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Free to
prisoners

The newsletter of the Missouri Prisoners' Labor Union

Off the Hook



We must stop
thinking that
those who profit
from keeping us
bound will ever do
anything to
set us
free.



Missouri Prisoners' Labor Union

Mission Statement

- The MPLU recognizes the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family and the principle that the recognition and adherence to said rights is the basis for freedom for all humans and requisite to peace in the world.
- The MPLU recognizes and believes that all prisoners are human beings as well as political prisoners and have a right to be freed from all forms of abuse, oppression, repression, racism, sexism, and slave labor exploitation.
- The MPLU recognizes and believes in the people having the right to govern their own lives and to be free from wage slavery.
- The MPLU is founded upon the principles of liberty, equality and solidarity and recognizes that such principles are fortified with mutual aid, free association and free cooperation.
- The MPLU recognizes and strongly supports the abolition of all prisons everywhere, the abolition of the death penalty, and the ending of the capitalist system with its false democracy.

Contact Information

MPLU officers

Jerome White-Bey # 37479
SECC
300 E. Pedro Simmons Drive
Charleston, MO 63834

Mark Moore El #990115
SECC
300 E. Pedro Simmons Drive
Charleston, MO 63834

Lenard Bradford-Bey # 131806
Marquette Branch Prison
1960 US 41 South
Marquette, MI 49855

Outside supporters

Off the Hook Editorial Collective
PO box 872
Kirksville, MO 63501

MPLU Support - Europe
Patric Dooms
Leemputstraat 29
2600 Berchem
Belgium

Anthony Rayson
South Chicago ABC
PO box 721
Homewood, IL 60430

Kansas Mutual Aid
PO box 442438
Lawrence, KS 66044

A word from the editors

We do not want this project to become yet another commodity for sale, however, the financial drain of this publication is a real concern. If you are able, please consider making a donation. Thanks to those who already have.

Not all of the views contained within these pages mirror our own. A specific point of contention is addressed in the following paragraphs, not to attack or condemn, but to encourage dialogue and the expansion of our critiques.

"Prisons are Slave Plantations" A Note:

The metaphor of Americans as dependant whores and the government as an overbearing and abusive pimp has validity. Parallels between the subjugation of women and the oppression of people of color have long been acknowledged. Many social groups are oppressed by the capitalist government and its white/male-centrism. All who struggle for equality should recognize that they are stronger united. However, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism are all powerful social forces and unfortunately one is sometimes allowed to stand in the struggle to abolish another.

In his letter, Stanfield unequivocally condemns the exploitation and oppression of the American people, specifically people of color and other social groups targeted by law enforcement. However, the uncritical discussion of what a pimp "has to" do to break "his" whore is unsettling. This metaphor fails to criticize the slavery of forced sex work, or how sexism in society perpetuates the exploitation of women.

In our next newsletter we would like to focus on issues dealt with by women prisoners, effects of incarceration on women and families, and the role played by gender in defining our current reality. Gender is a powerful social construct that teaches us to associate certain behaviors or traits with one biological sex and not another. Whether we choose to enact or reject gendered roles in our own lives, we

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are not immune to the power of other's expectations. Sexism grows from attempts to enforce these expectations.

We cannot achieve a thorough discussion of this topic on our own. We rely on your contributions to make this newsletter what it is.

Please send your submissions to:

Off The Hook Editorial Collective
PO Box 872
Kirksville, MO 63501

All contributions for issue 14 should be submitted by April 15.

Editorial

Off the Hook • issue 13

In our last editorial we asked the question, "What is the Missouri Prisoners' Labor Union?" After years of communication with members of the MPLU and involvement in the editing and publishing of this newsletter, our best answer is still incomplete.

From our perspective the MPLU is, for all intents and purposes, less of an organization and more of an idea. To us the concept communicated by this project is that people do not lose their humanity when they pass through the gates of a prison. Prisoners are still people and should not be treated as less than such. Furthermore, in the context of prison abolition, the MPLU represents the idea that those most affected by a systematic injustice can collectively create the conditions necessary for systematic change.

The MPLU's current inability to live up to the idea of an organized and effective labor union for prisoners is not a negation of these ideals, nor is it a statement on the character of those most intimately involved. The world that we live in does not facilitate efforts to eradicate the foundations of institutionalized domination, exploitation, and oppression. This is no less true of the prison environment with its lethally armed guards, endless regulation and bureaucracy, material deprivation, and cells of isolation. Indeed, there is much that stands in the way of a movement dedicated to prison reform and abolition.

In 1977, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling with important implications for the struggle against the prison industrial complex. Without granting the courts the undue authority of influence over popular struggles, it is nonetheless valuable to have an understanding of the law as it relates to those struggles so that we can attain a more thorough understanding of the task at

hand. In *Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners' Union* (433 U.S. 119), the court laid out its current opinion on the legal status of prisoner labor unions.

The Prisoners' Union in question filed a lawsuit against the North Carolina Department of Corrections (NCDOC) claiming that its members' First Amendment and equal protection rights were violated by regulations of the NCDOC; specifically, those that prohibited prisoners from soliciting other inmates to join the Union and barred Union meetings. Following a long standing precedent of deference to the decisions of prison administrations, the court ruled that inmates should not be allowed to organize as a union.

