



PRISON FOCUS

Number 21 • Fall 2004

THE SHILO PART ONE



LETTERS

TWO LETTERS ON RAMIREZ V. GALAZA

Dear Prison Focus,

I'm sending you this letter in response to the letter published in Issue #19, "Luis Ramirez v Galaza." This letter concerned the validation of prisoners who were subsequently placed in Ad-Seg/SHU confinement, for no other reason than because they were considered to be "disruptive" or "gang members." I have also fallen victim to this wrongdoing. I have never been a part of any gang, nor have I been disruptive to the point where my behavior warrants SHU confinement.

As the authors of the aforementioned letter stated, these 1030s are just a way of putting prisoners in Ad-Seg/SHU, so that any prisoner who is trying to fight on his own, simply cannot win. This is why I am writing to you. Hopefully, being a part of a class action suit will give me a better chance of being released from this SHU.

—Stephon N. Williams, Corcoran

Dear Prison Focus,

This response is in reference to your recent publication, Issue # 19, pg. 23; the letter entitled: *Luis Ramirez v. George Galaza*. I would like to tell you that on February 13, innocent prisoners including myself were similarly uprooted from the mainline via fabricated rules and violation reports. These reports were written by unethical and rogue PBSP guards as a form of vengeful retaliatory punishment.

In summary: on January 29, a prison guard was allegedly assaulted at PBSP. Immediately thereafter, PBSP officials implemented a systematic retaliatory campaign targeting innocent prisoners who were obviously not involved in the alleged assault.

For instance, these retaliatory measures consisted of deliberately setting-up prisoners through covert and illicit means by fabricating rules violation reports.

These reports reflected that during the course of the search, they discovered a razor blade in a crevice between the support brackets inside the cell locker, resulting in the removal of approximately 157 prisoners

from the general population and re-housed in Ad-Seg.

It was well rumored that prison guards were already locking up numerous prisoners, claiming they'd found razor blades, so the majority of prisoners victimized by this malicious campaign had already searched their respective lockers (upper and lower cubicles) between the support brackets before the search squad entered the cells.

CPF, the razor blade scheme was a mere pretense concocted by PBSP officials designed to indefinitely uproot targeted prisoners (particularly orthodox Muslims, who they vehemently loath) from the general population.

—Kahari, Pelican Bay

PROPOSITION 66 – TWO THOUGHTS

Dear Prison Focus,

A few of us here in the Pelican Bay SHU were hoping that via this letter and CPF all prisoners within California state prisons could put their petty differences aside and spend more time writing loved ones, encouraging them to vote for Prop 66. This would include Level I's thru Level IV's as well as the SHU's. We need everyone's support. We need people to realize the significance of winning this initiative on November 4. Thousands of inmates will be affected, if passed, including two and three strikers and prisoners with strikes dating back before this law even came into effect in March of 1994.

This is something to consider when writing to your loved ones and friends. Tell them to register and vote! If we can work together on this we can possibly win our freedom, but in order to do so, we need to unite together, collectively as one for this cause.

—Another 3rd Striker

Dear Prison Focus,

I would like to address all of California's voters regarding Prop 66 and express my deepest condolences to all the families who have lost loved ones to violent crimes.

I'd like to point out a few key facts about the Three Strikes law. This law, in its' present state, needs to be amended.

Currently it is misinterpreted and abused.

If Prop 66 is passed, there will be no violent criminals released from prison as the opponents of Prop 66 have led some to believe.

If you recall, in 1997 the first man to be sentenced to 25-Life under Three Strikes was a man arrested for stealing a slice of pizza. The first woman sentenced 25-Life was in a hotel room with someone who made a drug deal.

It costs the state of California approximately \$28-\$30 thousand dollars annually to house and feed the average prisoner. The money spent on housing prisoners guilty of petty crimes could be better spent on education.

Three Strikes was implemented to keep violent offenders, who have made a career of crime, off the streets. This law was not intended for repeat offenders who have no history of violent crime.

In the wake of the Kimber Reynolds and Polly Klass crimes, fear swept through our state. In both cases, the perpetrators were both repeat, violent offenders. It is important to note however, that Joe Klass, now the chairman of Citizens Against Violent Crime, is speaking out against the way the Three Strikes law is interpreted. Mr. Klass believes "the time should fit the crime".

I urge every registered voter in the State of California to vote YES on Prop 66!

—Gricel Paz, CCWF

Editor's Note: Proposition 66 ultimately failed to pass, though supporters vowed to continue the fight.

HIGH DESERT REBELLION

Dear Prison Focus,

Conditions at High Desert Prison's newly opened Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) led half of the more than 150 prisoners being housed there to act out in protest. The prisoners involved in the uprising were protesting not only the condition of the facility, which is still under construction, but also the misuse and abuse of power by prison officials and correction officers

Continued on page 27

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Subscribe to *Prison Focus* for \$20 (\$5 for prisoners) and receive four issues. *Prison Focus* is available free to California SHU prisoners. Others can send for one free sample copy. For further information, call (415) 252-9211.

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THANKS

THE COVER AND SOME OTHER ART IN THIS ISSUE WERE DONE BY ROBERT GARCIA, A PRISONER AT PELICAN BAY THAT WE'VE KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME. YOU CAN ALSO FIND INSIDE ARTWORK BY CHRIS AVITEA AND RICHARD HALL. A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THESE ARTISTS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT ARTWORK TO PRISON FOCUS PLEASE SEND US A GOOD COPY.

SOME CURRENT THOUGHTS ON SECURITY HOUSING UNITS: PART ONE

CPF has been meaning to dedicate an issue of Prison Focus to the topic of control units for some time. We wanted to write about SHU for women, the history of control units, activism today, how Administrative Segregation—used for short-term removal from general population—is sometimes used like a control unit, about who is housed in these places and more. We wanted to hear from prisoners’ personal experience. We’ve got some of this discussion accomplished below, but it is only a start. Be warned, this is the beginning of another series so please send your submissions to us for the future.

TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

By Terry A. Kupers, M.D.

The prison-building binge that gathered momentum in the 1980s was accompanied by a love affair with supermaxes. Most states and the feds built them. And a growing proportion of maximum security prisoners wound up in some form of long-term segregation. (If you build them, they will fill).

Meanwhile, courts have been recognizing the fact that long-term confinement in segregation units causes or exacerbates mental illness and suicide. Litigation has focused on inadequate mental health services for the growing proportion of prisoners who suffer from serious mental illness, and the toxic effects of relegating prisoners with serious mental illness to 23-plus hour segregation and lock down. Some of the better-run departments are even deciding that the supermax venture is a failure—psychiatric breakdown inside the supermaxes has reached epidemic proportion, the recidivism rate is higher, especially for individuals who “max out of the SHU” (i.e. leave prison straight out of supermax confinement), and the rate of violence on the yards has not diminished. The fiscal value of mass segregation is also being questioned. Last year Maryland decided to close its supermax and other states are considering following suit.

Inadequate treatment for prisoners suffering from serious mental illness is only one of many problems with supermaxes. Relationships between staff and prisoners break down and there is widespread and well-documented sadism on the part of some of the keepers toward the people they keep under total control. American courts, since the *Madrid vs. Gomez* decision regarding the SHU at Pelican Bay State Prison, have consistently found violations

of prisoners’ 8th Amendment rights (protection from cruel and unusual punishment). In the international discussion, equivalent abuses are called torture. But *Madrid* was a “split decision.” After all, the plaintiffs argued that supermax confinement is entirely unconstitutional, the court ruled that they failed to prove (to the satisfaction of the court) that supermax confinement is unconstitutional per se, but did find that for prisoners suffering from serious mental illness long-term segregation is cruel and unusual. Federal courts in other states have determined that the *Madrid* decision must be applied in their jurisdictions.

I have testified as a psychiatric expert in quite a few class action lawsuits in several states. And the prisoners (plaintiffs) have won substantial improvements in their conditions of confinement, including upgrading of mental health and rehabilitation services. Lately, in large part because previous cases resulted in victories for prisoners, states have been eager to settle class action lawsuits almost as soon as they are filed. The states know that the plaintiffs can win on certain points, so they decide it would be better to spend the public dollars on making the improvements the courts would inevitably order than to spend a bundle on defending the case. The plaintiffs and their attorneys are willing to settle only if they determine they would not actually win more concessions by prevailing at trial. And a negotiated settlement has a further advantage over victory at trial. Often, when a court rules in the prisoners’ favor, the state balks at implementing the remedy ordered by the court. But in the settlements in which I have participated, the mental health administrators for the department take part in the negotiation,

and when they are convinced by plaintiffs’ experts that certain improvements are needed, they are more likely to cooperate in their implementation.

Of course, there is always a double edge to class action litigation. Improvements are won. But in drawing a line and saying that a department of corrections cannot perpetrate a certain evil – e.g., confining prisoners with serious mental illness in long-term isolation—the court is implicitly ruling that if a department halts the identified cruel and unusual practices, then it is OK to keep on confining other prisoners under the same dreadful conditions. I always argue that what is bad for people with mental illness is bad for everyone, but the courts rarely agree. So, in effect, the victories prisoners win in class action litigation can serve to certify the legality of some of the other practices – including long-term segregation itself – even though the plaintiffs and their attorneys may have entered the fray hoping to make supermax confinement entirely illegal. This is not to say that litigation is ineffectual, merely that other concurrent actions are required if more substantial change is to occur. And this is precisely what is going on. For example, Critical Resistance, the Prison Moratorium Project and California Prison Focus are calling for a moratorium on prison construction and a halt to construction of a maximum security facility at Delano, and some organizations, including California Prison Focus, continue to call for closure of the SHUs. And a significant number of journalists, legislators and the public are listening.



AD-SEG AT PELICAN BAY AND ITS USES

By Mary Rubach

Beginning about June 2003 the CPF received letters from prisoners who have been placed in Administrative Segregation—isolation with similar conditions to the SHU but supposed to be short term—following an incident in General Population (GP). Below is a report on the use of AD-SEG at Pelican Bay.

According to Title XV Administrative Segregation (AS) is used, according to Title XV “when an inmate’s presence in an institution’s general population presents an immediate threat to the safety of the inmate or others, endangers institution’s security, or jeopardizes the integrity of an investigation of an alleged serious misconduct or criminal activity...”

AS cells are similar to SHU cells: the prisoner is confined alone for at least 23 hours a day and not only are there no programs but a TV is not allowed. There is no access to the law library, or canteen. For the prisoner who has not received any charge and has no information how long he is going to be held in AS, there is an uncertainty of when he or she will be released.

On June 21, 2003 a correctional officer (c/o) was assaulted on B yard and subsequently prisoners were told that they were under investigation for conspiracy to murder a peace officer. They were detained for the maximum of ninety days at the end of which some were released to return to general population, some were placed in SHU and some remained in AS this time with a charge of being in possession of a deadly weapon. We received letters from about ten inmates all charged with the same offense. We were told that the new AS building of 160 cells was being filled or had been filled with prisoners charged with the same offense.

All the prisoners who wrote claimed innocence. One thought it was no coincidence that a bus load or two of prisoners from Lancaster was arriving in need of general population cells. Another remarked that July happens to be the month when the administration must prepare its budget. (AS cells are worth more to the prison than GP cells but they must be in use before any claim can be made for the cost of maintenance). Several reported

that all the inmates were black and one or two referred to some of those detained as having attended Muslim services.

For a full year we received letters from prisoners in AS so a letter was sent to the warden from CPF. It took the administration about two months to respond but a response there was:

“On June 21, 2003 a Correctional Officer was assaulted with a weapon on Facility B. Confidential information was received regarding a “Conspiracy to Murder “on Facility A. As a result ... approximately 70 inmates were identified and placed in ASU pending the conclusion of a formal investigation. A thorough investigation resulted in five inmates from Facility B and eight from Facility A being issued disciplinary reports for: Conspiracy to Murder a Peace Officer.



“During the course of the investigation, 18 inmates were remained in the ASU based on being identified as an associate or member of the disruptive group: Ansar El Muhammad (AEM). The aforementioned conspiracy involved AEM-identified inmates. These inmates are waiting reclassification to prison gang status.

“To give you some background regarding the razor blade issue, inmates were allowed to purchase razor blades in the canteen.... When the inmates decided their weapon of choice was an altered razor blade the item was deleted off the canteen list. Razors are now issued and picked up by staff with a much stricter accountability.”

It is not clear whether those who were found guilty of conspiracy to murder were also those found guilty of possession of a deadly weapon. Nor is it clear how so many razor blades could have appeared all within such a very short period, or how they were all “altered” since it appears that they were all hidden in crevices where they could hardly be seen. And how could prisoners in B yard have been conspiring against an officer in A yard?

POLITICAL PRISONER SUNDIATA ACOLI DENIED PAROLE

The decision to deny Sundiata’s parole announced by a two-person panel by the NJ State Parole Board. It still must go through the other board members to get final approval. Still, Sundiata’s attorneys are already planning the course for appeal. The general sentiment is they will uphold the decision to deny. They have thirty days to make the final decision and announce any extension to his current sentence before being eligible for parole again. But as you know, Sundiata is already 67 years old.

How many more denials of our freedom fighters to return to society do we have to hear before we understand why we should get involved? Herman Bell denied seeking appeal. Jalil Muntaquim denied... Mutulu Shakur denied... Mumia Abu Jamal on death row... Dozens and dozens of others are in the same predicament despite serving More than 25 years in prison while others, even some who have killed police officers have been released after serving far shorter sentences. We know what this is about.

Visit the website to learn more: <http://www.sundiata.afrikan.net>. Readers can learn more about other political prisoners like those mentioned above and support them whenever you can, even if by just sending a card or letter. We should leave no stone unturned for these brothers and sisters.

peace for now,

fayemi shakur
Sundiata Acoli Freedom
Campaign Organizer

ACTIVISM WILL END THE SHUS

By Charles Carbone

Many SHU prisoners and their supporters have long known that the goal of closing the SHUs is likely not to occur solely in the courts or via legislation—at least not as the initial impetus of such changes.

