

# A DISCUSSION ON THE AGREEMENT TO END HOSTILITIES AS A BASIS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND INTER-COMMUNAL INDEPENDENCE

*"To overcome the intelligent by folly is contrary to the natural order of things; to overcome the foolish by intelligence is in accordance with the natural order. To overcome the intelligent by intelligence, however, is a matter of opportunity"*

Zhuge Liang

From the NCTT-COR-SHU

Greetings brothers and sisters. On August 12, 2012 the Pelican Bay D-Short Corridor Collective issued the historic Agreement to End Hostilities (A.E.H.) in all prison and juvenile facilities and called for its extension to our communities. The strategic and material benefits for our ongoing human rights struggle, [for] thousands of prisoners and their families is obvious.

What may be less obvious is the unprecedented opportunity for social progress and community development represented by the A.E.H.; and more precisely why its popularization in the communities from which prisoners hail, and all similarly affected communities nationally, is so vital. The potential benefit to our interests collectively is equally as vital as the abolition of domestic torture units and mass incarceration as a whole, and in fact, may serve as a new front in that struggle.

In a recent "60 Minutes" exposé a New Jersey state trooper and former Iraq/Afghanistan Occupation Force Veteran began employing counter-insurgency techniques imported from those Middle Eastern battlefields to "clear and hold" poverty-stricken communities in New Jersey. As we watched this program they employed everything from quantification of tattoo I.D. and inter-communal violence data, to "winning the hearts and minds" of residents in order to increase informants amongst the population. The increase in arrests and convictions stats which followed came as no great surprise... nor did the corresponding imprisonment that followed. We noted the lamentable that followed. We noted the lamentable economic condition of the state and this community, in particular at the outset of the story, but only a passing reference was made to potential economic development opportunities that had any hope of empowering that community and those that lived in it.

One of the prevailing factors which prompted this further militarization of law enforcement was the alleged violence between street tribes (i.e., "gangs") and that surrounding the local drug trade knowing full well these phenomenon are structural aspects of the capitalist arrangement which force many in those communities to form (or join) street tribes for social empowerment or enter the underground economy (narcotics trafficking, etc.) as a survival activity, it reveals this new counter-insurgency-inspired approach was just the latest tactic to win public support for yet another streamlining of the school/poor community to prison pipeline and expansion of the prison industrial complex (PIC).

The NCTT is not simply an analytical body. It is an analytical body whose goal is to provide practical solutions to society's ills. We immediately began to make inter-connections on the theoretical level between these phenomena, the Agreement to End Hostilities (A.E.H.), collective community development programs, and a commitment to total community inclusion. This New Jersey community could have been any community in Watts, L.A., West Oakland or South-east San Diego. We thought: would such repressive and authoritarian state measures be justifiable if an effective A.E.H. was in place?

Furthermore, if there were community-owned and operated economic ventures, educational development initiatives, and socio-political empowerment platforms inclusive of, and beneficial to, everyone in the community would there even be a need for the residents to sell dope to, or ride on, one another?

If our communities were self-sufficient, politically-empowered, and markedly less violent would that not translate

into less of our brothers, sisters and children being exposed to the prospect of imprisonment and our communities being subjected to the militaristic occupation tactics of the state? It is our contention that the potential exists for this and much, much more.

The violence and rebellion against private property and bourgeoisie "law" which accompany the desperation of poverty and social alienation have long been the foundation for justifying the introduction and passage of draconian laws and GeStaPo-style enforcement tactics in depressed communities. We can assure you, the NYPD is not pushing "stop and frisk" on the [denzins] of the Upper East Side. These self-fulfilling prophecies of underdevelopment have decimated entire generations of young men (and women), consigning them to the (maw of the) PIC. It has also been utilized as the chief cornerstone in the state's justification for the maintenance and expansion of SHU torture units. It is the very basis of the "worst of the worst" propaganda that Stainer and his ilk continue to spout.

The A.E.H., designed to preserve and expand the solidarity of our prisoner human rights struggle has also had the objective effect of further undermining the state's untenable position by taking that argument away from them. If intra-prisoner violence is no longer occurring as a result of the A.E.H., how then can intra-prisoner violence be used as a way to confine men to torture units indefinitely as "the worst of the worst"? It obviously can't.

However, what may not be obvious is the A.E.H. provides us with a unique opportunity to also take that argument from community-based law enforcement agencies and remove tenuous justifications they're currently employing to terrorize our communities. It is a crime to be poor in America. From the indentured servitude and pauper's prisons of the 18th and 19th century, to the array of criminalization measures used today (i.e., "gang injunctions," prohibiting citizens from congregating with their own friends and neighbors; "stop and frisk"- powers which legalize profiling, and mandatory drug testing for recipients of public financial aid-the ugly essence of criminal presupposition) the U.S. capitalist state has always sought to criminalize the poor.

The A.E.H. can alter the historic dynamic by providing our communities with an environment in which to restructure our socio-economic reality and common ground upon which to pursue mutually beneficial cooperative efforts, independent of the hostile, antagonistic state and its modern predatory capitalism.

But how would that look on the ground? To answer that question we discussed the validity and practical application of such an undertaking, in relation to the realities on the ground. The final interpretation of that analysis led us to two basic conclusions:

1) Many of our younger brothers and sisters are so embroiled in these cycles of violence and retribution that if the A.E.H. were embraced en masse beyond the walls, not only would it require a productive program of genuine material benefits for them, to act as an incentive and fill the void previously occupied with contra-positive activities, but

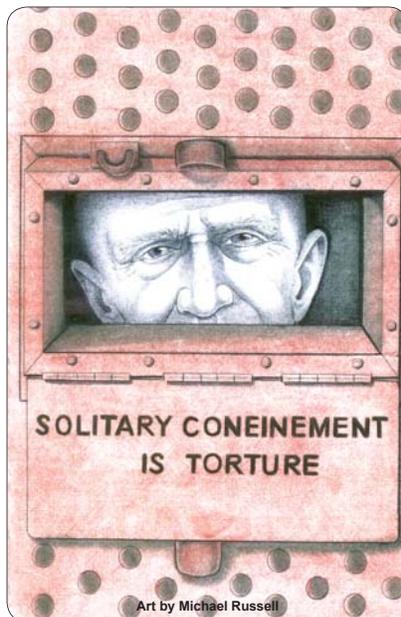
2) We'd also need principled and respected soldiers on the ground to mitigate misunderstandings.

The remainder of this discussion will thus be a direct outgrowth of these two primary prerequisites.

The NCTT-COR-SHU has previously articulated within the context of comprehensive community development and social transformation three pilot programs. It is our contention that these same pilot programs and other initiatives specifically developed for youth social empowerment, such as "The Youth Community Action Program (YCAP)", initiated within the confines of a universally-adopted and mutually enforced Agreement to End Hostilities (AEH) can give us the tools to reclaim our own communities from police state occupation, rebuild them into bastions of collective prosperity and shared success, while denying the PIC and the capitalist state the opportunity to exploit our young homies, g,homies, comrades and the intra-class/race contradictions we've had to endure under this corrupt system (divide and rule).

We took the time to explore the viability of these ideas by engaging those right here in this torture unit (Corcoran-SHU) from every cultural group on whether this would be something their homies and communities would be interested in. If brothers and sisters didn't have to worry about being tripped on, or having to ride on cats that rode on their homies, would they be interested in pursuing and working in community-owned businesses and agricultural communes that kept all the funds, fruits and employment in their community? Prison industrialists, corporations and politicians are consistently drafting laws to criminalize our daily lives and cultures. Would they be interested in organizing all their families, homies and home girls without felony records into voting blocks and lobbying bodies to push legislation that benefited their interests (i.e., abolishing the slavery provision of the 13th Amendment that precludes those convicted of a felony from voting, creation of community-based parole boards so their loved ones could finally get a date, or abolishing "gang injunctions" that criminalize associating with friends and neighbors you've grown up with all your life)? We held these conversations with young and old alike, from every cultural group and affiliation, and the response was universally positive. Some had never even viewed these concepts as a possibility, but by the wisdom of the Pelican Bay D-Short Corridor Collective the A.E.H. has given rise to possibilities previously unimaginable.

It is our contention that a concerted effort by all cultural groups and affiliations to extend the Agreement to End Hostilities (A.E.H.) to all communities in society where we have influence, coupled with designating specific personally-respected and reputable soldiers - to ensure the A.E.H. is understood and adhered to by their communities would give us both the social climate and manpower to organize effective closed-circuit economic initiatives, sustainable agricultural communes, and block-vote democratic initiatives.



In so doing we would transform the socio-economic paradigm in our communities, increasing the options and opportunities of our peoples without having to submit to the expropriation of our labor and talent by those who've built an industry around our inequality and enforced human misery.

What are we suggesting is extending the A.E.H. to the streets as a basis upon which to build an independent economy, our own self-sustaining agriculture and organized political power capable of ensuring our communities and loved ones are no longer a marginalized segment of the population preyed upon the fuel the prison industrial complex (for more information on the NCTT three pilot programs go to: NCTTCORSHU.org or see "A Discussion on Strategy for the National Occupy Movement" @sfbayview.com and netcorshu.org.

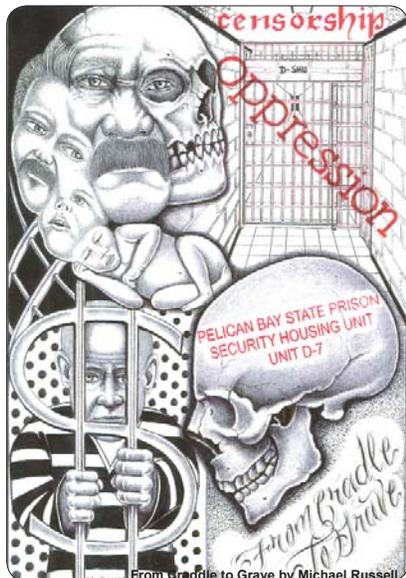
But there is even more opportunity for us here, brothers and sisters. One of the universal complaints of responsible thinking soldiers from all cultural groups is [that] our young brothers and sisters are receiving no meaningful development and are left to the tender mercies of the U.S. capitalist counter-culture of predatory greed and reactionary violence. They are emulating the irrationality inherent in the poor and powerless preying on the poor and powerless as a path to power and prosperity. This is not to castigate the quality of our young soldiers but to acknowledge structural setbacks in orientation and development.

Those who were following the "Each One, Teach One" tradition are either (to a great degree) isolated in prisons, SHU's or have turned their backs on the community completely for upward class mobility. There is even an unsavory segment who are actually taking advantage of this situation of uneven development for their own selfish gain. In either regard, all of us can agree that increasing the quality of young men and women being developed in our communities will empower us all, further improve the problem-solving skills of our young brothers and sisters, and improve the quality of life for all our people(s).

To that end, we propose the adoption and implementation of the "Youth Community Action Program" as a model for both developing and empowering our young sisters and brothers in the hoods, projects, barrios, rural towns, suburbs and trailer parks where our communities are situated. The Youth Community Action Program (YCAP) is both an educational/training program and a co-operative economic nonprofit initiative which targets underclass youth and neighborhoods employing volunteers from the youth's own community and family to work in concert with YCAP activists in a two phase development initiative.

Phase I - Involves a five (5) times a week, 2-½ hour (after school) educational and training initiative that focuses on history (from the true perspective, think: Zinn, Diop, and Dela Valle); cultural awareness to retard racial conflicts and strife between oppressed nationalities and citizens stemming from stereotypes and misconceptions of Asian, New Afrikan, Mexican/Latino, Euro-American, and Middle Eastern (etc.) cultures; computer- and technological literacy, the arts (visual, music, dance, etc.) and science/engineering; three out of every five days a week the final hour will be devoted to martial arts, self-defense training and strategic thought (to promote self-discipline and critical thinking). Participants must comply with participation in Phase I to be eligible for Phase II inclusion.

Phase II - Involves establishing a collectively-owned community-based venture which each youth participant will own an equal stake in and be trained in the area of the venture which best suits them. All will receive equal revenue portions/pay (collective work and responsibility, equalitarian distribution of wealth).



Perhaps one of the more enjoyable commonalities shared by all the cultural groups engaged in A.E.H. is a fondness for the custom-car cultures. Building on the intra-cultural commonality, the pilot venture can be a custom-car garage (think "pimp by ride") where we can seek in-kind donations of equipment and old cars (all tax-deductible), cash donations and fundraiser revenues to fund the rest. Volunteers from this industry will train such youngsters in exchange for marketing publicity for their own ventures while we also seek industry-related sponsors. The cars will be retrofitted, rebuilt and "pimped out" into custom low riders, donks, and euro-tuners and then put on the lot for sale and website auction. The proceeds from each sale or client "fix-up" will be split equally among the youth (50% of the profit), 20% will go to expand the nonprofit initiative, 20% will go to a college fund for them all, and 10% will flow back into expanding the venture. We, in this manner, provide them with an economic incentive to be indoctrinated into collective practices and progressive activism, bring the community closer to one another, and introduce a new source of revenue into the underclass community where that chapter of YCAP is based.

The positive social impact on our communities for our people who live in these communities should be significant. But equally impact-ful is all this progress would originate with the A.E.H., and the A.E.H. originated from prisoners in the SHU (the Pelican Bay D-Short Corridor Collective, to be precise). Can you all imagine the political success for our movement to abolish indefinite SHU confinement which would glow from such irrefutably positive public opinion? In the face of such success we would eradicate the myth that we are "the worst of the worst" while exposing the intention underdevelopment and predatory law enforcement practices of a capitalist state which has effectively dehumanized our communities, our families, our very children.

Central to understanding and responding to our indefinite torture as validated SHU prisoners and to human misery endemic of underclass communities where the majority of us come from is understanding the nature and structure of U.S. capitalism and our relationship to the productive system. The fact that we are holding this discussion with you from a SHU, and underclass men/women are virtually the entire prison population, is the best proof that the relationship between our communities and the ruling class of the productive system is a hostile one, one where we seek to wrest power from them sufficient to reclaim our humanity and enforce our dignity in the arenas of social life, while they in turn are disinclined to relinquish their authority to dehumanize and exploit us. As long as we are bound by the paradigm of the dominant culture, functioning within the labyrinth of our own exploitation by a socio-economic structure which institutionally disfavors both our communities and ourselves, regardless of cultural character, will continue the cycle of torture and misery.

What must be understood is the small social forces which have deemed our communities "high crime areas" and we (SHU prisoners) "the worst of the worst" are the same social forces that have reduced the social ties between people to naked self-interest and callous cash payment; the same forces who have transformed personal worth into mere exchange value, and subordinated countless of our hard-won freedoms to their one and only freedom - the freedom of "free trade." We are mere commodities to them, piles of human flesh they can use to expropriate a specific annual amount of the social product (taxes) depending on where they warehouse our flesh (G.P., SHU, Administrative-Segregation (Ad-Seg.), etc.) - our exchange value tabulated by prison industrial labor aristocrats (CCPOA, Administrators) and corporate interests to determine exactly how they need to manipulate public opinion and the electorate to maintain their privilege. We have an opportunity with the A.E.H. to fight back!

We have the opportunity to forge a new socio-economic and political paradigm which is structured outside the confines of the dominant culture, and definitely serves the interests of our communities, our families, us. The only question is do we collectively possess the political will to carry the Agreement to End Hostilities (A.E.H.) to its logical and victorious conclusion?

But this is all theoretical, a discussion designed to promote and inspire a glimpse of one possible future and encourage us all to consider it. We have a chance to not only change our communities for the better, but to definitively turn public opinion in our favor in the protracted struggle to abolish the domestic torture units SHU prisoners are condemned to endure.

No matter where this discussion leads, the very foundation of the premise would not exist if not for the wisdom of the Pelican Bay D-Short Corridor Collective in enacting the Agreement to End Hostilities (A.E.H.). We all, and society as a whole, owe them their thanks. Think on these things. They are cause for great meditation. ●

For more info on the NCTT-COR-SHU or its work product go to NCTTCORSHU.org or contact:

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## AGREEMENT TO END HOSTILITIES

August 12, 2012

To whom it may concern and all California Prisoners:

Greetings from the entire PBSP-SHU Short Corridor Hunger Strike Representatives. We are hereby presenting this mutual agreement on behalf of all racial groups here in the PBSP-SHU Corridor. Wherein, we have arrived at a mutual agreement concerning the following points:

1. If we really want to bring about substantive meaningful changes to the CDCR system in a manner beneficial to all solid individuals, who have never been broken by CDCR's torture tactics intended to coerce one to become a state informant via debriefing, that now is the time for us to collectively seize this moment in time, and put an end to more than 20-30 years of hostilities between our racial groups.
2. Therefore, beginning on October 10, 2012, all hostilities between our racial groups... in SHU, Ad-Seg, General Population, and County Jails, will officially cease. This means that from this date on, all racial group hostilities need to be at an end... and if personal issues arise between individuals, people need to do all they can to exhaust all diplomatic means to settle such disputes; do not allow personal, individual issues to escalate into racial group issues!!
3. We also want to warn those in the General Population that IGI will continue to plant undercover Sensitive Needs Yard (SNY) debriefer "inmates" amongst the solid GP prisoners with orders from IGI to be informers, snitches, rats, and obstructionists, in order to attempt to disrupt and undermine our collective groups' mutual understanding on issues intended for our mutual causes [i.e., forcing CDCR to open up all GP main lines, and return to a rehabilitative-type system of meaningful programs/privileges, including lifer conjugal visits, etc. via peaceful protest activity/cooperation e.g., hunger strike, no labor, etc. etc.]. People need to be aware and vigilant to such tactics, and refuse to allow such IGI inmate snitches to create chaos and reignite hostilities amongst our racial groups. We can no longer play into IGI, ISU, OCS, and SSU's old manipulative divide and conquer tactics!!!

In conclusion, we must all hold strong to our mutual agreement from this point on and focus our time, attention, and energy on mutual causes beneficial to all of us [i.e., prisoners], and our best interests. We can no longer allow CDCR to use us against each other for their benefit!! Because the reality is that collectively, we are an empowered, mighty force, that can positively change this entire corrupt system into a system that actually benefits prisoners, and thereby, the public as a whole... and we simply cannot allow CDCR/CCPOA - Prison Guard's Union, IGI, ISU, OCS, and SSU, to continue to get away with their constant form of progressive oppression and warehousing of tens of thousands of prisoners, including the 14,000 (+) plus prisoners held in solitary confinement torture chambers [i.e. SHU/Ad-Seg Units], for decades!!!

We send our love and respects to all those of like mind and heart... onward in struggle and solidarity... ●

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[NOTE: All names and the statement must be verbatim when used & posted on any website or media, or non-media, publications.]

### Notice

Anyone given a 115 for possessing, reading, or distributing this historic document should report this, including details, to CPF. We are also interested to hear about your thoughts and experiences regarding The Agreement to End Hostilities. Do you feel a change? Let us know. (Unless you direct us otherwise, we will share what you tell us anonymously. See Statement of Confidentiality on last page.)

# PRISON FOCUS

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## EDITOR

Ed Mead

## ARTWORK APPRECIATION

A hearty thanks to our artists for this issue, who include Michael Russell, C. Landrum, Louis Brackett, Mr. Wolf, and Will Willhoite. We are always looking for fresh artwork by prisoners—art that has a political content or expresses some aspect of the prison experience (however it is interpreted by the artist).

