

C. 4/1986

AT MARION & LEXINGTON PRISONS

DEMONSTRATE APRIL 19

On April 19, we will go to the gates of Marion Prison in Marion, Illinois to protest its inhumane lockdown. For 2-1/2 years, the prisoners have been subjected to isolation, beatings, denial of contact with family and other prisoners, denial of religious freedom.

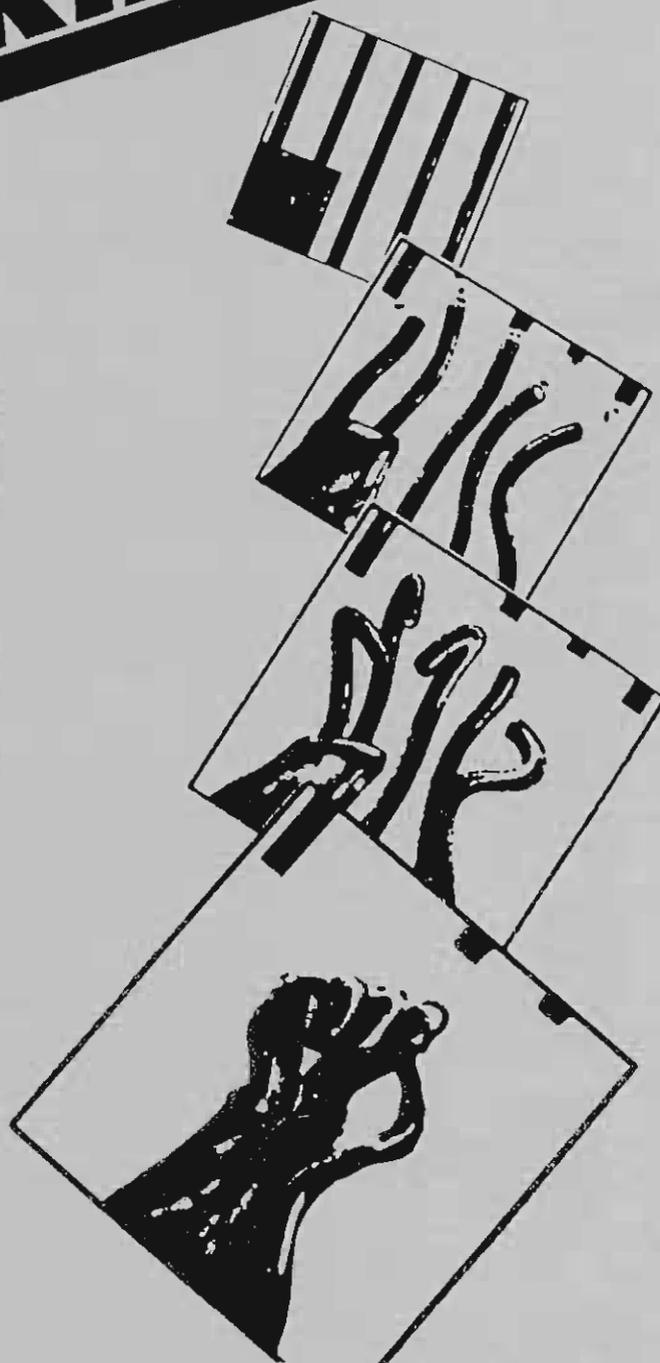
From Marion, the bus caravan will continue on to the Lexington, Kentucky Federal Prison. Here, the Bureau of Prisons is building a maximum security unit for women prisoners--modeled after the highly repressive Marion prison. This unit is scheduled open this year and Bureau of Prisons officials have acknowledged that it will be used to house women political prisoners. We want to prevent the unit from opening.

Join us in this day of protest--

Say NO

- to the flagrant brutality of the prison system
- to the racism that means the vast majority of all prisoners are Black, Latino or Native American
- to the government's attempts to isolate and repress political prisoners

BUSES LEAVE FROM CHICAGO



THE MARION CONTROL UNIT

Marion, the most maximum security prison in the country, is the experimental laboratory and trendsetter for the whole federal prison system. Here, the Bureau of Prisons established the Control Unit--a "prison within a prison" where prisoners have been subjected to sensory deprivation and solitary confinement. In the early years at Marion, prison officials experimented with use of drugs on Control Unit prisoners. Marion also uses boxcars--small, enclosed, lightproof and soundproof boxes in which prisoners are placed--as a means of psychological torture.

