

from
Prisoners at Marion:
**REFLECTIONS ON FIVE
YEARS OF THE LOCKDOWN**

This collection of letters was gathered and assembled by the Committee to End The Marion Lockdown on the occasion of completion of the fifth year of the Lockdown. We wrote to the prisoners and asked for their thoughts on this matter, in about 100-200 words. Many wrote us longer letters, which we had to edit down in order to complete the task on time - for the October 22, 1988 conference. We hope that our editing has not violated any basic ideas contained in the original letters.

**Committee to End The Marion Lockdown
343 S. Dearborn, Suite 1607
Chicago, IL 60604**

\$.50

SCOTT ROUTLEDGE, AKA SCOTT FOUNTAIN -- 02158-090

My name is Scott Routledge, AKA Scott Fountain. I am serving a 72-month bit in the Control Unit for my alleged involvement in a guard killing in Jan. 1984. The Control Unit aside, I think the general population should be open because all the prisoners are being held vicariously responsible for the 2 guards killed in H-unit in 1983. The vast majority of prisoners in Marion are no different from the prisoners in any state maximum prison. Since the lockdown I have seen a great many prisoners transferred to Springfield for mental help. Then they come back. Some go several times. The psychological damage is unquestionable. It is fact. Some friends of mine were talking once about what to do in a hypothetical situation where we would be on escape and be in a car with cops chasing us. We come around a corner and a school bus is discharging children in the street. What to do? Run them down or stop? The consensus of most was to mow the kids down rather than be caught and return here. That should speak for itself. Several years ago most prisoners wouldn't think that way.

Moral: This treatment convinces prisoners that society in general doesn't care a damn about them and in fact condones the treatment. Society as a whole now becomes the enemy where before the general enemy was the law with regular people seen as civilians and non-participants.

DANIEL E. BIFIELD -- 06833-014

It's easy to read things on paper and it always looks good, but you have to live it, to see it and feel it to know the real deal.

Sure, it's easy to say lock them up and they deserve it, but do you really know the reasons or why? Not too many people do. At least not until it happens to them.

This prison is not all it has been built up to be. There are a lot of people who do not belong here or deserve to be treated like they are. I know, see and live with them. Sure there are muderers and problems, but they have them in any prison, in every country. There are worse prisoners in other prisons than most of the people here who have done worse crimes.

We're being punished enough for our faults and a lot of us accept our punishment, but to be locked in a human warehouse and be treated like this is definitely against human rights. Because the people who treat us like this are as bad as we are. Do you think for one second that you can lock away all the problems and never have to deal with them again. Because you are wrong. All that does is build up the hate and make a person meaner.

Just remember a lot of people in here will be free someday. And that hate and meanness will be built up. It's easy to say lock them up and they deserve what they get. But what comes around goes around.

I'm not saying I don't deserve to be in prison or that I know the answers. But I will be free some day and I'm lucky enough to have learned my lesson and want to change my ways. I have a lot to look forward to. If I can change, so can others.

There has to be a better and different way. Because others will not forget or be as lucky as I am. And I don't want to be around for that.

Remember everything is not what it seems to be or how others would like you to believe. I'm paying for my wrong doing and a lot more than others have. But you can only punish a person so much. And we're all paying for it. I feel writing this letter is a useless cause, but I had to say something.

HANIF SHABAZZ BEY, S/N BEAUMONT GEREAU

All together I have spent 12 of the 16 years that I have been incarcerated at Marion. I am

38 years old, a Vietnam veteran with an undesirable discharge, unskilled, a sufferer of recurring back pain as a result of several beatings at the hands of prison guards, and I am a New African, all of which will make it that much more difficult for me to successfully re-enter society if ever given the chance. My chances of ever being released seem very slim, as I was sentenced to 8 consecutive life terms in connection with an armed attack on the Nelson Rockefeller owned golf course in the colonialist U.S. Virgin Islands in 1972.

In the last 4 years I have not received any serious disciplinary reports here at Marion, however at present there does not seem to be the slightest possibility of my leaving Marion in the foreseeable future. I presume that the B.O.P will continue to keep me at Marion as long as it is convenient to utilize me as a display piece, and use my case to demonstrate to the public the violent nature of the acts some of the prisoners at Marion are charged with and thus justify the spending of the tax payers' dollars in a program which is really not necessary.

The tax payers' dollars have gone to place a T.V. in each cell at Marion, yet U.S.P. Marion officials refuse to show videos on the T.V. with instruction in some form of vocational training, so whenever I do leave Marion, I will leave still unskilled.

