

SKATZES/LUCASVILLE 5 SUPPORT BULLETIN NO. 16 NOV.-DEC. 1998

Ed. We received several helpful comments about Scene 1. They included: 1. There is a serious error about where Perotti was at the time of the disturbance; 2. The characters all sound alike; 3. The suggested pantomime may be difficult for groups to stage without more direction; 4. Perhaps we should rely more on dialogue. In addition, another important source for pre-rebellion events has become available: writings by Native American activist "Little Rock" Reed and his lawyer. With all this in mind, we present a revised Scene 1 as well as Scene 2.

ACT I, SCENE 1 (revised): BEFORE APRIL 11

(This play can be presented in any large indoor space, such as a union hall or church basement. Hopefully there will be a stage at one end of the room. If there is no stage, part of the room should be marked off. In Act I, the stage represents indoor areas of the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, or SOCF, and the remainder of the space is the recreation yard, a large outdoor area. The audience should gradually come to feel that they are sitting in the yard, and therefore, inside the prison walls.

The "set" will have to depend on the imagination of each group showing the play. If spotlights are available, the room can be darkened and the spotlight can shift from one scene of activity to the next. If -- as we assume will be more typical -- no theater lighting is at hand, the house lights can be left on. The only props necessary in Scene 1 are a table and eight chairs. The table should be rectangular. Five chairs behind the table should face the audience. Three chairs in front of the table should face toward the rear of the stage.

John Perotti enters slowly from stage Left. He is a stocky white male in his early forties with dark hair. He is wearing a white jump suit, indicating that he is being held in segregation. He has ankle chains and walks in a shuffle. His hands are cuffed to a chain around his waist.

As John turns to face the audience, "Little Rock" Reed enters from stage Right and comes to a stop beside John. He is dressed in jeans and T shirt.

Perotti and Reed speak in the slurred Appalachian drawl common to whites who have been at Lucasville a long time.)

JOHN PEROTTI: Hello. My name is John Perotti. I am one of those whom the prisoncrats like to call "inmates," as if we were animals. I prefer "prisoner" or "convict."

I was at Lucasville before the rebellion and I am back there now.

The Lucasville rebellion was the longest prison uprising in United States history. Nine prisoners and one guard were killed. After the surrender, five prisoners were sentenced to death.

The uprising began at about 3 PM on April 11, 1993, Easter Sunday. More than four hundred prisoners occupied L block. At the time I was in Mansfield Correctional Institution north of Columbus. When the disturbance jumped off, I was in the visiting room at "Manci." They stopped visiting early when they heard about Lucasville. I have no first-hand knowledge of what happened in L block during the eleven days from April 11 to April 21.

What I can tell you about is the abuses that led up to the rebellion.¹

¹Perotti's comments are based on John Perotti, "Lucasville: A Brief History," Prison Legal News (Dec. 1993), pp. 7-9. None of the following information was allowed into evidence at the trials of any of the five men sentenced to death after the rebellion. Counsel for Abdullah Siddique Hasan f.k.a. Carlos Sanders, one of the defendants, attempted to question Warden Tate about living conditions at Lucasville and the causes of the riot. He was cut short by Judge Fred Cartolano, who said: "This riot is only incidental. You are not going to drag in philosophical or sociological theory. There's no justification for murder during a riot." In the sentencing phase of his trial, the judge barred a prison expert from presenting evidence that conditions at Lucasville were "chaotic" before the uprising. After the jury was excused, the expert made an "offer of proof" that white and black prisoners were forced to share cells, causing racial tension; the administration of the prison was poor; and there was serious friction between employees. Lucasville was "ripe for a riot," Joseph Rowan, a correctional consultant from Minnesota, told Judge Cartolano, who responded: "Riots are not created by the prison. Riots are created by the inmates." Columbus Dispatch, Jan. 25, 1996 and Mar. 4, 1996.

"LITTLE ROCK" REED: I am John Perotti's friend, "Little Rock" Reed.² I was convicted on two counts of aggravated robbery in 1982. While at Lucasville, I got to know my heritage as a person who is part Lakota Sioux. Right now I am out of prison.

