

# iROCK!

★ Working to Extend Democracy to All ★

★ Volume 3, Number 8 ★

★ August 2014 ★

## A YEAR AFTER MASS HUNGER STRIKE IN CALIFORNIA PRISONS

### WHAT'S CHANGED?

On July 8, 2013, 30,000 California prisoners launched what became a 60-day mass hunger strike. One year later, however, Luis Esquivel is still sitting in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) in solitary confinement in California's Pelican Bay State Prison. "Right now, my uncle is in his cell with no windows," said his niece, Maribel Herrera. "It's like sitting in a bathroom - your sink is there, your toilet is there, your bed is there. And you're just sitting there. I can only think about that for so long because it hurts."

Herrera's uncle has been in solitary confinement for 15 years. "I hadn't seen my uncle since I was a child," said Herrera. "I can't even remember hugging him." When she visited him in 2012, her first-ever visit

to Pelican Bay, more than 850 miles away from her family's home in San Diego, hers was the first visit Esquivel had received in seven years.

Esquivel is one of the plaintiffs in *Ashker v. Brown*, a federal lawsuit filed on behalf of Pelican Bay prisoners who have spent 10 or more years in the SHU. In the SHU, people are locked in their cells for at least 22 hours a day. Those accused of gang membership or association are placed in the SHU for an indeterminate length of time.

Accusations of gang involvement often rely on confidential informants and circumstantial evidence. Hundreds have been confined within the SHU for more than a decade. Until recently, the only way to be released from the SHU was to debrief, or provide information incriminating other prisoners, who are then placed in the SHU for an indeterminate sentence.

The lawsuit, filed in 2012, followed two three-week mass hunger strikes the previous year. During each hunger strike, hunger strikers issued five core demands:

1. Eliminate group punishments for individual rules violations;
2. Abolish the debriefing policy, and modify active/inactive gang status criteria;
3. Comply with the recommendations of the US Commission on Safety and Abuse in Prisons (2006) regarding an end to long-term solitary confinement;
4. Provide adequate food;
5. Expand and provide constructive programs and privileges for indefinite SHU inmates.

In 2013, prisoners struck again, reiterating their five core demands and issuing 40 additional demands, such as expunging all violations for participation in the 2011 strikes and prohibiting retaliation for those participating in the most recent strike.

The strike ended after California State Senator Loni Hancock, chair of the Senate Public Safety Committee, and Assembly member Tom Ammiano, chair of the Assembly Public Safety Committee, promised to hold hearings around the issues raised by the hunger strikers. As reported earlier in *Truthout*, the legislators' support pushed both the CDCR and the hunger strikers toward a resolution. Hearings were held in October 2013 and February 2014. Both Ammiano and Hancock introduced separate bills proposing time limits on solitary confinement. Ammiano's bill did not pass. Hancock's SB892, which has drawn criticism from both advocates and SHU prisoners, has been amended although it does not end the use of confidential informants in determining SHU placement. Those placed in the SHU before January 1, 2015, are to be placed in the Step Down Program no later than July 1, 2016, meaning that those who have already spent years in solitary confinement may still be awaiting review for up to another two years.

### The Lawsuit, the Review Process and the Step Down Program

On Tuesday, June 2, 2014, a federal judge ruled in favor of class certification, allowing hundreds of California prisoners

### CONTENTS

A Year After Hunger Strike .....	1
Quote Box .....	3
Editorial 3-8 .....	4
SWAT Team Gets Toddler .....	5
Letters .....	6
From The Inside Out .....	7
Largest HS in History .....	8
Motion to Dismiss Denied .....	9
Update on SCI Protest .....	9

to join the suit. However, the class is limited to those held in Pelican Bay's SHU for 10 or more years. Those held in other prisons' SHUs are not included.

In March 2012, the CDCR released its plan changing SHU placement. Prisoners identified as part of Security Threat Groups (STGs) can be placed in the SHU. Advocates and prisoners charge that the STG designation would enable CDCR to place greater numbers of people in the SHU. Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity, a grassroots coalition of Bay Area-based organizations and community members, stated, "Under the old policies, a prisoner could be placed in the SHU for affiliation with any of seven prison gangs. Under the new program, any grouping of three or more prisoners can be added to the list as a "security threat group," membership in which can result in a SHU term."

That same year, CDCR unveiled its new Step Down program for those serving indefinite SHU sentences for gang membership or association. In an email to Truthout, CDCR Deputy Press Secretary Terry Thornton notes that, under the Step Down program, prisoners are not required to debrief or drop out of their gang. But debriefing has not been eliminated: A validated gang member or associate can still choose to debrief instead of completing the Step Down program; that person would then be moved to a Transitional Housing Unit.

Despite CDCR's earlier assertions that the hunger strike was fomented by gang leaders and that participation in the hunger strike might be considered negatively during the Step Down review, hunger strikers have been moved out of the SHU.

As of June 9, 2014, CDCR has conducted 828 case-by-case reviews of prisoners housed in the SHUs and Administrative Segregation Units (ASUs) on STG charges. Of those reviewed, 557 have been released to Step Five, which is general population housing. Two hundred thirty-one people have been placed in Steps One through Four, six are going through the debriefing process and the rest remain in the ASU.

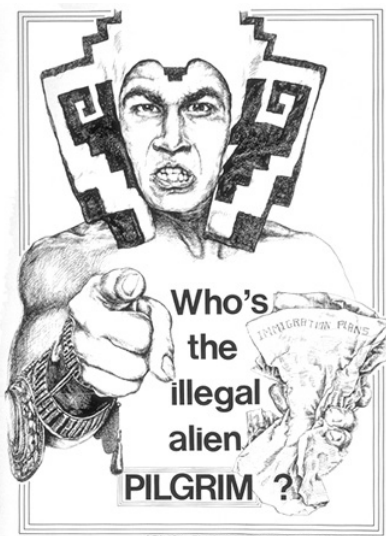
Sitawa Nantumbu Jamaa, one of the plaintiffs in *Ashker*, went through the review process in May 2014. He was placed in Step Three. "We thought he'd get Step Five being that he's not a gang member," his sister Marie Levin told Truthout. "But he's not being taken out of the SHU. He'll still be behind glass as far as visiting is concerned." Jamaa is scheduled to be moved

to the SHU in Tehachapi within four to six weeks.

