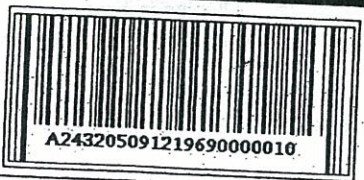


FREEDOM:

The Insight, Rage & Fury of
Political Prisoner Sean Swain

PART I



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TO GET DANGEROUS:

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Freedom.
 Sean Swain
 November 14, 2007

DANGEROUS READING:

ABC of Anarchism, Alexander Berkman
Ishmael, Daniel Quinn
My Ishmael, Daniel Quinn
Assata, Assata Shakur
Revolutionary Suicide, Huey P. Newton
Che: A Revolutionary Life, Jon Lee Anderson
Steal This Book, Abbie Hoffman
Blood in My Eye, George L. Jackson
War of the Flea, Robert Taber
Guerrilla Warfare, Che Guevara
Politics of Nonviolent Action, Gene Sharp
A Force More Powerful, Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall
Writings from Prison, Bobby Sands

OTHER WORKS BY SEAN SWAIN:

Last Act of the Circus Animals, Travis Washington and Sean Swain
BOMB THREAT: The Revolutionary Politics of Liberation
The People in Control Are Your Enemies
Sean Swain Sampler
Kicking in the Darkness
Application of Anarchist Theory to the Modern-Day Prison Struggle
Shotgun in Your Face
Interview #3, Each One Teach One (Double Interview), with Anthony Rayson

Available from South Chicago ABC Zine Distro
 And wherever quality revolutionary works are sold.

Sean Swain has been held captive by the State of Ohio since 1991 for the self-defense stabbing of a court official's relative in Sean's own home. He was subjected to two unfair and politically-motivated trials in Erie County, Ohio. He is the only son of a retired auto worker and stay-home mom. He has renounced his high school diploma (Anchor Bay High School), his Associate of Arts (Ashland University), and his Honorable Discharge (U.S. Army). Sean has worked as a newspaper columnist and as a union organizer.

His written works include *Maldoon, Last Act of the Circus Animals, BOMB THREAT: The Revolutionary Politics of Liberation* (which comprised his platform while running for Governor of Ohio in 2006), and several collections of his prison writings. He has published several articles in newsletters and indymedia websites. He is currently working on a novel-length manuscript tentatively entitled, *Though the Heavens Fall*.

His memberships have included Amnesty International; The Freedom Writers' Network; International Campaign for Tibet; Pax Christi, USA; The Communist Party, USA; and CURE-Ohio. He has been a supporter of the United Farm Workers and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in southern Mexico.

If Sean survives captivity, he intends to seek political asylum in Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, or the Zapatista-controlled areas of southern Mexico, where he can write freely and continue the struggle against the oppressive forces of international capital.

His next eligible release date from the State's fascist control system is November 2011.

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GET INVOLVED IN GETTING SEAN SWAIN FREE!

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Part 1

1. See How Grows the Green, Green Grass Where We Wave Our Stars and Stripes	4
2. An Enemy of the State	5 - 7
3. Fifteen Days	7 - 9
4. Open Letter to Regional Director Toni Brooks	9 - 12
5. Political Prisoners	12 - 15
6. Open Letter to Director Reginald Wilkinson	15 - 22
7. Advice to Parolees	23 - 29
8. Analysis of the Multi-Dimensional Culture War Employed Against Prisoners in the Current Slave Complex	30 - 39
9. Open Letter to <i>Captive Voices</i>	39 - 41
10. Application of Anarchist Theory to the Modern-Day Prison Struggle	42 - 56
11. Shotgun in Your Face	58 - 61

Part 2

1. The Wretched of the Earth	3
2. A Few Good Reasons Why People Might Get Pissed Enough To Fly Planes Into Our Buildings	4 - 5
3. Days of Poptarts and Bombs	5 - 6
4. Open Letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld	6 - 7
5. Supporting Our Troops...Who Frag	7 - 9
6. More Supporting, More Fraggging	9 - 10
7. In Support of NAFTA	10 - 12
8. Pat Robertson, Hugo Chavez and One Good Bullet	12 - 14
9. At Least Two Good Bullets	14 - 16
10. George W. Bush Doesn't Care About Black People	16 - 17
11. George W. P ash Doesn't Care About White People Either	17 - 18
12. The Moon?	18 - 19
13. Affidavit Regarding Assata Shakur	19 - 20
14. On the Tok Jo Riot	20 - 22
15. The People In Control Are Your Enemies	23 - 27
16. Dig My grave: Interview Conducted by Anthony Rayson	28 - 61

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Free to Prisoners

PART I

SEE HOW GROWS THE GREEN, GREEN GRASS
WHERE WE WAVE OUR STARS AND STRIPES

See how grows the green, green grass
Where we wave our stars and stripes.
And some will question our intent
To bring that dark-skinned Muslim boy
Freedom and American sneakers.
What rolling hills and shady trees
Our dropping bombs shall make.

See how sunny the blue, blue skies
Where we wave our stars and stripes.
While some yet mock our promises
Of democracy and prosthetic limbs
Underneath American sneakers.
What lovely schools and spacious homes
Our rolling tanks shall bring.

See how flow the clear, clear streams
Where we wave our stars and stripes.
And who can doubt our selflessness,
Our open hand on rifles pointed,
Our widening smiles and free market prices.
What arable land and lovely yards
Their flowing blood does feed.

See how grows the green, green grass
Where we wave our stars and stripes.

No, I'm not talking about terrorism. I'm talking about declaring a guerrilla war against one specific corporation after another, obstructing their ability to conduct their business; forcing them to spend all ill-gotten profits on costly security measures, causing investors to bail and their stock to plummet.

In our struggle for liberation, it may become necessary to apprehend the true enemies of the people, those cruel madmen whose pathological policies and twisted participation in the social disorder demands that we act preemptively and hold them to prevent future destruction and suffering they would otherwise cause. I'm speaking of the most vicious criminals like global capitalists, senators, representatives, judges, prosecutors, and media moguls.

I'm not talking about kidnapping corporate and government officials and issuing demands that would force those corporations and governments to address the maldistribution of wealth and power in the world. No. I'm talking about arresting them and holding them until the enemy pays restitution to the exploited of the world in order to secure their releases.

These criminals have disturbed the peace and dignity of our social order. Their crimes should not go unpunished. If we keep letting them get away with it, they'll never learn.

The time has come to stop dying. We must start living, and sometimes that means we have to shoot the enemy before the enemy shoots us. I'm not talking about selective assassinations. I'm talking about defending the lives and well-being of the many, even at the expense of the powerful few.

If we truly oppose the enemy, if we reject his imperial wars for profit at the expense of the lives of the poor, if we recognize his final solution waged against the have-nots of the world, if we seek desperately to bring an end to this repressive machinery that grinds out profits for the greedy cowards and traitors and war-mongers, then we must form our own mobile, guerrilla societies, an effective fifth column, that will build national resistance and topple all of the components of Empire.

Let the enemy wake up with a shotgun in his face for a change.

All Power to the People. Anything else is theft.

Freedom,

Sean Swain
Political Prisoner
Toledo Corruptional Institution
February 20, 2006



They all have a hand on the shotgun in our faces.

So, what can we do about it? We can picket and protest and hope the enemy's news trucks will roll up and tell our story to the sleepy, subjugated public who passively accept misinformation. We can vote for a new pair of hands to load the same old shotgun. We can organize boycotts by mobilizing the same cynical, immobile masses who are so incapacitated after years and years of misinformation and programming that they cannot lift a finger in their own self-interests.

Not good enough? We can share revolutionary ideas and work tirelessly to wake people up to the deeper, urgent reality, and we can help those few people who respond, giving them the tools to take control of their own lives, to get organized, to begin collective action, to become militant in the defense of their own rights.

But think about this. Our common enemy writes the laws and he has outlawed anything that would truly challenge him. Your free speech, for example, only extends so far, and when you point out the common enemy and propose a plan of action, that common enemy calls you a bandit or a Communist or a psycho or a terrorist. He has a place for you if you tell the dangerous truth, if you say that war is terror waged by the rich, and terror is the war of the poor.

If it's *legal* to say it, it probably isn't worth saying—or it isn't true. If it's legal to *do* it, it won't bring true liberation. In order to gain that liberation our enemy has withheld from us, the shotgun must exchange hands.

I'm not talking about breaking the law to change the world. I'm talking about transcending the law. I'm talking about living beyond it. We must declare our common enemy and his written rules absolutely irrelevant, and then live up to that declaration.

The enemy will label you a criminal. But, remember that the enemy murdered Michael Pipkens in Cleveland, murdered a young Black man and then called it "homicide through legal intervention." As if a broken neck at the hands of reluctant officers trying to do their job would somehow look different from a broken neck snapped by racist pigs who left the young man laying on the floor of a cement cell hours after he had died. Our enemy murdered Amadou Diallo in the doorway of his home, the unarmed man shot over 40 times. Some of the slugs were buried in the soles of his feet after his lifeless body had already fallen to the floor.

Our common enemy kidnapped thousands of our best and brightest, including Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier and Jeff "Free" Luers. The enemy kidnapped them just as efficiently as the Symbionese Liberation Army kidnapped Patty Hearst. They have kidnapped our leaders, our real leaders, the articulate voices of the people, those whose ideas pose a dangerous threat to the existing, corrupt order. We have a duty to un-kidnap them.

I'm not saying we should break them out of prison. I'm saying we should go in with ski masks and explosives and assault rifles and get them out and return them to the struggle. They won't be escaping. They'll be leaving.

The kidnapers, the murderers with the bodies of the poor and voiceless stacked up to the heavens will call us criminals and fugitives.

The enemy has inherited countless millions from ancestors who committed genocide on the real owners of the land, from ancestors who kidnapped a free labor force and robbed them of all the value of their labor to amass fortunes. Descendants of slave-owners, kidnapers, and thieves continue that robbery today, using their accumulated wealth as a weapon. We must transcend the law and divest those criminals and their corporations of their ill-gotten gains. I'm not talking about theft or robbery. I'm talking about expropriation.

What we cannot take, we must destroy. We cannot leave the enemy with infrastructure he can use against us. I'm not talking about terrorism. Terrorism is when you bomb Iraqi water-treatment facilities to increase the frequency of water-borne diseases, purposely and drastically increasing the instances of dehydration deaths among children. Terrorism is when you knowingly sell attack helicopters to a top-five human rights abuser that launches missiles at vehicles in heavy civilian traffic in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

FREEDOM AN ENEMY OF THE STATE

"The most dangerous weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."

—Stephen Biko, South African Rights Leader
Murdered by Police in Soweto Jail,
September 1977

Before I came to prison, I worked for a short time at a small, weekly paper. I had my own column writing opinion at the age of 17, and I occasionally covered city council meetings. My mentor, the paper's owner, impressed upon me that good journalism was "something to offend everyone," that the job of a journalist was to write what people needed to read, not necessarily what they wanted to read.

I grew up in Suburban America, the product of public schools. I went from the cub scouts to the boy scouts to the Army. I had received an Honorable Discharge and was attending college on the GI Bill.

Then, the nephew of the Clerk of Courts kicked in the door of my apartment and threatened to kill me. I stabbed him in a panic and when the smoke cleared, I came to prison for the rest of my life, found guilty of pre-planning the murder of the nephew of the Clerk of Courts after a politically-motivated judicial process.

I became aware of a drastic sea-change in my very status when I arrived to the prison and made every effort to contact friends and arrange employment at the standard, mainstream media. It seemed to me that even from prison I could keep abreast of current events and write a weekly column. I could rely upon my writing skills in order to earn money for counsel and overturn what was surely just a rare mistake in an otherwise fair system of justice.

I saw my case as just a hiccup in the process. My conviction was an anomaly.

I received no response from dozens and dozens of inquiries, from untold resumes. Nothing. I had become *persona non grata*. While neither my skills nor views had changed, the pounding of the judge's gavel—despite any actual innocence or guilt—turned me into an intellectual exile. I was banished from mainstream media forever.

I found myself unable to secure counsel and faced defeat after defeat, round after round, in courts with absolutely no regard for the poor, self-represented felon. My exile became permanent, and my hopes of vindication vanished.

This was my first encounter with a subtle form of censorship; not the censorship of "official state action," but the kind of self-censorship in which the corporate media tailors its specifically white-bread message to a white-bread America, delivered only by those who live well within the borders of that white-bread world.

Banished from the Newsweeks and New York Times and even the Plain Dealers of the "liberal" media, I found outlet by writing for prisoner rights and prisoner advocacy newsletters. I even became a prisoner Advisory Board member of one of the organizations, and my regularly-featured articles pointed out the glaring hypocrisy and idiocy of many of the system's policies, demonstrating that what this department says and what it does are two very different things. In one sense, this was simply a natural extension of what I had previously accomplished as a journalist—exposing the lie and corruption for ridicule in the public arena.

Turns out, all my writings were going into a file. Agents of the fascist machinery of the State were "monitoring" me.

After a long and enjoyable relationship with a specific newsletter, its publishers informed me during one phone call that wardens at select Ohio prisons had refused their newsletter, not permitting prisoners to read it due to the content of my articles. The wardens admitted they did not find the articles inciteful nor did they contend the facts were wrong; they conceded they were simply embarrassed.

I wrote and submitted for publication an article about censorship, recalling the lessons of my suburban education about a free press checking the abuses of government action, acting as an

insurance policy against tyranny. I wrote how other governments had silenced the likes of playwright Vaclav Havel, poet Yvgeny Yevtushenko, and resistance leaders like Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela. But the Ohio Department of Retribution and Corruption was afraid of a former gas station attendant who maintained a 'C' average in school? Afraid of me? I suggested a new poster with the faces of Hitler, Stalin, Augusto Pinochet, and Reginald Wilkinson with the caption beneath their faces: "The Experts Agree: Censorship Works."

That prisoner rights newsletter never printed another word I ever wrote. And, as you can probably imagine, the newsletter circulated to prisoners without a problem.

This, my second encounter with censorship, involved official government action; but in the final analysis the state did not leave me voiceless. Instead, the newsletter itself chose to sacrifice me in exchange for—what?—temporary relief from further censorship?

Left with no public outlet for my writing, I turned to helping those who suffered injustices inside this insidious system. My writing led to several senate investigations of staff assault on prisoners, of torture, of mail tampering and other forms of psychological and physical abuse. This led to no drastic reforms, but instead made me the target of administrators' "dirty wars." I found myself assaulted, thrown in the hole for fabricated rule violations, subject to harsh deprivations such as strip-down "suicide cells" (where I set records, by the way, enduring more torture than anyone else endured without breaking), and arbitrary destruction of a great deal of my property.

I made every effort to publicize every event of this arduous struggle, only to be denied media access for interviews by warden's assistant (and now regional director's assistant) Tim Milligan. I was unofficially (and deniably) labeled a "political threat," and for the purposes of responding to media requests for interviews, the prison system painted me a crackpot, a lone gunman, a behavior problem.

At one point in this ordeal, one of the prison's investigators, pushing to have me sent to a Supermax facility in Youngstown, looked me in the eye and said, "I think you just might be the most dangerous man in the entire prison system." I smiled and replied simply, "Well, thank you."

This third encounter with censorship, a parallel to the Soviet treatment of dissidents, pulled me completely from the somnolent bliss of the suburban middle-class McWorld where I had pledged allegiance to mom, apple pie, and Chevrolet. I became increasingly aware that if the state could use me as fodder—a man with no prior record, no criminal inclinations, a college degree and Honorable Discharge, a man with marketable academic skills—then what could the giant machine we call the state do to others without white privilege, without the benefits I had received without earning? If the state could exile me, marginalize me, and then subject me to mind-numbing tortures to break and silence me all for illegitimate reasons, then what could the state *not* do?

I also discovered that the deeper one encounters the truth and tries to publicize it, the more obstacles the state and its organs, including the corporate media, place in the way. It seems the more one perceives the truth and the more one's ability to articulate the evil that the state represents, the more marginalized one becomes, until the most profound and deepest thinkers and critics are left mumbbling in the wilderness like modern-day John the Baptists.

No, the next revolution will not be televised. It won't even be discussed by a small-town paper.

Over time the terror machinery of the state has created a revolutionary writer out of me. I am now, and shall always be, a revolutionary writer, persuaded onto the revolutionary path not so much by the eloquent arguments of Karl Marx or Che Guevara or Huey Newton, but by the apathy and inhumanity of Reginald Wilkinson, Bob Taft, and the senators and representatives who fail to respond to human rights abuses; I have been convinced by courts that interpret laws to the benefit of the rich and powerful, protecting the greedy from the hungry, the wealthy from the poor.

I have become a Communist Anarchist by process of elimination, from my personal encounter with the machinery of the state, and discovering the depth and breadth of its inherently evil nature absolutely insufferable.

I find myself awaiting the final encounter with censorship. As one famous dead guy once observed, assassination is the most extreme form of censorship and the most permanent.

I'm proposing that we're better off getting rid of the government than we are getting rid of the people. If we just locked up the government officials and started over, we could reduce the prison population to just about a thousand really low-down scoundrels. Bob Taft, Reginald Wilkinson, most of the county judges, the Ohio Supreme Court, roughly two-thirds of the senate... you get the idea.

Reginald Wilkinson, the Director of the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (which is actually the Department of Retribution and Corruption) is about the worst of the lot. He's more dangerous than all of his 44,000 captives combined.

As early as 1974, social scientists like Peter Scharf and Joseph Hickey came up with a model for rehabilitating criminal offenders. The program worked. For every 100 prisoners who went through it, only 17 returned to prison. That put the program's recidivism (or "re-offender") rate at 17%.

To make a comparison, for roughly the last 30 years, Ohio's recidivism rate has fluctuated between 70- and 80%. What this shows is that the Department of Retribution and Corruption *chooses* to fail *chooses* to ignore proven programs, and *chooses* to let people get out of prison broken and keep coming back. Over and over and over again, victimizing more people in the meantime, expanding the cost and size of the prison industrial complex—Reggie Wilkinson's slave plantation empire.

I suspect a civilized society would outlaw such corruption. I suspect a civilized society would employ proven programs that work, prevent future crime, keep citizens safe, and lower the cost and size of its prison system—if it could do all of that. Clearly, the State of Ohio is not a civilized society. Its decision-makers are not civilized people. They create 63 additional criminals who could otherwise be successfully rehabilitated out of every 100 offenders they release.

What does Reggie Wilkinson care? Or the senators and representatives? They live in gated communities. They won't get car-jacked.

Too bad. I would go so far as to say the greatest threat to the people of Ohio is their government, the same government that robs the people of their hard-earned pay and creates institutions that make criminals more dangerous. I would say the ruling elite running this twisted show are a far grave threat to the people than the 44,000 currently held captive by the government.

There isn't a day goes by that I don't witness a bewildering offense committed by the brutal thugs of this pig establishment, designed to humiliate and degrade and dehumanize a fellow captive. And each time I see the government's own plantation overseers impose grievous wrongs upon a human being hateful wrongs I would never dream up in a million years, I have to wonder—I'm in prison because have no regard for human life?

Please understand, I'm not trying to write an indictment against the State of Ohio. I *am* an indictment against the State of Ohio. And so are the other 44,000 captives who wake up every day with the State's shotgun in their faces, whose well-being is incompatible with the illusion of order that the State maintains by leaning upon billy clubs and shotguns and prisons.

And never forget, you're just one survival away from joining us. You're just one court official' drunken relative away from getting subjected to deprivations and mind wars designed to warp human beings.

If you try to survive in your own home, you're incorrigible. You clearly don't know your place.

Neither do I.

We have a common enemy pointing a shotgun in our faces. He writes the laws that protect people with property from the people without it. He writes the criminal codes to favor the greedy who have more than their fair share from those who are hungry. He writes the rules for the poor to follow, so the poor will stay poor and the rich will profit off of their desperation.

Our common enemy is the system of capital that takes American jobs to Mexico, then takes Mexico jobs to India, then takes Indian jobs to China, exploiting everyone along the way so the workers get less and the filthy rich at the top of the pyramid scheme get a summer home in the Poconos. Our common enemy is Empire using our friends and loved-ones as starry-eyed sandbags to protect our pipelines. Our common enemy is the distorted 6:00 news owned by Disney and General Electric and other corporations with a vested interest in keeping you dumb and under control, just so long as the keep you working and shopping.

FREEDOM

58

SHOTGUN IN YOUR FACE:

Statement Prepared for the April 2006 Global Solidarity Conference, University of Cincinnati

I wake up every day with a shotgun in my face. The sprawling pig establishment's hired thug would gladly pull the trigger and put a slug in my brain pan, leaving me slumped and dangling from the concertina wire if I ever make a real effort to go home. If I want my freedom so badly that I am willing to hit the fence, he will gladly kill me for union-scale wages and a decent dental plan.

So that's my situation. Let's talk about yours for a moment.

You wake up every day with a shotgun in *your* face. It may not be so close that you can smell the gun oil. You may not see the patrol truck rolling slowly around the perimeter of your world. But it's there. The same hired thug with the reflective sun glasses and leather driving gloves, just itching to punch an entrance wound through my spine, is watching you through the bank security cameras. He's flipping through your e-mails. He's listening in on your phone calls. He's got a shotgun trained on you at all times.

You better stay in your place.

Sure, your area of movement is larger than mine and you have the opportunity to collect a bigger pile of toys than I have, but your freedom exceeds mine only by degrees. You have a longer leash than I have, but you still have a well-defined fence around you that you can't jump. Don't believe me? Go to the airport and tell the ticket clerk you want to fly to Cuba.

