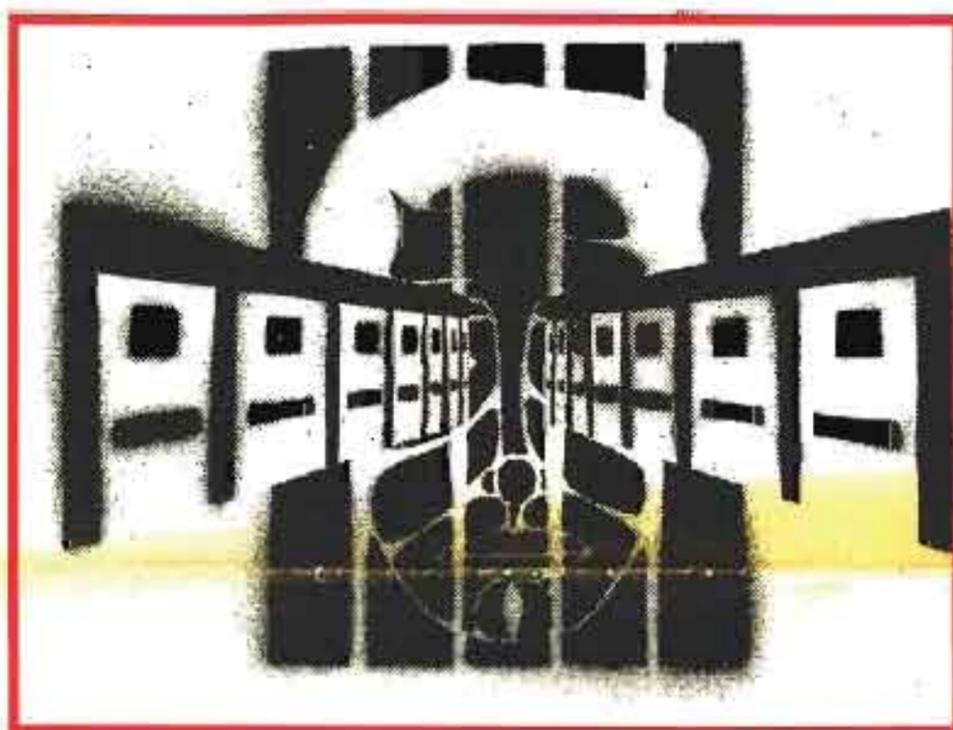




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ILLINOIS OPENS "SUPERMAX" CONTROL UNIT PRISON IN TAMMS

As the trend towards imprisonment, and state sponsored torture sweeps the nation, the people of Illinois are not left unscathed. Despite CEML's resistance, the State of Illinois led by Governor Jim Edgar has proudly built its own Super Max prison in Tamms, Illinois, known as "Tamms C-Max." The institution was opened on March 8, 1998 and before the DOC has even filled all 500 cells, there are already reports of atrocities stemming from extreme sensory deprivation, which is causing inmates to smear feces and urine on themselves, engage in acts of self-mutilation, and attempt suicide.



The Creation of Tamms

In 1992, Governor Edgar created the Illinois Task Force on Crime and Corrections to solve the overcrowding crisis in Illinois prisons. The Task Force was created to propose solutions that both protected public safety and did so in a manner the tax-payers in Illinois could afford. The Task Force consisted primarily of white males from law enforcement backgrounds. Although the meetings were open to spectators, speakers had to be invited by Task Force members. The Task Force recommended the extension of good time to prisoners and increasing drug, educational, and work programs for inmates. However, the crux of their recommendations was to build a state control unit prison and an additional 5,000 cells in the state (including transforming a high school in virtually all-Black East St. Louis into a prison).

When CEML learned the Task Force was considering a control unit prison, it requested to speak to the Task Force and present evidence criticizing the nature of and function of control unit prisons. The Task Force refused to allow CEML the opportunity to present any evidence, or open up their process to receive accurate information in opposition to control unit prisons.

CEML then took its message to the streets, holding a protest outside the Task Force's meeting and distributing a formal response to the Task Force's recommendations. CEML members also traveled to Tamms to speak with members of the community regarding the evils of control unit prisons. CEML's response to the Task Force proposals exposed the hypocrisy of their recommendation. Demonstrating that the building of a control unit and additional prison cells would fail to decrease crime in the public or prison population. Such construction would only serve to create human rights abuses, primarily against people of color, and expend precious financial resources better spent on schools and social programs throughout the state.

The Task Force and Governor proceeded full steam ahead, disregarding the overwhelming evidence against control unit prisons, and the State legislature passed the Task Force's recommendation to build a control unit. Towns and cities in desperate need for jobs began a bidding war to be the location for the control unit prison. Eventually, the state selected Tamms as the site of the new control unit prison, in the southern tip of the state.

The Structure of Tamms

The structure and purpose of Tamms was patterned after control unit models sweeping the nation. In fact, Warden George Welborn proudly boasts he toured the infamous S.H.U.- Pelican Bay State Prison in California before designing Tamms. According to Welbourne, "Tamms is not about rehabilitation, it's about punishment . . . some people may never leave."

Not surprisingly, prisoners at Tamms are forced to spend 24 hours a day, close to seven days a week in their single 8' x 10' concrete cement cells, which contain concrete beds, and stainless steel sinks, toilets, and mirrors. Although each cell has a window, the windows cannot be opened and the only way to look out of them is to stand on the bed. The doors to each cell, similar to the doors at Pelican Bay's S.H.U., are made of metal wire mesh which make it difficult to look out. Although the doors allow sounds to travel inside and outside the cell, a large echoing effect is created making communication difficult and painful. Further, guards have plexiglass shields which can be placed over the doors which completely isolate the prisoner inside his cell.

Tamms consists of a series of tunnels with electronically controlled doors. The majority of prisoners' movements outside of their cell are controlled by these electric doors which cut down on any contact

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TROUBLE IN MIND:

by Ray Luc Levasseur

"I will hold the candle, til it burns
down my arm, I'll keep taking
punches until their will grows tired,
I will watch the sundown until my
eyes go blind, oh I will make my
way through one more day."

—Pearl Jam



I've been locked in ADX for three and a half years. When I awake each morning it still feels like I'm being slapped in the face, only harder. It's not all of me you see in these words—the rest are indictable as thought crimes against the state. My time in ADX was preceded by more than 5 years of lockdown at Marion penitentiary, which was preceded by 5 years of high security units.

In February, 1996 I first wrote about ADX from STEP 1—the box car cells. Physical and emotional isolation, separation policies, use of restraints, the attack on one's senses that slowly corrodes, eating away at life and humanity. ("Trouble Coming Every Day: ADX-The First Year"). Predictably, the situation has deteriorated throughout ADX's 4-step obstacle course.

I'm still picking up birdshot from the last time guards cut loose during a confrontation. Violent confrontations between prisoners have steadily increased thru each year. It's the nature of the ADX beast to inflame, antagonize, confuse and generate animosity. Add the exploitable issue of racism and you have a prescription for continual turmoil and hostility. Administrators and guards are master manipulators in an environment where they have paramount control of cell/unit assignments, recreation schedules, inmate files, food, sick call, mail, etc. The prevailing product line is hate. Hatred of the police; hatred of other prisoners; self-hatred. It's got payback tagged all over it.

For all the infighting within walls of repression and shadows of despair there are also positive signs that ADX will also graduate those whose anger and consciousness is sharpened to a razor's edge. Those who take their training and studies seriously. Those who reject the criminal mentality in favor of a more radical, politically oriented agenda which will be brought to other joints and eventually back home.

The largest representative group of prisoners at ADX is not the 3 or 4 high profile cases focused on by the media. It's those predominantly Black, predominantly young, predominantly poor brothers dragooned to ADX following the October 1995 "crack riots"—the most widespread uprising in federal prison history. They are here for acts of resistance against a fundamentally unfair, repressive and racist criminal justice system—as reflected in part by the "crack laws". Their actions also underscore time/sentencing as a major issue, and not just conditions. Their potential to ignite further resistance was immediately acted upon by the BOP—hence, disciplinary charges and transfers to ADX & Marion. In some cases criminal convictions were obtained. I've seen no evidence that any outside organizations provided support to these prisoners, therefore most

are politically as well as physically isolated.

The largest organized gang in ADX is the guards and their honchos in the administration. They are manipulative, abusive and violent (among other incidents they formed goon squads to assault the prisoners brought in from the "crack riots"). For those special moments they have an operations group (SORT) which specializes in the use of force. With a nod from the administration they strut around here in a provocative manner wearing T-shirts (purchased with a generous government clothing allowance) proclaiming: "The Final Choice" (with a drawing depicting a goon squad charging a cell); "The Legacy Continues-Alcatraz, Marion, ADX"; and "ADX-ALCATRAZ OF THE ROCKIES". They embrace a sordid history of human rights abuses.

