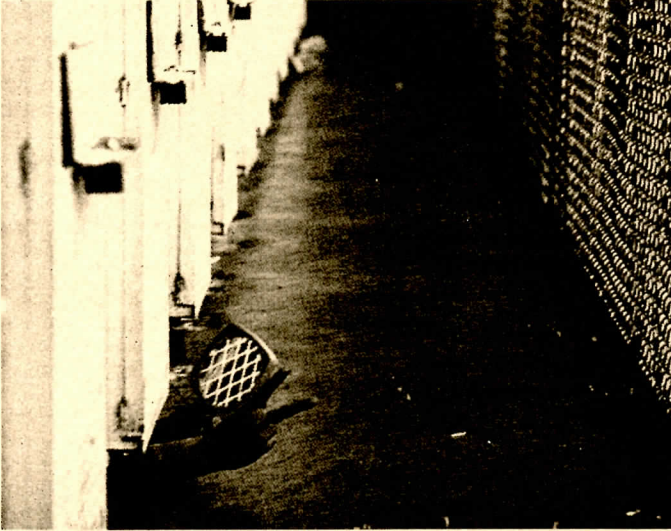


CLOSE MARION AND LEXINGTON CONTROL UNIT PRISONS



The Control Unit is a relatively new technique developed by the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. These units, which are unmatched in terms of their calculated brutality, are used as an attack on all prisoners in the U.S. prison system - the largest in the world. They are particularly used to single out political leaders and others who dare to speak out as an example of what is in store for those who fight for a human society. Control Unit prisons must be closed! Please read this pamphlet to find out how you can help to accomplish this crucial task.

THE MARION CONTROL UNIT

Marion was opened in 1963 to replace Alcatraz Prison, which was closed that same year. Marion is the most maximum security prison in the country. It is the experimental laboratory and trendsetter for the whole federal prison system. Here, the Bureau of Prisons established the Control Unit--a "prison within a prison" where prisoners have been subjected to sensory deprivation and solitary confinement. In the early years at Marion, prison officials experimented with the use of drugs on Control Unit prisoners. Marion also uses "boxcars"--small, enclosed, soundproof boxes in which prisoners are placed--as a means of psychological torture.

In October 1983, two guards were killed in isolated incidents by two prisoners. Although there was no prison riot, authorities seized this opportunity to violently repress the entire prison population. They turned the prison into one huge Control Unit. Since that date, the 350 men imprisoned at Marion have experienced brutal, dehumanizing conditions:

- * For 23 hours a day, prisoners are locked in individual cells, denied contact with each other and forced into total idleness.
- * During the initial stage of the lockdown, 60 guards equipped with riot gear were shipped in from other prisons, and assisted Marion guards in systematically beating approximately 100 handcuffed and defenseless prisoners.
- * All Control Unit prisoners are subjected to humiliating finger probes of the rectum every time they leave the unit for a court date, hospital visit, etc.
- * All contact visits were ended--no prisoner can touch or be touched by family or loved ones.
- * Prison authorities shut down work programs, group educational activities and congregational religious services.

In its efforts to justify its actions, the Bureau of Prisons tries to perpetuate the myth that Marion contains "the most vicious, predatory prisoners in the system." The fact is that the criteria for placement at Marion are intentionally vague, and that 80% of the men there are eligible for placement at less restrictive prisons. Although some infamous felons are placed at Marion, the prison also houses people sentenced to short terms for victimless crimes and people imprisoned for their political beliefs and activities.

In fact, the Marion Control Unit was never really designed to contain "vicious, predatory prisoners." The Bureau of Prisons established the Control Unit in July 1972, in response to a peaceful prisoner protest against the guard beating of a Mexican prisoner. About 60 prisoners were placed in isolated, sensory deprivation cells. With the Marion Control Unit, prison officials hoped to extinguish their spirit of protest, resistance and solidarity.

As predicted from its inception, the Control Unit produces in prisoners feelings of intense rage and helplessness that are inevitably expressed in violence--either against themselves or against others. Over the years, many prisoners have committed suicide or have turned on other prisoners or guards. Since the entire prison was locked down in 1983, three prisoners have been killed by other prisoners and several stabbings have occurred. The Marion prison lockdown is a bloody failure--it promotes the very violence it claims to be trying to prevent.

Top prison officials have made it clear they intend to permanently maintain the lockdown status, in spite of Congressional and church inquiries, and a class action lawsuit by the prisoners.

Lexington: Control Unit for Women

Taking lessons learned from Marion, the Bureau of Prisons has built a maximum security unit for women prisoners in the Lexington, Kentucky Federal Prison. It is located in the basement of a high security building, totally separate from the rest of the prison. It is literally a dungeon.

