

Chill Factor

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by Gwen Shaffer - City Paper

Progressive movements throughout the country are likely to be impacted by the hundreds of arrests in Philadelphia last week.

The crackdown on political activists who participated in local demonstrations last week is likely to have a "chilling effect" on progressive movements nationwide, civil rights attorneys and activists contend. Street protests are being wrongly equated with terrorism, they say.

As of Tuesday evening, a team of attorneys representing prisoners estimated that about 307 of the 470 protesters remained behind bars. The "vast, vast majority" of them are participating in "jail solidarity," refusing to provide officials with their names, says Marina Sitrin, a member of the R2K Legal Network. Some protesters stripped off their clothes to avoid identification. Numerous accounts of police brutality continue to emerge from those arrested and released.

Nearly 150 prisoners have been on a hunger strike since their arrest, and the remainder planned to join them beginning Wednesday, Aug. 9. They intend to refuse food until Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham agrees to meet with the R2K Legal Team; bail for misdemeanors is dropped; only 1 percent bond need be posted to bail out those arrested for felonies; and all prisoners receive adequate medical attention.

Thousands of activists took to city streets during the week of July 30. They used the Republican National Convention — and the media it attracted — as an opportunity to speak out on issues ranging from the death penalty to corporate globalization. The bulk of arrests took place Aug. 1, when several thousand activists blocked off six busy Center City intersections during rush hour.

But demonstrators claim intimidation from law enforcement began months ago. In early July, the Philadelphia Police Department acknowledged taking photos of activists who they suspected would

participate in demonstrations during the RNC. Law enforcement agents also infiltrated protest planning meetings and monitored e-mail discussion lists.

"We raised these concerns over and over again," says Cheri Honkala, director of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union and a highly visible local activist.

Her organization was denied a city permit for a July 31 march against homelessness and poverty (although police allowed the event to proceed anyway). And she claims that the Philadelphia Department of Human Services intended to intimidate parents from marching when the agency said it would place children of arrested parents in foster homes and shelters.

"Plus, [Deputy Police Commissioner Robert] Mitchell has been in our office at least twice a week for the past month," Honkala says.

"The city has put out a signal that it won't make it easy to protest. People are going to say they are willing to pay a fine or spend a few days in jail — but not this stuff," she says.

Other activists see "big picture" repercussions emanating from the events in Philadelphia as well.

"This is not about protests," says Amy Kwasnicki, an organizer for the Philadelphia Direct Action Group. "It is the beginning of a large-scale internal war on activism. If it were simply about demonstrations, [the crackdown] would already be over and done with."

She fears that the current campaign against activism means government officials are laying the groundwork for a new era of McCarthyism.

"You are going to see blacklisting of activists... 'Oh, my neighbor held a meeting last night,' kind of thing," Kwasnicki says.

The police and District Attorney are "over-criminalizing" last Tuesday's disturbances for an obvious reason, says Larry Frankel, director of the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

"They are sending a very strong message against speaking out," he says. "Are they taking this position because people were demonstrating

against the death penalty or the Tom Jones beating?" he asks, noting that many protests were aimed at city prosecutors and cops.

The District Attorney's office says prosecutors requested high bails — up to \$1 million in the case of activist John Sellers — specifically for protest organizers. (Judge Lisa Richette reduced Sellers' bail to \$100,000 and he has since been released on bond).

This fact alone raises red flags for Paul Hetznecker, a civil rights attorney representing a batch of protesters still in jail.

"Who gave the DA's office information that these people were organizers?" he asks. "Infiltration and what other techniques are being used? A new era of federal surveillance is emerging. It is one thing to survey mob actors, but another to chill First Amendment rights by sharing information on activists."

Civil rights attorneys say street demonstrations are being raised to the same level as terrorism.

"What does it say about a democratic system when people out there exercising their constitutional right to dissent need to be watched, and are treated like enemies of the state?" Hetznecker wonders.

New York attorney Ronald McGuire is also helping defend protesters still imprisoned. The high bails for misdemeanors set by Philadelphia prosecutors "are without precedent in the history of this country," he says.

"I'm talking about the average \$15,000 to \$20,000 bails, not even the \$1 million bail," he says. "Aggravated jaywalking is not the same as terrorism."

According to Cathie Abookire, spokesperson for Abraham, another reason for high bails is that "many protesters are flight risks and have committed serious crimes."