Despite CDCR's earlier assertions that the hunger strike was fomented by gang leaders and that participation in the hunger strike might be considered negatively during the Step Down review, hunger strikers have been moved out of the SHU. Paul Redd, another *Ashker* plaintiff who had participated in all three strikes, was recently approved for transfer to general population at Corcoran State Prison after more than 20 years in the SHU. Three other plaintiffs - Danny Troxell, Jeffrey Franklin and Gabriel Reyes, have also been placed in the Step Down program and transferred out of Pelican Bay. "If they're out of the Pelican Bay SHU, they're no longer in our class," attorney Anne Weills told Truthout. However, unless the judge rules otherwise, the five plaintiffs recently transferred from Pelican Bay will remain as named plaintiffs.

Lorenzo Benton, who spent more than 25 years in the SHU, was also transferred to general population after the review process. He was sent to another prison where he was assigned to both a work program and a vocational training program. He described "sucking up the sun" each time he goes out to the yard. "I even had the opportunity for semi-night (7 to 8:30 pm) yard for the first time of my 38 years of incarceration," he wrote in a letter to Truthout. "The summer skies and summer breeze was wonderful as I took in the sunset."

Release from the SHU also comes with surveillance and the threat of being returned: "Within days of my arrival, I was subject to an interview and an advisement by the institutional gang investigation (IGI) unit here. They laid out their expectation, such as no gang and/or criminal activities,



random urinalysis and cell searches, monitoring of one's movements and activities, and an every so often interview on one's actions here. They even closed with the statement, "That they look forward to the Step Down Program working out."

He remains unconcerned, noting, "Gang activity is not something I choose or elect to involve myself with nor is it a practice of mine."

### **CDCR Proposes to Ban Certain Publications**

Both Benton and Redd seem confident that they can steer clear of all allegations of gang activity. However, the CDCR's proposed new regulations around publications may make it more difficult for them to stay informed of prison activism and policy changes while also avoiding charges of associating with validated Security Threat Groups.

On April 4, 2014, CDCR announced proposed new changes expanding the definition of contraband (or prohibited possessions) to include "written materials or photographs that indicate an association with validated STG members or associates." Possessing these materials can lead to being labeled an STG member or associate and placement in the SHU.

Censorship of publications is not new. Daletha Hayden, mother of one hunger striker, recounts handing out fliers in the parking lot of Corcoran State Prison during the 2011 hunger strike. She met a person from the prison's mailroom who informed her that mailroom staff were throwing away publications. The editor of the *San Francisco Bay View* noted, "In 2013, every month's issue of the *Bay View* from January to June except February's was 'disallowed' at Pelican Bay State Prison and withheld until well after the hunger strike began on July 8. Those issues were packed with letters from prisoners explaining and discussing the reasons for the upcoming strike."

The proposed change is absolutely a response to the hunger strike, the activism, the organizing and the media [coverage]," stated Weills. "It's meant to attack and isolate prisoners, to cut their voices to the outside world as well as to other prisoners. Media was a clear mechanism for doing so."

### **Family Members Organizing**

Family members have been actively organizing to abolish solitary confinement.

Dolores Canales, whose son has spent 13 years in the SHU, originally became involved with hunger strike support during the 2011 hunger strike. "I just wanted to know when my son was going to eat," she recounted. But she had no intention of changing SHU policies. "I had accepted it as the way it was."

That same year, Daletha Hayden drove to Sacramento to learn how she could support her son Ian, who was also participating in the 2011 strike. Ian has spent six years in the SHU at Tehachapi on charges of gang association. "I haven't been able to hug, touch or kiss my son in six years," she stated. "I only get a one-hour visit each week and they [prison staff] are very strict about that one hour. Sometimes they even short me that."

Like Canales, Hayden had no prior connection with prison justice organizing. Her son sent her California Prison Focus, a publication located in Oakland. Hayden looked up the group's website and saw that they were having a meeting. "I jumped in my car and went," she told Truthout. She started learning about other organizations fighting for prisoners' rights and against prison expansion, such as CURB (Californians United for a Responsible Budget). She also met Canales and other women who formed the California Families to Abolish Solitary Confinement (CFASC).

Herrera has a similar story. During the 2011 strike, she and her family drove from their home in San Diego to Los Angeles. "We didn't know anyone there," she recounted. "We just set our GPS, got to Los Angeles and started rallying." She and her family drove to Los Angeles for every rally and protest that year.

Family members also joined the mediation team that met with CDCR to negotiate the hunger strikers' demands. During the 2013 hunger strike, CDCR secretary Jeffrey Beard requested that family members not attend his meeting with the mediation team. "He had said that he didn't want to meet with family members during the hunger strike because he thought it would be too emotional," Canales recounted. Instead, he offered to meet with family members after the strike was resolved. Five family members, including Canales and Levin, were scheduled to meet with Beard in June.

Even after the strike, family members continue to organize, driving several hours to meet with other families, sometimes as frequently as once a week. "We're not going away," stated Canales. "If anything,

even more family members are willing to get involved." She noted that people inside the SHUs are urging their loved ones to join advocacy efforts and that CFASC's visibility has given them an opportunity to do so. "A lot of family members had no way of getting involved before," she explained. "They didn't know how to do so. They feel isolated with having a loved one in prison, but, with CFASC, they can find encouragement. We know what each other are going through."