## DONATIONS

If there are to be additional issues of *Prison Focus* published there will need to be more people contributing to the cost of production. Thanks to all of those who have given their time and money to make this issue possible.

If you have not contributed either stamps or money to California Prison Focus please do so soon. The only obstacle to printing this newspaper more often, and printing more pages, is the lack of money. We need your help.

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## Writing to CPF

For ease and efficiency, please follow these guidelines when writing to CPF:

- Write your complete name, address, prison ID number and date on the letter.
- Print legibly and be brief.
- Indicate on the envelope who the letter is for (i.e., Newsletter, etc.).
- Write and underline if an action is requested (Although this does not guarantee a response).
- Do not send unsolicited legal or medical documents.
- Enclosing a SASE will increase the likelihood of getting an answer.

In the event you are wondering if you've received all recent issues of *Prisoner Focus*, note that the previous five issues are:

- #44 Fall 2014 (this issue)
- #43 Summer 2014
- #41 Winter 2013
- #40 Summer 2013
- #39 Spring 2013

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## QUOTE BOX

"Hope...is the companion of power, and the mother of success; for who so hopes has within him the gift of miracles." - *Samuel Smiles*

"None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free." - *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

"... in America, we have achieved the Orwellian prediction - enslaved, the people have been programmed to love their bondage and are left to clutch only mirage-like images of freedom, its fables and fictions. The new slaves are linked together by vast electronic chains of television that imprison not their bodies but their minds. Their desires are programmed, their tastes manipulated, their values set for them." - *Gerry Spence, Freedom to Slavery*.

"Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding." - *Albert Einstein*

"It is always easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them." - *Alfred Adler*

"There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not starting." - *Buddha*

"Search for the truth is the noblest occupation of man; its publication is a duty." - *Anne Louise Germaine de Stael*

"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing." - *Albert Einstein*

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself." - *Leo Tolstoy*

"All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent." - *Thomas Jefferson*

"Never do anything against conscience even if the state demands it." - *Albert Einstein*

"An unconscious people, an indoctrinated people, a people fed only partisan information and opinion that confirm their own bias, a people made morbidly obese in mind and spirit by the junk food of propaganda, is less inclined to put up a fight, ask questions and be skeptical. That kind of orthodoxy can kill a democracy - or worse." - *Bill Moyers*

"The major western democracies are moving towards corporatism. Democracy has become a business plan, with a bottom line for every human activity, every dream, every decency, every hope. The main parliamentary parties are now devoted to the same economic policies - socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor - and the same foreign policy of servility to endless war. This is not democracy. It is to politics what McDonalds is to food." - *John Pilger*

"If the world is to be healed through human efforts, I am convinced it will be by ordinary people; people whose love for this life is even greater than their fear." - *Joanna Macy (born 1929)*

"The common sense of mankind demands that law shall not stop with the punishment of petty crimes by little people. It must also reach men who possess themselves of great power and make deliberative and concerted use of it to set in motion evils which leave no home in the world untouched." *Justice Robert Jackson - Nuremberg address*

"People who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction, and anyone who insists on remaining in a state of innocence long after that innocence is dead turns himself into a monster." - *James Baldwin (1924-1987), Fiction Writer, Essayist, Social Critic*

"The two greatest obstacles to democracy in the United States are, first, the widespread delusion among the poor that we have a democracy, and second, the chronic terror among the rich, lest we get it." - *Edward Dowling - [1941]*

"The issue today is the same as it has been throughout all history, whether man shall be allowed to govern himself or be ruled by a small elite." - *Thomas Jefferson*

For the first time after 3 and 1/2 years of preparing for, dealing with, and following up on the hunger strikes aimed at ending long term solitary confinement and the corrupt and unfair policies that lead to this form of systematic torture, I seem to be able to take a breath. A short one, but a breath nonetheless. We have accomplished so much in the past three years, and yet we have barely been able to celebrate our successes or think deeply about the next big strategy. The struggle continues, for sure, and there are significant problems that need immediate attention in the coming weeks, but the frantic pace of moving from major event to major event has slowed a little bit with the end of the most recent legislative session.

Unfortunately, the result was the failure of both the Ammiano and the Hancock bills. As noted last time, Assembly-member Tom Ammiano's bill sought, at first, a cap of 36 months on all SHU sentences based on gang or "Security Threat Group" affiliation, and later was amended to prohibit sending anyone to SHU unless they were responsible for specific, serious, violent acts. After passing through the Public Safety and Appropriations Committees, it failed on the floor on May 28th by a vote of 23 to 38, with 18 members not voting.

The Hancock bill was more extensive, as I described in previous columns and articles of *Prison Focus*. The bill moved slowly through the Senate Public Safety and Appropriations Committees, and we were able to gain several key improvements. For example, the new law included definitions of SHU, Security Threat Group, etc., and we requested such definitions not be put into the law. The bill was amended to state that to the extent those terms appeared in the law, they had the meaning as was already stipulated in the DOM and Title 15. The bill passed a floor vote of the Senate on 25 to 11 (4 not voting) on May 28. The bill was co-sponsored by the Senate leadership and appeared to have so much support that some members of the support coalition came to believe it was "greased to pass."

On the Assembly side, new amendments were added at each stage: the Assembly Public Safety and Appropriations Committees, and the final floor presentation. Unfortunately, the bill significantly weakened throughout the process. For example: A vital element of the bill was that all people in SHU would be evaluated by a professional psychologist every 180 days and those who showed any sign of mental illness would be taken out of SHU and could not be placed in any other SHU. This element disappeared by the end of the process. The four stage Step Down Program was to be capped at two years (no step longer than six months), but that, too, was nixed.

In the original version, the OIG (Office of Inspector General) had the ability to review gang validations based on debriefing testimony and even reverse those decisions if they were judged to be invalid. The new version only allowed OIG to bring such cases to the attention of the highest officials at CDCR. (This amendment was based on the argument that OIG was not an administrative agency and therefore cannot carry out administrative acts. It is merely an oversight agency.) The fact that CDCR must provide "promising programs" to those in SHU was clarified when it was stipulated that CDCR would regulate through Title 15 what that term meant.

An amendment was proposed to provide an "advocate" to help men defend themselves against STG validation, but this was downgraded to a "staff assistant." All versions of the bill included mandating the Step Down Program for all persons who are in SHU due to STG affiliation. No versions of the bill ended validation based on confidential informants.

The bill seemed to be settling down, and the changes suffered in the Assembly, while in the wrong direction, seemed small enough to deem the bill worthwhile.

However, at the last minute, it was apparent that the Governor's office made demands on what had to be removed from the bill in order for the Governor to sign it. The amount of red ink in the final redactions felt like a kick in the stomach. While it appeared that we were tweaking wording here and there up to that point, these final revisions removed whole entire paragraphs that appeared to be the meat of the bill.

By the end, the bill contained only a few positive elements. First, the bill declared that long term solitary confinement must be used as a last resort and for the minimum time only. That statement could be used to inform future lawsuits. In addition, the statistics gathering that was mandated remained, and the reports to be filed by the OIG would be helpful to build a case against the overuse and abuse of solitary confinement by providing accurate statistics of the same. Finally, the bill would have allowed monthly phone calls and up to ten photos per year. These are good things, but they seemed so insignificant compared to the real changes we had been discussing, negotiating and preparing for the past few months. It felt as if the rug was pulled out from underneath us.

CPF supported the coalition's decision to allow each group to support or oppose the bill as they saw fit, even as the coalition itself came out against the bill. The coalition agreed, however, that no one would lobby against the bill or

work to kill it.

In the end, after the final amendments were made, I sent a fax to Senator Hancock's office that condemned the last round of changes and asked her to withdraw the bill so that we could work on developing a much stronger piece of legislation and developing the support for it in the coming term. Our concern was that the bill, if not pulled back, might be voted down, which we felt was a worse option. I am very disappointed to be left with no legislative accomplishment at all. At least, however, the bill did not get voted down which leaves me hopeful that we can work with the new legislature in the coming year to get something meaningful passed.

As several members of CPF reflected on these events at our last meeting, we came to the conclusion that now more than ever we need public education on long term solitary confinement. We need to make sure the public knows how people end up in solitary and how long they remain there. We need to call this treatment by its true name: torture. We must create public awareness that long term SHU sentences in our Supermax prisons are immoral, inhumane, torturous, expensive, and ineffective, and that they cause mental illness and do nothing to rehabilitate or better prepare an individual for life back in general population or on the outside. With the public on our side, the legislature will not be able to turn us down. •

In solidarity,

Ron Ahnen

## KEEPING NON-VIOLENT WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA PRISONS

By Jessica Pishko

In 2011, under mounting pressure to decrease the prison population, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) created the Alternative Custody Program (ACP). It's a program designed to forge a path for low-level female inmates to return home (under electronic surveillance), care for their children, and reintegrate into their communities. The policy is currently the subject of a lawsuit claiming that it discriminates on the basis of sex, but in theory, it seems like a prison authority might have finally gotten something right.

That's what Cynthia thought when she appeared before the panel (called an Institution Classification Committee in CDCR lingo) after applying for ACP. After getting her paperwork straightened out and applying three times, she was told she was denied. She needed a teeth cleaning before her application could be processed.

Another woman was denied because of a computer error: Her dentistry was up to date, but a bureaucrat hadn't changed her status, so she remained behind bars.

In the offices of California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), letters (which you can read here) have piled high from women who want to return home to their families and repent for their crimes. But very few of the eligible inmates are given a real chance to take advantage of the opportunities that ACP promised. In one of the letters, an inmate named Anna wrote: "I know I've made mistakes in my life, but I'm ready for a change. Yes, I've been in and out of prison, but don't only look at my record, look at what I did and all my programs." Anna is currently in prison for identity fraud. She has not been released.

Michelle, who has four children at home, was denied ACP because of a mistake in classification—her crime was embezzlement, but it was mistakenly classified as "violent," rendering her ineligible. Misty Rojo, the program coordinator at CCWP, has received reports from women who were denied release because they had a pit bull as a pet and because they received medication for a treatable medical condition like high blood pressure.

Before the women are released under ACP, they're subject to a pre-release interview that includes sensitive questions about their histories of abuse and other mental anguish. The Justice Department has determined that at least half of all female inmates have been victims of physical or sexual abuse and one-third have been raped prior to incarceration, and appearing to harbor lingering psychological trauma from this abuse can prevent release. Even worse, the people asking these questions aren't licensed therapists, according to Rojo, and they intentionally ask questions that cause the women to break down into tears and then accuse the women of being "mentally unstable," which means they are not eligible for release.

That's what an inmate named Theresa claimed happened to her in a letter she wrote to CCWP explaining that she "was not prepared for what took place in my ACP classification hearing." Theresa met all of the criteria for ACP and had no disciplinary actions. She participated in programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and anger management. But in her hearing she was asked about her suicide attempts as a minor as well as her childhood and adult molestation and rape. She felt blindsided by the process and dejected at the result,

which was a denial of her ACP application.

These stories help to illustrate why out of the estimated 4,000 women eligible for ACP, only 420 have been released in the three years the program has been active. (The CDCR told me that it did not keep track of how many ACP petitions were denied.) California's prisons are overflowing—so why is the state trying to keep its women inmates behind bars?

Women are one of the fastest-growing segments of America's prison population, and more than half of these women—at least in California—are non-violent offenders. Women, along with gender-nonconforming inmates, are also some of the most vulnerable inside prison; rates of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence are higher among women than men. Even further, it's estimated that 75 percent of incarcerated women are the primary caretakers of their children, meaning that their imprisonment leaves a trail of disaster for their families.

In the policy debates over California's deplorable prison system, women's prisons have frequently fallen by the wayside. Overcrowding leads to a range of obvious problems, from overuse of solitary confinement and more frequent lockdowns (since there are too many inmates for the staff to control) to a lack of basic supplies and unsanitary conditions. But perhaps the most severe indirect consequence of overcrowding is poor medical care for the inmates. In December 2013, a court-appointed panel of medical experts issued an independent report condemning the conditions at CCWF citing a litany of institutional deficiencies.

More shockingly, an investigation this summer by the Center for Investigative Reporting discovered that nearly 150 female inmates were given unauthorized sterilizations between 2006 and 2010 at CCWF, CIW, and Valley State. A new bill just signed by Governor Brown last month supposedly outlaws the practice once and for all.

CCWF and CIW have been the target of scrutiny for poor medical care for nearly two decades, but instead of releasing female prisoners who are unlikely to pose harm—thus, potentially alleviating some of these issues—Governor Jerry Brown recently signed a contract worth \$9 million a year with GEO Group, the second-largest private prison contracting company, to take over a prison facility in McFarland, California that will house about 260 women (with an option to double its size). Press releases for the prison claim that the facility will boast services like job training, drug programs, and other therapeutic interventions, although there is no guarantee that transferred inmates will be able to continue any of their current programming.

### Michelle, who has four children at home, was denied ACP because of a mistake in classification—her crime was embezzlement, but it was mistakenly classified as "violent," rendering her ineligible.

But the move is not an auspicious one. While the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) doesn't have the best track record, it looks like a luxury hotel compared to GEO Group, which is the subject of hundreds of lawsuits for violence, mistreatment, and poor medical care in its facilities.

In 2010, the ACLU filed a lawsuit on behalf of an epileptic Texas man who died from an untreated seizure while in solitary confinement. GEO Group was called out for the abysmal conditions in a Mississippi juvenile facility by a federal judge, who held that the private company allowed "a cesspool of unconstitutional and inhuman acts and conditions to germinate." On top of concerns about privatized prisons, the latest outcry over the proposed McFarland facility crystallizes the ongoing problem of California's women's prisons, facilities plagued by scandals and problems that remain largely out of the public eye.

While the GEO contract might temporarily alleviate overcrowding, it doesn't solve the real problem, which would be to allow the release of non-violent offenders and maintain the programs that help these women reintegrate into their communities. (ACP, by the way, provides no assistance for women seeking employment or housing.)

The popularity of Orange Is the New Black has drawn attention to the plight of women in prison. When I talk with people about prisons, I often hear how difficult it is for these women to speak up about their treatment because they have felt so consistently ignored by prison authorities who operate in a system dominated by hyper-masculine principles. The CDCR, like all prison regimes, lacks accountability because their decisions are always shrouded under the guise of "public safety," something no politician seems bold enough to question.

Women inmates are less likely to riot or institute hunger strikes, which emboldens the CDCR to ignore them because they are less in the public eye—contrast, for example, the very public hunger strikes at Pelican Bay with the relative silence at CCWF. These women suffer from what is called a "double invisibility," hidden from the public's eyes because no one will take the time to listen. •

<http://www.vice.com/read/women-are-becoming-second-class-citizens-in-californias-prisons-114>



## CORCORAN REPORT #44

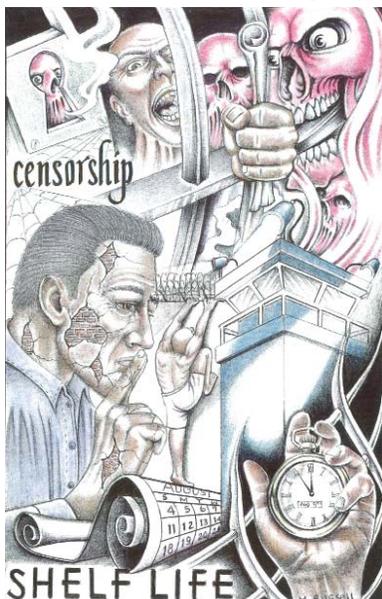
Summer/Fall 2014

This report is based on dozens of letters from the men in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at California State Prison at Corcoran (CSP-COR), and interviews with nine men in SHU in October 2014. This report reveals the fact that the conditions remain appalling, substandard medical care persists, and the retaliation and abuse by the guards has been amplified. Half hourly wellness checks and sleep deprivation are becoming increasingly problematic and unbearable. In addition, a slew of previously reported problems, most of which have worsened since the 2013 hunger strike, have not been resolved—especially related to retaliation and mistreatment. The extent of the post-hunger strike retaliation still exceeds the degree of retaliation that the men faced before the hunger strike. Even minimal gains and privileges resulting from the hunger strike are being denied and some apparently phased out. The neglect and abuse illustrate the uninterrupted pattern of human rights violations. CDCR practices stand in opposition to multiple sections of California State Law (Title 15), and they violate the United Nations Convention against Torture—an international treaty that aims to prevent torture and cruel, inhuman degrading treatment or punishment around the world.

The identities of the incarcerated individuals are withheld to protect the men against retaliatory consequences. Instead, a random letter (eg. Mr. C) is assigned each person cited in the report. For information specifically on the Step Down Program, please see a separate report on that topic in this issue (page 8).

### Medical negligence

The inadequacy of the physical and mental care at Corcoran remains dire. Last month, three individuals engaged in a hunger strike to demand humane health care treatment. Ultimately they received some of their demands, though again, they were only able to get some of their medical needs met by starving themselves. The lack of medical care runs the full gamut from life threatening illnesses to eye and dental care. In addition, prisoner reports indicate that decisions regarding medications are often arbitrary, retaliatory and/or based on financial concerns rather than need. Guards reportedly use



Shelf Life by Michael Russell

the threat of withholding or reduction of medications as a tool to control the men. The strategy is effective. Some men hesitate to file medical 602s due to fears of retaliation.

Mr. F has two lumps that he has discovered on his body approximately eight months ago. He has been trying to see a doctor, but the wait is long and often men will go to the medical area but never actually see a doctor. He had to file 602s (complaint forms) in order to finally see a doctor. He has since seen a doctor four times but has had no diagnostics or testing. On one follow-up visit, the doctor did not thoroughly examine him and did not find either of the lumps. However, he explained, since discovery, the lumps have gotten approximately three times bigger. One doctor told him to come back if they get bigger, but they have already done so. The doctors are essentially downplaying and ignoring the problem and risks. Mr. F is very concerned about his health.

Mr. A was involuntarily taken off his old pain medication and put on others that are ineffective. On the 1st of October he was pulled out of his cell and made to wait from 9:30 until 12:30 for his appointment. His request for different medication was denied. He returned on a different day hoping to get treated by a different person, and again, had to wait for several hours. He thinks the excessive waiting is a strategy to discourage the men from going to appointments. Men can then be penalized for refusing treatment. If treatment is refused, the men's medications can be curtailed or stopped. Mr. A stated that the only reason he had been able to receive an MRI in the past is because his niece on the outside advocated for him.

Mr. L has kidney problems which he believes are getting worse. He continually files sick calls. Sometimes he is taken to the medical area and is then made to wait all day. The line is always at least 15+ people. Eventually he is returned to his cell without having seen a doctor. He still is charged the five dollar co-pay for each sick call, however. He finally saw a doctor after about four sick calls. When the doctor found out he had been charged a co-pay multiple times yet never seen, he did not charge him for the last visit.

### Wellness Checks and Sleep Deprivation

Wellness Checks continue to be a serious and growing concern. For the last several months they have been conducted every half hour, 24 hours a day. We are receiving more and more complaints about the unremitting disturbance to sleep and peace of mind. In addition, as a result of the cell checks, guards are conducting more informal cell searches.