This decision was influenced by the fear that inmates would use the union in an effort to undermine the authority of the prison administration and reappropriate control over their lives. As stated in the court opinion, "[Appellants] sincerely believe that the very existence of the Union will increase the burdens of administration and constitute a threat of essential discipline and control. They are apprehensive that inmates may use the Union to establish a power bloc within the inmate population which could be utilized to cause work slowdowns or stoppages or other undesirable concerted activity."

The Court went on to state that, "Perhaps the most obvious of the First Amendment rights that are necessarily curtailed by confinement are those associational rights that the First Amendment protects outside of prison walls. The concept of incarceration itself entails a restriction on the freedom of inmates to associate with those outside of the penal institution. Equally as obvious, the inmate's 'status as a prisoner' and the operational realities of a prison dic-

tate restrictions on the associational rights among inmates."

Here the court reinforces the concept of justice established by modern nation states. This understanding of crime and punishment is based on a social contract in which some forms of violence and appropriation, such as exploitation and forced labor, are integral to the functioning of society while others, such as theft or self-defense against the agents of the state, are deemed unacceptable. When a citizen becomes a captive of the state, that person loses their legal status as such and all of the so-called "rights" and "privileges" that go along with it.

This concept is the fundamental basis of the legal system here in the United States. Accordingly, it is illogical to assume that by appealing to the legal manifestation of capitalist relations one could somehow attempt to alter the very foundation upon which the current social order is built. Because the prisons and courts are based upon the conception that once convicted, a human being is no longer entitled to the freedoms of the citizen, they will never be an open course through which one can gain genuine freedom. In order to liberate society from the haunting shadow of police, courts, and prisons, we will have to look outside the realm of the legal apparatus.

Furthermore, within the prison system itself - a highly controlled and regulated environment - there is little hope for the establishment and sustenance of a massive organization. In such an environment, any organization of scale capable of changing the conditions of existence inside prison walls would undoubtedly be brutally repressed long before achieving its goals. This is not to say that hope is lost or that the struggle for a world without cages should be abandoned. On the contrary, conclusions such as this can only serve to inform

our struggle and give us a better chance of achieving our goals.

If we accept the premise that massive organizations inside prison walls and legal appeals to the powers that be will get us nowhere in our quest for social liberation, what avenues are left to us? If a unity among prison laborers is to be forged, what forms could such collective consciousness and activity take?

By describing itself as a Prisoners' Labor Union, the MPLU has pushed the issue of exploitation of inmates to the forefront of its agenda. We wholeheartedly support this stance, as it is through recognizing our common exploitation across lines of race, gender, nationality, and social status that we can create a force capable of achieving social transformation.

The words 'Labor Union' are, however, in need of a drastic recontextualization if they are to be of any utility whatsoever. The policies of worker/management cooperation promoted by the mainstream of the modern labor movement are merely a means towards the smooth functioning of exploitation and not in any way antagonistic to capital or the state. Such policies have nothing to offer a struggle that aims to create a society without prisons of any kind.

Where, then, are we to go from here?

As a start, we would like to encourage a wider variety of voices to make themselves heard. Specifically, we are interested in receiving submissions from women prisoners. To date, the vast majority of submissions received and articles published have been written by men. This state of affairs can only give us a limited perspective and knowledge of the issues at hand.

Letters

Assimilation into the culture of incarceration

Assimilation in its traditional sense refers to the process of accommodation by which members of minority groups are absorbed or integrated into a society's dominant or core culture. In this process, racially or ethnically diverse groups of people adapt and become indistinguishable from the dominant group.

In America, this means that all Caucasians from various European countries can come to America and with a few language lessons be successfully absorbed or integrated into the Anglo-Saxon culture.

On the other hand, people of color can never be successfully assimilated into a western (European) culture because their skin pigmentation will always set them apart from the dominant group. Although people of color can be assimilated culturally (as long as they think, dress, and act like Caucasians), they can never be fully absorbed (except through miscegenation, which amounts to racial death) into the dominant or core culture to the same degree as an Irish, German, or Italian person, who can become indistinguishable from the dominant group.

Assimilation into the culture of incarceration refers to a different, yet similar, process. Assimilation into prison culture requires individuals entering into that environment to be absorbed into and adapt to the mental subordination of a slave mentality. This form of slavery is not dictated by national origin or skin color, but through incarceration.

A person found guilty of a felony and sentenced to prison finds upon entering that environment numerous and diverse groups. Some of these groups are found in

the free world, and if a person belonged to any of these groups on the street, they naturally flow in the direction of that familiar group. If a person, especially a young person, was not part of a particular group on the street, they quickly become a part of a group because they readily perceive a need to belong for self-preservation purposes.

In order to assimilate, there must exist a culture to assimilate into. The culture of incarceration involves every single negative aspect of free society unchecked. For example, robbery, murder, dope dealing and use, rape, etc., are all part and parcel of the culture of incarceration, an acceptable part, with a see nothing-hear nothing code of silence which protects this negative attitude. This is the culture of incarceration, and every person sentenced to prison finds him or herself bound to stay within the boundaries of this culture under penalty of death.