In October 1983, two guards were killed in isolated incidents by two prisoners. Although there was no prison riot, authorities seized this opportunity to violently repress the entire prison population. They turned the prison into one huge Control Unit. Since that date, the 350 men imprisoned at Marion have experienced brutal, dehumanizing conditions:

- * For 23 hours a day, prisoners are locked into individual cells, denied contact with each other and forced into total idleness.
- * During the initial stage of the lockdown, 60 guards equipped with riot gear were shipped in from other prisons, and assisted Marion guards in systematically beating approximately 100 handcuffed and defenseless prisoners.
- * All Control Unit prisoners are subjected to humiliating finger probes of the rectum every time they leave the unit for a court date, hospital visit, etc.
- * All contact visits were ended--no prisoner can touch or be touched by parents, wives, children.
- * Prison authorities shut down work programs, group educational activities and congregational religious services.

In its efforts to justify its actions, the Bureau of Prisons tries to perpetuate the myth that Marion contains "the most vicious, predatory prisoners in the system." The fact is that the criteria for placement at Marion are intentionally vague, and that 80% of the men there are eligible for placement at less restrictive prisons. Although some of the more infamous felons are placed at Marion, the prison also houses people

sentenced to short terms for victimless crimes and people imprisoned for their political beliefs and activities.

In fact, the Marion Control Unit was never really designed to contain "vicious, predatory prisoners." The Bureau of Prisons established the Control Unit in July 1972, in response to a peaceful prisoner protest against the guard beating of a Mexican prisoner. About 60 prisoners were placed in isolated, sensory deprivation cells. With the Marion Control Unit, prison officials hoped to extinguish their spirit of protest, resistance and solidarity.

As predicted from its inception, the Control Unit produces 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 or have turned on other prisoners or guards. Since the entire prison was locked down in 1983, three prisoners have been killed by other prisoners. The Marion prison lockdown is a bloody failure--it promotes the very violence it claims to be trying to prevent.

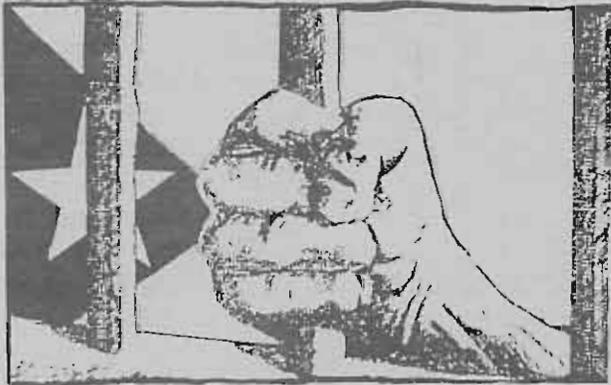
Top prison officials have made it clear they intend to permanently maintain the lockdown status, in spite of Congressional and church inquiries, and a class action lawsuit by the prisoners.



Lexington: Control Unit for Women

Taking lessons learned from Marion, the Bureau of Prisons is building a maximum security unit for women prisoners in the Lexington, Kentucky Federal Prison. It will reside in the basement of a high security building, totally separate from the rest of the prison.

