FORMERLY INCARCERATED ADVOCATES SPEAK OUT AT CALIFORNIA PRISON FOCUS’ 25TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

By Kim Roderbach

On November 12, 2016, California Prison Focus held its 25th anniversary commemorations at the First Congregational Church in Oakland. The highlight was a panel discussion with Watani Stiner, Mianta McKnight, Troy Williams, and Raymond Aguilar—all formerly incarcerated Californians. Together, their experiences span a significant half-century in this nation’s history, from the Civil Rights Movement through what’s being called the New Jim Crow era.

Bato Talamantez, a founding member of CPF who was absolved in the 1971 San Quentin Six trial reflected on the origins of the organization: “Everything about California Prison Focus started around Pelican Bay a hell of a long time ago. We didn’t have a name at first. We just responded to our friends inside. We had a lot of friends and still do. And they were the ones who ultimately led the Hunger Strike twenty years later: they figured out that it’s do-or-die time.”

Sharing his recollections of Holbrook Teter, a former activist with CPF who passed in 1999, Talamantez said, “Young people across the country were being a “sin” in the eyes of a Catholic-raised child such as Watani. Watts was “a whole different world.”

He remembered separate water fountains, separate beaches and schools, starting to enter the grocer’s through the back door. When he was seven, his mother moved his family to San Francisco. Stiner explained, “Young people across the country were raising questions. Stiner explained, “Young people across the country were raising questions. Dr. Maulana Karenga - also the founder of Kwanzaa - on the heels of the Watts Revolt. Watts was drawn to Us, finding a stronger sense of his “culture, identity and a way of resisting oppression”. Both Us and the Black Panther Party at UCLA were involved in efforts to establish a Black Studies program.

Stiner’s life was soon to change again because of a 1969 shoot-out at the UCLA campus, in which he was wounded and two Black Panthers (Bunchie Carter and John Huggins) were killed. “At the time,” Stiner said about the shoot-out, “I didn’t know about Cointelpro, and how they instigated and … turned that whole incident into a violent thing, where it caused the death of two human beings.” He and his brother were tried and convicted for the murder. They were sentenced to life and sent to San Quentin, where he was immediately placed in solitary confinement for an entire year. When he was released from San Quentin in January 2015, he hadn’t walked the streets of the US as a free man since 1969.

Restorative justice advocate, journalist and filmmaker Troy Williams who recently turned 50, was just a toddler during the heyday of resistance and self-determination organizations like the Black Panthers and Us. Williams and Stiner both remarked on how the disruption and decline of the Black Power Movement created a vacuum that gave rise to gangs. “I was sucked into that world, even though I didn’t want to,” explained Troy. Indeed, when Williams first learned from his brother at age ten what Crisps and Bloods were, his response had been: “That’s dumb. Like, why we fights each other? That don’t make sense to me.” Yet, the reality was that violence was everywhere around him and supposed role models, who preached nonviolence, did not necessarily practice nonviolence themselves.

Before long, when Williams was 13, he found himself confronted by six grown men who insisted that he fight. Well aware that he couldn’t fight six men, he ran and was chased. “I didn’t make it.” Williams remembered, “I got stomped out … beat up with chains and all that. And, guess who came to my rescue?”

“A rival gang showed up and ran the guys off. Next thing I know, I got thirty muscle-down men around me telling me how they got my back. Givin’ me some attention that I wish I would have gotten in the household, but I didn’t get.”

So began Williams’ involvement in “the lifestyle.” Two years later, he was in juvenile hall for murder. Williams explained that he has been in the hole countless times, including multiple times as a youth. After his release from juvenile hall, Williams became a youth counselor and returned to school for cinematography. Maxine Waters, then Representative for California’s 35th Congressional District, sponsored the organization he was working for as counselor.

Around that time—1996—Maxine Waters was calling for investigations by the D.O.J. and the House Judiciary Committee into journalist Gary Webb’s revelations published in the San Jose Mercury News. Webb had exposed that: (1) the CIA-backed Contras in Nicaragua were using profits from cocaine trafficking to fund their guerilla effort to overthrow the (left-wing) Sandinista government; (2) this had been going on for the better part of a decade, with the US government’s knowledge and tacit support; and (3) the cocaine being trafficked was being sold to the Bloods and the Crips in Los Angeles by the tons, leading to the crack cocaine epidemic that had spread from L.A. across the urban U.S.

“I was there when Gary Webb broke the story about Cointelpro and all the drugs coming into the community,” Williams said, “and I understood what had happened.”

1. The FBI states on its website: “The FBI began COINTEL-PRO—short for Counterintelligence program—in 1956 to disrupt the activities of the Communist Party of the United States. In the 1960s, it was expanded to include a number of other domestic groups, such as the KKK, the Socialist Workers Party and the Black Panther Party.” May 5, 2011, https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro.

2. Stiner expounded on this theme, “Once you create a vacuum, that vacuum is filled by something.” This phenomena, he noted, can be seen at even the international level—whether with the US in Iraq, or what’s happening in Syria or Libya.
PROPOSITION 64 REPORT
By Tom McMahon

I t is one of many world-changing decisions made by voters on November 8, 2016. California joined several other states that have legalized recreational use of marijuana by passing Proposition 64, the “Control, Regulate and Tax Adult Use of Marijuana Act” commonly known as the “Adult Use of Marijuana Act” and referred to below as “The Act”. The passage of Proposition 64 represents a major change in marijuana laws.

The Act has four major provisions. First, it permits adults, 21 years of age or older, to legally possess, transport, purchase, consume, or share up to one ounce (28.3g) of marijuana, and up to 8 grams of marijuana concentrates. Second, for those under 21 years of age, but 21 years of age, the Act permits the growing of six marijuana plants per household up to age 21. Third, in addition to its legalizations provisions, The Act drastically reduces the penalties for other marijuana-related offenses, including the reduction of some felonies to misdemeanors, and some misdemeanors to infraction.

Among these are offenses including Health and Safety Code Section 11357(a) (possession of concentrated cannabis), Section 11358 (cultivation), Section 11359 (possession for sale), and Section 11360 (sale, transportation for sale).

Fourth, The Act has a resentencing provision which permits persons previously convicted of designated marijuana offenses to obtain a reduced conviction or sentence. Therefore, your other offense is to be increasing in severity rather than becoming more lenient. As this are explicitly retroactive in their affect. There are enhancements, consecutive or alternative sentences).

How will the new credits system work?

Ultimate the rules are supposed to encourage more participation in programs and services, with the overall goals of making the prison environment safer and reducing recidivism.

What’s the latest news?

As of right now, CDCR has not yet released its proposed rules. This means it will be several months at the least before changes from Prop 57 go into effect. It is estimated that Prop 57 will save the state approximately $22.4 million in 2017-2018 and over $140 million by 2020-21. Organizations such as Californians United for a Full and Free Life has stated that sex registrant crimes will be excluded. The governor’s office has now stated that sex registrant crimes will be excluded. It is not known which crimes will be considered violent and not eligible for early parole. The governor’s office has now stated that sex registrant crimes will be excluded. CDAA has stated that sex registrant crimes will be excluded. It is not known which crimes will be considered violent and not eligible for early parole. The governor’s office has now stated that sex registrant crimes will be excluded.

PROPOSITION 57 REPORT
By Tom McMahon

On November 8, 2016, California voters approved Proposition 57, the “Adult Use of Marijuana Act.” Governor Jerry Brown sponsored the initiative and the “Yes on 57” campaign outspaced opponents, $14,988 million to $15,511 million, despite vocal opposition from law enforcement organizations across the state. Just months before the election, the California District Attorney Association (CDDA) filed a lawsuit to remove Prop 57 from the ballot, citing “unrelated amendments.” Though the CDDA initially succeeded in the lower courts, the California Supreme Court reversed, and the measure went forward. Prop 57 addresses several other crimes, including the measure with 64.46% in total, a total of 8,790,723 votes for and 4,847,354 against.

Prop 57 is the most recent ballot initiative in a series of efforts being made in California to address persistent overcrowding in our prisons. It should be viewed as the next step in the process, following the 2004 order by federal judges in Plata v. Brown that California reduce its prison population to 137.5% of the prisons’ design capacity, the 2011 ruling by the United States Supreme Court in the same case that the overcrowding of California’s prisons violates the 8th Amendment of the Constitution, and the adoption of Proposition 47 by voters in 2014.

This article breaks down exactly how Prop 57 will work in practice so that you can understand which offenses will be eligible, when sentences will be up for consideration, how the CDCR plans to implement Prop 57, parole enhancements, and the current status of the new regulations. Since the new rules are still in the process of being adopted, this article also updates you on how that process is unfolding, and what it should take once it’s finished.

What is Prop 57?

Prop 57 adds a new section to the California Constitution: Article I, section 32. It has three major provisions:

1. Parole consideration: Any person convicted of a “nonviolent” offense and sentenced to state prison is eligible for parole consideration after completing the full base term of the primary offense (defined as the longest term of imprisonment for any offense, excluding enhancements, credits, and sentences)

2. Credit earning: the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation will have the authority to award credits earned for good behavior and approved rehabilitative and educational achievements.

3. Juvenile prosecution: the authority to decide whether or not to try juveniles 14 years and older as adults is removed from prosecutors and conferred to judges.

Who will be Eligible?

To be eligible for Prop 57’s parole consideration provision, you must have (1) a conviction for a “nonviolent” offense, and (2) complete the full term of your primary offense. It does not apply to persons serving time in county jail – only those serving time in prisons.

As of the date of publication, CDCR has not yet formally proposed new rules for Parole Enhancement of Prop 57. Therefore, the term “nonviolent” offenses for purposes of Prop 57 are currently still undefined. Until the CDCR writes the new regulations, it is not known which crimes will be considered violent and not eligible for early parole. The governor’s office has stated that sex registrant crimes will be excluded. Other than that clarification, there is currently a great deal of misinformation circulating about this issue; it is important to understand that there are rumors only. There is disagreement in the legal community over whether the criteria should include all offenses not listed as “violent” offenses in Penal Code § 667.5(c), and the eligibility of second and third strikers. The CDDA campaigned against 57 on the basis that crimes such as Assault with a Deadly Weapon (ADW) and Domestic Battery (DBB) will not be included.

However, it is likely that the following “violent” felonies listed in Penal Code § 667.5 will not be included: murder; attempted murder; voluntary manslaughter; mayhem; forcible sex offenses, including rape; false imprisonment; kidnapping; carcaglass; certain gang offenses; first degree burglary where a victim is present; any felony punishable by death or life in prison; any felony where great bodily injury is inflicted; and felons under 18.

The base term means the normal, base Determinate sentence, if they would have received the benefits of The Act, “completed” in full. Until the CDCR writes the new regulations, it is not known whether good time credits can be applied to the completion of the primary term.

The governor’s office estimates that 7,000 inmates statewide stand to benefit from Prop 57’s parole consideration provision.

Before the rules are adopted, inmates and the public will have an opportunity to participate in a “notice and comment” period. At some point soon, the CDCR will publish the text of the new proposed rules. So make sure you keep checking in with your law library. This is an opportunity for the public to have a say in the process. At the end of this, the CDCR will file the new Title 15 rules with the Secretary of State.

How will the new credits system work?

The Act has a resentencing provision which permits persons previously convicted of designated marijuana offenses to obtain a reduced conviction or sentence...
A NOTE TO OUR FRIENDS INSIDE:

Despite the shortcomings in the California prison system, the prison focus team continues to focus on ending solitary confinement and other forms of torture in California prisons. In order to do so, we investigate and report on conditions in SHU, Ad Seg, and other isolation units - but in California only. Despite wanting to expand our readership, we do not have the capacity to receive and process requests that are not related to the use of solitary confinement in California. So please refrain from sending us lengthy reports of non-related abuses. Also, the majority of our resources are California-specific. We encourage non-Californians to write to local prisoner advocacy groups for state-specific resources.

Lastly, please continue to send us your ideas and input regarding where you would like CPF to put our energy. We have had an influx of activists since the election. University students reach out to us on a regular basis, seeking ways to get involved, especially with short-term projects. As we develop new projects, large and small, we will share them with you. (You can read about some of our projects on pages 22 and 23.) Some projects involve gathering and sharing your artwork and stories. We want to reach out to the Spanish speaking population, women, LGBT prisoners and the mentally ill, with a continuing focus on solitary confinement. I offer reference to letters we've received in the past, responding to requests for feedback. So I ask again, where would you like to see us put our energy? Ie: community outreach and education (getting your stories out), increasing the publication of this paper to 4x a year, or increasing the readership in outside communities, or publishing the paper in Spanish, or joining a legislative campaign and focusing on policy changes, etc. We are small and we can't do it all. What priorities would you like us to make?

Submit to Prison Focus and receive three issues. PF is published every four months. $20 for non-prisoners, $6 for prisoners and free to men and women in California SHU and Administrative Segregation. If you have not paid for an annual subscription for awhile and you know it's time to renew, please do.

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Housing Conditions

As well-reported in previous issues of Prison Focus, the facilities at Corcoran are in a constant state of disrepair, including leaking in the roof and extremely poor water quality. Mr. V. described how Corcoran is often yellow and smelly, which does not surprise anyone who has taken a breath there. Bottled water is available at the commissary but of course not all prisoners have funds for it.

Poor housing conditions are exacerbated by the freezing air pumped into cells in Ad Seg all night long by the night shift guards, who are, in at least one man’s words, “scared shitless.”

Compounding the poor living conditions are issues involving basic movement in and out of cells. Mr. A reported that one week not long ago, his unit was made to go over four days without showers, and the day showers were the only ones scheduled. This was probably because a football game was on during that time.

Mr. O reported that he was in a bad living situation with his cellmate, and alerted staff that he needed to be moved. This full day of no water and no showers, and the confrontation with the cellmate over the lights resulted in Mr. O getting punched in the face. He later learned that the cellmate had several previous 115s for in-cell fights in close proximity.

