

# THE CONTINUING SAGA OF SHAME

## Walkin' Steel

A Production of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown  
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DOES INCARCERATION DECREASE CRIME? see page 4

## POLITICAL PRISONERS COMMEMORATE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF ATTICA



### NOTES FROM THE UNREPENITENTARY

by Laura Whitehorn  
North American Political Prisoner



I've been thinking a lot about Attica, as we pass the 25th anniversary of the rebellion and the massacre. Remembering how the courage of the men of D Yard transformed all our sorrow and anger at the assassination of George Jackson into energy, struggle and hope. Remembering the inspiration of seeing unity built, combating the divisions of race and class the state normally feeds on. Remembering how we hoped against hope, argued against unreason that the brutal assault would not

come. Remembering the demand of the brothers, spoken by L.D. Barkley, that "We are men, we are not beasts, and we don't intend to be driven or beaten as such."

Attica was a rebellion against all odds — a message written in blood: human dignity will not allow itself to be crushed. A slogan the Vietnamese used in fighting for their national liberation and independence — "the spirit of the people is greater than the man's technology" — came alive inside the walls of D Yard. For almost five days a cooperative, peaceful, democratic society existed in D Yard, while the prisoners held power. The demands were so basic, and the administration's long-standing refusal to meet them so clearly inhumane, that public support grew quickly around New York State. The police guns were held at bay for a while by the stark morality of the brothers' stand.

But only for a while. As ever, when confronted with a just struggle of the oppressed, the government fired back with massive, brutal murder, killing nearly 40 prisoners along with some of the hostage guards the prisoners had protected. And then, after the assault itself, L.D. Barkley and other leaders were murdered in cold blood, while others were tortured with burning cigars and savage beatings. Stripped naked, chained, beaten to the ground and forced to crawl through the mud — the brothers received the government's response to their demands to be treated as humans.

In the aftermath, as the Attica brothers fought (successfully) through charges of murder designed to

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### THE MEANING OF ATTICA

by Sundiata Acoli  
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Twenty-five years ago, September 14, 1971, the bloodiest prison rebellion in U.S. history took place. Four days earlier prisoners had taken over Attica and demanded more humane treatment and better prison conditions. Now realizing that an assault on the prison was imminent, the prisoners marched their 10 guard-hostages to the top of the prison wall — and held a knife to each guard's throat. Sharpshooters zeroed rifle scopes between the prisoners' eyes — and opened fire.

Thirty-nine people — 29 Black, White, Brown and Red prisoners, and 10 White guards — died during the retaking of Attica. Forty-three died all told. Immediately after the assault state officials flooded the media with grisly tales of how prisoners cold-bloodedly slit guards' throats in the midst of the sharpshooters' barrage. It was all a "Big Lie." A week later the coroner announced that all guards and prisoners killed during the retaking of Attica had been killed by state trooper bullets.

The Attica rebellion occurred during the 1960s/70s era of the nationwide prison reform movement. It was part of the cost that prisoners, their families, and supporters, paid to roll back inhumane prison policies that had stood for two centuries. Prison struggles during that period, led mainly by politically conscious prisoners, gained the rudimentary privileges of contact visits, adequate law libraries, the right to a disciplinary hearing before punishment, college courses, Black, Hispanic and Native American studies, religious and cultural programs with attendance & participation by outside community representatives, more humane treatment — and numerous other rights that are taken for granted today.

Now, many of these hard won gains have been taken away. Prisoners everywhere are being harshly repressed, control units and complexes abound, mass arrest, mass imprisonment, building more and harsher prisons, the death penalty, more police, more guards and the "lock 'em up and throw away the key" mentality is the order of the day. Prison guards'

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# CONDITIONS AT MARION.

USP MARION, THEN AND NOW

by Bill Dunne

North American Political Prisoner

Thirteen years ago this week, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) slammed the U.S. Penitentiary at Marion, Illinois (USP Marion) into permanent lockdown, making it the first control unit prison in the U.S. Gulag Archipelago. Since then, the details of Marion's control unitization have varied slightly, as they vary among 37 other state and federal control unit facilities spawned in the wake of the 1983 lockdown, but its essential control unit character remains undiminished. In 1994, the BOP opened another control unit prison at Florence, Colorado, a high-tech dungeon it calls an administrative maximum (ADX).

After opening ADX Florence, the BOP started claiming that the "mission of Marion" -its control unit function- had been transferred there and that USP Marion had been made a "general population" prison. The truth, however, is that Marion's repressive mission was merely extended to ADX Florence. Conditions at Marion have not improved nearly enough to make it a "general population"; just calling a thing something does not make it so.

In court proceedings in 1986, then Marion Warden Gary Henman testified that USP Marion was a "Special Housing Unit", a formal designation that encompasses a variety of lockdown units but never general populations. The BOP thus acknowledged full implementation of its decision, reported in 1984 court proceedings, "to convert the prison from an institution with one Control Unit . . . to a 'close, tightly controlled, unitized' institution for all [prisoners]." The reality that Marion was and had been a control unit prison since the implementation of the total lockdown was, therefore, then acknowledged by all sides and not in dispute.

At that time, prisoners in the regular units were locked in their cells an average of 22:20 per day, up from 12:30 in the months following October, 1983. Prisoners were allowed out on the long, narrow tier in front of the cells on their side of the unit in groups of six for one hour per day. Each week, groups of up to 16 were given one two-hour yard period (calisthenics, basketball, running, tennis, heavy bag, grass, view) and one two-hour gym period (basketball, handball, running, pool, ping pong, board games). Meals were delivered through bean holes in the cell doors. Kosher, no pork, no meat, and regular diets were available. The education department provided ESL (English as a Second Language), ABE (Adult Basic Education), GED (General Educational Development — High School Equivalency), and ACE (Adult Continuing Education— the name for old videos not called something else) videos on closed circuit TV and college correspondence courses. The library was a box of ragged paperbacks outside the bars at the end of the tier, though the education department would usually provide text and other books it might have upon request. Visits were non-contact, and two 10 minute phone calls per month were permitted. Religious services were via video and, depending on one's religion and the presence of fellow adherents on the same tier, small congregate services were conducted irregularly. Medical services, to the extent they were available, were obtained by written request. Any misbehavior was met with overwhelming force. Other than that, prisoners were left pretty much to their own devices.

By 1992, not much had changed. Tier time had been increased to 1:45 per day in groups of up to nine, except on out-of-unit recreation days. On those days, it was reduced to an hour in the winter and just a shower period in the summer in exchange for three hour periods in the yard and gym. Total out of cell time was up from about 11 to about 15 hours per week. Pool and ping pong tables and racquet ball racquets had been removed from the gyms. Phone calls had been increased to three per month. Guards had stopped insisting on the return of empty milk cartons and salt and pepper packets with the food trays. Concrete slabs had replaced metal beds and armored lights had been installed. New petty rules regimenting what prisoners did in the cells had been promulgated, further extending officialdom's experimental harassment into the very corners of prisoners' subsistence.

In 1996, conditions are little different. Prisoners are allowed out of the tier in groups of up to 18 for three hours, four times per week, and 2:15 on Sundays. Two days per week, they are permitted outside recreation in groups of up to 35 in small rec pens built behind D,E and F units. No more yard, no more handball, and no more full court basketball are possible. Running is severely limited due to the size of the pens and the crowding, as is access to the single basket-



ball hoop. The pens were obviously built to reduce rather than facilitate recreation. Tier rec is also constrained by the crowding. Total out of cell time is about 18 hours per week. College correspondence courses are no longer provided. Requests for books other than ESL, ABE, and GED materials from the education department have been ignored, except for paperback dictionaries, almanacs, and encyclopedias in one volume. The book box selection has deteriorated, and guards have been confiscating books that were previously permitted. Prisoners still eat in their cells, though now a tier at a time is opened for a few minutes so prisoners must retrieve the chow through a bean hole at the end of the tier. Portions are smaller and no-meat diets are no longer supplied. More petty oppressions have been introduced in addition to the myriad unwritten, irregularly enforced, sometimes rules whose potential to elicit draconian sanctions keeps prisoners insecure.

The foregoing exposes the BOP's abandonment of previous boasts about USP Marion being "the end of the line" for "the worst of the worst" in favor of insistence that Marion is a "general population" prison as only rhetorical. The increased incidence of fights that can only be ascribed to a more stressful regimen illustrates that the minor changes in the "program" were not intended to make Marion less a control unit or to approximate an open population nor even to make it more secure. The circumstances and the prisonocracy's different stories about the requirements of the "program" to transfer — including that there is no set requirement — and who is at Marion suggest the swine have two purposes for Marion that make it undesirable to portray it as what it is. One is to use it as a long-term repository for people the BOP finds threatening, who have been particularly effective against it in one respect or another, or who have offended influential prisoncrats. Another is to try to intimidate a lot of young, rebellious prisoners relatively inexperienced in the rigors of maximum security by cycling them through an especially repressive paradigm that some people might not leave. Those rounded up after the rebellions sparked by the congressional vote to maintain discriminatory crack laws a year ago exemplify this group. Both uses are consistent with Marion's — and now ADX Florence's — function of experimentation in methods of social control through strictly negative attacks on prisoners' belief systems. The BOP needs the "general population" mythology to avoid having to defend relegation of its experimental subjects, whose consignment to and indefinite retention at Marion are mostly arbitrary or thinly pretextual, to an official control unit while maintaining the experimental conditions unofficially. But control unit Marion is still visible through the security smoke screen.

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## USP Marion — Winning Hearts and Minds CEML



The U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) claims that USP Marion is no longer a control unit prison, having been replaced in that function by the new control unit, ADX Florence. It claims it is to ADX that 'the worst of the worst' are now consigned and that Marion is now 'just another' maximum security penitentiary. This claim implies that Marion is a 'general population' facility with programs and with freedom of movement comparable to other maximum security prisons. However, as the accompanying article by Bill Dunne shows, these claims and implications are false. Yet despite a long history of official deceit, disinformation and distortion, the public is all too willing to accept self-serving and sensational misrepresentations about Marion and its prisoners. Why is this so?