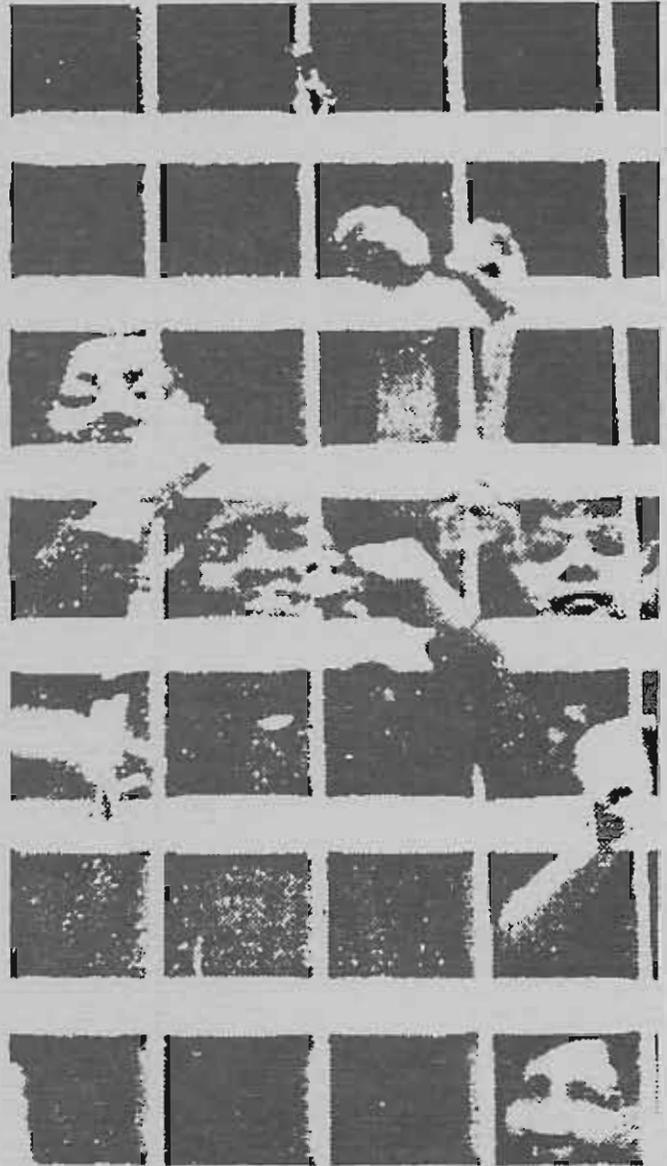
What do we expect this new Control Unit to look like? Although the Lexington unit won't open for several months, we can get some idea by looking at a previous effort by the government to set up a Control Unit. In 1984, the Bureau of Prisons attempted to set up a maximum security unit at the Alderson, West Virginia Federal Prison for women. Its purpose was to isolate and demoralize Lucy Rodriguez and Haydee Torres, both Puerto Rican prisoners of war.



Lucy and Haydee were placed in individual isolated cells. The furniture in the cells was bolted down, and the windows were translucent, making it impossible to make out figures or shapes. Each cell had a speaker that served both to broadcast messages and to eavesdrop on the prisoner's activity. When the cell doors were closed, the cells became soundproof, lightproof little boxes.

This constitutes sensory deprivation--the same kind inflicted on hundreds of men at Marion Prison. Research carried out by the CIA and by Nazi Germany indicated that people could be broken when denied contact with other people and sensory stimulation. Light, sounds and smells tell one what day it is, what is going on, etc. By shutting out all normal input, the prisoner becomes disoriented, can lose his or her sanity, perhaps becomes suicidal.

In the case of the maximum security unit at Alderson, West Virginia, the government did not succeed. Public pressure won out: Massive



letter-writing and phone call campaigns, a church delegation sent into the prison and a large, spirited demonstration held at the gates of Alderson Prison forced the government to close down the unit. Haydee and Lucy moved back into general population.

The Lexington maximum security unit -- scheduled to open this year -- will be the first Control Unit that is built explicitly for women. In the interim, the Bureau of Prisons has set up "ad hoc" Control Units for women, as in a federal jail in Tucson, Arizona where political prisoner Susan Rosenberg and Puerto Rican prisoner of war Alejandrina Torres are currently under close confinement and isolation.

