

PRISONERS AT MARION SPEAK OUT ON FLORENCE:

The Resistance Won't Stop

This collection of letters was gathered and assembled by the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown on the occasion of the seventh year of the Lockdown. We wrote to the prisoners and asked for their thoughts on this matter, in roughly 100 to 200 words. Many wrote us longer letters, which we had to edit down in order to complete the project on time—for the November 17, 1990 Conference. We hope that our editing has not violated any basic ideas contained in the original letters. We regret that a few letters arrived too late for inclusion.

We encourage correspondance with the prisoners. If you write, be sure to include his full name, his prison number and address: P.O. Box 1000, Marion, Illinois 62959.

The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown has produced a rich array of materials about Marion and the proliferation of control unit prisons; these are available by contacting us at the address below.

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\$1.00

JOSEPH W. DOUGHERTY, #01924-135

Arrived at Auschwitz, U.S.P. Marion, in January of 1985, out on Writ, in March 1985, returned to Marion, on June 1987.

Finally was sent to the pre-transfer program on December 1, 1989.

Was removed from the pre-transfer program on March 16, 1990, for filing too many administrative remedy complaints (BP-9's) regarding certain administrative decisions made by the parasitic staff.

I am now starting the program anew P.C.B. contaminated water, continuously abused, debased, and tortured daily by these feces faced cowardly hypocrits, with their grotesque pitiless sanctimonious bare-tooth depraved grins on their diseased faces, as they slither by your cage on their pathetic inspection tours.

I am now waiting/hoping, for a Earthquake on the magnitude of a "20" on the Richter Scale, so that all here in this pit of shame can be free, or rehabilitated once and for all.

Venceremos!

HANIF SHABAZZ-BEY, #96544-131

Where is the notorious mass murderer from California, Juan Corona, housed today? What has become of Richard Speck who in 1964 was convicted of slaying eight nurses in a Chicago hospital, or Dr. Charles McDonald, the ex-green beret officer who was convicted of murdering his wife and two young children in 1971? Are they still in state custody? The list of true sadist and serial killers who still linger in state custody goes on -- John Wayne Grayce, John Berkowitz, the hillside strangler, just to name a few.

By far the great majority of the nation's most sensational and hideous killers are housed in state custody, so it is not surprising that Florence County Commission member Bud Chess said that when you move a prison population like Marion's into Florence County, it's just a part of life. Despite all the media hype of the worst of the worst being housed at Marion, not one of the prisoners mentioned in the "Greater Denver" article of May 11, 1990 is a serial killer or charged with any psychopathic crime. Although the men housed at Marion may appear to be incarcerated for more sophisticated crimes, they are greatly outnumbered by men in state custody who are there for senseless violent crimes. So it is easy to see why the people of Florence County have no reason to be shook up due to the forthcoming arrivals from Marion.

However, what the people of Florence County should be shook up about is that this new federal complex being erected in their community is another sign of insensitiveness being displayed by the Bush administration. This administration has no goals of building more drug treatment centers for the growing number of addicts, which would decrease crime, nor are they taking steps to put more funding into education. The administration's answer to the national crisis is to build more prisons and then lock them up and throw away the keys.

The complex at Florence is one of the many that is being constructed across the country to meet the needs of the prisoncrats who know they will need more room to hold the overflowing influx of poor people coming to prison with lengthy sentences under the new federal sentencing guidelines. All this does is widen the social and economic gap between the haves and have nots.

When a nation that spends thousands of dollars each minute on military defense, and billions each year on space exploration, can come up with no better solutions to the crisis this nation is facing than building more prisons, then it is time to be shook up.

JAMES JOSEPH OWENS, #00308-131

In effect, the super max deal at Florence constitutes the epitome of vigilantism in true racist form. The act of local citizens leasing land with deliberate intent to reserve it for the use of the federal government is tantamount to federal employees conspiring and demonstrating political opinion and simultaneously campaigning. Federal law prohibits such exercises, refer to the United States Supreme Court reporter page 410-411 October term 1972. Just as shockingly, the overwhelming majority of America's public, i.e. the have nots, are numb to the genuine reality of the fact that the acceptance of such a facility as Florence is like offering themselves up for self-destruction by the United States government. Additionally, the inmates here at Marion are impressed that unity is impossible amongst convicts and self-interest is of the greatest significance.

Finally, tax dollars of grass roots people are utilized in funding this and other similar such programs. My experiences teach me that punishment for crimes proven against me are non-essential, that the government of my country wishes, in a most cruel and deliberate manner, to practice racism against one and all concerned in order to perpetuate its existence. Criminals should not be designated

to judge and control criminals.

