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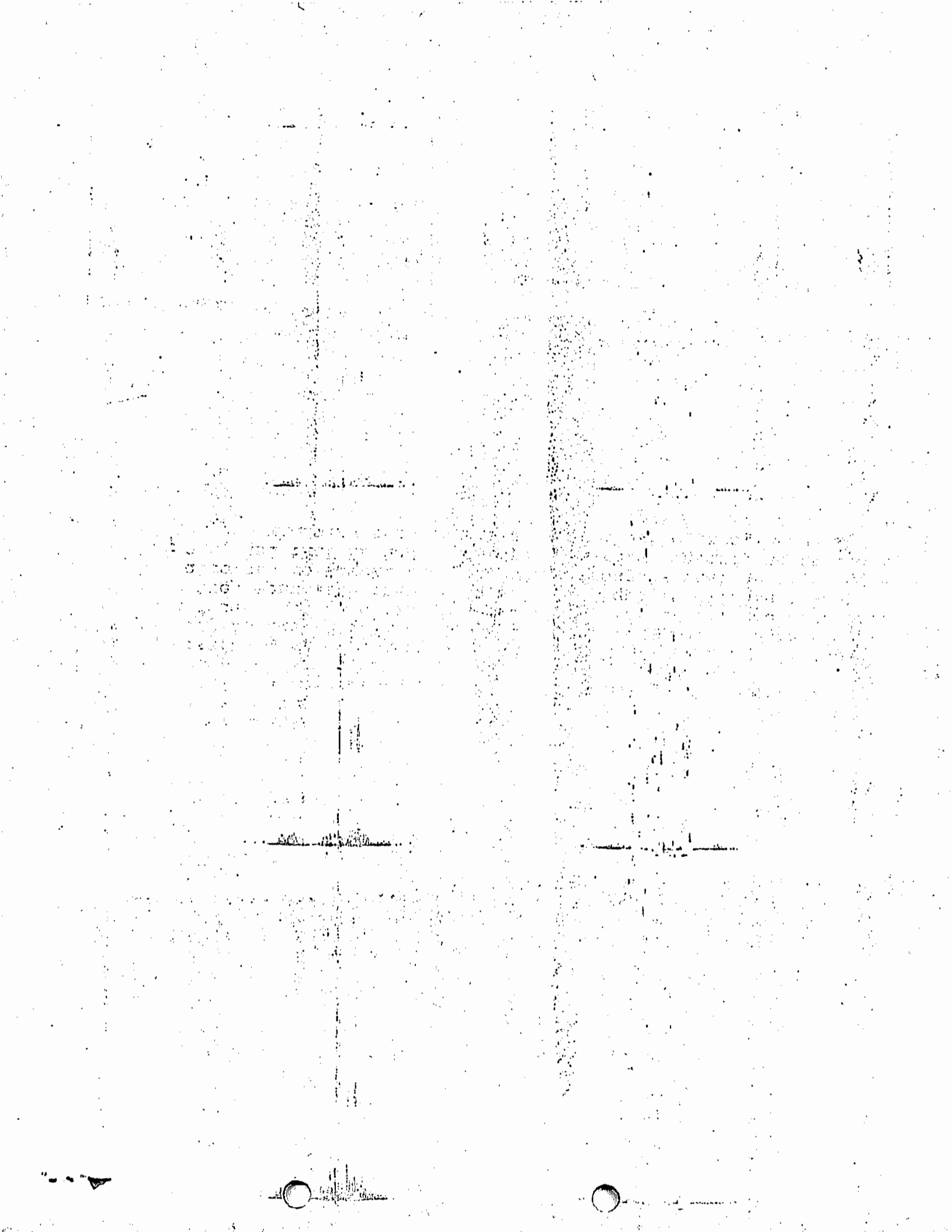
## PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF ADJUSTMENT CENTER ENVIRONMENT AT SAN QUENTIN PRISON

by

THOMAS O. HILLIARD

As a follow up to the June 11, 1974 summary of my evaluation of the Adjustment Center of San Quentin Prison, I am now submitting the complete and more detailed report. My methods of inquiry and conclusions are the same as the summary. That is, my evaluation and conclusions are based on interviews with Fleeta Drumgo and David Johnson, an inspection of the Adjustment Center and the cells, and a review of trial memoranda. I will offer my professional opinion as to the impact of the physical and psychological conditions of the Adjustment Center at San Quentin on the plaintiffs Johnny Spain, Fleeta Drumgo, Hugo Pinel, Willie Tate, Luis Falamantez and David Johnson, often referred to as the "San Quentin Six". Since my major personal contact was with David Johnson and Fleeta Drumgo, my conclusion will have most applicability to them; although much of my report will be quite relevant to the plight of the other plaintiffs. My professional opinions and conclusions are to assist in addressing the larger legal question as to whether the conditions and treatment in the adjustment center of San Quentin in fact constitute cruel and unusual punishment in violation of constitutional rights.

