

# Walkin' Steel

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

Spring 1992

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## ACTIONS AGAINST CONTROL UNITS MAY '92

### *Where will we be? What will we do?*

September of 1991 marked the 20th anniversary of the great rebellion at Attica prison. In memory of that historic event, members of national liberation struggles, prison activists, and many others from 14 states, Puerto Rico and Canada participated in a conference in Chicago to chart a course to abolish control unit prisons.

It was decided at the conference to devote a week-end of activities across the country, in Canada and Puerto Rico, that would proclaim our opposition to these notorious institutions. Since the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is planning a replacement for Marion prison in

Florence, Colorado that is specifically designed as a control unit prison, it is particularly important that the activities raise this issue. Allowing the prison at Florence to open would

set a precedent and would drag the entire prison system down to even greater inhumanity. We must stop the BOP from opening Florence.

Those generating the activities at each site should raise the issue of Florence and whatever local issues are appropriate. Each location should choose the best target (local control unit prison, federal building, congressional office, etc.) and the most appropriate activities. These could include demonstrations, press conferences, or delegations, for instance.

This issue of *Walkin' Steel* lists many of the plans. (We have thus far heard about plans, some still tentative, in 17 cities.) The next issue will report on the activities and summarize the lessons learned from this campaign.

This is an historic opportunity. While much of the progressive community has collapsed in the face of Bush's New World Order, this series of activities across the country, and even internationally, will challenge the racist hysteria behind the law and order terror that is sweeping the U.S., the country where Black people are incarcerated at a rate five times more often than Black people in South Africa.

We call on all those progressive people concerned with justice and opposed to racism to join us. Please contact us to get more information or to let us know what your plans will be for that weekend. Together we can construct a harmony of opposition to the New World Order.

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# TURNER OF THE SCREWS

*Although the tenure of C. A. Turner, the new warden of the U.S. Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois is only a few months old, he has already escalated the harassment and mistreatment of prisoners. In the name of "security," he has practiced policies which we find abusive and intentionally and unnecessarily provocative. In response CEML initiated a letter campaign.*

*We are asking that people write and express their outrage at this new round of attacks on prisoners at Marion. Write to: Warden Cecil Turner, U.S. Penitentiary, P.O. Box 2000, Marion, IL 62959; Representative William J. Hughes, Chair: Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration, Washington, D.C. 20515; Michael J. Quinlan, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20534.*

*Below are testimonials from two prisoners about the conditions that they are subjected to under Turner's reign.*

**FROM: Hanif Shabazz Bey**  
s/n Beaumont Gereau  
#96544-131

In July of 1991 U.S.P. Marion took on a sinister character with the changing of wardens.

With the arrival of C.A. Turner the institution has become a nightmare of games and deception for prisoners. Several new actions taken by the administration are mere tactics geared to add fuel to the tension at Marion and another dimension to the hopelessness and despair that so many prisoners experience at Marion.

For the last four months prisoners have been subjected to the new cell procedure of having to submit to a cell change every 90 days. Prisoners cannot refuse this cell move, which is generally from one cell to the next within the same unit. Refusal to move results in a disciplinary report being written against the prisoner. What prisoners find so demeaning about the new procedure is that they have no say as to where they are moved.

Staff members have used this new procedure to exacerbate lingering riffs among prisoners, as those who are not compatible for numerous reasons are purposefully being housed in close proximity. As a result of this latest move, a rash of physical altercations have escalated among prisoners.

In another move, prisoners who have met the criteria of 12 months clear conduct for placement in C-unit (the pre-work unit), are being set off for as long as nine months after reaching eligibility dates.

On top of this, where a prisoner was once made to stay approximately three months in C-unit, they are now made to spend (1) one year, before being transferred to the pre-work release unit (B), where prisoners must remain for 18 months instead of the previous eight month requirement.

Warden Turner was transferred to U.S.P. Marion from the medical center at Springfield, Missouri, where he served in the capacity of warden. So there is no surprise that he brings his bag of sinister tricks with him, as under his supervision the institution at Springfield was stricken

with a rash of negligent and mysterious prisoner deaths.

**FROM: Bill Dunne**  
#10916-086

Recently installed Marion Warden C. Allen Turner is busily demonstrating that his tenure will be the mean spirited reign of Allen the Asshole. He is not content with merely being the custodian of a winding down of Marion as the Number One dungeon in the U.S. Gulag Archipelago as the completion of its replacement approaches. Neither has he been satisfied with just leaving things unchanged as he claimed he would on local TV. Instead, Turner the Trembly has decided to increase the intensity of Marion experimentation.

Warden Warped, an official (and ex-military officer) of a government responsible for mass death both domestically and internationally, fearless leader of a prison where chaining to concrete slabs is still practiced and clubs are always trump, former fuhrer at a prison hospital where medical malpractice thrived scandalously and strangulation was a treatment for mental illness. No more will the prison provide the soft porn videos or magazines many

prisoners have enjoyed (for reasons both good and bad) for years. They will not be replaced with sex



artist work by: Kif Davis

education materials despite the poverty of such material, particularly with respect to AIDS. Nor will they be replaced with material aimed at correcting truly immoral aspects of sexual relations such as objectification, exploitation, and victimization of women and homophobia.

