

# ROCK

## ★ Working to Extend Democracy to All ★

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### ON THE QUESTION OF INTEGRATED CELLING

*[Note: The following article was originally published a few years ago in the Prison Focus newspaper. Given the current debate on the subject, however, I thought it would be a good idea to reprint here.]*

By C. Landrum

**Introduction:** We're all aware of the 2005 court decision ordering the D.C.C. to begin implementing integrated celling of the prison's multi-ethnic population. What may not be known to many is that this policy has already been initiated.

For the most part the immediate response has essentially been that of resistance which has manifested itself in both abstract (verbal) and practical (concrete) forms.

Despite the multi-faceted origin of this resistance, it is primarily the manifestation of subjective influences, that is, a long history of our social conditioning. Furthermore it should be noted that this resistance is not exclusively limited to the prison masses but transcends them to include those correctional officers who work in close proximity to the prisoners themselves.

It is only through the understanding of something's opposite that we can fully understand that which it is we seek to understand. For us to fully comprehend the resistance of the correctional officers and place this resistance into its proper context, we must not only understand, as most already do, that the C.O.s have no desire to deal with a prison population at each other's throats. But we must also understand the opposite tendency of this equation, i.e., that neither do they wish to see prisoners on exceptionally good terms with each other, for these are the conditions necessary to redirect our energies to the improvement of our conditions—thus threatening their interests.

The first attempts at implementing this policy was initiated at Mule Creek State Prison and the Sierra Conservation Center in Ione. This was met with mixed results. Prison bureaucrats announced that the imposition of this policy went smoothly in Mule Creek. When we place this in its proper context, this is understandable considering the content of Mule Creek's population as a "drop out" yard, i.e., defeatist and passive in both essence and form.

In regards to the Sierra Conservation Center, despite the individualism, and near total lack of unity that permeates all lower level facilities, there was nevertheless some degree of collective resistance in an effort to prevent the process of integration from proceeding.

There is a valuable lesson to be drawn from this as well. The many analysis and theories formulated around the argument that unity amongst the prisoners on the lower levels was an impossibility have now been proven wrong. Although a distinction must be made. The unity was a progressive

development in itself—the motive behind it was for an essentially counterproductive purpose and against our objective interests.

The prisoners who participated engaged in a work stoppage and, although they were "temporarily" successful in prolonging this process, the C.D.C. is intent on moving forward with this integration state-wide within two to three years.

This poses numerous questions, both theoretical and practical. I would like to ask you both, S.K and C.L., some questions more pertinent to the issue at hand. Likewise, I understand that circumstances necessitate a degree of self censorship. Nonetheless, whatever thoughts that you can share will no doubt be greatly appreciated and hopefully foster healthy dialogue that can result in action.

**Question One:** Do you believe that the issue of desegregation can be effectively addressed without also addressing the context in which this process develops? And why?

**SK:** The short answer is "No." The prison system is a microcosm of the class and racial contradictions inherent with the larger society. The segregation of prisoners was an extension of the class and racial segregation existing within society at that time. Over the years we have adopted and perpetuated these social practices as our own. This is reflected not only in our division into groups based on race, but also in the rules and regulations in which the groups operate. And despite the "official desegregation" that has formally occurred within the judicial realm some decades ago, we as prisoners have condoned and rigidly perpetuated this segregation and hostilities which have been reinforced and encouraged by the prison administration—

#### CONTENTS

On Integrated Celling .....	1
New Corrections Boss .....	4
The Final Hour .....	5
Editorial Comments.....	6
Lawsuit Forces SHU Moves.....	7
Letters.....	8

covertly as well as overtly. The ethnic, cultural, and geographical divide that we base our separation upon can be collectively dissolved through dialogue, although we must do so on a common ground which we can rally around, and this common ground is our prison conditions and the necessity to preserve and advance our own existence and development. A common struggle would function as the vehicle to accomplish this. So, “no”, desegregation and our prison conditions cannot be divorced, other than to do so artificially.

**CL:** This is an extremely relevant question. To expand on S.K.’s response in greater depth, I think it is necessary to understand that nothing exists in total isolation, separate, and independent of those other objects and phenomena around it which it is interconnected with, be it organic, inorganic, social development, the development of human thought and knowledge, including the developments that are in motion throughout the C.D.C. right now.

Everything without exception is interrelated (connected, interpenetrating, interdependent, etc.), and influences the direction and development of everything else around it, as it is in turn influenced by those forces around it. Keeping in mind, that in contradiction to the static and motionless “appearance” of objective reality (matter), everything, including social phenomenon is “essentially” in perpetual transformation. J. Stalin captured this well in his penetrating work *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*,” when he stated:

“No phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself, isolated from surrounding phenomenon.... Any phenomena in any realm in nature may become meaningless to us if it is not considered in connection with the surrounding conditions. Any phenomena can be understood and explained if considered in its inseparable connection with surrounding phenomena....”

Our concrete conditions and practical activities, such as the racial and geographical hostilities that we perpetuate between us not only gives further shape, thus molding our ideas and ways of thinking, i.e., our consciousness, that reflects and reinforces these practices. But reciprocally in turn, also influences the direction and further deterioration of our material conditions in that we give the necessary justification the C.D.C. relies upon to further strip us of our remaining “rights” and privileges.

Concrete conditions—the matter around

us—and our actions influence the direction and development of our consciousness, by way of our five sense organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. In separable interconnection, our consciousness influences the direction and transformation of our material conditions when we transform our consciousness back into matter, from ideas back into existence, and in the process of literally transform our concrete conditions. This was also summed up well in Marx’s statement, “Circumstances create man as much as man creates his circumstances.”

Unless we change our current practices and do so soon, we are going to lose everything, including our leverage and our ability to transform our situation. The transformation of our material conditions and the transformation of our consciousness (ideas, ways of thinking, concepts, emotions, etc.) is intrinsically interdependent. One process cannot occur without the other. To transform our condition is to simultaneously transform ourselves in the process, and visa versa, the opposite. Fred Engels said in explicit terms:

“Man’s ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man’s consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life.”