PEROTTI: Lucasville was opened in 1972 to replace the Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus, where there were riots in 1968. "Luke" had the reputation of being one of the most violent prisons in the country. Most of the guard on prisoners brutality took place in J block, which housed the hole and death row prisoners.

Thirteen prisoners, called the "Lucasville Thirteen," renounced their United States citizenship and demanded to be released to the Soviet Union. Many of these prisoners cut off their pinky fingers and mailed them to the United Nations and Department of Justice to prove that they were serious.

In 1983 twelve guards beat to death Jimmy Haynes, a mentally disturbed prisoner. While nurses stood watching, one guard jumped on Haynes' neck while another guard held a nightstick behind it.

Two black prisoners, Lincoln Carter and John Ingram, were alleged to have touched white nurses. They were beaten by guards and found dead in their cells in the hole the following day. No criminal charges were pressed against the guards.

I helped to organize a branch of the IWW at Lucasville. Our issue was that prison laborers should be paid the minimum wage. The courts ruled against us.

I also helped to prepare a 38 page petition to Amnesty International. The petition described instances in which prisoners were chained to cell fixtures, subjected to chemical mace and tear gas, forced to sleep on cell floors, and brutally beaten, all in violation of United Nations Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Prisoners. We were charged with "unauthorized group activity." The petition was confiscated as contraband.

²Little Rock is quoted in an article by his New Mexico attorney Steven Douglas Looney, "Little Rock Reed: America's Most Wanted 'Fugitive from Justice,'" Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, v. 9, no. 1 (1998), and in Original Action in Habeas Corpus, Timothy "Little Rock" Reed v. John F. Kinkela, Chief, Ohio Adult Parole Authority, et al., in the Supreme Court of Ohio, Case No. 98-2041, filed Oct. 5, 1998.

REED: There was a horrible incident in which a mentally unstable prisoner killed a young school teacher named Beverly Taylor, who was helping prisoners to achieve their GEDs. The prison administration had carelessly assigned him to work as the teacher's aide, where he would be alone with her at times, without supervision. The prisoner took her hostage and cut her throat. Local citizens gathered in front of the prison demanding that prisoners be stripped of all privileges, holding placards that said "Kill the killers." They didn't know that most prisoners thought highly of Beverly Taylor and sincerely mourned her death.

As a result of this tragedy, in 1990 Arthur Tate was transferred from Chillicothe to Lucasville as the new warden. King Arthur began "Operation Shakedown." The prison was placed on lockdown. Guards came into each cell block, armed in full riot gear, and tore the cells to pieces. Prisoners could only stand and watch as the guards intentionally destroyed personal property, such as our family photographs.

PEROTTI: At one point all personal property was ordered confiscated from prisoners in Administrative Control. Prisoners resisted, so goon squads used tear gas and force to take their property. I was housed in J1 Super Max. There was standing water in this area for four months after guards used high pressure fire hoses on prisoners. Hostages were taken and held in the J1 Super Max until prisoners' grievances were aired over the radio. Only then did the federal courts discontinue their practice of summarily dismissing all prisoners' civil rights suits.

REED: When Arthur Tate brought Operation Shakedown to Lucasville, life inside changed forever. All educational programs were terminated, and recreational, religious and rehabilitation programs were cut back. We were taken to chow in lock step, surrounded by guards who would brutalize any one who dared to step out of line or talk to any one.

There were unnecessary body searches intended to impress on us that Tate had absolute control over every aspect of our lives.

PEROTTI: Luke was built to house 1,600 men, one to a cell. It soon became overcrowded and at one point the population was close to 2,300.

(As the events they narrate become more horrendous, Perotti and Reed put their arms around one another's shoulders.)

REED: Most of the cells had two men in them the entire time I was at Lucasville, from 1984 to 1992. Before Tate, wardens allowed prisoners to cell with each other if they asked to do so. Tate told people where to live and moved men who had lived in particular cell blocks for years.

