

!ROCK!

★ Working to Extend Democracy to All ★

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SOLITARY CONFINEMENT ISN'T PUNISHMENT — IT'S TORTURE!

By *Jasmine Heiss*

Albert Woodfox sits alone in a cell smaller than the average parking space. Unless it is one of the three days that he gets to stretch his legs in the prison yard, the 68-year-old will likely remain caged in these conditions for 24 hours today. The four walls are solid – save a single small window that looks onto the parking lot – as is the metal door in front of him. His isolation is complete, even from others prisoners in nearby cells. He has spent more than half of his life in this nightmare.

Woodfox – who has the dubious honor of being the United States' longest serving prisoner in solitary confinement – is just one of an estimated 80,000 people held in solitary confinement on any given day

in the United States. He has described the physical and mental anguish of solitary as “standing at the edge of nothingness, looking at emptiness.”

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has specifically condemned Woodfox's treatment as torture and called on the United States to eliminate the use of prolonged isolation. Albert's case has returned to the spotlight in the past month because he is no longer a convicted man – a federal judge ordered his unconditional release in early June, two years after his conviction had been overturned for a third time (a last-minute appeal kept him behind bars). The ruling on Albert's behalf came only two days after the devastating news that 22-year-old Kalief Browder killed himself. Browder wasn't guilty of a crime – in fact, he was never even convicted. A judge eventually dismissed his case, but only after he had spent two years in solitary confinement for fighting with other inmates inside the notoriously brutal prison.

Their stories further illuminate the need for urgent and long-overdue reform of the United States' use of prolonged solitary confinement. Albert and Kalief's ordeals are particularly devastating because of their strong arguments of innocence and the glaring flaws their cases expose in the criminal justice system. But solitary confinement is a grave human rights abuse for guilty and innocent alike. No human being should face the prospect of years, or decades, in a cage without meaningful human contact, battling the very real prospect of being overtaken by insanity.

Numbers alone make the human cost of solitary confinement devastatingly clear. Half of all successful suicides in US pris-

ons occur in solitary cells. With an estimated 2.4m people behind bars in the United States, isolated prisoners make up only about 3% of the entire prison population. And if that human price isn't compelling enough, the financial arguments may be: the independent advocacy project Solitary Watch has documented available figures from key states and the federal system, painting a picture of an extravagantly expensive practice that only increases recidivism and fails to reduce violence. Although there are few available numbers, one study estimated that the annual per-cell cost of a Supermax prison is about \$75,000, compared to \$25,000 for each cell in a prison not designed specifically for solitary confinement. They are also estimated to be about two to three times more costly to build.

Because mass incarceration in the United States is particularly devastating for communities of color, it's not surprising that race is an important part of both Albert Woodfox and Kalief Browder's stories.

Browder consumed by a system in which racial profiling and excessively high bail thrust a child into a degrading, dehumanizing prison system. Woodfox is the co-founder of the first prison chapter of the Black Panther Party and has been zealously pursued and publicly maligned by a Louisiana attorney general through two overturned convictions, despite the doubt that has clouded his case for decades. While the demographic information about prisoners in solitary confinement is scarce, it seems to suggest that their cases are emblematic of a general over-representation of people of color in solitary confinement in the US.

Despite all this evidence that solitary is

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unfairly used and disproportionately affects people of color, states are not required to keep statistics on the numbers of prisoners held in segregated facilities, the demographics of those prisoners, the length of confinement they have endured, the effectiveness of programs instituted, the overall costs or the impact on prisoners and overall prison safety. The federal system lacks clear internal review procedures and monitoring for mentally ill prisoners. Human rights organizations like Amnesty International and the UN expert on torture have specifically condemned the use of solitary confinement for juveniles or mentally disabled prisoners.

It is time to develop national guidelines to limit the use of solitary or isolated confinement so that we can ensure that it is imposed only as a last resort – and never indefinitely. The dehumanisation, degradation and deprivation typified by the prolonged isolation of prisoners in the US prison system is akin to sentencing a prisoner to stand on the knife's edge of insanity and waiting to see if they stumble. It cannot, and must not, be the status quo. •

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2015/jul/02/solitary-confinement-isnt-punishment-its-torture>

THE “HANDS OFF” DOCTRINE REVISITED

By Ed Mead

At one point in my political career I was the co-founder of a publication called *Prison Legal News*, and as such I had occasion to write many articles on decisions from various state and federal courts involving prisoner rights issues. I don't think I've written much about the law since I ended my relationship with *PLN*.

I first became involved in prisoner oriented litigation in the early 1960s; indeed, I received my first legal-related infraction at the U.S. Prison at Lompoc, California, in 1963, for “illegal procedure in writing a writ” (my crime was to assist another prisoner with his post conviction relief petition). In those days there was something called the “hands off doctrine,” which essentially held that prisoners have no rights the federal courts are bound to respect—that they are literally slaves of the state. After all, the courts reasoned, the 13th

Amendment to the U.S. constitution legitimizes this condition of slavery. With the advent of a growing prisoner rights movement, however, that old reasoning slowly changed. By 1972 I had won a case in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals holding that federal prisoners had a right to file class action habeas corpus petitions to challenge their conditions of confinement. See, *Mead v. Parker*, 464 F.2d 1108, 1111 (9th Cir. 1972). In those days I naively believed the courts would fairly apply the law to achieve the ends of justice.

