



"It's a living tomb for those  
imprisoned there..."  
—ACLU

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**National Campaign to Abolish the Lexington Women's Control Unit  
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# Buried Alive in the Lexington Women's Control Unit



*"Descending the steps into this underground prison, escorted by prison staff who guide one through electrified gates and doors and past camera after camera, one enters what feels like a tomb. As each door slams shut, the feeling intensifies that one is about to be buried alive."*

Described by a visiting attorney, this is the Lexington Control Unit, an experimental federal prison for women political prisoners. At a cost of nearly \$1 million, 16 subterranean cells in a self-contained unit were constructed beneath an existing building at the U.S. federal prison in Lexington, Kentucky.

After its opening in November, 1986, three women were transferred to the prison. Alejandrina Torres is a Puerto Rican independence fighter, a prisoner of war. She is a 47 year old mother of two and wife of a minister in the United Church of Christ. Susan Rosenberg, a North American, and Silvia Baraldini, an Italian national, are both anti-imperialist political prisoners who have spent many years working in solidarity with the Puerto Rican and Black liberation struggles. When the campaign began to expose Lexington as a political prison, federal officials hurriedly brought in two other women serving long sentences; Deborah Brown and Sylvia Brown.

## THE CONDITIONS IN LEXINGTON ARE CRUEL AND UNUSUAL BY ANY YARDSTICK:

- \**Confinement in small, starkly lit subterranean cells.*
- \**No contact with other prisoners.*
- \**Constant surveillance by eleven video cameras watched by male guards.*
- \**All actions and conversations, no matter how trivial, recorded in prison log books.*
- \**Random strip searches and daily pat searches after using the yard.*
- \**Visitation limited to immediate family.*
- \**All mail censored; political and gay literature denied for "security" reasons.*
- \**Denial of decent medical care, which could be a death sentence for Alejandrina Torres, who has a serious heart condition.*
- \**No access to religious services.*
- \**Sexual humiliation; for example, whenever the women require sanitary napkins they must request them one at a time from male guards.*





# SHUT DOWN ALL CONTROL UNITS!

Lexington is a behavior modification unit characterized by systematic use of sensory deprivation, extreme isolation and degradation. This is why the Reverend Avery Post, president of the United Church of Christ, concluded after his investigation of Lexington: "The very concept of the unit, the very environment in itself is a human rights violation. It shrinks human beings into a state of inhumaness."

Michael Quinlan, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, says the conditions in Lexington are necessary to provide adequate security for the women. He says their radical politics make them a threat to the community and "escape prone." Other prison officials

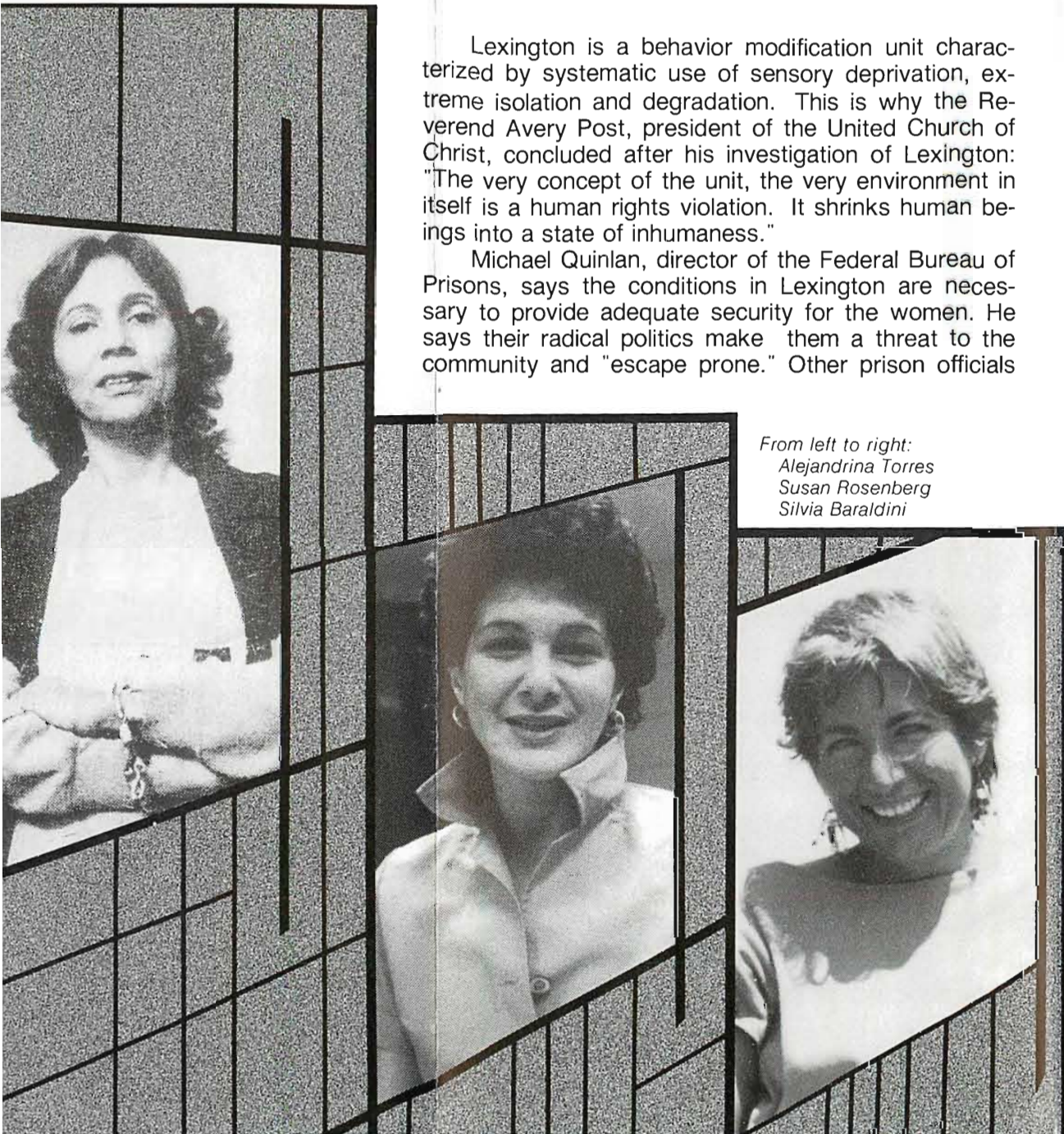
have told the women that their only avenue out of the control unit is to renounce their political associations, to repudiate a lifetime of political principle.

