



PRISON ART

Working to Extend Democracy to All

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Richard Williams está presente!

Political Prisoner Richard Williams died in custody on the night of December 7, 2005, at the federal medical facility in Butner, North Carolina. His death resulted from health problems caused by being put in isolation for 15 months following 9/11 without adequate health care. Richard was 58 when he died. This newsletter is too small to print the many tributes to Richard from all around the world, so instead I'll print a couple of representative samples:

The first time I met our comrade Richard Williams was in a safe house, underground. For the next decade we engaged in a common struggle to provide whatever support we could muster to the downpressed - be they victims of apartheid in South Africa, or slaughtered in Central America - and to defend ourselves. It wasn't until the last

hour of the last trial that we were consigned by our enemy to different prisons. I would never see him again.

Richard, like many political prisoners, has never received the recognition and respect he deserves. He has been vilified in the media and ignored by the left - a shared experience by many political prisoners. But then, Richard never sought accolades. The brother I know is not ego-driven nor laden with grandiose ideas about what others should march to. He has at his essence that uncommon quality of a revolutionary - feeling every injustice done to the poor and working people of this planet.

I know Richard well, having risked our lives together time after time. He never waived when confronted with danger, and didn't disappoint when demands upon us were critical. I've seen him act decisively when it took courage to step up, and step down in situations that required defusing. He's all of that - a people's soldier and friend.

A man of deep commitment and fiery passion, he dedicated his life to others. The fallout from that was not being able to see his own children during the most dangerous years. He made that sacrifice, but the longing for his kids was intense and it laid heavy in his heart.

Sacrifice. How deep the sacrifice for what we believe true and necessary? When the U.S. killing fields in Central America were littered with the bodies of compañeros and their children, Richard did not stand idly by. When apartheid drenched South Africa in the blood and suffering of African people, Richard chose to act. The lineage from prison and antiracist activist to underground guerilla is not difficult to figure - Richard has the heart, consciousness, and political perspective to take it to a brutal enemy.

He did it in his time, when time was



of the essence. When he knew he had the strength and endurance for a protracted and extraordinarily difficult struggle. That time has now past.

The brother I know, who withstood 50,000 volt stun gun assaults and the rigors of solitary confinement, has fallen. This brother of such infectiously good humor, so respectful of elders, and without a cynical bone in his body, is dead. He chose to pass on in as dignified a way as possible given the inherently abusive conditions of his confinement. They never crushed his spirit.

Brother, I do not say goodbye, for there are no words for this in the language we know best. Until next time - among oak leaves, the feathers of a hawk, nurturing new life from a coral reef I love you, Ray.

Ray Luc Levasseur, December 8, 2005

Table of Contents

<i>Richard Williams esta presente!.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Remembering Bruce Seidel.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>On Political Prisoners</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Disenfranchisement & Theory</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>From Mumia Abu Jamal</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>On Opposition to Torture</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Day Of Mourning Message.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Solidarity is Tenderness</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Rehabilitation and Revolution</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Report: Beyond Bars Conference</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>I Concur</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Postscript Tookie.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Why Combat?.....</i>	<i>9</i>

Continued on page 2

To the friends and comrades of
Richard Williams

With a heavy heart, we are saddened by the news that political prisoner Richard Williams has passed away. Many of Richard's supporters agree with his friend and comrade, Diane Fujino, that his problems stemmed from the 15 months of isolation he faced after 9/11. The State was tireless in its efforts to break his spirit and his will. His body, no longer able to stay as strong as his spirit, began to weaken under the pressure of captivity.

For those who are not aware of Richard, his death ended 26 years of imprisonment. He was sentenced to life for actions carried out in support of those who suffered under apartheid regime and the paramilitary death squads in Central and South America. He targeted those responsible for the death and torture of the innocent. His love was so deep for the people of the world; resistance was the only option against those who oppressed. He lived in resistance so that others can experience a moment of life.

His life was defined by his continuous struggle. The flame in his heart burned bright for the oppressed and colonized. His spirit, dedicated to the struggle for freedom and humanism in every corner of the world, inspired us all to follow his lead. His sacrifice for the struggle of liberty and resistance everywhere humbled those of us who found ourselves in his shadow. We who knew him count our blessings for the moments we shared.

Our sadness is only relieved by the knowledge that our comrade will be met by the likes of Steven Biko, Bobby Sands, Pedro Albizu Campos and others who struggle against oppression. We have to accept that such a man could only walk among us for a brief moment in time. A candle can only burn so long before the light is forced to go out.

Richard went through life with open arms but closed fists; prepared to embrace the world but fight for what is right and just. Richard can now relax his fists. It is time for us to close ours. ✌

Amanda, LA-ABCF



Remembering Bruce Seidel

By Ed Mead

Bruce Seidel was murdered during a George Jackson Brigade (GJB) bank expropriation on January 23, 1976 – thirty years ago this month. He was shot once in the chest and once in the back by two separate pigs – both shots were fatal. Bruce was in his twenties at the time of he was killed.

I was an ex-con living in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. One day there was a knock at my front door. When I answered it, Bruce Seidel introduced himself. He said he was the publisher of the *SunFighter*, a then well-known newsletter that was written for Washington State prisoners. Because of his advocacy in support of prisoners he had been barred from entering the state prison in Monroe. I took a liking to him immediately. Bruce, me and other comrades went on to organize the Washington State Prisoners' Labor Union. At one point 97 percent of Monroe prisoners were card-carrying union members. We did a lot of things, like shortly after the Attica uprising we brought former Attica prisoners Big Black, Dacajaweha, and Dalou, and the Attica film into the prisoners at Monroe and the women's prison at Purdy, raising \$1,500 for the Attica Brothers Legal Defense in the process. We crashed the American Correctional Association's national convention in Seattle, and a whole lot more.