Two cell mates near me made it known that they didn't want to cell with each other. The unit manager responded that only if there was violence would they be separated. Charlie stabbed his cell mate 42 times. When they took the body to the morgue, officials found one of his eye balls under his bunk. I remember being woken by the screams for help. Every one in my cell block remembers.

The entire time I was in Lucasville prior to Tate's administration, at least a third of the cells were racially integrated on a volunteer basis. Tate believed that this quota was a constitutional requirement. But he intended to fill his quota with blacks and whites who hated each other. He wanted the inevitable explosion to be between blacks and whites, rather than between prisoners and the administration.

One day an 18-year-old black kid named William, who weighed no more than 125 pounds, arrived at Lucasville and was ordered to room with a member of the Aryan Brotherhood. The AB proclaimed that if they placed a "nigger" in his cell, he would kill him.

The little black guy was terrified. He turned to the guards who were escorting him and pleaded for help. They made it clear that if he didn't step into the cell, they would beat him themselves.

William had barely entered the cell when the white man hammered him in the face with a padlock inside a sock. He ran down the cell block crying for help. He was placed in the hole for disobeying a direct order when he ran from the cell.

When William returned to the cell block, he agreed to let me file a law suit on his behalf.³ Attached to the law suit were affidavits from prisoners and two criminologists stating that Tate's policy of forced integration would result in a riot if we

³William Rogers v. Department of Corrections, et al., No. C-1-91-688 (S.D. Ohio, Western Div.).

didn't obtain an injunction. I also wrote to Warden Tate asking him if he was trying to start a riot. The court, the governor, the prison director, the chief inspector of the prison system, and every one else with authority to intervene, ignored our pleas.

I was paroled in 1992.

(Reed exits stage R.)

PEROTTI: Then came the incident that every one recognizes as the "trigger."⁴ Tate ordered all prisoners to submit to a form of TB test that involved the injection of alcohol under the skin of a prisoner's forearm. Many members of the large Muslim population responded that the test would violate their religious beliefs. There was a face-to-face meeting on Monday, April 5.

(Perotti exits off stage L. As he does so, five prison administrators enter from stage R. They are dressed in dark pants and ties, and white, short-sleeved shirts with an emblem on the left sleeve and name tags on their chests. The administrators sit down, facing the audience. Warden Tate is a very light-skinned African-American. Deputy Warden Roddy is also black. Three black prisoners enter from stage L. They seat themselves with their backs to the audience. They are dressed in the uniform of "general population": light blue, short-sleeved shirts and dark blue pants. Their principal spokesperson, Abdullah Siddique Hasan, speaks very clearly and concisely, rather like former SNCC organizer Robert Moses.)

WARDEN TATE:⁵ I am Warden Arthur Tate, Jr. This (pointing

⁴See, for example, Correctional Institution Inspection Committee, Interim Report on the April 11, 1993 Riot at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, p. 2 (disturbance was "triggered" by forced testing planned in response to inmates who refused to take TB skin test); Southern Ohio Correctional Facility: Disturbance Cause Committee Findings, p. 4 ("triggering mechanism" was decision to lock down SOCF to force testing).

⁵The following dramatization of the April 5 meeting is based on Taymullah Abdul Hakim (Leroy Elmore), "Lucasville -- An Inside View," Prison News Service (Jan.-Feb. 1994), p. 5, and on Abdullah Siddique Hasan, "Synopsis," contained in a letter to Staughton Lynd, Oct. 5, 1998.

to each in turn) is Deputy Warden of Programs Roger E. Roddy; Deputy Warden Bill G. Seth; Captain Earl P. Kelly; and Chaplain Warren Lewis. Weren't passes sent out for five of you?

ABDULLAH SIDDIQUE HASAN (hereafter HASAN): Only three of us are able to honor our passes. Cornelius Barnes and Isaac Hughes are in segregation. I am Abdullah Siddique Hasan, whom you call Carlos Sanders. This (pointing to each) is Taymullah Abdul-Hakim, also known as Leroy Elmore; and Namir Abdul-Mateen, or James Were.