Though the men are told the checks are for suicide prevention, the guards usually just walk by and rarely look into the cells, unless to conduct a cell search. The checks involve the use of wand-like beepers which are about five or six inches long and have magnets at the end. The guards touch the wands to another magnet attached to the cell door, which sets off a loud beeper and makes a clamor as metal strikes metal. The men can hear the beeps and bangs on each of the 20 doors on their tier. Mr. F explained that the noise made by the metal on metal is unnecessary. The guards do not have to touch the door, but only need to move the wand close enough that the connections registers. As would be expected, the noise is especially disruptive at night. Guards are not supposed to use the wands that beep at night, but they do. And even when they do not, they still bang the wand on the doors and wake the men up. Some guards do make an effort to avoid the needless racket.

Despite the claim that wellness checks are a suicide directive, there is an unquestionable consensus among the men that they are contributing considerably to sleep deprivation and exacerbating mental health symptoms. Interviewees made statements such as, "Everyone on the hall is seriously sleep deprived", "The wellness checks and sleep deprivation are definitely creating agitation on the tier," and "The anxiety level is very high right now, more than I ever remember." Mr. G knows at least one person on his tier who is experiencing severe mental health effects from solitary confinement. His condition, Mr. G explained, has become noticeably worse since the Wellness Checks began. "He yells and bangs in his cell all the time." Another interviewee reported that there are at least two individuals on his tier who are exhibiting symptoms of mental illness which have been exacerbated since the wellness checks went into place. "One of the men never talks to anyone. He is completely un-engaged. He does go out to yard but does not move around while there, instead he just stands and stares off into space. Other people have tried to talk to him but he does not engage. He does not have a cellie. He has a TV but doesn't use it. Everyone is very concerned about him." In addition, conversations between the men are dampened because people are constantly trying to get sleep whenever they can. This adds to the men's sense of isolation.

The guards dislike this new cell check policy as well, because they do not want to do the rounds all throughout their shifts. The men surmise that the guards are conducting the checks aggressively with little if any disregard to sleep disturbance in order to make inmates file 602s on the issue, so that this practice can be terminated. The guards verbally encourage the men to file 602s. The harm of the wellness checks have proven to be great and the benefits appear to be minimal. As they are now conducted, these checks should

cease or be curtailed immediately.

Another factor interfering with sleep are the florescent lights which are on 24 hours a day. There are light switches in the cells but they are disabled.

### Special Needs Yard (SNY SHU)

The conditions in the SNY SHU are even more horrendous than in other SHU sections. The men note that the guards are more violent and physically abusive to them, including an increase in the use of pepper spray. Mr. L disclosed that tear gas is used on the SNY tier *daily*. "It happens without warning," he stated, "and spreads throughout the entire tier through the vents." The burning sensation in the eyes and nose, and the coughing last anywhere from a half hour up to an entire day at times. Consequently, the men led a non-violent protest action in August against the use of tear gas. All of them refused to come out of their cells. In response, the guards used so much tear gas that it reportedly overflowed into the guard areas and upset them as well.

Transfer to the SNY SHU is being used as a method of retaliation. Mr. T no longer submits 602s because he was transferred to the SNY SHU as retaliation for doing so. Mr. B believes he was moved to the SNY SHU as a retaliation measure for participating in the hunger strike. He was moved there immediately after the strike ended. He explained that the SNY SHU is meant for individuals who have debriefed or are on determinate SHU terms, waiting to be moved back to mainline. Mr. T had not debriefed however, and reportedly does not fit the other criteria for placement in the SNY SHU.

### Property Rights and Denials.

The men in the SHU only get one special purchase a year. Items are ordered from a prison issued catalog. Sometimes men order and pay for packages, only later to have CDCR stop the order, claiming ineligibility. These men do not receive their packages, yet their money is not returned.

### The Property Matrix

One of the concessions made by the Corcoran administration after the 2013 hunger strike was new property regulations that expanded property limits. For example, a person can now have 45 pictures instead of the previous limit of 15. However, the new DOM released on January 1, 2014 does not include these higher limits. Thus, the men are still only allowed 15 pictures, no beanies or gloves, and no small connectors for the TV video cables that keep the cables from kinking and breaking. They are not permitted extension cords even though the cells were designed to accommodate them. Simply put, none of the new regulations resulting from the hunger strike are being honored at Corcoran. Moreover, some items went up in price following the hunger strike, and never came back down.

Corcoran neglects their responsibility to provide adequate property to meet the basic needs of those in its custody, yet regularly deny modest property requests made by the men who are simply trying to take care of themselves. Administration reportedly provides only one towel and no pillows or pillowcases. Other material needs that are not met include appropriate clothing, cleaning supplies and hygiene items. Items previously approved by the warden, like shampoo, may be taken and never returned. In addition, when men are transferred between institutions, property takes at least four to six weeks to arrive, and what arrives is not complete.

Mr. M has bad hearing. His hearing aid went out during the interview and he had to use the phone without a working aid in his right ear. Because of his hearing aids, Mr. M cannot use the earbuds that are provided to indigent people and cannot hear his tv properly. A different kind of headphones would easily solve the problem, so he requested a treatment order from his audiologist, for more suitable headphones. His audiologist said they do not do this and told him to request this from the medical department. Medical staff reported that he would need a cell mate to be accommodated with new headphones.

### Cell Raids/Property Confiscation

The men continue to report that guards use cell raids as a retaliation measure. Prisoners explain that these raids are punitive and not related to guard or prisoner safety. Immediately following the 2013 hunger strike, cell raids began occurring once a month. They are less often now but still occur regularly, often with no warning or apparent cause. Mr. E reported that if a complaint is submitted, about the food for example, a raid will be forthcoming as retaliation. He reported that the guards come in 20 to 30 deep. "They make us come out in boxers and shower shoes and stand out there." Another explained, "Everyone on a tier is dragged to the yard. The guards then tear up everyone's cells." The men's already limited personal belongings are usually damaged or confiscated. Mr. A stated that the guards "throw your stuff around and stomp on your photos." Legitimately purchased commissary food is taken. TVs are often broken, or those that are already damaged may be confiscated because guards claim that they were altered. (They want everyone to order new TVs with only the headphone option. But since they can only order once a year, the men usually have a long time to wait, without a TV at all).

602s are only sometimes successful in recovering property. Mr. G described a search in 2013 by which he lost all of the property he had accumulated over the past 20 years. He filed a 602 to recover his property. The administration responded by offering him a TV, which was only one of many pieces of property seized. His additional appeals have been denied because “compensation was offered,” although the amount does not come close to the value of all the property he lost.

### 602s (formal complaints)

CDCR’s officially sanctioned method to resolve prison related issues begins with the submission of a 602 form. The men emphasize that the appeals process is largely ineffective and poses the risk of retaliation. Some prisoners do not file 602s anymore because it is simply a waste of time, while others are discouraged to do so because of potential retaliation. Mr. C for example, used to file 602s regularly. He suffered so much retaliation, (eg, TV destroyed, property requests denied, and a transfer to the SNY SHU) that he no longer does. Men often receive no response to their 602s. The forms are allegedly lost and the appeals “uniformly denied”. The issues routinely go unresolved.

Mr. F filed a 602 last month with the laundry department. He had only been issued one towel, and since there had been no laundry exchange in about four months, it had not been laundered. In response to his 602, he was informed that he needed to submit a 22 form (Inmate/Parolee Request for Interview, Item or Service), which he did. He received no response. He then submitted another appeal which was rejected. All he wanted was a clean towel. Among other things, this example illustrates how 602s can be a unnecessary waste of resources, primarily time and energy, when prisoners are forced to use 602s just to get there basic needs met.

### Law Library/Mail

Access to the law library is inadequate. Inmates only have access if they have pending litigation. Since there is no library staff member however, access is dependent on the staffing, which is inconsistent. Even when men do get to go to the library, they rarely get the full allotted four hours. Even those with priority litigation access, those with an upcoming court deadline within 30 days, are not provided the required access once per week.

So, there is no opportunity for cell study at Corcoran, as there is at Pelican Bay. Law Books are not permitted in the cells. An additional obstacle is the difficulty of getting copies made, especially within a reasonable amount of time. This barrier is problematic as legal proceedings consist of many strict deadlines. Men complain of lost and missing legal mail, an obvious obstruction of their legal rights. Regular mail, both incoming and outgoing, is impeded as well by unexplained delays. Mr. R received his mail from early August in early October.

### Yard

The miniscule amount of time the men are permitted to spend outside of their cells causes great physical, mental and emotional harm to the individuals in SHU at Corcoran and elsewhere. Despite the brutality of the existing policy of holding men in their cells for 23 hours a day, prison staff still regularly find reasons to cancel yard time. Their excuses range from too many people having visits and a shortage of staff to staff meetings and events. Yard is denied weekly, “sometimes for 1 day, sometimes for 3 days.”

The World Health Organization (WHO) states in their Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health: “Lack of physical activity has been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality (6%). It is estimated to be the main cause for approximately 21–25% of breast and colon cancers, 27% of diabetes and approximately 30% of ischemic heart disease.” They assert that physical inactivity levels has “major implications for the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the general health of the population worldwide” (<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/pa/en/>). CDCR claims they strive to rehabilitate the men and women in their custody, but their actions—forcing men to remain in 7x12-foot SHU cells for more than 23 hours a day—invalidates this claim. The lack of physical activity is just one more example of how CDCR policies contradict their proclaimed mission.



Artist unknown

### Cleanliness and general conditions

Guards are supposed to sweep the tiers every 2 weeks, but they often do not do so unless the men lodge complaints. Air circulation and cell temperature continue to cause a great deal of discomfort. There is a lack of air flow through the vents, particularly in the summer because the swamp coolers stop moving air when the water in them gets too hot. This problem is easily resolved by simply changing out the water in the swamp coolers, but the guards do not do not bother doing this, except perhaps in the staff areas. This is a grave concern not only because the summer heat can be suffocating, but also because of the high levels of Valley Fever in the air in the Corcoran area.

### Food

The quality of food at Corcoran continues to be substandard. The men are fed on paper trays which are so small that they cannot get their full issue of food. The food never returned to pre-hunger strike sized servings. The portions remain very small and entirely insufficient for meeting the nutritional needs of grown men. We are told that the men have not received hot dinners since before the hunger strike. Occasionally they receive lukewarm meals in the morning. Access to fruit is inconsistent. Sometimes the men go for weeks at a time with no fruit, and the only fruit they receive, when they do, are apples. They used to get oranges or grapefruits on occasion, but no longer. One interviewee who had participated in the strike reported that he has not returned to his pre-hunger strike weight. He weighed 176 lbs before hunger strike and has since plateaued at 152 lbs.

### COMPASS Surveys

Compass surveys were originally designed as assessment tools used for placement of incoming inmates. They are reportedly distributed to individuals who have a parole date in the next three years, along with a pamphlet that states the surveys are to determine program eligibility. The survey contains invasive questions not only about an individual’s behavior, but also about the people they know on the outside, within their communities. Questions include whether people in their communities use drugs, possess firearms, are gang members and so on. If an individual does not fill out the questionnaire, his is threatened with a series rules violation (115). Such violations have been issued in some cases. Despite the consequences, many men have refused to fill them out. A group 602 was filed in response to the COMPASS surveys, but as of the time of the interview there had been no response. (For more about COMPASS surveys see CPF Newspaper issue 43). •

## STARK FACTS OF GLOBAL GREED, A DISEASE AS CHALLENGING AS CLIMATE CHANGE

By Paul Buchheit

We seem helpless, both in the U.S. and around the world, to stop the incessant flow of wealth to an elitist group of people who are simply building on their existing riches. The increasing rate of their takeaway is the message derived from the Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook (GWD).

It’s already been made clear that the richest Americans have taken almost all the gains in U.S. wealth since the recession. But the unrelenting money grab is a global phenomenon. The GWD confirms just how bad it’s getting for the great majority of us.

### 1. U.S. -- Even the Upper Middle Class Is Losing

In just three years, from 2011 to 2014, the bottom half of Americans lost almost half of their share of the nation’s wealth, dropping from a 2.5% share to a 1.3% share (detail is here).

Most of the top half lost ground, too. The 36 million upper middle class households just above the median (6th, 7th, and 8th deciles) dropped from a 13.4% share to an 11.9% share. Much of their portion went to the richest one percent.

This is big money. With total U.S. wealth of \$84 trillion, the three-year change represents a transfer of wealth of over a trillion dollars from the bottom half of America to the richest 1%, and another trillion dollars from the upper middle class to the 1%.

### 2. U.S. -- In 3 Years, an Average of \$5 Million Went To Every Household in the 1%

A closer look at the numbers shows the frightening extremes. The bottom half of America, according to GWD, owned \$1.5 trillion in 2011. Now their wealth is down to \$1.1 trillion. Much of their wealth is in housing equity, which was depleted by the recession.

The richest Americans, on the other hand, took incomprehensible amounts of wealth from the rest of us, largely by being already rich, and by being heavily invested in the stock market. The following summary is based on

GWD figures and reliable estimates of the makeup of the richest one percent, and on the fact that almost all the nation’s wealth is in the form of private households and business assets:

- In 3 years the average household in the top 1% (just over a million households) increased its net worth by about \$4.5 million.
  - In 3 years the average household in the top .1% (just over 100,000 households) increased its net worth by about \$18 million.
  - In 3 years the average household in the top .01% (12,000 households) increased its net worth by about \$180 million.
  - In 3 years the average member of the Forbes 400 increased his/her net worth by about \$2 billion.
3. World -- 1% Wealth Grew from \$100 Trillion to \$127 Trillion in 3 Years

A stunning 95 percent of the world’s population lost a share of its wealth over the past three years. Almost all of the gain went to the world’s richest 1%.

Again, the gains seem almost incomprehensible. The world’s wealth grew from \$224 trillion to \$263 trillion in three years. The world’s richest 1%, who owned a little under \$100 trillion in 2011, now own almost \$127 trillion. For every dollar they possessed just three years ago, they now have a dollar and a quarter.

From New York and LA and San Francisco to London and Kenya and Indonesia, the rich are pushing suffering populations out of the way to acquire land and build luxury homes. The “winner-take-all” attitude is breaking down society in the U.S. and around the world.

There’s a lot more in the GWD, and it doesn’t get any prettier. It tells us what unregulated capitalism does to a society.

Paul Buchheit is a college teacher, and the editor and main author of *American Wars: Illusions and Realities*. •

## CENSORSHIP REGS TO SQUASH PRISONER POLITICAL SPEECH

On October 20, the CDC revised its proposed changes to Title 15 concerning so-called obscene materials issued in April 2014. The changes, as initially published, were vigorously resisted by those with loved ones inside, advocates and activists, who submitted hundreds public comments in opposition. The CDC subsequently said that the public had misunderstood its intent, and announced that the Department would be going back to the drawing board. In response to the recent revisions—which are non-substantive, despite CDC’s talk of going back to the drawing board—once again a resistance effort has been mounted. (The deadline for public comments, November 10, will have passed by the time this edition of the newsletter is disseminated.)

The revisions are basically in keeping the newly adopted STG regulations, which went into effect on October 17, 2014. They prohibit, at subdivisions 3006(c) and 3006(c)(19), “[w]ritten materials or photographs indicating an association with validated STG members or associates, as described in subsections 3378.2(b)(5)–(6).” This specifically includes:

- Any material or documents evidencing STG activity such as the membership or enemy lists, roll call lists, constitutions, organizational structures, codes, training material, etc., of specific STGs or addresses, names, identities of validated STG affiliates” [sic];
- “Individual or group photographs with STG connotations such as those which include insignia, certified symbols, or other validated STG affiliates.”

(See subsections 3378.2(b)(5)–(6) as revised October 20.) Meanwhile, subsection 3134(e) (Centralized List of Disapproved Publications) has been revised to replace the term “STG recruitment materials” with the phrase “STG written materials or photographs, as described in 3378.2(b)(5)–(6).”

Materials prohibited under the current Title 15, section 3006 (which is still in effect until Office of Administrative Law approves any changes) include “[p]lans for activities which violate the law, these regulations, or local procedures” (at 3006(c)(6), and “[m]aterial that is reasonably deemed to be a threat to legitimate penal interests” (at 3006(c)(C) (16) [emphasis added]). In contrast, subsection 3006(c)(19), as revised October 20, imposes no standard of reasonability. Thus, a person possesses contraband or “obscene” material if s/he innocently possesses photo of a loved one or friend who happens to be labeled a validated STG affiliate, for example. (See subsection 3378.2(b)(6) as revised October 20.) •

### The Prison Art Website is Gone

Due to medical problems I will not be able to continue the Prison Art website. I have been running the website since 1999 as a service to prisoners, and I do feel bad about closing it. If you want to sell the art of a loved one inside you should do a Google search for “prison art” so you can find other sites that sell this art.

Ed Mead



## PELICAN BAY REPORT

October 2014

This report is based on dozens of letters from men housed in the Pelican Bay SHU, as well as 14 interviews with men currently housed in SHU conducted by CPF representatives in July of this year. The information gathered from these men reveal that conditions at PB have not improved since the hunger strikes of 2013, or since our last report on the conditions of PB SHU, published in our 2014 Spring issue. The blatant abuse of human rights persists relentlessly. The identities of all prisoners are concealed by using a random letter (eg, Mr. A) to reduce the risk of staff retaliation. Information regarding the *Step Down Program* is presented in a separate report. (See page 8)

### Non-Behavior Based Gang Validation

As long as men can be placed in isolation indeterminately without having committed a violent act, or any act at all, the SHU will be full and the wheels of the Industrial Prison Complex will keep on turning. Men continue to share with us the circumstances of their non-behavior based gang validation. Mr. C, for example, reported that he was validated in the mid-1990s based on information received from an unidentified informant. He has not received any violation write-ups (115s) in the last fifteen years, except for those he acquired during the hunger strikes. Yet Mr. C remains locked up in the SHU indeterminately. He has been waiting for his parole hearing for fifteen years. Another individual reported that he had been written up for gang activity after having received drawings through the mail with alleged gang-related symbols. He is challenging the purported violation. We heard that there is a new regulation that requires CDCR to give inmates, upon request, a document showing the symbols that may be used towards gang validation.

### Subjective use of violation write-ups (115s) and the failed grievance procedure (602s)

Officers reportedly receive orders from the top to find some men guilty of violations, whether or not the officer believes a violation was committed. One guard, for example, stated to a prisoner challenging his 115, "I understand what you are saying, but I have to find you guilty." We received a similar report, in which case, upon the approval of a 602 appeal, the officer stated, "I'll get in trouble for this, but I'm going to find you not guilty." Officers have reportedly been directed to write up any jerking of handcuffs as battery.

### Withholding of medications & proper medical care

Medications have been drastically reduced for reasons unrelated to the men's health care needs. When orders come down from above, the reductions occur all at one time. This has been especially difficult for the older men, some of whom are in severe physical pain. One interviewee reported lack of care for a re-injured shoulder for which he was already receiving pain medication. Despite an increase in pain and discomfort, his previously approved dosage was reduced. We received one troubling report from an individual that his neighbors were told that they needed to debrief in order to receive pain medication.

Several men reported ongoing neglect in both eye and dental care. The medical requests of men who need eye glasses or already have glasses but need a stronger prescription, are regularly denied. One individual explained that if somebody has one good eye and one bad eye, he will be denied optometric care.

There are so many factors that contribute to the poor health of the men imprisoned in the SHU. Lack of fresh air and sun continues to have a toll on the physical and mental health of these men. Mr. G reported that he gets spots on his arms that look like bites. The doctor told him that it was from lack of sun. Mr. L pointed out to his interviewer, in a past visit, that after decades in the SHU he was losing the pigment in his dull, hazy blue eyes.

