

POLITICAL PRISONERS

By Jose E. Lopez

According to the Bureau of Justice, in April of 1987 the number of prisoners in this country reached 546,659 — over one-half million people in prison. The bloating of the imprisonment rate is expected to continue. By 2000 the total prison population will quadruple. If current trends persist, over the next decade the prison population, excluding jails and parole, will reach one million. The US is becoming a nation of prison houses.

A closer look at the statistics shows that rates of imprisonment began zooming upwards after the social upheavals of the late 1960's. (In 1969, 120 cities burned in Black rebellions.) In 1925, when the US began keeping these statistics, the imprisonment rate was 79 per 100,000. The rate stayed more or less constant until 1972, when it started to rise dramatically. By mid-1989, the rate had skyrocketed to 219: more than a half-million people were in state and federal prisons!

In 1983, the imprisonment rate was 713 for black people compared to 114 for white people. This means that a Black person is six times more likely to go to prison than a white person.

While white people in the US go to prison at a rate similar to that of Western Europeans, the US black imprisonment rate is the highest in the world. In fact, Blacks in the US go to prison at almost twice the rate of Blacks in South Africa.

Genocide

This reality is devastating for people of color, particularly for Blacks. Meanwhile, outside the prison walls, people of color are trapped in deteriorating public housing projects, drop out of schools at alarming rates, lose their life to drugs, gangs, crime and violence. While the national unemployment rate is 6.9 percent, for blacks it is 15 percent. Seventy-five percent of black and poor youth are unemployed. Eighty percent of black youth drop out of high school.

Is the charge of genocide an exaggeration? The United Nations included in part of its definition of genocide, "Deliberately inflicting on the group-conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part." This is exactly the reality faced by colonized peoples in the United States. The huge number of Blacks imprisoned in their fertile years will significantly reduce the population growth of Blacks. In 1987, of nearly 2,000 prisoners on death row, nearly 50 percent were "Third World", in stark disproportion to their percentage of the population.

Nothing could be clearer evidence of genocide than the handling of AIDS in prison. PWA's in prison are treated like inmates of the Nazi concentration camps — made to wear pink uniforms in Alabama, made to write PWA on their forehead in Cook County Jail, quarantined and left to die alone in federal prisons. Denied necessary prevention education, prisoners are contracting AIDS at alarming rates. For example, it is estimated that 25 percent of the prisoners in New York state prisons have tested HIV positive, and in New York City jails alone, an average of 30 prisoners die of AIDS each year. If this policy of malign neglect continues, a huge portion of prisoners are going to die.

Political Prisoners

In the 1960's, as the Civil Rights and Black Power movements grew, the number of black political prisoners swelled and the prison struggle became a major part of the Black liberation struggle. Political prisoners like George Jackson stated that prisons are an important tool in the government's effort to contain and destroy black people's freedom.

Although the government refuses to admit it, there are nearly 100 political prisoners and prisoners of war in US prisons today. They come from the Puerto Rican, Black/New Afrikan and Native American liberation movements. They include progressive Christians, white anti-imperialists, draft resisters, and grand jury resisters. **The movements that these people represent honor, love and respect them.** Yet the government contends that they are criminals or terrorists, and reserves for them, as well as prisoners showing leadership and political direction, the harshest treatment. Control units are designed to totally control the lives of the prisoners in them, and ultimately to break the spirit of these prisoners. Control units are part of a calculated strategy to weaken the movements and intimidate others from taking a stand.

Intentionally, walls of silence are built around prisons in the hope that the public will never learn about the people living within the prison walls and the brutal policies that direct them. THE WALL OF SILENCE MUST BE TORN DOWN.

(This article is excerpted from the Foreword to *Can't Jail the Spirit: Political Prisoners in the U.S.*, published in 1989 by Editorial El Coqui, 1671 North Claremont, Chicago, IL 60647).

LEONARD PELTIER

In 1977, Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM) was wrongly convicted of the murder of two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Hundreds of federal agents had invaded the reservation to stop Indian people seeking control over their own lives and land. Ample evidence exists that the FBI withheld documents to frame Leonard Peltier. His appeals for justice have

FACE REALITY.

THERE ARE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE U.S.A.

FREEDOM NOW!

Campaign for Amnesty & Human Rights for Political Prisoners in the USA

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been supported by 75 members of Congress, Desmond Tutu, and Jesse Jackson. Despite this, he remains in jail serving two life sentences.

GERONIMO ji JAGA PRATT

In 1971, Geronimo jiJaga Pratt, a leader in the Black struggle for human rights, was framed on a murder charge in California. The key witness against him was in the pay of the police. Government spies infiltrated his defense team. Many pages of evidence, proving Geronimo's innocence, were "lost" by government lawyers. It was later revealed that he was a target of the FBI COINTELPRO program which sought to destroy the Black movement. Today, nearly 20 years later, Geronimo Pratt is one of the longest held political prisoners in the world.

SUSAN ROSENBERG

In 1984, Susan Rosenberg was arrested and charged with possession of weapons, explosives, and false ID. A white North American woman, Susan Rosenberg has been deeply committed since childhood to struggles for human rights including the movements for Puerto Rican independence, Black liberation, and women's liberation. Although she and her co-defendant **TIM BLUNK** were convicted of *possessing* materials, not using them, they received sentences of 58 years, the longest ever given on this charge. Susan Rosenberg also endured two years of psychological torture in the Lexington Control Unit before it was closed.

ALEJANDRINA TORRES

In 1982, Alejandrina Torres, a longtime Puerto Rican community and church activist, was arrested in Chicago. Because of her role in the Puerto Rican independence movement, she was convicted and sentenced to 35 years for conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government. These times in prison she has been beaten and sexually abused by guards. For two years, until international pressure forced it to close, she was held in the infamous Lexington Control Unit. Today, though she remains imprisoned, Alejandrina is regarded a national hero in Puerto Rico.

SUPPORT THE RESISTANCE CONSPIRACY DEFENDANTS

On November 3, the DC Court of Appeals issued a ruling that severely weakens the government's case against the resistance conspiracy six. The court ruled that in the upcoming trial that broad conspiracy charges could not be used against Susan Rosenberg, Alan Berkman and Tim Blunk. This ruling throws the government's case in disarray and it now has to decide whether to continue or to drop the charges against these three progressive activists.

The Washington Area Committee for Political Prisoners' Rights is urging everyone to write a letter TODAY to Attorney Richard Thornburgh, US Dept of Justice, 10th & Constitution, NW, Washington DC 20530, demanding that the charges be dropped against Susan, Alan, and Tim. Be sure to refer to the case by name and number: U.S. v Whitehorn, Crim. action no. 88-00145-04. The defense committee believes that these letters can make a difference in the government's decision.

It is an outrage that the government is continuing to prosecute any of the six defendants at a time when most of the charges are being dropped against the Iran-Contra criminals like Seacord and Fernandez.

Write to the Washington Area Committee, Post Office Box 28191, Washington DC 20038 or call 328-7818 for more information or to help with the important work the Committee pursues. The Resistance Conspiracy Case is a part of the Campaign for Amnesty and Human Rights for Political Prisoners in the USA of the national prisoners' rights network **FREEDOM NOW!**

HEALTH

Skin: More Than Meets the Eye

by Donna Vogel

The skin is much more than a covering that defines where your insides end and the outside world begins. In fact, the skin is the largest organ of the body, with functions that range from a barrier to a sense organ to an indicator of what is going on within.

The most obvious job the skin performs is that of protector. The skin is the first defense against injury, whether it be mechanical force, chemical damage, or radiation (including the ultraviolet in sunlight). There are two components of the skin: the outermost is called the epidermis, and is made of several layers of cells containing the protein keratin. Below this lies the dermis, made up of other types of cells, along with different types of fibers. The epidermis constantly renews itself. The top layer of epidermis is made of dead cells, which are no more than flattened sacs of keratin. These are continuously shed, and replaced by new cells formed in the underlying layers.

Thick and Thin

In different parts of the body, the thickness of the epidermis varies immensely, being thickest over the palms and soles. Some of the thinnest skin is found over the inner surface of joints. An appropriate rate of cell division is critical to maintain proper skin thickness both in health and during healing. It is the epidermis that gives the skin its relative impermeability. Chemicals, whether harmful or benefi-

cial, are absorbed through the skin only to a limited degree, unless they are small molecules or presented in high concentration.

Another important function of the skin is "climate control." The skin serves to cool the body by radiating heat away, and also by providing a large surface area through which blood can flow. In the heat, blood vessels dilate so that more heat can be dissipated at the body surface. In the cold, responses such as shivering and reduced blood flow through the skin help to warm the body.

Skin and Immunity

The dermis acts as a repository for a number of different cells involved in the immune response. These include macrophages, which help destroy foreign particles or organisms, and mast cells, which make histamine. Histamine is probably more familiar as the whatever-it-is that antihistamines are against. Actually, it is a substance that performs functions far more useful than making noses run. By increasing local blood flow and causing fluid to accumulate in tissues, it promotes dilution and removal of toxic substances. It also sends a message to other cells of the immune system that are needed to protect against infection or some other insult.

Much of the dermis is made of "connective tissue." This is a component which is made of fibers, rather than cells. There are two major kinds of fibers, collagen and

elastin. These give the skin its structural strength, extensibility, and elasticity. The fibers are produced by cells called fibroblasts. It is important to note that cosmetics or remedies which make health claims based on

was once thought that there were separate types of receptors (signal receivers) for touch, warmth, cold and pain. Current thinking is more in line with a major division between mechanical and temperature receptors, which respond to moderate stimuli, and pain receptors, which have a high threshold but are capable of responding to mechanical, chemical,

ciency can cause deepening pigmentation of the skin, while cortisol excess can produce thin skin. Thyroid deficiency, if severe, causes a particular moist, doughy feel to the skin, while hot dry skin can be seen in thyroid excess.

Skin as Diagnostician

There are many other, more common types of systemic diseases in which the skin can give important clues to the diagnosis. In earlier times, the skill of determining the cause of a particular rash or other skin sign could be lifesaving. Now, we have more sophisticated laboratory methods for proving various diagnoses, especially in the realm of infection. There is still a place, however, for the traditional skill of diagnosing by the human senses. It is quick and cheap, for a start. If treatment is begun quickly, with a relatively safe medicine, based on the characteristic appearance of a rash in, say, Lyme disease, while awaiting the results of blood tests, the patient will almost surely benefit.

Finally, the skin is a vitamin factory. It is where vitamin D is manufactured through the action of sunlight on an inactive precursor.

Through healthy habits and avoidance of damage, we can keep our skin not just looking good but doing a good job, too.

Ref: Ebling, FJG The Normal Skin in Rook, A et al. eds. Textbook of Dermatology, 4th edition, Blackwell Scientific Publishing, Oxford, 1986.

Donna Vogel, MD, PhD. is an endocrinologist and long-time volunteer-worker at Bethesda Co-op.

It is what is already within the skin that maintains its properties. "Moisturizers" at the very most, reduce evaporation at the skin surface. They cannot enhance the moisture content inside, where it matters.

their containing collagen or elastin in fact do nothing for the skin. *These proteins cannot be absorbed through the epidermis into the dermis.* Injection of such proteins into the skin can provoke serious allergic reactions. Between the fibers is a supporting "matrix" made of complex carbohydrates and proteins. These are responsible for holding water within the skin. Actually, it is what is already within the skin that maintains its properties. "Moisturizers" at the very most, reduce evaporation at the skin surface. They cannot enhance the moisture content inside, where it matters.

Skin Storehouse

A great deal of information is collected by the skin. It

or thermal insults. These sensors are located in the dermis, either deep or just below the epidermis. They may be of special shapes, or appear as simple nerve endings. They communicate through the nervous system to give the body the information it needs to deal with its surroundings.

Many hormones have effects on the skin and its "appendages" (e.g. hair). The androgens (male hormones) produced in both males and females at puberty, are responsible for acne and the growth of pubic and underarm hair. Androgens are also the cause of receding hairlines and male pattern baldness. In disorders of hormonal deficiency or excess, there can be characteristic changes in the skin. Certain forms of cortisol defi-

RECENT FOOD IRRADIATION VICTORIES

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|-------------|---|
| May 1987 | Maine bans the sale of irradiated foods |
| Sept. 1987 | International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOUC) asks for worldwide moratorium on food irradiation |
| April 1988 | US Congress says NO to more tax dollars for food irradiators |
| June 1988 | Washington State Apple Commission says they have no plans to irradiate apples |
| August 1988 | Syracuse University bans the sale or use of irradiated foods in campus facilities |
| Sept. 1988 | The International Finance Corporation, an affiliate of the World Bank, decides not to promote food irradiation projects abroad |
| Dec. 1988 | New Zealand bans irradiated foods |
| Feb. 1989 | Alaskan Governor say NO to food irradiation project |
| July 1989 | Hawaiian Governor says food irradiation project is dead |
| Aug. 1989 | New York State passes a 2-year ban on the sale of irradiated foods |
| Aug. 1989 | Beatrice Foods decides not to use irradiated spices in their products |

These consumer victories happened because people wrote letters and postcards, made phone calls, talked to grocery store managers and lobbied legislators. However, since food irradiators are still being built, the battle continues. Let's score more victories for consumers. What we can't do alone, we CAN do together. To get more information write to CUFFS: Consumers United for Food Safety, Post Office Box 22928, Seattle, WA 98122, or call CUFFS at (206) 747-2659. CUFFS is part of an international network which believes that food irradiation has not been proven safe or necessary. CUFFS also believes that all irradiated foods should be conspicuously labeled for consumers.



DON'T BUY GRAPES



EVERY DAY, in the food you eat, we're exposed to chemical residues from the over one billion pounds of poisonous pesticides used in the United States every year...

EVERY DAY, those who work in the fields to produce that food are exposed to over 600, mostly untested, chemicals. More than 300,000 farm workers are made ill every year through pesticide poisoning!

Join the United Farm Workers' grape boycott! By not buying or eating grapes and by asking your friends, co-workers and neighbors not to promote grapes, you can help win these demands:

- **STOP USING DANGEROUS PESTICIDES ON TABLE GRAPES...**
- **AGREE TO A MUTUALLY MONITORED PROGRAM TO TEST ALL GRAPES FOR POISON RESIDUES...**
- **HOLD FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS FOR FARMWORKERS AND GOOD FAITH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN THE GRAPE INDUSTRY...**

With our help the grape boycott can work. In fact, it worked before; as you may remember, in 1970 we were successful in eliminating such deadly poisons as DDT, DDE, and Dieldrin from every field under United Farm Workers union contract years before the federal government acted...thanks to a nationwide grape boycott.

Since then, however the situation has grown even more serious. Thousands of farm workers are poisoned each year in the grape fields. Testing has identified residues of more than 50 chemical products on grapes sold in stores.

We've identified five of the most toxic substances used in the growing of

table grapes. Each of these deadly poisons has a record of injuring—and in some cases killing—farm workers. And each of these deadly pesticides can be present, as a residue, on the table grapes in stores.

METHYL BROMIDE...extremely poisonous to all forms of life, this fumigant has been responsible for more occupationally-related deaths than any other pesticide. Even non-fatal exposure can cause severe, irreversible effects on the nervous system, with permanent brain damage, or blindness.

PARATHION and PHOSDRIN...can be rapidly fatal, producing illnesses in workers in as little as 20 minutes. Usually sprayed aerially, these poisons cause populations surrounding agricultural areas the same problems as they cause farmworkers, since as much as 90 percent of aerially sprayed pesticides miss their target areas.

DINOSEB...poisoning at first resembles heatstroke, then cumulative doses cause extensive illnesses, including loss of vision. It is much too toxic to be used safely (so poisonous, the EPA has finally banned its use, "pending industry reaction.")

CAPTAN...344,000 pounds are used annually on table grapes, and residue of this compound is the most frequently discovered material on grapes in stores. Not only can Captan cause cancer, it also causes birth defects and changes in body cells. It is structurally similar to Thalidomide, which caused thousands of babies in Europe to be born without arms and legs.

Each of these deadly pesticides used extensively in the grapes found in stores all across the country. They also have one other thing in common: *each has been recommended for banning by state and federal agencies...yet they*

TOP TEN DEATH SUPPLIERS

During 1988-89 (fiscal year), the Pentagon spent \$137 billion for weapons, equipment, services, research, and construction, which it purchased from private companies. Military contractors continue to reap the harvest sown and nurtured by Ronald Reagan.

The top ten contractors continued their disproportionate influence in the military business. During 1989 these top ten private companies received \$46.7 billion, or 34.1 percent of all prime contracts.

General Electric (GE), General Dynamics and McDonnell Douglas seem to have solidified their hold on the top of the list, especially since GE took over RCA in 1986.

The corporation displaced from the top ten by Tenneco's appearance was Grumman, the Navy's aircraft manufacturer.

MAJOR PRODUCTS OF THE TOP TEN MILITARY CONTRACTORS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. McDonnell Douglas
#1 Nuclear weapon producer
AV-8, F-15, F-18 Aircraft
Advanced tactical aircraft
AH-64, LHX Helicopters
Medium space-launch vehicle
KC-10 Tanker aircraft
Star wars
Tomahawk, Harpoon cruise missiles | 6. Martin Marietta
#8 Nuclear weapon producer
Ammunition
AH-64 Helicopter
LGM-118 MX ICBM
Pershing missile
Star wars |
| 2. General Dynamics
#3 Nuclear weapon producer
Advanced tactical aircraft
F-16, F-111 aircraft
DIVAD Anti-aircraft gun
Standard, Stinger missiles
M-1, M-60 Tanks
Tomahawk cruise missile
Trident submarine | 7. General Motors
#16 Nuclear weapon producer
Aircraft engines
Fire-control for M-1 tank
Maverick, Phoenix, Sidewinder, TOW missiles
Star wars
Trident ICBM |
| 3. General Electric (GE)
#2 Nuclear weapon producer
Aegis radar
Aircraft engines
Nuclear reactors
Space vehicles
Star wars | 8. Lockheed
#5 Nuclear weapon producer
C-5, C-130, P-3 Aircraft
Amphibious assault ships
SR-71, TR-1 spy planes
Star wars
F-117 Stealth fighter plane
Trident ICBM |
| 4. Tenneco
Aircraft carriers
Attack submarines | 9. United Technologies
#6 Nuclear weapon producer
Aircraft engines
CH-53, LHX, UH-60 Helicopters
Star wars |
| 5. Raytheon
#13 Nuclear weapon producer
Hawk, Maverick, Patriot, Sidewinder, Sparrow, Stinger missiles
Star wars | 10. Boeing
#12 Nuclear weapon producer
Cruise missile
CH-47, LHX Helicopters
LFM-118 MX ICBM
Star wars
V-22 Tilt-rotor aircraft |

(From RECON Network, PO Box 14602, Phila., PA. 19134. RECON is an alternative, progressive, Pentagon-watch news service to which Bethesda Co-op subscribes.)

continue in use!

You don't have to be a farm worker to be affected by the pesticides used in agricultural production:

- * Pesticides are now thought responsible for groundwater contamination in 23 states...and groundwater provides 50 percent of our country's drinking water supply...
- * Federal and State pesticide monitoring programs are both flawed and severely inadequate...
- * Samples taken during grape har-

vests are limited to usually 2, perhaps 3, of the hundreds of toxic pesticides applied to grapes...

OUTRAGEOUS? Of course it is. STOP BUYING TABLE GRAPES!