C. Allen the Slime also attacked the already meager hobby opportunities at Marion. The most popular was painting, and he banned all paints and materials, apparently on the theory that some wily prisoner might paint himself a door and walk out through it. A single cardboard-backed canvass may be kept as a writing/drawing board now. In all these years, he is the only official to conclude that whatever minor misbehavior some prisoner might accomplish with painting paraphernalia is not outweighed by the benefits to both prisoners and swine of that creative outlet. Verily, the other major hobby was also curtailed with an edict banning the crocheting of stuffed animals.

The list of additional harassments goes on. Yard recreation may now be cancelled at the discretion of the Operations Lieutenant without having to be made up. Given the courts' abdication of their responsibility to protect the rights of the powerless in the name of "deference" to "security needs," Turner and his henchies expect everyone to bow down (and shut up) in obsequious deference to their righteous representation of the True Faith.

On 27/DEC/91, Warden Turner claimed the increases in the length of the Marion "program" were because too many people who'd been through a term of Marion lockdown were being sent back from other prisons. But the rate of returns only increased significantly after the Marion term extension and then mainly from USP-Leavenworth, where ex-Marion Warden Henman now rules. And the number is still relatively small. The reasons for the returns suggest vendetta and statistical manipulation more than response to actual breaches of security.

Upon being asked if it was not inappropriate to punish people before they had done anything or for the actions of others by extending the Marion "program" for everyone, Turner agreed that it was, and that the program had been lengthened for the additional reason that staffs at other prisons felt Marion prisoners were not doing enough lockdown time for the reason (if any) they were sent to Marion. But this, too, catches the creeps in a contradiction: the official line is now and has been that Marion is not punishment. This is to avoid the requirement for due process-like hearings prior to inflicting punishment. It's architect, former Bureau of Prisons Director Norman Carlson, even said Marion was punishment in an APR/87 speech.

These and other detractions from the already oppressive totality of Marion subsistence are not isolated incidents of small-minded meanness like Turner's personally breaking the plastic towel hooks off the wall near a

tier's shower—though even such pettiness is part of an official mentality of meanness integral to the Marion experiment. No, the recent escalation of efforts to deepen the lockdown has more the character of instigation. They are yet another illustration of the manipulation of psychological stressors in furtherance of Marion's experimental purpose. Why the Bureau of Prisons—and it is highly unlikely that Turner would take such actions without the hierarchy's approval or behest—feels it needs to ratchet up the pressure at this time is unclear. It may be part of a desire to make the Bureau's future dungeon at Florence, CO., look better in comparison.

## WATER UPDATE

*The prisoners at USP Marion continue to have to drink, bathe in, and eat food prepared with water from Crab Orchard Lake. The water is now being treated, however, with ammonia, in an effort to lower the chloroform levels, which subsequently lowers the total trihalomethane (TTHM) levels. According to an engineer at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), which tests the TTHM levels of water samples from Crab Orchard Lake and from the prison, (provided, of course, by the prison), every 3 months, the TTHM levels have been much lower since the new disinfection method has been in place. Under an Illinois state law that took effect on January 1, 1992, the TTHM levels in the prison's water cannot exceed .100 mg/L. Prior to the new treatment process, which allegedly began in November, 1991, TTHM levels in the prison water supply often were double the .100 mg/L limit—reaching levels of .274 mg/L. According to the IEPA, the TTHM level in the prison water in November, 1991, were .007, and were .005 mg/L in January, 1992.*

*The prison is also "proceeding with plans" to develop its own water supply. As has previously been reported in Walkin' Steel, wells have been dug on prison property, and fresh water is available from them. The IEPA recently issued permits to the prison for a treatment plant. The BOP states that the independent water supply for the prison should be completed and ready to supply fresh, clean water to prisoners by the fall of 1992. Of course, they have been saying that for years. The prison could obviously supply the prisoners with clean water from the wells now. (The CEML has been told by sources at the IEPA that the water from the wells has already been tested and found to be pure.) Making sure that the most basic human needs of those caged at Marion are met, however, has never been the function of those who run the gulag.*

# WHAT IS A CONTROL UNIT PRISON?

*In the last issue of Walkin' Steel we presented an analysis of control unit prisons. That article did not include any clear-cut definition of a control unit, and some of our readers have asked for such a definition. We in CEML have been discussing this topic but have not been able to propose a precise definition. However, we have some basic ideas that we would like to share with you. We would appreciate your feedback on this matter.*

There is no "official" definition of a control unit. Such a precise description would work to the detriment of a prison system that likes to keep its machinations under a fog of obscurity. By keeping things vague, the prisoncrats can adjust their language to counter any criticism. In fact, the government, which initiated the term "control unit" at the United States Penitentiary at Marion in 1972, now denies that Marion or its successors is a control unit prison. In a shifty move, one of the units within Marion, H unit, has been dubbed "The Control Unit" thereby giving the impression that the rest of Marion is not a control unit, even though the conditions in six out of the nine units there are virtually the same as those of H unit. Also, the BOP is calling the replacement for Marion being built in Florence, Colorado "an administrative maximum security" prison. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) seriously underestimates its opponents if it thinks we are fooled by such pathetic maneuvers.

