

!ROCK!

★ Working to Extend Democracy to All ★

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TIME TO SPEAK UP: WOMEN'S PRISON RESISTANCE IN ALABAMA

By Victoria Law

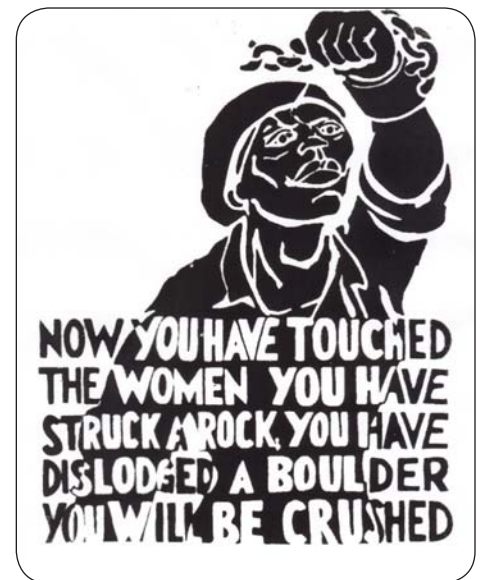
Both incarcerated women and the U.S. Department of Justice agree: The Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, Ala., is a hellish place. In a 36-page letter that the DOJ issued to the Alabama State Governor Robert Bentley in January, the agency declared, “The State of Alabama violates the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution by failing to protect women prisoners at Tutwiler from harm due to sexual abuse and harassment from correctional staff.”

Federal investigators found that, for nearly two decades, staff members at Tutwiler have sexually assaulted women and compelled them into sex to obtain necessities, such as feminine hygiene products and laundry service. Women who report sexual

abuse are placed in solitary confinement, where they are given lie detector tests and are frequently threatened by other staff.

But while the DOJ’s letter—and conditions in Tutwiler—made headlines, less attention has been paid to the activism and organizing by women inside Alabama’s prisons. During the department’s investigation, for example, it received 233 letters from women currently incarcerated at Tutwiler detailing a host of concerns about the sexual abuse they’ve either personally experienced or witnessed. This figure does not include the letters that women have been sending to the Department of Justice and other government entities for years before the investigation was launched. When incarcerated, sending testimony letters is a potentially dangerous action. Women risked prison staff opening their letters and reading their complaints—and retaliating against them. Two hundred thirty-three women decided to take that risk.

These actions of testifying are far from the first time women behind bars in Alabama have organized to effect change. Tutwiler was built in 1942 to hold 365 women. By 2002, Tutwiler housed more than 1,000 women. “Every dormitory was filled front to back with bunk beds,” described one woman for an essay in the anthology *Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*. “The weather gets extremely hot in the summers—the heat index regularly rises over 100 degrees in the facility — and cold in the winters. ... All the windows have been braced so that they open only a few inches at the top. Per-



sonal space is nonexistent, and security is very poor.” In recent letters, she asked that her name not be used for fear of retaliation for speaking out about prison conditions.

In 2002, women filed a lawsuit against both the state and the Alabama Department of Corrections about the overcrowding, extreme temperatures and poor medical care. They also attempted to contact the Department of Justice and other outside organizations about the rampant sexual abuse, but their complaints received little attention. In response to the lawsuit, in December 2002, a federal district court judge declared Tutwiler constitutionally unsafe and gave state officials 30 days to develop a plan to remedy conditions.

But Alabama’s solution did not involve sentencing reform or the implementation of alternatives to incarceration. Instead, it

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contracted with the private prison corporation Louisiana Correctional Services to re-locate some of the women to a private prison in Basile, a small town in southwest Louisiana more than seven hours away.

In April 2003, Alabama sent 140 women to Basile. In June 2003, they sent another 100 women. Women were pulled out of educational and treatment programs and transferred to a prison far from family and with far fewer programs.

“Ironically, we were told that the Alabama Department of Corrections chose prisoners for transfer based on our good conduct at Tutwiler,” wrote the essay author. In a separate letter, she recalled that Basile offered only three programs — a GED course, a substance abuse program and an anger stress management program.

The move sparked even more organizing. Once in Basile, women who were serving long sentences formed the Longertermers/Insiders group.

“The group wanted to have a voice in the decision making,” wrote the essay author. “We feared that once in Louisiana, we would be ‘out of sight, out of mind.’ ... We felt it was time to speak up, make a stand, and be heard.”

They worked together to help each other develop the skills to produce a political platform about the overuse of women’s incarceration, write articles for the local newspapers, write letters to legislative representatives, discuss legislation and talk with people outside prison about lobbying on their behalves.

“We ... are continually striving to give input to a system that has not allowed us to be heard,” she stated.

Their efforts to have outside people advocate on their behalves resulted in the legislature establishing the Commission on Girls and Women in the Criminal Justice System in 2006. The commission did a two-year study and — finding that women’s needs and pathways to prison remained un-addressed in the current penal system — issued a series of recommendations that included expanding the use of community-based alternatives to incarceration and the closing and tearing down of Tutwiler.

In 2006, the women were transferred to another private prison run by Louisiana Correctional Services, this time in Newellton, La. In 2007, they were returned to Alabama. Most were returned to Tutwiler, which re-mains overcrowded and rife with staff sexual abuse.

In the meantime, women’s prison or-

ganizing continued — this time aimed at changing long-standing prison segregation policies that discriminated against women with HIV or AIDS. During the 1980s, many prison systems segregated people with HIV or AIDS from the rest of the prison population. While most states stopped the practice years ago, a handful, including Alabama, have continued. At Tutwiler, women with HIV or AIDS were confined to a separate dorm. They were only allowed to work cleaning jobs inside their dorm or in the dorm’s yard. They had to eat in their living space instead of being allowed into the dining hall with the general population. They were denied placement in other dorms and prohibited from participating in programs. Lastly, they were required to broadcast their status by wearing white arm-bands.