Historically the C.D.C. has used every major event that has arisen within the prison system to further its own objectives at our expense—be it financial or in the erosion of our “rights.” Qualitatively speaking, there has not been a break in the continuity of this trajectory of deterioration over the last two years (longer?). This desegregation is inevitable and the sooner we grasp this intellectually, the sooner we can begin “formulate” and effective strategy that is “essentially” collective in its coordination so as not to allow the state to exploit and exacerbate the existing contradictions between us as a means to further infringe upon our remaining “rights.”

**Question Two:** Having read your responses, both of you not only draw essentially identical conclusions that this desegregation process is inevitable, but that some degree of collective cooperation between the prisoners themselves is needed. Would you please elaborate on this?

**CL:** It is important to understand that the state, in all of its forms—the military, intelligence, police, judicial system, courts, etc., including the prison system—is not only a product of class divided society, it is

a tool created and used by the economically dominating classes to protect and preserve their financial and material interests, i.e., their class interests.

In his theoretical work *State and Revolution*, Lenin correctly observed:

The state is a product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms.... According to Marx, the state is an organ of class domination, and organ of oppression of one class by another; its aim is the creation of “order” which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the collisions between the classes.”

And although it was not the intention of Frederick Engels, he nonetheless completed Lenin’s statement with this passage taken from his ground-breaking work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, in which he says:

“Public force exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men, but of material appendages, *prisons* (emphasis added), and repressive institutions of all kinds.”

On first appearance the above quote may seem irrelevant to the question, but it is actually essential to the question as will become apparent, as it is to our conditions and to the formulation of a correct plan of action. It allows us to place the various aspects of this issue into proper context. Not only is the prison system a tool, of the wealthy and their upper class supporters, used to perpetuate their ill-gotten class privileges, the prison administration and overly paid guards belong to a social class whose economic interests are irreconcilably opposed to our interests as prisoners. As the comrade S.K. has acknowledged, the prison system is a microcosm of the class and racial contradictions existing within society. We must not interpret this mechanically, i.e., from one side only. The prison system is not only a reflection of social contradictions and class struggle, but the prison system in turn, dialectically, reacts back on society, exerting its own degree of influence on the direction of social development, such as on social policies, laws, etc.

But more revealing of the comrade’s observation is the fact that the class struggle is an objective phenomenon that occurs regardless of our opinions, intentions, feelings, etc., just as the sun arises and sets regardless of our will.

A guard may wish you a “Buenos dias” as the tray slides through the food port in

your cell door, but that has no bearing on the fact that their material conditions as a social class are sustained on our incarceration, i.e., the incarceration of society's predominately poorest members. These same "cool" C.O.s push and vote for the harshest laws on the ballot that will keep us incarcerated for the minorest infractions, thus perpetuating their class interests at our expense and the expense of the social class from which we originate.

It must be understood that all of what we are currently surrendering without any form of resistance, spontaneous or organized, was not given to us on a silver platter, but was purchased for in the blood and sweat of those convicts of previous generations. Nor are these infringements upon our various "rights" unconnected isolated acts carried out on the part of the state. They are a connected part of a larger agenda pursued by various class forces who share a common interest in not only an incarcerated population, but in a defeatist and submissive prison population as well.

This allows us to see that any and everything that they do is diametrically opposed to our concrete interests, and despite the fact that this particular issue of desegregation was initiated by another prisoner's law suit, the state will utilize it to further their interests—if we let them. The question is, "Will we break with continuity?" Furthermore, any and all infringements upon our "rights" affect us as a whole, not just as individuals. To challenge or resist their encroachments "solely" on an individual level by itself only insures the success of their "divide and conquer" tactic. Not only must we challenge them on an individual level (602s, law suites, citizen complaints, etc.), we must more importantly cooperate with one another as objective conditions necessitate and resist them as a united front.

**SK:** The necessity for change amongst the prison population and the concrete conditions is most evident by the prisoners' existing conditions themselves and their continuous deterioration. Reversing, or at best, changing, the current direction of this trend and the corresponding self-destructive practices that reflects this downward deterioration, requires a protracted process of mutual cooperation between us, requiring that we set aside whatever difference we might have in order to achieve our intended and agreed upon goals, whatever they may be.

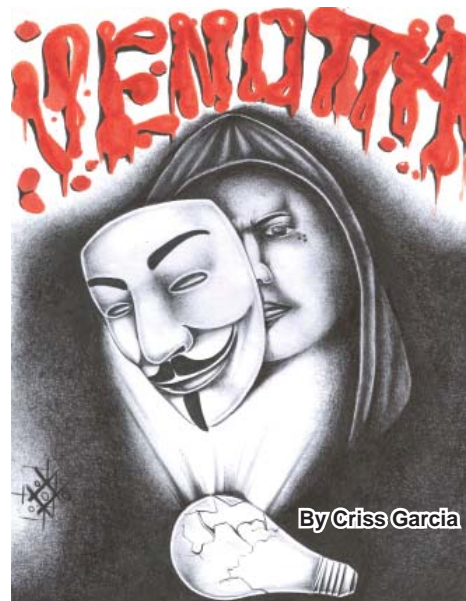
**Question Three:** So far you have given us a general description of this cooperation,

but could you describe to us in more detail how you envision this cooperation and what objectives do we intend to achieve from this cooperation?

**SK:** I would suggest that some form of strategic alliance be formulated by those individuals who already occupy positions of authority/influence.

There have been instances over the length of several decades of prisoner disunity in which we came together in order to achieve a common goal that improved the quality of prisoners' conditions.

The prison system continues to grow and expand while the quality of prisoners' material conditions and social relations continue on a downward spiral. Just under the previous two decades, prisoners have lost more than half of the gains it took decades of struggle to obtain.