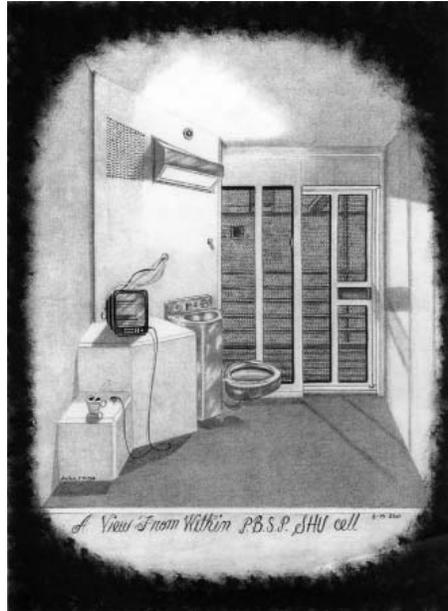
Thankfully, recent efforts are underway for a political movement led by former prisoners and human rights advocates to close the SHUs through education and mobilization of the public. In a series of coordinated state-wide meetings and actions, several groups have coalesced to draw attention to the inhumanity of the SHUs. The groups include the Barrio Defense Committee out of San Jose, CPF, MIM, and a number of student activists who have led coordinated regional meetings to develop a state-wide plan of action to close the SHUs. From these efforts monthly community education campaigns were initiated to properly educate and inform the public on the ills of long-term isolation in California's prisons. Once a month these groups target various California cities, including Los Angeles, San Diego, Oakland, and Santa Cruz to inform average citizens, many of whom are unaware of the use of the SHUs in California and their cost to the prisoners, public safety, and the taxpayer.

Through these efforts organizers have learned two simple lessons so far. One, most Californians of the existence and reliance on the SHUs, and second, once informed the vast majority of Californians express their disgust and dismay at the barbarism of these practices. These lessons provide critical insight for they teach us that the California voting public is on our side once they peer inside the realities of CDoC's love affair with torture and its impact on our state.

The monthly education effort has been so successful that plans are underway for a state-wide conference devoted to drawing further attention to the issue of the SHUs. These conferences will draw from a wide-range of prisoners, family members, attorneys, activists, and others to accomplish the short and long-term goals of education and most importantly mobilization because mere education without action is not enough. Actions are sure to include non-violent political demonstrations as

well as building alliances with other prisoner rights organizations in California and the rest of the nation.

It is our hope that these efforts will blossom into a sustained, diverse, and effective strategy for realizing the closure of the SHUs. Here at CPF we welcome input from prisoners on your thought for building a political campaign to address your rights and the efforts undertaken thus far.



NINE GUARDS FIRED FOR BEATING PRISONER

Nine correctional officers at Salinas Valley State Prison were fired recently in connection with the beating of an inmate last year, and for covering up the incident, a newspaper reported Wednesday.

The California Department of Corrections confirmed that "several" prison employees "have been served with adverse actions" at the Monterey County prison, spokeswoman Terry Thornton said.

A former Salinas Valley warden and top-ranking union officials both said the nine officers had been fired, and an anonymous source told The Sacramento Bee that a 10th officer was demoted as a result of the internal investigation.

Over the past three years, the prison has been the subject of numerous investigations by the Department of Corrections and the Office of the Inspector General into a small group of employees who called themselves the "Green Wall."

Ed Caden, former warden of the prison, told the Bee that the guards were fired after the November 2003 battery of an inmate, and not because of any investigation into the "Green Wall."

However, three of the officers who were fired had previously been implicated as members of the Green Wall, Caden said.

The disciplinary action stemmed from an incident that started when an inmate refused to come out of a "walk alone" cage in the exercise yard outside the administrative segregation housing unit at Salinas Valley, Caden said.

The cages are monitored by video cameras operated by officers in a control booth, department sources told the Bee. But before the officers responded to extract the inmate, one of them instructed the control booth officer to turn off the camera.

Officers then stormed the cage to get the inmate out, at which time the unidentified prisoner was knocked to the ground and kicked, according to Caden. The inmate had some red marks on his face as a result of the confrontation, but did not require medical treatment, Caden said. The nine officers were disciplined both for the alleged excessive use of force on the inmate and for failing to file any reports on the incident.

Caden was serving as the chief deputy warden at Salinas Valley at the time of the incident, but he said he did not find out about it until this past February, when he was named interim warden of the prison.

"I found out, and we immediately began an investigation," Caden said.

Caden served as interim warden until August. He has since retired.

California Correctional Peace Officers union Vice President Lance Corcoran confirmed the nine Salinas Valley officers had been fired, but he did not have any other details. Former CCPOA President Don Novoy said the firing of nine officers was "the largest I can think of. I've never heard of more."

In 1996, eight officers were fired for the rough handling of three dozen inmates getting off a bus at Corcoran State Prison. All those officers were later reinstated.

Correctional agency spokesman J.P. Tremblay said that the adverse actions taken against the Salinas Valley employees shows "we will not tolerate employee misconduct."

Reprinted from: L.A. Times

PELICAN BAY



AN INTERVIEW WITH SISTA SOUL

Sista Soul is a native of the South Bronx who now lives in Northern California with her husband. She hosts an Oldies show on the Humboldt State University radio station, which reaches Pelican Bay State Prison and the SHU. Through her show, she has become intimately aware of the devastating effects of SHUs. I interviewed her about the roots of her multicultural style, her love of music, and her relationship to prisoners, including her friend, Troy whom she credits with changing her life and her feeling about the SHU.

SISTA SOUL: I was raised on rhythm and blues and soul; the radio stations that I listened to, for the most part, played this great music, like Jocko Henderson and Alan Freed and Symphony Sid jazz. My brothers and sisters, all older than I, listened to this music; it was in my house, so it got inside of me. And I lived right across the street from a tiny little sitting park, a park that just had benches and a couple of trees. The bus would stop there. In the '50s and '60s, the Puerto Rican guys that lived in the neighborhood would come with their congas and their bongos and other instruments and jam. They'd do it at night, so I would go to sleep to rhythms of the congas. The neighborhood that I grew up in was so beautifully multiethnic. I was

raised at a time when there was a huge influx of Puerto Ricans into the Bronx, where Black people were present, big-time, Italians, Jews, Irish, the whole mix. And we all knew each other. We all went to school together, we were in each other's tenements, and tasting each other's foods ... the older I get, the more I recognize how much that culture is who I am. People are surprised when they find out that I'm not African American because I use the name Sista Soul; well, so what is soul? When I was growing up in the neighborhood, the brothers would call me an honorary soul sister. And I just flipped the 'soul sister' to 'Sista Soul' when I became a radio person....

GEORGIA SCHREIBER: Primarily you're a music DJ, and when you started your show on KHSU it was a music show. How did it evolve to include prisoner advocacy?

SS: This all started in 1990, or 1989. I got a letter from an inmate, Troy. [He] wrote me, telling me this story of how [he] and his cellie...had this radio that he just kept in storage because...at that time there was no radio station up [at Pelican Bay] except a Country Western type thing. One night, he took out his radio, and they held it up, way up to the window, and they strung a piece of wire and, lo and behold, he starts hearing Marvin Gaye kicking all over the place because that night, I was doing a special on Marvin Gaye — from the time that Marvin sang with the Moonglows, that famous Doo-Wop group, 1958, all the way through to whatever year that was, 1989 or 1990. Troy said that he couldn't believe it, that he was turning the dial and it was scratchy but he could hear it, and oh my god! So I wrote him back! I said, if you've got any songs you would like me to play, give me a list. And he gave me this long list and I played all his songs the next week. It was great.

...About six years ago, KHSU put a translator—a power booster—up into Crescent City, and the signal goes into the prison full tilt. One week, I come up to do my show, and there's this little stack of mail. And then the next week, another stack, and the next week, another stack. And, to this day, every week there's a little stack of mail sittin' for Sista Soul. It has changed my life completely, in terms of my work (and) where my heart lies....

GS: I want to talk a little bit about music. For the benefit of readers who

haven't heard your show, will you list some of the stars of your playlists?

SS: Oh, we love ... I love the Manhattans, Donny Elbert, Linda Jones, Etta James, The Stylistics, The Dramatics, Blue Magic, The Delfonics, The Moments. Then there's always the Motown stuff. I don't play a lot of Motown because that was very commercialized. I'm a little more rare in what I play. And then there's the early 50's music that the younger guys that are locked up don't really know. But that was the beginnings of the soul music, so I mix it. I'll throw in some Latin stuff, and just last week I played Lord Buckley, who was an orator—a hip orator....

GS: Have the prisoners influenced where you have gone musically, with the show?

SS: Through the inmates, I learned a little more about West Coast R&B that I would have not known about 'cause I was in the Bronx. Like I was getting requests for Donny Elbert. [That's] just one example of one of the best singers. Often I'm turning these guys on, and my regular audience, to people they've never heard of. But also, they give back to me.

GS: Music may not be a necessity like air or food or water, but artists and music-lovers know that it is essential to our quality of life, like love.

SS: Well, there's not much that these men locked up in this way get to hear. If they're lucky, they'll have a radio or a TV where they can get music. But I would suggest that even if they had nothing, to listen to a bird, to listen to rain tapping. Those are all sounds that we have used and incorporated in music. It's a sound. It's a vibration, and we can't exist without it, as human beings.

GS: In their letters to you, do prisoners often talk about the SHU?

SS: I've been totally educated about the confines — that box. I don't know how anybody survives it in the short term, let alone in the long term. I have some of the



Georgia and Sista Soul

most well-articulated letters from men in that environment. Men are not supposed to reveal emotions, or say how they feel. Right? This is the culture we live in. I have been told more personal, deep and heartfelt emotions from some of these men. That utterly blows my mind. Because a guy on the outside couldn't tell me how they're feeling the way some of the men do who write to me. I've been very humbled by the honesty that they share.... They don't have to tell me anything, and they do.

When I first started getting all the mail, I resolved that I would not write to these guys, because it would be too much! I said to myself, I'll give them shout-outs, I'll give them information, and that'll be good enough. Then I realized that I had to, to some degree, write some of these men back. Particularly the ones where they were sounding utterly depressed. Sometimes it can only be a postcard, 'cause I know the postcards get there quick, and at least I can make a quick connection. But with some of the guys I've developed a pen-pal relationship. It is time consuming, but I can't turn a blind eye.

GS: Between Troy's letter to you and these new groups of letters that have been coming, what happened when you discovered the prison conditions?

SS: Well, soon it became clear. Right after the [radio] signal got big and I was getting a lot of mail, there [was one guy] in particular who was the first to carefully...articulate what the situation was. And it would be confirmed by another one, and another one, and another one, and pretty soon I couldn't deny what was being told to me. So I had to get educated, and then bring people on my show that could help educate others about what we do in this country, how we lock people up. The isolation, the deprivation... I haven't even spoken to you about-because I don't know the details- the cruelty that's inflicted upon these men that goes a lot unspoken, but I know it exists.

GS: How has prisoner advocacy changed your life?

SS: Let me say this: when I say my life has changed, this wasn't a struggle that I was looking for; I could have been fighting any number of things in this country. But this is the one that came to me. And I have met some of the most beautiful and wonderful women and men in this struggle, mothers, and grandmothers, and wives and

lovers, and it can not be denied! It can not be denied. And as long as I can, I will do what I do.

Sista's show is on Sundays from 2:30 to 4 pm. It broadcasts out of Arcata at 90.5, or in Crescent City-Brookings at 91.9. You can stream it from the KHSU website at khsu.org.

SUPREME COURT DECLINES TO HEAR FELON RIGHT TO VOTE CASES

By Linda Greenhouse, *New York Times*, November 9, 2004

The Supreme Court has declined to hear two cases on whether states violate the federal Voting Rights Act when they strip felons of the right to vote. But with 48 states, all except Maine and Vermont, disenfranchising millions of people who have been convicted of crimes, the issue remains very much alive in the lower courts, and the justices' action did not foreclose accepting a future case.

The Voting Rights Act prohibits states from applying any "voting qualification or prerequisite" in a manner that has a racially discriminatory effect. Inmates and their advocates who are bringing the lawsuits point out that the impact of the felon-disenfranchisement laws falls disproportionately on members of minority groups, particularly on black men. The number of people barred from voting under the state laws is estimated to be 3.9 million, with more than one-third of them black men.

Two federal appeals courts differed on the question in the cases that the justices considered and turned down on Monday. In the case from Washington State, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit permitted a lawsuit by six felons to go forward. In a similar case brought by a New York inmate serving a life sentence for murder, the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit dismissed the lawsuit on the ground that the Voting Rights Act did not apply.

The Washington case, *Locke v. Farrakhan*, No. 03-1597, was filed by four black men, one Hispanic man, and one

Continued on page 12



*Donny
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HELP CPF STOP SEXUAL ABUSE

CPF has had a long term commitment to stop the sexual abuse and harassment of women in California's prisons. We first visited Valley State Prison for Women in response to prisoner complaints of sexual harassment, and then assisted the United Nations special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women investigate charges against VSPW. Last fall we led a coalition of prisoner rights groups and women prisoners to stop a new pat search policy that essentially ordered guards to sexually molest women.

Still remaining are policies and procedures that continue to offend women prisoners. For example, California has a policy of routine cross gender pat searches. Women are subjected to the degrading procedure of being patted down by male guards over and over again. In most other prisons in the U.S. and in all large jails in California no male custodial staff is allowed to touch a women prisoner (i.e. pat searches) except in an emergency. Cross gender pat searches are considered a needlessly abusive practice that injures women, and causes bad feelings and anger that make the prison harder to manage. CPF wants to end the California Department of Corrections'

cross gender pat search policy. But we want to do much more than that. We have been awarded a small grant from The Women's Foundation of California to begin a new campaign and we need the help of our friends and supporters inside. In the first year the campaign will primarily reach out to women's organizations, human rights groups and the feminist community to educate them about the sexual abuse of women in California prisons. Certainly we will tell them about the continuing cruelty of cross gender pat search and how the CDoC refuses to comply with standing court rulings in our Federal Circuit Court that outlaw such.

But we want to do more. Our goal is to develop public understanding that having any male custodial staff assigned to housing units in women's prisons is abusive. In fact, Rule 53 in the United Nations' *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* states that no male officer shall be assigned to guard women prisoners, and no male staff member shall ever hold a key to a unit housing women. That human rights rule is the standard around the world, and needs to be applied in California.

Presently men make up about two thirds of the custodial staff in the three women's prisons in California that house about 10,000 women. Forty to fifty percent of the female prisoners have a history of being survivors of sexual abuse. Men touching them during pat search, observing them while showering, seeing them while changing clothes or while at toilet is cruel

beyond words. It humiliates women and causes them to relive terrible abuses of the past.

We can't conduct a successful campaign without the assistance of women inside and their family members and loved ones. We need your help. Testimony about your experiences is critical if we are to

help the community understand what is happening now. We want your ideas about how to present the information and your referrals to organizations, friends and family members. It is your voices that must be heard! Our first priority will be to reach out to women, women's groups and the feminist community. We will be contacting female legislators, human rights orga-

nizations and faith groups.

Our campaign coordinator is Anne Clark Ronce. You can write to her at the CPF office. She will be visiting at the two Chowchilla prisons, so tell her if you would like to be interviewed.