Health and Mental Health

We interviewed at least four men who are in dire mental health straits. Mr. T confessed to being in a lot of mental trouble; he is in Ad Seg and terrified of his condition, especially since he was in the SHU at Pelican Bay who had adjusted there. He found that he could not adjust to the main yard population but instead, felt himself becoming terribly anxious and frightened of everyone and anyone we were concerned that some inmate had put him back into isolation at Corcoran where he has been asking for help every day in all the ways he knows how to ask. Similarly, Mr. O had a hard time holding a conversation, and continually repeated the same narrative over and over and over, in the same words. He was very jumpy and physically uncomfortable.

Mr. S reported that he was permanently in Ad Seg because of “mental health” issues. There are apparently no similar conditions in Pelican Bay. Mr. R reported severe levels of anxiety which he credited to his recent release from the SHU; he does not get the support he needs, and notes that the failure of CDCR to treat his medical condition generally of his mental health.

Physical Health

Many of the men with whom we visited are in dire physical condition. They explained to us that despite regular requests for care, doctors under-diagnose and under-treat many illnesses, leading men across the prison to be in daily pain and often with worsening conditions. For instance, Mr. C described how he had fallen during a seizure and seriously hurt his wrist. He did not realize it was broken until the terrible pain drove him to plea to see a doctor. That doctor said it was “sprained” and gave him acetaminophen (which in not an anti-inflammatory and thus unhelpful to his condition, but the only pain medication allowed). Mr. C continued to try and sleep because of the continuous pain, so he put in for another medical visit. This time he x-rayed the wrist and told him it had actually been broken but that there was nothing they could do now because it had healed too much without proper care. Not only did it continue to hurt but it became unusable so he put in for more testing. After over 90 days, they ordered another x-ray. This showed that the wrist had healed into a visible knot (which he showed me). Mr. C is now unable to use his right hand. In the outside world, he would likely need surgery so that he could ever have hope of using his arm again.

Unfortunately, with the long sentence he is service, he is not likely to ever be released, so effectively he now only has use of one hand for the rest of his life.

A second interviewee, Mr. L, also had complaints of poor orthopedic care. He has a permanently damaged hand due to a surgical error. Unfortunately, the doctor apparently removed the carpal bones. He is in constant pain as a result, and another surgeon informed him that only fusing the bones permanently would possibly relieve the pain. He has no use of the hand and has no word on whether the procedure will happen.

Mr. W reported a lack of medical attention to two severe conditions, a back injury and diabetes. Despite his documented back injury, Mr. W has been given a work assignment that requires high levels of physical labor. He has asked and asked to see a doctor for the pain but when he finally got taken to medical, he was kept in a tiny holding cell for 6 hours while he waited to see what turned out to be a foot doctor. He lives with this pain as he tries to do his work assignment. For his diabetes, he has been instructed to take a certain medicine three times a day, but his cellmates but the nurses who provide all the medical services force him to swallow the medication in front of him whenever they deliver it, in order to avoid trafficking of contraband and because they do not want him to come to the infirmary during mealtimes. Mr. W also noted that his diabetes exacerbated by the freezing air pumped into their cells in Ad Seg all night long by the night shift guards (see above on Facilities). We also heard from prisoners with a condition common to many California prisoners, who suffers from Hepatitis C. Mr. F, who is terminally ill with cirrhosis of the liver due to Hep C, reported that he had had decent medical care at various prisons but in Corcoran, he has not been provided with the appropriate regimen. Since he is wheelchair-bound, he is entitled to special housing in a “medical cell,” so that there are less chances he can hurt himself by falling out of the wheelchair. He is presently in “isolated housing” to assure his safety, but already feeling Corcoran because this would end his relationship with two doctors who have been caring for him. Transfer creates long term disruption of care and is a major inhibitor to delivery of care.

Mr. I, who has also been diagnosed with Hep C, stated that he has never been treated for his condition.

Mr. W reported that he had “mild” brain damage and indeed, this was the case that he would most likely end up in Ad Seg. He sat smiling throughout the interview, although was unable to respond to questions. We quickly realized that an interview was impossible and we terminated it. He did report that he receives no treatment for this brain damage or his condition.

Mr. M reported that he has chronic dizziness, ringing in the ears, and nausea, leading him to believe he may have a brain tumor, but the prison will only send him to an ear, nose, and throat doctor who does not speak English. Several men reported serious issues with access to dental care. Mr. Y has a really bad tooth that had cracked during a fall. He first saw one dentist, who put peroxide into the hole, and in his broken tooth and told him to continue this treatment. When informed that inmates are not allowed to have peroxide, he said salt would do. Of course inmates are also forbidden salt. This reveals the lack of awareness and understanding that prison doctors have of limitations on prisoners ability to care for themselves, as well as an unnecessary lack of collaboration between medical and custody, such that effective medical treatment is functionally impossible due to such high levels of bureaucratization.

Mr. K had seen a dentist whom he decided was deliberately trying to injure him by putting a needle in the roof of his mouth. He left the visit because of this and had to have a tooth pulled.

While outside the prison, we did encounter a dentist who was visiting from Arizona and seeing patients at the prison. Given the severe needs of dental care, it seems patently unacceptable not to have full time dentists on staff at or near the prison.

Access to effective care is a classic challenge. Mr. H reported that when he tried to get a new prescription for his eyes, he was told that he was not allowed to get the lenses replaced on the glasses he had had for years, but would only be allowed to buy prison glasses. This is a clear violation of Title 15 which allows one to purchase glasses from an outside vendor.

Racism

We found that racism is endemic throughout Corcoran. While both Latinos are African Americans suffer the impact of racist guards, it is understood that Black men experience the worst of it. Interestingly, the Black men interviewed all talked about the racism but said they expected it – as indeed they should, given US society and US history! Several noted that their court cases – including parole hearings – had been affected by various racist assumptions expressed in one case by the parole board, which decided that the man was clearly a “criminal type” because he had been in trouble once as a youth of 14. Latinos noted the racism – but often noted, too, that it hit hardest on the Black prisoners. One Latino prisoner was particularly explicit and I was turned off at the Praetorian guards’ privilege by stating that he did not witness any racism against anyone.

Mr. N confirmed, as many of our correspondents do, that while racism is not at its worst in California prisons, there are certain those who are nice quickly become outcasts and are treated poorly by their peers, which makes it difficult for them to “do the right thing.”
Property

Property is held for inordinately long periods for those men transferred from long-term SHU. Mr. U. reported that it takes 4 to 6 weeks to receive suit-case-living clothing. Several told us that once their property was returned, items were missing and that there was no recourse because when their property had been brought to them and they had found flaws with it, they were told that a return of the property had brought the flaws to their attention so that there is no record of the items delivered. This is a clear violation of Title 15, and we encourage prisoners in this situation to file 602s if they are in this situation.

30 minute checks

All interviewees told us that the 30 minute rounds continue unabated. Most said that the day shift guards are pretty good about keeping the checks as quiet and obtrusive as possible. But at night, especially when substitute guards are on the checks are deliberately as loud and intrusive as possible. Keeping everyone awake seems to be the purpose, and sleep deprivation continues to have negative and long term effects on everyone.

Law Library

Most of the men we met with told us that access to the law library is nearly impossible. Several of our correspondents are jailhouse lawyers and in active litigation. They universally stated that there is a dearth of material and all of it was outdated, making it difficult to keep up with important (and possibly positive) changes in the law.

Work Assignments

Work assignments are, as many know, only available to prisoners on the main line. While a few of those we interviewed had work assignments, those in the SHU, in Ad Seg, or in transit did not. Many were just waiting for assignments since they had been recently released from the SHU. Work assignments were few and far between, with long waiting lists, many over one year.

Programming

Many of the individuals we spoke with had requested programming but were not provided any. Waiting lists for educational courses are apparently long and all those in transit are ineligible. They all expressed frustration about this. We note that as individuals are moved out of the SHU and become eligible for parole, it is extremely frustrating to see individuals request programming, be rejected, and then denied for parole based on lack of programming. CDCR has an obligation to make programming and rehabilitative services available to those it confines.

SUICIDE CRISIS CONTINUES AT CIW

California Institute for Women (CIW) is responsible for six suicides in the past two years, the highest rate of any California prison. Despite new leadership after the warden, Kimberly Hughes, forced retirement in August 2016, CIW has repeatedly failed to follow their own mental health crisis policies and procedures. To date, no correctional officers have lost their jobs despite the systematic, negligent failures that led to these six deaths. Since the start of 2017, there have been more suicide attempts in the mental health crisis unit at CIW.

People are committing suicide because of the inhumane conditions at CIW, including forcing people into solitary confinement when they are the most vulnerable. Guards are indifferent to these deaths and blatantly refuse to follow CIW’s suicide prevention policy with no repercussions. When the women experiencing mental crisis ask the Co’s for help, they are told “calm back down” and sent back to their cells where at least two people have hung themselves in the past year alone. There is a culture of disrespect, disregard and neglect that is unacceptable!

California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP) has been working with women in the prison, family members and other advocates outside for years: issuing press releases and legislative memos since the Fall of 2013; having family members and former prisoners give testimony at legislative hearings; doing petition and phone campaigns; and demonstrating in front of

SLEEP DEPRIVATION UPDATE

By The Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity (PHSS) Committee to End Sleep Deprivation

Dr. Jamie Zeitzer, recognized worldwide as an expert in sleep and circadian rhythms, concluded in his 10/25/2015 report: “The current practice of 30 minute wellness checks of inmates housed in the SHU is likely a cause of severe sleep disruption. This type of sleep disruption is likely worse than anything that has been provocatively studied in a laboratory. The known consequences of chronic sleep loss, including impairments to metabolism, memory, mood, and health, are likely even more severe in these individuals. The mandated purpose of these wellness checks (i.e., suicide prevention) is, in fact, likely to have the opposite effect and inadvertently increase suicidality among these individuals...There have been no direct studies of intentionally waking an individual every thirty minutes every night for days, weeks, or months, as doing so would be considered highly unethical in a research environment.”

“Security/welfare checks” persist in SHU’s, Ad-seg’s, Psychiatric, and Condemned Units throughout California prisons, waking people locked in solitary confinement every 30 minutes, night and day. The PHSS Committee To End Sleep Deprivation have been to end these checks.

In May 2016, we published a survey to elicite information from prisoners about the checks. Soon we’ll have a more detailed survey for you to answer about the harmful effects. We want to document the effects in detail to get the checks stopped.

Systematic abuse and neglect caused and/or contributed to six recent deaths at California Institution for Women (CIW). A campaign is underway to request investigations from family members and California Coalition for Women Prisoners demanding investigation into those deaths has led to the current Joint Legislative Audit of CIW and all CDCR suicide prevention policies and practices. We have sent materials and communicated with both the Audit Committee and the CA State Auditor, the body conducting the audit for the legislature, urging them recommend a STOP to the “security/welfare checks”.

Suicide expert and Special Master in Coleman v. Brown, Lindsay Hayes and Matthew Lopes, still claim the “security/welfare checks” are suicide prevention despite the sleep deprivation and exacerbating mental and physical health problems they cause. Write to Hayes and Lopes (and send us a copy) about how the checks affect(you) and what you think true mental health and suicide prevention require, or send one letter to the PHSS Committee, and we will forward it to the aforementioned experts.

We also ask people not to write in prison to Hayes and Lopes and urge them to stop this harmful practice. Share any personal or professional understandings of the need for sleep and the effects of sleep disruption/deprivation.

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Thank You

“I had mean headaches, chest pains for lack of sleep, and I was constantly irritated, anxious and full of anger and frustration. I documented all that...I’ve been out the SHU for several months now and I’ve been feeling and sleeping better, but I’m still dealing with some issues over that. I get headaches, blurred vision and at times any noise wakes me up and I can’t fall back to sleep normally.” - Anonymous, Pelican Bay

Message from a Jailhouse Lawyer: To those who are suffering sleep deprivation and in danger of doing nothing, they should first file a 602 and go to the Federal Court afterwards. Sleep undoubtably counts as one of life’s basic needs, thus conditions designed to prevent sleep might violate the Eighth Amendment. I’ve found that the following case law support the claim of “Sleep Deprivation” and should be used to file a lawsuit:

2. Lomax v Cal Dept Corrections & Rehabilitation 756, F30 1062, 1074 (9th Cir. 2013)
5. Harder v Showers 774 F30 716, 720 (5th Cir. 1999)

REPORT FROM CCWF

Letter Excerpt:

CCWF, specifically the Appeals Coordinator, has incubated an institutional culture that permits, condones and covers up abuse. This corrosive atmosphere of fear and violence stems from a widespread failure of staff to perform the most basic requirements of their jobs.

The Appeals Coordinator refused to properly process or investigate allegations of misconduct which addresses an officer’s irrational intolerance of, or hostility towards me and several others. This is not an isolated incident with this officer, but rather a pervasive indifference toward prisoners. Instead of taking steps to remedy allegations of abuse or retaliation, high level prison officials, including the Appeals Coordinator, prevent violation of prisoners’ rights from coming to light. Anonymous, CCWF

REPORT FROM KERN VALLEY STATE PRISON

Letter Excerpt:

“I hope you can help with a dire situation going on at North Kern State Prison. There are large numbers of abuse incidents against inmates, especially those who complain about anything. Inmate are having all of their possessions taken including all of their legal documents and correspondence. Prisoners are being beaten and having gang members put into their cells to have them intimidated and sent to force them to drop their complaints against the guards. The so-called counselors do nothing at all. Most inmates are held in reception for three months, but some have been there for six months or longer.”

Anonymous

I have found that the following case law support the claim of “Sleep Deprivation” and should be used to file a lawsuit:

2. Lomax v Cal Dept Corrections & Rehabilitation 756, F30 1062, 1074 (9th Cir. 2013)
5. Harder v Showers 774 F30 716, 720 (5th Cir. 1999)
This is a summary of present conditions at High Desert State Prison, as collected by CPW through letters written to us, and a legal research visit conducted in January 2016. Our reports published under the Prison Focus, in order to protest those who write and visit with us, do not use any names that will identify any of the individuals we contacted. We purposefully use pseudonyms for the representative of names, and the repetitions of initials does not indicate it is the same person.

