THE CRIME & IMPRISONMENT QUIZ

1. During the past 25 years (1970-95), violent crime in the U.S. has:
   a. increased by 15%
   b. increased by almost half
   c. more than doubled
   d. remained approximately the same.

2. During the past 25 years, the rate at which people have been incarcerated in the U.S. has:
   a. slightly increased
   b. slightly increased
   c. almost doubled
   d. almost quadrupled
   e. remained approximately the same.

3. Studies have shown that higher imprisonment rates will lower the crime rate.
   a. true
   b. false

4. The incarceration rate for Black people in the U.S. is approximately __ that of White people.
   a. the same as
   b. 2 times
   c. 8 times
   d. 5 times

5. Black people are 4 times as likely to be arrested on drug charges as white people, even though the two groups use drugs at almost the same rate.
   a. true
   b. false

6. Although the incarceration rate for Black people in the U.S. is high, it is significantly less than the incarceration rate for Black people in South Africa.
   a. true
   b. false

7. There are more Black men in prison and jails today than are attending college.
   a. true
   b. false

8. It costs more to send a person to prison than to Harvard.
   a. true
   b. false

9. U.S. inmates serve shorter prison terms today than in the past.
   a. true
   b. false

10. Approximately ___ percent of inmates entering prison today have been convicted of a violent crime.
    a. 50%
    b. 72%
    c. 25%
    d. 36%

11. Politicians have proposed tough crime legislation because the public almost uniformly favors "lock-em-up" solutions to crime.
    a. true
    b. false

    a. true
    b. false

13. By the late 1980's, the U.S. far and away led the world in the rate of incarceration of its own citizens.
    a. true
    b. false

Answers on page 3
The United States Penitentiary at Marion, located in southern Illinois, opened in 1963 to replace Alcatraz which closed that same year. Until recently, Marion was the highest maximum security prison in the country, and the only one with a "level 6" security rating. Marion has been condemned by Amnesty International for violating the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Despite this international condemnation, Marion became an experimental laboratory and trend setter for the entire federal prison system.

Since 1983, Marion Prison has been in a state of permanent "lockdown". Prisoners are locked in their cells 22.5 hours a day, and all standard vocational, educational and recreational activities are virtually nonexistent. The cells are 8 feet by 10 feet with white walls and a concrete slab floor. The cells are 8 feet by 10 feet wide and 3 feet long facing a wall or rec yard. The cells are designed to prohibit any communication between prisoners. Even contact with prison officials is limited. ADX Florence has technologically perfected the Marion tradition of behavior modification. Strip searches, metal detectors and constant video surveillance are common practice at Florence. Excessive and humiliating, these control methods serve only as intimidation techniques. Oscar Lopez Rivera reports that isolation encourages the use of solitary confinement. As at Marion, 90% of these prisoners will ultimately be released from prison. Political prisoner Ray Levasseur states, "If I lock you up in your bathroom for 22 hours a day, you're not going to get into too much trouble. But when they let you out, you're going to get into trouble you would never have seen before. I have never met anyone who's been exposed to isolated and abuse whose attitude didn't harden."

ADX Florence has technologically perfected the Marion tradition of behavior modification. Strip searches, metal detectors and constant video surveillance are common practice at Florence. Excessive and humiliating, these control methods serve only as intimidation techniques. Oscar Lopez Rivera reports that isolation encourages the use of solitary confinement. As at Marion, 90% of these prisoners will ultimately be released from prison. Political prisoner Ray Levasseur states, "If I lock you up in your bathroom for 22 hours a day, you're not going to get into too much trouble. But when they let you out, you're going to get into trouble you would never have seen before. I have never met anyone who's been exposed to isolated and abuse whose attitude didn't harden."

Yu Kikumura noted that Marion was largely controlled by the brutality of the guards, and that here that isn't necessary because the design is so controlling in and of itself.

WHY MARION AND FLORENCE EXIST

The BOP claims that Marion and Florence are needed to contain "problem" prisoners with "high security ratings". Creating control units, claims the government, will create safer conditions in other prisons. However, those at Marion have never been "the best security inmates." Some have been, and some have not, just as in all maximum security prisons. Many have been sent to Marion because they wrote "too many" law suits, participated in work stoppages, or pursued their religious and political beliefs. Ray Levasseur and Yu Kikumura were sent to Marion straight from court and are now in Florence ADX. BOP papers document that Mutulu Shakur was moved to Marion because he was effectively organizing young Black prisoners. The warden of Lewisburg, in recommending his transfer, wrote the following: "I firmly believe Shakur needs the controls of Marion, as he appears to manipulate the entire system. This shrewd behavior coupled with his outside contacts and influence over the younger Black element will have adverse affects on the mission."

soil and air is of imminent concern. Due to the water contamination alone, the Lincoln Park area has been designated a Superfund site for contamination clean-up.

FLORENCE AREA'S POLITICAL CLIMATE

Residents in the Canon City and Florence area were overwhelmingly in favor of this new prison complex. They managed to raise $160,000 to purchase the 600 acres for the prison site; 400 locals gathered for the ground breaking; t-shirts bearing a map of the site were "sold out" at $7.99. Although the enthusiastic attitude of many of the locals is reprehensible, it's hardly a surprise. Ten years ago, when the U.S. proposed a new prison, the general climate was to run prison authorities out of town. Now, due to increasing economic hardships, prisons are welcomed with open arms.
It is estimated that the prison will generate about 1000 temporary jobs for the poverty stricken area and about 750 to 900 permanent jobs. Pueblo Community College has capitalized on this opportunity by "customizing" its "criminology" courses to suit the needs of the federal prison. The college is trying to work out a deal where students of these customized classes would be guaranteed an interview with the prison. Canon City is currently the home of at least six state prisons. Already the $168.5 million prison has helped Florence put in a new water supply restore their Realto Theatre and build a new golf course.

THE PROLIFERATION OF CONTROL UNIT PRISONS

Control unit prisons are proliferating. In addition to the many state run prisons such as Pelican Bay, Shawangunk, New York, and Ionia, Michigan, the BOP is planning an entire new federal prison in Massachusetts. The estimated cost per prisoner is $800,000 for construction alone. Sam Calbene, deputy regional director for the BOP, said prisoncrats nation-wide will flock to Florence because "this will be a model for other correctional complexes."

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared on Florence indicates the BOP has examined 60 more sites and plans to draft EIS's (a serious step) for 20 new project sites. In fact, a map in the EIS shows that a new facility is currently being developed in Puerto Rico. Newspaper accounts relate that Florence is only the first of seven federal prisons to be built across the U.S. in the next six years!