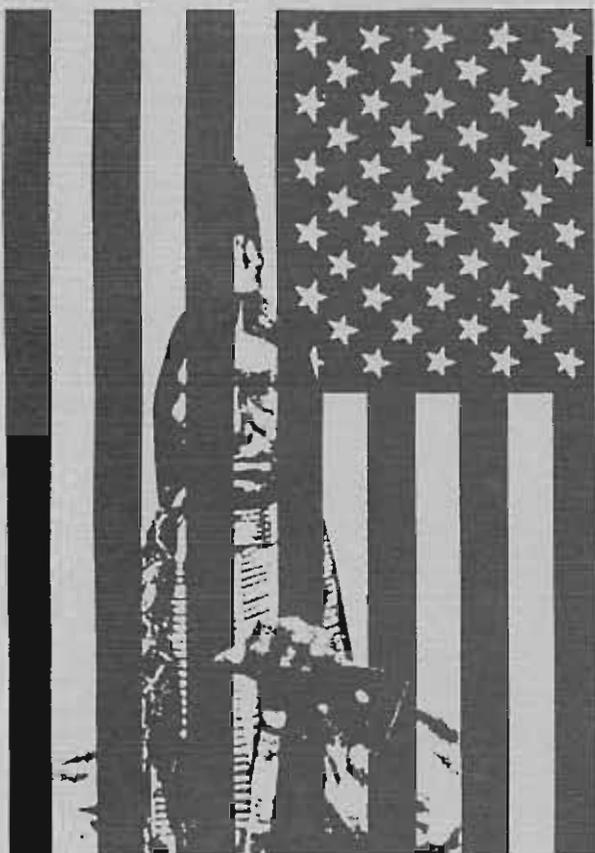
Prisons and Society

Fyodor Dostoevsky once wrote that to understand a society, one should look within its prisons. What does a glimpse behind U.S. prison walls tell us about our society?

From 1980-1984, the prison population grew by 36%, to about 1/2 million people. By the year 2000, there will be an estimated one million people in prison -- with the same strikingly disproportionate number of Black, Native American and Latino prisoners.

A growing disparity exists in this country between those who enjoy a comfortable life and those who must struggle to survive. It is these "have-nots" who fill the U.S. prisons. 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% 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.

Seen together, this set of conditions seem genocidal. In part of its definition of genocide, the United Nations includes "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part."



Through its actions, the U.S. makes a clear statement: It will not grant Third World and poor people their human rights. It will not provide them with job opportunities, schools that teach, or medical care. It will, however, spend billions of dollars to build bigger and more repressive prisons--prisons which are certain to house the swelling number of unemployed Black, Third World and poor people.

What makes this government's program for social "stability" work? Law and order. Longer prison terms. The death penalty. More prisons. More police. In the 1980's, prisons no longer pretend to rehabilitate -- they are simply warehouses. While prisons spend money on more guard towers, barbed wire, and new maximum security units, they cut the educational/vocational programs. The message is that crime is caused by bad individuals. Will society be healed by caging and electrocuting them? Attention turns away from the social, political and economic roots of crime. Instead, the individual is blamed--and since most of the blame is directed toward Black people, this leads to the criminalization of an entire people.

If prisons reflect the structure of society, they also reflect the nature of movements for social change. In the sixties, as the Civil Rights and Black Power movements grew, the number of Black political prisoners swelled and the prison struggle became a major part of the Black liberation struggle. Political prisoners like George Jackson stated clearly that prisons are an important tool in the government's effort to contain and destroy Black people's freedom.

Although the government refuses to admit it, there are nearly 200 political prisoners and prisoners of war in U.S. prisons today. They come from the Puerto Rican, Black/New Afrikan and Native American liberation movements. They include progressive Christians, white anti-imperialists, draft resisters, grand jury resisters. The movements that these people represent honor, love and respect them. Yet the government contends that they are criminals or terrorists. Although the government denies the existence of political prisoners in this country, it often reserves the harshest treatment for these very people. Control Units are designed to break every prisoner's spirit. In the case of political prisoners and prisoners of war, the Control Units are part of a calculated strategy to weaken these movements and to intimidate others from taking a stand.

WHY YOU SHOULD GO TO THIS DEMONSTRATION

The Committee to End the Marion Lockdown is trying to generate concern and action among white North Americans over the issues of Control Units in specific and the prison system in general. Similarly, Puerto Rican organizations and Black/New Afrikan organizations are going to their communities and calling upon them to attend this demonstration.

Legitimate Channels Unresponsive

The Marion lockdown continues despite two U.S. Congressional hearings and the recommendation of Congressional consultants that the lockdown end. The lockdown continues despite a class action lawsuit by the prisoners seeking an injunction to end it, and months of hearings in which prisoner after prisoner testified that guards have beaten them or forced them to undergo finger probes of the rectum, which the men likened to rape. The lockdown continues -- and it appears that neither Congress nor the courts will provide a remedy to the prisoners from the inhumane Control Unit at Marion. We can safely speculate that these channels will also be unresponsive to the women who are placed in the Lexington Control Unit when they seek an end to such conditions.