Longtime readers of Prison Focus may note that reporting on High Desert has received new press recently. For instance, in previous years, we exclusively reported on the conditions in the SHU, at Pelican Bay, Corcoran, and occasionally Tehachapi. In recent times, however, due to the vast movement out of the SHU resulting from the Attorney General’s own settlement, we have begun to hear more and more reports of the harsh and inhumane conditions in many of the other prisons, especially those places where former SHU residents have been moved. Accounts of excessive lockdowns, long stays in ASU, and lack of programming expected on the mainline have driven us to increase our attention to the level 4, high security prisons, where according to many SHU “kickouts,” conditions are as bad, if not worse, than the SHU. As one correspondent would put it, “You have the thought that since it is in the far corner of the state, not too many people will care what happens.” We reject the idea that distance and isolation give CDCR a pass on following its own rules, and its obligation to treat human beings with the basic dignity due to each.

General conditions at HD

The cell conditions at High Desert fall grossly below basic standards for livability. Inmates are responsible for cleaning their own cells, yet they are not provided with cleaning supplies. Mr. B reported that he has only received cleaning supplies, scrub pads, caps, and spoons twice in the months he has been at HD. The mattresses are stinky and tiny. Mr. U reported that his cell was leaking when it rained. He requested an order repair, but didn’t receive anything, and was forced to personally patch the leak. He used soap.

In the day rooms, there only one phone. Even at Pelican Bay there were two phones per section. The cell sizes in the cells at HD are significantly based on locations. Mr. O reported that in his block, the temperature is warm, but elsewhere, he knows there are constant complaints of cold air pumped into the cells. Individuals in AdSeg reported very cold temperatures. Cell searches happen randomly every day. Each shift has to search 6 cells a day at random, according to an internal CDCM memo. During searches the COs drag the mattress onto the nasty dirty ground.

Several persons reported that laundry gets picked up but it comes back dirty every week. Despite these conditions, one individual who was at HD from 2010-13, left, and recently returned, noted that the new administration is making changes and is much better than the previous one.

X-ray Scanners

As reported elsewhere in this issue, CPW has heard reports from across the prison system that X-ray Scanners are getting installed and used on a regular basis. At HDSP, interviewees told us that machines had been installed in early November 2016 on the way to the visiting area, but not yet in use. It was Mr. T’s understanding that they would be put into use in early 2017. When guards were trained on their use (we have not received any updated reports on their use at HDSP at the time of publication). Until such time as the X-ray machines are put to use, the “registration” protocol for prisoners is still used, but only when there are incidents on a unit.

Rules such as the X-ray machines are put to use, the “registration” protocol for prisoners is still used, but only when there are incidents on a unit.

Law Library

Mr. L explained that HD law librarian does not have a contract with the state, so the library is only open when she is available. As a “Priority Legal User,” he is supposed to get a minimum of 4 hrs/week in the library, but it is inconsistent. “General Legal Users” have an even harder time, with a wait list of over 200 to gain access. On the week of our visit, the library was only open two days. Mr. S stated that he regularly waits up to two months between visits, which makes researching for a case he intends to file essentially impossible.

The library is even more difficult to access during lockdowns. Mr. D noted that he had to file a 602 in order to gain access to the library because there are so many lockdowns.

Medical Care

It is almost unnecessary to state that our correspondents describe medical care at HD as grossly below basic standards. Mr. S stated that others in his yard have cancer and others are not receiving their medications, and do not regularly appear in the infirmary. Mr. Z reported that someone was injured over a year ago and immediately after, the doctor recommended an MRI for him. He has now seen the doctor two more times since then but has never received the MRI. Mr. B complained that he was in a medical issue and that there existed a severe heart condition as a result of a stabbing at a different institution. He had emergency surgery, but was left with a hole in his heart. It is his understanding that there is no full-time doctor on staff, but only one on call, and that the closest hospital is quite small (only 25 beds) and prisoners are never transferred there. A nurse practitioner confirmed the facility cannot support his condition, but has not had success in advocating for his transfer.

The treatment of Hep C is especially frustrating to individuals. It is rumored that under CDCR policy, Hep C is not treated at HD. Mr. B reported that no one had been treated for this condition at HD. Mr. W told us that he received no treatment whatsoever for his Hep C when he does see a doctor, he checks his blood pressure and sends him on his way. As a result, Mr. C has very high anxiety about his health. He said that if he were to gain access to a liver transplant, he would sign a paper giving the time getting prescription medication than at HD. Mr. J told us that his cellmate, who has late-stage Hep C, was hospitalized for two weeks and upon return received no follow up care.

Dental care is also an issue and many prisoners expressed dissatisfaction with the level of care. Mr. C stated that the dentist is quick to pull teeth rather than fix them. He had severe tooth pain and it took about 6 months to see the dentist after paying for a visit. One individual reported a delay of only 2-3 months to see the dentist. Mr. E stated that he has put in requests for a dental care, but that is considered not serious enough to warrant an appointment.

Guard Behavior

“There is a different breed of prison up here. They follow their own rules.” Mr. Z reported that even since the 2015 Ashker settlement, SHU prisoners and other activist prisoners who promote programming and educational opportunities are getting removed from jobs, or through limitations on movement access, designed to deny them the ability to promote positive activities.

One individual who visited with CPW reported that he received threats of retaliation immediately after the visit for speaking with CPW. We condemn this behavior and the chilling of constitutionally-guaranteed access to the courts that it leads to. “The meetings will not go unheard or unchallenged,” Mr. C stated. He has put in requests for a dental care, but that is considered not serious enough to warrant an appointment.

Violence

More than some other facilities, CPW receives a lot of reports of violence at HD. Mr. P reported that there are rumors that three prisoners died in October alone at HD. One person reported that someone was killed the day after our visit. We do not have details on whether the suspected killer was another prisoner or a guard, but regardless, it is the responsibility of CDCR to ensure the integrity of every individual’s life in their care. Failure to protect other prisoners from violence is a violation of the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

Food

Reports of the quality of food were varied. Some stated it was bearable, although they would prefer more variety and access to a healthier selection and more vegetables. Others reported that the quality of the food was very low: undercooked, cold, and tasteless. Mr. W stated “I prefer the food at Pelican Bay, and that’s saying something.” Mr. E explained that HD has a contract with the state, so the library is only open when she is available. As a “Priority Legal User,” he is supposed to get a minimum of 4 hrs/week in the library, but it is inconsistent. “General Legal Users” have an even harder time, with a wait list of over 200 to gain access. On the week of our visit, the library was only open two days. Mr. S stated that he regularly waits up to two months between visits, which makes researching for a case he intends to file essentially impossible.

The library is even more difficult to access during lockdowns. Mr. D noted that he had to file a 602 in order to gain access to the library because there are so many lockdowns.

Mail

One of the biggest issues that access to mail centers around the censorship of an allied newspaper, the SF Bay View. Many people across the California prison system, including those at High Desert, did not receive the Bay View this week or last week. Mr. V reported a delay of only 2-3 months to see the dentist. Mr. E stated that he has put in requests for a dental care, but that is considered not serious enough to warrant an appointment.

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that he is in the process of filing 602s about timeliness of mail. Most reported a delay of two or three weeks before delivery, including for legal mail. Several individuals reported that in the lower D yard, a big stack of mail was thrown in the trash. Large bulk of mail for prisoners from all races/ethnicity. It was discovered by kitchen workers.

There is a new rule about magazines and many people complained that they are no longer allowed magazines if they are not “educational.” This is frustrating to people who have paid for magazine subscription but believe they are getting thrown out.

**Programming and Work Assignments**

There is very few educational and programming opportunities at HD. Mr. K reported that there is one GED class and two college classes for the whole prison. The classes are apparently not at capacity, although there is a waiting list of over 100 people. Mr. K received a letter stating that the wait list for college classes is approximately a year and a half. Mr. Y had heard that starting in 2017, HD is supposed to receive more programming opportunities, including art, music, educational, but it is not available to all prisoners, including those with the longest sentences.

Mr. T reported that even though he received a GED and AA degree, but they are not reflected in his C-file. Mr. C described access to a self-control program, which consists of essay assignments inside the cell two times per week. He liked it. It is the only program he’s had since he’s been at HDSP. He signed up for anger management, never got called.

Several of our correspondents reported that they did have work assignments, including yard crew, a recreational clerk on the yard, and a law clerk. Mr. U explained that there are also work programs for jobs, laundry, medical, kitchen, and in the educational department. In general, however, there are not enough jobs for everyone and people expressed frustration at the forced boredom of their lives. Mr. H stated there are only 42 jobs available in his general, however, there are not enough jobs for everyone and people expressed frustration at the forced boredom of their lives. Mr. U explained that there are only 42 jobs available in his general, however, there are not enough jobs for everyone and people expressed frustration at the forced boredom of their lives.

My son has concerns for the safety of young naive inmates coming into SNYs from the streets. My son dropped out of the prison gangs many years ago. He wasn’t a street gang member ever. He went through the whole process of qualifying for SNY protection years ago. He says the old drop outs, like him, want programming, not drama. However new gang drop-outs are coming in from General Population and they are not going through the same process of qualifying. He calls these new gang members SNY gangs, identified by a tattoo playboy bunny behind the ear. The SNY gangs are going after the new inmates coming in from the street (likely their first term), pulling them into their new SNY gangs. COs just look the other way.

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**Report from California Health Care Facility**

**Letter Excerpt:**

Hello. This is just a information letter letting you know the “Get Down” here at California Health Care Facility. You can share this letter and cry any way you want! I am at the Health Care Facility because I’m bipolar. I suffer from depression and I’m an emotional cutter.

Some people really needs to look at the solitary confinement here called mental health treatment.

The treatment here is segregation and I find it is damaging to my mental health and very frustrating.

Three guys and I get TV for 1 ½ hours in the am. and 1 ½ hours in the pm. That group. Health Care Sucks. My cellmates have been hurting me for three weeks with only motorists and I haven’t seen a doctor yet. The staff refuse to give out medical requests.

The psychological effort is hard to take. Twenty one hours a day with no TV or radio. Only a book to look at. Thank you for your time and the newspaper.

Sincerely, RH, CHCF

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**Report on High Desert Special Needs Yard**

**Letter Excerpt:**

My son has concerns for the safety of young naive inmates coming into SNYs from the streets. My son dropped out of the prison gangs many years ago. He wasn’t a street gang member ever. He went through the whole process of qualifying for SNY protection years ago. He says the old drop outs, like him, want programming, not drama. However new gang drop-outs are coming in from General Population and they are not going through the same process of qualifying. He calls these new gang members SNY gangs, identified by a tattoo playboy bunny behind the ear. The SNY gangs are going after the new inmates coming in from the street (likely their first term), pulling them into their new SNY gangs. COs just look the other way.

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**A Note on the Ashker Settlement**

By Kim Rohrbach

We have elected not to publish a separate article on matters concerning the **Ashker v. Brown** settlement in this issue of **Prison Focus**. We will say a few words, though.

The one-year period within which all Ashker reviews were to be completed came and went on October 2, 2016, around the time we last published. We understand that, as of early February, ten or fewer class members were still waiting to either see the Departmental Review Board or be released into the general population. However, as reported by the Ashker Litigation Team and from letters received by California Prison Focus indicate an issue with class members ending up in Ad Seg following release.

A member of the litigation team will soon be attending a Correctional Officer training at Salinas Valley State Prison, concerning the use of confidential information and how to accuse a person of a SHU-eligible offense. We are curious what she’ll hear.

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**PRISONS AND POLITICS IN 2017**

By Juan Moreno Haines, San Quentin, California

The 2016 election showed us all that enough of the electorate likens the ability to run a business with the competency to be the President of the United States. Sadly, this is not the case. Businessmen benefit themselves, whereas the President works for all the country's citizens equally.

A government operating as a profitable business is something to be wary of, not a notion to embrace.

Still, government and business need each other's support. American consumers get an assortment of goods from fair business practices, like food, electronics and entertainment. Many people purchase their tobacco, alcohol, legal drugs, and automobiles. Even though these things satisfy consumer demand, history is marred with business practices that hurt and discriminate against people, particularly minorities. There has been corruption, deceit, and cover-ups, at the expense of the affect citizen's welfare.

We need the government as an independent monitor of business practices. In addition, the government fights for the fundamental rights that each person is born with, but not necessarily in control of.

Most recently, the federal government stopped using private prisons because of how badly profiteers were treating people in their lock-up units. To up its profits, Corrections Corporations of America (renamed CoreCivic) skimmed costs by under-paying guards, while providing inadequate health care and rehabilitative services to inmates. On the other hand, several state governments are moving toward private prisons to return people to their families with support services geared toward stable living.

The more than 3,000 volunteers who come to San Quentin believe in prison reform and help incarcerated people undergo their rehabilitation efforts. However, San Quentin is an exception. The country’s prisons and jails are in disarray. The United States has 5% percent of the world's population, but houses 25% of the world's incarcerated people.

Prisons, as they exist, give society a false sense of security. Tax-abiding citizens believe that if criminals are put behind bars, the community will be safe. Simply incarcerating people does not change them into better citizens, does not protect the community. In fact, all indicators reveal that mass incarceration makes people more susceptible to criminal thinking. The incarceration experience is ill-equipped to help people overcome a wide range of issues, including substance abuse, mental illness and childhood trauma. Most people’s problems are swept under the rug rather than diagnosed and treated. Without the incentive or opportunity to change, most people are not going to get out. Twenty percent of incarcerated people will get out of prison, and they are being returned to their communities in worse shape than when they begin their incarceration experience.