Bruce was the first to use an attack on property as a means of communication. Before we formed the Brigade we engaged in militant mass actions. In one case there was a racist contractor doing construction work in Seattle's Black neighborhood – the Central District—who refused to hire Black workers on his construction sites. There were numerous and militant demonstrations against the contractors organized by the United Construction Workers (UCW), a Black-led organization of minority construction workers. We on the white left, with the blessing of the UCW, would attend those demonstrations wearing ski masks as we raided the construction sites of the racist contractors, doing as much damage to construction equipment and supplies as we could before the police showed up. Bruce was always at the head of our group, leading us deeper into the construction sites.

There were many arrests, but we always managed to elude the pigs.

The struggle against the racist contractor grew to a peak—aspects of this ongoing battle were in the headlines of the daily papers; it was the single issue the entire Seattle left was united around.

One night Bruce and an unindicted co-conspirator talked about taking the struggle to a higher level. Bruce came up with the idea of fire-bombing the office of the racist contractor. The co-conspirator and he went out and did the deed that night, completely destroying the targeted office. We kept an ear to the ground to listen to what the progressive community had to say about the action. The reaction to the bombing from the United Construction Workers and the left was positive. Out of that action the

George Jackson Brigade was formed.

Bruce was on the first formal action of the GJB. At about midnight on June 1, 1975, armed with a six-inch diameter pipe bomb, he busted into the headquarters of the Department of Corrections in the state capitol. The explosive device was



Bruce Seidel 1974

planted under the desk of the Director of Corrections and timed to go off when we were well away from the scene. According to the newspapers, the explosion did \$125,000 worth of damage to the building.

We issued a communiqué demanding that prison officials stop brutalizing prisoners in the hole for taking guards hostage in their struggle for self-government. The GJB went on to conduct about twenty acts of armed propaganda, including the bombing of the FBI office in the Federal Courthouse in Tacoma and the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Everett. Those actions were done in an effort to draw FBI attention away from Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations, which at the time were being invaded by feds because of the killing of some FBI agents.

The members of the Brigade supported themselves by doing armed robberies. It was during one such expropriation that Bruce was killed, another comrade was shot in the face, and I was captured. Due to the sacrifices of those who maintained the firefight with the police from inside

On Political Prisoners

By Michael Africa

the bank, including Bruce who died in the process, three additional participants were able to escape capture. It was an expensive lesson. We had underestimated the state's viciousness. The first shot fired was a cowardly police bullet into Bruce's back.

In college Bruce majored in economics. He once told me that the stock market meant nothing. "It's a psychological component, nothing more," he would say. "Watch the industrial inventories and unemployment rates for the true direction of the economy." I remember those words when listening to newscasters babble about the stock market.

Bruce had an infectious smile, kind nature, and a gentle approach to life in general. He was a good friend and a dedicated revolutionary. One of his favorite spots in Seattle was Volunteer Park on Capitol Hill. Bruce spent much of his free time there, reading books and throwing Frisbees. The park was named after the "Volunteers" who went to subjugate Cuba for the greater glory of U.S. imperialism and the gambling industry. It has always been my hope that I would live long enough to see Volunteer Park renamed "Seidel Park" and that a small monument would be erected at the spot where he was killed. The former is unlikely, but the latter is still possible.

Here's a partial quote from Bruce's last Brigade communiqué. He said:

"Our attacks must be discriminate and both serve and educate the every day person. On New Year's Eve we took two bombs to Safeway's main offices for the Seattle area in the very white suburbs of Bellevue and simultaneously in solidarity with a long and progressive City Light Workers strike, we destroyed the main power source for Seattle's rich Laurelhurst neighborhood.

"We are a product of various cultures, neighborhoods, 'fronts,' and forms of struggle. We have lived and worked among the people in the country and in the Northwest in particular. We have learned and experienced, articulated and directed, the issues, grievances and rage that eat away ourselves and all oppressed peoples.

"Like most, our practice has varied from leafleting, boycotting, participating in strikes, bombing, and coordinating guerrilla attacks... whatever the situation called for. For us in the George Jackson Brigade, we understood politics in command to mean something different than just paying lip service to struggle of oppressed peoples, writing radical and/or Marxist essays, or even placing pipe bombs." ☸

On the move!

Solitary confinement is a position that most true activists experience regardless of their location. Whether on a cell block or a street block, the life of an activist is one of isolation.

Public officials want to isolate the activist in the community in an attempt to contain them. Old acquaintances distance themselves when they realize the activist is aggressively confronting the same system they have been taught all their lives to fear and avoid. But as old friends distance themselves, new comrades emerge who also feel compelled to confront a system that has terrorized your power of purpose. These comrades, however, are always subject to be snatched away by the system.

Once these same activists are thrown in jail, the isolation tactic increases a thousand fold. All the tactics the system employed in an attempt to break the will and the spirit of the activist are applied non-stop 24/7 to the political prisoner (P.P). The authorities then figure they have the P.P exactly how they want him or her: beaten and silenced. Or so they figure.

In a further attempt to silence and contain the P.P., officials then keep some P.P.s in the holes of the worst prisons in the country. And as demonstrated by the prison guards turned soldiers and sent to Iraqs Abu Gharib terror camp, these guards have employed the same tactics on P.P.s in this country - and continue to do so today. The torture of P.P.s in this country is a continuous tool of the ghouls that run these slave camps. And the more the P.P.s stand up to these cowards, the more they are targeted and isolated.