Their organizing has not only raised visibility of prison conditions among the general public, but it has also allowed family members to support each other. "I now am surrounded by family members whose loved ones have been in solitary confinement for 20, 30 years," reflected Canales, who was recently awarded a Soros Justice Fellowship to continue her organizing with family members to end solitary confinement and decrease mass incarceration. "We draw our strength from each other. We're growing our family movement. To speak out, to no longer accept that this is the way it is."

Family members in both Southern and Northern California are planning events to commemorate the strike's one-year anniversary as well as to remind the public about the issues. In the Bay Area, Levin and other family members and supporters will hold a rally. In Los Angeles, family members are planning events all day, including a morning rally at the state building, an afternoon get-together including a barbecue in San Bernadino, and a candlelight vigil that night.

### **"We Are Not the Worst of the Worst"**

Those who have gone through the Step Down program have not forgotten those they left behind. One month after his release to general population, Lorenzo Benton wrote, "For me, this [my release into general population] was further assurance that I, as well as others, were wrongfully being held in SHU on indeterminate status for all those years (and some still are), after being labeled 'the worst of the worst.' Such a review shed light on much. We are not the worst of the worst. All need a chance at our freedom, whether in prison or in society, because we are all children of humanity who want a better life." ●

<http://truth-out.org/news/item/24695-a-year-after-mass-hunger-strike-in-california-prisons-whats-changed>

## Quote Box

"The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently."

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

"We place no race or people above any other, acknowledge no superiority in any culture, honor no special privilege in any nation, and have no respect for any creed that limits the absolute freedom of the human mind."

*ClassWarFilms*

"Many Americans hunger for a different kind of society—one based on principles of caring, ethical and spiritual sensitivity, and communal solidarity. Their need for meaning is just as intense as their need for economic security."

*Michael Lerner, journalist*

"Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories..."

*Amilcar Cabral*

"Politically popular speech has always been protected: even the Jews were free to say 'Heil Hitler.'"

*Isaac Asimov*

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world".

*Mahatma Gandhi*

"Wall Street owns the country...Our laws are the output of a system which clothes rascals in robes and honesty in rags. The [political] parties lie to us and the political speakers mislead us...Money rules."

*Mary Elizabeth Lease  
Populist orator - 1890*

"The two parties have combined against us to nullify our power by a 'gentleman's agreement' of non-recognition, no matter how we vote ... May God write us down as asses if ever again we are found putting our trust in either the Republican or the Democratic Parties."

*W.E.B. DuBois*

## EDITORIAL 3.8

I've struggled with the question of whether to merely say I have medical issues and leave it at that, or if I should take the drama queen approach and give you some of the details. Even though I've decided on the latter, my health is not something I will be regularly commenting on.

I have advanced stage lung cancer. This was discovered last week while a CT scan was being done of my right shoulder, which had been giving me a lot of pain. There is a tumor over three inches wide between my lungs and multiple cancer nodules located throughout both lungs.

How much time I have left is uncertain, and at this point would be little more than speculation. If the disease grows fast, not much. If slow, then I'll have more time. I know I'll have enough time to publish at least one more issue of Prison Focus and to continue with Rock for a while longer.

Needless to say, the news of this condition has caused me to do a lot of deep thinking about what I want to do with the rest of my life—with what little time I have remaining. Sadly, I want to continue doing exactly what I've been doing—to go on working against the pro-slavery provision of the thirteenth amendment and to extend full democracy to prisoners, including the right to vote. I would like to keep trying to move social prisoners in the direction of rights consciousness, and rights conscious prisoners toward class consciousness. I also want to continue to devote my one human power to the effort to bring about a socialist revolution and to put an end to such crimes as income inequality (poverty), unemployment, and perpetual wars of aggression.

It was also my grandiose hope that I would live to see the day that the prisoners of one state would initiate a peaceful, long term work strike—one that would light the way for convicts in other jurisdictions to follow. Georgia came close but failed after only five days. Maybe the political

consciousness on the inside is not there yet. And even if it was, such consciousness would most likely have only a reformist (rather than a revolutionary) orientation.

Anyway, you keep supplying the stamps, I'll keep putting out the newsletter for as long as I can. Unfortunately, when I go there is nobody to take my place. Mark lacks the technical skills for running the software needed to produce the newsletter, labels, etc. So, as things currently stand, the *Rock* newsletter will pretty much die along with my ability to put it out. If stamp donations slow down it will die even sooner.

A friend I met shortly after my release from prison went by the name of Donny The Punk. On the inside he had created a group called Stop Prison Rape. His idea, which was similar to mine in Men Against Sexism at Walla Walla, was to combat prison rape from the inside. Donnie relied on education and consciousness raising, rather than things like legislation. His approach was from the ground up, not from the top down. Donnie, with very little money and the help of some community volunteers, continued his work with Stop Prison Rape while on the streets.

Not too long after his release Donnie became ill and died. While the volunteers he worked with carried on, they did so in a manner that failed to honor Donnie's approach to stopping prison rape.

They first changed their name from Stop Prison Rape to Just Detention International (JDI). They got lots of grant money, paid themselves salaries, and worked out of a nice office (kind of like *Prison Legal News* is today, very bourgeoisified).

Worse, they ignored Donnie's approach to the problem of prisoner-on-prisoner rape. Instead of working from the ground up with education and persuasion aimed at prisoners, their focus was on solving the problem through repression, from the top down. Working with law makers, they got state and federal laws passed against, and increased penalties for, those convicted of prison rape. Donnie would not be pleased

with what JDI is doing in his name. He never stood for increased repression.

I don't want some liberals carrying on the newsletter's name but without the communist content—by making it toothless—or as a mere vehicle for lobbying

state officials to do the right thing. Constructive change will only come to prisoners through their unity, as expressed in peaceful collective action (such as withholding their labor). This is also the only way in which prisoners can enforce any gains or promises made by the state.

Woe be to anyone who uses my life's work to push for anything other than the class oriented empowerment of prisoners and revolutionary change.