The essence of ADX is amplified in the segregation unit. The place is a madhouse. When I was there the guards had organized themselves into an assault squad and during one 30 day period they attacked several handcuffed prisoners. One prisoner was placed in 4-point restraints (metal rings on all seg bunks allow for this). If they think you're acting up in seg they strip you down to issue—a jumpsuit, underwear change, canvas slippers and minimum hygiene supplies. You can't ever keep the letters you receive. Mental instability and extreme frustration manifest themselves through continual screaming and relentless banging on anything that will produce noise, while others silently withdraw to the shadows within themselves, only to appear during the mandatory 14 day cell changes (a cell change every 14 days being simply another method of harassment).

In STEP 1, I was with 3 men who are now dead. Regarding the death of Skip Martin, ADX was negligent and deliberately indifferent to his medical needs. As his pain increased Skip put together a trail of documentation which shows how ADX let a small, cancerous tumor on his leg go untreated. When it got to the size of a softball they were giving him anti-inflammation pills and repeatedly telling him they'd send him to Springfield for treatment. They lied, delayed and by the time he got to Springfield he was down to his last 2 and a half months of life. There have been deaths and suicides reported from other units but because of the vast separation I've been unable to look into the circumstances.

Mass media continue to depict prisoners as demons and ADX as holding "the worst of the worst". They define the parameters within which issues of crime and punishment are presented to the public. They

bogart the language and definitions. A kid steals a TV and winds up in a Louisiana juvenile prison getting his head and anus ripped apart—the owner of the TV is a victim while the kid is a perpetrator and criminal. If that isn't skewered enough we're steadily propagandized to idolize the corruption and criminality of the wealthy and powerful. We're supposed to pay profound respects to a serial killer like Ronald Reagan, a.k.a. the butcher of Central America. So says NBC, owned by General Electric—those corporate criminals who supplied the heavy machine guns and other weaponry to a Salvadoran government that used them to murder its own people. Too far afield? I don't think crimes against humanity are ever too far afield from a discussion of crime and punishment—particularly when Reagan kicked off a deluge of prison construction and NBC/General Electric grants itself humanity in its bottom only view of crime.

That's not enough for ADX. In the past year they've targeted many alternative publications for suppression. (e.g. Prison Legal News, North Coast Xpress—even the PEN Writing Awards for Prisoners). I have dozens of publication rejection notices from the ADX mailroom. What these publications have in common is articles by/about political prisoners and/or articles critical of the Bureau of Prisons/Department of Corrections. The ADX has a real concern that politically conscious and informed prisoners are not easily manipulated. Concerned enough to keep copies of some of my published articles in my BOP file (a fact I discovered thru the Freedom of Information Act). The articles are critical of BOP policies.

As a hate and misery generating facility, ADX can claim success. It produces both in abundance. Yet neither the lockdown at Marion or ADX were able to prevent the uprisings that rocked the federal prison system in 1995. They've not prevented acts of sabotage or the spread of radical ideas. They've not prevented guards from being killed, nor prisoners. What I have seen them do is damage the minds of individuals whose constitution, personality or burden of other problems makes them especially vulnerable to the negative effects of prolonged isolation. ADX is relatively new with only a few dozen prisoners having been released or transferred. Several were indicted for armed robbery or homicide. Another was picked up for generic parole violations. The BOP is afraid to take responsibility for its own handiwork. When an ADX prisoner is within a few months of his release date he's quietly transferred to another prison so, technically, he doesn't hit the street directly from ADX. It's a bureaucratic bait and switch which spins the myth that "no one hits the street from ADX". From what I've seen of Marion and ADX, the former convicts hit the street running hard.

I'm another kind of example. During 1970-1971 I was in the infamous locked down prison at Brushy Mountain (Tennessee) where the razor strap reinforced a punishing existence of isolation and idleness. Brushy was a prison that drove men mad—half the convict population according to an

ADX--THE FOURTH YEAR

investigative piece broadcast by a Knoxville TV station. Two years after that piece ran Brushy exploded in riot and blood that shut the joint down. Three years after it ran I was involved in what the government refers to as "a revolutionary anti-imperialist organization created and established for the purpose of engaging in and conducting armed attacks on military, police and government installations." I went to Vietnam as a working class stiff and returned a radical. I entered prison a radical and exited a revolutionary. War and prison can have that kind of effect.

"Dem leave sorrow, tears and blood, dem regular trademark."

-Fela

STEPS 2 thru 4 of ADX's insidious, insulting program came with incremental privileges—bandaids after enduring the suffocating boxcar cells of STEP 1. Going from STEP 1 to 2 I was removed from the boxcars and for the first time in 8 years allowed to eat outside a cell with a small number of other prisoners. From STEP 2 to 3 I was allowed to walk the 50 feet from cell to recreation area without handcuffs on or a club wielding guard at my back. From STEP 3 to 4 I was immediately impressed by the fact that I ate better. They fed me better. Food, I've noted, is used as a tool of compliance. The most distinguishing feature of STEP 4 is being coerced into the "privilege" of working for 46 cents an hour. The traffickers in bodies operate an ADX sweatshop with enslaved labor. It's very existence violate the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and International Labor Organization Conventions. Federal Prison Industries generated over \$500,000,000 (1/2 bil.) in sales last year with only a pittance trickling down to prisoners. Yet if we so much as utter "union", circulate a petition, call a grievance meeting or strike—it's a straight shot back to the boxcar cells. We have few rights our overseers are bound to respect.

Another reason for the work program is to create a favorable impression on the congressional oversight and appropriations committees that pour money down this rathole. No one here—including the guards—sees it as anything more than a scam that's got the requisite look on official documents. In some ways it's not unlike jobs we've had on the street—punch the clock and go through the necessary motions while pursuing a separate agenda.

The intellectual architects of ADX and its operations should be indicted for gross fraud. Fears are jacked up way out of proportion to the danger represented by "street" crime. General Electric—the largest toxic polluter in the U.S.—represents a far greater threat to public health than all the burglars from coast to coast. Fear of Blacks, Mexicans, poor people, immigrants, youth—even fear of prisoners in prison—is all inflamed. Expectations and hopes are manipulated. False diversions are created as real economic and social problems go unresolved. Statistics go any which way some opportunist politician or think tank wants to take them. The public gets worse than nothing in return. They get

the chickens that come home to roost.

Playwright Bertolt Brecht tells the following parable:

"A man living alone answers a knock at the door. When he opens it, he sees in the doorway the powerful body, the cruel face, of the Tyrant. The Tyrant asks, "will you submit?" The man does not reply. He steps aside. The Tyrant enters and established himself in the man's house. The man serves him for years. Then the Tyrant becomes sick from food poisoning. He dies. The man wraps the body, opens the door, gets rid of the body, comes back to his house, closes the door behind him, and says, firmly, "NO."

There's a cost to being enslaved, and there's a cost to being the boss. There's also a cost for indifference. The primary aim of prisons like ADX—and those children's prisons in Georgia and Louisiana—is to crush the human spirit. It's the logic of corrections that an incapacitated prisoner is not a management problem. The fundamental flow of that logic was exposed when 2 guards were killed in Marion's control unit. The response of the BOP? They brought in a mob of guards from other prisons who beat down Marion prisoners from cell to cell and subjected them to anal probes. What goes thru the mind of a man who was sexually or physically abused as a child and then finds himself chained and shackled with a guard's fingers forced up his rectum? The logic of incapacitation and submission is for the prisoners to withhold their violence and anti-social behavior for the streets. We see in these prisons a reflection of society's degeneration into the heart of darkness, with its moral quagmire and civil strife rooted in classism and racism. The gap between rich and poor—the widest of all industrialized countries—is being filled with penitentiaries. Incapacitating prisoners for the short or long term makes it far more difficult for them to hold jobs, advance their educations and raise families upon their release. But being damaged and debased does not make it harder to kill, assault and rob.



Whether you spin the statistics up or down, Amerika is a violent country. It's history is rife with bloodshed. The government demonstrates a propensity for extreme violence. People at the bottom of society too often try to mimic the values of those responsible for their oppression. Ameri-

cans are noted for their lack of political consciousness and short attention span. They've bought into the prison system (sometimes literally) with the same mind set they buy sweatshop shoes and clothing. Changing this mind set is the major challenge facing community activists.

And it is a major challenge. About 3 decades ago as an organizer with Vietnam Veterans Against the War, I encountered a startling realization—most Americans didn't care about a million and a half Vietnamese people dead from a hailstorm of U.S. bombs and bullets. The overwhelming majority of these deaths—civilians. Americans didn't seriously perk up to U.S. military casualties until the draft was expanded. What then caught their attention was body bags and broken bodies finding their way to suburbia with alarming frequency. Likewise the financial and social costs of the war wasn't much of an issue until taxes were raised, domestic programs scrapped or under funded, and polarization drove a wedge between people.

We're headed down that same road with the casualties of the so-called wars on crime and drugs, criminalization of poverty, and blatant racism which dictates a Black male has a greater than 1 in 4 chance of going to prison in his lifetime. The path of more wasted lives and misspent funds: of false promises and malevolent recidivism. The masters of this war label us the "worst of the worst". But historically such labels have always been used by the privileged to characterize those who buck the system. Native American warriors, resisters of slavery, immigrants, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, rebellious youth, militant activists, communists.... They labeled the Vietnamese as "gooks", "dinks" and "slopes"..... They use language like a strip search and parade us naked down the street of public misperceptions. It's a problem, but I'd be more concerned if they were saying good things about us.