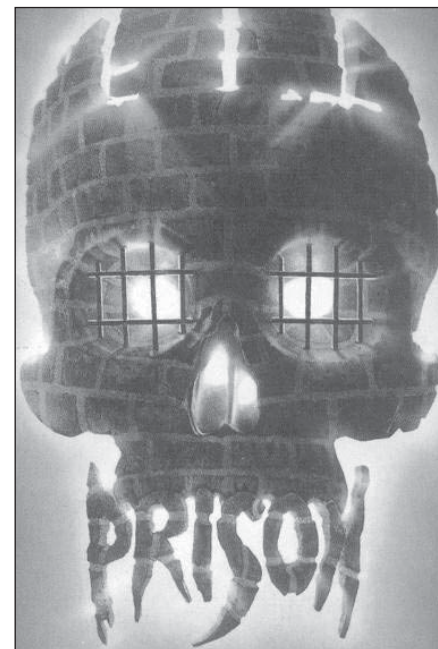
While we have not totally gone back to the hands off doctrine, we've now got pretty much the same thing. Today they say while prisoners do have due process rights, the needs of the state, however frivolous they may be, trumps those rights—meaning of course that we have no rights at all.

In 2005 a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court has dashed the hopes of those liberal prisoners who look to the courts as an avenue of salvation from the ever-increasing levels of deprivation and repression being visited upon them by their captors. In the case of *Wilkinson, Director, Ohio DOC, et al. v. Charles Austin et al.*, No. 04-495, decided June 13, 2005, the high court noted that “In the OSP [a Supermax or SHU facility] almost every aspect of an inmate's life is controlled and monitored. Incarceration there is synonymous with extreme isolation. Opportunities for visitation are rare and are always conducted through glass walls. Inmates are deprived of almost any environmental or sensory stimuli and of almost all human contact. Placement at OSP is for an indefinite period, limited only by an inmate's sentence. Inmates otherwise eligible for parole lose their eligibility while incarcerated at OSP.” The court went on to note that: “For an inmate placed in OSP, almost all human contact is prohibited, even to the point that conversation is not permitted from cell to cell; his cell's light may be dimmed, but is on for 24 hours; and he may exercise only one hour per day in a small indoor room.” Moreover, such placement is reviewed only once per year. Yet when all is said and done, the court held “that courts must give substantial deference to prison management decisions before mandating additional expenditures for elaborate procedural safeguards when correctional officials conclude that a prisoner has engaged in disruptive behavior.” So how much process is due before locking someone up in one of these dungeons for an indefinite period? According to the court the answer

is an “informal, non-adversary procedures comparable to those we upheld in *Greenholtz* and *Hewitt*.” (See, *Greenholtz v. Inmates of Neb. Penal and Correctional Complex*, 442 U. S. 1 (1979) and *Hewitt v. Helms*, 459 U. S. 460 (1983).)

Which brings us to the question of how relevant is the legal front in today's struggle for the rights of prisoners? As mentioned above, and as any astute prisoner rights activist knows, the 13th Amendment banned slavery except for those convicted of a crime. In other words, slavery still exists for some 2.3 million Americans. Worse, there are countless millions more who have been disenfranchised (a modern Jim Crow) as a result of their status as previously convicted persons. While the issue of prisoner enfranchisement (right to vote) is pending appeal in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, in a lawsuit filed by political prisoner Anthony Jalil Bottom, the outcome of that litigation will most likely turn on a political rather than legal rationale. Democrats know that if formerly incarcerated individuals had been permitted to vote in Florida's 2000 presidential election George W. Bush would have never been president.

From California to Florida there is a push by liberals to enfranchise ex-felons. This has nothing to do with their love of prisoners, and everything to do with their love of the Democratic Party. Even the *New York Times* has editorialized on the need to give ex-felons and, shudder, prisoners the right to vote. They understand that, for the most part, prisoners will not be voting for pro-lock 'em up; pro-death penalty, anti-parole



Republicans. So here comes the vote, not from the courts, but from bourgeois politicians. Oh, the courts may hand down the ruling, but it will be the existing political climate that caused it to happen. In the late 1960s and early 1970s it was the prisoners that created the climate for judicially mandated reform and the expansion of our meager rights. Today, sadly, it is the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie that is providing the necessary impetus for voting rights.

So before too the vote will come, at least to ex-convicts and very possibly to those still on the inside. And in time, lots of time, the 13th Amendment may be modified to abolish slavery once and for all. But that's a story for another day.

Today we need to talk about how we can use our small amount of influence to insure that this vote thing does not unfold in a manner that is antithetical to prisoner interests. The liberals will try to get the vote to felons using the absentee ballot, thus dispersing the impact of our ballot over the entire state. But prisoners are counted in the census for the county in which they are confined, and those counties receive funds from the state on the basis of that count. The prisoner vote should be concentrated in the respective county where the prison is located, not scattered by absentee ballots. Since most prisons are located in remote areas, with such a condensed voting block prisoners will be able to have local politicians catering to their legitimate needs—visiting, vocational facilities, etc.

There was a time when the rights of prisoners could be extended through use of the bourgeois judicial system. As can be seen by *Wilkinson*, cited above, and the numerous cases just like it, those days are all but over.

The courts can from time-to-time still be used for the occasional defensive struggle, but to expect any significant advances to be made as a result of litigation is an exercise in futility—we are merely throwing wadded up paper balls at them. The task of today's advanced prisoners is not litigation, but organization. And the issues we should be organizing around are the right to vote (winning the franchise for prisoners) and the final abolition of slavery in the United States. Conjugal visits, wages, and myriad other issues can be raised at the same time, but the guiding star should be the elimination of the pro-slavery segment of the 13th amendment. Once that falls the legal justification for treating other human beings as less than human will be gone. ●

PRINCETON STUDY: SAYS U.S. IS NO LONGER AN ACTUAL DEMOCRACY

By *Brendan James*

A new study from Princeton spells bad news for American democracy—namely, that it no longer exists.

