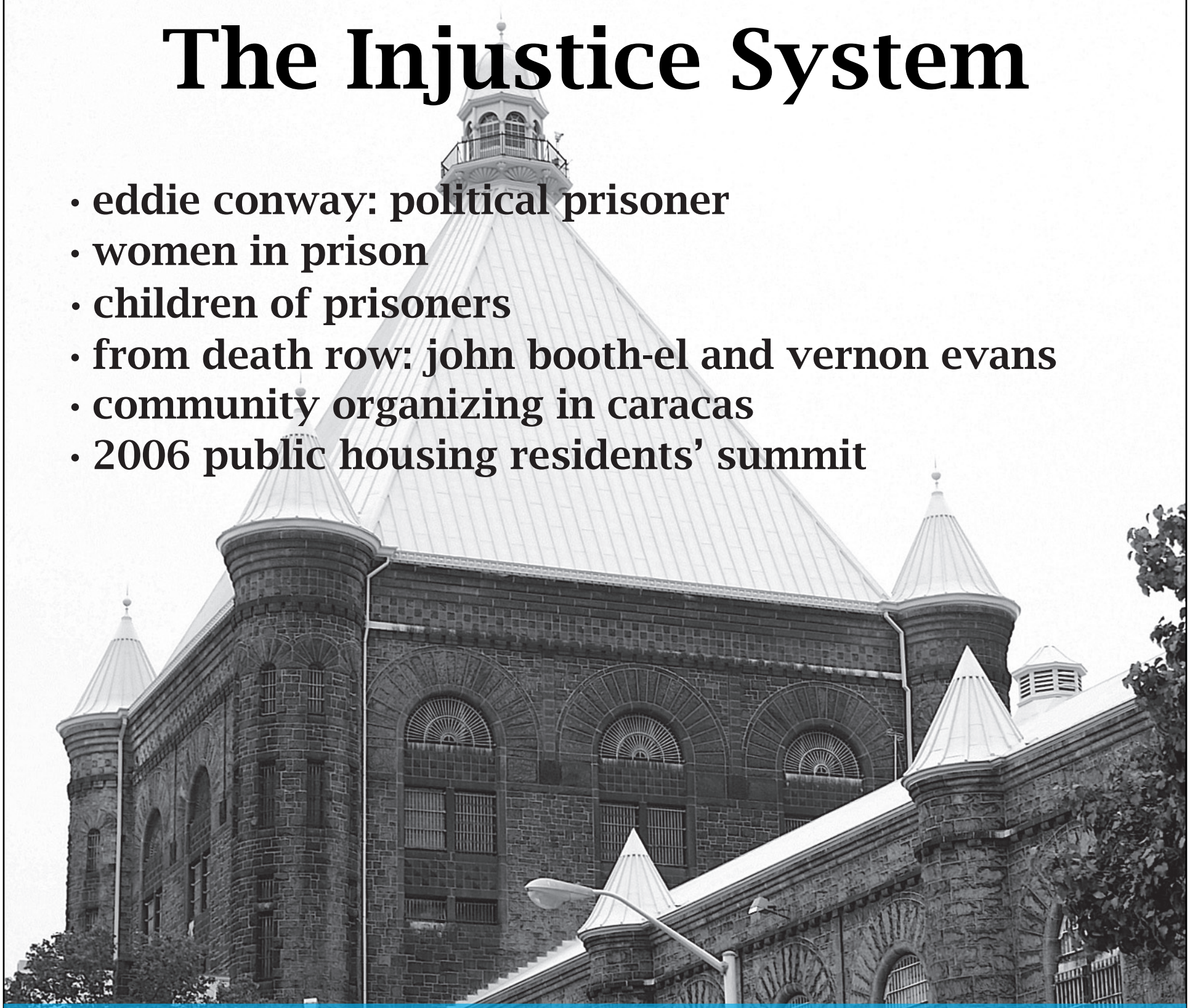
building a new society on the vacant lots of the old... **Free**

INDYPENDENT READER

Baltimore Fall 2006 Issue 2

The Injustice System

- eddie conway: political prisoner
- women in prison
- children of prisoners
- from death row: john booth-el and vernon evans
- community organizing in caracas
- 2006 public housing residents' summit



1800

1804
The Maryland State legislature appointed nine commissioners to choose a site for a new prison and propose a plan to the governor. Construction begins and continues through out the decade.