TATE: My staff has informed me that 159 inmates have refused to take the TB test. The largest group out of this 159 are Muslims. That is why I singled you out to send passes to.

The TB test is a health issue. It is mandatory that all prisoners be tested. There will be no exception or deviation from this rule.

I understand that the Muslims' objections to taking the test are religious, and based on a letter that you received from your leader in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Your concerns have been put forth to Central Office and they, in turn, have contacted various Muslims from the Ohio area. All the religious leaders stated that there was nothing religiously wrong with Muslim inmates taking the TB test.

Therefore, we will be testing all inmates. I expect the Muslims to cooperate. If I allow the Muslims to deviate from taking the test, then the Aryan Brotherhood and other groups will want to deviate from institutional policies. I cannot tolerate that in my prison.

Sanders, do you have anything to say?

HASAN: I have nothing to say. You have already said what is going to happen and I see no reason to waste my breath.

TATE: This is a meeting. I want to hear what you have to say.

HASAN: This is not a meeting where what we say makes a difference. It is a meeting where you are being a dictator, and have adopted a hardline approach. You are not being sensitive and understanding toward our leadership position on the test.

TATE: Elmore, what do you have to say?

TAYMULLAH: The test is unlawful for us to take. We have no intention of taking it, for we would be guilty of a sin. However, if someone forces us to take the test, we will be absolved of the sin.

CHAPLAIN LEWIS (smilingly): How much force would have to be applied in order for you to be absolved of the sin?

TAYMULLAH: This is not a joking matter. The bottom line is we are not going to take the test.

TATE: Elmore, what will you do if one of my officers grabs you and tries to give you the test?

TAYMULLAH: I can't say what I will do. We will have to worry about that when we cross that road. If I were to tell you, "If one of your officers puts his hands on me I will physically strike him," I know for a fact that you would put me in the hole before I could even leave this so-called meeting.⁶ Again, all I can tell you is that it's not permissible for us to take this test.

NAMIR: I do not trust the prison officials to test us. You have a reputation for using us as guinea pigs.

TATE: Mr. Roddy, when will you finish testing the inmates that are HIV positive?

RODDY: By Friday, April 9.

TATE: Then we will be ready to start testing you early next week. I hope you will change your minds.

(All rise and begin to exit. Their body language should

⁶Warden Tate testified at Hasan's trial that Hasan said: "You do what you have to do and we will do what we have to do." Testimony of Arthur Tate, State of Ohio v. Carlos Sanders, p. 28. Hasan thinks that neither he nor Taymullah said that. Perhaps Tate was paraphrasing the abovequoted words from Taymullah: "We will have to worry about that when we cross that road."

reflect the fact that, as Hasan puts it, "the vibes were somewhat tense." As Hasan and Warden Tate are about to exit from stage L and stage R, respectively, they turn back toward each other.)

HASAN: We agree to submit to X-ray testing, sputum testing, or any other form of testing that does not violate our religious beliefs.

TATE: "I believe you realize that I have the utmost respect both for you personally and for your religious beliefs.

Your position relative to TB testing is, however, one that is not rational nor will it be accepted by me. Your options have been explained and I expect full compliance to my orders for all SOCF inmates to be tested. There will be no deviations to this order.

I trust you, as well as others who feel as you do, will comply with this policy. You are in no position to dictate to me how you perceive this should occur. I am certainly hoping there will be minimal difficulties associated with this process."⁷

(Both exit. Lights out. End of Scene 1.)

ACT I, SCENE 2: APRIL 11, 3 PM TO SUNSET

(The table and chairs are gone. At stage L is a large barricade, as in Les Miserables. At stage R are some bleachers, facing the audience. Center stage is a jumble of overturned

⁷Hasan's message to Warden Tate was actually an internal prison memo, or "kite." It was admitted as an exhibit in Hasan's trial and we are in process of obtaining it. The Warden's memo of April 8, responding to the kite, is attached to Disturbance Cause Committee Findings. Interestingly, after his release on parole in 1992 "Little Rock" Reed wrote to Warden Tate criticizing the lack of religious services for Native American prisoners at Lucasville. Tate replied, using the same word he would later use to Hasan, that he resented Reed's "attempts to dictate" how to run the program. Action in Habeas Corpus at 9.

trash cans, bodies wrapped in blankets, broken glass.

