

Walkin' Steel

A NEWSLETTER DEVOTED TO THE ABOLITION OF CONTROL UNIT PRISONS
PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN

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Vol. 1 No. 2

FROM ATTICA TO MARION TO FLORENCE: THE INHUMANITY CONTINUES UNLESS WE STOP IT!

This is the second issue of Walkin' Steel, a newsletter devoted to abolishing Control Units. Yet, the focus of the issue is the Attica prison rebellion that took place 20 years ago. Let us try to explain.

In a very real way the seeds of the relationship between Attica and Marion started 200 years ago, before either existed, with the founding of the penitentiary in the U.S. in 1790. Shortly after that first institution was opened in Philadelphia, the state of New York unveiled its first prison at Auburn, far away from New York City. Auburn would become one of the models for the development of penitentiaries in the U.S., and its decrepit building and brutal mentality would continue — always being challenged by those it was imprisoning.

Leaping ahead until 1970 we see essentially unchanged conditions at Auburn, 170 years after its opening. At this time the prisoners demanded their right to celebrate Black Solidarity Day. When the Department of "Corrections" refused this demand, the prisoners rebelled. Once the rebellion was put down, in November of 1970, many of the leaders were transferred to Attica, a nearby prison. Just a few months later, on August 21, 1971, George Jackson was assassinated by guards in San Quentin, and prisons across the country trembled.

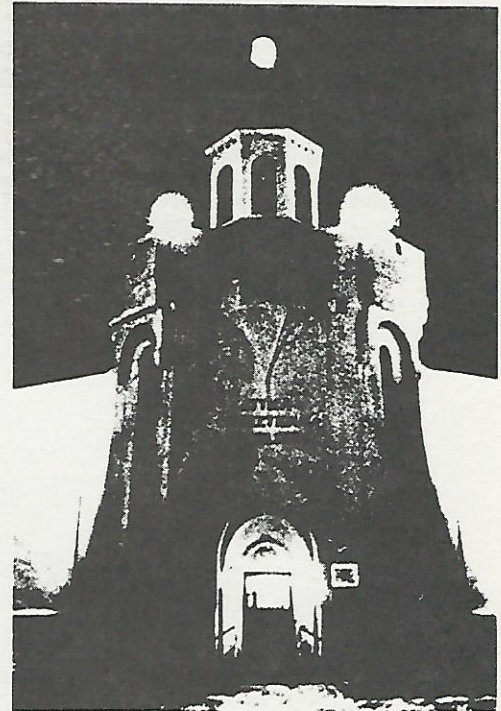
One of these prisons was Attica. Less than a month after the assassination of George, the prison erupted in the greatest prison rebellion in the history of the U.S. The following year, in 1972, imprisonment rates in the U.S., which had remained

more-or-less constant for 50 years, started to soar. Also in 1972, a big work stoppage at the United States Penitentiary in Marion persisted. The prison officials were unable to break the strike, so instead tried to break the strikers. Over

60 leaders of the strike, including Puerto Rican National Hero Rafael Cancel Miranda, were rounded up and caged in one wing of the prison. Here a new concept in incarceration was formulated and institutionalized. It was called the Control Unit.

The rebellion at Attica by itself was not responsible for the development of the Control Unit. But it was one of the fundamental moments in the struggle of people of color throughout the country, and it was this struggle, and others like it, that stimulated the creation of the Control Unit at Marion.

But more links Attica and Marion than the chain of events described above. Attica and Marion have, despite their unmitigated evil and brutality, been the location for hundreds and hundreds of acts of rebellion and creative resistance by the prisoners. But these haven't only been negations. They have been assertions of true humanity, of what the human spirit is capable of. Imagine the strength it took for the men at Attica to rebel in 1971. Imagine the strength it has taken for the men there to continue to rebel. Yet, the rebellions at Attica continue. And imagine the courage that it takes for those at Marion who rebel daily. Although these rebellions are not always visible to us, we know that they are visible to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Marion has failed. It has not destroyed at the needed level, and thus the BOP is now trying to build the "new and improved" control unit prison in Florence. The need for this



IN THIS ISSUE

From Attica to Marion to Florence	1
Sept. 21st Attica Commemoration.....	2
Attica = Resistance.....	3
Resources on Attica.....	4
New York Control Unit Prisons.....	5
Control Unit Prisons Proliferate.....	6
Florence Update.....	8
People to Contact.....	9
Who Killed McDuffie?	10
Toxic Water at Marion - Changes? ..	11
Get In Touch With CEML.....	12

new prison is the proof of the failure of the old, the ultimate testimony of the spirit of resistance that is contained in the human beings caged at Marion.

As we work against Marion and Florence, we thus remember Attica. We remember those courageous Brothers who fought so that prisons would never again be the same. We remember those who died in the yard. We remember, and we promise never to forget, never to stop struggling against Attica, Marion, Florence, and all the other monsters constructed in an effort to stop people from obtaining their freedom.

Sept. 1971: Attica Prison Rebellion... 20 Years Later, Sept. 21, 1991:

ATTICA REMEMBERED

DATE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1991

PLACE: DePaul Univ., 2323 N. Seminary, Chicago

TIME: CONFERENCE - 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

RALLY & THE COMPELLING DOCUMENTARY "ATTICA"

SHOWING: 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

CEML invites you to join us on September 21, 1991 in a day-long commemoration of the heroic uprising at Attica prison 20 years ago. The day will include workshops, a strategy session, and an evening rally and film showing.

The workshops will address: 1) Lessons Gained: 20 Years of Prison Organizing; 2) Control Units; and 3) The True Purpose of Prisons.

An afternoon strategy session will bring together people from around the country who have been working to defeat control unit prisons and others who would like to become involved in the project. Hopefully, we can take another step toward the creation of a united network.

The evening program promises to be a truly memorable event. We will be fortunate to have with us one of the Attica Brothers, Akil Al-Jundi. Akil was in the yard at Attica during the rebellion and continues to struggle for justice for the Attica Brothers. He is currently involved with a major civil suit on behalf of the prisoners which ironically will be heard this fall, 20 years after the massacre. The second speaker of the evening will be Michael Deutsch of the Peoples Law Office. Michael was a lawyer for the Attica Brothers in the aftermath of the massacre and is one of the attorneys in the civil suit. Both Akil and Michael have been persistent fighters for the human rights of prisoners. The evening will also include a rare showing of the prize-winning documentary film, Attica, a film which includes footage from inside the prison.

If you are interested in understanding an important moment in U.S. history, join us. If you want to act on your anger and opposition to the proliferation of repressive Control Unit Prisons, definitely join us.

One of the first things the prisoners did after the uprising was to submit a list of immediate demands. The t.v. cameras carried their declaration, conveying their anger, frustration and determination to the world.