But there is a dual aspect of this culture: one is determined by the prisoners and the other is determined by prison officials. The administration creates the policies that control every aspect of the incarcerated person's existence, yet neither the administration nor the guards are bound to follow those regulations that apply to them.

Administrators create the rules and the prison guards enforce them, or not, in whatever manner they see fit. What the administrators and guards have in common is the sincere desire to keep what happens within the prison walls within the prison walls. Neither group wants any of the internal problems brought to outside attention; the less attention brought on their personal regimes the better.

What this means in practice is that more often than not, prison guards will not

go out of their way to enforce or uphold the rules established by the administrators unless it is a blatant violation (done right in their face) or done by an individual that is considered an undesirable. An undesirable is usually a grievance writer, or jailhouse lawyer, you know, a trouble maker, a whistle-blower. This type of individual will usually be singled out for strict adherence to all the rules, regulations and policies, known and unknown.

Assimilation into the culture of incarceration has several requirements: first, one must become invisible, meaning one must not draw any attention to oneself. Second, one must obey all the laws of the prison culture, see no evil, speak no evil. Third, one must deal with any problems among prisoners strictly between prisoners. Fourth, one must not cause any problems for the administration or prison guards by filing grievances, lawsuits, or informal complaints.

Prison officials, bottom to the top, truly believe that ignorance is bliss. They don't want to know who is getting raped, stabbed, robbed, using or selling dope, because if they know about it, they have to do something about it. Prison officials don't want change, they want compliance!

Humans are creatures of habit, so it goes without saying that people exposed to a negative, detrimental, oppressive, and destructive environment for any prolonged period of time will internalize those negative behaviors. Then when they are released, they will take those behaviors and mannerisms back to their community with them. By this means, certain communities are overly affected by incarcerating large numbers of their members.

What happens to those who resist or refuse to be assimilated into the culture of incarceration? Prison officials have arranged and even participated in the

assassination of non-compliant offenders, and while death is always a very real possibility, rejection and ostracism are the norm. For this reason, many actively seek to be assimilated as a survival tactic.

While prison administrators rely on prison guards to enforce their dictates, prison guards rely on their inmate collaborators to keep the incarcerated herd moving in the right direction--compliance to the culture of incarceration. Inmate collaborators most often come from the groups or gangs that are numerically powerful in a given institution and have a vested interest in keeping everything running smoothly.

This often involves keeping the illicit drug trade flowing, or else the groups or gangs enjoy other special privileges. These privileges are more often than not extra portions of food, access to unlimited telephone calls, transfer into another cell with a sex partner, etc.

Inmate collaborators are more often than not persons seeking status. Status is achieved in several ways within the prison environment. The number one way is through fighting-ability; a willingness and ability to kill is a great status maker along with gang affiliation. Drug dealers also achieve significant status, but only if they have the ability to defend themselves. Within various gangs, leadership ability gives one status, which is often achieved through manipulation, fighting ability, and the knowledge of a particular doctrine relevant to a certain gang. These individuals are actively recruited by prison administrators and guards.

Most prisoners are compliant because they have not been taught how to think for themselves and are easily led or misled into accommodation and compliance. Individualism is not favored. All incarcerated persons are encouraged to act in a uniform

Letters

manner that is indistinguishable from the next person. The majority dress in a manner exactly the same as the next person and respond to change, threats, and official abuse in the same manner. They accept whatever is thrown their way, don't make waves, don't complain, and do as they are told.

After being successfully assimilated into the culture of incarceration for prolonged periods of time, how is a person to adjust to the expectations of society upon release? Or how can one overcome the psychological affects of being submerged in a culture of incarceration for years on end?

Society has failed to consider the answers to these questions, and that lack of vision, neglect, or indifference keeps the prison culture alive and well, a subculture festering, yet never healing.

Welcome to my world!

Omwale A. Shabazz, #244104
 BMCX/HAS -46 (sin Fred Dean)
 PO box 1000
 Petros, Tennessee 37845

A continuing conversation: gangs, mentacide, and community response

My name is Mutawally Jaka Kam-bon Cooperwood. I am a new Afrikan conscious combatant, confined inside the SHU/Hole at Pelican Bay State Prison, California. I have lived inside the Security Housing Unit for a little over a decade, along with many others who have been inside of the various holes for the past 20, 30 and 40 years.

We are called the "indeterminable class." This class of prisoners have been accused by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) as being gang affiliated. This particular gang label

has been fought in different courts - it's a proven fact that the gang label is an abstract tool the CDCR utilizes to remove conscious groups and individuals from general population.

The term "indeterminate" means that once a prisoner is placed inside the SHU, he or she will remain there for the duration of his or her prison term unless he or she makes parole, dies, debriefs (rats out another prisoner) or goes insane (mentacide). I may add that over the many years of diligent court struggles and other legitimate means a few of us have managed to be liberated back to the general population.

This communique was inspired by the constant progressive work y'all's newsletter *Off the Hook* has done/is doing in light of prisoners' freedom, justice and equality. I particularly enjoyed your 12th Issue, dated September 2006, and the series of related letters concerning the dark reality of our urban youth. Two articles caught my attention and I wish to extend a short comment upon them, in hope of adding some progressive and positive thoughts to the work they have in motion.