The Control Unit at Lexington is the first of its kind in the country—a special unit designed with the express purpose of breaking women political prisoners. What are conditions like in Lexington?

- * The women are never allowed contact with other prisoners.
- * The cells are painted bright white to produce feelings of disorientation.
- * The few windows in the unit are covered with screens to prevent the women from seeing the outside.
- * The women are never free from the eyes of either guards or video cameras.

- * Visits are restricted to family members and attorneys; no friends are allowed to visit. Visiting takes place in a "special" room and is of shorter duration than visits allowed to other prisoners at Lexington.
- * The women are required to wear special uniforms to identify them at all times as "high security" prisoners.
- * The women are guarded by twice as many guards as other prisoners.

Placement in the Lexington Control Unit, as with Marion, has already proven to be completely arbitrary. There is one significant difference—the head of the entire prison system makes the final decision about who is designated for Lexington. He has already decided, without any justification, to imprison Puerto Rican Prisoner of War Alejandrina Torres and North American Political Prisoners Susan Rosenberg and Silvia Baraldini, already the subjects of special abuse, in the Lexington Control Unit.

Lexington presents us with a qualitative change in the repression of women.

Prisons and Society

Feodor Dostoevsky once wrote that to understand a society, one should look within its prisons. What does a glimpse behind U.S. prison walls tell us about our society?

U. S. prisons hold a vast number of people of color. Black people are incarcerated at a rate of 714 per 100,000 population, six times the rate for white people in this country and almost twice the rate for Black people in South Africa! This rate is the highest in the world. Such a large number of incarcerated people constitutes a

well-defined system of population control. In fact, it is predicted that U.S. prisons (this does not include jails) will hold over 1,000,000 people by the year 2000, and that more than half will be people of color. This growth is taking place with devastating rapidity. For example, during the period of January - June, 1986, the number of prisoners in the U.S. increased by 25,630 - or more than 1000 per week! It is the case now, and has always been the case, that such increases in the imprisonment rate have nothing at all to do with the crime rate but rather reflect the ideological and economic realities of the times.

A growing disparity exists in this country between those who enjoy a comfortable life and those who must struggle to survive. It is these "have-nots" who fill the U.S. prisons. The society that delivers such a disproportionate number of Third World people to the prison doors is one that has produced a generation of Black and poor youth -- 75% of whom are unemployed, who are trapped in deteriorating public housing projects, who drop out of schools at alarming rates, who lose their lives to drugs, crime and violence.

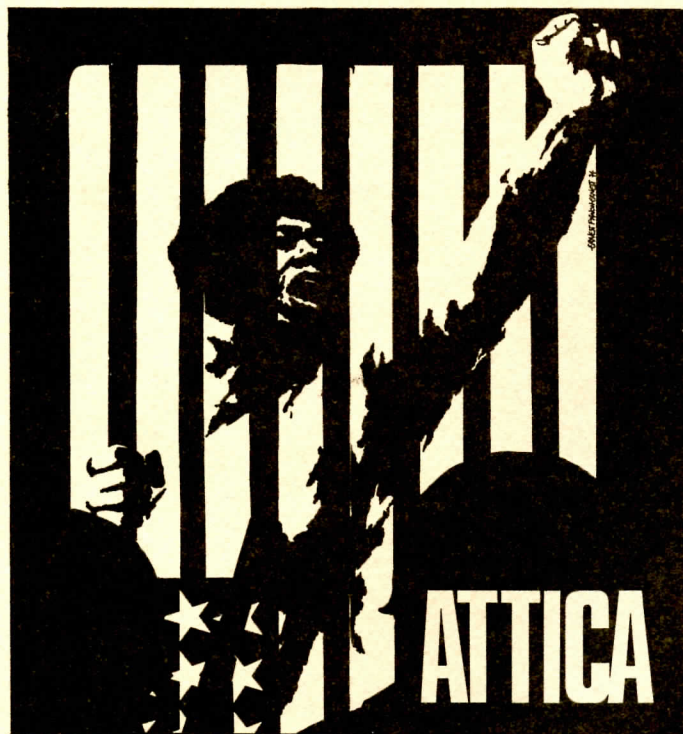
Seen together, this set of conditions seems genocidal. In part of its definition of genocide, the United Nations includes "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part."

Through its actions, the U.S. makes a clear statement: It will not grant Third World and poor people their human rights. It will not provide them with job opportunities, schools that teach, or medical care. It will, however, spend billions of dollars to build bigger and more repressive prisons--prisons which are certain to house the swelling number of unemployed Black, Third World and poor people.

