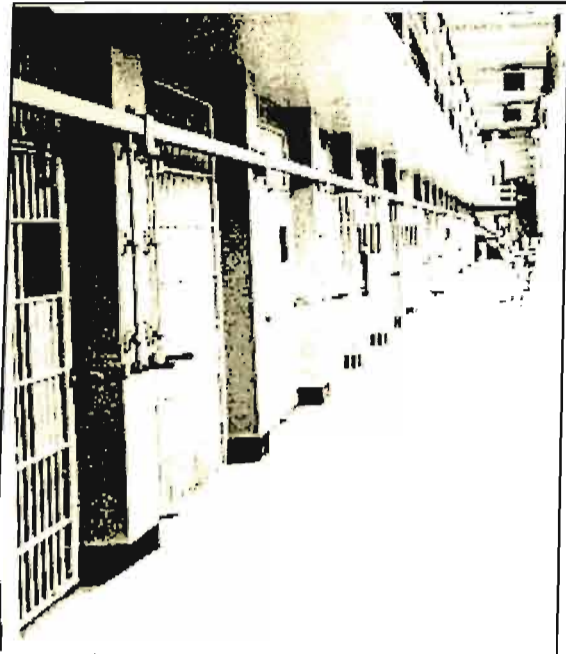


# ABOLISH!

Newsletter of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons



## A CALL TO ACTION

In December, 1994 activists from across the United States, from a dozen states and two dozen cities, met in Philadelphia and founded the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons. A year later, at our second meeting, the Campaign issued a call to action for Spring of 1996. We believe:

- That control unit prisons are barbaric. No human being should be caged in a cell nearly 24 hours a day and denied all human contact for years on end. It is clear that the purpose of control units is to destroy prisoners both physically and psychologically, not to facilitate growth or improvement;
- That political prisoners and other dissidents are especially targeted for incarceration in control units, with the intent of dehumanizing and criminalizing them, as well as keeping them separate from other prisoners and from the movements of which they are a part;
- That control unit prisons are part of the insane imprisonment binge which portrays every problem as the fault of the individual rather than the result of a perverted social structure, one which proposes that most of these problems can be solved by putting people away in cages for longer and longer periods of time;
- That our society's imprisonment binge and the proliferation of control units are essential components of U.S. colonialism and racism. We believe that these components are not "errors" or misguided attempts to control crime. They exist not to control crime, but to attempt to control the democratic impulses of people of color within the borders of the U.S.

Understanding these issues, we must organize and act, educate and agitate. With this in mind, the National Campaign is calling for coordinated activities all across the U.S. and Canada at the end of April and the beginning of May, 1996. The goal is to hold as many programs and demonstrations as possible at almost the same time. Areas already involved in the planning include Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Boulder, Newark, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco. A variety of events are being scheduled, including hearings, demonstrations, seminars, delegations, educational pickets, caravans, dinners, concerts, and so forth.

We hope that many more will join the effort. We believe that if we raise our voices against these barbaric control unit prisons, against the racist imprisonment binge, against the incarceration of millions of young people, that together we will be heard. Together, we can organize through practical activity a network of people that will challenge the dehumanizing U.S. society, and that will move towards the construction of a human society in its place. Please join us.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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## Hearings Rationale

*The National Campaign to Monitor and Abolish Control Units Prisons is organizing a series of regional hearings on the topic of Control Units, Prisons and the Imprisonment of Political Prisoners as Human Rights Violations.*

*These hearings, educational in nature, will be organized in*

*order to give the broadest possible exposure to the unprecedented building of Control Units, Prisons and the incarceration of Political Prisoners in the US. Their history, philosophy and in particular, the racist manner in which the first two are populated will be addressed as well as the conditions that prisoners in general, and political prisoners specifically, are forced to live under.*