Brotha Sheik Mark S. Moore wrote an enlightening piece entitled: "Roadblocks to organizing faced by poor blacks." I read the contents many times and found his analysis of the inner-city, community-based, lumpen street gangs was on point.

His thoughts towards a new workable solution to the nation's neighborhood problems reiterate mine and those whom I have managed to dialogue with over the years. It's my opinion that there is an imperative need to organize and reconstruct the mind set of the national inner-city, community-based, lumpen street-gangs.

We are living in a society where our youth are constantly portrayed as criminals, bangers, thugs, gangstas and murderers whom are intellectually inferior and

devoid of any moral values. The explanations "society" uses to validate these images are the rising national inner-city homicide rate and drive-by-style shooting, the residential intimidation of our elders, and the tragic images left behind after our neighborhood shoot-outs and warfares.

No doubt we disagree with the social hypotheses as they pertain to the nature and character of the lumpen street-gang! However we do comprehend the power of images. Images link and encompass all the elements of a community and are impacted by everything the community does or does not do. Negative images become our dark reality when we have little or no control of our own images.

Inner-city lumpen street-gangs inside America's repressive neighborhoods each have their own historical beginnings deriving from capitalist exploitation, disenfranchisement, and social exclusion, which factors create a hostile environment. However, the lumpen street-gangs and their outlaw culture are qualified to reconstruct themselves because they will not allow outside forces to dictate their flow, but only if they will consolidate with positive progressive people, organizations and movements who share a common interest.

In understanding our situation, it is imperative that we dissect the conspiratorial views of inner-city violence. It is my belief that the greatest cause of failure in understanding our youth is that we have tried only to understand them by studying their behavior! This approach only teaches outsiders to disregard the righteous potential waiting to be awakened inside our youth! Work to organize the gangs.

Researching the conspiratorial views of the nation's inner-city phenomenon, I'll leave y'all with a few words taken from some conscious literature. "It is no accident that the hoods are against each other. It is

no accident that the ghettos are economically depressed, flooded with narcotics, guns, and unexplained hostilities which keep the neighborhoods off balance and in turmoil. It is no accident the hostilities caused the effect that has our residential folks crying for more and more K9s [Police] to come into the hoods! And it is no accident how easy it has become to convince the poor and wealthy people to vote for greater penalties for the inner-city lumpen street-gangs." The California Prisons are full of us; we must come together, organize and reconstruct ourselves.

In reference to a broader meaning of "mentacide": My intention is to extend a broader meaning to brotha Damon Harrison's concept of "mentacide" and how it is being systematically applied in the two super maximum security prisons at Corcoran and Pelican Bay in California. I want to add to the positive work Damon Harrison and others are doing in staying above the mentacidal attacks being waged upon them.

One of our conscious brothas here at Pelican Bay wrote "Education and orientation are the most important aspect of human society. They determine everything regarding a person's life and the quality of their life. One's values, standards, dislikes and likes are all connected to education and orientation." When COs (pigs) make comments like "gangsters don't read books," always remember, it's their weak psychopathic way to distract y'all's conscious focus. Stay focused, We can't stop! We won't stop!..

The word "mentacide" was coined by Bobby Wright, author of *Psychopathic Racial Personality*. He defined mentacide as the deliberate and systematic destruction of a person or group's mind. We hold that mentacide is genocide, a neo-tool used by the CDCR upon its prisoners at Corcoran and Pelican Bay State Prison.

The CDCR has targeted specific conscious prisoners in its population and covertly placed them under its psychological and murderous program. This illegal system is deliberately designed to destroy the prisoners' mental stability and capacity. The old tactics of murder by shooting, beating, and torture are still in place, but the neo-tool is sensory deprivation and years of isolation.

In Security Housing Units, we are housed inside our cells approximately 22 and a half to 24 hours a day. We are allowed to walk around a very tiny yard, maybe the size of a trailer truck, surrounded by 20 ft. walls for one and a half hours a day; no sunlight shines on the yard floor.

For years there have been no educational programs or opportunities to stimulate our intellectual development. The idea was to keep us laying dormant and sleeping the days away. Recently the CDCR was forced to adopt the title rehabilitation! As of today, we are waiting on their so-called rehabilitation projects to reach us inside these holes.

For the past decade, we have deliberately been deprived of all physical contact with our families, wives and children. Due to the travel distance of these prisons, 400 miles one-way, most prisoners don't receive visits! We are not allowed phone calls (exception: five minutes, Death Emergency only). There is no picture-taking, and our children have totally forgotten what their fathers' faces look like, due to the no picture policy.

Due to this kind of deprivation, usually the prisoner loses all communication with his loved ones and years later the pictures he receives of them are from an obituary and a short note saying they were killed in a drive-by-shooting or some other neighborhood violence. Sensory deprivation compounded with isolation is the neo-tool

being utilized in CDCR mentacide/genocide process.

Often the prisoners' reality is rejected by society because they lack real information or access to it. This mentacidal plot is taking place inside every prison in the nation. I challenge Y'all to reveal what is taking place inside your state operated torture chambers.

We can't stop! We Won't Stop!