We all want to believe we are free. We want to believe the myths and lies we learned in public schools. But the truth is *you* are *me*. As you sit there in a well-lit room on a university campus wondering how long this statement is going to be, you are just one tug of the leash away from where I am.

I came to prison in 1991 because I survived. That was my crime. I lived. A relative of a court official got drunk and kicked in my door and said he'd blow my fuckin' head off; I offended the peace and dignity of the State of Ohio when I refused to dutifully fall over dead.

A court official's nephew died. I didn't. Clearly, I didn't know my place.

For the last fifteen years or so, the State has been trying to teach me a lesson. I think I'm a hard learner. I think I'm learning lessons other than what the state intended: I'm coming to the conclusion that *my* survival and the existence of the State are mutually exclusive. Either the State will destroy me or, to survive, I must destroy the State. The State, as unreasonable as it is, leaves no other options.

Please keep in mind that I didn't start this fight; the *State* declared war on *me*. The indictment I received in 1991 had for a heading: *The State of Ohio versus Sean Swain*. That's quite a thing. The whole State had declared itself my enemy and went about getting very hostile toward me.

And we have to make a distinction here that when I'm talking about "The State of Ohio," I'm really talking about the government, not the people. I suspect the people have nothing against me. In fact, under similar circumstances, I think the vast majority of people in Ohio would refuse to fall over dead just like I did. I think the vast majority of Ohioans would survive.

I suspect there's a whole population of working people in Ohio who don't know their place. They have not declared themselves my enemy. Their government has. The government, the State, outlaws me. I outlaw it.

There are roughly 44,000 people who, just like me, wake up with the State's shotgun pointed directly in their faces. The State has declared war on those 44,000 people too. Ultimately, the State says order demands locking all of us in cages. The State says the program will not work if we were free.

It makes me wonder—what kind of "order" is so disordered that it creates thousands upon thousands of people too maladjusted to function, and what kind of order needs to throw 44,000 people onto the trash heap? If you have a program that requires you to throw away the people, shouldn't you throw away the program instead?

FREEDOM

7

But unlike the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, where the state has attempted unsuccessfully several times to hurriedly execute a living testament to the state's corruption and inherent dishonesty, with me the state has not even fabricated justification to execute me legally. So, instead of an electric chair or guillotine or whatever "humane" and "legitimate" methods the state now uses to murder its most ardent critics, it will have to get creative to kill me. It will have to pay someone to shank me or direct staff to stage my suicide—the most common method used by Apartheid forces in South Africa, when freedom fighters like Steve Biko were too often found swinging from bed sheets in Soweto jails. And coroners ignored the bruises on their wrists.

Never believe them when they call it suicide.

FIFTEEN DAYS

"No, I don't think you're crazy. Sometimes you have perfectly normal people, and if you put them in crazy situations, then, yeah, they may seem crazy. But what they're doing is what they have to do. They're not crazy. Their world is. They're just surviving in it...."

The prison psychiatrist gave me that explanation through the plexiglass window of the suicide cell's metal sliding door. I stood on the other side, naked except for an oversized flak jacket that served as my bedding and my clothing. The entire contents of the cell consisted of a steel toilet and sink combination, a green vinyl bench that took up the middle of the cell floor, and a fluorescent light above the sink that glowed incessantly, twenty-four hours a day.

Oh, yeah. And the puddles of brown piss, dried and crusted, baked on the floor. The piss would remain there for the entire fifteen days, a constant companion, as I set the record for consecutive days in the suicide cell without breaking.

No soap. No toothpaste. No underwear or shoes. No paper or pencil. Just a flak jacket, a toilet, a bench, a light, and a puddle of piss.

My unpardonable transgression that warranted such severe treatment was a letter I wrote to Central Office complaining about the operation of Toiletto Corruptional Institution. Shortly thereafter, Warden Kelleh Konteh came to my cell routinely, almost daily, for about two weeks. If you would ask him if he was harassing me or trying to get other prisoners to be suspicious of me or make them resent me for bringing the attention of the warden into the block, he would likely shrug and feign stupidity and say he was just checking up on me everyday.

But he's far from stupid. He's incredibly shrewd.

After a couple of weeks of stops at my cell to ask if I had any problems (and then not addressing any of them), his crew of Nazis came to take me away. I saw it coming. I predicted it in a letter to Regional Director Toni Brooks that I mailed only days before the event went down.

This was my first time getting carried to the hole at Toiletto. They had no way to know that I routinely refuse to participate in my own repression and that I lay on the floor. So, on this occasion, they attempted the Rough Treatment as a deterrent, as if I wouldn't lay down the next time and the next and the next...

After my head collided with every metal surface between my cell and the hole, I arrived unconscious in segregation. They cut off my clothes with an exacto knife and left me lying there naked on a cell floor. After 3 or 4 days of laying in my own piss, generally unresponsive, a nurse saw me flopping like a fish. Turns out Gran Mol seizures are symptomatic of dehydration—the kind you might experience if left laying around without food or water for 4 days.

I arrived at St. Vincent's Hospital in Toiletto, covered in bruises and bed sores. When I became lucid, I told the doctor what had happened to me. They juiced me up with a bottle of intravenous solution and compassionately sent me back to the concentration camp. I returned to the suicide cell and the puddle of piss.

They had to teach me my place, you know.

At first the smell of it mixed with the stench of my own body odor overwhelmed me, but over time it became the relative norm. I grew accustomed to living with nothing. I refused my meals for several more days, probably taking my body back to the brink of seizures, as a matter of resistance.

This act, however symbolic, gave me purpose and drive as I defied the enemy. It kept me sane. By refusing my meals, I told my enemy that I had not broken. Far from it, I could withstand every hardship they heaped upon me, and even hardships they could not. By Day 8 in the suicide cell with no food, the prison had violated its own protocols, its own rules regarding harsh confinement and deprivation, and the constitutional prohibitions against cruel and unusual punishment. If I was a dog, several State agencies would have investigated what the enemy did to me and, very likely, people would have lost their jobs. Unfortunately, I was only a human being, living in uncharted territory after 8 days without breaking.

On that 8th day, I received a response from Regional Director Toni Brooks. Remember, before I ever went to the hole, before the Nazis came and took me away, I wrote to her and predicted what was going to transpire. I told her I was going to be tossed in the hole as a matter of retaliation, as a matter of the warden teaching me my place; I told her I would likely get beaten up when I refused to walk, and I may even be hospitalized. I told her I would be held incommunicado. I told her there would be no legitimate justification for this treatment.

There I stood, 8 days in the suicide cell, holding Regional Director Toni Brooks' response. This time, there would be an investigation. This time, the prison system would make someone answer for what they had done.

She wrote that she had called the institution. They denied they were engaged in retaliation. The reason for placing me in segregation would be revealed to me shortly.

That's it.

Her mindless and incomprehensible response represents the kind of foolishness and inhuman apathy required of the lackeys who maintain this cold, cruel system of modern slavery and bondage, who sell their souls for decent retirement benefits and a mediocre dental plan: If no one among their corrupt cohorts admits their own criminal brutality, then it didn't happen—all insurmountable evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

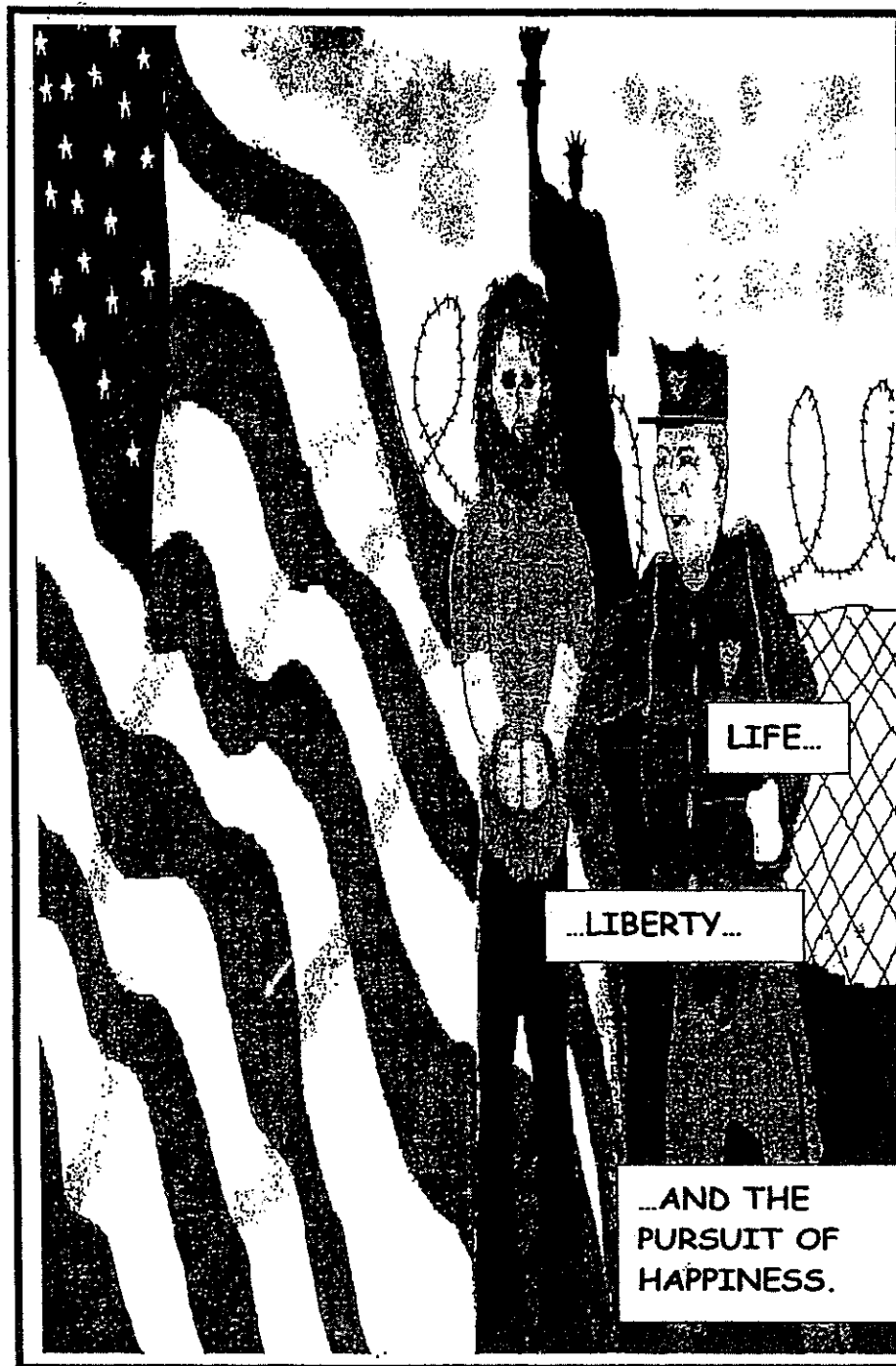
I stood virtually naked in a puddle of piss, reading a letter that told me I wasn't experiencing what I was experiencing. (I later wrote Toni back and told her that, since she believes whatever anyone tells her, I would give it a try. I told her that I was the King of Denmark and had diplomatic immunity in her country; I wanted her to release me and drive me to the airport. I closed all subsequent letters, "In allegiance to the Danish Crown. Long live me, Sean Swain, King of Denmark." Strange, she never wrote back.)

Day by day, I paced the floor and chanted, as if on a death march, "Mejor morir en pie que vivir en rodillas." ("Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees.") Sometimes, I would reach out to each person to whom my life is inextricably linked and I would visualize them, and I would remind myself that as I endured each element of that insidious mind war, each of them was with me. They represented my reason to continue. I fought the enemy so the world would ultimately be better for all of them.

At some point in the pacing and chanting and contemplation and hunger, I came to the realization that on a very tangible and concrete level, I was everyone. I was humanity, enduring oppression, enduring suffering. I was part of a larger body, a body that was everywhere, surviving the same thing. And I contemplated the enemy.

They had subjected me to deprivations that would break *them*. They had employed cruelties that would destroy *them*. But day after day, I did not break. Instead, I grew stronger.

So often, our concept of what the enemy can inflict upon us—and what that will do to us—truly exceeds our enemy's actual abilities. We overestimate him, and we underestimate our own capacity to survive. We fear the bully and give him our lunch money day after day, certain that the punch in the nose would be far more painful than anything we can bear. But then, one day, the bully takes our lunch money *and* punches us in the nose anyway, and we suddenly realize that the punch in the nose

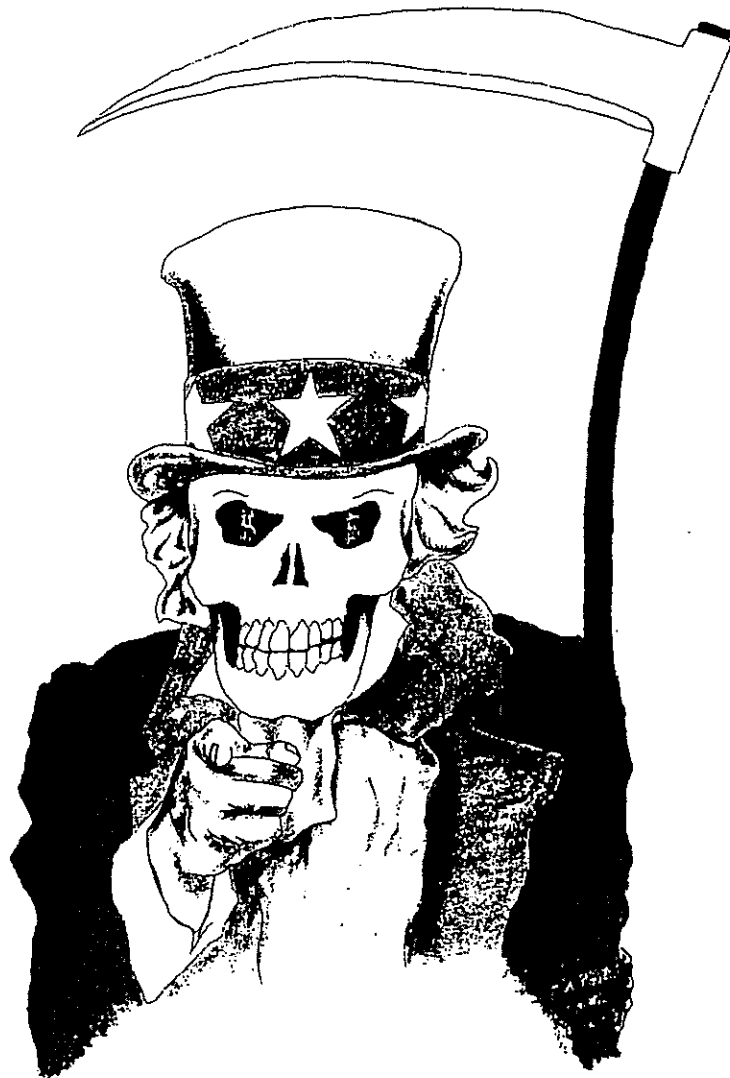


Anarchists, engaged in the modern-day prison struggle, perform necessary and essential revolutionary functions in the subversion and defeat of inimical fascist forces and the creation of a new order, one where the institutions of the old order cannot stand. This Anarchist engagement is not an elective contribution to the next revolution, a footnote to the struggle over the reactionary forces of fascism. It is its fundamental basis.

Freedom,

Sean Swain
Political Prisoner
Toledo Correctional Institution
February 12, 2007

...



is not so bad—not as bad as the humiliation of the empty pockets and the grumbling stomach from missing lunch.

I contemplated that I had endured the enemy's worst. He could never again take my lunch money. I was free.

I also saw how weak and cowardly the enemy really was. Mere deprivations of property and comfort would have dropped him to his knees, crumpled and crawling and crippled. He was addicted to his stuff, whereas, through the course of my oppression, I had come to learn to live without stuff. My enemy had attempted to destroy me but instead had given me a dangerous glimpse into my own capacity for absolute freedom—freedom from any possession.

I knew the enemy far better than the enemy knew me.

After fifteen days, they gave up. They released me from the suicide cell and from segregation and back to population. The oppressors would resign themselves to other tactics in order to destroy me.

Ironic, but the enemy's repressive treatment of me made me impossible for him to contain: He had pushed me beyond his own reach when he forced me to survive his torture. I had transcended fear, the most valuable tool the enemy uses to control captives. I no longer fear anything they can do to me. In fact, I no longer fear death, no more than I fear changing my shoes.

Still the ultimate irony of ironies lies in the suicide cell's true purpose opposed to the justification for its use that the prison slave complex fabricates for public consumption.

While the smiling suits of the Department of Retribution and Corruption recite the same old tired lie that suicide cells exist to protect prisoners from killing themselves, and while the power whores wink and nod and look the other way, these same fascist thugs commit crimes against humanity, placing political threats into suicide cells, not to prevent them from killing themselves but in the intention of driving us to it.

And these people are rehabilitating me...

OPEN LETTER TO REGIONAL DIRECTOR TONI BROOKS

North Regional Director Toni Brooks
Department of Retribution and Corruption
1050 Freeway Drive North
Columbus, Ohio 43229

Dear Director Brooks:

I wrote to you in January of this year, raising six (6) separate issues wherein prison staff ignored established rules in order to infringe upon my recognized rights. After you forwarded a copy of my letter to Warden Konteh, I had fifteen (15) days in the hole for no legitimate reason. Fortunately for me, I often come up with some of my best ideas after fascists kick me in the head. And I had a real spiritual awakening this time, a moment of clarity.

I came to realize the problem is not Warden Konteh or any other staff here. My problem, and the problem of every prisoner, is the very system itself. It is not that staff can take my guitar from me, but that they can take *anything* from me without any substantial redress. They can take me and toss me in the hole for no reason, for as long as they want, whenever they want, and no one will interfere.

I live in a Soviet village. The grievance process is an open joke among staff and prisoners alike. A Department of Corruptions staffer is given the job of investigating the people with whom he eats dinner every night.

Efforts to involve central office are futile. Take for instance my last ordeal. I sent the letter to you, you forwarded the letter to the prison, and they tossed me in the hole. When I wrote and told you I was a victim of retribution, you called here. They said they were not engaged in retribution. You then wrote me back while I was in the hole suffering retribution to tell me it was, apparently, all in my mind because the cowards you spoke to on the phone did not admit to what they were doing.

Since you believe what anyone tells you, let me give it a try: I am the King of Denmark. I have diplomatic immunity in your country. Please bring a limousine and take me to the airport immediately.

Contacting senators, representatives, and the news media accomplishes very little. Nobody cares. Even the courts have decided to leave control of the prisons to those who (mis)manage them. So in the final analysis, we have an authoritarian system that models itself after Bulgaria in about 1985, oppressing its 44,000 peasants any way it chooses, damaging people and failing to prepare us for citizenship in a representative republic in 2004. This is why your system has an abysmal failure rate of over 70%, manufacturing crime and creating future victims.

If you believe in America and democracy and all that jazz, then the core problem boils down to the fact that the Department of Retribution and Corruption is an "illegitimate government." Or at least, that's what Thomas Jefferson would call it. See, in the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson and his buddies wrote that all legitimate forms of government derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed. They said any government not formed by the consent of the governed must be abolished.

What that means is, in order for the Department of Corruptions to be legitimate, the governed (that would be us prisoners) would have to provide our consent to it. That means like voting for it.

If it makes you feel any better, I have a solution. My proposed program would address the problems of oppression in this system; it would address the rampant recidivism and keep former prisoners from coming back to prison; and it would address the Department of Retribution and Corruption's illegitimacy problem. And I think I am qualified to present this program.

In high school, I was a strike shift leader for the United Food and Commercial Workers. I later did volunteer organizing for the Teamsters. While in the military, I wrote the exit report for Operation Glass Monkey in the People's Republic of China, providing an analysis of that failed revolution that helped perfect the organizing process that led to the formation of OKPOR and the disintegration of the Slobodan Milosevic regime.

So you see, I have a history of addressing oppression.

For me to successfully work this program, I would need your permission to gather a handful of prisoners from across the state, a few courageous people committed to the cause of liberation. We can call them the "Vanguard of the Revolution." Then I would need your permission to have a bus transport us to each prison, where we would be able to address the whole prison population, explaining how we think we could improve their situation if they voted to permit us to act as their "collective bargaining agents" to negotiate a contract with the State. This Vanguard of the Revolution would then be acting as what we call "The Prisoners' Revolutionary Front." I would ask that even prisoners in the hole be provided absentee ballots and the Red Cross be permitted to supervise the vote. Maybe even Jimmy Carter.

If prisoners are happy with the current state of affairs and they do not want us Commie agitators interfering, then we would go on to the next prison. But if the prison ratifies a Prisoner Revolutionary Front agenda, then they must go on to elect their own prison leadership who would become their voice in the future negotiations.

And, of course, we would be back on the bus and off to the next prison.

Can you see how this would be exciting stuff?

Prisoners would also elect a kind of prisoner congress at their own prison, a legislature with veto power and rule-making power to work with the executive, the warden. Prisoner courts would replace the R.I.B., according to the Prisoner Revolutionary Front Constitution.

Ultimately, all of these legislatures would have to work at each prison to elect a Central Committee to replace the Vanguard of the Revolution, so that democratically-elected representatives would negotiate with the State. I propose that all negotiations be videotaped and played at every institution so the whole process is transparent.

Think of the end result. The grievance process would cease to exist. Elected prisoners would address problems just like a union would operate. The R.I.B. would be gone, replaced by prisoner judges.

exercise of his or her own power. So, within this context, the single-most important contribution which Anarchism can provide to such a prisoner population is an *alternative to reactionary suicide*, the idea of something that the prisoner can do or have or be—the concept of direct action.

