

# !ROCK!

## ★ Working to Extend Democracy to All ★

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# WOMEN IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

By Victoria Law

Victoria Woodrich had had enough. On November 11, 2014, six weeks before her 36th birthday, she tied a sock around her neck; she tied the other end to the top of her bed structure. By the time staff found her at 3:30 that afternoon, she was dead.

Woodrich, known as Shortybang to her friends, had been in prison for more than a decade and at Illinois' Logan Correctional Center since its 2013 conversion to a women's prison. Earlier that month, she was placed in the prison's segregation unit, where women are locked in their cells nearly 24 hours a day.

"She kept telling me she wanted to die," recalled Nicole Natschke, who was in segregation during that time. "She told me that everyone would be better off without her." Three days later, the woman awoke to screaming. That was when she learned that

Woodrich had hung herself.

Most prison officials eschew the term "solitary confinement" these days. They use other names for the units in which people are isolated to their cells nearly all day. In California, it's usually the "administrative segregation unit" or "security housing unit"; in New York state and in the federal system, it's the Special Housing Unit (or SHU). In Logan prison, the unit is known as the "segregation wing."

Regardless of the name, women in these units spend 22 to 24 hours in their cells. They are allowed out of their cells for showers up to three times each week and for one hour of exercise and recreation per day inside a different cage outdoors. This isolation exacerbates any existing mental health problems and, even for those without preexisting conditions, can cause severe psychological and emotional trauma.

Dr. Craig Haney, widely considered an expert on the effects of isolation on mental health, rattled off a list of the effects of solitary confinement in his 2012 testimony before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, including significantly increased negative attitudes and affect, irritability, anger, aggression and even rage; chronic insomnia, free floating anxiety, fear of impending emotional breakdowns, a loss of control, and panic attacks; severe and even paralyzing discomfort around other people, social withdrawal, and extreme paranoia; hypersensitivity to external stimuli (such as noise, light, smells), various kinds of cognitive dysfunction, such as an inability to concentrate or remember, and ruminations in which they fixate on trivial things intensely and over long periods of time; a sense of hopelessness and deep depression; and signs and symptoms of psychosis, in-

cluding visual and auditory hallucinations.

Haney is not alone in his findings. Not only do others in the mental health field agree, but directors of various state prison systems have also come to recognize solitary's harmful effects. But, despite the increasing attention being paid to solitary in men's prisons - from the 2013 mass prison hunger strike in California to prison commissioners experiencing the isolation firsthand and condemning the practice - far less attention has been paid to the practice in women's prisons.

### "You Have Lost Your Freedom in Ways You've Never Thought of"

"Solitary confinement traumatized me far more than being in prison did. And prison traumatized me," Evie Litwok told Truthout. Litwok, who was released from prison on August 19, 2014, is still affected by her stay in solitary. "You have lost your freedom in a way you never have thought of," she said. "Your nerves are shot. You feel more edgy."

Evie Litwok spent seven weeks in the SHU, which she describes as a prison-within-a-prison at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tallahassee, Florida. There, she was confined to her cell nearly 24 hours each day. For one hour each morning, she was also allowed to leave her cell to exercise in another cage. To do so, she was chained, handcuffed and walked to the recreation cage outside, which she described as "probably never having been cleaned." After one hour, she was handcuffed, chained and escorted back to her cell.

She was allowed to shower three times each week; each shower lasted less than 10 minutes. Other days, she had to improvise in her cell. "I would strip naked and

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pour water over myself,” she recalled. Like many of the other women in the SHU, Litwok was double-celled and so had to do so in front of her bunkmate. She was also exposed to the eyes of any guard or staff member who walked by her cell door, since prison policy prohibits covering the small window on the door at any time.

What landed Litwok in solitary? Publicizing the death of a woman named Miriam Hernandez. According to Litwok, Hernandez had been complaining of excruciating stomach pain. Medical staff dismissed her complaints, telling her, “You’re fat. You need to walk on the track. You need to drink water.” Hernandez died two weeks later when her gallbladder burst.

People incarcerated in the federal prison system have access to CorrLinks, a limited version of email. Litwok emailed the details of Hernandez’s death to a friend, who posted it on her website, Ex-Offender Nation. Within an hour of the story’s posting, Litwok was handcuffed, strip searched and sent to the SHU.

There’s little quiet in the SHU, Litwok explained. All day, women screamed, “Get me out of here! Get me the fuck out of here!” The screaming was always worse at night.

Women who were on medication sometimes received a fraction of their prescription after being placed in the SHU. Litwok recalls that her cellmate was one of those women. “She was freaking out,” she said. “It was clear that she couldn’t take it. She kept asking, ‘Why am I here? I’m not

charged with anything.’”

Litwok was able to flag down the psychologist, who gave the woman the proper dosage for that one night. But the following day the medications were gone, and the woman’s freak-out resumed. Two months later, Litwok’s cellmate, who had been placed in SHU “under investigation,” was released without charge. She was not the only one in the SHU whose charges were ultimately dropped.

“I was with 60 women in the SHU,” Litwok recalled. Most were awaiting the outcome of an investigation and hearing. “Everyone who was charged had their charges dropped or reduced,” she stated. She remembered women accused of bringing in contraband. After spending four months in isolation, their charges were dropped. Another woman spent eight months after she cursed about a correctional officer within his hearing, and was charged with threatening the officer. The charges were ultimately dropped.

In solitary, women must depend on prison staff to bring them necessities. Litwok remembers the humiliation of having to beg for toilet paper. In Illinois, Natschke reported that officers frequently refused to hand out sanitary pads until women staged a disturbance. “I went two days with no pads,” she said. “There were several other women who also needed pads. The officers ignored us or would tell us that there aren’t any.” The women had to stage individual protests: “One woman ended up flooding her cell. I held my chuckhole open so I

could see a lieutenant. Other women were banging on their doors.”

They received their necessary pads, but each was also issued a misconduct ticket, which prevents them from having their segregation time reduced. “If we didn’t do that, we would’ve still been sitting on the toilet,” noted Natschke, whose solitary sentence will not end until August 3, 2015.