### Sleep deprivation and cell checks

The disturbance caused by regular cell checks is a growing problem. Cell checks create a lot of noise, making it very difficult to sleep, or even think. The huge chains on the pod doors make a loud noise every time they are opened and closed, which is unrelenting due to the frequency of cell checks, every half hour, all day and all night. In addition, the guards make excessive amounts of noise stomping up and down the stairs with their keys jangling. The noises are multiplied by six, as the men can hear the noises coming from each of the six pods in their block. Despite the increasing number of complaints of sleep deprivation, ear plugs are prohibited.

It is hardly disputed among specialists that lack of sleep has adverse health effects. Years of research demonstrate that sleep deprivation has both short and long term effects. Short term effects may include impaired judgment, mood stability and one's ability to learn and retain information. It also increases the risk of accidents and injury. Long term effects include damage to the cardiovascular, endocrine, immune, and/or nervous systems, leading to a host of health problems such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Lack of sleep impairs glucose tolerance which is a precursor to diabetes, a life threatening disease already rampant in California prisons. Cell checks are directly contributing to the already compromised health of the men warehoused in the SHU.

### Drug testing

Random drug testing has been occurring once a week or every two weeks. One man reported that for a month, he had been drug tested weekly. The guards state that the cells are picked randomly although some men believe this to be untrue. One individual referred to the drug testing as "bogus." He reported that he had received an erroneous serious rules violation (115) for being drunk, stating that he had not had alcohol in 15 years. One individual asked in exasperation, "There is money for this, but not for programming?!"

### Violation of Legal Rights

One man reported that he has an active case and that he has been allowed only 2 hours in the Law Library every 6 weeks. This is a violation of his legal rights to defend himself.

### Lack of Educational Opportunities

The R in CDCR stands for Rehabilitation. Yet, over and over men express frustration at not having access to rehabilitative opportunities, such as education. Despite CDCR neglecting their own mission and responsibility to provide rehabilitative opportunities, many of the men strive independently to better themselves. Many explain that they are unable to take correspondence courses because they cannot afford to do so. We received one report that the proctored exams, including math and reading, were stalled. Mr. P explained that he had requested the opportunity to take correspondence courses in late 2011, but there were continuous delays and excuses and ultimately, he never received permission to do so. Mr. Q had taken Coastline correspondence courses until CDCR "cut them out." He was working toward an AA degree in 2006/2007. He is still a registered student there but CDCR will not allow him to continue his studies. Mr. Q wants more education materials in general, but specifically in history and math. He expressed disappointment that the SDP journals are not educationally oriented.

Supposedly, the men in the SHU have the opportunity to attain, at minimum, their GED. Even this minimal education proves nearly impossible to obtain according to several of the men with whom we have spoken. One student explained that when they are in the prison-run educational program, students send their work to the teacher to be graded, but noted "you wait and wait and get no reply." Mr. W reported that he was in the GED program but then, for reasons unknown to us, he was required to take CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) again. At the time of the interview, Mr. W had already waited for over five months and had been unable to continue his studies. He is determined, however, to obtain an education, and looks forward to being able to do so when the prison makes that possible.

Education is an unquestionably critical element of rehabilitation. It opens the mind enabling one to see a different way of being. It is a critical stepping stone to making better decisions and building one's self confidence. The Division of Rehabilitative Programs, a branch of CDCR, states that its mission is to "help offenders leave prison with better job or career skills, education, life skills, and confidence, so they can succeed in their future despite past obstacles... evidence shows successful rehabilitation is good for communities in a multitude ways, including a significant reduction in crimi-

nal recidivism." CDCR and the Division of Rehabilitative Programs blatantly disregard their own mission statement. CDCR needs to take the R in their name seriously and provide real, effective, and timely educational opportunities for all men who need or desire it. As eloquently noted by Mutope Duguma (James Crawford), "If we fail to educate the people while we get their attention, that's our failure."

### Unsanitary Living Conditions

Little has changed regarding the appalling conditions at Pelican Bay. The men describe unsanitary conditions, worn out items such as clothing and mattresses, a faulty ventilation system, to name just a few. Trays continue to be "unsanitary and dirty with old food" visible on them. Showers are reportedly not cleaned regularly as is required by CDCR regulations, and even when they are cleaned, they are cleaned inadequately. Insufficient amounts of cleanser are provided for cleaning the pods, showers and yards. Mr. S said he does his own laundry because otherwise his clothes are returned dirty, damaged or not at all. Additionally, it is difficult to get replacement clothing, and when the men do succeed in procuring new (or used) items of clothing, they are often given the wrong size. It was reported at the time of the interview that there had been no hot water for the previous two days. Another common grievance we hear is about the apparently faulty ventilation system. Rather than cooling the cells, the vents had been feeding hot air into their cells causing great discomfort, especially for the men who are double celled. At other times the ventilation made the cells cold due to the condensation and lack of air movement.

Worn out, low quality mattresses are yet another problem. Mr. F reported that he had received a new mattress just two months earlier, but that it was already lumpy, all the air has gone out of it and he cannot sleep on it. Mr. D reported that despite the worn out state and poor quality of his old mattress, he preferred it to the new ones, which are even worse, he explained. The physical discomfort of sleeping on a slab of concrete on an inadequate mattress contributes to the sleep deprivation, back problems, and other associated ailments experienced by a large percentage of men in the SHU. Even the average barnyard animal receives more comfortable bedding than the men of Pelican Bay SHU.

### Claustrophobic conditions of Plexiglas lined-cells

Lexan cells are cells lined with Plexiglas, with about an inch of air space at the bottom of the walls. We understand that there is one pod in every block has lexan on the cells, though this information has not been verified. Though these cells are designed for mentally ill and/or suicidal inmates, they are being used to house non-mentally ill prisoners, either punitively or arbitrarily. One of the interviewees reported that half of the cells in which the Lexan had been removed, had since had the plexiglas put back on. Mr. X, who was being housed in a Lexan cell, explained that staff "pump in whatever temperature they have in mind, but there is no exiting air vent. So the air is stale." He said that over the summer his Lexan cell was extremely hot. However, the guards force in hot air in the summer and cold air in the winter. Mr. K reported that he does not complain about the temperature of his Lexan cell for two reasons: First, because he has been told by the guards that the forced air is not coming off, and second because he believes if he complains he would be the target of retaliation and probably moved to a different pod with even worse conditions. (This is a common threat made by the guards: "If you don't behave, we'll move you.") It is critical that where the Lexan is not necessary for its purpose, it should be removed from the cell.

### The use of stamps as donations

CPF received two reports through written correspondence that they were no longer able to include stamps in outgoing mail. One man's letter to the editor of The Rock was returned because he had enclosed 4 stamps as a donation. Staff attached a note when returning it that said, "can't purchase with stamps" even though it was just a donation. We find it incomprehensible that CDCR devotes time and energy to blocking a donation made to a small, but truthful and informative newsletter to prison while denying basic sanitary conditions and real educational opportunities to the men in SHU.

Recently CDCR attempted to enact a new regulation that would censor incoming publications. The public outcry against the unconstitutionality of this type of censorship forced CDCR to drop and reconsider the proposed regulation. Yet they seemed to have found a way around this move. Reports of stamps being disallowed as use for donations have only been received recently since the proposed censorship regulation was dropped.

### On a positive note, prisoner solidarity thrives

We spoke with one man who told us about how he tries to take care of others. If he knows somebody is feeling bad, he will send some food over. "Food," he stated, "[is what] I call it our 'emotional currency.'" In addition, he tries to educate those who need it about how to resolve conflict without violence, "to teach them it is okay to have emotions and express them—but emotions change and pass." •

**Prison Focus....  
Working to Extend  
Democracy to All**

# UPDATE AND SUPPLEMENTARY CORCORAN AND PELICAN BAY REPORT: STEPDOWN PROGRAM (SDP) & COMPAS

By Kim Rohrbach

[Note: The Tehachapi Report included in this same issue discusses what's been happening with the SDP at that institution. As noted therein, Tehachapi houses those placed in Steps 3 and 4 of the SDP—or what passes for Steps 3 and 4, as the author describes.]

This report is largely based on interviews conducted with about two-dozen individuals at Pelican Bay SHU and at Corcoran SHU (respectively, in July and early October 2014). It is also based on letters recently received from men in either SHU, as well as CDCR publications. Random numbers are used herein instead of peoples' names, to guard the anonymity of our sources.

On October 17, 2014, the new administrative rules instituting the SDP and the Security Threat Group (STG) rubric were approved by the Office of Administrative Law and went into effect. They will be published in the next printing of California Code of Regulations, Title 15. At this time, we have only cursorily reviewed the final approved rules. All references to "indefinite" SHU terms have been omitted: The word "administrative" is substituted for "indefinite." This change was vetted prior to the final October 17 hearing and, at any rate, is rhetorical rather than substantive. More noteworthy is the fact that §3023(b), as approved, does include the word "knowingly." (The final text reads, "Inmates and parolees shall not knowingly promote, further or assist any STG as defined in section 3000." "Knowingly" had been omitted from an earlier proposed version noticed by the CDC on June 20, 2014.)

Under the new rules, the minimum amount of time it will take a person initially placed in Step 1 to progress through Step 4 is four years. This assumes that the person qualifies for accelerated placement into Steps 2 and 3 following 180-day reviews. For many, no doubt, four years equals or exceeds their actual SHU term.

We understand that the CDC plans to continue with both the DRB (case-by-case or CBC) reviews and inactive reviews. However, the Department previously stated that CBC reviews will be conducted only for those validated prior to March 2013. And, although the Department has promised to honor existing dates for upcoming six-year reviews, the SDP regulations will replace the former six-year review process.

## Glacial Pace Of The Drb Reviews

Last August, Michael Stainer, Director of the CDC's Division of Adult Institutions, said that STG associates with the earliest validation dates would be prioritized for CBC reviews, although members would also be included for review on a sequential basis. At Pelican Bay, we are informed, the DRB is still in the process of conducting CBC reviews of those validated in the mid to late '80s. Meanwhile, according to "3," the DRB is simultaneously reviewing those deemed inactive, who receive priority. This leaves little time for others to receive reviews. "8" similarly observed that you only go to the DRB if the IGI (Internal Gang Investigation Unit) says you're inactive.

Information from Corcoran seems to corroborate what "3" and "8" said. "13" and "16" didn't expect to go before the DRB until their inactive reviews came up several years

henceforth. "15" reported that he hasn't seen anybody going to the DRB [for CBC reviews], but has seen people placed in Step 1 following their six-year inactive reviews.

Another man at Corcoran was placed in Step 5 following his inactive review, although he was kicked back to the SHU shortly thereafter. (He filed a 602 [grievance or administrative appeal] in response, since he wasn't provided with relevant documentation concerning the circumstances of his being returned to the SHU. His 602 was denied, and was denied at every level of review.)

Recent sightings of the DRB at Corcoran appear to be scant. One man, "20," said that he hadn't heard about the DRB coming around in a long time; i.e., since early this year. Another, "17," hadn't seen the DRB on his tier for over a year. "19" reported that they came in January, and at some point this spring, but had not been back since. (An IGI officer told him that the DRB wouldn't be back until December, because they were busy a Pelican Bay.) "20" indicated, on the other hand, that of those reviewed earlier in the year, a large percentage—up to 95%—were placed in Step 5 or went straight to the mainline. He personally knew of only two people who met with different outcomes.

## So-Called Self-Directed Journals (Workbooks) Mandated By SDP

Vis-à-vis the journals, one man at Pelican Bay exclaimed, "They can't use against you things you write to answer questions they made you answer. It's humanly impossible!" Supporters on the outside will appreciate the righteous indignation and sense of outrage implicit in his remark: Yet, leave it to the CDC to defy time and time again what seems humanly and humanely possible. Otherwise, this man was of the view that there's no harm in participating in the SDP, since "it ain't gonna hurt to do what we can to get out of here."

"3" at Pelican Bay characterized the journals as "real negative," in that one has to assume that he's a bad person to answer the questions contained in them. (Note: Some journals have titles such as "The Con Game," "Thinking Errors," "Criminal Lifestyles," and "Reviewing my Drug Use." These titles alone clearly convey negative assumptions about those asked to complete them.)

At both Pelican Bay and Corcoran, individuals overwhelming expressed a disinclination to participate in the journaling aspect of the SDP, and/or reported that others were against doing them or were not doing them. However, "12" at Pelican Bay, who initially refused Step 4 but was subsequently placed in Step 1, indirectly indicated an intent to complete the journals. Another man at Corcoran, not yet in SDP, said he wasn't opposed to doing them, adding that it seems "elementary" (or, that the journals seem "elementary"—elementary being the least castigating word we have heard in relation to the journals.)

Under the new rules (§3378.3(a)(3)), failure to participate in the SDP, "in and of itself, will not be cause to generate a Serious Rules Violation Report." This begs the question, how will staff interpret the phrase "in and of itself"? In any event, a person can be returned to a previous step for not participating, and will "be allowed to plateau" at Step 1 or Step 2 in "accordance with [his] conduct." This differs minimally from the stated policy under the Pilot Program initiated in October 2012. The Pilot Program provided that "an inmate electing to not participate and with no continued STG related behavior may choose to stay in Step 2 indefinitely and the required ICC reviews will continue." Several men at Corcoran attempted to challenge the institution's practice, under the Pilot Program, of regressing those who refused to complete journals from Step 2 to Step 1. In their group appeal filed a few months ago, they argued, without success, that this was done in retaliation for not doing the journals and constituted an underground policy.

We heard from one man at Pelican Bay that a person refusing the SDP must expressly say so during his DRB review, or else consent will be presumed.

## Compas Assessment Protocols Still Not Being Followed

As reported in recent issues of this newsletter (#42 and #43), the purported purpose of the COMPAS Assessment is to further the development and implementation of "a plan to obtain additional rehabilitation and treatment services for prison inmates and parolees." The 2007 Public Safety and Offender Rehabilitation Service Act (PSORSA) requires the CDC to do develop and implement such a plan. PSORSA further mandates that the "data" collected by the CDC through assessments "shall be used to place inmates in programs that will aid in their reentry to society and that will most likely reduce the inmate's chances of reoffending" [emphasis added].

Based on what our sources have said, it appears that those with parole dates are prioritized where it comes to completing assessments (although not all men with parole dates have been asked to complete them, and although multiple COMPAS Assessments were distributed to one man who has no a parole date). We have thus far seen no evidence to date that any person, subsequent to completing a COMPAS Assessment, has been placed in any program that will "aid in their reentry to society."

The questions on the COMPAS Assessment ask not only

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change,



I am changing the things I cannot accept.

about the person who's responding, but also ask about that person's friends, acquaintances and family members—whether on the inside or outside. They include questions regarding past or present illicit drug use, gang involvement, arrests, and so forth. Meanwhile, the CDC has acknowledged that any "data" gathered through the assessments is going into peoples' C-files (central files). Given this circumstance, we see no reason why a person who completes a COMPAS Assessment can't become an unwitting confidential informant against himself or others.

Title 15, §3378.3(a)(5), as approved on October 17, provides, "Information gleaned through inmate participation in program activities is not intended to be used to validate an inmate, initiate an investigation into STG related behavior, or identify/corroborate the involvement of other STG participants." Suffice to say, however, that the phrase "not intended to be" is a far cry from "shall not be." And, this weak assurance aside, §3378.3(a)(5) moreover states that "information specifically intended to convey to staff the occurrence of past, present, or future STG threats of violence or disruption may be evaluated to maintain institutional and public safety." It does not specify how staff will arrive at such subjective determinations.

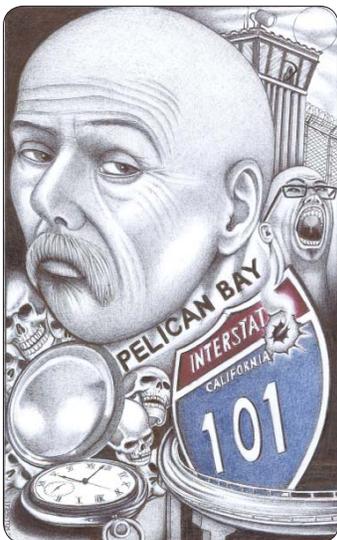
The COMPAS Assessment, as advertised by the CDC, is said to involve a face-to-face interview conducted by a trained person, who enters a respondent's information into computer. We continue to invariably hear from men at Pelican Bay and Corcoran, however, that this protocol isn't being followed. Instead, paper fill-in-the-dot-style surveys are being distributed to individuals, without any explanation. In addition, we continue to hear that people who refuse to fill out the surveys are being threatened with 115s (Serious Rules Violation Reports) and/or are actually receiving them.

## Different Privileges For Same Classification Groups?

As "22" pointed out to us in a letter written in Spring 2014, §3044(c)(5) of Title 15 specifies, "No inmate or group of inmates shall be granted privileges not equally available to other inmates of the same custody classification and assignment who would otherwise be eligible for the same privileges." This language is unchanged under the new rules. "22" additionally noted in his letter that those in the SHU generally share the same custody classification [and assignment]; i.e., they are placed in Workgroup D-2 pursuant to §§3043.4(b) and/or 3044(b)(7). Thus, he continued, the provisions of the SDP are inconsistent/incompatible with §3044(c)(5), in that they afford different privileges to persons who share the same custody classification and assignment.

§3044(b)(7) has been amended effective October 17 and now states, "An inmate in ASU [Administrative Segregation Unit], SHU, or PSU [Psychiatric Services Unit], serving an administrative or determinate SHU term, who is deemed a program failure as defined in section 3000, may be assigned Work Group D-2 by a classification committee." Previously, Work Group D-2 included those validated as prison gang members or affiliates. (The term "prison gang," of course, has been eliminated in the new rules, and is replaced with the term "Security Threat Group.") §3043.4(b) has been amended to read, "An inmate who is placed in SHU, PSU, or ASU for misconduct described in subsection (c) [e.g., murder or attempted murder, manslaughter, assault or battery causing serious bodily injury, assault or battery on a peace officer resulting in bodily injury, possession or manufacture of a deadly weapon] or upon validation as a STG-I is ineligible to earn credits pursuant to Penal Code section 2933 or 2933.05 during the time he or she is in the SHU, PSU, or ASU for that misconduct." What is not clear from the new rules is what the default classification/assignment will be for persons serving SHU terms who are validated as STG-I or STG-II associates or members, whether or not they've been placed in the SDP.

We by no means begrudge any individual for receiving so-called privileges under the SDP that s/he is not otherwise able to receive. Yet, the issue raised by "22" points to the ineptitude of the CDC. ●



Labeled by Michael Russell

# TEHACHAPI REPORT

By Marilyn McMahon

California Prison Focus plans to visit Tehachapi (CCI) as soon as we have the resources to do so. In the meantime, we are tracking conditions there via letters from inside. This report is based on correspondence from two dozen prisoners in Tehachapi SHU. As in our standard practice, because we do not have everyone's permission to publish their names, we maintain our sources' anonymity. Arbitrary letters designate individuals.

