

# ROCK

★ Working to Extend Democracy to All ★

★ Volume 1, Number 4 ★

★ May 2012 ★

## VOICES FROM SOLITARY

### On Solitary Confinement and Finding Humanity

By Jean Casella and James Ridgeway

*[The following text comes from two letters written by Susan Crane on May 10 and 12, 2011, in which Crane—who had herself served stints in isolation after earlier arrests—observes and reflects upon the lives of women in solitary confinement.]*

While at the Federal Detention Center (FDC) SeaTac, Sr. Anne [Montgomery] and I were in cell 11 in one of the women's units. Cells 2 – 10 are filled with women wearing orange, held in solitary (Special Handling Unit as it is officially named). These sisters eat all their meals alone in their cells. They get out of their cell for a 15-minute shower three times a week (M, W & F). They are offered no exercise or outside time. They are not allowed to communicate with other prisoners, and we were not allowed to motion or talk to them. There is no yelling between cells. They can't participate in group prayer, or any group activity. No one offers them Eucharist.

The best we could offer was a smile as we walked by the line that is ten feet out from their doors; Sr. Anne and I would walk around the SeaTac women's unit (21 laps = 1 mile).

Some of the women in solitary are pre-trial, some have been sentenced. They are probably here for some sort of write-up for an infraction of a prison rule: some have had a hearing with a BOP [Bureau of Prisons] officer and have been found guilty, and so continue to sit in the solitary cells. The write-ups might be, for example, for

fighting, making a three-way call, or the result of mental illness.

One woman who was eating meals with us had just been abruptly taken off anti-anxiety medication. She was understandably having a hard time. The "counselor" came over during lunch and was excoriating us for keeping items on the shelf and desk in our cells. Our friend quietly walked up to the "counselor" and is reported to have said, "Why don't you let the women eat in peace?" (or something to that effect). She is now in orange, in solitary.

According to Bill Quigley, one of our lawyers at the Disarm Now Plowshares trial, and the legal director for the Center for Constitutional Rights, medical testimony presented in the case of Syed Fahad Hashmi in New York "concluded that after 60 days in solitary people's mental state begins to break down. That means a person will start to experience panic, anxiety, confusion, headaches, heart palpitations, sleep problems, withdrawal, anger, depression, despair and over-sensitivity. Over time this can lead to severe psychiatric trauma and harms like psychosis, distortion of reality, hallucinations, mass anxiety and acute confusion. Essentially, the mind disintegrates" (Not Just Guantanamo: US Torturing Muslim Pre-Trial Detainee in NYC, Huffington Post, by Bill Quigley).

Of course the 9 solitary cells holding women at FDC SeaTac are a small part of the entire solitary population at SeaTac, or in the Federal prison system, or in the US. The US has 5 percent of the world's popu-

lation and 25 percent of the world's prisoners! The US now has 25,000 prisoners in supermax prisons, and an additional 50-80 thousand in restrictive segregation units (Hell Hole, by Atul Gawande, in the New Yorker). Although the argument for solitary confinement is that it prevents violence and rule breaking, studies have shown that there is no correlation between the use of solitary confinement and a decrease in prison violence. In June 2006 the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons released its study and called for ending long-term isolation of prisoners. The report concluded that "after 10 days, no benefits of solitary confinement were found, and the harms are clear."

Sr. Anne was recently released from FDC SeaTac after serving her sentence. I am now at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Dublin. Things here are the way prisons are.

Yesterday there was a group of people who were given a tour of the prison. I was on the rec. field walking on the track. I try to see the facility through their eyes. Women walking, running, talking, laughing; all dressed in khaki; no one rowdy; no one crying. They see buildings, well cared for, floors clean and waxed, organized, no garbage or litter; sort of looks like a clean college campus.

But there is a lot that they don't see. They don't see the pain of toothaches. They don't see the pain of mothers who can't raise their children, or the pain of the children who want their moms. They don't see

the pain that comes when a close relative or friend dies and you can't celebrate their life or mourn with family. They don't see the pain of women who grew up in the US and face deportation to a country in which they have never lived. They don't see the day-by-day humiliations dealt out by some of the guards who are just doing their jobs. They don't hear the stories of an unjust legal system that grinds up so many women and spits them out into FCI Dublin.

I want to walk up and speak to these visitors, but I'm not ready to be rebuffed, yelled at, or see some sort of fear in their eyes if I come near them.

At FCI Dublin, walking on the track on the recreation field (3 laps = 1 mile), I pass the building holding the women in solitary. Here, the windows have a metal shield around them, so we have no contact with them. Is this acceptable punishment in the United States? Does it serve any purpose? Are there better solutions?

I saw that many of the guards made a point of talking through the doors to the women in the SHU, using their unique humor, being human, showing compassion. And I was thankful to see that!

But what about the structure, the actual rules that put women in solitary confinement? Our willingness to allow this sort of punishment lets us imagine that it's OK to hold prisoners and torture them at Bagram or Guantanamo.

Jesus once said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). Is that not the measure of our humanity? Is any other human being less than us? How is it possible that the US has 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's prisoners?

Does our disregard for the humanity of our brothers and sisters held in solitary make it easier to imagine killing millions in nuclear war? Are not the warehoused, marginalized, throw-away people in prisons a symptom of devalued life, and a symptom of the kind of thinking that allows us to invade other countries, and spend trillions of dollars on nuclear weapons and consider their use?

Where in all this do we find our humanity?

Susan Crane, 87783-011, FCI Dublin, 5701 8th St. – Camp Parks, Dublin, CA 94568

Article provided by Freedom Archives, <http://www.freedomarchives.org>

## 3,500 PALESTINIAN CONS IN ISRAEL IN HUNGER STRIKE ON PRISONERS' DAY

The majority of the 4,699 Palestinians currently being held in Israeli prisons refused their meals on Prisoners' Day, while 1,200 of them promise to hunger strike indefinitely to protest unfair conditions.

The other 2,300 have refused to eat any food for the whole of Tuesday.