But to McGuire, they represent "an attempt to write protests out of the Constitution."

The decision to be tough on protest-

ers was made "on high," he says, "to teach all of us a lesson."

He blames Police Commissioner John Timoney for setting a "horrible tone" during the RNC. "Timoney is a commissioner, not a commando. You can't have that mentality of leading troops into battle."

Kwasnicki agrees that her concerns are not leveled at the average cop on the street.

"I'm not blaming the entire police force for a handful of sadists. Just as they shouldn't blame us for a handful of troublemakers."

The precedent set in Philadelphia this week will affect civil rights organizations, asserts Pedro Rodriguez, director for the Action Alliance of Senior Citizens. Although he has participated in direct actions — including stopping traffic — Rodriguez says he was never criminally charged.

"A different standard is being used this time," he says. "I call on Mayor Street to be a leader in this instance and step back from his confrontational stance. There is no reason to go on with harassment of protesters who visited Philadelphia to peacefully express their beliefs."

The mayor's press office did not return a call.

PDAG member Jody Dodd says that, in her "20-plus years of activism," she has never seen such high bail set for nonviolent acts of civil disobedience.

"This is a blatant attempt to squash freedoms and it is going to backfire on the city."

And Dodd just may be right.

A number of attorneys representing protesters promise to file civil lawsuits after their clients' criminal charges are resolved. And with nearly 500 arrests, the city is not likely to get off cheap.

Financial repercussions are not the only thing Philadelphia officials should be worrying about, Kwasnicki stresses. "The city should be ashamed of itself now. It is alienating itself from an entire generation of youth."

LINGERING INJUSTICE

R2K protest goes to trial

Call it Democracy Derailed Day. August 1 marks the second anniversary of the day that Philadelphia, home of the Liberty Bell, turned free speech on its head at the 2000 National Republican Convention (see “Rough Justice,” News and Features, January 19, 2001). That’s when 420 protesters were arrested and charged with trumped-up felonies and misdemeanors while the Republicans nominated George W. Bush for president.

Now, two years later, criminal charges against hundreds of activists have been dropped or dismissed because of lack of evidence. Except, that is, for those against Providence-based housing advocate Camilo Viveiros, who still faces felony charges for allegedly throwing a bicycle at Philadelphia police commissioner John Timoney. Viveiros, who denies that he assaulted Timoney, has endured a mixed court battle to date. In October 2001, a Philadelphia municipal-court judge reduced most of the 17 misdemeanor and felony charges filed against him, including a felony-assault charge that carries a maximum prison sentence of 50 years — the same as any homicide. But last January, after Philadelphia district attorney Lynne Abraham appealed, the Superior Court reinstated the felony-assault charge against Viveiros. Earlier this month, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court declined to hear his case. He is scheduled to go to trial on October 9.

In many ways, Viveiros’s life has become an exercise in contradiction. As an organizer for the Massachusetts Alliance for HUD Tenants, in Boston, he spends his days trying to save the poor, elderly, and disabled from eviction. He has devoted much of his adulthood to myriad social-justice causes. But not a minute goes by without flickers of fear and preoccupation related to his own prospects. As Viveiros puts it, “Here I am trying to create a world where truth will prevail. Yet I’m worrying about whether the system will deliver justice in my own case.”

His ordeal has had a tangible effect on his advocacy work. Since his August 2000 arrest, it has become harder for Viveiros to convince disenfranchised tenants to speak out. Last June, for instance, he spent weeks trying to urge people to participate in a national affordable-housing protest in Washington, DC. But he found himself facing the same bitter-sweet response. “Tenants said, ‘But we don’t want to end up like you,’ ” Viveiros recalls. “People were hesitant because they know about my [criminal] case. It has made them think twice before actually practicing free speech.”

As Viveiros awaits trial, he has tried to find comfort in the Philly district attorney’s poor prosecutorial record. But that cuts both ways. On the one hand, he says, “It’s fantastic that almost all the criminal cases have been thrown out.” On the other hand, it puts pressure on Abraham to win convictions against the high-profile Timoney Three — *i.e.*, Viveiros and the two activists who are co-defendants in the case. All along, Philly officials have portrayed R2K protesters as violent, unruly types. In reality, most of them were like Viveiros, who claims that police knocked him unconscious before charging him with aggravated assault. “The city,” he says, “has to legitimize the police’s excessive use of force that day. So my case may become the scapegoat case.”