Your Brotha,
Mutawally

Prisons are slave plantations

If we were to take a close look at America, its prison culture and the way that it is being instituted upon poor unsuspecting victims, none of us could deny the similarities that the prison culture has with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

For those who are poor, uneducated and misinformed; mentally ill; politically and socially outspoken; freedom fighters; misrepresented and misunderstood; used and abused; black, brown and yellow; men, women, and children; America is literally being kidnapped and held in concentration camps. We are forced into slave labor, subjected to beatings, killings and are deprived of the dignities of civilized life. Is this not the same method that Sir John Hawkins used when he docked his ship upon the shores of West Africa?

The people who supported and instituted chattel slavery from 1555 C.E. up until 1865 C.E. when slavery was supposed to have been abolished in this country are the very same people who now advocate policies and attitudes such as: "tough on crime," "lock 'em up and throw away the key," the death penalty, prison enterprise labor, field and road squads, three strikes laws and all the other shit that is designed

to keep the slaves in check and following "the program". The motto is "those who rebel or dare to step outside of their box will be dealt with," just as rebellious slaves like John Brown and Rev. Nat Turner had to be dealt with. Our children are being dealt with like they dealt with little fourteen year-old Emmett Till. Yes! We are all getting dealt with real good!

Let's face the facts: this country (U.S.A.) is founded upon greed, lust, hate, theft, white supremacy, and all types of devilishment. These same entities are what will destroy this land.

Finding a clear cut solution that would heal all the wounds and make right all the wrongs is not something that we will witness in this day and time. The old has to be stripped and torn down before the new can be set in place. I personally foresee destruction before I see peace. Regardless of how long and hard we strive for freedom, justice, and equality, it is insane to assume for one second that the very people who make their livings from the slave labor, ignorance, division, and oppression of the poor will have a sudden change of heart and grant us our three wishes.

Listen to me people! A pimp just does not fall in love with his whores and allow them to enjoy the fruit of their labor. He would not last as a pimp if he did. The pimp has to mislead, degrade, dehumanize, manipulate, oppress, slap, kick, and beat his whore until she submits and depends on him for everything in life. We are all getting pimped in some manner, it's just that some of us can take more dick than others. The American government has one of the biggest cocks the world has ever known. While America fucks some of us to sleep, others get fucked to death, but at the end of the day, the majority of us get fucked. [editor's note: This metaphor is powerful,

but problematic. See "A Word from the Editors" for a response.]

So what do we do? Well, for one, we must educate ourselves and get that mess out of our brains--stop thinking that the ones who profit from keeping us bound will ever do anything for us. They are not going to pay us more gold for our labor, give us the forty acres and mule, deal in social equality, or allow us to enjoy the comforts that they do.

Secondly, we must organize ourselves, inform and teach others the reality of the attacks waged against them. People do not like to be attacked, therefore once they have been informed they will set up a defense and resist the attack whether consciously or unconsciously. In this age of information, we have means to inform people the world over.

Keep in mind that when you step out against the system of oppression, you become a target. You will be labeled a terrorist, a gang member, an enemy of the state, a criminal, a troublemaker, etc... yet you must continue to fight for the cause of humanity. There is hope and that hope lies in the revolutionary action of those of us who are sick and tired of the conditions that we are forced to live in.

If we are not willing to give up our lives, if need be, in the fight for freedom, justice, and equality, then we do not deserve it. If you deserve it then fight like hell, with all that you have, to obtain it.

Love, Truth, Freedom, Justice
Larry D. Stanfield #0578097
5150 Western Ave.
Morganton, NC 28655

Slave-breaking: Part two

Continued from Issue 12

Another way to break a slave is the "hole". The "hole"/solitary confinement is

an isolation chamber. It is an area that contains thirty oppressively small cells. When a slave is to be punished for allegedly committing an offense or infraction, s/he is sent to the hole.

Being in the hole is truly being locked up. For one, if you are a slave charged with an offense and you are sent to the hole, then any movement is done with handcuffs. For two, you enter a steel door into the cell, into a cage of steel bars and concrete. The cage door is slammed behind you and you're locked in, but then the steel door is slammed shut and you're "shut" in.

The hole was built to assist in the campaign of dehumanizing, breaking the will, breaking the spirit, and psychologically destroying us.

A psychological definition of sensory deprivation is: extreme reduction of sensory stimuli. There have been experiments done where student volunteers were put into special sensory deprivation chambers where they were masked and bandaged to severely restrict their visual, auditory, and tactile stimulation. They were released from those constraints only for three meals a day and for trips to the bathroom. The results were dramatic.

The subjects were increasingly unable to perform mental tasks that they had set for themselves, such as in their studies or thinking about papers they had to write. They grew increasingly irritated and eventually began to hallucinate. When they were released from their cubicles, they did poorly on a number of tests in comparison with a control group given the same tests.

More recent research has modified the techniques for studying sensory deprivation. Investigators learned to vary the mode of sensory deprivation; the variability of sensory input was diminished by restraining part or all of the subject's body in a frame. Also, the absolute level of sensa-

tion was reduced by placing volunteers in dark, quiet chambers...the perfect definition of the hole.

The hole is a strategically designed and built sensory deprivation chamber which restricts your visual, auditory, and tactile stimulation. They use a special type of lighting so that when the lights are on they give off a strange and eerie light.

