



Prison Art Newsletter

Working to Expand Artistic and Political Expression to All

December, 2003

Volume 3 • Issue 12

The Struggle Continues – For All of Us or None

Over 30 million adults have been convicted of a felony in the United States – 17 million of us have been locked up, along with hundreds of thousands of juveniles. Most of us are Black or Latino – nearly all of us are poor. Most of us are parents, and 80% of the women inside prison are single mothers who will lose custody of our children because of a felony conviction.

What does it mean to walk around with a felony conviction, even once you manage to get released from prison? Basically it means you are looked down on and punished the rest of your life. A drug felony conviction means you can't collect welfare or food stamps ever again, can't get a college loan, can't get public housing and are likely to get your whole family kicked out if you try to go home when you get out of prison. Most places you won't be able to vote until you're off parole, and in some states you'll never vote – this undermines the political power of our communities. If you've been in prison longer than 15 months, in most states you'll lose custody of your kids forever. You're automatically excluded from most jobs just as soon as you check that box on the job application that says "Have you ever been arrested?" Accessing basic survival needs when people are released from prison has become nearly impossible.

The lack of basic survival needs not only restricts the quality of life for former prisoners, it also dramatically impacts the quality of life for our families and communities. The mental and medical health care problems of people coming back from prison pose a public health crisis for our communities. Our children suffer life-long scars when more and more of their mothers are imprisoned for longer amounts of time. Grandparents and other family members are taking care of millions of children with incarcerated parents, but still many of our children end up in the hands

of an often-abusive foster care system. Restrictions on visits with incarcerated family members are breaking up more families, leaving prisoners without the family ties that are so crucial for re-entry into the community.



With so many of us facing so much discrimination, we know it's time to organize to fight for our rights. All of Us or None is a national organizing initiative started by people who have been in prison, to fight against the discrimination that we face every day. Our goal is to build political power in the communities most affected by mass incarceration and the growth of the prison-industrial complex. Together we can make changes in public policy and fight for prisoners' rights. This is an effort supported by many organizations around the country, a way for us to unite nationally around a common strategy and common goals, to be more effective in the ways we fight for our human and civil rights. We

are committed to a process of democratic decision-making, where everyone has equal access to information and where we are accountable to each other. We want to build a movement that is egalitarian, where women's and young people's voices are respected and where our ideas are supported and implemented.

All of Us or None will also strengthen the voices of people currently incarcerated so they can speak about the horrendous conditions that we face while we are in custody of juvenile jails, INS detention centers, and prisons. So often our pain and suffering go unchecked. Too often people leave jail or prison and fail to help those we left behind speak about issues that were terribly important to us when we were prisoners. We must fight to establish a family bill of rights that will stop telephone companies from exploiting our loved ones. We must fight so that our family members have contact visiting, including domestic partners as well as husbands, wives, children, grandchildren, parents and grandparents. We must fight to insure that we have the support we need to reunify our families, and we must fight against the deportation of juveniles away from their families, and parents away from their children.

How did All of Us or None get started?

In November 2002, Dorsey Nunn (Program Director of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children in San Francisco) wrote a document called "Save Our Selves." This document was modified by many other former prisoners and finally renamed All of Us or None to honor Nate Harrington. Nate was a San Francisco man who earned his GED inside prison, and went on to become a lawyer and director of Prison Legal Services in the San Francisco County Jail. When Nate died in

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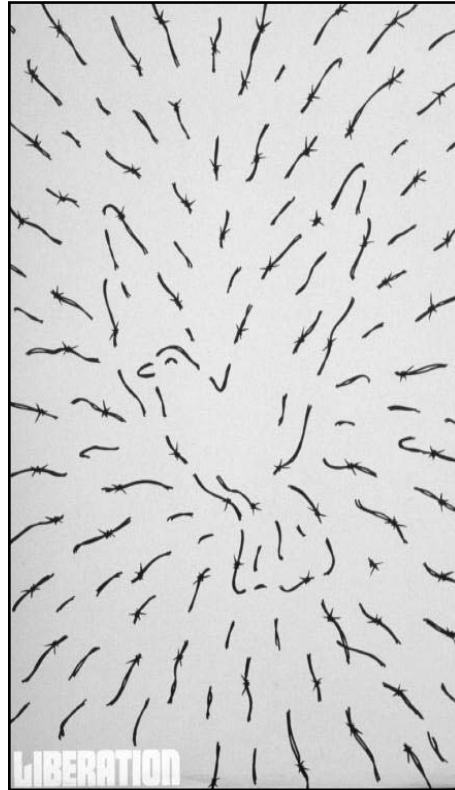
1999, the law library in the jail was named after him, and a memorial to him was created in the lobby. Some of his favorite things were in the memorial case: a Snickers bar, the book *Wretched of the Earth* by Franz Fanon, and the poem "All of Us or None" written by Bertolt Brecht.

Several of us who had been in prison in California were already planning a state-wide strategy session for former prisoners, to develop effective ways to organize to change criminal justice policy, support each others' work, and fight to eradicate the legal obstacles that prevent successful re-entry when people come out of prison. The strategy session happened on March 14-16 in Oakland, with over 40 former prisoners participating – one-third young people under the age of 23, one-half women, and 90% people of color. We made agreements to organize state-wide across race, class, gender, age, and geographic boundaries. This organizing work is continuing as All of Us or None in California.