Taking a longer view, Viveiros hopes people will recognize the harm these prosecutions can cause to the principle of free speech. “If people cannot express themselves through nonviolent means,” he asks, “then how can we consider ourselves to be living in an authentic democracy?”

For updates on Viveiros’s case, check out www.friendsof-camilo.org. Contributions to Viveiros’s legal-defense fund can be sent to: Friends of Camilo, P.O. Box 58247, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

— **Kristen Lombardi**

AUGUST 2, 2002 BOSTON PHOENIX

GUIDELINES FOR LETTERS TO THE JUDGE

(If you do not know Camilo personally)

- Letters, if possible, should be on official stationery from the organization/institution.
- Please send two signed copies of the letter, one addressed “To Whom it May Concern” and the other addressed to “Honorable Judge Young.”
- Please send the letters to: Friends of Camilo, P.O. Box 23169, Providence, RI 02903.
- Do **not** send them directly to the Judge.
- If your organization has branches or affiliates, please urge them to write letters as well, particularly those in Philadelphia, to help build pressure where it is needed most.
- Letters to the Judge should focus on putting Camilo in a positive light, showing the value of his work to the community. It is **not helpful to rant** against the Police Commissioner, D.A., or the Philadelphia police in general.

1) Describe the organization and the letter writer:

- State your title, position or affiliation with an organization, church, association, union, etc. This can be anything from Executive Director to Member.
- State the constituencies your organization serves and the size (#s)
- Describe how your organization serves/impacts the community.
- When instructive, describe the specific issues (civil rights, labor, economic justice, faith-based social justice) where the organization’s work is focused and the connection to various social, ethnic or academic communities that highlight the organization’s status in the community.

2) Describe your familiarity with the work Camilo does:

- See www.friendsofcamilo.org for information. If the issue you want to highlight is not there, please contact stayingstrong@hotmail.com and they can provide you with more details about the kind of work Camilo has been involved in over the years.
- State why it would be a shame to deprive Camilo of his ability to continue to work on important community issues.

3) Draw a link between your organization and Camilo’s work:

Camilo has been involved in direct service, advocacy and community organizing. He: works to assist mostly elderly and disabled tenants who are endangered by rent increases to form tenant associations and stop evictions; volunteered as a caregiver in high school; volunteered on a suicide hotline; worked in group homes with developmentally disabled adults; worked in the local rape crisis center; co-founded the Progressive Student Alliance (to increase financial aid funding and preserve programs to support immigrant and first-generation American students); co-founded the national organization Empty The Shelters (Fill the Homes), which helped students and youth contribute to the efforts of welfare rights organizations and unions of the homeless; helped to mobilize a mostly Cambodian and Lai neighborhood in Fall River, Massachusetts, to pressure the city to shut down a toxic incinerator; went to Canada to stop the creation of a Hydro Quebec dam on Innu land; co-founded Homes not Jails in Boston. ***Camilo has been committed to the use of civil disobedience for years.*** Camilo has always believed that the power of the people lay in passionate activists successfully building the support of ordinary people.

4) Explain why it would be a great tragedy to imprison someone like Camilo:

State why you think Camilo’s role in the community should be considered; how the kind of work he does is so useful and necessary to society.

E.G. “Proceeding with the prosecution of these charges would constitute a great disservice not only to Camilo and everybody that is lucky enough to know him, but to a society that is already suffering from a serious shortage of people as passionate and committed as Camilo.” Tom O’Brien, former co-working, MAHT

Biography of Camilo Viveiros Jr.

Camilo Viveiros was born in 1971 to immigrant parents from the Azores, Portugal. Before immigrating to Southeastern Massachusetts, his parents led an agrarian life in the Azores, a small group of islands in the Atlantic between Portugal and the U.S. Raised in the closely-knit Portuguese community of Fall River, Massachusetts, Camilo was taught from an early age that strong family ties and support were more important than the size of a bank account. Through their example, his parents instilled in their son a commitment to sharing generously with others — important values in an extended family without large paychecks. Both of Camilo's parents worked blue-collar jobs — his mother, working for over forty years in the garment industry, while his father worked his whole life as a laborer.