Prisons and prisoners are arguably the subject of more misconceptions than any other social institution and segment of the population. People watch the six o'clock news or read the morning papers and are given the impression that violent crime is on the rise and that the vast majority of prisoners are irrevocably dangerous people who must be locked up under harsh conditions for a long time. Yet the reality is that more than 75% are sent to prison for nonviolent, often victimless crimes and that only a small

# WORSE THAN EVER

## DISTORTION AND DECEPTION: THE CHANGES AT USP MARION

by Oscar Lopez Rivera  
Puerto Rican Prisoner of War

(reprinted from Libertad, the newsletter of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, Winter, 1997; 2607 W. Division, Chicago, IL 60622)

To those who have asked why I was returned to Marion — the news media and concerned individuals — the jailers at Marion and ADX Florence [Ed.note: *Administrative Maximum*, a 500 cell control unit prison opened in 1993 in Florence, CO that was to have replaced Marion.] have responded that Marion's mission has changed, that it is less structured today, and that it has a lowered security level rating. Louis Wynn, jailer at ADX Florence, told journalist Alan Prendergast that due to the changes at Marion, I should be receiving more privileges here. But what exactly are these changes and benefits?

One of the more obvious changes is the construction of recreation cages for the prisoners housed in general population. This construction, from a physical perspective, only signifies more fences, more cement, more barbed and cyclone wire. It means they are adding more security and restrictions to this dungeon. From a practical point of view, the cages were constructed to serve as a substitute for the gymnasium, the area where handball is played, and the yard.

Before being transferred from Marion in 1994, I used the gym area, the yard and the handball court to run. It is my favorite form of exercise. Now in the cages, I barely have room to walk. One lap around the court equals one fifth of a mile and by contrast, the cages are forty feet. That small space is shared with 33 prisoners at the same time. It would be interesting to hear how Mr. Wynn and the rest of the jailers explain how the building of these cages is to my benefit and how it changes Marion's mission or reduces its security level. If taking away the use of the gymnasium, the handball court and the yard is a privilege, then the claims of the jailers represent an exquisite game of deception and distortion of reality.

More privileges? I am locked in my cell for more than twenty-two hours a day; my hands are cuffed every time I enter into direct contact with the jailers; I do not receive contact visits; I am allowed only three fifteen minute phone calls a month; I do not have access to educational programs or library, and to complete their program, I must work in a factory where cables are manufactured for the US Armed Forces. To top it off, the water that I drink every day is contaminated with dioxin — a carcinogenic substance. Are these privileges?

If the transfer to Marion signifies a benefit or privilege, then it is worth comparing the program here to the one I was forced to complete at ADX Florence. During the last fourteen months, I was able to be out of my cell from 6:00 am to 9:30 p.m. This means I was able to be out of my cell for more time in a day there than my entire weekly out-of-cell time here. I went for more than sixteen months without being handcuffed in Florence. I was able to go to the dining room and commissary and purchase items. Between September of 1995 and November of 1996, I went to the hospital at Florence twice. One time, a woman took chest x-rays and the second time, the dentist worked on my teeth. I was never handcuffed and was accompanied by only one guard. Two weeks ago, I was taken to the prison hospital for a colon x-ray with a barium enema. The jailers put me in handcuffs, a black box and chains. Arriving at the hospital, the x-ray technician asked the jailers to take off my handcuffs because I had to

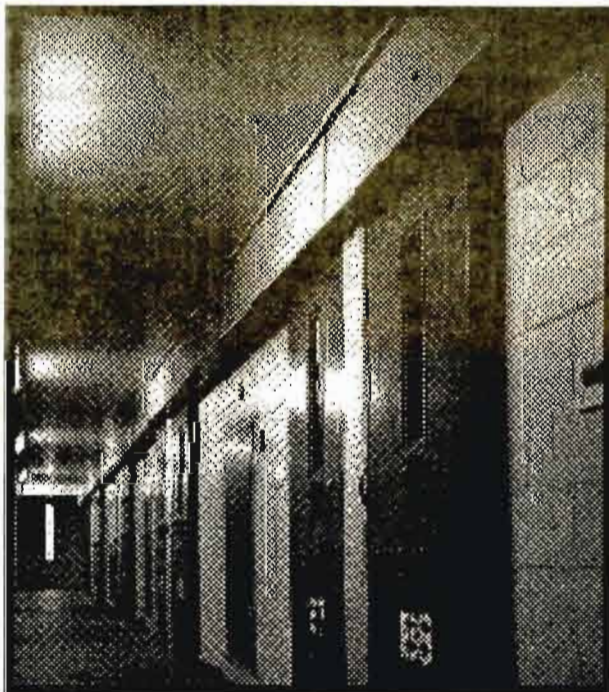


undress and put on a robe. The jailers said that they had to obtain permission from a senior officer. They called and someone gave them instructions. They proceeded to cuff my legs and while one held me, the other removed my handcuffs. I removed my shirt and put on the robe. Then they handcuffed me and took the cuffs off my legs. With my hands cuffed, I had to make like Houdini in order to remove my shoes and the rest of my clothes. They put me on the x-ray table, inserted a tube in my anus and began the barium enema. With my hands cuffed, they moved me from one side to the other until they finished the x-rays. The procedure lasted almost one hour. And in order to remove the robe and get dressed, the jailers repeated the same moves with the handcuffs and leg irons. If Marion is a lower security level than ADX Florence, it would be good to know why they are submitting me to such a dehumanizing and painful experience just to give me a little medical treatment.

The program currently in effect at Marion is the same one that Amnesty International, religious leaders, politicians and experts in the field of sensory deprivation condemned more than a decade ago. Why do the jailers, who had done nothing to ameliorate these deleterious conditions, now try to say that the mission and security level have changed? Without a doubt, the jailers are impudent, with twisted and bestial minds that don't care if they tell lies. The prisoner, in the process, is turned into fodder for the punishment industry because he/she is the most stigmatized and hated individual in society. They argue that this gulag's mission has changed because they must justify its existence and the existence of ADX Florence.

The case that best exemplifies what Marion is today is that of a prisoner who is asking the courts to condemn him to death. He wants to die because this dungeon denies him the psychiatric treatment he needs. The psychologist at this gulag told him he was receiving the best treatment possible under the circumstances. This is because the prisoner cannot go to see the psychiatrist without being handcuffed, black boxed and chained. And, the session can only take place with two guards present the entire time. While the psychologist interviewed him, all the prisoners could hear the conversation. This prisoner has less than three years left to serve and has been institutionalized for 26 years. He wants and has asked for the treatment he needs, because he knows that when he gets out, he will commit the same acts that led him to prison in the past. In order to call attention to his case, he has to take drastic measures. How many innocent people will be affected when this prisoner is released? It will be innocent people who pay for the distortions and deceptions of the jailers. Who will compel the jailers to tell the truth about the nefarious program they have at Marion? The guards who work here, who receive additional pay for working here, are the same ones who hate the prisoners for the killing of two guards in 1983. They have more than enough incentive to want to perpetuate the sensory deprivation program that they allege to have changed. The same level of desperation that the National Interreligious Task Force on Criminal Justice found in the majority of inmates here still exists. And the same lies that M. Quinlan, ex-Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, told them in response are still being told by the jailers today. The lockdown, the handcuffs, the black box and chains continue.

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fraction of the rest have been convicted of truly vicious and predatory crimes. Similarly the media uncritically parrots official claims that rehabilitation and socialization programs don't work when, in fact, they have seldom been tried and, when tried, have often worked remarkably well. Prisoners placed in educational programs or paroled through work release, for instance, have much lower recidivism rates than comparable prisoners who have served their time in harsher prisons or who have been paroled directly from penitentiaries.