—Corey Weinstein

CALIFORNIA PRISON FOCUS IMPACTS CCWF

I want to thank CPF for everything they do for the women at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF). CPF has been our voice that may have never been heard; they have ears that are more than willing to listen.

CPF goes above and beyond to ensure that all women who are experiencing medical neglect, receive appropriate medical care. I am a Peer Health Educator here at CCWF. Over the years, I've witnessed extreme cases of medical neglect and I pray to God that I never become seriously ill while in this institution. I've seen women pound on the medical doors begging to be seen. There are a few custody staff who will take the time to force medical staff to see the inmate. It's sad that an officer has to go out of their way to see than an inmate gets the medical attention they need.

Our voices are not heard until CPF intervenes. CPF is a blessing to us. They volunteer countless hours of their personal time to visit the population and not only CCWF but other institutions as well. They listen attentively to the women who are sick, HIV+ and HCV+. The women at CCWF should commend them. Knowing that we have these advocates in our corner frees us from fear of retaliation. Thank you for all your positive support.

Sincerely,

Gricel Paz #W26568
Peer health Educator
Central California Women's Facility

HIV AND HEP C In Prison

CHOWCHILLA WOMEN'S PRISON GUILTY OF MEDI- CAL NEGLIGENCE (AGAIN!)

The HIV/Hepatitis C in Prison Committee works with prisoner organizers, former prisoners, family members and other activists around the state to challenge gross medical neglect and abuse of prisoners with HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening illnesses. We are reporting in this column about a serious outbreak of staph infection at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, CA – perhaps the biggest prison in the world. We know that all of California's prisons at one time or another have experienced outbreaks of staph infection, h-pylori and other serious illnesses. We hope that this information is helpful to prisoners and their advocates in fighting against the California Department of Corrections' medical neglect against all prisoners, both in and out of the Security Housing Units.

We have found that only public exposure of abuse and neglect will embarrass the prison system enough to respond to life-threatening situations. We reprint below our advocacy letter to the CCWF warden and our media advisory that accompanied it. Please feel free to reprint or to adopt for your advocacy issues.

ADVOCACY LETTER

Acting Warden Deborah Jacquez
Central California Women's Facility
P.O. Box 1501
Chowchilla, CA 93610

Dear Warden Jacquez,

The legal team of the HIV/Hepatitis C

in Prison Committee of California Prison Focus has recently completed a visit to your facility. During our legal interviews, one particularly worrisome issue was continually brought to our attention. There is a

pervasive outbreak of staph infection at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF). We are writing to demand an immediate investigation of this staph outbreak.

According to our clients, well over 150 women through CCWF have come down with staph infections. Two women have already had major surgical operations at Madera Community Hospital; one had abscesses and gangrene from an infection left untreated for too long, the other had to have one large boil removed and another was already growing.

All of the women we interviewed were worried about staph infections. They told us that Peer Educators had handed out a printout, but that prison medical staff was not giving out any information, explanations or warnings. Because of this, the women are scared to admit when they have signs of an infection until it has spread. Within this climate of fear, ignorance and stigma, they are scared of being seen as "dirty". In a cell where eight women live in close proximity, it is very stressful to have to keep such a secret.

Staph is a very common bacteria, but when it enters the body, usually thru a break in the skin, it can cause dangerous infections all over the body. People who are otherwise healthy do not usually become severely sick, but with compromised immune systems, can become deathly ill. Many of the women prisoners we visited, are living with HIV, hepatitis C, and other serious and illnesses.

According to an article in the *New York Times* in February, doctors are starting to see a lot of staph infections that are resistant to all antibiotics, even in the otherwise healthy population. Several of the women we interviewed told us they had been treated with antibiotics – one woman had had four different kinds in as many months.

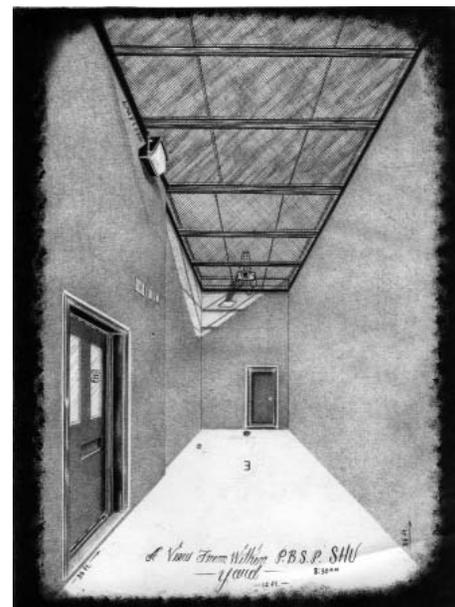
It seems obvious that the doctors at CCWF are not diagnosing the infections properly or in time to stop them from spreading. It is a sign of poor medical care

when staph infections are ignored and women have to be rushed to the hospital for surgical treatment. This medical neglect is both inhumane to the women prisoners and costly to taxpayers.

We urge your immediate attention to this epidemic of staph infections at CCWF. Your intervention will greatly improve the care and treatment of women prisoners at that prison. Please feel free to contact me at (510) 665-1935 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Julie Starobin
for the HIV/Hepatitis Committee

cc: Director Jeanne Woodford, California Department of Corrections
Dr. Renee Kanan, Assistant Deputy Director, CDC Health Care Services Division
Sara Malone, CDC Ombudsman
Dr. Sampath Suryadevara, CMO, Central California Women's Facility
Senator Gloria Romero, Chairperson, Senate Committee on Corrections
Senator Sheila Kuehl
Assemblymember Mark Leno, Chairperson, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Cassie Pierson, Attorney-at-Law, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Alison Hardy, Attorney-at-Law, Prison Law Office
Cynthia Chandler, Attorney-at-Law,
Justice Now
Various Members of the Media



MEDIA ADVISORY

California Prison Focus Demands Immediate Investigation As Staph Infection Outbreak at Chowchilla Women's Prison Goes Untreated

California Prison Focus (CPF), a statewide organization monitoring prisoners' healthcare, today demanded an immediate investigation into the staph infection epidemic at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) in Chowchilla.

In a letter today to the prison's warden, Deborah Jacquez and the Director of the California Department of Corrections, Jeanne Woodford, prisoner advocates described the staph infections as life-threatening.

"Many of the women we visited who have staph infections also have HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening illnesses," said Julie Starobin, spokesperson for CPF's HIV/Hepatitis C in Prison Committee. "Women with compromised immune systems can become deathly ill if their infections are not treated," Starobin added.

"After interviewing nearly 20 women at CCWF earlier this month," commented Judy Greenspan, another CPF member, we have come to the conclusion that medical staff is not taking this staph epidemic seriously. Women prisoners report that there are more than 150 serious staph infections at the Central California Women's Facility," Greenspan concluded.

The Central California Women's Facility has been plagued with reports of medical neglect and abuse almost since its doors first opened in 1990. In 1995, CCWF was one of two women's prisons sued on behalf of women prisoners with chronic and serious diseases for poor and substandard medical care. A series of nine deaths at CCWF at the end of 2000, again thrust this prison into the spotlight for poor care.

A CDC medical investigation concluded that some of the deaths could have been prevented if medical staff had acted in a timely manner. CCWF is one of the prisons currently being monitored by medical experts as part of the settlement agreement in the class action lawsuit of, *Plata v. Davis*.

I THOUGHT IT WAS COOL

I started cutting school
I thought it was cool
I drank and smoked weed
I thought it was cool
Gangs, guns, and running from the police
I thought it was cool
I went to juvenile jail
I thought it was cool
I had a baby at 15
I thought it was cool
Started doing cocaine
I thought it was cool
I became a thief and a drug dealer
I thought it was cool
In and out of jails for 25 years
I still thought it was cool
I'm now dying of Hep C, and may spend the rest of my life in prison
because I thought it was cool.

Cynthia Hamilton
Cook County Jail

The HIV/Hepatitis C in Prison Committee of California Prison Focus works on behalf of all prisoners to:

Fight for consistent access to quality medical care including access to all new HIV and hepatitis C medications, diagnostic testing and combination therapies.

End segregation, discrimination, medical neglect and violations of confidentiality.

Allow prisoner access to harm reduction tools such as condoms, dental dams, bleach, drug treatment and methadone maintenance.

Advocate for compassionate release and alternatives to incarceration for prisoners with serious illnesses and severe disabilities.

End the discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender prisoners.

Educate and organize AIDS service organizations, public health professionals, community groups, prisoners' rights advocates and policy makers to become involved in these issues.

NEW MEETING TIME:

The HIP Committee meets every fourth Tuesday of the month, 7:30-9 p.m. at our office. You can contact us at: (510) 665-1935
website: www.prisons.org/hivin.htm

VOLUNTEERS URGENTLY NEEDED!
PLEASE CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION!

REMEMBERING 'BIG BLACK'

By *bo brown*

On July 31, 2004, Frank 'Big Black' Smith died in Kinston, NC. He was 71, and cancer won the final battle of his life. He will be missed by his wife Pearl; his friend of 30 years, Attica attorney Liz Fink; this writer and thousands of other lives he touched in person, in prison or the film such as *Eyes On The Prize*. If you haven't seen it, you are missing out.

Frank Smith was a large Black man, at least 250 lbs. and more than 6 feet tall. While serving his nine years in Attica he was the prison football coach. He was popular and well liked by inmates and staff alike. This was one reason he was chosen to be the chief of security by the inmates during the rebellion. This meant he was responsible for the safety of the outside in observers and negotiators during the four-day uprising. After his release in 1972 he was encouraged by other Attica Brothers to work with attorney Liz Fink in search of some sort of justice for those murdered by the state of New York and the national guard.

I was in prison when George Jackson was killed in August of 1971 and i was still in prison a month later in September 1971 when the Attica massacre happened. Not only my own prison experience but these historic events affected my heart and soul; thus shaping my politics and my life for all time. Upon release i got even more aware and politicized and was part of the 1970's prison movement in the Pacific Northwest. I even went back to prison as a political prisoner.

In 1973 'Black' was touring for the Attica Brothers Defense Committee and we honored him as the keynote speaker at CON-vention (an organization for ex-cons based in Seattle). He stayed with a close comrade/brother and we broaden our understanding of how Attica Is All Of Us as we talked and hung out.

In 1974 two more Attica Brothers came west and we continued our local support work. Then again in spring of 1975 'Black' returned and this time we got him and the Shulasmith Firestone Attica movie inside two Washington state prisons (one was Purdy, a women's prison). One of my best memories of those times was when

'Black' and Mark Cook came over to our very dyke house and made us breakfast in bed. It was truly a beautiful sharing of love and solidarity; and the food was great! August 1975, we traveled to Buffalo for a huge national Attica memorial march that was very well attended by people who were doing prison work all around the country. We stayed with 'Black' and Akil during this trip. We also met several other dykes who were going into women's prisons and we stayed in regular communication for the next couple of years.

Now, i went on about the business of my life and didn't see 'Black' for some years but i always kept up with the Attica Defense Committee and the 30 year struggle to get that case to court. I even went back to prison as a political prisoner. I paroled to the sf bay area January 1986 and was soon engaged in prisoner support work around the lexington control unit built for political prisoners.

In 1997 a jury award Frank Smith \$4 million in damages for his torture over a 36-hour period after the Attica prison rebellion in 1971. A jubilant Frank Smith broke down and cried in the courtroom. He sobbed so loudly that District Judge Elfvin asked him to wait in the hall. Afterwards, he said, "I hope every one of them who were hurt gets \$4 million. This jury is sending a message—just because you're in prison they can't beat you like a dog and get away with it." The \$4 million judgement was overturned in August.

In 1998 Frank 'Big Black' Smith was part of yet another history-making event. Critical Resistance, a conference at UC Berkeley, brought together more than 3,500 people from around the country (many who were ex-prisoners) to discuss and organize around what had by then become the gigantic prison industrial complex. On one panel sat Raphel Cancel Miranda, Frank 'Big Black' Smith, Ed Mead and bo brown. These folks represented about 60-70 years worth of time behind the walls and they all had continued to be activists in their communities.

I saw 'Black' a few more times either here or in New York. We talked occasionally on the phone. Even when he was in the hospital, he always had a genuine interest in what i was doing and how i was doing it.

He wasn't a perfect person. Neither am i. Actually, i don't like perfect people and neither did he. He was a good person and he made me feel like i was a good person, too. He was a stubborn and strong individual who took on an extremely hard job for many many years with little or no pay and pursued with honor to teach everyone possible that...

ATTICA IS ALL OF US.

Voting... continued from page 8

American Indian. All were in prison on felony convictions or had recently been released. Washington has stripped felons of their right to vote since before it became a state, and the prohibition against voting by "all persons convicted of an infamous crime" is part of its constitution.

In the New York case, *Muntaqim v. Coombe*, No. 04-175, a black man, Jalil Abdul Muntaqim, serving a life sentence for murder, filed his own lawsuit in challenging New York's law, which is less extensive than Washington's and applies only to those who are in prison or on parole. The Federal District Court in Syracuse dismissed the case. The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, in Manhattan, also ruled against him

In October, the 11 judges of the full United States Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, heard arguments in a case challenging Florida's life-long felon disenfranchisement law, which bans an estimated 600,000 state residents from voting. The plaintiffs presented evidence that Florida's law, which dates to 1868, was enacted with the intention of keeping the newly enfranchised blacks from voting.

Many lawyers following the issue believe that the Florida case, which is being handled by lawyers from the University of North Carolina School of Law and the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University, is the strongest of the lawsuits because the facts have been extensively developed and the state's history of discrimination is clear. The brief urged the justices not to grant the Washington case but to wait for the Florida case.

PRISONER ESSAYS

ABUSE OF PRISONERS

By Donald Lindsey

It is inevitable that prisoners shall be abused by their jailers. It is the accountability and outside entities that need to be incorporated, along with raising the bar of prisoners' rights. This will not stop the abuse of prisoners, but it will begin to minimize it to a manageable degree. This will attack the problem, not the symptom. Because that is the way all branches of government deal with situations; the act that causes attention is swiftly dealt with and swept under the rug as if it were an isolated incident When, in fact, the problem is structural and systemic.

It should be clearly understood that in the midst of all of this abuse and political chicanery by C.D.C./C.C.P.O.A. and their affiliates, that all actions are geared toward isolating prisoners from the public scrutiny and even family members. This ensures their ability to abuse.

The public and prisoners must realize that the political system that allows or denies the existence of abuse fluctuates in directions of popularity due to rigorous lobbying by politically powerful organizations and/or unions. An example here is the C.C.P.O.A.

