

PRISON REVOLT

In the face of asymmetrical power between the colonizer and the colonized, the prison revolt is an interruption of the colonial order. The prison, as a “living cemetery,” disappears and abuses anti-colonial forces in an attempt to suppress their fight for liberation. In response to this death sentence, the prison revolt emerges as a radical life-affirming practice—an assertion of dignity that transforms a cage into a space of fierce collective struggle.

Prisoners lead the fight against their conditions, producing creative means of radical dissent—such as hunger strikes and hostage-taking—that require exceptional organization and serious collective action. Those outside the prison walls must recognize the clarity in these actions, which reveal the state’s inability to subjugate people who demand freedom by any means necessary. The prisoners’ revolt teaches us to become masters of our own destiny by transforming even the most brutal conditions into a front of resistance.

Khader Adnan and the Hunger Strike

Khader Adnan, Palestinian prisoner, hunger striker, baker, and resistance leader in Palestinian Islamic Jihad, achieved his liberation on four separate occasions through hunger strikes. He was martyred in the early morning hours of May 2, 2023 after 86 days of his sixth and final hunger strike, demanding his freedom. Adnan inspired an entire generation of captive strugglers, among them 30 political prisoners who declared a hunger strike in September 2022, asserting that, between them, the Zionist authorities had stolen over 200 years of collective life.

Within minutes of his martyrdom, fellow Palestinian prisoners responded with attacks on prison guards and hunger strikes in protest of his assassination. Palestinians across the West Bank and Gaza rose up in strike as resistance factions quickly mobilized, reaffirming the power of the prisoners movement in unifying our struggle.

This is not to romanticize the horrific process of a hunger strike. Adnan, like all the other prisoners, aspired to a life of dignity, and sacrificing his body was not about death as much as it was about life and freedom. He saw hunger striking as the most powerful weapon he had, and in that he sent a message to the world that the prison, the occupation is not fate, and liberation is a choice you make.

Carol Crooks and the August Rebellion

In August 1974, several prison guards brutally beat and kidnapped Carol Crooks in full view of other prisoners—a cowardly act of retaliation for her legal victory that secured the right to due process before punitive transfers to solitary confinement. The next night, the other women prisoners defied lockdown and fought back, using the tear gas canisters and kerosene that had been intended for use against them. The uprising led to a landmark legal victory, Powell v. Ward, which secured the prisoners’ release from solitary confinement in 1975 and established due process protections in all disciplinary hearings, an act that still protects women in prison today.