Later on Tuesday Israel is to release Palestinian prisoner Khader Adnan, 33, who attracted worldwide media attention after spending 66 days on hunger strike – the longest in Palestinian history.

In Palestine, practically every person has a relative or acquaintance who has spent or is spending time in Israeli prison. Palestinians consider them freedom fighters, whichever setup they belong to, be it Hamas, Islamic Jihad or any other Palestinian organization.

Israel has 17 detention facilities across the country and the West Bank. According to Israeli data, 3,864 of the total number of prisoners are from the occupied West Bank, 475 are from Gaza and 360 are Arab Israelis or from Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem. The Palestinian data says that 534 prisoners – more than one in 10 – are serving a life sentence.

The Israeli rights group B'Tselem reports that 203 Palestinian children and youth are imprisoned, 31 of whom are under 16 years old.

Israeli uses "administrative detention" that dates back to when the region was a British protectorate. It allows Israel to detain suspects indefinitely without charge, simply by repeating the implied maximum six-month periods of detention time after time. At the moment there are 319 persons under "administrative detention" in Israel.

Last year the number of Palestinians in Israeli jails was considerably reduced with the release of 1,027 prisoners in exchange for captive Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, a swap between Palestine's Hamas and official Tel-Aviv after years of negotiations.

All in all, since 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem as a result of the Six-Day War, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, some 700,000 Palestinians have seen daylight from behind the bars of Israeli prisons. This is equivalent to 20 per cent of the total population of the Palestinian Authority.

April 17 [RT Network]

## URGENT MOBILIZATION TO SACRAMENTO!

By *prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity*

Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity's mediation team received word yesterday that the CDCR (CA Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation) will meet with the mediation team and family member representatives on Thursday at CDCR Headquarters in Sacramento to discuss the CDCR's proposed regulation changes on SHU (Security Housing Unit) placement. Legislative aides from the State Assembly and Senate will also attend the meeting.

During Thursday's meeting, Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity's mediation team and family member representatives will support the hunger strikers, their rejection of CDCR's proposal, and their five-core demands (Earlier this Spring, shortly after the CDCR released it's proposal, hunger strikers in the SHU at Pelican Bay rejected the CDCR's proposal and issued a counter proposal).

We need to show the CDCR & State legislators that the hunger strikers do not stand alone! Please come to Sacramento Thursday, April 26th, for an urgent rally outside CDCR Headquarters before the meeting.

**Urgent Rally to Support the CA Hunger Strike!**

In July & September of 2011, thousands of prisoners in 13 of California's state prisons joined in solidarity across boundaries of race & geography to protest the torturous conditions in Security Housing Units (SHU) by going on hunger strike.

Support the Hunger Strikers in Winning their Demands!

Urgent Rally\*  
Thurs 4/26, 3:00 pm  
CDCR Headquarters  
1515 S St  
Sacramento, CA

\*Hunger Strike mediators & family reps will meet with the CDCR to discuss CDCR plans that could expand the number of our loved ones held in SHUs. We need to show the CDCR & CA legislators how many people support the hunger strike! Come through & help spread the word!

All out to Sacramento! Support Prisoners NOW!

# PRIVATE PRISON CORPORATIONS ARE SLAVE TRADERS

“The Corrections Corporation of America believes the economic crisis has created an historic opportunity to become the landlord, as well as the manager, of a big chunk of the American prison gulag.”

The nation’s largest private prison company, the Corrections Corporation of America, is on a buying spree. With a war chest of \$250 million, the corporation, which is listed on the New York Stock Exchange [5], this month sent letters to 48 states, offering to buy their prisons [6] outright. To ensure their profitability, the corporation insists that it be guaranteed that the prisons be kept at least 90 percent full. Plus, the corporate jailers demand a 20-year management contract, on top of the profits they expect to extract by spending less money per prisoner.

For the last two years, the number of inmates held in state prisons has declined slightly, largely because the states are short on money. Crime, of course, has declined dramatically in the last 20 years, but that has never dampened the states’ appetites for warehousing ever more Black and brown bodies, and the federal prison system is still growing. However, the Corrections Corporation of America believes the economic crisis has created an historic opportunity to become the landlord, as well as the manager, of a big chunk of the American prison gulag.

The attempted prison grab is also defensive in nature. If private companies can gain both ownership and management of enough prisons, they can set the prices without open-bid competition for prison services, creating a guaranteed cost-plus monopoly like that which exists between the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex.

“If private companies are allowed to own the deeds to prisons, they are a big step closer to owning the people inside them.”

But, for a better analogy, we must go back to the American slave system, a thoroughly capitalist enterprise that reduced human beings to units of labor and sale. The Corrections Corporation of America’s filings with the U.S. Securities and Ex-

change Commission read very much like the documents of a slave-trader. Investors are warned that profits would go down if the demand for prisoners declines. That is, if the world’s largest police state shrinks, so does the corporate bottom line. Dangers to profitability include “relaxation of enforcement efforts, leniency in conviction or parole standards and sentencing practices or through the decriminalization of certain activities that are currently proscribed by our criminal laws.” The corporation spells it out: “any changes with respect to drugs and controlled substances or illegal immigration could affect the number of persons arrested, convicted, and sentenced, thereby potentially reducing demand for correctional facilities to house them.” At the Corrections Corporation of America, human freedom is a dirty word.

But, there is something even more horrifying than the moral turpitude of the prison capitalists. If private companies are allowed to own the deeds to prisons, they are a big step closer to owning the people inside them. Many of the same politicians that created the system of mass Black incarceration over the past 40 years, would gladly hand over to private parties all responsibility for the human rights of inmates. The question of inmates’ rights is hardly raised in the debate over prison privatization. This is a dialogue steeped in slavery and racial oppression. Just as the old slave markets were abolished, so must the Black American Gulag be dismantled – with no compensation to those who traffic in human beings.