P.P.s like Mumia Abu Jamal and the Angola 3 have been isolated in these dungeons for a quarter of a century by people who find it intolerable that people stand up and speak the truth. MOVE people have been forced into the holes for five and seven year blocks at various times during the various rigged up sentences we have been given.

The torture and isolation for the P.P. also extend to the families of P.P.s, as was demonstrated by Philadelphia officials when they targeted MOVE's home on May 13, 1985, dropping a third bomb on the house and murdering all inside: four men, two women, and five babies!!! Four of them were the children of the embattled MOVE women and men in the holes from earlier

confrontations with the same Philadelphia officials and terror cop brigades that assaulted and massacred MOVE on May 13, 1985.

Being a P.P in isolation means enduring a multitude of gut wrenching experiences on a daily basis. It means watching guards that swear they will find a way to further harass you bring you your meals, your mail, come to get you for a shower where you have to completely expose yourself by coming out of your cell wearing only a towel. It is watching these same guards harass your family and friends when they come to visit you, treating them like criminals as well, in an attempt to discourage them from supporting you.

Being a P.P. in isolation is sometimes getting to see yourself in the mirror and not recognizing the changes in the reflection.

Being a P.P is watching your parents grow old as they continue to visit less frequently until too many calendars prevent them. It is being told of your loved ones' passing by people who hate you and only use the news as another tool to dig at you.

Being a P.P is watching your siblings grow more unfamiliar to you with each passing year. Watch as they struggle to carefully keep disturbing family news away from you. See them not realizing that, after decades of this treatment, you no longer feel like the brother, the son, but a kind of guest in your own family.

Being a P.P makes you feel terrified of touching things that you keep locked up in the recesses of your mind. Like the first day your young children woke up without you anywhere near. How it must have been for them to only know you through an entire lifetime of brief visits under the ever-watchful eye of people they know hate you - and because they hate you, look upon them with much suspicion.

Being a P.P. means watching your family struggle, locked into a lifetime of battles of support on your behalf. Defending you and then having to defend themselves from the corporations that exist only to try to exploit the families and friends of prisoners. The lawyers, the phone companies, the commissaries, the suppliers, all of whom jack up their prices when dealing with prisons.

Being a P.P is watching your sister (Merle Africa, one of the MOVE 9) die in a prison having spent the last twenty years of her life in a goddamn dungeon for a crime

that even the mayor of the city admitted he knew she was innocent of and nevertheless would do nothing about it as she died in a prison where she was sent by his courts and terrorist cops.

Being a P.P means taking all of these things and using them as motivation to keep fighting, knowing that this is exactly the kind of injustice that compelled you to want to stand against and confront the system in the first place.

All P.P.s should be supported and freed! The system only gets away with this treatment of P.P.s because the people allow it to. The silent give their permission by their silence. It is past time that all P.P.s are freed and given the same kind of support that they have always shown to the people for whom they sacrificed their lives. ☹

On the move!

Ireland: Support for Voting in Prison

Following the recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights upholding the right to vote for people in prison in the United Kingdom, the opposition party in the Irish Parliament has just introduced a bill to permit voting by the more than 3,000 people in prison. In the *Irish Times*, Legislator Gay Mitchell stated that "By encouraging prisoners to think of their responsibilities as citizens, we allow them to take a more active role in society and in their own communities."

Disenfranchisement and Political Theory

Addressing the issue of disenfranchisement through a consideration of arguments grounded in political theory, Philosophy Professor Jeffrey Reiman of American University concludes that "enfranchising all offenders – even those in prison – would be good social policy." Writing in the journal *Criminal Justice Ethics*, Reiman addresses the major justifications that have been offered for disenfranchisement practice, including "preserving the purity of the ballot box," disenfranchisement's role as an aspect of punishment, and disenfranchisement as a consequence of violating the social contract. He concludes that not only does voting by people with felony convictions aid in responsible civic engagement, but it also "can make us all better citizens."

Source: *The Sentencing Project*

The Quote Box

"Individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience ... Therefore [individual citizens] have the duty to violate domestic laws to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring."

—*The Nuremberg Tribunal 1945-1946*

"If a war be undertaken for the most righteous end, before the resources of peace have been tried and proved vain to secure it, that war has no defense, it is a national crime"

—*Charles Eliot Norton*

"Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it."

—*George Bernard Shaw*

"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion."

—*Thomas Jefferson*,

"So let us regard this as settled: what is morally wrong can never be advantageous, even when it enables you to make some gain that you believe to be to your advantage. The mere act of believing that some wrongful course of action constitutes an advantage is pernicious."

—*Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.)*

"Allow the President to invade a neighboring nation, whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion, and you allow him to do so, whenever he may choose to say he deems it necessary for such a purpose -- and you allow him to make war at pleasure. If today, he should choose to say he thinks it necessary to invade Canada, to prevent the British from invading us, how could you stop him? You may say to him, 'I see no probability of the British invading us' but he will say to you, 'Be silent; I see it, if you don't.'"

—*Abraham Lincoln*

"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."

—*Albert Einstein*

"Not the faults of others, nor what others have done or left undone, but one's own deeds, done and left undone, should one consider."

—*50th Stanza from the Dhammapada (The Path of Wisdom)*

"Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress had been made, through disobedience and through rebellion."

—*Oscar Wilde, (1854-1900)*

"He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself"

—*Thomas Paine*

"Find out just what people will quietly submit to, and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."

