



THE FREEDOM ARCHIVES



Indeterminate Sentencing Finding Aid

Description:

This collection contains materials detailing the reality of indeterminate sentencing in California prisons in the early 1970s. An indeterminate sentence is a sentence imposed for a crime that isn't given a definite duration – the prison term does not state a specific period of time or release date, but just a range of time, such as "five-to-ten years" or "5 years to life." California used indeterminate sentences from 1917 to 1976.

This collection is primarily comprised of correspondence from prisoners to the office of California Assemblyman Ken Meade. The main focus is on prison conditions, the Adult Authority and the Indeterminate Sentence Law and how it affected their time in prison.

The Adult Authority made parole-granting decisions and was empowered to impose conditions of parole and/or revoke parole for violations of these conditions. The Adult Authority heard cases for review submitted by two panels within the AA, reviewed the records of all prisoners recommended for parole, and considered making a commutation recommendation to the governor in cases where the original sentence is life without possibility of parole.

Privacy Statement:

This collection contains correspondence from prisoners who were voicing their concerns to California Assemblyman Ken Meade (and whoever they thought could help) about the Adult Authority and the Indeterminate Sentence Law and how it affected their time in prison. With the Indeterminate Sentence Law, the Adult Authority/parole board could vote against granting a prisoner parole and/or lengthen their sentence for any reason. The Adult Authority could have punished the prisoners (no parole, more prison time) if the correspondence had been were released and their contents revealed.

As this collection contains private and sensitive information about prisoners, their lives, their sentences, etc., some of the individuals in this collection may still be in prison. To maintain the privacy of all parties mentioned, this collection will not be digitized nor will direct citations be allowed. For more information please consult Freedom Archives staff.

Collection Processed by Rain Thomas

Subjects: Political Prisoners; Prison; Resistance; Human Rights; Women

Keywords: indeterminate sentence, San Quentin State Prison, prison conditions, parole board, Vacaville State Prison, California Department of Corrections(r), California prisons, CA Adult Authority, Sandy Turner, Ken Meade, David Hilliard, Prison Law Collective

Date Range: 1973 – 1975

Size: 401 records

Formats: correspondence, legal documents, government documents

Collection Contents:

Folder 1: General Concerns about Lockups and Prison Conditions

Folder 2: David Hilliard

Folder 3: Wayne Lauser

Folder 4: Prison Mail Problems

Folder 5: Ruth Friedman Cases-Tracy

Folder 6: Prison Law Collective

Folder 7: CMC Write- In: Inmates and Relatives

Folder 8: Otha Davis

Folder 9: Adult Authority Policies

Folder 10: Adult Authority (unconstitutional sentence)

Folder 11: Sandy Turner – Adult Authority Abuses

Folder 12: John Bastian

Folder 13: Vacaville Write-in

Folder 14: San Quentin Write-in

Folder 15: David Hilliard current 11/73

Folder 16: Assorted Write-ins

Folder 17: Assorted Write-ins Extra Letters (indeterminate sentence)

Folder 18: Inmate Mail Protesting Terrible Problems

Folder 19: Peer Counseling Program

Folder 1: General Concerns about Lockups & Prison Conditions

Description: This folder contains correspondence from the general public- law students, members of councils, etc.- expressing their concerns with prison conditions, the treatment of prisoners, women's health in prison, and views and inquiries about some of Ken Meade's bills.

Folder 2: David Hilliard

Description: This folder contains correspondence to and from Ken Meade concerning Black Panther David Hilliard, his health conditions in prison, and problems with being granted parole; fact sheets about David Hilliard and his case; and medical and psychiatric evaluations of Hilliard.

Folder 3: Wayne Lauser

Description: Contains correspondence and letters of recommendation in regards to Lauser getting his license to become an ambulance technician.

Folder 4: Prison Mail Problems

Description: Contains correspondence asking why inmates' legal mail has been tampered with.

Folder 5: Ruth Friedman Cases – Tracy

Description: Correspondence addressed to Friedman from prisoners about their conditions, fears, and concerns in prison.

Folder 6: Prison Law Collective

Description: Correspondence from the Prison Law Collective to Ken Meade and Sandy Turner in regards to or on behalf of prisoners whom the collective represents and their cases.

Folder 7: CMC Write In- Inmates and Relatives

Description: Correspondence from inmates and relatives about the issues with indeterminate sentencing and the effects it has on prisoners, all addressed to Ken Meade.

Folder 8: Otha Davis

Description: Contains correspondence between Davis and the office of Ken Meade. Davis pleads with Ken Meade to help him make contact with his niece and nephew, who have stopped visiting him in prison. He also asks Mead to visit him. Davis reached out to seven lawyers, asking them all to come see him but they all declined. Most correspondence from Davis are duplicates that he had sent. Sandy Turner, Field Prison Representative in Ken Meade's office, asked Davis to explain the urgent situation/trouble he was in.

She reached out to Dr. Isaac Slaughter to go see Davis and evaluate him. Davis seems to be worried that his mail is being tampered with and withheld.

Folder 9: Adult Authority Policies

Description: Contains a rough draft outline of legislation to abolish indeterminate sentencing; a letter to Ken Meade from the Chairman of the Adult Authority regarding Meade's request to attend an En Banc hearing for David Hilliard and the Adult Authority policy statement regarding "visitors and/or observers attending Adult Authority Hearings"; a news brief about the increasing male felon population and how that will be accommodated; a letter about an upcoming meeting with the chairman of the Adult Authority and information on decision making trends.

Folder 10: Adult Authority (unconstitutional arguments)

Description: Contains a copy of the Haygood Brief, which petitioned the indeterminate sentence law, making the claim that it is unconstitutional.

Folder 11: Sandy Turner – Adult Authority Abuses

Description: Includes instances in which the indeterminate sentencing law has affected prisoners, cases where institutions ignored courts' orders of innocence and proceeded to punish and hold prisoners, cutting visitors' hours, and the adult authority denying parole to even the most well behaved prisoners.

Folder 12: John Bastian

Description: Contains a correspondence asking Sandy Turner to help secure a lawyer and defense fund for John Bastian, who had been in jail for a month for assault with a deadly weapon. There is also a response letter from Sandy Turner apologizing for the circumstances and for her inability to help with a defense fund.

Folder 13: Vacaville Write-in

Description: Prisoners' correspondence from a write-in organized in support of the abolition of indeterminate sentencing.

Folder 14: San Quentin Write-in

Description: Correspondence from inmates at San Quentin about their opinions on indeterminate sentencing. The office of Ken Meade did not organize this write-in or solicit any of this and requested an end to the campaign because Ken Meade had already taken a stance against indeterminate sentencing.

Folder 15: David Hilliard current 11/73

Description: Correspondence regarding Hilliard's health and his parole and letters from his supporters, including members of the Black Panther Party, about the necessary release of Hilliard, and job offers from Hilliard for when he is released from prison.

Folder 16: Assorted Write-ins

Description: Correspondence not addressed to Ken Meade or his office, not answered.

Folder 17: Assorted Write-ins Extra Letters (indeterminate sentence)

Description: Extra response letters that would be sent back to whoever sent in a letter about their news/experience with indeterminate sentencing.

Folder 18: Inmate Mail Protesting Terrible Problems

Description: Correspondence from California state prisoners protesting the conditions they face in prison.

Folder 19: Peer Counseling Program

Description: Materials from the Peer Counseling Program at Lompoc Federal Prison and California Men's Colony (CMC).