Three weeks later, we organized a national meeting, an Exploratory Committee to discuss the idea of convening a national strategy session called All of Us or None. We brought over 50 former prisoners from 16 states together for a planning meeting just prior to the Critical Resistance South conference in New Orleans, April 4-6. These 50 people decided to initiate a national organizing drive to mobilize former prisoners, felons, and our family members, and to reach into the prisons to include our brothers and sisters inside. Collectively we agreed to call this organizing initiative All of Us or None. Legal Services for Prisoners with Children is coordinating the effort, mailing news and contact information to everyone, keeping up a unified national database of prisoners, former prisoners, felons, and family members, and providing support for organizing All of Us or None around the country.

Local organizing for All of Us or None is taking place in many areas, based on the unity built in the New Orleans meeting. In Southern California, former prisoners and our allies have been building unity and plan a regional strategy session for late summer. Northern California folks have been meeting regularly and mobilized people for a May 8th rally and lobby day in Sacramento, demanding "Education

Not Incarceration." They are also working on a jobs initiative in East Oakland and to create peer training sessions about how to seal juvenile records and expunge criminal records. Former prisoners and family members in Oklahoma have begun working groups to strategize around specific issues that most affect them. Local organizing is starting in New York, Boston, Tennessee, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.



Recently in East Palo Alto, All of Us or None started a grassroots organizing initiative to reach all of us in 12-step programs. At the community-based recovery center Free at Last, almost 100 people gave testimony about the many ways felony convictions have affected their lives, despite their own struggle to stay clean and sober. Person after person recounted how they had been discriminated against in the job market, in training programs, trying to go to college, in child custody fights. Many of them pledged that they would take All of Us or None brochures to the World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous (July 3-6, 2003 in San Diego), recruiting other former felons in recovery to join the fight for our rights.

We want people currently in prison to have an active part in this organizing initiative, and we welcome your comments and ideas. We are creating a platform of action to achieve the following goals:

1. To overcome the fear and heal the

shame associated with being a convicted felon or formerly incarcerated;

2. To change the public perception of who we are; to show our successes instead of allowing the media and others to focus only on our failures;
3. To eliminate the lifelong punishment that is the result of felony convictions;
4. To develop a Family Bill of Rights that will guarantee prison visiting rights, stop profiteering from telephone surcharges, stop one-strike evictions from public housing, end fast-track adoptions, and stop the deportation of juveniles and parents away from their families;
5. To pressure local, state and federal governments to develop policies and to make resources and services available to formerly incarcerated persons, in order to insure the greatest likelihood of success upon release;
6. To effectively advocate for alternatives to incarceration, both for young people and for adults; to encourage mother-and-child alternatives to incarceration for women;
7. To change society's over-reliance on incarceration and stop the expansion of the Prison Industrial Complex;
8. To stop politicians and others from using crime rates and parole to advance their careers;
9. To advocate against human right abuses for our sisters and brothers behind the walls;
10. To develop a national movement of formerly incarcerated persons and felons so we can build political power for our communities.

For more information, please write LSPC, 1540 Market St., #490, San Francisco, CA 94102. 415-255-7036 x 337 (Dorsey Nunn, Yvonne Cooks or Linda Evans). Our website is www.allofusornone.org. We will be successful when people realize that we are not just victims of the system, that we can act together to change it. Our goal is to ensure that people with felony convictions can unite to regain our rights – for All of Us or None.

WRITE TO PRISON ART

SEND LETTERS TO:

PRISON ART NEWSLETTER,
P.O. Box 31574

SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94131-0574

PRISON ART

Volume 3, Number 12
December 2003

Some Crime Statistics

Can you imagine working for a company that has a little more than 500 employees and has the following statistics:

- * 29 have been accused of spousal abuse
- * 7 have been arrested for fraud
- * 19 have been accused of writing bad checks
- * 117 have directly or indirectly bankrupted at least 2 businesses
- * 3 have done time for assault
- * 71 cannot get a credit card due to bad credit
- * 14 have been arrested on drug-related charges
- * 8 have been arrested for shoplifting
- * 21 are currently defendants in lawsuits
- * 84 have been arrested for drunk driving in the last year

Can you guess which organization this is? It's the 535 members of the United States Congress. The same group of idiots that crank out hundreds of new laws each year designed to keep the rest of us in line.



Thirteenth Amendment Overruled by International Treaty Signed by U.S.

Nearly 140 years after it was abolished, slavery, by way of the involuntary servitude of prisoners, continues to flourish in this "land of the free," thanks to the clause in the Thirteenth Amendment authorizing "involuntary servitude ... as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted...." Based on such "license to slavery," Texas and Florida, both former slave states and both under the toe of the Bush mafia family, pay their prisoners nothing at all for their compulsory labor, while several other states, again mostly in the ex-slavery South pay "peanuts and shells" for forcible and often brutal prison labor. Prisoners work long hours in the sun or very hot indoors. They work long weeks, year after year with no vacations, no sick leave, no retirements or benefits of any kind. And in Texas, those lucky enough to make parole are given fifty bucks and a one-way bus ride to start their broken lives again.

The same U.S. Constitution that perpetuated slavery by way of the Thirteenth Amendment, says in its Article VI: "This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of

the Land." One such treaty, duly signed, nay, promoted by the anti-fascist United States of post World War II (who said that old times cannot be brighter and better, huh?), duly ratified by the U.S. Senate and still in full force today, is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (G.A. Res. 217 U.N. 3 F.A.O.R., U.N. Doc 1/777, 1948), which ways in its Article 4: "Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."

