

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Don't Step Back, Fight Back!

Lorenzo Komboa Ervin

May 23, 2022

Recently, I learned that my book *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* had been banned by the United States government from all of its prisons because of its "radical content" and "Black Anarchist activism". I appealed the original rejection, and it was denied by higher level officials. New York State and Arizona prisons have also blocked the book.

It seems everyone in the political establishment is in fear of Anarchism, especially Black Anarchism. These days most prison censorship is against Black and LGBTQ authors. Not just in prison, but censorship in prison is the largest book banning in the United States of America and the world. So my book, which had already been seen as a classic, important political work for over 40 years, now sits as another banned book, along with some of the best written works in all literature.

I am, of course, going to fight back and feel confident in saying I/we are going to win. Martin Sostre, a Black Anarchist, had fought New York state penal authorities back in 1968-1969, and had won the first rights for prisoners to receive revolutionary literature taught me how. As a follower of Sostre, I also fought in court, and in every way possible to challenge the repressive logic of prison officials to justify censorship. They couldn't win

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back in the day, and we won in the courts and in the streets. Now, it appears that we must fight again. Only, this time I am not in prison, and people all over the world can participate in this campaign with me. But it is not just about me or my book, there is prison book banning of hundreds of thousands of books in America's massive prison system, and we have to build a new movement to fight back for prisoner's right to read radical and unorthodox writings and for authors to distribute their works in prison without interference by racist or homophobic authorities.

I am going to work with other prison rights activists, book distribution services and book thru bars groups, radical publishing houses, and others who believe in freedom of speech to create a major campaign against prison censorship by: 1. Filing a major lawsuit against the Federal Bureau of Prisons and various state prisons for banning my book and that of other radical authors. 2. Create a massive campaign against prison censorship for the banning of my book and all books. This campaign by The Martin Sostre Institute, will unite prison abolitionists, civil libertarians, anti-racists, librarians, Black activists, Anarchists and many others who believe prisoners should have their rights to read controversial and other "radical" literature, protected under the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, and international law, and not be punished for their beliefs.

Please join my patreon page: <https://www.patreon.com/blackautonomy>, and make a donation or support us monthly in fighting this government censorship and my writing generally. Also, we hope you will join us in building the Coalition Against Prison Censorship and Book Banning, email: [komboa47@protonmail.com](mailto:kombo47@protonmail.com), There is already a discussion group at: connect on book ban (on Signal). Coming soon will be video conferences so we can brainstorm. We are just starting, so please be patient while we set it up. We are doing the best we can with little help at this stage.

Here is what I am asking my publishers at Pluto Press UK (and associated publishing houses) to do to help me and other radical authors, book thru bars groups, book clubs that distribute book to prisoners, and the prisoners themselves:

1. Contact the Radical Publishers Alliance, of which Pluto is a member) and rally them to help myself (and their own authors) to combat prison book banning. Only when we all come together will we even have a chance to beat back book banning programs which are blocking thousands of authors from distributing their books, and allow prison officials to ban hundreds of thousands of books based on racist and homophobic conservative political grounds. Bring together the RPA and other Left radical publishers to join Black and LGBTQ authors in building a mass movement led by the Martin Sostre Institute against prison censorship and fascist book banning. Radical publishers should create a monthly podcast forum so that radical book authors can talk about their work and denounce book banning. Part of book banning is about silencing the author as well as the prisoner, we need a way to speak out.
2. Help create an annual International Day of Action Against prison censorship and book banning to highlight the issue worldwide. This would be a protest campaign in the streets, in front of prisons, and at their administrative offices to fight mass imprisonment in the USA, as well as its censorship and book banning.
3. We need to make prison banned books part of the annual “Banned Books Week” held by the American Library Association, PenAmerica, and the UK Banned Books Week Coalition. We should contact these groups, who are already conducting massive anti-book banning campaigns against right-wing campaigns to remove

books from libraries, schools and other institutions to support our own campaign against prison book banning. In fact, every champion of free speech, expression, and the right to read should be appealed to become part of this movement. It can only make us all stronger.

4. Legal support from the ACLU, National Lawyers Guild, Prison Legal News or other civil rights law firm, to bring an anti-censorship lawsuit against prison book banning. We need an injunction against prison officials for the systematic banning of thousands of books.

Conclusion

Prison censorship includes the nation's largest book ban, not just a few controversial or unorthodox books, but hundreds of thousands of classics, Black literature, LGBTQ contents, educational books and college textbooks, among many others. Prisoners are being denied many educational, mind opening, and entertaining volumes. Books unite us all, despite the racial, sexual orientation, or political beliefs of the authors. We cannot allow the Right-wing politicians, fake parent groups, or other bodies from acting as our censors. It isn't just in prison that they are doing all this, they are doing it all over American society as well. They want ideological and political hegemony and conformity. Fighting book banning is a struggle against fasism. We need to stand up, not back down in the face of unjust authority, or would be dictators.

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