The Anarchist, through sharing and disseminating the revolutionary idea, the framework of internal liberation, provokes the prisoner, making her or him capable of asking that profound and dangerous question, the singularly important question in the history of human existence: "*What can we do about it?*" In this way, Anarchism provides prisoners the idea of "*something we can do, or have, or be, simply by acting. Then what have we been waiting for? Let us act!*"

In this context, a previously disarmed and oppressed people recognize the potential to change the circumstances of their own lives, conditions that they previously viewed as inapplicable, circumstances and conditions of their larger communities, and they are infused with a completely new way of seeing the world and its operation.

The prisoner becomes armed, dangerous with ideas and awareness and conscious of her or his own potential. But more importantly still, the prisoner becomes aware of the potential of *collective power*.

The Anarchist inspires in prisoners a new state of mind and instills a belief in liberation, freedom, a new revolutionary idea. In this way, the Anarchist most-effectively creates guerrillas among the prisoner population—among the slave population—disseminators of the revolutionary ideal who are formed not just by their exposure to the idea of Anarchism but by the experience of oppression and brutality imposed by the State.

As Robert Taber wrote of the guerrilla, "Limitations that were formerly accepted all at once become intolerable... the *will to act* is born..."

The prisoner, the slave, previously cast upon the trash heap by the oppressive machinery of the fascist State, grows into new capacities for self-determination, self-rule, and the empowerment of others by inspiring in them this new state of mind. In this way, the Anarchist becomes the liberator of formerly-subjugated populations, making liberation contagious among the captives that the State previously held in complete sway, subjecting them at will to cultural genocide and complete psychological and social disarmament. But now, with the intervention of the Anarchist, a new and revolutionary captive culture begins to take root and flourish, one subversive of the State's genocidal aims.

And, again, in reference to Robert Taber, "The defeat of the... enemy, the overthrow of the government, are secondary tasks, in the sense that they come later. The primary effort... is to militate the population, without whose consent no government can stand for a day."

A militated prison population composed of individuals empowered by the Anarchistic ideal, engaged in mutual aid and voluntary association and cooperation, capable of self-governance and inspired in the maintenance of their own culture, has the potential to render impotent the State's oppressive machinery, to undermine the power of the State's system of sanctions, to undue the harm the fascist State would otherwise impose upon its passive and accepting captives.

And without a real threat of sanctions, without the imposition of effective punishment, without real control of its own prison system and its captive population, the power of prison and punishment and the enforcement of the law on a broader, general level is effectively abolished.

Militating the prisoner population, empowering and liberating prisoners with the revolutionary truth and arming them with the tools for their own self-organization and mutual aid ultimately rob the State and the fascist forces of market capital of one of its primary and necessary components, one of its most-essential pillars: The power to punish.

Such a tactic serves more than the direct and immediate aims of liberating prisoners, as it also may contribute to a broader strategy. The subversion of the prison through co-opting the population (turning the prison into revolutionary academies) axiomatically opens up greater "free space" throughout the entire social order; it diverts attention and resources of the oppressor to deal with the dangerous, libtatory trends within its concentration camps; it makes the system of exploitation and expansion and oppression more unsustainable, hastening its inevitable collapse.

"...The *will to revolt*... seems to express... a newly awakened consciousness, not of causes but of *potentiality*. It is a spreading awareness of the possibilities of human existence... that together inspire, first in individuals, then in communities and entire nations, *an entirely new attitude toward life*.

"The effect of this sudden awareness, this sudden fruition of consciousness is to produce... a pervasive and urgent desire for radical change, based on the new insight, startling in its simplicity, that the conditions of life that had seemed immutable *can*, after all, be changed.

"Limitations that were formerly accepted all at once become intolerable... The *will to act* is born. It is as if people everywhere were saying: *Look, here is something we can do, or have, or be, simply by acting. Then what have we been waiting for? Let us act!*

"This, at any rate, describes the state of mind of the modern insurgent, the guerrilla fighter, whatever his slogan or his cause; and his secret weapon, above and beyond any question of strategy or tactics or techniques of irregular warfare, is nothing more than *the ability to inspire this state of mind in others*. The defeat of the military enemy, the overthrow of the government, are secondary tasks, in the sense that they come later. The primary effort of the guerrilla is to militate the population, without whose consent no government can stand for a day.

"The guerrilla is subversive of the existing order in that he is the disseminator of revolutionary ideas; his actions lend force to his doctrine and show the way to radical change. Yet it would be an error to consider him as being apart from the seed bed of revolution. He himself is created by the political climate in which revolution becomes possible, and is himself as much an expression as he is a catalyst of the popular will toward such change..."

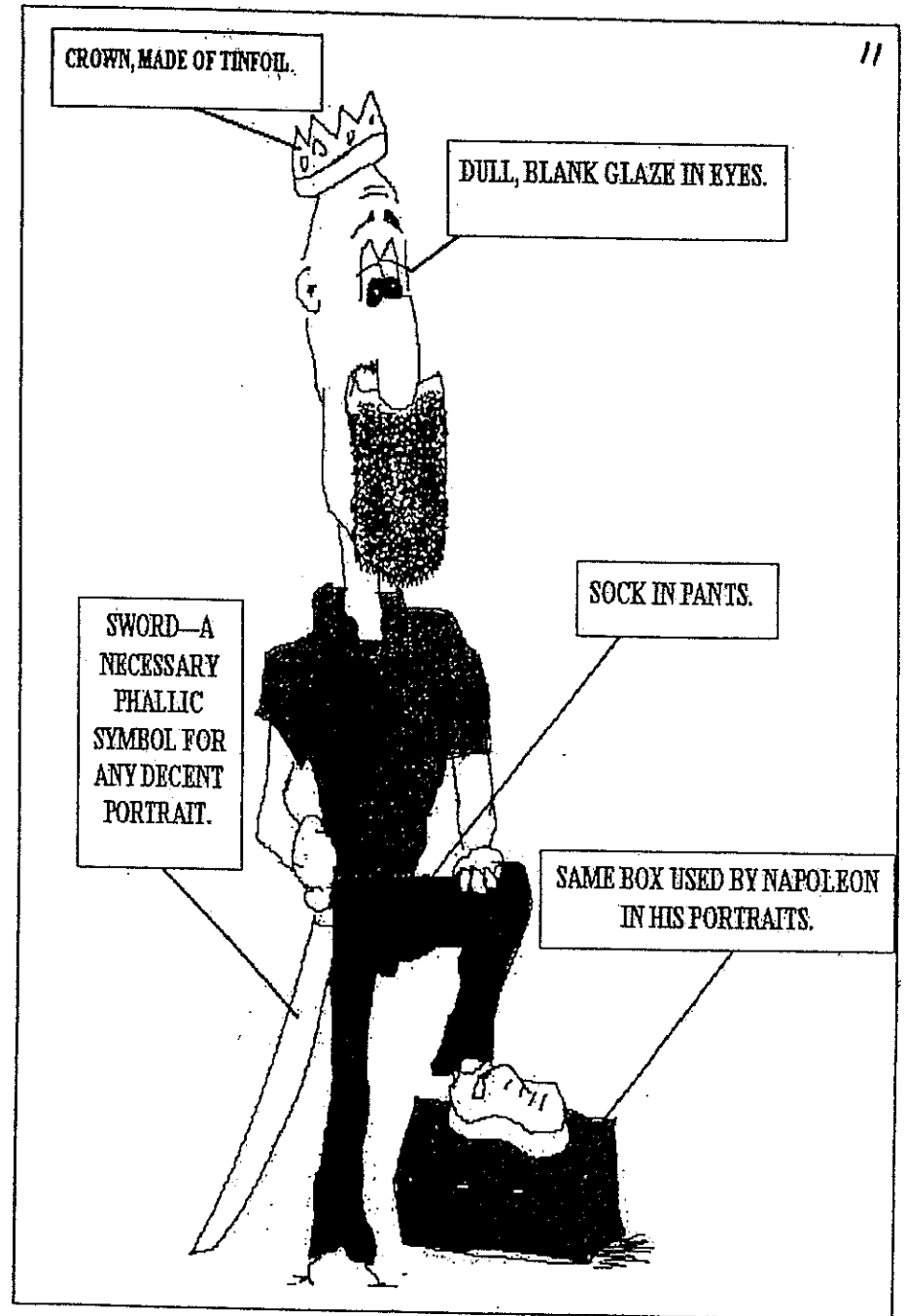
—Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: A Study in Guerrilla Warfare*

Objectively, the current prison population represents a nexus of several converging points. Those confined within this system are most often those most victimized by the forces of the State and its capitalist owners, abused and mis-educated, accepting the rule of the forces of reaction as inevitable. Simultaneously, this same population is composed of the same elements that the fascists' police, prosecutors, courts, and legislatures all deemed the greatest potential, political threat to the current system; the individuals who have, in specific and limited ways, likely in narrow self-interest, rejected the validity of the law or its application to them.

Hence, the "offender" is likely one disarmed since birth, formed and shaped by the forces of poverty and exploitation and proactive repression, born and bred to know his place and has, in some limited way, rebelled and forgotten his place—yet without necessarily rejecting the right of State authority to put him back in it.

For the Anarchist, for one who rejects the State, its laws, and the fascist forces of capital which the State ultimately serves, the prisoner represents that individual most-shaped by the harshest of oppressions, the clearest expression of the reality of our slave existence. No one has better glimpsed the true face of the State. So, for the Anarchist, the prison complex represents the training ground where an entire population, an army of the most oppressed and potentially most ardent allies in the cause of revolution are warehoused by the thousands—disempowered and disarmed, subject to covert mind-control, torture, and cultural genocide.

This army, absent any other intervention, submits to the fascist's mind control and genocide *without perceiving any other alternative*. Having been rendered powerless in every encounter with every institution supporting the current fascist order, the prisoner has never had any experience in the



**KING OF DENMARK,
A SELF-PORTRAIT.**

Prisoners would be making minimum wage and would be able to attack their criminal convictions, challenging the circumstances of their confinement with real litigation, supporting families, paying for real health care, and saving for release.

With voting rights in local, county, and state elections, the 44,000 currently kicked-around prisoners would become, overnight, the single-most powerful voting bloc in the whole damn state. Imagine that. The most disempowered and marginalized class of people becoming the movers and shakers with senators and representatives schmoozing for their vote.

The rate of re-offending would be nearly zero. Largely minority prisoners would return to dying, despairing communities as veterans of social struggle, as community leaders and organizers, as graduates of a real social and political education process that your current control system works very hard to keep from us. In less than ninety days, this program could make the re-offender rate plummet, redistribute radically unjust financial and political power, and solve your current system's "illegitimacy problem."

I know only the most deplorable and sinister traitor, only the worst Enemy of the People, could say, "I hate democracy and don't believe in what America stands for." Only the most despicable fascist lackey could say, "To hell with the poor, the marginalized, the minority." And I know neither you nor Director Wilkinson are sinister traitors, Enemies of the People, despicable fascist lackeys. And since all the best experts agree that democratic re-education is the best option to lower re-offense rates and prevent future crime, I know you will want to protect the people of Ohio and get started on this program right away.

I am pretty excited, too.

We can form up this Prisoner Revolutionary Front just as soon as you can get gas in the bus and come get us. And I owe you all the thanks and credit for inspiring this idea. I look forwarding to working with you.

Your Communist-Anarchist Comrade in the Proletarian Struggle,

Sean Swain

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Political Prisoner—the words evoke images of Stephen Biko hanging chained and naked in a South African jail cell or snapshots of emaciated Russian poets trudging across the frozen wastelands of Siberia, but few probably envision the 50,000 people held prisoner by the State of Ohio. After all, less sophisticated countries persecute people for their political beliefs, but we in America possess guaranteed liberties that prevent such tyrannical behavior by our government.

But what does "political prisoner" mean in the context of a sophisticated legal system such as ours? Eugene V. Debs, one-time presidential candidate, went to prison for criticizing U.S. involvement in World War I. His tragic end certainly fits the bill of the common perception of a political prisoner, though scenarios like his remain rare in this country—but not unknown. Far more common in America, citizens find themselves prosecuted not for their overt political beliefs or views, but for the political gain, appeasement, and imbalance that results from their prosecution. Because of the sophisticated nature of the American legal system, the common understanding of "political prisoner" no longer applies; unlike political prisoners everywhere else, the American brand amounts to political fodder confined for the social, economic, and political results of the trial and subsequent imprisonment, not necessarily for the individual's true guilt or innocence.

The U.S. system operates under a tricky thing called the Rule of Law, which changes according to social climate. Because popular opinion and fashionable thought largely determine the legal standards, courts and legislators have legalized and illegalized slavery, prohibition, segregation, and the death penalty—sometimes changing the law over and over again. So while our constitution guarantees us

How does this liberation—this so-called "revolution" come to pass? The very first and essential factor is recognition that each individual possesses power. It begins with a belief in one's own authority, rather than a belief in authority residing elsewhere, as in the State. "Man's true liberation," Emma Goldman proclaimed, "individual and collective, lies in his emancipation from authority and from the belief in it." (Emphasis added.)

"The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. He frees himself and shows the way to others. Freedom and slavery are mental states. Therefore, the first thing is to say to yourself, 'I shall no longer accept the role of a slave. I shall not obey orders as such but shall disobey them when they are in conflict with my conscience.'"

Mohandas Gandhi.

Conscious and aware of their own power and rejecting authority as the slavery that it is, internally-liberated former subjects begin to work toward their external and complete liberation, inspiring others in the process. As Peter Kropotkin described:

"Men of courage, willing not only to speak but to act; pure characters who prefer prison, exile and death to a life that contradicts principles; bold natures who know that in order to win one must dare, --these are the advanced-guard who open the fight long before the masses are ripe to lift the banner of insurrection openly and to seek their rights, arms in hand. In the midst of complaining, talking, discussing, comes a mutinous deed by one or more persons, which incarnates the longings of all."

Such "courageous characters" make insurrection and freedom contagious, subverting the fear that authority relies upon in order to control individuals and populations. The spirit of rejecting authority spreads and it is in the refusal of submission that the old order eventually starves. As Benjamin Tucker relates, "Power feeds on its spoils, and dies when its victims refuse to be despoiled. They can't persuade it to death; they can't vote it to death; they can't shoot it to death; but *they can always starve it to death.*" (Emphasis added.)

The withdrawal of consent and cooperation brings about the collapse of the State.

"...[T]he day after the revolution," wrote Luigi Fabbri, "no one should have the power or the economic wherewithal to exploit the labor of another..."

THE ANARCHIST RESPONSE: APPLICATION OF ANARCHIST THEORY TO THE CURRENT REALITY

"Persons in power should be very careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasures, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy, because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase on his soul..."

—Professor Gilbert Murray, Oxford University, *Hibbert Journal*,
"The Soul As It Is, And How to Deal With It"

crushing state machinery courage rises up again and again, for fear is not the natural state of civilized man... "

--Aung San Suu Kyi

"You'll get your freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it. When you get that kind of attitude... they'll call you an extremist, or subversive, or seditious, or a red or a radical. But when you stay radical long enough and get people to be like you, you'll get your freedom... "

--Malcolm X

"I believe, and everybody must grant, that no Government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and if the people suddenly withdraw their cooperation in every detail, the Government will come to a standstill."

--Mohandas Gandhi

The forces of nonfreedom that view liberty and the individual as threats, the forces that maintain and perpetuate exploitation and poverty and inequality, and the forces that multiply crime through cruelty and distortion of the individual are all linked to the existence of the State, its laws and its corrupt recognition of property. The abolition of the State, then, would abolish those forces that create crime.

Voltaire DeCleyre proclaimed, "Abolish the law—this is, abolish privilege, —and crime will abolish itself." With the abolition of the State and authority, each individual would become free to engage in voluntary association to meet the demands of his own survival and the demands for collective survival as well.

"...[I]n the animal kingdom, as well as in human society, cooperation—as opposed to internecine strife and struggle —has worked for the survival and evolution of the species. [Kropotkin] demonstrated that only mutual aid and voluntary cooperation—not the omnipotent, all-devastating State —can create the basis for a free individual and associational life," wrote Emma Goldman.

Mikhail Bakunin concurs, "Man becomes man, and his humanity becomes conscious and real, only in society and by the joint activity of society. He frees himself from the yoke of external nature only by joint—that is, societary —labor; it alone is capable of making the surface of the earth fit for the evolution of mankind; but without such external liberation neither intellectual nor moral liberation are possible."

In this free re-organization of society, free of an oppressive State, the freedom of each reinforces the humanity and dignity and freedom of the other, as Bakunin further observes: "The more free men surround me, and the deeper and broader their freedom is, so much deeper, broader, and more powerful is my freedom too. On the other hand, every enslavement of men is at the same time a limitation of my freedom, or, what is the same thing, a negation of my human existence by its bestial existence."

So it is that everyone aware of their nonfreedom, in their own self-interests and in the interests of all, must seek out the means to liberate themselves from the slavery of the State, its laws, its recognition of property, and the injustice, inequality, and exploitation that naturally flow from that oppressive state of affairs.

"The revolution has for allies all who suffer oppression and exploitation; let it appear and the universe stretches its arms to it," declared Joseph-Pierre Proudhon.

certain ambiguously described rights, those rights are interpreted and legislated by human beings in fixed places and times.

In Ohio, judges elected to public office by popular vote render interpretations of law. By the very nature of the process which gives them their jobs, they find themselves bound to certain political agendas such as tough-on-crime initiatives that do not necessarily make anyone safer. Likewise, prosecutors too gain their offices in the same electoral process, kissing hands and shaking babies, and they too become political creations with unseen strings tugged by popular opinion. So judges and prosecutors, in a self-serving interest in maintaining their jobs and appeasing popular opinion and the public appetite for either vengeance or justice, must sway to the often uninformed will of the voting majority. In modern times, while professors "publish or perish," court officials with their careers in the hands of an uninformed but scared voting majority must "convict or perish." Combining these subtle nuances with the particularly overt politicization our system has sustained since the fall of the Soviet Union, the justice system now possesses a distinctly and disturbingly political character.

Any smart prosecutor, before charging a defendant or choosing which charges to levy, before deciding whether to offer a plea bargain, considers a number of factors which probably have nothing to do with a person's guilt or innocence. While an OJ Simpson possesses the wealth and clout to fight successfully if faced with the death penalty, an urban high school drop-out with few community ties cannot put up the same battle. In practical terms, prosecutors pick their shots. As a result, the urban poor, minorities and other non-voting segments of our population face elevated charges and stiffer sentences for the same conduct compared to wealthy or powerful criminal defendants.

Who you are and who you know matter more than what you did.

Judges too must remain ever-cognizant of press coverage and public opinion. The larger community's perceived expectations of toughness, at least on a subconscious level, must impact many decisions during the course of trial proceedings. As a result, judges may provide the prosecution greater latitude than justice requires. The cumulative effect of a number of such decisions where the judge has broad discretion may subtly alter the outcome of the trial, convicting the innocent, purposely or otherwise.

Smart politicians never bite the hand that feeds them. Subsequently, citizens guilty or innocent find themselves sacrificed for the political gain of the officials conducting the trials and the resulting appeasement of public opinion that demands its elected officials to "get tough."

With all of these factors and more weighing down on the scales of justice, few distinctions now exist between the scripted show-trials of the former Soviet Union and the everyday administration of so-called justice in today's justice system in Ohio, administered by politicians with agendas and a particularly self-serving interest in the outcome of every case. Given the political character and nature of each case, every convicted person, to some lesser or greater degree, guilty or innocent, is-a *de facto* political prisoner of a *de facto* political system.

The Ohio prison system holds the vast majority of its captives not for the protection of the public—if public safety truly mattered, the corrections system would make a valid effort to rehabilitate prisoners and prevent future criminality. But it doesn't. Further, if a prisoner is scheduled for release tomorrow but escapes today, he will be shot off of the fence; yet hours later, he would be permitted to walk out the front gate. Is he that much less dangerous only hours later? Of course not. These systems are not really about public protection. Instead, Ohio's system of justice and corrections exists largely to perpetuate multi-million dollar industries that offer financial and social and political benefits to those who operate them and receive employment from them.

Further to this tangled and sophisticated system, contaminated by political gain and appeasement, those segments of our social order most impacted by economic disparity who necessitate the most vocal input find themselves effectively silenced and stripped, stigmatized, subject to social and economic deprivations by a justice system operating under ulterior, self-serving motives. The weakest and most disenfranchised find themselves shoveled into the system, treated as enemies to be resisted and eliminated. Subsequently, an entire class of people find themselves deprived of the right to vote and unable to effect social and political change. In this way, the systems of justice and corrections serve to maintain the status quo at the cost of 50,000 otherwise productive lives and counting.

Show me your life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, and I'll show you the shackled hands of 50,000 men and women confined for the benefits gained to the officials who put them here; confined for the appeasement of a blood-thirsty public whipped into a frenzy by irresponsible rhetoric; confined for the maintenance of the status quo while an entire class of disenfranchised people languish out of sight and out of mind. They may not look like the stereotypical political prisoner. They may not necessarily resemble Mohandas Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, or Vaclav Havel in their overt political views or conduct or character.

But neither do the people who put them here.

'QUALITY CORRECTIONS THRU PARTNERSHIP'?

Whenever a Department of Retribution and Corruption administrator wishes to communicate with another member of the DRC collective, he or she sends a memo with the DRC's catchy logo at the bottom which reads: "Ohio Quality Corrections/Quality Services through Partnership." On either side, a jumble of letters pose as book-ends to this logo, looking suspiciously like gang symbols. I suspect that DRC employees now may have secret handshakes and initiations. Someone should investigate these people.