1811
November 18, the first inmate enters the penitentiary, a 22-year-old slave and convicted murderer referred to as "Negro Bob" Butler.

1812
The prison's first full year of operation. The population consisted of 92 inmates, including 6 boys under 16 years of age and 11 teenagers between the ages of 16 and 20.The Penitentiary's first dormitory wing was built to house 360 prisoners.

Indypendent Reader

building a new society on the vacant lots of the old...

BALTIMORE INDYMEDIA

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&

CAMPBALTIMORE

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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

The fi rst Independent Media Center was founded to cover the Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization in November and December 1999. This fi rst IMC created an environment for independent media makers of all types (audio, video,print, Internet) to work together covering the protests in a democratic and collaborative manner. Seattle IMC was the beginning of a global independent media movement which focuses on reporting the world-wide struggle against neoliberal capitalism and a range of local issues. There are now over 130 IMCs around the world. Baltimore IMC has been publishing since July 2001.

WHAT IS campbaltimore?

campbaltimore is a group that organizes projects and discussions around critical cultural, political and social issues in collaboration with community organizations and activist groups in Baltimore.

Indypendent Reader
The Indypendent Reader is funded by benefits, donations, subscriptions, and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

Participate
The Indypendent encourages the contributions of activists, journalists, and new writers. The editorial group reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

Address
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This Issue:

This issue examines the US Criminal Justice System, and specifically the experience of prisoners. It attempts to reveal the classist, racist, sexist nature of the US system and its failure to provide equal protection under the law to all persons.

From 1975 to 2000, the number of people incarcerated in the US increased from 380,000 to more than 2 million. (1) Yet crime levels during this period remained level. An important determinant was the Reagan Administration's War on Drugs. These policies criminalized drug use and sent hundreds of thousands to prison. And, we should not forget George Bush, Sr.'s 1988 presidential campaign with black prisoner 'Willie Horton' as banner ad. In 1976, the US reinstated the death penalty. Since then over 40 countries have abolished it. While the European Parliament in 1998 called for immediate and global abolition of the death penalty, the US continues to maintain it.

Our justice system has emerged as a tool for sustaining a crop of citizens condemned to slavery by a powerful elite who profit politically by their control and exploit their labor. Often described as a revolving door, this system tags and tracks individuals like animals, and discourages the education and social development necessary for reentry or reform.

The 'Prison Industrial Complex' is one of the fastest growing industries in this country. This industry is both public and private. Government organized incarceration has 650,000 employees making it the third largest employer in the US. Public-sector operating expenses exceed $40 billion. Over the last two decades, the United States has built more prisons than any other nation in history, many privately-run. The privately-owned prison industry manages 140,000 prisoners, about seven percent of those incarerated. These institutions are overrun by non-violent and drug related offenders, many of whom would benefit from counseling or treatment if those services were made available. Instead, the warehousing of more than 2 million people is advocated as the only solution.

If you find the material in this issue disturbing, talk about it with your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and families. Ask yourself how the justice system effects you, your family, and your community. Incuded is a list of organizations confronting these issues, and as always feel free to contact us with any questions. -- CD/NP

Why the Indypendent Reader?

Why publish the Indypendent Reader? Does Baltimore need another print periodical? Afterall, we have the *Sunpaper*, the *Examiner*, the *City Paper*, the *Urbanite*. The short answer is that the citizens and residents of Baltimore need local advocacy journalism in print, not just on the web like *Baltimore Indymedia* and the *Baltimore Chronicle*.