The mass incarceration strategy has resulted in 2.2 million men and women being locked away, disenfranchised, stripped of their citizenship and deemed second-class.

They are surviving a destructive style of punishment, a denial of dignity that does not end when they get out of prison. Nearly 2 million children feel the repercussions of incarceration in the absence of their parents and siblings. There is something to be said about listening to the mistakes of incarcerated people and their reasons. Solutions are within them. The media can play an important role in this process, or it can be used as an insulator that challenges them to do otherwise. In the end, the most important role of the media is to hold the powerful accountable, and to amplify the voices of the powerless. Journalists, advocates and politicians who focus on the disadvantaged, the underclass, and particularly the incarcerated are on the right path to honoring the very foundations of Americanism.

"It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong." — Voltaire, The Age of Louis XIV
The Agreement To End Hostilities and Hugo Pinell

Musings from Pelican Bay...

Regarding the conditions here at Pelican Bay State Prison SHU: these cells are not remotely safe. Officials are tampering with mail-legal mail, etc.; reading incoming and outgoing mail aloud all the time. Cell searches are constant, there are medical charges for each visit and service is slow. The law library to the public seemed a bit harsh and very a legal deadline.. Special Needs Yard/Protected Custody are back here playing the role of pig state. They’re attempting to dent the Agreement To End Hostilities. But strong minds will not prevail. There are a few of us New Afrikans, Mexican/Indian(s), whiteness who’re keeping it together.

Revolutionary salutations and regards are dutifully extended to the New African/Black brothers and sistas, and all the other (solid) Revolutionary Nationalist Brothas and Sistas whom I’ve encountered with, and can continue to build from, The Agreement To End Hostilities (See The Agreement To End Hostilities, Pg. 22).

I’m putting forth this letter to make the public aware that there has been a change in those individuals’ behavior, for the best. As long as we can continue we can coexist as an (active) prisoner class...we can be (active) prisoner class...we can be a collective of individuals here who were spewing reactionary/racist jargon, aloud. This went on for months before I thought to mention it to the public. About two days after one of us sent out a confidential letter, it became apparent that its contents had been compromised. That not only angered me, but made me want to present my sentiments towards their racist, nonsensical and bellicose, unethical behavior. But that’s not my story, nor any A/AA prisoner’s story to place to do... So I did what I felt was best: be second best! Normally, my reactions to such disrespect/stupidity would have been to ‘fight fire with fire.’ Instead, I remained a revolutionary nationalist brothas and sistas. Don’t get me wrong, I’m putting this all in perspective. I’m keeping up with the initiative of honoring what all of our esteemed elders/and/or formations - we can no longer allow CDCR/PISC to combatively and offensively for the majority of my life..

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From a personal lesson you can take from the text is the importance of self-control and self-discipline. It is crucial to control one’s actions and thoughts in order to achieve personal growth and success. The text emphasizes the need for self-control in order to avoid falling into negative behaviors such as shoplifting or theft. The importance of self-discipline is also highlighted, as it is necessary to maintain a strong sense of purpose and direction in order to achieve one’s goals. The text concludes by emphasizing the need to continue working towards personal improvement and success, and to remain committed to one’s values and beliefs.

The text also touches on the topic of personal character and leadership. It notes that personal character is a crucial component of effective leadership, and that leaders must be able to lead themselves as well as others. The text cites examples of leaders who have excelled in this area, such as those who are able to manage their own emotions and maintain a sense of integrity. The text also notes the importance of personal character in creating positive change in society, as leaders who have strong personal character are able to inspire others and lead by example.

The text concludes by emphasizing the importance of personal growth and success, and the need to continue working towards these goals. It encourages readers to remain committed to their values and beliefs, and to continue striving for personal improvement and success.
desperately to learn from, you, and those revolutionary intellectuals of like minds. We wish to force alliances/ allegiance with you – wholeheartedly. But in this age we are all as sheets of metal meant to be airfed in public... It causes sensations and dislike towards a movement - or can - of such a fruitful meaning for the New Afrikan/Black community across. To each one, teach one until we reach... -Life, Love & Loyalty – “G.U.”

Editor’s Note: Ed laid out his analysis in his article in Prison Focus Issue 49. Powell presented his critique of Ed’s article, which I thought was thoughtful and insightful. Hayward had issues with Powell’s article, and expressed discomfort with airing out dirty laundry, so to speak. While his arguments are valid, it is not justifiable. I would agree if it was a “condemnation” rather than a “critique”. There should be no martyr’s immunity against criticism of our movements, leaders or soldiers. W.S.

Letter to Mr. Lindsay Hayes regarding sleep deprivation

(See Sleep Deprivation Update, pg. 5)

Letter to Matthew Lopes

Dear Mr. Hayes,

I was arrested and detained in Ad Seg at DVI on March 27, 2016. The practice of false security/welfare checks occur every 20 minutes. They sound louder at night – more intense and annoying, because the alarm sounds louder when you are not fully aware. It is quiet. This penetrating, and irritating screech sound on every cell door, shakes, torments, and agitates us, causing a jumping fear every 20 minutes, day and night. The flashing of a bright flashlight penetrates my eyes like a shock, like when you see lights of a train and the noise sends chills through you.

I wind up angry, my blood pressure and heart rate increase. This can’t be good for my heart. Sometimes every 15-20 minutes, an officer bangs a door, shakes the metal bar, twice, as if to deliberately wake me up and keep me up. It sends a penetrating, heart-aggravating piercing in me that affects my physical, mental and emotional mind and body. The sounds are from a metal pipe the officers use to hit the frame of my door, hitting metal to metal that causes a loud, echoing alarm that sounds all the way to the end of the building, like a car alarm you can hear a distance away. It’s loud, annoying, and disturbing.

I can’t sleep at all, and the most I can get is if I feel as though I don’t get any sleep at all. My eyes hurt from being puffy, swollen, tired, and red/irritated. My body aches from tossing and turning back and forth. Nothing blocks out the loud, alarming, beeping, echoing noises and irritating sound from the metal bar. This is the longest I’ve ever been deprived of sleep.

My mind and my eyes hurt. I have headaches. My ears ache. My body aches. I feel full of stress and cannot get my mind to shut down. When I am in Ad Seg, I can’t think, read, write, stay focused, or concentrate at all. Between the constant noise in my cell, and the yelling and shouting of the officers, and the pounding on the door, I don’t think I can ever heal.

I have been in solitary confinement for 29 years. I have not received any mail or correspondence. I can’t even get up for breakfast. I feel that if I don’t turn this around I may not ever be able to recover. On some days I feel that I am near death. And because I am on hunger strike, I hope that the court will force the prison officials to take care of me.

I am writing to you to make you aware of the conditions I am enduring. I have been in solitary confinement for 29 years. I have not received any mail or correspondence. I can’t even get up for breakfast. I feel that if I don’t turn this around I may not ever be able to recover. On some days I feel that I am near death. And because I am on hunger strike, I hope that the court will force the prison officials to take care of me.

Illegal Use of Segregation at Sonoma County Jail

October 26, 2017

I am writing to inform you of some issues and action we’ve taken in the Sonoma County Jail. By the time you receive this we will be days into a hunger strike. We began today. We are being held unlawfully in Administrative Segregation on 23½ hour lockdown, causing us undue mental, physical, emotional and spiritual suffering. They hold us for prolonged periods of time and place us on indefinite terms of isolation. There are gentlemen back here who have been here for over 6 months and could be here for years depending on their case. I’ve personally been in segregation all but 19 days in the last 18 months. For some of us we are not placed here because we broke facility rules or are any type of disciplinary issue. They say we’re here because we choose to exercise our right to remain silent. By exercising our right they unjustly punish us. There are about ten of us back here in this situation. We feel this facility uses barbaric tactics to break us down, holding us to the lowest levels of human decency we give in to them. Our rights are being violated and we are being deprived of privileges due per Title 15. There has been much scrutiny on Sonoma County over the past few years, due to the beating of inmates, unlawful procedures and procedures and outright disrespect for our constitutional rights. Sincerely yours, D.O., Due Vocational Institution

Wisconsin Prisoner Hunger Strike

January 3, 2017

There is a group of us prisoners in Wisconsin protesting long-term solitary confinement. Currently the administration, Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WDCCO) can keep you on administrative confinement (AD) — solitary and totally isolated (SC) indefinitely. With our hunger strike we seek to bring awareness to the issue and put a one year cap on AC.

I personally been on this hunger strike since June 2016, but the Wisconsin prisoners can be force-fed. I have been force-fed for about 6 months now. At first the DOC hoped that sticking tubes up my nose would compel me drop the hunger strike, so they were doing it three times per day feeding me 2,250 calories. Then, when they realized that we were not going to break, the prison doctor reduced the calories to 1,500 to be administered AC and PM. Their hope was that the midday hunger pains would compel us to eat. When that didn’t do the trick, on December 1, 2016, the doctor wrote another type of prescription order. He ordered that I only be force-fed and hydrated “when I am near death”. And because my hunger-strike includes no water/fluids, near death comes every 4 days... I wrote to the court judge who issued the court-order for me not to be forced to try to get an “injunction” to stop the DOC from misusing the court-order. On December 20th, 2016, the prison doctor Jeffry Manlove verified that the reason why he changed his prescription order for me to be force fed and hydrated only when I am near death was because “they were trying to get me to eat”, meaning that he admitted that he is misusing the court-order and using it as a method of coercion to try to bend my will, rather than for its intended purpose which is to provide medical treatment to prevent injury or death from starvation and dehydration.

However, the judge sided with the DOC and permitted them to resort to such torture techniques. The judge told me that “if they kill me my only consolation would be that my family would have grounds for a civil claim against the DOC.” You can find the transcripts on-line. The case is: “Wis. DOC v. Cesar DeLeon #322800

Dodge County Case No.16CV301”

And in the complaint D.O.C the greenlight to torture me with these water boarding-like techniques, the DOC is using it on all prisoners in the WDOC who are on hunger strike. But because they still haven’t been able to break us, the DOC decided to intensify the pressure by performing other kinds of stress-inducements, on top of the water boarding-like torture techniques. Every time they extract us for the daily evaluations and/or force-feedings (when we qualify) the guards use this opportunity to use excessive force and ram sick our cell.

They find any excuse to put us on paper restrictions, which means we cannot send nor receive mail, to isolate us from our supporters.

And they take our clothes to humiliate us and, well it is winter in Wisconsin. You can imagine how cold it get in here.

Not long ago in Guantnamo Bay the prisoners went on hunger strike. And the military was using the same water boarding-like technique on them. As a result of being subjected to such methods, of only hydrating the subject when he is near death, the prisoners developed a serious medical condition known as “dehydration syndrome”. Eventually human/civil rights attorneys stepped in to help stop this practice.

What surprises me is that here in Wisconsin no one cares. There are no attorneys of law all they want and no one cares. No attorney wants to help us.

But we continue to peacefully resist. And even though I’ve been enduring a lot of harassment, beatings and injuries from falling from dehydration, I plan on pushing forth.

We truly appreciate your support and we want everyone to know we are doing our part in the struggle against solitary confinement.

In struggle, Cesar DeLeon

I decided to not follow the prisoners’ code of violence and politics of killing and mayhem.

“You can use my whole name Santiago Soto, I’ll tell you why.

I made the transition from an active yard (so called hardened core yards) to a Sensitive Needs Yard (i.e. soft yard full of prison informants, sexual predators, rapers, child molesters, kid killers, etc.) I decided not to follow the prisoners’ code of violence and politics of killing and mayhem. Therefore, I was occupying a cell that they needed for a soldier willing to blindly follow orders. The SNY program allows me to be the only owner of my destiny.

No slave can knock on my door and order me to kill or harm another slave.

Now it just me against the whole world, and I’m loving it to further the psyche of the chain of slavery that goes over all prisoners.

Love and respect, Soto
These abuses are the result of a culture cover-ups and collusion from the top.

From Warden Dean Borders all the way to the Inmate JW leadman and his supervisor, Mr. Wally Luce, the hiring process is rigged. [The above individuals] are allowed to view inmates medical files, do background checks on inmates, charge fees for hiring people and discriminating against transgenders.

The assignment Lt. Williams should know that the proper process for hiring is being circumvented, but he insists on giving the impression that all is right in the job market, at one of the most corrupt prisons in California. Anonymous

Exxtortion at Oregon Department of Correction Facility

One of those who requested Correction (ODOC) wanna give you a monetary fine for every perceived misstep. I’m sending you a copy of ODOC’s disciplinary fine matrix. If you look at it, you’ll see 3 main rule infractions. Assault I, II, III. (Because there’s no such thing as a fight here.) We assault each other. That way it sounds violent. Extortion, which we asresubject to all day everyday: do this or else this will happen. Work or go to the hole. Move into the cell with another inmate and sleep in another cellmate or go to the hole. And lastly, Disturbance: see, according to these officials a disturbance can be one incident, 3-4 days long. I can’t stress this any harder. The last disturbance in August at OSP involved over 200 people. Yet this transpired for 3 days, under controlled conditions of specific cells opened with CO’s standing feet away with jugs of pepper spray. Everyone’s getting wet today. And that’s how the disturbance goes down. It’s second to none where the most violence and only weapons being used are by the CO’s. And then everyone gets a $200.00 fine. 200 plus prisoners getting $200.00 fines. Do you know how long it takes to pay $200,000? Well, 180 days, DMU, most whites to live here. (Because there’s no such thing as a fight here.) We assault each other for every violation and are charged with non-sex offenders; Knowing from decades of gladiator scraps, they simply try to integrate sex offenders and accountable.