However, we feel it would be useful to try to delineate those factors which we believe characterize control unit prisons.

No single aspect identifies a control unit; rather, it is a combination of physical conditions, the policies which determine who is sent there, how long they stay there, and the overall purpose of the unit that constitute a definition.

The function of control unit prisons can best be explained by giving a brief description of their development. The first control unit was instituted at USP Marion in 1972 as a response to a strike by prisoners who were protesting the beating of a Mexican prisoner by a guard. It can also be seen as a response to events within the entire prison system which, for the few years previous to 1972, had been rocked by dozens of rebellions culminating in the great rebellion at Attica in 1971. As evidenced by the

Attica rebellion, these prisoner uprisings were not merely protests over bad treatment but truly revolutionary struggles against racism and for dignity and liberation. In this way, the prisoners' fight mirrored what was happening in U.S. society as a whole at the time. The strength of the Black Liberation Movement not only galvanized masses of Black people, but inspired organizations such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the anti-war movement which brought literally millions of people out into the streets to protest U.S. imperialism.

The threat to the established powers from the general population resulted in rapidly rising imprisonment rates, especially for people of color. The threat from within the prison walls was what initiated the development of control units, designed to suppress protest by isolating those who could organize other prisoners and by psychologically terrorizing all prisoners by their mere existence.

The reasons for the proliferation of state control

units, documented by the organization Human Rights Watch (see page 11), are not fully clear to us. Obviously, with the prison population reaching such huge proportions, one can see it as a repressive measure in the face of the increased likelihood of prisoner protests and rebellions. But this doesn't completely explain why it is happening just now. One factor could be the increase in the proportion of prisoners who are people of color, which has accompanied the rapid increase in the overall imprisonment rate. This has resulted in a situation in which the U.S. imprisons Black people at a rate that is five times that in South Africa. Historically, people of color have always formed the most politicized, organized, and vocal groups in prison. Also, the guards and officials of this racist prison system see people of color as less than human and have always treated them with accordant brutality. Both these aspects of the reality of the imprisonment of people of color can help us to understand why the prisoncrats want more and more control units.

What, then, are the physical conditions that characterize a control unit? Since isolation is an essential element, the prisoners are single-celled; there is no congregate



dining, no congregate exercise, no work opportunities, and no congregate religious services. Prisoners are kept in tiny cells for between 22 and 23 hours a day. In addition to these features, conditions in control units vary somewhat. Some of these include lack of contact visits, greatly restricted law libraries, finger probes of the rectum as standard procedure when a prisoner returns from court or hospital, the power of guards to chain prisoners spread-eagle and naked on concrete slabs, solid cell doors, electronically remote-controlled door operation, and the ability of guards to direct prisoners around the prison by loud speakers.

Terrible conditions alone, however, are not enough to distinguish a control unit. Conditions in most prisons in the U.S. are terrible, in some cases approaching those of control units. What is it then that finally identifies a control unit?

First, the conditions described above must exist as official policy and not as the result of some *ad hoc* action by a local warden or captain of guards. Second, the conditions must be labeled as being permanent (since temporary lockdowns occur at almost every prison). Third, and crucially, the set of conditions must be accompanied by the ideology that the unit exists not as a *punitive* measure (since isolation units, doghouses, and disciplinary segregation cells, for instance, are common and always have been) but as an *administrative* measure.

The use of this seemingly harmless word, "administrative," has meant the suffering of countless thousands of prisoners. Incredibly, it has resulted in a situation where

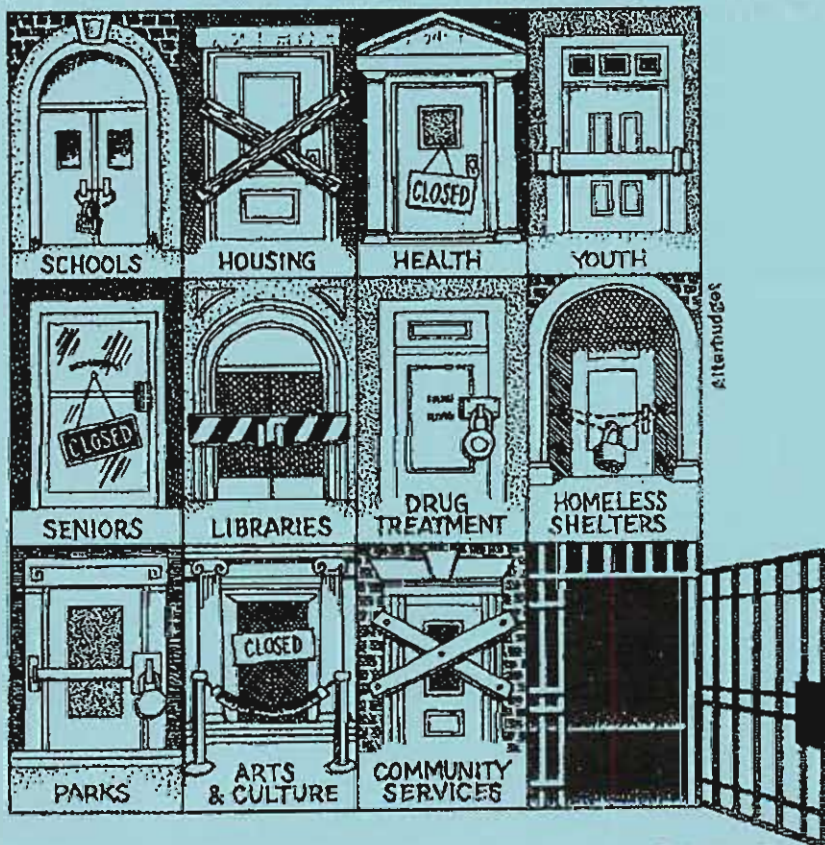
the prisoncrats can bury any prisoner they want for as long as they want, merely by claiming that it is an administrative move. There are no rules to govern such transfers. Thus, prisoners are not only denied due process with regard to the decision of whether or not they will be sent to a control unit, but also with regard to the decision of how long they will remain in the unit. Prison officials have unbridled discretion in determining the length of a prisoner's stay in a control unit.