A democratic society is impossible unless citizens are engaged in active discussion of public policy. Such discussion requires controversy between well-informed citizens. However, in the United States 67% of the people rely on television news—ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC. Media analysts from Noam Chomsky to Mark Crispin Miller agree that this is a bad thing.

Yet, even in the depoliticized United States, there have been times when the number of social critical periodicals was extensive. In 1912, there were 323 socialist newspapers or magazines, many published in foreign languages. And by the end of World War II there were about 200 African-American newspapers. Most constituency-based periodicals were partisan and controversial, working for democratic social, political and economic change.

While mainstream newspapers and magazines often publish articles which help citizens to intervene in the political process, it is usually the independent, critical periodicals which generate the innovative reporting and analysis important for progressive political intervention. This reporting is well documented by Project Censored.

Many editors of the alternative press take it as their mission to move readers beyond information to action. Indeed, the independent, "alternative" press has been organically connected to social movements. Publications rise, fall or subsist in circumstances that parallel the movements they represent. Such periodicals serve as forums for debating strategic approaches, for finding common cause among seemingly disparate, often geographically diffuse, constituencies, and, in hard times, for critique.

Three examples from US history:

*In 1862, writing in the *Douglass Monthly*, Frederick Douglass argued that slavery had become an obstacle to preserving the Union, helping to persuade Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.

*Second-wave feminists writing in Washington DC's *Off Our Backs* and Baltimore's *Women: a Journal of Liberation* expanded feminist analysis to include violence against women, the poverty of single-mothers, sexual harassment, and the politics of the personal.

*From the 1950s through the early 1970s, criticism in the pages of the *IF Stone Bi-Weekly, Monthly Review, The Guardian, Liberation, NACLA*, and *The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* in

1817 – March 5, a fire (believed to have been caused by arson) seriously damaged the dormitory wing.

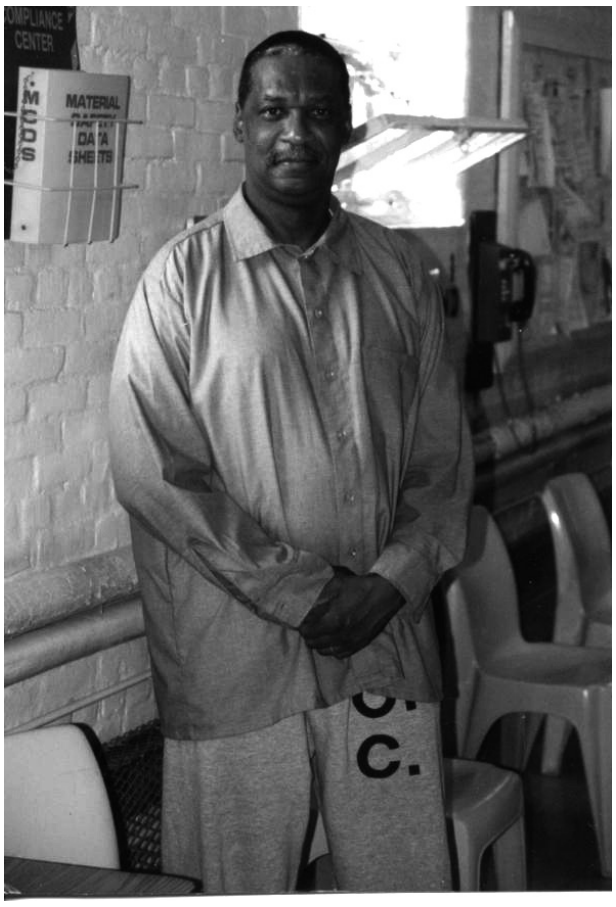
1827 – The directors of the penitentiary announce plans to erect a new building, which would provide enough single cells for all convicts.