During the height of the anti-apartheid struggle the African National Congress issued a call to the People. Make apartheid unworkable! With considerable commitment and sacrifice they did precisely that. We have the potential power within us to make the entire Amerikan gulag unworkable as an instrument of class and racist oppression. The system can't operate without the participation and compliance of prisoners. It can't function without public mandate and funds. Although that dawn is still beyond our reach, we can make great strides by working to increase awareness of our common struggle and develop an unbreakable solidarity.

Whatever it takes, for as long as it takes,

Ray Luc Levasseur
August 1998

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Shackled Births (Or Sometimes I Feel Like a Childless Mother)

by Joanne Archibald, Chicago Legal Aid to Incarcerated Mothers

Childbirth is an occasion to be celebrated. Despite the pain and discomfort of labor and delivery, bringing new life into the world is cause for elation. After nine long months of waiting and preparation, a mother's joy at actually seeing her baby and touching the tiny feet that she felt kicking inside her is hard to describe. When mother and baby come home from the hospital, the whole family rejoices and welcomes a new family member.

But what if you are a mother who is in prison? How do you celebrate your child's birth when you are incarcerated? How much elation can you feel when you are shackled to the bed during your labor? How does the family welcome the newborn when mothers are sent back to prison alone twenty-four to forty-eight hours after giving birth?

Women are the fastest growing segment of the burgeoning prison population. The number of women prisoners in Illinois has tripled in the past ten years. Today there are over 2,400 women incarcerated in the four Illinois prisons that house women.

About 80% of those women are mothers, most are single mothers who were the primary caregivers of their children before their incarceration. Being separated from their children is one of the most difficult components of punishment for mothers in prison, and the children who are left behind are punished along with their mothers. The pain of being separated from their children is even more acute for mothers who give birth while in the system. After being shackled to their beds during labor, they are denied contact with their infants during the critical early bonding period.

Dwight Correctional Center, the primary state correctional reception and classification facility for adult females in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), houses all pregnant inmates. In 1997, there were fifty-one babies born to women there. While the prison works to provide adequate medical services, OB-GYN care is only available on a part-time basis. The women receive their regular pre-natal care at the prison but deliver their babies at a hospital in the neighboring community.

The women are shackled while they are transported to the hospital. Once at the hospital, regardless of their security status, they are also shackled to their beds during their labor. One end of the metal restraints is padded with gauze and attached to the woman's ankle, the other end is fastened to the bed, severely limiting her movement. Birthing experts recommend that women move during their labor. In general, women are more comfortable out of bed and moving helps the labor progress more quickly while lessening the pain. This use of restraints for security purposes is totally unnecessary since there are corrections personnel at the hospital when inmates are there.

CLAIM is working with state legislators to address this practice. The so-called "prison reform" legislation that was proposed in the spring legislative session included a provision to abolish the practice of shackling pregnant women. But this legislation also included draconian provisions that would have prohibited contact visits for inmates at all maximum security facilities and imposed a six-month "impact isolation" program where all new inmates would be on 23-hour-a-day lockdown. Thankfully, this bill (HB 3000) did not pass.



After the defeat of the "prison reform" legislation, Representatives Lou Jones, Barbara Flynn Currie and Shirley Jones proposed House Bill 3891 to deal specifically with the issue of using restraints on pregnant women. This bill says that "when a pregnant female committed person is brought to a hospital from an Illinois correctional center for the purpose of delivering her baby, no handcuffs, shackles, or restraints of any kind shall be used during her transport to the medical facility." It further states that "under no circumstances shall leg irons or shackles or

waist shackles be used on any pregnant female committed person who is in labor."

Some would argue that the use of restraints is necessary for public safety. But the fact is that women prisoners are far less likely to be serving time for violent crimes than male prisoners, only about one third of the women in state prisons are serving time for acts of violence. Violent crimes committed by women are more likely to be defensive or retaliatory. The majority of women's crimes are either directly or indirectly linked to addiction. Addressing the need to insure appropriate security, HB 3891 requires that IDOC must provide adequate personnel to monitor the woman during transport and while she is at the hospital.

Call or write your legislators to let them know you support HB 3891 which will end the medieval practice of chaining pregnant women to their beds. Let them know that you support alternative sentencing programs designed to keep families together while providing programming to help mothers become responsible, caring parents. Tell them too that you are against the other punitive provisions that were proposed in the "prison reform" legislation. It is not unlikely that some of these draconian measures will resurface in future legislative sessions. Keep yourself informed about what your legislators promote as effective "crime policy" and make sure they know what you think. Taking an active part in dismantling the prison industrial complex is the best way to welcome these babies home and insure that they do not become the next generation of prisoners.

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JUVENILE JUSTICE: FACTS VS. ANGER

By JEROME G. MILLER

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — With every new tragedy involving children accused of murder, there is a louder drumbeat of demands for harsher laws to deal with what some experts say is a new breed of killer. So it was again in August when two Chicago boys, ages 7 and 8, were charged with the murder of an 11-year-old girl, and two Arkansas boys were sentenced for the shooting deaths of four classmates and a teacher.

Many politicians and others have called for allowing children under the age of 10 to be tried in adult courts and to be sentenced to

adult prisons. The Texas Legislature has even debated imposing the death penalty on children as young as 11 years old, although the actual execution would be postponed until he or she turned 17.

But as the former commissioner of youth corrections in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, I know from experience that punishing children with harsher sentences and conditions is not the solution.

First, there has not been a surge in child killers. Children under the age of 18 have been responsible for fewer than one-twenti-

eth of the murders committed in this country for the last two decades at least. (Approximately 10 percent of these crimes involve young people who have killed their parents, often within the context of abusive relationships.)

After reviewing 975 homicides in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, over 42 months in the early 1970's, for example, the Cleveland deputy coroner found five homicides committed by children 8 years of age and younger — some of them unusually brutal. According to the Justice Policy Institute, which analyzed F.B.I. statistics, nationally

PRISONS DON'T PREVENT CRIME: CONSERVATIVE THINK TANK

Across the United States there is one standard, overwhelming policy in the alleged effort to combat the public's fear of crime: build more and more prisons and fill them with more and more people. By the end of 1997, the United States held one and a half million people in prisons and jails. And, money that is being spent on this massive incarceration binge is often taken directly from human services. For example, California's most recent state budget for the first time allocated more money for prisons (\$2.8 billion) than for education (\$2.6 billion). According to Prof. William Chambliss, former president of the American Society of Criminology, "We're trading textbooks for prison cells" (San Francisco Chronicle, July 3, 1994, pages B1 and B2).

Does this "crime fighting" policy make sense? Does putting these young men in prison make them better people? Does it prevent them from committing more crimes when they come out of prison? Does imprisonment prevent more crime than programs that improve people's quality of life — increasing their chances at gaining meaningful jobs, educations, and better living conditions?

Finally, there is now a definitive study of these kinds of programs and their impact on crime (*Diverting Children from a Life of Crime: Measuring Costs and Benefits*, Peter Greenwood et al., Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 1996, \$15.). The study was carried out by the very influential, conservative Rand Corporation think tank. Rand, which gets many millions of dollars each year to write position papers on many different topics, is a government favorite since Rand evaluations so often parrot what the government wants and needs. This time, however, even Rand could not avoid the truth.

The researchers at Rand started with four programs that have been used in the past for, among other things, crime prevention. The four programs are:

1. Home visits by child care professionals, both before birth and extending for two

Juvenile Justice, continued from page 4

there were 25 recorded homicides committed by children under the age of 13 in 1965, versus 16 in 1996. And despite the rash of school shootings in recent months, fewer incidents occurred this year than in some past years. For example, school shootings caused 55 deaths in 1992-93, in contrast with 40 in 1997-98.

This is not to deny that juvenile violence is an important problem. But consider what effects harsher penalties for young people had in the past. In Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, for example, children were brutally treated in both adult and juvenile correctional institutions a generation ago. Boys as young as 14 were often sentenced to three to five years for offenses as minor as vandalism and small burglaries. Beatings and long stretches in solitary confinement were common.

In the early and mid-1970's, I helped several

years after birth;

2. Training for parents and therapy for families with children who are found to be at high risk for getting involved with the criminal justice system;
3. Incentives to induce high school students to stay in school and graduate;
4. Monitoring and supervising high school students who have already exhibited delinquent behavior.

The impact of these four programs were compared with California's new three strikes law, one of the most severe imprisonment policies in the country, to determine which of these five programs would prevent the most crime. To produce comparable findings, computations were made for each program to show how many serious crimes (defined as homicide, rape, arson, robbery, aggravated assault, and residential burglary) would be prevented if a million dollars were invested in each program. The table below shows the results:

Program	Serious Crimes Prevented
Home Visits	11
Parent Training	157
Graduation Incentives	258
Delinquent Supervision	72
Three Strikes	60

As you can see, three of the four programs are more effective than California's three strike policy at preventing crime; high school graduation incentives are more than four times more effective. And not even included in these calculations is the amount of money that would be saved by diverting these young people from prison so that the state would not have to pay the costs of incarceration. In fact, the authors write: "... a million dollars spent on graduation incentives should result in a savings to the criminal justice system of \$600,000 to \$1.1 million. In other words, over the long term the program would probably save enough money to cover most of its costs" (page 28).