In recent months the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, the American Civil Liberties Union, and a wide array of activist groups have demanded that Lexington and all control units be shut immediately. As part of a scathing ACLU report, Dr. Richard Korn, a noted psychologist and criminologist, summed up the goals of the control unit: "to reduce the prisoners to the state of submission essential for their ideological conversion. That failing, the next objective is to reduce them to a state of psychological incompetence sufficient to neutralize them as efficient, self-directing antagonists. That failing the only alternative is to destroy them, preferably by making them desperate enough to destroy themselves."

These chilling words describe the white collar torture of America in the 1980s and 1990s. It is administered not by guards carrying electric cattle prods and brass knuckles, but by wardens armed with the latest research studies on behavior modification.

By the fall of 1987, the wave of protest against the control unit resulted in a pledge by the Federal Bureau of Prisons to improve the conditions in the unit and eventually close it down. Yet this became an almost meaningless promise when it was discovered that the government is proceeding at full speed with the construction of Lexington's replacement. The Marianna Federal Prison, 75 miles outside of Tallahassee in rural Florida, will be a new, larger maximum security prison for up to 200 women. Marianna promises to be the female equivalent of the notorious Marion Prison in Illinois, where for the last four years 350 men have been locked down 23 hours a day in tiny six by eight foot cells.

Alejandrina, Susan and Silvia have now spent



From left to right:  
Alejandrina Torres  
Susan Rosenberg  
Silvia Baraldini

## What You Can Do:

\* Contact the National Campaign to Abolish the Lexington Women's Control Unit; invite one of our members to your home or organization to make a presentation and show a video.

\* Break through the isolation by writing the women, or by putting them on your group's mailing list. Their addresses:

Alejandrina Torres 92152-024  
Susan Rosenberg 05125-024  
Silvia Baraldini 03684-016  
P.O. Box 2000  
Lexington, Kentucky 40512

\* Write a check to help support the campaign (tax-deductible). Make check payable to: IFCO (designated to the Lexington Campaign).

\* Distribute copies of this brochure.

\* Voice your protest. Write:

Michael Quinlan  
Federal Bureau of Prisons  
320 1st St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

more than one year in the control unit. Their spirit of resistance has enabled them to preserve their sanity and strength. Yet they are beginning to experience the consequences of sensory deprivation: seeing spots, dizziness, loss of concentration, lethargy, depression and weight loss.

This situation affronts our humanity. The existence of a political prison like Lexington, and other control units like Marion and Marianna, are a threat hanging over the heads of all of us who work for social justice. Lexington is a terrible experiment in how much the women can take...and how much we, the public, can take.

We will not tolerate these dungeons; instead we will speak out until the control units are shut down forever.