Camilo was arrested on August 1st, 2000, during demonstrations in Philadelphia highlighting national mispriorities of putting the profits of the few over the needs of public. In particular that day of protests was focused on the number one growth industry in the U.S. the prison and criminal justice industries. While more and more prisons are being built, funding for education, healthcare, affordable housing and decent jobs are being cut. As the regional organizer in southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod for the Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants, he works to assist mostly elderly and disabled tenants who are endangered by rent increases to form tenant associations and stop evictions. He had come to Philadelphia in that capacity, to represent the concerns of these tenants and to address call attention to the lack of support for low and moderate income people in general.

Until his arrest, Camilo has been involved in work for social justice virtually without a break. This dedication to helping those who have “fallen through the cracks” made itself known early on in his youth. During his high school years he began by volunteering as a caregiver, choosing the settings in which he could help those who were most overlooked. In his teens he spent time volunteering on a suicide hotline, giving attention to people who called in their worst moments of crisis. Believing he should try to contribute to the welfare of others before graduating high school, he dedicated time to distributing food to those in need. “Camilo is always looking after the underdog,” his friend, David Malone, says of those years. “In high school he took time out to befriend others, who were being made fun of, because he has a big heart.” After high school Camilo worked in group homes with developmentally disabled adults, assisting residents with their everyday needs to “make a little positive difference in their lives”. Shawn Mills a co-worker of Camilo's at a group home for the developmentally disabled seniors said “Camilo always treated clients with respect, he spoke to them as peers and recognized them as unique individuals.”

During his college years and in his professional work, Camilo has continued to devote his time to help people in impoverished communities to attain basic survival needs, from food and housing to environmental health and protection from domestic violence. This caring has been expressed through his work with myriad grassroots community organizations, several of which he helped to found. During college he worked in the local rape crisis center, assisting those who had been sexually assaulted to find services and counseling. Also while in college, he co-founded the Progressive Student Alliance, whose members struggled to increase financial aid funding and preserve programs to support immigrant and first-generation American students. Also, during these years, Camilo began what would become a life-long commitment to ending homelessness and increasing the availability of affordable housing. He co-founded the national organization Empty The Shelters (Fill the Homes), which helped students and youth contribute to the efforts of welfare rights organizations and unions of the homeless.

Camilo's commitment to empowering communities in need has continued in his professional work. Yet his activism as an adult has not been limited to his paid work. As one example, he helped to mobilize a mostly Cambodian and Lai neighborhood in Fall River, Massachusetts, to pressure the city to shut down a toxic incinerator. Ed Duran, who was part a the coalition effort, commented, “Camilo is always thinking about how to broaden community participation He helped increase participation by simply going door-to-door. Residents responded to his approachable and humble character and with more community support we eventually got the incinerator shut down. “ Again and again, both his professional colleagues and the community residents he works with describe Camilo's manner and organizing style as unique, marked by his belief in each person's human dignity and his soft spoken support.

Efforts by police administrators to portray Camilo as violent or thuggish contradict sharply with the experiences of the elderly and disabled tenants, religious, labor and community leaders who have come to know him. As Gary Hicks, one public housing tenant who has witnessed Camilo's efforts, says, “Camilo constantly builds up tenants' self-confidence through his gentle encouragement”.

“All of Camilo's caring community work and sensitivity for some of our most vulnerable community members does not match who police officers claim he is,” says his partner, Mimi Budnick. “Camilo has spent much of his life trying his best to play a positive role in others' lives. We will not allow an inaccurate impression of him to be accepted. We're confident that the more others get to know him, the more people will understand why this violent portrayal just doesn't ring true.”

Friends of Camilo

camiloboston@yahoo.com • www.friendsofcamilo.org



Dear Friend,

September 2002

Thank you for your interest in the case of Camilo Viveiros Jr. We are a group of activists, community members and friends of Camilo, a tenant organizer from Fall River who was arrested on August 1, 2000 during protests at the Republican National Convention, in Philadelphia. Camilo is facing serious trumped up charges that could send him to prison for many years. Below is some basic information about the case and why your involvement is critical, not only for Camilo's future, but in order to ensure our right to dissent and continue to work for human rights and social justice.

On the week of August 1, during the Republican convention, thousands of people from all over the country took to the streets of Philadelphia in protest. Over 400 protesters were arrested, including Camilo, who was originally charged with 11 misdemeanors and 2 felony counts. Since then, various charges have been dropped and reinstated. Today, Camilo remains charged with first-degree felony assault against Police Commissioner John Timoney, a charge which carries the same potential sentence as homicide!