If prisoners want more widespread support from progressive elements they will need to take public stands on issues like war and peace. As they say, if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.

If you think this struggle is *only* about prisoners you have your head up your ass. There is a reason you don't get a decent education or training while in prison, or, for that matter, even in the schools. There's a reason why you can't find decent work once you are released from prison.

Those who initially conceptualized the first hunger strike probably had low expectations. I too had my doubts.

Because of these low expectations the five core demands were kept very moderate. I can't speak for the reps, but as for myself, I was surprised at the amount of support for the strike, both inside and out. The last of the three strikes kicked off with 30,000 prisoner participants.

What has been "won" so far? Well, there is the step down fiasco, which can be viewed as nothing other than a resounding defeat. In fact, the end result of all that struggle and sacrifice will be a more widespread implementation of behavior modification programs in California's prison system, and of course the expansion of what constitutes a STG to include just about anyone—no longer restricted to just gangs.

Your captors aim to make you the cause of the problem, not them, and thus alienating you even further from yourselves—insuring a continuation of the ongoing cycle of doing life on the installment plan. These two draconian measures (SDP and STG) were the principle "concessions" CDCR gave to their slaves. Oh, yeah, let's not forget sweat pants and what not.

With the possible exception of the 1971 Attica uprising, where rioting prisoners demanded transportation to a non-imperialist nation, the demands of struggling prisoners have traditionally addressed only their immediate needs (better food, etc.). That limitation has

### **The Prison Art Website is Gone**

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

**Ed Mead**

been in place since the invention of the penitentiary. Unfortunately, as you can see, not much has really changed since then. Maybe it's time to try something new?

Those convicts who, at their innermost core, have a love for peace and justice are going to need to take a stand on more than just prison issues. Society itself must undergo a radical transformation before the issues of crime and punishment can be successfully resolved. You must be a part of this long-term change, and in the process you'll be transformed into a better version of yourself.

You, the essence that is you, is made of countless individual cells all cooperating together to make up the whole. What if some of those cells developed a capitalist way of looking at things, and rather than cooperating with each other started looking out for only themselves, taking nutrients meant for others so they could grow faster and stronger. Well, some cells really do that—they are called cancer. That's what capitalism is, a cancer on the body of society.

Now those who have left the SHU to enter one of the state's behavior modification programs might see the three hunger strikes as a success—it got them out of the SHU and into SDP. Many will see narrow self-interest, rather than mutual cooperation, as their guiding light. These are the illegitimate capitalists, the wanna bees. Their reward will be even more alienation from themselves, more anger and hatred, as the state's brain washing program works to convince them that they are the problem, not the state nor it's capitalist masters.

Of course it's all adjustment oriented crap. The state's message is "adjust to the sickness of imprisonment and the existing social order. If you don't there is something wrong with you." Yet if you adjust to this sickness, what does that make you?

What you should be doing is what the cells in your body are doing, peacefully cooperating with each other for the benefit of the whole. That's how civil society should be organized as well, not by a few rich assholes who send us off to fight and die in their endless wars of aggression.

There is such a thing as right and wrong. What the state is doing to you is wrong. Rather than adjust to that wrong, act on the side of right and you become a better person—you'll be making the world a better place to live for yourself and for those you love. ●

*Ed Mead*

## SWAT TEAM BLEW A HOLE IN MY 2-YEAR-OLD

After our house burned down in Wisconsin a few months ago, my husband and I packed our four young kids and all our belongings into a gold minivan and drove to my sister-in-law's place, just outside of Atlanta. On the back windshield, we pasted six stick figures: a dad, a mom, three young girls, and one baby boy.

That minivan was sitting in the front driveway of my sister-in-law's place the night a SWAT team broke in, looking for a small amount of drugs they thought my husband's nephew had. Some of my kids' toys were in the front yard, but the officers claimed they had no way of knowing children might be present. Our whole family was sleeping in the same room, one bed for us, one for the girls, and a crib.

After the SWAT team broke down the door, they threw a flashbang grenade inside. It landed in my son's crib.

Flashbang grenades were created for soldiers to use during battle. When they explode, the noise is so loud and the flash is so bright that anyone close by is temporarily blinded and deafened. It's been three weeks since the flashbang exploded next to my sleeping baby, and he's still covered in burns.

There's still a hole in his chest that exposes his ribs. At least that's what I've been told; I'm afraid to look.

My husband's nephew, the one they were looking for, wasn't there. He doesn't even live in that house. After breaking down the door, throwing my husband to the ground, and screaming at my children, the officers—armed with M16s—filed through the house like they were playing war. They searched for drugs and never found any.

I heard my baby wailing and asked one of the officers to let me hold him. He screamed at me to sit down and shut up and blocked my view, so I couldn't see my son. I could see a singed crib. And I could see a pool of blood. The officers yelled at me to calm down and told me my son was fine, that he'd just lost a tooth. It was only hours later when they finally let us drive to the hospital that we found out Bou Bou was in the intensive burn unit and that he'd been placed into a medically induced coma.

For the last three weeks, my husband and I have been sleeping at the hospital. We tell our son that we love him and we'll never

leave him behind. His car seat is still in the minivan, right where it's always been, and we whisper to him that soon we'll be taking him home with us.

Every morning, I have to face the reality that my son is fighting for his life. It's not clear whether he'll live or die. All of this to find a small amount of drugs?

The only silver lining I can possibly see is that my baby Bou Bou's story might make us angry enough that we stop accepting brutal SWAT raids as a normal way to fight the "war on drugs." I know that this has happened to other families, here in Georgia and across the country. I know that SWAT teams are breaking into homes in the middle of the night, more often than not just to serve search warrants in drug cases. I know that too many local cops have stockpiled weapons that were made for soldiers to take to war. And as is usually the case with aggressive policing, I know that people of color and poor people are more likely to be targeted. I know these things because of the American Civil Liberties Union's new report, and because I'm working with them to push for restraints on the use of SWAT.