—*Frederick Douglass*

"Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph."

—*Haile Selassie*

"No man survives when freedom fails, The best men rot in filthy jails, And those who cry 'appease, appease' are hanged by those they tried to please."

—*Hiram Mann*

"Men in authority will always think that criticism of their policies is dangerous. They will always equate their policies with patriotism, and find criticism subversive."

—*Henry Steele Commager, Historian*

"The soul of our country needs to be awakened . . . When leaders act contrary to conscience, we must act contrary to leaders."

—*Veterans Fast for Life*

From Mumia Abu Jamal

This international day of solidarity with political prisoners shows us that while repression is national, resistance can be global. In truth, it must be so. Many of us have been part of national liberation movements, revolutionary political parties, anti-racist communes, or, in the case of people of like the Cuban Five, anti-terrorism activists. We've been tried in tribunals where our politics have been our crime, and our political associations our felonies. This, in nations which claim to support the right of free association. But the truth of the matter is that nations are not bound by law, but by power. It doesn't matter what is written in arcane ancient documents. It doesn't matter, truthfully, what treaties or pacts have been sworn to or signed. Treaties and constitutions are sheer conveniences, ignored more often than followed.

This is my position, based on my studies of history, law, and political, and also international, affairs. Political prisoners and prisoners of war should accept that truth, perhaps use it in political organizing, but not rely upon it. That's because many imprisoned activists and revolutionaries refer to international law principles when they protest either their incarceration or their conditions of confinement.

What can such an argument mean in an era when the attorney general refers to the Geneva Conventions as "quaint?" Law isn't something that simply exists up in the air, like the moon. Law is an instrument of the ruling class, and it can only be impacted by social forces which struggle to change or transform social relations. What that means in a nutshell is relatively simple: organize, organize, organize.

Many of us began our activism in an age when we'd claim to believe in the people. We should therefore, as much as possible, believe in them anew. Speak to them, write to them, work with them, organize. There are no shortcuts, especially for those who rebel in the heart of the empire. We live in an age of secret prisons, what a British jurist called recently "legal black holes." We have therefore seen, with our eyes, the death, if not the internment of America's reverence and adherence to the Constitution.

Those of us who remember the Cointelpro era have lived long enough to see many of those same illegalities and violations made into law. Many of us who count

our radicalization in the fires of the Vietnam War have been around long enough to see another imperial adventure, begun in lies, and ripened into social resistance to the Iraq war. Many of us can speak to those realities from our specific movement experiences. There is space for us to write, to call, to speak, and hopefully, to touch others in the process of reaching and radicalizing them, as we were radicalized. We must pass it on, so that another generation doesn't know more about a 50 Cent than Huey P. Newton. So that young people will create a culture that doesn't say "Get Rich or Die Tryin," but "Get Free, or Die Tryin." That is our collective challenge. If we can do this, we will give arms and legs, hearts and minds, bodies and souls to the movement to create true international solidarity with political prisoners, prisoners of war, and political detainees. This is our duty. This is our responsibility. This is our work to remake the world in a more life affirming, humanistic vision. Thank you for your invitation. ✌

Ona Move! Long Live John Africa! From Death Row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

*Mumia Abu Jamal AM-8335
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Letters

I've come to truly look forward to Prison Art. The dialog challenges me to question my perceptions and allows for positive growth and political awareness. The arguments presented are some of the most lucid and well articulated social and political discussions I've ever read. Your editorials are poignant and on the mark. You address realities that the mainstream chooses to ignore. Your newsletter possesses relevance and importance in a truly fucked up society. Thank you.

A federal prisoner in Safford, AZ

I have been receiving the Prison Art newsletter for some time now. In the recent December '05 issue I can relate to the article entitled "The Struggle" by Donald Heisler. His words are very powerful. But are they strong enough to break through some of these prisoners' heads? I sure hope so. Like they say, there are people who "make" things happen, those who "talk" about what happened, and those who "wonder" what happened!

On Opposition to Isolation and Torture

Physical torture and forced isolation are two arms of the same body. At its social base is the state, which relies upon this practice to enforce its will upon its citizenry to achieve some specific political objective: usually to elicit information, or to dissuade one from engaging in disfavored activity.

In its efforts to assert its political and economic hegemony across the globe, even as the social contradictions between itself and its opposing forces intensifies, Western imperialism will employ any and every draconian means at its disposal to achieve its goal: world domination. Social activists, educators, workers, grassroots organizers, people who are avowed opponents of their government's egregious social and foreign policies, are cast in the mode of "trouble makers," "agitators," "criminals," and the like, or in some other expedient pejorative to justify state repression. Imprisonment, torture, isolation cells, and disappearances are the tools of choice. Therefore, Abu-Ghraib; Guantanamo; u.s.a. Florence, Colorado; F-type prisons in Turkey, the EU, and elsewhere are not aberrant lapses -- they set the stage for this type of repression.

This is why support work to get people out who are locked in these torture chambers is so critical, and is why work to prevent their expansion must be vigilant and unrelenting. The word "ineluctable," which means, "not to be avoided or escaped" is an apt characterization of what the world's people are up against as regard Western imperialism and its quest for global hegemony. One is either "in the fray," or "out of it." The former means that one's next location could well be in Abu-Ghraib; Guantanamo; or Florence, Colorado. The latter means that one could become an instant "collateral damage" statistic (not to suggest that life offers any guarantees), as was the unfortunate case with the foreigner on a British subway platform shot to death by British authorities without provocation in the aftermath of a tragic subway bombing incident in that country.