First encountering this logo at the bottom of DRC communications, a number of questions came to mind. The propaganda truly puzzled me. The DRC has held me captive for 8 years (1999), and I have yet to see any quality correcting, quality services, or partnership. But it does sound nice, doesn't it?

The Ohio Department of Retribution and Corruption has miserably failed at any corrective mission. While recidivism rates fluctuate year to year, overall recidivism (released prisoners returning to crime) hovers somewhere between 60 and 70% according to the DRC's own literature. That means that out of every 10 prisoners the DRC attempts to correct, 7 do not respond. Imagine a car company that manufactured lemons 70% of the time. If 70% of America's workforce sat in the driveway, late for work every morning, public outcry would shake the auto industry. Ralph Nadar and the Better Business Bureau would put that auto company out of business, and consumers would demand full refunds. Certainly, someone would sue them for advertising "quality automobiles."

But, not with the corrections industry. We collectively accept their failure and expand their authority as we push for harsher legislation and shovel more human life into the industry's rusty jaws. After all, the corrections industry doesn't deal in something valuable like cars; it only mismanages hearts, minds, and souls of mere human beings. And, while it admits its unconscionable failure, it boasts of providing "quality corrections."

The "Quality Services through Partnership" part of their logo also remains an enigma. I investigated thoroughly, but could not find any partner to the DRC's culpability. The corrections industry cannot share the blame with anybody except the common public it perpetually dupes, although I found a number of people and organizations that profit from the DRC's failure.

Recently, a government-contracted construction firm bilked eleven thousand dollars in tax money to put up an aluminum outdoor sally port at Mansfield Correctional's medical clinic. The sally port reportedly required only \$600 in materials. I'm sure that construction firm views the DRC as a good partner. I bet the construction firms that build \$80 million prisons also appreciate the DRC. Mansfield Correctional, with millions of dollars in cost overruns, maintains a contract with two independent electric companies but still loses power almost every time it rains. In fact, the power goes out sometimes on perfectly sunny days. The "Quality Corrections" provided by the DRC includes the complete loss of security each time the power goes out and the electrical fence-monitoring system goes blank, all because the "partner" the DRC hired to perfect its prison electrical systems invested more money in summer homes in the Poconos than in the electrical works.

The DRC's "partnership" with its tax-paying citizens looks more like the partnership John Wayne Gayce had with the Boy Scouts he wrapped in duct tape and buried in his basement.

In order to help make the DRC a bit more honest, I developed a few catch-phrases of my own and I would allow the DRC to use any one of them (for a nominal fee, of course—if the guys who threw

authority despite how insignificant or inefficient or even exacerbating the State's response may be to the original problem of crime—the problem of being rejected by the individual.

Beholden to its reliance on fear and force, the State must count upon the individual being prevented from rebelling, must count upon fear of sanction and prison and punishment, must pass harsher laws if fear of punishment proves ineffective.

"[T]he law has no claim to men's respect," Peter Kropotkin asserts.

"...(S)uperfluous and harmful, finally, are the laws for protection of persons, for the punishment and prevention of 'crimes.' The fear of punishment never yet restrained a murderer. He who would kill his neighbor, for revenge of necessity, does not beat his brains about the consequences; and every murderer hitherto has had the firm conviction that he would escape prosecution. If murder were declared not punishable, the number of murders would not increase even by one; rather it would decrease to the extent murders are at present committed by habitual criminals who have been corrupted in prison."

Peter Kropotkin.

So injustice and cruelty which flow naturally from this coercive relationship between the State and the individual, by reliance of the State upon force and fear and sanctions, are at the root of the multiplication of crime. The unjust social system, built as it is upon laws favoring the exploiter and idler and oppressor, creates the criminal, the offender who rejects the authority of the law, the offender distorted and corrupted by social forces that have so exploited him as a commodity that he views others as commodities and behaves in his own narrow self-interest.

In either instance, the robbery of the individual of her dignity and humanity and self-sufficiency creates this criminality, an outgrowth of the social forces unleashed by the State's covert hostility toward liberty and the individual. Ultimately, the State's cruelty and hostility and repression becomes self-defeating.

"There is something in injustice, in cruelty," writes Robert Ingersoll, "which tends to defeat itself. There never were so many traitors in England as when the traitor was drawn and quartered, when he was tortured in every possible way, --when his limbs, torn and bleeding, were given to the fury of mobs, or exhibited pierced by pikes or hung in chains. The frightful punishments produced intense hatred of government, and traitors increased until they became powerful enough to decide what treason was and who the traitors were and to inflict the same torment on others."

The existence of the State and the existence of crime go together. The State's solution to crime and criminality becomes part of the problem. The abolition of the State, the abolition of authority, leads to the abolition of crime and criminality.

"The State is itself the most gigantic criminal extant. It manufactures criminals much faster than it punishes them," observed Benjamin Tucker. "We look forward to the ultimate disappearance of the necessity of force even for the purposes of repressing crime."

Liberation from Force and Fear

"Within a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day. Fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing friends, family, property or means of livelihood, fear of poverty, fear of isolation, fear of failure. A more insidious form of fear is that which masquerades as common sense or even wisdom, condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant, or futile and small, daily acts of courage which help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity. It is not easy for a people conditioned by fear under the iron rule of the principle that might makes right to free themselves from the enervating miasma of fear. Yet even under the most

abuse his dog. I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it and pitied it... "

--Henry David Thoreau, *On Civil Disobedience*

"Soul breakers [complete isolation] exist because the authorities know that such conditions would drive *them* to the breaking point, but when I resolved that they would not conquer my will, I became stronger than they were. I understood them better than they understood me. No longer dependent upon the things of the world, I really felt free for the first time in my life. In the past I had been like my jailers; I had pursued the goals of capitalistic America. Now I had a higher freedom... Even so, the way I was treated told me a lot about those who devise such punishment. I know them well..."

Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*

Because the State and its apologists wrongly conceive of crime originating in the faulty-willed individual, in the errant person, in the irrational and immoral offender, the State prescribes punishments as sanctions for those who do not conform their behavior and do not subordinate themselves to the dictates of the Almighty State. The State and its apologists cannot imagine that the origins lie not in the faulty individual but in the corrupted and faulty social circumstance that the State itself generates, relying, as it does, upon the dynamics of force and repression and fear and control of the individual, the reduction of the individual and the taming of the general public as a whole.

The State, given the reality it creates, imposes irrational expectations upon its subjects:

"No prayers, no legal enactments, will ever rid society of crime. If they would, there have been prayers enough and preachments enough and laws enough and prisons enough to have done it long ago. But pray that the attraction of gravitation will cease. Will it cease? Enact that water should freeze at 100 degrees heat. Will it freeze? And no more will men be sane and honest and just when they are compelled to live in an insane, dishonest, and unjust society, when the natural operation of the very elements of their being is warped upon by statutes and institutions which must produce outbursts destructive both to themselves and others..."

...

"Logic would say that anyone who wished to obliterate cruelty from the character of another must himself show no cruelty; one who would teach regard for rights of others must himself be regardful. Yet the story of exile and prison is the story of the lash, the iron, the chain, and every torture that the fiendish ingenuity of *the non-criminal class can devise by way of teaching criminals to be good!* To teach men to be good, they are kept in airless cells, made to sleep on narrow planks, to look at the sky through iron grates, to eat food that revolts their palates, and destroys their stomachs, --battered and broken down in body and soul: and this is what they call reforming men!"

Voltaire DeCleyre.

Because the State operates through force, imposing law upon its subjects, it must rely upon its sanctions to re-habituate those who have, by their actions, rejected the authority of the State. Through this dynamic of force and sanctions, then, the State must respond to those who reject its

together a crappy aluminum sally port can make eleven grand, certainly the DRC could throw me a few bucks for an honest logo):

1. "We build walls and fences so you can't see what we're doing, but trust us anyway because you don't have much of a choice."
2. "We may not know what we're doing, but we cost less than the shrinks who do."
3. "We pay half the unemployable people to watch the other half."
4. "Emancipation what? We got a cure for that."
5. "Over 50,000 served."
6. "We're our brother's keeper and we got the concrete warehouses to prove it."
7. "Creating a beast of a burden while turning burdens into beasts."
8. "The Nazis had *some* good ideas, didn't they?"
9. "Let's pretend the thousands of people we subject to meaningless deprivation won't live next to you someday."
10. "Does anybody really care 'What Jesus would do?'"

The way I figure it, why all the political posturing? Hell, tell it like it is. The DRC wants criminals to remain criminals as a matter of job security and they know the common public stays too wrapped up in their own problems to really inquire where billions of dollars of tax money are squandered. I mean, if the DRC wasted billions of dollars manufacturing cars that wouldn't start, the average Ohio citizen would grab the shotgun from the closet and demand a reckoning. But the DRC only darkens hearts, minds, and souls and contributes to future criminality. Since nobody cares, why not be honest?

OPEN LETTER TO DIRECTOR REGINALD WILKINSON

Reginald Wilkinson, Director
Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
1050 Freeway Drive North
Columbus, Ohio 43229

Dear Director:

I write this letter further to the 13 page affidavit I mailed to you and others in late September or early October of 2003. That affidavit concerned torture, human rights abuses, and assault on prisoners. It concerned the use of the Rules Infraction Boards and other such mechanisms as tools to oppress, silence, and malign prisoners who report such crimes and abuses.

Certainly, the Department cannot tolerate such prisoners who demonstrate courage and honesty and depth of character--such prisoners will never fulfill their duty and recidivate.

I write this letter fully cognizant that your copy will likely find its way into my parole file and ensure that I die in prison. I fully expect that exigency. But I also write this in expectation that it may also gain the attention of the newly-assembled Corrections Institution Inspection Committee.

"It is always the duty of everyone everywhere to oppose evil," Mohandas Gandhi said.

I would like to make some general observations regarding the DRC before addressing specific examples as evidence of the larger problem. These general observations are made based upon more than 12 years of personal experience within this system and also based upon my reading and study of nearly all the relevant, published material regarding corrections and criminal justice theory and practice since the early 1970s.

First, a simple fact: The Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections is the most abysmal failure and greatest waste of tax dollars in the history of the State of Ohio.

Recidivism, or your "direct failure rate," remains between 70% and 80% over the long term. That means for every 100 offenders who enter your system, only 20 to 30 leave and do not come back. That means 70-80% of the time, you take a criminal and turn him into a criminal.

At the cost of *billions* of dollars a year.

That is the equivalent of spending \$6 billion on a toaster that pops up bread 80% of the time.

My dad retired from Ford. How long, I wonder, would he have maintained a job if 80% of the cars coming off of his assembly line were recalled for defect?

And just so I don't let you off the hook, I want to point out that just because only (*only!*) 70-80% of the people in your care return to prison, that does not mean that you succeed 20-30% of the time. That doesn't mean you prevented them from committing crimes; that only means 20-30% stayed out of the clutches of their parole officers. Some of that 20-30% run to Canada or Mexico or otherwise abscond and do not get caught. Some of them are hit by cars or die from drug overdoses or get killed in drive-by shootings; they stay out of prison because they stopped breathing.

Only a small, small percentage of released felons stay alive, stay in Ohio, and stay out of prison.

Back to the analogy of the car manufacturer. Only 70-80% of the cars are brought back due to defects, but of the 20-30% that do not come back, some cannot be found; a considerable number have crashed. Possibly, only 5 to 10 out of 100 actually stay on the road.

That is what you, Sir, call "Ohio Quality Corrections."

You apply that label to a system that qualitatively and quantitatively, by any measure, is the *single greatest failure of any Ohio government system ever devised*. I will refrain from calling "Ohio Quality Corrections" a purposeful lie, a fraud, or a convenient deception for public consumption. Others can draw their own conclusions.

Systems and modes derived as far back as 1974¹ produced rates of recidivism at levels of 14-17%. These systems were also more cost-efficient than the system you currently manage.

The implications of this are far-reaching. First, based on the information available to someone like myself with only an Associate of Arts, it appears that you, Sir, have purposely ignored successful programs in favor of employing abysmal, proven failures. This is assuming, of course, that the Director of the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction is as nearly-informed as a prisoner confined since 1991 with no internet access and a salary of \$17 per month with which to buy books and resources.

But this implies much more.

Many of those 70 to 80 of 100 prisoners who get out and recidivate commit another crime. That means another victim. So, beyond simply employing failed programs, you, Sir, are contributing to future, unnecessary crime; future, unnecessary victims.

Every successful program scrapped in favor of harsh, authoritarian modes of control translates into more than just heightened recidivism and data. You, Sir, create unnecessary human casualties. Your failed system unnecessarily contributes to the robbery and murder of store clerks working their way through college; the rape and mutilation of poor inner-city children left with a neighbor because their mother works 2 jobs; the car-jacking of pregnant mothers; the drug addictions of high school kids who buy the poisons pandered *by offenders you failed to correct or rehabilitate*. All this by offenders you *debilitated*.

You, Sir, are complicit to thousands of perfectly preventable crimes every year. Rather than employing modes known to lead to the victimization of only 14-17 taxpayers for every 100 released offenders, you, Sir, opt to victimize as many as 80 citizens for every 100 released prisoners. You manufacture unnecessary victimization.

I am amazed, given the data, that you have not been forced to flee the country like General Augusto Pinochet of Chile or the Shah of Iran.

¹ The Niantic Project by Joseph Hickey and Peter Scharf, in 1974, fostered democratic re-education with a recidivism rate of less than 17%. Their experiment is detailed in the publication "Social Psychology and the Law" published by Central University of New York (CUNY)

The social situation "prepares" the crime, the "perverted forces of man," described by Voltairine DeCleyre; forces put in motion not by the offender but by the State with its laws and preferences for the wealthy, the idler, the exploiter.

"It is safe to say that governments have committed far more crimes than they have prevented," concludes Robert Ingersoll.

So if it is the social situation, the forces of poverty and injustice and inequality that find their origin in the exploitive and self-serving indulgence of wealthy and privileged oppressors, in the maintenance of legislated inequity and social stratification, then how is it that anyone could blame the so-called offender, can hold responsible the poor, wretched, abused, and oppressed who find themselves in such desperate straits? How can one declare someone such situated a criminal, an offender, a "bad man"?

"But who are the bad men among us?... (I) f by the men from whom the State must protect us we mean the criminals, then we know they are not special creatures like the wolf among sheep, but just such men as all of us, who like committing crimes as little as we do; we know that the activity of governments with their cruel forms of punishment, which do not correspond to the present stage of morality, their prisons, tortures... contributes more to the barbarizing of the people than to their culture, and hence rather to the multiplication than the diminution of such criminals."

Leo Tolstoy.

So it stands that the misperception of the causes of crime lead to punishment, which lead ultimately to the multiplication of crime. And that, then, leads one back to the serious consideration of the State's violence which is at the root of these dynamics. It is the State's violence which ultimately creates the so-called criminal—the individual who rejects the law of the State and does not act in conformity with the State's dictates.

"The individual's violence is called crime, and only by crime does he break the State's authority when he opines that the State is not above him, but he above the State," contends Max Stirner.

Again, it comes back to the individual as a threat to the State, as a threat to the forces of wealth and privilege that the State truly represents with its law and its might. The so-called criminal is an individual who has endangered the State by rejecting the State and its authority over his behavior.

Voltairine DeCleyre summed it up this way:

"Some die because they cannot eat at all. Pray tell me what these last have to lose by becoming thieves. And why shall they not become thieves? And is the action of a man who takes the necessities which have been denied him really a criminal? Is he morally worse than the man who crawls in the cellar and dies of starvation? I think not. He is only a little more assertive..."

"But," you will say, and say truly, 'to begin by taking loaves means to end by taking everything and murdering, too, very often.' And in that you draw the indictment against your own system. If there is no alternative between starving and stealing, (and for thousands there is none) then there is no alternative between society's murdering its members, or the members disintegrating society. Let society consider its own mistakes, then: let it answer itself for all these people it has robbed and killed: let it cease its own crimes first!"

The Failure of Punishment

"...As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come to some person against whom they have a spite, will

something less than her birthright and creating an unquestioning subject who submits to even tyranny and injustice as those things may be systematically maintained by the State.

In this way, the State creates the social forces giving rise to crime.
 "THE REASON MEN STEAL IS BECAUSE THEIR RIGHTS ARE STOLEN FROM THEM BEFORE THEY ARE BORN," proclaimed Voltairine DeCleyre.

"These are the things that make criminals, the perverted forces of man, turned aside by the institution of property, which is the giant social mistake to-day. It is your law which keeps men from using the resources and means of wealth production unless they pay tribute to other men, it is this, and nothing else, which is responsible for all the second-class of crimes and all those crimes of violence incidentally committed while carrying out a robbery..."

Voltairine DeCleyre.

So crime, then, is the result of social inequities to which the exploited and destitute must react, social inequities maintained to the advantage of the wealthy through enforcement by the State and its laws. As William Godwin described, "The fruitful source of crimes consists in this circumstance, one man's possessing in abundance that of which another man is destitute."

It is the existence of wealth and privilege bestowed ultimately by the State and its laws that creates the social forces of poverty and desperation and exploitation. As Benjamin Tucker wrote, "Our prisons are filled with criminals which our virtuous State has made what they are by its iniquitous laws, its grinding monopolies, and the horrible social conditions that result from them. We enact many laws that manufacture criminals, and then a few that punish them."

Peter Kropotkin places the blame for the existence of crime squarely at the feet of the privileged classes, the capitalists, who maintain lives of excess and luxury, idle lives through the exploitation of others and not through their own labor:

"So long as we have a cast of idlers who have us feed them under the pretext that they must lead us, so long these idlers will always be a focus of pestilence to the general morality. He who lives his life in dull laziness, who is always bent merely on getting new pleasures, who by the very basis of his existence can know no solidarity, and who by his course of life cultivates the vilest self-seeking-- he will always pursue the coarsest sensual pleasures and debase everything around him. With his bag full of dollars and his bestial impulses he will go and dishonor women and children, degrade art, the drama, the press, sell his country and its defenders, and, because he is too cowardly to murder with his own hands, will have his proxies murder the choicest of his nation when, someday, he is afraid for his darling money-bag..."

"Thus society is incessantly bringing forth beings who are incapable of an honorable and industrious life, and who are full of anti-social feelings. It does homage to them when success crowns their crimes, and sends them to the penitentiary when they are unlucky..."

Peter Kropotkin.

At the root of crime is this inequity built into the social order of things, accepted by society generally as the way things are, and perpetuated with the active participation of everyone within this state of affairs, the exploited and exploiter. So observed Adolphe Quetelet, "Experience demonstrates, in fact, by every possible evidence, this opinion, which may seem paradoxical at first, that it is society which prepares the crime, and that the guilty one is but the instrument which executes it."

Let me ask you one question: Is the money that good?
 Will it buy you forgiveness? Do you think that it should?
 Though I think you will find when your death takes its toll
 All the money you made will never buy back your soul...
 So what do I know to talk out of turn?
 You might say that I'm young, might say I'm unlearned,
 But there's one thing I know though I'm younger than you:
 Even Jesus would never forgive what you do.

--Masters of War,
 Bob Dylan

I now turn your attention to the brief filed by Attorney Norman Sirak in his action against the parole board. In it, he demonstrates that, in your system, Sir, prisoners who engage in rehabilitative programs, apply themselves to the available educational opportunities, and/or maintain exemplary work histories in Ohio Penal Industries *have a greater chance of receiving a continuance at the parole board*. Further, the more rehabilitation an offender receives, the *greater* the likelihood of a continuance and *greater* its length. What this means is, if a high school drop-out that poses a disciplinary problem would expect a parole, an offender under identical guidelines and circumstances who earns her or her GED may expect an 18 month continuance; a similarly-situated offender who attends AA, has a GED, *and* some college or works O.P.I. would then expect a 3-year continuance.

The better we do, the more we are penalized. No good deed goes unpunished. And the implications of this are pretty disturbing, too.

The Adult Parole Authority has worked under you, Sir, for years, more than a decade. Yet you either (1) never cared enough to compile the same data that indicates almost criminal behavior by the A.P.A. in what appears to be a *concerted effort to create future crime*, or else you (2) compiled it and were complicitous by your inaction.

I say "almost criminal" behavior and "concerted" effort because I can draw no other conclusion. I have read your department's materials printed for public consumption. By what the A.P.A. itself recognizes as clear indicators of a prisoner's rehabilitation and fitness to adapt to society, by their own standards, they keep "rehabilitated" prisoners in prison and release prisoners that, by their own standards, are most likely to commit another crime.

It would seem from this that the Adult Parole Authority, by its actions demonstrated over a number of years, not just in the analysis of one case or an anomaly or a mistake, has used its authority in a latent and purposeful effort to increase crime and victimization rather than lessen it—an effort they never anticipated would come to light since they conducted all their business in secret (just like their Soviet counterparts did). It would seem that, implicitly, they have increased the rate of crime by denying paroles to those who should get released and by granting paroles, then, to the offenders most likely to screw up.

Good thing for Ohio that Norman Sirak figured this out in a matter of months after years of you, Sir, letting this process continue.

The parole board creates unnecessary suffering for those needlessly confined and for their families, and they also endanger the tax payers whose money funds the very process that endangers them. Ironically, tax payers would be safer if they stopped paying their taxes and refused to let you "protect" them, and offenders would get released faster if they refused all programs and instead became disciplinary problems.

Now, Sir, add that to your purposeful decision to endanger 80 citizens for every 100 prisoners released rather than just 17, and somebody could conclude that you, Sir, are far more dangerous to the people of Ohio than any of the men and women confined in your mismanaged system.

You operate a system that opts to endanger up to 80 new victims for every 100 released prisoners, the offender likely to commit crimes while the most adjusted offenders stay locked up.

The word "treason" comes to mind.

You, Sir, are the Henry Kissinger of the war on crime.