Camilo's life-long commitment to empowering disadvantaged and oppressed members of society is clear to anyone who has had the good fortune to cross paths with him. His dedication serves as an incredible resource to all of us who are working for a more equitable society. Camilo approaches his work as a housing organizer with a strong understanding of how housing is connected to other issues (his enclosed biography reflects the broad range of Camilo's work). Taking him away from his work would be a blow to the tenants he works with and to the coalitions he has helped to build.

What's more, this is not simply a case of injustice against one individual. Camilo's case threatens our right to use public protest and non-violent civil disobedience as a way to speak up against injustice. Camilo has already found that tenants he works with are more reluctant to attend protests for fear that they will be caught in a situation like his. If Camilo is convicted and imprisoned, such sentiments will only be more widespread and stronger.

We hope that your organization will support Camilo in the following ways:

- Write a letter in support of Camilo. Letters are vitally important for convincing the judge of Camilo's character, and for showing how much damage it would do to the community if he were imprisoned. You don't need to know Camilo personally to write a letter! (See attached)
- Publicize information about Camilo's case in your internal publications, like newsletters, mailings, or web site.
- Ask people to write letters, call their own contacts in Philadelphia, ask around for people who were present at Camilo's arrest, and come to the next meeting.
- Contact your organization's affiliates in Philadelphia (or Pennsylvania) and ask them to support Camilo.

Thank you in advance for your time. As a community organizer colleague of Camilo once put it, "For those engaged in the collective fight, Camilo is one of ours. And, it is our problem if they take him away from us." As Camilo puts it, "The only way to stop these attempts to criminalize me and protests in general is to out-organize them." We urge you to join in the struggle to organize around this case and ensure our right to continue working for social change on all fronts.

Staying Strong,

Friends of Camilo, Boston Chapter

TALKING POINTS

Following are some “talking points”. They are not meant as a word-for-word script, but rather an outline containing basic information on the case, why an organization would want to help, and what we are asking for. Many people have also requested a “script” to help open the conversation.* Following is a suggestion for how to begin a call.

“Hello, I am a friend/ working with —— (contact person). I am calling on behalf of the Boston support committee for Camilo Viveiros. Are you familiar with his case? Is now a good time to talk?” Use the following information & your own knowledge to begin talking about the case:

BASIC INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE:

The Protest: On the week of Aug. 1, 2000, thousands of protesters came together to protest the Republican National Convention. In general, many activists converged to participate in activities around democracy and justice. More specifically, many activists went to Philadelphia to protest corporate rule, the death penalty, and the criminal justice system.

General Info on Arrests: In what has since been called a civil rights catastrophe, over 400 people were arrested during peaceful marches and civil disobedience, including many from Boston. Some were held on bails of up to the previously unheard of amount of a million dollars; almost all were subsequently acquitted or had their charges thrown out.

Camilo’s Charges: Camilo and two other people were arrested when they were on a march that was attacked by police. The police commissioner was there, and has publicly bragged that he and other officers rode their bikes directly into a group of demonstrators. Camilo sustained a concussion, but he was charged with assaulting officers. He is accused of having thrown a bicycle at police officers—an idea which people who know him and know how gentle he is find absurd.

What he faces: Camilo now faces 15 to 40 years in prison if convicted. He and his co-defendants are the only ones arrested at the convention who have not yet gone to trial. With the city facing criticism for its handling of the Convention, it would reap political benefits by convicting Camilo as “proof” that its treatment of protesters was justified. The fact that the police chief was involved in the initial incident makes prospects for a fair trial even more ominous.

WHY WOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION WANT TO HELP:

Protect Our Right to Protest: Sending Camilo to prison would send a frightening message to all activists and others who believe in public protest and civil disobedience as a strategy for social change. Camilo has already found that some tenants he works with are more reluctant to attend protests, fearing that they could be caught in a situation like his. It is meant to, and would, discourage others from raising their voices.

Camilo’s Organizing Supports All of Our Struggles: Camilo’s work empowering people around housing underlies every other kind of organizing that can be done, as housing is the most fundamental of human needs. Taking him away from his work would be a crisis for the tenants he works with, and would add that much more insecurity to those who are most oppressed, inhibiting the work of many other organizations.