Ultimately, ours is a struggle of ideas, of how people wish to live as opposed to the exigencies of market forces, a struggle to build a social environment in which basic human rights and freedoms are protected, a struggle to make judicious and respectful use of the earth's resources, which is the

Continued on page 6

Continued on page 6

Oppositi..... Continued from page 5

birthright and natural inheritance of all life on our planet. Unfortunately, a select group of people who have organized for centuries and are well established in governmental bodies have presumptuously claimed through tradition, by so-called "right of inheritance," organized state violence and so on, to privately own what Mother Nature avails to us all. Therefore, and to the end of days, to all the good and unselfish people past and present who have taken a stand against this long train of social injustice, tyranny, usurpation, and oppression, I salute and stand with you. ☸

*Herman Bell 79 C 0262
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Solidarity is Tenderness Between Peoples

*For 12/3/05: International Day of
Solidarity with Political Prisoners*

Today we face, in US-led imperialism, the greatest destroyer of human life and potential in human history. The illegal and immoral invasion and occupation of Iraq has caused 100,000 civilian deaths, contemptuously dismissed by the perpetrators as "collateral damage." This war was preceded by a decade of ruthless economic sanctions that resulted in over one million deaths, more than half of them children, due to breakdowns in [the delivery of] food, water, and medical supplies. The aggression against Iraq is one example of the much more widespread brutality needed to enforce a global economic system where 11 million children die each year from easily preventable causes and where 2.8 billion people live on less than two dollars a day. This system is so rapacious and ecologically irresponsible that it threatens the very basis for sustaining human life on the planet.

Love of people and belief in life lead us to resist imperialism, always striving to find the methods that are most effective and most consistent with our underlying humanism. An important way to reaffirm the history of struggle and to contribute to the spirit and energy of today's movements is to never forget, and to actively support, political prisoners around the world. ☸

*David Gilbert 83-A-6158
Clinton Correctional Facility
P.O. Box 2001, Dannemora, NY 12929
(U.S. anti-imperialist political prisoner)*

Day Of Mourning Message

I again write to you on this day of mourning as I approach the end of 30 years of deprived freedom. I am here to appease a vengeful government that has come onto our lands, committed genocide and continues to rob us of our history and culture while giving away our land, murdering, and torturing our people. I am held here because of the corruption of two countries (Canada and the United States) which illegally extradited me, and which led to an illegal conviction and imprisonment. Despite the incessant claims of this being a country of laws and an example to the world of justice, freedom, and democracy, it is obvious that this Government protects whoever it wants, and imprisons and kills whoever it wants.

My imprisonment is one key example of what lengths this Government will go to in order to achieve its goal of repressing indigenous dissent. The United States Government continually seeks to imprison all indigenous peoples on our land. The US Government has been increasing its oppressive and tyrannical tactics. All people's rights are being eroded and fears are heightened as a tool to keep the war machine alive and increase the destruction of Mother Earth. Innocent people are dying, not only in this country, but all over the world in the name of "democracy and freedom."

My elders before me said, and I tell you now, "The earth does not belong to us, we belong to the earth." And I want to say, this earth belongs to Tunkashala, the creator of all that is. There has already started a time of great cleansing upon the earth and this Government has begun to crumble. The fabric of the constitution is soiled and torn.

We as human beings can give thanks or mourn, but if all that happens is no more than lip service, very little will happen to correct things. In the traditions of my native people we barely had words of thanks. It was something that was shown by action of giving or doing. We all breathe the same air, are made of the same earth, and drink of the same water. We are all more relative than we sometimes acknowledge. We need to do more than just what is right. We need to join together and right what is wrong.

It is time we all unite to stop the madness threatening the whole planet, and stand together with those who go beyond words and deliver on the promise of freedom and justice, and against those guided by greed,

arrogance, and prejudice. Stay true, work in unity, confront the traitors, don't be afraid, and don't let our struggle die. And finally, I mourn the loss of so many of our relatives over the past year and especially my brother Steve Robideau. I appreciate you each and every one. Now, please organize and set out to correct the wrongs so that this day of mourning will become a relic of the past. ☸

*In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,
Leonard Peltier Mitakuye Oyasin*

Letters Continued from page 5

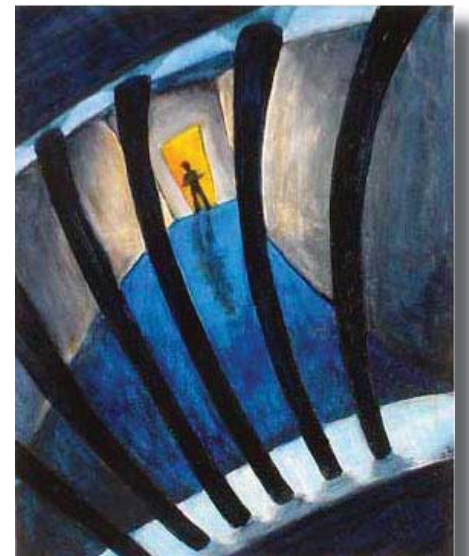
On a different note, you printed "Revolution" which was posted on the web by a combat soldier stationed in Iraq... However, some type of credit should be given to those who wrote the lyrics—the rock group "Rage Against The Machine."

Anyhow, enclosed are a few stamps. It isn't much but hopefully it will help with the mailing costs. Keep up the good work.