1828 – The new dormitory wing was built almost entirely by convict labor. Five stories high, it contained 320 cells which each had a window. A central gallery, which was open up to an arched roof, allowed a single guard to observe the doors of all the cells

1835 – The General Assembly authorized the construction of a complex of workshops especially designed for more effective surveillance of prisoners at work during the day.

Eddie Conway: Political Prisoner

by R.B Jones



The Spirit of the Black Panther Party still lives in a land where the forces of reaction tried to exterminate it with violence and illegal prosecutions and imprisonment. Black Panthers lie in hallowed and early graves or live heroic lives in the hellish tombs of America's shameful prison systems. Others remain in the community working for justice in ways less frenetic and dangerous than the halcyon days when Panthers spread across the nation and challenged an oppressive system not from the belly of the beast, but from its bloody jaws.

The Panthers live on, not in imitators but in the monumental sacrifice and legacy. They live on wherever Panthers refuse to accommodate an oppressive system that today ravages inner city neighborhoods in ways hardly imagined when the Panthers were founded in 1966. The spirit cannot be broken and it cannot be written out of history.

I lived through the era of the Panthers glory days and though I did not join as a teenager, I thoroughly identified with them. I shared their belief that radical solutions were needed for the problems of society. One of the Panthers who has haunted my life is Marshall "Eddie" Conway.

I must say at the risk of appearing maudlin that Eddie has taught me more about spirituality and grace than all my Sunday School lessons, more than all the religion professors and seminarians I sat in class with in college. He has taught me more about faith than all the imams, reverends, and spiritual gurus I have met and regarded with skepticism and hustler radar.

Eddie Conway has been unjustly imprisoned for 36 years because he was and continues to be a liberation soldier. He has been in the worst penal institutions of Maryland, the ancient tomb on Forrest Street that was built when Thomas Jefferson was president, and the sinkhole of violence and despair called the Maryland House of Corrections aka Jessup Cut. They have imprisoned Eddie Conway, but his humanity is diamond hard and undimmed by the acts of callous and ultimately doomed agents of oppression.

Eddie was a Vietnam era veteran who was stationed in Europe. When he was discharged he returned to Baltimore determined to help liberate his people. The prevailing winds of the time were for change. The civil rights movement, anti-war movements and the black power movements were pushing for change and Eddie made the fateful decision that Paul Robeson did decades before. He said the choice was between fighting for freedom and accepting oppression. Eddie made the clear choice when he joined the Panther Party. They were not the only liberation movement, but they were at the top of the massacre list of the FBI and other counterfeit law enforcement agencies.

In 1970, three blocks from where I lived, two policemen were shot on Myrtle Ave in West Baltimore. One died and one survived. Then as today, the Baltimore City Police had a contentious relationship with the black community. Shortly before this incident the community was able to end canine patrols through protests. A patrol dog had mauled a woman sitting on her steps and the hated procedure, which was also used by the Belgians in the Congo and the apartheid government of South Africa, was changed.

Two suspects were caught hiding near the scene of the shooting. Police claimed that a third got away after shooting at a policeman responding to the initial shooting incident. The police officer claimed to have seen the man from a hundred feet or more at night in an alley. While Conway was working his job at the post office he was arrested and charged with the murder of one police officer and the wounding of a second. There was no evidence linking Conway to the crime. His picture was selected from a photo array where both sets of photos contained his picture, a clearly illegal and unprofessional act.

While Conway was awaiting trial a known informant was placed in a cell with him despite his vehement objections. Conway knew the tricks of law enforcement because he was head of security of the Baltimore branch and had exposed an NSA agent who helped found the chapter. The informant placed in his cell later testified at his trial claiming that Conway confessed. At the trial Conway was denied the attorney of his choice and was saddled with a court appointed defender with little interest in the case and a drinking problem.