SCOTT ROUTLEDGE, #022158-0900

I just don't know anymore about the lockdown stuff. Man it's like a nightmare I can't wake up from. I want to be able to reach out and physically touch another person. Just the casual touch you all take for granted like a pat on the shoulder or a poke in the ribs or a handshake. I want to be able to take a shower or go to the hospital or dentist or rec cage without first getting naked and bending over and spreading my cheeks. God, I'll never keep another animal as a pet in a cage for as long as I live even if I was free!

I believe this type of lockdown is destroying people psychologically and the feds with all its power to alter facts does so concerning the mental state of inmates. In the distant future, people will look back on this period of American penal history the way we today consider the inquisition, only this will be on a mind level instead of physical.

Our citizens created the greatest and most powerful government the world has ever known.

And our citizens are going to abhor some day what they've created. A monster that feeds on the people solely to benefit itself. A self-perpetuating machine that can't be stopped. A human created social thing whose structure and actions are alien to human behavior itself. Something of us, but not us.

MY FEELINGS ABOUT FLORENCE

Since January of 1984 I have been on control unit status. Due to time lost for "misbehavior" my H-unit time won't end until August of '91. Before now I thought "Well, soon I will go to Marion's main-line and hopefully to an open prison in 2 or 3 years." Now I see that the carrot the Fed has held out in front of me all these years I can never reach. There is no carrot. Never was, I guess. The hardest thing to live with in a lockdown state is your mind. It doesn't seem to understand there's no way to achieve its desires. So it always keeps hoping and wanting and making excuses that someday things will get better. Slowly even the mind rots. I guess this is the government's way to destroy us mentally instead of physically, because this is all us lifers are ever going to know. I wish the brain death would come quickly because seeing it happening and knowing how you were before is a terrible thing. Even though you recognize it you can't stop it.

NORMAN RAY FREELOVE, #78862-012

I think man's greatest pain, no matter if in a free society, or the restrictive confines of prison, is a feeling of personal insignificance, of being placed in a position where you feel helpless, where you have no value as a person or individual; when you know that no matter what you do, you have no control, no say over your future.

Prison for me is a prolonged experience in feeling deprivation and psychological pain. My personal desires and feelings are regarded with violent and cold indifference. There is never anything warm or loving, no laughter or pleasant thoughts in your mind. There is only the daily struggle to survive, and in spite of what I am faced with, to remain sane.

You try to find healthy ways to channel the frustrations of your daily experiences, to overcome the emptiness, aloneness, the isolation and helplessness you feel from having no control over today, tomorrow, yesterday. You create a world where you can relive memories of a better day, yet reality dictates that even your memories must be mixed with the harshness of today. You try to maintain a balance, a hope for some faraway tomorrow, while listening to other men slowly go insane.

I am a desperate man; a man who must embrace isolation and keep hope alive with some sense of reality as to what's normal, yet live in a place of abnormality. A place, where I am systematically stripped and raped daily by policies carried out by those who have created a failure which has been allowed to grow and prosper in spite of truth, decency, or concerns for what's ethical and moral.

This is what the Federal Prison in Marion, Illinois is all about. The great penal experiment that's to be transformed and improved upon in Florence, Colorado.

ALEX MC COY, #01887-045

Florence, Colorado is the new site to be. But is the way America treats people in the so-called land of liberty?

21st century state of the art technology to maintain the powers to be idea always!

Newspaper accounts relate that the Florence Colorado site will be the first of seven federal prisons to be built across the U.S. in the next six years.

Paul Revere said the British were coming. People became aware and together from far and near.

Living in prison can become anyone's nightmare because in reality the U.S.A. is a police state which is very clear.

We the people must fight Florence Colorado and all prison ideas.

Drawing the line
right here . . .

TACUMA NEHUSI s/n ALAN BALTIMORE, #42310-066

Being a Political Prisoner of War well grounded in the knowledge and understanding of Amerikkka's history, and of its prison system, I knew what to expect psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and physically of what struggles awaited me to survive and thrive in Gulag Marion. I knew what to expect as a result of my studying and first hand experiences in lesser Gulags on the shores of Northern Amerikkka, hence: Florence, Colorado will be of no exception in confirming what I already knew and understood. And, as a revolutionary, I understand that this is a sacrifice similar to death! A price we pay for being held captives.