Asking “[w]ho really rules?” researchers Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page argue that over the past few decades America’s political system has slowly transformed from a democracy into an oligarchy, where wealthy elites wield most power.

Using data drawn from over 1,800 different policy initiatives from 1981 to 2002, the two conclude that rich, well-connected individuals on the political scene now steer the direction of the country, regardless of or even against the will of the majority of voters.

“The central point that emerges from our research is that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy,” they write, “while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence.”

As one illustration, Gilens and Page compare the political preferences of Americans at the 50th income percentile to preferences of Americans at the 90th percentile as well as major lobbying or business groups. They find that the government—whether Republican or Democratic—more often follows the preferences of the latter group rather than the first.

The researchers note that this is not a new development caused by, say, recent Supreme Court decisions allowing more money in politics, such as *Citizens United* or this month’s ruling on *McCutcheon v. FEC*. As the data stretching back to the 1980s suggests, this has been a long term trend, and is therefore harder for most people to perceive, let alone reverse.

“Ordinary citizens,” they write, “might often be observed to ‘win’ (that is, to get their preferred policy outcomes) even if they had no independent effect whatsoever on policy making, if elites (with whom they often agree) actually prevail.” ●

Source: Information Clearing House

Quote Box

"Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind."

Albert Einstein

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

John Pilger (05/11/2009)

"Our government has kept us in a perpetual state of fear-kept us in a continuous stampede of patriotic fervor-with the cry of grave national emergency. Always there has been some terrible evil at home or some monstrous foreign power that was going to gobble us up if we did not blindly rally behind it ..."

General Douglas MacArthur, 1957

On the threat to democracy by corporate power Fascism - A system of government that exercises a dictatorship of the extreme right, typically through the merging of state and business leadership, together with belligerent nationalism."

American Heritage Dictionary, 1983

"Fascism should more appropriately be called Corporatism because it is a merger of State and corporate power."

Benito Mussolini, Italian fascist

Any president engaged in lying and empire-building must have some of the traits of a psychopath ... To murder innocent people in order to aggrandize the American Empire would be extremely difficult if not impossible for someone who feels empathy, remorse and guilt and who is incapable of lying. It might even be suggested that having at least some psychopathic traits is a qualification for the job."

David Model, "Lying for Empire"

"Democracy is not the law of the majority but the protection of the minority."

Albert Camus

IT'S TIME FOR PEACE

By Anthony Murillo

The reinigorated Prisoner's Rights Movement, currently focused upon the abolition of control units and long-term solitary confinement, has brought about the first real effort at penal reform since the 1970s. California has been the engine leading the rest of the states, particularly with regards to increased consciousness, solidarity, and peaceful demonstrations on the inside. However, now that the Five Core Demands and Supplemental Demands are being addressed, there is a lull in action resulting in the natural dissipation of energy.

Everything gained (or promised) thus far is largely the result of the civilian coalition working closely with incarcerated influencers to set and receive realistic goals. We have seen a few hiccups with tactics, but overall strategy has been consistent and effective. This demonstrates a ripening of the prisoner class itself and proves, once more, that violence must not always be met with violence. Sometimes, the image of our humanity is more powerful than brute strength.

Furthermore, the 2012 Agreement To End All Hostilities is a game-changer. It represents not just an increase in awareness and corresponding solidarity amongst prisoners but a counter-strategy to deflate the state's long held assertion that control units and solitary confinement are the only way to combat prison gangs and other groups it calls disruptive. (This argument was whacky all along because segregating those accused of gang membership did not put a dent in the senseless drama, but that's neither here nor there.) The next logical step for the Movement is a Formal Peace Process culminating in a permanent treaty that spells out obligations, establishes bench marks, and puts in place necessary mechanisms for dealing with inevitable violations. This is where at least some of that stationary energy should be directed while we patiently wait for the CDCR and Legislature to follow through with policy changes.

The keys to a successful case process are: 1) a social mandate for a negotiated settlement; 2) the willingness of warring parties to talk and three the emergence of a neutral mediator and facilitator.

Most combatants and noncombatants want peace, so it's safe to say the first two

keys are met; it's just a matter of resolving differences in political dogma. As with most social issues, there is a left right divide, and many peoples' opinions are formed through the prism of race, class, and culture. But we are witnessing a general pull to the center, and that is where civil conflict are ultimately settled. Interrogating warfare affects everyone on many different levels, including but not limited to: physical and mental health, taxes, insurance premiums, property values, social stability, and overall quality of life.

...the 2012 Agreement to End all Hostilities is a game-changer.

The third key is what is conspicuously absent. Anyone familiar with the internal workings of the system knows that we've been sending signals to civil society since the 1990s. Yes some individual, as well as a number of religious, and cultural organizations, I've seen the signals and attempted to make things happen, but there is no statewide effort, no collision, no Federation of groups dedicated to the secular because of creating a formal peace process.

The civilian coalition, which did such a great job of winning public support, harnessing media attention, and negotiating with the cats during and after the last round of hunger strikes, could easily use the network to raise awareness of support for the adoption of a case plan. One such plan, entitled "We Want Peace", is a comprehensive 28 page document modeled after a number of successful plans in other regions of the world. You Want Peace was authored by a former gang member and is sponsored by the national coalition of Barrios Unidos, an organization with more than two decades experience in working with at risk, prisoners, and communities.