A state prisoner, Imperial, CA

I am writing to articulate my appreciation for your advocacy for change as well as your inspiring newsletter. It provides some of the most intriguing and factual articles and statistics. Truly, Prison Art is the "fuel" that I need to promulgate my message to The People. In your December 2005 issue, the article titled "The Struggle," by Donald Heisler was felt very profoundly. Currently I am confined in segregation for reasons analogous to Mr. Heisler's. Indeed, actuating the methods of revolution is highly obligatory. Enclosed are two stamps to continue my subscription.

A prisoner, Big Stone Gap, VA



Rehabilitation and Revolution?

C. Landrum

In June of 2005 California began opening the 5,000 man Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, the third most recent prison in the state's prison expansion boom. In January of 2006, when the prison is expected to be fully operating, prison officials boast that it will be the first maximum security level IV in California with a variety of academic and vocational education programs. These academic and vocational programs, prison officials claim, is meant to "increase an offender's chances of reentering society successfully."

Academic and vocational programs are progressive and should be welcomed by all prisoners (so long as they're not being used to reward those in protective custody or producing goods or service for profit), but what is not progressive is the expansion of more prisons, and the expansion of more prisons should not be eclipsed with the promised benefits of some academic and vocational programs. The claims and supposed good intentions of prison officials are hollow and misleading yet to the ears of those less politically conscious, these claims sound valid. The fact of the matter is, no amount of academic and vocational programs is going to significantly reduce the prison population. This is a textbook case of trying to treat a symptom instead of treating the disease.

According to the secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency (YACA) Roderick Q. Hickman stated "...prisons are designed to serve the public safety by keeping inmates in custody and preparing them for the eventual release..." Hickman's statement has far deeper implications than what appears on the first glance, and quite probably deeper implications than he himself understands or would be willing to face.

In capitalist society where production is based on profit, instead of correctly basing it on the needs of all of society's members as a socialist economy dictates, such a society whose production is based on profits inevitably results in and perpetuates social inequalities where a prison system becomes necessary to protect the wealth and privileges of the bourgeoisie and its beneficiaries.

Despite various degrees of fluctuation in the prison population no amount of reforms, academic or vocational programs is going to adequately resolve the existence

of the prison system. Only through an ongoing transformation of society's economic base and the property relations which it rests upon, from capitalism onto a socialist course, can the first steps of abolishing all social inequalities and a true continuous reduction of the prison system begin.

As the laws governing transformation dictates, all quantitative increases or decreases at some point leap to a change in quality and this is no less true of the increase of California's over-populated prisons.

In the 1970s California Gov. Jerry Brown, in an attempt to deal with the symptoms of a class-divided society, signed legislation requiring judges to impose mandatory, and longer, prison sentences for a wide variety of capitalist created crimes, thus igniting the process of California's prison boom. In 1978 California prisons held fewer than 21,000 prisoners. By 1984 this number had more than doubled to 43,328. And currently in the end of 2005 the prison population has more than tripled at 163,7171 and continues to rise.

The pressure of this increase in the number of new prisoners and their populations has led to a qualitative deterioration on all aspects within the prison population itself.

Within several years the annual budget for California's medical care has doubled over on billion dollars and is increasing. And yet this increase in medical spending hasn't been able to keep pace with the medical needs of a growing prison population. In fact, as many prisoners are far too aware, despite this increase in medical spending, prison health care remains grossly inadequate and results in widespread medical neglect and numerous preventable deaths every year throughout California.

As for drug and other so-called rehabilitative programs (programs designed to treat symptoms while avoiding their root causes), they have for the most part been dismantled and in direct contradiction to the C.D.C. officials' claim of trying to "increase an offender's chances of reentering society successfully." In reality the truth is quite the opposite. The everyday lives of the prisoners have deteriorated dramatically. Most of the productive aspects of prison life that were originally gained through prisoner struggles and designed to promote personal and social development (as far as social development is possible within the

limits of a class-divided society), such as a family visits, educational programs for all, recreational programs, etc, have for the most part been eliminated while isolation units along with the CDC's excuses for permanently isolating prisoners has expanded in an inverse ratio.

And although Roderick Q. Hickman is a reactionary proponent of the existing status-quo, he is correct for having acknowledged in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that the 5,000 man Kern Valley prison could not possibly be the last prison because the system holds twice the number of inmates it was designed for and is still adding more.

Does this signal an eventual overturn of Three Strikes and other similar laws? Doubtful. Is this an indication of a future transformation from state to private prisons throughout California? It's worth considering but also doubtful, given the strength of the CCPOA, who would most surely oppose such a step.

But what is evident, not only are the objective conditions within California prisons ripe to struggle for improvement, but more importantly, through a united struggle within the prison population can further raise their political consciousness and continue to struggle to end capitalism-imperialism and all of its inherent contradictions, including the prison system as we know it today. ☪

Sources: "Hard Time: CA's Prisons in Crisis," July 3 2005, *San Francisco Chronicle*.

"From 1945 to 2003, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to crush more than 30 populist-nationalist movements fighting against intolerable regimes. In the process, the US bombed some 25 countries, caused the end of life for several million people, and condemned many millions more to a life of agony and despair."

—William Blum

Report: Beyond Bars Conference

Danielle Ni Dhighe, a member of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement who serves on the coordinating committee of the Irish Republican Socialist Committees of North America, attended the Beyond Bars conference at Fairhaven College in Bellingham, Washington State, USA on Saturday, December 3rd. She led a workshop on Irish national liberation and prison struggles and participated in a panel discussion later in the day. Following is her report:

"I arrived at the conference after a 100 mile (160 kilometer) car trip. The first event of the day was a play staged by former prisoners showing what a normal day in the life of a prisoner is like. After the play, various workshops were held in different rooms.