According to an investigation by The Atlantic, when Beverly Jacobs first arrived at Tutwiler, she applied to the religious dorm, but officials denied her a space because of her HIV status. She also applied to a support dorm for people recovering from substance abuse. Prison officials refused her application, again because of her status. They also refused her for a work-release program. In addition to being denied participation in programs, she faced other forms of discrimination even while held in a separate dorm. Her clothing was placed in a bin marked AIDS, washed separately and often returned dirty.

“I still have nightmares about that prison,” she told The Atlantic.

Jacobs’s experience was the norm. Dana

Harley, a mother of two who was serving a 20-year sentence, recalls being confined to the dorm 24 hours a day.

“I felt caged,” she said in video testimony recorded by the ACLU. “I wanted to do things, I wanted to be a part of things, but I couldn’t.”

When her family visited, they were not allowed to use the main visiting room. When Harley’s four-year-old son visited, he asked why the other children were allowed to play in the larger visiting room while he and his mother were forced to remain in the smaller room.

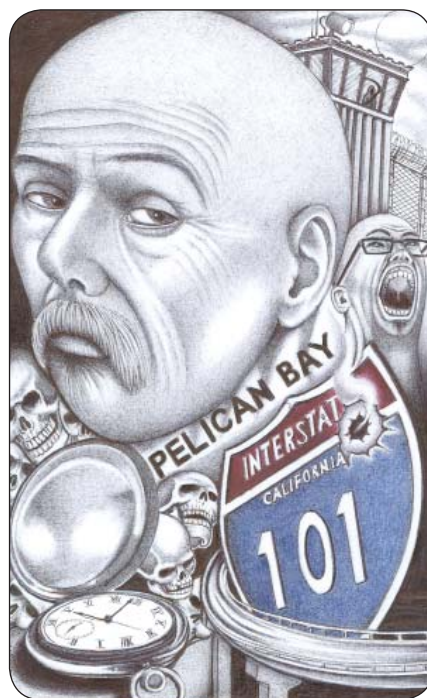
“There’s just no way for me to explain to a four year old,” Harley reflected. At the prison’s clinic, nurses made comments like, “You’re going to die anyway,” in response to Harley’s questions.

In 2007, Harley wrote a letter to the ACLU describing her experiences. The ACLU had already spent two decades making several unsuccessful attempts — through both litigation and negotiations— to end this policy. The ACLU arranged for Harley to testify at a closed hearing about the segregation policy. It also filed another suit and, in 2012, a judge ruled that the policy violated the Americans with Disabilities Act. That ruling had a ripple effect, forcing Alabama and South Carolina, the other hold-out state, to end their HIV/AIDS segregation policy. The change meant that people with HIV would be allowed to participate in programs such as work release for the first time since the segregation policy began in the early 1980s. Now, Harley is able to attend religious services, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and other programs, all of which had been previously closed to her.

“It wasn’t for me,” she stated later in an interview with USA Today. “It’s for the people behind me coming in who aren’t as comfortable [with their status].” Now, if women with HIV or AIDS enter the prison, none of the other women know their status.

While these changes are welcome to those currently behind bars, the drastically increasing numbers of women sent to, and remaining inside, prisons should also push us to challenge the policies that are locking up so many. In 1978, Alabama held 257 women behind bars. This included women in local jails as well as in state and federal prisons.

Since then, the state has seen a 930.7 percent increase in its women’s prison population. By the end of 2012, there were 2,649 women in Alabama prisons. As of April



Labeled, by Michael Russell

2014, Alabama has 2,686 women under some form of prison custody — a figure that does not include the unknown numbers of trans-women held in men’s jails or prisons. Just over half the state’s prisoners have been sentenced for drug or property crimes. Of the 15,212 people in Alabama convicted of violent felonies, only five percent are women.

Regardless of whether they are incarcerated for violent or nonviolent offenses, the conditions women face once inside are horrific. In addition to pervasive, unchecked sexual abuse, women have reported inadequate medical care, excessive use of force, threats of force, and inadequate access to clean clothes, uniforms and hygiene products.

For those of us on the outside, given what we know about conditions in prison, it’s important to support incarcerated women’s efforts to change conditions. At the same time, we need to understand that more humane conditions should not be the ending point. We need to also challenge laws and policies that lock a drastically increasing number of women away from their families and communities in the first place. ●

<http://prisonbooks.info/2014/07/16/time-to-speak-up-womens-prison-resistance-in-alabama/>

PALESTINIAN PRISONERS SUBJECT TO ONGOING RAIDS, WORSENING CONDITIONS

By Samidoun

The Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies reported that the conditions of Palestinian prisoners in occupation prisons have worsened significantly following the imposition of further sanctions upon the prisoners by the occupation forces, imposed during the mass arrest campaign following the disappearance of three settlers in June and maintained throughout the Israeli assault on Gaza that killed over 1850 Palestinians.

The occupation prison administration has cut recreation time in half, reduced the maximum amount each prisoner can have in his or her “canteen” fund (provided by family or Palestinian sources) from 1,200

shekels maximum to only 400 shekels, reduced family visits to one half-hour each month, removed 7 satellite channels of 10 from prison television (and 2 of the 3 remaining channels are Zionist channels).

Raafat Hamdouna reported that the prisoners reject these sanctions, which are designed to prevent them from learning the truth about the war on Gaza, the Israeli crimes and the Palestinian resistance, and are planning to protest these sanctions as part of the war against prisoners and in particular those from Gaza, who are suffering an additional heavy burden behind bars while their families face bombing and destruction.