Furthermore, these are not the only human

states deinstitutionalize their juvenile justice systems. In Massachusetts, Gov. Frank Sargent, a Republican, replaced all the reform schools with some 200 different nonprofit programs, including group homes and individual intensive treatment for the worst cases. In some instances, we had one worker supervising no more than one or two youngsters. Institutionalization is so expensive — it currently costs \$50,000 to \$70,000 a year per child in most states — that these options did not cost the state more money.

More important, making the juvenile justice system less strict had positive results. Independent studies found that a decade after Massachusetts closed its reform schools, the recidivism rate was much lower than in states that continued to rely on reform schools and prisons. In Massachusetts, 24 percent of juveniles who had been released for 36 months were reincarcerated or recommitted. In contrast,

service programs that are available. For example, another recent study found that "every \$1 invested in solid drug treatment saved \$7 in future costs of crime and incarceration" (New York Times, July 3, 1995, pages 1 and 9). This is certainly more than can be said of the imprisonment binge.

So, as the song says, "whoomp, there it is." Even the harshest imprisonment policies do less to prevent crime than many programs that strengthen families and provide human needs. And imprisonment is more costly than the other programs. Interest-



ingly, this is the position taken by many people who put forward the slogan that we should "fund human needs, not prisons." This should be more than just a slogan. It is the road that will lead to reduced crime in our society, a road clearly illuminated by these research findings. To the extent that the U.S. refuses to follow this road, we can only conclude that it is not interested in preventing crime, but is using this massive imprisonment binge for some other purpose.

Texas had a recidivism rate of 43 percent, and California's rate was 62 percent. And when Massachusetts juveniles committed new crimes, the violations were less serious than those by offenders in states with stricter laws.

Perhaps our reforms were successful because they spoke to civility and decency. Many people would argue that today's young criminals deserve nothing of the kind. But they should know that harsher penalties will do nothing to protect society.

This article originally appeared in the New York Times Op-ED section on August 15, 1998.

Jerome G. Miller, former commissioner of youth corrections in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, is the author of "Last One Over the Wall."

PHONE COMPANIES AND D.O.C TEAM UP

For those of us with family, friends, comrades or loved ones in prison, receiving the phone bill at the end of the month is a painful and enraging experience. The walls between inside and outside the prison seem undimly high when one of the only lifelines connecting the two worlds is a financially crippling bill that can be as high as rent. Meanwhile, multinational phone companies such as AT&T, MCI and Sprint, as well as a large number of smaller companies, have been waging a fierce battle for control over a highly profitable and ever expanding new market: prison phones. Phones, an important tool we use to keep connections alive through the prison walls, have become a \$1 billion industry, and that \$1 billion is coming out of the pockets of prisoners' families and into the overflowing wallets of telecommunications companies and government budgets. While corporate profits soar and states get ever larger and larger kickbacks in the form of commissions and signing bonuses, the families, friends and lawyers of prisoners are becoming more and more limited in how often they can remain in contact due to financial constraints.

CEML, in collaboration with the Prison Action Committee (PAC), has decided to focus a significant portion of our energy and resources to fighting this grossly unjust prison phone system. We believe focusing on prison phones can bring together a wide base of people outraged by the exploitation caused by the current phone system and can help to build community and organizational power to counter the constant attacks on prisoners, their families and all our communities. We began our work at what seemed like a natural starting point: researching and collecting information. Over the last couple of months we've traced state contracts and phone regulations through phone calls and Freedom of Information Act requests to various state offices. We've also made a connection with and built a relationship with PAC, which we hope will continue to develop to the benefit of both organizations. In the near future we also hope to reach out and make connections with other individuals and groups working on prison issues and convince them that the phones should be something they consider as part of their work. We're on the verge of sending out a survey and fact sheet to the thousands of prisoners and family members that PAC has collected in their database over the past few years. Once we collect all of this first hand knowledge of peoples' interactions with the prison phone systems, we plan on holding a strategy session and then a large scale press conference/meeting to kick off an official public campaign.

Prison phones are a billion dollar business¹ and one of the fastest growing industries in America. The recent history of prison phones begins with the break up of Bell/AT&T in the late eighties and the national phone deregulation in 1996. In the opening up of the telecommunications market, a number of small companies sprang up to take over the phone systems in prisons, correctly seeing that they have a completely captive market from whom to extract profits. Initially it seemed that most of these companies were run by relatives of local public officials and connected to other similar shady dealings, and this is how it is believed they gained the prison contracts. In Illinois it has long been rumored that Consolidated Communications Phone Services (CCPS), which still holds a large share of the state's prison phone market, once had family connections to the Governor or his wife. In the late 80's, once automated operating systems became available, costs were cut drastically and profits swelled even more. As these small companies began to grow off of the massive profits they were pulling in, the big guys started to notice, and soon AT&T, Sprint, MCI, and Ameritech, and the like were buying out or out bidding small companies for the prison phone contracts.

Five or ten years ago it was standard that the state or DOC would get 5 to 15% of the phone profits in the form of commissions. Now they are being offered 50% and signing bonuses of \$500,000!! The huge phone companies also escalated a technology war that the small companies couldn't keep up with by continually delivering higher-tech recording equipment and other supposed "anti-fraud" features. Once these large companies consolidate and lock a monopoly on the prison phones we can expect that these signing bonuses will vanish and commissions may go down, but rates certainly won't be reduced as no company is voluntarily going to give up any increase in profit margin. John Gamino of John Richard Associates, an industry consulting firm, has said "Prisons have the highest margins around. It's a golden egg."² With the advent and growth of phone cards and cell phones outside the prison walls, prison phones is one of if not the only growth market in the collect call business, so companies are scrambling to control it and wring out any possible profits to make up for this shift in technologies/phone use.

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Basically, a system has developed where the state prisons yet no one has ever accused the families of the sentenced them to bear this egregious financial burden. One of the most ridiculous high is that the state considers prison phone calls don't fall under normal telecommunications regulations. In Illinois they are not regulated by the Illinois Commerce Commission. There have very few restrictions as far as what rates they can charge. There is a conflict of interest as at once the state decides to allow massive profits from the decision it makes. The most profitable deregulation is that these companies who are supposed to charge low rates have a monopoly on the phone options prison phone companies to keep prices in check, and the rates we pay are

As if the straight phone rates weren't high enough, many states allow prisoners to call 2, 3, or even 4 minutes, but there is a connection surcharge fee that can be as high as \$1.50 for a fifteen minute call. Also an "operator assisted" call requires a phone maze that is more often than not both hard and expensive. Exorbitant rates are making it difficult for lawyers to have stopped accepting calls from their clients in prison. For prisoners they represent receiving adequate representation is hard for prisoners to keep in contact with loved ones. Cutting behind bars only serves to further isolate them and prevent them from integrating back into their community when they are



Prison Phone Bill of Rights

1. No one should be overcharged simply because they accept collect calls from prisoners, all rates for prison phone calls should be no higher than standard rates from pay phones. This means no extra service charges or other hidden costs.
2. Accepting phone calls from prison in no way means that we abdicate our right to privacy. Our private phone calls with our friend and loved ones are not to be recorded or listened to by either the state or private corporations.
3. Neither the state nor the Department of Corrections should receive commissions off of prison phone calls.
4. No one should have to prepay or pay a deposit in order to receive phone calls from prisoners.
5. Prisoners and those they call should have a say in what phone companies they use to make calls and what form of payment they wish to use.

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All prisoner calls made from the Illinois Department of Corrections have to be made collect, from payphones run by a phone company of the state's choosing. The state certainly doesn't choose which companies get control of the phones based on the fairness of their rates, but clearly based on the money they promise to dump into the state budget. This is crystal clear in the case of AT&T, which has contracts with 4 prisons and gave the state a "signing bonus" of \$500,000 to get those contracts. Ameritech has contracts at 11 prisons run by the Illinois Department of Corrections, and gives 50% of the profits back to the state, and we all know that no company gives half their profits away unless they're making a ton of money!!! In fiscal year 1997, four major phone companies paid the state \$11,717,809 in commissions, this \$11 million does not, of course, include the profit the phone companies kept. State legislatures have become addicted to these massive



amounts of revenue flowing into the state budget. As Jean Auldridge of the Virginia chapter of CURE says, "They think they've found a group of people who have no voice, who they can do anything they want to. They can't see the moral issue. The legislators don't want to give up the money."³ Russ Vitale, the manager of AT&T's corrections operation concurs, "Once state, county or city budgets find out how much money they can get they become dependent on it."⁴ This dependency is at the cost of friends and family of prisoners.