Marion is a violent attack on human rights. Florence is even worse — an outrage! As Oscar Lopez Rivera states, "The fundamental issue is not whether Florence ADX is better than Marion, whether the jailers are nicer or the food is better. It's the concept — it's designed to destroy the demonization of the prisoner is the basis used by the jailers to justify this place. Both the physical environment and the mind set of the jailers have been created to treat the prisoner not as a human being but as a beast. Once the prisoner is stripped of his humanity any measure to incapacitate him is acceptable and justifiable." People of good will, people who want a society based on true human values, must work to end the lockdown at Marion and, now, Florence.

RESISTANCE BUILDS AGAINST CONTROL UNIT PRISONS

And this is just what has happened. In 1991 when the Florence AD-MAX was just a twinkle in the eye of the BOP, Colorado activists began to organize against the Florence AD-MAX and the state control-unit prisons. And this is just what has happened. In 1991 when the Florence AD-MAX was opened to replace Marion in Florence, Colorado. Those initial visits helped get Marion out of the ground. Now, Florence. Those initial visits helped get Marion out of the ground. Now, Florence.

The fundamental issue is not whether Florence ADX is better than Marion, whether the jailers are nicer or the food is better. It's the concept — it's designed to destroy the demonization of the prisoner is the basis used by the jailers to justify this place. Both the physical environment and the mind set of the jailers have been created to treat the prisoner not as a human being but as a beast. Once the prisoner is stripped of his humanity any measure to incapacitate him is acceptable and justifiable." People of good will, people who want a society based on true human values, must work to end the lockdown at Marion and, now, Florence.

One of the key media attacks against this prisoner centered around the idea that Florence was a prototype for other federal prisons across the country. This fear of spread of control-units was both potent and real. Since the opening of the Florence AD-MAX, the group has been contacted by local, national and international media always offering a voice of opposition, encouraging the media to question BOP rhetoric and ultimately helping them to go to the most important source of information, the people inside Florence. In fact all the work against Florence is informed step by step by the courageous, articulate voices of those inside.

RESISTANCE BUILDS AGAINST CONTROL UNIT PRISONS

And this is just what has happened. In 1991 when the Florence AD-MAX was just a twinkle in the eye of the BOP, Colorado activists began to organize against the Florence AD-MAX and the state control-unit prisons. And this is just what has happened. In 1991 when the Florence AD-MAX was opened to replace Marion in Florence, Colorado. Those initial visits helped get Marion out of the ground. Now, Florence. Those initial visits helped get Marion out of the ground. Now, Florence.

The fundamental issue is not whether Florence ADX is better than Marion, whether the jailers are nicer or the food is better. It's the concept — it's designed to destroy the demonization of the prisoner is the basis used by the jailers to justify this place. Both the physical environment and the mind set of the jailers have been created to treat the prisoner not as a human being but as a beast. Once the prisoner is stripped of his humanity any measure to incapacitate him is acceptable and justifiable." People of good will, people who want a society based on true human values, must work to end the lockdown at Marion and, now, Florence.

One of the key media attacks against this prisoner centered around the idea that Florence was a prototype for other federal prisons across the country. This fear of spread of control-units was both potent and real. Since the opening of the Florence AD-MAX, the group has been contacted by local, national and international media always offering a voice of opposition, encouraging the media to question BOP rhetoric and ultimately helping them to go to the most important source of information, the people inside Florence. In fact all the work against Florence is informed step by step by the courageous, articulate voices of those inside.

For many in Colorado it is a surprise to hear that anyone is opposed to the new high-tech wonders of the control-unit or that anyone cares what happens to those whom the media loudly portrays as "the worst of the worst." Every time we talk about Florence, the human rights abuses, the political oppression and the racism, we also talk about the criminalized spread of this social control mechanism. We tell people about Colorado State Penitentiary, where 50% of the people are kept in solitary for the living. We tell them of the 35 other states where the same high-tech torture is going on. People cannot leave without knowing that Florence and CSP are not aberrations. Always the education involves putting control-units into a political context of social control. Always there are the few who hear the message and cannot ignore it. So, one-by-one, the movement to shut down Florence, AD-MAX and stop all control-units grows here in Colorado.

For more information contact:
The Rocky Mountain Peace Center PO Box 1156, Boulder, CO 80306 303-444-6981.
THE CRIMINALIZATION OF YOUTH OF COLOR

Myths and Facts about "Juvenile Crime" and "Juvenile Justice"

(This text came from a packet that was passed out anonymously. Small changes have been made for this publication.)

MYTH: Increases in the numbers of youth detained and incarcerated by the Juvenile Justice system generally occur as a response to juvenile crime waves.

FACT: There is little or no relationship between the rates of serious juvenile crime and rates of youth incarceration. In fact, in 1980, Richard Daley, then Cook County State's Attorney, announced a plan to crack down on serious juvenile "crime." Soon the number of juveniles committed to the Illinois Department of Corrections in Cook County increased by 119 percent. Between 1975 and 1980, however, felony arrests for juveniles had actually dropped 8.5 percent. The only variable that has been connected to the rates of incarceration is the availability of cells.

MYTH: The reason that youth of color are overrepresented in juvenile detention and incarceration systems is because youth of color account for a disproportionate number of delinquent and criminal offenses.

FACT: African-American, Latino and other youth of color account for a much greater percentage of youth arrested, detained and incarcerated for delinquent offenses than do white youth. However, the National Youth Survey indicates that youth of color, particularly African-Americans, do not account for a disproportionate amount of serious juvenile crime. The fact is that youth of color are more likely to be arrested by police officers, more likely to be detained and more likely to be incarcerated. Racism is systematically entrenched in juvenile "justice" and law enforcement institutions. In 1989, on the national level, youth of color were grossly overrepresented in public juvenile facilities which were comprised of 40 percent White youth, 42 percent African-American youth, 15 percent Latino youth, and 3 percent Other. This is especially shocking given that Black people only constitute 12% of the population. The overrepresentation of youth of color, namely African-Americans, is likewise overwhelming at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) in Cook County. The JTDC, which includes all of Cook County, is used to detain youth before trial or transfer to adult court. Of the typical daily population, which is 600 youth (200 over capacity), 80 percent are African-American, 10 percent are Latino, 5 percent are Asian-American, and 5 percent are White. Given the overall demographic of Cook County, for individuals under 18 are 44 percent White, 32 percent African-American, 20 percent Latino, and 4 percent other.

MYTH: The main purpose of juvenile incarceration is to protect society from juvenile crime and deter youth from committing delinquent acts.