Conway was the victim of the COINTELPRO conspiracy by the FBI which was created to infiltrate and destroy social change movements such as the Panthers, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and SCLC, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Students for a Democratic Society and other old left and new left groups. He was found guilty and sentenced to life plus thirty years. The system imprisoned him but it could not break him.

The same man who helped found free breakfast programs and a free health clinic on Greenmount Avenue that survives today as a non-profit health organization, continued his organizing in the hellholes of the correctional system. Conway worked with writing groups, Vietnam veterans' organization, study groups, computer literacy classes, and conflict mediation programs. He is associated with the American Friends Service Committee of Baltimore. He has not lost his thirst for liberation and justice, despite the worst that the enemies of freedom have done to him.

That Eddie Conway is still languishing in prison is an indictment of the injustice of the American judicial system, but more personally it is an indictment of my generation and following ones that have not insisted on justice for all the victims of COINTELPRO. Eddie Conway is the embodiment of the heroism and determination of the Black Panther Party. Anyone wishing to write to Eddie can send correspondence to:

Marshall E. Conway #116469
PO Box 534
Jessup, MD 20794

1836 – A new law is written ordering that blacks who are re-convicted of crime can be sold as slaves out of state.

1836 - To incorporate the Auburn system of discipline (work together in silence by day, confined in individual cells at night), three wings connected by corridors to a central octagonal pavilion were built. This system was implemented in 1841.

1839 – Prison officials introduce a new, "more humane" method of discipline: the cold shower bath. The bath would replace the more severely painful lash. During this time the ball-and-chain was also employed.

1840 – Profits from the prison's cotton and woolen goods fell due to a decrease in demand for those goods and competition from labor-saving machinery. Facing financial problems, the prison decided to reinstate a contract system, in which inmates were rented out to perform manual labor for outside contractors. This was often very hard labor, and some prisoners were reported to have inflicted serious wounds upon them selves intentionally so as to avoid it.

Women in Prison

by Natalie Sokoloff

At the beginning of the 21st century American women are increasingly facing a trend of mass incarceration that follows the monumental expansion of incarceration rates of U.S. citizens in the last three decades of the 20th century. This period has been labeled as one of "equality with a vengeance." Women, so to speak, have had "the book thrown at them" for demanding equality in the courts, at school and work, and in the home. Thus, despite the fact that our prisons and punishments are ill-designed to rehabilitate the violent male offender, women have had the same harsh sentences applied to them in a conservative punishment era that intensified under the burden of "mandatory minimums," "three-strikes" laws, and "truth-in-sentencing" laws. All such laws have had the effect of incarcerating more people, for longer periods of time, with less options for parole or rehabilitation.

As with men, the social factors involved in crime have been ignored and women have been swept into the penal dragnet without regard for the fact that they are primarily nonviolent drug and economic (theft, forgery, petty larceny) offenders.

One Million Women

Let us look at the way in which the numbers of women in prison have increased in the last three decades of the 20th century and at how this increase has specifically impacted minority groups of women. The early 1970s witnessed the systematic "mass imprisonment" of certain populations (especially young Black men, more than one-third of whom are under the control of the criminal justice system today). How has this expansion of the prison population impacted the experience of women in prison, and how has it affected Black and Latina woman differently than white women.

At the beginning of 1970, there were only 5,600 women in prison, nationally. In fact, between 1936 and 1975, the number of women incarcerated in state and federal prisons in the U.S. fluctuated between 5,000 and 8,000 prisoners. By 1980 there were still fewer than 12,500 women in State and Federal prisons. But over the next two decades that number rose seven-fold to 94,336. Since 2001 the women prisoner population has grown to the current total of 167,000 women. Including those on probation and parole., almost 1 million women are currently under the control of the criminal justice system in the U.S.

This growth was at least partly made possible by a huge prison-building program. Between 1930 and 1950 only 2 or 3 prisons opened across the country for women every ten years. Each decade saw greater increases in the numbers of women's prisons: 7 new units in the 1960s, 17 in the 1970s, 38 in the 1980s, reaching a total of 104 by 1995. Today, during a period of fiscal crisis, women's prisons are still being built.