Prisons are the reflections of our society in its existence and those who inhabit them. Those who inhabit these human warehouses were once members of society, even your families - perhaps, some day even you! So take a close scrutiny inside from the outside of what your future holds. Family members and generations to come. Then you determine the destiny of Florence, Colorado and this irony it may hold for you.

Until society itself changes and stops being silent as it does unconsciously ignorant to the capitalist elite and fascist propagandist tactics and strategies of fears, this is only a taste of what the blood hungry system craves. This is only a test, to fail it is to fail us, yourself and a better society.

A lute continua!

RAY LEVASSEUR, #10376-016

At this juncture I don't think the problem is what to say as much as how to say it in a way which will have a profound effect on people. That will spark some initiative which will lead to movement, as it did in the Lexington campaign.

Somehow we have to dispel the government's propaganda that we are "the worst of the worst." Such propaganda is at the very core of the governments claim that control unit prisons are necessary. It's a Madison Avenue approach in the market place of ideas. And it's pure rubbish. The government's propaganda serves as a rationalization for the proliferation of control unit prisons and justification of the abuses which take place within them.

I saw this sort of propaganda used during my tour in Viet Nam. From training sergeants to general William Westmoreland, we were steadily fed a diet of racist, anti-communist, anti-Vietnamese propaganda which served to foster the worst images of the people of that ravaged country. And it made it easier for us to kill, abuse and denigrate. I still remember when Westmoreland said the Vietnamese don't care about dying because they don't place the same value on human life that Americans do. Unadulterated, racist garbage.

In war, truth is the first casualty and we are presently in a so-called "war on crime," according to the government and its sycophants.

They do not want to end the lockdown because Marion (as will Florence) serves as a concentration camp. It has the largest number of political prisoners of any prison in the U.S. It always has. That's one of its functions, "to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and society at large", and the BOP takes its task seriously. That's why Oscar Lopez-Rivera is still here after so many years. That's why Rafael Cancel Miranda was here. It's another method the government uses to bleed our movements.

I see Florence as sort of a flagship prison, similar to Marion. Sink it and the fleet will be lost if not defeated. Given limited resources, this makes sense. At the same time we must recognize that Florence is one of a number of control unit prisons -- all of which are an integral part of the prison system and other social-economic issues.

BILL DUNNE, #10916-086

Seven Slimey Stretches

With the end of October, 1990, USP Marion passes into its eighth year of lockdown. The whole period has been characterized by varying intensities of physical and psychological brutality as part of a callous program of repressive and destructive experimentation in social manipulation and control. Verily, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and Marion administrations have gone out of their way to

keep the lockdown needlessly restrictive and repressive.

At this beginning of yet another stretch of the official swinishness that characterizes the Marion lockdown, the BOP is engaged in an offensive to change it from lockdown of an institution to institutionalized lockdown. The physical plant of Marion having proven inadequate to expanding the research into suppressing the spirit of its victims and the class from which they derive, the apparatus of repression is building a new dungeon at Florence, Colorado, to which it plans to transfer Marion's "mission." There, evidence indicates it intends to escalate its efforts to sterilize the seeds of resistance.

After seven years of lockdown: The BOP has long experience in and the blessing of the courts for its lockdown depredations. It is building a new instrument of maximum security oppression to escape the crumbling infrastructure and labor intensity of Marion without prisoner labor. There is no light at the end of the tunnel. So we better get to playing with matches.

SEKOU M. ABDULLAH ODINGA, #05228-054

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful!

Peace and Greetings to all struggling against the repressive conditions here at Marion and other like Gulags. I also want to thank you for the support, concern and solidarity you have shown us in our struggle to survive and change the conditions here at Marion.

I am a Political Prisoner of War. I was captured in 1981 while actively struggling in the war for national liberation of the New Afrikan people and land. After being found guilty helping to liberate another P.O.W. - Assata Shakur - and of illegally raising funds to help finance our struggle, I was sentenced and then sent straight to Marion. Although it is often stated by the Bureau of Prison and officials of Marion that the prisoners here were sent to Marion because of serious infractions of prison rules at other institutions. But the fact is that many Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War like myself have been here simply because of our political beliefs and the refusal to change those political views. This is my second time being sent here and neither time had I been found guilty of breaking any rule or regulation.

Now the question that we need to answer is "What can we do about control unit prisons?" To answer this question we must first find out as much as we can about the proposed prison complex in Florence, Colorado. Some of the things we need to know are:

A. What are the proposed buildings and grounds going to be like, i.e. size of cells, ventilation, lighting, plumbing, beds, showers, indoor and outdoor recreation, law library, hole, seg, clothing, books, etc.