## Welcome to Tehachapi

The conditions for some new arrivals in the SHU were horrific. In June we heard from one man ("B") who was housed in a disciplinary management cell. These have no furniture and no electrical outlets. Their occupants get no access to the law library or to CDCR-22 forms (the beginning of the request or complaint process). "B" had been in that cell over five weeks when he wrote to CPF. For the first day and a half he had a mattress that reeked of urine and the cell smelled of excrement and urine. He was given no cleaning supplies. He stood up for the entire day and a half. He did not receive his religious diet for the first week.

Reportedly, others new to the unit were housed in these management cells for three to four days without even a mattress, sheets, blankets, soap, or toilet paper. This means men are sleeping on the bare concrete floor and have no ability to clean themselves properly.

After prisoner "E" arrived, he received no envelopes or pen for nine days. He could not even fill out a health care form. His cell was covered in "soot" and he lacked scrub pads and cleanser to clean it, getting only liquid disinfectant. It took 13 days to receive clean underwear, and then what he got was very worn and not the right size. His mattress was short—"shoulder length"—and he got no pillow. His first exchange of linens was after 19 days. Overall, he found the move from PBSP to CCI to be "a huge step backwards."

## Step Down Program

Tehachapi SHU is home to steps 3 and 4 of the Step Down Program—or what passes for steps 3 and 4, as this report will describe. The SDP is allegedly designed to transition prisoners out of gang activity (if any) and prepare them for general population. Yet men have been moved to Tehachapi for months and nominally placed into these steps, only to find that it is SHU as usual—or worse. As they progress in the SDP, they should be allowed to walk to showers unescorted, participate in educational programs or groups, spend yard time with others, eat outside their cells with others, and spend time in a dayroom. The reality is that the prison was sorely unprepared for them and has provided none to little of this programming.

In July, prisoner "A" reported that step 3 and 4 participants were spending virtually no time out of cell, and no programming was in place. They were getting yard time in cages and only one day a week, for one 5-hour block. After being at Tehachapi for six months, "we still find ourselves working to get what comes with these programs." He is "thankful that change is coming, but it ain't nothing nice having to be one of the first participants to programs that are still working out the many kinks." He noted that the promised phone calls and extra package had been granted.

Almost twenty other prisoners echoed his assessment that there was little sign of the steps operating. They detailed what was missing. There was no unconfined movement, no dayroom time allowed, yard was limited to once a week at most, and no meaningful educational programs were in place. In sum, "we are going along with what is required of us...and...we are receiving no beneficial treatment. It is like we are being

punished for participating."

Letter writer "C" described the conditions for SDP prisoners at Tehachapi as "completely dysfunctional"—in short, "a mess." He found the conditions there harsher than those in PBSP SHU, from where he was transferred. Given that prisoners are allowed no social interaction or freedom to show that they are not engaging in gang activity, he believes steps 3 and 4 have nothing to do with discontinuing gang activity, but are simply a matter of punishment and control.

Slowly, minimally, changes occurred. In late July, SDP participants were permitted to walk to showers unescorted. In early August, group yard started—but for only four men, three "northern Mexicans" and later, one "southern."

One SDP participant ("D") wrote with a somewhat different story. He reported that "so far we are getting all the privileges in accordance with the SDP memo, such as phone calls (4), packages (2) plus the annual [package]. There are hitches but mostly from the vendors." As of early September, though, he said that there were still only four men getting group yard. There were men unable to get into groups like NA or AA for lack of space or facilitators, and the dayroom was still just an unrealized promise.

"D" had a positive view of the widely detested journals. He found them to fit the general purpose and "not invasive" as others have reported. He related that some men are graduating from step 4 and being transferred, though the transfer process has taken months. Despite the delays, this progress is very good news. It is the first verification that California Prison Focus has received that SDP participants are progressing through step 4 and being released from the SHU to general population.

However, "D" echoes a suspicion others have voiced—namely, "we still need unbiased oversight 'cause I feel in time—more specifically after the courts are done, CDCR won't be so gracious." And "E" suspects that CDCR is using the SDP policies only to remove those men from PBSP SHU covered by the class action lawsuit.

Despite the slight progress made in the SDP during the summer at Tehachapi, in early October correspondent "C" still reported only four prisoners going to group yard. There were two new developments: first, some group meals were occurring—but only "one cell at a time," which must mean that cellies were eating together, not exactly something new. Second, those in the SDP were being allowed to walk to showers unescorted, but only once a week. All in all, said "C", "nothing that resembles a step down program is functioning here, nor can it be for quite some time, because...Tehachapi SHU will have to go through a major overhaul and retro-fitting to be able to secure both prisoners and guards."

"C" and "G" assert that the SHUs at Pelican Bay and Corcoran "are making big strides in lining themselves up with the Title 15 matrix, standardized SHU and SDP policies," but not Tehachapi. In agreement, "E" also found his move from PBSP to Tehachapi to be "a huge step backwards."

## Health Concerns

There were many health-related concerns. Cleanliness was near the top of the list. Prisoners reported that the yard was "filthy," covered in dust and trash, and with algae in the toilets. The showers were described as "dirty" and simply "horrendous." Prisoner "C" explains that the guards don't clean the showers, yet won't let prisoners to do it either. Ironically, "F" observes that guards regularly clean the gun tower and their own office. However, "F" indicates that prisoners are allowed to clean them sometimes.

Most tiers are "dirty and dusty" at best. Resident "F" reported that numerous broken sewage pipes flood the tiers with human-waste-tainted water, making the whole block "smell like a sewer." The puddles, which are not mopped up, attract bugs.

Many prisoners criticized the lack of health care without providing details.

"G" and "C" are concerned about the water. Staff refuse to drink the tap water, which leaves hard white deposits on sinks and cups or bowls. Of course, no other drinking water is provided to prisoners.

These same two individuals report that, though they had active medical chronos [established orders] at their previous prisons for pain medication, Dr. Tate at Tehachapi refuses to prescribe these needed medicines. Consequently, both men are unable to sleep through the night and are prevented from doing all of their usual daily activities. "C" knows of many others who have the same experience.

There does seem to be one improvement for SHU residents' sleep. In June we heard that the wands that were touched to sensors on the wall—to register that a guard had done the half-hourly check—emitted a screeching beep, whose volume prisoner "F" compared to pushing the test button on a smoke detector. He wrote that the results were widespread sleep interruption, and foul moods among prisoners and staff. Since then, we have not received further reports of these noisy disruptions, so it appears that the prison has remedied the situation.

## Staff misconduct

Several letters alleged pervasive use of excessive force by guards. "B" believes staff at CCI punish prisoners for claiming their legal rights and reporting CDCR abuse and corrup-

tion. "F" alleges that even verbal disrespect triggers the pepper spraying of a cell, and that assaults are common in all the blocks of the SHU. He suggests that the brutality started after an officer was killed in 2008.

"F" states that Ad Seg is filled with prisoners who were assaulted by staff and then charged with assaulting staff. "Most victims of these assaults are initially held uncommunicado in pods where staff intentionally dog them and isolate them as much as possible. Prisoners with injuries are hidden and denied medical attention."

Beyond this, many of these prisoners are denied food for days at a time. "F" writes, "Staff go to their cell and say, 'You refuse your tray? Okay.' The prisoner usually says, 'No, I want my tray!' and [the officer replies], 'Okay, you refuse your tray!'" This man says he has personally witnessed this scenario three times and heard of it dozens of times.

## Prisoner "C" explains that the guards don't clean the showers, yet won't let prisoners to do it either.

The serious rules violations (115s) for alleged assaults are nearly identical, according to "F". "The prisoner is always cuffed and under escort. The guards claim he attempted to kick them. They then deploy their batons and pepper spray," yelling "stop resisting! stop resisting!" as the prisoner lies balled up defensively and cuffed behind his back. The officer then reports that force was deployed "for my safety." Other guards' reports corroborate the first guard's claim, alleging the prisoner was "combative" or "non-compliant." The prisoner's injuries are either ignored or explained as accidental. If the prisoner complains, he is charged with assaulting an officer. Usually the guard even explicitly threatens, "If you snitch, we'll charge you."

[As "F" noted, and California Prison Focus is well aware, this whole scenario is practiced far beyond Tehachapi, at other CDCR facilities and also in some county jails.]

An attitude of lawlessness pervades the ranks of Tehachapi's staff according to our interviewees. When prisoners first arrive at the prison, guards express this attitude, "letting us know they don't give a damn about Sacramento, 602s or the courts." According to "F," staff stop the vast majority of complaints from being successfully filed. Most of the prison's administrators ignore complaints and back the officers completely.

## Mail, Clothing, Linen, and Visiting Problems

Many prisoners complained of mail, both incoming and outgoing, being delayed, and sometimes "lost." Eleven weeks after arrival at Tehachapi, "C" was still waiting for his personal mail—even though it arrived on the same bus as he did.

Nearly all of our sources said that allotments of clothing and linens are deficient. One letter spelled out the problem, comparing what rules and regulations require the men to be issued against what they actually receive. Here's a partial tally:

required	issued
6 pairs of socks	1 pair of socks
4 pair of boxers	1 pair of boxers
4 T-shirts	1 T-shirt
4 sheets	2 sheets
2 blankets	2 blankets
1 pillow	no pillow
2 pillow cases	1 pillow case
3 towels	1 towel
2 floor rags	1 floor rag

Laundry exchange happens irregularly and, like the original allotment, delivers clothing of random sizes that is often ragged and dirty-looking. "C" described how he was issued a T-shirt and boxers that were four sizes too small upon arrival at Tehachapi.

Re-packaging of products in prisoners' packages or from the canteen elicited complaints from multiple prisoners. In one account, the food arrives smelling and tasting like soap or deodorant. Similarly, the canteen food items are re-packaged, and "E" writes that this causes loss of some of the toothpaste or cheese squeeze, etc.

Another area of concern is visits. To book a visit, the visitor must wait two to three hours on the phone. When finally able to speak with the booking person, the visitor may be told there are no vacancies. The visits are officially 60 minutes long. But according to "F," either visitors or prisoners are often brought to the visiting booth late so they do not get the full hour.

A couple of correspondents lamented the limited selection of TV channels and said that the signal was so weak that reception was frequently lost.

California Prison Focus calls on Warden Kim Holland to immediately start conforming her institution's practices to Title 15 and CDCR rules and policies. Warden Holland must provide Tehachapi residents with the property and privileges they are due and must get staff under control. In particular, we condemn and call for an immediate end to the excessive force by staff and the writing of fraudulent incident and serious rules violation reports (115s). •

## WELLNESS CHECK COMPLAINTS

We continue receive complaints about the 30 minute "wellness check" device that CDCR has installed and is using in SHUs and other solitary cells. In addition to filing 602 complaints, prisoners can write to the prisoners' attorneys in the Coleman mental health case. Letters need not be long but should be factual -- details about if and how the device is disturbing to the prisoners, such as effect on sleep, concentration, mood, etc. It is important that these attorneys hear from prisoners about how the device is impacting them.

The attorneys are:

Prison Law Office  
1917 5th Street  
Berkeley, CA 94710

Rosen, Bien, Galvan & Grunfeld  
315 Montgomery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94104

# LETTERS

## Letter On Re-Validation Discrimination

It has come to our attention that many inmates who are undergoing their six-year inactive review are being discriminated against. Specifically, those inmates who the I.G.I. (goons) target and choose to re-validate. According to the memorandum dated August 9th, 2013. Subject: Update and Information Sharing Related to the Ongoing STG Case by Case Review. This from the Director of Adult Institutions.

All validated members and associates undergoing their six-year inactive review will be referred to D.R.B. for a case by case review. "After the evaluation", however, administrators are choosing to refer only those inmates found inactive to D.R.B. Even providing those inmates with a D.R.B. review date while placing those inmates who are re-validated by I.G.I./O.C.S. in limbo.

When confronted, counselors are claiming it is their responsibility to refer an inactive inmate to D.R.B. However, when handling re-validated inmates the D.R.B. referral is not included in their procedures. Thus, administrators are ignoring the Director's instructions on how six-year inactive reviews are to be conducted.

It is also important to point out that the Director specifically states "Although inmates continue to be scheduled ... for their six-year inactive review, only conduct that occurred during the preceding four years will be considered and evaluated consistent with the new STG policy."

Basically, all those being revalidated must fall within the guidelines of the STG policy. This conclusion is further supported by D.R.B.'s stance that case by case reviews will only go up as far as March 1, 2013, as all validated after said date should fall in sync to new STG standards. We know that this is not the case. Many inmates are being revalidated as told by I.G.I. under the "old validation" process.

Therefore, it is imperative that inmates demand their due process rights are acknowledged and respected by voicing such discrimination to all involved. Even by utilizing the 602 appeal process when needed. The discrimination must stop!

*Jose Nunez, PBSP*

*[Ed's Note: We've received several complaints about the DBR and the re-validation process. It is not only slow as hell they are making it wrong too.]*

## Be Subordinate To Right Only

To my fellow oppressed New Afrikan, Brown, White and People of Color who are within the womb of the tomb of our modern day plantation. We should all be aware that the oppressor ruling class administration is very greedy. And to maintain their greed and control of our underclass they must constantly feed this greed and contempt for our underclass nation. This is true on the inside and out! This is because oppression breeds resistance and if their hatred isn't fed and nurtured into constant growth, they will be overcome by our have-not nation. But they do not realize that those who hold the true power under the title of "poor and oppressed." And without us there can be no industrial complex, colonies, prisons, factions and farmworkers which provides them with their bourgeois lifestyle.

This is the same within their prison. We were forced to prepare their meals, clean their prison yards, tend to their book keeping, wash their automobiles and now, have actually turned their wage paying slave duties within this neo-plantation into a sought for occupation. This has to be brought to the attention of the people that fit this description (ignorance) that with every duty we accept, serving chow meals or disinfecting the warden's toilet; it is taking from the people's strength and adding not only to the prisons industrial complex preservation but also to the oppressor's superiority complex. Not only must we begin to abandon the preservation of the prison, we must embrace our commonalities as victims of the short end of a class/race genocidal war and solidify as our class enemy is so determined to prohibit.

We have never been as in tune behind prison walls with those supporters on the outside of all different cultures who are willing to fight with us as we are right now. We as a whole have many aspects of the struggle in which we need/have to train in so that our effort won't be untied due to imperfections. It has been my/our experience that the most excellent strategies have always succumbed because of minor miscalculations. I have blood in my eyes but I am very aware that without it there can and will be no retrieving of justice from those who seek so desperately to drain it from our future completely. I address all who are of capable mind, body and spirit to take principled action against any and all forces who attempt to subject our enslaved populace to oppression and injustice with whatever tool their circumstances dictate. And I pledge to you that no matter where, or however far apart we find ourselves on bourgeois dominated soil, I will remain a constant reflection of our undying revolutionary spirit in mind, study and action....

Hearts focused, we are almost there!!!

*Moja upenda  
Justin Askari Grant*

# HUNGER STRIKE AT CORCORAN OVER MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE.

On Friday, September 26, 2014, three men who have been confined in the Special Housing Units (the SHU, aka solitary confinement) at Corcoran State Prison for several years began a week-long hunger strike to protest lack of adequate health care. As in all California prisons, the health care at Corcoran is so inadequate that it often puts prisoners in harm's way, and often results in life threatening situations. As in past hunger strikes, these men sacrificed their own, already compromised health in order to get the attention of the people who have the power to do something. In this case that included the warden, the CDCR administration and the medical receiver, who is appointed by the courts to oversee health care within California prisons. Each of the three hunger strikers are suffering from various health ailments, some potentially life endangering, such as poorly regulated diabetes. Two of the men were requesting to be moved to outside medical facilities for adequate medical care. But above all, these men made it clear that they were striking for all of the prisoners at Corcoran who suffer from illnesses or injuries and are not receiving the care they need, which is in violation of their human rights. The three men ended their hunger strike when the individual with the most urgent needs was moved to the Acute Care Hospital in Corcoran. Another of the men was eventually moved to an outside hospital, as needed. Thanks to the strength and commitment of the three protesters, along with the many letters and phone calls made by advocates on the outside, some of the men's demands were met, and public awareness was advanced. Of course we have a long, long way to go in our fight for all men and women in California prisons to receive acceptable levels of physical and mental health care, but each small win is encouraging and affirming.

## Following are some of the many actions that incarcerated individuals and their family or other advocates can take to make a difference:

### What the incarcerated individual can do:

- Make sure medical staff is accurately recording your complaints.
- File medical 602s if care is denied or inadequate.
- Keep copies of all records, documents and correspondence.
- Keep a medical diary that keeps track of dates that forms were submitted, dates of responses and description of all contact with any medical staff including names and titles, as well as details of the state of your health.
- Fill out a Medical Information Release Form or an Authorization of Release of Information, allowing a loved one or advocate access to your medical records.
- Write to the medical receiver and explain your situation. (see address below)
- When possible, find somebody on the outside willing to advocate for you.
- Educate friends and/or family on the outside.

### What advocates for incarcerated individuals can do:

- Write letters and make follow up calls to the warden and to the chief medical officer of your facility, the medical receiver, Clark Kelso, and CDCR Secretary Jeffrey Beard to make known the situation of the individual in need of medical care. (contact info below)
- Call the receiver's office directly.
- Keep copies of all documents and correspondence.
- Make sure you have been authorized by the individual for whom you are advocating, to receive information about medical issues, by having them fill out a Medical Information Release Form.
- For more critical information on how to advocate

for an incarcerated individual, acquire *Fighting For Our Rights: A Toolbox for Family Advocates of California Prisoners* published by Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. This important manual can be ordered through their website: [www.prisonerswithchildren.org](http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org)

- Attend public hearings.
- Go to social justice rallies and events.
- Become familiar with relevant organizations and what's happening within the movement.
- Get involved. Become active. Volunteer.
- Connect with other family members of incarcerated individuals or prisoner advocates.

### What anybody can do:

- Educate yourself.
- Educate those around you.
- Stay up on relevant current issues.
- Write or call policy makers and representatives.
- Get involved in advocacy for policy change.
- Be informed and Vote.

### Contact Information:

J. Clark Kelso, Receiver  
California Prison Health Care Receivership  
P.O. Box 588500  
Elk Grove, CA 95758  
(916) 691 - 1404

Jeffrey Beard, CDCR Secretary  
P.O. Box 942883  
Sacramento, CA 95811  
(916) 323-6001

### Sample Letter by Advocate:

(Using a pseudonym and made up scenario)  
August 20, 2014

J. Clark Kelso, Receiver  
California Prison Health Care Receivership  
P.O. Box 588500  
Elk Grove, CA 95758

Re: Inmate (Name and ID) pseudonym: John Smith.

Dear Mr. Kelso,

I am writing on behalf of my brother, John Smith.

John was diagnosed with throat cancer in June of 2007, 2 years before being incarcerated in 2009. He was treated at the Los Angeles Children's Hospital and his cancer went into remission until January 2014. His condition has worsened since that time.

