

Accounts & Analyses **Regarding the Current Situation in Indiana State Prisons:**

July 28th, 2011

Preface:

This is a statement of fact and analysis written collaboratively between folks on the inside and the outside of Indiana prisons. Our goal here is to contribute to opposing and actively resisting all forms of domination, be they imposed directly by the state or manifested through structural inequalities and prejudices.

Recap of Recent Events:

On the morning of 7-16, an alleged white supremacist was stabbed and killed by two alleged Latin Disciples. The attack took place at Pendleton Correctional Facility in the Maximum Security area of the prison. The murder, coming on the heels of inmate murders at Miami Correctional Facility and Pendleton Correctional Facility earlier in the year, was the stated pretense for putting all institutions in the state on lock down and conducting thorough, far reaching searches.

While many of the lesser security units and institutions have come off lockdown, prisoners at Pendleton, Wabash Valley and the Indiana State Prison are still facing raids and searches. The searches at first seemed to be targeting alleged gang members, in search for contraband materials that could be used in retaliatory attacks, but it has also been used as an excuse to harass and attack inmates across the board, especially those at the Wabash Valley SHU (Secure Housing Unit). The SHU houses many of the states political prisoners and the leadership of much of the political organizing that has taken place over the past 3 decades in Indiana Prisons.

Recently on the SHU, CERT and other such 'emergency response teams' have entered the cells of many different inmates, unannounced and unprovoked, in full riot gear in order to carry out violent and destructive searches, in clear violation of their own policies. This is despite the fact that the SHU has not only been on total lockdown since 7/17 /11 but had just gone through an intense search of personal property by these same teams looking for contraband. Many different people have been transferred and shuffled around, with transfers off the SHU being given in accordance with predictable race based prejudice.

A personal account of what has taken place on the SHU:

"Now scores are being settled by reactionary guards who have been given a green light to target anyone they choose for assault.

Imagine sitting in your cell reading, or watching TV n suddenly your door rolls open and hear comes a five man team of guards in riot gear beating, kicking n throwing u to the ground to be handcuffed while screaming 'stop resisting!'

This is what's taking place on a daily basis on the SHU at Wabash Valley Prison.

These assaults are without warning or provocation. In violation of DOC policy n operating procedures, in violation of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Treatment of Prisoners and US constitutional law... Prisoners are not being given any due process. We are not being given the opportunity to cuff up or even being asked. The DOC by its on policy is required to have a camera present video taping in any kind of cell extraction. Cameras are non-existent! There is no recording... Only your word against the guards.

Prisoners who are political, progressive, jailhouse lawyers or convicts who do not snitch are the prime targets.

This is designed in part to boost the morale of overworked and underpaid guards who have been complaining about working conditions n pay. This is designed to unify and close ranks amongst terroristic guards who have been complaining that SHU prisoners have it too easy

[this despite the fact we are locked in our cells 23 hours a day! Despite the fact that outside of GED no rehabilitative, educational, counseling programs exist on the unit or that all visits are by video monitor or you're only allowed one phone call a week! That people have been held under these conditions on average 3yrs or more, some as long as 10!] Hey boost morale lets stomp a prisoner head in!

It is also designed to intimidate and soften up the rest of the prisoners held on the SHU. The message being this could happen to you! Resist, open your mouth, file a grievance or lawsuit and this could be you! Refuse to be a snitch or debrief and this could be you.”

Inside sources have noted that the white supremacist organizations that have come under attack lately have in the past and today continue to enjoy institutional support, from job placements that allow the construction and distribution of weapons to favorable transfers that facilitate the development of a strong base of members in certain units or institutions. This treatment is, in effect, allowing them to build up their institutional infrastructure in order to recruit more into their ranks and expand their activities.

Everything from drug distribution networks to fake IDs are at their disposal, following from their elevated status and treatment by the administration. The Department of Corrections is facing escalated racial tensions that they have purposefully helped to create, and are using such manifestations of this tension as pretense for increased security measures and violence against those who dare speak out.

An analysis of the racial politics of this recent crack down from inmate Frank Talk:

“Prisoners that display a certain profile in terms right wing politics or racist politics or whatever have always enjoyed a certain skin-privilege. This privilege, coming from the Department of Corrections, is geared towards disrupting progressive movements for prison struggle, disrupting solidarity amongst prisoners within the state of Indiana to fight a collective struggle against their conditions. That is, it is a privilege based in supporting activates of a criminal nature that do not directly challenge the status quo of prison control, that don't attack the power of the administration.