B. What kind of programs will they have for prisoners?

C. What kind of health and educational facilities will be available?

D. Who will be sent there?

E. Will there be any guide-lines for who is sent there?

F. If so, what are those guide-lines?

G. Have any studies been done on the physical and mental affect of these kinds of institutions on the prisoners?

H. If so, who did the studies and what are the results?

I. How long will prisoners be made to stay and what must they do to be released?

With these and other important questions answered we can then decide what areas we need to concentrate our work on to get the most positive effect.

Again, let me thank those of you who have and will help the struggle against Marion and other oppressive prisons. We are up against a well organized right-wing machine lead by the B.O.P., congress, the courts and many state officials. To have a positive affect against such powerful forces we must be very committed and well organized with well thought out strategies and tactics.

Together we can make a difference. Let's empower the righteous people.

GEORGE E. COWSEN-EL, #01933-003

It was not my intention to answer your letter, but I remember that a little push is better than no push at all.

My reflections on Marion and Florence are this. Hell cannot replace hell. At some point or another there must be a let off. Marion is a problem created not by the inmates but by the BOP off the reputation of the inmates. Marion is an experiment that has gone bad. Now the BOP has created what they believe to be the answer, a new and better Frankenstein—Florence. But what of the old one? Oops! A storm is coming and all will feel its force.

OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA, #87651-024

Revolutionary greetings! Let's hope that the conference turns out to be an energizing and pedagogical experience for those who take part in it.

What's this gulag named Marion all about? First, it's about obscene cruelty because of what it does to the prisoner psychologically and physically. By the jailers subjecting the prisoner to a program that includes both sensory deprivation and a state of helplessness, they are lobotomizing the prison's population collectively without surgery or drugs. The prisoner is forced to spend 22 1/2 hours per day in the sterile environment of a 6' by 8' cell with monochromatic walls. For 24 hours each day he hears the loud noise of an overhead fan's motor. He smells, touches, sees, hears and tastes basically the same things everyday. Even such a simple thing as contemplating a starry sky or the natural darkness of the night is denied to him. His main connection to the outside world consists of a small tv set and a radio. Such a reality leads one to conclude that the prisoner's senses are being stifled and destroyed.

This gulag is about more than just the trials and tribulations suffered by the prisoners. It's more than an isolated and uni-dimensional issue that affects a handful of prisoners. It's also about a structural reality. What does this mean? Prisons are becoming big business and this gulag is the hottest model for duplication. The ratio of jailers to prisoners in this gulag is almost one to one. This is translated into more jobs for jailers. And there's plenty of demands for such jobs. For example, when General Motors closed some of its plants in Michigan, many of the unemployed workers were retrained as jailers. When it was announced that a new super maximum security prison was to be built in Florence, Colorado, unemployed workers flocked there seeking employment. For any economically depressed community, getting a prison is almost a miracle. For politicians who get elected using crime as an issue and calling for less government, building prisons is the perfect budget item. And for industry, prisons are a sweetheart deal. Consequently, structurally prisons are becoming a solution for economic woes and the final solution to the problem of the wretched and the alienated of this society.

On the positive side, this gulag is also about the strength of the human spirit. Although the destruction of the spirit is the main target of the jailers, it's under these deleterious conditions that we witness the strength and resiliency of the human spirit. Whenever the jailers feel victorious because they feel that they've destroyed the prisoner's spirit, their victory is short lived because the prisoner bounces right back. Even when the prisoner is only a voice speaking to the night with unwinged words, one senses in his dolorous lamentations the strength of his spirit. And for those who struggle for justice, human rights, freedom and truth such an experience is a heart warming one.

STANLEY ZEBULUM, #18185-037

As far as my thoughts on a new Marion. I believe that Marion should be phased out and the prisoners housed here spread out into other institutions and released to the streets. This would have a far better rehabilitation effect than building a new prison like Marion. And in the final analysis would have a more devastating effect than it already does. Since prisons really don't work, and Marion is a double don't work prison, than why build another Marion? A lot of times kindness and consideration can get you much further than brutality and force. I know that if the people came and told me that they were going to release me today it would do a lot of good for my soul and I would think three or four times before committing another crime. Especially when I know that it is all on me. But me being me and the Justice Department being the Justice Department that won't happen and the only way that I will ever get out of Marion or another place like it, is when I am incapacitated or my time is up.