At present prisons are overcrowded and prisoners' rights are eroding to that of third-world prisons. I could provide you with a litany of abuses and brutalities, but they are merely the symptoms of a failed prison direction and philosophy. Rehabilitation and public safety are no longer part of the correctional objective, because rehabilitated prisoners and a safe public mean less prisoners. This goes against prison expansion, and goes against strengthening the guards' union and prison revenue generation. There is a clear conflict between what is good for both prisoners and public and what is good for correctional prosperity. It is this conflict that has provided a zone of lawful and unlawful suffering to exist. Our rights, or what's left of them, read one way on paper/in books ... the actual application, however, differs greatly. Prisons run consistently on substandard levels, regardless of the written standard.

So it would behoove the public, and prisoners to lift the standards of prisoners' rights, prison protocol, philosophy, direction. These must be raised to a degree that well reflects the tenets of the constitution as well as those of the Geneva Convention.

Are you familiar with the term: Cruel and Unusual Punishment? Well protection from it is in the constitution. "This amendment was designed to assure that the state's punishing power be exercised within the limits of civilized standards and it must draw its meaning from the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society." Yet, the barbarity pervades the California correctional system like a fog encasing prisoners and their families. "Corrections" represent the law in name and language, but there is a mixed deck of cards on the grounds of daily application. Sub-par is the standard for living behind these fences and walls. This will continue as long as the people out there remain unaware, unorganized and inactive. There must be organization and awareness and activity to make an incentive to change.

How does all of this affect the public? Crime will continue to rise while law enforcement use manipulated/unreliable statistics to lull the people into a false state of security. A measure of the rise in crime can be attributed to the correctional system's overall failure to implement programs that will assist parolees back into society with trade options and educational schooling (fundamental, as well as higher learning). There must also be extensive youth intervention programs. What we are speaking of is an investment in long term public safety, coupled with lower recidivism rates. This would be using taxpayer's dollars for the taxpayer. This makes no sense, but it does however make dollars for the correctional conglomerate.

We as a society must put an end to the practice of applying short-term relief at the cost of long-term socially destructive methods. Let us help end prison abuses and invest wisely in the future of society as a whole.

LOCKING UP THE WORLD IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

Exporting U.S. American Terror, Torture and Injustice Around the World

By Baridi Williamsun

[Editor's Note: I was going to have you mentally insert replacement words in the following article. Where you would read U.S. I was going to replace it with U.S., United States for United States, California substituted for Kalifornia, where you see AmeriKlan I was going to replace it with America, etc. This is a stylistic form of writing that the artist has every right to use in making a political statement — up to a point, I thought. While it is a means of raising political consciousness, before long it gets tiresome and can obstruct readability. Originally I took out the stylized words but then upon further reflection put them back in. I have printed a lot of prisoner articles using this type of language, and will be printing more of them. But everyone we had read this piece felt the excessive use of this stylistic syntax detracted from the writer's very perceptive message. Even so, I am leaving it in.]

"They put us in these concentration camps here, the same as they put people in tiger cages, or 'strategic hamlets' in Vietnam. The idea is to isolate, eliminate and liquidate."

—Comrade George L. Jackson

The world watched in shock and awe at the pictures and stories of torture, terror, violent inhumane abuse, degrading mistreatment and brutal death being executed upon the invaded, occupied and imprisoned people of Iraq.

Is this what the U.S. Ameriklan President George W. Bush envisioned when he publicly announced that he "have a vision to change the world," during a speech he gave earlier this year on the Iraq war?

The people of Iraq appear regularly on television asking the question: "Is this the freedom and democracy that the United States (and its United Kingdom brethren Britain) promised when they attacked and invaded Iraq?"

The true nature of the European's (i.e., Bush and Blair's regimes) occupation of Iraq becomes apparent from countless deaths of Iraqi women, children and men, including those beaten, raped, tortured and killed inside the U.S. controlled prisons "Abu Ghraib," "Baku," etc., as the United States (and United Kingdom) introduces its renown Yankee-style brands of Ameriklann Freedoms and Democracy to the people of Iraq, as it has and continues to do to the captured, colonized and oppressed nations of Black, Brown, Red, and Yellow People (as well as poor Whites) right here within its domestic borders of the "land of the Free, Home of the Brave."

In a desperate attempt to control the damage that the exposure of their exported special brand of freedom and democracy, is causing the United States to be perceived globally by humanity's majority, the United States Ameriklann Ruling Regime is trying to fool the world into believing that the torturous human rights violations of the Iraqi people locked up in Abu Ghraib prison are an isolated event committed by just a few Ameriklann soldiers. However, each day we learn of more and more evidence is surfacing that demonstrates a clear pattern of such unjust, terrorist and deadly practices being exacted upon imprisoned men, women and youth that expands beyond the prison walls of Abu Ghraib in Iraq, to other U.S. Ameriklann lock-up institutions from Guantanamo Bay (in Cuba), similar ghost CIA facilities in Afghanistan where many persons have been reported beaten, tortured and/or murdered by Ameriklann service men, and back to the U.S. massive prison industrial complex, where physical and mental assaults, torture, degradation and death is so regular that the majority of the U.S. society has come to expect, accept and ignore such human rights violations occurring right inside their own country.

When the recent Iraqi prisoner abuse was exposed, the U.S. Ameriklann ruler George W. Bush feigned a state of shock and awe, stating, "This do not represent the U.S. It is not what we do in

America..."

What? Wait a minute here... Isn't this the same U.S. Ameriklann who governed over the nation's second largest prison system [Texas], where the most men, women and mentally retarded young people were executed on his watch, while his younger brother, Florida's governor executed many others!

It's such hypocritical statements as that Bush public announcement, which leaves many of the oppressed, suffering victims here within the U.S. in a state of shock and awe, as Bush's words adds pain to injury, "This is NOT WHAT WE DO IN AMERICA!" Well, try telling that to the countless women, men and youth that your U.S. Ameriklann quasi-government guards beat, rape, hang, degrade and kills daily (both directly and indirectly) within the U.S. Ameriklann lock-up institutions, as a result of the inherent nature of Ameriklann racism, class difference policies, collective police state orientated mentalities and repressive practices by the U.S. Ameriklann government's appointed officials and hired henchmen guards of the regimes prison system. Try telling that to the millions of families and numerous communities that are disenfranchised and devastated by the mass-imprisonment policies, mandatory sentencing laws and a racist criminal injustice system that discriminates and locks up the poor and oppressed people of color at alarming rates across this country.

The ruling regime has established itself as the mortal enemy of all genuine peoples' government and all "Peoples First" scientific socialist ideas, beliefs and actions everywhere on the globe. Those who have invaded, occupied, colonized and ruled this land for over the last two centuries and who place themselves above the rest of society's oppressed and poor people/nations, through guile, fortuitous outcome of circumstance and sheer brutality, have developed two principal institutions to deal with the control of opposing ideas, activities and all serious disobedience: (1) systems, policies and practices of Institutionalized Racism; and (2) prisons.

Institutionalized racism has its roots in Europe's colonization and re-colonization of this land and its establishment of white supremacy systems of dominance and rule over the original indigenous inhabitants (aka "Indians") of this land, as well as

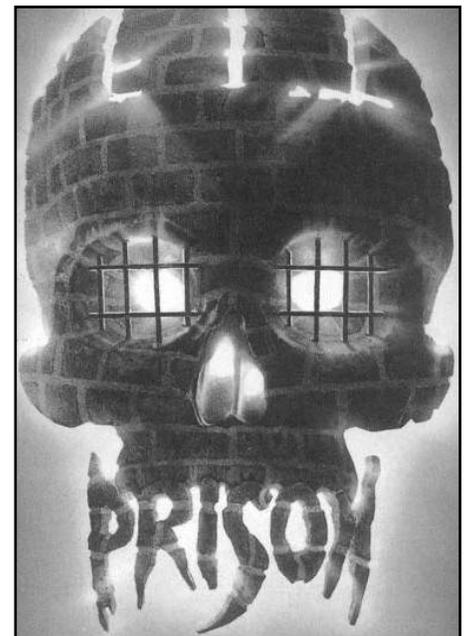
their kidnap and enslavement of Black people from Afrika to property ("chattel" slaves).

And prisons are one of the strongest institutions supporting the U.S. Ameriklann's regime. It is essential to humanity's freedoms, justice and human rights that we, the people, learn and understand the true nature, function and role of prisons. Why do so many exist? What's the real underlying economic motive?

There are more prisons of all categories in the United States than in all other countries of the world combined. Here in the state of California, which holds the U.S. Ameriklann's largest prison system, there exist thirty-three (33) prisons with a total population of over 164,000!

Currently, it is report that there are over 2 million people locked up in the U.S. massive prison industrial complex, making the United States the largest prison nation in the world. There has not been this many people locked up in the U.S. since the era of the Atlantic slave trade, where millions of human beings were kidnapped from Afrika, shipped here and locked up in slavery. Today, prisons are used to warehouse the descendents of this large slave labor class that is no longer needed in the modern-day U.S. globalized economic scheme.

So what happens to these millions of prisoners? Well if history be our guide, then the picture is very dim that these human beings will be afforded opportunity to utilize their untapped creative abilities to productively contribute toward



humanity's needs. Instead, the U.S. Ameriklan regime has destined hundreds of these men, women and youth to be legally executed, and thousands more quasi-legally murdered. Thousands more will never again have any freedom of movement and are subjected to a civil death penalty.

As if this injustice and human rights violations is not enough, the Ameriklan regime's prison system profiles, singles out, classifies and targets for the regime's special brand of political segregation, repression and torturous mistreatment, at one of its supermax isolation confinement dungeons, situated throughout the United States prison/military complex, such as in California, which is home to the notorious ("skeleton") Pelican Bay and Corcoran SHU isolation confinement dungeons.

Within these extreme isolation confinement facilities, prisoners have been subjected to decades of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual attacks. And how prison guards have been called up by the Ameriklan regime to now go around the world importing their Yankee-style institutional racism, as we are witnessing in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, etc.

THERE'S A MONSTER IN MY CLOSET

By Lonnie Williams

As a transsexual prisoner, currently incarcerated at the California Security Housing Unit (SHU), Corcoran, I wonder who the "monsters" are?! As a transsexual I use to run or hide and was sometimes even ashamed of who I am, when the "monsters" would attack, taunt and humiliate me believing that my gender and orientation were actually evil, abnormal or even inhumane. Humanity, I've noticed, is very much conditioned and set in its ways. I won't say that all heterosexual beings are "monsters." I would be just as judgmental as the "monsters" I am now writing about. But, I will point out those who fit the shoe and wear them. Arnold Schwarzenegger! The actor, Olympian, Mr. Universe, and now governor of the State of California. Not to mention body builder. (smile) Some things you just have to accept. Governor

he is. What does this mean to us as prisoners and transsexuals? Does the deficit crisis, which this state faces, mean that we shall be deprived our constitutional rights? No! Gender Identity Disorder (G.I.D.) is a disorder which warrants treatments. Treatments which CDoC, the legislature and the Governor must provide for us. Their "[f]ailure promptly to alleviate the existing situation," *Mickens v. Winston*, 462 F. Supp. 3 at 913 and provide transgendered prisoners with the appropriate treatments violates our Eight Amendment right to medical and mental health treatments. Unmonitored estrogen (hormonal) treatments, brassieres and other treatments provided by untrained officials doesn't "okay" or is not a substitute for the surgical treatments which (mostly) is required to cure G.I.D. "[D]efendants may not rely on a defense of inadequate resources to justify deprivation of constitutional rights." *Mickens v. Winston*. 462 F. Supp. 3 at 912. which "we" are entitled and shall be provided G.I.D. treatments, programs, surgeries and monitored estrogen treatment.

I have filed a civil, 42 U.S.C. § 1983, action against the governor and the departmental officials, and encourage other transsexuals, (M/F) and (F/M), to do the same. However, take notice that any person is immune from suits brought against them in their official capacities. So, be sure to sue and file suits against each person in their personal capacity. Example: If your suing Arnold Schwarzenegger, you would sue him in his personal capacity requesting that he pays monetary relief (money) out of his personal pockets for whatever damages you have suffered based on his deliberate negligence and deliberately turning blind eyes to our constitutional rights in the performance of his duties. A 602, although required to be exhausted, will not gain us our rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. So, kick the "monsters" out of our closets and let's fight for our rights.

As one we shall fight back. As one we shall win.

The One Who Struggles Beside You!



TO HUMANIZE OR NOT

By Prince Imari A. Obadele

In Texas prisons the guards are told they should never refer to a prisoner as "sir," "Mr.," or "Ma'am," or "Ms." One fellow said the reason for this is "they" (the administrators) don't want the women guards to look at us as men because then we might get into a "relationship" with them. I responded as diplomatically as I could (I see the "relationship" of guards to prisoners as relationship of master to slave; oppressor to oppressed and in spite of the fact that my mind was screaming "Man, don't you see the bigger picture?") I said, "Yeah, bro., that's part of it. But the main reason they don't want the guards to show any signs of respect (i.e., treating others as they want to be treated, assuming, that is, that one wants to be treated decently) is because to do so is to humanize you. To humanize you would mean that they couldn't treat you like an unwanted beast as they do 24 and in some more and 48 straight." In other words, they couldn't constantly subject you to torture.

Torture in one form or another, to one degree or another, is part of the fabric of Babylon (the U.S.) prisons. Indeed, torture is the woof and warp of the fabric of Babylon society. One need only access the painful racial memories of Africans and "Indians" in this country whose wimmin and children were subjected to rapes, beatings and enslavement, and whose wimmin's pregnant bellies were cut open and the fetus inside taken out and smashed against the hanging tree and trampled under the feet of the fiendish, torturing slave-holder, as the slave-holder's family, friends and neighbors looked on, gleefully, as they ate their picnic lunches. One need only look at the photographs of the Babylons partying around the hanged, mutilated and burnt bodies of Black men hanging from trees while White women posed next to the "strange fruit," smiling and pointing at the horrendous sight while her man stands by her with the hanged, mutilated and burnt Black man's genitals in a jar.

And so it goes in Babylon prisons: rapes, beating, hanging and mutilations; the arbitrary and capricious destruction of property and denial of rights and privi-

leges and visits and freedom. The verbal abuse day in and day out. Such is the nature of this dehumanization of all Babylon's prisoners, from Michigan to Mississippi, from Connecticut to California and from Abu Ghraib to Guantanamo Bay.