Now is the time for society to act, but anyone interested in being a part of the solution must understand politics call for finesse. Protocols must be followed. Certain prisoners must be consulted. I'll times. Civil society cannot force it's will upon warring factions in our communities, but there are a few answers can convince the warring parties to squash there rivalries as an extension of a Peace Treaty behind bars. Most civilians don't understand the nexus between street gangs and prison cliques,

but the former listen to the latter, and that's just the way it is. If society wants peace, society must also one piece for its incarcerated masses.

What we need, more than anything, is a father Gregory, Bishop Tutu, Dolores weather, Jimmy Carter or Jesse Brown to step up to the plate. We need somebody with more recognition, in the background and diplomacy, and experience in dealing with complex issues. What we don't need is highly political, rhetoric spouting firebrands who do more talking than listening.

This is a tall order, for sure. But all these processes are. Again, this is only partly about games and prisoners; it is mostly about society as a whole, and future generations. As Americans, we say we want peace, but too often our actions declare and maintain war. Let us want for ourselves what we claim to want for other people all over the world, and Let our deeds form to our words.

A dignified peace is more possible than ever. All the stars and planets are aligned. The civilian coalition must seize this opportunity by creating the space influencers need to debate the pros and cons, once more, attempting to engage in a formal Peace Process. (The last effort fizzled because it lacked keys one and three. Now, we just need that one that is brave and qualified to make peace a reality, but as always, the clock is ticking....

Do we really want peace? We'll see....

The we want peace document can be viewed at www.barriosunidos.net •

Who's UR Daddy?

Just when you thought US imperialism could not mess things in the Middle East up any worse, they've found a way. Many of you know that the US is objectively allied with Iran in Iraq against ISIS, and against Iran in Yemen, and some of you know that the US and Israel are quietly supporting Al Qaeda in Syria against the duly elected leader of that nation. But here's what you probably did not know, "fighters loyal to ISIS have seized substantial territory in Afghanistan for the first time, wresting areas in the east from rival Taliban insurgents in a new threat to stability."

See: <http://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-turf-war-afghan-taliban-islamic-state>

[So ISIS is a "threat to stability" in the 13 year war against the Taliban? Try and wrap your head around all that.]

ON VISITING GEORGE

By Dr. Tolbert Small, July 29, 2015

George Jackson was a legendary prisoner who was attempting to organize the Blacks, Latinos and poor whites under their common linkage as victims of an exploitative class system. At that time, he was incarcerated in the San Quentin Adjustment Center, which housed the prison's most feared and dangerous inmates.

The Adjustment Center also housed the political prisoners. Both Huey Newton, who had recently been released from prison, and Angela Davis, who was incarcerated herself, had asked me to "go see about George." George's attorney, John Thorne, had to get a court order to allow me to visit George.

On April 8, 1971, I drove my bright red Plymouth Barracuda across the San Rafael Bridge to San Quentin, parked and walked down the long lane to the opening gates of San Quentin. There, a short wiry guard, who George later informed me was a member of the John Birch Society (a far right-wing group that was politically influential at the time – ed.), searched my black medical bag. Another guard escorted me across the yard and along several dreary red brick buildings, winding our way to the feared Adjustment Center.

After being led into the Adjustment Center, I immediately saw a tall, handsome man, locked into his holding cage, which was the size of a small casket, that was bolted against the wall. He immediately gave me the raised fist sign, power to the people, as I nodded my head toward him.

A thin, shorter gentleman, Ruchelle McGee, was sitting to the left against the wall. He stared at me, asking me if I was an attorney? When I told him no, he smiled at me. Ruchelle was a jailhouse attorney who felt that he, himself, and many other prisoners were victims of glib attorneys. Ruchelle had a passionate dislike for attorneys.

The escorting guard told me that George was a very intelligent person – "too bad he got into trouble." He unlocked George's cage and escorted both of us into a small office to the right of the hallway. We saw a layer of guards lining the room like corn stalks in a circle. George immediately pointed out which guards were members of the John Birch Society. "Officer so and so is a member and so are his two sons; the john who searched you at the entrance is one of his sons."

Using a hard oak desk as an exam table, I gave George a complete history and physical. George was concerned over the pain from his ingrown toenails; he wanted me to operate on him, immediately. I informed him that this was not possible.

The San Quentin officials had ignored George's request for medical therapy for over a year. I arranged for George Rhoden, D.P.M., a Jamaican gold medalist in the Olympic 400 meters, to perform the surgery. In direct violation of the court order, Warden Red Nelson refused to allow Dr. Rhoden into San Quentin.

George told me that he realized that the podiatrist who operated on his toes was not referred by me, when the podiatrist asked George, "Did he feel any pain?" George replied, "Yes." The podiatrist then proceeded to cut on George's toes.

Immediately after the surgery, they made George walk 200 yards back to the Adjustment Center. Each step was quite painful for George. The guards claimed that George was too much of a security risk to stay in the infirmary.

George was not given any convalescence, because Warden Nelson didn't want an extra guard in the hospital. Knowing that George was allergic to codeine, they gave him codeine for pain. George was up all night vomiting. They refused to give him any other pain medicine. They gave George another prisoner's three year old dirty shoes and dirty socks to wear. He was given no follow-up care, no clean facilities and no sterile gauze.

George was more concerned with the health of other prisoners than with his own health. He wanted me to visit an ill Ulysses McDaniels, the cofounder of the Black Guerilla Family. I was allowed to visit George three times before Warden Nelson had the judge rescind the court order. Warden Nelson claimed that I was a security risk.