FACT: There is virtually no connection between the incarceration of young and juvenile crime rates. Incarceration perpetuates criminalization, and youth that are committed to secure facilities have high rates of recidivism. In one institution in Maryland, 85 percent of committed youth were re-referred to the juvenile system; in 1984, Florida had a recidivism rate of 60 percent for youth committed to its "training schools" (juvenile incarceration facilities); and a ten-year study of the California Youth Authority showed that 80 percent of youth released from institutions were rearrested. Presently, at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center in Chicago, 50 percent of first-time detainees are back within six months. On the other hand, in Massachusetts, after the state's juvenile training schools were closed down in the 1980's, the rates of serious juvenile crime actually declined. The greatest factor involved in keeping juvenile prison facilities open is economic: communities and individuals that benefit from the infusion of state monies spent on child incarceration lobby hard with politically expedient politicians.


JOIN THE CONTROL UNIT EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK

The Control Unit Emergency Response Network consists of a group of people willing to respond to emergency situations inside control unit prisons by phoning or faxing prison administrators, political figures, or media depending on the circumstances. It is an attempt to break the isolation that surrounds these institutions. This isolation allows prisoncrats to basically do whatever they like to the prisoners without regard to their human rights. The Network is an attempt to let them know that we are indeed watching and that their actions do not go unchallenged.

The Control Unit Emergency Response Network grew out of and is a part of the work of the December 1994 Philadelphia meeting about Control Unit prisons. We hope that the ERN will be built by that network of people and beyond. Generally speaking it will deal with issues related to the conditions of incarceration within Control Unit prisons, although there may be occasions for activating it that do not deal precisely or exclusively with that. However, control unit conditions will be the general focus.

The CONTROL UNIT ERN will consist of an e-mail network as well as a telephone tree. People can choose to be contacted by e-mail or telephone. However, you are likely to pick up your mail, think twice about choosing that mode. We hope that people will provide us with feedback when participating in the CONTROL UNIT ERN. If you want to be part of the network, please let us know when you've made your protest. In that way, this will be a live network, with interaction back and forth.

To join the CONTROL UNIT ERN, send the below coupon to: Nancy Kurshan, CEML, PO BOX 57672, Chicago, IL 60657-8172.

---

I would like to be part of a telephone tree:

Name ____________________________

Telephone number, including area code _______________________

I would like to be part of an e-mail emergency response network:

Name ____________________________

E-mail address ____________________________

---

NATIONAL CONTROL UNIT MEETING

Anti-prison activists from far-flung places in the U.S. and Canada came together in Philadelphia on December 3-4, 1994 for the first meeting of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons. About 40 people traveled at their own expense from Ohio, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Colorado, New York, California, Illinois, Missouri, Maryland, Toronto, Texas, Georgia, and Washington, D.C. There were ex-prisoners and family members, human rights groups, community activists. Representatives were in attendance from Abolish Control Unit Torture (Colorado), American Friends Service Committee, Anarchist Black Cross, CEML, CLURE, National Committee to Free Puerto Rican POWs, National Council of Churches, National Lawyers Guild, Prisoners of Conscience Project, Prison News Service and Pelican Bay Information Project. This was the first such gathering and the introductions themselves were extraordinary, reflecting a wonderful breadth and depth of experience. The meeting itself spanned the weekend, with many hours of discussion of strategy and possible joint activities.

After twelve hours of discussion and analysis, two areas of concentration emerged. One area involves the creation of a Control Unit Monitoring Committee. This would involve the collection of basic information about control units nationwide, on a state by state basis. The second area is a Political Action Committee. There was a preliminary discussion of a possible national demonstration against control units. In addition, an Emergency Response Network has emerged from this committee as well. (See article at left.)

The American Friends Service Committee generously hosted the conference. Many of the attendees were people we have been corresponding with or speaking with via telephone for years now. It was exciting to have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, to share information and begin a dialogue about possible common activity.

Control units have proliferated remarkably since the Marion control unit was established in 1983. Various groups have been doing excellent work in a number of localities. Now a national network is developing. This is a logical response and an extremely welcome development in light of these torturous institutions.

For more information contact: Bonnie Kerness, American Friends Service Committee, 972 Broad Street, 6th Fl., Newark, NJ 07102 (201) 643-3192
The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML) was founded in 1985 to fight against the brutality of the United States Penitentiary at Marion. In 1987, we wrote that by the year 2000 the U.S. might have 1,000,000 people in prison. At that time U.S. prisons held 561,000 people, and most of our friends thought the notion of 1,000,000 prisoners was foolish.

In the Fall of 1994, the U.S. announced that it sent its 600,000 prisoners to prison daily. In addition to those in jails (about 500,000), those on parole (about 600,000), those on probation (about 3,000,000), and those in juvenile facilities (about 100,000), it is difficult to grasp the enormity of these numbers. For example, the number of people in prison would comprise the 9th largest city in the U.S. The number of people who are incarcerated in jails and prisons is greater than the number of people who live in 3 states. The number of people under the control of the "criminal" justice system is almost two times larger than the population of Cuba. The number of people in the U.S. who were arrested last year (14,000,000) is much larger than the population of Cuba.

For example, if instead of imprisonment rate remained on the order of about 100 per 100,000 people, we employ percent-rate for Black men in the U.S. was 4.3 times greater than the rate for White men in the U.S. and 3.1 times greater than the rate for Black men in South Africa. In 1990, there were more than 500,000 Black men in prison and more than 250,000 Black women in prison. In 1992, the U.S. had an incarceration rate of 519 compared to South Africa's rate of 368. Furthermore, in 1990 the incarceration rate for Black men in the U.S. was 3,109 compared to 729 for Black men in South Africa. In 1992 this differential had increased: the rates were, respectively, 3,822 and 851. Thus, in 1990 the incarceration rate for Black men in the U.S. was 4.3 times greater than the rate for Black men in South Africa. Two years later that ratio had increased to 4.5.

We can see from the table that Black people are 8.5 times more likely and that Hispanic people are 3.9 times more likely to go to prison than are White people.

Further examination of these statistics reveals the depth of their meaning. For example, if instead of the usual per 100,000 people, we employ percent-ages (per 100,000), we see that 1.48% of all Black people (and 0.76% of all White people) will be in prison at any given moment. Using census data we can calculate related figures: 3.0% of all Black males will be in prison on a given day in 1994 as will 6.0% of all Black men aged 18-44 and 7.6% of all Black men aged 25-29.