This scene begins in darkness. It would be impossible adequately to act out the beginning of the Lucasville rebellion, so we will present it altogether through sound. This will require creativity. What follows is an inventory of sounds that participants remember hearing:

The riot erupted just inside the M2 door near the metal detector, where black prisoners returning from rec on the yard assaulted guards and then moved up the hallway.⁸ The first sounds should therefore be scuffling, shouts, the sound of blows, cries of "Help!" and "Man down!"

Another prisoner remembers that the first officer to be attacked was Corrections Officer Horsley. A prisoner yelled at him, "Where are the keys? Give me the keys." Horsley yelled back that he "didn't have the keys." This witness also recalls prisoners beating on the control panel that opened the cell doors.⁹

Another witness recalls Sergeant Shepherd screaming excitedly into his radio, "close the crash gates, close the crash gates. . . . I told you to close the fucking gates."¹⁰

Phrases heard by many witnesses were, "This ain't a black and white thing," "We're taking over," and "There is an inmate police, kill the snitch," and variants thereof.

A prisoner interviewed at an Ohio correctional facility recalls the sounds of breaking glass. He heard people shouting: "They fightin' the police, man. Open up!" "They [prisoners] runnin' out there in the hallway!" He heard the rattling of officers' keys, as guards fought with prisoners and went down.

Paul Mulryan, in his account of the first moments of the rebellion, writes: "I heard the two rollers [guards] in charge of my block. . . . Their voices were so full of panic and urgency that I knew something very big was jumping off. 'Lock up! Lock up now, damn it!' they yelled. Someone in the cells called out, 'The guards are locking themselves in the bathroom! What the hell's happening?' 'They've got control of the L-Corridor! There are guys running around with masks on! They've

⁸Testimony of Roger Snodgrass, State of Ohio v. Jason Robb, p. 3926.

⁹Testimony of Inmate #1 in an anonymous history of the rebellion entitled "To Whom It May Concern," July 5, 1993, p. 8.

¹⁰Testimony of Inmate #2.

got the keys! They've got the fucking keys!' The rumble from the corridor began to grow like a rolling thunderstorm: muffled screams, the thud of feet running through the halls, glass shattering and showering the floor, and echoes of loud ramming sounds as though heavy steel bars were battering down the walls."

At an appropriate point in this pandemonium, there should be a very short pause and then the following: "Lucasville is ours! This is not racial, I repeat, not racial. It's us against the administration! We're tired of these people fucking us over. Is everybody with us? Let's hear ya." The prisoners "roared their approval."¹¹

Lights go up. A tall burly white man with a beard, in his late forties, another older man, and two younger white men are standing in the aisle on the L hand side of the theater, talking intensely. They are George Skatzes, Paul -----, Keith -----, and Roger Snodgrass. They are dressed in prison blues. Their talk, like that of Perotti and Reed, is Appalachian.)

ROGER SNODGRASS:¹² What's goin' on? The place is blowin' up.

GRORGE SKATZES: We don't really know. It could be a race riot.

SNODGRASS: What are we goin' to do, George? Looks like all the white dudes are on the other side of the yard, over there in the basketball court.¹³

SKATZES: I'm not going over there. I'm goin' back in. Brother Charles [Parker] and a lot more solid whites are still in there. (To Paul, who is heading away from the stage.) I'll see you.

¹¹Paul Mulryan, "Eleven Days under Siege: An Insider's Account of the Lucasville Riot," Prison Life, n.d., pp. 32, 33.

¹²George Skatzes reconstructed this dialogue in a letter to Roger Snodgrass on January 1, 1995, p. 2. Throughout what follows, words drawn from written sources have been supplemented by what Skatzes recalls.

¹³Whites who did not wish to take part in the rebellion gathered in the basketball court in the yard. "To Whom It May Concern."