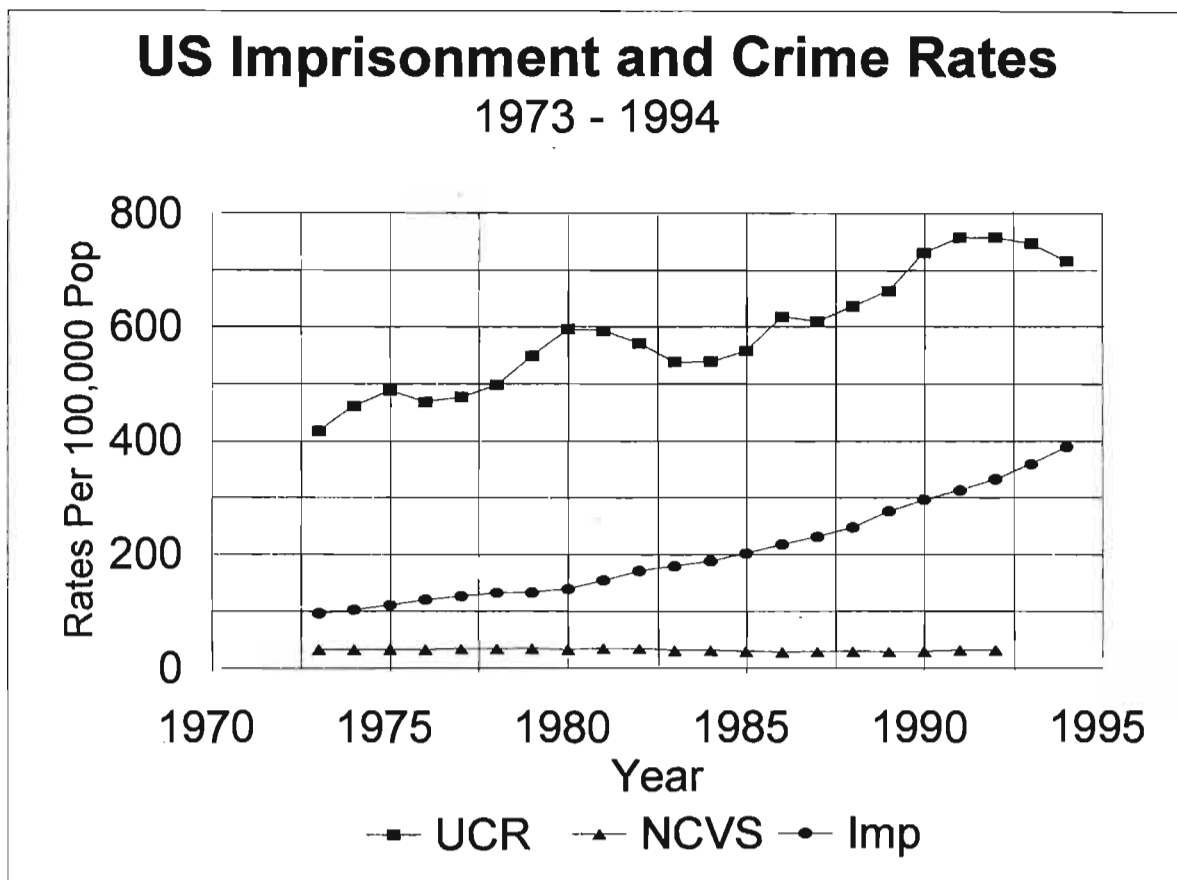
Once broad misconceptions of this type are established in the public mind, it becomes easier for public officials to convince us to go along with whatever policies they deem necessary. This is clearly illustrated in the case of Marion. Beginning in 1972 and extending to the present, a number of repressive policies were enacted at the prison, while the BoP simultaneously issued statements (or rationalizations) designed to win public acceptance. For example, when the prison was originally locked down in 1983, it was said to have been in response to the murder of two guards. Yet BoP documents have shown that plans for a tightly controlled, locked-down institution had been in the works for years and that officials were simply waiting for an opportunity to implement them. In fact, during the years immediately preceding the lockdown, there seemed to be a deliberate attempt to precipitate a conflict. Prison conditions, including the relationship between prisoners and guards, were allowed to deteriorate to the point where tragic consequences were almost inevitable.

Once the lockdown was in force, the Bureau's position was that Marion would house "the worst of the worst," - vicious and predatory prisoners whose presence in other prisons made those prisons more difficult to operate. Once in Marion, they would be kept in a state of "humane incapacitation" until their behavior improved. Again, neither of these claims were true. During the following 13 years, Marion would hold some violent men,

# DO PRISONS DECREASE CRIME?

For the past three or four years, some measures of crime have been falling in the United States. As a result, some media pundits have been claiming that this drop in crime has been caused by putting so many people in prison. Likewise, President Clinton has claimed credit due to the passing of his 1995 crime bill which emphasized imprisonment over all else. The same claims were made in the mid-1980s after a similar but short-lived decline in crime. The graph below reveals a different story.

It is the picture worth a thousand words on the correlation between imprisonment and crime. What's the correlation? There is none. It shows what



CEML has said many times in our twelve years; imprisonment does not and cannot prevent crime. And nearly everyone who has seriously studied the issue is in agreement on that, if anything. On page 10 we review four books by such scholars. The myth that imprisonment has caused the recent drop in crime is also refuted on the very first page of *Truths, Half-Truths and Lies: Myths and Realities About Crime and Punishment*, by Mark Mauer of the Sentencing Project (available for \$10, 918 F Street NW, Suite 501, Washington DC 20004; (202)628-0871.)

Many criminologists are exasperated that governments never incorporate such findings into public policy, cutting everything else, but bankrolling yet another cage (and another bomb). We, rather, take a deep breath and another step, understanding that prisons are not intended for crime prevention. We hope that the articles in this issue will illuminate some of what is the true purpose of imprisonment.

As the media hype about the benefits of "lock 'em up" will no doubt continue, we urge readers to keep in mind the slogan popularized by rap group Public Enemy, "DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE." The facts are clear. Only the hype remains.

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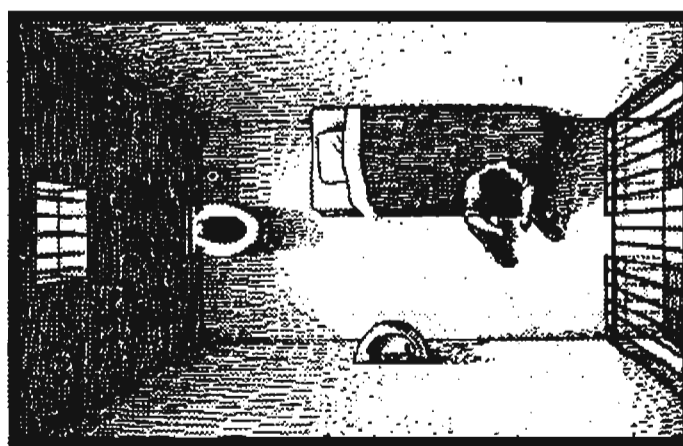
but it would also hold many others who had committed far lesser violations, as well as many political prisoners, organizers for improved conditions within prison, jailhouse lawyers, the mentally ill, groups of prisoners such as Cubans who had been held for years without charges and were sent to Marion after they rebelled at the federal prison in Atlanta, and prisoners who were moved from other jails and prisons because of overcrowding or for other quite arbitrary reasons. And in all these categories, people of color were disproportionately represented.

As to "humane incapacitation", the administration kicked off the new era of prolonged isolation and sensory deprivation by assembling a small army of guards from Marion and other prisons. They worked their way through the prison beating the prisoners, none of whom had anything to do with the two murders. Then, with the lockdown firmly in place, any further pretense of effecting positive change in individual lives was abandoned and replaced with punishment and an obsession with manipulation and control. As the accompanying articles by Bill Dunne and Oscar Lopez Rivera reveal, conditions in a control unit prison like Marion are very harsh. While prisoners and a few prisoner rights activists have tried to call attention to this, they have run up against a wall of resistance from public officials and the courts, and indifference on the part of a public that has been taught to dismiss prisoners as unworthy of trust or consideration.

It is not surprising that officials at Marion feel they should not have to be accountable and that they can fairly easily manipulate the public. In the regressive present, prison officials are only held accountable when there is the perception that they have been too lenient. And in a succession of cases, courts have backed away from prisoners' rights, leaving prisons to the "experts" (prison officials) who can claim to do nearly anything in the name of "institutional security." U.S. and state legislatures have enjoined the affront by passing legislation which even further restricts prisoner rights. But even without sanction from above, prisons have always been closed institutions where incred-

ible extremes of power and powerlessness between the keepers and the kept are built-in. This dynamic in which one party is allowed to act with impunity and is given total credibility while the other is given none, makes one tend to doubt almost anything prison officials say. There may be some truth to some of their assertions, but since the dynamic is one without checks and balances, there is no reason to think that truth will be forthcoming.

One example of this was the complete vindication of Marion officials and guards after the wholesale abuse of prisoners in retaliation for the killings of the two guards. Many of the prisoners were beaten, some quite severely, or otherwise abused. One hundred ten of them filed reports. (Many others did not, for fear of reprisals.) The guards and administrators simply maintained that no abuse had occurred and that any force that was used was reasonable. Despite a preponderance of evidence to the contrary, the court decided that each and every one of the prisoners who testified was not



credible and that the prison officials were. The media duly reported the decision as reflecting fact, despite an Amnesty International report condemning the unfairness of the process.

Yet the keepers seem to be holding sway in the battle for public sympathy. Some of this may have to do with the failure to understand what prison life is really like. Prison life is a unique experience with its own particular setting, its own sense of time and its own set of pressures. It is an island unto itself in which any sense of the personal security and freedom one becomes

accustomed to in the outside world, is removed. It is an experience that most people find very difficult to cope with, even when it is administered in a fairly "humane" way. One cannot make easy comparisons between life inside and life on the streets and expect them to hold up. This is true even in a relatively lenient institution. One cannot take something out of context, like the showing of a movie on a Saturday night, for example, and reason that since 'I don't often go to movies on a Saturday night', it somehow means that prison life is not so bad, or that it alters the basically punitive nature of the prison. It may make life there a little more bearable for a couple of hours, but that is all. In a much more harsh and restrictive prison, like Marion, this gap between inside and outside worlds is even wider.

Disinformation about prisoners and an inability to fully comprehend prisoners' reality, both contribute significantly to our willingness to go along, not only with an altogether unprecedented increase in incarceration, but with harsher treatment of prisoners as well. A series of false perceptions has been created in the public mind that has allowed otherwise decent and caring people to go along with the indecent, even the unthinkable. Among these false perceptions is that a segment of society, largely poor, and Black and Latino, is out of control, at fault and in need of incarceration. Another perception, perhaps even more absurd at face value, is that, once in prison, these individuals somehow have it too easy and that further punishment, including extreme isolation, is justified.

People may say, 'who cares if we have misconceptions about prisoners. They committed crimes and deserve whatever they get.' Aside from excusing the indecent, and aside from the fact that NBC Nightly News reported on 22/Dec/96 that 10,000 people are wrongly convicted each year, such an attitude injures its holder as well as prisoners. If we are ever to make progress toward solving the problems crime creates for our communities and our neighbors — both as victims and perpetrators — we must see and treat things as they really are.

# Criminal INjustice for Women: The Perp? — Patriarchy and Racism American Style

● The number of women in Illinois state prisons is almost four times what it was ten years ago. From 1981 to 1990 the number of women in our nation's prisons more than tripled, increasing by 276%. However, arrests of women for murder and manslaughter decreased 10.8% from 1984 to 1993, and in that time the total number of arrests for women increased by only 37%.