Meanwhile the Palestinian Prisoners Society reported ongoing attacks by prison administration on prisoners in various prisons. In Gilboa prison, the prison administration claimed to discover a tunnel in one of the prison sections and transferred the prisoners affiliated with Islamic Jihad to Hasharon and Hadarim prisons, and isolated Muhammad Zayoud and Muhammad Sawalha. They raided each of the sections of the prison throughout the night, and invaded section 5 - which houses prisoners from Jerusalem and occupied Palestine ‘48 - for 5 hours. On Sunday, special units invaded section 1 for 6 hours, and section 2 has been closed since Sunday.

Similar to the pretext used in Gaza to attack civilians massively, the Israeli prison administration has used claims of “searching for tunnels” to engage in abusive raids and “inspections” in Ashkelon prison, damaging prisoners’ belongings and vandalizing and ransacking the rooms. ●

<http://samidoun.ca/2014/08/palestinian-prisoners-subject-to-ongoing-raids-worsening-conditions>



THE A-B-C- APPROACH TO RE-ORGANIZING THE PRISON MOVEMENT

[The following article is the third place winner (\$50) of the Rock's writing contest. The second place winner's piece will appear in next month's issue.]

By Kijana Tashiri Askari

Foremost, I would like to make it absolutely clear that this analysis is not being made for purposes of personally attacking individual or organization as that would be a form of liberalism which is a corrosive that undermine our collective unity. But nonetheless, there is a real need for us to reflect upon why the prison industrial slave complex (e.g. “P.I.S.C.”) has been historically successful in stimulating a mass consciousness amongst the people as a supposed synthesis to the issue of crime, gang violence, etc. that exist in our communities? We could easily point to several reasons for this, however, it is critical for us to look at the fact that the principal reason for this is rooted in our collective failure of not organizing ourselves to the extent of building a mass movement that is equipped with the necessary organizational infrastructure which would enable us to qualitatively negate the advances of the P.I.S.C.. It is an undisputable truth that the P.I.S.C. is a by-product of the social system of capitalism and we would be forth right in concluding that therein belies the problem. But that would be dealing with this issue in the abstract.

Every organization or movement must have a defined ideological method in which it structures and organizes its primary functions and objectives around. Without ideology the basis of that organization and/or movement is doomed to dwell in the abysmal pit of a social disconnect from the material factors that it proclaims to represent and organizing around. For example, let’s look at the current state of the prison movement as it exist today and begin our analysis with those factors wherein every movement/organization is supposed to have a framework in place to advance their material existence. And in doing so we must ask ourselves; 1.) Does the prison movement have a clear line of organizational expecta-

tions? 2.) Are these organizational expectations clearly define and being facilitated through ideological precepts? and 3.) Do these ideological precepts clearly address, confront, identify and have the ability to destabilize the P.I.S.C.? And as we look at the current state of the prison movement in trying to identify these factors, the answer is unfortunately a resounding no!!

My people, before I press further, allow me to clarify what an ideology is how it is developed and its overall significance to movement building. An ideology is systematic, scientific, cultural, economic, political, social and moral values of a people. An ideology are those systematic views that are historically evolved by definite stages of social, political and economic development. In dealing with the development of an ideology, we are essentially dealing with the development of ideas. However, in order for these ideas and/or theories to become transformed into an ideology they must be tested and verified in one's social practice pursuant to the social history of the people that are waging the struggle for the total liberation of all oppressed people!! An ideology enables an organization and/or movement to co-ordinate its set-aims/goals through their organized activities via the ideological indoctrination of its members so that they can carry forward these set-aims/goals of that particular movement and/or organization within the harmonious flow of social and political cohesiveness. These points are essential in relation to us educating the people for purpose of forging a consciousness in them that would allow the people to understand that our struggle for human rights did not become manifest in the abstract!! Meaning that it is imperative that we study analyze and draw upon the historical experiences of those organizations and/or movements that preceded us.

Per. the principal factors that I just outlined such as: 1.) organizational expectations, 2.) organizational expectations being clearly facilitated through ideological pre-

cepts, and 3.) ensuring that our ideological precepts clearly address, confront, identify and have the ability to destabilize the P.I.S.C.. It should thus become quite clear that in order for today's prison movement to begin developing some realistic organizational expectations we must begin to construct organizational infrastructures that will qualitatively facilitate the educational development of those individuals who volunteer and become members of various human rights organizations. I mean think about it, before an individual in our communities can become a postal worker, a factory worker or even to the point of acquiring their driver's license, he/she must go through the process trained/oriented before they can even be considered a postal/factory worker or be allowed to drive a motorized vehicle on the road. So why shouldn't this be a requirement when individuals of our communities decide upon becoming a human rights activist by volunteering for various prisoner rights organization?

I have created the W.L. Nolen Mentorship Program (e.g. "W.L.N.M.P.") in order to help provide solutions to not only this contradiction but also to several other contradictions that exist in our prisoner rights movement which addresses the issues of: 1.) Violence prevention/intervention; 2.) Developing critical thinking skills, 3.) Cultural tolerance/sensitivity, 4.) Alternatives to joining gangs, 5.) Support for single mothas, 6.) Economic empowerment; 7.) How to overcome alcohol/drug addiction, 8.) Domestic violence conflict resolution, 9.) Avoiding negative peer-pressure and 10.) tools to help develop community responsibility and awareness. (*NOTE: The W.L.N.M.P. mission statement may be downloaded at: www.sfbayview.com*)

I have taken the initiative to make several prisoners' rights organizations in California and abroad aware of the W.L.N.M.P. However, there has been nobody to step forward thus far and facilitate the W.L.N.M.P. through their organizations or otherwise?