Signed and ratified 84 years after the Thirteenth Amendment, Article 4 should overrule the Thirteenth Amendment as to the formers "slave license" against those convicted of crime. Article 4 absolutely and without any exception prohibits "slavery or servitude," period. It prohibits them "in all their forms," like the Texas Government Code sec. 497 et. Sequitur TCI/PIE (prison industries), which, pious and empty words to the contrary, do indeed take every scarcer free-world job, by opposing the unfair competition of free (or dirt cheap) involuntary servitude of convicts.

Is the way then clear in the courts to once and for all times abolish the slave labor of prisoners? By no means!

-Ana Lucia Gelabert

NO SURRENDER

David Gilbert is one of America's longest-held political prisoners, and one of the most politically active. A founder of Columbia University Students For A Democratic Society (SDS), and a veteran of the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, Gilbert joined the Weather Underground Organisation in the late 60's. After more than 10 years of clandestine resistance, he was captured in the course of an armed action in 1981.

Gilbert has been a revolutionary political prisoner for 22 years, continuing his work as an AIDS activist, prison organizer, and author from behind the walls.

This first collection of David Gilbert's prison writings is a unique contribution to our understanding of the most ambitious and audacious attempts by white anti-imperialists to build an underground movement "within the belly of the beast." With unsparing honesty (and unflinching

humor), he discusses the errors and successes of the WUO and their allies; the pitfalls of racism, sexism and ego in revolutionary organizations; and the possibilities and perils facing today's growing anti-imperialist resistance.

NO SURRENDER is both an analysis of the past and a vision of our collective future. And more. It is the intensely personal, harrowing true story of a captive revolutionary, struggling to maintain an active political life deep inside America's most violent, repressive prisons, where principle is his only weapon, and surrender is not an option. It's not an easy book; it's not an easy path. But it is one we all need to know, to honor, and understand.

To pre-order your copy send \$20 post-paid, cheques or money orders made out to "Abraham Guillen Press" and mail to: Abraham Guillen Press, C.P. 48164, Montreal, Quebec, H2V 4S8, Canada

BARRIERS TO BASIC CARE

BY VICTORIA LAW

[Note: Vikki Law is the author of the wonderful pamphlet, "The Invisibility of Women Prisoner's Resistance," which is available from Break The Chains for \$2 postage paid. Vikki gave a presentation on women in prison and women prisoner's resistance, at the Break The Chains Conference in August. This article originally appeared in the Summer edition of Clamor magazine.]

Medical neglect and malpractice are issues faced by prisoners across the United States. Women in prison, however, face the additional challenge of trying to obtain adequate care for specifically female health concerns from prison administrators and medical staff trained and accustomed to treating male prisoners. Despite the lack of outside support and the prevailing notion that female inmates do not organize to change prison conditions, women in prison have been and continue to be proactive in demanding adequate medical care.

Pregnancy is one of the more common female health concerns, yet even prison wardens agree that several of its needs "have yet to be dealt with in any of the facilities," including adequate resources to deal with false labors, premature births and miscarriages; maternity clothing; changing the requirement that pregnant inmates wear belly chains when transported to the hospital; and a separate area for mother and baby. A 1999 study by the Department of Justice indicated that six percent of women entered jail and five percent entered prison while pregnant. However, only three percent of pregnant jail inmates and four percent of pregnant state prisoners were found to have received prenatal care since admission. Pregnant women are also not provided with the proper diets or vitamin supplements, given the opportunity to exercise or taught breathing and birthing techniques. In one instance, a twenty-year-old woman, who was almost five months pregnant when incarcerated, began experiencing vaginal bleeding, cramping and severe pain. She requested medical assistance numerous times over a three-week period, but there was no obstetrician contracted with the prison. She was finally seen by the chief medical officer, an orthopedist, who diagnosed her without

examining her physically or running any laboratory tests, and given Flagyl, a drug that can induce labor. The next day, the woman went into labor. Her son lived approximately two hours.

Pregnancy is not the only female medical concern ignored by prison officials. Prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, pain alleviation and rehabilitation for breast cancer are virtually non-existent in prisons. In 1998, a study at an unnamed Southern prison found that seventy percent of the women who should have had mammograms under standard medical protocol had not been tested. Although many of the women were at high risk because of family histories, they were not provided with a clinical breast exam, information or basic education on self-examination upon admittance. At the California Institute for Women, Sherrie Chapman pleaded for nine years before receiving medical attention for the lumps on her breasts. By that point, cancer had progressed and she was forced to undergo two mastectomies and a hysterectomy.

AS THE FASTEST GROWING POPULATION IN AMERICAN PRISONS, WOMEN FACE MEDICAL NEGLECT AND MALPRACTICE IN EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS

Similarly, cervical cancer and other female illnesses are commonly misdiagnosed and mistreated, sometimes with alarming consequences. At Oregon's new women's prison, Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, Danielle Conatser was given a Pap smear which came back with abnormalities. The prison's doctor informed her that she had cervical cancer. Conatser, who had given birth six weeks earlier, requested a second opinion. She was then told she would be put to sleep for a biopsy. When she awoke, she was told that the doctor who had originally diagnosed her had removed a good portion of her cervix, thus making it unlikely that she would have children in the future. Conatser never received a second opinion or any follow-up care. She continues to

live with the fear that she has cancer.