STANLEY ULATOWSKY -- 39329-066

I am a Massachusetts State Prisoner serving time for armed robbery. I voluntarily transferred from State to Marion. I have been here a year and one-half and the prisoners here don't exhibit the vicious, predatory behavior for which Marion allegedly exists. To be warehoused for years in a tiny cell 23 hours a day, while the government makes every effort to destroy our minds, tends to increase divisions along real lines. This isolation which this practice promotes is exacerbated by the Federal System practice of refusing to permit inmates to an open-programming which is extremely important for rehabilitation. Because they are dealing with human beings, I strongly feel that unless the Federal System's policies and practices regarding this "lockdown" change, the effects on the prisoners are destructive of their potential rehabilitation, a deprivation which can obviously have serious consequences in a maximum security federal prison.

STANLEY ZEBULUN -- 18185037

I am writing in response to a letter I received from your committee. I am not surprised by the words of the people out there in society, since the ones responding probably have never been incarcerated. Personally, I have been confined in Marion Penitentiary for 7 years and I can assure you from any respect you care to view it from, Marion is an epidemic to the outside society as long as it exists. I don't know what exactly it is that you would want to hear since you are out there and I am in here. But if you want to be more specific, then your questions or comments should specify that. In the event you would care to send someone out here then I would be more than happy to oblige an interview.

MARCELLO GAB BAEZA -- 19980-148

I received a letter from Charles (for CEML) and he requested that I, and a few others, should respond to what some of these folks from Southern Illinois are saying about the Lockdown here in Marion. And since I have passed this letter around to a few people, I gave them your name so they can seal up their envelopes. I hope you don't mind.

Donna, I myself will not be writing any comments on this lockdown. Oh, yes! I'm against it, but please understand I'm from the ole school. I'm a convict, not an inmate. It's inmates that got me put in Marion. I can really dig what y'all are doing for these inmates cause for

sure they don't belong here in Marion. Marion isn't what they say it is. It's a jail cell. And nothing more.

IMAM HAKIM -- 41334-133

Peace be with you! Victory to he who strives! Never give up the fight!

I am Iman Hakim Abdul Hamid Ali (AKA Charles Perry); I have been here at Marion USP since 1984. So, for 4 years I have suffered through some of the worst of treatment ever handed out by man to man!

I was sent here to Marion from USP-Lewisburg, accused of being a leader of a massive work strike that took place in May, 1984. I am a leader of the Sunni Muslim Community, and I was a leader in a massive legal suit (class action) for religious freedom, that was scheduled to go to court in June, 1984. (coincidence?)!

These have been 4 years of physical and psychological torture. Even though I am now in B-Block (a better environment), I will never, ever forget the humiliation of being subjected to the "finger-wave"; or the psychological damage done to me by being subjected to the verbal abuse and utter disrespect of the officers working at this institution.

I know (from experience) this type of confinement (lock-down status) does not work in the long term. It might temporarily relieve the officials of some initial problems, but in the end, it festers like a sore -- just waiting for the right type of contact - then it will burst wide open.

I know (from experience) that men (any type of men), convict or not, will not continue to suffer abuse without striking back. I know that somewhere down the line, someone will be the recipient of the delayed response from this present situation. It's very tragic and unfortunate -- but very true, none-the-less.

I pray something is done soon to change the present state of affairs in USP-Marion.

OSCAR LOPEZ-RIVERA

It's very difficult for people who have never been exposed to the hostile and destructive environment of prisons to appreciate the experiences that prisoners are forced to endure while subjected to a lockdown like the one in Marion. When I arrived here in 1986, there were prisoners with whom I shared books and discussed political ideas. Within 2 years I've been able to observe a tremendous transformation in their personalities. Some are no longer interested in reading or engaging in political discussion. They prefer to watch television. They seem withdrawn, tense and to have short fuse tempers. Looking at those changes makes me realize that I must have also changed. That pre-occupies me because I'm conscious that the objective of the lockdown is to rob us of our humanity and destroy our moral and spiritual fibers by reducing us to mere objects --despicable ones to boot according to the BOP.

The state of helplessness that we suffer on a daily basis stifles and destroys our spirituality and our creativity. It's a terrible reality to be forced to spend 23 hours each day in a cement box not knowing what is going to happen to us from one minute to the next. Not only are we denied every possibility of decision making but also every creative opportunity. It's almost impossible to be creative when your main source of stimulation are the walls and the steel bars. Yet the little spark of spontaneity that we generate is destroyed by the jailers because they see it as a threat to their control and authority. Such a state of helplessness is made more pernicious because we are conscious that the water we drink is contaminated with lead and PCB, yet we can't do anything about it.

Well, allow me to wish you success with the commemoration activity. Please share my greetings with those who participate in it.

BILL DUNNE. -- 10916-086

I have been relegated to dungeon Marion for 44 months. I am allegedly too fiendish for transfer because I've committed horrible crimes like hanging socks on the bars to dry while at Marion. I was sent to Marion for purported possession of escape paraphernalia, though circumstances indicate it was more because I was politically persona non grata and thought to be inclined to pursue the first duty of the POW.