*Black Agenda Radio, Glen Ford*

Links:

- [1] <http://blackagendareport.com/category/other/ba-radio-commentary>
- [2] <http://blackagendareport.com/category/us-politics/mass-incarceration>
- [3] <http://blackagendareport.com/category/us-politics/privatization>
- [4] [http://blackagendareport.com/sites/www.blackagendareport.com/files/blackmen\\_jailed-02.jpg](http://blackagendareport.com/sites/www.blackagendareport.com/files/blackmen_jailed-02.jpg)
- [5] <http://ir.correctionscorp.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=117983&p=irol-faq>
- [6] [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/14/private-prisons-buying-state-prisons\\_n\\_1272143.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/14/private-prisons-buying-state-prisons_n_1272143.html)
- [7] <mailto:Glen.Ford@BlackAgendaReport.com>
- [8] [http://www.addtoany.com/share\\_save?linkurl=http%3A%2F%2Fblackagendareport.com%2Fcontent%2Fprivate-](http://www.addtoany.com/share_save?linkurl=http%3A%2F%2Fblackagendareport.com%2Fcontent%2Fprivate-)

prison-corporations-are-slave-traders&linkname=Private%20Prison%20Corporations%20Are%20Slave%20Traders

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## TIDBITS

### Posts From the HS Support Mailing List

Hundreds of men in the ASU at Calipatria State Prison participated last year in the Pelican Bay State Prison hunger strike that reached statewide in July 2011 and another in September 2011. The men at Calipatria State Prison ASU who starved themselves were in unity with Pelican Bay State Prison 5 demands but these men at Calipatria added their own demand which was to have an appliance to stimulate their minds (either a T.V. or radio) if they had to be forced to stay in segregation. With the help from articles that were published to expose the illegal extended years these men are serving in this “temporary” segregation unit, loved ones pushing CDCR to have these men’s demand met for an appliance, the men at Calipatria State Prison ASU expressing to the public of the extreme inhumane conditions they were facing, and after Warden Leland McEwen at Calipatria State Prison was removed; Sacramento approved T.V.’s for all men in Calipatria State Prison ASU.

On 4-19-2012, at the expense of CDCR, T.V.’s were distributed/installed around to all the men in the Administrative Segregation Unit.

Now while in segregation the men won’t have to just stare at a damn wall all day, the men are just waiting on the headphone extensions. Next step is getting them out of that hellhole of segregation. The men at Calipatria ASU wanted me to share with everyone who helped support them, were their voices and pushed to help them say “THANK YOU!!!”.

(Note: some of these men have been in ‘temporary’ segregation at Calipatria ASU from 1 year all the way up to 7 years straight).

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I hope a few families talk about how men statewide at the moment in segregation units throughout CA prisons are getting themselves ‘mentally prepared’ to die in just around 2 months if they start another

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*Tidbits ..... Continued on page 9*



# LETTERS

## Linking Struggles

Just got done going through the March issue of *PHHS News*, *¡Rock!*, and the spring 2012 issue of *Prison Focus*, and wanted to say Thank you, Ed. Thank you for being there. Thank you for your time and energy, not to mention the resources you put into all of this. I just wanted to let you know that it is appreciated by many.

Many prisoners just don't get it and think that this is your job and that you do all this for us or else that you're gaming us somehow and making money off us—now that's just silly!

Sure, a lot of people just don't like you for one reason or another, but isn't that true about anyone who kicks up the dust? I'm just glad to see that regardless of all the negativity you're still there! Now that's gumption.

There is an article by Chad in the *Prison Focus* that reads, "As a side effect of capitalist economics they all understood Lenin's statement that 'politics are concentrated economics' and they used this knowledge, hitching their struggles to other political struggles and international movements and gaining support from various international entities, such as Amnesty International, etc. The I.R.A. succeeded in abolishing solitary confinement, and in other cases they were successful in achieving 'association', that is group housing up to fifteen prisoners."

I was wondering if you could enlighten me a little bit about this "hitching" our struggle to other political struggles or international movements. How would that work in that present context?

*¡Rock!* looks fine to me, you're doing a great job! Is there a website it can be downloaded from?

*Name Withheld*

**[Ed's Response:** *Rock* is not written for outside people so I did not have it posted on any website. However I have just now posted copies of it on the Prison Art website ([www.prisonart.org](http://www.prisonart.org)). As for linking or hitching the prisoner rights struggle with others, it's a simple matter of prisoners using their collective voice in support of some movement, or rendering some form of material support to that movement. This could be anything from the pro-war movement to the anti-war movement, etc. It's a thing where you support them and they

support you. You are allies in a common cause, in this case the struggle for justice.

When I was in my mid-teens growing up in Fairbanks, Alaska, a friend of my mother's sold business cards. I asked her to make a set for me that read "Anything for money." She refused. My point is that I too was so inculcated with bourgeois ideology that I believed anything worth doing was worth doing for money. In the late 1960s when radicals started coming into the McNeil Island federal penitentiary where I was doing time, I could not understand why they would risk their lives or freedom for a cause that made them no profit. Yet before long I became one of them; I became a prisoner activist.

To hear that some folks on the inside think I am in some way scamming everyone to make a profit causes me to laugh. Nobody at California Prison Focus gets paid a dime, we are all volunteers. *Rock* cost me money to produce and mail. And my work for the *PHSS News* is also a volunteer gig. The same is true for Prison Art, whose only value has been my ability to deduct the losses it incurs on my taxes.

I can understand people not liking me. I'm a nigger lovin' commie fag. What's to like? This isn't a popularity contest. At Walla Walla prisoners gave me the nickname "Straight Ahead Ed" (and some others less flattering). Fact is, I am single-mindedly fighting to advance the cause of prisoners. Like me or not, respect the fact that I'm trying, the best way I know how.]

## NCTT Cup Holds no Water

Just received your latest newsletter the *Roca*, Gracias! Here we all sincerely appreciate all of the great work you are doing to get our voices heard, and to bring us messages of information we might not get the opportunity to otherwise hear due to our housing. So all of us hunger strikers thank you for that.