### Cellmates in Segregation: Enabling Human Interaction or a Result of Overcrowding?

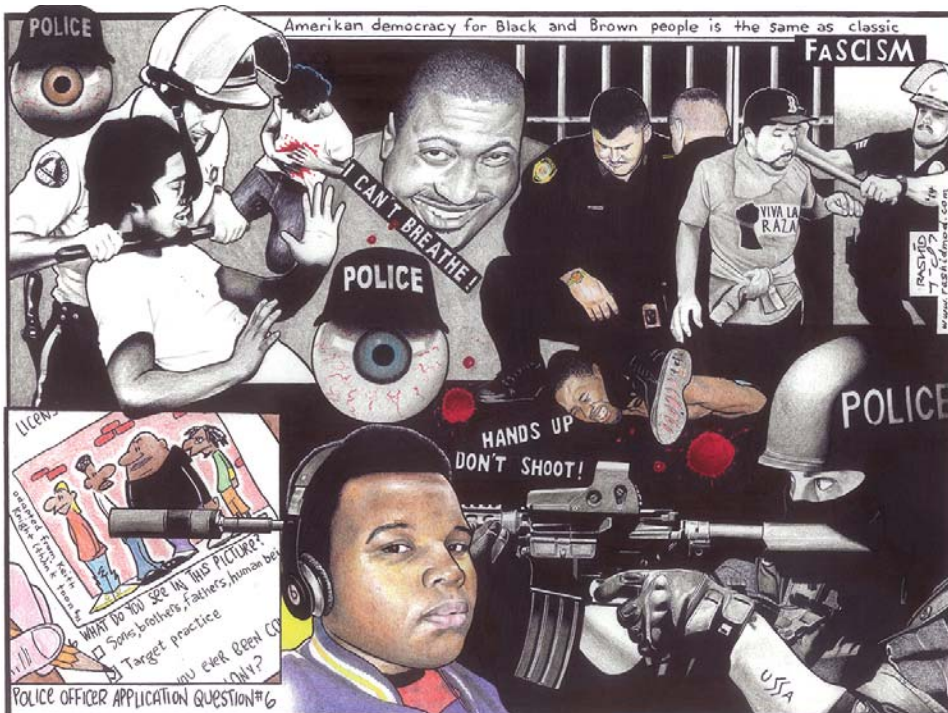
Prison administrators have pointed out that some people in segregation are allowed cellmates and thus are not “solitary.” In Logan, for instance, prison watchdog group the John Howard Association found that 92 of the 99 women in segregation shared cells with one other person (a term known as double-celling). In California’s women’s prisons, only two of the 158 women in Administrative Segregation and four of the 78 women in the Security Housing Unit were in cells alone; the others are double-celled. But advocates, including people who have spent time in these units, say that this double-celling is more about prison overcrowding than ensuring human interaction.

As of October 2014, for instance, the California Institution for Women, originally designed to hold 1,100 people, housed 1,799; the Central California Women’s Facility, originally designed for 1,895, housed 3,676. In Illinois, Logan, with a rated capacity of 1,106, currently holds 1,950 people.

Having a cellmate, however, does little to ameliorate the effects of prolonged confinement. “When the lights close, you’re in this small space,” Litwok explained. “You can’t turn on the TV; you can’t listen to the radio; you can’t read a book.” Four months later, she still has difficulty falling asleep. When she does, she has nightmares. “I have a darkness that I never had, a cloud that sits over my head. And you can’t fix that,” she said. “I wonder if I’ll ever be relaxed.”

### Protective or Punitive?

When 20-year-old Donna Hylton was first arrested and sent to Rikers Island, New York City’s island jail, she was placed in protective custody (solitary confinement). “It was horrible!” she told Truthout. “I was isolated. For a long time, I didn’t see anyone. I got taken to court by myself or, if I was on the bus with anyone else, they’d put me in the caged part by myself.” The isolation was ostensibly to protect her because



of her high-profile case in the kidnapping and murder of a real estate broker.

But the lack of human contact soon resulted in nightmares, which resulted in medical staff prescribing psychotropic medications. "I didn't know what it was," Hylton explained. "They told me I had to take it or I'd get in trouble. I didn't want to get in trouble, so I took it."

After six months, she was taken off protective custody and allowed into general population. A few months later, after returning from court, she was told that staff had found a straight razor among her possessions. She was sentenced to 45 days in solitary and sent back to the same unit, this time as punishment. "I was in the same unit, same corridor. It was no different." The only difference was the label explaining her placement.

### **Report Sexual Abuse? Go to Seg.**

Although the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act prohibits sexual contact between staff and the people they guard, prison administrators frequently use the threat of solitary to dissuade women from reporting staff abuse. Donna Hylton knows this firsthand. She recalled one particular sergeant who tried to coerce her into having sex. She tried to report his behavior to the administration.

"They told me, 'If you keep making these allegations, we're going to send you to SHU,'" she remembered. The lieutenant told her that, without evidence, they would not believe her accusations.

In response, Hylton snapped, "The next time he pulls out his dick, I'm going to bite it off and bring you the evidence."

Recalling the conversation, Hylton said, "I sat on the floor of the administration building and screamed it out," she recalled. The sergeant stopped his behavior, but found a way to punish Hylton for speaking out.

A few months later, Hylton was involved in an altercation with another sergeant. She had recently learned that her daughter had been assaulted, and Hylton had been traveling two hours back and forth between Bedford Hills and the New York City court system to press charges against the assailant.

"I had marijuana and a five dollar bill on me," she recalled. An officer noticed and placed his hands to begin a search. "I had been molested as a girl," she explained. "I didn't realize he was going to search me. All I knew was that he put his hands on me." Hylton pushed him, leading to

an altercation where other staff members wrestled her to the ground and handcuffed her. The sergeant whose sexual advances she had tried to report joined in, ultimately charging her with possession of money and assault on staff. She was sent to the Special Housing Unit.