The subjects used in the experiments were released from their chambers for three meals a day and for trips to the bathroom. Well, in the hole our bathrooms (a steel sink and toilet) are in our cells, and we eat our three "poor" meals in there as well. So imagine the effect on us slaves. Psychologists have said that "no matter how deprivation was induced, its effects were similar."

When the subjects emerged from solitary confinement to face a battery of perception tests, they showed impaired color perception and reaction time. It was concluded that sensory deprivation has effects such as daydreaming, dreaming, and fantasizing.

Within a few hours of entering the chambers, most subjects began to pass through alternating states of drowsiness, sleep, and wakefulness. Because the distinctions between wakefulness, drowsiness, and sleep became blurred in the chamber, subjects found it difficult to distinguish between waking, hallucinations, and dreams. They reported seeing flashes of light, geometric forms, and various complex images of objects or living beings, as well as hearing various noises.

These hallucinations were most powerful after about two days of deprivation and lasted for up to a day after the end of the experiment. What about those of us slaves who spend thirty or more days at a time in such conditions?

There are slaves in the hole right now that have been there for several months to years and still have several months or even years to go. Consider their mind state due to sensory deprivation.

Is it really a wonder how recidivism and slavery/prison conspire? Is it really a surprise that the Department of Correction fails to correct more than it degenerates?

Hmm.

Keyono Cook #118795
2501 State Farm Road
Tucker, Arizona 72168-9503

A letter from Michael Africa

May 13, 2007 will mark the 22nd anniversary of the holocaust, when the city of Philadelphia along with the federal government bombed the MOVE Organization's home on Osage Avenue and cowardly shot MOVE members, including children, as they attempted to escape the burning house.

Twenty two years, and to this day not one murdering cop or official has been held accountable for this atrocity. They assassinated 11 MOVE people, five of them children, and 21 years later all those who participated in the holocaust are still out there being allowed to plot the same end for all minorities; especially those who speak out against injustice.

As the 22nd anniversary of May 13, 1985 approaches, I again wonder, "Where's the rage?" Where's the outrage over racist, terrorist cops and officials bombing babies? Where's the outrage over cops cowardly gunning down women carrying children while fleeing a burning building? Where's the rage over the cold-blooded massacre of the men, women, and children that stood up in the face of this terrorism for you? This stand wasn't just for MOVE, but also for the people who are still being oppressed and slaughtered in the streets.

For 35 years, MOVE has told people, "Remember the fight the MOVE Organization is waging in the courts and prisons is for your children too!" For 35 years, the MOVE Organization has proven consistently to be committed to this fight. For the people who have chosen to be blind to that information, the examples of Amadou Diallo, Patric Dorismens, Donte Dawson, Johnny Gammage, Tim Thomas, and countless other victims of officially sanctioned terrorism and murder are for you.

As a result of all these crimes against the people there are a few protests, but where is the real rage? Where is the sustained presence of outrage that will produce the needed pressure to affect real change and revolution?

As John Africa demonstrated, the fight MOVE has waged is for your folks too. People need to support MOVE and fight with MOVE for justice. People should be ashamed of themselves every time they see folks struggling on the frontline while they sit at home, apathetic, and doing nothing, allowing children to be continually shot down in cold blood and set up with long prison sentences for using things this system put into their hands.

This is what John Africa exposed them for. This is why they attacked MOVE on May 13, 1985, why they shot 10,000 rounds of ammo into a house full of men, women, and children, and why they exploded three bombs on MOVE's home, allowing the fire to burn and then shooting anyone who was still able to escape, including babies! Not one of these murdering fiends was ever held accountable, not one!

The only charges ever filed against any of the murderers were filed by my sister, Ramona Africa, the only adult survivor of this holocaust. She filed them from her jail cell after she was sentenced to seven years for the crime of surviving the massacre.

A jury found the police commissioner and fire commissioner guilty. The penalty was that they each had to pay one dollar a week for 11 years to symbolize the 11 MOVE members. Only one buck a week, and as pathetic as that was, the judge overturned the guilty verdict altogether.

These bastards plotted and conspired for years to carry that attack out, then admitted on the stand that they had made a conscious decision to let the fire burn as a weapon against MOVE, and their punishment was one dollar a week, then nothing. Where is the goddamn rage!

Our MOVE family continues to stand strong in the face of repeated threats and attempts by the system to provoke another confrontation. Support them, support yourself. Those in power have already demonstrated that they will use any excuse to attack MOVE in an effort to silence our opposition.

Let city and state officials know that you won't allow another attack on MOVE. Show support to those who have continually put their lives and freedom on the line for you, and never let them forget about May 13, 1985. Remember them, honor them: Netta, Tree Tree, little Dalisha, Lil' Tomaso, and Lil Phil--all babies! Remember Conrad, Rhonda, Frank, Theresa, Raymond, and Vincent.

Honor them by never tolerating another assault. Honor them by speaking out against injustice, and never letting the system forget what they did on May 13, 1985.

There should be World Trade Organization type demonstrations in the streets all over this rotten country every day until justice is done. Those officials only get away with atrocities like these because the people allow them to. You give them permission to do this. Your silence is their permission.

Rise up! Show your rage!