This point is critical because August of 2012 we provided the people with our agreement to end all hostilities which was officially implemented in October of 2012 as a deterrent to negate the 40mplus years of racially based violence. The agree-

ment to end all hostilities is a tremendous step forward!! However, it is fundamentally impossible for anybody to believe that somebody who has been a long-standing adherent to criminal behavior and values would somehow make a complete transition from this aberrant way of life without first being armed with the necessary tools to do so. The W.L.N.M.P. provides the people with materialism for this type of change to occur as we have an abundance of knowledge, wisdom experience and archive of materials that specifically deal with: alternatives to joining gangs; violence prevention; cultural tolerance/sensitivity etc. Eventually, I would like to develop some cadres that are cable of teaching and carrying out the objectives that are set-forth in the W.L.N.M.P. along with converting all of the subject materials that we are providing through the W.L.N.M.P. into: study group workshops; instruction self-help videos, published pamphlets/books, documentaries and so forth. As we believe that this will also aid those who have committed to being a part of the prisoner's rights movement, to purge within themselves all values and aspirations of emulating capitalist behavior.

My people, this speaks to the essence of how we begin the process of constructing an organizational infrastructure. But in addition to this every prisoner's rights organization must incorporate "steering committees" within our community based infrastructures which must include California's captive political prisoners to thus allow us to be a part of the process of synthesizing information with regards to protecting and advancing the human rights of all prisoners. This will ensure that the issues of prisoners are qualitatively represented while allowing our organizational expectations to be clearly understood, fostered and facilitated through ideological precepts. This will also accord every individual within our prisoner's rights movement to function with a unity of purpose!!

So in closing, I again ask the question: "which individuals and/or prisoner's rights organizations in our communities is willing to step forward and help us change the course of history in relation to the masses patriotic reliance on the P.I.S.C. as a supposed synthesis to the issue of crime, gang violence, etc. that exist in our communities.???" •

*Dare 2 struggle!!!
Dare 2 win!!!*

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

EDITORIAL 3-9

The Writing Contest: First Place \$100, Jose Villarreal wins first prize focusing on a clear political change in the state. Jose's article "The Lumpen Has Stood Up!" was printed on page one of *Prison Focus* #43. Our Second Place winner of \$50, Anthony Artega (page 8) wins second prize proceeding from a detailed historical analysis of prison. Third Place, also \$50, Marcus Harrison (page 3) wins third prize; he sees prison administrations run by prisoner advocates.

Your Letters: Thank you, dear readers, for the kind thoughts and good wishes you there on the inside have been sending me in your cards and letters regarding my medical condition. Your ongoing support for the work I do is very much appreciated. There are some great letters from you and they will be preserved but not printed here.

Need Help: It cost \$300 to produce and mail out the August issue of *Rock*--\$156 for printing and another \$150 for the 300 stamps needed to make up for the shortfall in donations. Last month I received a single \$30 contribution from a prisoner, the rest came from out of my own pocket.

Now, getting ready to send this issue off to the printer, I count stamps. There are 382 of them, whereas I need at least 600 to get the mailing out. I also put up all of the \$200 in prize money for the writing contest, and I'll be paying the \$156 to get this issue duplicated. Either you pick it up or I'll have put it down. I simply don't have the money to giving away what amounts to between three to five hundred dollars each month.

And yes, I know there is less of a need for this newsletter now as there's no struggle taking place. Perhaps, California prisoners have given up, maybe feeling that what they got was all they could get. Of course I disagree; but it ain't my show. I'm feeling like we have glorious struggles ahead.

Ebola and Big the Pharmaceuticals:

Last month I wrote:

"...do ... 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...."

One might ask why this is so, didn't Darwin talk about the survival of the fittest? Well, capitalism emphasizes only one aspect of Darwinism, so much that you do not even know there is another side of the Darwin coin. The other side of that coin is "mutual cooperation", like when one bird

in a flock sounds the alarm, thus attracting attention to itself in order to warn the rest of the birds. But more to the point than theoretical debate is the fact that you get situations in places like Western Africa, where the Ebola virus has spread to three nations adjoining Liberia and two non-contiguous states. As of this writing at least 1,950 are dead from the virus. That's the big news story. The story behind the news is better framed as a question: I've been hearing about Ebola in Western Africa since at least the 1970s, so why is there no cure or vaccine for Ebola some all of these years later?

The reason is simple: While white racism plays a big part of the equation (they are only African blacks), I think a larger part of it was there being no mega-profits for Big Pharma in such a small number of infections. Once the virus spreads and there was no cure in sight, governments started paying Big Pharma to create a vaccine. And wham! Looks like they might have one already.¹ Big Pharma has once again put profit ahead of people. The Ebola cure or vaccine is only one of many drugs that could save lives but are not produced because there is not enough profit in doing so for the pharmaceutical corporations.

Big Parma is not alone in putting profits ahead of people. Indeed, it's the capitalist way. You probably even know some wannabe capitalist (in the old days we called them "illegitimate capitalists") who would put profit before people. These are people who've bought into the lie that "you too can be rich." Their mantra is it's a dog-eat-dog world (FTW). Fact is, and we all know it, you'll be lucky if you can get a minimum wage job when released, let alone ever being rich.

Inversions: Something capitalists call an "inversion" has been getting a lot of coverage in the news lately. A corporate inversion is when companies who have factories or other corporate interests in the U.S., who built there business off the land and people of this nation, now "invert"—they buy a little subsidiary company in a place like Ireland, renounce their U.S. citizenship, then say their home base is now there, and thus evade paying taxes to the U.S. government. Even Burger King has bought a doughnut chain in Canada and is moving its corporate headquarters there. Hundreds

1. On Aug. 30th the *Seattle Times* reported 36 monkeys were given the Ebola virus, half were given placebos, the other half the new experimental vaccination. The 18 given the placebos all died, the 18 given the experimental drug all lived.

of billions have been lost to the U.S. coffers. In an article in the *Seattle Times* titled Tax Inversions Threaten Economy, U.S. Senator Ron Wyden was quoted calling these inversions a "plague."