I ask you to think for a moment about the real lessons that the prison population of Ohio—more than 44,000 human beings—draw from the DRC's criminal behavior and from its underlying, authoritarian dishonesty. We learn that people are commodities, a means to an end, we see the naked reality of apathy and oppression, the system of brutality and violent control for the sake of convenience, and then see the contemptible and cowardly distortions contrived for public consumption.

You do not so much as release criminals hopelessly inclined toward crime, destined for failure 80% of the time, as you release bitter people who have been just as abused by your system as the truth has been.

While I have yet to adequately and fully describe the depth and breadth of this dark forest, I will move on to describe some of the trees that are part and parcel to it.

I would say that there are a number of problems that contribute to this system's abysmal failure, except these are not really "problems" at all, and the system does not really "fail" to accomplish its goal. From the standpoint of someone whose empire is founded upon perpetual human suffering, the system succeeds quite nicely. This "forest," to continue the analogy, produces the principle commodity of rotten fruit, and *everything* is thus geared toward the production of rotten fruit.

I say this not from the standpoint of someone who has experienced the degrading and debilitating system—though I have; I say this as someone who has read all of the theories and data and the economic and social predictions.

No effort is made to *persuade* an offender to change his or her conception of the world to the way a law-abiding citizen sees it. The will of the offender is not won over by persuasion or example or through processes within an atmosphere conducive to real, lasting cognitive change or moral development. Instead, offenders are coerced by threat of force, by force, and ultimately by direct violence, to engage in outward behaviors our captors desire.

We are temporarily *physically* controlled in a controlled environment. Outwardly, we comply with our captors because we are held hostage and have little recourse. Outwardly, we do things we do not want to do. But inwardly, very dangerous changes take place. We resent coercive controls, as any human being would, particularly when we know, deep down, that the authorities do not have our best interests in mind. Our resentment turns to hatred. We learn to hate authoritarian, arbitrary controls that force us to work against our own best interests, and we learn to reject the law and the pigs who push it on us. We become less likely to respect the law and instead loathe it for its hypocrisy. We conform to often inane demands pushed upon us by lawless and malicious authorities, and we secretly dream of the day when this system, this evil system with its tight controls, no longer has us in its rusty jaws.

We dream of the day you're not looking.

We know by the operation of this system that you intend us harm. You intend us evil. You intend us future failure. You coerce us through threat of force to assist in keeping your totalitarian machine running, and for pennies a day. We mop your floors and take out your trash and we smile and tell you what we know we must say. And with every fake smile and every, "Yess'm, boss," we hate you more.

This coercion, this threat of violence which is the basis of your control system, creates criminals in the system's own image. Persuasion through experiential learning and democratic re-education (like that proposed by Scharf and Hickey almost 30 years ago) creates adjusted citizens with the practical skills necessary for good citizenship. It produces a recidivism rate of 14-17% with a *fraction* of the costs, and it can accomplish its work in a relatively short period of time. In Scharf and Hickey's initial study, offender participants increased as much as a whole level of moral reasoning according to Kohlberg's moral reasoning instruments—virtually unheard-of in an ordinary setting over the course of time in which it was accomplished in their program.

With persuasion, you would win over the vast majority of offenders who get out of prison and become suitable for release much faster, and they stay out and do not hurt anybody else.

supported by the 'moral indignation' of the majority against the heretic, the social dissenter and the public rebel—the majority for centuries drilled in State worship, trained in discipline and obedience and subdued by the awe of authority in the home, the school, the church and the press... "

Emma Goldman.

In this way, the State (and the institutions which preserve it) maintains homogeneity of behavior conformity to enforced norms. It limits and dominates, viewing liberty and the individual as feared enemies.

"...[E]ven when the State does good things, it finally rests on a club, a gun, or a prison for its power to carry it through," remarked Voltairine DeCleyre.

The role of the State in the maintenance of law for the protection of the individual no longer serve its original function: "The law, which first made its appearance as a collection of customs which served for the maintenance of society, is now merely an instrument to keep up the exploitation and domination of the industrious masses by wealthy idlers," wrote Peter Kropotkin. "It has now no longer any civic mission; its only mission is to protect exploitation."

The State pulls from the hands of the individual her liberty and duty to defend herself and offer defense as a service—a public service to all—which each individual must support through payment of taxes. But this physical protection, just like the legal protection the State provides, becomes something distorted when placed into the hands of the State:

"Defence is a service, like any other service. It is labor both useful and desired, and therefore an economic commodity subject to the law of supply and demand. In a free market this commodity would be furnished at the cost of production. The production and sale of this commodity are now monopolized by the State. The State, like almost all monopolists, charges exorbitant prices. Like almost all monopolists, it supplies a worthless, or nearly worthless, article. Just like the monopolist of food product often furnishes poison instead of nutriment, so the State takes advantage of its monopoly of defence to furnish invasion instead of protection. Just as the patrons of one pay to be poisoned, so the patrons of the other pay to be enslaved. And the State exceeds all of its fellow-monopolists in the extent of its villainy because it enjoys the unique privilege of compelling all people to buy its product whether they want it or not."

Benjamin Tucker.

The State, even at its best, relies upon force and relies upon the diminishing of the individual and individual's liberty—which are threats to both the State's existence and its reason for existence. The State forces the individual to pay for protection and to accept protection, whether the individual wants it or not. And more times than not, the "protection" consists of the State invading and imposing on the individual with the arms the individual paid for.

"Whoever lays his hands upon me to govern me is a usurper and a tyrant; I declare him my enemy" wrote Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

Origins of Crime

The individual, fully capable of exercising liberty and able to self-govern, poses the greatest threat to the continued existence of the State. Such individuals render the State obsolete.

The State must control each subject, reduce the capacity of each in their abilities to self-govern; in their abilities, then, to abandon the State. The State must instill a sense of dependence into each subject, a sense of conformity and recognition of outside authority. It must force upon the individ

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE STATE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Out of self-preservation, to maintain its authority over everyone, the State seeks to diminish the subject, to keep the subject needy and incapable of self-rule and self-governance. The State takes on responsibilities otherwise vested in the subject, and ultimately makes the subject less able to exercise self-rule and self-governance.

As William Godwin stated it, "As long as man is held in the trammels of obedience, and habituated to look to some foreign guidance for direction of his conduct, his understanding and the vigor of his mind will sleep. Do I desire to raise him to the energy of which he is capable? I must teach him to feel himself, to bow to no authority, to examine the principles he entertains, and to render to his mind the reason of his conduct."

Submission to obedience and the habit of recognizing someone else as the authority over her, the subject loses the capacity for self-determination. The State, then, in this way, alienates the individual from herself. In bowing to an authority outside of herself, the individual becomes, more and more, incapable of self-direction and dependent upon an outside authority to govern her will.

The State imposes upon the individual and lessens the individual, this imposition taking concrete forms through the State's laws and the enforcement of those laws:

"The State is force. Nay, it is the silly parading of force. It does not propose to win love or make converts; if it puts its finger into anything, it does so in an unfriendly way; for its essence consists not in persuasion, but in command and compulsion. However much pain it may take away, it cannot conceal the fact that it is the legal maimer of our will, the constant negation of our liberty. Even when it commands the good, it makes this valueless by commanding it; for every command slaps liberty in the face; as soon as the good is commanded, it is transformed into evil in the eyes of the true (that is, human, by no means divine) morality, of the dignity of man, of liberty; for man's liberty, morality, and dignity consist precisely of doing the good not because he is commanded to but because he recognizes it, wills it, and loves it."

Mikhail Bakunin.

It is this force, this threat of force which is at the basis of the relationship between the State and the individual; it is this force, this compulsion that limits the individual, limits liberty—at the expense of the individual and to the ultimate benefit of the State.

"Doubtless the State leaves the individual as free play as possible," wrote Max Stirner, "only they must never turn the play to earnest, must never forget it. The State has never any object but to limit the individual, to tame him, to subordinate him, to subject him to something general; it lasts only so long as the individual is not all in all, and is only the clear-cut limitation of me, my limitedness, my slavery."

To govern is to subordinate, to control, to tame, to reduce. In this manner, the State must limit and enslave, must subject the individual to force in order to compel the individual to recognize the legitimacy of the State and obey its directives, its laws. The every action of the individual must reflect recognition of the State as authority:

"The other factor which impels government to become even more conservative and reactionary is the inherent distrust of the individual and the fear of individuality. Our political and social scheme cannot afford to tolerate the individual and his constant quest for innovation. In 'self-defense' the State therefore suppresses, persecutes, punishes and even deprives the individual of life. It is aided in this by every institution that stands for the preservation of the existing order. It resorts to every form of violence and force, and its efforts are

Your coercion requires years and years and billions of dollars a year to get its subjects properly hateful and maladjusted in order to guarantee recidivism.

And your coercion turns us into cowards. We live in constant fear because we live in constant dishonesty.

We convince ourselves that it is morally acceptable to continually endure neglect and hardship and scorn and loathing. We are like battered wives who come up with excuses for their abusive spouses, excuses for *deserving* the full extent of the humiliation, excuses for our cowardice in *not* rising up, in *not* engaging in collective resistance to a system *designed to harm us*. We live in constant self-loathing, because deep down we know we are cowards and we contribute to your vast lie.

So on top of our hatred for you, this system gets us to hate ourselves.

I have told a few prisoners of my intention to write this letter. "You can't do that." "You'll go to the hole." "You'll end up in Supermax." "You're crazy."

I respond that everything I am writing is true. "Yes," one prisoner replied, "But you can't tell them the truth. Are you crazy?"

I am reminded of Russian dissident poet Yvgeny Yevtushenko who wrote, "Conversation with an American Writer." Yevtushenko recounts how the writer called him fearless and Yevtushenko then considers future generations who will look back on our time and, "debunking worthlessness," will be amazed when "simply honesty was called fearlessness."

And if I am the closest thing to a dissident that you must deal with, then it bodes much better for your Soviet Empire than it did for the last one.

Your system deforms us in a number of ways and we let it. We participate in this dishonesty, loathing ourselves, loathing our cowardice. Our hatred seeps out in strange ways as we try to reassert control over our world, as we try to regain some semblance of being "men" and "women" capable of dignity and honor. We beat or shank each other over packs of cigarettes or boxes of snack cakes, but we stare at our shoes and mumble like children when confronted by your most-inciteful hired thugs.

"You'll go to the hole." "They'll beat you down." "They'll break your TV." "You'll end up in Supermax."

Fear. Cowardice. So we behave dishonestly. We smile to your face and hate you. We participate in systems designed to harm us, designed to destroy us in essential ways.

We know that depriving men and women of normal, intimate contact with the opposite sex makes us maladjusted. We know it can only be intended to make us rotten. You say you do not do it just to be evil, and we nod and smile. We pretend we do not know any better.

But we know you lie. And we are just as dishonest as you are.

We know it is wrong to obey "unlawful" orders. But we do it. We are told sometimes, for example, to throw away property we know we are permitted by rules to have; and it would not be humiliating enough for your hired thugs to throw it away. Instead, he makes the prisoner throw away his or her property. Sometimes prisoners who just sat down are told to get up and dump their trays. They know they have a right to eat their meals, but when push comes to shove, they obey the orders.

Unlike in the military, we are not directed to disobey unlawful orders. We are directed to obey lawful *and* unlawful orders. It is easier to control us.

We are divested of any decision-making or moral reasoning. We submit to authority and give away our moral agency. Is it any wonder, upon release from this environment of constant, direct control that we are incapable of decision-making skills?

We become thousands of Lieutenant William Calleys, capable of thousands of our own My Lai massacres, resulting in the thousands of proverbial shallow graves you, Sir, helped to dig. We do not question power, which equals coercion, which equals physical force and violence.

Your system is not without its redeeming virtues. It is perfect, Sir, for turning even ordinary citizens into the ultimate mafia hit-men. Might makes right, people are commodities, and follow the orders of the boss without question.

We become incapable of outward resistance. But you ought to see the inside. We know that robbing us of our moral agency diminishes us, and we continue to participate in the system of it. That is why we hate ourselves.

We know your system purposely deprives us of loving contact with family and friends, and deprives our family and friends of ours, so that all of the debilitating hatred I have already related to you will seep into our bones. You outwardly claim that the system encourages familial contact but we know you are lying. We pretend we do not know. We are as dishonest as you are.

In Michigan, anyone can visit a prisoner. No lists, no bureaucratic process and screening (i.e., creating so many hoops they quit jumping). Your "hoops" are something particular to hyper-punitive, debilitating control systems latently designed to increase the likelihood of future criminality.

In prisons 100% overcrowded, visiting areas are already half the size required for the population. Then, staff invariably remove chairs and tables to create fewer visiting spaces, or close outdoor areas, or both. On top of that, visitors are permitted limited numbers of visits per month.

We know there is no reason why we can only see our mothers five times a month. We know there is no harm in us seeing them every day. We know that unlimited familial contact could undo the covert work of your hate-inducing system. Too many hugs and smiles might make us too human.

But we pretend not to know. That makes us as dishonest as you.

Some of us know the only way to reverse the harm you inflict upon us, the only way to combat the paralyzing evil pushed down upon us is to organize, to fight for prisoner suffrage (and vote, just like prisoners in Canada and some other states), to unionize and engage in collective bargaining (which the Supreme Court says we cannot do, but lacks the power to stop us).

This system could never concede that kind of power to us, to the powerless, could never recognize us as fully human and fully capable and deserving of human dignity.

"They'd kill us all before they'd let us vote." "Don't even talk about unions." "You'll end up in OSP." "They'd call you a gang and they'd crush you."

We convince ourselves that we cannot stand up because "the other guy" would never do it. Always the other guy. But deep down, we know we continue to cower because we fear you. We fear the psychological brutality and deprivations in store for people like Yvgeny Yevtushenko who tell the truth.

We pretend the rehabilitation and education programs are not watered-down money-scams. We participate out of perceived self-interest, but we know it is dishonest.

Very few, if any, of our professors teach courses at the universities. We get flunkies willing to come here just to get their foot in the proverbial door. But the universities would never let *them* teach the *real* students. The universities receive guaranteed grant funds, most of which are *not* spent on our educations, and the universities use these guaranteed cash-cows to pad their minority enrollment.

I volunteered as a clerk for Ashland University at Mansfield Correctional. I was the clerk to Mr. David Benjamin Copeland-Jackson III, the administrator there.

We pretend to believe professors who tell us they teach exactly the same material at exactly the same pace as main campus. But we know it is a lie, particularly those like myself who attended college before coming to prison. We know campus students do not get the exam answers spoon-fed as a "study guide" the class session right before the exam, the answers in the exact order as they appear on the test. We know campus students do not get open-book exams and a full-page of notes used for study guides.

To give an example, one course I took with Dr. Chung—physics—went the same pace as on campus. The course began with more than 30 students. It ended with 12. I received the only "A" out of the 12. Dr. Chung did not teach physics at ManCI again. He was not conducive to financial solvency.

The DRC participates in the lie and says, "Look at the opportunities." We participate in the lie and get a certificate we can use to hoodwink a future employer who we may even entice to look past the felony conviction. The universities participate to load their pockets and keep minorities off of their main campuses.

By submitting to an organized government, or State, subjects give up power they previously exercised over themselves and they subordinate themselves to the State. Those people who comprise power, however it is that they receive it, exercise power over their subjects.

"The possession of power," Leo Tolstoy reminds us, "depraves men." So by creating a State, by creating an external power, each subject participates in the process of "depraving" men. And to make matters worse, in the establishment of a State, it is the "depraved" men of power who, in the end result, remain organized and the subjects, who submit to the State, who become disorganized.

"...Where a government exists, then the only really organized people are the minority who make up the government," said Luigi Fabbri. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon asserted, "The government of man by man is slavery." And, as Benjamin Tucker pointed out, "Rule is evil, and it is none the better for being majority rule."

Mikhail Bakunin explains: "Even in the purest democracies, such as the United States and Switzerland, a privileged minority faces a vast enslaved majority."

So what is the nature of the State?

"(The State) meddles in all our affairs, pinions us from cradle to grave. It prescribes all our actions, it piles up mountains of laws and ordinances that bewilder the shrewdest lawyer. It creates an army of office-holders who sit like spiders in their webs and have never seen the world except through the dingy panes of their office windows. The immense and ever-increasing sums that the State collects from the people are never sufficient; it lives at the expense of future generations, and steers with all its might toward bankruptcy. 'State' is tantamount to 'war'; one State seeks to weaken and ruin the other in order to force upon the latter its law, its policy, its commercial treaties, and to enrich itself at its expense; war is today the usual condition... there is a 30 years' supply of causes of war on hand. And civil war rages at the same time with foreign war; the State, which was originally designed to be a protection for all and especially for the weak, has today become a weapon of the rich against the exploited; of the propertied against the propertyless..."

Peter Kropotkin.

The State, then, behaves as if it is the enemy of the individual, of the subject that the State is supposed to defend and protect.

"The interests of the State and those of the individual differ fundamentally and are antagonistic. The State and the political and economic institutions that it supports can exist only by fashioning the individual to their particular purpose; training him to respect 'law and order'; teaching him obedience, submission, unquestioning faith in the wisdom and justice of government; above all, loyal service and complete self-sacrifice when the State commands it, as in war. The State puts itself and its interests even above the claims of religion and God. It punishes religious or conscientious scruples against individuality because there is no individuality without liberty, and *liberty is the greatest menace to authority.*"

Emma Goldman, emphasis added.

So, far from seeking to benefit and elevate the individual, the State seeks to preserve itself at the expense of the individual—at the expense of its subjects. It seeks to harness and control the individual, and control ultimately equates with enslavement, as the two differ only by degrees.

"The State seeks to hinder every free activity by its censorship, its oversight, its police, and count this hindering as its duty, because it is in truth a duty of self-preservation," argued Max Stirner.

status quo, keeping down minority birth rate and insuring minorities will never make up the majority. In political terms, this helps to ensure the continuance of conservative and reactionary governance inclined to serve the interests of the affluent, the white, the conservative.

Prisons have become the primary tool of economic controls, confining and releasing segments of the unemployed underclass fabricated by the manipulations of the market. This flow of unemployables permits the capitalist class to depress real wages by pointing to the availability of unemployed labor, concentrating more capital into the hands of the powerful few, increasing the gap between the wealthy and the worker.

Prisons have become the primary tool of political control, removing millions from voter lists, many times permanently. The absence of felons alters the outcomes particularly in close, local elections in the poorest areas. As the poor and marginalized are those primarily targeted and harvested for incarceration, primarily from urban areas, prisons and imprisonment prevents the emergence of politically-conscious representatives among the urban poor, stifling the potential for revolutionary currents among the poorest and those most benefiting from radical social and political change.

Prisons have become the primary tool of social control as they create a permanently disenfranchised underclass used by both the capitalist and the politician to scare and divide the working classes, creating fear and distrust of the "criminal element" fabricated by economic and political forces. In this way, crime becomes a diversion of otherwise libratory collective resources and the working class relinquishes more power to the ruling elite who promise falsely to treat criminals as enemies to be resisted and eliminated, all while knowingly creating the criminal element of tomorrow with failed policies today.

Directly, through the processes of advanced and plausibly-deniable torture and deprivation and psychological distortion, the modern prison complex creates predictable future crime in much the same way that tortures at Abu-Graib predictably created the terrorist and guerrilla by alienating those who were victimized. In these terms, the prison systems of the U.S. are engaged in the "Abu-Graibization" of the poor and marginalized.

Ultimately, victims of this mass Abu-Graibization, subject to covert mind-war and cultural genocide, get released, steeped in the hatred the State infused into them, drenched in self-loathing, incapacitated in their wills and minds, programmed to accept second-class citizenship, to know their place, to behave as their own worst enemies, lackies and pawns of the social forces unleashed upon them in the first instance to distort them and create them as they become.

It is in light of this grave reality that Anarchist theory regarding the State and its relationship to the individual becomes most applicable.

THE STATE

"...What happens in every country, by all men, and in all eras, that one man abuses a hundred thousand and deprives them of their liberty? Who would believe it, if only he heard of it, and did not see it? And if it only happened in strange and distant lands and that it was spoken of, who would not suppose it was somewhat false and made up, not really true?"

--Etienne de la Boétie

"Nothing appears more surprising, to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few, and the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers..."

--David Hume

At Richland Correctional Institution, the premier educational prison, we receive certificates in Vocational Landscaping. We mow the grass. We get certificates in Vocational Plumbing and Electrical. We use plungers on toilets and change light bulbs. Graduates of 2500 hours of Advanced Office Technologies learn to type a document, save it, retrieve it, modify it, and save it again. The instructor drinks coffee and reads a newspaper.

They get certificates. Those certificates might get them jobs. Their severe educational deficiencies get them fired. Their loss of a job gets them sent back to prison.

We pretend not to know because we want to be able to dream of a future with hope. We pretend we are not a means for the State of Ohio to defraud the federal government of large bloc grants siphoned through the Ohio Central School System.

We are cowed by the threat of retribution through the Rules Infraction Board, which conducts Soviet show trials. The tactics employed there deserve a letter all unto themselves. Examples of rip-roaring, laughable injustice are just too numerous to cite.

After I reported torture and assault of prisoners by RiCI staff and implicated Warden's Assistant Tim Milligan in a security violation, I was thrown in the hole and taken in front of R.I.B., accused of possessing a computer disc to which I never had access, which was found in a cabinet I never owned, in a building where I had never been. I was found guilty without a single piece of evidence of misuse of property and lying. Weeks later, I was accused of creating a disturbance and a host of other charges by writing 18 letters designed to *disrupt the entire state government of Ohio*. No evidence was presented against me. No effort was made to present any evidence.