The way the dehumanization is accomplished and justified is the same way it has been done throughout recorded history: the point of focus of torture becomes not-human – something to be treated other than humanely. One is turned into the “something other.” This is true whether it was the Christian “Crusaders” against the Muslim “heretics,” or the Muslim “jihadis” against the Christian “infidels,” or the White “superiors” against the non-White “inferiors,” the object of domination must become not-human. One is dehumanized when one is no longer Imari or Nzinga, or Bob or Sue, but rather “nigger,” “bitch,” “cracker,” “ho,” and so on.

You are dehumanized when you become a dollar sign, much as the people of California became for Enron, or the workers of Walmart are for that family. When you're a poor soul trying to survive a corrupted life and get caught doing some three-handed stuff, you're no longer a person. You're an “offender,” a thing. When you become an offender you are a thing that exists for the sole pleasure of some twisted mind to play out her/his demented fantasies.

And so it goes, the cycle continues throughout your arrest, conviction and imprisonment. And if you ever get out of prison, unless some extraordinary events and circumstances intervene, you act just as you've been treated: dehumanized.

And so it goes.



VALIDATED (PART ONE)

By A'Jene

As repressive measures the state and federal KonKentrations Kamps imply a policy known as “validation.” As we are aware this policy serves as a punitive and arbitrary weapon to discriminately target and segregate for indefinite periods prisoners who they define or classify as gang members and/or influential factors. This policy of “profiling” is aimed at non-traditional or non-conformist (not sanctioned) socioeconomic and political-paramilitary sub-cultural groups (e.g., Aryan Brotherhood; Mexica Mafia; Black Guerrilla Family; Nostra Familia; South Siders; Kumi; Damu's; Kiwe's; et al.)

To be “validated” is to be confronted with the probability of enduring arduous, depressing, and brutal conditions of extreme alienation, psychological and physical deprivation.

In fact, for that unfortunate lot it can literally mean insanity or suicide by proxy – I say by proxy due to the reality that those who succumb to this horrendously desperate act do so as a means of escaping the inhumane and barbarous conditions imposed on them by people who in such instances become surrogate executioners, i.e. state murderers! Even a damn domesticated dog has more latitude (space and time) to interact as a social creature than humans confined in dog houses....

Although I recognize the brutal reality of the SHUs, I want to direct these words at the “validated” prisoners. In California holes the prisoners have a policy which involves the “validation” of our own homeboys, etc. Upon entering the hole a person must produce or display his (CDC-114) Lockup order. The purpose of this is to ensure a person is not a “rat,” “molester,” P.C.,” etc. One day, I had a peculiar thought which was how come when a homeboy, etc., returns to prison we don't bother to check if he's back for a crime or crimes against our communities?

How come a person that is validated can return to the SHU from a run on the streets for a crime against our own people – the underclass, lower-class, or working class – and yet we don't find or judge him to thus be now invalid? What I'm sayin' is why aren't we offended by a

homeboy/Komrad that returns to the tomb for preying on our damn 'hood?! Why isn't the homeboy/Komrad in “violation” with us when he returns to prison for a crime against us as he is seen even by the enemy class as being a violator?

The simple and indisputable truth is many in the SHUs or of the validated class actively endorse, promote, rationalize and worship as honorable, criminality! Crime is not only their exclusive and despicable agenda; crime is in fact the very basis of their functions. The very same reactionary mentality of our enemy class, i.e., the capitalist white-male imperialist and supremacist ruling gang of “democratic” and “civilized” amerikkka!

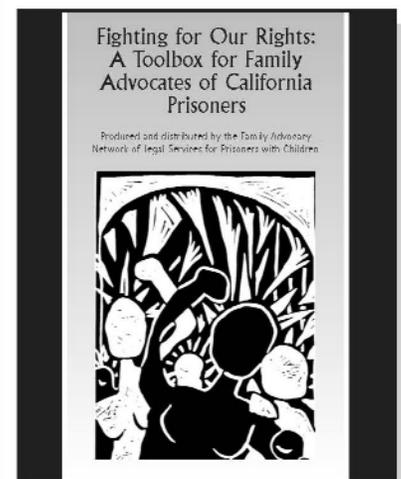
No disrespect at all intended toward any white male of the prisoner class. However, if you are one or a group that identifies with the above white male rulers in their values, world views, racism, greed or exploitation, oppression, theft, genocide, and domination not only are you on their team, but in fact the ones that are being disrespectful are you! Thus, the challenge is for you to reevaluate your ideology and your soul!

NOW AVAILABLE

A handbook for family members who want to advocate for their incarcerated loved ones. Includes sample letters and forms.

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children/Family Advocacy Network
1540 Market St. Suite 490
San Francisco, CA 94110

\$20 suggested donation; free to prisoners.



REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE VERSUS GANG CULTURE

“...we prisoners in California are
playing child games in a man’s world.”

By *VoodooX*

Revolutionary freedom fighter comrade Sa’sa George L. Jackson said, before he was crucified at San Quentin 1971, we must develop our gang mentality into a conscious revolutionary thinking mentality – or we prisoners will only have one maniac group attacking another maniac group. The CDoC penal system, and the insidious cancerous union of CCPOA just love the gang culture and racist mentality of prisoners, because it puts them in the position they are in today. California’s so-called peace officer association has the power of God in this state. Many don’t know, COINTELPRO, the counter-intelligence program of the ‘60s created the gang culture, and this sick mentality gave power to this beast. After the terrorist program of COINTELPRO against the liberation struggles of the peoples in the ‘60s, this boogey man made us turn the gun against ourselves and we have been blowing out our brains every since. The CDoC penal system is taking everything away from us because we are not men, or convicts – we prisoners in California are playing child games in a man’s world. A game of life and death. We prisoners are now crying to *Prison Focus*, *Justice Xpress* and many grassroots activist groups to help us because we are not men enough to change our situation. I know what time it is, I have a C#, I seen this sick mentality take over this penal system – a fool asked me the other day, where you from, I told him, go ask that pig in the gun tower where’s he from! Keep it real, it’s our fault we let this penal system become so powerful, while we were playing games killing each other, we let our guard down, and CCPOA, politicians, etc., took advantage of our child mentality. The gang culture is nada, nothing, never been, look what this stupid mentality has bread, and what’s so cold about it is, many of us know this stupid mentality is about nothing. It is as if many of you love being abused are hiding behind your race or gang for protection.

Oh we will be butt naked in our cells

with nothing, believe that. Don’t look for help in society because we not doing enough to stop the senseless killings of each other. The gang culture and the race card is dividing us into extinction. We live under terrorist, draconian, genocidal laws like three strikes you’re dead, life in prison over peanuts, and in masses of concentration slave plantations, without family visits, etc. Because we’re not men, stop crying, start organizing, united for liberation, struggles and fight the power. The last issue of *Prison Focus*, winter/spring issue, a very good article called “A Little History Lesson” – read it. Walla Walla State Prison, Washington state pigs and the insidious nature of CCPOA, CDoC penal system are using the race card, racist mentality and the gang culture to strip the whole prison population butt naked, taking away everything. The disease of the gang culture and racist mentality gives power to this beast, the boogey man who has got his foot on our throats. Don’t ask me where I’m from. Ask the pigs. If you, your set, car, or race continues this sickness, then just join CDoC and put on a badge. Right now to this day, we prisoners ain’t doing nada nothing to better our situation, but crying to *Prison Focus*, etc., Afrikans, brown, white, Asian, others, in this penal system are not organizing or struggling to come up with plans to unite around. I’m talking about now. Believe me, I’ve tried, I’ve kept over the years a revolutionary mentality. Books, literature of struggles, etc., I’ve bought and passed out to prisoners papers like the *Revolutionary Worker* that I’ve been getting for years. Yes I’ve personally sacrificed, I felt many times all dress up with nowhere to go, that I’m stuck in an alien generation. I know over the years a small minority comrades have always stayed firm in their revolutionary mentality of liberation, we were just up against a sickness diseased majority gang culture, racists and the boogey man himself, CCPOA. Revolutionary brothers keep your spirit alive and the children in this penal system, stop crying and become men or just put on a CDoC badge.

Documentary: A Panther In Africa

A Panther In Africa, Directed by Aaron Matthews, released in September, is a documentary about Pete O’Neal, a young Black Panther from Kansas City, MO. who has lived in exile in Tanzania for over 30 years.

In 1969 Pete was arrested for transporting a gun across state lines. One year later, he fled the charge and has since lived in Tanzania with his wife Charlotte doing community work in Arusha. The film chronicles Pete and Charlotte’s work and the legacy of the ten-point platform of the Panthers as it continues in its truest forms of umoja (unity) kujichaguilia (self-determination), ujima (collective work and responsibility) and ujaama (cooperative economics). DVD’s and videos are available on loan in hopes that group screenings might occur and funds could be collected for the village water project in Arusha. The film is 70 minutes long.

Contact: marina@napanet.net

Attention Artists

Books To Prisoners wants your art. BTP is struggling financially; our funds come almost entirely from individual donations and fundraising events. We hope to hold an art auction in the spring/summer of 2005. If you think you could create a painting, pano or drawing that someone would buy, and would be willing to donate it to us (no strings attached!!) we would really appreciate it.

If you donate: include with your picture a title, a description of the picture and/or the thoughts behind it, a description of the materials you used, and whether it’s OK to use your name.

Books To Prisoners
92 Pike St. Box 'A'
Seattle, WA 98117

Articles summarized
by Craig Gilmore

GOV. VETOES PRISON BILLS

Despite his promise to “make our Department of Corrections into a real Department of Corrections,” Gov. Schwarzenegger’s recently vetoed a variety of prison reform bills. Among those axed at his desk:

SB 1399, that would have created a system of educational, vocational, and psychosocial assessment of each prisoner entering the system in order to develop a programming plan towards successful reentry. Schwarzenegger called the bill “premature” and pointed to the additional costs. Bill sponsor Sen. Vasconcellos criticized the veto, pointing out that every dollar spent on rehabilitation saves the state \$2.42.

SB 1164, another attempt to reopen state prisons to journalists.

SB 1676, would have required the CDoC to post information about lockdowns on their website.

AB 2742, would have prisoners who are seen by community doctors (outside the prison system) receive the treatment those doctors prescribe.

Orange County Register, Sept. 2, 2004

ARCHITECTS CALL FOR PRISON BOYCOTT

A group of activist architects called Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility has called for all architects to stop designing prisons. The group works to advance peace, green building, social equity, and the growth of stronger communities. They believe that building more prisons contradicts those core values.

The campaign launched from the group’s San Francisco office with a public forum Sept. 22 included presentations by Corey Weinstein of CPF and Rose Braz and Ari Wohlfeiler of Critical Resistance.

“There’s a lot of social injustice in America; I tried to think of that which affects architects in our professional life,” says Raphael Sperry, initiator of the campaign.

Architecture Magazine, Sept. 14, 2004

C.O.S SUE PRISONERS

California prison guards are rolling out a plan to further impoverish prisoners and ex-prisoners. They are suing prisoners in civil

RECENT HISTORY

court for damages in assault cases. Most have been filed in small claims court, but in May, a suit was filed in Monterey Superior Court over an incident at Soledad.

Costs for the c/o were paid by the California Staff Assault Task Force and the suit was supported by the California Correctional Crime Victims Association.

Monterey Herald, May 31, 2004

BATTERED WOMEN’S LAW SIGNED

Legal protection for battered women has been significantly extended with the signing of SB1385 (Burton). The law allows petitions for retrial or resentencing to a wider range of crimes, including those coerced by their batterers into committing crimes; those convicted of voluntary or involuntary manslaughter in the death of their abusive partner; those convicted of attempted murder; and others convicted of crimes where expert testimony on domestic violence could have changed the outcome of their case. The law also expands protections to those convicted of crimes occurring before August 29, 1996.

For more information, contact:

Free Battered Women,

A Project of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners

1540 Market St., Suite 490

San Francisco, CA 94102

COURT CRITICAL OF PRISON DOCTORS

Judge Thelton Henderson convened a panel of medical experts to evaluate the status of health care in California prisons. Their report showed a system of abusive incompetence. “An incompetent retired cardio-thoracic surgeon manages complex internal medicine patients and makes serious life-threatening mistakes on a continual basis,” the report said. Don Spector of the Prison Law Office said, “It was worse than we thought. We always knew there were physicians who had no business

practicing medicine, but we did not know it was this pervasive.”

The panel found that at Sacramento State Prison prisoner requests to see a doctor had been piling up on a desk for months and that the health clinic has no examination table.

San Francisco Chronicle, Los Angeles Times, Aug. 11, 2004

PRISONER DIES: PULLED TOOTH

On the heels of a stinging report on incompetence in California’s prison medical system, Anthony Shumake, a prisoner at Solano State Prison, has died as a result of having a wisdom tooth pulled.

Shumake complained that his jaw and throat swelled after the extraction such that he could not eat and had trouble breathing. He was driven 76 miles to a Manteca hospital rather than to the local Vacaville emergency room, and died in Manteca that night. Legislators are asking whether the fact that the Vacaville hospital has sued the CDoC for \$18 million in unpaid bills influenced prison officials to drive Shumake more than two hours to a distant emergency room.

San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 17, 2004

PRISONER DIES: PEPPER SPRAY

Anthony Brown, a 46-year-old prisoner at California Men’s Colony, died two hours after he was subdued with pepper spray. Prison officials claim that Brown hit a c/o with “his elbow or fist,” causing swelling. After spraying him, officers took Brown to the prison hospital, where staff “noticed he had stopped breathing.” Officials say an investigation is ongoing, but that no prison staff are suspected of causing Brown’s death.

Los Angeles Times, Sept. 1, 2004

CONTAMINATED WATER AT NORCO

Prisoners at California Rehabilitation Center are using socks to filter shower water. Many have stopped washing their faces. Others won’t drink prison water or eat food cooked in the prison kitchen. Hunger strike? Dirty strike? No, just attempts to protect themselves from *Helicobacter pylori*, a bacterium that is known to cause rashes, bloating, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, ulcers and cancers.

“We came to prison to do time, not to be contaminated,” said former prisoner Tina Perez. Released July 4, she is still ill. Prison officials claim that the few dozen prisoners who are infected brought the bacteria into prison with them. Dr. Sarv Grover, chief medical officer, blames the infection on prisoners who didn’t wash their hands well as children.

But Judy Greenspan of CPF says, “There are thousands of inmates statewide who are infected with H. pylori.” “I think it’s coming from the prison kitchens, and the cells are dirty,” she said. “The conditions they live in are pretty bad.”

Riverside Press-Enterprise, Aug. 4, 2004



CPF’s Judy Greenspan speaks to a reporter

CHINO CO CHARGED IN RICO CASE

Federal prosecutors have charged former Chino c/o Shayne Allyn Ziska with three counts of racketeering and two counts of deprivation of prisoners’ rights. Ziska is charged with helping Nazi Low Riders set up two stabbings and with transporting speed and heroin for the group. The indictment also claims that he helped gang members change cells, taught them martial arts and taught white prisoners the ideology of white supremacy.