This so called plague comes at a time when we need a lot more money for our many military adventures. Sure we need to rebuild America's infrastructure and stuff like create jobs here at home, but our endless wars against the poorest peoples of the world are very expensive.² And now it looks as if we need to start yet another one in Syria.

My point is that the ruling class, the ones who run this oligarchy, have no loyalty to any one spot on the globe, they owe allegiance to no nation (but the god of profit)—they are globalized. Yet it seems globalization is only for the rich. The Earth's working class can't seem to reach out to other workers outside their respective national envelopes. In fact working people are still all too happy to go off and fight and die in these endless wars of ruling class aggression.

So you see, just as what the healthy cells in your body are doing, peacefully cooperating with each other for the benefit of the whole. So too is how civil society should be organized—on a global level. Cells that look out for only "number one" (narrow self-interest) are a cancer both in your body and in the body of the capitalist system.

Bourgeois ideology, which is the philosophy of capitalism, has been taught to everyone from the cradle to grave. Its insidious effects contaminates us all and must be fought not only in our own head, but in the heads of those around us. Combat all forms of bourgeois ideology, including its destructive offshoots of racism, sexism, and homophobia—all of which work to divide prisoners from one another. And anything that works to undermine prisoner unity serves the interests of the state.

The tool for overcoming the insidious effects of that negative ideology is to study its opposite—dialectical and historical materialism. It does takes effort to learn. •

2. When was the last time we won one of these wars? Well, let's see, there was Regan's invasion of Grenada (which did not have an army). And the Panama War over the Canal in December 1989. It occurred during the administration of Bush One, ten years after the Torrijos-Carter Treaties were ratified to transfer control of the Panama Canal from the United States to Panama by January of 2000. The US invaded under the pretext ousting a rouge puppet (Manuel Noriega), and thus invalidated this formerly binding treaty by invading that tiny nation.

LETTERS

THERE IS NO DIVERSITY IN STRUGGLE

It seems to me (a recent reader) that *Rock* is for those on the left and right of the political spectrum. So given such a medium, I would like to bring up a subject that has vexed me and that is "diversity." This word has become a platitude for the left and a mark of the beast for those on the right.

The way I see things, both left and right are confused as to what diversity actually means. It means variety. Variety is different classes, races, income, and even rights. So no matter where you fall on the political field, it seems to me you have not thought through this idea very much. I wish the left would stop spouting it as a mission statement, and the right needs to stop running because of ignorance.

This is just another example of how the left and the right have been fighting little ideological battles that makes no sense. We have a common goal before us, let's take care of the task at hand before we all become philosophers and fail to get something done.

Cameron Hayes,
Pendleton, Oregon prison

[Mark Responds: Cameron, California prisoners are the founders of the *Rock* newsletter. Thirty thousand prisoners who at one time stood in unity during the historical hunger strike dealt with the issue of diversity by adopting a cessation of antagonisms during the struggle.

Rock is published by and for prisoners who have chosen to struggle together in common cause. Everyone can keep their political "diversity" but when struggling in common cause, it is time to put religious and social ideologies in your back pocket.

Today, two and a half million men, women and children are in prisons that are systematically abused and their necessities neglected. *Rock* is about prisoners speaking up and struggling together against those abuses and neglect. During that struggle, prisoners have taken the position calling for the cessation of all hostilities among prisoners. Diversity among prisoners is; the person in the cell next to you and in other prisons suffering the same neglect and abuses you suffer. Let's *Rock* this boat!]

Class Analysis from Within

First Comrades Zero your letter was on point. Your observations on the prison systems were very well critiqued. In evaluating the prison society one must also understand the "free" society and its values, because those of us (lumpen proletariat) on the inside of the prison industrial complex are direct products of that society and its values.

These are the values of a corrupt, parasitic and predatory capitalist system that influences/compels us to exploit, dominate, and subjugate one another. One only need look at how we separate from each other inside of the prison setting along gang and racial lines to see that it's a mirror image of how we separate from each other in the "free" society.

You see, capitalism replaces cooperation with competition, the dog-eat-dog (individualism) mentality replaces socially progressive values (socialism) such as unity, equality, and justice with suspicion, fear, and intolerance.

Look at how we *compete* with one another in the P.I.C. for territory, status, wealth, and resources, all the while ignoring the horrible conditions/abuses we are subjected to by the prison administration and their goons. The prison officials and their flunkies play upon our fear and suspicion of each other. They instigate/orchestrate problems among us to divert our attention away from the real cause of our problems. Remember, it was the ruling elite who brought into being divisive practices like racism and sexism in an effort to impair any collective movement against their rule.

The ruling class (that tiny minority) has always employed the method of divide, agitate, and rule over the lower working classes (the huge majority) in order to undermine our unity and collective resistance.

Every time there is a concerted effort to protest conditions and abuses within the prison, the state's first reaction is to divide us, thus fictionalizing the movement in an effort to make it less effective.

I have been involved in several prison riots. None of these were in response to conditions or mistreatment by the corrupt P.I.C.

In order for us to effect revolutionary changes within the P.I.C. the prisoner leadership must have an accurate and compete understanding of the classes in society. It is through this sound understanding and correct revolutionary ideology that we will

ultimately reach our peers in oppression.

Just as we ourselves have done in the past, so too many of our peers today have internalized the negative values of this corrupt and illegitimate social order. By internalizing these negative values we become unreliable and reactionary—we become so alienated that we identify with our captors rather than our peers.

With this in mind, and understanding that we ourselves are the products of the very system we seek to change, we must do a through class analysis in order to really understand the subjective and objective needs of the people.