Not only are the particular health care needs of women ignored or dismissed, but health care in general is often inadequate or life-threatening. Darlene Dixon recalled her visit to a private clinic contracted by her prison: "There was no disposable paper on the table to create a sanitary barrier between my body and the examination table. The room was basically in disarray; there were spilled liquids on the counter tops as well as debris on the floor." In the restroom was a sink filled with "soiled and bloody tubes, lids and bottles. Even more disturbing were the clean ones located on top of the toilet tank beside it. It rapidly became apparent to me that these items were being washed and reused."

In addition, illiteracy and poor literacy can be an obstacle to obtaining medical care. As Ellen Richardson, an inmate at Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW) in California, testified: "The medical staff triage [is] based on how the patient states her symptoms on paper." This procedure ignores the fact that the average literacy level at VSPW is less than ninth grade, that over seven hundred women have less than a sixth-grade reading level and that approximately one hundred are illiterate or speak English as a second language. "A woman may have extreme stomach pain and cramping, but only have the literacy level to write, 'I have a tummy ache.' That is not enough for medical staff to let her see a doctor."

Medical neglect has sometimes led to preventable deaths. In February 2000, Wisconsin prisoner Michelle Greer suffered an asthma attack and asked to go to the Health Services Unit (HSU). When the guard and captain on duty contacted the nurse in charge, he did not look at Greer's medical file, simply instructing her to use her inhaler (which was not working). Half an hour later, Greer's second request to go to HSU was also ignored. After another half hour, Greer was told to walk to HSU but collapsed en route. When the nurse in charge arrived, it was without a medical emergency box or oxygen. A second nurse arrived with the needed emergency box, but again with no oxygen. Forty-five minutes after her collapse (and less than two

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hours after her initial plea for medical help), Greer died.

However, women have been active about trying to change their sometimes life-threatening medical neglect. The most successful and well-known prisoner-initiated project organized around health care is the AIDS Counseling and Education Project (ACE) at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York. AIDS is the leading cause of death among U.S. prisoners, being five to ten times more prevalent in prison than in the outside society. In 1999, the New York State Department of Health found that the rate of HIV infection among women entering the New York State Correctional Facilities was nearly twice that of their male counterparts. In 1987, inmates at Bedford Hills, motivated by watching their friends die of AIDS and by the social ostracism and fear of people with AIDS, started ACE.

ACE founders hoped to educate and counsel their fellow inmates about HIV/AIDS as well as help to care for women with AIDS in the prison infirmary. Although the prison superintendent gave the group permission for the project, ACE continually faced staff harassment and administrative interference. For instance, because both Kathy Boudin and Judith Clark, alleged members of the Weather Underground, were active ACE members, the group was constantly monitored and sometimes prevented from officially meeting. Fear that the one-to-one peer counseling sessions would lead to inmate organizing as well as the staff's own ignorance of HIV/AIDS led to staff harassment and interference. Educators from the Montefiore Hospital holding training sessions were banned from the facility for suggesting that the Department of Correctional Services lift its ban on dental dams and condoms. A year after its formation, ACE members were prohibited from meeting at their regular time, from using their meeting room, giving educational presentations or to referring to themselves as "counselors."

Despite these setbacks, the members of ACE not only managed to implement and continue their program, but also received a grant for a quarter million dollars from the AIDS Institute and wrote and published a book detailing the group's history and its positive impact on women with AIDS as a guide for other prison AIDS programs.

One interesting aspect is that despite ACE's success, male prisoners attempting to set up similar programs at their facilities continue to meet with administrative resistance and retaliation.

Other women political prisoners have also focused on the AIDS crisis behind bars. Marilyn Buck, for example, started an AIDS education and prevention program in California. In 1994, three HIV-positive inmates at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) began a peer-education program encompassing not only HIV and AIDS, but also other sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis and hepatitis C.

Women have also worked individually and without the auspices of administrative approval to change their health care. Until her recent death, California prisoner Charisse Shumate worked with her fellow inmates with sickle-cell anemia to understand the disease and the necessary treatments. She also advocated the right to compassionate release for any prisoner with less than a year to live and was the lead plaintiff in the class-action lawsuit *Shumate v. Wilson*, challenging medical conditions throughout the state's prison system.

Unfortunately, Shumate herself died at CCWF, away from family and friends, because the Board of Prison Terms recommended clemency rather than compassionate release. Governor Gray Davis refused to approve the Board's recommendation. Four years before her death, Shumate wrote: "I took on [the battle] knowing the risk could mean my life in more ways than one... And yes, I would do it all over again. If I can save one life from the medical nightmare of CCWF Medical Department then it's well worth it." Her work did not cease with her death. Women who had worked with her continue the task of teaching others how "to understand their lab work and how to chart their results, keep a medical diary, hold 'these people' accountable to what they say and do to them." Sherrie Chapman, one of the 26 inmates who testified in *Shumate v. Wilson*, became the primary plaintiff in a class-action suit over medical conditions as well as filing a civil suit charging the CDC with cruel and unusual punishment after being forced to wait years for cancer treatment.

In Wisconsin, an anonymous female prisoner telephoned the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel to report the medical

neglect leading to Michelle Greer's death. This one phone call prompted Sentinel reporter Mary Zahn to begin investigating. Two weeks after Greer's unnecessary death, Zahn not only publicized the story, but also turned the death into a "minor sensation." The publicity led the Wisconsin Department of Corrections to investigate the incident and suspend the two nurses who initially ignored Greer's requests for medical assistance and then bungled their eventual response, leaving her to die. The article also prompted the state's Assembly's Corrections and Courts Committee to hold investigative hearings into the incident.