During my "defense," I proved that on the day the letters were mailed, I possessed no envelopes and could not have engaged in the necessary behaviors to have done what I was accused of doing. I then asked that the letters be admitted and subjected to adversarial testing, that I would be able to prove my innocence if I could simply show them the letters and envelopes.

They refused. They found me guilty. Then I appealed to Tim Milligan, the man I turned-in for a security breach, the man that the R.I.B. chair admitted, off the record, ordered him to "get rid of me." I then submitted my final appeal to you, Sir, and despite the fact that no evidence was presented against me, and despite the proof I presented that made it impossible for me to have done what I was accused of doing, you sent me a boiler-plate response telling me there was some evidence of my guilt and no procedural violations. Your signature was affixed by computer print-out.

My security status was raised and the parole board now has ammunition to keep me for life. I languished in the hole for 144 days on fabricated charges because I had exposed grievous abuses of human rights. And I stared at your form letter, stewing in the juices of my hatred for you. I know where terrorists come from.

People like you, Sir, mass-produce them on assembly-lines.

We know the R.I.B. is a weapon designed to silence us, punish us, break us, malign us. We know that, beyond deprivations of the hole and other sanctions, R.I.B., more than anything else, represents that unstoppable injustice, the proclamation of powerlessness in the face of unchecked power and systemic apathy. It is our shameful, humiliating impotence. We stand before it shackled and castrated.

We leave prison perfectly and completely neutered, stripped of any social, political, financial, psychological, or moral power. In that way, your system and the former Soviet system are a lot alike.

Meet the new Soviet Man. Morally incapacitated, psychologically warped, dishonest even with himself, filled with bitterness and self-loathing, his will paralyzed, his mind mismanaged.

Director Wilkinson, I would like to congratulate you. At my trial, when I was found guilty of a crime I didn't commit (as demonstrated by my polygraph and forensic data), I was sent to prison for the rest of my life ostensibly because I lack the proper respect for human life.

You, Sir, do things to thousands of people every day, a kind of wholesale deforming, that I could never even *conceive* in a lifetime, let alone *carry out* on fellow human beings. Every day, you have upwards of 44,000 rape victims convinced that if they hold still it won't be so bad, convinced they are powerless to stop it, afraid to even scream out.

You debilitate us. You diminish us. You destroy us. And we pass it on.

Systems that do terrible things but give the outward appearance, at least cosmetically, of doing the opposite sure cost a lot of money.

And that leads me to the next social ill created by your system and its bloated budget for the manufacture of criminality: the money that your abysmally-failing system steals from Ohio's social programs and infrastructure and education. By deforming all of us, you guarantee job security for those in the terrible business of human bondage even long after we are gone, simply because the long and expensive process of pressure-cooking hatred drains resources that would otherwise keep children from falling between the cracks.

In fact, due in large part to the obscene spending on corrections, whole schools have fallen between the cracks. Those cracks are starting to look like sink holes.

I have read most, but not all, of the relevant material regarding modes of corrections. If someone actually wanted to protect the public by reforming offenders, lower the rate of future crime, and do it economically, they could take your system, Sir, and do the exact opposite in almost every regard.

I do not believe you are a stupid man, Director Wilkinson. I do not believe you are uninformed. I try to reconcile that belief with the fact that, according to all of the social sciences and best thinking, you have created a system that does *everything perfectly wrong*.

Until I wrote this letter, legislators could plead absolute ignorance. Now, based upon what I have shared, they have at least been put on notice and the blame no longer resides simply with you. I urge legislators to hold hearings and call experts, people like retired professor Dr. Jack Arbuthnot from Ohio University. And I contend the whole truth is here, in the cell blocks, in the dormitories, and they need to speak to prisoners.

Ultimately, the solution lies in legislation that would provide prisoners the necessary political space, a forum where we are protected from you, Sir, and your thugs. We need recognition of our right to vote and to join unions. Until those rights are recognized for everyone, someone like you, Sir, will always maintain totalitarian control over an oppressed class of people whose brokenness bleeds into our social order and poisons it.

Only through exercising social and political responsibility will offenders develop the skills necessary to become responsible citizens and engage in viable alternatives to criminality. Only then can we take that knowledge and experience back to our dying communities and our slowly dying people.

But I suspect that you, Sir, already know that. It is only a matter of convincing those who hold the purse strings to your empire.

My hope is that legislators will read this and will investigate more fully the depth of this problem and the way it is intrinsically interwoven with all of the other problems Ohio is experiencing. I hope they will have the moral courage and temerity to recognize the political and social rights of prisoners and extend the light of guaranteed freedoms into the last existing crevices and caverns of oppressive darkness.

My hope is that they will shine the light of freedom into this dark corner of society where the civil rights movement was quietly dismantled, and that they will do it not for the good of the offenders, but the good of our whole social order and humanity. When you, Sir, send the thugs to toss my cell and throw me in the hole and accuse me of rule violations; when you have them fabricate any multitude of "security" issues in order to further deprive me; when you have them elevate my status, or continue my sentence so that I grow old and die in prison, you will only go to prove me right:

There is no room for totalitarian machinery in this world. As long as one human being is oppressed, none of us are free.

You can put this in my parole file now. I meant every word of what I wrote. And I forgive you in advance for whatever you do to me.

In Open Defiance of Your Machinery,
Sean Swain

that the benevolent State is a friend and protector, an extension of the will of the governed; that the State's laws establish order and maintain the freedoms of each individual; that its police enforce the laws, its courts adjudicate offenders, and its prisons lock away the threats to our public order.

Anarchist theory presents a fundamentally different understanding of prisons and a vastly divergent view of our present reality. Anarchist theory conceives of prisons within the context of the Anarchist understanding of the State, its relationship to the individual, the origins of crime, the failure of punishment, and an understanding of the forces that liberate the individual.

The resultant Anarchist response, the application of Anarchist theory to the current reality, counter the reactionary and destructive forces commonly pervasive in institutional confinement.

A Brief Description of the Current Reality

"When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him to stand here or go yonder. He will find his 'proper place' and stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go there without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary..."

--Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*

"...(T)he most dangerous weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed..."

--Stephen Biko, *I Write What I Like*

"Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killing... It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of the essential foundations of life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, and national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group..."

--Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*,
Quoting the definition of genocide

More than 2.2 million people reside within the prisons of the United States. Including those probation and parole whose lives are controlled directly by government agencies, the segment of U.S. population under criminal justice supervision numbers well over seven million.

The justice and prison systems of the country represent the primary tools for wholesale genocide. From the over-representation of police in poor areas to the over-representation of the poor minorities within the prisons, the same government forces once openly engaged in genocide against national groups now continues that same genocide through more covert means and expands its scope to include their victims' potential sympathizers—to include the revolutionary left.

Prisons have become the primary tool of population control, confining minorities and political dissidents for the years of their productivity. This works demographically to the advantage of

APPLICATION OF ANARCHIST THEORY TO THE MODERN-DAY PRISON STRUGGLE

Prepared for the Conference on Anarchist Theory,
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INTRODUCTION

"While there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

—Eugene V. Debs

"...Sometimes I dream of this social change. I get a streak of faith in evolution, and the good in man. I paint a gradual slipping out of the now, to that beautiful then, where there are neither kings, presidents, landlords, national bankers, stock brokers, railroad magnates, patent-right monopolists, or tax and title collectors; where there are no overstocked markets and hungry children, idle counters and naked creatures, splendor and misery, waste and need. I am told that this is far-fetched idealism, to paint this happy, povertyless, crimeless, diseaseless world; I have been told I 'ought to be behind the bars' for it..."

—Voltairine DeCleyre

"The masses must be taught to understand the true functions of prisons. Why do they exist in such numbers? What is the real economic motive of crime and the official definition of types of offenders or victims? The people must learn that when one 'offends' the totalitarian state, it is patently not an offense against the people of that state, but an assault on the privilege of the privileged few..."

—George Jackson

Socialist Eugene V. Debs spoke out in Cincinnati, Ohio, opposing U.S. involvement in the first World War. He contended that the government forced the poor to fight and die to protect the economic interests of the wealthy, an immoral situation. He spent ten years in prison for speaking his mind.

Anarchist Voltairine DeCleyre had her fair share of arrests for voicing her views, as did her contemporary, Emma Goldman. Goldman urged a crowd of out-of-work men to ask for work; if refused work, to ask for bread; if refused bread, to take bread.

Her next words were uttered from a jail cell.

In the case of Black Panther Field Marshal George L. Jackson, when prison fences proved inadequate to contain his dangerous ideas, bullets from the guard tower rifle did the trick.

Anarchist theory can easily explain such situations which seem to fly in the face of the traditional, reviling view of prisons in society—the accepted view that prisons segregate dangerous offenders from the rest of society for society's own good; that prisons are an extension of a benevolent State;

FREEDOM ADVICE TO PAROLEES

Something like 3 quarters of you will get out of prison and commit another crime, most within just a few months of release. I mention this not to scare you, but so that you can realize you are not alone. A whole lot of people are getting out of prison and don't have a clue how to start putting a normal life back together. The people running the corrections system have planned it that way. For everyone who hasn't lived the prison experience, let me explain.

Despite what people might think about the Department of Corrections, no real rehabilitating or correcting goes on here. You won't find bleeding-heart shrinks helping captives get in touch with their inner selves or developing new patterns of thought about the world and their place in it for when they get out and move next door to you. The Department of Rehabilitation and Correction might *pretend* it does all that, and I bet they have some nice brochures they can hand you about their wonderful programs and goals, but it's all bullshit.

On this side of the fence, administrators, staff, and guards all know they are in the crowd control business. Supervise the cattle. Herd them into barns, feed 'em, send 'em into the pasture, herd 'em back into the barn. The cattle herders use a number of distractions as their primary tools: Television, basketball, playing cards. The carrot-and-a-stick of dangling a TV in front of a guy (and the stick being the threat of taking it away) will keep most pretty docile and controllable. A small gaggle of child molesters have engaged in a decade-long Uno-fest right in my housing unit. Think all that experience at cheating at cards will keep your kids safe when they let those guys out? Don't count on it.

Even if prisoners here wanted to turn their lives around, and (believe it or not) many of them do, they don't know how. Where they came from (and where they will return) possibly had no real job opportunities, and they probably don't know about educational opportunities. They will leave here no better than when they came in, with the same habitual responses to the world, and with \$75.

Too bad that, in the decade that the State has had these people in their custody, they never tried to accomplish anything substantial. The truth is, they really can't.

What qualities make up the character of a good citizen? They have a faith or belief that their effort can make a difference, an idea that every vote counts, so to speak. But people with faith are dangerous, because accompanying that faith comes the realization that you have the power to change things. Would you rather engage in crowd control for a bunch of broken, hopeless, sway-backed souls with low self-esteem and no sense of accomplishment or truth in their fellow man to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, or would you rather try to engage in crowd control over a whole army of Gandhis?

Good citizens also exercise courage, the willingness to stand up to injustice and defy it, even if it's to one's own detriment. Do you really want to fill a human warehouse full of people you just empowered, who now have the courage and self-esteem to defy you? Do you want to try and subdue 50,000 Che Guevaras? Hell, no. Instead, you cultivate hopelessness and docility and cowardice, just like the social dynamics of the former Soviet Union. Keep them divided and keep them conquered and keep them controlled.

You would see plenty of proof of that here if they let you wander through here unsupervised. In close to 11 years, I've known of 3 men try to escape. Only 3. Nobody else has attempted because the State has paralyzed them in fear, and I don't mean fear of the perimeter trucks or the shotguns, I mean fear of getting sent to the Supermax if they're caught. The fear of mailing home the TV and music collection. The fear of no recreation and no human contact for years.

Cowardice so cripples people here that they cannot try to organize in any way, for fear of losing tiny creature comforts. Liberty means very little in contrast to Uno cards and soap operas, and that keeps everyone manageable for the guards.

But the question is, what happens when you leech people of power and courage and faith and self-esteem, and you send those people back into a world with no guards imposing that constant cloud of impending punishment into their mental skylines? The evidence says those people come back to prison after 6 months or less, usually after victimizing somebody.

The corrections industry has at its disposal a number of promising and proven programs that would empower people who made bad choices, that would engender a respect and appreciation for law and society, that would build self-esteem and realistic belief in their own capacities, and that would send them back into the real world equipped and prepared for becoming (maybe for the first time) respected, productive members of their communities.

But they can't create good citizens here. Good citizens wouldn't lie down and take their shit. So, they create good dogs. We respond well to rewards and we cower from the threat of punishment. When nobody's looking, we chew the leg off of the coffee table.

As a result of this backward approach, this ugly system purposely isolates prisoners from opportunities to engage in principled, moral thinking. Programs like the Niantic Project fostered great increases in moral thinking, an evolution if you will, in prisoners' moral outlooks. Here, they maintain a system of reward and punishment, much like you would with simple animals, rather than creating an atmosphere that could foster an appreciation for democracy and law, an atmosphere conducive to instilling skills and tools for functioning in our society.

The Department of Retribution and Corruption relies on brute force and minor luxuries to keep people controlled, creating tiny Soviet villages that are the antithesis of our larger society. And we keep people here in a Soviet village in order to prepare them for citizenship in a representative republic. Certainly, you could argue that after years of arbitrary brutality and senseless injustice, a released prisoner would think, "Boy, I never want to go back *there* again."

The deterrence argument: "If I beat you down and make you suffer, you won't break the rules again." Most people buy it. Most people are wrong.

The proof? The majority of released prisoners return here. You know why? Because humans adapt better than any other creature on the planet. Stick a human in the harshest environment and we'll find some way to survive, overcome, adapt. I remember my first visit, entering the "shakedown room" and having to strip down naked, lift my testicles, bend over and spread my butt cheeks for a prison guard who looked like he was watching me solve some math problem on the chalkboard. I remember my first time exiting the chow hall, having to "assume the position" on the wall as a guard patted me down with hands the size of ham hocks. And I remember the first time I walked into the latrine in the recreation area and heard the sound of smacking flesh and the muffled grunting as one man shoved his meat in another man's rectum.

In each of those situations, I felt shocked, bewildered, maybe even horrified. The events changed my whole world. But now, after all these years, I look back on that young kid who had his sensibilities shocked and can't relate. Strangers have patted me down a million times, the sound of grunting and flesh slapping has become commonplace, and as far as stripping naked, hell, I could probably sit in the middle of the mall where they used to have the smoking area and take a shit. Just give me a newspaper and a roll of toilet paper. I'm only one step up from needing a litter box.

I adapted. So did everybody else. In old vaudeville shows, they'd put chickens on a hot plate and play the piano, making it look as though the chickens were dancing. But every so often, they had to replace the chickens because they would stop dancing. The chickens would realize that, by lifting their feet, they had to put them back down and it would cause more pain; if they held still, the hotplate would fry their nerve endings and the pain would stop.

In the prison systems of the U.S., you have 2 million chickens standing still on a hot plate. They adapted. The cruelty and barbarism of prison didn't serve as a deterrent, it served as a catalyst in the evolution of bitter, angry, unemployable, mind-mangled criminals.

Sure, we still dream of the United States and the streets of gold, but we live in a Russian village and we've been modified, rendered completely unprepared to regain our citizenship, and absolutely incapable of exercising it. They have leached us of courage and hope and all that makes humanity good, and they have kept us for a duration that allowed us to adapt to a bizarre world where everything poisonous becomes normal.

Take as an example the EZLN in Oaxaca, Mexico. In the beginning of their struggle, it was an armed guerrilla movement but as the people more and more found their own voice, the EZLN has become more of a social and cultural movement that has "normalized" its relations with the state, seeking a more political solution. The vanguard of the revolution, before it answered to the will of the people, fought with guns. Once it became a service to the people, it altered its approach. It adapted, in order to keep from alienating popular support.

Anything we begin will have its power from the support of the prison population. We must anticipate its will.

4. Once we figure out who we are, what we want to do, and how we intend to do it, we write up a constitution or a charter that can be used for a number of purposes. First, it explains our grievance with the plantation system for anyone who reads it. Second, it gives us a practical framework, a definition, something for other prisoners to accept or join or to reject based upon ideas of freedom and struggle we will have agreed upon. Third, and this is important, it bestows a perception of legitimacy. If and when the government ever begins any kind of negotiation process to end the hostilities (violent or nonviolent), the state will be, implicitly, recognizing the authority of prisoners across the table not because they are the strongest or smartest, but because those prisoners arrived as the result of a process.

This constitution or charter, once ratified, is the founding document, then, that we take back to the cell blocks. It would contain the idea of what we can do and how we can do it.

If Houston ABC is unable to serve as the central spot for us to send our responses/dialogue, then we would need to find a central base of operations before we begin. I send with this reply a brief biography, in the event that Houston ABC wants to take on this revolution and in the event that HK and others who respond decide to begin this thing like I have proposed. Houston ABC or HK or anyone else can disseminate my response and biography as needed.

"All power comes from the people, and all power must ultimately be vested in them. Anything else is theft."

—Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*

"The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of history."

—Mao Ze Dong, April 24, 1941

"The social revolution, it must never be forgotten, is not to alter one form of subjection for another but is to do away with everything that can enslave and oppress you."

—Alexander Berkman, *ABC of Anarchism*

All Power to the People.

For the Next Revolution.

Zapata.

Your proposal, however, inspired me to consider the possibility that we could, nationally, create a dialogue between revolutionary prisoners and build a foundation—get together on what we are about and what we intend to do; how we intend to organize and communicate; even publish our own literature, handbooks, etc., and arrange to “export” revolution across the country.

We could all (whoever all of “we” turn out to be) collaborate on the process and create our own “institution of resistance,” a recognized voice of prisoners, nationwide, a popular movement, that gains support of the prison population.

I would like to offer some thoughts for HK and any other prisoners interested in HK's idea. These are ideas that come to mind based on what other revolutionary movements have done to succeed, and I believe that, if everyone else involved in this agrees, it would provide us a kind of short-term agenda, or at least get us thinking about what our short-term agenda would be. I number them in order that these questions are normally tackled:

1. Some “central” mechanism (such as the Houston ABC) would need to compile a list of who is participating. Under normal circumstances, people just meet and get to know each other. In this case, it is quite different. I would suggest that we all write to the central location and that central location then disseminates what we write to everyone else, but without revealing our real names. For instance, all prison participants would know me only as Zapata, but not as my real name.

2. We would need to kick around our aims and goals and get some kind of consensus.

Because this is a national thing, I would suggest that we must speak to a national agenda. What I mean is, our goals should address the needs of the national prison population. We should not focus on the crappy food at a prison in North Dakota, or magazine rules at a prison in Massachusetts. We should focus on solutions that will *change the structure of power*. We should adopt goals and aims that give prisoners power over the prison industrial complex and how it formulates rules and procedures.

For instance, prisoner suffrage (the right to vote) would give us power over selecting those who write the laws. Prisoners, making up more than 2 million voters, would be a powerful voting bloc, and the system would change how it behaved due to the power prisoners would wield.

We could also adopt the goal of recognition of prisoners' rights to collective bargaining. If we form a union, if we united and elect representation to negotiate with the State, then we maintain power over the system.

The same would hold true for minimum wage and the guarantee of a forty-hour work week. But to have a goal, for instance, of improving the food would not work. Even if we win concessions, in the end the fascists could take back all the gains unless you have a union, or recognized voting rights, or economic power to attack the system.

I bring this up because, historically, revolutionary movements that get caught up in the small stuff usually fragment and fail. If we want to succeed, we should focus on redistribution of political power *over the long term*.

3. Once we determine who we are and what we want to get accomplished, we must then decide what methods we are willing to employ. Are we going to organize in secret, insulated cells like a terrorist underground? Are we going to support/foster political violence, destruction of state property, sabotage of state machinery? Are we going to organize democracy workshops that teach prisoners guerrilla nonviolence and the methods of grinding the system to a halt without resort to violence? Are we going to endorse seizing prisons in planned uprisings?

These are important questions because it will define how the prison population views us. We have to think about not only what we would want to do as a group, but if we intend to foster real change, we have to consider what the population can be persuaded to support.

So they let us go and we can't possibly function in a world that operates foreign to everything we've become for the last decade or 2. But here awaits the Russian village, the place that warped our minds and turned us into its children, waiting in anticipation with the familiar clenched fist.

The end result? Another victim that didn't have to become a victim. Another parolee returning to captivity and becoming an economic drain. Another brick, another roll of razor-wire, another justification to expand the string of Russian villages, just like you might see McDonalds' franchises popping up everywhere.

Who can we blame? The guards? They shrug and tell you that they just “do their jobs,” and they don't create prison policies. They maintain security. They have no training to accomplish anything more, even if they wanted to. Case managers and unit managers and low-level staff? Certainly they could implement programs on a small scale but they cannot create new policy, and they only impact a small part of the prison. Wardens and administrators? They have authority to implement policies prison-wide, but they have a duty to manage costs, and guards are always cheaper than an army of social scientists. Without funding, they cannot implement anything. Central administrators and the department director? Like most bureaucrats, they have no desire to blaze new trails, particularly when nobody complains about the way things presently operate. Don't fix what ain't broke, and it ain't broke unless somebody important notices.

That takes us up to policy-makers. Senators. Representatives. The governor. They create the policies. They steer the ship of State. They might tell you that they only respond to the will of the people and if the people want Russian villages, if the people want vengeance at great social cost, if the people want to make harder and angrier criminals, they people get what they want. But this argument would not account for our policy-makers' duties to lead and work for the common good.

The policy makers know the end result of reactionary policies, but they bow to an uninformed people who, if they knew the full repercussions, would not want their daughters raped by mind-mangled parolees; they wouldn't want their sons robbed at the local stop-stop; they wouldn't want their spouses car-jacked or their neighbors shot on camera at the nearby automated teller.