Basically, a system has developed where the state is charging the families of prisoners to run the prisons yet no one has ever accused the families of a crime, never mind convicted them or sentenced them to bear this egregious financial burden. Part of the reason these phone rates can be so ridiculously high is that the state considers prison phones to be "private," and that they therefore don't fall under normal telecommunications regulations. This means that unlike home phones, they are not regulated by the Illinois Commerce Commission, which then means that companies have very few restrictions as far as what rates they charge us for prison calls. This is clearly a case of conflict of interest as at once the state decides which phones it regulates, and it collects the massive profits from the decision it makes. The state's public justification for this conveniently profitable deregulation is that these companies work under the laws of "capitalist competition" so that supposedly they will "naturally" charge low rates to stay competitive, but since these companies have a monopoly on the phone options prisoners have to choose from, there is no competition to keep prices in check, and the rates we pay are more than proof of that.

As if the straight phone rates weren't high enough, most companies limit prison calls to fifteen minutes, but allow prisoners to call 2, 3, or even unlimited times. The catch is that with each call there is a connection surcharge fee that can be as high as \$2.60 that is charged on every single fifteen minute call. Also an "operator assisted call" charge is often leveled on prison calls even though none of them require a live operator, but are completely regulated by a computer-run phone maze that is more often than not both hard to follow and difficult to understand. The exorbitant rates are making it difficult for lawyers to afford to talk to their clients. Many lawyers have stopped accepting calls from their clients inside, severely limiting the possibility of the prisoners they represent receiving adequate representation. This overcharging is also making it hard for prisoners to keep in contact with loved ones outside, one of the few things that has shown to help prisoners rehabilitate themselves. Cutting down the communication of men and women behind bars only serves to further isolate them and makes it much more difficult for them to integrate back into their community when they are released.

On top of the clear financial injustice, a whole laundry list of other injustices are also a product of the current phone system. Many companies have strict time limits and time of day restrictions that make it much harder to talk to loved ones. This is painfully clear to those whose loved ones can only make calls at the same time that they have to be at work or out of the home due to other responsibilities. Companies like Ameritech also use recording equipment to record phone calls without asking permission; we call this an invasion of privacy. Every citizen is supposed to be protected from the arbitrary recording of their phone calls and surveillance of their personal lives, but the prison's often heard call for "security" is trumping our once thought "inalienable" rights. With most systems, each call is continually interrupted with a recorded message explaining that the call is "originating from a correctional facility," as if we weren't already painfully aware of that. This message takes up valuable phone time by repeatedly interrupting the flow of conversation and making it difficult to hear the person on the other end of the line. Any one with experience talking to prisoners over the phone knows about these and dozens of other nuisances to downright harassment techniques that the phone system imposes on us. We feel like it's time that both the DOC and the corporations that run the phones are held accountable to these issues by the people that are forced to use their "services."

Over the past five years a number of groups and individuals have done work in Illinois around the prison phone issue, most notably PAC and the Prison Reform Advocacy Yardstick coalition (PRAY). A couple years ago a group of family members and activists were meeting regularly around the issue, under the name "Concerned Citizens of Illinois for Lawful Phone Services" and they came up with a list of demands, a number of which we think should be adopted generally around the phone issue. In both 1996 and 1997 PAC called for 30 day phone boycotts and received very good responses in Pontiac and Statesville (both maximum security prisons) as well as a couple medium security camps, these being the prisons at which PAC had the strongest contacts and members inside. The phone companies gave no response, but the IDOC labeled the strike a "gang activity" and a number of those involved lost their jobs and faced other harassment. In September 1996 there was a small uprising by prisoners at Pontiac and the phone system was one of the issues claimed by the prisoners as reason for their actions. We feel that all of this history shows how necessary it is to have a strong, well-educated, and organized group on the outside to both show the state and the companies that we are serious and not going away, but also to help fight for those on the inside who will inevitably face repression due to their activism.

Around the country anti-prison activists on both sides of the prison walls have been working around prison phone issues, from the gross overcharging we focused on above to privacy issues (large numbers of phone calls from prisons are listened to and/or recorded) to the prison phone system playing a role in obstruction of prisoners access to lawyers. The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown decided to get involved and try to campaign around phones for a number of reasons. We realize it's a shift away from much of the work we've been involved in over the past couple of years but it's very important because:

1. Rather than pick the issue we find the most morally reprehensible, we feel it was important to pick an issue that touches as wide a swath of those affected by the criminal justice and prison system as possible. If the amount of money being stolen from prisoners and their families was being stolen from any other sector of society all hell would break lose.
2. We wanted to choose an issue that would lead us to work closer with other prison activist organizations in and around Chicago and Illinois as well as with more individuals on both sides of the walls, prisoners and their loved ones.
3. We choose to work on the phones because we've researched the issue and feel like it has the potential to set some groundwork for long-term organizing goals, and maybe give us some small victories along the way.
4. We think we might be able to gain some victories because in other states people have fought the phone system and won!! The following list of examples shows that it is possible to tackle phone companies over this issue:
 - In Louisiana prisoners at the LA State Penitentiary began a phone boycott in 1993 which reduced calls from the prison by 75% and forced the phone company Global Tel-Link to reduce rates. The Public Service Commission then ordered Global Tel-Link to refund \$1.2 million in overcharges from June 1993 to May 1994.
 - In Florida a company called Oncor was fined \$250,000 for overcharging prisoners' families and had to refund \$750,000. More recently MCI was forced to refund \$1.7 million to customers in Florida for overcharging on prison calls.
 - In Nebraska a new contract with Sprint was announced in May 1997 that gave no commission to the state in return for lower rates.

We need to learn from these examples from other states. The work that has already been done in Illinois, and our combined experience around prisons and other forms of activism will help us to forge an effective strategy around the prison phones. The state and phone companies like AT&T and Ameritech have been making millions of dollars off of family and friends of prisoners for far too long, and they don't think there is anything we can do about it. We think it is time we prove them wrong.

- ¹ Freedman, Alix M. "Mom, It's Mugsy": Phone Firms Wrestle for Prisoners' Business in Hot Growth Market." Wall Street Journal, February 15, 1995.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Prendergast, Alan. "Reach Out and Gouge Someone." Westword, February 5-11, 1998.
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-CEML 7-

GOUGE PRISONERS' & THEIR FAMILIES

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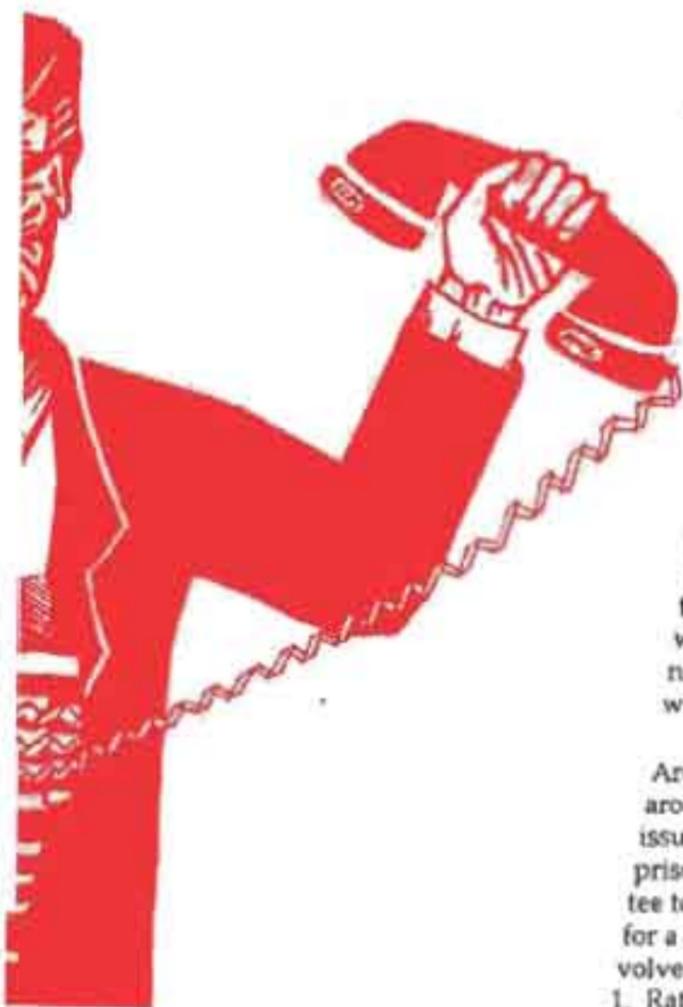
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maximum security democracy

resistant strains 1998

Although the title, Maximum Security Democracy is somewhat overarching, this project began with a fairly specific intent: to focus on the US prison industry and to highlight some of the struggles of those opposing it with a series of artists' posters designed for a variety of uses. The series serves to foreground some of the issues central to the construction of crime and punishment at a time when these issues are deliberately dismissed in the frenzied expansion of the criminal justice system. The posters also elaborate a definition of maximum security democracy, a structure of systems which maintain elaborate security (physical, financial, political, etc.) for some through the repression, both direct and subtle, of others.