In the SHU, women were allowed one hour of recreation time out of their cell each day. As in the federal system and many other state systems, recreation consists of spending time in a cage outside. "There's a stone table with stone slabs you can sit on," Hylton described. "It's a little bigger than your average-sized bathroom. It has razor wire over the top of the rec yard. There's also a gun tower." Showers lasted five minutes. "By the time you take off your robe, they've turned off the water," she recalled.

She remembered women screaming day in and day out. People tried to kill themselves and sometimes succeeded. "The isolation can break you down mentally, emotionally," she explained. "It was torturous." Mental health check-ups consisted of a mental health staffer asking her, through the food slot in her door, "You okay? Do you want to talk?" There was no privacy to talk one-on-one with either mental health or medical staff.

### **"We Need to Eliminate Solitary for Everybody"**

From inside her solitary cell, Natschke has been trying to speak out. "I want to help make prisons better, so I don't mind people knowing what I'm going through," she wrote.

Out of prison, both Litwok and Hylton have become outspoken advocates against solitary confinement. On December 19, 2014, four months after her release from prison, Litwok testified about her SHU experience before the New York City Board of Corrections, which establishes and monitors minimum standards in the city's jails. The board was hearing testimony about a proposal to build a \$14.8 million, 250-bed "Enhanced Supervision Housing Unit" on Rikers Island to isolate people deemed to be violent or threats to security.

"I am the face of someone who is considered a security risk," the 62-year-old testified.

Hylton also testified, recounting her experience in solitary and urging the board to consider adding positive programming to Rikers, such as the college programs AIDS Counseling and Education and Family Violence, addressing abuse and violence,

which she had helped create at Bedford Hills.

At its January 13, 2015, meeting, the board approved the proposal to build the Enhanced Supervision Housing Unit, with amendments excluding people age 21 and younger and setting 30-day duration limits. Litwok, who attended the three-hour hearing, was appalled. But she's resolved to keep fighting.

"We should be eliminating prison for most people," Litwok said, "but we need to eliminate solitary for everybody."

<http://truth-out.org/news/item/28570-women-in-solitary-confinement>. •

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## **ISRAELI RAMON PRISON CLOSED AS DETAINEES NEARLY FROZE TO DEATH**

*By Saeed Bannoura*

The Palestinian Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs stated that the Israeli Prison Authority closed, on Sunday January 11, the Ramon Prison due to the extreme cold weather, especially after the rain flooded all sections and cells. It stated that several of the detainees nearly froze to death, and became unable to move their limbs due to the cold in their cells.

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**...several the detainees nearly froze to death, and became unable to move their limbs due to the cold.**

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"Their suffering escalated after the Prison Administration refused to allow their families to provide them with winter clothing and sheets," the Commission reported, "They have no heating in their rooms, while the freezing temperatures are even depriving the detainees from sleeping." The commission said thousands of political prisoners, in various Israeli prisoners, detention and interrogation centers, are exposed to extreme cold as temperatures continue to drop due to the current snow-storm in Palestine. The Commission stated that more than 6500 Palestinians, including at least 250 children, are currently held by

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*Israeli Prison..... Continued on page 8*

# THE U.S. HAS MORE JAILS THAN COLLEGES

By Christopher Ingraham,  
*The Washington Post*

There were 2.3 million prisoners in the U.S. as of the 2010 Census. It's often been remarked that our national incarceration rate of 707 adults per every 100,000 residents is the highest in the world, by a huge margin. We tend to focus less on where we're putting all those people. But the 2010 Census tallied the location of every adult and juvenile prisoner in the United States. If we were to put them all on a map, this is what they would look like:

[Map omitted by Ed]

The map shows the raw number of prisoners in each U.S. county as of the 2010 Census. Much of the discussion of regional prison population only centers around inmates in our 1,800 state and federal correctional facilities. But at any given time, hundreds of thousands more individuals are locked up in the nation's 3,200 local and county jails. This map includes these individuals as well.

To put these figures in context, we have slightly more jails and prisons in the U.S. -- 5,000 plus -- than we do degree-granting colleges and universities. In many parts of America, particularly the South, there are more people living in prisons than on college campuses.

As you can see in the map, states differ in the extent to which they spread their correctional populations out geographically. Florida, Arizona and California stand out as states with sizeable corrections populations in just about every county. States in the midwest, on the other hand, tend to have concentrated populations in just a handful of counties. Prisons tend to leave an unmistakable mark on the landscape, as artist Josh Begley has documented.

Because of the mix of state, federal and local correctional facilities in each county, it doesn't make sense to express these numbers as a rate -- X prisoners per Y number of adults. The presence of a federal or state facility in a given county will greatly inflate that county's prisoner count relative to the general population. And in many instances, large correctional facilities are located in sparsely populated regions, like Northern New York. In some of these counties, prisons account for 10, 20 or 30 percent of the

total population.

In recent years criminal justice reform has risen to prominence in the national conversation, with both Democrats and Republicans looking for ways to dial back the incarceration-focused policies of the '80s and '90s. This map shows one reason why the issue is gaining traction: prisoners are literally every where you look in the U.S. Nearly 85 percent of U.S. counties are home to some number of incarcerated individuals. Localities spend tens of thousands of dollars per prisoner each year -- and often much more than that -- to house, feed and provide them with medical care. Most counties would doubtless prefer to spend this money elsewhere. •

## POLICE IN THE US KILL CITIZENS AT OVER 70 TIMES THE RATE OF OTHER FIRST-WORLD NATIONS

By Matt Agorist,

In case you've been under a rock lately, it is becoming quite clear that police in the US can and will kill people, even unarmed people, even on video, and do so with impunity. The tallying methods, or rather lack thereof, used by both the FBI and individual police departments to count the amount of people killed by police, have been shown to be staggeringly inaccurate. However, this inability of the government to count the number of people it kills, has been met with multiple alternative means of calculating just how deadly the state actually is.