A few nights ago, my 8-year-old woke up in the middle of the night screaming, "No, don't kill him! You're hurting my brother! Don't kill him." How can I ever make that go away? I used to tell my kids that if they were ever in trouble, they should go to the police for help. Now my kids don't want to go to sleep at night because they're afraid the cops will kill them or their family. It's time to remind the cops that they should be serving and protecting our neighborhoods, not waging war on the people in them.

I pray every minute that I'll get to hear my son's laugh again, that I'll get to watch him eat French fries or hear him sing his favorite song from "Frozen." I'd give anything to watch him chase after his sisters again. I want justice for my baby, and that means making sure no other family ever has to feel this horrible pain.

Update: As of the afternoon of 6/24/2014, Baby Bou Bou has been taken out of the medically induced coma and transferred to a new hospital to begin rehabilitation. The hole in his chest has yet to heal, and doctors are still not able to fully assess lasting brain damage. ●

*Alecia Phonesavanh is the mother of "Baby Bou Bou." She and her family live in Atlanta. For more information about Bou Bou, go to [www.justiceforbabyboubou.com](http://www.justiceforbabyboubou.com).*

# LETTERS

# LETTERS

## Tehachapi SHU Does Not Get A Five Star Rating

I'm writing you to inform you of my change of address. After 24 years at PB-SP-DHU I was recently transferred to Tehachapi SHU for placement into the newly created step 3 of the step-down program. And I am here to tell everyone that this SHU/program is the worst in the state! There aren't any cleaning supplies for the cell, no weekly change of clean clothes or linen, a constant struggle to get any state issued supplies, such as pen filler & general forms. Very terrible reception on the only six (6) channels here and that's when the TV signal comes in at all. And the radio stations are just as bad. Visits are allowed only one (1) hour per week behind glass. These are just a few examples of what a real shitty hole this place is compared to PBSP-SHU or Corcoran SHU, or New Folsom SHU and what those coming here have to look forward to! .....

*Danny Troxell, Tehachapi*

## Oregon Prisoner Is In On California Prisoner P.A.C. Idea

You mention the coalition of California Prisoners having disparate political beliefs and because of this you refrain from writing about your own ideologies which from what I know are blazing red. You don't do it in an effort to appeal to a wide spectrum of prisoners.

Well, I guess that makes sense but can I say that as someone who's come from a long history in the white racist movement both inside and outside prisons and we know that nationalism (racism) and communism are fundamentally clashing ideologies. I would still welcome a certain exploration of Marxist/Leninist/Maoist concepts.

I do appreciate your position to facilitate inclusiveness. Please correct me if I am wrong though. But it is my understanding that the whole purpose of prison activism on all of our parts is to create revolutionary changes within the prison system. I know that I for one am aiming for ultimate abolishment of the entire system. That's not to say I believe it'll necessarily happen but the goals and focus are there and the objective is to destroy every element of the system we can. If nothing else, it's to create more mobility for prisoners to have politi-

cal influence in society general and to become a functional part of that society. Even if one is not seeking ultimate revolution (which I am) one who is involved in the prison movement is seeking revolutionary change. Correct? To be honest, on a personal level, I really don't even give a shit about the more subjective horrors of confinement. Personally, I only see the prison system as a tool of force to be used as conflict in the war between classes.

Well...the complexities of what I just described are Marxist concepts, are they not? I mean I guess I understand people's aversion of communism and socialism. But we can think of it like this. If one is involved in the prison movement, then one is involved in a political struggle, correct?

And in a political struggle one can't get very far by applying theistic fucking principles. So much for religionoids. Neither can one apply divisive nationalistic principles. So, anyone who is more concerned with racial separation while under the same oppressive thumb as the Black gentleman in the next cell, well maybe we should just build giant prison for our whole race...that way no one can infiltrate us, make sense?

The reality is that I, a white dude, am stuck in the same social class as my Pisa neighbors, the Black dude across from me and the rapos for that matter. So as far as I'm concerned all the elitist, divisive, clique bullshit is our own self-maintained roadblock.

Back to revolutionary motion and communism and socialism, etc. Well again, correct me if I am wrong. But from what I understand, Marxism is essentially the foundation of revolutionary political science. If Hitler, for example, had never studied Marx, he would have never been able to apply socialist politics to his nation. Communism in itself is the objective study of social dynamics and progressive strategic revolutionary development. Am I wrong? And isn't that what we need to have a grasp of in order to wage an effective revolutionary campaign? I mean, I'm just sayin...

As for the P.A.C. thing, I've been following the dialogue in your pages and the question is why those guys aren't committing to its creation. I can't speak for California but I can say that once we can develop a functioning political force here in Oregon, whatever shape it may take, I for one will be working on a P.A.C. for us here. Perhaps it falls on deaf ears down there because the concept of a P.A.C. is hard to visualize.

People are more open to strikes and shit like that I think because we can see its developments and effects as it is happening. We're already stripped of any control we have in our lives, so it may seem that outsourcing our means of resistance is giving up even more control to others. Besides, where do we start with a P.A.C.? Don't we need lawyers and shit?

Still, the question remains--- why aren't you guys in California committing to a P.A.C.?

*Zero, Oregon State Penitentiary*

## All Being Said, Step-Down Program is Individual Choice

I wanted to make all aware that us inmates here in PBSP D-8-F Pod filed a writ of habeas corpus challenging the ridiculous delay in reviewing our case-by-case reviews by DRB and the arbitrary decision to allow ICC to conduct ASU inmates CBC's but not SHU. The Court ordered CDCR to file a response to all our grounds and specifically state when each petitioner will be reviewed and CDCR will complete all CBC reviews. Currently Due June 26, 2014. We're trying to get a lawyer and certify as a class action.

I want to propose to change The ROCK's publishing policy and put forth a new policy holding if you don't have the courage to put your own name to your words then your letter should not be published. Period!