In Feb. 2002, federal officials charged twelve alleged members of the Nazi Low Riders with racketeering. Two pled guilty. The CDoC put Ziska on administrative leave, but he returned to work in a clerical position eight months ago. He is free without bail pending trial.

The Daily Journal, July 30, 2004

PRISON POPULATION UP

Justice Department figures for 2003 show significant increases in the numbers of people in jail, in prison and on parole. The U.S. prison population was 1,387,269 last year and 691,301 were in jail. Those figures represent increases of 2.3 percent in the prison population and 3.9 percent in

the jail population over 2002.

The number of people on probation or parole in California was 485,039. The number of parolees increased 3.1 percent to 774,588. There were 4,073,987 on probation. Black probationers accounted for 41 percent of the total; whites 40 percent.

New York Times, July 26, 2004

LOOPHOLE REMAINS OPEN IN CCPOA CONTRACT

After days of intensive lobbying, SB 1731 (Romero) which would have closed a major loophole in the state’s scandal-plagued prison investigation system, failed in the Assembly.

The bill would have overturned a provision in the latest CCPOA contract that requires investigators to turn over all information, including the prisoner/accuser’s name, to the union before any investigative interviews take place. Critics have pointed out that this condition makes any accusation or whistle-blowing even more dangerous. So Senator Romero sought to have disciplinary investigations done confidentially.

Her bill was supported by Investigator General Matthew Cate and Los Angeles DA, Steve Cooley. In June, Judge Thelton Henderson’s special monitor reported that the contract provision “renders fair investigations into the abuse of force almost impossible.” But the CCPOA fought against it and despite passage in the state Senate, it was defeated in the Assembly. “Today, power and privilege were ceded to the CCPOA,” Romero said. “I’m extremely disappointed.. Justice took a walk.”

Los Angeles Times, Aug. 31, 2004

HIGH DESERT DEATHS AND LOCKDOWN

Officials at High Desert State Prison announced that in the aftermath of the July 13 melee that left one prisoner dead and 18 injured, the prison would remain on lockdown indefinitely. The lockdown is the second for the Susanville prison this year. HDSP also announced that the day following the melee, 49-year-old Pablo Palacios was found dead in his cell, hung by a t-shirt.

Associated Press, July 23, 2004

FEDS DROP FOLSOM INVESTIGATION

A federal investigation into the April

2002 riot at Folsom seems to have ended. Although Eastern District U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott sent a note to the Governor saying that no action will be taken, he said, “To say we’re closing it is a misnomer.”

Sources claim that the investigators seem to have done little but review CDoC reports and memos on the riot. Neither the assistant warden whistle blower who went public with the mismanagement of the riot nor the Corrections administrator who wrote a report on civil rights violations at Folsom were interviewed. And according to CCPOA chapter president, so far as he knows, neither were any of the c/os. The CDoC’s investigation “revealed” that Northern Hispanics had been locked down for 20 months. The Inspector General’s report showed that then Warden Diana K. Butler’s use of force review contained “substantial irregularities,” and that she “failed to take appropriate and prompt action” and “made questionable management decisions” in conducting her post-riot assessment and in enforcing job changes as a result of it. Butler has since been fired.

Sacramento Bee, June 16, 2004

SOMEDAY WE’LL LOVE AGAIN

someday this will all get old
and the prison walls
will crumble to the ground
and the owl and coyote
will take up watch
that the memories
will never live again
and the wind
and the rain
will cleanse
the horrors
and the distance
will lose the sound
of men’s voices
and all footsteps
will lead away
never to return

*Edward Garza
Corcoran, CA*

IN ED'S OPINION

[*Note: These comments are my own opinions and do not necessarily reflect the ideology of California Prison Focus.*]

By Ed Mead

My co-editor, Leslie, has been busy on another project this Summer and Fall. While she was here to for choosing articles and editing, I was left with much of the burden of reading and sorting incoming *Prison Focus* mail, work she usually does. I've just finished processing a half a shopping bag full of mail, mostly from prisoners. I now see that I have to give some of you a little reality check. There are a lot of letters containing some version of the "innocent victim of blind justice" song. Another variation is "I have litigation pending and I need your assistance." This is usually followed by requests for us to contact legal professionals, doing legal research, perform copying, typing, make phone calls, etc. While Leslie and I welcome your struggle-related articles, inspirational poetry, and artwork, we simply do not have the resources to answer all your letters nor the inclination to perform errands for you. Let me explain....

It is my personal opinion that prisons are factories that produce a product, and that product is the alienated and angry individuals it releases to the streets. This product does not serve the social good, as the rage caused by this alienation eventually finds expression—it gets taken out on wives, children, neighbors, or the community in general. I am not so much concerned with getting this or that person out sooner because the factory will still be spewing out its destructive product regardless of the release of any individual prisoner—tomorrow or ten years from now. The object is to shut down the economic system that feeds the factory, and then the factory itself.

A nice part of that mail was from prisoners expressing support for my becoming co-editor of *Prison Focus* and for the progressive thrust of my articles. Thank you for those warm comments, they are appreciated. Yet I do have critic, both inside and out. One prisoner wrote and told me that my addition to the staff of *PF* was the worst thing that has ever happened to the

newsletter—not because it is now being published regularly, but because I unashamedly express my politics. The problem seems to be with my use of bad words; words like "bourgeoisie" and "ruling class" and "imperialism" to explain my world view and assessment of the prisoners' movement. Maybe it will contribute to better understanding if I explain how I came to have this outlook. It's not a very long story....

In the late 1960s I was just another state-raised convict doing a ten year federal bit in McNeil Island penitentiary. The Viet Nam war (In Vietnam they call it the American war) was waging, but I didn't pay much attention to it because I wasn't at all political. If someone had asked me my opinion on the war I might have said something like this: "We ought to bomb them gooks back into the stone-age and then pave their country over into a parking lot." Not because I felt that way, but because I'd heard some older men express that notion and in the absence of an opinion of my own I would have parroted what I'd heard elsewhere.

Then something happened on my way to being just another crime statistic, the Men's Advisory Committee at McNeil Island called for a prison-wide work strike over conditions. (Oh, and did I mention that I was innocent of the federal crime I was doing time for? Yeah. I've done a lot of crime and a lot of time. This was the only instance in which I was totally not guilty. So I was angry, too.)

The strike was launched and, predictably, the prison administration overreacted, strengthening our resolve to fight on. Before long we had 600 demonstrators across the water on the dock protesting our treatment on the inside. Included with the demonstrators were some of the leaders of Seattle's chapter of the Black Panther Party, singer and song writer Pete Seeger, and even the then anti-war activist Jane Fonda. Their being out there on the dock in the middle of nowhere to support our struggle impressed me, so much so that after the strike I started a little process of self-examination.

When I began the process I did not understand that it would lead to my choosing sides. All I saw was that the folks who

avored the "bomb-'em-into-the-stone-age" line were the same ones supported the death penalty, who opposed paroles, who wanted longer sentences, and who generally demonized prisoners. On the other hand were the anti-war activists, who were against the death penalty, who busted Timothy Leary out of prison, and who supported prisoners and their struggles. Gee, tough choice! The next step was to find out what these lefties were all about. I started to read what they read. The next thing I knew I was a dirty Red.

I had started doing time at the age of 13. Since the age of 19 I'd always identified as a criminal. That's what I was, and I wanted to be a better or more successful criminal. Then one day I woke up and realized that I was no longer identifying criminally, I was now a radical! I didn't know what kind of radical I was, but I knew I was no longer a criminal. I had found Jesus, as it were. I now had an ideology that enabled me to understand and change the world I lived in. I became a prisoner activist.

Finding Jesus, or in this case Marx, was not enough to make me committed radical. I could not just put my toe in the water. The choice came for me in 1971 when some prisonrat called me into his office and told me that the class action prisoner rights case I had filed would be my undoing unless I dismissed it. "The choice is yours," he said, "either dismiss the suit and go to the farm... (he hinted at the possibility of early release) or find yourself on the bus to Leavenworth." I wish I could say I spit in the official's face and told him to bring on his bus. What really happened is that I went directly from his office to the law library, where I told my comrades of the attempted bribe and threat. After that I could hardly back down. Before long I was indeed on the bus to Leavenworth, where I worked at organizing a prisoners' union. Nearly thirty-five years have passed since then and I've never regretted that decision.

Now it may be that my "finding Jesus" was to put my faith in a false prophet, and that I've squandered all these years. I am open (if doubtful) to the notion that my critics have a better way, that they have a more effective strategy for uniting the diverse elements needed to win the human rights of prisoners and other oppressed

peoples. If they do have a more effective means or idea for accomplishing these goals then let's discuss them. If they have a clearer vision of the kind of future society in which we would like to raise our children, then that too should be shared.

So far the discussion has been to brow-beat me because I'm a communist and because I write from a class conscious perspective. I am not sure what perspective should I be writing from, maybe if we implement this or that reform then prisons under capitalism will be just dandy? Are prisoners strong enough to implement even token reforms without allies from other progressive struggles? On what common ground will we reach these other comrades? And on what basis will we achieve unity on the inside?

I genuinely try to look for what is right in criticism, not for what is wrong with it. But red-baiting is not criticism. Quite frankly, my reaction to red-baiting is similar to the reaction of my critics to Marxist terminology: it leads me nowhere. There are dozens of powerful grassroots struggles out there: protect the environment; abolish the death penalty; save the right to abortion; animal rights; restitution for slavery; save the whales and dolphins, etc. What analysis brings those struggles together under one umbrella? To me, Marxism identifies the common enemy and explains the reasons these movements should unite. If Marxism doesn't do the job for you, please let me know what other analysis, terminology or reasons we have for bringing our very diverse struggles together?



In Recognition and with Great Honor, Presente L to R: Sundiata Tate (SQ6), Elder Freeman (BPP), Geronimo Ji Jaga (BPP), Bato (SQ6), Mateo (CPF), Richard Aoki (BPP) at LaPena, Berkeley, October 2004.

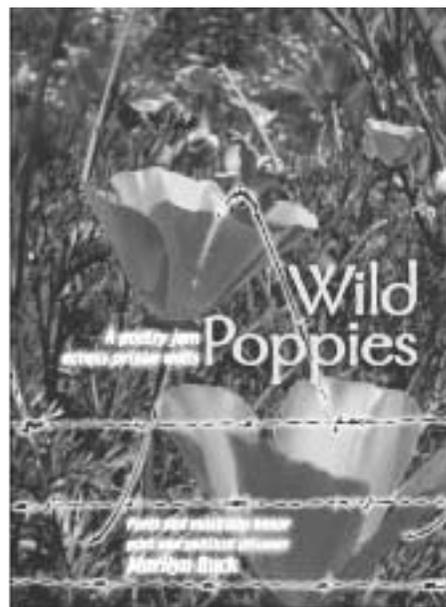
MARILYN BUCK WILD POPPIES

A poetry jam -
Across prison walls
October 10, 2004. Berkeley, CA

One of America's most respected women prisoners is also a productive artist, poet and much beloved. Her words resonated, a-la razon de vivir, Sunday to a captivated audience. Poetic words that give reason for being, forever living and writing within a restricted life of indefinite imprisonment. Marilyn Buck shares much with us of life, and much admired especially within the active prison movement. Her history of dedicated struggle and imprisonment these past 23 years is much too real, part of history and worth learning about see www.Freedomarchives.org And while kept away from her support party in a world unknown to us, Marilyn's presence was nonetheless felt deeply at the historic gathering place La Pena, the popular Berkeley site chosen for the poetry jam. The house filled, spilled outside and in total numbers was guesstimated at a few hundred avid supporters presente. For the few who know Marilyn personally, who visit with her at the Federal Women's Facility at Dublin, she is a growing and vital personal experience. For many other attendees present and not so familiar, they left the revolutionary jam no longer strangers. Some went home having purchased "Wild Poppies" to again listen to the many poetic voices of struggle therein. Her warm voice recorded for the event was piped in over the sound system and had a stirring effect throughout. A short video made behind prison walls was also shown during the talent filled program. In it, Marilyn is seen all hugs and smiles with her dearly beloved comrades in struggle. Viva Marilyn Buck. Viva la Lucha.

Her history of dedicated struggle and imprisonment these past 23 years is much too real, part of history and worth learning about see www.Freedomarchives.org And while kept away from her support party in a world unknown to us, Marilyn's presence was nonetheless felt deeply at the historic gathering place La Pena, the popular Berkeley site chosen for the poetry jam. The house filled, spilled outside and in total numbers was guesstimated at a few hundred avid supporters presente. For the few who know Marilyn personally, who visit with her at the Federal Women's Facility at Dublin, she is a growing and vital personal experience. For many other attendees present and not so familiar, they left the revolutionary jam no longer strangers. Some went home having purchased "Wild Poppies" to again listen to the many poetic voices of struggle therein. Her warm voice recorded for the event was piped in over the sound system and had a stirring effect throughout. A short video made behind prison walls was also shown during the talent filled program. In it, Marilyn is seen all hugs and smiles with her dearly beloved comrades in struggle. Viva Marilyn Buck. Viva la Lucha.

—Bato



WILD POPPIES: THE CD

*...a poetry jam across prison walls
Poets and musicians honor poet and
political prisoner Marilyn Buck*

This CD is a poetry jam in space—created across and despite razor wire, prison bars and censored phone lines. It is a gathering of poets to celebrate the work of sister poet Marilyn Buck, who has spent more than 20 years in U.S. prisons for her anti-imperialist politics and actions.

In the eyes of the government, Marilyn is an enemy of the state, despised for her role in freeing BLA leader Assata Shakur, hated for her willingness to risk her life and freedom for a world imaginable only to a revolutionary—or a poet. Yet for the poets who rushed to lend their voices and their words to this collection, Marilyn is someone very different—a woman who lives for transformation.

Through her political activism and writing, she creates the possibility of a world of social justice and peace. Through her approach to prison, she transforms the repression and censorship of imprisonment and, in the process, has become a poet. Includes tributes from Kwame Ture and Amiri Baraka.