This one story led to the paper's own investigation as to whether the neglect causing Greer's death was an isolated incident. For the following eight months, Zahn and a fellow journalist Jessica McBride investigated every prisoner death since 1994, revealing "a dysfunctional health care system in which gravely ill prisoners, often while literally begging for medical treatment, are ignored — and sometimes even disciplined for being 'aggressive' or 'disruptive.'" Their findings led to a series of articles about the inadequate and often times life-threatening medical care in Wisconsin prisons, prompting the state's lawmakers to introduce legislation requiring better-trained medical staff, improved medical record-keeping, and the creation of an independent panel of outside medical experts to review prison deaths.

This anonymous woman prisoner protested the conditions of the prison-industrial complex and ensured that Greer's death, as well as those of other Wisconsin inmates, would not remain swept under the rug. Similarly, the works of ACE, Marilyn Buck, Charisse Shumate and other women address crucial issues facing women in prison and contradict the notion that women do not and cannot network and organize to change their conditions.

Further Reading: Amnesty International. *Not Part of My Sentence: Violations of the Human Rights of Women in Custody*. March 1999. The Women of the ACE Program of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. *Breaking the Walls of Silence: AIDS and Women in a New York State Maximum-Security Prison*. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press. 1998. California Coalition for Women Prisoners: women-prisoners.org

A STRUGGLE ON TWO FRONTS: PRISONS & IMPERIALIST WAR

[Reprinted from the Oct. 30, 2003 issue of *Workers World* newspaper.]

After a war waged by the U.S. military against Vietnam which took the lives of more than 3 million Vietnamese people and more than 58,000 GIs, the U.S. finally withdrew in 1975. It had suffered its first official major military defeat by a united peoples struggle led by the Vietnamese, along with a mass U.S. anti-war movement.

Four years earlier, another heroic struggle of resistance had taken place inside the U.S. The battlefield was in upstate New York at the notorious Attica prison. Hundreds of prisoners—African American, Latino, Native and white—organized a united front and took over the prison for four days in September 1971.

These prisoners exposed to a largely uninformed U.S. population and to the world that U.S. dungeons were nothing more than concentration camps for the poor. The demands they made of the prison officials and the ruling-class governor, Nelson Rockefeller, reflected both the daily inhumane treatment that exists for prisoners along with concerns for the worldwide problems caused by racism, capitalist greed and imperialist war.

Among the prisoners' demands was the right to be unionized to win a decent wage with benefits like other workers. Another demand was for willing prisoners to be granted political asylum in socialist Cuba.

The political consciousness of these prisoners was inspired by the writings of anti-imperialist Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh as well as other revolutionary figures like Che Guevara, Karl Marx and George Jackson.

This rebellion was drowned in blood as Rockefeller ordered the National Guard to open fire, resulting in a slaughter that left 29 prisoners and 10 hostages dead. What this uprising showed was that economic and political repression gives birth to social consciousness, solidarity and class struggle.

U.S. TERRORISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

Fast forward to what is happening now. The names may have changed but the struggle is the same. This time the U.S. military has carried out another brutal war

against Iraq and is bogged down in a racist occupation of that once sovereign country. Like the Vietnamese, the Iraqi people are putting up a heroic resistance. This occupation is part and parcel of Bush's so-called war on terror.

The economic and political repression inside the prisons has deepened over the past 30 years.

During the era of Attica, there were an estimated 300,000 prisoners in the U.S. Today U.S. prisons and jails are now filled with over 2.1 million poor and working people, more than any other industrialized country.

“People who come out of prison can build up the country...Those who protest at injustice are people of true merit...When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out.”

-Ho Chi Minh

Women prisoners, many of them single mothers, constitute the fastest-growing prison population. It has been documented that at least 70 percent of imprisoned women and men were convicted of non-violent, drug-related “crimes.” Many suffer from HIV/AIDS, other disabilities and illiteracy. Amnesty International and other groups have accused the U.S. prison system of violating many international laws, especially the racist, anti-poor application of the death penalty.

The building of private prisons, including juvenile detention centers, has been one of the most profitable markets for Wall Street investors. Prison slave labor has enriched the coffers of U.S. corporations to the tune of over \$1 billion annually. This super-exploitation lowers the wages of many workers and undermines the campaign to organize the unorganized. Unions should make it a policy to organize prisoners as they are doing with immigrants and other low-paid workers.

One of the main reasons such blatant exploitation and oppression exists inside the prisons is institutionalized racism that permeates throughout the entire criminal justice system. According to Mother Jones.com, in 2000 some 66 percent of those incarcerated were people of color.

This is hugely disproportionate to their numbers in the population. There were more Black men in prison in 2001 than in college. (Justice Policy Institute)

People of color, especially youth, are demonized and criminalized in the media to help drive an invisible wedge between the multi-national and multi-cultural communities, who have common interests.

This same divide-and-conquer tactic is a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy as leaders like Saddam Hussein, Robert Mugabe and Fidel Castro are portrayed as “tyrants” and “dictators” by the mainstream media and U.S. government to justify imperialist aggression.

REPRESSION & POLITICAL PRISONERS

The U.S. government likes to ostracize other countries for having political prisoners—especially those countries that favor a different economic system such as Cuba, North Korea and China.