Speaking on the latest newsletter it was interesting: First no voice should be ignored, especially if he was a full participant in both hunger strikes, but common knowledge it has been solely demonstrated that one voice coming from the shorty corridor has communicated on behalf of all SHU inmates concerning the challenge of conditions we in the SHU/Ad-Seg face.

I have been in the SHU since 1990, and it and it has been without chaos in the message conveyed out of the short corridor to the five core demands. I find that

it might be naïve on some level to speak outside that one voice, those who misinterpret the avenues that have been opened due to making new demands, historically that not valuable to the process. It just muddies the waters. Pelican Bay SHU inmates are of one voice that comes from the short corridor, not some new group that brings distractions from the five core demands. This Corcoran NCTT/New Afrikan/Occupy Wall Street new 10 demands is not speaking in the voice of the majority recognize or believe in. Until the short corridor embraces that message and conveys that to us, it holds no water in my cup.

*Name Withheld*

**[Ed's Response:** The NCTT was making a suggestion to the Occupy Movement and to the community on the outside. They were not trying to supplant the five core demands. We are all in total agreement that first, above all else, are the five core demands. They will be met. But some of us, including myself, believe that implementing those five demands is but the first step on a very long journey.

I am an officer of California Prison Focus, and our Mission Statement is to shut down the SHU, not to make it more comfortable or the policies more rational. Accordingly, in my mind, while the five core demands are first and foremost, they are not the end of the road—at the very least we must shut down the SHU.

If prisoners have differing opinions these pages are open to all as a forum to express those thoughts. This newsletter is intended as a space for differing viewpoints. But to tell you the truth, I can't imagine anyone believing that the five core demands are the end of it—that after they are met that everything in California's prison system will be just dandy.

The five core demands are the priority and ahead of everything else, but please allow folks to look a bit further into the future as well. A non-violent movement needs to be built in order to get prisoners the vote and to eliminate the provision of the Thirteenth Amendment that authorizes slavery for prisoners. Until those things are accomplished there will be no significant change in this nation's prison dynamic.

If anyone has a different opinion these pages are open to you.]

## More On NCTT

Does the NCTT have any practical solution to do away with the social stratification within the prisoner class and divisional segments (i.e., general population, segregation SHU/ASU status, sensitive needs yard) of the California prison population? Because at this point that's critically important for the development of *prisoners' political consciousness*. I agree with the article "The Road Ahead" [*Rock* vol. 1, No. 1], that pointed out that dialectical and historical materialism is our (prison class) basis to draw from for building a resilient class for struggle. Anything beyond this point could only be a superfluous grandiose presentation for the development of a non-existent movement.

So can we build from this point? Do the NCTT have any practical programs available to unite the prisoner class on a national level? Because this battle has only begun and the political consciousness of prisoners is shouting one core demand: "UNITE ALL PRISONERS!" Hello, NCTT! I'm still hopeful but are you paying attention? Look at the mock polling system, the interest in the prisoner hunger strike outside has dramatically declined, so let's not lose the attention of the prisoner class too. Accordingly, can we lessen the rhetoric on the multi-demand presentations and more on the prisoner class unification?

Nevertheless, overall the NCTT article's ten core demands etc. was probably well-received by its intended audience when it was published in the *SF Bay View* newspaper. But for the prisoner class, which I assume are the readers of the *Rock*, it fell on death [deaf?] ears!

Finally, NCTT, I am looking for your wisdom and guidance to propose something on the overcoming the challenges in achieving prisoner class unification. Thanks for your consideration.

UR-2

**[Ed's Response:** The above letter writer is correct on all counts. The NCTT piece was written to the outside community and, as such, was not suitable for the purpose this newsletter is intended to serve. It was my thinking that the NCTT's submission of demands to the Occupy Movement would also work to raise prisoner consciousness around these community issues. From the number of letters I've received from prisoners that was evidently not the case.

Readers should feel free to jerk my chain whenever they feel I drift off course.]

## Demand For Change

Most of us should not even be in these sh-t holes! The only reason for it is money & politics of special interests (the poor aren't considered a special interest! Their considered expendable interests!) Also, there are other evil motives involved – I believe this nation incarcerates so many people for purposes of psychological control of the masses too and in the article in reference to the U.N. Petition press conference subject. The article from Moscow said many other nations have been discussing the fact that the U.S.A. is becoming more and more of a police state... it's obvious, we're close to becoming a fascist govt!! But, it might be stopped because more and more people are waking up (becoming more conscious!)

I really believe the time is ripe to force change to California's sentencing laws and also paroles of lifers – it can be done with peaceful protest type activity! But it will require a very big – committed effort. It needs to be propagated real big – exposing the fraud, corruption, waste of billions, and all of it tied into the sentencing laws and failure to parole enough lifers, who are way beyond our minimum terms!

And, it will require very solid, committed, direct action – words are powerful but they must be accompanied by "direct action" in a coordinated – correlative effort, in order to be effective! That's been the problem with a lot of struggles in this country; during the past (25-30) years, there's been a lot of words – a lot of rhetorical dialogue about fighting the good fight for change, with little to no direct action. I believe you have to show by your actions, that the cause is serious and worthy of putting lives on the line of necessary to draw attention and force the changes sought! As the old saying goes "Power to the People". Its time, people have power when they come together collectively to make a hard core stand for a cause!

There 1000s of prisoners in California Prison System who are not serving valid sentences – sentencing laws based on special interest politics are not valid... they are political that equates to 1000s of political prisoners rotting in these dungeons while our families and loved ones suffer too. Family and loved ones need to rally together for the common cause and make a solid, hard core stand to demand changes. "Rights" are not given; they are taken by the people! In other countries around the world – South America and Africa come to

mind – family and loved ones have rallied and stood together in public places – gone on hunger strikes outside the capitol buildings and refused to move, until the changes were made! This has been successful.

People out there need to think about these types of direct actions because the time for it is NOW! A STAND AND DEMAND FOR CHANGES HAS TO BE MADE!"