I received a letter from my brother on August 16th, 2014. He stated that he is unable to eat and in a great deal of pain. He has lost 32 lbs. in three months. John put in a request to see a doctor on March 3rd when his symptoms began to accelerate. He did not receive a response and submitted another request on April 10th. Though his condition is worsening he has been unable to be seen and has received no treatment since he was re-diagnosed in January. He has been given Tylenol for his pain which has been completely ineffective. On May 15th John submitted a 602 in an attempt to get the medical care he needs. He was later informed that the 602 has never been received so he submitted another one on June 16th. I have included a copy of his 602 with this letter. Meanwhile his condition continues to decline, he has lost a great deal of strength and his pain has skyrocketed. John filled out the Authorization for Release of Information in May, authorizing the release of his medical information to me and I have requested a copy of his medical file, which I am still waiting for. I have also included a copy of the Authorization for Release of Information. •



# COURT ACCESS ALERT: OUTRAGEOUS "PILOT PROGRAM" MANDATING ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF §1983 PLEADINGS FOR THOSE AT CORCORAN AND PLEASANT VALLEY

By Kim Rohrbach

When we were at Corcoran in early October, one man reported that, according to information broadcast over the prison's institutional TV channel, the US District Court (Eastern District, Fresno Division) was no longer accepting paper filings in 42 USC §1983 lawsuits. All filings would have to be scanned and electronically submitted by staff, he informed us to our dismay. This has since been confirmed through a phone call placed to a clerk at the Eastern District, who e-mailed this writer the order issued by Chief Judge Morrison C. England on September 24, 2014, mandating the new procedure.

Judge England's order begins, "This Standing Order...describes a pilot program...whereby initial pleadings submitted by prisoners in civil rights cases involving conditions of confinement claims are electronically filed. As part of this pilot program, CDCR agrees to collaborate with the Court to include the following prison facility or facilities in the pilot program: **Corcoran and Pleasant Valley State Prisons**. This pilot program is designed to reduce the cost of processing court filings in civil rights cases brought by incarcerated Plaintiffs pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983."

Judge England says that the order does not apply to claims challenging "the fact or duration" of a person's confinement; it only applies to cases brought by incarcerated persons "who assert claims involving conditions of confinement, such as those brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983." Be that as it may, claims challenging "the fact or duration" of a person's confinement may fall within the purview of a lawsuit filed under §1983 (as when a person challenges his validation under § 1983). So, how does a person proceeding without an attorney know whether or not he is required to electronically file his §1983? (Those proceeding with an attorney needn't worry about England's order, as attorneys are generally required to electronically file under federal rules. But, incarcerated persons proceeding with an attorney are a minority.)

England further specifies that the order "only applies to initial filings by Plaintiffs which initial filings are defined as the complaint, an application to proceed in *forma pauperis* without prepayment of fees, or a motion seeking relief from this Standing Order or a motion for emergency relief." He further pronounces, "Complaints shall not exceed twenty-five (25) pages in length. Any exhibits attached to a complaint shall count toward the twenty-five page limit. ... In the event a Plaintiff moves the Court to file a complaint longer than twenty-five (25) pages, he or she must include the motion with the proposed complaint to Court and must demonstrate the grounds for the need to exceed the page limitation. Motions to proceed in *forma pauperis*, motions to increase the page limit and motions for emergency relief shall be no more than fifteen (15) pages in total length combined."

The problem inherent in relying on prison staff\* to timely and properly submit one's lawsuit *suing* prison staff will be obvious to most anyone reading this article. We can't tell you how many times we have heard of documents submitted in support of administrative grievances going missing; or, how many times we've heard of decisions on grievances being delayed, leaving a person with little to no time to appeal. To make matters worse, some of the most egregious cases of retaliation and abuse that we are aware of involve men who are active litigators proceeding in *forma pauperis* and without attorneys.

We are similarly uneasy about any "collaboration" between Corcoran and Pleasant Valley State Prisons and the Eastern District, Fresno Division, geared towards reducing the costs of processing court filings. What are the costs that will be reduced? In any given year, how many §1983 lawsuits do incarcerated persons at Corcoran or Pleasant Valley file in the first place? How will it save the court any significant amount of money to receive their filings electronically, rather than in paper? Their filings still need to be reviewed by a judge—assuming that they ever arrive at the court once submitted to prison staff. Moreover, England's order only appears to apply to *initial* filings (complaints), applications to waive fees (which are generally submitted as two-page forms) and motions for relief from his order. So, again, how does the new procedure result in any significant cost reduction to the court?

If Judge English wants to "reduce the cost of processing court filings in civil rights cases brought by incarcerated Plaintiffs pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983," then he would do best to join the ranks of those of us who seek to eliminate the types of abuses that lead to §1983 claims in the first place.

We encourage those of you who are incarcerated and are dealing with the new filing procedures at Corcoran or Pleasant Valley to write us. How are things are playing out on the ground? Who are the staff members you have to interact with in order to submit your filings? Who are the staff members who call the final shots as to whether or not your filing will be submitted? What are the outcomes you've met with?

\*Title 15, §3041.3(a) specifies, "Inmates shall not access

any computer outside of their authorized work, vocational, or educational assignment, or as needed for legal research on the Law Library Electronic Delivery System, except as authorized by the department's Information Security Officer (ISO). §3041.3(b) in relevant part states, "Inmates shall not access any computer connected to a local area network (LAN), except as approved by the ISO; nor shall inmates access any computer which has any type of direct, outside communication capability...."

## DREAMING OF TOOKIE

By Edward Garza

It was the talk of the prison yard. Not since the vote to change the three-strikes law were the black prisoners expressing such deep contemplations. I stayed up until midnight awaiting the outcome. Tookie Williams arrived to San Quentin's death row a young man. He departed a greying middle aged man. I emphasize the word "Man." He was one of the founding members of the Crips gang compliments of South Central, Compton, Watts. Over the television the news showed a single photograph of him as a slender youth yet to possess the full physique of a man, having an abundant afro, his fingers dancing arcs throwing gang signs for the camera lens. He was a mere child. When I awake the next day I heard the news, he's been executed by the state. He's written many children's books warning them to stay away from gangs and drugs. I suppose this was his way of trying to re-enter civilized society to the best of his ability, to be part of the simplistic, but they wanted no part of him and the only redemption they were willing to concede to him was a lethal injection. As long as you blindly graze with the herd, you'll live to a ripe old age, but if you stray, the system bares its fangs. If you happen to be poor, this society says you're poor because it's your fault. But let us turn back the time to Tookie's childhood in South Central Las Angeles and we see he never stood a chance. His last act as a man was to refuse his last meal, stating it was ludicrous to accept a meal from those about to take your life. The white man hired by the state, the death merchant, struggled to find a ripe vein. He jabbed nervously at the hard black tendons as the seconds ticked by pushing into eternity. Finally Tookie flexed his large muscled arm and showed him the way. It was said if he'd only bowed down and cried for mercy expressing remorse he might have been saved.

But he knew of the lynched and castrated who'd pleaded with the hooded night riders to no avail. America the ironic, murdered another of its truest sons. The Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger arrived to America to realize an epitomized dream propagated across the land. His grandfather was a member of the Nazi party in Austria. And Tookie Williams, was a descendant of African slaves brought to America shackled in the bowels of some slave ship. The Governor lived the American dream to its fullest and was showered wealth and accolades.

Segregation was still one of the strongest lawful institutions existing in America when Tookie was born. And so not so distant from that pale green gas chamber, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Nazi's grandson, signed the execution order to dispatch Tookie from the face of the earth, the reluctant Native Son, more true to America than the newly arrived governor. ●

## FAMILIES AND ADVOCATES CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION

### INTO MULTIPLE 2014 DEATHS AND SUICIDES AT CALIFORNIA INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN (CIW)

*Being in physical distress locked in a cell turns into a truly terrifying experience when you can hear the cops banter with each other about you being a "crybaby"...and "they'll get to it" when they have finished cutting it up with each other. It's especially terrifying when you are experiencing symptoms you don't understand & you have witnessed others calling for help only to learn that person didn't survive.*

—Sonja Marcus, formerly incarcerated woman,

Survived 18 years in prison  
On July 30, 2014 a woman committed suicide in the Solitary Housing Unit (SHU) of the California Institution for Women (CIW), in Corona. According to information gathered by the California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), there have been seven preventable deaths at CIW so far in 2014 and three attempted

suicides since July alone. None of these deaths have been made public by CIW or CDCR although they signify a state of crisis in the prison.

Prison officials have failed to inform bereaved family members of these deaths in a timely and respectful manner. Margie Kobashigawa, the mother of 30-year-old Alicia Thompson, who died of an alleged suicide on February 24, 2014 in the SHU, was ignored by prison staff. "Nobody from the prison would call me back, nobody would talk to me. I was planning to pick up my daughter's body and suddenly CIW was trying to cremate her again, and quickly. To me it's like they're trying to hide everything," said Margie. As she prepared her daughter for burial, she found no signs of hanging trauma to her body and has reason to believe her daughter died from some other type of violent force. On March 13, 2014 Shadae Schmidt, a 32-year-old African American woman, died in the CIW SHU. Shadae had a stroke in February 2014 and was prematurely returned to the SHU. She was given medication that made her sick but her requests for a change in prescription fell on deaf ears; and then she died.

CCWP received information regarding these two deaths from friends and family members, but other deaths, suicides and attempted suicides remain shrouded in mystery. The majority of people in the SHU have some type of mental health problem, which is exacerbated by solitary confinement. CCWP continues to hear reports that there is no medical staff to monitor people's vital signs and mental states when physical and mental health crises occur. People scream for help and get no response at all.

Since the closure of Valley State Women's Prison in January 2013, overcrowding at CIW has skyrocketed. Medical care has significantly deteriorated and there has been a dramatic increase in the population of the SHU and other disciplinary segregation units. Overcrowding has aggravated mental health issues causing an increase in the number of mentally disabled people in the SHU even though this is the worst place to put them.

### On July 30, 2014 a woman committed suicide in the Solitary Housing Unit (SHU) of the California Institution for Women (CIW),

In August 2014, in response to a court order, the CDCR released revised policies to reduce the number of people with mental health diagnoses in isolation. Policy changes are only useful if they are implemented. It is crucial for the CDCR to transfer all people with mental health issues out of the CIW SHU as soon as possible in accordance with the court order.

Despite decades of lawsuits to remedy prison health care and court orders to reduce prison overcrowding, the inhuman conditions inside CA women's prisons continue and have led to these tragic, violent and untimely deaths. In order to reverse the crisis at CIW, CCWP calls for the following immediate actions:

- Immediate transfer of all prisoners with mental health issues from the SHU and implementation of care programs.
- Increased healthcare staffing and care for people in the SHU.
- An independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding all deaths at CIW in 2014.
- Reduction of overcrowding through the implementation of existing release programs rather than transfers to other equally problematic prisons and jails.

Contact the individuals listed below with the 4 demands, by letter, or if able, by phone.

Sara Malone, Chief Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsman  
1515 S. Street, Room 124 S.  
Sacramento, CA 95811  
Tel: (916) 327-8467

Kimberly Hughes, Warden CIW  
16756 Chino Corona Rd  
Chino, CA 92880  
Tel: (909) 597-1771

Jay Virbel, Associate Director of Female Offender Programs & Services  
(916) 322-1627  
PO Box 942883  
Sacramento, CA 95811

Jeffrey Beard, CDCR Secretary  
(916) 323-6001  
PO Box 942883  
Sacramento, CA 95811

To learn more about conditions and issues inside of California's women's prisons, including the use of solitary confinement, subscribe to *The Fire Inside*; Newsletter of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, by writing to:

California Coalition for Women Prisoners  
1540 Market St., Suite 490  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
<http://womenprisoners.org> ●

# A NEW BEGINNING OR THE BEGINNING OF THE END: A QUESTION TO THE LEADERSHIP

By C. Landrum (footnotes by Ed Mead)

It is said that history repeats itself. There is some truth to be found within this statement. All existing matter, be it organic or inorganic, and social phenomenon alike, have a history of endless development, a process of becoming, being, and passing away and into something qualitatively new altogether.

But development does not, nor should it be misunderstood, as proceeding along a straight line. Linearism is a product of the human mind, a human construct, that fails to correspond with the external material world and the laws inherent within it that govern the direction and development of its endless transformation.

History, like every other existing thing in this world, develops not in a straight line, like a recording on a reel that repeats itself continually, but in a cyclical like ascendancy, with each cycle repeating itself qualitatively distinct from the previous one, or as V.I. Lenin described:

“A development that repeats, as it were, stages that have already been passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher basis (negation of negation), a development, so to speak, that proceeds in spirals, not in a straight line.”

At this particular stage in our struggle, we are coming full circle as history is once again repeating itself. This is a critical moment, and the life or death of our struggle is being decided by our response to the Security Threat Group and Step Down Program [S.T.G. and S.D.P. respectively] that we have allowed the state to impose upon us.

The fact that we are assisting the state to perpetuate its policy of social extermination under a new label directly reflects the deterioration of our collective unity and the resurgence of the vile individualism that has come to characterize the prison population of the last two decades.

If we are to take a correct measurement of our current situation and the trajectory we are now on, we must place the S.T.G. and S.D.P. within its proper historical context, and this requires that we once again revisit the *Castillo* case with an understanding of the 602 process and the function it serves.

The 602 process serves two main simultaneous functions: First, by seeking relief on an individual basis, it distracts and divides us from the issues that impact us as a group. Secondly, the administrative process is dragged out for so long and the petitioner is required to jump through so many hoops that eventually most petitioners grow exhausted and abandons all attempts at seeking relief from the violations committed by the state.

Embodied within this statement is the age-old strategy of “divide and conquer”, which the CDC has learned to employ against us with great efficiency. And everytime we utilize the 602 process individually as the only means of achieving transformation, like a ju-jitsu fighter we allow the state to turn our own individualism against ourselves as a means to deprive us of the unity and momentum necessary for waging a successful struggle. More important, this strategy is not limited to the 602 process alone, but is a common feature that permeates all interactions between the state and ourselves. This is inevitable being that the state’s apparatus of repression in all of its various forms—the judicial system, police, military, intelligence, etc., especially the prison system—is an inherently oppressive institution by design.

As most of us can recall, the *Castillo* case was a long, arduous legal battle that raged in the judiciary arena for some ten years in a noble effort to eliminate the state’s inhumane practice of “social extermination”, i.e., *keeping us alive as living and breathing empty vessels without the social intercourse necessary for one to develop identity* (emphasis added by Ed). For reasons left unexamined we failed to complement this legal battle with any other forms of direct resistance, while IGI fascists and the CDC bureaucracy remained ada-

manly consistent throughout in its own efforts to keep us divided. Despite the absence of subjective conditions (a politically conscious mass of prisoners), the state recognized that nonetheless the objective conditions were conducive for large-scale resistance. And once again, remaining true to form, we allowed them to exploit our own self-interests in a successful effort to prevent this potential from materializing. When, as Anthony Arriaga pointed out in his recent article:

The six year “active/inactive gang status review” was created and implemented. A policy requiring a validated inmate to remain free of any and all gang related activity and association “for no period less than six years in order to reconsider (but rarely granted) general population release....

All hope for a unified resistance dissipated and “every-man-for-himself” was now consolidated and set in stone, with the initial release of a relatively insignificant number of validated SHU prisoners back into general population, we cultivated and insured our own further atomization from each other as we pursued our search for escape on an individual basis by way of the six year inactive review policy.

Despite the fact that group oppression necessitates group resistance, the state has learned long ago that we are easily defeated when we are tossed a bone that appeals to our self-interest. The state accomplishes this with little effort, sadly, when it sold us on a false hope that we could all obtain inactive status as individuals.

To reiterate, Joseph Dzhuchashvili stated that dialectical and historical materialism teaches us that: “...the process of development should not be understood as a movement in a circle, not as a simple repetition of what has already occurred, but as an onward and upward movement, as a transition from ... the simple to the complex.”



Louis Brackett “corrected and rehabilitated”

It has been roughly fifteen years since the *Castillo* case settled, and the empty promise of the six year inactive review policy was implemented—and here we are coming full circle. Like in the *Castillo* case, the state has initiated its imposition of the S.T.G. and S.D.P., pacifying potential resistance with the release of SHU prisoners back into the general population, although this time around the numbers have been significantly greater and have included elements from amongst the “leadership” thus creating an externally superficial illusion of victory.

Throughout the hunger strikes we paid an extraordinary amount of lip service to the necessity of collective unity, and yet when the state employed its own counter-tactics to create fissures and divisions amongst us once again, we assisted them in their endeavor. Without any consideration for long term consequences, or the immediate obvious fact that our current circumstances, or the immediately obvious fact that our current circumstances are far more dire now that when we first initiated our strikes, we could not trip over each other fast enough to sign release forms acknowledging guilt of past association, or membership, “post facto” in our scramble to get out. This fidelity to philosophic pragmatism and its application will come back to bite us.

Within the last twelve months the state claims to have released seventy percent of those previously held within the toms of the Security Housing Unit (SHU), and yet the number of those in isolation have remained consistently steady.

Philosophically, idealism is a still a poisonous weed that continues to distort the mind of many. In spite of those who are proclaiming victory, reality is not determined by wishful thinking.

The demand to eliminate collective punishment was not only not achieved, but true to its fascist inclinations the CDC retaliated by making it policy and thus giving pseudo-legitimization to its practice, via the new STG with the SDP, the IGI has extended its reach even further. Anyone having belonged to any group, or street gang (past or present), or



Art by Will Willhoite

possessing any political opinions reflecting a class position other than their own, can be isolated indefinitely without any connection to a particular prison gang. Our vulnerability has increased in direct proportion to the increase of state power.

Like the six year inactive review policy, the number of those now being released under the S.T.G. and S.D.P. will decrease dramatically and ultimately taper off to a trickle in correlation to our own struggle losing steam with the waning of outside support. If we are to inject life back into our struggle, we must absolutely understand the S.T.G. and S.D.P. for what it is, i.e., another means to perpetuate indefinite isolation under a new label. We have not achieved our goal of ending social-extermination. This is not a spiteful, nor rhetorical question, but we must sincerely ask ourselves—“is this truly a victory, or a failure being sold as a victory by those reactionary elements amongst us?”

With each state in the historical development of our struggle, changes in policy alone have only amounted to a change in label, allowing the state to maintain its trajectory without interruption. If we are to eliminate social-extermination, “abstract” changes in policy must be facilitated with “concrete” transformations. We must transform the various Ad Seg and SHU facilities from within, otherwise indefinite isolation will continue unabated and the state will manufacture a new label whenever circumstances necessitate, be in “program failure”, “validation”, or the latest gem from the CDC’s book of labels “S.T.G. and S.D.P.”, etc.

If we are to greatly reduce, or eliminate, their ability to permanently isolate us, we must struggle for the installation of two 4-man tables in each pod, phones, exercise bars (dip, pull up, push up combo) designed and fabricated by prisoners, cellies, Day Room time for social development and preservation of the individual’s identity. Social intercourse is a “human right” that needs to be established to facilitate these changes—both in policy and practice. To accomplish this, “limited association” must be our primary demand, and if collective unity is to be more than empty rhetoric, then we must likewise adjust our demands (which can be done without compromising the original five) and address the interests of those in G.P., such as weights, family visits, the question of prison labor and wages, etc. These are issues that concern all prisoners, S.N.Y.<sup>1</sup>, and solid alike, and therefore we should be appealing and accepting support from all corners of the prison system.

If we are to resuscitate life back into our struggle, we must adjust our tactics to meet the changing conditions. If there are any amongst the leadership or anyone politically conscious, who are still dedicated to our original goals, I believe we can achieve this with a small group of strikers consisting of 10, 15, maybe 20 “volunteers” willing to fast consecutively one at a time (or in pairs?) to the end. Each striker could initiate his fast with a new striker on standby joining in at 20-day intervals. And with leadership guidance and blessing, this could be complemented with a state with a statewide prisoner work-stoppage and halt of all movement.