The balance of forces has tipped and we are in the process of transforming into our opposite. Numerically we are nearly the minority now, and those in protective custody (SNY) are nearly the majority. Where we were once free to walk the lines while those who demanded protective custody from the state were isolated; today it is us who are now isolated under the guise of validation, i.e., indeterminate SHU, etc., and those demanding protective custody are rewarded. These rewards are temporary and a tactical move on the part of the state, used as incentive to entice those converts who have refused to capitulate up to this point.

We have arguably lost more than we have left to lose. The balance of forces have also tipping here and as dialectics and the struggle of opposites reveal, the C.D.C. is that much closer to achieving their grand

agenda. The further day has progressed, the sooner darkness will envelope us.

**CL:** There are no such thing as "rights", there are only power struggles. This captures the essence of all objective reality, i.e., it captures the transitory nature of reality's motion, be it organic, inorganic, human thought, social phenomenon, etc. To comprehend this, is to likewise comprehend that any strategy or tactics that we formulate (assuming we adhere to a plan) would be purely abstract and only approximate with reality to a given point.

In other words, we can devise a plan based upon a thorough analysis of existing conditions, but by the time we begin to implement this plan, many aspects of the existing conditions will have already transformed, although the essential trajectory will have remained the same and this is of importance to understand.

We can formulate a general plan, i.e., a "strategy" while the particularities (tactics) of this plan must be fluid and can only be realized through concrete actions, not abstract theories and ideas divorced from practical actions.

Having said that, individualism is a tremendous obstacle. I don't believe it possible at this stage to convince another prisoner to take up the cause of other prisoners if it does not impact him or her directly, even if it does so indirectly. Validation reform is a prime example.

Due to the low level of prisoners' political consciousness and for practical purposes, we would have to find an issue, or a number of issues, that affect all of us in common which we could unite around.

As for integrated celling, this is an extremely complex issue, an issue that only the prison masses can decide. Do we accept it, or not? I correctly recognize that to resist it in a attempt to perpetuate the old status-quo, no matter what our "initial instincts" tell us, is in fact "reactionary" and only sets ourselves up for further infringement of our rights.

Despite our decision, we need to ask ourselves, "are we going to allow C.D.C. to manipulate and exploit our reaction" as a means to advance their agenda and deprive us further, that is, are we going to continue assisting them in keeping their boot on our necks?

No matter what our decision is, assuming we do organize ourselves, I strongly suggest that we not turn on one another and provide the C.D.C. with more justification, but instead unite and struggle to improve

our circumstances and preserve all of that which is positive of ourselves, rather than dig our holes a little deeper than we already have.

There's nothing more that the C.D.C. fears than to see us on good terms with each other. If we do not transform our reactionary ways into a pro-active existence, we will continue losing what remaining "solid" yards we have left, which are already becoming difficult to distinguish between.

With that said, I'm only one of 170,000 other prisoners in the CA system. I neither have the authority, nor all of the solutions to our dilemmas. Like the next man, I can only suggest and contribute my opinion, thoughts, knowledge, etc., and hope that others will be provoked to contribute their own input with the ultimate goal of reaching a consensus by those in a position to implement a plan of action.

Dialectics reveals the transitory character of all reality, i.e., the transformation that results from the struggle of opposite tendencies inherent within all reality. It's not a question of whether or not transformation is going to come. Change—motion—is perpetual as it is inevitable. The question is, are we going to sit idly by, or are we going to harness these contradictions and influence the direction and development of these changes to serve our common interests? As Lenin correctly said in *On The Question of Dialectics*, "development is the struggle of opposites." •

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## NEW CHIEF OF CALIFORNIA'S PRISONS NAMED

**G**ov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday named a vocal advocate of shorter sentences and community treatment to run the state's crowded and troubled prison system.

Brown announced the selection of Jeffrey Beard, 65, the retired former Pennsylvania prisons chief, to succeed Matthew Cate, who stepped down last month after four years as secretary of corrections in California. Cate is now leader of the California State Assn. of Counties.

Beard, whose appointment is subject to Senate confirmation, spent nearly four decades in corrections in Pennsylvania, starting as a counselor and advancing to prison warden, eventually spending nine years as department head. He completed an expansion

of that state's prison system, including the addition of 32,000 inmate beds.

He left in 2010, advocating for laws that put more criminals into work-treatment programs instead of prisons, telling lawmakers that an "over-reliance" on locking up non-serious offenders did little to improve public safety.

Though an official start date was not announced, Beard joins Brown's administration at a critical time. The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has until Jan. 7 to produce a plan for reducing prison crowding or face the renewed threat of federal orders to release inmates early.

In addition, a federal receiver is attempting to negotiate terms for California to resume control over the delivery of healthcare to inmates. And the parole and healthcare divisions are laying off staff.



In announcing the appointment, Brown said Beard "has arrived at the right time to take the next steps in returning California's parole and correctional institutions to their former luster."

Beard's successor in Pennsylvania says Beard will fit right in.

"I think you guys hit a home run," said Pennsylvania Corrections Secretary John Wetzel.

Wetzel, who was appointed eight months after Beard retired, said the former director weighed in frequently with crucial advice and provided input on new legislation intended to reduce prison crowding in that state and on expanding community treatment and diversion programs.

In 2008, Beard lent support to a proposal to ease county jail crowding by sending felons serving more than two years to state prison. But it allowed for medical release and early release of nonviolent offenders who completed treatment and education programs.

Andy Hoover, legislative director for the

Pennsylvania branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, said Beard played an active role in developing corrections policies and promoting them before the Legislature.

But Beard has critics as well, some of whom hold him responsible for expanding the use of solitary confinement in Pennsylvania and for a two-month moratorium on parole releases after the murders of two Philadelphia police officers. The moratorium caused such overcrowding that Pennsylvania began sending inmates to serve time in other states.

Hoover said Beard was caught in a political bind, carrying out policies he had not set. "He was in an unfortunate position," Hoover said. "It was very much out of his hands."