*By Todd Ashker, 4-4-2012, written to and transcribed by Kendra Castaneda*

## On Contradictions

How you manage is beyond us, but your spirit is beautiful. You got down pretty heavy with the Mao thing on contradictions in your editorial. To the point, insightful, and necessary. Especially in these times.

*Kody Scott, Pelican Bay*

I'm an alleged "validated" associate in Calipatria A.S.U. for almost three years now. I hope people start contributing more because you provide some good materials. I mean shit, you could be spending your golden years chillin'. Keep sending materials my way. Enclosed are six stamps.

*Name Withheld*

## Editorial Comments

The *Rock* mailing list is currently at 125 people, nearly all SHU/ASU convicts. So far (after three issues) I've received a total of 130 stamps, all but 25 of them in the last ten days. That's enough to mail out this issue, but not enough to pay for printer toner and paper.

If this newsletter is to also survive for the long haul it can only do so with your material support. If you have not yet sent a donation of stamps, then do so now. For those few of you who have money to spare, contributions of cash are graciously accepted (so far zero dollars have been received).

Some of the 130 stamps received came two stamps at a time. Two stamps will get you only one issue—one stamp to produce it and another to mail it. 24 stamps will get you a year. Send more if you can, in order to help those who are totally broke.

This issue of *Rock*, as well as the next one, will go out to everyone on the current mailing list. After that only those who have contributed something will get the paper. If at that point the list is too small I'll stop doing this one. If *Rock* ends, any extra stamps donated will be used to further the struggle of prisoners for meaningful justice.

# CONTRABAND WATCH PROLIFERATES

Posted on April 16, 2012

Contraband watch, also known as “potty watch,” something prisons throughout California have used for years to humiliate and torture prisoners, is becoming more common. In a recent interview, a prisoner in the Pelican Bay SHU told a legal representative that there were 15 watches happening at that time. “Potty watch” is the practice of forcing prisoners to wear a diaper and shackling them so that they cannot use their hands. In some cases, PVC pipes are placed over the person’s hands. The supposed purpose for doing this is so that the guards can find any illegal substances or items prisoners are not supposed to have that they have attempted to take into the prison by ingesting or otherwise inserting in to their body. The reality is that “potty watch” is used for punishment and retaliation. The result is days of both physical pain and psychological torture. Prisoners who have been subjected to the “potty watch” report that not being able to move freely is painful and that guards don’t always change diapers. In one case, a prisoner emerged from a 6 day” potty watch” to find that the skin on his thighs and buttocks had been burned from the ammonia in his urine. Prisoners are reporting that these contraband watches are usually lasting 3-6 days and that they are commonly used after transfers or visits, they are becoming increasingly arbitrary and common.

<http://www.centralvalleybusinesstimes.com/stories/001/?ID=20849>

# CDCR TO LIMIT CELL PHONES IN PRISONS

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation says it has awarded what it likes to call a “groundbreaking and momentous” contract to Global Tel\*Link that is designed to eliminate contraband cell phone use by inmates.

Under the contract, GTL will also provide the Inmate/Ward Telephone System (IWTS) for inmates to make domestic and international calls from an authorized phone network.

“Inmates have used cell phones to commit more crimes, organize assaults on staff, and terrorize victims,” says CDCR Secretary Matthew Cate. “This groundbreaking and momentous technology will enable CDCR to crack down on the potentially dangerous communications by inmates.”

Managed access technology uses a secure cellular umbrella over a specified area blocking unauthorized cellular communication transmissions, such as e-mails, texts, phone calls, or Internet access.

Implementation of the system will come at no cost to taxpayers, the state claims. GTL is responsible for all implementation costs, including new installation of equipment and services, as well as the costs of operating this technology at CDCR institutions. GTL, in return, receives the revenue generated from the ITWS services.

CDCR anticipates the system to be operational at its first institution by the end of the year with other institutions to follow.


<http://www.centralvalleybusinesstimes.com/stories/001/?ID=20849>

confinement for Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox of the Angola 3, by exploring the expansion and overuse of solitary confinement, mobilizing support for the Amnesty International Petition to remove Wallace and Woodfox from solitary confinement (being hand delivered to LA Governor Bobby Jindal on Tuesday, April 17) and support for the California Hunger Strikers.

Featuring the following speakers:

- Robert King, of the Angola 3, released in 2001 after 29 years of solitary confinement.
- Hans Bennett, Independent journalist and co-founder of Journalists for Mumia
- Terry Kupers, Institute Professor at The Wright Institute in Berkeley, California
- Manuel La Fontaine, Northern California Regional Organizer for All of Us or None
- Aaron Mirmalek, Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee Oakland
- Kiilu Nyasha, Independent journalist and former member of the Black Panther Party
- Tahtanerriah Sessoms-Howell, Youth Organizer for All of Us Or None
- Luis “Bato” Talamantez, California Prison Focus and one of the San Quentin 6
- Azadeh Zohrabi, Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Hastings Race and Poverty Law Journal
- Stuart Hanlon, lawyer for Geronimo Pratt.
- David Newton, Editor in Chief of the Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly
- Kelly Turner, author and former three-strike prisoner.
- Anita Wills, member of Occupy 4 Prisoners and mother of Kerry Baxter Sr., a three-strike prisoner.

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# “OUTER LIMITS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT” EVENT

This public forum, entitled “The Outer Limits of Solitary Confinement,” held at UC Hastings College of the Law, in San Francisco on April 6, 2012 was organized by the International Coalition to Free the Angola 3, and co-hosted by the Hastings chapter of the National Lawyers Guild and the Hastings Race and Poverty Law Journal.

The event marked 40 years of solitary

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# RESPONSE TO CDCR FROM CA FAMILIES TO END SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Posted on April 13, 2012

**W**e live in a state whose citizens are more morally outraged about the confinement of chickens and dogs than of human beings. We are the loved ones of men and women who have been incarcerated indefinitely—some for decades—in California’s “supermax” segregated and administrative housing units. Solitary confinement, even for short periods, has been known for centuries to cause irreparable physical and psychological damage: torture. Yet California continues to condone this practice in violation of both Constitutional and international law against the use of this and other inhuman and degrading treatment.