We can also consider some other research findings:

- In 1992 there were more Black men in prison (583,000) than in college (537,000)!
- One out of every four Black men will go to prison in his lifetime.
- 30% of Black men aged 20-29 in Chicago were arrested in 1993
- 42% of Black men aged 18-25 in Washington, D.C. were under some form of criminal justice control in 1992
- 56% of Black men aged 18-25 in Baltimore were under some form of criminal justice control in 1992

The New Crime Bill

A new "crime" bill has just been passed by Congress. This bill will render the horrific numbers discussed above small by comparison. In addition (cont. on next page)
more to send a person to prison than it would to support a family of four. Interestingly, about 300,000 families of four or 1.2 million people could live for what it will cost just to implement the new three-time loser laws. Noting the surging hunger in the U.S., the Bread for the World Institute has just determined that $10 billion would be enough to expand the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food program to assure that there were no longer any hungry people in this category. This is less than two years of payments for the three-time loser law. Or, consider this. According to a report from the American Bar Association, all the state taxes of 18 average taxpayers in Delaware are required to keep one person in prison for a year; and the money spent to build a prison in Wisconsin would pay for 11,000 children to attend Head Start.

Political scientists and criminologists have started to estimate the impact that this bill will have on imprisonment. John Irwin and James Austin, two criminologists who often prepare publications for the prestigious National Council on Crime and Delinquency, have estimated in their new book entitled It’s About Time that a package of laws such as those included in the new crime bill would result in over 9 times as many people being imprisoned. Thus, if we multiply by 9 the 6.0% noted above, we see that well over half of all Black men aged 18-44 would be in prison on any given day if the provisions of the new crime bill were implemented. Irwin and Austin note similarly: “[The Crime Bill] would mean that most of the nation’s 5.5 million black males aged 18-39 would be incarcerated.” Other estimates of the potential impact of the crime bill have suggested a smaller but still devastating impact.

There is much that is speculative about this estimate, and that must remain so given the unfolding details of the new crime bill. Other specifics would have to be taken into consideration to refine the estimates above, such as estimating the impact of an aging prison population, determining how much of the “crime” bill will actually be funded, etc. Whatever these refinements, the numbers will remain staggering. Never before has any society at any time used imprisonment in this fashion. The impact that this will have on the Black community is difficult even to fathom.

**Finances**

Much has been written about the financing of the “criminal” justice system (CJS). Just a few figures here will suffice. Funding for the CJS has increased seven-fold over the past 20 years, from $10 billion to $74 billion a year, with $25 billion spent for incarceration. This, however, is all spare change compared to what may follow, depending upon which aspects of the new crime bill are implemented. For example, it has been estimated that the “three-time loser” provision itself will cost $5.7 billion annually and require an additional $21 billion in prison construction costs. It has also been estimated that the crime bill could cost much more - an extra $51 billion over the next ten years.

Since not many of us have this much money in our pockets, or even in our bank accounts, let’s try to understand just how much it really is. It costs much more to send a person to prison for a year than it does to send that person to Harvard. In fact, it costs estimated the impact that this bill will have on entitled criminologists who often prepare publications for Political scientists and criminologists have started to such as those included in the new crime bill would be in prison on any given day if all projected aspects of the new “crime initiative” are implemented. Irwin and Austin note similarly: “[The Crime Bill] would mean that most of the nation’s 5.5 million black males aged 18-39 would be incarcerated.” Other estimates of the potential impact of the crime bill have suggested a smaller but still devastating impact.

There is much that is speculative about this estimate, and that must remain so given the unfolding details of the new crime bill. Other specifics would have to be taken into consideration to refine the estimates above, such as estimating the impact of an aging prison population, determining how much of the “crime” bill will actually be funded, etc. Whatever these refinements, the numbers will remain staggering. Never before has any society at any time used imprisonment in this fashion. The impact that this will have on the Black community is difficult even to fathom.

**Finances**

Much has been written about the financing of the “criminal” justice system (CJS). Just a few figures here will suffice. Funding for the CJS has increased seven-fold over the past 20 years, from $10 billion to $74 billion a year, with $25 billion spent for incarceration. This, however, is all spare change compared to what may follow, depending upon which aspects of the new crime bill are implemented. For example, it has been estimated that the “three-time loser” provision itself will cost $5.7 billion annually and require an additional $21 billion in prison construction costs. It has also been estimated that the crime bill could cost much more - an extra $51 billion over the next ten years.

Since not many of us have this much money in our pockets, or even in our bank accounts, let’s try to understand just how much it really is. It costs much more to send a person to prison for a year than it does to send that person to Harvard. In fact, it costs...
never entered the criminal justice system. Society," notes: "Of the approximately 34 million serious felonies in 1990, 21 million were either unreported or unsolved." Thus, she continues, only 10% of all crime ever entered the courts, about half of which resulted in imprisonment. Thus their denials of the impact of the death penalty do not make any sense to pump millions and millions into corrections and have no effect on the crime rate.45

Finally, from Robert Gangi, current Director of Corrections of Alabama, the Director of Corrections of New York: “Building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease.”46

One last study on this topic must be noted before moving ahead. Justice Fellowship, the organization founded by Chuck Colson (of Watergate infamy), publishes a special report to determine how prisons deter crime. Their findings were so nonsupportive of prisons that they were reduced to this sarcastic attack:

Incarceration rates are such a poor predictor of crime rates that researchers would find proximity (of states) in Canada more reliable. Eight of the 12 states that border on Canada rank in the bottom 20 in overall crime rates. Even alphabetical order is more reliable (than incarceration rates) when predicting crime rates: Three states among the first 15 alphabetically rank in the bottom two-fifths of crime rates.47

As one person is removed from the labor market, another replaces him or her. Prisons will never be able to dent this supply.

4) Consider the question of supply. There is a virtually unlimited supply of people who will commit crimes associated with drugs. As soon as one person is removed from the labor market, another replaces him or her. Prisons will never be able to dent this supply.

5) Virtually all experts agree that prisons cause crime rather than deter it. Prisons are an extraordinary answer which shows where liberals must wind up on such a question. Here is a system that is spending $74 billion a year and Currie thinks it acts the way it does because it cannot find someone to explain what the research is saying. Let us try another possible answer.