Zero said he "Really don't give a shit about the more subjective horrors of confinement." But we must care about the subjective horrors of confinement. Many if not all of these "horrors" stem from objective conditions imposed upon us by the system. In order for us to create revolutionary change with the P.I.C. we must organize and mobilize the people around their subjective and objective needs.

When prisoners can see that they can trust in your ability to effect progressive change they will then rally under the banner of a unitarian struggle.

Julian Daniels, Ontario, OR

[This letter goes on for another two pages, and will not be keyboarded as those pages address issues already covered by articles in other parts of this newsletter.]

RELEASED AFTER 30 YEARS ON A BUM BEEF!

DNA Exoneration: On September 2nd a North Carolina judge overturned the convictions of two men who have served 30 years in prison for the rape and murder of an 11-year-old girl after another man's DNA was recently discovered on evidence in the case. Superior Court Judge Douglas Sasser ordered the release of Henry McCollum, 50. And Leon Brown, 46. The half-brothers were convicted in the 1983 slaying of Sabrina Buie in Robeson County. ●

Seattle Times, 9/3/2014, p. 2

DEADLY BRAZIL PRISON RIOT ENDS

By Marilia Brocchetto and Shasta Darlington, CNN, August 26, 2014

Sao Paulo, Brazil (CNN) -- A prison riot in Brazil that left four inmates dead came to a conclusion Tuesday after officials transferred all the inmates elsewhere and rioters released two guards they had held hostage.

Brazilian authorities had begun moving inmates out Monday after rioting at the prison in the southern city of Cascavel, where two inmates were decapitated and two thrown off the roof of a cell block. According to the state-run Agencia Brasil news agency, there was a fifth victim, too.

Prisoners, demanding better living conditions and more flexible visiting hours, overpowered guards Saturday at the State Penitentiary in Cascavel. They burned mattresses and damaged cells.

The prison housed just over 1,000 inmates, according to local media reports.

Prison riots are not uncommon in Brazil, often sparked by overcrowding, poor conditions and rivalry between gangs. •

19 INJURED WHEN TEXAS PRISON ROOF COLLAPSES

By Susanna Capelouto and John Newcome, CNN

Nineteen inmates were injured when a roof of a private prison collapsed Saturday near Lufkin, Texas, fire officials said.

Ten prisoners were taken to hospitals by ambulance, and nine were transported as "walking wounded" from Diboll Correctional Center to area hospitals, according to prison officials.

At 11:30 a.m., the sheetrock ceiling of one of the five housing units in the prison collapsed, according to Management & Training Corporation (MTC), which operates the prison.

"We are still trying to determine the cause of the collapse," said a statement by MTC. A local fire official on the scene wasn't sure what may have caused the collapse, or whether it's related to heavy rain-

fall in Texas recently.

"It's not raining at all today here. We got a lot of rain yesterday. It's a new building, a new facility. I don't know why the roof would collapse," said Lufkin Fire Department Battalion Chief Jesse Moody.

David Driskell, the prison's warden, said, "It probably had a lot to do with the rain over the last couple days."

Diboll Correctional Center has a maximum capacity of 518 inmates and is managed by MTC, according to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice website.

MTC, a private contractor based in Centerville, Utah, manages 22 prisons in eight states, according to the company website, and also operates 21 Job Corps programs for the U.S. Department of Labor. •

BILL WOULD ALLOW INMATE TRANSFERS TO ANY FACILITY IN THE NATION

New legislation recently announced by California State Senator Ted Gaines could provide county sheriffs with the authority to move inmates to any other facility in order to avoid releasing them when jails become overcrowded.

Senate Bill 1376 was amended in August by Gaines – whose district covers Siskiyou County – from a personal income tax bill to its existing form.

Current law allows sheriffs to transfer an inmate from county jail to a city jail if crowded conditions demand it and there is room in the county jail.

If passed, SB 1376 would allow a county sheriff to contract with any state, county or private jail or prison in the U.S. to confine inmates in one of those facilities, with or without inmates' permission.

In order to cover the costs, the bill would allow counties to bill the Department of Justice for the reimbursement of costs associated with housing and transporting transferred inmates.

While the bill establishes that funding will have to be allocated to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, it has not yet identified how much funding will be made available.

When introducing the bill, Gaines stated in a press release "When criminals know they can commit crimes without the con-

sequence of jail time, it creates a crime frenzy. It is unsafe for the public and demoralizing for law enforcement.

"We can take back our neighborhoods, our streets, our businesses, and I'm confident my bill will get us there."

The bill is currently being discussed in the Senate Rules Committee. •

GUARDS NOT ALLOWED TO READ INMATE MAIL, COURT SAYS

Bob Egelko

Prisoners can inspect inmates' mail to their lawyers for evidence of illegal activity, like escape plans, but can't read the letters because of attorney-client confidentiality, a divided federal appeals court ruled Monday.

"A criminal defendant's ability to communicate candidly and confidentially with his lawyer is essential to his defense," the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco said in a 2-1 ruling.

The court reinstated a suit by an Arizona Death Row inmate, Scott Nordstrom, whose letter to his lawyer was seized and read by a prison guard in his presence in May 2011.

In California, by contrast, prison officials prohibit guards from reading inmates' mail to their lawyers, said attorney Donald Specter of the Prison Law Office, which filed arguments supporting Nordstrom's suit.

A federal judge in Arizona dismissed the suit, but the appeals court said the U.S. Supreme Court had implicitly ruled in a 1974 Nebraska case that officials could inspect, but not read, inmate mail.

While guards can examine outgoing mail to see if it contains a map of the prison, escape plans or other incriminating content, inmates would be chilled from discussing essential information about their cases and their backgrounds if they knew guards would read the letters.

In dissent, Judge Jay Bybee questioned how guards could determine whether a letter contained escape plans without reading it. He said the court majority made an already tough prison environment "a little tougher." •

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN CALIFORNIA

(The second place *Rock* writing contest winner, \$50.)