Long Live MOVE!
Long Live Revolution!
Long Live John Africa

Michael Africa

A brief history of MOVE

MOVE is a revolutionary organization which formed in the early 1970s to confront oppression on all levels and work towards animal liberation, environmental and social justice. MOVE was founded by John Africa, who believed in the need to destroy the illusion that humans are the masters of the living world and to start living in submission to, rather than above, natural law as equal members of the community of life.

Among their early activities, MOVE demonstrated against police brutality, confronted industrial polluters, mediated between gangs, and fed poor children natural food. This holistic, consistent revolutionary example set by John Africa and MOVE became a threat to those who profit from the subjugation of life.

Throughout the 70s this conflict escalated with Philadelphia police regularly beating and arresting MOVE members. Police even resorted to a starvation blockade of MOVE headquarters, beating several women into miscarriage, and on one occasion stomping a 3 week old MOVE child to death. MOVE, refusing to break or compromise in the face of such brutality, took a militant stand against this abuse and forced the system to either do the right thing or openly declare their intentions of destroying MOVE.

For more information on the MOVE 9 and the MOVE organization visit www.onamove.org

News

Dogs attack inmates

The U.S. based organization, Human Rights Watch, has reported that dogs are allowed to terrify and even bite prisoners who refuse to leave their cells in five U.S. states. The established human rights group said it was unaware of any other nation where such a practice exists, describing it as a well-kept secret and comparing it to abuses at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison where U.S. soldiers terrorized detainees with dogs.

If prisoners refuse to leave their cells when ordered in Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, South Dakota and Utah, officers may bring a dog to the cell "to terrify the prisoner into compliance," the 20-page report said. If an inmate still refuses, the dog is allowed to bite the prisoner. As the prisoner struggles to fend it off, officers restrain and then remove the prisoner from the cell, the report said.

"In some prisons ... the institutional culture permits cell extractions simply to show inmates 'who's in charge' or to retaliate against defiant inmates, even if there is no real emergency," the report said.

Herman Wallace update

A Louisiana state court official has recommended reversing the murder conviction of a former Black Panther who has been held in solitary confinement at Louisiana's state penitentiary since the early 1970s. Inmate rights activists have fought for years for a new trial for Herman Wallace, who was originally sent to the state prison at Angola after an armed robbery conviction, then found guilty of stabbing to death a guard in 1972.

Rachel Morgan, the court commissioner in the case, recommended reversing

the conviction. Morgan's recommendation could be rejected by the trial judge. If the decision is upheld by the court, however, it is likely that the Baton Rouge district attorney's office will appeal that decision to the Louisiana Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, a process that could take as long as two years.

Wallace, Albert Woodfox and Robert Wilkerson are known as the "Angola Three," considered by prisoners' rights groups to be wrongly held in solitary confinement because of their political activity with the Black Panthers. Wilkerson was released in 2001 after a judge overturned his conviction for killing another inmate.

U.S. prison population largest in the world

A U.S. Justice Department report released on November 30 showed that a record 7 million people -- or one in every 32 American adults -- were behind bars, on probation or on parole at the end of 2005. Of the total, 2.2 million were in prison or jail. The rate of people going into U.S. jails and prisons has quadrupled in the last 25 years, swelled by get-tough policies enacted in the 1980s and 1990s and rising by 500,000 in the last 10 years alone.

According to the International Centre for Prison Studies at King's College in London, more people are behind bars in the United States than in any other country. China ranks second with 1.5 million prisoners, followed by Russia with 870,000. The U.S. incarceration rate of 737 per 100,000 people is the highest of any nation.

The United States has 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population. Drug

offenders account for about 2 million of the 7 million in prison, on probation or parole.

Guantanamo Bay Prison protest

On January 9-13, the first-ever international delegation of former prisoners, families of current prisoners, U.S. lawyers and human rights activists traveled to Guantanamo, Cuba to hold a conference on prison abuses and march to the Cuban-side security gate of the U.S. Naval Base to call for the closure of the illegal prison. The protest in Cuba was part of the January 11 International Day to Shut Down Guantanamo, the day that marks the 5-year anniversary of the first prisoners being sent to Guantanamo.

"I am traveling all the way from Dubai because my heart is overflowing with grief over the abuse and ongoing detention of my son," said Zohra Zewawi, whose son has been tortured and blinded in one eye during his detention, and has never been charged or tried. Her son was imprisoned in September 2002 and is still a prisoner in Guantanamo. Asif Iqbal, a former detainee who was freed with no charges after years of abuse, is coming to show his support for the basic rights of detainees.

"All prisoners deserve humane treatment and fair trials, which is not happening in Guantanamo," says retired U.S. Army Colonel and delegate Ann Wright. "U.S. federal courts, not military commissions, should hear the cases against those charged with terrorist acts and the infamous prison in Guantanamo should be immediately shut down."

Hunger strike in Texas Prison

On October 8, 2006, inmates on death row in the Texas Polunsky Unit began a hunger strike to protest poor housing con-

ditions. In a call for support from people on the outside, one of the strikers stated, "A few of my comrades and I are fed up with the deplorable conditions we're housed in, and we have decided we will no longer eat. We are going to hunger strike until TDCJ moves us to more humane living conditions. We are determined, and either the conditions will improve or we will starve to death."

The illusion of hope is all but gone

You can see it all the time on the news. It's all over the internet. Prisoner abuse has run rampant throughout the world. You've seen Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, American soldiers torturing hundreds of people in the interest of democracy, peace, justice, and freedom.