USP Marion is a dangerous cancer in the body politic. It is an anti-democratic tool of repression and laboratory for experiments in social manipulation and control. Its nefarious ulterior purposes are highlighted by the extent to which officialdom distorts the reality. Marion is not filled only with vicious predators convicted of violent crimes in other prisons. Prisoners do not have any certain opportunity to "progress." People are subjected to conditions that violate U.N. standards. Marion has been condemned by all unbiased observers such as Amnesty International. And the cancer is spreading as the Marion "model" proliferates. It will do increasing damage until people make themselves aware of and stop it. By the time you feel the sickness it may be too late.

ANDREW INGRAM EL -- 40508-133

On 2/12/82, I was sent to Marion as a disciplinary transfer after being found guilty of allegedly stabbing another prisoner at Leavenworth. The disciplinary committee there said I did it, saying that the statement of its confidential informant outweighed the testimony of my sole witness, the stabbing victim, who stated that I was not his assailant.

On 7/17/83, after being in Marion for about 18 months, a prison guard was stabbed in my unit. Shortly thereafter I and another prisoner were taken to the segregation unit and charged with and found guilty of the assault on evidence so weak that I was later found not guilty of the assault in criminal court. Nonetheless, the administration sent me to the Control Unit for 3 years.

Since 12/83, I've received one minor infraction for talking to another prisoner; yet for some reason I don't fit the ever elusive and changing criteria for placement in the pre-transfer unit.

JOSEPH W. DOUGHERTY - 01924-135

I am a 49 year old who has the dubious distinction of having been in Marion from July, 1969, thru August, 1978. Those were years of torture, terror and much pain during the Adams vs. Carlson (1972) and Bono vs. Saxbe (1977) periods. During those terrible years, guards beat prisoners with clubs and blackjacks and chained them up for days at a time, naked. During those times, guards would take a prisoner to the hospital in chains, x-ray him repeatedly and then rape him with their fingers -- for security reasons.

Now it is October, 1988, and the guards are still subject to beat prisoners with clubs and chain them up for long periods of time, naked, of course. Now prisoners have a choice between being forced to take some x-rays or being finger raped by the guards, for security -- and still may get both. And now the whole prison is a hole.

I made parole on 19/Sept/81 and was returned to Marion as a parole violator on 2/5/85, straight from the streets. I was and still am amazed that nothing has changed in 19 years except that the oppression is more out front. Happy anniversary!

KOJO BOMANI SABABU (S/N GRAILING BROWN) -- 39384-066

Succinctly, the opportunity and moment is upon us to excoriate human rights violations in the U.S. Constantly, this nation assails countries whose politics they disagree with regarding prisoners and their treatment. Yet, inhumanities exist in Marion, Illinois, at this nation's maximum security prison. Although the U.S. courts upheld such inhumanities, it used harsh language concerning their practice. It referred to Marion's operation as "sordid and horrible" and "ghastly" and "depressing in the extreme." Numerous impartial observers have also condemned Marion, including Amnesty International, among other political and religious organizations. And it has been repeatedly noted that USP Marion violates the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Purportedly, America currently holds clear distinction as human rights leader and advocate within the international community. It's high time the "Man in the Mirror", reflecting domestic shame about outrageous treatment of the forlorn men at Marion, cast his shadow.

I am a New African Political Prisoner who was sent to Marion 29 months ago on charges of plotting escape. I spent 18 months in isolation at MCC Chicago pending trial on those charges. There is no telling when I will be transferred.

OMAR SALCEDO -- 01058-131

I am a Cuban refugee who has been at Marion for the past 4 years. I was sent to Marion as an administrative transfer. My sentence was up on 2/26/87, but there has been no process to transfer me to another facility to wait for the INS to release me. On 8/2/88, I was approved for release by the "Cuban Review Panel" and was taken to MCC Chicago to be released to my family. But after a month there, I was returned to Marion because of a sadistic recommendation that the Marion administration made to the INS which is based on a denial of my release order. I have not been given any statement of the reasons for which I was returned to Marion after being approved for release.

I do not know how long I will have to stay at Marion. Racism and physical and mental punishment are the 3 things that characterize this place. There is no respect for the prisoners' human rights. Communist states are accused of inhumane treatment of prisoners, but Marion is more inhumane.

GARVIN DALE WHITE -- 04761-035

I came straight to Marion from federal court, never having been a federal prisoner before. Three years later, I was transferred only after being forced to drop a lawsuit in exchange for the transfer. Later I was brought back to Marion for a court appearance. Marion officials again coerced me into dropping a civil suit in order to get back to my original location. A week after that transfer, I was transferred back to Marion for administrative reasons but through complaints was transferred out again. One year later I was transferred back for administrative reasons and here I sit.