If you go back to when they first started opening up Super-Max units and SHU units in the state of Indiana, starting in 1991, and look who was on these units, they were mostly occupied by political prisoners, jailhouse lawyers, young guys who were just rebels, and guys that was challenging the overt racism that was being perpetrated by the system, responding to the attacks on black people in general. Then you got guys who were influential amongst other prisoners. This included many white supremacists or white pride folks, who held these views but were anti-administration as well. They were being punished for collaborating or cooperating with the black prisoners or New Afrikan prisoners. They were standing on what we call the 'convict code' or standing on political views of we do not support the guards, we do not support the system, we do not support the administration.

Back in the '80s and early '90s you had a breed that were white pride and whatever, but they were also anti-administration. You could approach these dudes and create some lines of solidarity or unity around conditions or the issues that were affecting prisoners as a whole. But you didn't see the leadership of the white supremacist organizations in these lockup units, and you still don't today. These guys don't challenge the administration's control; they play the game as a reactionary police force, an auxiliary police force, and are encouraged and rewarded as such.

Today, most of the white supremacist guys are reactionaries. You know, these guys they hate us, they hate black people more so than they hate the police, more so than they hate the administration, more so than they hate their own oppression; in actuality the majority of these guys have a police mentality. Their conduct is more of an agent provocateur nature, and this is why the administration and the Department of Corrections as a whole turn a blind eye or actively aid and assist these organizations in building up their infrastructure and bases of operation, because they have a police mentality, because of the fact that their daily activities are geared towards expanding their criminal mentality, it's not geared towards challenging the administration. It's not geared towards creating unity or solidarity amongst prisoners, so in actuality these organizations are a police force: they carry out hits for the state, they disrupt activities geared towards progressive activities or forms of solidarity.

On the SHU at Wabash, where the racism is blatant, the guards with white supremacist views are in your face. Some of these guards belong to white supremacist organizations, others exhibit a 'benign racism', where hating people of color is 'just how they are' culturally speaking. Within the administrative dealings, in terms of who gets reviews and who is released from the SHU, it's blatantly discriminatory. If you look into the facts of who has remained in these units for 5, 10 years, it's obvious. If you look into who has been prosecuted for murder by the Department of Corrections, again, is blatantly disproportionate in terms of race. These are signs from the State, signals of what is allowed and what isn't and who is able to get away with certain things. People like myself and other political prisoners who are geared towards a progressive agenda, a revolutionary agenda, we are punished and isolated and there's an agenda to destroy us mentally and physically. And that's the order of the day all across the state.

We as radical minded people try to unify and reach across racial lines to join in efforts to better our conditions, to better expose and educate other prisoners to the social reality that we're dealing with behind these walls and in this country. We're opposed to all forms of oppression and strive to work together to combat them as they affect us all. Today that's a hard draw. Today we're dealing with a younger population; we're dealing with more reactionary violence. There are so many internal contradictions amongst ourselves in terms of the youth, in terms of the drug use, in terms of the reactionary gang violence on the streets, and that spills over to the prison system.

And it's hard to want to reach out to some of these white supremacist dudes; it's hard not to just hate these motherfuckas, man. It's hard to reach out to these dudes who got swastikas on their chest and are espousing all kinds of reactionary views. And personally, I'm of the mindset that there are going to have to be some hard examples set, some lines drawn in the sand if there are going to be any strategies of reaching across certain lines.

And you know, a lot of these cadres, they're not as hard-core as they front, compared to what's going on in California for example. A lot of these guys that claim to be racist and whatnot, they cowards; I don't say that from biases, I'm just being real, if they were locked up in another state, their own people would kill'em. A lot of the youth, the majority of

this white youth, they come in here into hip-hop culture, they're listening to rap, they're listening to Jay Z, and yet they supposed to be hard core racists. You sneaking in to watch B.E.T., but you're claiming to be a racist. In other places, this wouldn't stand, their own people would kill'em.