Pre-written and recorded statements, interviews, photo, etc., of each “volunteer” could be provided to various media outlets, TV, radio, newspapers, internet, etc., prior to each striker initiating his fast, preventing the CDC from denying or sweeping deaths under the rug with minimal publicity.

This may seem drastic but have we not already lost life with each strike, while not accomplishing anything substantial? Nonetheless, I know this is a controversial issue with many sides and aspects to it and a proposal of this magnitude needs to be put on the table and discussed. And although the Comrade Ed and I are probably in more or less agreement with my analysis, we have gone back and forth on the issue of a smaller strike of dedicated “volunteers.” I believe that we have both made valid points, but we would encourage both the leadership and other potential volunteers for their contribution to this discussion. •



Art by C. Landrum

1. Ed’s Note: The so called “convict code” is dead. Prisoners killed it. All any of us remember of the code is that we don’t rat. Yes, S.N.Y. has rats, get over it. They are prisoners first, rats second. You leaders created the S.N.Y, now you need to eliminate the need for such facilities. We need a new code, an “all of us or none” code.

# PHSS OUTREACH REPORT

October 2014

**P**risoner Hunger Strike Solidarity (PHSS) coalition Outreach Committee has the goals of attending community events with exhibits and flyers, responding to invitations from schools and universities to contribute to classes, and most important, to invite Families and Friends of prisoners to join our group in activities to turn around this state's laws and get the word out to more tax payers in outlying communities. 'One county or district at a time' is a new motto for ending solitary confinement. Let's put this issue of abolishing solitary confinement on our ballots, in Letters to Editors, on placards for demonstrations, radio talk shows, tweets, and more.

Prisoners are always leading the way in ideas and actions, and they report on conditions that the public needs to know about. They draw our attention to ways we can assist the Legislature to change draconian measures that have slipped into state law. Through the fine work of investigators who regularly visit women prisoners, members of PHSS have been able to stay informed on the horrific conditions that have resulted in multiple suicides at CIW. Members of the coalition are investigating and reporting on other abuses as well, such as the number of men and women who spend indefinite months and years in strip cells awaiting placement in SHU units. The outreach teams around the state emphasize these points of information during events where we take placards, banners and model SHUs. Families and friends of prisoners are most important in letting people know of the struggles to abolish the prison system as we know it today. A better way, a more rehabilitative way is possible.

People on the outside are becoming aware of the new security threat group definitions that are being arbitrarily assigned to young men and women in the streets these days. We take this valuable information and what to do about it to people who do not even know that they are under threat. Join us.

This year events all over the state have seen partners in the coalition go to Sacramento to inform Legislators of problems the legislators and their aides had no idea about. By way of this constant attention, many senators and assembly people wrote and re-wrote proposals to make changes. No laws were passed that would have resulted in the release of men from solitary confinement, but we still made gains in that we were heard and we became acquainted with some of the awesome law makers who are committed to work for better conditions in the prisons. Following are some of the activities in which we have been involved so far this year:

**January:** The PHSS local outreach committee members went to the State Legislature to lobby. We demonstrated in front of the CA State Building in San Francisco, attended a lobbying workshop in Oakland, demonstrated against building a new jail in San Francisco, and heard the lead attorney for the Class Action Lawsuit speak in Berkeley.

**February:** Members of the PHSS outreach committee attended an informative workshop on gangs and what police have been doing to identify young people on the streets as gang members.

We also attended two demonstrations that further exposed police violence in Oakland, and we heard the Federal Senate Hearings on arbitrary solitary confinement in the U.S.

**March:** We held several important meetings on how to organize.

**April:** We attended a street fair in Oakland, California, though we were rained out and the model SHU got wet and damaged, but it was then repaired and made ready for summer events. We also took our huge "END LONG TERM SOLITARY CONFINEMENT" banner to various rallies, in both downtown Oakland and at the Capitol in Sacramento. We tabled two book fairs. We spoke to people at each event we attended, bringing awareness to as many individuals as possible.

**May:** There were several fairs we attended in local parks and at a local college. In addition, we had the special opportunity to meet with Juan Mendez, the UN Rapporteur on Torture who spoke to a crowd at UC Berkeley.

**June:** We organized a rally at the Federal Building in Oakland when the Class Action Lawsuit, *Ashker v Brown*, had a 20-minute status conference, and afterwards we spoke to the press. We had impressive banners and many supporters. During this period, one of the Plaintiffs in the lawsuit was being considered for parole after requesting a resentencing, related to the change in the 3 strikes law. The consideration for his release is still going on. Several members of the outreach committee attended an outstanding conference about methods to assist prisoners in legal matters, put on by the National Lawyers Guild. We also engaged in efforts to oppose CDCr proposals which would make incarceration even less rehabilitative and more torturous. We went to yet another legislative hearing on Senator Loni Hancock's bill, SB892.

**July:** PHSS held a well-attended event in Oakland to celebrate the start of the 2013 Hunger Strike and Work Stoppage in California prisons, launched by 30,000+ prisoners in all sorts of lockups, and lasting 60 days. Speakers included youth groups and people from outlying communities who spoke about their successes in organizing. As the month pro-

gressed, demonstrations against police violence in Oakland brought large crowds and many banners. All during these times, there have been demonstrations on issues reflecting our views but not linked directly to PHSS, like the Oakland Port Blockade of Israeli ships, when we stood in support of Palestinians struggling against illegal imprisonments of people opposing the occupation of their homelands, and stopped the Israeli ships from docking in Oakland.

**August:** We tabled at movie theaters, spoke at rallies, continued setting up the model SHU at these events, and prepared for a community event that was to take place in September.

**September:** For the Commemoration of the 60 day-long Peaceful Hunger Strike Protest of 2013, we held a BBQ at Mosswood Park, on September 6<sup>th</sup>. More than 100 people came to celebrate the work all us do, and to renew our commitment to present, everywhere, the Agreement to End Hostilities and the 5 Core Demands. Once again, we set up the model SHU, had speakers, mingled, ate good food contributed by community members and planned for the future. ●

*PHSS Outreach Committee, October 2014*

## BOOK REVIEW

"Out of Control" by Nancy Kurshan

A Revolutionary's Perspective

By Kijana Yashiri Askakri (footnotes by Ed Mead)

"All human activity is collective—a combination of the work and inspiration shaped by those who came before us and those who labor with us."

—Nancy Kurshan

**E**very aspiring prison rights activist, both captive and non-captive, that has a desire to qualitatively learn and to develop themselves into becoming a professionally trained activists, so as to be effective through the course of their line of work, must read and study Nancy Kurshan's book "Out of Control." I highly suggest that study groups be formulated, so as to advance and build upon the organizational framework she has provided for the people, to which has been conceptualized in simple and easy to read language. The book at its core, illustrates countless examples of mutual-aid-and-cooperation, along with emphasizing the importance of having clearly established goals and objectives that can be reasonably achieved.

Nancy Kurshan does an excellent job of highlighting the significance of a 15 year (1985 to 2000) struggle, the was waged and became manifest in their collective efforts to end the lockdown at Marion Federal Prison, that is located in the state of Illinois to which morphed into one of Amerikkka's notorious control unit and isolation-based torture chamber (e.g. solitary confinement).

As with any struggle that is geared towards movement building, it begins with the idea of an individual and/or individuals, which was the case with the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML), when its founding members Nancy Kurshan, Jan Susler, and Steve Whitman initially just wanted to educate the people by exposing to the public, the systemic practices of social, political, economical, and racial injustices, that are inherent in the Prison Industrial Slave Complex (e.g. PISC). And in addition to how these contradictions impact and affect our communities. It wasn't long before their work took on a life of its own—a life molded by their relentless strategic planning and organizing.

Unbeknownst to many in society, the construct of solitary confinement units, were originally modeled after the "diabolical techniques" of the mad scientist Dr. Edgar Schein of MIT, where he provided a blueprint on how to break and brainwash the Chinese prisoners of war via his book "Coercive Persuasion." Nancy Kurshan excerpts a passage from his book, wherein it states:

"In order to produce marked changes of attitude and/or behavior, it is necessary to weaken, undermine, or remove the supports of the old attitudes. Because most of these supports are the face to face confirmation of present behavior and attitudes, which are provided by those with whom close emotional ties exist, it is often necessary to break these emotional ties. This can be done either by removing the individual physically and preventing any communication with those whom cares about, or by proving to him that those whom he respects are not worthy of it, and, indeed, should be actively mistreated.

I would like to have you think of brainwashing not in terms of politics, ethics, and morals, but in terms of the deliberate changing of human behavior and attitude by a group of men over who have relatively complete control over and environment in which the captive populace lives." Page 12 of "Out of Control."

The context of this is relative to the CDCr's gang validation policies and practices, in particular, in relation to CDCr's newly created "How to Make a Slave" Step Down Program (SDP), where prisoners have been targeted/persecuted with the same purpose and objectives in mind—to break and brainwash us! Pelican Bay's counter intelligence unit (IGI)

has successfully destroyed/neutralized the only real outside community support that I had, when they falsely accused my beloved lil' sista [Name omitted by Ed] of promoting gang activity via a letter she sent me, to tell that Black Panther Party (BPP) members were going to be attending/supporting a community event, that was being held on my behalf, at Lil' Bobby Hutton's Park in West Oakland. Instrumental in the CEML's successful grass root organizing was several key factors, such as:

1. Their multi-faceted approach, as to how they took to accomplishing various tasks. They make a point of not just up and involving themselves in activities—if they could avoid it. This allowed them to preserve and maximize their limited resources. For example, they would initiate plans 3, 6 or 12 months in advance, containing specific goals particular, in relation to CDCr's newly created "How To Mark a Slave" Step Down Program, where prisoners have been targeted/persecuted with the same purpose and objectives that they wanted to achieve in their line of work. This provided their personnel with organizational structure (leadership), which armed them with the tools to modify their tactics, when circumstances warranted such. This point is significant, as many activists find themselves becoming over-whelmed, burnt-out, and worn-down rather quickly, as they are often operating upon their emotional subjectivity that is associated with being outraged—over how the people they're attempting to aid and assist, is being oppressed by as racist and diabolical system of government! This typically clouds an activist's ability to creatively assess the fact that victories often won't be achieved over night—especially without any organizational structure in place to compartmentalize their work!

2. Their collaborative work with political prisoner like Sundiata Acoi, Oscar Lopez Rivera, Alejandrina Torres, Bill Dunne, Safiya Bukhari, Hanif-Bey, Carlos A. Torres, Silvia Baraldini, and Susan Rosenberg, to which later included the prisoners that were also being subjected to various human rights abuses. The relationships that were forged out of this crucible, enabled human bridges to be constructed, wherein CEML members were able to learn, hands on, of the contradictions that plagued this slave camp (Marion Prison)<sup>2</sup>, and other like it. Thus allowing CEML to be equipped with the necessary tools to achieve their objectives, while providing substantive support to prisoners. Pivotal in this exchange, was CEML's functional appreciation of Democracy, through the course of staying in contact with the prisoners, but more importantly, including the prisoners in the decision-making process when strategizing for a particular action and or community event. This protected prisoners from being left nameless faceless, and voiceless, when the reality of the issues directly pertained to prisoners being brutalized, tormented, and dehumanized in every extreme by our oppressors!

3. CEML understood the importance of having organizational infrastructure, wherein they constantly distributed pamphlets, leaflets, flyers, brochures, and other propaganda based materials, wire their work. Shops, seminars, study groups, etc. That they held to educate the people, about their line of work. This insured the basis of, clearly define organizational expectations being set for, which made it easier for CEML to receive the support from the community by other people wanting to become CEML members; volunteering her time or donating funds and other essential resources for their work.

4. CEML did not limit the focus of their primary objectives, to just ending the lockdown at Marion, they also instituted additional campaigns, they became interconnect (secondary) to their pursuits. For example, the prisoners at Marion were being forced to drink, shower, and wash themselves in toxic polluted water! The exposure of this contradiction, brought about outrage from the environmentalist in our community this allowed CEML to forge a united front with them. And this was a pivotal tactic, when you account for the fact, that, CEML only had 10 to 15 core members throughout their entire 15 year struggle. This is extremely impressive!

Close this with a clenched fist salute to Nancy Kurshan in the entire CEML staff for a job well done, but more importantly — for having a wherewithal, to share their struggle of life's experience with the people. So again, everyone to read and study Nancy Kurshan's book "Out of Control" for free on the Freedom Archives website, and build upon the framework that she has provided us. The book is available online at: [http://www.freedomarchives.org/Out\\_of\\_Control/index.html](http://www.freedomarchives.org/Out_of_Control/index.html). ●

1. Let us remember that criticism is a two way street. When we discuss the burn out of outside volunteers let us not neglect to mention our fault for this burn out—our putting too much work or making too many demands on our few outside volunteers.
2. I was a prisoner at the Marion Federal Prison during some of that period and I too was very active in the struggle against not only that prison's degrading behavior modification program, but all such programs.

# SOLIDARITY HAD THE MIGHT TO MOVE THE MOUNTAIN OF PRISON TORTURE THAT KEPT US ISOLATED AND VOICELESS – WE STILL NEED YOU NOW MORE

By Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa and Jabari Scott, 10-11-2014

CDCR deliberately lied about their implementation of the Security Threat Group (STG) Step Down Program (SDP) sanctioned by Gov. Jerry Brown. We prisoners, the Prisoner Human Rights Movement (PHRM), all our supporters, all state legislators and all citizens of California are being lied to and manipulated by Gov. Jerry Brown, CDCR Secretary Jeffrey Beard, George Giurbino of the Division of Adult Institutions (DAI), Suzan Hubbard of DAI and the Departmental Review Board (DRB), Tehachapi Warden Kim Holland and Chief Deputy Warden W. Sullivan as they continue their torture tactics from Pelican Bay to Corcoran to Tehachapi state prisons.

Gov. Brown and CDCR administrators are currently violating our United States constitutional rights, the California Code of Regulations and other rules, laws, policies and standards with the intent of breaking down and destroying men and women prisoners, family bonds and moral ethics here in California.

On July 11, 2014, I was transferred from Pelican Bay State Prison to CCI, better known as Tehachapi State Prison. During my journey, I had a week long layover at DVI, Tracy, from July 11-17, 2014. I continued my journey on July 17 and arrived at Tehachapi on that same day.

My week long journey was pretty much uneventful, but I was able to touch base and educate a few young up-and-coming, politically conscious prison activists to a better understanding ceasing hostilities and where we stand in our protracted peaceful protest.

Upon my arrival here at Tehachapi, it immediately became clear to me that my next two years were going to be another form of modern day slavery and that the past four years of protest – all we fought through and accomplished – had fallen on deaf ears here at Tehachapi with Warden Kim Holland. My very first run-in with these backward, mountain dwelling slave drivers was during my journey from DVI.

The mail I received there was put on the transportation bus. Upon my arrival at Tehachapi, the transportation sergeant gave my personal mail to Tehachapi Receiving and Release staff with instructions to give it to me when they found housing for me. I was later walked approximately 125 yards from R&R to 4B-7C housing, where I and two others were placed in 7 Building's holding cages.

I reminded the correctional officer of the transportation sergeant's instructions and that the large envelope contained my personal mail and I would like to have it before being placed into my assigned cage. His response was, "You'll get your stuff!" When he walked away, I knew I wouldn't see him or my mail again; and to this day, I have yet to receive my personal mail.

This hellish modern day slave camp and all its staff have been brainwashed and indoctrinated into an old, prehistoric, backwards prison mentality of the 1960s and 1970s, minus the physical violence, which has been replaced by a new form of violence, mental assault through every facet of this institution and its officials. All of the rights that have been rightfully ours as prisoners since long before Oct. 12, 2012, are denied.

Warden Kim Holland's staff knowingly violate daily every rule, policy, law, standard and constitutional provision that has been written to provide prisoners with their basic human rights, and they do it as though they have no conscience at all and it is their normal way of life, that we prisoners should be thankful for and accept with a smile and "thank ya, sir."

With that, they flex their muscles as though they stand on the absolute power of virtual impunity that allows them to constantly get away with the crimes they commit upon us prisoners daily. Thus, they boldly think we should bow to their whim.

On July 17, 2014, as I was being escorted to my cage, just about every prisoner in 4B-7C (whom I had never met) was yelling out at me to check my laundry roll for sizes. I wasn't sure at the time why they were yelling this to me, but through my many years of experience, I knew it was a warning.

Therefore, as soon as I was in my cage and was un-cuffed, I immediately began to check my laundry roll. I held up the boxer underwear so that the correctional officer (c/o) could clearly see that the boxer underwear I was holding up couldn't have been any bigger than a large.

The c/o looked at the boxers and looked at me, then said, "and," as though I was either supposed to just accept them without any argument or what was he supposed to do about it. This foul show of disrespect got my blood boiling. I responded "What in the hell is this?" holding the boxers closer to the door.

With that, I picked up what looked like a T-shirt. It was so dirty and small that I really wasn't sure if it was a T-shirt or rag to clean my floor and toilet with. It, as well, couldn't have been any bigger than a large. Looking at my size and the size of the boxers and T-shirt, it was crystal clear that I couldn't have fit any of these items in my teen years, and if I could, I wouldn't put my body in nothing that dirty.

Therefore, I asked the c/o to go find me something I could

fit – something around a 4XL for both the boxers and T-shirt. When he left my door, I took a good look at these super small, dirty boxers and T-shirt, and was, well, bowled over how this prison enforcer responded to my dilemma. It was clear to me that this administration utilizes the methods of dehumanization by stripping prisoners of their dignity, one layer at a time.

I soon learned that Receiving and Release SHU Property Officers were also a tool of reaction that this administration uses against us and that this office regularly practices the art of intentionally destroying and/or making prisoners' property disappear, while keeping a straight poker face, acting as though it never existed or it never came though the property room.

We were informed by IGI Counselor V. Ybarra and all of 4B-7C staff that the property policy is: Your property follows you soon after you step off the transportation bus, meaning we no longer have to wait 10 days after our arrival or after we have gone to Classification or after a long 30-day waiting period. Now it's immediately after your arrival, your property is broken down and sent to your assigned location. Thus if all the above staff are well aware of this property policy, then it is quite clear that the R&R property officer is well aware of it as well, when property is his responsibility.

My cellie, Jabari Scott, arrived here on Sept. 2, 2014, and as of Sept. 23, he still has not yet received his property. Therefore, you have a policy that's not being adhered to or enforced and a property officer doing what he wants, when he wants, no matter what rule or policy he breaks.

Note to all prisoners who are scheduled to be transferred to Tehachapi State Prison: Make sure to get an accurate and complete, itemized inventory slip of every item in your property before signing and transferring.

All California state prisons are mandated by statute to provide each and every prisoner in the prison system, whether you are in SHU or in Step 1 through 4 of the SDP or in general population, with the required allotment of clothing and housing supplies to keep themselves and their living quarters clean and to practice good health habits essential to the maintenance of physical and mental well-being.

State mandated clothing allotments are one pair of shoes, six pairs of socks, four boxers, four T-shirts, two pillow cases, four sheets, three towels, two washcloths, two floor towels, two jumpsuits, one denim jacket, one beanie, two blankets, one laundry bag, one pillow, one mattress, one solid plastic coffee mug and one solid plastic spoon.