I also don't agree with the extremely negative view put on the last month's letter who stated they participated in the SDP. From my understanding it's a personal choice for each inmate to make. Many up here including short corridor inmates have put up for transfer to CCI for step 3 and 4. I look at like lifers padding their C-files with N/R, A/A, certificates to get paroled. I don't look down on them for doing it. It may be childish and stupid, the material presented in the SDP but it doesn't as far as I have seen make anyone incriminate themselves. We being on the mainline, not the SHU or single cell status

Lastly, I would like to let those involved in the *Asker v Brown*, suit know they might want to consider due process claims for the *certifying\_a* Group A STG. Most know we're entitled to notice, opportunity to be heard, 'some evidence' to support finding and periodic reviews of whether or not we are an associate or member of a Group.

But we're also due these same due process protections for certifying re: Group as a prison Gang/STG. I have found some case law on this. *Walker v. Ryan*, (U.S. Dist.Ct. Arizona)2012 US, Dist. Lexis 137891 Sept 26, 2012 citing *Zinerman v. Burch*, 494 US 113, 125, 110 S.Ct. 975(1990)

On a political front, with the collapse of both Amminos and Hancocks bills to nothing of significance and *Asker v. Brown* not set for trial till December, 2015, our only and I feel our own best chance to leverage our position is to take advantage of the fact CDCR cannot provide anywhere close to enough cells to house all ASU/SHU inmates in their own cell. This act is not only crippling to CDCR, it is easily sustainable for as long as necessary till we reach our goals.

I close as I came united in the struggle to achieve our aims and goals. We will only do it together as one on every front available.

*Thomas "Klumzy" Goolsby*

---

## FROM THE INSIDE OUT

### "Overcoming Misdirection and Revealing What's Hidden."

#### "Some Proposed Solutions"

I have been incarcerated inside the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) System now for 20 years, from the summer of 1994 to this summer of 2014. One issue is constantly seen and overheard which seems to remain constant. That is the division within "us" and the unity of those against us. Here in the State of Washington, we cannot seem to agree on anything which would unite us and instead we find ourselves being self-serving and stubborn to no end.

This makes it easy to give up. So, with that in mind, I wanted to share with those of you in this state and those outside of Washington State, what ideas and solutions I have which I hope will bring some common agreements and unity.

The purpose being (of course) is to attempt to overcome the systems misdirection and to reveal those issues which are hidden from us that can assist us in solving these ongoing problems.

The evidence I have seen and overheard over the past 20 years shows me that the

Washington State Penal system is designed, like other states, to "break you". What is done is the day to day actions of prison authorities (hereinafter referred to as snouts) to dehumanize you, and make you feel like a failure on every level.

However, what is not told to you is ever more important and meaningful. That is that we all have this tiny candle flame of courage and hope still residing inside us which cannot be seen but felt only and it drives us to never give up. So, why do we give up?

It's called misdirection. Just like a magician, the snouts like you to think and act a certain way all along they succeed at dividing us, thereby defeating us.

How do we defeat this misdirection by the snouts? I'm glad you asked. Fight fire with fire? Simple concept but it works.

That tiny candle flame of courage and hope can ignite real change.

First "Education" is the key! That's fire in action! Every day we sit with our buddies and play games of chance. What are the odds of success? Not very good. How many times have you lost? But if you get together and educated each other on common problems and common solutions, the direction you will go will define your future. You will not be wasting your time. The odds of winning are greater if you are together, than if you are against one another. True talk.

"Zero", an Oregon prisoner, was right, "The problems are only symptoms of the overall structure." I agree. We cannot afford to be self-serving! We cannot afford to not unite! We must unite! There is no other way to make change happen!

What could the snouts do to us if we were so educated that we could overcome their lies and half-truths and teach each other how to survive through this?

The snouts could not overcome this even if they tried to separate us because we became united in spirit as well as in physical body. If you're real about this then nothing they do will change you!

In the January 2014 edition of the *Prison Legal News* (Vol. 25, No. 1) it gave an example (in the cover story) about the lives of men in a prison overseas. Prisons in this country should be the same way. If so, I believe there would be allot less crime or laws being violated.

Also, make your education fun and also exciting for those who participate. For example here in segregation (on the tier) I have a contest in my law school 101

course. Those who study and get the questions correct win a prize and reward. This gives those involved the idea that education is exciting and a challenge which can be rewarding. This changes the misdirection that learning is boring and dull. This is how we overcome.

One day at a time. One question at a time. One answer at a time. One solution we didn't know before.

Here in Washington State I've seen the snouts take smoking away, porn away and also at least 35% of any funds that come into our accounts. There was little to no opposition by us and it's getting worse day by day.

We are still holding on by a thread of hope though due in part to those outside organizations who are keeping our struggle in the light.

I do think we are coming full circle to another modern day Attica uprising here in Washington State. It's going to get worse before it gets better. However, your candle is still burning strong and cannot be put out by the snouts. Only you can chose to put it out.

Let me be an example to you and others. I will not give up! I will not bow! I will not kneel! I will not live a slave! I'd rather die on my feet than live on my knees!!!! True talk. We can change this corrupt system. But we must first change our outlook on our situation.

Deprogramming and then reprogramming yourself. That's the key to making the candle flame burn brighter. Step outside of yourself, see your neighbor for the first time as you (human) and help him/her and in turn you will find an ally to help you succeed.

My mission is the same as yours. Change the prison system and the social order that feeds it day by day. What is your mission today? It should be to help ignite another candle flame and help it to burn brighter to get rid of the darkness and expose the truth to the light... •

*Jason Lee Sutton #730954*

*Washington State Penitentiary*



# LARGEST HUNGER STRIKE IN HISTORY:

## California prisoners speak out on first anniversary

One year ago, on July 8, 2013, 30,000 California prisoners initiated the largest hunger strike the world has ever seen. Sixty days later, 40 prisoners, who had eaten nothing in all that time, agreed to suspend the strike when state legislators promised to hold hearings on ending solitary confinement, the heart of their demands.