They just bond together out of fear and ignorance. And it's the same with the leadership. The leadership claim to be convicts who facilitate breaking bread and engaging in various business ventures with all kinds of prisoners, they subscribe to a convict code of non-cooperation with the administration, yet they do not have any discipline within they ranks, they don't hold they rank and file accountable for breaking this code. It's like you got a puppy, you got a puppy and he's shitting and pissing all over the place. You not disciplining this puppy, you've got to take a newspaper to his behind and train this puppy.

That's what they're facing; they got guys that come on these units, they're dealing with a small amount of time and causing conflicts with other prisoners. These young guys are throwing feces and urine and spoiled milk on other prisoners, a lot of times for the guards, for the police. These white supremacist guards might have a conflict with a certain inmate, so they will talk to these young white guys, bond with them and get them to throw shit in an inmates cell. So for them, it's not about having an identity as prisoners, a bond as prisoners; I mean, you can subscribe to whatever views, but for these young white supremacists, it's not about us and them, it's us, you and them. You hate other prisoners more than you hate the state, you hate prisoners more than you hate the guards, you hate prisoners more than you hate the mutherfucka who got they foot on your neck.

And so, in my mind, you are one of them! And the State and the Department of Corrections encourages this type of behavior, encourages this type of conduct by allowing these guys to organize and by concentrating them in certain areas, giving them jobs to create and manufacture weapons and to distribute their materials. In other words, they're encouraged to build a base of operations. If you fraternize using your skin privilege, you're allowed to engage in certain conduct; whether it's drugs or violence or what have you. All with the knowledge that you're not going to be held on these isolation units for 5 or 10 years like a lot of the New Afrikan or political prisoners.

A lot of the guards too, especially down here at Pendleton and at the Farm, subscribe to or are members of themselves some of these white supremacists organizations. Which makes them more open to collaborating or communicating with some of these other elements within the prison. And we do not know, yet, to what extent these guys are working with outside forces. Cause, you know, just as the left wing or whatever is working and organizing within the prisons, so is the right wing. And I think that's one of the reasons we're seeing such an influx or momentum amongst these elements these days.

And so now, after allowing and promoting this kind of conduct, the administration wants to lock down the whole state just cause two or three Aryan guys have been killed. We've seen repeatedly acts of violence, like there's a war going on between black gangs, street organizations, and they have not once, in my 27 years of doing time, responded in the ways that they are now. Trying to lock down the whole state and engage in the activities they engaged in, never. Again, what signal is being set here.

Call for unity

The DOC in Indiana is constantly expanding; expanding its bed count, expanding its budget, expanding (and tightening) its grip on the lives of the people it holds captive. In late 2010, it signed a contract with the GEO Group Inc. to build at its private facility at New Castle a new for-profit, 512-bed high security prison wing. The DOC has also begun to construct 'prisons within a prison', by building more barriers within each institution: more gates, more walls, more fences to physically separate and alienate prisoners from each other. Filling up the SHU, the MCC and making life at high security institutions more controlled and repressed are the operating norm of the DOC. These trends must be countered!

This is a call for solidarity in action amongst prisoners, between prisoners and those on the outside that struggle against the prison system. In Indiana, in contrast to the solidarity we're seeing from guys out there in California responding to what's going on at the Pelican Bay SHU, and the solidarity we saw amongst folks down there in Georgia, we've got a long way to go. But it can start now, right now. To put ideological discrepancies aside, to reach across racial and cultural differences, to form a common bond of struggle against the prison authorities that oppress us all: this has been done before and it is possible still today.

The misguided and reactionary activities of the majority of prisoners continue in prisons due partly to the fact that the guards and administrators promote these activities and ways of life. They would much rather have drug dealing, would much rather have gang violence than to have to deal with a cohesive and diverse group of prisoners attacking the root cause of their present situation.

This is a call out: to think about your daily activities, to analyze the battles you choose in prison and ask “is this working towards my and my fellow prisoners’ freedom and dignity as human beings” or “is this helping the guards and administrators to keep us down, to keep us buried alive”? This is a call to come together as prisoners, as a class of people who have tremendous powers even under the most adverse of conditions when we choose to come together, choose to fight together. To find one another, to find folks on the outside, to develop bonds of comradeship and connections of struggle. To fight back.

IN STRUGGLE, TILL THE LAST PRISON CRUMBLES