By Anthony Arteaga

In the 1979's there was a general tendency to regard the basic aim of imprisonment as rehabilitation of the criminal rather than as punishment. In addition, federal courts, often as a result of prisoners acting as their own lawyers, began to recognize for the first time that prisoners had constitutional rights, most notably, the right to Due Process prior disciplinary sanctions and freedom from Cruel and Unusual Punishment in the form of deplorable prison conditions.

This of course didn't last. Before long the emphasis on prisoners' rights and prison reform, distinguishably trail blazed by the events in Attica State Prison in New York (1971) followed by several other less publicized uprisings and riots of the same agenda began to evaporate in the face of the "tough on crime" and "war on drugs" crusades.

By the 1970's a series of decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the protections earlier envisioned as guarantees of prisoners' well-being and dignity. Rather than to continue implementing programs of rehabilitation, prisoncrats throughout the country began to develop special solitary confinement units (control/security housing units, etc.)

One of the very first units to be built was the Marion Federal Penitentiary in Illinois. Here men were being confined to tiny cells the size of a parking space for 23 to 24 hours a day. Solitary confinement units have always been part of the prison environment. In some cases it has been used to place prisoners in protective custody when either the prisoner or prison staff believed a life threatening situation existed. And of course, solitary confinement has traditionally been used as a disciplinary measure to punish infraction of prison rules.

However, the idea of these control/SHU's was very different; namely, that certain prisoners had to be permanently separated from the general population due their supposed influence over other prisoners. In essence they were now being subjugated to prolonged isolation for indefinite periods, where by being relegated to the status of incorrigible specimens who can only be governed, controlled, conditioned and suppressed to dehumanizing submission. In simple terms, to break a man's spirit.

This idea soon caught on and isolation

units were being established everywhere and not long before they were being specially constructed into new prisons.

For over 25 years, here in California, the Dept. of Corrections (CDCR) has had a policy of removing prisoner from the general population, validating them as either prison gang members or associates and indefinitely confining them to said types of isolation units. And just like other political figures, prison officials used propaganda about the supposed menace of these prison gangs and difficulties and dangers of dealing with them to encourage and maintain public indifference to what prisoners were actually going through on the inside.

In the 1980's, under the above guise, most of these men were placed at either, Duel Vocations Institute, Tracy, [Old] Folsom, San Quentin and Soledad Correctional Training Facility, where over one fifth of the general population at these institutions were housed in each of its segregation lock-up units.

Ultimately, falling in line with the trends of the times, California opened up three (3) maximum security Housing Units of its own at Tehachapi, Corcoran and Pelican Bay. Most recently, a fourth SHU opened up at [old] Folsom, where approximately 4,000 men, combined, have now been housed for up to 5, 10, 20 and even over 30 years.

These SHU's are literally human warehouses saturated by recycled air and blight monotony. Both days and night are cloaked with the eerie sense of history slowly repeating itself, specifically, that of the 16th through 19th centuries where indigenous populations of the Americas were gradually being eradicated by its oppressors. Only difference here is committing the actual deed itself and the name its being done under "security and safety" --- both of which resemble "Liberty" in that many are crimes committed in its name

By 1997, 45 states and the District of Columbia, as well as the Federal system were operating these types of units with California holding the most prisoners within them than any other U.S. state or nation. This fact continues to grow at an alarming rate.

The majority of California prisoners serving indeterminate SHU terms are the result of these pseudo-prison gang violations, gang policies to which civil rights lawyers have long been critical. The pro-

cedures used to identify gang affiliates are severely flawed and lacking in meaningful Due Process protections. Evidence used in these proceedings would never satisfy the "Preponderance of Evidence" standard required of normal legal proceedings. But because of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Superintendent v. Hill* (1985) holding that the Due Process Clause requires only the existence of "some evidence" in support of a decision to segregate an inmate. The Court gave prison administrators more arbitrary powers and discretion over prisoners' daily lives. This naturally leading to shrinking further and further the process of any accounting for or recourse from the many perverse ways they've come to abuse that power.

Under current policy, validated prisoners are not allowed to confront their accusers (or even to know who they are). Nor are they allowed to cross examine witnesses or present their own evidence to prove their case before a panel of neutral decision makers. You're basically guilty and there is no "until proven guilty".

In 1999, after many individual petitions and class action suits brought before both state and federal courts challenging these policies and inhumane SHU conditions the six (6) year "active/inactive gang status review" was created and implemented. A policy requiring a validated inmate to remain free of any and all gang related activity and association for no period less than six (6) years, in order to reconsider (but rarely granted) general population release.

A policy and process just as flawed as ones initial gang validation because the crux of it is gang activity is whatever these alleged gang intelligence experts choose to deem as gang related without being afforded a meaningful opportunity of contesting them.

The Procedural Due Process currently in place consists of being reviewed every 180 days and annually. However, these reviews are largely meaningless gestures and shams of proceedings in light of the fact that one first has to complete the minimal six (6) years required.

Since the late 1990's to present, it's evident that inmates are not being validated to restore order or to maintain security but maliciously for the purpose of causing pain and inflicting punishment in an attempt to break a man's spirit. Equally evident is the

fact that despite the creation of California's SHU's prison violence in the general population setting is far more violent now than it was over 25 years ago.

Said California prison gang validations have become a pretext to indefinitely confine its inmates to these SHU's at the expense of their well-being and it's only real escape coming in one of these ways...An individual can either choose to "debrief" --- that is to tell gang investigators everything they know about who's involved in gang activity both inside and outside of the prison system, including crimes in which they've committed themselves --- , parole or die. Snitching, parole or die' as the policy is more commonly referred to.