At the same time, our own experiences participating in the anti-intervention, anti-apartheid, anti-nuclear, and disarmament movements have shown us that we also cannot rely on Congress or the courts to recognize or protect the rights of people when these rights are in conflict with the aims of the United States government. We have thus taken to the streets and demonstrated in order to expose human rights abuses caused by U.S. intervention in Central America and U.S. support for the apartheid regime of South Africa. For the same reasons we must take to the streets and demonstrate to expose and protest the human rights abuses which occur in U.S. prisons. These abuses occur most regularly to Third World prisoners who represent the sectors most often targeted by government repression. Over the years, Marion has been a holding place for leaders of the Black/New Afrikan, Puerto Rican and Native American struggles.

Free All Political Prisoners!



We Can Make a Difference

The Bureau of Prisons intentionally builds a wall of silence around its prisons in hopes that the public will never learn about its brutal policies. For this reason, Marion, like so many other prisons, is tucked away in a rural not easily accessible area. However, when the public calls on government and prison officials to account for their abuses, they become extremely uncomfortable and are often pressured into initiating some changes. For example, from a small group of people who began to protest the continued imprisonment of the Puerto Rican Nationalists grew a movement which led to their unconditional release in 1978. In another instance, two years ago, when several hundred people demonstrated at Alderson Prison against the punitive segregation conditions of Haydee Torres and Lucy Rodriguez, two Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, they were transferred out of isolation. And then last year, public attention to Leonard Peltier, the Native American leader who was incarcerated at Marion, resulted in his transfer out of Marion to a less restrictive prison. We can make some changes in the situation at Marion and Lexington.

Prisons and the Movement

Since prisons reflect both the structure of society and the nature of the struggle against that structure, when we work to minimize the brutality of the prison system, we simultaneously work to support those like political prisoners and prisoners of war who have been a dynamic catalyst in the movement for a changed, humane society.

It may be that very few of us will go to prison or even know someone who goes to prison, so it may not be apparent why we should attend this demonstration. But if we are to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem, we must fight against these racist warehouses. The long bus ride, the time, energy and money spent will be well worth it. Only by dealing with these stark realities, only by making these kinds of sacrifices, can we build a movement that will some day be an alternative to this system and its repression.

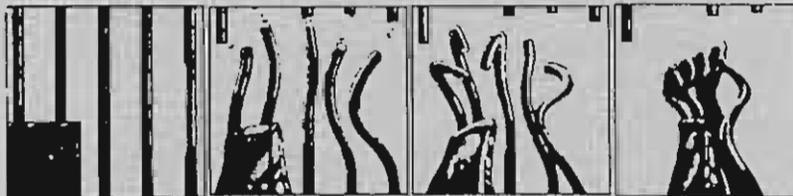
Turn Knowledge Into Action

The wall of silence around prisons will work only if we let it--out of sight, out of mind. Historically, most of us have become aware of prisons only after some terrible, violent event occurs, such as after the 1971 National Guard massacre of 41 prisoners who rebelled at Attica

Prison against racist and oppressive conditions. Yet, right now, and for the past 2-1/2 years, the prisoners at Marion have been experiencing physical and psychological violence on a daily basis. Many of us now know about these conditions. The question is, what will we do with this awareness. As Rafael Cancel Miranda admonished us at a conference about Marion Prison a few months ago, "we cannot just feel bad or sad, *we must do something.*" This demonstration is one opportunity for us to do something - to fight against the brutality of Marion and a new Control Unit at Lexington; to place ourselves in solidarity with those who have been leading the struggle for a new society; and to say that we would rather work on the side of the battle for justice than sit idly by as others wage the battle for us.

JOIN US

On Saturday, April 19 hundreds of people will be demonstrating at Marion and Lexington Prisons with us. At the same time, hundreds more will be demonstrating in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. Together we can stop the lockdown at Marion and close the Control Unit, we can prevent the construction of a new Control Unit at Lexington, and we can help the advance of the movements for national liberation within the borders of the United States. JOIN US.



I will come to the demonstration. Enclosed is a check for \$60.00 for the trip.

Enclosed is \$ for other people to attend the demonstration.

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

I would like more information about the demonstration.

I would like to have a house meeting to hear about Marion and Lexington prisons.

COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN
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