(Skatzes starts up the aisle toward the stage, followed by Keith. He has no weapon.¹⁴ As he does so, two white men from the direction of the stage run past him toward the back of the hall.)

TWO WHITE MEN:¹⁵ They're killing everything white in there!

(Snodgrass grabs a small weight bar. He starts toward the stage. He comes up behind Skatzes as Skatzes mounts the steps to the stage, that is, goes into L block.)

SKATZES: It's all smokey. (At these words, Keith turns and starts toward the back of the hall.) God almighty. Bodies everywhere.

(Skatzes picks his way through the debris on the eerily quiet stage. A man approaches.)

DWAYNE JOHNSON: George, we got a guard who's hurt real bad!

SKATZES: We'll try to do something. (Skatzes climbs up on the barricade and screams at the top of his voice to invisible listeners.) You know who this is! Come on over here! I need to talk to you. This is not no fucking joke! There's a corrections officer in here! He's hurt! He needs help! Bring a gurney. . . . All right. We need to get him out of here before he dies. How are we going to do this? Listen up, now. There's a hole in the wall near the L-8 stairwell. I'm going to climb through the wall. They'll pass the body through and I will put him there and you all better come and get him!¹⁶

(Skatzes wriggles through a hole in the barricade. Johnson passes a body wrapped in a blanket through to him. Skatzes

¹⁴Testimony of Tom Hurst, State of Ohio v. Skatzes, p. 5029.

¹⁵Testimony of Roger Snodgrass, State of Ohio v. Skatzes, pp. 4373-4375.

¹⁶Testimony of Roger Snodgrass, State of Ohio v. Skatzes, pp. 4379-4380; testimony of John Powers, pp. 5911-5916; testimony of Dwayne Johnson, pp. 5943-5945. It was stipulated that State of Ohio personnel retrieved Correctional Officer Harold Fraley from the L-8 stairwell at 4:45 p.m. on April 11.

leaves the body outside the barricade and climbs back through the wall.)

(Two black men enter from L rear. One is Hasan. The other is of medium height, with fingers missing from one hand. His name is Cecil Allen. He has a megaphone. Allen stops at center stage, looks at George, who is still at stage L, and speaks through the megaphone.)

ALLEN:¹⁷ There's nobody going to be talking to you guys but myself and this man right here (pointing to George). Big George, would you please be a spokesman? This thing has gotten out of hand and we need some help.

HASAN: We've got to get this under control.

ALLEN: Tell them this is not a race thing. This is not a race war. It is a war against the administration, against Arthur Tate.

SKATZES (after an initial hesitation): Sure. If I can help in some way, I will do that.

LITTLE WILLIE (another black man): George, come over to the gym. The whites are all on one side, the blacks on the other.

(George goes to stage R, and stands, with his back to the audience, facing the bleachers. Little Willie is beside him. George says he has never been a public speaker, but that a kind of power came into him at this moment.)

SKATZES:¹⁸ This is against the administration. We are all in this together. They are against every one in here who's blue. . . . Don't be paranoid. Mix it up. Just stay out of the way. Don't worry about anything. . . . This is no time for

¹⁷Testimony of Charles Valentine, State of Ohio v. Skatzes, pp. 4921 ff.

¹⁸Skatzes' words are drawn from the recollection of an eye witness now at another Ohio prison; from the testimony of Brian Michael Young, State of Ohio v. Skatzes, pp. 5082-5083; and from Skatzes himself.

you to be calling me "honky" or me to be calling you "nigger."
If they come in here, they're going to kill all of us. (Puts
his arm around Little Willie's shoulders.) They're going to
kill this man and me, no matter what color we are. . . . Is
everybody in agreement?

(Suddenly the hall goes dark again. The authorities have
turned off electric power in L block.¹⁹ End of Scene 2.)

**If you have comments or suggestions, please send them to:
Docudrama, George Skatzes Supporters, P.O. Box 1591, Marion, OH
44301-1591.**

¹⁹The electricity was turned off on the first day of the
disturbance at sunset. Abdullah Siddique Hasan to Staughton Lynd,
Oct. 27, 1998.