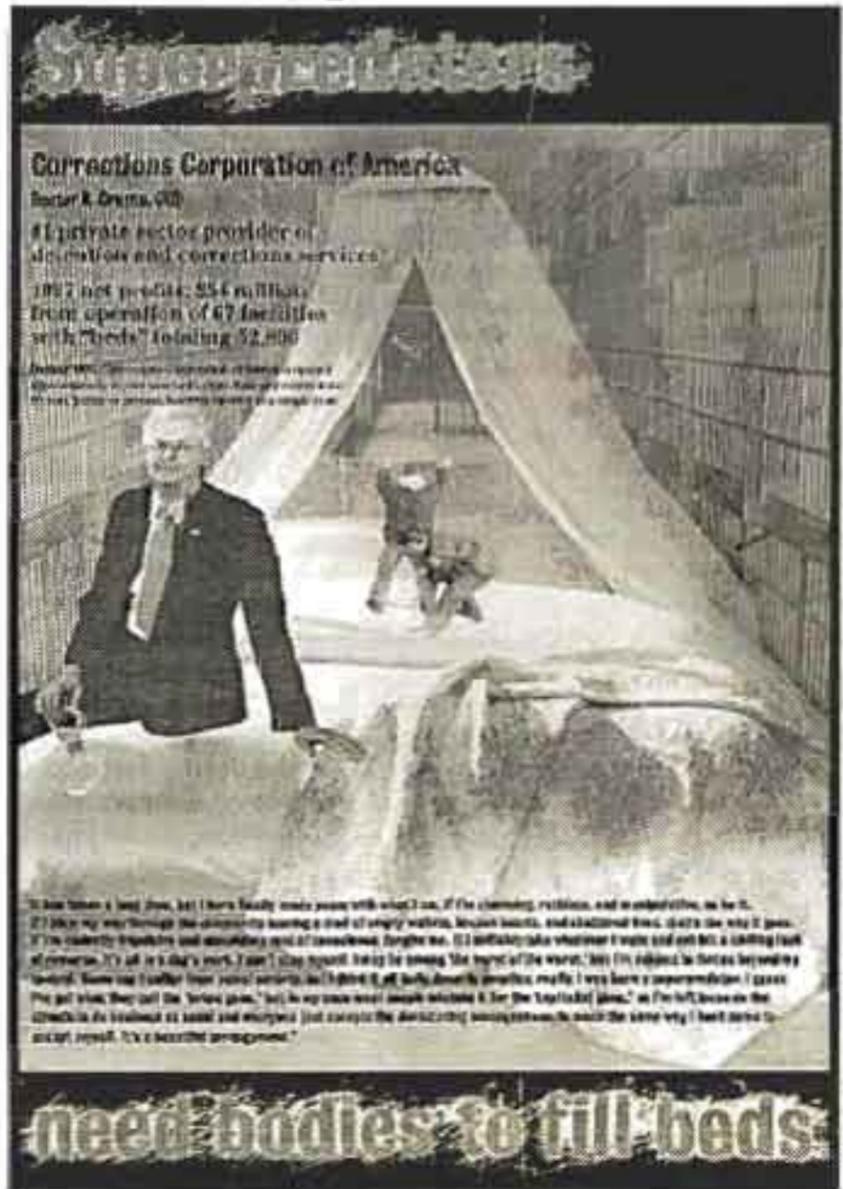
While there are obvious shortcomings and omissions in the series (i.e., no work from prisoner artists, no work about control units, medical neglect, HIV, corrections officers violence, visitation rights, the death penalty, alternatives to incarceration, treating youths as adults, and so on), we plan to continue with this work in different formats, expanding the range of concerns to further explore the prison-industrial complex and, more importantly, to focus on the work of people fighting it. Part of our intent is to produce materials that are useful to activists, and also in some way about resistance. As we continue, then, we encourage more activists to become involved in the preliminary discussions and in directly collaborating with artists. This involvement will contribute to decisions about both form and content, making our projects more effective in political context.

But at the same time, these works are not for activists only. We are interested in producing critical, political art that is accessible to anyone, and that examines issues without resorting to oversimplification. We want to put out works that are sharp and funny and engaging and politically challenging, and avoid those which once again combine a slogan with an image from the lefty stockpile (the clenched fist, the dove, the stripes of a flag turned into prison bars, people at a rally, etc.). These posters, the third project of resistant strains, are another step in this direction. We hope the images and words, if not explicitly about resistances to maximum security democracy, encourage, support, and contribute to these resistances.

— D. Thorne for resistant strains

For ordering information and/or more info on resistant strains, email vters4nica@igc.org.

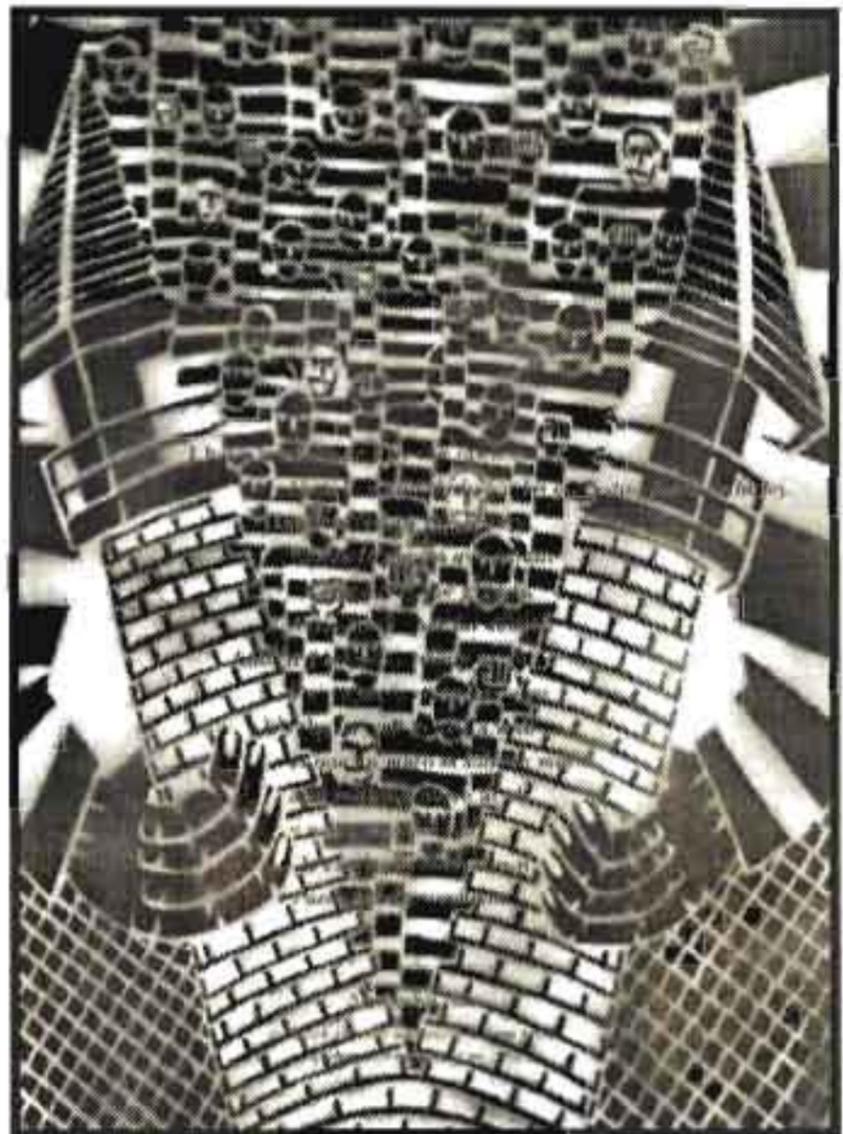
There are more than a dozen posters on exhibit at: <http://www.prisonactivist.org/resistant-strains>



'Superpredators' by resistant strains group



'Fast Track Police State' by Max Schumann



'Riot' by Josh MacPhee

ANTI-PRISON ACTIVIST BILLY HAND ROBINSON REMEMBERED

Billy Hand Robinson, former prisoner, anti-prison activist and friend of CEML, died this past May at the age of 63. Perhaps no single word better defined Billy's life than the word struggle — struggle, as in "struggle against the odds," struggle, as in "inner struggle" or, struggle, as in a life-long commitment to "the struggle" for social justice.

Billy was extraordinarily gifted. He was a writer, a teacher, a counselor and an activist. He directed a halfway house for ex-prisoners and founded an organization run by, and for, homeless people called EMPTI-SPOON. While these achievements were impressive, none was more impressive than the fact that he attained them in spite of obstacles that must have seemed to him, at times, insurmountable — a near life-long battle with alcohol and drug addiction, spending 15 years or more of his life in jails and prisons and repeated bouts with homelessness.

Billy was always very open about these more painful experiences in his life, speaking and writing about them often, and pondering them deeply. What troubled him most was not just that they had been a part of his life but that they had been a part of the lives of so many others in his community. The question haunted him: Why had so many Black men and women of his generation and of succeeding generations succumbed to addiction and, subsequently, to a life in prison?