Corrections historian Dan Berger, who was working on his doctoral degree at the University of Pennsylvania at the time, disagrees.

"Beard does not have a good reputation on health and human rights in prison," Berger said. "He gives more rhetoric to sentencing reform than believes it."

After retiring in 2010, Beard joined Pennsylvania State University's Justice Center for Research, and he has worked as a private consultant to a number of states, including California. He advised Sacramento on litigation over the care and housing of mentally ill offenders and has toured California prisons.

Beard is not shy about voicing opinions on where the criminal justice system fails. In 2010, he told Pennsylvania lawmakers that heavy reliance on incarceration of low-level offenders "has proven to have limited value in maintaining public safety."

"We must stop treating all offenders the same and move away from the 'get tough on crime' philosophy of locking up less serious offenders for longer periods of time," he told them.

In a 2005 commentary in an industry publication, Beard called for a rethinking of "who really belongs in prison" and an end to the then-popular "scared straight" programs he felt increased the likelihood that freed inmates would commit future crimes. "We must have the will to put an end to feel-good and/or publicly popular programs that simply do not work," Beard wrote.

Corrections officials said Beard was unavailable but released a single statement quoting the incoming secretary as saying he was "honored" to be appointed "for this important public safety position." •

# THE FINAL HOUR

By C. Landrum

[*Ed's Note: The footnotes in this article were inserted by me, and not the author, in an effort to clarify issues or to provide additional information.*]

A PBSP-generated memo dated December 10, 2012, was circulated throughout the pods addressing both current and additional demands. How much more obvious can it be?! The state has essentially been stringing us along like a puppy on a chain, conceding and occasional crumb along the way in an effort to pacify and distract us, and ultimately dividing us into opposing camps. As convenient as it may be, let's not allow ourselves to be further deceived with self-delusions of grandeur. These concessions are not victories to be celebrated without constraint, except within the most extreme limitation. They are in fact just merely some of the 'rights' that we have long been entitled to.

The overwhelming majority of those of us subjected to a life sentence of indeterminate sensory deprivation are for non-punitive administrative purposes, and are therefore entitled to the same 'rights and privileges' as those in general population, so long as they do not pose a threat to the safety or security of the institution. Although this 'right' exists only in the abstract.

Our efforts to seek relief and improve the quality of our conditions by utilizing the administrative (602) and judicial (lawsuits) avenues available to us, time and time again both prisoncrats and judges alike have worked hand-in-glove using this excuse of safety and security concerns to perpetuate our oppression.

And now we are demanding more concessions in addition to those already insisted upon—none of which have anything to do with our most essential issues of eliminating our endless isolation. And prisoncrats respond to our growing demands not in their usual way with the expected "no", but instead they are quick to string us further along on artificial hope cultivated with empty statements such as, "We'll look into it", "When the budget passes", "At our next meeting", etc., etc. And rather than adjust our course to meet the needs of our struggle, we mechanically apply the same rigid tactic, like a stencil superimposed upon the changing conditions of our needs, and make more irrelevant demands.

The state is all too willing to haggle over

secondary issues with us, issues that will have no fundamental effect on our long term isolation. The more we preoccupy ourselves with these non-essential issues, the further we stray from the decisive issues of social-extinction. But of greater significance, our success or failure, hinges upon our ability to distinguish the difference between a *strategy* and a *tactic* that supplements it, something we have failed abysmally to do. This is a necessity in order to formulate a correct strategy capable of meeting the needs that will bring us one step closer to eliminating social-extinction. So allow me to reiterate once again as we have done many times over.

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## **The state's capacity to isolate us indefinitely stems not from any one specific policy, ... but from the fact that sensory deprivation facilities exist.**

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A *strategy* seeks to abolish the source of a given phenomenon "internal cause", whereas a *tactic* addresses the "external side effects" that manifest from an internal source.

How many times will it take before we come to our senses and internalize this simple, yet decisively fundamental lesson? How many more convicts must die unnecessarily in a pointless effort to alleviate a symptom while ignoring its source? Or will we continue chasing our tails until the prison masses become so psychologically exhausted and defeated that all confidence in the collective struggle is depleted? Elevating the political consciousness of the convict masses is a safeguard that inoculates us against defeatism and the concerns currently raised, many of which are now raising their head as a result of initiating our struggle prematurely.

Although it may appear to be in good condition externally, a blown motor is incapable of being repaired with a new paint job. Our efforts to eliminate the validation policy as a vehicle to abolish social-extinction, is in fact a tactical issue that we have incorrectly pursued as a strategic solution. Eliminating the validation process—or program failure, the step down S.T.G. for that matter—only creates a new necessity for the state to simply manufacture a new pseudo-justification for keeping us isolated and locked quietly away down a long, dimly lit corridor.

We failed to draw this lesson from the

*Castillo* case, but we immediately identified our primary mistake and addressed it in depth in our analytical and preparatory outline, the "Road Ahead and the Dialectics of Change"<sup>1</sup> But for reasons potentially self-defeating—inflated egos, self-interest, feigned indifference, etc., this essentially decisive issue, and other pertinent ones, were consciously side-lined and ignored despite the pamphlet's wide distribution<sup>2</sup>, and personal discussion with some of the current leadership. To consciously neglect the obvious, has and continues to cost us dearly, both in the lives of our fellow convicts, and in unnecessary and avoidable mistakes.

The state's capacity to isolate us indefinitely stems not from any one specific policy, be it program failure, the validation process, or the S.T.G step down program, etc., *but from the fact that sensory deprivation facilities exist.* So long as the SHU, Ad-Seg, Stand-Alone, ASU, Z-Unit, etc., remain intact as they currently do, one excuse only needs to be replaced by another in order for the state to perpetuate the continuity of its subtle practice of social-extinction.