In March of 2012 the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) came out with its long-awaited proposal to overhaul its use of prolonged solitary confinement to manage gangs and violent prisoners. Families, lawyers, prisoners and activists had hoped that after two peaceful hunger strikes in 2011 engaging 12,000 prisoners protesting CDCR’s illegal practices, the Department would follow several other states that have successfully and significantly reduced their use of solitary confinement and instituted effective rehabilitation and re-entry programs—and at great savings to overstressed state budgets.

Sadly, that was not the case. By definition “torture” is the intentional infliction of severe mental or physical pain or suffering by or with the consent of state authorities for a specific purpose. With CDCR, this purpose is to extract information about gang activities, real or fabricated. There is nothing in these new proposals that leads any of us to believe that a sincere reform of CDCR’s extremist policies is at hand; in fact, the language is more obscure, the policies more layered, and the prisoners’ demands for decency and rehabilitation virtually ignored. Amnesty International and the National Religious Campaign Against Torture among others issued immediate statements repudiating this document as not going far enough to address the inhumane conditions

that have persisted in California prisons for decades. If anything, much of the new document appears even more Draconian. We are very concerned for our loved ones inside this prison within the prison.

Prisons are by nature closed systems, yet they are funded by taxpayers and are public institutions whose function is to oversee the deprivation of liberty, an extreme use of power against an individual. Our loved ones are human beings first and prisoners second. Too many have endured retaliation, arbitrary interpretations of CDCR’s regulations code, poor food, medical negligence, and an inability to program out of solitary unless they self-incriminate, snitch, or die. This is not to ignore crime and punishment, but we believe the public interest in law and order can best be served through standards of morality and human decency.

**There is nothing in these new proposals that leads any of us to believe that a sincere reform of CDCR’s extremist policies is at hand....**

All California communities are stakeholders in what happens in our prisons because many of these inmates will eventually return to society. Even if our state’s citizens may not generally be sympathetic to prisoners, we must hold our public institutions to high ethical standards, including assuring that both prisons and communities are safe.

California’s version of supermax is extreme on every level, involving more prisoners for more of their sentences under worse conditions. Many states are revisiting their use of solitary confinement, but given California’s documented tendency to create torturous conditions under the justification of security, large-scale use of solitary confinement in this state should end.

Substantial, meaningful and ethical revision of the CDCR proposals will be a large step toward addressing the barbaric and inhumane treatment to which SHU prisoners are currently subjected, with no threat to public safety. We believe Californians have a considerable stake in this humanitarian reform and we ask your participation in our efforts to raise awareness and end torture in California prisons.

*California Families to Abolish Solitary Confinement – CFASC 8108 E Santa Ana Canyon Rd. #100, 213 Anaheim, CA92808  
Contact us at 714.290.9077*

# CORCORAN COPS RETALIATE AGAINST HUNGER STRIKERS IN AD SEG UNIT (ASU) 1

**W**hen we, the prisoners housed in the Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) of CSP-Corcoran, initiated a hunger strike to protest against the inhumane conditions and constitutional violations we faced in the ASU1, the prison officials responded with retaliation and indifference. Their intent was clear: to set an example of what would occur if these protests that had been rocking the California Department of Corrections (CDC) this past year continued. Their statement was not only meant for the protestors in this ASU1, but for the entire class of oppressed prisoners in the CDC.

The hunger strike in this ASU1 initially began on Dec. 28, 2011. It was a collective effort with various races and subgroups standing in solidarity for a common interest. A petition was prepared with the issues we wanted to address, and it was submitted to the Corcoran prison officials and also sent out to prisoner rights groups in an attempt to gather support and attention.

A few hours after the protest began, Warden Gipson sent her staff to move the prisoners who were allegedly, and falsely, identified as “strike leaders” to a different ASU. I was included in that category because my signature was on the petition that was submitted to prison officials. When we initially refused to move, the correctional staff came to our cells wearing full riot gear, to cell-extract and move us by force. Since we were engaging in a peaceful protest, we agreed to move and were placed in the other ASU, which turned out to be 3A-03 E.O.P., an Ad Seg unit that houses severely mentally ill inmates.

While isolated in that psychiatric ward, we continued to refuse food until we received word that the hunger strike ended in the ASU1. I later found out that the Warden and Captain had me with the spokesmen of the ASU1 protestors and promised to grant the majority of our demands, but requested three weeks to implement the changes and to have the agreements in writing. The protestors agreed to give the prison officials the benefit of the doubt, and for that reason the hunger strike was put on hold.

I continued to file complaints and 602s during this period asserting that my placement in a unit along with severely mentally ill inmates violated my Eighth Amendment rights because I was not mentally ill, and that my placement in this psychiatric ward was the result of illegal retaliation by prison officials against me for exercising my First Amendment right to peaceably assemble and protest. These grievances went ignored. In addition to my isolation in the psychiatric ward, I received a 115 for "inciting/leading a mass disturbance" (12 month SHU term), and was later found guilty although they had no evidence to support that charge besides my signature on a petition. The other protestors who were also falsely identified as "Strike Leaders" were issued the same 115 for "inciting/leading a mass disturbance."

On January 18, 2012, Warden Gipson ordered her staff to move me, as well as other isolated protestors, back to the ASU1, believing that the hunger strike was over. Before we were moved back, she sent an email to C/O Lt. Cruz, a correctional officer in 3A-03, and asked him to read it to us. It contained a warning that she would not tolerate any more disturbances in the ASU1, and a threat that any such behavior would carry more severe reprisals.

After 3 weeks had passed since the hunger strike was put on hold, it was clear that the prison officials had no intent to honor their word and keep their promises. The hunger strike resumed on January 27, 2012.