Instead of confronting constituents with the cold, hard truth, they bow to the whims of the uninformed and even fan the flames with irresponsible, get-tough-on-crime rhetoric. They exacerbate the problem.

As a result, the cycle of violence, deprivation, crime, and victimization continues. But just imagine for a moment that legislators had to worry about parolees getting out of the mind-warp they've created and coming out to rape *their* daughters, rob *their* sons, car-jack *their* spouses, shoot *their* neighbors at the automated teller. Do you think they would still engage the same stupid policies? If it wasn't just poor Black people getting victimized in areas where people don't turn out to vote. *do you* think they would keep fanning the flames of crime and violence with solutions that have failed for decades?

What Parolees Can Do

Keep in mind that I do not condone nor encourage anyone going out and committing any crime against anyone. Any parolee who cannot find work or find housing or find transportation should contact a small number of over-burdened agencies or charities designed to help ex-cons. If that leads nowhere, contact your parole officer. It is better that you get violated and return to jail than commit another crime.

However, if you do commit another crime, don't commit it against innocent people who didn't know the prison system would destroy your mind and any potential for normal living after your release. Instead, engage in a public service by helping our elected representatives see the error of their ways.

You have a civic duty to meet with your elected representatives and tell them how you feel.

The Committees of the 124th General Assembly

Here's a quick civics lesson. Senators and representatives work in committees, small groups who work on specific problems and draft bills related to a specific area of government. There are dozens of

committees, and one representative may serve on many of them. Below, you will find a brief description of the committees related to justice and corrections in the State of Ohio, as well as the names and party affiliation of each of the committee members. If you wish to contact any of these people, you can turn to the roster that appears following this article, and you can obtain the home addresses and home phone numbers of those committee members.

These rosters are current through 2002, so if you attempt to contact a committee member after 2002, you might want to give them a call to see if they are still maintaining their role in the Big Lie before you visit them with a fruit basket or a batch of homemade brownies.

Two separate rosters appear at the end of this article—one for senators and one for representatives—so make sure you note the title of any of these legislators you might want to visit.

The Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review

This special committee has senators and representatives working together, keeping an eye on every state agency in Ohio from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Retribution and Corruption. Before any agency can change their rules, they must consult this committee and get their approval. For instance, when the DRC robbed prisoners of their food and clothes boxes, the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) let that happen.

Greg Trout, the DRC spinmaster, presented a fraudulent proposal to these people, complete with photographs and descriptions of shit the DRC never gave any of us prisoners. Based on Trout's lies that the DRC provides for all of our needs (and without checking), the JCARR allowed the DRC to take away food and clothes boxes.

If you're a recent parolee with no hope for the future, you might want to contact the following legislators and tell them how you never got any free toothpaste (and show them your cavities); or tell them how you never got any of those nice boots featured in the photo (and show them the calluses on your feet); follow them around in the supermarket and share the long list of medications the DRC doctors prescribed to keep you from bugging-out and suggest rule changes that might make the DRC more responsible and effective in its mission. Here are the members of the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review: Rep. Jamie Callender (R), Chair; Sen. Jay Hottinger (R), Vice-Chair; Sen. James E. Carnes (R); Sen. Eric Fingerhut (D); Sen. Robert F. Hagan (D); Sen. Robert F. Spada (R); Rep. Dean DePierro (D); Rep. Keith Faber (R); Rep. Merle G. Kearns (R); Rep. Anthony Latell (D).

Turning to the roster with their home addresses and phone numbers, you may notice that Anthony Latell provided no personal information, obviously scared that some kooks might try to harass him. But don't let that discourage you. You can probably get ol' Tony's address by contacting fellow House democrat Dean DePierro. Dean lives on Clearview Avenue in Parma, a nice place. I bet he has a man-made pond in his back yard with some ceramic turtles and a bird feeder. He knows where Anthony Latell lives and would be willing to let you rifle through his Rolodex if you effectively expressed the urgency of your need to see Anthony up close and personal.

Corrections Institution Inspection Committee

These folks had a staff until 2001, taking phone calls and logging complaints from prisoners. They have a good idea what goes on in the Department of Retribution and Corruption. They also received reports from groups like Catholic Justice Fellowship that detailed the financial waste of maintaining the present system, a system that kills its captives from the inside-out for no good social purpose. Senator Mark Mallory, who works on this committee, has responded personally to prisoner complaints and he opposes the death penalty. That doesn't mean he likes us, but at least he doesn't favor killing us the way his morbid colleagues do. Here's a list of the legislators who have squandered tax money by needlessly hardening criminals and reaping the political benefits: Sen Bruce E. Johnson (R); Sen. Robert F. Hagan (D); Sen. Mark Mallory (D); Rep. Ann Womer-Benjamin (R); Rep. John Williamowski (R); Rep. Jeanine Perry (D); Rep. Shirley Smith (D); Rep. Robert Latta (R).

If you feel an uncontrollable urge to present one of these fine statesmen with a copy of JD Salinger's *A Catcher in the Rye*, find their addresses and phone numbers on the corresponding rosters—one for

Final Analysis

Separated from our cultures and families, we prisoners have our perceptions of ourselves distorted from our first steps inside the prison gate. We lost our identities, replaced systematically with the conformity imposed upon us: Within an environment where every message filters through the prison censorship machine, we become de-culturized and taught implicitly to hate ourselves and our cultures as substandard and inferior; we then embrace the sick, reactionary culture of the capitalist slave-masters, hugging our oppressors like thousands of captives deranged by Stockholm Syndrome.

We adapt to a life with no rights, no self-respect, no courage or moral deliberation. We become thousands of psychic rape-victims; as if our complicity with the rapist will make it hurt less, will make it go quicker, will make us suffer less. We adapt to restrictions and repression and exploitation, and we develop low expectations of those in authority, becoming accustomed to the coercive and violent nature of the capitalist slave-master and his prison complex lackeys.

All of this occurs under the unconscious threat of violence, the shotgun on the other side of the fence aimed at our heads. We fear the violence and beat-downs from staff, the violence of pepper spray and scientifically-honed deprivations and suicide cells designed to drive us mad if we do not conform. This ever-present shadow of violence typifies the sickness inherent in the thinking of the radical right, the philosophy that might makes right, coinciding as it does with imperial designs and hegemonic domination—a view and exercise of power that leaves the poor powerless.

In our case, the case of prisoners, our minds become so mangled by this violent reculturation that we end up applauding the very power relationships and mimicking the slave-master that leaves us disarmed and enslaved. We become so distorted, we hug our chains.

We may never encounter any real, viable option but submission to this dysfunctional and self-defeating world view, kept in a dark box void of intellectual stimulation like lambs bred for veal, and in the final analysis we are left culturally and socially broken, self-hating and paralyzed, incapable of seeing the true cause of our disordered and unmanageable lives because we have been so steeped in compounded lies and misinformation that batters our minds for days and months and years.

The slave-master capitalist and his prison complex lackeys neutralize a potential revolutionary threat through this brutal, multi-dimensional process. We have a duty to survive. But even more, we have a duty to develop a culture of resistance to ensure the survival of others and to combat the systematic and genocidal destruction of the poor and the oppressed.

OPEN LETTER TO CAPTIVE VOICES

Houston ABC
P.O. Box 667614
Houston, TX 77266-7614

June 24, 2004

Fellow Revolutionaries:

I write this in response to HK's "Proposal for the Ronin Alliance." Please feel free to forward this to the Austin ABC for publication, in whole or in part, in *Captive Voices* if Austin ABC chooses to use CV as a vehicle for this effort. I ask that you publish it under the pseudonym, "Emiliano Zapata Chavez," due to the nature of this subject matter. My response follows:

In an effort to organize prisoners for collective action I have studied a number of revolutionary movements, and I had begun the work of writing up organizational materials for the purposes of fostering a statewide underground resistance.



PLEASE STAND BY.

senators, one for representatives. Please note that there are 2 representatives named Smith and I took a guess that Shirley Smith is on this particular committee. But, in all fairness, before you go piss in her rhododendrons or show up at her family barbecue with some of your ex-con buddies, call her and specifically ask her if she's one of the criminals who mangled your mind.

You will notice on the roster that Annie Womer-Benjamin listed a post office box as her address. Annie must not be a people-person. But don't worry, parolee. You can still get some face time with your representative.

If you urgently need to meet with Annie, go to Aurora, Ohio and get directions to the post office in the 44202 zip code area. Wait over by the post office boxes for somebody to come by and check box 524. If it's not Annie, just follow that person home and wait for a moment before you go up and knock on the door. If Annie gets her mail herself, just walk up and politely introduce yourself. Tell her you survived in the depraved system she helps to perpetuate, and tell her how many years you served. Share with her any particularly heart-warming accounts of people you know getting forcibly corn-holed or outrageous and deprecating behavior by the thugs that get paid to shoot captives who just want to go home. Recount the graphic details of any really unusual suicide attempts you may have witnessed in her dungeon of psychological darkness, and ask her if she would mind you dating her daughter. Share with her any problems of adjustment you may have after years of sleeping in the same room with a toilet.

Senate Judiciary Committee

Everybody wants a job on the judiciary committee because kicking around criminals always gets you some mileage in the next election. These people have allowed the system of justice to become a Final Solution for the poor and minorities, a weapon used to suppress the unwanted unemployables. These legislators are supposed to stop judges and prosecutors from using laws in ways other than the way they intended, rather than letting a cold system grind you into hamburger. Those responsible for the judicial system that maybe screwed you are: Sen. Scott Oelslager (R), Chair; Sen. Bruce E. Johnson (R), Vice-Chair; Sen. Louis Blessing (R); Sen. Kevin J. Coughlin (R); Sen. James D. Jordan (R); Sen. Priscilla D. Mead (R); Sen Ben E. Espy (D), Ranking Minority; Sen. Mark Mallory (D); Sen. Timothy D. Ryan (D).

Note the number of republicans. Educated, white conservatives cannot hold down real jobs, so they freeload on the public as elected officeholders. Give them a friendly visit and show them all the tattoo work you got in prison. Persuade them to come down to your favorite hang-out and get their nipples pierced and, while you wait, tell them how your attorney fell asleep during your trial. Or how the appellate court set free a white rich kid for the exact same error that took place in your trial. Tell them how you never saw your attorney before the first day of your trial because of the salary cap for public defenders. Show them where you live, where you work, and demonstrate how life has become unmanageable since you got caught in the rusty teeth of the system they legislate.

Senate Judiciary Committee, Criminal Justice: Rules Subcommittee

Do you know from personal experience how unfairly the system of justice operates? Do you have some idea how it could be improved? The wheelers and dealers of this high-rent subcommittee write the rules. They are: Sen. Richard H. Finan (R), Chair; Sen. Bruce E. Johnson (R), Vice-Chair; Randall L. Gardner (R); Senator Bill M. Harris (R); Sen. Jay Hottinger (R); Scott R. Nein (R); Sen. W. Scott Oelslager (R); Sen. Mark Mallory (D); Sen. Leigh E. Herrington (D), Ranking Minority; Sen. Daniel Brady (D); Sen. Greg D. DiDonato (D).

If you received an unfair trial but had no recourse because the rules were slanted from the start, take your trial transcripts to the homes of these public servants and show them how you could have demonstrated your innocence if only you had the chance. But, they work long hours, so to catch them at home, you might want to wait until about 2:00 in the morning. And don't pound on their doors;

just sit in the driveway and honk your horn until the lights come on. Then yell to their window: "Senator, I was innocent and I got fucked!" They like that.

For Senator Gregory DiDonato, you'll have to hang out in the post office in New Phillie. It seems Greg doesn't want crackpots to know where he lives, but you can use the same method for meeting him that you used on Annie Womer-Benjamin. Or, in a pinch, you can contact Leigh E. Herrington who lives on Harden Road in Ravenna. Nice neighborhood, and her name sounds kind of like a soap opera starlet. In an emergency, tell her you need to see Greg and then maybe read her some romantic poetry. She'll give you his address. She may even want to go with you, cruisin' the 'hood and checkin' out the opportunities for ex-cons.

Judiciary Committee, Criminal Justice, House of Representatives

The senate has their own committee and so does the house of representatives. They do that so everyone can get a shot at kicking criminals. Neither committee seems to do anything good for the public, but they can take all the credit for the latest legislation that helps shovel poor and minority people into prison by the truckload. So, after hanging out on the lawns of these fine senators listed above, head over to the homes of: Ann Womer-Benjamin (R), Chair; Robert Latta (R), Vice-Chair; Dean DePiero (D); Jamie Callender (R); Keith Faber (R); Jeanine Perry (D); Shirley Smith (D); John Williamowski (R); Tom Brinkman (R); Jim Hughes (R); Edward Jerse (D); Peter Jones (D); Linda Reidelbach (R); Derrick Seaver (D); Bill Seitz (R); Barbara Sykes (D); Ron Young (R).

This laundry list reads like a Who's Who of the Ohio Nazi Party, every single one of these freeloaders taking credit for "getting tough" every time one of them came up with something new and sick and twisted. You can contact each one of them by referencing the roster for the House of Representatives—except for Annie Womer-Benjamin (and I already discussed the strategy for getting face-time with Annie), Derrick Seaver, and Barbara Sykes. To get their addresses, contact other democrats on this committee. Or, you can call their administrative aides, claiming to be some other representative's aide, and ask for their home phone numbers. Derrick Seaver's administrative aide is Erik Rousch and Barbie Sykes' aide is Ramona Ragland.

"Hi, Erik? This is Tim Gardner from Peter Jones' Office. We can't find Representative Seavers' home phone. Can you get that for me?" Or you could call Senate Clerk Matthew Shuler. Some college kid in his office will likely answer the phone and give you any information you want if you sound legitimate.

Other Stuff

There you have the primary committees keeping people down in the systems of justice and corrections. You may be surprised at what you can do as just one parolee showing up at dinner time in your best Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes and putting a human face on the tragedy these people inflict. Until this article, they probably never had to worry about ex-cons darkening their doorsteps.

If these people get snotty or short with you, just keep in mind that these people aren't normal like you and me. And, keep in mind you have their names, addresses, and phone numbers. You can call the front desk of their local police stations (don't use 911 because they record those) and tell them you suspect a guy at such-and-such road is beating his wife. The cops will go out to the senator's house at 2:00 in the morning and check. And you didn't lie so long as you suspect that, through the course of their marriage, the senator has probably hit his wife. You didn't say the senator was beating his wife *right then*.

And you can order pizza to their house. Check in the phone book. There might be a dozen pizza places around their home that deliver. You can keep them in pizza around the clock, especially if you work with friends in shifts. Flower delivery. Even construction firms will arrive at their homes, ready to pave the whole lawn, and the senator won't know why. Call and complain to the gas company on his behalf about the cost of gas and demand that they turn it off. Give them your senator's address. Send them yearly Ramadan cards in Arabic filled with baby powder to keep their skin soft.

The system of deculturation limits reading consumption to specific social and political viewpoints consistent with the prisoners' submission. No free thought or real variety of views, nothing to challenge the multi-dimensional attack on prisoners' minds.

Prisoners do not have computer or internet access. In fact, in Ohio, as technology increases, the availability of technology for prisoners has gone in reverse. While a decade ago, prisoners could purchase word processors, with the advent of even greater technologies, prisoners now cannot purchase typewriters with any memory storage at all. If something more revolutionary than laptop food the market, prisoners may find ourselves chiseling our ideas onto stone tablets.

Listening materials too are screened and banned by the Screening Committee. Prisoners will not possess any Ice-T, no cop-killing. Tupac and Rage Against the Machine and System of a Down are banned completely and their titles are added to the banned list almost as soon as they are released. Even the selections and compilations that gain extensive radio airplay cannot come into prison. Rag can roll down Rodeo with a shotgun, but they cannot get over the prison fences.

This amounts to more than just security; the prison system eliminates content that could raise the consciousness of prisoners and open our eyes to the real work of deculturation and social distortion that our class enemy imposes upon us. The real consideration, despite any policy written for public consumption, is to control political and social messages. The oppressed masses in prison cannot hear Tupac tell the truth about racism in his radio hit, "Change," but we can hear Lynard Skynard defend the South in support of the segregationist governor of Alabama in "Sweet Home Alabama."

A number of revolutionary groups, leftists, and radicals have attempted to expand prisoner consciousness by offering free book programs. In response, the State has conjured up a number of ever-changing rules and regulations that free book distributors must meet. From state to state and prison to prison, these rules vary. Some prisons require an invoice; some require senders to identify themselves as publishers or distributors; some demand the book must be new and not used; that book are paperback; that the sender envelope does not have address stickers; and on and on.

Further, the content of the book must conform to any potential Mail Nazi's interpretation of the criteria written straight from federal case law, and he or she may simply replace his or her legitimate criteria with whatever rationale he or she decides. Possibly, the most mundane and superficial criticisms of the pig establishment will get books tossed onto the trash heap of history. As a person example, mail staff at Toledo Correctional once withheld printed material and would not permit me to know the sender nor the content of the material; I was ordered to make a decision in disposing of material when I did not know what it was. Corrections Reception Center withheld material on the grounds that it incited violence. The withheld material was a series of pamphlets published by Amnesty International, the human rights organization, sent to me by a pacifist Catholic priest.

Most recently, material sent by the Maoist Internationalist Movement was withheld on the ground that it was possibly racist and anti-American because "American" was spelled "Amerikkkan." No one exists for anyone to be pro-American, whatever that means. A week later, a book was sent condemning racism in the Georgia prison system and the same mailroom withheld it as well, using their position, it would seem, to defend the good name of the Georgia Ku Klux Klan.

The real aim of mailroom supervisor Captain Fullenkamp is to limit available reading material, control available ideas and perspectives, limit information, and thereby create a predictable outcome for a whole prison population just as dumb and narrow and reactionary as the Captain Fullenkamps of the world.

On many occasions, my own views were so radical that I could not have published copies of my own work mailed to me because my own radical ideas might incite me. I am not permitted to read my own writings.

All of these restrictions on the flow of information to prisoners leaves us only to a steady diet of sources approved by the deculturation machinery. The restrictions serve the two-fold purposes of separating us from cultural influences and consciousness-raising materials, and it simultaneously reinforces the process of deculturation with the information that it does permit us to receive.

Wardens and administrators earn their stripes not in reforming people, but in cutting the cost of pennies from the operating budget by reducing the serving size for the mashed potatoes. They defend the State's bottom line, largely oblivious to the final product their institutions produce.

Not only do "Cage Your Rage" and other such state-offered programs fail to incorporate current research in the social sciences, the programs often teach directly contrary to the findings of the sciences. So, as an end result, the prisoner receives misinformation more likely to do harm than good, and when he or she applies it to his or her life and continues to subsequently fail, the prisoner concludes that he or she is irreparable even beyond the social sciences; that not even the best programs and processes can fix his or her malfunction.

In truth, the prison system is the root cause and principle, aggravating factor to that malfunction. Prior to my own parole hearing in August of 2005, I attended more than 20 mandatory pre-release classes, most taught by a member of the prison staff. Despite the given topic of any of the classes, almost all digressed into nothing more than a naked sales pitch urging all of us to sell our labor when we leave prison. The prison provided us with lectures on getting a job, so that we would prostitute ourselves to the forces of capital. Hours of preparation went into the sole purpose of persuading us to turn ourselves into marketable commodities to be exploited for the profits of others. In this way, after all the other processes have thoroughly incapacitated the prisoner, this final process gets prisoners to focus on the future as tomorrow's over-worked and under-paid ditch-digger, completely disarmed of any other viable options and forced to submit to the dominant culture of capital.

In order for all of these components of deculturation to work effectively, however, they must be employed within a system of controlled information flow, making it impossible for the prisoner to receive effective, alternative concepts. That dimension of information control proves as important as all the other weapons in the State's arsenal.

Information Controls

If not for information controls during this regimen of distortion, forces from outside of the system could combat the work being conducted upon prisoners' minds; they could undo or diminish the effects of deculturation.

In some prison systems, prisoners gain access to movies released on DVD and VHS but the prison selects the movies to be shown, and those movies are approved by a mechanism called the Screening Committee. Movies that have been withheld from prisoner viewing include "American History X" where a white protagonist swears off his racist gang affiliations because he realizes the dogma of racism is a tool to manipulate him—a conclusion that the prisons do not want prisoners in a racially divided atmosphere to reach; "Con Air," on the grounds that prisoners may learn a new method of escape, even though the movie was shown on network television; and "Amistad," where Black slaves revolt against the white capitalist oppressor who has intended to use the slaves as marketable commodities to the capitalist's benefit—a scary scenario to prison authorities maintaining order on a modern-day slave ship.

Documentaries, histories, biopics—nothing of substance happens on the prison's in-house movie channels. In fact, in most jurisdictions, cable cannot be found. Prisoners cannot subscribe to A & E or the History Channel. The prison confines the message from outside sources as much as it confines prisoners. In this way, news comes from only the corporate-owned network sources that work hand-in-glove with global capital and U.S. Empire. This provides prisoners only the warped and distorted perception of the world preferred by nine out of ten capitalist slave-owners.