It was the answer to this question that troubled him even more. Billy was never one to avoid accepting responsibility for his own actions and, where befitting, was all too eager to do so. Yet, he felt certain — the kind of certain that comes from a lifetime of experience and witness — that the lives of so many Black people had come undone, neither by chance nor by personal failure but by design, and that nothing he or his peers could have done would have changed anything about that. Oh, perhaps under just the right set of circumstances he, or any other given individual might have been spared but, then it would have only meant that some other Black man or woman would have become the "statistic" rather than he. In his (yet unpublished) autobiographical novel, *The Lynching Tree*, Billy writes about being set up for failure, like this, by powerful elements in a society that was both racist and unequal:

"When I graduated from grammar school in June of 1949, I was strung out. I had a dope habit. There was nothing mysterious or esoteric about it. It was like an osmosis process. The syndicate dumped tons of extremely potent, dirt cheap heroin into Black and Latino communities. I was one of those who was permeable. I wound up going to the penitentiary in 1951. (Yes, I was too young but, I, wanting to be grown too soon, had put my age up), and stayed there until 1956. I went back to prison in 1959 and 1970 — all convictions having to do with narcotic obtaining activities."



As with so many of his peers, Billy struggled against the odds from the very beginning. He was a gifted, Black child at a time when gifted, Black children were seldom encouraged, an impoverished child at a time when impoverished children were given few opportunities. He was a young Black man at a time when young Black men were routinely targeted by the police, a politically-minded, Black man at a time when politically-minded Black men were targeted by F.B.I. operations like COINTELPRO. More succinctly, he was a Black man in an America where Black men and women have never counted — or, at least, have never counted as much.

It is remarkable that, under such circumstances, he achieved so much. A 9th grade drop-out, he became self-educated, reading books by the dozens in jail and prison cells, taking courses, and eventually gaining a Masters Degree. It is perhaps even more remarkable that he never lost his spirit, never lost his determination, his dogged persistence to fight, at all costs, against those who attacked his people, Black people, and poor people everywhere.

here
 (at least) the pain is objectified:
 the bars // // //, the itchy-fingered shot-guns
 stalking prey from the mile high towers and walls,
 that stark, Flesh charred electric chair,
 the friendly cell mate who before your incredulous eyes
 turns into a forbidden object of sexual desire,
 the ballooning hordes of quite angry young
 black/latino/native american
 peach fuzz faces
 here
 (at least) gangsters plot no more
 — unless, of course, there be's such contradictions as gangbangin', drug
 guzzling gangsters
 here
 in this painful concentrated camp of quite angry
 young
 black/latino/native american
 peach fuzz faces
 here
 here
 here

1972 - For the "Iceman," Eugene Lewis -
 May his soul rest in peace
 Written by Billy Hands Robinson

At age 54, Billy was diagnosed with kidney failure and his health gradually declined. Despite being saddled with these health deficits, including dialysis treatments that eventually had to be done several times a day, he continued his activism. Prison related issues, homelessness, the widening gap between rich and poor, U.S. aggression in the 3rd World . . . all of these concerned him. What struck him hardest, however, was the plight of young people, especially young people of color, in America today. He saw them as counterparts to the youth of his own generation, and he saw the same deadly games being played with their lives as with his and that, if anything, the stakes had been raised even higher.

He saw that drugs were continuing to be dumped into poor Black and Latino neighborhoods, even as opportunities were withdrawn, and that the youth of such neighborhoods were being sent to prison at unheard of rates, 3, 4, 5 times the rate as in his day. Each time he looked, the rate had risen higher. He heard new code words being used to blame the victims, like "personal responsibility," "zero tolerance" or "war on drugs" . . . and he knew the fix was in. He read about the C.I.A./ Contra/ inner city L.A. drug connection or of the 100-1 ratio of crack to powder cocaine used in drug convictions (which meant, in effect, that poor, youth of color would get sent to prison much more often and with far longer sentences than anyone else), or that in many U.S. cities, 30, 40, even 50% of young, Black men were in the grasp of the Criminal Justice System — and he compelled himself to keep on trying, to continue to go to community meetings or to take the L to 51st Street, where he used to live — no matter that he could barely manage to do so — to talk to the young people on the streets there, to educate, to raise consciousness, to organize. . . .

He desperately wanted to save as many of these youth as he could from both addiction and prison. He knew that the former had robbed him of a great deal of his own productivity and peace of mind, and he hated prisons. He hated their cruelty and violence, their mindless regimen, their arbitrariness and pettiness. . . He hated their dehumanizing qualities and the way they wasted lives. He hated the part they played in the larger society, in maintaining racism and inequality, and in controlling any resistance to those in power.

Billy struggled to the very end and, despite all that he had seen and experienced, found hope in that struggle. He knew he could not give up. He knew that, while things looked bleak, now they would look brighter only if he and others like him "kept the faith." Much like the time-honored chant heard at so many rallies and demonstrations — "The People United Will Never Be Defeated" — he felt that if enough people joined the struggle, even seemingly invincible forces could be overcome.

FROM A MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

An interview conducted by Dorothy Glover

This interview was conducted on 4/7/98 with Warrior Queen Mother, Mary L. Johnson, whose son was recently transferred from Menard Correctional Center "Triple Max" to Tamms "Supermax" Correctional Center. Queen Mother Johnson is a woman who has worked, raised four children, and dedicated her life to the struggle, on behalf of her son and other oppressed people, whether they be on death row, or confined in any of the other sections of the Department of Corrections, including the Supermax at Tamms.

Q: What have you experienced since your son's imprisonment?

A: I've experienced many things, but what has been most disturbing is when I see friends and loved ones eventually break all ties with inmates. First, the cost to visit inmates (usually located in rural areas), and the astronomical charges by the phone company whenever calls are accepted from inmates, such as \$2.58 and up for the first minute, while calls are made statewide "for a dime". People who care about inmates are dehumanized in every way. They are forced to give up their right to be protected by the constitution, simply because of association with an inmate.

Q: What effects have his incarceration had on the family as a whole?

A: My son's incarceration has brought my immediate family closer; nonetheless, I am aware of other ramifications. Due to the incarceration of a family member, shame and blame becomes profound. Many stop visiting their family members, rather than deal with the humiliation.

I've learned that in sharing my experiences, it helps others to cope with what is happening in their own lives. We don't have to stop loving our family members or allow the system to brand us for having unconditional love.

Q: What effect has it had on you, personally?

A: It has motivated me to make this struggle a lifetime commitment. In the beginning I was naive. I thought being a good, hardworking, non-smoking or drinking, church-going person would be security enough for my family and me. My struggle has taught me it is not enough to be good, that's only trying to play it safe. I had to stop being fearful of man, and do what I felt in my heart was right, by fighting against injustice wherever I see it, knowing there will be no peace for the rest of us until there's justice for the least of us.

Q: Discuss the statistics of your son's disciplinary reports.

A: My son does not have a disciplinary problem, he hasn't received a ticket in approximately ten years.

Q: How do you feel about his transfer to Tamms?

A: His transfer to Tamms is another eye-opener— if they can send him, then 90% of the inmates in the institutions will be going. It's appalling, this biased system attempts to humiliate inmates by

making it mandatory for them to get on their knees every time they're escorted out of their cell by security guards. Tamms is designed to completely dehumanize the inmate by eliminating all human contact. It's a sophisticated replacement of the "Hole" that was outlawed years ago, a modern Alcatraz!

Q: Is Tamms just a supermax prison built both above and underground for the specific purpose of totally isolating its victims?

A: Tamms is another way society is looking out for people living in rural areas. It's a new Welfare Reform Program to provide for people who have no source of income, and no ability to do anything else. They have been blessed with the misery of other poor people, they now have their own penitentiary for their livelihood. All supermax prisons are a selective way to prosecute anyone who dare to stand up for what's right and the rights of others.



Q: Do you believe that this is a human rights question?

A: No Doubt! Definitely! I see this as a modern plantation. Corporation, and businessmen, all over the world are bidding on penitentiaries and the right to own the commissary. They have a closed shop on anything the inmates purchase—such as toiletries, writing materials, and clothing. Inmates choices are limiting and prices are doubled. Everything purchased at these institutions in the past is being destroyed if it's not picked up in 30 days by a friend or relative—this begs the question, so just what really happens to their property?

Q: What do you feel in regard to the direction that the Department of Corrections is going in?

A: The Illinois Department of Corrections is going in the direction of COMPLETE CHAOS! Unless the public rises up and demands that inmates be treated like human beings, we will be cosigning this new way of priming slaves. We need to communicate to people of conscience that the old plantation mentality is attempting to bring back slavery, claiming it's to protect the people, knowing this will eventually replace them on jobs. Why pay for labor when you have slaves to work for little of nothing? It's about profit, not people. In some institutions, the sharecropper tactics have already been instituted. These wages would be saved for use sometime in the future. But now, these wages are to be paid back to the plantation for room and board. The plantation owner strips the inmates of hope...any hope for a future.

Q: What would you suggest to the workers in this struggle?