Currie and many others get stuck and can move no further because they assume that the purpose of the criminal justice system is to prevent crime. Consider a quote from another leading liberal in “criminal” justice reform, Norval Morris, a professor of law at the University of Chicago who has written excellent articles and books critiquing the CJ’s: “The whole law-and-order movement that we’ve heard so much about is, in operation, anti-black and anti-underclass. Not in plan, not in design, not in intent, but in operation.”48 Thus, also according to Morris, the direction of the CJ is an accident. If liberal critics of the CJ’s would just turn the problem around and ask why the CJ falls at its stated purpose but not ask what purposes a system like this could have, then they could find an answer. Let us examine Table 4 which presents the characteristics of the CJ that have been established above:

Table 4. Characteristics of the “Criminal” “Justice” System

1. The process of mass incarceration started in 1972.
2. The CJ spends many billions of dollars every year capturing millions of people.
3. The cages are filled with people of color, most of them Black.
4. The system does not prevent crime.
5. The system does not rehabilitate people.
6. We know of many other measures that would prevent crime.

We would suggest that a system with these characteristics might be seen, not as a crime prevention system, but as a system whose foremost purpose is to control people of color. Remember what events preceded the growth in imprisonment that started in 1972. That year followed in the midst of the...

(continuation on next page)
F.B.I.'s CONTELPRO program; the assassination of dozens of leaders of the Black Liberation Movement and the imprisonment of hundreds more; the assassination of George Jackson on August 21, 1971; and the rebellion at Attica on September 9 – 13, 1971. Then just a few months later, the imprisonment rate started to spiral upwards, and has not yet stopped doing so. Furthermore, 1972 was also the year that the first Control Unit was opened — as one wing of the U.S. Penitentiary at Marion.

When this historical context is added to the statistics about crime and imprisonment and the rampant racism of U.S. society, it seems clear that the hypothesis that prisons are institutions for control of people of color is a far more viable one than the notion that prisons are an effort to prevent crime. In fact, the only support for the latter hypothesis would appear to be the assertions of some of those who run the prison system and politicians.

It seems worthwhile to elaborate on this point. There is no viable evidence that prisons prevent crime. There is an abundance of evidence, a small proportion of it presented above, that prisons don't and can't prevent crime. In addition, every serious analysis of the history of incarceration reveals the same historical thrust: prisons and other systems of punishment are for social control, not crime control. For example, in 1939 Rusche and Kirchheimer wrote a very important book showing that the systems of imprisonment throughout history were simply reflections of the economic systems that existed at given times. These systems were not about crime prevention; they were about the relations of production. Foucault, in his seminal book, Discipline & Punish, has shown that the evolution of state punishment had little to do with crime and everything to do with the excretion of the state to maintain its power: "... one would be forced to suppose that the prison, and no doubt punishment in general, is not intended to eliminate offenses, but rather to distinguish them, to distribute them, to use them"44 on: "We are aware of all the inconveniences of prison, and that it is dangerous when it is not useless. And yet one cannot 'see' how to replace it. It is the desolate solution, which one seems unable to do without."45

CEML believes that one of the main functions of progressive struggle is to counter the prevailing ideology. If this is correct, then fighting to establish the real purpose of the "criminal" or "justice" system is meaningful work. At the same time, it is not easy work, to say the least. Many progressive publications show no understanding of or interest in these issues. We in CEML, have often posed the slogan "Not One More Cell," only to be opposed by other progressive people. When we have asked why they disagree, they note that crime is a serious problem and we should pursue those strategies which will build a truly human society and thus prevent crime. These strategies include struggling to eliminate white supremacy and poverty while building an economy that meets human needs rather than the desires of predators. Rather than creating a nation of prisons we should be allowing the emergence of a nation of human beings.

April 1995

---

7 In order to allow for international comparability Mauer used rates which included people in jails plus those in prison, since many countries do not make distinctions between these two groups. We call this the incarceration rate. In the U.S., where there are important distinctions between jails and prisons, it is more common to use only the number of people in prison when calculating rates. We follow this convention in this paper and call this the imprisonment rate.
10 Ibid.
19 Sourcebook, p 2-3.
21 Austin and Krisberg, 1994. Interestingly, all of these costs are notable understimates as the plagues of the U.S. in the 20th century, AIDS and TB, enter and spread in the prisons. Even the U.S. prison system will be forced to deal with some allocation of funds for medications and hospitalizations for these epidemics, as well as for the increasingly aging population of people who will never be let out.
22 Chicago Tribune, October 14, 1994, p 7.
25 Sourcebook, p 247, 352.
28 Sourcebook, p 247.
29 Sourcebook, p 352.
30 The UCR is measured by the number of crimes per 100,000 population. The NCVS is measured by the number of crimes per 1,000 people age 12 and older. Thus, although the patterns between these two measures may be compared, their magnitudes are not comparable.
38 Jill Robinson, "Lock 'Em Up and Throw Away the Key." Time, February, 7, 1994, p 55.
40 Currie, Confronting Crime.
41 Ibid, p 18.
42 Los Angeles Times, April 22, 1990.
THE PELICAN BAY DECISION

After nearly a year of deliberating on a class action lawsuit filed by prisoners at California's Pelican Bay State Prison Security Housing Unit (SHU), Federal Judge Thelton E. Henderson came down with a 344 page decision in January, 1995. The decision titled 'Madrid vs. Gomez' strongly condemns the prison administration, describing the staff as "criminally reckless", and ruled that the California Department of Corrections (CDC) had violated the 8th Amendment of the US Constitution which prohibits cruel and unusual punishment. This article will summarize the decision's strengths and weaknesses.

"Grossly Excessive" Force

Judge Henderson found that the Pelican Bay staff participated in a deliberate use of "grossly excessive force" while punishing prisoners and that this was condoned by the prison administration. He stated that this included lethal force and that the guards practiced "gratuitous violence". During the trial the judge heard numerous descriptions of prisoners being hog tied, assaulted while restrained in chains, and beaten in back rooms. He condemned the prison's use of lethal force as a first resort and ordered a halt to "the pattern of needless and officially sanctioned brutality.

Insufficient Medical and Psychiatric Care

Judge Henderson also blasted the Pelican Bay Administration's failure to provide adequate physical and mental health care to the prisoners in the SHU. In the decision he often quoted the prisoners' medical expert who testified during the trial, "The entire system is grossly inadequate and unsatisfactory in meeting the health care needs of the inmate population. It is deplorably inadequate." Those on the medical and psychiatric staff are poorly trained, disorganized and cynical about their patients. Prisoners with serious conditions are often accused of faking their illness. In his decision the Judge quoted the prisoners' psychiatric expert who found "an almost obsessive preoccupation by (the) medical staff with the possibility that an inmate might be manipulating." Henderson was very concerned about prisoners who could be "driven insane" while inside the SHU. The decision states that the CDC "created a prison which would necessarily and inevitably result in an extensive demand for mental health services, yet they negligently failed to furnish mental health services at all." Indeed the CDC has transferred hundreds of psychologically disturbed prisoners (labeled as violence prone) from other prisons to the SHU. The judge ordered that prisoners with mental illnesses be screened out and removed from the SHU.