What makes this government's program for social "stability" work? Law and order. Longer prison terms.



The death penalty. More prisons. More police. In the 1980's, prisons no longer pretend to rehabilitate -- they are simply warehouses. While prisons spend money on more guard towers, barbed wire, and new maximum security units, they cut the educational/vocational programs. The message is that crime is caused by bad individuals. Will society be healed by caging and electrocuting them? Attention turns away from the social, political and economic roots of crime. Instead, the individual is blamed--and since most of the blame is directed toward Black people, this leads to the criminalization of an entire people.



If prisons reflect the structure of society, they also reflect the nature of movements for social change. In the sixties, as the Civil Rights and Black Power movements grew, the number of Black political prisoners swelled and the prison struggle became a major part of the Black liberation struggle. Political prisoners like George Jackson stated clearly that prisons are an important tool in the government's effort to contain and destroy Black people's freedom.

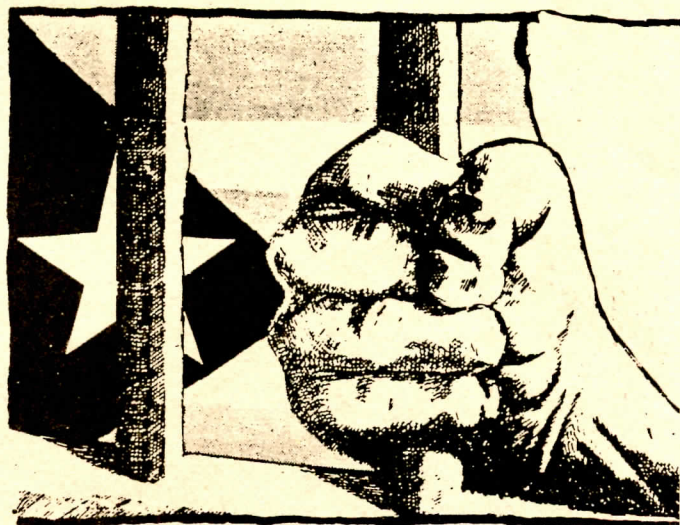
Although the government refuses to admit it, there are nearly 200 political prisoners and prisoners of war in U.S. prisons today. They come from the Puerto Rican, Black/New Afrikan and Native American liberation movements. They include progressive Christians, white anti-imperialists, draft resisters, grand jury resisters. The movements that these people represent honor, love and respect them. Yet the government contends that they are criminals or terrorists. Although the government denies the existence of political prisoners in this country, it often reserves the harshest treatment for these very people. Control Units are designed to break every prisoner's spirit. In the case of political prisoners and prisoners of war, the Control Units are part of a calculated strategy to weaken these movements and to intimidate others from taking a stand.

Legitimate Channels Unresponsive

The Marion lockdown continues despite two U.S. Congressional hearings and the recommendation of Congressional consultants that the lockdown end. The lockdown continues despite a class action lawsuit by the prisoners seeking an injunction to end it, and months of hearings in which prisoner after prisoner testified that guards have beaten them or forced them to undergo finger probes of the rectum, which the men likened to rape. The lockdown continues—and it appears that neither Congress nor the courts will provide a remedy to the prisoners from the inhumane Control Unit at Marion. We can safely speculate that these channels will also be unresponsive to the women who are placed in the Lexington Control Unit when they seek an end to such conditions.

At the same time, our own experiences participating in the anti-intervention, anti-apartheid, anti-nuclear, and disarmament movements have shown us that we also cannot rely on Congress or the courts to recognize or protect the rights of people when these rights are in conflict with the aims of the United States government. We have thus taken to the streets and demonstrated in order to expose human rights abuses caused by U.S. intervention in Central America and U.S. support for the apartheid regime of South Africa.

For the same reasons we must take to the streets and demonstrate to expose and protest the human rights abuses which occur in U.S. prisons. These abuses occur most regularly to Third World prisoners who represent the sectors most often targeted by government repression. Over the years, Marion has been a holding place for leaders of the Black/New Afrikan, Puerto Rican and Native American struggles. In the past few months, Oscar Lopez-Rivera, and Kojo (s/n Grailing Brown) have been transferred to Marion joining Sundiata Acoli and Sekou Odinga. Also transferred to Marion recently are Tim Blunk and Ray Levasseur, two North American anti-imperialist resistance fighters.