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CPF PRESENTE AT CMPP CONFERENCE

“The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison”

San Diego, May 29. California Prison Focus (CPF) went south this trip, from San Pancho to San Diego for the (CMPP) Chicano-Mexicano Prisoner Project’s 8th annual *conferencia* at Chicano Park. Among this year’s *temas* were: **the rich get richer the poor get prison: racism, poverty, and the unjust legal system, the rich who steal from the poor: and destroying Mother earth e tal.** It was quite awhile ago since I’d been down to la *Logan*. I’d first met Chicano legend, Corky Gonzalez here in 1977—from the *la cruzada* (Crusade for Justice/Denver). Also Corky is the poet of the great epic “**I am Joaquin.**” Both of us were there for the *desvelo*, unveiling of the Murals. Many of the paintings are now old and faded, rained and smog’d on now. But I still remember they’d shone brightly that sunny day a quarter-century ago. Like the murals, I’d faded a lot since then, too.

Chicano Park is of significant political history. Part of a *barrio*’s established mythology. Chicano Park (fyi) was one of the first “takeover parks” in the country during the radical 70’s. *El Parque* was not gladly bestowed upon the poor people of the predominantly Chicano-Mexicano *barrio*. It was only won through, sacrifice, struggle and unity. That’s saying a lot for Raza, agreeing on anything *de unavez*. The community took the rundown, infested hobo/wino freeway underpass, and over a period of time and many problems, turned it into a community cultural center it is today: complete with Azteca outdoor stage, with green lawns for kids to play and a place where people could meet, be safe and feel welcome. I felt the tribes again gathering. For those of us *veteranos* who were around back then, we remember, that so-called third-world communities at home (during Vietnam times): this one, only miles away from one of the most impoverished nations on earth, were on the revolutionary rise during the 70’s. We had too few leaders to lead the way or to teach others, how to stand up to the status quo. How to say, *chale no vale*/ we won’t go, #*! While our Youth were either being sent to war or went to prison. *Porque* being **under** the so-called, status quo most of ones life, can condition one’s *mente* into

believing in inequality, for ourseleves and for others, and in accepting the idea of second-class citizenship within a so-called democracy. Being in prison is definitely not first-class, *piensalo*.

En Logan as elsewhere, where Raza people live in *colonias* in America, we have ever present the indomitable *las comadres*: those solid and staying mothers, sisters and aunts, *e abuelitas e tal* who can hold everybody together and make things work. They struggle long, hard and usually unrecognized, to empower the rest of us. Those woman who still send us pictures from home, while in prison and remind us we are not alone. Only much later in life, it seems, do we think of showing our best side and appreciation to our Raza women by remaining free, and having them proud of us... for a change. I was again glad to see a still active and together Chicano Park.

I was accompanied on this mission of solidarity by our own aspiring CPF legal beagle, and homeboy Mateo who also is our DJ @ KPOO /SF 89.5fm (**for our FOCUS program every Thursday 11:00 am. Check it out!**). Mateo, like myself, is also a Che Guevara aficionado: t-shirt, dreds and cigar combined. *Orale*. In appreciation that, you, youngblood, drove all night and let ol’ dog sleep. *No pedos* in the backseat, please.

Beautifully colored murals, greeted us in the morning: immense images on immense granite columns. People had said (it) couldn’t be done. The City wouldn’t let it happen. City Halls in general, we recall, were hostile to protesters back then and to **any** people’s aspirations. But the intended *foco*, *el parque*, was secured and worked on over a period of time by a united community. *Y Presto*, Chicano Park came into being. The women of the *barrio* led the struggle against an entrenched and traditionally racist city bureaucracy. But how many Chicanos today know this history? *Quien sabe kimo sabe*.

I recall being told that Cesar Chavez had come to lend his support during the time and had stood fast alongside the local *activistas*. **Chicano power** as we understand it today, was still new then. And in a way, it still is new, to many of the young,

especially to prisoners and youth offenders who from lack of experience, early on, are confronted by the hostile face of authority. Many young prisoners will never again know freedom as we know it. At such times, it is the *veteranos* among us, who must give support and wise council and teach thru example. The mind can remain free under the worst circumstances. ‘Keeping the faith’ is a life long protracted struggle. To lead others, one must also be educated and know how the system works. *Orale*.

Past heroes and revolutionary fighters for justice, symbols of people’s past struggles world wide, are all proudly displayed and emblazoned onto the skeletal bones of the *barrio*’s freeway underpass. Prisoners are prominently displayed. *Barrio Logan*, still very poor in material things, is now still much richer for the past *lucha* that demonstrates what others, are able to accomplish ... together.

CMPP, the sponsor *de la conferencia* and some of it’s leadership, still carry on the fight for justice after all these years. *Orale Ernesto e Cathy e compas*: the fight for justice on behalf of those oppressed behind prison walls. To the many absent members of this community, wherever incarcerated, wherever buried, we want to salute your continuing courage, steadfastness and Raza beauty.

From across the Southwest and elsewhere, activists, young and *veteranos*, converged to speak-out and reaffirm, individual commitments to solidarity-work with all our imprisoned communities inside America’s mammoth prison industrial complex.

Keynote speaker this year, was veterana Cecilia Ubilla, a former political prisoner held in Chile during the 70’s by the fascist Pinochet regime, installed, after the overthrow of Socialist President Salvador Allende. Ms. Ubilla’s first hand account of her brutal imprisonment: her endurance and eventual liberation, gives hope to many of the reps and families present with gente and “loved ones” similarly held in Americas totalitarian prison gulags. Torture **does exist** inside these prison facilities: no doubt about it, just ask any Raza who’s been there.

Celebrated by the attendees, was the announcement of the recent release of Maria Suarez from Federal Deportation Custody. She was earlier freed by state degree, after having spent 20 years inside California's woman prison @ Chowchilla. Ms. Suarez was serving 25-to-life, for supposedly, aiding in the murder of her slave master: the man who bought her at age 16 for \$200 in Mexico. She will now be able to remain in the country. We made a special appeal that all women in prison today under same circumstances (any form of abuse by men of women, serving time, who were forced to kill or be killed) to be immediately set free.

La conferencia brought both youth and veterans, women and men, people of all colors and ethnic diversity, all urging a strong united front and the continued support for our growing imprisoned communities. California alone holds approximately 162,000 prisoners at present: 75 percent of who are people of color. Women are the fastest growing imprisoned population. Eighty percent of all women under lock and key are mothers. In one of Amerika's most notorious gulags at Pelican Bay State Prison more than 60 percent of prisoners in

SHU (security housing units) are Chicano. VSPW has a women's SHU as brutal as any in the state. Each prisoner in SHU cost an average of \$50,000 annually to keep warehoused under extreme security conditions that are unneeded and a cruel pretense so guards can have good jobs (see *Castillo vs. Almeida* case—relief on the way). Prisoners are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars over a period of time, so we believe, that calling places like Pelican Bay and Corcoran, slave plantations and third-world concentration camps, aptly applies to those prison facilities.

Workshops featured during the daylong symposium were the following:

The Destruction of our Youth: Prisons Outside the Walls: Organizing for Justice & Freedom. Endorsed groups participating: Union del Barrio: Chicano-Mexicano Prisoner Project: Committee on Raza Rights: Raza Rights Coalition: Voz Fronteriza: Comite de Mujeres: Patricia Marin Memorial: Barrio Defense Committee: Afrikan Socialist Party: Capana to Free Alvaro Luna Hernandez: Leonard Peltier Defense Com. Centro Historico Lucio Cabana:

Justicia for Maria Suarez: California Prison Focus: Mecha de SDSU: Brown Berets de Aztlan: Mexicanos Unidos en Defense del Pueblo. Raza Press Association.

Bato's solidarity statement with all political prisoners delivered to CMPP:

Unmentioned but unforgotten ... are included in statement. We come to *la conferencia* with fraternal greetings & solidarity of the comrades in our CPF organization. We reaffirm our love and support for all political prisoners, imprisoned families, mothers and fathers, our *comunidades, la Raza, gente de uticolores, todos los oprimidos e encarcelados*. That unity: and one love for all humanity, continued persistence, override all obstacles and personal setbacks. Help us ALL, to free from oppression and injustice, ALL prisoners and caged humanity.

We reaffirm our support and love for all the mothers with children doing time. In California prisons, prisons anywhere in America, in the world and anywhere in custody where mothers are separated from their children and their children's need. We remember our sisters, nieces, daughters,

grandchildren. Our sons, fathers, brothers, cuz'.

We express our love and solidarity with Leonard Peltier and all indigenous people held captive. In the spirit of Crazy Horse resist!

Free Mumia abu Jamal. Free the last of the San Quentin 6 Hugo Lyon Pinell (since 1965). Free Ruchell 'Cinque' Magee, the last survivor of Marin county courthouse "shootout" on August 7, 1970. Free Marilyn Buck. Solidarity with all Jailhouse Lawyers (jhl's) "fighting the good fight." Steve Castillo, Paul Redd, Donny Johnson et. al. Mike viet Ngo, Luis Rodriguez: Free the Cuban 5, Antonio Guerrero: Rene Gonzalez, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino aka Luis Medina, Fernando Gonzalez aka Ruben Campa (all 5 in separate Fed. Detentions (see www. Freethethefive.org). Free Alvaro Luna Hernandez in Texas penal colony, Free Ramsey Muniz: Free Oscar Lopez Rivera and all our Puertoriqueno cuz': Free Jalil al-Amin: Sundiata Acoli: all former Panthers and militants: Viva la memoria e ejemplo de Flores-Magon (died in Leavenworth pen 1933) Free all prisoners in Guantanamo. Free all prisoners held by the MIC: SHUT THE SHU's: End 3-Strikes: End the Death Penalty: Stop Executions in America. Reparations. Return All Stolen Lands to the Indigenous Peoples of America. Jail the real Criminals. All power to the imprisoned and oppressed class. Together we shall overcome.



L to R: Bato, Mateo, Mo Ashida, Tappa Johnson, and Minica Lyi at San Diego Conference, May 2004.

HELP LEARNING YOUR NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

The Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival works with Native American prisoners interested in revitalizing their indigenous languages. The Advocates will research word lists and try to find language mentors on the outside to work with prisoners. Contact:

Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival
 221 Idora Ave.
 Vallejo, CA 94591

ONE NATION THAT LIKES PRISONS: HOW THE U.S. COMPARES TO THE U.K.

By Corey Weinstein, MD, CCHP

One reason I like traveling outside of the United States is that it helps me put this country in perspective. In the spring I was in England to meet with representatives of the World Health Organization's Health in Prison Project and administrators working with the United Kingdom's Prison Medical Department. It was great to spend a week talking to people and touring UK prisons. (I was there as a member of the American Public Health Association's Task Force that wrote the 2003 APHA Standards for Health Services in Correctional Institutions). We shared our Standards with England's prison medical department that is being fully integrated into their National Health Service (NHS).

The weather in May was unseasonably warm and the flowers were blooming in the parks and the fields. We made our way around on efficient public transportation, even taking a first-class train from London to Durham (in the north) where we visited men's and women's prisons. The countryside was beautiful with rolling green hills and fields bursting with green. It is comforting to see the richness of the land knowing that it has been continuously cultivated for more than one thousand years. No dust bowl here.

In London we spent an interesting afternoon with Professor Andrew Coyle and Lady Vivian Stern from the International Center for Prison Studies (ICPS) at Kings College. Dr. Coyle had been a prison governor (warden) for more than 20 years before creating the Center. The ICPS has done a lot of work in Central Asia, the former USSR and Africa and in Moldavia and Kazakhstan they have helped develop needle exchange programs. One of their important goals is to bring custodial and prison medical people together for public health goals like TB control, HIV and HepC prevention.

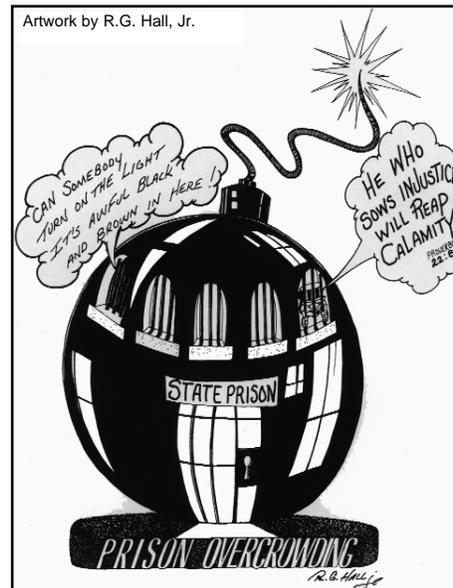
An outcome of their work came the understanding and breakdown of the relationship between countries and incarceration style:

1. Eastern Europe/Central Asia – These were previously part of the USSR's gulag

with a very high rate of incarceration and very harsh conditions. But they are now rapidly decreasing their prison population and are interested in changing the old Soviet methods and becoming more humane and community oriented.

2. Former colonial countries – In the liberated colonial states prison is not an indigenous concept. Rather it is a colonial institution and seen as part of an oppressive past. There is a great possibility for change in these places.

3. Latin America – Prisons are places of great violence and the custodians are often not in control. Here the government often wants to change conditions, but is stymied and is requesting assistance.



4. Europe – The incarceration rate is low. Prison is a place of last resort, and the goal of incarceration is successful reintegration back into the community. Sentences are not long and punishments in prison are not severe.

5. Countries that like prisons – There is only one nation in this category, the United States with 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the prisoners.

Dr. Coyle thought that the U.S. mass incarceration habit was a result of our history as a slave state, rampant institutionalized racism and our need to label certain people as "other" who are undeserving of societal care or concern. It was chilling to consider how the U.S. stands alone among industrialized nations as a lover of punitive, racist

and ineffective solutions to societal problems; and how deep the roots of these injustices go.

UK PRISONS AND SUPERMAX FACILITIES

While riding north to Durham on a fast train we continued our discussions with our hosts about the importance of prison medicine being fully integrated into the National Health Service in England. Prisoners would become ordinary patients served by community physicians and the cost funded through the regional funding organizations for primary care that fund all basic medical clinical services for the area. The prison medical staff will be paid by the NHS, not the prison system, and responsible medically and ethically to the NHS.

As the countryside whizzed by we ate a gourmet meal and drank some French wine. In Durham we stayed in a 500 year old inn near the town center and got a tour of the thousand-year-old Cathedral before our dinner meeting.

The next day we visited two prisons, an old one that held mostly pretrial men and had a small wing for sentenced women, and a new prison for men. One thing was very clear: the custodial staff was sure that a prison could only be a humane place and well controlled and managed if the staff developed strong and positive relationships with the prisoners. Over and over again we were shown how such relationships were developed. Each prisoner is assigned to a particular officer with whom they can speak when needed. And the officer is responsible for being available and getting to know the prisoner. They have a strong anti-bullying policy that is enforced by staff.