As litigation neared the judicial conclusion of the *Castillo* case, the CDC feared a potential defeat, and so like candy, began to hand out indeterminate SHU terms for having served prior SHU terms and failure of program, i.e., "program failure." Although, when we ultimately failed to secure a fundamental victory and overturn the validation process, program failure demonstrated to be an unnecessary alternative to substitute the validation process and perpetuate indefinite isolation. And it was at this particular point of development that the state immediately refrained from its substitution practice. The lesson we failed to draw from all of this was likely the most obvious as well! The CDC never entertained the notion of reducing the SHU population. They would simply manufacture a new excuse, should circumstances necessitate. But as we addressed, this proved unnecessary as a result of their victory and the validation process was sufficient to continue the slow and subtle practice of state-sanctioned so-

1. "The Road Ahead" was published in volume 1, issue 1, of this newsletter. For those who missed it, you can get the article in pamphlet form by sending a request to *Rock* along with five postage stamps to cover printing and mailing.

2. This pamphlet was also printed in a past issue of *Prison Focus*.

cial extermination.

We initiated our current struggle with a repeat of the same mistake for the second time. And now, remaining fatefully loyal to the continuity of our practice, we secured both a victory, and a defeat simultaneous, as a result of pursuing our fallacious tactic for a third time! We eliminated the validation process, although failing to eliminate social-extermination, we instead inherited the CDC's latest excuse used to isolate us indefinitely—the STG step down program.

Forget the pseudo-justifications used, be it program failure, validation, the STG step down program, or any potential excuse, eliminating one label will only insure its replacement by another label. These excuses and justifications that are manufactured by the prisoncrats and the labels they use, are side-effects that manifest from an internal source, that being the isolation units. We must transform the isolation units from within and eliminate their capacity of sensory deprivation, and in doing so, we would render all of their excuses—old and new—both obsolete and impractical. We must appeal to the international community of the U.N., and the domestic community, and in a political context challenge our legal and human rights, according to those established by the General Assembly of the U.N.

Social intercourse with others is a necessity to feed, clothe, shelter, and procreate, in order to perpetuate our species. Seeking out the company of others is a genetic drive programmed within our DNA, and in the process of social intercourse, our personalities as distinct individuals is shaped and molded, giving us our identities. To socially isolate and deprive us of social contact is to dehumanize us and destroy our identity as distinct personalities. A life of both social isolation and sensory deprivation is an unnatural state of existence artificially imposed upon a essentially social animal. Such conditions of social isolation amounts to nothing less that “social-extermination”—keeping us alive biologically as living, breathing, empty vessels, devoid of all social content—a socially engineered lobotomy.

This is as much of our human right as it is a phenomena of political economy, and only in the political theater can this be fought effectively. Only in this political context is there potential to resuscitate and cultivate our identity, and politically collective identity. We must establish our ‘right’ to social intercourse, which would serve as the vehicle to install tables (two),

phones, exercise bars (designed and fabricated by convicts), cellies, etc., day-room (8 man minimum) to facilitate social-intercourse. “Limited association” must be our primary demand!

So much has been left unaddressed. It would require another pamphlet to address all of the relevant issues, ideological, economic, a philosophic guide forming strategic and tactical matters, participation of general population and its interests, the role of S.N.Y. and solid yards, weights, family visits, minimum wage, and other possibilities. But what’s absolutely necessary is an adjustment in our current in our current course. And if necessary, we should consider pursuing the demand for “limited association” with a small, politically conscious, and dedicated, group of *volunteer* H. strikers (ten, fifteen, maybe 20?) to proceed in pairs until expiration if necessary with a replacement pair on standby. Media outlets, public, etc. could be provided with pre-written statements, interviews, photos, etc. with the initiation of each pair. This tactic would not only allow us to present to the public a human face on our struggle and develop support, it would prevent the media from diluting itself between several thousand others who at this stage participate more from a sense of obligation than political conviction—a trend that we must also struggle to reverse. ●

## EDITORIAL 2-2

Well boys and girls, it’s time for another exciting episode of “Bring In The Liberals.” Yep, Governor Brown has appointed/nominated what some will call a liberal to head CDCR.

I’ve had the pleasure of playing this game before, back the mid-1970s in the Washington State prison system. When prisoners struggling for democracy made the Penitentiary ungovernable, the state fired the head of DOC, transferred the warden, and brought in liberal correctional bureaucrats from another state. We had a liberal head of DOC and a new liberal warden. They gave and gave to us prisoners. For example, I was able to create the first sanctioned openly gay prisoners’ organization in history—Men Against Sexism. Gay prisoners could wear dresses and full makeup on the inside! The new administration even gave us faggots a roomy, air conditioned office to meet and hang out in.

Of course this sudden air of permissiveness caused a rift between the old line guards and the new administration. Had my comrades and I been more politically sophisticated we would have exploited that contradiction, but back then all we had in mind was backing the liberals up against the wall (which of course we did, finally ushering in their replacement with hard-line representatives of the guards union as the new warden and the new head of DOC). But that’s another story.

Today you in California may be about to experience something similar, a least in terms of a slightly more liberal CDCR. The new boss is here to toss you some scrumptious crumbs. Many will find them quite delicious, so good in fact that they will toss aside things like limited association, the right to vote, and abolition of the pro-slavery provision of the thirteenth amendment. Those who lose sight of the larger picture will say, “Oh, we are being released from the SHU so we can get back to (fill in the blank). The struggle for justice is over, and nobody better disagree.” I’ve seen it more times than I can count; these elements become the administration’s first line of defense, bought and paid for with perks tossed to them by their captors.

I’ve never done time in California. I’m not a prisoner. I call no shots. Yet I nonetheless have opinions. One such opinion that we need a progressive national prisoners’ movement that demands full enfran-

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chisement and modification of the thirteenth amendment to abolish slavery once and for all. I believe that stopping short of these modest changes will seriously damage the cause of justice for prisoners. Note that while I am a communist and a revolutionary, I am not asking for a communist organization or for revolution. I am only calling for two simple and long overdue reforms. With the right to vote politicians will pay more attention to prisoner issues. With the elimination of the slavery provision the justification for treating convicts as animals will be gone—we'll have the same rights as every other citizen.