● Women in prison are more likely than men to be there for non-violent property crimes and drug offenses. In Illinois, 63% of women are in prison for non-violent offenses; about 57% of women's new admissions in 1994 were for Class 3 and Class 4 felonies which used to be punished with probation. (An example of a Class 3 felony is retail theft of property worth \$150 or more.) In comparison, 70% of Illinois prisoners overall (about 95% men) serve time for Class X or Class 1 felonies.

● A greater proportion of women in prison are sentenced for non-violent offenses now than previously. In 1979, 51% of women were incarcerated for taking part in violent offenses. In Illinois in 1993, only 37% of women were in prison for committing or being an accomplice in a crime that posed a risk of bodily harm to another. Women's crime has not become more violent, but sentencing has become harsher.

● Like poverty, imprisonment disproportionately affects women of color. Women in Illinois prisons are 68% African American, 25% white and 6% Latina with Asian and Native American women making up the other 1%.



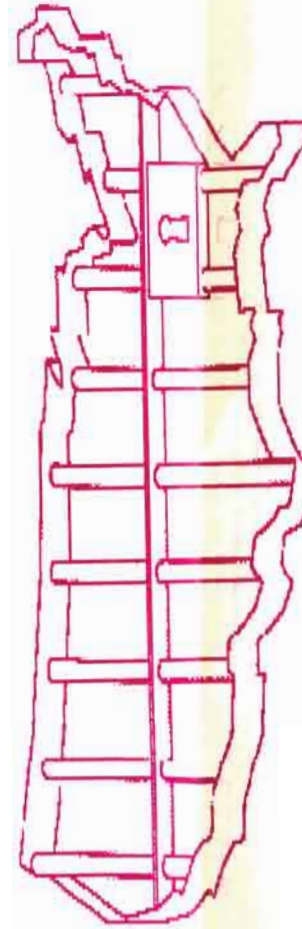
● Conservative estimates report that over half of all adult female offenders were victims of physical abuse and 36% were sexually abused as children. Some studies report that 88% had experienced at least one major form of violent victimization. In Illinois, 54% of women in prison have not attained a high school diploma. Nationwide, 39% dropped out of high school because they were pregnant.

● Education and vocational programs at Illinois adult correctional centers serve less than one-third of the inmates.

● About 80% of women inmates in Illinois have a history of drug abuse. The Gateway Program, the only substance abuse treatment center for women prisoners in Illinois has room for 166 women, 7% of the female prison population.

● Rates of HIV infection are much higher in prison than in the general population. Rates of HIV infection for women prisoners are higher than men prisoners. TB is also a higher health risk in prison and rates are higher among women than men.

● Prisons are generally male-oriented and male dominated. While there is a lack of programs and services for prisoners overall, the shortage for women is even more stark. For example, fewer women than men in prison have access to parenting classes, and their families are more severely harmed by the lack of services.



## Women and Children First ...

● About 81% of women incarcerated in Illinois are mothers, affecting at least 6,500 children annually. Most of these were single mothers who were their children's sole caretaker prior to incarceration.

● Nearly 90% of male inmates in the U.S. report that their children are being cared for by the children's mothers; 25% of incarcerated mothers report that their children are being cared for by the father.

● Nationwide, about 6% of women are pregnant when they enter prison, and another 15% have babies less than six weeks old. Newborns are separated from imprisoned mothers within 24 hours of birth, missing the crucial, irreplaceable period of mother-child bonding which affects development for the rest of their lives.

● Studies demonstrate that regular visits between children in foster care and their mothers enhance the children's emotional, scholastic and social adjustment to placement. Numerous studies show that family contact is the only factor that has a strong, positive impact on parole success when the mother is released.

● A 1985 study demonstrated that less than 1% of mothers in prison were convicted of child abuse.

● When a mother goes to prison, usually it is her children who suffer most. Very young children may be severely traumatized by the sudden separation from their mothers, and this trauma may result in developmental delays and later emotional problems. Children's substitute care givers are stretched beyond their resources. Visits to distant prisons and long-distance, collect phone calls are the only ongoing contact with the mother available to children who are too young to benefit from letters.

● While some children of imprisoned mothers are cared for by relatives, those who go into state foster homes face a bureaucratic nightmare. They often are separated from their brothers and sisters, moved to a series of different foster homes, and denied visits with their mothers. Some children are abused and neglected in foster care. Children in foster care have an increased risk of delinquency in adolescence and homelessness in adulthood. Foster care workers often fail to provide mandated visits or service plans outlining tasks mothers must accomplish to regain custody. Moreover, there is little coordination or continuity of services when the parent comes home to the community.

● Maternal imprisonment affects future generations because children's psychological health and sense of family is severely damaged by the separation from their mothers. Increasingly, families are destroyed forever through the termination of parental rights, permanently cutting off the mother-child bond.



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## Peg Byrne, continued from page 5

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Another big problem, of course, is that the State's Attorney of the county where Dwight is located does not investigate criminal charges unless the warden or investigators from the DOC come to him and say "please bring charges against this guard." That, to my knowledge, has never happened. Never has a guard from Dwight Correctional Center been charged with a crime. Crimes are being committed. Women have complained about sexual assault by guards. In some of those cases, the DOC apparently believes the inmate because they have transferred women out and brought some kind of disciplinary process against the guard, but no criminal investigation takes place.

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on the history of violence, the woman is not charged. A lot of these women should never have been charged in the first place. But once someone is charged, you set that process in motion and she is probably going to end up in prison. If not for first degree murder, than for second degree murder.

The problem begins often at the police station when she is brought in. The assistant state's attorney's office and is often the first job that a

new assistant state's attorney has. They are on call and often have to go to the police station in the middle of the night to interview a suspect. We hope that our talking to law students about these cases might help them to be aware of the issue and to honestly investigate these cases from the beginning.

Lots of women I represented said, "The room was a shambles where I stabbed him not because I was hurting him, but because he was beating me up before I picked that knife up." The women will say things like, "I told the police that he threw me through that glass table and I tried to show him my back, but he wouldn't look at it." The state's attorney has an ethical obligation to seek justice and I think sometimes they forget that justice does not necessarily mean locking the suspect up for as long as possible. It means honestly investigating the case and trying to get to the truth and then charging appropriately, which sometimes means to not charge at all.

Do you have any reflections on how the overall prisoners rights movement addresses the issue of women in

prison?

I think that women are still relegated to the "other" even in the movement for prisoners rights. At least in most public programs about prisons some attention is given to women's problems in prisons, but it's never quite as important as the problem of political prisoners or the problems that men face — which are, of course, both very serious. I think the Left has a long history of ignoring women's problems and, although things are a little bit better, I don't think women are considered as important. It might have to do in some part to the numbers of women in prison — 3,000 women in prison in Illinois and more than 10 times that many men. Because there are fewer in prison, maybe that's part of the justification. I don't know. I do think that the problems that women have are unique and generally ignored by the DOC as well as by the small, but vocal prisoners rights movement in this state. It's a very serious problem and we should all care about it.



## IMPRISONMENT

### JAIL BIRDS

I. At the gatehouse, waiting for my visit,  
I see a blackbird on the high wire fence.  
The barbs grab her feet and she is caught.  
She struggles to free herself, wings flapping wildly,  
but she only spins, madly,  
round and round and round the wire.  
Everything is crazy in here.  
I am unable to look in this mirror any longer.  
Later, when I come out of the visiting room,  
the bird is gone.  
I think she must be resting in some soft nest now  
with her baby tucked safely under her wing.

II. Seagulls  
out of context  
on the green grass.  
So far away from home.

III. The killdeer walks and walks,  
endlessly repeating her plaintive cry,  
like a mother who has lost her children.  
In her sorrow, she forgets that she can fly.

IV. I walk in circles,  
going nowhere.  
The song of the meadowlark,  
pure and clear,  
stops me,  
becomes my brief destination.

V. The great hawk soars to incredible heights  
above the prison yard.  
She glides freely with outstretched wings,  
and makes the wind her own.



Joanne Archibald  
Ex-prisoner and  
current CLAIM  
staff member

# Criminal INjustice for Women: The Perp?

● The number of women in Illinois state prisons is almost four times what it was ten years ago. From 1981 to 1990 the number of women in our nation's prisons more than tripled, increasing by 276%. However, arrests of women for murder and manslaughter decreased 10.8% from 1984 to 1993, and in that time the total number of arrests for women increased by only 37%.

● Women in prison are more likely than men to be there for non-violent property crimes and drug offenses. In Illinois, 63% of women are in prison for non-violent offenses; about 57% of women's new admissions in 1994 were for Class 3 and Class 4 felonies which used to be punished with probation. (An example of a Class 3 felony is retail theft of property worth \$150 or more.) In comparison, 70% of Illinois prisoners overall (about 95% men) serve time for Class X or Class 1 felonies.

● A greater proportion of women in prison are sentenced for non-violent offenses now than previously. In 1979, 51% of women were incarcerated for taking part in violent offenses. In Illinois in 1993, only 37% of women were in prison for committing or being an accomplice in a crime that posed a risk of bodily harm to another. Women's crime has not become more violent, but sentencing has become harsher.

● Like poverty, imprisonment disproportionately affects women of color. Women in Illinois prisons are 68% African American, 25% white and 6% Latina with Asian and Native American women making up the other 1%.



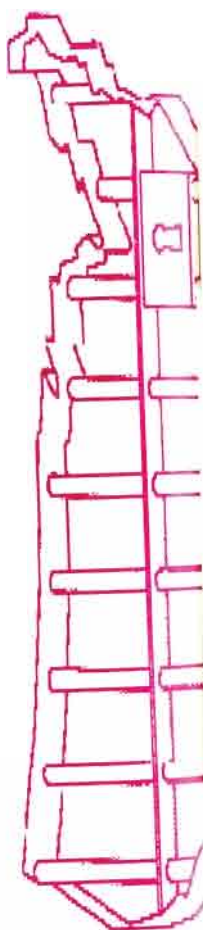
● Conservative estimates report that over half of all adult female offenders were victims of physical abuse and 36% were sexually abused as children. Some studies report that 88% had experienced at least one major form of violent victimization. In Illinois, 54% of women in prison have not attained a high school diploma. Nationwide, 39% dropped out of high school because they were pregnant.