One of these citizen run databases, is the website [www.killedbypolice.com](http://www.killedbypolice.com). The site is basically a spreadsheet that lists every person killed by cops in the years 2013 and 2014. In addition to naming those killed, it also provides a link to media reports for each of the killings, age, sex and race if

available.

Do not mistake this as saying that those who were killed were innocent. However, when we look at violent crime in this country, we can see that it is at an all time low. While violence among citizens has dropped, violence against citizens carried out by police has been rising sharply. When we look at citizens killed by police over the last two years, deaths have increased 44 percent in this short time; 763 people were killing by police in 2013. As a comparison, the total number of US troops killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, in 2014 was 58. Fewer soldiers were killed in war than citizens back home in "the land of the free" in 2014, by a large margin.

So why is that? Is this some natural tendency of police in "free societies" to kill their citizens more, in an effort to maintain this freedom? Hardly, and hardly is the US a free country.

According to the 2014 Legatum Prosperity Index released in November, in the measure of personal freedom, the United States has fallen from 9th place in 2010 to 21st worldwide—behind such countries as Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Uruguay and Costa Rica. Other such rankings systems show the US as low as 46. Let's look at our immediate neighbors to the north, Canada. The total number of citizens killed by law enforcement officers in the year 2014, was 14; that is 78 times less people than the US. If we look at the United Kingdom, 1 person was killed by police in 2014 and 0 in 2013. English police reportedly fired guns a total of three times in all of 2013, with zero reported fatalities. From 2010 through 2014, there were four fatal police shootings in England, which has a population of about 52 million. By contrast, Albuquerque, N.M., with a population 1 percent the size of England's, had 26 fatal police shootings in that same time period. China, whose population is 4 and 1/2 times the size of the United States, re-



corded 12 killings by law enforcement officers in 2014.

Let that sink in. Law enforcement in the US killed 92 times more people than a country with nearly 1.4 billion people. It doesn't stop there. From 2013-2014, German police killed absolutely no one. In the entire history of Iceland police, they have only killed 1 person ever. After exhausting all non-lethal methods to detain an armed man barricaded in his house who actually shot 2 police officers, police were forced to take the 59-year-old man's life. The country of Iceland grieved for weeks after having to resort to violence.

So why are police in the US so much more likely to kill than all of these other first world countries? To better understand the multi-dimensional answer to that question, we can start by looking at the prison population of the US. America imprisons almost twenty five percent of all people imprisoned in the world, although containing only about 5% of the world's population, an extremely disproportionate share of people imprisoned globally. The U.S. houses 2.3 million inmates, while China, a country with four times the population of the U.S., is a distant second with 1.6 million prisoners.

The war on drugs coupled with the military industrial state created by the US playing police of the world, has created a deadly combination. A constant pursuit of new weaponry by the military has paved the way for the hand-me-down cycle of military gear to police departments. The idea was that if the U.S. wanted its police to act like drug warriors, it should equip them like warriors, which it has—to the tune of around \$4.3 billion in equipment, according to a report by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The time for peaceful resistance is now and more and more people are beginning to understand this. Even retired police chiefs of large cities are watching from the sidelines with anxiety as they see their once, only slightly corrupt cities, turn into occupied militarized zones, ready to pounce on the first instance of civil opposition. The most recent of former police chiefs coming to terms with the horrid consequences of their actions is Norm Stamper, former chief of the Seattle Police. Stamper was recently on the Colbert Report and Stephen Colbert asked him what happened during the infamous Seattle WTO protests in 1999 under his leadership. "Well we gassed non-threatening, non-violent protesters," re-

plied the former Chief of police for Seattle Washington.

Of course while Norm Stamper was a cop, he didn't realize that his actions, no matter how "justified" by the state, would be contributing to a hellish future police state. Stamper, like myself a 4 year veteran of the USMC, and most of those who serve, or have served the state in some way, are unable to think outside of the paradigm while simultaneously supporting it. Because Stamper is out of the paradigm, he can see clearer now. According to his website, he wants to: End the Drug War... Drive Bigotry and Brutality Out of the Criminal Justice System... Honor the Constitution... Build Respect for Cops..., etc. So far, Stamper has been quite outspoken against the police state of which he was once complicit in creating. In order to affect change more people like Stamper need to come out. If half of the officers that contacted the Free Thought Project spoke publicly about their concerns, we'd be in a much better place.

Unfortunately when officers do speak out against their own department they are met with horrid backlash from their peers.

Most recently an officer in Texas contacted us, who wanted to help prevent brutality and corruption. When we told him that speaking out and refusing to enforce immoral laws is how to change things, he replied by stating that he does refuse to arrest people for marijuana possession, but that he "fear(s) the repercussions by speaking out, simply because I do need a paycheck." The overwhelming majority of police brutality cases stem from the war on drugs. When so many people are tasked with finding and prosecuting those in possession of a substance deemed illegal, the interactions become more frequent and less cordial. If we end that, we get the state out of the private lives of most individuals. This will only serve to lessen the scope of police harassment, in turn lessening the instance of brutality and killings.

The Free Thought Project is currently planning a world wide day of peaceful resistance to #End the Drug War. We are also starting a Go Fund Me campaign to help support whistleblower police officers. With enough 'good cops' coming out against corruption in their departments, this would help to speed up the awakening process for Americans who still support the police state. We've seen the change that one or two good cops can effect, imagine 100.

The time for peaceful action is now. ●

<http://thefreethoughtproject.com>

## Quote Box

"What we think, or what we know, or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do."

*John Ruskin*

"It's not who you are on the inside but what you do that defines you!"

*Darius Shah*

"When you invite people to think, you are inviting revolution"

*Ivana Gabara*

"When the people liberate their own minds and take a hard clear look at what the 1% is doing and what the 99% should be doing, then serious stuff begins to happen."

*Michael Parenti*

"He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself."

*Thomas Paine*

"The evils of tyranny are rarely seen but by him who resists it."