Because of the huge controversy surrounding my comments on the issue of mixed racial celling, I have reprinted the article by C. Landrum (On The Question of Integrated Celling) that I published some time ago in *Prison Focus*. This will enable us to discuss more about the politics of the question, and less talk about the gut reactions of those opposed to such a change. Lastly, it should again be noted that the change we are talking about is *not mandatory interracial celling*, but rather the freedom to choose that option without fear of violence from one's peers. We are talking about freedom of choice. And isn't freedom what we are struggling for?

Now a couple of quick house cleaning items: First of all, if you write and expect a response to your letter you should enclose a SASE. Doing so will save me time and money. More to the point, it substantially increases the likelihood of your getting an answer. Secondly, please do not write and ask me to get you a lawyer. I'm way up here in Washington, and don't know of any attorneys willing to take on cases in California. I'm fixing to sue CDCR over the rejection of the November issue of *Rock* and will be doing the litigation myself, along with some prisoners, because I don't yet have a lawyer willing to help. If I can't get one for myself, trust me, I can't get one for you. The same goes for other demands on my time; will you phone here, look up this, fetch that, etc. At my age (71) I just don't have the energy to be your gofer.

As of this issue, *Rock* has been published for one year and two months. It has 250 subscribers. Of that number 97 have never contributed a single stamp. It is the generosity of those who are contributing more than their share that carries the weight of those who cannot or will not materially support this publication. You all pay for—I just do the work (and run my mouth).

A couple of days ago I bought three cases of paper for my printer (ten reams each case for 30 reams, or 15,000 sheets). With five sheets of paper for each newsletter and a mailing list of 250, that's enough paper for an entire year of newsletters (of course the mailing list will grow). I also bought several cartridges of laser printer toner, enough for several more issues of *Rock*. The bad news is that I've used up all the money you've contributed. I won't need any money real soon, but within two or three months I'll be asking for more financial contributions—especially if there is a need to put out two issues a month as we get nearer to July 8th. •

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## LAWSUIT FORCES STATE TO MOVE PRISONERS FROM ISOLATION UNITS

Michael Montgomery, KQED

Facing a federal lawsuit, state corrections officials are moving forward with a plan to transfer hundreds of alleged prison gang members from controversial isolation units to regular lockups around the state.

The first group of 45 inmates will be removed from the state's Security Housing Units in the coming weeks, said Kelly Harrington, associate director of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. He said some of the inmates have spent more than 20 years locked in the special units.

"The priority has been to look at individuals who have been in the Security Housing Units the longest," he said. "The goal is to reduce the number of inmates in the security housing units as safely as possible."

As part of a new policy announced earlier this year, the inmates are not being required to renounce the gangs or snitch on other members, a practice known as "debriefing." Instead, the prisoners must show they are no longer involved in gang-related activity as defined by new departmental guidelines.

Another 21 inmates will be placed in a "step-down" program that focuses on improving behavior and reintegrating inmates into the general prison population. Harrington said inmates could pass through the program within four years.

Since October, corrections officials have

reviewed the files of 77 inmates currently housed in five security housing units, including 16 prisoners being held at Pelican Bay State Prison, the focus of a class-action lawsuit filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights and several other legal organizations on behalf of 10 inmates.

The suit claims that prolonged solitary confinement violates Eighth Amendment prohibitions against cruel and unusual punishment, and that the absence of meaningful review for placement in the Security Housing Units violates the prisoners' right to due process.

The lawsuit alleges that...

"California's uniquely harsh regime of prolonged solitary confinement at Pelican Bay is inhumane and debilitating. Plaintiffs and class members languish, typically alone, in a cramped, concrete, windowless cell, for 22 and one-half to 24 hours a day. They are denied telephone calls, contact visits, and vocational, recreational or educational programming. Defendants persistently deny these men the normal human contact necessary for a person's mental and physical well-being. These tormenting and prolonged conditions of confinement have produced harmful and predictable psychological deterioration among Plaintiffs and class members."

Corrections officials insist conditions at Pelican Bay are humane and have withstood legal challenges. Now, they are trying to show that no inmate will spend more than four years in the special unit unless he is actively involved in gangs. Officials hope to complete the review of nearly a thousand cases within the next six months.

In February, a federal judge is expected to rule on a motion to dismiss the suit. •

Source: <http://blogs.kqed.org/newsfix>  
2012/12/28/



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# LETTERS

[*Note: Names of letter writers will be withheld unless the author of the letter explicitly approves printing of their name.*]

## Words From Calipatria

Speaking as an average, non-influential, run-of-the-mill mainline prisoner, in my humble opinion, I believe that the call to end racial group hostilities should've immediately been followed by a call for some sort of collective action involving all racial groups in order to begin cementing this agreement among the GP prisoners. I think that is essential to moving the struggle forward instead of backwards as this latest incident [the race riot] threatens to do. Also, the message (about the Agreement to End Hostilities) as it's being understood by the average mainline prisoner is sorely lacking in content. The great majority of prisoners I've spoken to don't understand why it's necessary to put an end to hostilities between racial groups, or why we must put the interests of *all* prisoners ahead of our own personal ego issues, and why we must all become more active in the struggle for causes that benefit us all. In short, it seems like it's not being taken too seriously and treated as if nothing has changed.

Mao began his *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* by asking "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of first importance for the revolution." In prison it is not difficult to see who your friends *should* be. Look around, it's all those living in the same exact conditions as you do. They're caged up in the cell right next to yours. *Nothing* is different between your situation and his. You eat the same-sized portions of crap that these pigs feel you got coming. They'll shoot you with that mini-14 rifle just like they'll shoot him when you're stabbing each other on the yard. There is absolutely no substantive difference between the way you're forced to live your life and the way he's forced to live his.