To the People of America

The incident that has erupted here at Attica is not a result of the dastardly bushwacking of the two prisoners Sept. 8, 1971 but of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administration network of the prison, throughout the year.

WE are MEN! We are not beasts and do not intend to be beaten or driven as such. The entire prison populace has set forth to change forever the ruthless brutalization and disregard for the lives of the prisoners here and throughout the United States. What has happened here is but the sound before the fury of those who are oppressed.

We will not compromise on any terms except those that are agreeable to us. We call upon all the conscientious citizens of America to assist us in putting an end to this situation that threatens the lives of not only us, but each and every one of us as well.

We have set forth demands that will bring closer to reality the demise of these prison institutions that serve no useful purpose to the People of America, but to those who would enslave and exploit the people of America.

THE INMATES OF ATTICA PRISON



ATTICA = RESISTANCE

"If America has a soul, it's right here."

Attica Brother Clarence Jones,
September 11, 1971

The United States has many souls; rich and poor, black and white, inhuman and compassionate, caring and indifferent, caged and free. On September 9, 1971, the prisoners of Attica maximum security prison forced the rest of the U.S. and the world to look into the depraved soul of the United States government's iron fist of prisons — the crudest form of political and social repression — and face the racist, oppressive truth of that system. Attica is not just a point on a map or a geographical location. Nor is it just a maximum security prison in upstate New York. Attica stands for the resistance to the barbarity of the U.S. prison system; for the dignity and humanity of all prisoners; and for the never ending struggle against racism and oppression of third world people. While we organize and fight against the new supermax dungeons of today, we can take heart from Attica and use the power of Attica to bolster our efforts.

The prisoners at Attica rebelled for many reasons, but it was summed up most succinctly by Attica Brother Flip Crawley: "We want to be treated as human beings. [We want what] oppressed people are advocating all over the world...We do not want to rule, we only want to live."

Conditions at Attica in 1971 were horrible. In the summer of 1971, the prison held nearly 700 more prisoners than the 1600 it had been designed for. The prison society was rife with racism. White prisoners were accorded the best jobs. 54% of the prisoners were Black while 100% of the guards were white. Black magazines and books were censored or intercepted. Black Muslims were targeted and treated as subversives. The bad treatment of Muslims was compounded by the fact that the prison diet, which all prisoners wanted changed, was high in pork, which Muslims could not eat, starch and fat, and contained few vegetables or fruit. The meals were budgeted at \$.63 per day per prisoner. Work was boring, nondevelopmental and paid paltry wages — monthly wages averaged \$7.50 — and many prisoners had no job at all. One of the most debilitating and dehumanizing of all prison conditions was the lack of adequate medical care. The prison doctor ran the morning sick call from behind a mesh screen and examinations were rarely given. The doctor would make a diagnosis in a few seconds without physically examining the prisoner and often dismissed prisoners as malingerers or gave them a prescription for aspirin. Chronic and acute illnesses were routinely left untreated and there was little mental health care.

In response to these appalling conditions, approximately 1,200 prisoners liberated Attica on September 9, 1971, by seizing control of Times Square, the crossroads of the prison. The prisoners took 39 guards hostage, providing them with food, water, cigarettes, mattresses and blankets. A ring of Muslim prisoners encircled the hostages at all times to ensure their safety. The prisoners could not, however, protect the hostages from their murderers—the New York State Police

and their fellow correctional officers. For four days after Sept. 9, the prisoners organized themselves, elected a central committee, negotiated with prison officials, and declared their autonomy and dignity to the world, all the while under the scrutiny of the media that they had invited into the prison.

On September 13, at 9:46 a.m., without any clear warning that an assault with lethal weapons was imminent, a force of 150 state troopers, prison guards and police, armed with 12 gauge shotguns, .270 caliber rifles and .38 caliber handguns, fired for six minutes on the unarmed prisoners and hostages, seconds after a powerful and incapacitating tear gas had been released. The massacre occurred on Governor Rockefeller's approval of Correctional Commissioner Russell Oswald's recommendation, after Rockefeller refused to come to Attica

From the yard at Attica the brothers presented the following to their jailers:

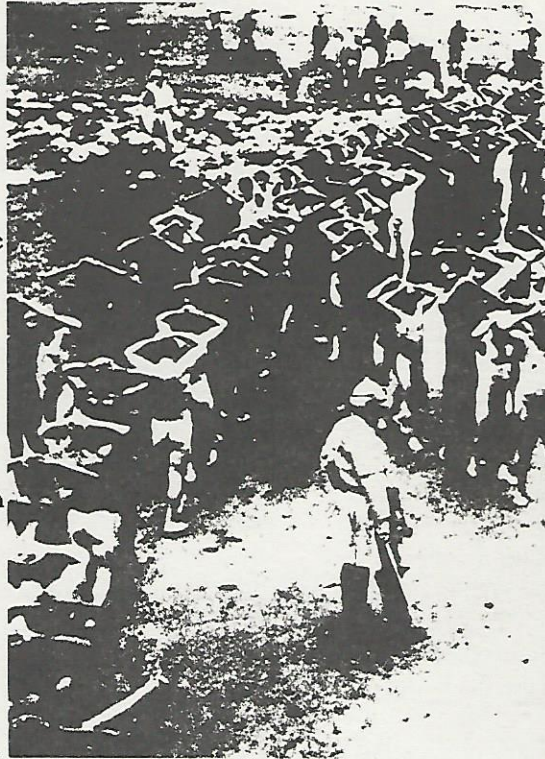
The Fifteen Practical Proposals

- 1. Apply the New York State minimum wage law to all state institutions. STOP SLAVE LABOR.*
- 2. Allow all New York State prisoners to be politically active, without intimidation or reprisals.*
- 3. Give us true religious freedom.*
- 4. End all censorship of newspapers, magazines, letters and other publications coming from the publisher.*
- 5. Allow all inmates, at their own expense, to communicate with anyone they please.*
- 6. When an inmate reaches conditional release date, give him a full release without parole.*
- 7. Cease administrative resentencing of inmates returned for parole violations.*
- 8. Institute realistic rehabilitation programs for all inmates according to their offense and personal needs.*
- 9. Educate all correctional officers to the needs of the inmates, i.e., understanding rather than punishment.*
- 10. Give us a healthy diet, stop feeding us so much pork, and give us some fresh fruit daily.*
- 11. Modernize the inmate educational system.*
- 12. Give us a doctor that will examine and treat all inmates that request treatment.*
- 13. Have an institutional delegation comprised of one inmate from each company authorized to speak to the institution administration concerning grievances (QUARTERLY).*
- 14. Give us less cell time and more recreation with better recreational equipment and facilities.*
- 15. Remove inside walls, making one open yard, and no more segregation or punishment.*

in an attempt to avert the slaughter. The troopers had no evidence to believe that the prisoners had firearms. 29 prisoners and 10 hostages died as a result of the indiscriminate firing. An additional 85 prisoners and 3 hostages were injured.