● Education and vocational programs at Illinois adult correctional centers serve less than one-third of the inmates.

● About 80% of women inmates in Illinois have a history of drug abuse. The Gateway Program, the only substance abuse treatment center for women prisoners in Illinois has room for 166 women, 7% of the female prison population.

● Rates of HIV infection are much higher in prison than in the general population. Rates of HIV infection for women prisoners are higher than men prisoners. TB is also a higher health risk in prison and rates are higher among women than men.

● Prisons are generally male-oriented and male dominated. While there is a lack of programs and services for prisoners overall, the shortage for women is even more stark. For example, fewer women than men in prison have access to parenting classes, and their families are more severely harmed by the lack of services.



## Peg Byrne, continued from page 5

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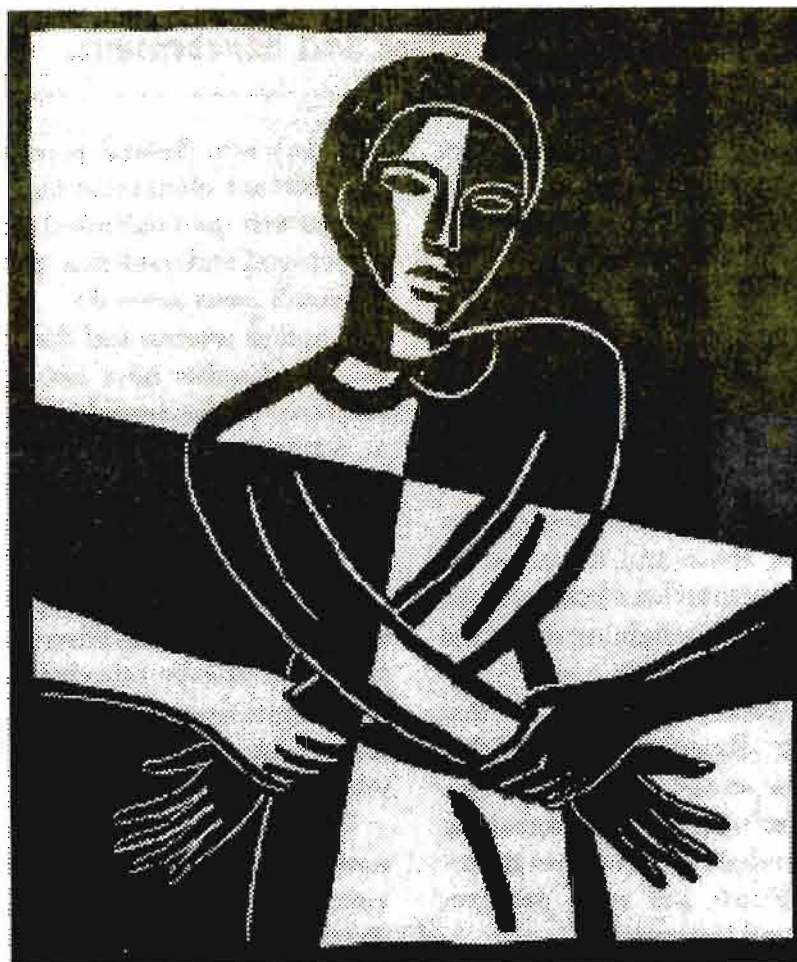
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*Do you have any reflections on the women's rights movement?*

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torney either does or doesn't ask her "Has he hit you before?" It can really make a big difference if he asks that question. Sometimes I hope that just by going into the law schools and talking about these cases and talking about the role of prosecutors, we make a difference. Lots of these law students end up being prosecutors. Felony Review, which is where these very important decisions about charging take place, is the pits of the state's



# Patriarchy and Racism American Style

## Women and Children First ....

- About 81% of women incarcerated in Illinois are mothers, affecting at least 6,500 children annually. Most of these were single mothers who were their children's sole caretaker prior to incarceration.

- Nearly 90% of male inmates in the U.S. report that their children are being cared for by the children's mothers; 25% of incarcerated mothers report that their children are being cared for by the father.

- Nationwide, about 6% of women are pregnant when they enter prison, and another 15% have babies less than six weeks old. Newborns are separated from imprisoned mothers within 24 hours of birth, missing the crucial, ir retrievable period of mother-child bonding which affects development for the rest of their lives.

- Studies demonstrate that regular visits between children in foster care and their mothers enhance the children's emotional, scholastic and social adjustment to placement. Numerous studies show that family contact is the only factor that has a strong, positive impact on parole success when the mother is released.

- A 1985 study demonstrated that less than 1% of mothers in prison were convicted of child abuse.

- When a mother goes to prison, usually it is her children who suffer most. Very young children may be severely traumatized by the sudden separation from their mothers, and this trauma may result in developmental delays and later emotional problems. Children's substitute care givers are stretched beyond their resources. Visits to distant prisons and long-distance, collect phone calls are the only ongoing contact with the mother available to children who are too young to benefit from letters.

- While some children of imprisoned mothers are cared for by relatives, those who go into state foster homes face a bureaucratic nightmare. They often are separated from their brothers and sisters, moved to a series of different foster homes, and denied visits with their mothers. Some children are abused and neglected in foster care. Children in foster care have an increased risk of delinquency in adolescence and homelessness in adulthood. Foster care workers often fail to provide mandated visits or service plans outlining tasks mothers must accomplish to regain custody. Moreover, there is little coordination or continuity of services when the parent comes home to the community.

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# ACTIVISTS GATHER

Some forty prison activists from around the country gathered in Chicago, November 8-10, 1996, for the third annual meeting of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons (NCSCUP).

Nearly everyone from the year before was back, which is no small thing in this time of reduced activism. Particularly inspiring were student contingents representing strengthened campus groups in Oberlin, Ohio and Boulder, Colorado. Along with Chicago and the students, NCSCUP has active participation in the Bay Area, Northern Indiana, Baltimore, and through the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Dayton, Newark and Philadelphia. Committed participants also hail from Milwaukee, Bloomington, IN, Cleveland, New York, Massachusetts, and Florida. And the above does not include many who are on the front lines - in prisons throughout the u.s.

The previous meeting, also held at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, generated, the Spring '96 regional hearings/tribunal and demonstrations (our caravan to Indiana). No such singular plan came out of the recent meeting, rather, we filled our plates with a variety of great ideas (and great food, provided by the Center's affiliated bakery/cafe). Three proposals were official endorsed by the Campaign:

\* **Summer Youth Institute.** The idea is to link those with a wealth of long-haul experience and expertise to a team of young organizers gathered in Chicago for two weeks. As of this writing, we are shooting for July 6-19, '97, contingent on raising money, most of it for participant stipends. Women and youth of color and regional diversity are priorities

in recruitment. The institute and its graduates might help generate some sort of "fall offensive."

\* **Helping control unit (c.u.) prisoners by improving their educational opportunities.** This is one of several c.u. reform proposals submitted by Bill Dunne, a political prisoner at Marion. Pursuing this worthy objective offers the additional opportunities of bringing in new people, such as those in academia, and of challenging the ideology of the irredeemability of prisoners. There is no master plan on how to do this; local groups are free to experiment. Successful efforts will be shared nationally. Dunne's other proposals — to help enable prisoners to file lawsuits, and to agitate for improved recreational opportunities — also demand attention, but the Campaign determined that it only had strength for the one now.

\* **Publish a survival pamphlet for prisoners in isolation,** written largely by other prisoners in isolation. Prisoners, or others who may have insights, are invited to join in the process of producing this handbook. As of this writing, there is a suggested outline. Contact

NCSCUP's clearinghouse: Bonnie Kerness c/o AFSC, 972 Broad Street-6th Floor, Newark, New Jersey 07102.

As for ongoing work, the Monitoring Project distributed an impressive new document - a draft interim report on c.u.'s. Forty of these monstrosities now exist by their count. The project needs monitors for those states

*continued on back page*

*Laura Whitehorn continued from page 1*

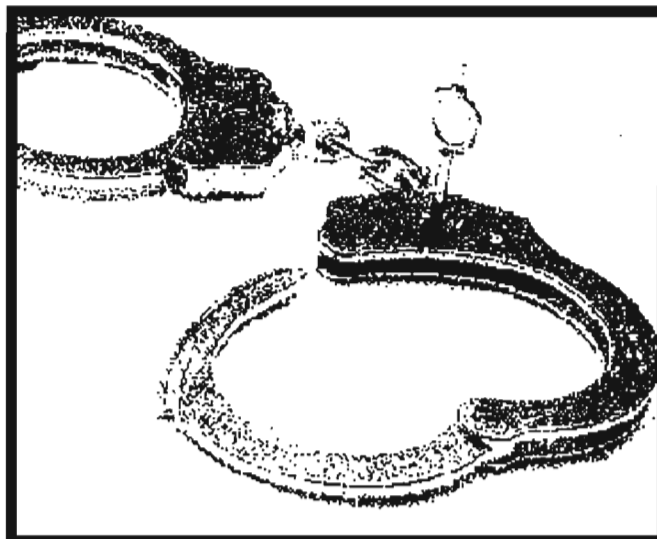
punish them further for the rebellion, Attica inspired thousands of prisoners throughout the country to rise up and demand their human rights. At the same time, a movement of support for the brothers grew. In that period, we had two main slogans: "Attica is All of Us" and "Attica Means Fight Back." These slogans couldn't quite capture the depth to which Attica shook u.s. society, nor how the inspiration of that struggle for human dignity will continue always to light the path of resistance.

I thought about "Attica Means Fight Back" last October, when Congress refused to adjust the racist, disproportionate sentences for crack as opposed to powder cocaine, and prisoners throughout the federal system fought back. As in NY State in 1971, we recognized that no one on the outside would take up the responsibility to resist the attack on our human rights — we prisoners had to do it ourselves. Unlike NY State in 1971, there was no sympathetic public response to the October federal prison rebellions.