Who decides when you get toilet paper and how much of it you get? Who decides when and how much you eat? Who enforces the sentence the judge gave you? Who enforces the warden's call to cancel all visits, all phone calls, and the amount of time spent in your tiny cell every time there's a lockdown? The human being living in the cell right next to yours might have a dif-

ferent skin color than yours, and he might listen to different music, but he's dealing with the same shit as you, day in and day out. Once you realize who you should be uniting with you'll realize who you should be fighting against.

*Cacalotl Cordova, Calipatria*

## Words of Wisdom?

A friend of mine wrote and told me that in order to eliminate criminality at all its levels, we must eliminate all the aspects of society that make people suffer. This includes the prisons and imprisonment, the police forces and the pretended necessity for their militarization, and all other institutions of contempt for the people. Though these institutions pretend to provide security, it is a security that victimizes the people, while primarily providing security for those institutions themselves, in the name of the people.

What they are essentially defending with that security are the institutions of economic exploitation, impoverishment, racialization, and the commodification of people. Please consider—in order for there to be justice, we have to get rid of the government's criminal role models.

The judicial machine's role models are the engine by which social criminality and its injustices endlessly increase. Under the guise of protecting society from crime, a social situation is created in which people find themselves without protection from the judicial machine, instrumental in producing injury, suffering, and a social atmosphere of contempt. The judicial machine leads only to the formation of a police state. The judicial role model is no longer acceptable?

*[Name Withheld]*

## More on Interracial Celling

I am just one of the sixteen SHU reps here at PBSP. I write in response to part of your editorial comments in Rock Vol. 1 #12, Dec. 2012. I won't bother to waste my time with the rest.

You stated that those up here "put out the dictate that nobody should take an interracial cellie...." This is the first I hear of it! That has to be false, especially when wardens across the state, right now, won't cell-up *any* individuals from other races in SHU. Hell, here at PBSP-SHU, we Mexicans, Whites, and most Blacks can't even cell-up with our own race unless they're relatives, let alone with someone from an-

other race. That's a fact!

That said, the only thing I've heard and maybe expressed to outside supporters that could have been twisted up in the rumor mill and then spat out by you is that SHU prisoners should consider to not to cell up with anyone and remain single-celled. This was being said in order to deprive CDCR of those empty SHU cells, where CDCR cannot fill them with more general population (GP) prisoners—but we're not against any in SHU celling up.

I'll further add that the reality in California prisoners, CDCR has always integrated the GP bathrooms, mess halls, tiers, work places and yards. And prior to the ruling in *Johnson v. California* (2005) 543 U.S. 499, CDCR had an unwritten policy on GP that they still have in all SHUs, as I already stated, of not celling up prisoners from different races together (even if they are homies from the same group). Which I believe is how that *Johnson* case came about, where two friends from different races who were "compatible" wanted to "voluntarily" cell up, but CDCR refused their request and Johnson filed suit. And, after CDCR lost that case—and we all know how CDCR loves to retaliate by twisting and manipulating court rulings to their advantage whenever they lose (the *Castillo* settlement case is just one example), they turned around and tried to "force" GP prisoners at all security levels (1 through 4) to cell up with other races. And this was during the hostilities. Behind that CDCR action alone, a lot of violence erupted on the GPs. Under the information I received, CDCR now only "forces" level 1 and 2 prisoners to integrate in dorms (i.e., 3 man bunk beds).

Then, in 2007, in order to further clean up their won created violence, and under the guise of a security threat, that they themselves created; CDCR got around the court's ruling by creating Cal Code of Regulations, Section 3269.1 "Integrated Housing." If you read that, you'll see that no one remotely involved in the so-called racial-hostilities for the past 30 years will be allowed to cell up with individuals from other races. That rule alone probably excludes everyone in SHU, as well as all prisoners CDCR is now cataloging under the new Security Threat Group (STG), which ninety-nine percent of GPO and new prisoners will fall under. Thus, further discred-



iting the rumor you started.

However, if you want to know my personal opinion on this issue, I feel that as long as two individuals are “compatible” and “mutually” agree to “voluntarily” cell up with each other, they should be allowed to cell up, no matter the race. But no one should ever be forced to cell up, even those from the same race and group. This is especially so in the SHU, where you have to spend 22 ½ hours together in a confined space, sometimes for years. In that situation, the last thing one wants is to be in as cell for that amount of time with someone you are not compatible with. That would only be a recipe for disaster in that cell. Let me include a parallel that would be like if the U.S. Supreme Court during the civil rights rulings also ordered the military to “force” all races and people across the U.S. to also be integrate their won households with neighbors and strangers. That may have worked in a perfect world. But, if the court had even tried that, even today, the people of *all* races and groups would have risen up united to overthrow the government. That’s a fact that nobody can honestly deny. That’s the same in California prisons, where the prison cells are the households. Therefore, no one should agree with CDCR or any court to “force” anyone to cell up together unless they both “mutually” agree to “voluntarily” cell up with even those from the same group or race. Of course this is only my opinion, but I’m sure all or most of your readers will agree with this because we are all trying to avoid hostilities, not create new ones or restart old ones.