*John Hay - (1838-1905)*

"Wall Street owns the country...Our laws are the output of a system which clothes rascals in robes and honesty in rags. The [political] parties lie to us and the political speakers mislead us...Money rules."

*Mary Elizabeth Lease - 1890*

"Enemies are necessary for the wheels of the U.S. military machine to turn."

*John Stockwell, US Marine Corps*

"Make men wise, and by that very operation you make them free. Civil liberty follows as a consequence of this; no usurped power can stand against the artillery of opinion."

*William Godwin, (1756-1836)*

"None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free."

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

# LETTERS

## Rock Solid

A forum for expression, shaping and sharing modes of tactical political engagement as well as contributing to the marketplace of ideas, the *Rock* newsletter has long provided an invaluable service in the 21st century struggle for the human rights of prisoners. Given this undeniable fact, it is difficult to reconcile that same fact with the persistent accounts of prisoners' lackluster support for the *Rock* itself.

In instances like this old clichés are often true: Nothing worth having ever comes easy. So, it bears noting, as a reminder, that there is a battle going on right now. A battle not just to legally define what would constitute acceptable forms and lengths of solitary confinement—for, by the way, nothing more than departmentally perceived social status—but, more broadly speaking, to also develop or suppress (depending upon where you stand) a strong prisoner movement that will effectively challenge those that seek to continue benefitting from and expanding the market of mass incarceration will into this century.

While efforts and sacrifices made over the last several years have certainly allowed us to elevate some of our grievances over the Department's most egregious inhuman practices to the heights of state, national, and international public condemnation. Such short term successes will by no means be enough to win the day. It must be firmly grasped that the opposition is playing the long game, one in which sustainability of their market is the primary objective, which is closely followed by their need for expansion. Consider the inter-generational implications of that for you and your loved ones. Power and greed at an institutional level has historically depended on the marginalized's inability to remain engaged for very long—and understandably so.

Amid the gravity of real life, where tragic and unforgiving circumstances rear their ugly faces with multi-sensory-cinema-like force, we continuously encounter the daily challenge of navigating the transition between the sanctuary of artificial (or pretend) life and reality. This universal human experience is compounded in the prison context, and it is impossible to describe, in technical terms, an exact formula for successfully striking such transitional stasis.

It is, however, entirely possible to describe what will emerge if the need for this crucial balance is not acknowledged and satisfied within our struggle—or any other life goals for that matter—namely, our opponent's success.

There is something to be said about any human being willing to effectively engage in the realm of reality, who makes the critical connections needed to fully and accurately grasp the totality of his or her circumstances, who identifies the most viable, creative and effective methods of engagement, and who ultimately makes no excuse and musters the determination and grit to move forward according to this process. Over the roads and days of the past several years, we've seen numerous shining examples of this particular human spirit (33,000 at its apex), and every one of those examples is deserving of a tremendous amount of respect.

While there is still much to be done, we take this opportunity to contribute to the work and effort that will help see this movement through. First, enclosed you will find 275 first class stamps, which constitute a collective donation by everyone here at PBSP "A" facility. Second, we have also enclosed a copy of a proposed activity group which we have presented to the warden for approval. We ask that you publish this copy in order to provide others with a workable idea on the question of how to give life and application to the Agreement to End All Hostilities within their specific social environment.

We remain *Rock* solid, focused and forward looking.

*Jesse Perez, PBSP*

**[Ed's Comments:** Thank you for an insightful letter, for your ongoing support for the *Rock*, and a special thanks to the comrades of "A" facility at PBSP for the 275 stamps. Unfortunately, I am unable to print the Proposed Activity Group documents here. By the time I added the signatories to the document it would be too lengthy to include in the newsletter.

What we are talking about is an organizational document setting out membership criteria, structure, frequency of meetings, CDOC sponsor, etc. Anyone wanting a copy of this document should send me a SASE and a stamp (the stamp is for printing the document, and the SASE for getting it mailed to you).

I have only one issue with the organiza-

tional proposal, and it's a tactical one. Over the years of my incarceration I've asked prison administrators to sanction many prison groups. A few examples are the Prisoners' User Group (PUG)<sup>1</sup> in Washington State, the Committee to Safeguard Prisoners' Rights (CSPR) at the Arizona Prison Complex at Florence, and Men Against Sexism (MAS) at Walla Walla.

Each of the above requests to the administration for recognition of a group were granted and the organizations were legally formed. But that was then, and this is now. Have things changed?

While efforts to form administration sanctioned groups can be made, it should be understood that any such CDCR sanctioned organization would be very limited in terms of what it can accomplish. A prisoners' union, on the other hand, recognizes that meaningful progress will require peaceful, protracted struggle. A union is not something CDCR will recognize until political realities force them to do so. It is at this point that the courts too will recognize our human right to organize--when it's a fact.]

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In a four paged letter this comrade explains how the DRB had messed him over, and how his appeal of the process was successful. Since the letter was too long to print here, I'll only touch on a conversation he had with CDCR's Director of the Division of Prisons, Ms. Suzan Hubbard.

The author of the letter quotes her as saying "that CDCR is in the process of formulating a new list of banned publications, in relation to the new policy that bans obscene publications, which had been put on hold so that the new STG/SDP regulations could be promulgated into law." Ms. Hubbard then went on to assure me "that none of George Jackson's books, etc. will be on the list of banned publications, as CDCR has now determined that the content of George Jackson's books do not threaten prison security." This conversation might be of value to others who have been validated, in part, on having George's name in your poetry.

—Tashiri Askari

1. We successfully struggled to have personal computers and printers in our cells if paid for at our expense. PUG was our users' group, through which outside computer enthusiasts would come in and meet with us prisoners.

# INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

“But let us be absolutely clear, ‘Hands Up Don’t Shoot’ is a passive plea for mercy, and at best a neurotic concept perpetuated by the misguided belief that We too are Americans.”