At least two Attica Brothers, now released from prison, remember Attica every day by working to help prisoners and defendants trying to stay free. Akil Al-Jundi and Frank "Big Black" Smith both work in NY on prisoners' cases. Big Black is the one who said "Wake up — because nothing comes to a sleeper but a dream." Those of us inside need to wake up to the need for unity — to fight racism and the other divisions that hurt our ability to stand up together for our dignity. And I think we need to find a way to wake up all those people out there who dream that locking up more and more people will solve the problems of violence and crime — problems that come NOT from the oppressed but from the very nature of this capitalist system. We need to make them understand that what they are locking up and destroying is, in the end, their own humanity, their own souls.

The u.s. should be held accountable for its human rights violations. The massive long-term incarceration of huge numbers of oppressed people is one of these abuses. Holding more than 100 political prisoners — in a country that claims to have no political prisoners — is another. Others are daily reported in the newspapers — from the u.s. army teaching brutal counterinsurgency techniques ("Army Instructed Latins on Executions, Torture," *Washington Post*, 9/21/96), to the CIA dealing crack in L.A. to fund the illegal "contra" forces in Nicaragua. It's not in the past, not 25 years ago, it's happening now. It's in violation of international law. The u.s. government is the real criminal, the international outlaw. We prisoners, who experience these human rights abuses every day, can help expose u.s. crimes to the rest of the population. ATTICA IS ALL OF US! ATTICA MEANS FIGHT BACK!

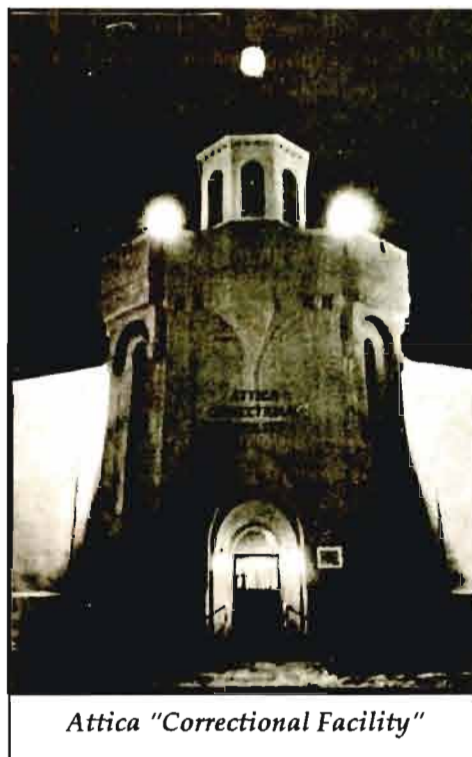
Laura Whitehorn, #22432-037  
5701 8th St.  
Camp Parks  
Dublin, CA 94568



*Sundiata Acoli continued from page 1*

unions' have mushroomed and become as powerful as the Policemen's Benevolent Association in bankrolling law-and-order politicians to pass more repressive crime legislation. Nothing is too cruel to be done to prisoners' today — particularly since most prisoners are now Black, brown and other people of color.

The "Big Lie" reigns supreme. No one wants to hear about Reagan's use of the CIA to flood the ghettos, barrios and reservations with cocaine to create the crack/crime epidemic in the first place — in order to fund the Contra War. Nor does anyone want to hear of Clinton's passage of the NAFTA bill and other transnational corporate schemes that sent U.S. jobs overseas to be done at cheaper wages by foreign workers — creating massive unemployment here. And definitely no one wants to hear of the current stampede by transnational corporations to replace overseas labor by opening factories in the prisons — in order to make even bigger profits. Prison slave labor is cheaper than overseas labor, plus no overseas shipping cost, health insurance, unemployment benefits or retirement cost — and, most of all — prisoners can't strike. Everyone is profiting off the law-and-order "Big Lie" that scapegoats prisoners and people of color in general. Everyone, that is, except the un/underemployed U.S. worker — while the transnational corporations laugh all the way to the bank.



Attica "Correctional Facility"

If Attica represents a high point in unity and consciousness of the prison struggle movement, then today represents a low in prison consciousness, solidarity, conditions... and struggle. The real lesson of Attica is its symbol as a beacon to remind us of where we were, and how we got there. Today's prisons are filled with mostly younger, less politically aware but rebellious prisoners who were swept up during the "Big Lie" War on Drugs; actually a War on People of Color. All struggles go through cycles. We changed the prisons before, we can do so again — and farther. To do so it's necessary to politically educate and activate a whole new generation of prisoners, communities and legal supporters. Building a National Prison Organization (NPO) is as good of a place to start as any.

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# THE REV. SEIICHI MICHAEL YASUTAKE: A CHAMPION OF HUMANITY

A highlight of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons (NCSCUP) weekend in Chicago (see page 8) was a tribute to the Rev. Seiichi Michael Yasutake.

After wrapping up Saturday's sessions, most participants headed downtown to the United Methodist Temple. The students prepared tables, making way for a gourmet Puerto Rican feast. Soon the place began to fill. And fill it did, despite the fact that no flyers or fancy invitations had gone out—almost everyone who had heard about it, came. Many expressed gratitude for our taking time to honor one of our own beloved heroes, such events being too rare.

Through prepared testimonies and a slideshow made especially for the occasion, folks became acquainted with many facets of Mike's life. A program booklet offered yet more testimony. When Mike himself spoke at the end, he noted that many had said that he inspired them. As for him, he said his inspiration comes from the political prisoners. Their tributes to Mike had to be relayed, second-hand, through the booklet.

Mike seems to run circles around those of us who are younger (he is 77), maintaining commitments to many different collective efforts. Recently, he was on a fact-finding mission to the border at El Paso with the Racial Justice Working Group of the Prophetic Justice Unit of the National Council of Churches-USA. (whew) The latter represents 35 Christian denominations with 40 million members. Mike's primary organization is yet another offshoot of the above; he is the director of the Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project (IPOC). IPOC says, "A prisoner of conscience,

indispensable.

Mike also serves the prisoners by visiting them. One of these, Puerto Rican Prisoner of War (POW), Dylcia Pagan, wrote of Mike, "You are a

versial that they could not meet about it at the local YMCA even though Mike was on the board. It was controversial enough to bring Mike's time there to an end.

His next assignment was to supervise the Church's campus ministry in the Midwest region. It was the time when the civil rights movement was galvanizing many students and others in the north who would soon be using lessons and tactics from that freedom movement to protest the war in Vietnam. He took students to Mississippi right after the murders of Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner. When they returned, they went to work against housing discrimination in Chicago's affluent North Shore, where he was based.

When hundreds of young people, including soldiers, were imprisoned for refusing to fight in Vietnam, Mike crossed the country visiting and drumming up support for them.

Mike has always found ways to struggle for a better world no matter where on it he has been, which is good because from his college expulsion and on through his career, his activities have often scared his superiors and shortened his stays. His reputation preceded him such that Ruth has said that they could have "plastered the bathroom" with all his job rejection notices.

It was advantageous then for Mike to be in the position in 1976 to hire a young woman named Carmen Valentin into the counseling department at Chicago's YMCA Community College (no longer in existence). She was in the same boat, having just been run out of Tuley High School, the target of school board and media retribution for a struggle to transform the anti-Puerto Rican bent of the City's mostly Puerto Rican high school, soon thereafter renamed Roberto Clemente H.S. Mike and Carmen made a good team, involving themselves in the Arab and Iranian student movement and defending the students from the Shah of Iran's Savak agents, organizing a union and trying to get the secretaries into the teachers union (all the while Mike is in management!). Carmen wrote:

"Then, April 4, 1980 came and I had to abandon ship. One of my regrets—believe it or not—was leaving that zone of struggle and you! It wasn't long after our capture, perhaps a few weeks, when you appeared at Cook County Jail as our spiritual consultant. We had to pray together; that was the institution's expectation and we did. To this day, I remember the content of that prayer, not an empty plea, like most religious, traditional prayers. Your prayer offered us hope, consolation, strength—a prayer of resistance. The essence of these words have never left my soul."

It takes greatness within oneself to recognize it in another, and that was certainly true of the more than a dozen people who spoke. Among them was Mike's sister Mitsuye Yamada of Seattle, an accomplished poet who herself visits the Puerto Rican women POWs who are at a federal prison in California.

Afterwards, a photographer took portraits of Mike with those who would be caught alive with him. First up were many configurations of Mike's extended family, some of whom had come from as far as Seattle.

Let us 'be like Mike', and rededicate ourselves to bringing about freedom in our day.



Michael Yasutake speaking at the tribute in his honor

true champion of humanity."

Alan Berkman, a former political prisoner (who spent much of his time in Marion), asked Mike on a visit to relate what was the root of his commitment to the prisoners. During World War II, Mike and his Seattle-based family had been among 120,000 people of Japanese descent who were sent to internment camps by the way of broken-down trains with the shades drawn to conceal their route from their captives. His father was taken to a different camp. After one-and-a-half years of this imprisonment in the arid Snake River Plain of Idaho, Mike was released, whereupon he began pursuit of his calling to the ministry. He had just settled in for his second year at college when u.s. agents came to question his loyalty and willingness to fight, for the war was still on. He resisted, and was quickly expelled. In a sense, he was one of the lucky ones. 7,000 were deported to Japan for having "answered the loyalty oath wrong." And he could not forget the drafting of men right out of the camp. In a pre-Vietnam spirit of "Hell no, we won't go!" 66 of them were sent to prison. Berkman relates:

"... deciding as a young man to resist serving in the military had been a hard and painful process. This personal experience gave him insight into both the need to resist social injustice and an appreciation of the personal cost that often follows from confronting authority."