One of the many ironies to emerge from Attica was that the lack of medical care available to the prisoners following the shooting mirrored the same substandard medical care available to the prisoners before the liberation. Following the shooting, prisoners were allowed to die without receiving medical treatment. Although 39 ambulances were waiting to take away the 39 hostages, seven hours passed before any prisoner was taken from the prison for medical treatment at an outside hospital. In fact, no preparations at all had been made for any outside doctors or nurses to be present; no blood, plasma or any other medical equipment was ready; the prison hospital itself was not prepared, and aside from a brief visit by the two prison doctors on the yard, a doctor from the National Guard was the only doctor in the yard that day. The most shocking revelation, however, is that the prisoners were actually attended to by two veterinarians, members of the Attica Lions Club, who had been working at a food station inside the walls, and were pressed into service by one of the two prison doctors.

Injured and uninjured prisoners alike were stripped of their clothes and possessions (including glasses, watches and false teeth), and made to run a gauntlet, naked, during which



they were beaten by guards wielding clubs and other weapons. Many prisoners were also severely beaten once inside the prison.

As soon as the massacre was over, the official lies began. The press was told that all the hostages had been killed by the prisoners; either by having had their throats slashed or heads hit with pipes. The press was also informed that some hostages had been castrated. The autopsy results proved otherwise, of course, but this came after the white mainstream media had splashed the official lies all over the front pages of every paper in the country. In fact, not one hostage was killed by the prisoners.

But this isn't what we remember Attica for. We remember Attica because it was the single greatest act of defiance and independence by prisoners ever recorded in the U.S.

As an essay published in the Black Panther newspaper noted on the first anniversary of Attica: "The prisoners' uprising at Attica was a statement of life, of human concern for survival with dignity, addressing all-too-clearly the backwardness and armed forces of racism, exploitation and death." Notwithstanding the brutal repression present at Attica, the Attica prisoners said NO! We will not be treated as animals anymore. Attica was liberated for four and a half days. This is what we remember Attica for; this is what Attica ultimately stands for. Liberation. Power. Resistance. Above all, let us never forget, Attica equals resistance.

RESOURCES ON ATTICA

Books

Tom Wicker. *A Time to Die* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1975). An account of the rebellion from the well-known liberal *New York Times* columnist who was a member of the Observer Team invited to Attica by the prisoners.

Attica: The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972). Discusses in detail conditions at Attica prior to the rebellion and the events of the rebellion itself.

Malcolm Bell. *The Turkey Shoot: Tracking the Attica Cover-up* (New York: Grove Press, 1985). A prosecutor in the Attica case describes the derailing of the prosecution of state troopers and officials for murder and other crimes committed in the attack on D-Yard.

Films

Attica. 80-minute award-winning documentary from 1972, includes footage from D Yard and follow-up interviews. Available from CEML.

Attica. Commercial adaptation of *A Time to Die*.

Eyes on the Prize II, Part 6: A Nation of Law? (Alexandria, Va.: PBS Video, 1990). Covers the Chicago police/FBI murders of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark as well as the Attica Rebellion.

Teach Our Children. 35-minute documentary including on-site footage of the rebellion and the mass funeral procession through Harlem for murdered prisoners. For rental (\$60 film, \$50 video) from Third World Newsreel; 335 W. 38th St., 5th Floor; N.Y., N.Y. 10018.

HIDDEN CONTROL UNITS IN UPSTATE N.Y.

by Safiya Bukhari-Alston

The prisoner uprising/rebellion which occurred in May at the Southport Correctional Facility in Pine City, New York was inevitable. Why?

In the late 70's and early 80's rumors abounded in New York State about the building of a maxi-maxi security prison for the housing of prisoners deemed to be high security risks, political activists and "unmanageables."

But, with prisons being a major industry in New York, which is undergoing a major recession, the Board of Corrections (BOC) realized that it was necessary to take a different approach to the management of the burgeoning prison population. The BOC determined that the way to supervise a prison population of this magnitude and spend less money was to streamline existing prisons.

The institution originally designated to be this facility was Shawangunk. This institution had all the requirements for this designation including the small, self-contained prisons within the prison designed to insure that the minimum number of prisoners interacted with each other at any given time and the maximum amount of security would be available for them.

This was also done to prevent another Attica.

Herman Bell, Basheer Hameed, and others were promptly sent to this institution. Herman Bell was told that this was his last stop. However, security technology at Shawangunk turned out to be inadequate.

Thus Southport Correctional Facility. The extremely modern multi-million dollar complex with a gym, art class, music room, and academic/vocational class capacity seemed ideal. It was located hundreds of miles away from the city, and the high-tech security was already in place. Each cell was modern and fixed mirrors were over the sink/toilet unit. The bed, cabinet, desk and stool were all welded in place. No mirrors were sold in the commissary, thus there was limited visual capability. Only those who came into the facility with mirrors and refused to give them up could see into their neighbors' cells. Each cell had a window directly in front of the cell. Hence, the security cameras that were mounted on the walls outside could look directly into a cell. Since each cell had a window, by counting windows you could count the cells and therefore monitor each cell individually. The fence-mounted cameras had swivel capabilities and therefore could monitor specific cell occupants. Southport was ideal for long-term, permanent lockdown.

Southport was designated for conversion into a Special

Housing Facility. New York's version of Marion. Plexiglas barriers cover the front of each cell. Each housing unit in the institution has its own recreation yard. Cages in each recreation yard house men during recreation hour. These cages are no larger than common cells, complete with concrete flooring. It is in these cages that the prisoners are locked during their one hour recreation period.