*The hearings will address the*

*concerns of community, civil and human rights and progressive organizations throughout the US. The hearings will be divided into themes that address the past and present situation of those communities most impacted by prisons. It is our belief that in this manner, we will begin to tear away the veil of respectability and prestige the US government enjoys in the international community as a human rights leader. Prisoners, former prisoners, their families,*

*academics and advocates will be invited to deliver presentations in the form of testimony.*

*International law standards, as well as US federal and state law, will be the instruments used to construct the hearings.*

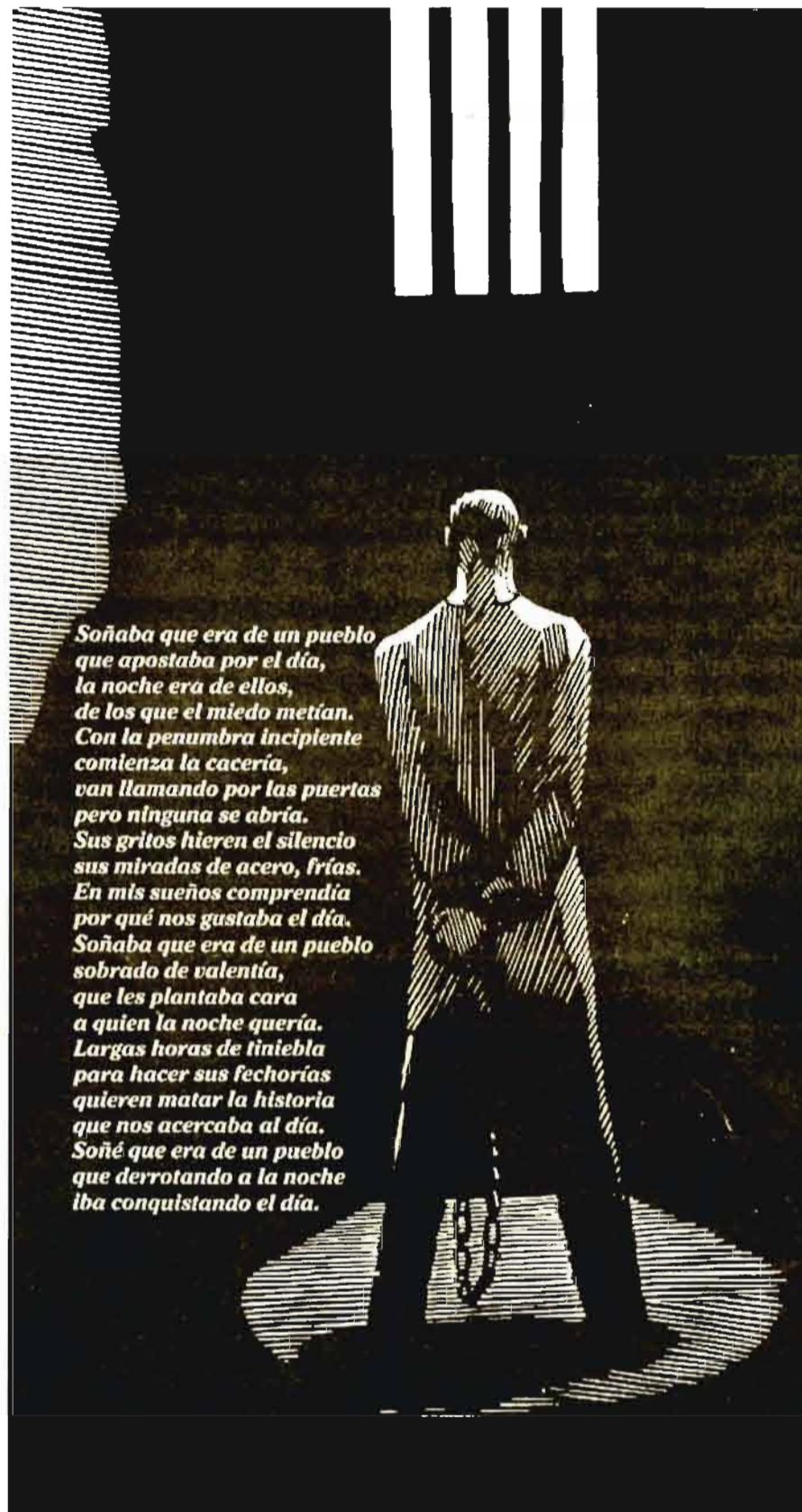
*To this end, all organizations and individuals which are active in opposing prisons, control units and are prisoner advocates are welcome to sponsor the hearings.*