George's body bore the permanent scars of many a battle. In 1967, he was hit with a lead truncheon five times; he bore to his grave an indentation and scar on the back of his skull. After this beating, he had ringing in his ears for six months.

On April 6, 1971, a San Francisco sheriff's deputy kicked him into his mouth, knocking out three of his teeth. The same day, while handcuffed, George was cracked across his throat with a sap. He had pain over his larynx and he had numerous bruises over his neck. He had been hit in the nose numerous times. He had a permanent nasal scar.

The left frontal area of his head was swollen. His right shoulder had a bite mark. In November 1970, the prison guards broke and dislocated his left fourth finger. This was not treated. The finger grew back crooked. Even today, the San Quentin guards brag about the good old days in which they would take eight people to beat one prisoner down.

George was an amazing person. Like Napoleon, he only slept four hours per night. He spent his days reading, writing, exercising and doing martial arts. He did a thousand pushups per day in sets of one hundred. He showed me how he could do pushups standing on his head.

George was assassinated on Aug. 21, 1971. He was shot in the neck while he lay helpless on the ground from a gunshot wound to his foot. When Mrs. Georgia Jackson heard about it on the radio, she called up San Quentin.

The prison guard laughingly told her, "We killed one of yours sons last year and another one this year. Pretty soon you won't have any more sons left." I was up to 3 a.m. with an angry but grieved Georgia Jackson.

In a telegram that I sent Mrs. Jackson on Aug. 25, 1971, I wrote: "Let George's fiery writings and iron deeds serve as a path to lead all of our imprisoned cadres to final victory. Let us mourn him. Let us love him. Let us miss him. Let us do as he did in the name of freedom. In our last hours, let us die as men and not as slaves. Long live George Jackson."

George was not a paper panther. In the Black Panther Party, we had many paper panthers, some in leadership roles. That is why the first woman to join the Panther Party would be one of the first women to be beaten in the party. I would like to dedicate this poem to Comrade George; I wrote it five years after George's assassination.

THE HEROIC GUERRILLA

Scream! Scream! Scream!
About that man
Who threatened the fires of hell.
Stalk forward, Bronze Dragon.
Breathe pits of fire
To melt the molted bars of slavery.
Conquer concrete walls
With courageous conviction.
Teach us the art of raging, Heroic Guerilla.

Steal my writings, resist we must.
Steal my weapons, resist we must.
Steal my life, resist we must.

In your last hours, caged but unconquered,
Stand defiant
Before the jaws of death.
Teach us to die as men, not as slaves,
So that even after death
We may continue to resist.

Steal my writing, resist we must.
Steal my weapons, resist we must.
Steal my life, resist we must.

In your spirit of defiance,
Let's crawl over our slain heroes
To tumble down those prison walls
Stone by stone.

Remember well, Dragonslayer;
Truth will break the chains of death.
I shall escape from the grave
To dog your every footstep.

Five years have passed.
'Tis a pity.
Your ideas, though alive,
Lie dead
In the hearts of your followers.

*Source: S.F. Bayview,
by way of Freedom Archives*

[Editorial Note: Dr. Small wrote this poem only five years after George's murder. At that time he may not have been aware of the existence of Seattle's George Jackson Brigade. The group took its name from a passage in Blood In My Eye, which the poem expresses as: "I shall escape from the grave - To dog your every footstep." What George's words were referring to the ruling class and its minions: "Hurl me into the next existence. The descent into hell won't turn me. I'll crawl back to dog his

trail forever. They won't defeat my revenge. Never. Never."

I wanted to be a part of helping George fulfill his promise to "dog his trail forever." There will be other mass organization and underground groups that will continue with that important dogging. I am proud of having been a part of the first group to do so.

That said, George did have his faults, such as the endemic homophobia that existed at the time. And you and I, too, have our blind spots that only those in the future consciousness will see.

George's mother writes: "My dear only surviving son, I went to Mount Vernon August 7th, 1971, to visit the grave site of my heart your keepers murdered in clod disregard for life. His grave was supposed to be behind your grandfather's and grandmother's. But I couldn't find it. There was no marker. Just mowed grass. The story of our past. I sent the keeper a blank check for a headstone and two extra sites—blood in my eye!!!" George is buried at the Bethel Memorial Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Jefferson County, Illinois 62864.]



VOICES CRYING OUT

By Ebony Delaney, March 9, 2015

What good are voices that fall on deaf ears?
What good are eyes constantly filled with bitter tears?
Hearts torn from the grief of lives unnecessarily lost,
How deep is the debt? Haven't we paid the cost?

Like a chorus of the dead, these names ring with truth.
Michael Brown, Tamir Rice and Trayvon Martin to name a few.
Eric Gardner of course, and now Tony Robinson as well,
Lives filled with potential, erased as bullets left their shells.

Hands up, don't shoot... No justice, no peace.
I can't breath, I'm not armed, and one day we'll all be free?
Voices drowned with rage, chants pulled from a nation's soul.
Eliminated by official thugs drunk with power and out of control.

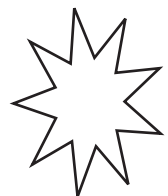
We the people? In God we trust? And, all men are created equal?
Tell me, how is this possible when we're targeted as a people?
Living in the land where hatred's engrained in society's psyche;
Taught through systems of the familiar, believing this is the key.

Saying "I'm so sorry" will never quench this raging fire,
There's far too much judgment, yet not enough justice is desired.
Scarred by police trigger fingers wrapped around their guns,
What's the difference between a racist bullet or a rope from which we're hung?