—*Jalil A. Muntaqim*

By *Ed Mead*

As I’ve previously pointed out, I have no love for Russia’s President Putin. While the US is the Big Brother capitalist nation, Russia is the little sister capitalist country. I’m against capitalism in all its forms. That said, being a former prisoner and subjected to myriad cruelties, I am for and will defend concepts such as equality, fairness, and meaningful justice.

As an example of what’s fair let’s look at Yugoslavia’s treatment under then President Clinton. That nation was essentially bombed into the stone age, and then Kosovo was carved away and annexed by the puppets of U.S. imperialism. The US bombed a nation that had done it no harm, and then carved off a chunk of it (Kosovo). The US had no previous historical relationship with Kosovo at all. It was full of reactionary Muslim fundamentalist, that’s who we were helping to have their own nation. It was the US and NATO that were behind the aggression against Yugoslavia and the ripping of Kosovo from that nation.

Today the US and NATO spent five billion dollars to overthrow the democratically elected government of the Ukraine, a nation that was once a part of the Soviet Union. Before the putsch and installation of a reactionary billionaire as president of the Ukraine, there were demonstrators out in the streets of Kiev protesting the

elected government. What you were *not* told is that those demonstrators were paid what amounts to a month worth of wages to show up at the demos.

It is in this context that we look at the US and NATO meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, a state that has a long history with Russia. So as you know, the proto-Nazis (the Ukraine largely sided with the Nazis during WW II) took power in Kiev. The eastern part of the country objected to the overthrow of their elected government and started fighting back. As this was happening the Russians took the Crimea (was invited in by the people of Crimea, after a vote in which 97 percent of the ballots favored their becoming a part of Russia).

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**...nobody being charged for these murders by torture? If you tortured someone to death it would be aggravated first degree murder.**

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Today few people in the US remember Kosovo, instead there is widespread outrage in US and NATO circles that Russia would “annex” the Crimea—an area essential to Russian defense. In response to this route to US machinations in the area, US and NATO are crying Russian aggression.

Russian aggression, really? Secretary of State James Baker promised Russia that if they removed their 24 divisions from East Germany, the US and NATO “would not move one inch eastward.” I’ve previously listed some of the nations that fell into US and NATO hands since then. As author Peter Hitchens noted, “Since 1989, Moscow, the supposed aggressor, has - without fight-

ing or losing a war - peacefully ceded control over roughly 180 million people, and roughly 700,000 square miles of valuable territory.”

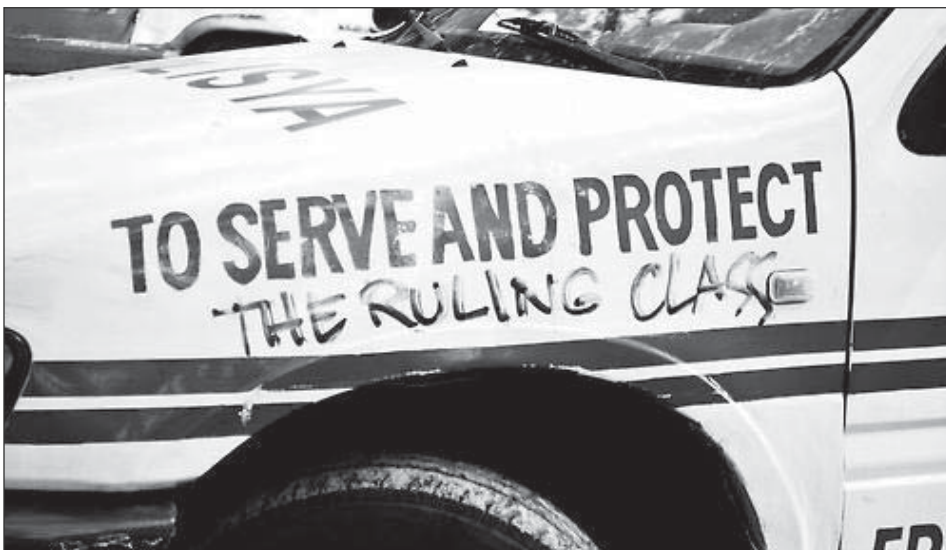
Most Americans would probably agree that when real enemies actually do threaten the US, we have a right to defend ourselves. But, as Philip Giraldi points out, “where are the enemies that justify Congress spending nearly as much as the rest of the world combined on weapons and soldiers?” China’s defense budget is 65 billion. That’s a lot of money in anyone’s book. The US “defense” budget has a base of 700 billion dollars, with billions more in supplemental expenditures for places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and other wars of convenience (like Libya, Somalia, Yemen, etc).

The corporate media chorus willfully ignores that U.S. actions, not Islam, fuel jihadism. And with those lies Obama adds another, “where ever we have been involved over the last several years, I think the outcome has been better because of American leadership.” Tell that to the Libyans, Yemenis, the Somalians, or any number of other nations the US attacking or waging war against.<sup>1</sup>

The US government has spent US\$1.6 trillion dollars on war since the September 11, 2001 attacks, according to a recent report by the Congressional Research Service (most reports put the amount at over two trillion). If we use the government’s figures, it means U.S. taxpayers have shelled out roughly \$337 million a day for the last 13 years. Are we any safer? As noted in the last issue of *Rock*, in 2013 there were just under 10,000 terrorist attacks that killed 17,958 people, including large numbers of women and children. If every day we gave 337 terrorists a million bucks for the next 13 years, terrorism would be over.

Notwithstanding what George W. Bush and Dan Rather of CBS news had to say about the cause of terrorism (they said they are terrorist because they are jealous of us). Nope. People, surprisingly, don’t strap on suicide vests and blow themselves up be-

1. French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian warned that the situation in Libya was “no more and no less... the resurgence of a terrorist sanctuary” that was dangerously close to Europe. Oh, and what about the hated Colonel Ghaddafi? Come to find out the United Nations Human Rights Council was about to vote on a report that affirmed and praised Libya and Colonel Ghaddafi for their human rights record. The report said that the Ghaddafi government protected “not only political rights, but also economic, educational, social and cultural rights,” and praised it for the nation’s treatment of religious minorities, and the “human rights training” received by security forces. Yes, yet another example of America’s great world leadership.



cause they are jealous of another nation.