## "NO EXIT CRITERIA": Northeast hearings on control-unit prisons

New Jersey State Prison in Trenton, New Jersey is the location of one of the purest control units in the country. It's official name is the Management Control Unit, or MCU, and it houses ninety-six male prisoners who are "involved in the disruption of the orderly running of New Jersey State Prison." Sundiata Acoli spent five years in the control unit at Trenton; he was among the first people held there. He wrote of his experience, "I remained in the Management Control Unit almost 5 years locked down 24 hours a day... I was allowed 10 minute showers and two hours twice a week recreation." New Afrikan Anarchist Ojore Lutalo is beginning his eleventh year in New Jersey's MCU where he takes his food through a hole in the door. New Jersey placed him in the MCU hoping to keep his mind locked up. There is nothing to indicate that he will be released from this unit soon; there are no exit criteria.

The Northeast Region (home of New Jersey State Prison) of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons is planning a hearing for April 27 which will raise the consciousness of the general public as to the existence of control unit prisons and the implications of that particular injustice.

The space reserved for the hearings is a Quaker meeting house with benches on all sides surrounding a central, square area. This room was chosen because its design ensures that everyone can see and no one is left disengaged. The testimony will include first-hand experiences of prisoners' family members, examples of human rights violations and medical inadequacies, and lawyers' and human rights advocates' experiences. A taped interview with Sundiata Acoli will be played, and words of prisoners will be read. Mike Africa, whose parents are part of the MOVE 9 incarcerated unjustly since the late 1970s, will testify also. Jamal Abu-Jamal, Mumia's son, and Bonnie Kerness, outspoken prisoner advocate and activist will share their knowledge



of control units. It is a real possibility that voices raised on the outside on behalf of those inside will result in the punishment of prisoners whose advocates speak. Consequently, some testimony the audience will hear will be anonymous.

In addition to the general audience, a selected panel of twelve listeners from religious, legal, and activist communities will focus on the testimony. It is their responsibility to compose a response/conclusion to the testimony they hear.

Their writings will be compiled in a booklet with the text of much of the testimony and may be distributed to legislators and the

public as an educational tool.

In a room separate from the hearings (so as to maintain the somber atmosphere of the testimony), The International Art and Writings Against the Death Penalty exhibit will be displayed, videos about control units will be shown, and rap artists will perform. Incorporating these other forms of political media will engage all of the senses of the day's participants, and provide variety and refreshment to an emotionally exhausting day. Between blocks of testimony in the meeting house, the audience will participate in an interactive piece written especially for the hearings.

The success of the multi-media hearings is not dependent solely on the planning committee, testifiers or listeners. It depends on Mike Hadjuk who volunteered to videotape both the testimony and the multi-media events and rebroadcast them on the local New Jersey cable access television stations, and a Philadelphia church that is sharing its resources by providing a modest lunch for everyone at the hearings. The import of the control unit issue is manifested through these community offerings.

The booklet compiling the listeners' responses and the broadcast on local cable access television will not be the only products of the day's activities. What is most important is the people's response. It is hoped that the evidence presented by the testimony and the performers will teach the public the politics of control units, compelling them to join the struggle for justice.

Coinciding projects include the coordination of a pamphlet by prisoners in New Jersey's Management Control Unit. The finished pamphlet, like the hearings booklet, will be an educational tool distributed across the country. For copies of the pamphlet, write to Bonnie Kerness (see below).

The **Hearings on Control Unit Prisons** in the Northeast are **Saturday, April 27, 1996** from **10:00 am to 4:30 PM**. The **Friends Center, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA** is the site of the event. Questions about the multi-media hearings and events should be directed to: Bonnie Kerness, American Friends Service Committee Criminal Justice Program, 972 Broad Street, 6th Floor, Newark, New Jersey 07102, (201)643-3192.

# MIDWEST REGIONAL HEARING: Control Units, Prisons & Political Prisoners

Joint activities are being planned for Illinois and Indiana. Plans have been established for hearings on the criminal justice system to be held on April 20 at the United Methodist Temple, 77 W. Washington.

The all-day event will begin at 9:00 am with a keynote address by Marc Mauer, Assistant Director of the Sentencing Project in Washington D.C. Marc is the author of the series of studies that have demonstrated that the U.S. is the leading incarcerator in the world and that this is by and large the result of the incarceration of Black people.

After the keynote, the conference will break out into workshops on several topics, including control unit prisons, women in

prison, the death penalty, political prisoners, and prisons and the economy. The day will conclude with hearings during which victims of the "criminal justice system will give testimony to a group of respected community leaders, who in turn, will produce a document summarizing what they have heard.

Two weeks later, there will be two demonstrations that will target three prisons in Indiana. On Friday, May 3 activists will go to the gates of Westville prison, Indiana's first control unit, which has been condemned by Human Rights Watch and various church organizations. Then, on Saturday, May 4 activists will travel to Indiana's second control unit, Wabash Valley "Correctional"



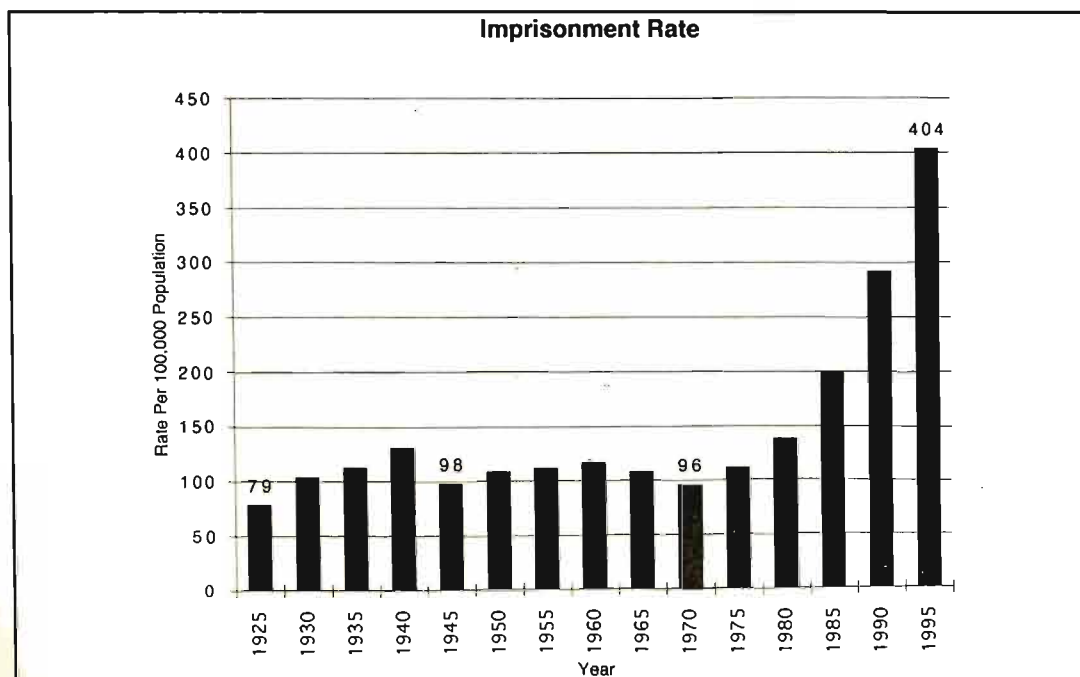
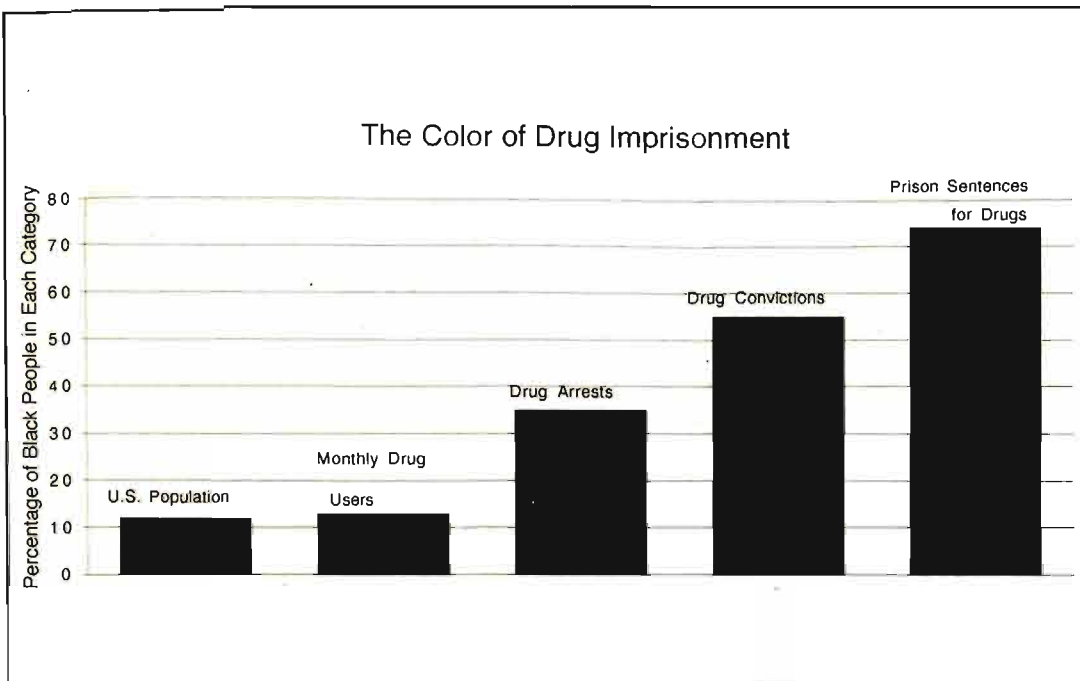
Institution in Carlisle. Incredibly, although Indiana is a small state it now has two control unit prisons, both of them filled with cages containing almost entirely Black people. The demonstration will then continue on to Terre Haute Federal penitentiary, which

contains the federal death chamber and Puerto Rican POW Edwin Cortés.

It is hoped that these activities will draw people from across the midwest. To educate, organize, and agitate is the only way to pursue a human society.

For more information, contact Charles Carney at the 8th Day Center for Justice, 312.641.5151.

Childcare provided. Group rates provided for educational institutions and non-profits.



Marc Mauer, Assistant Director of The Sentencing Project, has directed programs on criminal justice reform for twenty years. He is the author of some of the most widely cited reports in the field of criminal justice, including "Young Black Men and the Criminal Justice System," and the "Americans Behind Bars" series, comparing international rates of incarceration. His most recent report on racial disparity and the criminal justice system led the *New York Times* to editorialize that the report "should set off alarm bells from the White House to city halls -- and help reverse the notion that we can incarcerate our way out of fundamental social problems." Mr. Mauer has served as a consultant to the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and is a member of the American Bar Association's Committee on Race and the Criminal Justice System.

Mr. Mauer directed state and nationwide efforts in criminal justice for the American Friends Service Committee from 1975 to 1986 and served as that organization's National Justice Communications Coordinator. Since 1987, he has been Assistant Director of The Sentencing Project, a national organization which develops alternative sentencing programs and conducts research on criminal justice issues. In that capacity, he has testified before Congress, addressed a broad range of national and international conferences, and appeared often on radio and TV networks. Mr. Mauer is frequently interviewed by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and other newspapers. In 1991, Mr. Mauer received the Helen L. Bottenweiser Award from the Fortune Society in New York.

**OTHER LOCATIONS**

Other locations are planning activities, but as we went to press, details were not established. Here's their contact info:

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## "SEEKING JUSTICE FOR THE IMPRISONED": West Coast builds anti-control-unit work

The National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons-West has decided to combine forces with the annual Criminal Justice Consortium Symposium scheduled for Saturday, April 27th at the First Congregational Church in Oakland, rather than plan a separate activity for that time period.

The symposium, entitled "Seeking Justice for the Imprisoned," will feature Angela Y. Davis as the keynote speaker. The National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons (NCSCUP) will lead a workshop entitled "Organizing Against Control Unit Torture" and conduct

a lunchtime "informational." This conference annually draws dozens of prison activists from throughout Northern California.

Members of NCSCUP have been quite active lately, conducting investigative visits to Pelican Bay a few weeks ago and to the Chowchilla Control Units towards the end of December. Plus, a conference for Mumia Abu-Jamal on March 2 and an International Women's Day benefit for women political prisoners have preoccupied some of us.

We're spending most of our energy getting the monitoring project off the

ground for our assigned states. Once we've completed a first round of information gathering, (at least enough to know which states do/don't have Control Units), then we'd like to organize a formal report back. Hopefully the timing of such an event can be coupled with an action idea many of us like: to caravan between the Chowchilla facilities and Corcoran (for men), the latter of which has never been hit by such a protest.

### Cleveland Activity Planned

A hearing on control unit prisons (such as the proposed Youngstown Penitentiary) and political imprisonment will be held on Saturday, April 20 from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the Cleveland State University Main Classroom Building Auditorium. For more information, contact Nozomi Ikuta at (216) 736-3280.



## COLORADO PEOPLE'S HEARING: The people speak out on the racist imprisonment binge, control-units and political prisoners



The Colorado People's Hearing will take place Saturday, April 27th at Metro State College in Denver. It will be a full day of events in opposition to the racist imprisonment binge, control-unit prisons and the continuing imprisonment of political prisoners.

The day's events will be opened with West African

drumming by the drummers of Moyo Nguvu of Denver. Following the opening ceremony will be a short plenary panel, which will lead into the introduction of the panel of eminent people and the witnesses. Testimony will be heard from former control-unit prisoners, family members of people in prison, political prison-

ers, and people who can shed light on the abuses inherent to the U.S. prison system, including experts on: international law, the psychological effects of long-term isolation, racism within the prison system, the violation of religious rights and freedoms, and the targeting of jail house lawyers and political prisoners. Following the testimony will be a short question and answer period, a call to action and a cultural event. The day's events are intended to be a springboard to greater community awareness, involvement and action against the prison system.

Friday evening, April 26th at 7 P.M., also at Metro State College, a pre-hearing keynote event will introduce the issues around the crime of imprisonment. José Lopez of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in Chicago will speak on mass imprisonment and its effect on communities of color; and Francisco Martinez, a long-time committed prison activist and lawyer from Alamosa will speak on the economics and profiteering of the ever-expanding prison system. The evening will end with a dance performance by Grupo Tlaloc of Denver.

Throughout the month of April, *The Art of Struggle*, an art exhibit of work from people in control-units and political prisoners will be shown at Metro State College, in the Multicultural Lounge of the Tivoli Center. Artists include Oscar Lopez Rivera, Tom Manning, Edwin Cortés, and Leonard Peltier. In conjunction with this exhibit there will be an opening address by Alberto Mares who was in the first control unit in USP Marion in 1972, as well as a reading of prisoner poetry and a showing of the videos *Through the Wire* and *Live from Death Row- Mumia Abu-Jamal*.