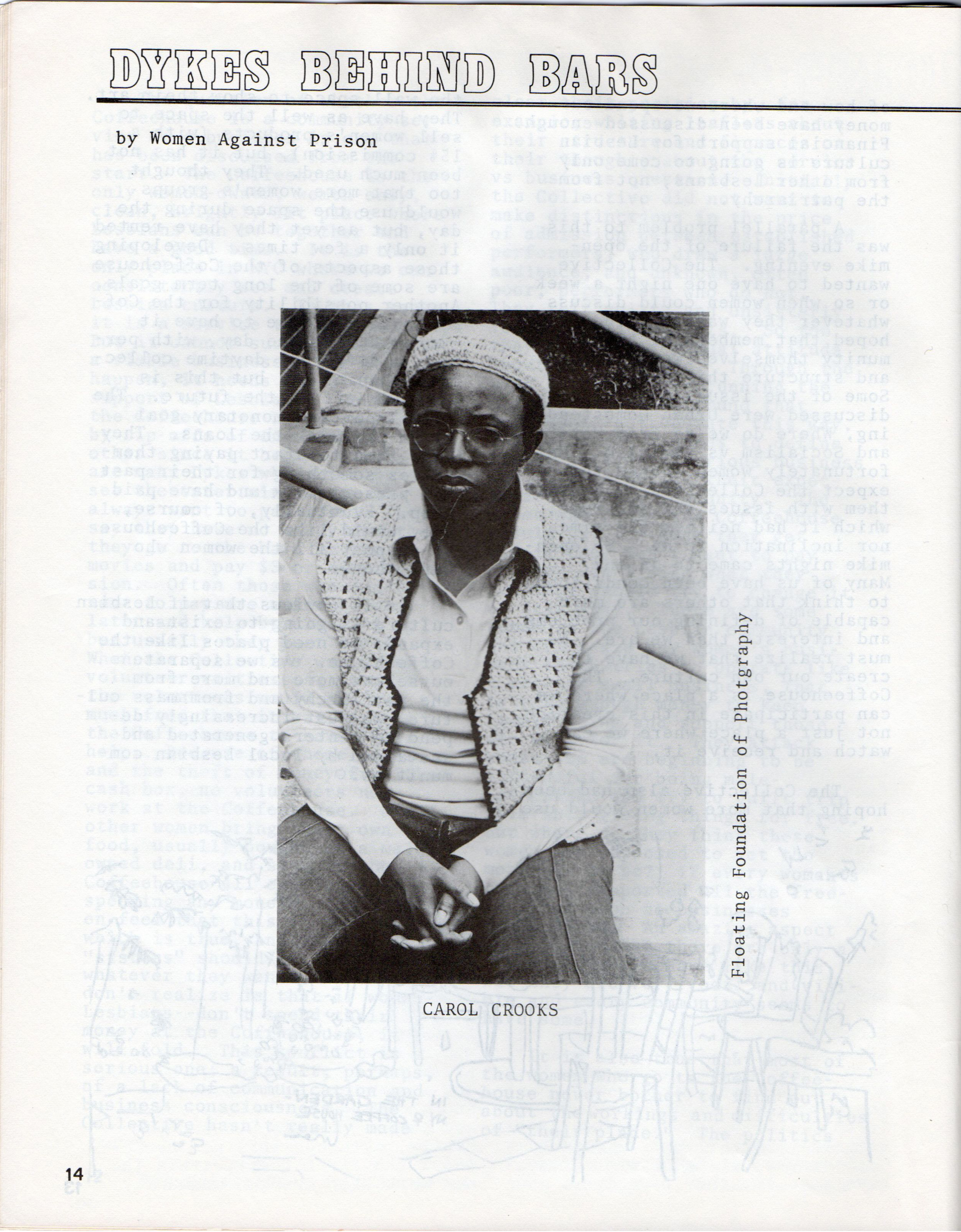
“It is odd how a hunger strike, which literally eats the body from the inside, gives a prisoner unparalleled power: the power of rejection, and saying “no” in the face of jailers who view you as nothing more than a number.” - Fellow hunger striker

the battle of empty stomachs

Hunger strikes, described as the Battle of Empty Stomachs by Palestinian prisoners, are not merely a demand for better conditions—they are profound acts of self-determination and resistance. Prisoners often see hunger striking as the most powerful weapon they have, sacrificing their bodies in the struggle for freedom. Hunger strikes interrupt the daily order enforced by prison authorities and reject the “fate” of captivity. The hunger strike is an act of refusal—a revolutionary choice: freedom or death.

LINA JARBOUNI

Lina Jarbouni, the longest-serving female Palestinian prisoner, served as an elected representative at Hasharon prison, advocating for Palestinian girls’ right to education inside prison. She joined a mass hunger strike with thousands of prisoners, demanding an end to administrative detention and solitary confinement, and the right to family visits. Israeli authorities tried to break her spirit by moving her to solitary confinement. In a show of solidarity, her fellow captives launched a hunger strike on her behalf, forcing the authorities to perform the life-saving surgery she needed.



Prison quiet; inmate moved



CAROL CROOKS

"We have the solution! The Solution is Unity!"

In September 1971, more than a thousand Black and Puerto Rican prisoners united in a powerful display of collective strength, seizing control of the prison and taking 39 guards hostage to protest inhumane conditions. During the rebellion, Attica resisters transformed the prison into a maroon camp—a space of self-determination and communal care. They organized food distribution, waste removal, medical care, security, political education, and negotiations. In the midst of chaos and repression, they organized themselves and forged unity in their purpose and determination for freedom. Despite multiple countries offering to accept the prisoners in exchange for amnesty, Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered a brutal assault on September 13, resulting in the murder of 43 prisoners and guards and the torture of survivors. One of them, Frank “Big Black” Smith, left this message for those beyond the prison walls:

“Wake up, stop hiding, because the same thing that is happening to me is happening to you.”
“Wake up, stop hiding, because the same thing that is happening to me is happening to you.”

Frank “Big Black” Smith



In July 1971, the Attica inmates presented a list of 27 demands regarding improvements in living conditions in Attica to state Commissioner of Corrections Russell Oswald and Governor Nelson Rockefeller. The Attica brothers cited the death of George Jackson as a catalyst for the revolt, who was killed only a month prior. The day after Jackson’s death, at least 700 Attica inmates participated in a hunger strike in his honor.

ATTICA MEANS FIGHT BACK!