State mandated weekly laundry exchanges require that all state prisons provide prisoners a one-for-one exchange limited to three T-shirts, two sheets, three pairs of socks, three boxers, one pillow case and two towels.



Nightmare by William Willhoite

Upon your arrival at Tehachapi, each prisoner is issued one clothing roll and one bedding roll, which is your one and only issue for the duration of your time here.

The clothing roll consists of one pair of socks, one boxer, one T-shirt, one towel and one floor rag. The bedding roll consists of two sheets and two blankets.

Laundry exchange: Keep in mind that no issued laundry is new, and all of it is very battered and used. Weekly laundry exchange goes by a one full clothing roll for one full clothing roll in return, which means that you can only exchange full rolls – a clothing roll consisting of one T-shirt, one boxer and one pair of socks or a bedding roll of two sheets – or you can choose not to exchange anything at all. You don't have a choice on what size you receive in return. All laundry rolls are pre-made, and size is not considered; therefore, it's a take-it-or-leave-it exchange and luck of the draw on sizes.

Housing supplies: All SHU prisoners here at Tehachapi are issued one small paper dixie cup and one small plastic picnic spoon. Supply exchange is every two to three weeks, if we are lucky; thus, you must be real careful in the maintenance of your dixie cup and picnic spoon to ensure they last until the next supply exchange.

Cleaning supplies: Each prisoner is issued one yellow cleaning rag, and once a week an officer will yell out, "disinfectant." At that time, all prisoners are expected to push their yellow rags out under their door. Then the officer will walk by, pouring disinfectant onto the yellow rags. You have to sop up as much disinfectant as possible, then squeeze it into some sort of milk carton or container to preserve as much of the disinfectant you sopped up as you can. This practice is so disrespectful and degrading that we refuse to participate in it. Those are the only cleaning supplies that Tehachapi provides its prisoners with. State mandate requires that all state prisons provide three ounces of uncut disinfectant, plus one cell cleaning rag and one scrub pad, weekly.

TV stations: We struggle to get all the following basic stations: ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, MY13, COZI, two Spanish stations and four church stations. The struggle is that some stations are blurry and very hard to see; others go in and out all throughout the day, every day, and others just black out for about 30 to 40 seconds. TV access starts at 6:48 every morning.

Pillows: Tehachapi does not issue pillows and the floor officers will write you a rule violation if a home-made pillow is found in your cell. Therefore, we roll up our jumpsuits, towel and blanket and put them in a T-shirt at night, then unroll them every morning.

Mirrors: There are no mirrors whatsoever in any cell. We have a very small mirror in each shower and it is the only place and time we have access to a mirror.

Containers: They are not allowing us to have or possess any canteen containers and some plastics. They argue that because we have in-cell electric plugs, we could use them to make weapons. Their argument makes it clear that Tehachapi refuses to advance out of the Stone Age and embrace the future. Thus, they are going to fight tooth and nail on adhering to SDP policies.

Water: The water here is so bad that every correctional officer here refuses to drink it and every one of them brings his own water to drink. The water is treated with so much sodium that it leaves a thick white deposit caked on all our sink nozzles that is as thick and hard as cement. And when you run your water in your sink for about 10 to 14 seconds, you'll start to see the sodium deposit build up, foaming around the edges of the water.

Turn the water off, as it dissipates, it leaves behind a thick white film that hardens on the inside of your sink. This thick, white sodium film sticks to the inside of your cups and bowls, too, as well as to your body, which leaves you with an itchy feeling.

Now if this sodium film deposit is sticking to everything water touches, what is it doing to the inside of our bodies after we consume it, especially when you're drinking the eight recommended cups of water a day? Tehachapi is well aware of this water issue but it is of no concern to them, because to them, we are only prisoners! And they don't have to drink it.

Yard: Buildings 4B-7 and 4B-8 share a total of 24 yard cages, 12 cages per building. Each building has 64 cells, and Tehachapi SHU only runs one yard a day for SHU prisoners for three and a half to four hours. Therefore, it could take five to seven days for the yard to make a full rotation. Thus, each cell is not getting its 10 hours a week allotted yard and exercise time, which is mandated by law.

Medication chronos: Me, my cellie, Jabari Scott, and many other prisoners were taking various different medications and had various different active medical chronos that were prescribed by medical doctors in our previous prisons to alleviate pain and bring comfort to disabilities. All have been taken by a rogue doctor employed by Tehachapi – another tool of reaction deployed against us.

H. Tate, M.D., is an old war veteran who has a firm grip on his old war roots. He has a high threshold for pain and believes that everyone else should too. Thus he follows a firm practice of "If it's not killing you," he will save CDCR some money in not treating you.

All my pain meds were taken and all my cellie's pain meds were reduced to regular over-the-counter Tylenol that we can buy from the canteen. We both are in so much pain that we are not sleeping through the night, nor can we perform many of our daily activities and functions. And many other prisoners are experiencing the same discomforts at the hands of Dr. Tate.

Programming: The big con, The Big Lie, the scheme, sham, bogus Step Down Program Steps 3 and 4 at Tehachapi State Prison – the whole conspiracy was sold to us by Secretary Jeffrey Beard, Undersecretary Martin Hoshino, Adult Institutions Director Michael Stainer, Departmental Review Board Director George Giurbino, Adult Institutions Deputy Director Suzan Hubbard, Corrections Counselor II C. Vargas at Pelican Bay and Warden Kim Holland of Tehachapi and sanctioned by Gov. Jerry Brown as if it was a beautiful Hawaiian vacation. It all was a lie – a hoax – and this was never a functional or functioning step anything program.

This is the worst SHU in California. Nothing that resembles a step down program is functioning here, nor can it be

for quite some time, because it was finally admitted and is a fact that Tehachapi SHU will have to go through a major overhaul and retro-fitting to be able to secure both prisoners and guards. It was as well revealed that there are far too many blind spots that the gun tower cannot see.

Thus, as we speak, only one cell at a time is allowed to come out to what they are calling and selling as group dining, and thus far, only four prisoners have been approved for group yard. Steps 3 and 4 are only allowed to walk to the showers with no cuffs once a week. The other two times a week, we are escorted and cuffed.

The STG/SDP was forced upon us Oct. 12, 2012, as a token given by CDCr in hope that it would wash away all the years of torture and foul deeds subjected on us. This supposed token became our only means of escaping our torture. For us here at Tehachapi, that token became our new form of torture, only with a new name, Tehachapi, and what we have come to realize is that the supposed token of good faith has twin evil heads – one that stares you in the face, while the other is biting you on the ass!

The facts are concrete and crystal clear that Beard, Hoshino, Stainer, Giurbino, Hubbard, Holland and Chief Deputy Warden W. Sullivan all knew from the beginning that Tehachapi State Prison SHU would not be a match made in heaven and was, in fact, incompatible with the concepts of Steps 3 and 4 of the SDP, which is why it fails entirely in its bogus attempt to align itself with those policies and principles. Knowing this is fact, Tehachapi continues to be sold to the public, legislature and prisoners as an up and running, operationally functioning program with all of the privileges, opportunities and amenities intact.

IT IS A SHAM! Warden Kim Holland would never even attempt to embrace the concepts of human dignity and a prisoner's basic human rights, because she has turned a blind eye throughout her tenure, refusing to address and assure anyone that her prisoners are treated with the smallest air of dignity and that their basic needs – mandated by law – that express a concern for humanity are met.

Pelican Bay SHU, Corcoran SHU and many other SHUs are making big strides in lining themselves up with the Title 15 matrix, standardized SHU and SDP policies. But Warden Kim Holland continues to hold the same immoral ground of the past, keeping Tehachapi in the chattel slavery era. And Gov. Brown, Secretary Beard, Undersecretary Hoshino, Director Stainer, Director Giurbino and Director Hubbard all continue to feed Warden Holland the power to hold such an immoral position that basically shatters the very foundation of the SDP, which they themselves built.

Taking a good look at the facts and seeing them for what they truly are, one would have to say this whole thing reeks of conspiracy, and it's clear that there is way more to these tactics than we know and see. But we still must press the questions: Why is a rogue warden, Warden Kim Holland, given such power? Why is a rogue institution, Tehachapi SHU, being allowed to operate? Why have all the above clear violations gone unnoticed by all these years?

If SDP is truly a program that CDCr administrators want to succeed, then why haven't Secretary Beard, Director Stainer or any of the other staff taken a look into these violations and resolved them in a humane manner that would reflect anything close to the SDP re-entry program that they have been selling since Oct. 12, 2012?

Why did Secretary Beard, Undersecretary Hoshino, Director Stainer, Director Giurbino, Director Hubbard and Warden Holland attempt to establish a Step 3 and 4 of the Step Down Program in a prison that is not structurally capable of accommodating such a program? And why force bodies into a Step 3 and 4 program in a prison that they knew would not offer those prisoners the privileges, opportunities and amenities outlined in the SDP policies that would afford them their basic, fundamental rights that promote human dignity?

Bottom line is CDCr has knowingly lied to state Sen. Loni Hancock and the other legislators about the entire SDP and how well it is functioning. Sen. Hancock should come and pay a visit to Tehachapi State Prison so she could see for herself the lies CDCr sold her and the Legislature, catch them in the game they are playing with prisoners' lives and shut Tehachapi SHU down.

Tehachapi has no business attempting to establish any step of the Step Down Program here, nor should it house regular SHU prisoners here until this prison has completed a full overhaul from top to bottom, from its structural insufficiencies to all its staff, starting with Warden Kim Holland, Chief Deputy Warden J. Gutierrez, Capt. Mayo, Lt. Parrett, V. Ybarra, Dr. H. Tate, the R&R staff and all those that refuse to divorce themselves from that old style slave-driving mentality.

We call on all of the officials to respond swiftly to this human crisis. If just one of you possesses just a morsel of empathy and believes that no prisoner should be subjected to torture and cruel, inhumane, degrading treatment, then put a STOP to the foul practices that continue to violate every rule, law, standard, policy and constitutional provision ever written to protect the fundamental rights of human beings.

To our countless supporters and those who ceaselessly fight for justice on our behalf, we thank you all for your boundless support – that driving spirit that keeps us pushing

forward – and we thank you for your great effort. Your successes have proven mighty enough to move that great mountain of torture that kept us isolated and voiceless for way too many years.

Words cannot fully convey how great it is to have so many amazing people join our fight. Although we have much to stand proud about, we still have a long way to go and we still need you all even more.

Thus, spread the word, push the word, shake that great bush that attempts to hide Tehachapi and Warden Kim Holland's horrors until we have shaken them all to the ground and that bright light of the people's justice reveals all their foul deeds. Call, tweet, text, write all your legislators, all CDCr administrators, Tehachapi State Prison Warden Kim Holland and Chief Deputy Warden W. Sullivan and express your desire for change, for justice, for humanity! And ask a friend, family member and loved one to join us.

And a special call-out to our New Afrikan community, civil rights leaders, human rights leaders, all religious leaders, our lawyers, actresses, actors, sports figures, musicians, entertainers and all those in the business sector: We need you all to get involved to make a difference in your community's future, and together we will rebuild justice on the foundation of a new morality that is the heart of the people.

To all those prison rights activists and those who stand for what is right in Corcoran State Prison SHU, Zaharibu, Heshima, Turi, Griff, Amondo, we owe you all a great deal of gratitude for your courageous stance of defiance against CDCr's implementation of its criminalizing journals that do nothing towards aiding rehabilitation or arming men and women with the necessary tools to succeed on a mainline or in society.

Your act, many acts, of defiance were critical and effective in catapulting us forward into the position we are in right now, to enable us to shine the light of justice on and expose the foul, torturous conditions of this institution, Tehachapi SHU, that reeks of the mentality of Robben Island, South Africa! Deeply appreciated! Keep pushin'! To all U.S. citizens and our world community, support those who struggle to support themselves! •

*[Ed's Note: OMG! Do you mean to tell me CDC lied to you? So the SDP was a "hoax" and a "sham." Who could have guessed? And now you want to blame the warden, et. al. for this predicament?]*

*From what I can gather, your complaint is not against the SDP, itself, but instead against the CDC and the Tehachapi administration's implementation of the program at that facility—that you object to the lack of a properly functioning SDP.*

*If so I've just used over a page of newspaper space on your complaints about conditions, and I'm guessing it's because you and some other reps were tricked or involuntarily placed in the state's behavior modification program.*

*It is my hope that you all will bail on SDP, and warn others against participating as well. Behavior modification is wrong! Progressive prisoners should not participate, so says this elder of our movement.*

*I've been fighting against various state and federal behavior modification programs since 1976, back when "Dr. William Hunter's system for modifying behavior" was forcing Walla Walla's "bad" prisoners to wear diapers, crawl on the floor, and carry a baby bottle. Others were chained and handcuffed to the bed. [Evening News newspaper, June 26, 1976]. Dr. Hunter, you see, was working with the worst of the worst, a concept familiar to some of you.]*

## NEW REGULATIONS USE INDISCRIMINATE AND HIGHLY INVASIVE SEARCHES IN PRISONS

By Kim Rohrbach

In late September, the CDC announced draconian new regulations promulgated under the guise of an emergency. These regulations purport to authorize the use of dogs and electronic drug detectors to indiscriminately search all persons entering institutional grounds for contraband, as well as the CDC's wards. The public was given short notice of the new regulations—we were only given about five days to submit public comments to the Department—but word quickly got out, and a large number of comments opposing the regulations were submitted.

Although the "emergency" regulations nominally apply to all persons, they require that only visitors and those incarcerated endure strip-down searches in the event of "positive canine alert" (employees and contractors receive nothing more than a pat-down.) Moreover, penalties attach to anybody who refuses a strip-down search and/or does so repeatedly.

To what extent these regulations have been implemented, and the time-line for implementation, are unclear. Meanwhile, on October 17, and on October 31, respectively, the CDC issued Notices of Change to Regulations regarding both electronic drug detection equipment and canine searches. The Department contemporaneously publicized, "Recognizing the ongoing problem with drug use and trafficking within the institutions, CDCR must focus on undertaking a comprehensive approach to prevent the introduction of drugs and contraband into the institutions." The Department further noted that there were 4000 documented incidents recorded in 2013 related to drugs in California prisons.

4000 incidents is not such a high number, when put into perspective. On December 25, 2013, the CDC's total in-custody population, according to its reported statistics, was 134,243. Thus, based on the latter figure, for each one hundred people in custody, about 2.98 reported drug-related incidents were documented in 2013. (One wonders how these statistics compare with statistics out on the streets.) This is by no means intended to minimize the problems and risks associated with the presence of illicit drugs within California's prisons. However, the situation hardly justifies a policy allowing highly invasive and indiscriminate searches of visitors and those in custody. Staff and contractors, who typically go into work without so much as passing through a metal detector (or so this writer has observed), have the most unfettered access to those in custody, and the greatest ability to introduce contraband unnoticed. •

Please note that the deadline for submitting public comments in opposition to the revised regulations regarding electronic drug detection equipment is December 9, 2014, at 5pm. The deadline for submitting public comments opposing canine searches is December 16, 2014, at 5pm. The CDC specifies, "Any person may submit written comments about the proposed regulations to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Regulation and Policy Management Branch (RPMB), P.O. Box 942883, Sacramento, CA 94283-0001, by fax to (916) 324-6075, or by e-mail to RPMB@cdcr.ca.gov." Those e-mailing may want to cc the Office of Administrative Law at staff@oal.ca.gov.



On September 6th, people gathered at Mosswood Park in Oakland, California to commemorate the suspension of the largest hunger strike in U.S. history. The 2013 hunger strike aimed to win five demands and end California's arbitrary and intolerable practice of isolating individuals in solitary confinement indefinitely, based solely on alleged gang affiliation rather than their conduct. The participants and supporters of the 2013 peaceful protest were honored for their courage and commitment to making change, despite the cost to their health and wellbeing. The event consisted of a BBQ, speakers, including family members and activists, and access to educational materials. Our model SHU cell, covered with pictures and the stories of individuals in the SHU, was set up and displayed. There were over 100 people at the commemoration over the course of the afternoon. Everybody came to show their support for the incarcerated individuals who are the driving force behind this struggle for social justice, for the five demands, and putting an end to solitary confinement. And to top it off there was a lot of wholesome food brought by community members – a feast, to say the least. There was a genuine sense of warmth, community, commitment and solidarity at the park, on that peaceful, sunny afternoon in the shade under the trees, surrounded by friendly faces.

# PRISON FOCUS

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## CPF MISSION STATEMENT

California Prison Focus fights to abolish the California prison system as we know it. We investigate and expose human rights abuses with the goal of ending long-term isolation, medical neglect, and all forms of discrimination. We are community activists, prisoners, and their family members working to inspire the public to demand change.



## ABOUT CPF

California Prison Focus is a non-profit community-based human rights organization working with and for California prisoners. Our two main issue areas are fighting against the long term isolation, torture and abuse of Security Housing Units (SHU) and demanding an end to the medical neglect and abuse of prisoners.

The focus of our work is our investigative trips to prisons with SHU facilities. We make as many SHU visits as possible. We work to build strong bridges between the prisoners and the community, and to bring forth the voice of the prisoners through our newsletter, Prison Focus, and our ongoing educational outreach. Central to our work is training ourselves, prisoners and their loved ones in self-advocacy through public protest, networking, coalition building, letter-writing and contacting prison officials and policy makers.

Founded in 1991 (as Pelican Bay Information Project), we have made hundreds of prison visits and conducted thousands of interviews with prisoners. Our membership is comprised of prisoners, activists, family members of prisoners, former prisoners, law students, attorneys, and human rights advocates.

## PRISON FOCUS #45

### Submissions are Welcomed

CPF depends on our readers to keep us informed. *Prison Focus* welcomes all submissions. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published, nor will they be returned (unless prior arrangements have been made). We generally cannot respond to individual submissions because of the volume of mail we receive.

### Suggestions for general submissions:

- Artwork or graphics
- Letters (250 words) Let us know if you want us to use your name or we will only publish your initials and city & state of residence. You can also specify "anonymous."
- Short Articles (250-500 words) The same identification guidelines apply. Topics can be issue specific, or current news or information.
- Creative writing, fictional or otherwise.
- Helpful resources with address and pertinent information.
- Larger articles are accepted but be aware-our space is limited.

### Special Topics

Following are some current topics of interest that we invite you to comment on:

- Step Down Program
- Agreement to End Hostilities
- Theoretical and strategic challenges confronting prisoners in the development of their peaceful struggle for democracy.
- Family/Community Activism. We would like to address more regularly how family and community members of incarcerated individuals can become involved and how people on the inside can foster family/community activism. Please share your own relevant stories and ideas.

## Notice of Confidentiality

California Prison Focus (CPF) treats all incoming mail as confidential. We respect your privacy and understand that there are risks for you involved. Therefore we will keep what you tell us anonymous unless you give us permission to use your name. Unless you direct us otherwise, we will share what you tell us anonymously in order to educate the public about conditions here and to support advocacy for prisoners. We rely on you to tell us if you want us to treat your information differently (for example, to use it with your name, or not to share it with anyone).

## BECOME A VOLUNTEER

CPF depends on volunteers to do our invaluable work. We need your help answering mail, working on our newsletter, staffing our office, fund-raising, and outreach, IT, and more. Check our website for additional information.



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A one year subscription is provided with a donation of \$20 or more, or \$6 for incarcerated individuals. Free subscriptions are provided upon request to those with SHU addresses, though stamps still welcomed.