Lastly, whenever they can’t earn profits through the prison walls, then they can be one incident, 3-4 days long. I can’t stress this any harder. The last disturbance in August at OSP involved over 200 people. Yet this transpired for 3 days, under controlled conditions of specific cells opened with CO’s standing feet away with jugs of pepper spray. Everyone’s getting wet today. And that’s how the disturbance goes down. It’s second to none where the most violence and only weapons being used are by the CO’s. And then everyone gets a $200.00 fine. 200 plus prisoners getting $200.00 fines. Do you know how long it takes to pay $200,000? Well, 180 days, DMU, most whites to live here. (Because there’s no such thing as a fight here.) We assault each other for every violation and are charged with non-sex offenders; Knowing from decades of gladiator scraps, they simply try to integrate sex offenders and accountable.

To prevail in our struggle for prisoners human rights we respectfully ask the prisoner population to exercise discipline for its own best interest to engage in combat with one another when we are fighting together to improve our conditions of confinement. We ask those of you who sway influence in our housing unit to work with each other to resolve conflicts peacefully by promoting prisoner solidarity. Let’s try not to provide ammunition to the administration that allows them to justify the reasoning for the use of solitary confinement. Our goal is to promote our cause by unifying like-minded people to support our next planned Hunger strike. Truly,

PRISONERS UNITED OF SILICON VALLEY

Oppressive and Torturous Conditions in Louisiana

This plea is for advocacy against the cruel and unusual conditions. here in Louisiana at David Wade Correctional Center. No one in their right mind should let this happen. The assignment Lt. Williams should know that the proper process for hiring is being circumvented, but he insists on giving the impression that all is right in the job market, at one of the most corrupt prisons in California.

These abuses are the result of a culture cover-ups and collusion from the top.

From Warden Dean Borders all the way to the Inmate JW leadman and his supervisor, Mr. Wally Luce, the hiring process is rigged. [The above individuals] are allowed to view inmates medical files, do background checks on inmates, charge fees for hiring people and discriminating against transgenders.

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WE BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SEX ABUSE IN WOMEN’S PRISONS

By Bonnie Kerness

The issue of prison rape, America’s dirty little secret, is so serious a problem that in 2003 Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). Unfortunately, the “elimination” part of that legislation has been enforced only intermittently. NJ Advance Media reporter S.P. Sullivan’s investigation “Locked Up, Fighting Back” echoed the hundreds of testimonies from prison inmates that AFSC’s Prison Watch receives from imprisoned women each year. Letters, telephone calls and visits from people formerly incarcerated confirm stories we hear from behind the walls.

I have held women in my arms who have described the worst of their assaults and the impact of living with that trauma upon release. The Conscience told the tears, “Relinquish your Fears and doubts And heal yourself in the process.”

I can still fix this by paying attention to any honest opportunity that comes my way. OK. I can still fix this by paying attention to any honest opportunity that comes my way. I am… Trayvon Martin

I am… What reflects from my thoughts and actions but never again

I was just a fool. I was stuck in a maze. I need a few, create a few. I got it this time. Enjoy the fuckin’ process. Yeah now I get it!!

The public pays heavily for these institutions without knowing what is happening behind those walls.

I don’t smoke, don’t drink, don’t fuck. At least I can be fucking independent. I am… what reflects from my thoughts and actions

The power in prayer will prevail everywhere and nowhere. I am… Trayvon Martin.

For those of the struggle who really don’t know, no matter where you go the world is a gheto. Law of nature is cause and effect, knowledge is key.

The tears gave it some thought Before giving the Conscience an answer, “If crying brings you to triumph Fast bits every which way hitting nothing. Fragments of my memories, histories, ideas and sense of self whizzing by speed of light

I need a few, create a few. I got it this time. Enjoy the fuckin’ process. Yeah now I get it!!

I can still fix this by paying attention to any honest opportunity that comes my way.

What is happening to our sisters and brothers in prison reflects poorly on our prison system which is only authorized by law to remove people from society, not torture them. It reflects poorly on us as a society, and exposes whole families and communities to the aftermath of institutional violence.

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As Lydia so aptly said, “What happens behind prison walls does not stay there; it affects people, families and all our communities. I paid my debt to society, as did many others. We should not have to live with such abuse or be tortured by the memory of it... A safer prison culture will improve public safety and reduce recidivism.”

According to experts, sex abuse behind bars is underreported. New Jersey reports few substantiated prison rape cases to federal government. Because these crimes of sexual violence occur to people in our governments’ custody, we bear responsibility, along with those who ignore the law. We, the people, can—and must—act to interrupt this ongoing terror.

There is a county jail, a juvenile detention facility, or a state prison near one of us. Do we know what our fellow citizens are experiencing?

I do not think of my life as finished. I am… what reflects from my thoughts and actions
touch, grab, feel and everything else. And most of us had them. So, even if you had nothing on you, they…could grope, guards from conducting searches on females. Regarding the Issue 50, CPF successfully campaigned to prohibit male searches for contraband. But, as reported in ‘Prison Focus’ everybody inside a woman’s prison identifies as a woman.) she was told to use a sock. (McKnight pointed out that not never cram eight dudes in one room, but they’ll sardine us ahead and get in trouble: You’re never gonna get out. The as a young person coming inside, ‘Don’t worry about it: go I was never getting out. I believed them. I told my parents A decision, and my decision cost me something far greater that’s how I ended up with this guy to begin with. “I made it. McKnight’s parents divorced when she was young. Though with the physical, mental and verbal started, so I held the restroom. Maybe I need this. You know what I’m saying? McKnight had to advocate for and rehabilitate herself. In prison, McKnight had to advocate for and rehabilitate herself. Eventually, she decided to become an advocate for women, speaking out against sexual assault and advocating for changes in the criminal justice system. She also worked with organizations that provided support and resources to incarcerated women. McKnight was one of the founding members of the Women’s Advocacy Network, which was formed in response to the mistreatment and neglect that women experience in prison. She spoke out against the use of solitary confinement, the lack of access to health care, and the high rate of sexual violence in women’s prisons. McKnight’s activism was driven by her own experiences and her desire to help others. She was a powerful voice for change, and her work helped to bring attention to the issues facing women in prison.
figure out a way to come together so that … we can allow our communities to heal in the way that they need to heal. Because irrelevant of what goes on, if I don’t respond to it, then it has no effect. … At First when we really wanna stop the system, then we gotta stop feeding the system. We gotta stop allowing our young to be fed to the system.” Raymond Aguilar echoed these sentiments. In Stockton, he says, “the politicians foster initiatives like gun buy-back programs; initiatives that have to make for great publicity, but end up dividing neighbor against neighbor.” What is works is when … we take back our community. And when our people come back, we are Oakland. We are Frisco. … And we’re gonna take care of our community because, for years, we have harmed our community.” A critical aspect of healing one’s community, the panelist argued, is engaging with the young. On this score, Watani Stiner discussed furthermore, the older generation’s role in “passing the historical baton” on to the youth. … We can’t just talk about all of the glorification; history can’t just be celebrated. There have to be talk about … the mistakes and the weaknesses, in order to understand and not make the same mistakes. … I think that the older generation has that responsibility; not to become this ‘I know all’ guru whose going to post questions and tell the youth how to do things but to instead engage with the younger people. And I find so much hope in young people today. I mean, I really find a lot of hope.”


CPTPO FILE “UNDERGROUND REGULATIONS” PETITION CONCERNING X-RAY SCANNER SEARCHES

By Kim Roderick

Starting in October 2016, volunteers with the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition and California Prison Focus began hearing reports about X-ray scanners acquired by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

By now, of our incarcerated readers will have encountered or been subject to the use of X-ray scanners firsthand. Some may have received a November 30, 2016 memo titled, “Adani Conpass and Rapiscan Secure 1000.”

3. Amended Penal Code Section 6402

Section 6402 is found in Part 3 of the Penal Code, Title 7 (Administration of the State Correctional System), Chapter 10 (Prison Visitation). The law requires the CDCR to “develop policies related to its contraband interdiction efforts for individuals entering CDCR detention facilities.” Per section 6402, subdivision (a), the term “all individuals” includes “visitors, staff, volunteers, and contractors.”

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The Thirteenth Amendment marked the discourse link between the civilly dead felon and the slave or social nonperson… Once the connection to prisons and slaves had been made, slavery could reassert itself within the American family. - Colin Dayan

That slavery remains legal in the U.S., though disturbing, is not as shocking as the fact that the vast majority of U.S. citizens don’t know slavery remains legal.

The U.S. Constitution states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States…” From 1862 to the present day, American criminology and legislative effect would be a series of refinements on this single theme: the systematic criminalization of New Afrikans, other oppressed nationalities and the poor, populations designated for exploitation or disposal by the U.S. from its inception. The primary rationale for “Amend the 13th” is simple: there are thousands of dynamic progressive groups and leftist organizations engaging in the anti-Prison (Private Industrial Slave Complex) work – waging the same struggle at many different points. But this beast is so big, so powerful, so imbedded in social life in the U.S., that it is able to ignore, absorb or superficially reform our individual attacks, while keeping the heart of all these contradictions protected under layers of Constitutional legitimacy and conditioned public support. The heart of these contradictions is the slavery provision of the 13th Amendment.

The maintenance of slavery in the U.S. for the subject to the courts is designed to maintain both the physical structures of race/class oppression and the (psychological/ideological) character structures upon which the capitalist system is based.

U.S. capitalism can not function without these populations forced to the bottom rung of society, acting as surplus labor, human chattel or social scapegoats.

Sexism and xenophobia play roles just as crucial as racism and classism in the U.S. capitalist arrangement. America’s conscious, unconscious-basing economic, political and social infrastructure capable of eliminating, mitigating or diminishing to the greatest degree the negative impact of mass incarceration, criminalization and “legal” slavery in our communities.

We will seek to accomplish this end via a three-prong strategy designed to focus on the following: public information, public education, and public opposition to the continuation of “legal” slavery in America, while simultaneously undermining its basis:

A) Organize a national petition drive to Amend the 13th Amendment to remove its “legal” slavery provision to a Federal level, and a concentrated campaign in each state to rescind all “Civil Death” and social containment “laws” which derive their powers from the legal slavery provision of the 13th Amendment.
B) To carry out targeted demonstrations which highlight the negative social impact and continued existence of legal slavery in America. Central to this point is educating, organizing and mobilizing as many People as possible to support and/or participate in the MILLIONS 4 PRISONERS MARCH on Washington, D.C. on August 19th, 2017.
C) Promote and seek formal authority for the implementation of a wide range of parole, pardon and clemency review boards based on the concept of “Strategic Release.”

Building a successful movement with these aims begins with developing a competent and effective structure. Slavery and involuntary servitude are for anyone – even those convicted of a crime – is itself criminal, morally repugnant and indefensible. In the final analysis, the complete abolition of slavery in America is a historical imperative.

We are in your hands in a crucial, crucial way.
Support “Amend the 13th”!
For more information: visit Amendthe13th.org

AMEND THE 13TH
Let’s Bring It Together

I’m just trying to open up the lines of communication so we can begin our work!

I’m trying to put together a class action

Message from Comrade Malik in Texas

What I’m proposing is y’all in Cali, we in Texas and the slaves in Africa have a form of solidarity so we can work forward in abolishing slavery and emptying the 13th [V]. … I’m just trying to open up the lines of communication so we can begin our work!

EXTING SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AND THE GAMES CDCR PLAYS

By Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa
Published in in W.O.W. Bayview on December 29, 2016
I t is very important that you all clearly understand the depth of human torture to which I was subjected for 30-plus years by CDCR and CCPOA. (See end note.) This torture was differently experienced by similarly situated prisoners held in California’s solitary confinement locations throughout CDCR, with the approval and sanctioning of California governors, attorneys general, CDCR secretaries and directors, and the California Legislature. They have, with no regard to the real dangers of systematic killing of prisoners, both physically and mentally, for decades. I was placed in solitary confinement – the SHU – on May 15, 1985, on trumped-up, illegal and fabricated state documents by two leading CDCR lieutenants, Criminal Activity Coordinator (CAC) Lt. L.O. Thomas and Lt. Suzan Holland.

I am talking about? Then the counselor replied, “Dewberry.”

Gabriel saw right through what this counselor and her supervisors, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) manipulation game and attacked the SHU counselors and guards.

During our peaceful protest by the solitary confinement class action, we collectively stopped participating in the dysfunctional SDP at CCI-Tehachapi Prison on May 11, 2015. This was because the SDP has been violating our SCPC liberty interest arising from the Due Process Clause itself, and CDCR had to stop its SDP from imposing stigmatizing classifications and concomitant behavior modification. I realize now that the SDP between 2012 and 2015 violated our constitutional rights, and it still does.

It was a tragedy for three decades – yes, 30-plus years I was forced to suffer all forms of torture and to witness killings at the hands of CDCR officials and staff, aided and abetted by government, state officials and the California Department of Vocational Institution (DVI), it would not take long before the CDCR officials at CCI-Tehachapi would show their collective scheme to have me assassinated as the New Afrikan prisoner and Black activist and/or Black_class action lawsuit.

During our peaceful protest by the solitary confinement prisoner class (SCPC) against Steps 3 and 4 of the CDCR-CCI Step Down Program (SDP), we resisted any attempt to participate in the dysfunctional SDP at CCI-Tehachapi Prison on May 11, 2015. This was because the SDP has been violating our SCPC liberty interest arising from the Due Process Clause itself, and CDCR had to stop its SDP from imposing stigmatizing classifications and concomitant behavior modification. I realize now that the SDP between 2012 and 2015 violated our constitutional rights, and it still does.

In an obviously sinister campaign to undermine the collective solidarity of our historic Agreement to End Hostilities, these officials tried to manipulate the other racial groups supporting the AEH to turn against me.

First, SHU Counselor Vanessa Ybarra went to one of our 16 Prisoner Human Rights Movement representatives, Gabriel Huerta, and tried to get him and other reps to turn against me, asking Huerta, “Why do you all let that Black inmate speak? If you all collaborated with us, we could stop the Step Down Program? My supervisors want you to know.”

Correctional Counselor II B. Snider, Capt. P. Matzen, Associate Wardens J. Gutierrez, Chief Deputy Warden W. Saffold, Chief PHRM representative and other prisoners, then said, “You are referring to?” the counselor responded, “I’m talking about?” Then the counselor replied, “Dewberry.”