Fact is terrorism is rooted in injustice. We don't need to spend trillions to defeat it. We can keep that money for ourselves—using it for such projects as improving the nation's infrastructure. You see, they've (the so-called terrorists) told us what it takes to end the war. They ask us to remove our bases from their lands and to stop killing them. It's that simple. Is it worth the trillions of dollars, the death and maiming of tens of thousands of Americans, or the slaughter of 1.5 million Iraqis, and who know how many other victims of US and NATO aggression around the globe?

But maybe things are getting better in Iraq? Not so. 17,049 civilians have been recorded killed in Iraq during 2014 (up to Dec 30). This is roughly double the number recorded in 2013 (9,743), which in turn was roughly double the number in 2012 (4,622).<sup>2</sup>

Before I leave you, let me briefly touch on the subject of torture. Last month I reported that one person died during CIA torture, although I said there could be even more. This death information was contained in a small torture report released to the public by Diane Feinstein in which that one person killed was mentioned. Oh how the government howled over this small release of material. Come to find out at least 39 people were killed in the "interrogation process." You see, there is another report on torture, this one containing 9,000 documents, that was not released to the public. The CIA said it would be too damaging to release the full report.

Why is nobody being charged or tried for these murders by torture? If you tortured someone to death it would be aggravated first degree murder. We know there are two justice systems in the US, one for the rich and another for the everyone else, but torturing 39 people to death goes a bit beyond that financial divide. The people who committed those crimes did so as minions of the rich—both the minions and the rich who gave them orders must be prosecuted (it makes no difference if the rich used Bush or Obama to issue the actual death orders). Death by torture is murder. Death by drone is state sponsored terrorism. Each is a war crime.

The good news is that the rest of the world is finally starting to wake up. You won't see many signs of this in the bourgeois press, but it's slowly happening. ●

2. <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014>

## PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION FILED TO PREVENT "SILENCING ACT" FROM STOPPING PRISONERS' SPEECH

### Continuing the Fight Against the Silencing Act, Prisoners and Advocacy Groups Seek Injunctive Relief to Stop Enforcement

A motion for a preliminary injunction was filed today in the ongoing lawsuit, *Abu-Jamal v. Kane*, challenging a Pennsylvania censorship law intended to silence Mumia Abu-Jamal and others convicted of personal injury crimes.

The Abolitionist Law Center, Amistad Law Project, and the Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center at Northwestern University School of Law filed the preliminary injunction motion to stop enforcement of the law. The law firms represent Mumia Abu-Jamal, Prison Radio, Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal, Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall, Robert L. Holbrook, Donnell Palmer, Anthony Chance, and Human Rights Coalition in the lawsuit filed November 10, 2014 against Attorney General Kathleen Kane and Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams. The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania (ACLU) filed a similar lawsuit and preliminary injunction today.

The Silencing Act, also known as 18 P.S. § 11.1304, allows the Attorney General, county District Attorneys, and victims of personal injury crimes to bring a lawsuit in civil court against the person convicted of the personal injury crime to enjoin conduct that "perpetuates the continuing effect of the crime on the victim". The actions that could prompt a lawsuit include "conduct which causes a temporary or permanent state of mental anguish."

"This law is unconstitutional," said David Shapiro of MacArthur Justice Center. "The facts are on our side and the law is on our side. The Silencing Act targets a huge amount of constitutionally protected speech based on who is speaking."

After a prerecorded commencement speech by journalist and prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was played for graduates at Goddard College in Vermont, the Pennsylvania legislature passed and outgoing Governor Corbett signed into law the Silencing Act on October 21st, 16 days after the commencement speech.

Abu-Jamal has spent 33 years in prison, 29 of which were in solitary confinement on death row after being convicted at a 1982 trial that Amnesty International said "failed to meet minimum international standards safeguarding the fairness of legal proceedings."

Robert L. Holbrook, who is serving a death by incarceration, life without parole, sentence he received as a child, had this to say about the law: "there are people in prison who will stop writing, stop publishing, stop speaking out because of this law."

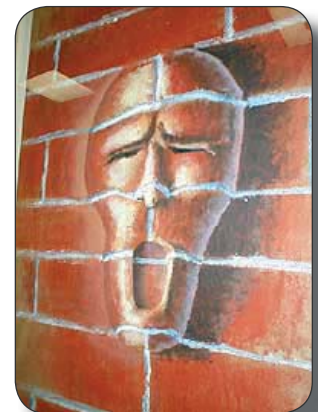
"Silencing prisoners is one more way of dehumanizing them," said Amistad Law Project Policy Director Nikki Grant. "We need the voices of the marginalized to shed light on injustice." ●

### *Israeli Prisons ..... Continued from page 3*

Israel, facing very difficult conditions, constants harassment, and are now subject to the impacts of the current freezing weather.

In related news, the Palestinian Prisoner Society (PPS) filed an appeal with the Israeli High Court Saturday calling on Israeli authorities to provide adequate clothing and covers for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prison camps, as many of the prisoners are held in outdoor camps with no heat, in the midst of a severe winter storm. The appeal also included reports that the placement in outdoor cages was being used by Israeli interrogators as a form of torture.

The Israeli High Court denied the appeal, but Palestinian prisoner groups say that the practices are ongoing, and many prisoners are facing death or severe frostbite as a result of the cold, sleet and wind. ●





I. Hands up...  
Her hands were up and  
She was shot down like  
Michael Brown; she couldn't  
Breathe but they left her for  
The coroner, like Eric Garner—  
But Ida B, Rosa  
Luxemburg and Mama  
Harriet had other  
Plans for Assata...