Southport's modern features disappeared when it became the maxi-maxi facility for New York State. No more gym. No more art class. No more music room. No more academic or vocational classes. With the exception of recreation and showers, Southport is a lockdown joint. On May 28, 1991,

after five months of control unit torture, Southport Prison blew. Fifty prisoners seized five guards as hostage, held them for over 24 hours, and demanded that their views be aired in public. When this demand was realized, the prisoners released their hostages unharmed. On June 25, about one month later, New York state held hearings on what happened at Southport. These facts have emerged from those hearings:

** About 92% of the prisoners at Southport are Black or Latino;
** Southport guards

frequently beat prisoners and hurled racial slurs at them. Two days before the rebellion a guard threw prisoners' food on the floor and chanted his support for the Ku Klux Klan;

** A Department of "Corrections" spokesperson admitted that Klansmen worked at Elmira Prison and that some guards from Elmira had been transferred to work at Southport;

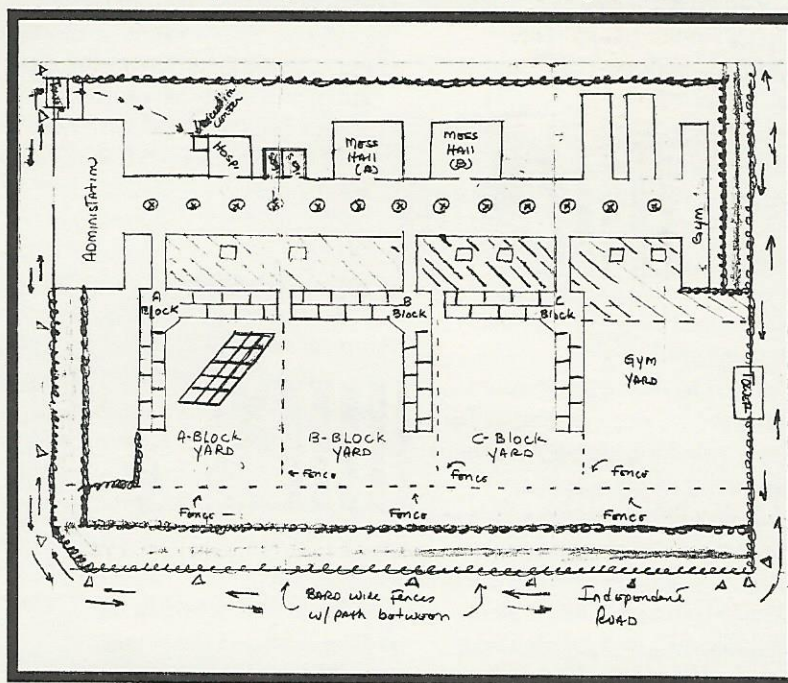
** Guards would often not walk their beats. Since the prisoners are locked in their cells 23 hours a day, contact with everything, including emergency medical services, could only be obtained through the guards.

** Prisoners hostile to one another were often deliberately placed in the same small exercise cages by the guards to get the prisoners to fight;

** Guards would often turn off the water in prisoners' cells, leave lights on all night, and turn off the heat in the winter;

** When the rebellion ended, guards deliberately destroyed much personal property belonging to the prisoners.

With nothing left to lose, why not rebel? In the words of Janis Joplin, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose!"



Southport Correctional Facility, drawn by political prisoner, Seth Hayes

Safiya Bukhari-Alston, a former political prisoner, currently organizes against Control Unit prisons in N.Y.

Marion Inspires Creation of State Control Units

Long-Term Solitary Institutionalized as Tool of Repression

The eight year experiment at Marion Penitentiary has inspired state prison officials across the nation to implement their own "super-maximum security" prisons or units within prisons. A recent survey conducted by Marion staff found that thirty-six states now operate such control units. Like Marion, these control units have institutionalized long-term solitary confinement as the primary weapon against prisoner resistance generated by our increasingly crowded and brutal prisons.

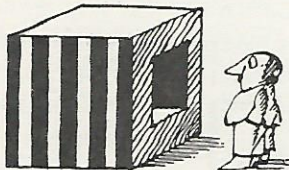
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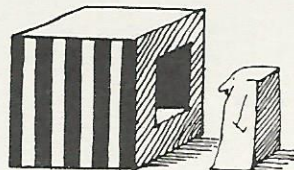
as is the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison in California. The SHU, which opened in December 1989, was in turn inspired by Marion. Built to hold 1,056 prisoners in near-total isolation, it is already twenty percent

over capacity. Prisoners are confined to their eighty square foot cells with solid steel doors for twenty-two and one half hours a day. They are allowed out only for a ninety minute "exercise" period. During this period they are alone in an empty concrete yard the size of three cells with twenty foot high walls and metal screens overhead. Guards open the sliding doors by remote control and use loudspeakers to direct the prisoners in and out. Prisoners moved off the cell-block for any reason are shackled and flanked by two guards wielding truncheons. Except for the sound of a door slamming or a voice on a speaker, the SHU is silent. Prison officials, not the courts, "sentence" prisoners to SHU terms. Many prisoners are sent there for filing grievances or lawsuits or for otherwise opposing prison injustices.

Conditions such as those at the SHU and Marion are replicated in state control units throughout the country. Many of these prisons feature their own innovations in controlling and dehumanizing prisoners. At a second California control unit prison at Corcoran, armed guards patrol the Plexiglas ceilings over the cells and peer in at prisoners through Plexiglas cell walls. At Colorado's Centennial Prison in Canon City, the administrative segregation unit is being expanded to include the whole prison. A priest hired by the prison delivers communion through a small, knee-high food slot in a solid steel cell door. "If you ain't wrapped too tight, 23-hour lockdown can be enough to make you explode," says the priest. Guards are armed with "nut-guns," wide-bore guns that fire wildly caroming, acorn-sized "nuts" at prisoners from close range. "It's a miniature cannon," the priest explains. Prisoners hit by the nuts can be maimed. "One guy lost his eye, and since I arrived here three years ago, an acorn took off a guy's nose and plastered it



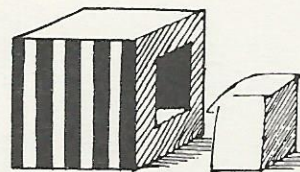
The model for and improved" Marion built at Florence, Colorado, is a state control



to his cheek."

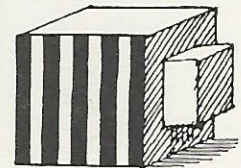
At Lebanon, Ohio, prisoners under administrative control are held in eight by six foot isolation cells. Each cell has a second door so that prisoners can be locked in the extreme back, darkened portion of the cell. A prisoner describes being leg-shackled, having his arms cuffed to a belt about his waist and being escorted by three guards whenever he is moved from his cell. Other prisoners are forbidden to speak to him. Prison officials at the Missouri State Prison at Potosi apply the "double-litter restraint" to "recalcitrant" prisoners. The prisoner's hands are cuffed behind his back, his ankles are cuffed, and he is forced to lie face-down on an Army-type cot, his head turned to the side. A second cot is then tightly strapped upside-down over the prisoner and the ends are strapped shut, totally enclosing and immobilizing him. Carl Swope, a 21 year-old sentenced to seven years for credit card fraud, filed suit after being held in the restraint for three hours.

Other state control unit prisons are at Ionia, Michigan; Southport, New York; McAlester, Oklahoma; and Baltimore, Maryland. The list will apparently continue to grow.