Yes, black lives matter! Our hands are up, please don't shoot!
We've been enslaved, lynched, raped, betrayed and abused.
Denied the truth of self, ripped from all we ever knew,
Forced to drink the cup of lies and feast at the table of untruth.

When will it end? Will enough ever truly be enough?
Is change really a change when we're preferred dead or in cuffs?
Innocent until proven guilty? Honestly, for us it doesn't apply.
Blind justice is a joke, fairness simply another lie.

We've sang hymns and marched until weariness claimed our strength.
We've rallied and cried out, decrees and letters have been sent.
Will justice ever flow like a river or righteousness a mighty stream?
Or, like Martin, do we have to continue to hope in a dream?



INCARCERATED WORKERS' UPRISING IN NEBRASKA

From IWW, By FW Chadrick, x385061

Greetings my friends. My name is Chadrick Fitzgerald, IWW membership number x385061. As I write these words, I am sitting in a cell on the Special Management Unit (SMU) gallery in Tecumseh Correctional Facility under investigation for the uprising that took place on May 10, 2015. The Nebraska Department of Correction (DOC) has been run poorly for some time; we have had a number of changes in directors and that's about it. The number of problems are too long to list but somewhere at the top of that lists its overcrowding, lack of programming, and the mistreatment of the inmates.

To give you an idea of how out of control it has become, prison guards themselves have sued the state of Nebraska and won because they were being abused by co-workers using racial slurs at work. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has threatened to sue because of the overcrowding and current living conditions. The inmate population has tried many times to get programming that would help us upon release, and time and again: nothing.

There are a few jobs that pay more than \$24 per month (\$1.21 per day) and they are restricted to approximately 200 of the more than 1,000 inmates that live here. Those jobs include Cornhusker State Industries (CSI) wood-shop and laundry, and a few in the kitchen. So once again a group of inmates came together to make a list of things that need to be changed. This list was to be presented to staff at 2:30 p.m. on May 10. If the prison staff refused to talk with us, then work was to stop on May 11.

At approximately 2:30 p.m., a group of about 65 inmates went to the main compound area when medical sick calls were called over the PA (public address system). When staff noticed the group, they were confronted. Seventeen staff members were trying to stop more from joining the growing group. As the list was given to the staff by an inmate, the staff became aggressive and pulled out large cans of mace and told the inmate who handed them the list to cuff up, at which time he asked why. Shortly there after, there was a melee with staff spraying mace and inmates fighting back. Shots were fired from the gun tower and all became quiet as inmates and staff lay flat on the ground.

Staff regained control of the situation for a moment. They handcuffed a few and identified the rest, but before long, their verbal taunts became too much. The group stood as one and began marching around the compound. Inmates inside the housing units joined in at this time. Staff ran for cover, locking everyone out of their housing units. The group of inmates marching on the compound tried to break into the gym to let out inmates who had been locked in. This is when they shot inmate Washington in his upper leg. As inmates attempted to give first aid, the tower rained down bullets. The only two hit were Washington and Camancho. Inmates then carried Washington to medical where they refused to give him aid for some time before dragging him off by his arm to the medical sally port.

Once word got out, fires started burning. Hours later, local and state law enforcement, along with prison officers, came in and regained the prison by force, shooting inmates with less lethal rounds at point-blank range. Some were already cuffed when they were shot. Inmates were taken to the education building until all were accounted for. Many inmates were left cuffed with hands behind their backs for more than 48 hours.

At the time of this writing, that was eight days ago. We have been receiving only two meals a day since, with little or no way to make contact with our family or loved ones. What the future holds we do not know, but until there are no prisons left, we must fight. •

Source: *Industrial Worker*, issue #1776



ED'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the September issue of the Rock newsletter. This month we have something a little different for you. At the bottom of your address label is an expiration date. When that date is reached your subscription is cancelled unless you send me some stamps or money. As regular readers know, over the years I've pumped thousands of dollars into this thing. I'm a 73 years old ex-convict with advanced stage lung cancer and living on a fixed income. I know many of you are locked down and broke. All I can say is that when I was on the inside I sold subscriptions to my peers for the publications that supported prisoners' rights. It just takes a little hustle.

There seems to be a lull in the dynamics of the prisoners' struggle in California, at least that's my perception. And from the letters I get it seems as if there is a two line political discussion taking place on the inside. One line is represented by those who believe that prisoners must be their own liberators—that peaceful means of prisoner protest will win the day. The other line takes the approach that outside people should fight our battle for us, while we sit back as passive observers—occasionally giving instructions. It's clear to see where I'm coming from on this question.

During the hunger strikes we had a combination of inside and outside struggle taking place at the same time. The outside support was triggered by the struggle on the inside. Over my years as a prisoner I've help to form many outside support groups. Some of these were effective, one even pied (hit in the face with a cream pie), twice, the director of corrections for the state of Washington. Yet these groups were never able to achieve much in terms of change. The progress we made came from our struggle on the inside, and that struggle was the little motor that cranked up the big engine of change. We got conjugal visits that are still in place to this day, and a whole lot more. Out here on the streets one of our slogans is "No justice, no peace!" Here's one I've not heard yet but makes common sense, "No struggle, no progress."

Yes, your captors can and most likely will keep you longer if you peacefully object to being a slave of the state. So all who think they are tough yet still cringe in fear of the parole board, it's time to stand up like the proud human being you are.

Take care in there. See you next month. •

IN WORLD'S LARGEST FEMALE PRISON, PRISONERS ORGANIZE FOR HEALTH

By Claudia J. Gonzalez

My heart begins to pound as I enter the gym at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) on the outskirts of Chowchilla, about 20 miles south of Merced. Within moments memories of my own time behind bars flood my mind. I can't help but wonder at my own sense of being so at home after so many years.