This yo-yo statement should give you some small idea of how I feel toward the BOP staff that have done this to me. There is no set program for a prisoner to settle down and do his time *in peace* and make something of himself. Only ex-Wall Streeters are playing golf and catching the sun. The less influential are subject to this hole and spun on the run.

When finally a prisoner is erupted out of the bowels of this hospice, he is forever marked with the stigma of Marion and its mental scars.

STEVEN D. LEFRIDGE -- 60780-000

I've been at Marion for 43 months. I was sent here from Lorton Reformatory (Washington, D.C.) on some type of transfer which noone has explained to me. I was found not guilty by a jury of an alleged assault, so that was not the reason.

Racial discrimination is practiced here and throughout the federal system. The population is about 70% black or other minority. And the vast majority of them do not fit the bill of what this institution is supposed to be. The administration says that only the worst of the worst come here, but in truth almost all are here for minor infractions in other places. I'm not saying that it doesn't happen to white guys also, but when you look at the whole picture and walk through this prison you can see the racism with your eyes. The average blacks are here for breaking in the chow line and things of that nature. Some are here for nothing at all. They use this prison like a club for when one expresses a viewpoint that they don't like, or walks a certain way, or just because.

HAROLD J. GARMANY -- 23431-149

Everything's wrong about this place. There isn't enough opportunity for exercise. We have to spend almost all our time in the cells for no reason and even though there is good reason for us to have more time out. This results in a person always being in a state of depression and constantly angry. Despite being of a non-violent nature, Marion has created in me strong urges to become violent because of the petty rules and restrictions with which we are constantly harassed. "If you cage a man like an animal long enough, he'll start thinking like an animal."

I've been at Marion for a year and my attitude has almost completely changed. I was first sent here on the uncorroborated statement of an unknown confidential informant that I was involved in some sort of escape plot. But the reason I was sent here has been changed so many times that I am now thoroughly confused about what the official reason is -- if there is one. I am 50 years old and no kind of threat to anyone.

ELVIS WILLIAMS -- 02751-045

I arrived at Marion in October, 1986. Since I have been at Marion, I have been cursed at by staff; also, I have been put in segregation because an officer put something in my cell. I have been accused of things and, once I was found guilty, officials told other convicts that I was the reason their recreation was cancelled. Officials have taken my personal property, knowing that the courts in this district will support them. Marion officials say they have the green light to do as they please.

The lockdown at Marion has also given officials more power to practice racial discrimination. When we are out within the block for recreation, we have to use the shower to urinate or cancel our recreation. They sell us things from the store, then some months later will say some of the stuff is contraband. Most of the staff are only one race, something like 98%. I have been assaulted by staff late at night while I am asleep. I was hit on my leg hard with the blackjack. And I was asleep. I have proof of my claims and will testify to them.

JOSE ORTEGA -- 61910-098

(translated from the original Spanish). I arrived at this penitentiary in 1984 and was put in the Control Unit for just reasons, because the crime in which I was implicated was very

serious. However, I feel that I am a person like others and that any of us can commit errors in life. The only question that I ask myself is why these authorities take the negative position of denying us rehabilitative programs. Since no type of legal or counseling help exists here and they are creating hate, that lack of programs can be a serious problem. I admit that I am not an angel. But that is not to say that they should not treat me as a human being. Where are those human rights this country is always mentioning to the entire world when here is its most negative part.

JOHNNY LUTTRELL -- 32678-138

I've been here at Marion for almost 3 years, the last 25 months of which I've spent in the control unit. I have 26 more months to go before being released to the main line.

Doing time under these conditions is a real drag and I have yet to meet anyone who thinks differently. Most of us are biding our time - just waiting. That's really all Marion is, a waiting area. You wait till you get out of the control unit, then you wait in D-unit till they decide you are ready for C-unit, then you wait in C-unit till they decide you are ready for B-unit and then you wait for them to decide whether or not you are ready for Leavenworth, Lewisburg, Lompoc, etc.

If I could wave a magic wand and make places like Marion disappear from the face of this earth I would. Of course, the local people probably feel the same way except they would have us prisoners disappear too.

And looking at it from their viewpoint I can't really blame them. Society has been stepped on from so many directions that they are scared shitless of anything or anyone who threatens their safe lifestyles. And since we are already in cages, who better to take it out on than us?

Perhaps within 3 or 4 more years, I'll be sent to a better place or perhaps my status will change via the cover of darkness, illness, or death. But until such time I'll just do the best I can, waiting here in this lockdown that they claim doesn't exist.

Thanks again for your concern. Quite a few of us really appreciate your efforts.