The ASU1 Lieutenant, after hearing that we resumed the protest, came to a few protestors and stated the following, "We are tired of you guys, all you guys, doing hunger strikes and asking for all this shit. I am not only speaking for myself, but for my superiors as well. There are correctional officers and staff getting laid off because the state doesn't have money, and you guys in here are asking for more shit? You know what? We don't care if you guys starve yourselves to death. You guys aren't getting shit. The only thing you'll get are incident packets."

Two days later, on Jan. 29, 2012, Warden Gipson sent her staff again to round up the alleged "Strike Leaders" and place them in isolation. This time, the spokesmen who had previously come out to speak and negotiate with the prison officials regarding our demands were also included in that category. We were all moved once again to 3A-03 psychiatric ward, although we were not mentally ill. Furthermore, our visits

were suspended by Classification Committee for the duration of our "involvement in the hunger strike," and we were issued another 115 for "inciting/ leading a mass disturbance."

The retaliation did not stop there. All the participants of the hunger strike were issued 115s for "participation in a mass disturbance," and the most important of all, the correctional staff and prison officials were deliberately indifferent to the medical needs of the starved protestors in the ASU1. When some of the protestors started losing consciousness, experiencing serious pain and requesting emergency medical attention, the correctional staff was deliberately slow in responding, and in many instances they just simply ignored them. This conduct and this mindset of prison officials, setting an example of action deliberately indifferent to the medical needs of the protestors, directly contributed to the death of one of our own. His brave sacrifice and unflinching personal commitment will never be forgotten, nor will it have been for naught.

This is where they stand. The oppressors who take away our freedom and liberty, continue to fight tooth and nail to deprive us of even our basic human rights. They employ brutal means of retaliation and suppression in an attempt to keep us from exposing the harsh truths of everyday life inside these prison walls. Although the ASU1 hunger strike may have ended, I will continue to have the spirit of resistance. The outcome will not be decided by a single battle but many, and I will do my part, in hopes that my small contribution may make a difference.

In Solidarity,

*Pyung Hwa Ryoo F88924  
3A-03-213  
Corcoran CA 93212*



## OCCUPY4 PRISONERS PRESENTS

[*Ed. Note: By the time you read this the event will be over. But I thought it would be a good idea to let you know it happened.*]

**I**n Solidarity with the Occupy the Justice Department protest in Washington, DC

End Mass Incarceration! Tuesday, April 24th.

### 4PM - RALLY at 14th and Broadway, Oakland

Occupy4Prisoners and supporters will rally at Oscar Grant Plaza, where awareness and understanding regarding the brutality and corruption within the United States INjustice system will begin to rise up. We will be doing educational outreach about the prison system with music, speakers, a "Truth Mob" and amplifying the voices of people inside of prisons.

### 5PM - MARCH to Federal Building and Obama Headquarters

We will take to the streets to march as an expression of our solidarity with the 2.5 million people incarcerated in the country. The United States has the highest incarceration rate of any country, with 743 people in prison per 100,000 of national population. Occupy4Prisoners brings to the attention of the greater Occupy Movement how we cannot forget the bottom 1% of the 99% in our greater struggle for justice and equality.

The march will continue past the Federal Building (13th and Clay) where representatives from the Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia and the Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal will speak. Folks from the Bradley Manning Support Network will share information about Bradley's plight when we reach the Obama Headquarters (17th and Telegraph.) Then we will march to...

### 6PM - THE INJUSTICE SYSTEM ON TRIAL - 19th and Telegraph

Once we arrive at the 19th and Telegraph Plaza, we will be putting the Injustice System on trial. Powerful local activists will preside over a trial that is actually about the truth.

The prosecutor will be Anita Wills, (Oscar Grant Committee and Occupy4Prisoners), the defense attorney will be Deborah



Small, (Break the Chains), and the judge will be Jerry Elster (All of Us or None). The system will be played by Dan Siegel (National Lawyers Guild).

### The jury will be YOU!

These witnesses will be bringing evidence against the system regarding the following charges:

1. Targeting youth of color
  - Chris M, Occupy Oakland Tactical Action Committee
  - Sagnitche Salazar, Youth Together and Xicana Moratorium Coalition
2. Allowing murder and assault by police to go unpunished
  - Denika Chatman, Kenneth Harding Jr. Foundation
  - Carey Downs & Dionne Smith Downs, A Mother's Cry for Justice
3. Enforcing racism at every level
  - Jabari Shaw, Rapper, Laney College Black Student Union
  - Manuel La Fontaine, All of Us or None and Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity
4. Holding political prisoners hostage
  - Kiilu Nyasha, Independent journalist and former Black Panther
  - Aaron Mirmalek, Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee Oakland
5. Torturing people inside the prisons
  - Sharena Curley, Oscar Grant Committee
  - Luis "Bato" Talamantez, California Prison Focus and one of the San Quentin Six
6. Conspiring to commit mass incarceration
  - Linda Evans, All of Us or None and former political prisoner
  - Ghetto Prophet, Onyx Organizing Committee and spoken word artist

More information:

[www.occupy4prisoners.org](http://www.occupy4prisoners.org)  
[www.occupythejusticedepartment.com](http://www.occupythejusticedepartment.com)  
[occupy4prisoners@gmail.com](mailto:occupy4prisoners@gmail.com)

**OCCUPY4PRISONERS**

**OCCUPY THE INJUSTICE DEPARTMENT  
END MASS INCARCERATION  
TUESDAY, APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup>**





APM - Rally, Truth Mob and Education/Outreach at 14<sup>th</sup> and Broadway  
 5PM - March to Federal Building and Obama Headquarters for Mumia Abu-Jamal and Bradley Manning Speakouts  
 Then on to:  
 8PM - Put the Injustice System on Trial at 19<sup>th</sup> and Telegraph!  
 Charges include: Mass Incarceration, Police Brutality and Murder, and Torture of People in Prison.  
 Hear testimonies and see evidence which support these charges. Witnesses include formally incarcerated people, All of Us or None, Stop the Injunctions Coalition, Occupy Oakland, former Black Panthers, people who have lost loved ones to police murder, and more.  
 This action is in solidarity with the Occupy the Justice Department happening in Washington DC on April 24<sup>th</sup>, Mumia Abu-Jamal's birthday.  
[occupy4prisoners.org/occupythejusticedepartment.com](http://occupy4prisoners.org/occupythejusticedepartment.com)  
[occupy4prisoners@gmail.com](mailto:occupy4prisoners@gmail.com)