The truth is that there are U.S. prisoners who have been victims of illegal frame-ups because they have a history of being outspoken opponents against racism, imperialism and colonialism. The more well-known political prisoners include Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (formerly H. Rap Brown), the Cuban 5, the Angola 3, the Puerto Rican independentistas, members of the MOVE 9 and many more.

The repressive U.S. Patriot Act since 9/11 has sanctioned the illegal detentions and torture of thousands of unidentified South Asian, Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants within these borders and on a U.S. military base in Guantanamo, Cuba.

Palestinian detainees such as Professor Sami Al-Arian, Amer Jubran and the Los Angeles 8 are being threatened with prison and/or deportation for defending Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation.

The movement for social change has important political allies locked away who must never be forgotten in the heat of battle. While fighting French colonialism, Ho Chi Minh wrote from his prison cell, “People who come out of prison can build up the country...Those who protest at injustice are people of true merit...When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out.”

Marines Held Over Iraq POW Abuses

The US military has charged eight Marine reservists, including two officers, in connection with mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners-of-war. The eight served as part of the First Marine Division during the campaign to oust Saddam Hussein and guarded prisoners at a camp near the southern city of Nasiriya. Two of the men were charged with negligent homicide in connection with the death of a captured Iraqi at Camp Whitehorse in early June. Details of the incident remain unclear.

The eight Marines are now in custody at Camp Pendleton, a base outside San Diego, California, where they are undergoing pre-trial hearings.

A Marine spokesman, Staff Sergeant Bill Lisbon, said the cases would be examined by the military equivalent of a grand jury, which would decide whether to proceed to a court-martial. The other charges include assault and dereliction of duty. The most sweeping accusations were levelled against Major Clark Paulus, charged with negligent homicide, assault, cruelty and maltreatment, dereliction of duty and making false statements, Mr Lisbon said. Lance Corporal Christian Hernandez was also charged with negligent homicide.

Donald Rehkopf, a lawyer representing one of the men, said the reservists had "no training at all" in running a detention camp, and had received just 30 minutes training on the Geneva Convention.

Military prosecutors allege that an Iraqi man named Nagem Sadoon Hatab died at Camp Whitehorse in early June, possibly following a beating by US guards. But Mr Rehkopf, who will be defending Lance Corporal William Roy, said the circumstances of Hatab's death remained unclear.

Other Iraqi prisoners from the camp were also beaten by US Marines, though they did not suffer as serious injuries, the lawyer said. The investigation was handled by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. In late July, the US Army filed charges against four military police members accused of hitting Iraqi prisoners and breaking their bones at Camp Bucca in southern Iraq.

Ex-Guard Gets Prison Term

A former federal prison guard was sentenced Thursday to 21 months in prison for sexually abusing female inmates.

Ricardo Vasquez, 32, of the Bronx, N.Y., was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Alvin Thompson.

"The sentence imposed by Judge Thompson should send a clear message that inappropriate conduct with inmates by corrections officers simply will not be tolerated and will be vigorously prosecuted," U.S. Attorney Kevin O'Connor said.

Vasquez pleaded guilty in June to making false statements to a federal law enforcement officer and six counts of sexually abusing four female inmates at the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury.

-Associated Press



Jails Are Bursting At The Seams

Sara Gaines, *The Guardian, London*

Prisoners are being ordered to choose between having a shower, exercising or phoning friends and family because of the overcrowding crisis in Britain's jails, a charity has warned. The problem is forcing prison officers to keep many inmates locked up for long periods - and putting staff and prisoners at risk, says the Prison Reform Trust.

There has already been a marked rise in jail violence, the charity warned. The incident command suite at Prison Service headquarters went on red alert 62 times this year, up 27% on last year. "I would not want to predict a riot but I think when prisons are bursting at the seams, security and safety can be compromised and the possibility of a disturbance is more likely," said Enver Solomon, the trust's policy

officer. The charity believes Prison Service figures show that 11 prisons have exceeded their maximum capacity, including high-security Belmarsh in London - where the chief inspector of prisons, Ann Owers, reported yesterday that staff were struggling to meet prisoners' basic needs.

However, the prison population is set to go on rising steadily. Last Friday it stood at 73,802 and the director general of the Prison Service, Martin Narey, has said it will top 80,000 within three years. The charity said that has led to rehabilitation being badly affected. Waiting lists for training and workshops in some prisons are now so long that few prisoners have a chance to attend - even though the classes are seen as a vital part of programmes to reduce reoffending. "Unless we reduce the prison population then prisons don't have a chance to try to stop reoffending," Mr Solomon said. "There should be an outcry,

but people don't stop to think that overcrowded prisons do not work."

The charity is calling for a reduction in the number of people jailed for petty offences and those given sentences under six months. "Prison governors can't do anything constructive in under six months," Mr Solomon said. "There have been new community sentences brought in but judges are getting mixed messages. The tough rhetoric coming from the government means that judges are reluctant to impose them."

A spokeswoman for the Prison Service admitted that overcrowding was causing problems, though pointed out that it was the courts that decided who to send to jail. "In Belmarsh there was a problem with showers and in Pentonville for two weeks - after a near riot when they were on an emergency regime - prisoners were getting showers whenever the staff could manage it," the spokeswoman added. "It may be that prisoners are having to make a choice between two things, both of which they should have."

Sir David Ramsbotham, the former chief inspector of prisons, appealed for a greater focus on alternatives to prison in a SocietyGuardian.co.uk online chat yesterday. "The trouble is that imprisonment as currently conducted, in overcrowded conditions where too many prisoners are left in their cells all day, gazing at television, discredits the whole process, lessens its impact and deterrent effect," he said.