My initial exposure to the Adjustment Center was on May 31, 1974, as I was given a tour of Tier One of the Adjustment Center and visited the cell of Fleeta Drumgo. My first and most striking perceptions were of the small, cramped and barren quarters where the plaintiffs lived. Within this small six foot by eight foot space, Fleeta Drumgo had stuffed all personal possessions such as books, letters, clothes, toilet utensils, etc. Ordinary conveniences such as a dresser or shelves to stack his personal property in an orderly way were absent. There were no rugs or



other decoration to soften the hardness and coldness of the bars and concrete. Only a few pictures of friends and loved ones gave some warmth to the cell. A small, hard cot covered approximately half of the space in the room. I was shocked to find the toilet located approximately six inches from the head of the bed.

Following my inspection of the physical facilities and conditions of the Adjustment Center, I interviewed Fleeta Drumgo. Fleeta was led into the interview room with handcuffs. In addition to the restraints that the handcuffs placed on the overall atmosphere of the interview, they made it quite difficult and often uncomfortable and clumsy for routine movements such as lighting a cigarette, drinking a soda or for physical gestures as he talked. Fleeta presented himself as a serious and sensitive person. He is intelligent, verbal and articulate. He displayed a heightened political awareness and a strong and positive racial identification. He writes letters daily and reads both critically and voluminously. In fact, these interests serve an important psychological function of giving meaning to his life and value to his being, given the overwhelming restrictions imposed at the Adjustment Center.

In answering my question as to what is the most difficult aspect of life in the Adjustment Center, Fleeta mentioned constantly being in a "cage" and in chains, handcuffs and leg irons. He associated this treatment with that of an animal. Equally difficult was his attempts to combat the persistent thoughts that he might never get out, and that he had no future. In this context, he talked of the overwhelming tension and anxiety that he experienced when his future was being considered, such as prior to his trial. Sometimes the tension was sufficiently great that he actually experienced physical pain, though he would not report it to prison officials for fear that they would pounce on any weakness that he showed. He flatly stated that he did not trust the prison doctors. During many of these difficult times, Fleeta talked of at times having to yell out or sing loudly to seek some release for the pain and tension that he experiences. Despite the painful and depressive content of the interview, Fleeta, throughout, displayed remarkable poise, ego strength and psychological resiliency.

Following our interview, Fleeta was taken back to a cell in the center of the hall of the Adjustment Center and was required to undress completely to be searched. After being searched thoroughly he was required to turn his back to the prison guard and bend over as the guard examined his rectum for weapons. Nothing could hide the pain and humiliation on Fleeta's face.

On June 6, 1974, I interviewed David Johnson, a twenty-seven year old Black, male inmate of the Adjustment Center. He was bright, perceptive and quite personable. According to David, the most difficult aspect of the Adjustment Center is that of being constantly

Perhaps, the most gross and visible aspect of life in the Adjustment Center at San Quentin prison is the prolonged confinement behind bars and in chains - handcuffs, waist irons and leg irons. The parallels between their chains and bonds, and animals in captivity is quite obvious to Fleeta Drumgo, and David Johnson. In fact, it was stated that the "cages" of the Adjustment Center are smaller and less roomy than those of many animals in the zoo. The chains have both physical and symbolic significance to the inmates. The daily reality of being in chains involves very real physical restrictions and, therefore, is a source of constant annoyance and frustration. Equally important, however, is the symbolic and psychological significance of being in bondage, particularly for Fleeta Drumgo and David Johnson as Black males. Both are acutely aware of the similarity between their position of confinement and the historic captivity of Blacks in slavery. For instance, Fleeta and David commented on the fact that there is a disproportionately large number of Black inmates in San Quentin, at the same time that

- (1) The experience of prolonged confinement behind bars and chains.
- (2) The lack of sufficient physical activity and exercise.
- (3) Prolonged isolation from people including the absence of normal heterosexual relationships.
- (4) The impact of their indeterminate status.

Following my descriptions of the physical conditions of the Adjustment center and my interviews with Fleeta Drumgo and David Johnson, I will now offer my professional opinion as to the nature and impact of these conditions on people in general, and, specifically, the inmates in question. My comments will be focused on:

locked in chains and in "cages" with little space for exercise and not being allowed outdoors. He further echoed the concerns previously mentioned by Fleeta Drumgo about the difficulty of dealing with indeterminate sentence - not knowing how long he would remain in prison, and having no specific program leading to his release. David also talked of the inmate's vulnerability to arbitrary decisions and whims of prison guards. He cited numerous examples of brutality by the prison guards such as being beaten and spit on while in chains. At other times the guards were reported to take away privileges arbitrarily such as recreation in the time allotted for physical exercise. Permeating his discussion of the abuses by the prison guards was a constant fear of being provoked into action that would cause an extension of his incarceration.

the prison officials are largely white. Further, they pointed out the injustice involved in their long period of confinement, in comparison to the sentences meted out to whites in the Watergate scandal. The obvious and visible inequities heighten their sense of injustice and makes their acceptance of their plight more difficult and frustrating.

Another part of their prolonged confinement is the limited opportunity for physical activity and recreation. The plaintiffs are restricted to their small cramped living quarters, twenty-four hours per day, except for a physical exercise period for one hour, four times a week. During this limited exercise period, they are restricted to walking and exercising in the narrow hallways of the tier. The inmates are not allowed outdoors. These severe restrictions on physical activity and recreation denies the inmates a valuable release for tensions and pent up emotions and a necessary relief from the boredom and monotony of their lives.

More important, from a human perspective, is the severe limitation that the prolonged isolation from normal human contacts has on the development and maintenance of warm and positive relationships. The inmates of the Adjustment Center are limited to one hour per week for visiting; to accommodate all family, friends, etc. The absence of these relationships severely minimizes the love and warmth that would be important in balancing the negative relationships that the plaintiffs experience with the prison guards and officials. Their relationship would provide emotional support and greatly bolster their spirits during the difficult period of their confinement to the Adjustment Center.

Further, close relationships with family and friends would be particularly useful in providing support, as they return to their communities, such as in finding housing, jobs and other crises of readjustment. In the latter example, the prolonged isolation not only causes severe human deprivation, but is clearly counter-rehabilitative.

Additionally, the inmates experience an almost total absence of normal, adult heterosexual relationships. The establishment and maintenance of these ties would also serve as a positive incentive to the inmates for the return to their communities. Further, the policies and procedures of San Quentin dictate that adult males must be denied for years sexual intercourse with members of the opposite sex. Obviously, these are not ideal conditions for males in their twenties.

While the day-to-day life of the Adjustment Center involves considerable pain and suffering, the indefinite or indeterminate

status serves to heighten their pervasive sense of frustration and hopelessness. That is, there is an apparent lack of clear sense of the length or duration of their confinement. More importantly, there is a lack of a specific criteria for what is "adjustment" or an identifiable plan that would lead to their release from the Adjustment Center. Further, there appears to be a total absence of any rationally based rehabilitation program for inmates of the Adjustment Center. The cumulative effect of the prolonged confinement, the intolerable daily existence and the indeterminate nature of their sentence would tend to produce deep feelings of despair, and hopelessness. In fact, my clinical experience indicates that when people experience painful and distressing circumstances and also are unable to see any resolution they are driven to extreme actions, and desperate solutions are, indeed, predictable.

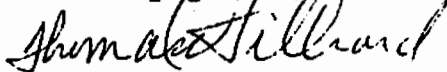
The question may be raised as to what is the present emotional status of the plaintiffs as a result of the Adjustment Center conditions, which I have consistently described as deleterious. Fortunately, in my examination of Fleeta Drumgo and David Johnson, I found no evidence of gross psychopathology, such as psychosis or severe neurosis. They were in touch with reality. Their moods were appropriate. Their impulse control was good and there was no evidence of violence proneness. In fact, both Fleeta Drumgo and David Johnson were quite preoccupied with the need for control and discipline, lest they be provoked into action that would cause massive retaliation from the prison guards or that would prolong their period of incarceration.

However, I would warn against the notion that the absence of severe psychiatric symptomatology may be construed to mean that the conditions of the Adjustment Center are positive or beneficial. Rather, Fleeta Drumgo and David Johnson have and continue to experience considerable pain, suffering, degradation and dehumanization. My own explanation of the cause of their psychological health despite such extreme conditions is due to several circumstances. First, the camaraderie and group cohesiveness of the inmates of the Adjustment Center provides a strong emotional support system that allows them to endure difficult circumstances. Also, as Blacks, they have retained a strength, resiliency and an unexplained ability to survive and even flourish under conditions of extreme oppression. Finally, several empirical studies indicate that strong and positive racial identification and political awareness, such as David Johnson and Fleeta Drumgo demonstrate, is associated with psychological health in Blacks. In fact, it may well be that they are an atypical sample of the inmate population and that an examination of other inmates, past and present, may show more serious psychological damage.

Overall, it is my professional opinion that despite the benevolent and therapeutic sound of the title Adjustment Center, its physical environment and psychological climate is overwhelmingly negative and antagonistic to effective rehabilitation. In fact, I would submit that the conditions of the Adjustment Center are both hostile and provocative. That is, that the normal and typical experiences in the Adjustment Center stimulate, and, indeed, provoke hostility, resentment and resistance to this type of treatment. Essentially, inmates are treated as animals or sub-humans. They are constantly in chains, experience the crudest of living conditions, endure prolonged confinement and isolation from normal human contact, and are severely limited in physical activity and recreation. There is no apparent positive reinforcement. This overwhelmingly negative environment leads to hostility, bitterness, frustration and despair. Ideally, penal and correctional institutions purport to develop the inmate's sense of empathy, identification and respect for society and its institutions. However, the prison system, symbolic of other societal institutions, breeds an acute awareness of injustice, insensitivity and engenders a basic contempt for society.

I therefore affirm that it is my professional opinion that the physical and psychological conditions connected with life in the Adjustment Center is cruel and unusual punishment and clearly inconsistent with positive mental health.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas O. Hilliard, Ph.D.

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