"Special Master" Appointed

Regrettably, Judge Henderson did not order the closing of the SHU, but he did demand significant changes in the policies and practices of the prison administration and staff. To initiate these changes the Judge appointed a "Special Master" to negotiate with both the prisoners' lawyers and the CDC to develop a plan to comply with the court's findings and orders within 120 days. In May, Henderson granted a 120 day extension to September 10th. If a plan cannot be agreed upon, it will be up to the Special Master to recommend a plan to the court. Unfortunately, the CDC is infamous for successfully ignoring and obstructing past court orders for improving prison conditions.

Control Unit Conditions Not Condemned

One great weakness of Judge Henderson's ruling is his refusal to declare the Pelican Bay SHU itself unconstitutional. Ignoring international law and particularly the U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, he let stand the practice of long term solitary confinement and sensory deprivation. In a very contradictory statement the judge writes that although the SHU "will likely inflict some degree of psychological trauma upon most inmates confined there for more than brief periods...we are not persuaded...that the risk of developing an injury to mental health of sufficiently serious magnitude due to current conditions in the SHU is high enough for the SHU population as a whole." Taking this position even further, the Judge states that there is "nothing improper about lengthy or indefinite segregation for discipline or security reasons."

Unfortunately, Judge Henderson does not see basic control unit conditions as psychological torture. Therefore, he let stand the most serious human rights violation in his decision. Indeed, CDC Director James H. Gomez, the named defendant in the prisoners' lawsuit, called the Judge's ruling "a significant victory" because the SHU was not ordered closed.

Placement at SHU

Equally unfortunate, the Judge's opinion does not address the racist way in which prisoners are selected for placement in the SHU. Prisoners are sent to Pelican Bay with little or no due process. Prison "kangaroo courts" allow hearsay evidence and coerced confessions. Often, being accused of gang affiliation is reason enough to be sent to the SHU.

Conclusion

Even though the Pelican Bay SHU was not shut down the decision was a significant moral victory for the prisoners. Not only did they bring serious scrutiny down upon the CDC, but their suit helped raise public awareness around the issue of control unit prisons and human rights violations in U.S. prisons. The brutality of Pelican Bay was featured on many different radio and television shows including 60 Minutes, 20/20, etc. We must continue with our efforts on the outside to help support them in any way we can.

To get more information on the Pelican Bay SHU and Judge Henderson's decision contact:

The Pelican Bay Information Project
2489 Mission St. #28
San Francisco,CA 94110
(415) 821-6545

WOMEN IN PRISON

Women represent the fastest growing population in prison. Between 1980 and 1993, the growth rate for the female prison population increased approximately 31%, compared to 18% for men in the same period. At the end of 1993 women accounted for 5.8% of the total prison population and 9.3% of the jail population nationwide.

Women prisoners are disproportionately women of color, with African American women comprising 46% of the population nationwide. White women comprising 36% and Hispanic Women comprising 14%.

Incarcerated women are overwhelmingly poor. The majority of women in prison are poor, and women in jail (74%) were unemployed prior to incarceration.

When women go to prison, it takes a devastating toll on the family. Sixty seven per cent of women incarcerated in state prisons are mothers of children under 18. Seventy percent of these women compared to 50% of men had custody of their dependent children prior to incarceration.

Six per cent of women are pregnant when they enter prison. In almost all cases, the woman is abruptly separated from her child after giving birth.

Women prisoners report significant histories of domestic violence. Thirty-two percent of women in prison (approximately 4,000 women) serving sentences for murder were convicted of killing a husband, ex-husband or boyfriend.

Because there are fewer prison facilities for women, an incarcerated woman is ordinarily much farther away from her home and family than the average male prisoner. This increased distance causes substantial transportation problems for children of prisoners and as a result deprives women prisoners of contact with their children.

While medical care for all prisoners is poor, the situation is far worse for women prisoners. Because prison health care systems were created for men, routine gynecological care, such as pap smears, breast exams and mammograms, is extremely rare in women prisoners. Care is frequently only administrative violations in U.S. prisons. The brutality of Pelican Bay was featured on many different radio and television shows including 60 Minutes, 20/20, etc. We must continue with our efforts on the outside to help support them in any way we can.

To get more information on the Pelican Bay SHU and Judge Henderson's decision contact:

The Pelican Bay Information Project
2489 Mission St. #28
San Francisco,CA 94110
(415) 821-6545

Page 9
degree of segregation is what surprise him the most, however, he is equally outraged by the gross inequality, in public education, between rich and poor.

What startled Kozol most was the remarkable degree of segregation he found nearly everywhere he went, and the fact that no official, in any school district, questioned this. During Black History Month, dutiful references were sometimes made to "The Dream," Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of a nation in which Black and White children went to school together, but the contents of the dream was "treated as a closed box that could not be opened without spoiling the celebration." Only the students, themselves, seemed to recognize this.

"We have a school...named for Dr. King," said one 14 year-old girl, "The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in that school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history."

In fact, Kozol found that the debate over today's schools was framed far more in terms of the nearly 100 year old "separate but equal" mandate of Plessy vs. Ferguson than of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision outlawing segregated education as "inherently unequal." If the degree of segregation is what surprised him the most, however, he is equally outraged by the gross inequality, in public education, between rich and poor. Poor children, and especially poor children of color, he finds, are being left behind in a far more obvious fashion than African American children were in the 1950's and 1960's. While he insists on the importance of the "high road" of desegregation, he acknowledges that the "low road" of high poverty is also "inherently unequal." He concludes that the "low road" is inextricably linked to the "high road," and the two cannot simply be separated without creating a "debt" that will be difficult to repay.

For two years, Jonathan Kozol visited America's public schools, especially those in its large cities. He spoke with teachers, students, and school officials, as well as with newspaper reporters and community leaders. The result of his work is the book Savage Inequalities, a searing expose of the extremes of wealth and poverty in America's public school system and the blighting effect it has on poor children.

In his chapter on East St. Louis, Kozol mentions that the Catholic high school which Black and White children went to school together, but the contents of the dream was "treated as a closed box that could not be opened without spoiling the celebration." Only the students, themselves, seemed to recognize this.

"We have a school...named for Dr. King," said one 14 year-old girl, "The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in that school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history."