An example of how this works in practice is the case of an Ohio prisoner who was charged with "inciting to riot." He had convinced other prisoners at his medium security prison to sign a statement of grievances against the prison based upon the terrible conditions. The prison disciplinary committee found him guilty and recommended a punitive transfer to a control unit at another prison in Ohio. However, all transfers had to be approved at Central Office in Columbus. The transfer was denied because under the law, the prisoner could not be punished with such a transfer for what he had done. So the warden at his prison responded by requesting that Central Office approve an *administrative* transfer instead. The transfer was approved without question.

The attempt to totally control prisoners is one of the main horrors of the control unit. Together with the brutal and inhumane conditions, this is why control units are legendary among prisoners and why they are a giant club that the prison system wields over them all. It is why, when faced with the prospect of their prisons being turned into

control units, prisoners at Southport rebelled, and prisoners at Westville went on hunger strike.

All these observations go some way to identifying a control unit. We can understand why control units were developed, why they continue to exist today, and why we must fight to abolish them. When some government official claims that these prisons are for violent prisoners who cannot otherwise be controlled, they are lying. Violence is not disallowed or disliked by the prisoncrats. In fact, the fostering of violence among prisoners has always been a fundamental tool of control employed by prisons against prisoners. Ironically, the true purpose of control unit prisons was declared by a past warden of Marion, Ralph Arons, who testified in federal court: "The purpose of the Marion control unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and in the society at large."



## PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY ACT AGAINST CONTROL UNIT PRISONS

### MADISON MARCHES ON MAY DAY

Free U.S. Political Prisoners and POWs (FUSPP) will be coordinating efforts in Madison, Wisconsin during the national weekend of action against control unit prisons, in general, and the planned control unit facility in Florence, Colorado, specifically.

Serendipitously, a major march, rally and picnic in honor of May Day is already planned to take place on May 2nd in Madison, which is likely to attract large numbers of progressives of all stripes. The event promises very fertile ground for raising the issue of control units to a large audience of sympathetic ears.

Those interested in participating in the planning for this event can contact Rob at (608) 257-6729 or Melissa at (608) 256-7005.



### TENACIOUS TORONTOANS HOLD TEACH-IN

In Toronto, *Prison News Service* will have two showings of CEML's video "Shut Down The Control Units." Jim Campbell will speak about the importance of doing hands on work. He hopes the video and stirring discussion will galvanize people into becoming more active in the fight against the brutality within the prison system!

Contact Jim at (416) 921-0437.

### COOL CALIFORNIA PROMISES...

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC) is sponsoring a one-day teach-in on Saturday, May 16, 1992 about the "Crisis in U.S. Prisons '92." It will address the following issues: Control Units; HIV/AIDS in Prisons; the Death Penalty; the Economics of the California Prison System; and the Movement for Amnesty/Sentence-Commutation for Battered Women Imprisoned for Defending Themselves Against Their Attackers. Jose Lopez, National Coordinator of the Movement for National Liberation - Puerto Rico (MLN-PR), will give the keynote address.

On Monday, May 18, 1992, the Real Dragon Project and PFOC are co-sponsoring a demonstration in San Francisco as part of the national protests against Control Units as called for by CEML.

We will specifically focus on Pelican Bay, the flagship control unit prison in the state of California.

For further information contact: PFOC, P.O. Box 14422, San Francisco, CA 94114 (415) 330-5310 and Real Dragon Project, P.O. Box 3294, Berkeley, CA 94703 (415) 861-6515.

### BIRMINGHAM ORGANIZES THE OUTRAGE

In Birmingham, Alabama a demonstration will be organized for the 2nd week of May by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and Mafundi Lake Defense Committee. For further information call (205) 290-0379.

### KANSAS CITY CARRIES CALL FOR JUSTICE

Video Showing/Forum scheduled for May 2nd in Kansas City sponsored by the 12th Street Coalition for Justice. For more information Shiriki Unganisha, P.O. Box 516, Kansas City, MO. 64132.