I'm here as a volunteer for a health fair co-organized by an advocacy organization and a group of CCWF inmates. The facility is one of three female prisons in the state, and with an inmate population of 3,123 is the largest female-only prison in the world. Opened in 1990, CCWF has 2,004 beds, and is currently at 155 percent capacity. Twenty inmates are currently on death row.

Niki Martinez, 38, has spent the past 20 years as at CCWF. Petite, her arms decorated with tattoos, she was sentenced as an adult for a crime she committed when she was only 17.

"I was young and I take responsibility for my crime," said Martinez, who is serving a sentence of 45 years to life. "But [now] my goal is to help other girls avoid ending up in my situation." Martinez joined with fellow prisoner Elizabeth Lozano, 40, to form the Juvenile Offenders Committee (JOC) several years ago, which provides a support system for women at CCWF who were sentenced as adults when they were juveniles.

A 2010 study by the UCLA School of Law Juvenile Justice Project found that 66 percent of youth sentenced as adults develop mental illnesses. Forty-three percent were found to have three or more psychiatric disorders. JOC currently has some 130 members. The group provides workshops on issues like substance abuse, trauma education and assistance with preparing for parole hearings.

In June, JOC partnered with the San Francisco-based organization California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP) and Centerforce, which is headquartered in San Quentin and has been providing health and family services to incarcerated popula-

tions for the past 30 years, to host the 2015 Health and Wellness Fair. CCWP advocates for women, transgender people, and communities of color impacted by incarceration, and its membership encompasses both incarcerated women and activists.

Nearly 1,000 women gathered in the prison gym on the day of the event, which featured informational booths on substance abuse, transgender support, disability services and trauma. There were also a variety of activities like exercise challenges and live performances. Martinez says events like this are crucial, not only because they identify available resources, but also because they help build morale among the inmates and encourage them to support each other.

Sara Kershner is a coalition member. She says the fair was "organized with the goal of giving people tools that they can use to take care of themselves and each other." She adds that groups like CCWP are working to "build power in a place where you are humiliated, blamed, and shamed on a constant basis." Recent reports do in fact paint a grim picture of life inside California's women's prisons.

In 2013 the Center for Investigative Reporting published a report that found that between 2006 and 2010, 148 women inmates had been sterilized without consent in California. Prisoner rights advocates called the practice a form of eugenics. That same year a Health Care Evaluation of the Chowchilla prison by medical experts took note of the "overcrowding, insufficient health care staffing and inadequate medical bed space" available at the prison. The report's authors attributed at least one inmate death in 2013 to complications brought on by subpar care. Such concerns are what drew Lamercie Saint-Hilaire to participate in the fair.

A practicing physician in San Francisco, Saint-Hilaire spent the afternoon answering medical questions and providing medical information to attendees. She says many of the questions were about health care for relatives on the outside.

"It's amazing that even when dealing with the daily struggle of surviving prison, they still prioritized their family's needs before their own," recalls Saint-Hilaire, who says the trip to Chowchilla offered her an opportunity to help women in need of care, and to gain insight into health care inside the prison system. "This experience showed me their humanity ... I left the event with a great sense of humility," she

said.

I shared that same sense of humility, having spent the day listening to the stories of women whose narratives sounded so much like my own. I was at turns amazed and inspired at how many of them were eager to help others and try to give back to their communities from the inside.

As the fair was wrapping up an elderly inmate approached. "I am so happy to see you here," she said. "It makes me feel like somebody cares about us."

I reflected on my own time behind bars, and how I could be where she is now had I not been given a second chance.

"We do care about you," I replied. "Never forget that." •

<http://www.wecedyouth.org/2015/07/in-worlds-largest-female-prison-inmates>

Oops, Missed Again...

U.S. Drone Strikes Killed at Least 874 People in Hunt for 24 Terrorists: U.S. drone strikes that hit their intended targets only 21% of the time have resulted in the killings of hundreds of civilians, including children, in America's hunt for terrorists in Yemen and Pakistan.

<http://us.sputniknews.com/us/20150120/1013514542.html>

The Buck Stops...Where?

The dollar has a seven-fold indebtedness (i.e. total outstanding and uncovered commitments are currently more than 7 times higher than the US GDP (US\$ 17.6 trillion, 2014 est. – vs. US\$ 128 trillion of unmet obligations); making the US worldwide the most indebted country – by far. Russia, on the other hand, has foreign exchange reserves of close to half a trillion dollars, equivalent, more than two times the rubles in circulation. Russia's economy shows a pristine balance sheet with only about 15% debt to GDP, whereas the EU's debt-GDP ratio is close to 100%.

Haikus By Kurt Michaels San Quentin

Gaia

sad, wise, cautious eyes.
Green shoots after a wildfire.
Life follows all storms.

Archipelagos

Island of strung pearls,
Safe harbors during rough seas,
Where I find myself.

LETTERS

He Likes Us

I see what you're doing, in terms of your reform advocacy and in teaching us, and I know that it comes from a place of compassion. I see that you have a strong humanitarian sense. I believe you to be a truly selfless and pure hearted person.

There are a long of good people in the world but there aren't many who have the courage to face down their peers to champion for *all* underprivileged classes or people. I've always admired that about you.

You are second to none in your passion for advocating for equality for all classes of people and defending the mistreated. I know that you don't do it for recognition or accolades but I don't feel that you get enough of them. I predict that you will one day though. You've sacrificed your whole life for this cause.