Don’t Let Them Intimidate & Discourage Activism: If we don’t support someone who has devoted his life to activism, we could be discouraging other people who might otherwise choose this path. What does it say about us if we don’t try to defend a hard-working organizer? The last thing we need is fewer people choosing to work for social justice!

WHAT WE ARE ASKING YOU FOR:

Write a Letter of Support: Letters are vitally important for convincing the authorities that the community cares about this case, and for showing how much damage it would do to the community if he were imprisoned. You don’t need to know Camilo personally to write a letter! In fact, it illustrates just how far-reaching the consequences of his imprisonment would be if we can demonstrate the connections between this case and a wide variety of social justice, human service, and community work.

Get the Word Out: Publicize information about Camilo’s case in your internal publications, like newsletters, mailings, or web site.

Contact Sister Organizations in Philly: We need to come together to demonstrate to the Philadelphia community that it is worth the risk to support Camilo’s case. We have much less to risk (potential city funding, etc.). It is our responsibility to model support for our friends in Philly and urge them to come forward and speak out as well. Please speak with any contacts in Philly you may have, as insignificant as they may seem. If you are unsure how to approach them, email camiloboston@yahoo.com and someone will get back to you and give you talking points, and an opportunity to ask whatever questions you need to feel confident.

* Please feel free to refer to the “Worst Case Scenario FAQ” sheet which will hopefully help everyone to feel prepared to address the more difficult questions that may be asked.

Answering Tough Questions; Worst Case Scenario FAQ's

While those of us who know Camilo are sure that he should not be facing imprisonment, those we talk with may not know that. They probably won't be accustomed to being asked to support people facing charges, and they may wonder what this has to do with them.

What can you say when they say something like, "We don't know this person. We have no connection to him. How can we speak to his character, his innocence, etc? What can we write to the judge if we don't know him?"

Following are some of our brainstorming on what to say when addressed with tough questions:

This may be a good cause, but I work in a soup kitchen/ on immigration issues/ with a church etc. I can't just support any cause that sounds important. What does this have to do with me?

- This is about police crackdowns on protest. Any group that holds protests is impacted. Camilo was arrested along with hundreds of other people, including those who were in the warehouse where puppets were being made when police raided it. The situation was described by one lawyer as a "civil rights catastrophe." In the days after the protests, police commissioner Timoney called for a national criminal investigation of anti-globalization protesters. Philly now faces lawsuits over its behavior during the protests.
- If Camilo is convicted, it will be a huge blow to our confidence in our right to protest. Camilo has already found that tenants are reluctant to attend protests and fear they'll be caught in a situation like his.
- Camilo's organizing among tenants in S.E. Mass is an important part of the housing movement statewide and a broader economic justice movement. If tenant organizing is set back, it will have broad ripples.
- Camilo's case has become political, thanks to the involvement of the former Police Commissioner, the media attention, and the fact that he and his co-defendants are the last to go to trial. Camilo must not take the fall because the city wants to save face or justify its actions during the convention.

I will never know if Camilo is innocent and I don't support violence under any circumstances. How can I speak on behalf of Camilo when I do not know if he is guilty as charged?

- Camilo says that he did not, and those of us who know him know how contrary the charges are to his character. Point out some of the other false accusations that police leveled around these protests. For instance, police claimed that a series of items such a kerosene stoked rag was going to be used to throw at police, but actually it was used as paint thinner. Police claimed that items were huge slingshots when they were actually backpacks for strapping puppets to people. They claimed that "unknown" substances were found in protester's bottles when the substance were actually water. You can also point out historical examples of similar lying to discredit activists—Martin Luther King, Jr. was slandered by the FBI and reported in the media to have received money from the KGB. (But while it's good to tell people this if they ask, you shouldn't get caught up in it. Their letters won't speak to innocence or guilt.)

I don't know him. What could I possibly say? Besides, I am not a big name nor is my organization that powerful politically.

- This is addressed in the sheet on writing a letter. In short, they can focus on why it would be a tragedy and a disservice to the community to imprison Camilo. This can be based on the work he does and on what they have learned (from you, from literature, etc). It's not useful to tell the judge that the city is out to get him. Only witnesses can do that. Focus on how we need him as a great organizer and a compassionate, dedicated community member.