Her bloodthirsty captors  
Tortured her until  
Toussaint, Dessalines,  
John Brown and other  
Ancestors conspired  
With her comrades like  
Marilyn Buck, John  
Brown of her generation,  
Deciding "night time  
Is the right time," a  
Good flight time, for  
Fleeing torturers, and  
Like Mama Harriet  
She "hit the road, Jack"  
Following the North  
Star south in footsteps  
Of freedom fighter  
Robert Williams to  
Open armed welcome  
90 miles offshore,  
And a thousand miles  
From her hell/Dixie

II. Celebrating Cuban 5  
Now, they were serious  
'bout "smoking them out  
Of their holes," "draining  
The swamp," infested  
With terrorists up  
In Florida, they  
Were serious about  
Ferreting out gusanos,  
Terrorists, thick like  
Lice hobnobbing with Nazis,  
Ton-Ton Macoute and  
Other cutthroats, saboteurs  
Sipping rum and boasting  
Of bombing passenger  
Planes, hotels, power lines...

Guess the Cuban 5  
Knew all along that  
If Architects of  
Torture wanted to  
Wage a real war on  
Terror, plenty NY  
99 cents stores  
Sell mirrors... razors...

## CUBA SÍ, JERSEY NO!

III. Shut Guantanamo/ free 'em all!  
Orwellian as  
Ever, code-switching  
'Interests' translating  
Into spying and  
Lying, Commander  
Unpacked politics  
As concentrated  
Expression of  
Economics,  
War with less violent  
Means, diplomats  
Subbing for Marines...  
Like the Nixon visit,  
Following "ping-pong diplomacy—"  
And China's off and running  
On the "capitalist road" we see...

Rulers sometimes move to remove  
Some things from the headlines,  
While sharpening long knives and  
Memories, having no deadlines...  
Was street heat hurting Wall Street  
Default swappers, sub-primers, too big  
To fail, in the midst of seasonal retail?  
"Our interests," "our values," & Cubans  
Freeing 53, inspiring his new lust for  
liberty?

Raise our hands shouting these  
demands:  
Try swindlers and banksters like Wells-  
Fargo  
Keep pushin' for ending the embargo  
Exonerate Assata, shut Guantanamo  
Withdraw slave-patrols, AKA po-po  
Convene Peoples' Tribunals under  
Jericho  
Host numero uno at Harlem's Apollo—  
Shout something that we all now know  
It's way past time to let 'em ALL go:  
Ruchelle 'Cinque' Magee, 49 years  
Hugo 'Yogi' Pinell, 49 years  
Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald, 45 years  
\*Marshall Eddie Conway, 42 years  
Mondo We Langa, 42 years  
Ed Poindexter, 42 years  
+Herman Wallace, 42 years, 41solitary  
confinement  
Albert Woodfox, 42 years, 41solitary  
confinement  
Jalil Muntquin, 41 years  
Russell Maroon Shoats, 40 years,  
30solitary confinement  
Sundiata Acoli, 40 years  
Herman Bell, 39 years  
Veronza Bowers, 39 years

Try swindlers and banksters like Wells-  
Fargo  
Keep pushin' for ending the embargo  
Exonerate Assata, shut Guantanamo  
Withdraw slave-patrols, AKA po-po  
Convene Peoples' Tribunals under  
Jericho  
Host numero uno at Harlem's Apollo—  
Shout something that we all now know  
It's way past time to let 'em ALL go:  
Robert 'Seth' Hayes, 39 years  
Leonard Peltier, 37 years  
Chuck Africa, 34 years  
Debbie Africa, 34 years  
Delbert Africa, 34 years  
Eddie Africa, 34 years  
Janet Africa, 34 years  
Janine Africa, 34 years  
Michael Africa, 34 years  
Phil Africa, 34 years  
Mohamman Kati, 34 years, 86 years  
old  
David Gilbert, 31years  
\*Sekou Odinga, 31years  
Try swindlers and banksters like Wells-  
Fargo  
Keep pushin' for ending the embargo  
Exonerate Assata, shut Guantanamo  
Withdraw slave-patrols, AKA po-po  
Convene Peoples' Tribunals under  
Jericho  
Host numero uno at Harlem's Apollo—  
Shout something that we all now know  
It's way past time to let 'em ALL go:  
Oscar Lopez Rivera, 31 years  
Zolo Azania, 31 years  
Mumia Abu Jamal, 31 years, 30 on  
Death Row  
Abdulla Majid, 30 years  
Joan Laaneim, 28 years  
Mutulu Shakur, 26 years  
Jamil Al-Amin AKA H.  
Brown 12 years,  
2solitary confinement  
Kamau Sadiki, 10 years  
\*Lynne Stewart, 4 years  
Try swindlers and banksters like Wells-  
Fargo  
Keep pushin' for ending the embargo  
Exonerate Assata, shut Guantanamo  
Withdraw slave-patrols, AKA po-po  
Convene Peoples' Tribunals under  
Jericho  
Host numero uno at Harlem's Apollo—  
Shout something that we all now know  
It's way past time to let 'em ALL go:  
It's way past time to let 'em  
ALL go...

\* Released; + Deceased

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### On Jailhouse Lawyers

"...jailhouse lawyers often unwittingly serve the interests of the state by propagating the illusion of 'justice' and 'equity' in a system devoted to neither." They create "illusions of legal options as pathways to both individual and collective liberation."

*Mumia Abu-Jamal,  
JAILHOUSE LAWYERS: Prisoners  
Defending Prisoners v. The U.S.A.*

### Important Notice

Articles and letters sent to the *Rock* newsletter for publication are currently being delivered and received in a timely manner. Please do not send such materials to third parties to be forwarded to *Rock* as it only delays receiving them and adds to the workload of those asked to do the forwarding.

Letters sent to *Rock* (located in Seattle) in care of *Prison Focus* (located in Oakland) can take over a month to reach us. Send *Rock* mail to this newsletter's return address (below). Anything for publication in *Prison Focus* can be sent either to me or to CPF in Oakland.

### Message Box

"You stand with the belligerent, the surly, and the badly behaved until bad behavior is recognized for the language it is: The vocabulary of the deeply wounded and of those whose burdens are more than they can bear."

*Gregory Boyle, Tattoos on the Heart*

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