### D.C. DELEGATION DELIVERS PETITIONS, PROTESTS, AND PROOF

On Tuesday, May 5th, the first day Congress is in session after the May 2-3 weekend of protest, a delegation of our supporters, including the Reverend Michael Yasutake of the National Council of Churches' Prisoners of Conscience project and Jane Henderson from Equal Justice USA, will meet with members of the Congressional Subcommittee that oversees the Bureau of Prisons. They will petition the Subcommittee to convene public hearings on the Florence control unit. They plan to point out that control units have been condemned by the organization Human Rights Watch, that Marion already violates virtually every one of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, and that Florence promises to be even worse. Finally, they'll be able to point to all the demonstrations that happened across the country as proof of how much opposition there is to Florence!

### COLORADO COVERS GROUND IN ANTICIPATION OF MAY PROGRAM

The Florence prison is not the only thing being built in Colorado. A movement of control unit resistance is also being built day by day.

Folks from the Rocky Mountain Peace Center in Boulder became aware of the BOP's plans to build the new control unit prison when speakers from CEML came to Boulder last spring. Now there is a small group of folks, the Prisoner Allies Project, who meet biweekly. More than ever we are committed to taking the message of the inhuman treatment that goes on in control units to everyone who will listen.

On January 21, The Allies had a meeting with Pat Schroeder, a U.S. representative from Colorado who is on the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, to present our concerns about Florence. We requested her assistance in calling for congressional hearings.

We are excited to be planning events for the May 2nd national weekend of awareness about control unit prisons. The day's events will include educational street theater in Boulder. Groups in Alamosa, Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Denver will be invited to participate. We are currently writing a small funding grant to support the Allies work.

Of course the real support comes from all of you who also work for an end to this inhumanity. Members of our group have been corresponding with some of the men at Marion, and we see they are just the Allies we need to keep up the work. Together we will shut down control units in the U.S. forever. For more information on Prisoner Allies or to let us in on your good thinking about this work, please contact the Rocky Mountain Peace Center listed in the "People to Contact" section of *Walkin' Steel*.

### HOT HOOSIERS HOOT AGAINST CONTROL UNITS

Rethinking Prisons in Indianapolis is holding a teach-in about control units on May 2nd. The time and place are yet to be determined, but for all of you excited in helping put the event on and learning more, please call Evalyn Kellum at (317) 926-5614.

### ILLINOISANS INSTIGATE PROTEST

In Illinois, on April 26, CEML will host a program entitled "Prisons Are About Racism" with the hopes of engaging political activists in Chicago around the issue of prisons and encouraging people to join us in the May caravan.

On May 2nd CEML and the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War are planning an ambitious day long happening. A bus and car caravan will leave Chicago in the early hours of the day, travel to the prison for women in Dwight, continue downstate to Menard prison, and then onto Marion Federal Penitentiary before returning to Chicago. At each of our destinations, we will hold a picket line and rally. The demands of the demonstrations will be an end to the lockdown at Marion, a halt to the construction of the Control Unit in Florence, Colorado, and freedom for all Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war. Puerto Rican Prisoners of War are being held in all three prisons: Alicia Rodriguez in Dwight, Luis Rosa in Menard, and Oscar Lopez Rivera in Marion.

Similar past excursions have always proven to be an adventure, and we look forward to many people coming with us from Chicago and others meeting up with us along the way. For more information, please contact CEML.

### PUERTO RICANS ACTIVATE AGAINST CONTROL UNITS

Activities are being planned by Juan Antonio Corretjer Cultural Centers in three cities. For information call: (215) 225-6266 in Philadelphia; (203) 549-3747 in Hartford; (212) 792-7911 in New York City.

### IOWANS IRATE OVER LOCKUP

Iowans will participate in the national campaign against control unit prisons with a rally against lockup at Fort Madison, site of the maximum security prison in the state, at 1 p.m. on May 2nd.

Over 40% of the population inside the walls at "The Fort" is in some kind of lockup. Some prisoners are scheduled to be in lockup for years or even decades.

Prisoner advocates are also concerned about the lockup situation at Anamosa, the state's largest prison, where prisoners are sometimes in lockup for months despite Department of Corrections policy, and the same is true at Mitchellville, the women's prison.

The rally is being organized by Criminal Justice Ministries with the help of other religious, community, and family groups. For more information contact CJM at P.O. Box 70033, Des Moines, IA. 50311 (515)284-5047

# Lawyers denied access

## Wanted to see inside Westville

By Joseph N. DiStefano

Staff writer

WESTVILLE—A pair of Chicago civil rights lawyers Monday complained they were illegally barred from entering Indiana's toughest prison, the Maximum Control Center at the Westville Correctional Center, to speak with inmates about what they call "brutal" and illegal conditions.

and often. Ice cold firehoses are turned on prisoners. Prisoners are shackled hands, feet, waist, and between the legs with a choke chain. There are no radios or televisions. Mail is censored and withheld. Pens must be "earned." Goon squads stand ready to attack. Lawyers and family members are turned away at the door. Welcome to Westville's MCC.