Gabriel is my given last name.

As Gabriel told that counselor, “Dewberry is one of the four principal negotiators who represent the Prisoner Rights Human Movement prisoner class. He and I are discussing the 13th [V], or am I talking about?” Then the counselor replied, “Dewberry.”

Dewberry is my given last name.

When Gabriel asked Vaca, “What Black prisoner are you referring to?” the counselor responded, “I’m talking about Dewberry.”

The second attempt was by another SHU counselor from 4B building named Vaca, who approached the PHRM representative and other prisoners, then said, “You prisoners should go back to participating in the Step Down Program, or all of you are going to be sent back to the supermax. Your station is not to be released to the general population this year (2015) or next year (2016), all because you are listening to that Black prisoner.

When Gabriel asked, “What Black prisoner are you referring to?” the counselor responded, “I’m talking about Dewberry.”

The Rep refused to play into that old CDCR manipulation game and terminated the conversation with the counselor, “You can take me back to my cell,” and left.

So neither of the attempts worked, because Brother Gabriel recognized what time it was. He summed it up in these words:

CDCR had been manipulating and playing us against each other… They can’t do that anymore.

This life-threatening CDCR campaign leading up to my release out of SHU in October 2015 would be followed by the unprofessional attitudes and illegal actions by CDCR employee in the general population.
Upon my preparing to allegedly be released to general population, I was notified on Aug. 11, 2015, that I would be attending my first institutional Classification Committee (ICC)。“I put this in parenthesis because the ICC  took my oral statement into perspective as to why these ICC hearings now have merit for the Solitary Confinement Prisoner Class (SCPC). We, the SCPC, had to take our struggle to the streets of this world by participating in three non-violent peaceful protests. In the first, commencing July 1, 2011, a total of 6,600 women and men participated. And when CDCr failed to honor the agreements they made to end the first strike, we convened another protest on Sept. 26, 2011, in which a total of 12,600 men and women participated across this state.

CDCr begged for us to discontinue our protest and allow for them to make the necessary interdepartmental major changes which would save the longest held prisoners. The four principal negotiators — Brutha Sitawa, Arturo Castellanos, Todd Ashker and George Franco along with 16 Prisoner Human Rights Movement (PHRM) representatives submitted a second protest to CDCr on September 26, 2011 and allow for CDCr to show their good faith efforts to reform their illegal solitary confinement policies, laws and rules and place all 10,080 SCPC women and men on a fully functional general population. By Feb. 1, 2013, we vowed to resume our protest to death or until CDCr negotiates with us in a real way. On February 1, 2013, the four principal negotiators announced that we would resume our protest on July 6, 2013, being 40 days after CDCr stated they wanted to wage their war of attrition on us and similarly situated SCPC.

On July 8, 2011, we entered into the largest hunger strike in prison history. Some 30,000 prisoners participated and our efforts brought the California Attomey General Kamala Harris, all 56 SCPC secretaries between 2010 and 2016 and their stakeholders, who all had the current data, to recognize the torturous conditions we SCPC had to endure for decades. I was one of thousands held at Pelican Bay, and I don’t want another woman, man or child to be forced to suffer what I went through. We SCPC observed and suffered the cruel and devastating harm caused by CDCr.

On Aug. 11, 2015, I was approached by Building 8 Correctional Counselor Vaca at approximately 8:25 a.m. at my cell door for the purpose of preparing my central files for my release from the SHU. Once Vaca met me into that I am the first solitary confinement prisoner class member whose case files he is currently reviewing and that I was scheduled to appear before a full ICC on Aug. 19, 2015. Within a two-week period, within a two-week period, I was allowed to attend the exercise yard, with all racial groups and especially with my New Afrikan Prisoner Government (NAPG), and explain to all people the importance of prisoner organizing, which I had personally signed off on. The IGI made their usual threats. Now, within the next 10 days, I was allowed to attend the exercise yard, with all of the African tribes embraced me as their own Big Bruh. As I was within my political organizing role in the 2016 ICC hearing in New Afrikan, their war which was not to be a natural form of affection between a brother and sister. However, while my sister was squeezing me so tightly, I all thought could be during those moments of was of the family members who died, whom I will never be able to hug or speak with them again.


One of them was illegally denied the right and opportunity to physically touch me for over 30 years, due to my political and cultural beliefs – three decades for a “thought crime” which did not exist.

This is just a window into what we prisoners had to suffer for decades by order of our tormentors — CDCr and it continues to this day within the realm of CDCr modified general population. Our struggle for justice, equality and human rights continues.

We need the support of all people in California and the world to stop the injustice we suffer at the hands of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation officials and the California Correctional Peace Officers Association and others of their ilk.

I would be extremely irresponsible if I didn’t seek the support of my New Afrikan people – and all [my] sista and brutha entertainers across Oakland, the Bay Area and the country.

Yes, our New Afrikan Lives Matter here behind the enemy lines of California’s unjust prison system. On behalf of our New Afrikan prison community, I pray that you will show your support for our freedom campaigns and whatever you all can donate shall be greatly appreciated. Please send your donations to

FREEDOM OUTREACH
P.O. Box 7359
Oakland, CA 94601-3023.

Endnote: CDCr stands for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation – the last word in California Dep't of Corrections and rehabilitation – the last word uncapitalized by many prisoners to signify how little rehab exists. CCPOA – California Correctional Peace Officers Association is – the greatest visit to see our greatest influence within CDCr and on state policy and legislation.

Subscription Form

Guscino people can subscribe to Freedom Front for $20 per year. Prisoner subscriptions are $5 a year or twice first class stamps.

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First Name:
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For the first time in my imprisonment, I was somewhat shaken to the inner core of this New African revolutionary nationalist man by a simple hug from my younger sister, Queen Marie, during our October 2015 visit. A hug should be a natural form of affection between a brother and sister. However, while my sister was squeezing me so tightly, I all thought could be during those moments of was of the family members who died, whom I will never be able to hug or speak with them again.


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Subscription Form

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15
Men of color are overrepresented in solitary confinement, while whites are typically underrepresented.

By Juleyka Lantigua-Williams

Printed in The Atlantic on DEC 5, 2016

Tark disparities in prisoners' treatment are embedded throughout the country. But in some states, the racial makeup of prisons and their solitary-confinement populations appeared more balanced—like in New York and Kentucky, where white prisoners made up 70 percent of both the general and solitary-confinement populations, respectively.

District of Columbia, with whites representing 2 percent of those in solitary. The dynamic is similar in the states of California, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Wisconsin, where the percentages of white prisoners are higher than those of black prisoners. In contrast, in Kentucky, where black prisoners made up 41 percent of the general prison population, but only 27 percent of those in solitary confinement, the percentage of black prisoners was disproportionate to their slice of the general population—it was greater.

The basis for the data is a 2015 survey on the use of solitary confinement in 43 jurisdictions, which represent about 96 percent of all prisoners. The New York Times, “A Treatise to End Mass Incarceration” by Serge Mydland

Editor's Note: The following is an edited and reduced version of the full article by my colleague and fellow writer, Sergio Mydland. He is currently living in Mexico and is a student of the great Russell Maroon Shoatz (Black Panther, Black Liberation Army Vet and political prisoner). The following is the explosive conclusion of his full piece which analyzes the tactics of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Enjoy!

When it comes to the prison industrial complex, those who control and benefit off of this system are in a definite minority, and are far less in human numbers than those adversely affected by it. The cost of prisons doesn’t merely affect prisoners and their families, but taxpayers as well. Those dynamics require our situation more comparable to that of Gandhi and what was taking place in India.

The proper way to view this is to focus on the methods used by anarcho-syndicalists in Europe, who believed that the only way to earn their economic freedom was through the economic life out of it.

Prisons function so smoothly largely due to the cooperation of inmates. That cooperation is often incentivized through employment opportunities. The fact that labor is a major part of the prison economy is so ubiquitous, that for all or without the cooperation and the cooperation and-often free-labor of prisoners.

The vast majority of jobs within prisons are filled by prisoners. Officers are outnumbered by prisoners 50:1 and sometimes more. Ten kitchen staff members supervise up to 300 inmate workers throughout the workday. Maintenance crews have one civilian supervisor for up to 100 inmate workers. High-level inmates make up to 180 dollars per hour on parole, while prisoners max-out at 42 cents per hour. Prisoner worker strikes would coincide with boycotts of commissary and other commodities which prisoners are forced to pay inflated rates for. Profiting off of prisoners would be in steady decline, while the cost of prisons would continue to rise, causing state budgets to balloon, hurting taxpayers' pockets, forcing them to demand a change to the status quo.

Currently, one very large obstacle stands in the way of work-based reforms. A movement to strike the "punishment clause" in the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution allows for legal slavery and forced labor as punishment for conviction of a crime. Therefore, a prison strike is not only likely to perceive contraband in a black offender’s hand than in a white offender’s hand. A prison guard may also decide more quickly that a black offender is a threat as compared to a white offender, leading perhaps to increased citations for black offenders. It is also possible that the threat is exaggerated for minority offenders, and therefore, minority inmates may face more serious conduct reports than their white fellow inmates for the same type of behavior.

The influence of color on prison decision-making is the subject of a paper by Andrea Armstrong, a law professor at Loyola University New Orleans, titled “Race, Prison Discipline, and the Law.” Her conclusions on race include:

First, minority offenders may be more likely to be perceived as a disciplinary threat by correctional officers, regardless of an offender’s actual behavior. For example, a white offender and a black offender are equally likely to perceive contraband in a black offender’s hand than in a white offender’s hand. A prison guard may also decide more quickly that a black offender is a threat as compared to a white offender, leading perhaps to increased citations for black offenders. It is also possible that the threat is exaggerated for minority offenders, and therefore, minority inmates may face more serious conduct reports than their white fellow inmates for the same type of behavior.

The more Amerikan dollars spent on violent external movements/situations taking place. WWII was causing the British to deplete their resources and focus their movements/situations taking place. WWII was causing the British to make our situation more comparable to that of Gandhi and what was taking place in India.

With King and the civil rights movement, there were also violent anti-colonial struggles going on around the world in places such as Vietnam, which forced the United States to get so heavily involved that the civil rights movement basically sucked in through the back door.

Today we see the same things taking place. With wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and the constant threat of terrorism, Americans are being diverted from the struggle to end mass incarceration. This movement can be a thorn in the side of the institution. The more American dollars spent on violent external forces, the more the non-violent struggle will fail. The struggle will fail because prison reform will pale in comparison to the threat of violent external forces.

As with any other revolution, the struggle to end mass incarceration will take time, dedication, and focus. Dedicated activists and revolutionaries must realize that while prisoners will eventually be the main force behind the movement, this force hinges upon our allies on the outside of prison and their effectiveness in forcing Congress to strike the clause. Any movement without this critical element will ultimately fail. The time and conditions are perfect. Eliminating the punishment clause would essentially hamstring the Department of Corrections, taking away their ability to retaliate against prisoners for exercising their constitutional rights. Currently, hunger strikes are being utilized to bring attention to the plight of prisoners. Also, a number of
We live in a capitalist society, and in a capitalist society, only economic pressure creates change.

That pressure can be applied violently or non-violently, but due to the general perception of prisoners and prisoners, as little more than criminals, any revolutionary action taken by prisoners must be non-violent. Otherwise, we risk turning the masses against us, as this violence would only serve to impede our progress or lighten up on the enemy.

The time for talk has ended. A new era of activism has begun, and we don’t have to quote statistics; we’ve heard enough of them. To help the Department of Corrections of its financial and political grossly inflated rates, would at least threaten to bankrupt the Department of Corrections budget to unsustainable proportions. That, coupled with an economic boycott of services offered to prisoners at grossly inflated rates, would at least threaten to bankrupt the Department of Corrections of its financial and political capital.

Returning to our communities and our families is our priority. Prisoners want to live lives that matter, where we have control over our own lives, where we are governed. Mass incarceration destroys communities and families, and lays the foundations for following generations to fall victim to the system as well. The real cost of prisons aren’t merely financial. Mass incarceration continues to highlight America’s biggest flaws—in classism, sexism, and racism. It mirrors the biggest crime against humanity: slavery—also perpetrated by America, and its classism, sexism, and racism. It is the biggest crime against humanity: slavery—also perpetrated by America.

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The Department of Corrections has publicly admitted that the $30,000 a year a prisoner costs is vastly outdated. The average prisoner today is about $60,000 a year. The Department of Corrections has grossly inflated rates, would at least threaten to bankrupt the Department of Corrections budget to unsustainable proportions. These rates are grossly inflated, and keeping the Department of Corrections budget to unsustainable proportions.

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It was the continental philosopher Michel Foucault who stated, however, that “there where power, there is resistance.”

The California prison hunger strikes of 2011 and 2013 were efforts to resist the regime of solitary confinement with the goal of remaking carceral, i.e. prison space. The strikes saw increasing participation between the first and third strikes; the July 2011 strike saw 6,600 prisoners not eating, and the 2013 strike involved upwards of 30,000 hunger strikers across California SHUs. While there was certainly strong support from outside families and organizations, the strikes were initiated, planned and organized by prisoners. These strikes can be considered social movements in their own right, collectively organized attempts to reform and abolish certain elements of the prison landscape. As a group, prison hunger strikers, in their deliberations, challenge the justification of the strikes. CDCR is a power structure. Prison authorities constitute an apparatus of state power and state violence. However, I believe we have to go further than this to understand how power works at the scale of those individuals and groups resisting the state, because social movements involve establishing power structures and power relations in order for them to happen. Is this implicit in a struggle against power? The power relations involved in prison-led organization against state violence? These are difficult questions, and require more thought than what this article can provide. Nevertheless, we must consider to what extent social movements in the form of strikes involve the kinds of power relations and structures of organizing of the California prison hunger strikes in 2011 and 2013, and furthermore, why did these power relations exist and function as they did? And lastly, my ultimate question here, who are the power relations and structures to us? Are there certain power relations that may exist within prison populations?