In fact, Kozol found that the debate over today's schools was framed far more in terms of the nearly 100 year old "separate but equal" mandate of Plessy vs. Ferguson than of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision outlawing segregated education as "inherently unequal." If the degree of segregation is what surprised him the most, however, he is equally outraged by the gross inequality, in public education, between rich and poor. Poor children, and especially poor children of color, he finds, are being left behind in a far more obvious fashion than African American children were in the 1950's and 1960's. While he insists on the importance of the "high road" of desegregation, he acknowledges that the "low road" of high poverty is also "inherently unequal." He concludes that the "low road" is inextricably linked to the "high road," and the two cannot simply be separated without creating a "debt" that will be difficult to repay.

For two years, Jonathan Kozol visited America's public schools, especially those in its large cities. He spoke with teachers, students, and school officials, as well as with newspaper reporters and community leaders. The result of his work is the book Savage Inequalities, a searing expose of the extremes of wealth and poverty in America's public school system and the blighting effect it has on poor children.

What startled Kozol most was the remarkable degree of segregation he found nearly everywhere he went, and the fact that no official, in any school district, questioned this. During Black History Month, dutiful references were sometimes made to "The Dream," Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of a nation in which Black and White children went to school together, but the contents of the dream was "treated as a closed box that could not be opened without spoiling the celebration." Only the students, themselves, seemed to recognize this.

"We have a school...named for Dr. King," said one 14 year-old girl, "The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in that school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history."

In fact, Kozol found that the debate over today's schools was framed far more in terms of the nearly 100 year old "separate but equal" mandate of Plessy vs. Ferguson than of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision outlawing segregated education as "inherently unequal." If the degree of segregation is what surprised him the most, however, he is equally outraged by the gross inequality, in public education, between rich and poor. Poor children, and especially poor children of color, he finds, are being left behind in a far more obvious fashion than African American children were in the 1950's and 1960's. While he insists on the importance of the "high road" of desegregation, he acknowledges that the "low road" of high poverty is also "inherently unequal." He concludes that the "low road" is inextricably linked to the "high road," and the two cannot simply be separated without creating a "debt" that will be difficult to repay.

For two years, Jonathan Kozol visited America's public schools, especially those in its large cities. He spoke with teachers, students, and school officials, as well as with newspaper reporters and community leaders. The result of his work is the book Savage Inequalities, a searing expose of the extremes of wealth and poverty in America's public school system and the blighting effect it has on poor children.

What startled Kozol most was the remarkable degree of segregation he found nearly everywhere he went, and the fact that no official, in any school district, questioned this. During Black History Month, dutiful references were sometimes made to "The Dream," Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of a nation in which Black and White children went to school together, but the contents of the dream was "treated as a closed box that could not be opened without spoiling the celebration." Only the students, themselves, seemed to recognize this.

"We have a school...named for Dr. King," said one 14 year-old girl, "The school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains. Every student in that school is black. It's like a terrible joke on history."

In fact, Kozol found that the debate over today's schools was framed far more in terms of the nearly 100 year old "separate but equal" mandate of Plessy vs. Ferguson than of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision outlawing segregated education as "inherently unequal." If the degree of segregation is what surprised him the most, however, he is equally outraged by the gross inequality, in public education, between rich and poor. Poor children, and especially poor children of color, he finds, are being left behind in a far more obvious fashion than African American children were in the 1950's and 1960's. While he insists on the importance of the "high road" of desegregation, he acknowledges that the "low road" of high poverty is also "inherently unequal." He concludes that the "low road" is inextricably linked to the "high road," and the two cannot simply be separated without creating a "debt" that will be difficult to repay.

For two years, Jonathan Kozol visited America's public schools, especially those in its large cities. He spoke with teachers, students, and school officials, as well as with newspaper reporters and community leaders. The result of his work is the book Savage Inequalities, a searing expose of the extremes of wealth and poverty in America's public school system and the blighting effect it has on poor children.
Black Health in the United States

We are currently being bombarded with the nonsensical, racist argument that White people are being denied access to resources because of the demands of Black people, because of "reverse discrimination." Nothing so profoundly gives lie to this argument than the basic facts of life and death. There are many measures of the health and well-being of a people, but those that measure life and death are obviously the most important.

Racial Differentials in Death

Infant mortality compares the number of babies who die before their first birthday to the number of infants born in a year. In 1992 the infant mortality rate in the U.S. was 8.5 infant deaths per 1000 live births. The rate for White infants was 6.8 while the rate for Black infants was 16.7. Although both rates have been declining over time, the differential has been expanding. Historically the Black rate has been twice the White rate. However, now it is 2.7 times as high and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that it will be 3 times as high by the turn of the century. The Black infant mortality rate is higher than that of every industrialized country and even some Third World countries. Maternal mortality, a related measure, reveals an even worse differential: Black women die during childbirth four times more often than White women.

Consider life expectancy. In 1992, the life expectancy of a person born in the U.S. was 76 years. It was 74 for Black women, 65 for Black men, 80 for white women, and 73 for white men. Thus, White people will live, on the average, 7 years longer than Black people. Startlingly, in 1990 two researchers found that the life expectancy for a Black man in Harlem was lower than for a man in Bangladesh.

Today's Epidemics

Much terror lies in the day-to-day sickness that eventually generates death. For example, the major epidemics of the day are tuberculosis and AIDS and Black people are disproportionately attacked by both. The AIDS case rate is six times higher for Black people than White people while the TB case rate is eight times higher. Jonathan Mann, former director of the World Health Organization's AIDS program, points out that "in parts of the Bronx, the AIDS rates are similar to some of the hard hit areas of Africa."

Access to Care

Still, this is not all there is to the physical brutality. Under recent cutbacks many inner city hospitals have been closed. In Chicago, alone, 10 hospitals have been closed, all in Third World communities. Even when hospitals are able to remain open, access to care is denied. Cook County Hospital, which has a clientele that is over 90% people of color, reports a waiting period for a clinic appointment that may be up to six months. A couple of years ago, researchers revealed the common practice of "patient dumping", whereby private hospitals transferred large numbers of patients, overwhelmingly Black and Latin, to Cook County Hospital, because they had no insurance. The researchers determined that 24% of these were transferred while medically unstable, and thus at risk to their lives. Managed care, the new cost cutting wonder, will only further worsen access to care for people of color as health "care" empires search for ways to increase profits still further.

Drugs

While the media focus on the devastating impact that illegal drugs are having on the Black community, little is said about the impact of alcohol and cigarettes. For example, cigarettes now kill about 400,000 people a year, about 20 times as many as guns. It is common in virtually every inner city community to find the vast majority of billboards and store signs devoted to selling liquor and cigarettes — all the while promising the life of luxury for those who use the advertised products.

Conclusion

The impact of racism on health care can be seen everywhere. While oppressed White men are feeling bad about how little they have and how much Black people have taken from them, virtually every measure of Black health reveals tremendous devastation. Wherever one looks to find "reverse discrimination", one continues only to find discrimination. Discrimination which kills. This is the enemy. This is the poison which must be rooted out.

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 locked down and turned into a control unit. In 1985, 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.

Control units have existed for more than 20 years. Many organizations and individuals have done massive amounts of work in these torture chambers, 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 us.

THE STAY

Column #252 — Written 11 August 1995 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

"Justice is just an emotional feeling..." — Judge Albert F. Sabo, PCRA Hearing, Com. V. Abu-Jamal

In the late morning of August 7, 1995, Senior Judge Sabo surprised many in the courtroom by issuing an extended stay of execution, citing "pending appeals" in the case. The decision seemed expected by the prosecutors, but stunned members of the defense team, whose client had 10 days only the date has been changed.

Questions abound — among them, "What does it mean?"

To simplify, a stay is a judicial stop sign, and in this case, a stopped death warrant. It should be clear, however, that the writer remains on death row, under a death sentence — only the date has been changed.

The state of Pennsylvania still has every intention of killing me — just not right now.

Thus, the stay is a limited victory, not just for the Jamals and the Africans, but for thousands and tens of thousands of people from every corner of the globe — to these many, our most profound and heartfelt thanks for your militant and spirited protests. LONG LIVE JOHN AFRICA!

Although many radicals and progressives expressed joy at news of the stay, other political analysts saw it as a clever move by a clever judge, who did what higher courts would've done and, in so doing, attempted to blunt the edge off of a growing and militant anti-death penalty movement, in Philadelphia and beyond, thereby stymieing a series of planned demonstrations.

Whatever the reason, let us utilize this precious time to build a stronger and broader movement, to not "stay" one execution, but to halt them all! DOWN WITH THE RACIST U.S. DEATH PENALTY!

In an age when South Africa, once the parish of the international community, has abolished ALL executions as an affront to the inherent right to life, our task can not be to merely stay (or slow down) one man's execution. No! It must be to echo the world — the European Community, Australia, South Africa, ET AL. — in total abolition of this racist vestige of the lynching tree, all forms of state murder.

It will take the power of the people — you and us all — to bring it about.

We can do it.

If you are truly committed, we WILL do it.

I know I am doing my part — will you help me?

This stay is but the first step, although in the right direction, in our long walk to freedom.

No matter where we live there is a support group near you; contact Concerned Family and Friends (International) (215) 476-8812.

We are growing — thanks to you!
A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES WILL TELL YOU THAT CRIME RATES ARE SOARING, THAT MORE PRISONS AND LONGER SENTENCES ARE THE SOLUTION, AND THAT YOUNG BLACK MEN ARE ALL DANGEROUS CRIMINALS... DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE!

Dostoevsky once wrote that if you want to know about a society, you should look into its prisons. Today, U.S. prisons incarcerate more than one million people. This results in a higher imprisonment rate than has ever existed in any country in the world at any time in history. That's the equivalent of the ninth largest city in the United States. If you add to that the number of people being held in jails in the U.S., it's greater than the population of 13 states.

While these numbers are shocking in themselves, closer examination reveals how we have been duped by politicians and the media. Consider the fact that murderers in this country comprise less than one percent of crime. Indeed, over half of the people currently being sent to prison are being sent for petty crimes which involve no violence whatsoever. The most frequent crime resulting in a prison sentence is drug possession, and 53% of all drug offenders are sentenced to prison for possession of one gram or less of an illegal substance. Is this consistent with what you've been hearing from the mainstream media and public officials?

Analyzed in terms of race, the statistics shock the conscience. One in four Black men between the ages of 20-29 is either in prison or jail or on parole or probation on any given day. One out of four Black men will be arrested in his lifetime. Black men will go to prison in his lifetime. One out of two people are four times as likely as white people to be arrested on a drug charge, even though the two groups use drugs at the same rate. A Black woman is eight times more likely to go to prison than a white woman.

Criminologists have recently predicted that under the new federal crime bill, 55.8% of all Black men between the ages of 18 and 44 will be in prison on any given day in this country. What does it say about our society that we are willing to imprison over half of the adult Black male population?

Not only are there more and more prisons being constructed, but they are becoming more and more brutal and repressive. Thirty-six states now have control unit, " maxi-maxi," or "supermax" prisons. These institutions hold prisoners in strict and permanent isolation conditions, employ extreme behavior modification and control techniques, and are frequently located near toxic waste sites. Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have consistently criticized and condemned these prisons for violation of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

In Chicago, the public schools, which are 80% Black and Hispanic, could not open on time last year due to lack of funding, yet in the same legislative session, the Illinois General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to spend 100 million dollars to build a "supermax" prison in Illinois. Why wasn't the public outraged at such a massive expenditure?

Prisons, the warehousing of young people of color, has quickly become one of the fastest growing industries in this country. Local governments, and private business, desperate for local jobs and long term contracts, clamor for the chance to build prisons. Indeed, National Public Radio recently revealed that much of the organized support for harsher sentences, mandatory minimum sentences, and "three time loser" statutes is coming from the ranks of those who are financially and economically invested in the prison industry.

At the same time that we are spending literally billions of dollars to imprison people of color, one out of every two Black children and one out of every three Hispanic children is living in poverty. The Black infant mortality rate is twice the white rate. 80% of Black, Latino, and Native American children in the United States have not been adequately vaccinated. What do these facts say about our priorities as a society?

Virtually everyone who has ever studied the subject concedes that prisons do not deter crime or reduce crime rates. Yet prison construction continues unabated across the country. Anyone with an ounce of common sense knows that the only way to reduce crime is to invest the money up front, in education, jobs, housing, drug treatment, and health care. Why would a society refuse to spend a couple of thousand dollars to better educate our children, and then turn around and spend $30,000 per year to imprison a person, more than it would cost to send that person to Harvard?

What's going on in this country in the name of law and order is unprecedented in history. The effect that the imprisonment binge and the cuts in social spending are having on people of color in the United States is genocidal. We must confront this new face of racism. You're on notice now. Do you really want to say someday that you didn't do anything about it?

IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO JUST THINK IT'S WRONG. DEMAND REAL SOLUTIONS - FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE.

THE COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN
8TH DAY CENTER FOR JUSTICE
205 W. MONROE
CHICAGO, IL 60606-5033