**The prisoner's response: a courageous and unprecedented hunger strike!**

On March 9, 1992, two lawyer members of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, Erica Thompson and Mariel Nanasi, tried to visit prisoners at the Maximum Control Complex (MCC) at Westville. Erica had called the MCC and found out what the procedures were for getting a legal visit were and followed those procedures. When we arrived we were told by the warden of the MCC, Charles Wright, that we were not entitled to a visit. He said that because we were attorneys from *Illinois*, and not *Indiana* that we'd be unable to visit. It was then that we spent about three hours on the pay telephone in the visiting room trying to overturn Wright's decision. We had a conversation with the legal department of the Department of Corrections and the Attorney General's Office, both in Indianapolis, who indicated that Wright was absolutely wrong and that they would call him and tell him to let us in. They both indicated that they did so, but that Wright had gone over their heads to John Nunn, Deputy Commissioner of Operations and 2nd in command to James Aiken, Commissioner of the DOC, and Nunn

# The Conditions at Westville Maximum Control Complex Are "Tantamount to Torture"

A bright light burns twenty-four hours a day. Prisoners are locked down twenty-three hours a day. Clothing is stripped from the prisoners. Bedding is removed and replaced with seven-way body straps. Air conditioners are cranked up to frigid levels. Forced cell changes are violent and frequent. Beatings are savage

sanctioned Wright's refusal to let us in. Nunn said "it was policy" that only Indiana attorneys were allowed in; but a person from the legal department told us that she could not find any policy, *anywhere*, that said such a preposterous thing.

Needless to say we were fuming; we had gotten up at 5:00 a.m. to visit, had a pre-arranged and pre-approved visit, and we were forced to deal with this bureaucratic mess all in an effort to deny the prisoners access to lawyers and to outside exposure. We believe that the basis for their refusal was further punishment for the prisoners and fear on the prisonrats' part that we'd find out and make public the horrors of MCC.

So we decided to hold a press conference later that day. It is our belief that at least three newspapers, if not more, carried the story. We explained in our interview that it was absurd, illegal, and unprecedented that "out-of-town" attorneys be denied access. Well, by the time the press came, Wright had already come up with another story - that he refused us access because we had refused to sign some papers, an alleged prerequisite to gaining entry. How ridiculous! We scolded the press for even entertaining the idea that we'd refuse to sign any papers or believe that if there were any papers necessary to complete that we wouldn't have done so prior to our visit, just to make sure everything went smoothly.

Legal action will be taken in the near future to combat these human rights and unconstitutional violations.

## Chicago lawyers barred from visit

By CRIS CARMODY  
Law Bulletin staff writer

The prison locks at the Maximum Control Complex in Westville, Ind., aren't designed just to keep convicts inside. They also keep lawyers out. say two Chicago attorneys who were barred from the prison last week.

During the pre-guard ordered the attorney off prison grounds. "If you walk across the street, that's fine," she said. Thompson and Nanasi are members of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, a group that opposes maximum control units patterned after the U.S. Penitentiary in Marion, Ill. The national group is based in Chicago. The Marion, Ill., prison is the institution with the tightest security in the country. It is also the only prison that has ever been condemned by the United Nations' standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, according to the group. Thompson and Nanasi said the Maximum Control Center in Westville is one of the control prisoners. Nanasi said the control prisoners employ sensory deprivation that are "tantamount to torture."

Corrections  
"All these prisons are being built to stop crime. So why is there more crime now?" Nanasi asked.

"The only thing that's been proven to help prisoners is personal contact," she said. That includes developing inmates' vocational and educational skills, feeding prisoners healthy food, allowing inmates to exercise their minds as well as their bodies and respecting them "as people," she said.

Thompson and Nanasi said they wanted to meet with eight inmates of Westville Maximum Control Center. They have alleged in letters to the prisoners include random number of human rights abuses, the allegations include random, severe beatings; men shackled, naked, spread-eagle, to concrete beds; lack of access to mail, phone calls, legal materials and writing tools; and a

# DEAR COMMISSIONER: STOP THE RACIST ATTACKS!

*The following excerpts are from an open letter to Indiana Department of "Corrections" Commissioner James Aiken. The letter was written in January and was signed by thirty-one prisoners on the Disciplinary Segregation (D/S) Unit at the maximum security prison at Pendleton, Indiana. All 1600 Pendleton prisoners have been locked in their cells around the clock since November, 1991, when virtually the entire population of prisoners engaged in a peaceful show of support for hunger-striking prisoners at the Westville Maximum Control Complex (MCC).*

We write to bring to your attention the very dangerous situation which is being created by the Custody Staff working on the D/S Unit here at the Pendleton Reformatory. Currently there exists a minimum of racial tensions among us. Black and white, both are confined to the D/S Unit. Presently we are ALL active in attempting to foster an awareness among ourselves as to the socio-political and economic dimensions of our imprisonment, while, at the same time, sincerely encouraging each other, as fellow human beings, to struggle against the negative habits, vice and criminal mentality which was responsible, to a large degree, for our past, parasite-like behavior against our peoples and communities.