Prior to the hunger strikes, the Short Corridor Collective as well as other non-Short corridor prisoners wrote to California Prison Focus discussing their plans for the hunger strikes. Prisoners also wrote about events transpiring during the strikes. While the majority of these letters came from Short Corridor members, a handful of other prisoners wrote stating the extent to which they planned on participating in the strike. Prisoners also wrote about the number of prisoners across the state that participate. In order for the number of prisoners to support the July 1st 2011 Peaceful Hunger Strike to be supported. This was echoed in several different letters received by Short Corridor Prisoner 1 identifies the ‘Principal H.S. Strike Clarification’ in which Pelican Bay Prisoner 1, a prisoner-led organization against state violence? These are difficult questions, and require more thought than what this article can provide. Nevertheless, we must consider to what extent social movements in the form of strikes involve the kinds of power relations and structures of organizing of the California prison hunger strikes in 2011 and 2013, and furthermore, why did these power relations exist and function as they did? And lastly, my ultimate question here, who are the power relations and structures to us? Are there certain power relations that may exist within prison populations?

Thus, according to Short Corridor Prisoner 3, commitment for enduring violence by hunger striking across racial lines in the SHU prison population is necessary to produce change. This letter also discusses the extent of participation: “This is a call for all prisoners of the SHU to join the hunger strike.” This letter also mentions the three-time support in principle by not eating the first 24 hours of the hunger strike.

While it was bashed in the SHU, the Short Corridor was interested in the peaceful hunger strikes beyond their spearhead of space confinement within the larger carceral apparatus of Pelican Bay and throughout the California system. Prisoner 3, as a Short Corridor representative, asks that other prisoners show solidarity by not eating for the first day. This demonstrates the dichotomy present between the Short Corridor and the state’s power. The administration officials would not listen to the administration officials in relation to the hunger strike on at least three occasions. On the last occasion the administration expressed its desire to meet with each participant individually – an obvious gambit to muddle or fracture the core demands they are presented. Brother (name redacted) of the Short Corridor desired for certain prisoners to participate in certain durations of time; however, establishing participation was evidently an initial challenge for the representative structure.

Prisoners on the scope of prisoner participation in the strike: The July 1st letter, a prisoner-led organization against state violence? These are difficult questions, and require more thought than what this article can provide. Nevertheless, we must consider to what extent social movements in the form of strikes involve the kinds of power relations and structures of organizing of the California prison hunger strikes in 2011 and 2013, and furthermore, why did these power relations exist and function as they did? And lastly, my ultimate question here, who are the power relations and structures to us? Are there certain power relations that may exist within prison populations?

While these letters reporting on recruitment state that older prisoners are not expected to join the strikes because of their age or other health issues, several of these prisoners were reported to be striking on some level despite medical implications. Facing dwindling participants and an ultimatum from CDCR stating that they would re-examine the 5 Core Demands, the Short Corridor strike after three weeks. In an August 22 letter, Short Corridor prisoner 1 states that to get the hunger strike to continue for as long as possible. While the July 8, prisoners did not join the movement immediately, as participation evolved slowly as the strike began. In a letter from June 12, Short Corridor prisoner 4 explains how the representative structure continues to recruit other prisoners to join the movement.

Those who are healthy we are still trying to convince them to participate, for even just a few days. Hopefully we can get another 1 or 2 before the target date. (Note: there are others from different groups who are participating and will raise the overall number for this unit). This passage illustrates challenges in recruitment. The letter goes on to say that this particular prisoner’s unit has many older prisoners who cannot safely participate, as the strike is voluntary, not mandatory. Short Corridor prisoner 4 discusses how prisoners felt: “As far as the Northern Mexicans are concerned, we are only requesting a minimum of five days and anything beyond that will be left up to the individual participant. At least the strike is said to be voluntary, not pushing an all or nothing agenda. In other words, we are not asking people to die for this, all we are asking is to do what you can.”

It is difficult to ascertain from this passage the unique reasons as to why the representatives are calling for this particular racial group to strike for five days, after which point the strike is left up to prisoners on their own. Nevertheless, while the strike is said to be voluntary, this passage suggests that the Short Corridor desired for certain numbers of prisoners to participate for certain durations of time; however, establishing participation was evidently an initial challenge for the representative structure.

In a July 7 letter, a prisoner-led organization against state violence? These are difficult questions, and require more thought than what this article can provide. Nevertheless, we must consider to what extent social movements in the form of strikes involve the kinds of power relations and structures of organizing of the California prison hunger strikes in 2011 and 2013, and furthermore, why did these power relations exist and function as they did? And lastly, my ultimate question here, who are the power relations and structures to us? Are there certain power relations that may exist within prison populations?
The 2011 and 2013 California prison hunger strikes established a model from which the political left, in and outside of prison, can learn in conducting similar modes of protest.

In an age of neoliberalism, unfettered capitalism, and the sheer horror of the Trump administration, prisoners will continue to resist in the most creative and powerful ways. We must think about how power is constructed within the scale of our resistance movements, in order to combat and end state violence. For that we must say thank you to the California prison population for what they were able to do and what they were able to teach us as the resistance goes forward.

Note: If you have any further questions regarding the article or the research, and/or have interest in participating in the research, please reply to Adam Morse via California Prison Focus.

8 RICHER PEOPLE AS WEALTHY AS POOREST HALF OF THE WORLD – OXFAM

Have you been involved in Restorative Justice into account race, class and other factors that cultivate the restorative justice provides a holistic approach, taking practiced within the context of criminal justice system, schools throughout Oakland have completely changed their centers, workplaces and schools. For example, public in both private and public establishments such as community to share a safe space where they can express themselves and The goal is healing for everybody involved. In peacemaking members, meet with a facilitator to to discuss the incident. Large. Restorative practices attempt to address harm in a through reconciliation with victims and the community at large. Prisons, and detention centers, breaking up families and that people are more than the crimes that they committed. Calling on readers and incarcerated people, Prison Focus wish to hear from you. We would like to write a follow up article with your voices and experiences.

- Have you been involved in Restorative Justice practices, and if so, how did it impact your life?
- What would a more compassionate, healing approach look like in your situation?

Please indicate if Prison Focus is permitted to publish your writings, with or without your name. Unless you tell us otherwise, we will share what you tell us anonymously.

Retirement of the Honorable Judge

By Genevieve Fuller and Kim Pollok

Thelton Henderson, former judge in the Northern California district since 1996, is retiring. Henderson’s career has been distinguished by several precedent-setting decisions and a commitment to ensuring that constitutional rights and protections extend to every American. His career is of particular interest to prisoners and advocates of prison reform. For over 30 years, he has been an instrument of change within the California Department of Corrections.

In 1982, Henderson became the first African-American Civil Rights Division lawyer. He was employed by the U.S. Justice Department to monitor civil rights abuses by law enforcement, a role which included investigating the infamous 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. He became acquainted with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders. Within a year, Henderson lost his post for lending his government-issue car to Dr. King—a simple act of kindness that unleashed a fury of protest from Southern politicians who felt threatened by the federal government’s involvement in the civil rights movement. Henderson returned to his native California and, after a couple quiet decades in private practice, was appointed to the federal bench by President Carter. It would soon become apparent that the political backlash he’d experienced 20

UK Prison Officers STRIKE YEARS IN THE MAKING

By Frances Lai

1,000 members of the Prison Officers’ Association (POA) held a 24-hour strike in November across England and Wales. The POA, which has 28,000 members, has long been granted an injunction that prevented the union from promoting any industrial action and ordered officers back to work. A legal ban in the UK forbids prison and police officers from going on strike. Not only did the protests impede on trảls across the UK, but they also forced the government to reassess its policies. The POA claimed that the strike was necessary to secure the safety of officers and inmates, a remedy to what was described as “a meltdown” of the prison estate.

In practice, restorative justice can take many different forms in and out of the confines of prison walls. In victim/offender dialogues the person who inflicted the harm and the victim, who may be accompanied by other affected community members, sit together and attempt to reach a better understanding of what happened. The goal is healing for everybody involved. In peacemaking (or community building) circles, participants come together to share a safe space where they can express themselves and hear each other. Increasingly, these practices are being used both in private and public establishments such as community centers, workplaces and schools. For example, public schools throughout Oakland have completely changed their approach to discipline by adopting an intra-school-based restorative justice, with indisputable promising results; suspension rates in the Oakland school district fell by 52% in one year. When practiced within the context of criminal justice system, restorative practices include a holistic approach, taking into account race, class and other factors that cultivate the conditions allowing for mass incarceration.

An illustration of restorative justice work within prisons is the Prison Focus. It is a project of the Prison Officers’ Association. According to their website, they “support incarcerated individuals in the process of understanding and developing insight into the underlying circumstances of their lives and the choices they have made. Their methodology utilizes restorative justice models as a way to help participants identify the conditions otherwise left unresolved by the state criminal justice system. Through an intensive 18-month curriculum, inmates can reach a better understanding of how their life experiences have led them to prison and have the opportunity to make amends to their communities and the people victimized by their crimes. Unlike the traditional criminal justice system, this program doesn’t see “criminal” and “victim” as mutually exclusive; the participants are seen as equals in the process of finding healing and building relationships with themselves and their communities. People who have graduated from this program can choose to extend their trainings to become peer facilitators. Programs modeled on CHP’s programs are now being used in 15 California state men’s prisons, and three women’s correctional facilities. Despite the increased attention RJ principles have received it is important to acknowledge some of its critiques in order to truly make meaningful change from aboriginal traditions in Canada, there is a growing fear that the original principles will be lost or transformed as RJ takes an institutionalized form. Restorative justice practices are currently seen as an important aspect of the traditional criminal justice system, but in reality, our whole criminal justice system must change in order to stay true to the original tenets of restorative justice. The term itself may raise suspicion from groups who object to the word “restorative” calls into question whether there was ever justice to begin with. For this reason, the term “restorative justice” is sometimes replaced with terms like “transformative justice” and “community justice.” 

Just six years after it opened, it was systemically violating prisoners’ 8th Amendment rights. (It is notable that the Judge visited Pelican Bay personally) Judge Henderson’s decision resulted in 16 years of federal oversight at Pelican Bay and other California prisons; mandated the removal of mentally ill inmates from the SHU; and established a framework for redressing the use of excessive force by prison guards.

In 2006, in response to a report by the U.S. Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, Judge Henderson brought the administration of the CDI’s $1 billion health care system to an end. The Commission’s report concluded that one prisoner died unnecessarily every week in CA’s state prisons. Addressing the American Law Institute later that year, Judge Henderson answered accusations of judicial activism alarmingly: “Taking an active role to induce defendants to comply with their constitutional obligations does not an activist judge make.”

Judge Henderson’s long career has been characterized by unlike virtues, but it is interesting to note one ironic defect: In 1996, he attempted to block enforcement of California’s Prop. 209, which banned affirmative action in the public sector. The Supreme Court upheld the proposition, overturning his ruling. As a crusader for equity for all Americans, Thelton Henderson is not just an advocate for, but an example of the importance of creating a civil service that truly represents the public it serves. We are grateful for his service, and look forward to continuing the struggle for legal equity, armed with the precedents he has set. 

The new report takes into account data from

India and China.
proven correlation between the rise in violence and the growth in prison population without expanding facilities. The number of people held behind bars in England has also increased by 45,000 in the last 19 years, from 69,000 in 1991 to 86,000 today. Prison staff has diminished by about this time with 23,000 in the force in 2010 compared to 18,000 in 2015. Naturally an increase in violence follows. Prison experiences 15,000 incidents in 2007 while in 2016 the number reached almost 24,000.

Much of this can be seen as a direct result of the cost-cutting initiatives implemented in the early days of the Conservative government. In 2012, Chris Grayling was appointed Secretary of State for Justice, at which point he implemented several controversial reforms. In addition to a ban on all parcels, including those containing books or clothing, Grayling also introduced “back-to-back” benches and unlimited outside visits and TVs in their cells. Prison staff were hired to reduce their operating costs to the same rates as the most efficiently run prisons, even those in the private sector. The Ministry of Justice estimates that annual prison costs dropped 20% between 2008 and 2013, but with the risk that the result is a non-binding declaration, yet Méndez said, “It's very authoritative. It’s been around since the 1950s, and it's always been considered standard minimum rules on prison and detention centers.” In 2015, the UN General Assembly approved a set of amendments to the document called the Nelson Mandela rules, which included the first international limitations on the use of solitary confinement, based on Méndez’s 2011 report. “I completely agree with the Mandela rules. I was surprised they agreed with my position,” said Méndez.

The United States, Méndez says, “participate in conversations leading to [the Nelson Mandela Rules], and signed off on those reforms. They did not object to them,” Méndez said. “Of course, it does not automatically describe an obligation, just a moral one. They agreed with it as a sort of aspiration.” Still, he said, it's important that the United States participated, and “participated actively.” The limits imposed by Méndez in 2011 and added to the Standard Minimum Rules in 2015 are based on psychiatric literature, including studies that show children suffer isolation differently than adults, and that after 15 days the mind works to protect itself from prolonged confinement, any duration — even hours — of children, with those mental disabilities, and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

“What I advocated in 2011 has now become part of the UN’s standard minimum rules on prison and detention centers. In 2015, the UN General Assembly passed a set of amendments to the document called the Nelson Mandela rules, which included the first international limitations on the use of solitary confinement,” based on Méndez’s 2011 report. “I completely agree with the Mandela rules. I was surprised they agreed with my position,” said Méndez.