A Pennsylvania Senate Judiciary Committee report studying the causes of, and proposing responses to, the 1989 uprising at the state's Camp Hill prison had as a key proposal the construction of a Marion-style control unit.

Control unit technology is closely related to solitary confinement or "segregation," a practice as old as imprisonment itself. Indeed, one of the earliest debates concerning prisons revolved around the proper use of solitary confinement. The debate raged from the 1820's to the start of the Civil War. Advocates of the "Pennsylvania system" championed absolute solitary confinement of all prisoners for the length of their prison term, as practiced in Pennsylvania's two prisons. During the day prisoners worked alone in their cells. Proponents of the "Auburn system," named after the New York prison where the system was first implemented in 1822, thought that solitary confinement during the night should be broken by congregate work and dining during the day, though prisoners were always to maintain absolute silence.



By the 1930's, solitary confinement had become the main disciplinary measure in prisons, having replaced various forms of corporal punishment which, until then, had been widely used. A second role of solitary was for "administrative segregation." Unlike "disciplinary segregation," administrative segregation was not officially considered punishment, but rather was justified as an administrative

Incompatible situations are agitated by prison staff rather than broken up. Information which is confidential from prisoners' files is broadcast by correctional officers onto the tiers to bring suffering to certain resistant prisoners. A prisoner who refuses to accept the violation of his rights is subject to harassment and intimidation. Some staff provoke incidents to have justification to physically abuse prisoners. The prisoner grievance system is a farce mainly indicating the need for prisoner staff to initiate a cover-up of whatever violation of prisoners' rights has occurred. I wonder if this situation is solely designed to destroy prisoners with pain, stress, and frustration.

*~Thomas Feters
Pelican Bay control unit prisoner*

response to the prison's purported inability to manage the prisoner by normal means. In practice, the distinction served mainly to reduce what little claim the prisoner might have to due process, the case for which was less compelling when the prisoner was being confined merely to allow the smooth functioning of the prison. Even then, prison officials at least went to the trouble of setting guidelines stating under what circumstances and for how long a prisoner should be subjected to segregation. For example, the 1959 Manual of Standards of the American Correctional Association, noting that segregation could have a "damaging effect upon some inmates" and that "[e]xcessively long periods [in segregation] for punishment defeat their own purpose by embittering and demoralizing the inmate," recommended "a few days" of punitive segregation for most infractions, and an additional thirty to ninety days of administrative segregation in extraordinary circumstances.

Actual practice often differed dramatically from these guidelines. Political prisoner Geronimo Pratt, for example, reported being held in sordid conditions in San Quentin's segregation unit for eight straight years. Yet it was with the conversion of H-Unit at Marion to the Long-Term Control Unit in the early 1970's that long-term solitary confinement became an institutionalized practice. A General Accounting Office report from 1975 stated that prisoners had been held in solitary in the Control Unit for as long as three years.

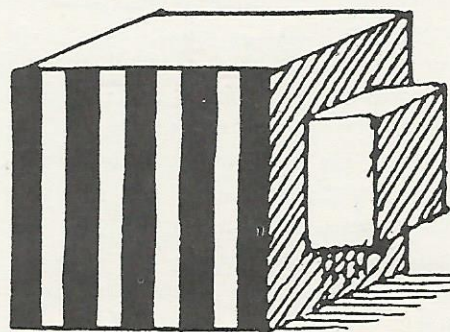
To understand why the BOP would adopt a practice whose "embittering and demoralizing" (and worse) effects on prisoners were so well known, one need only examine the social and political climate of that era. Both prisons and society at large were undergoing a period of upheaval unprecedented in scope and revolutionary potential in 20th century United States. The establishment of the Control Unit was part of a fundamental shift in the nature and role of imprisonment undertaken in response to that upheaval.

The 1960's marked the end of a long period in which the "rehabilitation" of prisoners was in principle the goal of imprisonment. With the rise to power of Richard Nixon on a platform of "law and order" - generally recognized to mean the suppression of the Black and other liberation

movements of the 1960's - even lip service to such humane goals was abandoned. Instead, Marion's new Long-Term Control Unit was used to hold the most dissident and politicized prisoners from throughout the Federal prison system in long-term administrative segregation. The goal was to politically neutralize such prisoners and set them up as an example of what would befall other would-be resisters.

The early 1970's also marked the beginning of a period of spiraling imprisonment rates in the United States, an ongoing phenomenon. By the 1980's, the doubling of the prison population had intensified already horrible and deadening prison conditions and set the stage for another period of intense prisoner resistance. The use of control units and whole control unit prisons was expanded in an effort to undercut such an eventuality. In late 1983, all of Marion was converted to a control unit functioning much the same as H-Unit had since the early 1970's. State prison systems began adopting the Marion model, as documented above. By mid-1991, Marion Warden John Clark could gloat in the success of this strategy at the federal level. In view of the explosive growth of the federal prison population, he told the Washington Post, "the Bureau of Prisons should be blowing up - but that's not happening and the reason is because of Marion."

The realization of both the scale and purpose of the proliferation of control units should elicit a powerful response from people concerned for peace and justice. The fight seems a daunting one, but it is not one in which we must start from scratch. CEML, and many others, most notably the prisoners have worked over the years to develop a wide range of educational materials, including newsletters, articles, videos and pamphlets about Marion, control units, prison and racism. Members of the group give talks, show our video and lead discussions wherever we are invited, sometimes traveling widely. Readers of Walkin' Steel, join us in the struggle by setting up your own action groups wherever you live. Use our resources to educate those you know about the reality of prisons and control units. Probably your state is one of the 36 with a control unit of its own and there may already be a group campaigning against it directly. Try contacting one of the groups listed on page 9. If there isn't such an organization in your area, why not start one? We also request the assistance of our readers in our effort to establish a clearinghouse for information on the various state and Federal control units. Letters from prisoners or lawyers identifying control units and describing conditions in them, and newspaper articles and other published materials are needed. We also welcome requests for information.



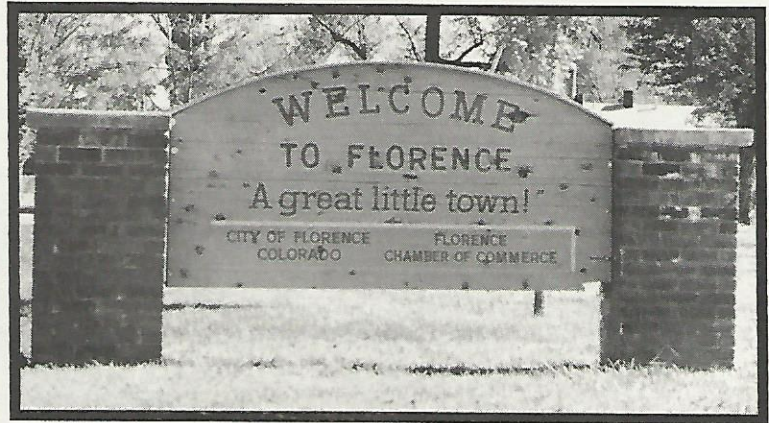
FLORENCE, COLORADO UPDATE

What's new about the construction of the Florence prison site isn't all that heartening. The complex will be the largest federal prison in the United States, but only the first of seven "multi-prisons" that are planned. The population of Florence, Colorado has grown recently due to the increased work demand (unemployment hovers at 17%), and a Colorado Rural Revitalization Project has been created in order to focus on marketing plans to improve conditions for newcomers (traffic movement, rental housing, and food availability). Furthermore, the complex will be located in Fremont county, home of more prisons than any other county in the country.