Most astounding to me was how they treat prisoners with serious disciplinary problems. Of course there is a segregation unit for short-term punishment, but no prisoner spends more than seven days there. The goal of all discipline is to return the prisoner to the general population as soon as possible. But like all prison systems they have a few prisoners who require long term segregation because of continued rule breaking.

In a country of 50 million people the UK has 75,000 women and men incarcerated in

BOOK REVIEW

LUCASVILLE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF A PRISON UPRISING

By Craig Gilmore

138 prisons. Of those 75,000 only 40 men are assigned to long term segregation. We visited the Close Supervision Center (CSC) at the Durham prison complex. Ten men were housed in a small unit with a day room and communal dining area. When we were there they were all out of their cells. Two were using exercise equipment, two were at computers and the others were working with various counselors and teachers. They have three sessions each day in which they are engaged in some useful activity like gym, hobby craft, education or therapy. Each man is assigned a personal officer and the staff has weekly meetings to work out “needs analysis” for each prisoner. All of this extra service and attention has one goal: to get them back to mainline through rehabilitative activity. How different from U.S. supermax units could the English approach be?

The other lockup unit we visited was a new 80-man cellblock called Westgate for prisoners with dangerous and severe personality disorders (DSPD). If successful in reforming such prisoners, this unit could set a new standard for prison management of some of the most difficult prisoners in any system. It’s a completely self-contained facility with its own separate kitchen, laundry, canteen, medical and psychiatric departments. There are classrooms, large day-rooms, therapy rooms, computers, chapel and library. The custodial staff is specially trained and works only in West-gate. The treatment and custodial staff will make collective decisions about the care of each prisoner. Their goal is to use intensive therapy and group work to teach the men with DSPD to behave in a more social and acceptable way, and return successfully to the prison general population and to society.

It was simply a joy to spend a week with prison medical, administrative and custodial staff who share ideas and values so lacking in the U.S.. By and large the people we met understood that prisons need to serve social goals of rehabilitation, public health and healing, goals which complete the task of public safety that confinement only begins. These are considered radical concepts in the U.S., but they are quite ordinary in the UK. After 30 years of visiting prisoners, I thought that if I ever decided to leave the U.S. at least there was a prison health service in which I could work and be happy.

The 1993 uprising at Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) in Lucasville left 10 people dead and put five prisoners on death row. The 11 day occupation of SOCF by prisoners is one of the longest in US prison history. SOCF was built to replace the Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus, where prisoners rioted in 1968. After it opened in 1972, it quickly acquired a reputation for particularly brutal treatment of prisoners. Two Black prisoners, alleged to have “touched” white nurses, were found beaten to death in the hole. No charges were brought in those deaths.



The Lucasville 14 requested they be stripped of their U.S. citizenship and sent to another country. Three cut fingers off their own hands and mailed them to then President Jimmy Carter in an attempt to get out of Lucasville and out of America.

Warden Arthur Tate was known as a petty and violent disciplinarian. “New rules were enforced daily, disregarded, then re-implemented weeks later,” according to former SOCF prisoner Chrystof Knecht.

On April 11, 1993, prisoners returning to L block overwhelmed staff. Badly injured guards were released and eight oth-

ers held hostage. The three major groups of organized prisoners each moved into one of the block’s pods: Muslims in L-6, Aryan Brotherhood in L-2 and Black Gangster Disciples in L-1. Representatives from those groups came together to create a team to negotiate and to manage L block.

We know a lot about this prison uprising because the state almost immediately put a listening device in a tunnel under L Block to monitor the prisoner leadership council’s discussions. Among the complaints and demands raised by prisoners were: firing Warden Tate, inadequate medical services, indiscriminate mixing of prisoners from different security levels, punishment for alleged gang membership based on appearance. And Muslim prisoners were incensed about a TB test that their religious leadership ordered them not to take.

Four days into the uprising negotiations over prisoner demands including access to the media were derailed when the prisoners announced that a guard, Bobby Vallandingham, had been killed. But both sides regrouped and a negotiated 21-point settlement was signed. On April 21, 1993 407 prisoners surrendered and the remaining five hostages released.

The state’s priority was to convict prisoners, especially prisoner leadership, of the murder of Vallandingham and the nine prisoners, said to be snitches, who were killed during the uprising. When the Office of the Public Defender began representing prisoners before they were interviewed by law enforcement, the state objected that PD’s job should begin only after individuals are charged, not before. So most prisoners were interrogated without legal counsel. Pressure to snitch was intense; threats were made and deals cut to protect snitches from prosecution, especially if they would confirm the participation of prisoner leaders in murder plots.

Reginald Wilkerson, head of the state’s corrections department, said, “The key to winning convictions was eroding the loyalty and fear inmates felt towards their gangs.”

Five prisoners were convicted of murder and now sit on Ohio's death row as their appeals are heard.

Lynd shows how Warden Tate began forced integrated celling in an attempt to intensify racial divisions among prisoners. Little Rock Red tells Lynd, "His [Tate's] oppressive policies and practices were bound to cause an explosion sooner or later, and he wanted the explosion to be between the whites and blacks, rather than the prisoners and the administration."

But Lynd shows that during the uprising, a sense of solidarity formed among various prison groups, creating what one prisoner called a "prison race."

George Skatzes told a group of prisoners during the uprising, "This is against the administration. We are all in this together. They are against everyone in here who is blue [the color of the prisoners' uniforms]."



Wilkerson decided after Lucasville that Ohio needed a stronger tool against prisoner organizing and pushed for the supermax at Youngstown. The Lucasville Five were among the first transferred in. Retribution, isolation and terror are tools Ohio uses against prisoners who dare to organize alliances among all prisoner groups.

Lynd offers clear, concise and compelling evidence of misconduct and collusion by prosecutors and prison administration at Lucasville. Their goal has been to divide prisoners among racial and gang affiliations to prevent prisoner unity. The Lucasville Five still sit on death row.

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SENTENCING-GUIDELINE STUDY FINDS DISPARITIES

The number of minority inmates in federal penitentiaries, as a percentage of all federal prisoners, has increased sharply since sentencing guidelines took effect in 1987 and now accounts for a majority of the prison population, a study reviewing 15 years of data has concluded.

The study was conducted by the United States Sentencing Commission, which sets the guidelines for federal judges. The panel examined how well the guidelines had brought uniformity to punishments, and found that while sentencing had become "more certain and predictable," disparities still existed among races and regions of the country, with blacks receiving harsher punishment than whites.

The study found that the average prison sentence today is about 50 months, twice what it was in 1984, when lawmakers began calling for a uniform sentencing system. The difference, the study determined, is due mostly to the guidelines' elimination of

parole for offenses like drug trafficking.

"The big unanswered question is, Do we need to have sentences growing this way?" said one sentencing expert, Douglas A. Berman, a law professor at Ohio State University.

Whites made up 35 percent of the prison population in 2002, a sharp decline from nearly 60 percent in 1984, according to the report. It attributed the decrease to a striking growth in Hispanics imprisoned on immigration charges - to 40 percent of federal prisoners, from about 15 percent.

In addition, the gap in punishment between blacks and whites widened. While blacks and whites received an average sentence of slightly more than two years in 1984, blacks now stay in prison for about six years, compared with about four years for whites.

The study found harsher punishments generally in the South than in the Northeast and the West.

November 27, 2004, New York Times

CPF'S 2003 - 2004 GOLD STAR REPORT

- Our weekly KPOO radio show
- Castillo settlement creating fairer rules for gang validation
- Surviving without our founders and have new leadership
- Funding by more agencies than ever
- High quality and on-time newsletter
- Organized a functional Board of Directors
- Led ban on sexual molesting pat search at CCWF and VSPW
- Got grant for the Rule 53 campaign
- Handing a huge prisoner mail load
- Moved and outfitted a larger and more functional office
- Some excellent media attention
- LIP successes in BPT hearings, medical advocacy, and racial segregation in CDoC
- Held successful retreat that developed goals for next year



Above: Some of the members who attended the Annual CPF Retreat.

Letters.... continued from page 2

assigned to the new unit.

Inmates cite the following as reasons for the protest: improper ventilation in cells, toilets that don't flush, no access to or limited resources in the law library, confiscation of individual property without justification, and mocking and degrading comments from officers assigned there.

Prison officials responded to the inmate uprising with the use of pepper spray and showed no regard for the health of those not involved in the uprising. This response was preceded by inmates boarding up windows. Inmates involved in the protest were stripped of their mattresses, forced to sleep in shorts and a tee shirt on the concrete floor and were required to eat meals with their hands for nearly ten days.

I am writing this to bring much needed attention to the inhumane conditions that exist at High Desert State Prison. Officers assigned to the prison readily admit that officials foresaw many of the problems and failed to take the necessary precautions.

—A. Martinez, HDSP

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Prison Focus,

Thank you for revising the editorial "Reflections on Class Crime" in regard to the anonymous sex offender's complaint. However, I beg to differ with your view in response to (pg. 31) to the effect, "There are women, even compassionate ones, who would say the daily reality of rapists on the inside is a good thing." While there may be some women who would say that, I don't think that a truly compassionate women would either say it or share that view.

From one who has been a victim (on more than one occasion) of the criminal conduct in question, whatever my feelings and sentiments have been in response to the criminal conduct (then and now), a malicious, revengeful, cruel and spiteful attitude has never been among them.

To the contrary— while initial reactions were hardly sympathetic, given the conduct, I never harbored ill will. At worst I may have felt anger, a sense of frustration at the behavior, and curiosity why some men don't have better sense, manners, social skills and feelings for the rights of others. (Not to mention the apparent lack of self-respect to put themselves in a position that could under certain circumstances

result in a very negative outcome for them.)

Given the harsh, inhumane and unreasonable treatment typically provided sex offenders under the guise of modern and civil commitment laws, I am far more likely to sympathize with the sex offender, and think of those that perpetrate or gloat in its implementation as the "real" criminals. The crime against the individuals subject to such laws far exceeds the offenses of the persons subject to criminal punishment or civil commitment. While sex offenders misbehavior may be a social problem, or issue, I think society has missed the boat in devising solutions for dealing with it in a humane and civilized manner.

Despite all that, I failed to get the points of the comments of your editorial (pg.5) to the effect: "Without the foundation, without control of the means of information and education, we can only work to redirect the force of crime back up against those who created the conditions for its development. You also state: "Taking control of our neighborhoods is an important part of increasing the resistance that will ultimately direct crime back up against the rich."

First off, I fail to see the point of desiring to direct the impact of the crime against anyone. You can land in prison for a crime against the rich just like you can the poor. Begging your pardon, but I would not want to see people in prison for committing crime against anyone, rich or poor. Not that I care so much for the interests of the rich, but because I care for the interest of the person who in committing the crime. Anyone sufficiently educated and sustaining a social awareness of class related issues would seemingly have no cause to discriminate on whom (which class) they perpetrated crime on; or even commit crime barring perhaps, politically motivated crime.

In the end what does the poor criminal stand to gain by directing his or her crime towards the rich, rather than the poor, other than perhaps, in your view, some small status for not having committed crime against the poor. How will this save the criminal or improve his lot, much less have any real effect on any class struggle that may exist?

—Theresa Torricellas, Corona, CA

LETTERS



READ THIS

By Tim Troyer, CPF fundraiser

CPF DOES NOT –

- Take government grants
- Employ high-priced lobbyists
- Sponsor expensive "workshops" at first-class hotels
- Operate Private Prisons
- Have an Executive Compensation and Perk Package

CPF DOES –

- Attempt to protect the human rights of vulnerable prisoners in California Security Housing Units and medical units
- Advocate for meaningful change in California's treatment of prisoners and their families
- Rely on volunteers to perform its mission
- Squeeze the Buffalo out of a nickel.
- Know the difference between self-serving nonsense and real change.
- Need your help to continue this tradition.

California Prison Focus is a grassroots volunteer-driven advocate for dramatic change in California's prison system. As such, we have little institutional support. Nonetheless, CPF continues to provide a voice for those who would otherwise go unheard; those denied healthcare, those denied their basic human rights by the repression of SHU's throughout the state.

Help us continue this important work. If you are not already a subscriber, our newsletter is only \$20 for four issues (\$5 for prisoners). Better yet, make a generous donation. Use the attached envelope. And please, do it today.

What's that Bunkie? The envelope is missing? You don't have a stamp? Don't despair. You can still make a donation. Get on the web, go to www.prisons.org and click on the donate button. It's that easy!

PRISON FOCUS

2940 16TH STREET - SUITE B5
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

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OUR MISSION

The mission of this organization is organized is to end human rights abuses and torture in California prisons including abolishing the Security Housing Units, ending medical neglect and insuring civil and human rights for all prisoners. CPF achieves its purposes by visiting prisoners, monitoring conditions, educating the public and policy makers, providing a voice for and working with prisoners, and encouraging legal advocacy.

CPF GOALS

1. End all human rights abuses against prisoners.
2. End the use of long-term isolation.
3. Close the Security Housing Units.
4. Offer rehabilitation of SHU prisoners as torture survivors.
5. Improve medical care and living conditions for prisoners living with HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening diseases.
6. Help gain compassionate release for prisoners with serious illnesses and physical disabilities.
7. Stop all discrimination against LGBT prisoners.
8. Abolish the prison system as we know it.

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 with HIV, hepatitis C and other life-threatening diseases. The focus of our work is our investigative trips to women and men's prisons with SHU facilities and/or medical units. We make at least one visit per month. 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 and community forums. 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 policymakers. Founded in 1991 (as Pelican Bay Information Project) we have made 100 prison visits and conducted more than 3,000 interviews with prisoners. Our membership is comprised of prisoners, activists, family members of prisoners, former prisoners, human rights advocates, attorneys, and prison visitors.

CONTACT US

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E-mail: info@prisons.org - Website: www.prisons.org.

SOME GUIDELINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO PRISON FOCUS

Some suggestions for 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.
- Helpful resources with address and pertinent information.
- Larger articles are accepted but be aware-our space is limited.

Topics: PF topic of issue; current news; recent or pending legislation or policy; news from your institution; organizing efforts; books-basically anything related to the prison industrial complex as you see it. Individual legal cases are not usually printed. Sorry, we cannot return your submissions unless a prior arrangement is made. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published and we generally cannot respond to your submissions because of this volume. Please consider them a contribution to the work. *PF* welcomes all submissions!

ATTEND MEETINGS

CPF's general meeting is the second Wednesday of the month at our office at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Please join us to discuss important topics affecting California prisoners and to familiarize yourself with our day-to-day work.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Come to our monthly volunteer night, every third Wednesday of the month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., held at our offices or make an appointment to meet with us for another time. CPF depends on volunteers to do our invaluable work. We need your help answering mail, working on our newsletter, staffing our office, fundraising, and outreach.