"The workshop I led examined the history of the Irish struggle for national liberation, in particular the struggle of Irish political prisoners within British prisons. It also covered some other international prison struggles, such as the ongoing hunger strikes by political prisoners in Turkey and France. The workshop was well-attended and the participants seemed engaged with the subject matter. At the end there was a Q&A session with the participants. Afterwards, several participants thanked me for my talk and wanted more information about the Irish struggle and the IRSM.

"Then I attended a workshop about the case of Chris McIntosh, an anarchist and an environmentalist whom the US government charged with an arson attack on a McDonald's Restaurant, an action that was jointly claimed by the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front. Despite there being only some property damage to an empty restaurant, the US government initially charged him with terrorist offenses with a penalty of a minimum thirty year sentence in a federal prison. Those charges were based on the testimony of two known police informers. Faced with that, Chris pled guilty to lesser charges with a penalty of eight to ten years. The IRSCNA will issue a statement about his case in the near future.

"After lunch, which was provided by the local chapter of Food Not Bombs, I attended a workshop about colonization and the current issues of Native American prisoners. The workshop was led by Chrystos, a Native American writer and lesbian activist, and her talk was very informative.

"I finished up the conference on a panel

with four other people, including two former political prisoners -- Mark Cook, a former Black Panther who served twenty-four years for his alleged participation with the George Jackson Brigade, an underground leftist paramilitary that operated in the Seattle area in the 1970s, carrying out at least eleven bombings of government agencies and corporations (a local police chief said at the time, "Is Seattle in for a Northern Ireland episode?"); and Amin Odeh, a Palestinian who lived most of his early life in a refugee camp near Bethlehem in the Israeli occupied West Bank and was imprisoned in an Israeli military prison during the first Intifada.

"The panel discussion brought home the reality that the struggles of revolutionaries in and out of prison are ultimately part of the same struggle for human liberation and building a mass struggle is of great importance for enacting revolutionary change both locally and globally. The panel as a whole also defended politically motivated violence in response to an audience question about whether prisoners who committed violence should be considered political prisoners.

"All told, it was an excellent conference and I thank the organizers for inviting me to participate. I hope my talk gained further support for the Irish struggle and that more people will support political prisoners in general." ✂

I Concur

By Kenneth Foster

The following article is extended to the wise and righteous words of Donald Heisler in this article "The Struggle" (*Prison Art*, December 2005 issue). He hit the nail on the head and it needs to be repeated a million times. The truth is—we prisoners are our own damn enemies. Who can put a finger on where the individualism, complacency, and decay came from? The fact is we recognize it and we're doing very little to change it.

Comrade Donald's concise definition of "struggle" was on-point. Indeed, I'd like to dispel the myth that the struggle means "I'm doing bad," or "it's hard times." Struggle means conscious organizing and movement. To make a contrast, MLK, Jr. made a strong and relevant statement when he said: "Freedom is not only from something to something. True peace is not merely the absence of some negative force, it is

the presence of some positive force such as justice, good will and brotherhood." This runs hand in hand with what comrade Donald said—reading isn't struggling, doing is.

Case at hand—I've been on death row eight years. In 2000, due to an escape at our old facility in 1998, we were moved to a more secure unit. What followed was, out of the typical vindictive nature of the system, death row was stripped of everything from group recreation, piddling items, from work programs to TVs. In the five years here different protests have been initiated from hunger strikes to staff assaults. Each time, as expected, we're met with more repressive tactics, but some of us keep trying. As we speak of a few of us have initiated D.R.I.V.E. (Death Row Inner-communist Vanguard Engagement). But, the sad part is, it's hard to pull others away from their pacifiers and/or penitentiary politricks. Some dudes say they can't interact because it's one of another race involved. Hogwash! You know what I tell them—"that gurney takes all colors and creeds." We're so divided by the set and color, and so focused on that bullshit to where we invited and promote our own failure and destructions. So why complain?

But here's the key because we could go on like this forever—what are those of us with a conscious mind going to do? We can only write so many articles. I say that we need to network our everyday struggles. If these other so-called established political prisoner movements won't strive with us let's make our own network. I'm only one man but I'm extending a true bridge of solidarity.

For example, I've been working with the Human Rights Coalition out of Philly (1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107). HRC was founded by elder POW Russell "Maroon" Shoatz. This is a start if you don't know of any other groups. Write them and ask for info on how you can get involved. But more than that, let's see what we can do. It's understood that some of us lack outside support. HRC is well rooted in Philly so they conduct poetry/art events on a regular basis and do activities against the prison system throughout Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, I feel like if enough of us put our heads together we can make something happen.

Now, prisoners in Texas can't write other inmates but if you're willing to do some true struggling, drop a line and we'll find a way. To hell with the ones extending our

problems because a few men with courage can be a majority. Also, if you're about some righteous endeavors and you need help looking up some people to get at send some notes to comrade Ed and I'll try to assist through my support base. The key is this—those of us that do consider ourselves strugglers or modern day POWs, we need to work together. WE have to be a beacon of light to the other sleep walkers. Let's be on a move and do something. Without vision the people perish. Straight Ahead! ☘

Postscript Tookie

By Antonio A. Velasquez

[**Ed. Note:** As President of California Prison Focus I and many CPF members attended the protest against the legalized lynching of Stanly "Tookie" Williams at San Quentin on the night of December 12th. We were just a part of the three to five thousand people who went to protest this state sanctioned murder. Tookie is now dead. But the struggle against the death penalty continues. Indeed, the class bias of that punishment (not to mention the racial bias) is such that in the entire history of the U.S. not a single rich person has ever been executed. What follows in an article about Tookie's killing.]

