

from  
Prisoners at Marion

# **REFLECTIONS ON SIX YEARS OF THE LOCKDOWN**

This collection of messages was gathered for the program held November 4, 1989 to commemorate the sixth anniversary of the lockdown at Marion Federal Penitentiary. The prisoners at Marion may all be written to at P.O. Box 1000, Marion, IL 62959. The Bureau of Prisons wants them isolated. Writing to them is one way to break the isolation.

**Committee to End the Marion Lockdown  
343 S. Dearborn, Suite 1607  
Chicago, IL 60604  
(312) 663-5046**

**\$.50**

**DONALD TINKER-BEY. #03494-016**

I was sentenced to five (5) years imprisonment, and thus began the agony of being property of the United States government in the custody of its Bureau of Prisons. Human beings who have been officially designated as "criminals" are subjected to a concentration of abuse, disregard for health and safety, and general mistreatment that can hardly be imagined by those who have not experienced it. Since my six (6) years of confinement here at Marion the prison administrator, or warden, completely ignores the toxic-waste and the threat to human life. Prison is an extension and accumulation of all the wrongs of our society and culture. Let me take you behind the walls of Marion Federal Prison. Most people are here for drug-related crimes, selling, using, or committing felonies to obtain money for drugs. In six (6) years since I've been here I've seen no efforts aimed at rehabilitation, but many designed to exact retribution and revenge. The environment evokes childhood, a childhood filled with mental and physical violence. We are treated as juveniles who have no useful role models and who get to see no examples of humane behavior.

As a result, the recidivism rate surpasses 90 per cent. Repression and control are exerted beyond any reasonable limits. What makes prison life especially odious is the degree of violence directed at prisoners, which often exceeds the violence they may have inflicted on themselves or on others. A prisoner who could not possibly repeat the offense for which he is serving time, or who has managed to change and grow while in prison, is still compelled to complete his sentence. The conditions in Marion are atrocious. Every aspect of our lives is strictly regimented. One of the most destructive forms of control is our limited ability to communicate with people outside, whether in writing or by telephone. To make a call the maximum time allotted per person is ten minutes. Like the outside society, the prison is run on class lines; the poor are punished for being poor just like they are out there. Concealment and cover-up are standard features of prison life. I was told that I could not express openly my griefs about the toxic waste and violence inflicted upon the prisoners here in Marion because I would be subjected to an institutional disciplinary report. But through it all I manage to maintain joy and contentment in my life. I live and learn behind these walls. Only the persistent efforts of concerned human beings will bring about any kind of social change.

**OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA. PUERTO RICAN PRISONER OF WAR**

They want us to become highly contaminated and then, when we're in great danger and ready to die, they will decide the case of the toxic water supply. The more I read about PCBs and the other chemicals that we are consuming, both in the water and in the food, the more I realize that they are getting rid of us. After those chemicals are in our body, it is too late.

As bad as the situation is, and as many limitations as there are, there is no time for us to become cynical. Those who persevere and use patience as a tool to work with will eventually gain the fruit of their work. Nothing would be better for our enemy than to recruit us to the line of cynicism.

**DANIEL E. BIFIELD. #06833-014**

I'm writing this letter concerning our 5th annual program commemorating 6 years of the Lockdown.

First of all I want to thank all of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown for their help, care and concern for all of us here at U.S.P. Marion. We really appreciate all of their support. It feels good knowing that somebody cares and believes in us. I wasn't going to

write this letter because I did write one before and I thought it was hopeless, but I was wrong because I found out there are some people who care.

The problems with and in Marion is that they don't care about helping you. They don't believe in you or feel there is any hope. There is not and can not be any trust or communication between us and them. They are all so down on us. And all Marion knows and does is punishing you. Because that's all they want to know.

Believe me, there is a lot of good here. I know because I live here. You can't always believe what is written. And I know things look good on paper, but that doesn't mean it's true or how it is. There is hope anywhere you want hope to be. You can build all the new prisons you want, and you can lock people up for long periods of time, but that is not the answer nor does it solve the problems. It will only make it worse in the long run. People will come out worse then when they went in. They'll be full of hate and will not believe in or trust anybody. You get to feeling angry and mean. It makes you harder. Then if you have no help, support or love from the outside, you'll never survive or make it. Being treated and punished like this makes you train and discipline your mind to hate people. And that hurts the public. It's a very sad situation. I wish I knew the answers to our problems. I know Marion isn't it!