The 2013 hunger strike followed two in 2011 in which participation peaked at 6,600 and 12,000. In the interim, effective October 2012, the hunger strike leaders, representing all racial groups, issued the historic Agreement to End Hostilities, which has held with few exceptions throughout the California prison system ever since.

These statements, most by hunger strike participants, arrived in time for the July 8 anniversary, and more will be added as they arrive.

### We the people

*By Mutope Duguma (James Crawford)*

What we learned this far in our protracted struggle is that We the People are the vanguard. We the People have to demand what we want for ourselves. No government, no power, no authority and no one should be able to trample over the People without the People rising up and saying, "Under no circumstances do We the People accept this in our home."

- We the People reject torture of human beings,
- We the People reject mass incarceration of our sons and daughters,
- We the People reject police brutality,
- We the People reject poverty,
- We the People reject solitary confinement,
- We the People reject Security Threat Groups and Step Down Programs,
- We the People reject oppressive prison conditions
- In solidarity.

### We the People reject violence

Our unity is our strength. If we learn to cultivate our unity, we can begin to reshape this world – back into a world that reflects our humanity – because there is too much pain and suffering in the world today that only our unity will end. We've got to be unapologetic and always be dedicated and serious about the revolutionary change we

seek.

Violence only perpetuates more violence inside of the vortex of violence, the senseless taking of lives, like a timeless hour clock that never ends, feeding on the very lives of our families and friends.

An end to all hostilities means peace amongst the oppressed, where our children can focus on school and living their lives peacefully, while they develop into strong young men and women.

An end to all hostilities means peace for the elderly and worrisome minds, where they can take peaceful walks during any time of day or night, sit out on their porches and watch the moon and stars in the sky.

An end to all hostilities means peace where young men and women can go into any neighborhood to socialize with fellow human beings without fear of being attacked or murdered.

An end to all hostilities means peace where all races in the free society can coexist without worrying that their race or class will be a hazard to them.

During our strikes to end all hostilities – July 1 to July 20, 2011; Sept. 26 to Oct. 14, 2011; and July 8 to Sept. 4, 2013 – we men and women got together and said enough already!

An end to all hostilities is solidarity.

*Mutope Duguma, s/n James Crawford,  
D-05996, PBSP SHU, P.O. Box 7500,  
Crescent City, CA 95532.*

### Weighing sacrifices against successes, the price was too high, but the struggle moves forward

*By Antonio Guillen*

Greetings to one and all,

It has been three years since the commencement of the first hunger strike.

As I look back over that time to weigh our sacrifices against our successes, I have to admit that the accomplishments we've achieved thus far do allow me to be somewhat optimistic about the future. I cannot help, however, but remain angered at the cost of human life and damaged health we suffered simply to enact change – the price was way too high!

And, although our accomplishments appear promising, in no way am I suggesting that we've succeeded in our overall struggle, which is to end long term solitary confinement and to better the living conditions

of all SHU facilities – we are on our path, though!

As always, it's of the utmost importance to acknowledge family and friends on the outside, who through your unwavering support have made it possible for us to be who we are today. Each of you, through your contributions and sacrifices, be they personal or collective, have helped pave the way for this struggle to move forward. And we on the inside will forever be grateful!

Power to the people.

Strength and respect,

Antonio Guillen

*Antonio Guillen, P-81948, PBSP SHU,  
P.O. Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95532.*

### Work together to keep the pressure on

*By Phil Fortman*

July 8th is a date that made history around the world last year – 30,000 prisoners began a hunger strike in the state of California due to the inhumane conditions of solitary confinement.

The strike did not come about as a spur of the moment idea. No, these inhumane conditions have been worsening year after year, decade after decade until the outside and inside finally joined together in a movement for change.

The change started on July 1, 2011, and Sept. 26 of the same year, which set the course for the Big One – the one that got the attention of the world to show how prisoners are being treated, not only in California, but in most states of this country.

Speaking as one of the four main representatives for the prisoners in the Pelican Bay SHU, I applaud us all, prisoners and advocates alike, those who participated in the hunger strike and worked so hard for our case.

Looking back on this year, I see progress being made toward closing these holes – not as fast as we'd like, but the crack has been formed. The light is now beginning to seep in upon these dark, dreary walls for once.

In order to widen the crack until these walls come crashing down, we need to work together to keep the pressure on and on. We, as prisoners inside these places, have been advocating an end to hostilities among us. This attitude, along with the



continued help and support of you good folks out there, will hopefully bring about a more civilized society and for us to live in peace and harmony.

I thank us all.

*Phil Fortman, B-03557, PBSP SHU, P.O. Box 7500, Crescent City, CA 95532.*

## Women prisoners speak out on solitary and hunger strike anniversary

Solitary is torture. It humiliated me. They strip you of everything – I was only given a mumu and half a mattress. You are locked away with no answer. I was cold, tired and hungry. The other ladies in Ad Seg helped me out and also the ones on Death Row, which is right nearby, gave me stuff to survive.

The hunger strike last year was amazing. The guys went through hell, but it was so good for them to come together!

*Alicia Zaragoza, X-07564, CCWF, P.O. Box 1508, Chowchilla, CA 93610.*

Solitary confinement in all ways is cruel. If it is a form of abuse to keep a child locked away in a closet for long periods of time, then why is it not abuse to keep that same child, who is now a man, locked in a cell for years? Put yourself in their shoes! I supported the hunger strike.

*Natalie De Mola, X-12907, CCWF, P.O. Box 1508, Chowchilla, CA 93610. •*

<http://sfbayview.com/2014/07/largest-hunger-strike-in-history-california-prisoners-speak-out-on-first-anniversary/>

## FEDERAL COURT DENIES MOTION TO DISMISS

### Grants Motion to Amend Complaint in Coalition's Censorship Lawsuit

A challenge to prison censorship of political and human rights literature in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) has seen two favorable developments in the past month.