A: With the understanding that prisons are a microcosm of society, the inmates and their loved ones need empathy, not sympathy. This would enable you to proceed with sincere efforts to encourage others to get involved, the same as if you or a member of your family was in prison. And the people can demand that visitors be treated like citizens and that the constitution be enforced. Aim for the masses to educate and organize and agitate people of conscience with any spiritual awareness that instead of trying to be leaders we must make leaders who will share knowledge not flaunt it. Who will not spend too much time talking about how long they've been here or there but what have they contributed to make things better for the people they claim to serve. Then when the inmates return to the community you and others can welcome them with open arms knowing you have done your best and our GOD will do the rest. As we are forgiven, we will be forgiven.

**This article was excerpted, with permission, from *Connections: A Statewide Newsletter*, July 1998, Published by the Prison Action Committee.



A REVIEW; THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Pamphlet by:
Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans
Agit Press, 1998

Reviewed by:
Joe Cybert
Prison Action Committee

While small in size, PRISON by Goldberg and Evans covers a lot of territory. Prisons as big business, prison labor, and how the war on drugs is really a war on the people are just a few of the topics. In very short order, authors Goldberg and Evans demonstrate that the new prison building craze has a twofold purpose—profit and social control.

The book illustrates that in actuality, crime has little to do with prisons. That may be a surprising statement to some. Consider this, most of the "criminals" locked up in this country today are poor people who commit nonviolent crimes out of economic need or to feed their addiction to drugs. Violence is reported in less than 14% of all crimes. Injuries occur in just 3%.

Arrests relating to drugs alone account for 85% of the court's calendar. While the drug epidemic could be sanely and humanely treated as a health issue, the powers that be would rather regard it as a criminal issue to

be met with an "iron fist". (Let's not forget that the government's own CIA has been reported to be the largest single importer of illicit drugs into this country.)



Co-author political prisoner Linda Evans

As the Cold War has wound down and the Crime War has heated up, industry has been re-tooling. Companies like AT&T, Sprint, and MCI conspire with states to gouge prisoners and their families with

exorbitant rates that are as much as six times higher than the normal rates. Private correctional companies make good profits. Prisoner labor is plentiful with great potential for expanded super-exploitation. Meanwhile, as rural America is being downsized by agribusiness, prisons, full to the brim, have become a new crop.

The authors advise middle class America to wake up to this reality. Transnational corporations with national armies at their behest and police and prisons seem hell-bent on maintaining as well as widening the division between the rich and poor.

Goldberg and Evans conclude their booklet with these two paragraphs:

"Just as the prison industrial complex is becoming increasingly central to the growth of the U.S. economy, prisoners are a crucial part of building effective opposition to the transnational corporate agenda. Because of their enforced invisibility, powerlessness, and isolation, it's far too common for prisoners to be left out of the equation of international solidarity. Yet, opposing the expansion of the prison industrial complex, and supporting the rights and basic humanity of prisoners, may be the only way we can stave off the

continued on back page

TAAMS, continued from page 1

they have with other prisoners or guards.

Tamms consists of several units with glass control centers which are flanked by 3 pods. The units are designed to provide all services and needs to the prisoners to keep them inside the unit. Each unit has its own medical station and a small inadequate law library (prisoners report the library is lacking many necessary forms and books) which cuts down on the prisoners opportunity to leave the unit.

The yard is a 12' x 30' enclosed, empty box with concrete cement walls and floor. The ceiling is composed partially of steel slates and wire mesh which allows a minimal amount of fresh air and sunshine. Prisoners report that the yard is unbearably hot on summer days, and during yard time prisoners are not allowed to have any water. (If the prisoner needs water during yard his time is terminated.)

All visits, legal or personal, are non-contact visits conducted in glass boxes through a glass window with a voice activated system. During these visits, the prisoners are handcuffed to their chairs. Without any rational explanation, the prisoners are strip searched and their rectums are probed both before and after each non-contact visit.

In fact, whenever a prisoner leaves his cell (not including yard and shower) he is strip searched, probed, and shackled. When a prisoner is shackled, his wrists are handcuffed through the slot in his door, he is forced to his knees, where he must bend over while the guards apply chains to his legs. Guards search the prisoner's cell

every time he is out of it, and routinely guards handcuff prisoners to a "slave hook" in the cell while searching it when he is present. It is a common practice for guards to use pepper spray on prisoners and conduct cell extractions in full riot gear.

Who Is At Tamms

Tamms classifies prisoners as either disciplinary segregation candidates or as administrative detainees. The disciplinary candidates allegedly have recent infractions in other state institutions. The definition of who constitutes an administrative detainee is broad enough as to be meaningless. It is not only the catch-all of the institutional security, but also institutional "integrity"—and they can be anyone whom the IDOC determines to be a gang member.

Administrative detainees receive notice of their transfer and a hearing within 10 days of arrival, but many prisoners report that they never received any notice regarding their transfer to Tamms, and were not provided a hearing to present evidence or challenge the alleged reason for their transfer (rather they have a short meeting with a prison official and social worker). They are not allowed to challenge the evidence (often "secret" evidence) used to brand them as dangerous gang members or escapees.

In one case, a prisoner at Tamms was transferred to the institution as an administrative detainee for his alleged status in a gang. This prisoner renounced his gang status and involvement two years prior to his transfer, and at his prior institution worked in the officer's kitchen. At his former institution, the prisoner lived in the general population and apparently posed

no risks to the institution. However, according to DOC intelligence, this prisoner was deemed to be part of a gang, and he could not challenge the secret evidence or uncover the source of information used to support his transfer to Tamms. Many suspect it was the prisoner's successful suits against the DOC which bought him his one way ticket to Tamms.

The Illinois DOC does not have any policies regarding the admission and transfer of administrative detainees. It is unclear what kind of proof, if any, is needed for the DOC to brand an individual a gang member or threat to the security of the institution. Many prisoners report that previous infractions stemming from 15 year old incidents were used to support their transfer to Tamms, even though they already served time in segregation for these incidents at their previous facilities.

Regardless of whether a prisoner is transferred to Tamms as a disciplinary candidate or administrative detainee, the prisoner has a mandatory minimum sentence of one year there. One year of extreme isolation.

Shut Tamms Down

Currently, a variety of grassroots and legal organizations are gathering information regarding the conditions at Tamms and investigating potential channels to pursue in shutting this control unit down. Tamms is of no help to the prisoners or to the communities which most of them will return. It must be closed.

Who We Are

Walkin' Steel is a production of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML). The United States Penitentiary at Marion was opened in 1963 to replace the infamous Alcatraz prison which was closed that same year. Since then, Marion has become an increasingly inhumane institution. In 1972, a few months after the great rebellion at Attica prison, one wing of Marion was turned into a control unit. In 1983, the entire prison was locked down and turned into one huge control unit. CEML was founded in 1985, with three main purposes:

- ** to fight against the brutality of the prison;
- ** to work against the spread of control units throughout the United States; and
- ** to expose the white supremacist nature of the prison system.

In early 1990 the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) announced that the "mission of Marion" would be moved to a new prison to be constructed in Florence, Colorado. CEML decided that, despite our small size, we must try also to fight against the opening of this "administrative maximum" prison. Fortunately, we are but one small part of a movement across the country that is fighting against the brutality of this newest U.S. technological nightmare. Unfortunately, ADX Florence was opened, Marion is still under lockdown conditions and control units have proliferated in the state prison systems all across the country.

In December of 1994, many organizations and individuals from across the country including CEML came together to form the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons. A tremendous amount of work has resulted from this campaign, but clearly much more needs to be done. If you are not yet involved in this struggle, and would like to become involved, please contact either organization below.

**Bonnie Kerness; American Friends Service Committee,
National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons
972 Broad Street, 6th Floor Newark, New Jersey 07102
(201) 643-3192
e-mail: 103137.3272@compuserve.com**

**Committee to End the Marion Lockdown
PO Box 578172, Chicago, IL 60657-8172, (312) 235-0070
e-mail: ceml@aol.com
web page: <http://www-unix.olt.umass.edu/~kastor/ceml.html>**



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consolidation of a police state that represses us all, where you or a friend or family member may yourself end up behind bars.

Clearly, the only alternative that will match the power of global capital is an internationalization of human solidarity. Because, truly, we are all in this together."

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In one of the major lies of the 20th century the U.S. maintains that it holds no political prisoners at the same time that it criticizes many other countries for just such violations. Yet a look into U.S. prisons reveals more than a hundred political prisoners — people from the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Movement; Native American people like Leonard Peltier, for whom literally millions of people throughout the world have signed petitions of support; Mumia Abu-Jamal, well-known reporter, on death row in Pennsylvania; Silvia Baraldini, an Italian citizen who the parliament of Italy has requested be allowed to return home; 15 Puerto Ricans in prison with sentences of up to 100 years for pursuing independence for their nation; and a hundred others.

Many of these people have written their bios and they are all contained in this 206-page book, attractively published and ready to use to subvert the deceptions of the United States government. If the U.S. holds no political prisoners, then who are these people? Why are they in prison? Why is the U.S. trying to keep them there forever?

Can't Jail the Spirit can be ordered for \$15 +\$3 postage from:

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P.O. Box 578172, Chicago, IL 60657-8172
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All profit from these sales will go to the Jericho '98 Campaign and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago.

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