The complex in Florence is expected to be completed in 1993 and to incarcerate 2,350 prisoners. It will consist of four different security units: a 250-bed minimum security facility, a 750-bed medium security prison, a 550-bed high security penitentiary similar to Leavenworth, and a 550-bed "administrative maximum" security prison far worse than Marion. Construction of the minimum and medium prisons and the central plant at the Federal Bureau of Prison complex is near completion. The main road to the site is paved, and several temporary construction administrative offices are occupied. The maximum prison component will replace the notorious federal prison in Marion, Illinois, which was built in 1963 to replace Alcatraz. It is reported that Marion will be closed only to be renovated and opened again as a maximum security prison.

The administrative maximum security prison in Florence is the first federal prison to be constructed as a control unit prison. The design enables one guard to control the movements of numerous prisoners in several cellblocks by way of electronic doors, cameras, and audio equipment. "We'll be able to electronically open a cell door, shut it behind the inmate, and move him through a series of sliding doors" says Russ Martin, project manager for the Florence prison. At Marion the prisoners can scream to one another from their cells, and prisoners have minimal contact with guards when their food is shoved between the bars. In Florence, this "contact" may be eliminated. "These guys will never be out of their cells, much less in the yard or anywhere around here," the Florence City Manager states. The prisoners will have no clear view of the area surrounding the prison. There will be no windows. "Recreation" for prisoners, 90 minutes per day (the other 22.5 hours they are locked in their cells), will consist of monitored movement to an adjacent cell (a dog run) with natural illumination heavily blocked by a thick wire mesh ceiling. The electronically controlled steel doors and gates replace shackles while prisoners move from their cells to the indoor "recreation" area. State-of-the-art security technology and new construction materials will ensure near complete isolation. Martin boasts, "Marion learned from Alcatraz, and now we've had 30 years to learn from Marion."

Much is planned for the few newly-hired federal employees. According to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the guards will



have the opportunity for promotions within the complex - a first for the BOP. Pueblo Community College is expanding its "educational" track for careers for career jailors, through the masters degree level.

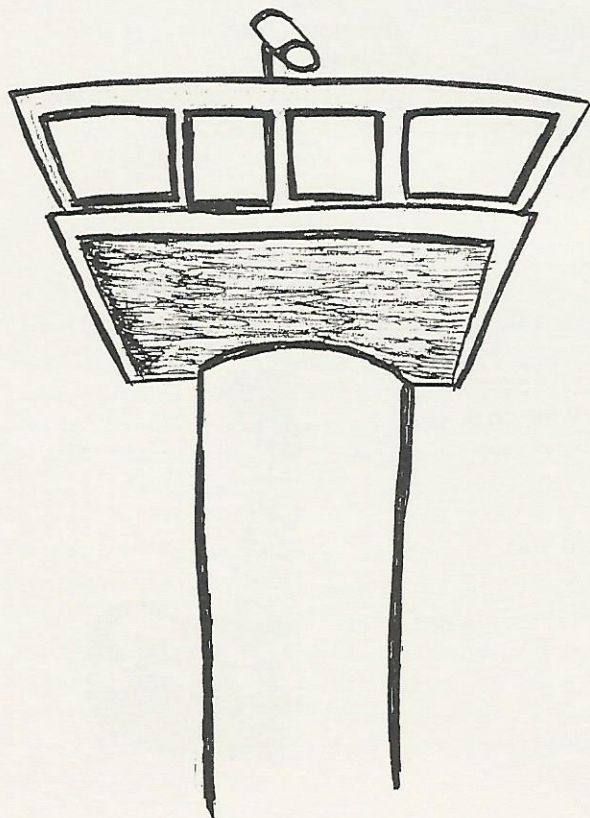
Along with the increase in population and construction proceeding on schedule, is the omni-present government propaganda campaign which continues in full force. The public is led to believe that the most violent prisoners are housed in Marion and will be housed in Florence ("Baddest of bad coming to new federal prison," *Denver Post* May 11, 1991; "Florence prison to get toughest inmates," *Rocky Mountain News*, May 11, 1990; "Toughest cons in line for stay in biggest pen," *Denver Post*, April 14, 1991). However, many are not even charged with violent crimes. A number of the prisoners at Marion have written "too many" lawsuits, participated in work stoppages, and hunger strikes, or pursued their religious and political beliefs. In fact, there are more political prisoners incarcerated at Marion than at any other penal institution, despite the fact that it is one of the smallest prisons in the U.S. There are also a number of Marielitos, prisoners from Cuba, who have been detained for years though they have never even been charged, much less tried for any crime. A 1985 Congressional study showed that 80% of those incarcerated at Marion did not have the level 6 security rating that is supposedly the threshold criterion for being sent to the prison. In fact, some prisoners are sent to Marion for no reason at all. For instance, the U.S. District Court ordered a cap on the D.C. prison population, and as a result, so many prisoners from the District of Columbia have been moved to Marion to relieve overcrowding that they constitute 17% of Marion's population. Virtually all of these prisoners are Black.

With yet another sleight of hand, the government has just designed a new custody reclassification system that allows prisoners to be transferred to higher security institutions with relative ease and far less room for public criticism. Previously the BOP ranked its institutions according to six security levels, ranging from Security Level 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). The BOP has now collapsed those classifications into just four classifications: Low, Medium, High and Administrative. They admit that the reason for this custody classification switch is that the "nature and missions of our institutions" have

changed. We agree, but for different reasons. Obviously, their nature and mission is to be as secretive and as undemocratic as possible, hiding from all forms of critique. They were only able to classify about 20% of the prisoners at Marion as level 6 under the old system. However, with these new designations, they will be able to blur their "decision making" with more and more subjective criteria.