Mike persevered and by 1950 was ordained into the Episcopal priesthood. The Chicago diocese sent him to the all-white, south suburb of Oak Lawn. In his time there he raised money to build a church and estab-

lished a center for family counseling, despite the fact that he and his wife, Ruth, and their three children could not have lived anywhere else but in church property because of community racism. Ever in pursuit of justice, he began organizing for open housing, an idea so contro-



Michael and Ruth Yasutake at the Tribute

otherwise called a political prisoner, is a person imprisoned... for reason of acts, associations or beliefs based on a concern for justice and human rights." IPOC recognizes and struggles for the release of the more than 100 political prisoners right here in the u.s.a. Its work is

# Why Do They Keep Putting More and More People in Cages?

## A review of:

- *Confronting Crime: An American Challenge* by Elliott Currie, Pantheon Press, 1985, \$11.95 (pb)
- *It's About Time: America's Imprisonment Binge* by John Irwin and James Austin, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1994 \$12.00 (pb)
- *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime and Punishment in America* by Michael Tonry, Oxford University Press, 1995, \$11.95 (pb)
- *Search and Destroy: African American Males in the Criminal Justice System* by Jerome G. Miller, Cambridge University Press, 1996, \$24.95 (hb)

CEML has written often in the past on the issue of the relationship between crime and imprisonment and the barbaric and racist nature of imprisonment in the United States. We have shown over and over again, as have others, that:

- There is no notable relationship between the crime rate and the imprisonment rate;
- Black people are imprisoned in the United States about eight times more often than white people;
- Black people are imprisoned in the United States almost two times more often than Black people were under the apartheid regime in South Africa;
- The number of people in prison (not including jails) has risen six-fold in the past 25 years (from 200,000 to 1,200,000);
- The "criminal" "justice" system costs about \$70 billion a year.

(Issues of *Walkin' Steel* published in 1994 and 1995 provide a great deal of data supporting all of these assertions.)

Given such a spectacular situation, one must ask, why does it exist? Why are things this way and how did they get this way? Four books, three of them quite new, speak to this issue. All four of them are written by progressive white men; all four know, and often prove anew in creative and useful ways, that imprisonment rates have soared, that this has not impacted on crime rates, and all recognize that related to all of this is Black people. (Two of the books are strong on this recognition, two are weak.) Those concerned with prisons, crime, and racism would do well to read and study these books. Their strengths are informative; their weaknesses are instructive.

Elliott Currie's book, published over 10 years ago, before the most recent manifestations of the "war on drugs" hysteria, three strikes, etc., shows a great deal of scholarship and understanding of relevant data. Over and over Currie shows that the "criminal" "justice" system (CJS) does not prevent crime, and indeed, that it cannot prevent crime. The next step is then to figure out why this situation occurs. And here, too, Currie is strong on the answers, tying elevated crime rates to social factors like unemployment and community structure, both of which he in turn relates, though not in these words, to the structures of society. In a most important point, that we will return to, Currie notes:

But the fact that economic inequality and criminal violence are closely and predictably linked raises a far deeper and, I think, a more compelling point than that the courts and the police may treat poor people differently from others (p 159 - 160).

Consistent with this observation Currie quotes Alfred Blumstein, arguably the leading U.S. criminologist, as stating :

Any significant impact on the racial mix in our prisons will have to come from addressing the factors in our society that generate the life conditions that contribute to the disparity (p 155).

It would be virtually impossible for an impartial reader to come away from Currie's vast array of data and not conclude that prisons are a failure

in preventing crime and that the way to prevent crime is to restructure society:

If we are serious about attacking the roots of this American affliction, we must build a society that is less unequal, less depriving, less insecure, less disruptive of family and community ties, less corrosive of cooperative values (p 225).

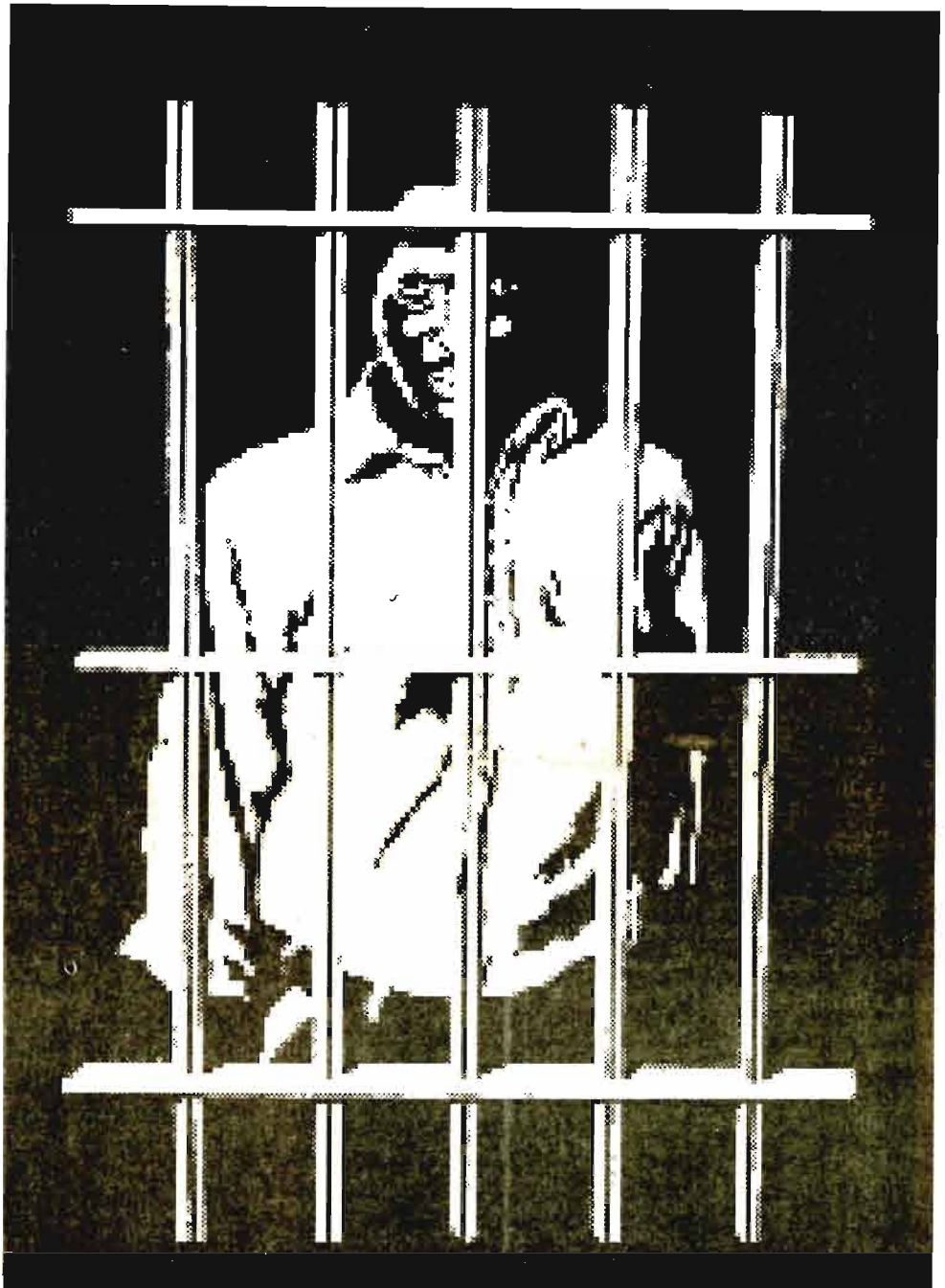
Finally, Currie notes, it must be asserted that "Government can fairly be said to have adopted a pro-crime policy for decades in America" (p 226).

John Irwin and James Austin have been writing penetrating works on the CJS for many years, often for the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). The main contribution of this book is to go beyond the official statistics to examine what crime really means, and what a criminal really is. For example, after reviewing the basic stats on imprisonment, Irwin and Austin report on a study they implemented by interviewing 154 prisoners from three states. Using a structured but open-ended questionnaire, and a scale that objectively measures crime seriousness (as opposed to employing the name of the crime that sent the person to prison), Irwin and Austin found that 53% were in for petty crimes, 29% were in for crimes of moderate seriousness, 13% were in for serious crimes, and 5% were in for very serious crimes. And all of this was before the war on drugs kicked in, which certainly would now produce a survey that showed an even greater percentage of people in prison for non-violent crimes. They also note, about another study they conducted:

Our research indicates that over half the persons being sent to prison are being sent for petty crimes, which are crimes with no aggravating features — that is, no significant amount of money, no injury, or any other feature that would cause ordinary citizens to view the crime as particularly serious (p 34).

In a similar effort to understand how the ha-

bitual offender laws (predecessors to the three strikes deceit) work, NCCD conducted an in-depth study of 90 prisoners in Florida. They found that although all those sentenced under the Habitual Offender sentencing laws had indeed offended habitually, the nature of their crimes varied greatly and, once again, were not very violent. In fact, only 16% were violent offenders. Furthermore, the NCCD found that the high degree of discretion employed by the pros-



ecutors about when to employ the Habitual Offender law "results in significant racial bias in the application of the law" (p 54).

The weakest chapter is about maximum security units and prisons, including Marion. Here their evolution is traced and explained. Irwin and Austin, who should know better, accept the government line that the purpose of such units, including Marion, is to indeed hold "troublesome prisoners." They then try, throughout the chapter, to explain why this effort has failed concluding that there has been poor calibration of the control! In other words, they accept the government's stated purpose of these units, they apparently accept the need for these units, and suggest that the failure of these units is not a political problem, but only a strategic one:

As was the case in California and Illinois, strategies to control troublesome prisoners greatly increased control problems (p 101).

Interestingly, both of these books note the absurdity, and even destructive nature of the prison system, but treat these facets of the CJS

continued from previous page

as if they were products of a well-intentioned system gone wrong by accident. For example, Currie asks:

If we know as much about crime as I think we do, why haven't we already acted on that knowledge more consistently and more constructively? (p 18).