Finally, not that I have everyone’s attention, I would like to add some short info of importance. On the HS, no one with a serious or chronic illness should participate (i.e., diabetes, heart problems, etc.). Also, because CDCR is complicating things for us, our demands will probably no come out until sometime in January. Here at PBSP, the disciplinary free period starts from the day you receive a RVR. If that happens, file a 602 appeal because that’s a due process violation. The year should start from a finding (guilty) of a serious RVR. And, per CDCR DOM, article 43, sec. 54030.10.2 “legal materials” are not to be counted towards the personal book limits. Instead, they are to be counted towards the six cubic foot property limits. So do not allow the IGI, property, or staff to try and count legal books, etc., as your personal book limits. File a 602 if they do. In solidarity,

Arturo Castellanos #C-17275, DI-121

## Exhaust Administrative Remedies

Greetings from the Tehachapi SHU. Hopefully folks have already been compiling a list of issues specific to your institutions. My guess is that many of the issues are the same. My suggestion is that you start exhausting the 602 process (group appeal) on many of the items that are correctable within your facilities. Namely, the ones your individual institutions have power over. Even the more broad issues that must be addressed by Sacramento are good (e.g. limit on soap, weekly phone calls, longer visitation, contact visits, Article 43 issues, etc.). That way we are also adding our collective voices to those already speaking in PBSP. But because group 602s are still subject to a 14 day waiting period you’ll want to strategize to strike a balance on things that you feel can be fixed easily with rep negotiation as we draw closer to struggle, and those issues that you want to give voice to. Over here we are also spreading out group appeals by having one section or block appeal one issue and another section/block another issue, and so on. This is so that as a whole we are pushing all of our issues at once. Basically gearing up and preparing to have all 3<sup>rd</sup> level response in hand come July 8<sup>th</sup>. By then we’ll have the documentation showing that we have put fourth effort to address these issues through the grievance process one last time.

Sacramento should hear *tens of thousands* of voices on the issues that affect us all, and locally your captains and wardens will have both notice and know what they can do to fix institutional problems as well. That said. We out!

Marco Perez

## To Participate in Setp Down?

I am writing these lines in regards to the pilot program being implemented statewide, the so called step down program. In my opinion this program is a tiny step in the right direction. But I do agree with Mr. Castellanos and the Short Corridor Collective in that this STG 1 and STG 2 categories CDCR wants to put into Title 15 widens the scope of what will now fall under gang activity. As their blueprint now reads, anything one does can be construed as gang activity, and anyone who doesn’t toe the CDCR line can arbitrarily be labeled a member of a security threat group and locked down indefinitely. And let’s be real here, some individuals can and do become informants just by being told they will be validated, not trying to belittle anyone, just

speaking the truth.

I think what you are doing by publicizing the struggle being waged in these security housing units is great. Keep up the good work and fight. *But*, and here’s my *but*, there are people around here who read your newsletter and misinterpret what they read within said pages. This only causes confusion and misdirection which benefits CDCR only. Everyone agrees that the 5.5 and 7.0 proposals of the STG program are laughable as they are written, but right now they are the only game in town. Now allow me to play devil’s advocate and say we will not participate in the farce called the step down program. In that case the only ones benefitting from this stand is the department (CDCR) who will say “Look we offered a way out of the SHU and they refuse to participate, we did our part in good faith, etc., etc.” And they would love this because we would be in the unenviable position of cutting off our noses to spite our face. I have read and understand the core demands that the Short Corridor Collective have made to the CDCR secretary and governor Jerry Brown, and they are and should stay non-negotiable until CDCR comes to the bargaining table in good faith and grants core demands one through three. Until then it’s all smoke and mirrors in the hopes that they can get away with only a cosmetic touch up with no substance.

[A paragraph is omitted that deals with failure of the DRB to properly or timely release validated prisoners.]

I have said my piece and hope that the opinions I expressed within do no offend anyone. I await, as everyone around me, you next issue of Rock newsletter. Thank you for your time and if you can would you please print this letter in an upcoming issue.

Carlos Sainz, Tehachapi SHU

**[Ed’s Response:** As I’ve said elsewhere in this issue, I’ve never done time in California, I’m not a prisoner, and I call no shots. That said, however, I do have a lot of prison organizing experience, and one thing I’ve learned over the years is this: You can settle for a small crumb from the crust of the pie, or you can settle for a slice of the pie, you can even dig in your heels and shoot for the whole damn pie. It seems to me like you are ready to settle for a mere crumb. Once folks have a thick and healthy slice of pie in their belly, I seriously doubt anyone will really care what CDCR says about any lack of prisoner participation in their step down scheme.] ●



The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is converting Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW) into a men's prison in response to a U.S. Supreme Court order to reduce overcrowding. Instead of releasing people and closing VSPW, they are squeezing over 1,000 women and transgender people into the two remaining women's prisons. The population of the other women's prison in Chowchilla, Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) is dangerously close to 4,000 even though its maximum capacity is 2,000. The conversion has aggravated overcrowding, created dangerous conditions, and health care is already getting much worse. What's more, they have added yet another men's prison to their inhumane system. We've had enough! Come show

support for all people locked up in Chowchilla's prisons and tell the Federal Judges that overcrowding must stop now!

**CHOWCHILLA FREEDOM RALLY**

Saturday, January 26, 2013

Rides available by bus and carpool. Contact [chowchilla.rally@gmail.com](mailto:chowchilla.rally@gmail.com) or 415-255-7036 x 314

Caravans leaving from MacArthur BART in Oakland at 10:30AM and Chuco's Justice Center in Inglewood at 8:30AM. We will gather at 2PM at SE corner of Ave. 24 and Fairmead Blvd off Highway 99 in Chowchilla.

Rally begins at 3PM at VSPW.

**OVERCROWDING = DEATH  
BRING OUR LOVED ONES HOME!  
COMMUNITY RELEASE PROGRAMS  
\* PAROLE FOR ELDERS \* RELEASE**

**FOR MEDICAL REASONS \* END LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE (LWOP)**

Solidarity actions encouraged! If you cannot make the rally or do not live in California, we encourage you to organize a solidarity action on the same day in your community. Hold a demonstration in front of the DOC offices or the county jail, organize a speak-out against prisons in a public space, stand in solidarity the Chowchilla Freedom Rally! Please let us know how we can support you! Contact [info@women-prisoners.org](mailto:info@women-prisoners.org).

Interested in helping organize this event? Join our coalition! Our next meeting is Wednesday, January 2, 2013 from 6 - 8PM at the CCWP offices. 1540 Market Street, Suite 490, San Francisco. Or contact [adrienne@womenprisoners.org](mailto:adrienne@womenprisoners.org). ●

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