One of the factors which determines designation to Marion is "membership" in, or affiliation with, certain groups. It thus seems as though the 1st Amendment right to freedom of association, is superseded by the alleged "need for security." This is particularly the case for members of the Black Liberation Movement, members of the movement for Puerto Rican Independence, and members of other political and religious groups. Prisoners at Marion, including Sekou Odinga, have already been told that if they don't give up their political beliefs they will be sent to Florence. If membership in a particular group doesn't do the trick, the Regional Designator can place a prisoner in a higher security facility for "good reason." The BOP admits that generally this means increased security for all: "inmates currently in our lower security level institutions may find their institutions redesignated as a medium security level facility and be required to follow the more stringent procedures."

The New World Order is the BOP's changed "nature and mission." Repression and brutality and its concomitant inhumanity is the trend, and more and more mini-Marions are being built. Florence will take over the show-piece that is now Marion. The government created the economic desperation that allows prisons such as Florence to be hailed as a "revival of hopes." It's a sad state of affairs when the media acts as a fourth arm of the government, and promotes the lies and barbarity of the BOP. It's up to us. We are the only ones who can turn this around.



THE FIGHT AGAINST CONTROL UNIT PRISONS PEOPLE TO CONTACT

This is a list of organizations and individuals who are doing work to stop the proliferation of control unit prisons. Some are working on state prisons and some are working on Florence or Marion. If you are interested in learning more about this work, we urge you to contact one or more of the following:

Pelican Bay Information Project (Corey Weinstein, M.D.)
Prisoners Rights Union
1960 Sixth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 441-4214

Bulldozer
Box 5052 Stn A
Toronto, Ontario MSW 1W4
Canada

Dan Kromer
P.O. Box 32761
Detroit, MI 48232

Edna Silvestri
P.O. Box 29041
St. Louis, MO 63112

Committee to End the Marion Lockdown
P.O. Box 578172
Chicago, IL 60657-8172
(312) 235-0070

Women's Jail Project
P.O. Box 1592
Madison, WI 53701
(608) 251-6314

Leonard Peltier Defense Committee
National Office
P.O. Box 583
Lawrence, KS 66044
(913) 842-5774

Saxifrage
P.O. Box 18717
Denver, CO 80218

Edelle Kinsinger
Rocky Mountain Peace Center
P.O. Box 1156
Boulder, CO 80306-1156
(303) 447-2291

Rita Martinez
716 West 16th Street
Pueblo, CO 81003

NY3 Freedom Campaign
2170 Broadway, Suite 2234
New York, N.Y. 10024

Equal Justice U.S.A. / Quixote Center
P.O. Box 5206
Hyattsville, MD 20782
(301) 699-0042

who killed mcduffie?

(a definitive question)

In 1979, Arthur McDuffie, a Black man, was riding his motorcycle in Miami when police chased him, knocked him off his bike, and beat him to death, crushing his head with billyclubs and flashlights. During the trial that followed, all the police were found not guilty. The Black community launched a massive rebellion that rocked Miami and sent shock waves throughout the entire country. Hakim Al-Jamil, then a prisoner at Leavenworth, wrote this poem about the incident. This has been reprinted from Notes from a New Afrikan P.O.W. Journal, Book 6.

his brain was bashed
cranium crashed
skull fractured/broken
all the way around
but they said those who beat him
didnt kill him
so who killed mcduffie?

maybe it was the same ones/
who didnt kill
clifford glover/randy heath/jay parker
claud reese/randy evans/luis baez
auturo reyes/bonita carter/eula love
elizabeth magnum/arthur miller &
countless others
when they musta tripped or
their fingers slipped

maybe it was the same ones
who didnt kill
jose torres/zayd shakur/fred & carl
hampton/jonathan & george/joe dell
twyman myers/spurgeon winters &
a few thousand others
perhaps it was those who didnt kill
lumumba/che'/amilcar/biko/fanon
mondlane/marighella/cordero &
quite a few thousands more

do you suppose it may have been those
who didnt kill
the indians & mexicans
who didnt steal the land &
claim that they discovered it
who didnt steal afrikan peoples
halfway across the planet
who didnt loot our customs/cultures/
religions/languages/labor & land
who didnt bomb the japanese/
vietnamese/& boriqua too

do you think it might have been those
who didnt kill at attica/watts/dc/
detroit/newark/el barrios
at jackson state, at southern u
at the algiers motel
who didnt shoot mark Essex

for 16 hours after he was dead
ask them & they'll tell you
what they didnt do
but they cant tell you
who killed mcduffie

maybe it was one of those
seizures unexplainable where he
beat himself to death
it wouldnt be unusual
our history is full of cases where we
attack nightsticks & flashlights with
our heads
choke billyclubs with our throats till
we die
jump in front of bullets with our
backs
throw ourselves into rivers with
our hands and feet bound
and hang ourselves on trees/
in prison cells
by magic

so it shouldnt be a mystery that
nobody killed mcduffie
he just died the way so many of us do
of a disease nobody makes a claim to
the police say they didnt do it
the mayor says he didnt do it
the judges say they didnt do it
the gov't says it didnt do it
nixon says he didnt do it
the fbi/cia/military establishment
says they didnt do it
xerox/exxon/itt say they didnt do it
the klan & nazis say they didnt do it
(say they were busy in greensboro
& wrightsville)
i know i didnt do it
that dont leave nobody but you
& if you say you didnt do it
we're back to where we started
looking for nobody
who killed mcduffie

you remember nobody dont you
like with de facto segregation

where they said the schools were
segregated
but nobody did it on purpose
like when they said there's been
job discrimination for years
but nobody did it intentionally
thats the nobody we're looking for

the one with the motive to kill
mcduffie
& you see, we *must* find this nobody
who slew mcduffie
because the next person nobody
will beat,
stomp, hang or shoot to death
wont be mcduffie
it'll be you or someone close to you

so for your own safety,
you should know the pedigree of
who killed mcduffie
you should know the reason of
who killed mcduffie
you should remember all those
forgotten
who died of the disease nobody
makes a claim to
so we wont be here asking
who killed you.

Hakim Al-Jamil
Leavenworth



Marion warden tries to douse water concerns

It doesn't taste very good, but it's safe.

Warden John L. Clark

M

arion prison

authorities, led by Warden John Clark, continue to force prisoners at Marion to drink, bathe in, and eat food prepared with toxic water—water containing over two times the federal and state maximum clean drinking water standards for the cancer-causing trihalomethanes (more commonly known as TTHMs.) This outrage is compounded by the fact that five water producing wells have been dug on prison grounds, and the water has already been tested by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) and found to be clean and untainted. An environmental protection engineer at the IEPA told the CEML that the water from the wells could be used immediately. Although the IEPA engineer met several times with prison officials and informed them that the well water was ready to use, Marion officials have not only refused to start using the water, but have not even offered him or us any credible explanation why the water is not being provided to the prisoners immediately.