You and a few others have brought out a better side of me. You've inspired me to be better and strive for better. You've caused me to think beyond myself and in doing so you've fostered a new found sense of empathy in me. You've challenged many preconceived notions/ideals that I've had and provoked countless hours of evaluation. One of the by-products of this are new goals for myself and I new direction that I'd like to go with my life upon parole. I know that you've had this effect on others as well. You've made some real changes. I know that the reform movement is just starting but you're recognized as an integral part in the genesis of that movement by myself and others. You've facilitated and contributed some great things. I thank you for all that you've done for myself and others, directly and indirectly.

When I was younger, I was very reckless with life (my life and the lives of others.) Death did not scare me and I did not appreciate life. Now that I'm older, I feel the opposite. I want to live for a long time and accomplish many things. The death of any friends or family would feel untimely regardless of their age or health. I'm not sure how to process this or come to terms with it. I was very close with my grandfather. He passed away of cancer a few years back. I'm still trying to process it and come to terms with it. Perhaps those unresolved feelings have exacerbated my feelings about your condition.

I'm getting out of the SHU. It's a bitter-sweet feeling. As soon as I leave some other hapless human being will fill my cell. I always dreamed of something big happening which would re-write policy and cause a mass exodus of us all out of here. I too share in your frustration and dissatisfaction with the 'new' regulations.

You thanked me for my ongoing financial and moral support (that means a lot to me coming from you). Ed, it has been my pleasure and privilege every step of the way. It is a great source of pride and contentment for me to be a part of this and contribute to it.

[Name Withheld]

Outside Versus Inside?

I recently heard about the mass actions going on out in society to raise awareness about the upcoming court date. It's important that people outside of SHU, and outside of prison for that matter, get involved in our efforts because on some level what we are going through affects everyone. So in that sense participation is key.

The recent monthly actions have been held on the 23rd of each month where folks have been raising awareness out on the streets. The idea of involving people in the anti-SHU or anti-solitary struggle is important, but I think it's [also] important to cast our net wide in order to build momentum.

I think after the court date in December that people exploring ways to better get folks on the streets involved in prison struggles for human rights start thinking of creating a day of action which is more inclusive of various prisoners, not just a certain demographic. It is understandable that we keep focus on SHU and ad seg prisoners, but the issue of prison oppression is scaling the walls of the maximum security prisoner whether we like it or not. The struggle for prisoners' rights, or prison reform is stretching out to other prisons and even other states.

A day designated at prisoners' Human Rights Day should be a day that includes prisoners throughout the U.S. and in every prison. It should be a day which has historically represented prisoners struggling for justice, a day which represents all prisoners struggling against state repression. As I scoured various dates the only one which signifies this the most is September 9th, the date of the Attica Uprising where all prisoner rose up against the state to reclaim

their humanity.

The date of September 9th would be inclusive of all prisoners throughout the U.S. and can be used to highlight the history of prisoners in the U.S. not just suffering oppression, but resisting as a class against the state. It would get wider swath of people to get involved and take notice about not just solitary or SHU issues, but for prisoners in general.

It would open up these efforts to a larger audience than just the current friends and family of SHU prisoners. Our sights should be set on shooting for a complete U.S. prison-wide movement for change.

The efforts created from within the SHU are spreading and affecting laws and reforms spanning across the U.S. in regards to prisons, our ideas and days of action should not lag behind these developments but instead lead them.

Jose H. Villarreal, PBSP

[Ed's Note: Jose's letter points to the need for prisoners to honor the struggles of those past by having a generally accepted Prisoners' Day. I totally agree. And I agree that Attica uprising should be the event we celebrate each year on September 9th. I have already been doing that for many years. Did I ever mention that I traveled from Seattle to Buffalo back in 1974 to work with the Attica Brothers' Legal Defense committee?]

Anyway, moving right along, lately I've been noticing a trend in which prisoners are agitating for outside people to fight your battle for you, while you passively sit back and eat Bonbons.

I've been here before, more than a few times. As soon as you forget that it is your struggle and your responsibility to fight it, when you fail to remember that the only reason you have any outside support at all is because of the sacrifices of the SHU prisoners, then you have lost all understanding of the dynamics of this struggle. As soon as you rely on people other than prisoners you are plunging a knife in the back of the movement. Your base is prisoners, and from that everything else flows. Look to outside volunteers too much and you burn them out. Look to the courts, legislature, or executive branch for relief, you are pissing up a rope. Remember, self-reliance in all things!]

Important Notice

Articles and letters sent to the *Rock* newsletter for publication are currently being delivered and received in a timely manner. Please do not send such materials to third parties to be forwarded to *Rock* as it only delays receiving them and adds to the workload of those asked to do the forwarding.

Letters sent to *Rock* (located in Seattle) in care of *Prison Focus* (located in Oakland) can take over a month to reach us. Send *Rock* mail to this newsletter's return address (below). Anything for publication in *Prison Focus* can be sent either to me or to CPF in Oakland.

Shout Out Box

Shouting out to Diane Mirabal who hails from the womens' joint at Chowchilla. She has donated 38 forever stamps.

Rock On Diane!

Free Electronic Copy

Outside people can read, download, or print current and back issues of the *Rock* newsletter by going to www.rocknewsletter.com and clicking on the issue of the *Rock* newsletter they'd like to read.

Outside folks can also have a free electronic copy of the newsletter sent to them each month by way of email. Send requests for a digital copy to ed@rocknewsletter.com.

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change,



I am changing the things I cannot accept.

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