Lost in the Translation at Camp Delta

Who Has the Antidote?

By Stan Goff

The arrest of three individuals, so far, who were stationed at Camp Delta, in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, raised the question at Reuters of whether there was a spy plot that involved Syria. Reuters is not alone with its espionage fixation.

The Christian Science Monitor warns US Muslims that they must “do their part by refusing to tolerate the tiny group of radicals hiding among them.” Not to be outdone by the press, Democrat Charles Schumer wrote Rumsfeld himself, one of the key architects of the post 9-11 Security State, and demanded to know why security measures “are lax at some of our most secure military facilities.” Since September 11, 2001, I have had to fight off the feeling that there was a second attack — far more successful than the suicide pilots — that quietly dispersed a powerful disabling agent throughout the whole country that was targeted against federal officials and all journalists who make more than \$100,000 a year. This colorless, odorless, tasteless agent attacked any neurons activated during critical thought and left its victims vulnerable to mass delusion and terminal groupthink. Hello? Anyone home? Plenty of light, but the motion sensors are unresponsive. Camp Delta is not just a military facility. How do people walk around all day and manage to ignore the fact that this place is a concentration camp where thousands of people have been incarcerated with all the due process and transparency of Treblinka. The Bush administration — as has been the custom of the US government for decades — exempted itself from all standards of international law, rounded all these people up, some just reaching puberty in the camp, pronounced them terrorists, and has been doing who-knows-what with them under ZERO public oversight.

Some of us left unaffected by the aforementioned disabling agent suspect that there are many things that can now never be allowed to see the light of day from Camp Delta. The Bush administration — under siege as their whole tapestry of lies begins to unravel — is waiting for another shoe to drop, and they have to know that among all those who have been required to

play the role of turnkey at Guantanamo, there will be some whose conscience gets the best of them... and make this thing the Mother of all Watergates — far worse than merely outing a CIA operative out of petty revenge.

These detainees were “captured” during a series of the most ill-conceived, legally-questionable, and poorly executed operations in recent memory, if we exclude Chechnya. They were rounded up between bombing Canadians, getting pinned down for days on snowy slopes during Operation Anaconda (as if any self-respecting reptile would stay somewhere that cold), overseeing torture and mass executions in Marar-i-Sharif, and calling Spectre gunships in on wedding parties. The beat goes on in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has reconstituted itself and roams across the south in battalion sized elements with near impunity.

This is the background, and we are supposed to give the benefit of the doubt to this administration — who has trampled on the Constitution, insulted its allies, violated the UN Charter to which the United States is a signatory, been caught in at least three vast fabrications about its pretexts for invading Iraq, and is now investigating itself after a 24-hour warning all concerned who might need to shred the appropriate documents and delete incriminating emails, for the Wilson-Plame affair. Why is no public persona asking a simple, straightforward line of questions: Were these detainees rounded up at random, held illegally, subjected to violations of their basic human rights, and transformed over time into a huge and growing political embarrassment that will have to be buried? And are these two, perhaps three, individuals — one a West Point graduate, Chaplain/Captain James Yee, and another an experienced and apparently dedicated Air Force translator, Ahmad al-Halabi, who is under suspicion for the seditious act of visiting the country of his parents’ origin — being pre-emptively locked up? Is the same US government that told us about Iraqi mushroom clouds blossoming over New York arresting these Muslim American servicemen to prevent them telling anyone just what in the hell is going on in Camp Delta? Is anyone going to ask why a list of the so-called evidence

has inexplicably escaped into the public to circulate freely in the media, while the accused are being held as tightly and silently as Manuel Noriega?

Who has the antidote that will restore us to skepticism? We’d better find it quick, because if they come for Ahmad in the morning, they might come for you in the afternoon.

Stan Goff is the author of “Hideous Dream: A Soldier’s Memoir of the US Invasion of Haiti” (Soft Skull Press, 2000) and of the upcoming book “Full Spectrum Disorder” (Soft Skull Press, 2003). He is a member of the BRING THEM HOME NOW! coordinating committee, a retired Special Forces master sergeant, and the father of an active duty soldier.

Witness Tells of Gang's Methods at Prison

By Susan Skiles Luke

Federal inmate Raymond Oeschle agreed to do some killing for the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang a few years ago inside Marion's penitentiary, he told a jury in Benton.

But at the time, he was confused. How would gang members get instructions from their reputed leader, housed in a different area of the notoriously tight prison? Most inmates are locked in their cells for up to 22 hours a day.

The answer, delivered to a hushed courtroom, came during a trial that has provided a rare look behind the razor wire around one of the most notorious prisons in the federal system.

Oeschle was testifying in the murder and conspiracy trial of the Aryan Brotherhood's alleged leader in the prison, David Sahakian, and two others accused of waging a war against black inmates at Marion. It turned out to be easy to deliver messages, he said.

Members of an allied gang, the Mexican Mafia, “know some old Aztec language no one understands,” Oeschle said, speaking in a low rasp, his mouth close to the microphone.

“They'd yell (messages) to the other side” of a wall separating inmates during

Continued on next page

U.S. Supreme Court Should Review and Reject Secret Detentions

Human Rights Watch and other advocacy groups sought the release of the names of hundreds of people arrested on immigration and material-witness warrants in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The groups filed their request with the Department of Justice under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in October 2001. The Justice Department denied that request, and plaintiffs filed suit.