Mental deterioration runs rampant and silent within the confines of these SHU's. In fact, social science and clinical literature has consistently reported that men are social animals and when they are subjected to social isolation and reduced environmental stimulation, their lives both internally and externally is disrupted inevitably leading to the development of a predictable group of symptoms, e.g. anxiety, frustration, dejection, boredom, feelings of abandonment, paranoia, rumination and severe depression. Facts supported by an ample and growing body of evidence that this phenomenon especially occurs among prisoners in solitary confinement . . . persons who by definition subjected to a significant degree of social isolation and reduced environmental stimulation.

In 2011, after endless years of withstanding such psychological torture, a collective group of men confined to Pelican Bay SHU initiated two (2) separate state wide hunger strikes during the months of July and September. These protests were aimed towards contesting the inhumane conditions indefinite SHU confinement inmates have been subjugated to. This collective group compiled a list of five (5) demands for CDCR officers. Those demands were:

1. End group punishment and administrative;
2. Abolish the debriefing policy and modify the active/inactive gang status review criteria;
3. Comply with the Commission of Safety and Abuse in Americas' Prisons 2006 Recommendations Regarding Ending Long Term Solitary Confinement;
4. Provide adequate and Nutritious food;
5. Expand and provide constructive programming and privileges for prisoners held in indeterminate SHU status.

In October of 2011, in response to said Hunger Strikes, CDCR officials outlined changes that would be made in the SHU program and in March of 2012 released new proposed gang management policies.

Under the new policies, however, accused gang members can still be segregated indefinitely; SHU conditions remain largely the same and other changes are mere window dressing. Overall CDCR's proposal shows they will continue to resist change and accountability.

The month of March was also significant with Juan Mendez, a U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture (followed by California prisoners and their advocates), petitioning the U.N. to end lengthy solitary confinement in prisons, expressing that it would inevitably result in serious mental and physical damage amounting to torture.

So what lies ahead??? A united group of men/human beings determined to bring about actual changes and SHU reform and regaining the right to being treated humanely. This comes with the knowledge that the oppressing powers in opposition to such changes will concede to nothing absent a committed struggle and demand . . . A struggle and demand that will come at a cost but a cost to which strength to live and reason for acting should continue to be drawn from.

'CRUEL CONFINEMENT' REPORT PACKED WITH GRISLY MEDICAL TALES FROM ALABAMA PRISONS

By Challen Stephens

Staph outbreaks. Scabies outbreaks. A footbridge over raw sewage. A guard with TB allowed to continue working. No blood sugar measurements for diabetics. Stroke victim left on a cell floor for days. A blind prisoner being tricked into signing his own "Do Not Resuscitate" form.

The Southern Poverty Law Center this morning released a report laden with jarring anecdotes, a report that argues the standard of medical care within Alabama prisons is cruel and therefore unconstitutional.

"The Alabama Department of Corrections is deliberately indifferent to the serious medical needs of the prisoners in its custody," contends the new report, "Cruel Confinement."

The Southern Poverty Law Center -- a nonprofit civil rights organization -- notes there are just 15.2 doctors and 12.4 dentists for 25,000 in-house inmates. And there are 4.7 full-time psychiatrists and only 5.6 psychologists for the entire system.

The report also argues that Alabama prisons do not treat disabled prisoners fairly and are woefully understaffed to care for mentally ill prisoners.

The Southern Poverty Law Center collaborated with the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program on the report. They based their conclusions on inspections of 15 facilities, interviews with over 100 prisoners and review of thousands of pages of medical records and media accounts and depositions.

They cite a prisoner who had blood tests showing his prostate cancer had returned. He was given no additional treatment and died less than a year later. They cite another person who died when he went into shock and staff members did not know how to use the emergency medical cart.

"A conviction does not open the door for the state to engage in cruelty."

The report includes tales of infected face wounds, amputated toes and feet, gangrenous testicles treated only with ice. They cite the story of a prisoner who complained after surgery that he was bleeding from his rectum. Staff twice gave him new pants after bled through his own, but gave him no treatment other than an antacid. He also died, according to today's report.

"Deliberate indifference to these medical needs constitutes 'unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain' barred by the Eighth Amendment," contends the Southern Poverty Law Center.

AL.com reported similar tales earlier this year, ranging from a heart attack left untreated to denied knee surgery. Here's a look at the legal standard for medical care of prisoners. Here's a look at mental health care through the eyes of a prison psychologist. And AL.com also found the state releases few severely ill prisoners.

Today's nonprofit report makes some grim mention of the wider effects of overcrowding, contending prisons lack adequate facilities to wash clothes or handle wastewater. "At the Hamilton Aged and Infirm Center, there is a footbridge across

a canal of raw sewage,” reads the report.

The report also contends the Department of Corrections violates the rights of the disabled, from lack of access to areas of the prison to denial of work release to an officer hitting a deaf prisoner for not replying to a question.

They write of mentally ill patients who have medication stopped without seeing a psychiatrist or are given the wrong medication.

The Alabama Department of Corrections did not respond to a request for comment on the report.

The report names a few contributing writers listed, but the chief author is listed as Maria Morris, managing attorney for the Southern Poverty Law Center office in Montgomery.

“Alabama illegally operates a corrections system that is little more than a network of human warehouses, a place where individuals caught in the criminal justice system are banished and forgotten,” reads the report. “A conviction does not open the door for the state to engage in cruelty.”

“Whenever Alabama determines a per-

son must be incarcerated, it must accept the legal – and moral – responsibility that comes from imprisoning a human being.”

We want to hear from you. AL.com is reaching out to Alabamians for a closer look at prison problems as part of the Alabama Investigation Journalism Lab.

Launched this year by Alabama Media Group, the lab encourages innovation in digital journalism and audience interaction to guide and inform reporting on complex stories. Partners in the lab include the Center for Investigative Reporting and NPR station WBHM. ●

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