It's been turning the collective stomachs of society these past years, as you come to see the face of a beast none want to recognize. You look overseas and ask yourselves, "How can good, solid citizens behave like that?" You wonder, "Where did that monster come from?"

The question isn't very hard to answer. That kind of abuse isn't anything new. It's been happening here on American soil for decades. And while it's true that American prisoners don't suffer the depth of those held hostage by Bush & Co., here in Texas on death row we are forced to endure some of the harshest and most inhumane treatment imaginable.

For the past several years, I as well as a few hundred others have been living out what can easily be called a nightmare. After the injustice of being sentenced to death by a corrupt legal system (our universal right to life notwithstanding), we've been shipped off to be warehoused in a penal

institution of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ).

Upon arrival, we are shorn of our dignity and our identity, caged and treated like animals, while we wait through the years of appeals and the judge's eventual signing of our death warrants. We spend these years stored in the Polunsky Unit, in a segregated housing facility that has been designed to house over 500 people in a complete, indefinite isolation.

Segregative housing units, also called security housing units (SHU's) and control units, have been around for decades, designed to break the most violent and dangerous inmates in the prison system. No one is ever sentenced by a judge or jury to segregation; it's the person's actions once in prison that determine the need for placement here, as a non-punitive measure to maintain safety in and security of the institution.

In general, after an inmate is able to prove that they are no longer a threat to the institution, they are placed back into the general population. The same is not true for us. Despite the provision for a non-segregation status in the Texas Death Row plan (the policy outlining death row housing and general procedure adopted by the director of TDCJ to bring the institution into compliance with Texas State Law), men on death row are never allowed to leave isolation.

And yet, it wasn't always like this. From 1965-1999, we were housed on the Ellis Unit, and afforded almost all of the same privileges that maximum-security general population inmates were allowed. We had art programs, group recreation, the ability to work and walk around unrestrained. We had religious services, and televisions. We were generally treated better all around.

Since being moved to Polunsky, though, life hasn't been the same. We've been put

on 22-hour lockdown. We lost all our group recreation, art programs and supplies (except well paper and color pencils), work programs, televisions, and religious services. We're not allowed contact visits, so the only physical contact we'll get until they kill us is when the CO's hold our restrained arms while escorting us.

According to policy, we're supposed to have a chance to have most of that if we're behaving ourselves. TDCJ's non-compliance with their own policy isn't only incredibly immoral, it's also illegal according to the state constitution's clause against cruel and unusual punishment. Why they're allowed to get away with this is beyond me.

The situation we're stuck in leaves a question begging to be asked: What can we do about it? Unfortunately, an answer really isn't forthcoming, as the courts, state, and federal government are apathetic, even hostile to us. We've tried lawsuits, pleas and petitions. Each has been futile, and it has sometimes resulted in further abuse of us and our outside supporters.

One of our main problems is that an insufficient number of us speak up about the abuse. In the minds of our captors and their supporters, "If they're not speaking up about it, it can't be that bad". Well, speaking up about it intelligently and effectively has been another problem. And even when it's done, our complaints seem to fall on deaf ears.

Over the years, we've also tried several civil disobedience movements, ranging from general non-compliance to non-violent resistance to try and get our complaints heard. This too has been to no avail. So if legal remedies and direction aren't helping, what's to be tried next?

To answer that, a few of us have come together out of necessity, realizing that it's

going to take more drastic measures to try to compel a change.

In this regard, as of October 8, 2006, we've initiated a hunger strike. We will not accept another morsel of food from our captors until such a time as TDCJ makes a credible effort towards the changes necessary to remove the current inhumane conditions.

We have several viable requests we're making to the administration, dealing with health and safety issues, with policies and procedures being ignored and misinterpreted, and with our segregation housing conditions. It's a shame that we have to starve ourselves to be treated decently. We're hoping we don't have to starve to death, but we cannot allow ourselves to be denied our basic human rights. We cannot, we will not live like this any longer.

Yet even as we take this drastic step to stand against this injustice, we realize our actions alone will not likely bring the

changes we require. We need your support in this struggle, fighting with us side by side. The administration will try to cover up and misconstrue our efforts, so we're asking you to get involved, to put up as much effort as you're able.

Any actions you can take to help vocalize our plight are positive, be it writing to government officials, TDCJ administration, or the media; participation in online blogs and forums; protesting if you are able; and encouraging others to get involved. We'll also need your encouragement and solidarity to help keep us from faltering, as even the stoutest of hearts can waver. The struggle will be long and hard, but in the end, with your help, we hope to succeed.

In strength, struggle, and solidarity,
 Steven Woods 999427
 Justen Hall 999497
 Richard Cobb 999467
 Travis Runnels 999505
 Kevin Watts 999456
 Stephen Moody 999076



Literature Catalog

Autonomous Self-Organization and Anarchist Intervention: A Tension in Practice

Confronting Empire: An Analysis of Contemporary Capitalism and Ways to Fight it in the U.S.

From an Echo in Darkness, A Step into Light: The Prison Industrial Complex & Prison Abolition

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The Invisibility of Women Prisoners' Activism

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Women and Imprisonment: History and Current Reality

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PO Box 872

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