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“Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.” — Daniel Patrick Moynihan
**ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC...**

**SALUDO AMIGOS,**

En California, el 42% de la gente encarcelada son latinos. Esto es asqueroso e inaceptable. Pero esto no cambiará hasta que todos los hombres y mujeres oprimidos, latinos y no latinos, dentro y fuera de los muros de la prisión, aprendan a defenderse de manera que no se den a sí mismos ni a los demás en la encrucijada en la que se encuentran. California Prison Focus (CPF) cree que la educación y la información son herramientas fundamentales para desafiar la opresión. Queremos abrir un diálogo con todos que hablan español bajo el lema: custodia del pueblo por el pueblo. Ahora podemos trabajar juntos para el auto-empeño y para aumentar la capacidad de defensa de ustedes mismos y unos a otros y por los derechos humanos de todas las personas. Estamos especialmente interesados en entender las circunstancias de los latinos en reclusión aislada. Por favor envíen sus pensamientos, preocupaciones e ideas.

Más específicamente, nos gustaría escribir un artículo o reporte sobre cómo las barreras de idioma afectan las apelaciones, la clasificación, y la DRB. ¿Cómo afecta a los derechos del “debiduro proceso”? ¿Barreras del idioma, en su experiencia en el recusión aislada, cómo llegó allí, cómo tomó tiempo, y cómo salió?

Por favor indique si California Prison Focus puede publicar su escritura con su o sin su nombre, dentro del periodico Prison Focus o para publicación solamente afuera de la prisión. A menos que usted nos diga lo contrario, compartiremos lo que usted nos dice a título personal. Puede dirigir sus cartas a Jessica en Prison Focus.

CPF no ofrece ninguna defensa individual o asistencia legal. Además, hasta que lleguen sus amigos y familiares a trabajar con nosotros en CPF, tenemos muy limitada la capacidad de gente que hablan español en la oficina. Así que por favor sea paciente con nosotros - y escriba pulcramente para hacer nuestro trabajo más fácil! Por último, CPF es un voluntario del 100% y depende de su apoyo, y otros que se preocupan por estos temas. Envíenos sellos y solicite a sus amigos y familiares que se involucren o nos apoyen convirtiéndose en un miembro, que viene con una suscripción el periódico, a través de nuestro sitio web (www.prisons.org). También pueden enviarnos una donación por correo.

**AMERICAN PRISON WRITING ARCHIVE**

Write to the American Prison Writing Archive c/o Hamilton College, 198 College Hill Rd, Clinton, NY 13323-1218 for information about how incarcerated people can contribute non-fiction essays based on their firsthand experience of life inside. There is a 5,000 world limit (15 double-spaced pages) and handwritten contributions are also welcome. The goal is to place essays on the American Prison Writing Archive website.

PEN’s Handbook for Writers in Prison details guides on the art of writing fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and screenplays – an invaluable resource for any incarcerated writer. Each year, thousands of free copies of the Handbook for Writers in Prison are sent to incarcerated men and women who request a copy.

**WE WANT YOUR SUGGESTIONS**

*Inspired by the powerful panel discussion covered in the front page article, CPF is planning a series of speaker panels featuring various incarcerated people. At our 25th anniversary commemoration, we heard from a cross-generational panel of speakers who had each spent 20 years or more in California Prisons, all of whom upon release, became active in the struggle for justice and equality. This is an opportunity to widen and deepen the conversation about oppression and incarceration in America, and to discuss ideas and strategies in moving forward. Panel discussions also provide an opportunity for formerly incarcerated community members to get involved; to share their experiences and wisdom. As this is an excellent opportunity for communicating prison issues to the outside world, CPF wants to hear from our incarcerated readers: What issues and topics would you like to see discussed at future panels? Share your ideas on how we can involve and bring you into these discussions? Send your ideas, stories, artwork and photos to: California Prison Focus Attn: Panel Committee*
REQUEST FOR MENTAL HEALTH STORIES:
CPF is interested in learning about the challenges faced by incarcerated men and women with mental health issues, and increase our efforts in addressing the issue of mental health, abuse and extreme isolation. Share with us ideas and suggestions on how to do so, as well as your stories and concerns.

Please indicate if we are permitted to publish your writing with or without your name, within the Prison Focus Newsletter or for publication on the outside only. Unless you tell us otherwise, we will share what you tell us anonymously. You can address your letter to Jessica at CPF. We look forward to receiving your stories.

SOLICITUD DE HISTORIAS DE SALUD MENTAL:
CPF está interesado en aprender acerca de los que se enfrentan con los problemas de enfermedad mental, y cómo afrontan esas crisis en un ambiente de prisión. Comparta sus historias y preocupaciones con nosotros.

Por favor indíque si CPF puede publicar su escritura con o sin su nombre, dentro del periódico Prison Focus o para publicación solamente afuera de la prisión. A menos que usted indique lo contrario, compartiremos lo que usted nos dice anónimamente. Por favor dirigir sus cartas a Jessica en CPF.

FOSTER CARE TO PRISON PIPELINE
We want to hear from you…

Prison Focus is working on a feature about the connection between those who went through CA’s foster care system as children and are now incarcerated in California adult correctional facilities, including the experiences of men and women who held in solitary confinement. If you’ve been through the California child welfare system, we would like to hear from you.

Please answer some or all of the questions below.

* How did you experience the foster or group homes you lived in? Were they safe?
* What was the impact of your foster or group home experience on your life?
* What was your experience of children in your care with reality?

Send to:  Prison Focus Parole Committee
P.O. Box 12426
Lancaster, CA 93539

PHSS REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
The PHSS Parole Subcommittee is focusing on parole issues specific to the prisoners who have been released from indeterminate SHU, both before and after the Ashker settlement. We are particularly interested in seeing translations from parole transcripts of language and psychological evaluations that contain references to unsuitability for parole based on:

1. Failure to debrief
2. Participation in the hunger strike
3. Factored related to long-term indeterminate SHU, such as inadequate programming.

We are reaching out to prisoners, family members, friends and penpals, including all those who may be familiar with prisoners for whom these issues have been raised in psych evaluations in preparation for parole, or in denial for parole.

We are asking for documents, both psych evaluations and BPH transcripts, (or relevant language from those documents) in order to try to determine patterns and the extent to which these issues are stated as factors indicating unsuitability for parole.

Please provide the following information: Documents or quoted language, prisoner’s name and CDC number, and length of time in SHU. It would also help to have the date and time of your parole hearing, as this information will be used by the committee in connection with its advocacy and may be shared with advocacy groups, as well as with CDCR, Board of Parole Hearings, and other state officials.

Contact:  HSS Parole Committee
P.O. Box 12426
Lancaster, CA 93539

WHEN & HOW TO CONTACT U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
As a person imprisoned…

1. You can file an Americans with Disabilities Act complaint alleging disability discrimination against any prison or jail. For example, if you need a wheelchair, a hearing aid, etc., you can file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, which is how prison labor is written in the US Constitution.

2. If you have been incarcerated because of your race, color, or national origin, including limited English proficiency, by programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance, the Department of Justice has to be notified. Write to the address below and write “Forward to Federal Coordination & Compliance” on the envelope.

3. If you can identify a systemic pattern or practice that causes harm, the Special Litigation Section would send a letter to the prison or jail describing the problems and what steps the prison or prison must take to fix them. Then, the Section will try to reach an agreement with the jail or prison and fix the problems. If an agreement cannot be made, then the Attorney General may file a lawsuit in federal court. Write to the address below and write “Forward to Federal Coordination & Compliance” on the envelope.

4. If you experience or witness excessive force or other constitutional violations by wardens and prison guards, write to the address below and write “Forward to Criminal Section” on the envelope. You will not be rehabilitated by the prison staff - the Special Litigation Section is not a mediation service.

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PRIVILEGE GROUP A1-A FOR PRIOR STEP DOWN PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

* Interested parties Date: November 10, 2016

Friends: Carol Strickman, Senior Staff Attorney with Legal Services For Prisoners/With Children

Kijana Tashiri Askari has authorized me to share this information with interested parties.

He is a long term incarcerated SHU prisoner who was transferred to Tehachapi SHU and placed in the Step Down Program there. In October, 2015, pursuant to the Ashker Settlement Agreement, he had his IIC review. The IIC then released him from SHU and transferred him to Kern Valley State Prison general population.

At KVSP, he was assigned to Privilege Group A2-B. He filed a 622 section 802 privilege group grievance.

It is an unassigned status per CCC Title 15 sections 3043.5(a)(3) and 3044(b)(2).

WRITING LETTERS TO YOUR OFFICIALS

California Prison Focus encourages everyone to exercise our right to voice opposition to policies and other grievances. Though letters may not bring immediate change, they are an important channel for communicating your concerns to officials in decision making. Positions in the next column is a letter of protest written by a California prisoner, to CDCR Secretary Kernan.

Dear Scott Kernan,

I am writing to you as a concerned CA resident in support of the SF Bayview Newspaper. Counselors approved my decision to censor the September edition of the SF Bayview Newspaper at several of the CDCR facilities.

I believe that this edition of the newspaper was censored because it mentions the Sept. 9th national prison work strike organized against prison slavery. Censorship of this discussion is in direct violation of our Constitutional rights of free speech and freedom of the press.

I would like to note that not long ago some of the most nefarious characters thought slaves should not be taught to read or write because it would lead to trouble. Today, the descendents of all those characters are saying: The new generation of slaves should not read their newspapers. How is this possible that with this access to education, we are still debating these same old questions of people’s rights to be informed and educated about history and current events?

This is one of the main reasons of recidivism; when slaves are kept in ignorance in a time bubble. Without access to different types of objective education and information they are disconnected with society and lose touch with reality. You could look at an all war against ignorance and illiteracy a sudden drop of recidivists would be seen within a few years.

The fact that prison labor is written in the US Constitution - slavery - is a felony! It’s not something that is not news and cannot be contested. The fact that prisoners went on strike in other states on September 9, 2015 cannot be contested. The fact that prisoners most likely knew about this strike from news, reported by more mainstream media that has been allowed into California State Prisons, can also not be contested. The SF Bayview is not the only news source that has reported on the strike. Other media sources that reported on the strike include: Democracy Now, Truth Out, Mother Jones, The Nation, The Wall Street Journal and CBS News. So why now? Why the SF Bayview?

I do not believe that the dissemination of news by a newspaper such as SF Bayview is being censored. I believe that all prisoners have the right to information in the way that they choose to see the prison walls have the right. Therefore I urge you to distribute to all the prisoners, the September and October censored newspapers.

If you can identify a systemic pattern or practice that causes harm, the Special Litigation Section would send a letter to the prison or jail describing the problems and what steps the prison or prison must take to fix them. Then, the Section will try to reach an agreement with the jail or prison and fix the problems. If an agreement cannot be made, then the Attorney General may file a lawsuit in federal court. Write to the address below and write “Forward to Federal Coordination & Compliance” on the envelope.

When and how to contact U.S. Department of Justice

1. You can file an Americans with Disabilities Act complaint alleging disability discrimination against any prison or jail. For example, if you need a wheelchair, a hearing aid, etc., you can file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, which is how prison labor is written in the US Constitution.

2. If you have been incarcerated because of your race, color, or national origin, including limited English proficiency, by programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance, the Department of Justice has to be notified. Write to the address below and write “Forward to Federal Coordination & Compliance” on the envelope.

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California Prison Focus is a grassroots organization working to END SOLITARY CONFINEMENT and other forms of torture and abuse in California prisons, while challenging oppression everywhere.

PRISON FOCUS #52
Submissions Welcomed
Prison Focus welcomes articles, stories, opinion columns, news reports, poetry, photos, cartoons and other artwork. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published, nor will they be returned. We generally cannot respond to individual submissions because of the volume of mail we receive.

Suggestions for general submissions:
- Letters or articles (250-500 words)
- Larger articles are accepted though inclusion will depend on available space.
- Artwork. We need more artwork from the inside.

We are especially interested in prisoner-oriented political content. Artwork may be published in the Prison Focus Newsletter, and/or used in other capacities to further CPF’s mission.

Send contributions to California Prison Focus, Editors
1904 Franklin Street, Suite 507
Oakland, CA 94612.

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

ABOUT CPF
Prison Focus is a publication of California Prison Focus. We are a small, community-based organization that works with and on behalf of California prisoners. We investigate and expose human rights abuses within California prisons, through prison visits and correspondence, and widespread dissemination of our quarterly prison reports. We provide incarcerated men, women and the LGBTQ population, with resources on how to advocate for themselves. We provide our newsletter free of cost, to individuals in solitary confinement. This is our 51st issue of the Prison Focus Newsletter! Central to our work is training ourselves, prisoners and their loved ones in self-advocacy through public protest, networking, coalition building, letter-writing and contacting prison officials and policy makers. We educate, foster awareness, solidarity and empowerment towards change.

Subscriptions
Subscribe to Prison Focus and receive three issues (published every 4 months)
$20 for non-prisoners, $6 for prisoners and free to men and women in California SHU and Administrative Segregation.

In an effort to expand our readership, we are currently offering 1 free issue for women and LGBTQ prisoners.

Help us keep our records current. Let us know if your address changes. Individuals in Ad. Seg. will only receive one issue, unless we receive notification between issues, that you have not moved.

NOTE: Despite wanting to expand our readership, California Prison Focus does not have the capacity to receive and process lengthy reports that are not related to the use of solitary confinement in California. Also, the resources we provide are generally California specific. We encourage non-Californians to write to local prisoner advocacy groups for state-specific resources.

DONATIONS
Thank you to all of those who have given their time and money to make this issue possible. We would like to send a special thank you to RESIST, a grassroots foundation that supports grassroots organizations such as California Prison Focus.

Thank you to all of our individual donors, from both inside and outside the prison walls. The number one obstacle to printing this newspaper more often is lack of funds. Thank you for your continued support!

PRISONER CONTRIBUTIONS: For those who are not able to contribute monetarily (and even those of you that can) Sharing your art and stories is a great way you can contribute to CPF’s awareness building and fundraising efforts.

WWW.PRISONS.ORG

BECOME A CPF ACTIVIST
CPF is a collective of volunteer activists. We are 100% volunteer. Check our website for additional information, and contact us to get involved.