### Tidbits ..... Continued from page 3

hunger strike, i have gotten quite a few letters from the main men at Pelican Bay short corridor and all throughout CA how they are currently getting mentally preparing themselves at the moment to go to the 'final hunger strike' they call it and die if need be. I really hope whoever goes to the rally in Sacramento tomorrow, families talk about this because many men have dropped a lot of weight last year and still cannot gain weight back. many men throughout CA prisons were in worse conditions after the last statewide hunger strike many almost died in hospitals, so their health is not as in tip top shape. if the men are strongly talking about the 3rd and final hunger strike really soon then it will happen, i really hope families who show up tomorrow talk about this or someone speak about the reality of what is going to happen if CDCR does not meet what the men want in their demands/proposal. Thanks - [Name withheld]

[I received this letter recently from a Pelican Bay prisoner. He singles out the lawyers for praise; we lawyers know that our work is not done in isolation and that the entire coalition, and the prisoners themselves, working with each other and with the coalition, deserve the credit for "what-ever gains" are made. --Carol]

I don't know how many prisoners write to thank you. But I want you to know that we are all most grateful to you. Thank you for everything you've done and continue to do. I'm sure that getting involved in this has taken up a lot of personal time, time you could've spent with your family. I'm sure it has caused you many sleepless nights. And one too many chocolates. I'm sure it has taken up a lot of your resources. This does not go unnoticed and unappreciated.

The progress and advancements we've all made would not have occurred without the assistance and dedication of you and Marilyn. You two have brought so much to the table. Whatever gains we make, they can be attributed to you. We would not be at this point without your help.

I'm sure there's a group you could've chose to help that would've been easier to be sympathetic towards. I want you to know we're not bad people. I see goodness and compassion in all of these guys. A lot of the bad choices we made were made a young age. We were all young and impulsive and looking for something to make us feel significant, and a gang was the most

accessible institution. Some kids join fraternities, some join the army, some join gangs. I think we're all attracted to that feeling of camaraderie, to that sense of purpose. Sure, we do dumb things, impulsive things, but it does not make us a rotten person. (The kids in the army and fraternities do dumb things too, but it doesn't make them bad people either.) I know we have to pay for what we've done, but CDCR seems to think we've forfeited any right to legitimate due process or decency.

Virtually every guy here was using drugs when they committed their crime. I've noticed that people who use drugs are usually very emotional and sensitive. I think everybody uses to numb themselves to whatever they're feeling. Maybe it didn't start out that way. Maybe they started because they wanted to be part of the crowd. But towards the end of everyone's days out there, they're using because of some sort of emotional issue that they didn't have the maturity to deal with. That certainly applies to me.

Before the hunger strike and the subsequent negotiations, a lot of guys were hopeless and therefore pessimistic towards the likelihood of any reform. . . . Now those same guys have a spring in their step. Their disposition has changed. Now they are starting to believe that change is going to come. I want you to know that you, Marilyn and Peter Schey are responsible for bringing this newfound hope to a lot of inmates.

### Quote Box

"The ruling class has the schools and press under its thumb. This enables it to sway the emotions of the masses."

*Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Physicist and Professor, Nobel Prize 1921*

"Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth."

*Albert Einstein*

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect."

*Mark Twain*

"Those who do not move, do not notice their chains."

*Rosa Luxemburg*

"Search for the truth is the noblest occupation of man; its publication is a duty."

*Anne Louise Germaine de Stael*

# A MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE

Act Now for SB 1363

**M**y oldest son was sentenced to California's youth prisons, called the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) in 2010 for assault when he was 16 years old. On one of our visits, my son told me that killing himself is his ticket out of DJJ. Imagine just for a second what it feels like to hear that from your child.

He's attempted suicide 7 times in two years. When he hurts himself, he gets put in solitary confinement. He sits in a small dirty cell for more than 21 hours a day while he hallucinates and gets more depressed. Once, he didn't eat for 7 days and no one bothered asking him what was wrong. He never had serious mental health issues before he went to DJJ. Now he takes more than 10 pills a day and constantly thinks about hurting himself. When we visit him, his body is scarred and his face twitches.

I need you to understand that this is standard procedure. Right now, youth prisons and juvenile halls can hold youth in solitary confinement for as long as they want.

That's why I joined with Books Not Bars to write a bill that would end this torture of our children. On April 17, we fell one vote short of passing the bill out of its first committee. There were four legislators who didn't support us. All of them received thousands of dollars from the prison guard's association in their last election.

Try to imagine what it's like to get a call in the middle of the night and being told that your child tried to hang himself with a bedsheet. Then, being told that he stabbed himself with a fork. Then learning that he slit his wrist with a razor. And after that, getting a call because he broke a TV and used the wires to choke himself.

They don't try to talk to him or give him counseling. Whether kids are getting into trouble or they are trying to hurt themselves, guards put them in solitary confinement. How is putting my suicidal son in solitary confinement supposed to help him? A psychiatrist talks to him for 2 minutes in the morning, then he stares at the walls for the rest of the day.

Every night I wish I could tuck in my son, give him the sign of the cross, and kiss him good night like I used to. But I can't, and it hurts so much. I may not be

a political insider or give millions to political campaigns, but that shouldn't mean politicians can ignore me or the thousands of other families who know my pain. There will be one more vote on this bill on April 24.

Will you help me make them listen?

*Owen Li*

*Lead Organizer*

*Books Not Bars*

*(An Ella Baker Center Campaign)*

*1970 Broadway, Suite 450*

*Oakland, CA 94612*



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