We Can Make a Difference

The Bureau of Prisons intentionally builds a wall of silence around its prisons in hopes that the public will never learn about its brutal policies. For this reason, Marion, like so many other prisons, is tucked away in a rural not easily accessible area. However, when the public calls on government and prison officials to account for their abuses, they become extremely uncomfortable and are often pressured into initiating some changes. For example, from a small group of people who began to protest the continued imprisonment of the Puerto Rican Nationalists grew a movement which led to their unconditional release in 1978. In another instance, when several hundred people demonstrated in 1983 at Alderson Prison against the punitive segregation conditions of Haydee Torres and Lucy Rodriguez, two Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, Torres and Rodriguez were transferred out of isolation. In 1984, public attention to Leonard Peltier, the Native American leader who was incarcerated at Marion, resulted in his transfer out of Marion to a less restrictive prison. We can make some changes in the situation at Marion and Lexington.

Prisons and the Movement

Since prisons reflect both the structure of society and the nature of the struggle against that structure, when we work to minimize the brutality of the prison system, we simultaneously work to support those like political prisoners and prisoners of war who have been a dynamic catalyst in the movement for a changed, humane society.

It may be that very few of us will go to prison or even know someone who goes to prison, so it may not be apparent why we should be concerned with this issue. But if we are to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem, we must fight against these racist warehouses. Only by dealing with these stark realities, only by making these kinds of sacrifices, can we build a movement that will some day be an alternative to this system and its repression.

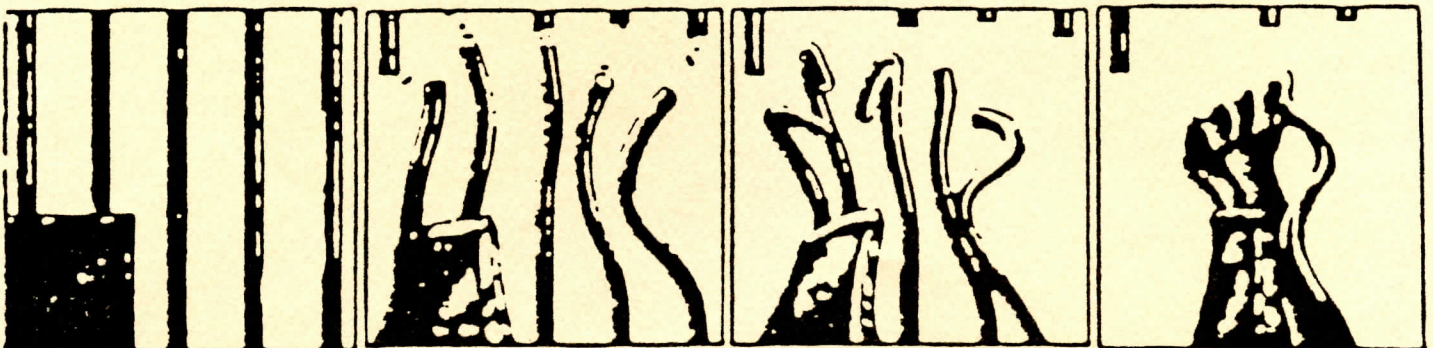
Turn Knowledge Into Action

The wall of silence around prisons will work only if we let it--out of sight, out of mind. Historically, most of us have become aware of prisons only after some terrible, violent event occurs, such as after the 1971 National Guard massacre of 41 prisoners who rebelled at Attica Prison against racist and oppressive conditions. Yet, right now the prisoners at Marion are experiencing physical and psychological violence on a daily basis. Many of us now know about these conditions. The question is, what will we do with this awareness. As Rafael Cancel Miranda admonished us at a conference about Marion Prison, "we cannot just feel bad or sad, *we must do something.*" This organizing process is one opportunity for us to do something--to fight against the brutality of Marion and the new Control Unit at Lexington; to place ourselves in solidarity with those who have been leading the struggle for a new society; and to say that we would rather work on the side of the battle for justice than sit idly by as others wage the battle for us.

THE COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN

The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown is trying to generate concern and action among white North Americans over the issues of Control Units in specific and the prison system in general. Black/New Afrikan and Puerto Rican organizations are going to their communities with similar appeals. We can only succeed with the broad support of many people working long and hard at this issue. For those of you who would like to get involved, you can do the following:

1. Join the CEML.
2. Arrange a speaking engagement for us at your church, school, union, etc.
3. Write to a prisoner at Marion or Lexington. Names can be obtained from the CEML.
4. Contribute to our work. Tax-deductible checks can be made out to Citizens Alert, Inc. and mailed to the CEML.



For more information, call 663-5046, or write the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, 343 S. Dearborn, Ste. 1607, Chicago, IL 60604