Yesterday, 21 co-plaintiffs asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review a June decision by the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, ruling that the Justice Department did not have to release the names or other information requested. In a split decision, the appeals court held that all of the information sought was statutorily exempt from disclosure because it was information compiled for law enforcement purposes, and disclosure "could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings."

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit, *Center for National Security Studies v. Ashcroft*, are

Gangs...Continued from previous page

their brief recreation time, he said. Fellow gang members translated and passed the word.

The trial is being held about 20 miles north of the Marion prison.

Home to the late mobster John Gotti (who once got sucker punched in its rec yard), Central American drug kingpins and disciplinary cases from other prisons, Marion was the end of the line for the nation's most hardened criminals until a high-tech super-maximum-security prison in Florence, Colo., took that designation a decade ago.

Prosecutors say Sahakian, 47, ordered inmates Carl Knorr Jr., 40, and Richard McIntosh, 41, to kill inmate Terry Walker in May 1999 as part of a war against blacks at the prison. Each could be sentenced to death if convicted.

At least four other black inmates were killed by others as part of the alleged scheme, but no one else at Marion has been charged in connection with it, prosecutors have said.

contesting that decision and are urging the Supreme Court to hear the case both on FOIA and First Amendment grounds. At stake is the public's right to know what actions the government has taken—a guarantee of openness and accountability that is all the more important when the government action involves deprivation of liberty. By cloaking its arrest powers in secrecy, the Bush Administration has prevented the public from judging whether those powers were properly exercised or widely abused.

There is mounting evidence that the rights of hundreds of non-citizens were abused in the aftermath of September 11. In August 2002, Human Rights Watch released a 95-page report, entitled *Presumption of Guilt*, that documents cases of prolonged detention without charge, denial of access to release on bond, interference with the right to counsel, and unduly harsh conditions of confinement. In June 2003, the Justice Department's Inspector General issued a 198-page report with the results of its internal investigation into the treatment of the September 11 detainees held on immigration charges. The Inspector General's report confirmed abuses previously reported by Human Rights Watch, and also identified a pattern of physical and verbal abuse by some correctional staff at a federally run facility in Brooklyn, New York.

"The blanket of secrecy surrounding these detentions has contributed to these abuses," said Patten. "We urge the Supreme Court to hear this appeal to resolve important constitutional and statutory questions and, in turn, protect the most basic of rights."

International observers will be watching this case closely. Over the past two years, numerous governments throughout the world have enacted laws that unduly expand government powers of detention and surveillance. Some governments have pointed to the erosion of civil liberties in the United States after September 11 to deflect criticism of their own rights abuses.

To read more on human rights issues in the United States, please see:
<http://www.hrw.org/us/usdom.php>

U.S. Immigration Officer Rapes Turkish National

An Immigration and Naturalization Services officer was behind bars in Springdale Wednesday night after being arrested on third-degree sexual assault charges.

Police say the alleged victim is a 21-year-old Turkish national who was being held in the Washington County Sheriff's Office awaiting deportation proceedings. The victim alleges that while being transported to a doctor's office from the facility, her INS officer made a detour, took her to a motel room in Springdale then raped her.

The officer is Curtis Hall, 38, who was arrested by Springdale police on third-degree sexual assault charges. Detectives say although Hall originally said there was never a motel room visit, after further questioning he then changed his story.

"Initially, he denied the rape, but he then admitted to taking her to a hotel room, and that they had sexual relationship, but that it was consensual," Lt. Brian Simmons said.

Hall is from Nashville, Tennessee but had been working as an INS detention transport officer in northwest Arkansas while on temporary assignment. Hall was staying in the Springdale motel room where the assault allegedly occurred.

"I anticipate there's a lot of people that are going to be angry about this on different levels," Simmons said. "Him being an INS officer, and her being an immigrant, that is disconcerting."

The victim had been arrested by Springdale police on a felony charge, although the nature of the charge was not disclosed. She was in the custody of Washington County for two months awaiting deportation. She is reportedly in good physical condition, but dealing with the trauma of the event.

Hall is behind bars at the Washington County Jail while investigation into this alleged sexual assault continues.

-Jenny Hamel Reports



Selling Crafts and Artwork

What Can Be Sold: Any hobby, craft, painting, music, or other form of artwork produced by prisoners that is capable of being handled for sale may be sold on the prisonart.org web site.

What We Charge: Most prisoners are charged a ten percent fee to help pay for our communication lines, web server, postage charges, etc.

The Purchase Procedure: Once the buyer selects an item and enters his or her credit card information, the prisoner will then be instructed to ship the object to Prison Art, who will in turn forward it on to the purchaser. After the item has shipped the buyer's credit card will be charged for the purchase amount, plus applicable shipping charges. Unless specifically instructed to do so by the purchaser, the prisoner will not know the name of, or any other information about, the person buying his or her artwork.

Refunds: In the event a purchase is not consummated, Prison Art will return the entire purchase price to the buyer. Ten days after a purchase has been consummated the sale will be considered final. Prison Art will ship all returned items back

to the prisoner (or his or her designee) at the returnee's expense.

Caveat: Not all submissions of artwork to Prison Art will be posted to the website, and not all material posted will be sold.



Woman's Clutch Purse by Gary Caubhey - \$65. Hand tooled, hand stitched. Made from Herman Oak (top-of-line) tooling leather. Clutch purse has place for currency, coin, checks, credit card, plus pockets.

Prison Art Newsletter
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First Class Mail

To: