

*I can't remember the coming together of so many important political leaders in any public forum. The fact that you are organizing to combat the terror of Marion and the rest of the prison system makes this conference a must for all pursuing a human society.*

Morton Sobell

Co-defendant with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

Served 19 years in federal prisons, including five at Alcatraz

### PROGRAM

12:00 – 12:30 PM

Literature distribution, coffee and cake

12:30 – 2:00 PM

ROOM A. Pontiac Prisoners' Rebellion slideshow.

ROOM B. Other audio-visuals.

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Attica movie and discussion

4:00 – 6:00 PM

The Role of Prisons in US Society – a panel discussion

*Asbanti Chimurenga*

*Akil al Jundi*

*William Kunstler*

*José López*

6:00 - 7:30 PM

Dinner served on premises.

7:30 – 9:30 PM

Marion Prison - a panel discussion

*Daniel Berrigan*

*Rafael Cancel Miranda*

*Imari Obadele*

*Raul Salinas*

*Jan Susler*

Childcare Provided

### SPEAKERS/FILMS (speakers listed alphabetically)

"Pontiac Prisoners' Rebellion" slideshow describes the 1978 rebellion in the central Illinois prison, out of which 17 men, all of them Black, faced the death penalty.

"Attica" was made in large part on the yard during the four-day rebellion in 1971 and documents the most important event in the history of the prison struggle in this country.

*Akil al Jundi* – a prisoner at Attica during the rebellion and currently an active member of the Black Liberation movement.

*Daniel Berrigan* – an internationally known member of the religious community and staunch anti-militarist imprisoned for his acts of resistance.

*Asbanti Chimurenga* – an attorney and spokeswoman for the National Committee to Defend New Afrikan Freedom Fighters and co-coordinator of the New Afrikan Legal Network.

*William Kunstler* – well-known political attorney. Acted as an observer during the Attica rebellion and has represented many targets of government repression.

*José López* – national co-ordinator of the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional - Puerto Rico (MLN-PR), imprisoned for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating the independence movement.

*Rafael Cancel Miranda* – national hero of Puerto Rico, imprisoned for 25 years for attacking US Congress in support of Puerto Rican independence. Served his sentence at Alcatraz and Marion.



*This October marks the 2nd anniversary of the prisoner lockdown at Marion Federal Prison.*

In 1983, two guards were killed by two prisoners in isolated incidents. Although there was no prison riot, authorities seized this opportunity to violently repress the entire prison population. For the last two years, the 350 men imprisoned at Marion have been subjected to brutal, dehumanizing conditions.

\*For 23 hours a day, prisoners are locked in individual cells, denied physical contact with each other and forced into total idleness.

\*During the initial stage of the lockdown, 60 guards equipped with riot gear, shipped in from other prisons, systematically beat approximately 100 handcuffed and defenseless prisoners. Guards also subjected some prisoners to forced finger probes of the rectum. Random beatings and rectal probes have continued throughout the two-year lockdown.

\*All contact visits have been ended – prisoners can no longer touch or be touched by parents, wives and children. Authorities also cut back visiting time to one two-hour visit per week. This effectively prevents prisoners from receiving visits since their families, many of whom come from as far away as Puerto Rico or California, cannot afford to travel so far to stay for only two hours.

*Imari Obadele* – founding president of the Republic of New Afrika and leading member of Black liberation struggle. Imprisoned at Marion on charges stemming from an assault by Mississippi armed forces while trying to establish national territory for RNA.

*Raul Salinas* – former Marion prisoner, is a spokesperson for Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

*Jan Susler* – a lawyer with Marion Prisoners Rights Project, has recently testified twice in front of Congress on behalf of the prisoners at Marion.

\*Prison authorities shut down all work programs, group educational activities and congregational religious services.

Two years later, despite the Bureau of Prison's blatant violations of their own rules, and despite clear documentation of guard against prisoner physical and psychological brutality, both Congress and the courts have refused to intervene to stop the lockdown.

### THE EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY

Marion, the most maximum security prison in the country, is the experimental laboratory and trend-setter for the whole federal prison system. It is here that the Bureau of Prisons established the Control Unit – a "prison within a prison", where prisoners have been subject to intense sensory deprivation, indefinite solitary confinement, and forced drugging. As predicted from its incep-



tion, the Control Unit has produced in prisoners feelings of intense rage and helplessness that are inevitably expressed in violence — either against themselves or against others. Over the years, many prisoners have committed suicide, and have turned on other prisoners or guards. The incident which led the Marion authorities to impose the lockdown in 1983 occurred in the Control Unit. Although the Bureau of Prisons claimed the Control Unit was designed to stem prisoner violence, its conditions have instead provoked violence. Now that the lockdown has turned the entire Marion prison into a Control Unit, more violence is expected.

The Bureau of Prisons tries to justify the lockdown by contending that the men at Marion are “animals”, the most dangerous prisoners in the country. This is not true. 80 percent of the prisoners at Marion are eligible for placement in less restrictive settings. Some are revolutionaries imprisoned on political charges, others are serving short sentences for victimless crimes. What does distinguish many of these prisoners is that they have spoken out against inhumane prison conditions.

This conference is, in its most immediate sense, about Marion Prison. Yet, to fully grasp the significance of Marion, we must look at it in the larger context of the “criminal justice” system, at how this society uses prisons, and at how the prisons affect us.

#### **HIGHEST RATE OF IMPRISONMENT, ESPECIALLY OF BLACK MEN**

The US has one of the highest rates of imprisonment in the world, second only to South Africa and the Soviet Union. The imprisonment rate for Black people in the US is much higher than for any other segment of society — 567 out of every 100,000 go to prison. Black people in this country go to prison six times more frequently than white people.

With the spiraling rate of imprisonment has come spiraling costs. It now costs more to imprison a person for a year than to send

that person to Harvard. The annual budget of the Bureau of Prisons is larger than the gross national product of many countries. Despite this expense, the imprisonment rate continues to rise. Yet the government keeps spending more tax dollars on bigger and more repressive prisons, while cutting social programs, food stamps, and employment. Why?

#### **PRISONS AS A TOOL OF SOCIAL CONTROL**

There is a great disparity in this country between those who enjoy a comfortable life and those who struggle to survive. It is these “have-nots” who populate the prisons. Dostoevsky wrote that to understand a society, one should look within its prisons. A glimpse behind prison walls in the US shows that a majority of all prisoners are Black, Hispanic, or Native American. The society that delivers such a disproportionate number of Third World people to the prison doors is one that has produced a generation of Black and poor youth, 75 percent of whom are unemployed, who are trapped in deteriorating public housing projects, who drop out of schools at alarming rates, who lose their lives to drugs, crime and violence. This then is what we are confronted with: a society that makes its rulers rich and powerful while attacking the humanity and living conditions of most of the rest of us, but especially and primarily of people of color.

#### **SOCIETAL, NOT INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS**

“Law and Order”. Longer prison terms. The death penalty. More prisons. More police. Prison authorities drop the guise of being rehabilitation-oriented and endorse the warehousing model; instead of educational/vocational programs, they add more guard towers, more barbed wire, more restrictions. The message is that crime is caused by bad individuals, implying that by caging and electrocuting them, the society will somehow be healed. Our attention is turned away from the real causes of crime. Instead we are encouraged to blame the individual — and since

most of the blaming is directed toward Black people, this leads to the criminalizing of an entire people.

#### **IMPRISONMENT OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS**

While prisons reflect the structure of society, they also reflect the nature of the movement for social change. In the Sixties, as the civil rights and Black power movements grew, the prison walls overflowed with Black political prisoners, and the prison struggle became a major part of the Black Liberation movement. Political prisoners like George Jackson spoke very clearly to the role that prisons played in the government’s effort to contain and destroy Black people’s freedom struggle.

As conditions worsen for Third World people and all poor people in this country, and as the US prepares for war, resistance is inevitable — as is government repression. Today, US prisons hold almost 200 political prisoners, members of the Black, Puerto Rican and Native American struggles, as well as draft resisters, white anti-imperialists, anti-militarism activists, and progressive Christians. Through their imprisonment, the government is attempting to weaken these movements and to intimidate others from taking a stand.

We can help to break the silence around the Marion lockdown and to foil the government’s attempts to isolate the prisoners at Marion. This conference is an opportunity to raise our voices and say no to this brutal prison system and no to the use of prisons to contain and destroy political dissent. Please join us!

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A contribution of \$5, payable at the door, is requested for the conference. Additional funds are desperately needed. Checks should be made out to Citizens Alert, Inc. and mailed to the Committee to End The Marion Lockdown, c/o People’s Law Office, Suite 1607, 343 S. Dearborn, Chicago, IL 60604.

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#### **THE COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN**

Presents



#### **A CONFERENCE FOR EDUCATION AND ACTION ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARION PRISON LOCKDOWN**

PEOPLE’S CHURCH  
941 W. Lawrence Ave.  
Chicago, IL

Saturday, October 26, 1985  
noon to 10:00 pm

(312) 663-5046