I can't blame nobody for what I did but myself. I did wrong and I'm paying for it, but then again how long do I have to suffer and be punished for it. Why punish me to the point of no return, where I won't care no more. That will only hurt society in the future. Just because I'm a convict and I'll be an ex-convict doesn't mean I'm useless and can never do any good. People do change and it will be hard enough to make it as it is, because people don't believe in you and they think you're all bad. I will do good and I'll prove myself. In fact if I could help kids in anyway, I would because if I could save one kid from this life I'm living it would be worth it and make me feel so good. Believe me there is hope if you want it! And I sure do want it! Thank for your time and concern! And thank you for believing in us!

GARNETT R. LEACOCK, #02121-052

There is no medium that can be utilized in order to project the oppressive, repressive, regressive and depressive feeling that someone incarcerated at Marion USP must survive with daily. To be able to articulate thoughts and present it so that a free society can understand would mean that the writer understands. How can I ever understand that there are men here, myself included, who are being subjected to conditions that our own government would define as criminal in another country? The fear of drinking contaminated water is well founded. The negative impact of being contained in a cell for twenty-one to twenty-three hours a day is real. The fear of existing from day to day with nothing to look forward to but another day of fear. The administration states that the men incarcerated here are the worst of the worst. They claim that if they were to let these men out that the results would be unpredictable. In effect they created a cancer and now they're saying they have no cure. Society doesn't see the pain and suffering which prisoners try to express; they don't recognize the indifference that attaches when prisoners speak out against brutal and often sadistic treatment even when that indifference is their own. They don't want to know that this cancer exists until it manifest itself and can no longer be ignored. This is what happened at Attica. Keeping prisoners in their cells with nothing to look forward to but the next day is not the cure; it's the problem.

P.S. Can anyone tell me why it cost over \$24,000 a year to keep me in a cell for twenty-three hours a day. The government can't afford to take homeless people off the streets or pay for medical cost of the elderly because they spend over \$24,000 a year to keep me in a cell.

HANIF SHABAZZ BEY, P.O.W. (s/n BEAUMONT GEREAU)

**How Much Longer?**

**How much longer must we drink water and with each gulp wonder if we are shortening our lifespan with contamination?**

**How much longer must we live in an environment infested with bacterial disease that are unnamed and improperly diagnosed?**

**How much longer must our families and loved ones suffer from only being able to hear our voices twice per month for 10 minutes on the phone?**

**How much longer must we stand for the tampering of our family ties, food, mail, right to religious worship, and overall the right to exist as men?**

**How much longer must it take before we all acknowledge that the government is carrying out organized violence against the men inside Marion?**

**How much longer before we realize that our keepers here at New Alcatraz are actually no different from the perverse Nazi war criminals, who were put on trial at Nuremburg for the inhumane treatment of prisoners?**

**How much longer must it take for us to draw the conclusion that our backs are all against the wall, and that passive compromise only nourishes the sadistic repression and eventual extermination?**

BILL DUNNE. #10916-086

The lockdown of USP Marion has now entered its seventh year. The passage of time, however, has not rendered the "concentration model" prison any less an instrument of oppression. Dungeon Marion is still a place where the repressive apparatus of the U.S. ruling class engages in destructive experiments in social manipulation and control. The overt brutality has receded from a common characteristic of the daily reality of Marion lockdown to more of a threat that enforces prisoners' consciousness of their powerlessness. But that does not signify progress: the threat needs occasional demonstration, and reports indicate that coercive and gratuitous physical abuse of prisoners in the segregation unit has escalated over the past year. And the even more onerous psychological torment that has pervaded Marion subsistence since the lockdown continues unabated. While it may have changed in small details, there has been no amelioration of its major elements. Verily, the situation has deteriorated as is illustrated by increasing population and longer average stays.

Everything about the Marion lockdown contradicts its alleged purpose of decreasing violence in other prisons and allowing them to be operated more openly. The Bureau of Prisons has advanced no credible support for the notion that violence has decreased as a result of the lockdown -- even assuming that its statistics could be trusted in the face of all the official lies surrounding Marion. Nor has it supplied any information to counter the fact that the lockdown has served to drag other prisons toward its repressive extreme rather than allowing them to be more open. Moreover, the Bureau of Prisons has been unable to show how depriving prisoners of work, education, adequate recreation, and other congregate activities -- in short all the positive human endeavors whose absence has been demonstrated to have negative consequences -- can do anything but worsen those problems instead of alleviating them. Yet the prisoncrats pursue their draconian policies at Marion, in the process revealing their ulterior motives even as they deny them.