His answer as to why we keep filling prisons and have no impact on the crime rate is that the U.S. government does not understand well enough what the research is telling it. Just imagine, the U.S. CJS spends \$70 billion each year and can't find a person to explain what the research says — essentially what is contained in his book, or even in this article. Also painfully absent from both books is an explanation of the centrality of Black people in the the CJS. The disproportionality is observed and lamented, but seen entirely as a result of the CJS rather than a cause of its growth.

The next two books, by Jerry Miller and Michael Tonry, address these important deficits.

Each is fascinating on its own; taken together the two books form an extraordinary dialogue in which we would all do well to participate. Both have at their foundation the brutality of prisons, the clear assertions, documented very well, that prisons don't and can't prevent crime, and each places at the center of it all the question of Black people — in prison and in U.S. society. Both argue in a most passionate way that this all may be a deliberate effort to control or destroy Black people, rather than a well-intentioned system gone wrong.

Tonry and Miller come at these questions from entirely different perspectives: Miller is an advocate looking more for justice than the most nuanced understanding of facts. As a person who has been in charge of several carceral institutions (for example, juvenile detention systems in Illinois and Massachusetts), has changed them, and has then been fired for doing so, Miller, it would seem, has analyzed the facts enough. He is a pamphleteer, on the move:

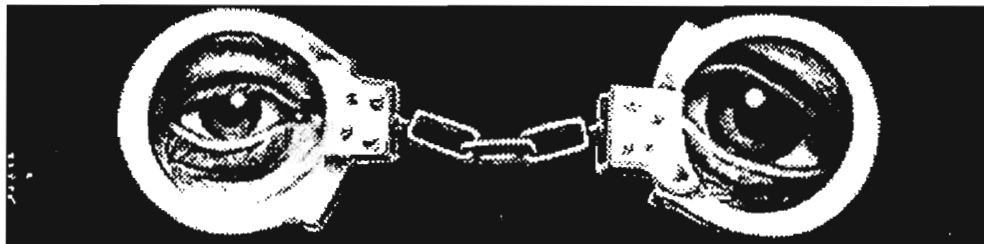
With the marriage of electronic news to entertainment consummated in the early 1990s, no set of social conditions better lent itself to manipulation by claims-makers than crime. Crime became a political game of bait and switch. The bait was violent crime — more money and resources were necessary to fight it. The switch occurred when the newly acquired criminal justice armamentaria were brought to bear. Because relatively few violent offenders could be found among the millions of underclass citizens of color who received the brunt of the newly-energized criminal justice system — from police to prosecutors — the definitions of dangerousness were twisted and stretched to include as many among them as possible, as often as possible. . . . It was perhaps not so ironic therefore that the incident which plunged Los Angeles into civil disorder in 1992 involved the police beating of a convicted felon. (p 3-4)

No confusion here — Miller knows where it's at and where he's going. A full review of his book would allow us to quote much more of it — it is that fine, that true, that excellent:

In fact, most of the frenetic law enforcement in the black community had nothing to do with violent crime. When the justice juggernaut is wheeled into the streets it tends to crush those more easily identifiable by race and socioeconomic status than by their violent or serious criminal behavior. Sustained and increasingly technologically sophisticated law enforcement intrusion into

the homes and lives of urban African-American families for mostly minor reasons has left the inner cities with a classic situation of social iatrogenesis—a "treatment" that maims those it touches and exacerbates the very pathologies which lie at the root of crime. It suggests that the criminal justice system itself has been a major contributor to breakdown in the inner cities. Along the way, it has spawned an industry fully capable of producing sufficient numbers of new clientele to validate the need for its existence and justify its growth, demanding more police, arrests, prosecutions, and prisons. (p 9)

Interestingly, Miller and Tonry, apparently friends and collaborators (Miller thanks Tonry



in his preface), come at the issue from very different points of view. As indicated by the above quotes, Miller is certain that Black people are deliberately targeted by the CJS; Tonry is not so sure: "Although damaging the lives of countless young blacks was probably not their primary aim, the architects of the War on Drugs no doubt foresaw the result" (p 4). Furthermore, Tonry finds that, aside from drugs, Black people do commit many more crimes than white people and thus, by and large, are accurately represented in the CJS. He recognizes the racist nature of the situation but rather, than blaming the CJS, he blames the structures of society.

This brings us back to the quote above from

Currie, who agrees with Tonry. It is widely acknowledged that housing is racist, employment is racist, education is racist, etc. Further, we know from countless studies that the death penalty is racist. How it turns out that the rest of the CJS is not racist — thus making it virtually the only institution in society in this category — is not clear. In this sense, the unstated disagreements between Tonry and Miller about the intent of the CJS, and whether it is racist — are intriguing and worthy of study in these two wonderful books.

CEML has maintained all along that although substantial evidence, much of it presented in Miller's book, suggests that the CJS is indeed racist, it is the structure of society as well as its police — the CJS and the vast majority of compliant white people in this country — that is at fault. We further maintain that no system as big and costly as the CJS could mistakenly cage people at a higher rate than any other society in the world — for 25 years and counting. Whether the CJS works, whether it is effective, depends upon what one perceives its purpose to

be: Is it for the control of crime or the control of people of color in an effort to prevent them from achieving their democratic rights?

We invite the reader to participate in these four rich volumes, to read, to critique, and to achieve her or his own analysis of this central issue in U.S. society.



SEEN ANY GOOD MOVIES LATELY?

We did. In fact, we (CEML) resurrected a film that to our knowledge had only been shown in Chicago once before. We've been conducting showings of "The Fire This Time", a 90-minute documentary that puts post-rebellion Los Angeles into historical context. Focusing on the Black community, it features many articulate and passionate voices. Threads of recently breaking news stories such as government encouragement of the proliferation of drugs, guns, and gangs (CIA-crack) as well as the Ebonics debate can be found in footage that was shot soon after the rebellion in '92. While not focusing on imprisonment per se, it presents the context into which the prison building spree fits, illuminated by the glittery new, county jail that rose from the ashes, vulture instead of Phoenix.

You can obtain a copy through Rhino Home Video at (800) 432-0020. The cost is about \$30. Better yet, get your local library or school, perhaps even a local video rental shop, to purchase a copy. We can send you our flyer with a "critic's choice" review. Other promotional material might be available through Rhino.

## Who We Are

Walkin' Steel is a production 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 was closed that same year. Since then, Marion has become an increasingly inhumane institution. In 1972, a few months after the great 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 units throughout the United States; 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 must try also to fight against the opening of this "administrative maximum" prison. Fortunately, we are but one small part of a movement across the country that is fighting against the brutality of this newest U.S. technological nightmare. Unfortunately, ADX Florence was opened, Marion is still under lockdown conditions and control units have proliferated in the state prison systems all across the country.



In December of 1994, many organizations and individuals from across the country including CEML came together to form the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons. A tremendous amount of work has resulted from this campaign, but clearly much more needs to be done. If you are not yet involved in this struggle, and would like to become involved, please contact either organization below.

**Bonnie Kerness; American Friends Service Committee  
National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons  
972 Broad Street, 6th FL  
Newark, New Jersey 07102  
(201) 643-3192  
e-mail: 103137.3272@compuserve.com**

**Committee to End the Marion Lockdown  
PO Box 578172  
Chicago, IL 60657-8172,  
e-mail: cemi@aol.com  
(312) 235-0070  
web page: <http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~kastor/cemi.html>**

This issue of Walkin' Steel was made possible by a generous grant from RESIST, an organization that helps fund organizations struggling for social justice. We urge you to make contributions to:

**RESIST  
One Summer Street  
Somerville, MA 02143**

### YOUTH INSTITUTE ON PRISONS, RACISM AND SOCIETY

Are you a young activist working on prison issues --- freedom for political prisoners, shutting down control units, fighting for the rights of women in prison, ending the criminalization of youth, combatting AIDS in prison, eliminating the death penalty? Are you interested in working on campaigns like these? If the answer is yes, we would like to invite you to Chicago for two weeks (July 7 - 20, 1997) for a Youth Institute on Prison Racism and Society. We have an exciting program designed to help young activists develop the knowledge-base and skills for radical prison activism. If you are interested contact either of the above two organizations.



### *"Activists" continued from page 8*

that are not yet covered. The Monitoring Project can be reached directly c/o Rocky Mt. Peace Center, POB 1156, Boulder, CO 80306.

Also ongoing is the Emergency Response Network (ERN). Consisting of many interconnected phone trees and an e-mail list, we hope to wield it more often and more effectively. Anyone can ask that it be activated, but a group of three who were elected at the meeting will give the final go-ahead. Bonnie (201) 643-3192 is one of the three. Nancy Kurshan is another, and it's her job to fire-off the e-mail. To participate, send your phone number or e-mail address to Nancy c/o CEML, POB 578172, Chicago, IL 60657 or [cemi@aol.com](mailto:cemi@aol.com).

Also on the menu are such projects as annotating medical literature on the affects of isolation imprisonment, making a list of conferences and symposia at which it would be appropriate for Campaign members to make a presentation or appear on a panel, and strengthening the cam-

paign at the regional level through regional meetings.

Along with our hearts, soul, and sweat, the thread that runs through all our work is money. We pledged that this would be the year to begin to raise funds. Up 'til now, everything has been paid for by local groups, with staff and office support coming courtesy of the AFSC's prison component. If the Campaign had a war chest, for example, we could give a grant to a local organizing project, or we could find a lawsuit to delay a prison's construction in order to buy time to organize against it, or we could provide air fare to foster a greater diversity of participants at national meetings, or we could fund a national speaking tour.

The need, and the potential, are great. The proliferation of these torture chambers provides more people the opportunity, the duty actually, to actively pursue their abolition. The ways to do this are many. As Bill Dunne always concludes his correspondence, "The future holds promise".