Previously this process of enlightenment and awakening has been somewhat limited to the African-American prisoners, and has (historically) been met with maximum repression by the clique of Masons and white supremacists (i.e. Klansmen) who run the custody aspects of the Reformatory. Beatings, brutality and the manipulation of white prisoners to injure politically aware, activist African-American prisoners was commonplace. In fact, such brutal repression, specifically the torture and beating of several prisoners on lock-up by racist correctional officers, sparked the February 11, 1985 riot/hostage situation.

Since then much has changed, but the Klan and racist Masonic orders are still using this prison as a recruiting area and an arena in which to propagate their bigotry and as before, the lock-up unit remains their primary area of activity! Currently, as we are sure you may be aware, the Custody Staff assigned to the D/S Unit here are under internal investigation for acts of racial misconduct, unnecessary use of riot gas and fire hoses (250 to 300 lbs of water pressure) on unarmed men trapped within 6' x 8' steel boxes, the use of riot sticks (i.e. baseball bats) and 'stun-guns' upon men who are already 'subdued' and handcuffed, not to mention the actual torture and beating of handcuffed prisoners. Since the peaceful protests here (November, 91) — in resistance to the unlawful transfer of many of us from D/C to the [Westville] M.C.C. "Supermax" Unit, and in solidarity with the men hunger-striking at "Supermax" and due to the oppressive and continuing lock-down of the whole Reformatory, the aggressiveness and racially motivated incidents by D/S staff against us has risen noticeably. One prisoner was poked in his eye by a broom requiring medical treatment. One man was blasted around his cage for several minutes with 300 lbs of water pressure (he was unarmed). One man, again unarmed, was shot with wooden blocks from a stun-gun. Another was

chained, cuffed, and shackled and then beaten brutally with bats and nightsticks until unconscious, requiring multiple stitches in his face and forehead. And the list goes on!!! The use of racial slurs such as "nigger," "spic," and "nigger-lover" by D/S staff have also become commonplace — and there have been many instances of staff using this type of language to provoke prisoners into throwing objects at them to justify stripping our cages bare, and/or to write us conduct reports to increase the time we must stay on lock-up (and consequently in prison). And there have been a good number of instances of staff writing "conduct reports" alleging we have "battered them" merely for challenging and verbally checking their racist actions and comments of D/S staff.

Traditionally the Klan and racist Masonic clique operating behind these walls have found the ignorant, racist white prisoner their tool of revenge and repression against those (white and Black) who question the legitimacy of white supremacy in Amerika, and encourage socio-political awareness outside of "acceptable" Euro-Christian concepts. Presently no such "tool" exists on the D/S Unit — much to the extreme discomfort of the racist staff.

The lack of racist tensions on D/S signals to the racist staff an end to their ability to enforce their white supremacist design (by proxy) among us. The Custody Staff have been sowing rumors to create racial tensions to try to check and disrupt the solidarity and unity we have established on D/S. This will lead to racial violence. For instance, now, when a white prisoner leaves the Unit, he is told by his guard 'escort': "We've got the word that the niggers are going to riot and kill all of the whites once the lock-down ends." Rumors are planted among the African-Americans by subtly hinting to certain whites: "We've heard you're going to move on the Blacks . . ." — knowing that this will be conveyed to everyone, etc., etc.

The situation is becoming dangerous and staff as well as everyone of us are under life-threatening tensions. We ask that you IMMEDIATELY remove the Custody staff, most notably Lt. Greer, C.O. Porter, C.O. Downing, C.O. Penticuff and C.O. White — to name a few of the more obvious instigators, as well as the Counselor S. Roberts. We ask that a full-scale investigation into the activities of each D/S custody staff person be made to determine the extent of their racist activities, acts of brutality and "race-baiting." Again, we stress that you take IMMEDIATE action. We close by stressing that you have been forewarned of the dangerous and explosive tensions being created by the racists working D/S — the matter is now clearly in your hands.

# PRISONERS IN PELICAN BAY CONTROL UNIT SUE GOVERNMENT

Prisoners at California's Pelican Bay State Prison have filed a class action lawsuit against prison administrators, charging that the prison's isolation, brutality, and inadequate medical care violate their constitutional rights.

The lawsuit follows in the wake of over three hundred civil rights petitions filed by Pelican Bay prisoners. The flood of prisoner complaints prompted a highly unusual meeting of federal judges and the prison's warden and state's attorneys to inquire about conditions in the prison.

Pelican Bay comprises two separate facilities. Over 1300 prisoners are confined in the prison's Security Housing Unit (SHU), a high-tech control unit prison which functions similarly to the federal penitentiary at Marion, Illinois. About 2300 prisoners are held in the maximum security general population prison.

A forty page complaint, filed last fall in federal court in San Francisco by lawyers from the firm of Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich, and Rosati, details numerous gross human rights violations in the prison. The most severe violations occur in the SHU

and the Violence Control Unit (VCU), a sub-unit of the SHU used for even harsher punishment.

Pelican Bay prisoners suffer from poor or non-existent medical and psychiatric care, lack of due process, and inadequate access to legal materials. More importantly, frequent use of excessive force and unnecessary restraints and a "shoot to kill" policy contribute to "an atmosphere of terror and violence," in the words of the complaint. In the SHU, the isolation of 22 1/2 hours per day cell time, and 1 1/2 hours of daily exercise time often spent alone in a small, empty concrete

exercise "yard," violates constitutional safeguards against cruel and unusual punishment, the complaint contends.