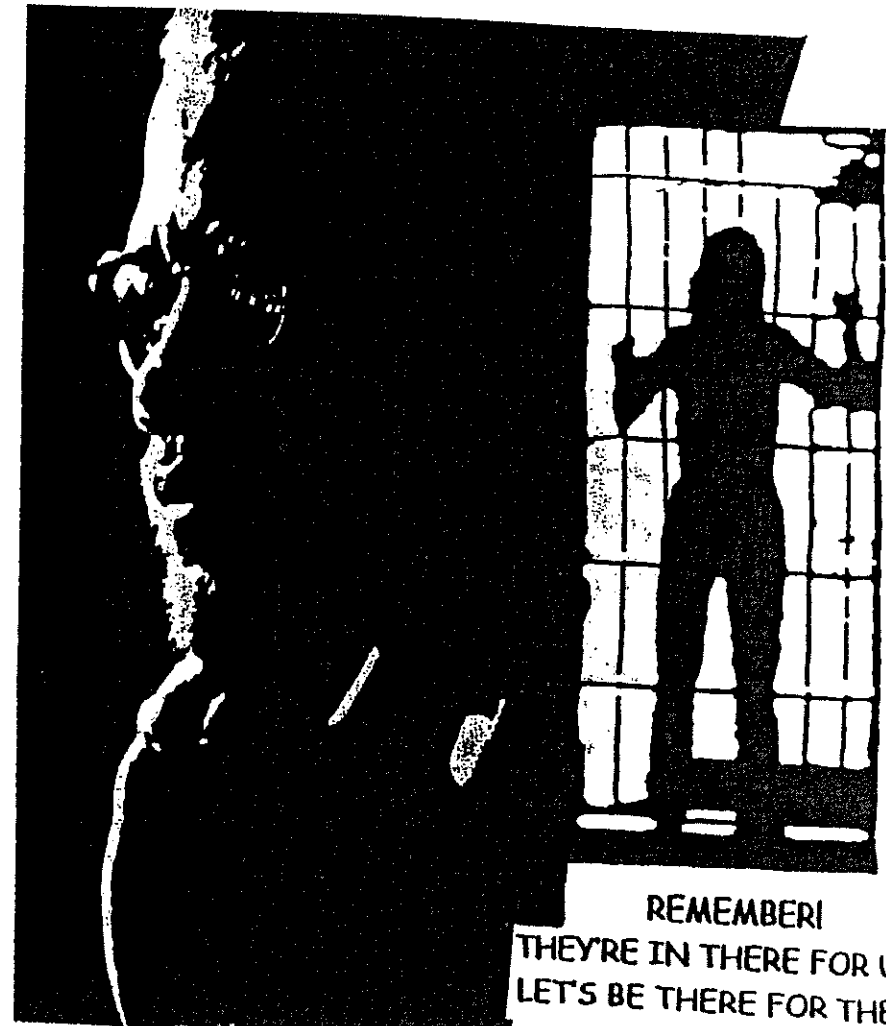
Prison libraries, mandated by law, conform nicely to the culture of the capitalist slave-master. Prison libraries offer thousands of pulp fiction selections designed to distract the captive audience. Prisoners can read biographies of presidents and public figures, but will find no Howard Zinn or Noam Chomsky, no Ward Churchill or Angela Davis. The shelves are void of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Huey P. Newton, and Cornel West. In the Toledo Correctional Institution library, *On Civil Disobedience* has been torn out of a collection of literature where Adam Smith's writings on capitalism still remain.

At the very least, make sure someone is calling them regularly. You have to check on their safety. After all, if legislators will get snotty with you, imagine what they will do if confronted by somebody dangerous.

You can get the committee meeting schedules from the clerk's office if you want to attend meetings. They may even offer coffee and donuts.

You can also branch off on your own. Contact the Ways and Means Committee and tell them you have just gotten out of prison. You need ways and means to get to your job. Contact the Transportation Committee and ask to borrow their cars. Get active. Get political. Get involved.

If you know somebody in prison or somebody who just got out, give them this resource. If you live in another State, contact the clerk of the state senate and get this same information about your legislators. Be sure and share it with my publishers. It's your civic duty.



ANALYSIS OF THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CULTURE WAR EMPLOYED AGAINST PRISONERS IN THE CURRENT SLAVE COMPLEX

"The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed..."

—from, *I Write What I Like*,
By Stephen Biko

"...[T]he relentless attempts of totalitarian regimes to prevent free thought and new ideas and persistent assertion of their own rightness being on them an intellectual stasis... Intimidation and propaganda work in a duet of oppression, while the people, lapped in fear and distrust, learn to dissemble and to keep silent..."

—from, "In Quest of Democracy,"
By Aung San Suu Kyi

"...[The colonized] do not even need to be exterminated anymore. No, the most urgent thing... is to humiliate them, to wipe out the pride in their hearts, to reduce them to the level of animals. The body will be allowed to live on but the spirit will be destroyed. Tame, train, punish: those are the words that obsess the colonizer..."

—from, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*
By Ward Churchill

"...Rehabilitation never offered mental health, just the reverse. It involved communication only with staff, who are not worth any contact at all. To listen to their philosophy or accept their outlook will destroy you..."

—from, *Revolutionary Suicide*
By Huey P. Newton

A Quick Note to the Reader

In the following analysis, I have attempted to demonstrate how tools of cultural genocide that have been honed throughout U.S. history are now employed effectively and with predictable results upon the imprisoned. I describe processes as I have witnessed them in operation, and I attribute to the State a motive for their current use, consistent with the State's motive for their previous uses.

However, you will note in the title that I have used the term "Culture War" rather than "Cultural Genocide." I do this because, possibly to my own detriment, I am not qualified to argue that "the imprisoned" compose a particular class or group, that we share a unified identity that makes us the *geno* against which genocide is employed. Such an argument becomes difficult because the State contends it treats prisoners as it does not for what we *are* but for what we *do*. In previous eras, Native Americans were targeted for who they *were*, not for what they *did*. Slaves too were subjected to cultural genocide for who they *were*. While the same weapons and methods employed in the genocide of both of those groups are now employed by the State against the imprisoned, the state has a veneer of legitimacy when it claims it targets us for *what we have done* and not for *who we are*.

Of course, this is a lie; one may effectively argue that the laws are passed by the rich to outlaw the activities of the poor, and one may argue as well that it is more than just ironic that the minority groups targeted for cultural genocide now comprise the majority of the imprisoned against whom the same methods of genocide are being employed.

You will not encounter this theology in prison either. You will not hear prisoners urged to exercise their collective power to reform corrupted social institutions like the one kicking them in the head. The real redemptive and empowering truth is withheld in favor of a message that will keep prisoners preoccupied and focused upon themselves in negative terms. While the prisoners need the proverbial loaf of bread or fish, we get handed snakes and stones. We get the theology of reactionary suicide.

Defenders of the fascist order often point to the educational programs and rehabilitative process offered by the prisons in support of their argument that the prison system is a social good rather than a destructive weapon used against the poor. Like every other aspect of the prison system, the programs represent harm to prisoners rather than any constructive benefit.

In many institutions, a large percentage of prisoners are high school drop-outs. They never graduated from the under-funded and crumbling inner-city schools. When entering prisons, they may enroll in the GED program and receive instruction, most often, from state employees who accept employment in prison because they could not obtain a job elsewhere, and that employee gets paid whether anyone learns or not. As a result, over a 5-year period in the State of Ohio, for example, federal grants allotted to the Ohio Central School System increased geometrically as prisoners failed to graduate from the program while more entered it.

Further, prisoner failure is a benefit to the prison, which funnels large amounts of the grant money into operating budgets. The longer the prisoners stay, the fuller the prison's coffers get.

College programs work much the same way. Instructors who most often teach only at the prison design courses "dummied down" for the prison population, grading the coursework on a curve a sometimes teaching directly to the test in the class period just before the exam. Prisoners who attend college before prison set a drastic elevation of grade-point average that coincides with a much lower retention.

Prisoners aware of the "dummy-down" phenomenon keep silent because of the short-term success in college, not foreseeing the long-term harm when their watered-down education cannot work to improve their lots when they resume lives outside of the prison walls. The colleges, in turn, participate in this fraud because the inflated grades and unearned certificates they offer will attract prisoner students and the government-guaranteed funding that goes directly to the colleges. The funding more than pays for the college programs, and the profit gets diverted to the main campus. Further, participation in the prison fraud pads minority enrollment for many lily-white university campuses that can then afford to raise tuition to the degree that only well-to-do students may enroll and receive the substance of an education sorely lacking in the fraudulent prison programs.

In the end result, poor people receive a worthless college education in prison while the wealthy, predominantly white, privileged classes receive the fullness of education on campus. The arrangement serves another latent purpose in that it disarms the revolutionary potential of college campuses that was unleashed in the 1960s.

The era of the 1960s saw the first opportunity for working-class children to gain access to college education *en masse*, and college campuses went up in a firestorm of student protest against a number of social injustices, from civil rights to the war in Vietnam. Now, the most revolutionary segments receive a watered-down curriculum behind bars and fences where they cannot generate any influence over the larger segment of the student body.

In this way, the imprisoned are not only stunted, but society-at-large is directly impacted by the absence of revolutionary forces for social change that remain absent decade after decade. The germs of the right in the political spectrum correlates directly to the imprisonment of revolutionary left and its containment (and subsequent extinction) behind prison walls.

As for rehabilitative programming, more often than not it is a hodge-podge of pop-psychology packaged as a cure-all and fed to prisoners by clueless staff who do not have the training to properly administer the program in the first place. One must keep in mind that the prison administration is normally composed of graduates from the social sciences. More commonly, wardens and administrators possess business degrees and know more or less about the process of social transforming offenders into citizens as they know about how to build an atom bomb.

This applies, of course, for those who have an opportunity to procreate. The prison system forecloses on the possibility of procreation for the vast majority of its captives. In this way, the prison system serves the latent function of population control for the poor and ethnic minorities, as well as negating the possibility of those same groups to pass on culture to the next generation, who is never born.

In the jurisdictions where conjugal visits are permitted, they are confined to prisoners who have state-recognized marriages. Thus, the possibility of procreation and the transmission of culture to the next generation is limited to only those who live according to the dictates of the ruling elite and recognize the institution of marriage and family as the elite define it.

Beyond prohibitions for conjugal contact, the prison system forbids, by rule, masturbation. Thus, from every angle, sexual expression and release are outlawed. This is quite interesting that the wealthy who own lawmakers identify their class enemies, confine them, and then impose a strange demand of asexuality upon them, distorting the normal person into something dysfunctional, repressed, and disordered. The capitalist's lackeys impose by force their own cultural virtue of abstinence which they promote as a solution to overpopulation, birth control, and the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases.

In conjunction with all of the other components employed to deculturate and dehumanize the prisoner, one can easily foresee survivors of this process being incapable of forming deep or lasting relationships, incapable of trust, deprived of the tools for meaningful interpersonal relationships, unable to perform responsibilities and duties of a parent or sibling or child or citizen.

This system is clearly designed to create those ends.

With nowhere else to turn for solace, some prisoners take refuge in religious services offered to them by the prison system. What many of those prisoners do not recognize, however, is that the religious services, often provided by paid employees of the prison, serve as another control component to alter and neutralize the potential of prisoners.

Some, if not most, of the clergy genuinely care about the prisoners generally. In many instances, these clergy may not even know the scope and depth of their assistance in this system of hobbling prisoners. The end result is the same:

The vast majority of state-paid clergy are white, protestant fundamentalist Christians steeped in a particular concept of man in the world, a very conservative and reactionary theology. They provide prisoners something they call religion, but the message inextricably interfuses itself with political and social undercurrents. This version of Christianity stresses law and order; it reinforces traditional gender role stereotypes; it views humankind as sinful and wretched and fallen and helpless; it demonizes liberals and leftists and radicals as godless; it defends the status quo, the State as ordained by God, blind patriotism and nationalism, and it accepts passivity and obedience to authority as a virtue.

This particular sect of Christianity that shares such a view of God and the world is a small fringe of even the so-called Christian believers worldwide. However, this small fringe has monopolized the public arena as if it speaks for all of Christianity, and its doctrines and theology fit nicely with the aims of U.S. Empire and the domination and subjugation of the poor of the world. This understanding diametrically opposes the emerging liberation theology of Central and South America, which holds that God has preferential love for the poor and oppressed, that understands Jesus of Nazareth as a radical and revolutionary whose teachings posed a dangerous threat to the status quo of the occupying Roman Empire and the Jewish Sanhedrin that kept the masses cooperative. You will not learn liberation theology from your typical prison chaplain.

The fundamentalist view fed to the prisoner is also diametrically opposed to the emerging theology in Africa and the concept of social or collective redemption which Archbishop Desmond Tutu described in his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. By his construct, we are all collectively responsible for the social institutions created within our communities and social order, and we are all collectively responsible for the actions of those institutions. Implicit in this view is the concept of communal sin or communal grace.

When these arguments are made effectively—and they should be—I will gladly change the title of this analysis from “Culture War” to “Cultural Genocide.” I firmly believe the imprisoned represent a specific group: The potential revolutionary, the most likely to defy the demands of a fascist, reactionary control state. I believe we are the new savages, the new slaves, and we are subject to cultural genocide at the hands of a ruthless State not for *what we do* but for the potential of *who we would otherwise become* if not for the cultural genocide.

In other words, this cultural genocide is designed to assassinate Crazy Horse and Malcolm X, to abort Cochise and Assata Shakur while they are still in the womb, before they ever actualize. The State has adopted the philosophy that Bob Marley eloquently attributes to Sheriff John Brown: “Kill it before it grows.”

Kill it before it grows.

The State kills the revolutionary potential of the proletariat. That is the true function of the prison slave complex as it employs the tools of cultural genocide.

Sean Swain

Toledo Correctional Institution

October 1, 2005

Introduction

If you currently number among the more than 2 million oppressed souls trapped in the genocidal machinery of America's prison-slave complex, your enemy now wages an undeclared war against you. And if you are unaware of the war that is being waged, you are likely losing.

The richness and diversity of poor and minority culture, the identity of the individual and his or her own perception of belongingness to a particular and distinct group, gets crushed under the weight of a system where reactionary forces control every aspect of the captives' lives and bombard them from every angle with a manufactured, imposed culture and an ulterior political agenda, a consistent series of messages that seep into captives' bones and tissue until their potential defiance is utterly destroyed. This system of deculturation and reculturation relies upon mountains of psychological and sociological data and decades of trial and error in its multi-dimensional attack: its purpose is to disarm, to tame, to punish, and leave captives functionally destroyed.

The Culture War. Waged every minute of every day, infecting every aspect of prison life, it manifests itself in prisoners' grooming and appearance, in the social restrictions imposed upon prisoners, and in the various forms of information that prisoners are permitted or not permitted to access. This analysis of the Culture War is confined to these 3 dimensions.

Grooming and Appearance

The State begins to dismantle your sense of who you are from your first few minutes in their custody. They strip you of your clothing and your jewelry and subject you to mandatory, uniform haircuts. Because our sense of ourselves is inextricably linked to our appearance and our expression of our identity—our clothing, our hair, makeup, piercings, jewelry—the State strips us of those expressions, stripping away our very identities.

Men have heads shaved while in most jurisdictions women do not, except as punishment. The State's rationale for shaving men's heads is “hygiene,” which seems an odd justification in light of the State *not* shaving women's heads. This would indicate the State wants men to be cleaner than women, except for women who create a problem and get their heads shaved like the men.

The real reason for the haircut policy is for the State to gain power over us and impose its standards; men have short hair and groomed in certain styles, while women have longer hair and groomed in certain styles. Prisoners must conform to traditional gender roles as those roles are understood by the reactionary forces controlling the prison system. Thus, our hair must reflect the standards imposed by the old, white, wealthy ruling class.

The State provides uniform clothing and, in most jurisdictions, personal clothing is very restricted, if permitted at all. In many jurisdictions, the State permits purchase of specific styles and specific solid colors only, limiting the expression of self to the same, limited choices provided every other prisoner. The rules most often forbid piercings, jewelry, or the process of tattooing.

This reception and deculturation process models to a great degree the same system employed in residential schools set up for the systematic genocide of Native American children who were pulled from their families and forced into government "schools." The heads of males were shaved, students were provided uniforms to destroy their sense of individual identity, and they were reculturated to be like "little white people," according to Ward Churchill's *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*. The State now imposes the very same, effective processes to dismantle prisoners.

Interesting, but when the State strips us of our identities and provides us uniform clothing, it does not provide tailored suits and ties. It does not hand us starched white shirts and wing-tip shoes. Such clothing would impress upon the prisoners a sense of upward possibility, a perception of self-dignity and association with the stereotype of success. Instead, the State hands us uniforms similar to those worn by janitors. We are stripped of individual identities and turned us into thousands of refrigerator repair workers. We are dressed like those who sell their labor to the rich capitalist, reinforcing our place in the economic system, reinforcing the abandonment of all hope for any degree of wealth and comfort, because the world needs ditch diggers.

The clothing and identification worn most often on shirt collars are designed to define us. In *Revolutionary Suicide*, Huey P. Newton points out the history of giving prison numbers dates back to the Nazi SS. Through stripping us of our expression of ourselves and by controlling the definition of who we are through our clothing and appearance, the State kills us as individuals and re-makes us in its own image.

Social Restrictions

In most prison systems, prisoners must work mandatory jobs unless medically exempt. We clean showers, dump trash, mop floors, prepare and serve meals, and maintain the process of the prison slavery system, and we do it for pennies a day. Refusal to work results in punitive deprivations designed to warp and distort human beings.

We must abandon any notion regarding the morality of labor and embrace the capitalist slave system's work ethic. We have no right to protest work conditions, no right to strike, no right to demand or request higher pay. We are at the arbitrary whim of those in control. In this way, the State breaks the horses for the capitalists. The State takes those most likely to rebel against the authorities, calls them "offenders," and reculturates us to silently take our place at the assembly line or burger grill.

As the signs over the entrances of the Nazi concentration camps used to say, "Hard work will set you free." It was a lie then, too.

The pittance we may receive in pay for labor cannot be spent as we please. All purchases come from our prison accounts, subject to approval of administrators. We need permission to even send money to family members. In some prison systems, we can only send money to approved visitors on the approved list, and only a limited number of people can be placed on that list.

The State forces us to purchase clothing or electronic items from approved catalog vendors that overprice cheap and often damaged re-sale merchandise that free people already returned for refund. We must purchase expensive junk.

In some systems that permit State-sponsored fund drives, the State permits purchases of food from a specific outside source of the State's choosing. On order forms we fill out, we see fine print that if we are placed in segregation, we forfeit both the payment and product we purchased. So, if a guard has it in for you, he can write a bogus write-up, toss you in the hole, and then eat the pizza you bought from a disaster relief fund drive.

The limitation of choice and economic rights reacclimatizes you to be poor, to accept the injustice of the marketplace and workplace, to defer to the judgment of those in authority, those in power who exploit you. You are learning to accept being swindled, learning to accept broken junk, learning to grovel and beg from bent knees rather than to stand and demand.

The State limits you in what you are permitted to do with the junk and the rags it permits you to purchase for inflated prices. You are not permitted to sell it, loan it out, to rent it out to others. The State does not allow gifts. Kindness and compassion are outlawed.

It may seem strange that a rehabilitation system designed to turn offenders into law-abiding citizen would outlaw kindness. And, if it was really a rehabilitation system, it *would* be strange. But it isn't. It is a debilitation system and the prohibition against kindness destroys the social bonds between the poor and marginalized, increases distrust between us, encourages a dysfunctional and pervasive sense of constant competition and danger and war, a Hobbesian world of all against all.

This element of the deculturation process creates brigades of paranoids hoarding our worthless junk incapable of transmitting anything beneficial to families, friends, or neighbors. By outlawing kindness, the act of giving, the prison system encourages selfish and narrow thinking and enforces callousness. It subconsciously reinforces the very capitalist inclination to kick the bum on the sidewalk rather than to buy him a cup of coffee.

Prisoners cannot engage in collective efforts. We cannot sign petitions, we cannot vote, we cannot organize a group function. Any prisoner-created organization is labeled a gang, no matter what its function or purpose. We are divided and conquered, every individual forced to accept powerlessness in the looming shadow of the all-powerful State. In this way, we are prepared for acceptance of our long-term powerlessness. We are trained to see power as something that emanates from the select few who run the world, and we are taught that we, the masses, possess no power.

It may seem that a rehabilitation system designed to turn offenders into citizens of a representative republic would forbid us from practicing democracy, forbid us from engaging in social and collective efforts, forbid us from acting in any way in our collective self-interest. And yes, it would seem strange if this was a rehabilitation system. It is not. It is a system designed to debilitate and the poor and ethnic minorities by destroying our ability to act for ourselves and organize in any way.

In the land of the free and the home of the brave, a sprawling system holds more than 2 million people hostage, forcibly and violently un-learning their ability to participate in democracy.

God bless America.

We also unlearn family bonds. The State severely limits visiting and family contact by imposing strict rules enforced by petty and malicious staff, and by the placement of most prisons in rural areas away from the population centers where offenders are harvested. Thus, over the course of long durations, prisoners forget or never learn how to be good fathers or mothers, good sons or daughters. Our only points of reference come from dehumanizing staff in socially- and psychologically destructive settings.

This process of separating hand-picked victims of State-sponsored deculturation was perfected in residential schools designed for cultural genocide of the Native Americans. The residential schools took children from their families and kept them separated for years, for a decade, sometimes longer. Some children never saw home or family again. As Professor Ward Churchill set forth, Native American children were taken from home, placed in the residential schools, and were forced to perform labor. Robbed of their identity, scarred and abused, those who survived were in many instances incapable of being functional parents and instead passed on their own tortured incapacity to their children. In this way, one generation of victims transmits the deculturation to the next generation of hobbled and dismantled souls.

This process, perfected in the genocide of Native Americans, is now employed against the people the State designates as "offenders." And, just as with the residential schools the current victims of deculturation pass it on to their children, who have a vastly greater chance of going to prison simply by having a parent in prison. Not only is this a living version of the proverbial sins of the father passed on to the son; it is the sickness of the State contagiously passed among the poor and marginalized.