Although the so-called leaders in their last ditch effort to save Tookie's life resorted to the veiled threats of street violence, the reality was that they all failed to minimally grasp the deeper implications of this case.

For one, Tookie himself, one step away from the gallows, thought he had a better chance to survive by not admitting, or showing any remorse, for the acts for which he was judged, convicted and sentenced to die. On the contrary, he saw the point of principle (whether innocence as truth or denial) as a cause worth dying for, and not as a moveable tactic to survive.

As in many ill-advised tragedies he took the dignified dead-end of the hero. How much all his advisors from his lawyers, peers, and hangers-on are to blame for this choice will never be known.

Self-appointed African leaders on the other hand assumed an influence not had by that community since the Black Power Movement. By having selected Tookie as a line in the sand regarding the African condition was itself a dismal failure and one that must have diminished even more their political standing in the power establishment's eyes. In the establishment's eyes, and in

many of the general community, he was in fact a ruthless killer.

Had they already forgot Katrina? Face it, a criminal government to begin with, that denies the basic needs at home while bombing the hell of neighborhoods abroad does not give a shit about a South-Central LA gang banger. For all we know the Terminator and his handlers maybe saw how conveniently the liberals used Tookie to prop up their flagging political influences and deliberately denied them the victory. They must have known by Monday that there was no real danger from the African community, and aside from the usual ambulance chasers from that community, the expected White anti-death penalty advocates with their candles were no threat to anyone.

Disappointing that the issue that may have helped to turn the tide to save Tookie was mysteriously missing from the arguments of this community's leadership. How could all his supporters forget that not so many years ago Gary Webb in the San Jose Mercury News in 1995 and 1996, exploded the hidden truth behind the secret drug running operations in South Central LA by the CIA in the three-part expose called the Dark Alliance Series, and in his subsequently published book Dark Alliance? Were they aware that he was killed for having exposed this truth, or did they actually believe that he committed suicide by shooting TWO bullets into his head with a 38?

Did they also forget that these operations deliberately pumped tons of crack cocaine into the neighborhoods, and specifically used the Bloods and Crips as their conduit? Was the so-called establishment now killing Tookie not more responsible for those four deaths attributed to him? There may be a lesson to be learned here so that another death will not have been in vain.

But the story is somewhere else.

Nary a mention of your name today Tookie - in their eyes you have been forgotten and erased. Next! ☘

Why Combat?

By Brian McCarvill, OSP

Why combat? The answer is simple, there is no choice, not for those who would have liberty. You know who you are, it burns in the soul. The fire cannot be extinguished, yet America seeks to do just that. Why? Some of the answers are simple, others may not be.

If we understand that the coals of liberty burn within the consciousness of some we must recognize that the exact opposite occurs as well, philosophical logic allows no other conclusion. One could subscribe to an absolute chaos theory, discounting this philosophical logic, but such a conclusion would not cancel the combat tension. In the end it all boils down to a good versus evil dichotomy. It is unlikely that either good or evil, regardless of how you define these concepts, will ever triumph over the other. So why do we persist? Because it is what we do so long as liberty and equality are hounded. Our enemy is as relentless as we are and so, as the movie says, there can be only one! Though it is unlikely there will ever be only one.

Are we combat volunteers unique? No. Though we exhibit the uniqueness described above, on ill-defining uniqueness, we are not an elite of any kind, not a vanguard of any kind, we do not enter into arguments revolving around these concepts, they have no meaning for us.

Are combat volunteers revolutionaries? Yes and no. The struggle for liberty is not revolutionary it has always existed and always will exist. If you must apply definitions and analysis, we could be deemed revolutionaries in that we seek to supplant an existing order that plays out in every direction as the evil mentioned above.

What political ideology are combat volunteers? None. Our ideology is liberty and good. All "isms," past and future, will reflect axioms that we embrace. We embrace liberty, equality, and fraternity, to borrow past concepts. We recognize the good in democracy, communism, anarchism, even capitalism; we recognize the bad as well.

What kind of organizational structure does combat and its volunteers espouse? None. We are not an organization. At the same time we are more than a concept. We are the resistance, with that said, all descriptive labels and analysis evaporate immediately, not as a matter of policy, as a matter of reality.

What ultimate plans or goals do combat volunteers target? We do not seek power of any kind unless one regards deterrence as accountability power. Our goals are liberty, equality, and fraternity, not lip service to the same. We have no ultimate plans, we have resolve. We would caution enemies of liberty, equality and fraternity as to that resolve.

Why combat? Why volunteer? Because we must. ☘

Selling Crafts and Artwork

Sending Artwork: Do not send your original crafts, music, or artwork to Prison Art, or have your outside people send it to us. We will not accept nor be responsible for original artwork. Send only photographs, or small throwaway samples. Include your name and address, a description of the item, weight, media used, and the asking price.

What Can Be Sold: Any hobby, craft, painting, music, or other form of artwork or craft produced by prisoners and is capable of being handled for sale may be sold on the prisonart.org web site. Poetry and writings are not suitable for sales on the web.

What We Charge: Prison Art is a non-profit organization, yet some 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 original 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.

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 or craft.

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 web site, and not all material posted will be sold.



Lady of the House by Isiah Daniels, \$300.

Ink art created on 140 lb water color paper, 18 by 24 inches. The style of the art is Stipple (individual dots). The artist is being generous in accepting only \$300 or this piece. The serious collector should snap this item up.

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