Officialdom endlessly reiterates its tired old lies about all Marion prisoners being vicious and predatory fiends who have perpetrated acts of violence in other prisons, "the worst of the worst". The transparency and repeated refutation of those lies are outweighed by the apparatchiks by their utility. Such a horrific vision of Marion victims -- which, even if true,

would not justify their counterproductive mistreatment -- makes it easier to justify their particular oppression. It makes it easier to conduct anti-popular experiments and expand dangerous precedents that will do injury far beyond Marion. They will be used against an ever more deprived and two-tier populace as its exploited majority becomes increasingly restive and politicized and inclined to resist its victimization. Final solutions always start with the use of special repression like "concentration models" against small and especially villified minorities like "the worst of the worst". But they never stop there.

This commemoration of the Marion lockdown is not only a recognition of the lockdown's criminal character in support of its prisoner victims, it is also an act of resistance in self-defense. Resistance always slows the encroachment of tyrannical machinery, however briefly. The commemoration is also demonstrative of an accurate analysis that the Marion lockdown is a manifestation of state power that needs to be studied and understood as an attack on all progressive people before any more of it slops over the walls. By thus broadening the issue, the commemoration will help tie the disparate elements of the struggle together into a more cohesive and powerful movement. For your participation in this effort to realize that potential, I commend you all and wish you all success.

### STANLEY ZEBULUN. #18185-037

I am now going into my ninth year being incarcerated here in Marion Federal Penitentiary. It is now my ninth year of being subject to harassment, repression, inadequate recreation facilities, visiting privileges, pre-release programs and eating facilities. I have also been subjected to drinking PCB contaminated water and have not had a visit where I am permitted contact with family members in over five years.

In comparison to a lot of people here that may not seem long but to me it seems like a lifetime.

The only ting that could be worse than being locked up in Marion Federal Penitentiary is being locked up in Marion Federal Penitentiary without a hope of ever getting out.

Luckily for me one day I will becoming out. And hopefully before I do I will be able to get out of here and go to a prison where I will be able to learn a trade that will do me some good when I do get out. Dig that!

### VON MOOS. #79328-012

Peace to you and your organization - may health and prosperity be yours, continually.

Hopefully, this reign of bureaucratic incompetence in the form of "THE MISSION" at USP Marion, will derail and come to an end before too long.

I know that your efforts are greatly appreciated around here. And although there are many convicts who do not express themselves, you can be sure that they believe in [and respect you for] what you are doing.

I have been incarcerated within the BOP for over nine years (4 of those in Marion) and during this time I have learned a great many things. Yet I cannot elaborate without it being held against me at some future "review".

But concerning Marion, "the Swamp" or Alcatraz II in particular, I can say; "It's an outrage" that such administrative incompetence, malfeasance and malicious abuse of specific groups and individuals is permitted to take place without being "checked."

To the serious convicts, one rule holds true; "When all hope is gone, there is no right or wrong."

And what have I personally learned from the administration while here in Marion? Something I never knew how to do on the streets. HATE!

**STANLEY ULATOWSKI #39329-066**

I am just one of over 100 involuntary transfers of state prisoners at Marion. I strongly feel that the government's policies and practices regarding this lock-down should be changed to an open population. This is a serious question. To examine it, we need to take a close look at the tools by which the government maintains the present punishment structure at Marion; how it uses nonculpable socioeconomic criteria to warehouse prisoners for years in tiny cells 23 hours a day. The federal and state systems get rid of litigious or troublesome prisoners, but its long term effects are extremely damaging to the offenders, and families also are adversely affected. In short this lockup involves unacceptable costs and entails considerable uncertainty. End the maximum lock-up and open this prison back up to a social institution. Once Marion's Pandora's Box had been opened, the desire to punish the blameworthy leads easily to the assignment of punishment in excess of that required by the goal of prevention. Put bluntly, since the day of the neurologist, Dr. Frankenstein, prisons have often overestimated their ability to control their inventions or the uses to which their ideas would be put to achieve results through vengeance and spite, accepting the dangerous notion that offenders deserve compensatory suffering for its own sake! This always lurks at the periphery that it may creep back on them.

**DARRYL MORGAN #00781000**

I was snatched from D.C.'s Lorton Reformatory in February 1985, and have since been held captive at Marion.

It doesn't take a master of psychology to perceive the physical, emotional and psychological restrictions and torture that prisoners here incur on a daily basis.

The obvious reason for the lock-down is to divest the prisoners herein of their identities, and alleged antisocial behavior.

Although the implementation and practices of the Marion lock-down has been met with much resistance, this "Behavior Modification" program - which is faulty, predicated on brutality, and survives on the perverse and sadistic acts of those committed to keeping prisoners confined here - persist.

The tactics used at Marion can be identified as the desired "Three-D Effect" (Debilitation - Dependency - and Dread). A tactic frequently used to brainwash or interpolate ideas and behavioral patterns on those under negative control.

This entire program has proven to be critically inappropriate, and for many, extremely detrimental to their personal psyches.

Henceforth, the questions that our concerned constituents in society should be asking is: How does one react to societal responsibilities after being subjected to the maliciously destructive circumstances and policies of the Marion lockdown? What is considered suitable treatment for offsetting the imbalances of such an adverse and uncompromisingly enervating condition? In effect, is Marion the treatment, or the cause of future societal problems?

**Alan Berkman (#233-315) and Tim Blunk (#233-410)**

We'd like to send our greetings to everyone and express our appreciation for both today's conference and the ongoing work of the CEML.

Since we left Marion 18 months ago, we've been held at the Washington, D.C. Detention

center - the county jail for this country's capitol and perhaps most segregated city. D.C. is the model city for the Bush/Bennett "war on drugs", and so D.C. Jail may be able to tell us as much about the U.S. prison system as Marion can. D.C. Jail is filled beyond capacity with poor, miseducated, profoundly alienated young African-American women and men. It is a warehouse: there are no programs, no visiting, no privacy, and most importantly, no justice. The racism and malignant neglect that permeates the schools, the labor market, the welfare system and social services of the Third World communities of our cities bears its inevitable fruit in the prisons.

Whenever one group of people tries to dominate and dehumanize another, there needs to be some place where the most rebellious can be sent to have their spirit broken. The United States has known that trick for a long time: during the days of slavery, the threat that went beyond the immediate lash and daily degradations of the plantation was to be sent "down south to Mississippi."

Today, beyond the D.C. Jail and Cook County and Riker's Island, there is Marion. It is the modern equivalent of the Mississippi plantation.

Marion embodies the inhumanity and racism of this system in concrete and steel. Marion is where the reality of power is experienced direct and unadorned: it is brutal, disproportionate, and arbitrary. It is designed to dehumanize.

There are psychopaths and sociopaths at Marion, but they are as likely to be wearing blue blazers as khakis.

Study Marion and you can understand the kinder, gentler nation of George Bush more deeply.

We live in a country whose leaders look at the human devastation caused by capitalism and domestic colonialism and then declare a war on the victims. When the oppressed organize themselves and consciously fight back, they are labelled "terrorists", a war is declared against "domestic terrorism", and those captured are sent to Marion and the other segregation units around the U.S. as political prisoners and prisoners of war. When the oppressed turn to drugs and street crime, they are labelled "narcoterrorists" and also become the enemy. The idea behind labelling people "terrorist" is to dehumanize and demonize those the government would destroy.

The U.S. has no problems, it has no righteous struggles for social justice and self-determination - it has only enemies. Problems have to be solved; enemies are to be destroyed.

Marion is an instrument of war and destruction, not of criminal justice.

The human spirit survives inside Marion, just as it does on the streets of even our most devastated communities. There is a sense of a shared humanity that binds all of us who struggle, whether inside or out, and that contrasts with the shallowness and moral corruption of the Bushes and the Bennetts. When you on the outside join us on the inside in a common struggle against Marion and all it stands for, the stakes are much higher than the future of one prison. It shows that the human spirit cannot be broken, that our dreams for a better future are not destroyed, and that hope can grow under even the harshest of conditions. That's perhaps the most important lesson from Marion and should not be lost.

(Alan Berkman and Tim Blunk are North American political prisoners who have been at Marion and are designated to return there at the end of their current trial in Washington, D.C. They are two of six North American anti-imperialists charged with attempting to resist "United States foreign and domestic policies and practices [e.g., war crimes against oppressed peoples] through violent and illegal means." The case is known as the Resistance Conspiracy Case. Alan and Tim may be written to at the D.C. Detention Facility, 1901 D Street, SE, Washington, D.C. 20003.)