The complaint cites several examples of inadequate health care. One prisoner who complained of severe abdominal pains was repeatedly refused treatment. He was finally hospitalized several days after his appendix had burst and gangrene set in. A second prisoner with a painful, potentially blinding growth on his cornea was refused the required surgery and merely given eye drops. Doctors routinely diagnose a prisoner after conducting

an examination from outside the prisoner's cell, although it is difficult to see through the cell's mesh door.

Prisoners are punished by restraints and "cell extractions," beatings by a group of six or more guards armed with Taser stun guns, batons and riot shields. One deaf prisoner, who was denied replacement batteries for a hearing aid, was "cell extracted" on two separate occasions when he failed to respond to orders given while he slept. On one occasion in January 1991, prisoners refused to return their food trays to protest a guard's racist taunting of Hispanic prisoners. About twenty prisoners were "cell-extracted" one by one,

left hog-tied without medical attention for eight hours, written up for assaulting an unnamed guard, and assigned to cells with no basic amenities, dressed only in their underwear. Those who objected to this treatment were transferred to the VCU.

Some prisoners are transferred to the SHU on the basis of confidential allegations of gang membership by other prisoners. In such cases, prison officials inform the prisoner that the only way for the prisoner to leave the SHU is to "snitch [inform on other prisoners], parole or die."



## 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

Bonnie Kerness  
American Friends Service Committee  
972 Broad Street, 6th floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102  
(201) 643-3079

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement  
5356 South Crenshaw Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90043  
(215)299-4412

Malcolm X Grassroots Movement  
P.O. Box 11464  
Atlanta, GA 30310-0464  
(404) 621-5019

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

Saxifrage  
P.O. Box 18717  
Denver, CO 80218

Sundiata Acoli Freedom Campaign  
P.O. Box 5538  
Manhattanville Station  
Harlem, N.Y. 10027

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

## HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP CONDEMNS CONTROL UNIT PRISONS

Human Rights Watch, an international human rights monitoring organization, has released a report condemning what it describes as the "Marionization" of the U.S. prison system.

The report, entitled "Prison Conditions in the United States," was based on interviews with prisoners in over twenty U.S. prisons and jails, newspaper accounts, prison litigation cases, and interviews with prison advocates, lawyers, former prisoners, relatives of current prisoners, and prison officials.

According to the report, the thirty-six states which have adopted prisons or units modeled on Marion "have been quite creative . . . in making conditions particularly difficult to bear, at times surpassing the original model." Among the examples the report cites are the Q-Wing of the Florida State Prison at Starke, where prisoners have been held as long as seven years and are never allowed to go outside, and the Disciplinary Segregation Unit of the Oregon State Penitentiary, where prisoners on "strip-status" have all their clothes, bedding and personal effects removed, and are expected to earn them back piece-by-piece through good behavior. The report details that the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners are routinely violated at control unit prisons, and often at other facilities as well.

The report notes that deteriorating prison conditions are taking place in the context of a burgeoning U.S. prison population. For example, in 1989 the U.S. prison population grew by 63,000, almost twice the *total* current prison population of Spain. Black people have been particularly hard hit: according to the report, U.S. Blacks are incarcerated at a rate three times higher than Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and five times higher than Black people in South Africa.

The 108-page report surveys conditions in jails, state and federal prisons, and Immigration and Naturalization Service detention centers, and includes an overview of prison litigation in the United States. Human Rights Watch is the umbrella organization of six human rights committees, including Americas Watch and Helsinki Watch. The report is available for \$7 from Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017 (212) 972-8400.

# WHO WE ARE

This is the third issue of *Walkin' Steel*, a publication of 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, despite our small size, we felt compelled to 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.

We are embarking on a campaign to demand Congressional hearings. Precedent for hearings exist, as they were held in 1984 around Marion. The BOP has refused to provide us with the detailed plans for Florence. Instead, they have written us a letter which contains "half truths," vague statements, and in some cases outright lies. (We have written a response to the BOP, and copies of our letter can be obtained upon request.) Given that Florence is to replace Marion, and given the BOP's present policy of disinformation on this issue, we fear that the human rights violations at Florence will be even greater than those now existing at Marion. Our push for Congressional Hearings is fuelled by our desire to condemn what we know about Marion and the BOP's promise to make Florence even worse in terms of isolation and sensory deprivation, and to find out about and contest the "new and improved" "security" plans.



PLEASE SEND LETTERS,  MAKE PHONE CALLS, AND SEND TELEGRAMS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE CLOSEST TO YOU. PLEASE SEND AN ADDITIONAL MESSAGE TO THE HEAD OF THE CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON PRISONS, WILLIAM HUGHES. TO SEND A TELEGRAM CALL 1-800-888-5284 - ASK FOR THE MARION COMMITTEE MESSAGE. The cost of the telegram paid with a credit card is \$4.50, and \$5.50 if billed.

----- 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 (312) 235-0070**