On Thursday, May 15, United States Federal District court ruled that a lawsuit challenging censorship of political literature in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections will go forward. The court denied the defense's request to dismiss some of the censorship claims and all of the su-

pervisory officials named as defendants.

On June 13, the court granted plaintiffs' motion to amend and supplement the original complaint, adding new claims for relief and one new defendant: DOC Secretary John Wetzel. The new complaint adds due process challenges claiming that prison officials failed to provide non-prisoners with notice and an opportunity to challenge when prison staff censor their mail. Additional claims challenge the criteria used by the DOC to justify censorship as being impermissibly vague, permitting prison staff to impose arbitrary standards when making censorship decisions.

Plaintiffs are seeking monetary and injunctive relief.

The lawsuit, *Holbrook et al. v. Jellen et al.*, was filed in January on behalf of the Human Rights Coalition (HRC), prisoner Robert Saleem Holbrook, and College of Charleston Professor Kristi Brian against several employees of the State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Coal Township and the DOC for confiscation of mail sent to Holbrook, a co-founder of HRC who is currently held at SCI Coal Township.

The suit details a series of confiscations of Holbrook's mail since January 2012 that includes academic correspondence with a college professor, scholarly essays from the anthology *If They Come in the Morning*, a Black history book, and a newsletter published by HRC, *The Movement*, which focuses on prison abuse, solitary confinement, and ways that prisoners' family members can come together to challenge human rights abuses and injustice in the criminal legal system.

Plaintiffs are represented in the case by the Abolitionist Law Center, and David Shapiro, Clinical Assistant Professor of Law at the Roderick MacArthur Justice Center at Northwestern University School of Law. •

## UPDATE ON DINING HALL PROTEST AT SCI COAL TOWNSHIP

Approximately 500 prisoners at SCI Coal Township refused to go to the dining hall for seven con-

secutive days between Monday, June 16 and Sunday, June 22 in protest of cutbacks to food portions at the prison. In a remarkable display of discipline, unity, sacrifice, and solidarity, the men maintained the boycott for a full week, sharing food items they had in their cells with one another.

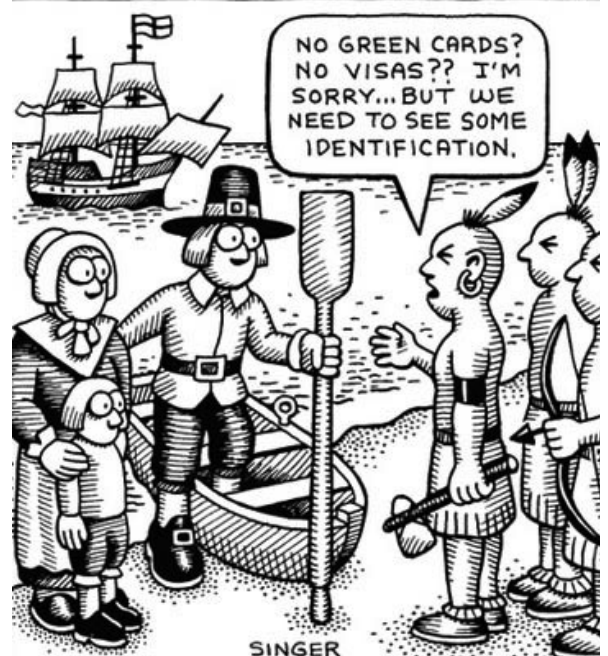
Support from family members and human rights defenders on the outside was loud and widespread as well. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and SCI Coal Township received so many calls on the first day of the protest that they were compelled to post a message on their website claiming that prisoners were being fed according to undefined "standards." The pressure kept on throughout the week, forcing prison officials to spend hours on the phone listening to outraged family members and others take them to task for making people go hungry in order to save money.

A more detailed update will be available soon, including next steps to support prisoners at SCI Coal Township who are seeking changes at the institution and throughout the PADO.

This protest was the largest collective action by prisoners in the PADO in recent memory and has the potential to inspire and elevate human rights and abolitionist organizing to a new level of commitment, power, and possibility. •

*In solidarity,  
Human Rights Coalition*

### THE FIRST ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS



## 4STRUGGLEMAG.ORG

views, thoughts & analysis from the hearts & minds  
of north american political prisoners & friends



4strugglemag  
P.O. Box 97048  
RPO Roncesvalles  
Toronto ON  
M6R 3B3 Canada

Help sustain our free prisoner subscriptions  
**SUBSCRIBE or DONATE & read online**

### 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.

### Subscription Form

Subscribe to the monthly  
*Rock* newsletter for \$15 or 30  
forever stamps per year.

First: \_\_\_\_\_

Last: \_\_\_\_\_

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Prison: \_\_\_\_\_

Housing: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Send to:  
**Ed Mead, Publisher**  
**Rock Newsletter**  
**P.O. Box 47439**  
**Seattle, WA 98146-7439**

"...jailhouse lawyers often unwittingly serve the interests of the state by propagating the illusion of 'justice' and 'equity' in a system devoted to neither." They create "illusions of legal options as pathways to both individual and collective liberation."

*Mumia Abu-Jamal,*  
*JAILHOUSE LAWYERS: Prisoners*  
*Defending Prisoners v. The U.S.A.*

### Free Electronic Copy

Outside folks can also have a free electronic copy of the newsletter sent to them each month by way of e-mail. Have them send requests for a digital copy of the newsletter to [ed@rocknewsletter.com](mailto:ed@rocknewsletter.com).

Back issues can be read once the Prison Art website is up and running again.

**Ed Mead, Publisher**  
**Rock Newsletter**  
**P.O. Box 47439**  
**Seattle, WA 98146**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

**COMMUNICATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT**