

THE INSIDE STORY - BRUTALITY IN U.S. PRISONS

The Prison Discipline Study (PDS) distributed a questionnaire nationally using channels trusted by prisoners, to gather data on the extent of brutality and torture in prisons in the U.S. They received 650 responses from 41 states, nearly all from prisoners serving very long sentences in maximum security prisons.

Study results raise concerns about the issue of torture in our prisons. The Central findings of the PDS are: first, that severe physical and psychological brutality are the normal daily routine in maximum security prisons throughout the country; and, second, that the most frequently disciplined and brutalized groups of prisoners are, in order, jailhouse lawyers, African-American prisoners, and prisoners labelled mentally ill.

Jailhouse lawyers are prisoners who assist others with grievance, appeal, and other legal procedures, and are singled out for legally challenging the status quo. Political prisoners often act in this capacity in prisons. Black and other non-white prisoners are singled out for more severe discipline within the prisons and sentenced in disproportionately large numbers to the longest sentences and the highest rate of death penalty sentences as a function of racism in the criminal justice system and society as a whole. Prisoners labelled mentally ill are easy targets, and are abused by both inappropriate placement and treatment.

Women and men both reported standard forms of physical and psychological torture, including routine beatings with every imaginable implement, years spent in solitary confinement, and routine non-physical harrassment. Women prisoners also reported the additional degradation of routine sexual harrassment and ridicule by male guards, as well as beatings and rape by male guards. Lesbians as a group are often singled out for severe discipline and harrassment ~~because they tend to be more outspoken and independent and more likely to stand up for themselves and their sisters.~~

Another category of people commonly singled out for severe discipline can best be described as exhibiting personal integrity: "those with dignity and self-respect;" "motivated self-improvers;" "authors of truthful articles." (This category includes those political prisoners who are created within the system, becoming politicized and suffering greatly for dedicating themselves to fighting abuses in prisons; as well as formal political prisoners jailed for acts against the state.)

The internationally accepted definition of torture is when severe or excessive discipline is applied in a discriminatory way. The Study reveals that severe and excessive discipline is systemic in our maximum security prisons, and applied in a discriminatory way against particular groups of prisoners. ~~The results~~ The results of this Study suggest that torture is indeed common, ~~in our maximum security prisons.~~

## FROM HORRIBLE TO HIDEOUS: THE PROPOSED PRISON IN FLORENCE COLORADO

The federal government opened a penitentiary in Marion, Illinois in 1963, to replace Alcatraz. It soon became clear Marion was to be an experimental laboratory in methods to control human life. Since 1983, the prison has been in a state of permanent "lockdown." Prisoners are locked alone in their cells for 22.5 hours a day. All standard vocational, educational and recreational activities are virtually non-existent. When the guards determine discipline is necessary prisoners may be tied spread-eagle and naked on their concrete slab beds. "Lockdown" at most prisons is employed as a method of control and punishment for short periods of time. The lockdown at Marion is permanent and the entire prison is a "control unit." It was the first prison in the U.S. to be condemned by Amnesty International for human rights violations.

The Bureau Of Prisons, (BOP), claims the purpose of Marion is to hold the most violent prisoners but the facts demonstrate otherwise. The real purpose is to incarcerate dissidents throughout the system; prisoners who lead work stoppages, prisoners who file "too many" lawsuits, prisoners who pursue their religious freedom and political prisoners. At present Marion is known as the "end of the line" in the federal system but may soon lose that title. Having decided Marion is not brutal enough, early in 1990, the BOP announced its decision to open a new maximum security prison in Florence, Colorado.

The prison in Florence will be designed so that one guard can control the movements of numerous prisoners in several cell blocks by way of electronic doors, cameras and audio equipment. "We'll be able to electronically open a cell door, shut it behind the inmate, and move him through a series of sliding doors" says Russ Martin, project manager for the Florence prison. Presently at Marion the prisoners can yell to one another from their cells and they have minimal contact with the guards. In Florence even this limited human contact will be eliminated. The project manager promises: "These guys will never be out of their cells, much less in the yard or anywhere around here." Florence promises near complete sensory deprivation and isolation, a technique which seeks to drive prisoners insane. The project manager for the Florence prison gloats: "Marion learned from Alcatraz, and now we've had 30 years to learn from Marion."

It's typical for the BOP to choose remote and poverty stricken areas to erect new prisons. Florence, Illinois fits the bill. It is estimated the prison will generate 1000 temporary jobs and about 750 - 900 permanent jobs, creating the impetus for local support. Control unit prisons are being opened across the country by both state and federal governments. There's one at Pelican Bay, Ca., Shawangunk, N.Y., and Ionia, Michigan. Newspaper accounts relate that the Florence site will be the first of seven federal prisons to be built in the next six years!

OUT OF CONTROL was first formed to fight a control unit, the

Lexington High Security Unit for woman political prisoners in Kentucky. These other control units must also be fought. Marion is a violent attack on human rights. Florence aspires to be worse. The unchecked development of these control units is a key element of the government's racist plan to warehouse poor people and people of color all in the name of a "war on drugs." It is really bullshit - don't buy it! The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (P.O. Box 578172, Chicago, Illinois 60657-8172, tel. # (312) 235-0070) is taking steps to stop the construction of the Florence prison. Write them to see what you can do.

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## **NORMA JEAN CROY IS MOVED**

Norma Jean Croy, a Native American Lesbian featured in our last issue, has been moved to another prison. Her new address is:  
Norma Jean Croy #14293  
California Institution for Women  
P.O. 1501  
Chowchilla, 93610

## **POLITICAL PRISONERS RELEASED**

Lucy Berrios-Berrios, a Puerto Rican Independentista, gets out on December 6, 1990 after doing 2 1/2 years for distributing toys to Puerto Rican children allegedly purchased with funds obtained from a Hartford bank robbery.

Jean Gump, a Plowshares activist, got out on October 15th, after doing 4 years for an antinuclear protest at an air force base.

Jaime Delgado, a Puerto Rican Independentista, got out on September 7th, after doing almost 3 years for a conviction related to his alleged involvement in an attempted escape of another Puerto Rican Prisoner of War.

Filiberto Ojeda Rios, a member of the Macheteros, a clandestine organization of Puerto Rican Independentistas, recently beat charges related to a gun battle which took place when the FBI assaulted his home in Puerto Rico. While awaiting trial on other charges related to a Hartford bank robbery Filiberto was monitored by an electronic bracelet. Filiberto "released" himself on September 23, 1990, when he clipped the bracelet and split the scene to go underground again.

## **PALESTINIAN WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS**

Out Of Control has a sister organization in Tel Aviv. Its called: Women's Organization for Political Prisoners (WOFPP). WOFPP periodically publishes a list of Palestinian and Israeli Women who are imprisoned, detained or harassed by the Israeli government in connection with the Intifada and political acts of protest. Their address is P.O. Box 31811, Tel Aviv. All of the incidents cited involve tactics of extreme intimidation, filthy conditions, starvation, and other forms of torture. Hakimeh Abu-Hakma was one of the women featured in WOFPP's last newsletter. Hakimeh (34), a teacher for retarded children (who recently took charge of a new center in the Gaza Strip), was arrested on October 18 and has been held in solitary confinement ever since. The cell is small, wet, filthy, ridden with cockroaches, strewn with mildewed food, and without fresh air. Hakimeh has been given a bottle of water a day since her arrest and a platter of inedible food. She has been threatened with the arrest of her family and the destruction of her home if she does not sign a confession. Her interrogation took place at night and went on until the early morning. She was placed in a room with an air-conditioner operating at full volume. When

she is moved from the cell, a green sack is placed on her head. On October 28 she was taken to a physician where she complained about the dirt and said that the food fit only for dogs. As of October 31, she has not been allowed to change her clothes or to wash (on October 30 a Red Cross official requested that she would be allowed to wash).

#### RACISM - ALIVE AND WELL IN CALIFORNIA

The California just-us system controls 1/3 of all Black males between the ages of 20 - 29, according to a report by the National Center for Institutions and Alternatives. Some are in jail or prison, some are on probation or parole.

"... We are writing off an entire generation of African American men in an illusive attempt to buy public safety," said Vincent Schiraldi directed at the Center and co-author of the study.

There is no evidence to indicate that Black men are more prone to crime. In fact a state report shows that 80% of drug use in america occurs in white communities while nearly 80% of drug busts happen in Black communities.

The number of people in state prisons has quadrupled during the past 10 years although the crime rate has remained the same. Why are we building more prisons?

In the November election California voters favored huge increased spending for new prisons and jails instead of investigating more economical alternatives (not to mention more humanitarian).

Racism is alive and doing well in California and we spend plenty money to support it.