Warden Clark, in a letter to prisoners dated October 25, 1990, stated that the water project would be completed in August, 1991. Kenneth Moritsugu, Medical Director of the BOP, in a letter to the CEML, stated that the new water project would not be completed until the spring of 1992. No doubt, by the fall, the estimate of when the prisoners will get clean water will probably be up to 1993. Obviously the prisoncrats are going to keep stalling as long as possible in order to continue forcing carcinogenic water down the prisoners' throats.

In a letter dated June 26, 1985, to an attorney who represented prisoners at Marion at that time, Charles Bell, Jr., P.E., the Manager of field operations of the Division of Public Water Supplies, acknowledged that the level of TTHMs in the prison's water supply exceeded federal standards and that "prison officials have been investigating alternative water supplies." The federal Agency For Toxic Substances and Disease Registry analyzed water from the prison twice, once in 1986 and again in 1990, finding both times that TTHMs were two times the federal level. More over, an independent review by the IEPA of water taken by a federal congressional subcommittee which visited Marion on May 18, 1990, found that the TTHM levels in the water were double state and federal limits.

Notwithstanding all of the scientific evidence dating back to 1985, Warden Clark in a letter to the CEML on March 29,



Photo for The Southern "Post" by MICHAEL SWAN
Down the hatch: Warden John Clark drinks a glass to demonstrate how safe it is.

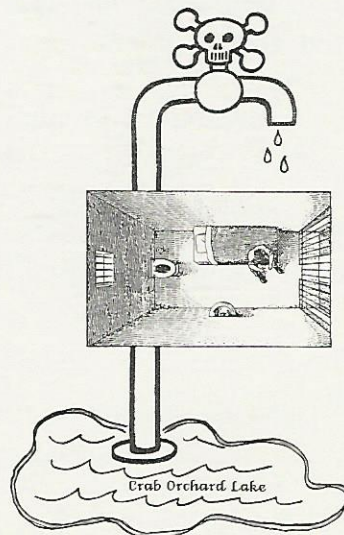
1991, asserted that, "all the tests continue to show that the water supply used at Marion Penitentiary is safe."

On November 1, 1990 CEML issued a press release notifying the media that on Saturday, November 3rd we would be releasing the definitive evidence. Clark felt so pressured by this damaging exposure that he drank alleged Marion water before local media at a last minute press conference just two hours before our press conference in an effort to preempt it. The official lie continues.

The prison officials will continue to poison prisoners until we force them to stop. Our pressure led them to dig the wells, and now we must make them use the wells. To keep the pressure on, write to: J. Michael Quinlan, Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 320 First Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20534 and send a copy to Congressperson William J. Hughes, Chair, Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration, United States House of Representatives, Washington D.C. 20515.

According to the June 25, 1991 issue of the New York Times, Marion Warden John Clark was called to testify at hearings on the recent rebellion at New York State's new control unit prison in Southport. Since Southport is one of many state control unit prisons to have been built on the "Marion model," Clark was a logical apologist to call. He performed well indeed. Clark noted that the plan at Marion is "right, good, and humane." He also cautioned the commission about being influenced by opposition to such institutions and said, "You can expect tremendous resistance from the inmates and their advocates."

Nothing could please us more than Warden Clark's acknowledging that prisoners, CEML and others have generated "tremendous resistance" to control unit prisons. This should inspire us all to redouble our efforts to put John Clark and his control unit colleagues out of work permanently.



WHO WE ARE

This is the second issue of *Walkin' Steel* published by the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML). The United States Penitentiary at Marion was opened in 1963 to replace the infamous Alcatraz prison which closed that same year. Since then, Marion has become an increasingly inhumane institution. In 1972, the year after the rebellion at Attica Prison, one wing of Marion was turned into a Control Unit. In 1983, the entire prison was locked down and turned into one huge Control Unit. CEML was founded in 1985, with three main purposes: to fight against the brutality of the prison; to work against the spread of Control Unit prisons throughout the U.S.; and to expose the white supremacist nature of the prison system.

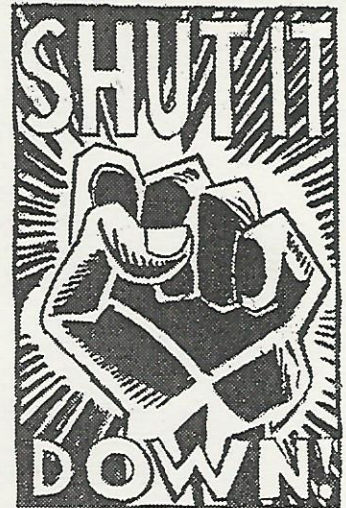
In early 1990, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) announced that the "mission of Marion" would be moved to a new prison to be constructed in Florence, Colorado. CEML decided that, as small as we were, we must fight against the opening of this "administrative maximum" prison. But we cannot hope to stop it by ourselves. Fortunately, we are but one part of a movement launched in November 1990 when people across the country responded to a call to gather and strategize against Florence. A year later, we are inspired by the actions of many:

**The Equal Justice U.S.A. project of the Quixote Center, which campaigns for human rights in a "system mired in the structures of racism and economic disparity that permeate contemporary U.S. society," featured an article about Control Units in the first issue of its newsletter.

**Michigan CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants) has established a creative method of forcing the BOP to respond to unanswered questions about the planned facility at Florence. They have enlarged single questions onto accordion-style postcards.

**Native American poet, Chrystos, has circulated the "NO CONTROL UNIT PRISONS AT MARION, FLORENCE, OR ANYWHERE!" petition at her performance across the country. She has also offered to do a benefit reading to help raise money for the fight against Control Units.

**Coloradoans have ignited a grassroots movement to stop the BOP's dungeon from being built in their state by making a video, organizing in different cities, writing editorials in their local papers, and flooding officials with letters and petitions.



It gives us hope to be a part of the effort to come together and to find the best ways to act. JOIN US!

----- CUT THIS COUPON AND MAIL IT TO CEML AT THE ADDRESS BELOW -----

Yes! I want to help CEML produce more issues of this newsletter and continue its work to stop control unit prisons.

☐ I would like CEML to come and do a program at my school, union hall, religious organization.

☐ I would like to write an article or know someone who might write one. Please contact me.

☐ I would like to help distribute this issue. Enclosed please find \$_____ for _____ copies (\$1.00 per copy).

☐ Enclosed is my financial contribution to the newsletter:

_____ \$100 _____ \$75 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other

☐ Please send me a _____ Resource List _____ the Attica video (\$50.00) _____ a 20th Anniversary Poster Commemorating the Attica Rebellion: three colors 18" x 24" (\$8.00).

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

**COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN
P.O. BOX 578172 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60657-8172**