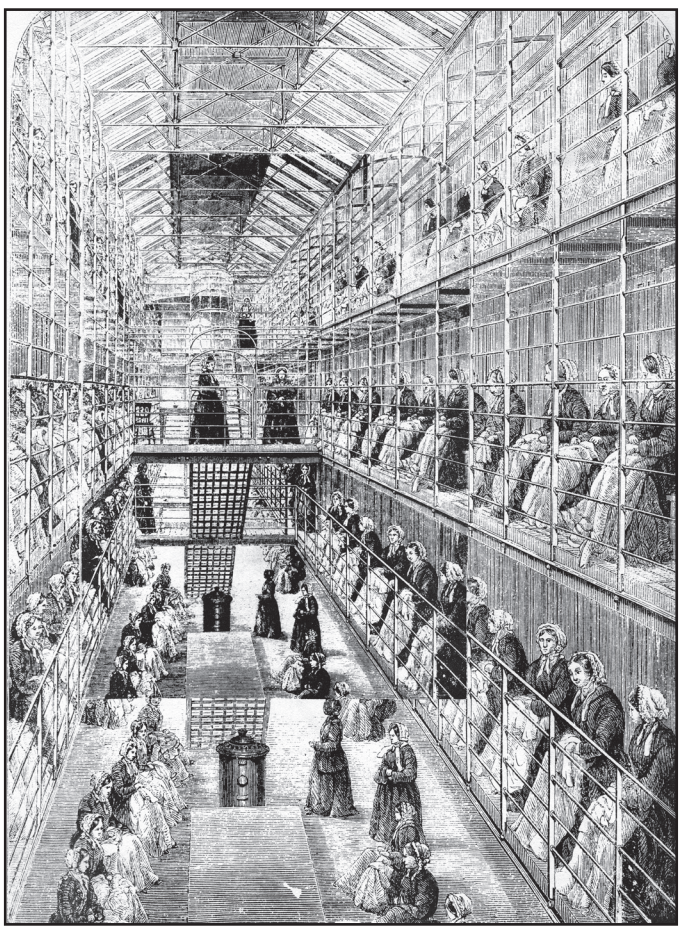
Overall, black women are 7 times more likely than white women to be incarcerated

Race/Ethnic Impact

The reality of this growth, however, is that there is a differential impact by race as to which groups of women end up in prison. Although almost half of the female prison population is Black, only 13 percent of the U.S. female population is Black (This is similar to the rate for men in prison). Overall, Black women are 7 times more likely than white women to be incarcerated, and in 15 states African American women are incarcerated at rates 10 to 35 times greater than white women. In New York, nearly 9 out of 10 female prisoners are Black or Latina. Despite their small numbers in the population overall, Native Americans are nevertheless ten times more likely than whites to be imprisoned.

Women in prison are among the most oppressed and vulnerable populations in the U.S. Women prisoners are typically young (in their mid-30s), poor (35 percent earned less than $600 per month), heads of households (75 percent), with limited education (less than 40 percent completed high school), mothers of young children (70 percent), and not infrequently homeless (up to 40 percent in some urban areas). In addition, about 50 percent of women in prison have serious, long-term substance abuse problems and are in poor health. These women often have HIV complications, asthma, diabetes, hypertension, STDs and reproductive health problems (Freudenberg 2001), and are the victims of childhood abuse and continued abuse in adult life (57 percent women prisoners were abused physically and/or sexually at least once in the past).

Most women are taken into custody today for the same kinds of crimes for which women have always been arrested: nonviolent larceny-theft, forgery, fraud, and prostitution—with the critical addition since the 1980s of drug possession and sales. Only a small percentage of women are arrested for violent crime, with three-fourths arrested for simple assaults. And less than one-third of women are incarcerated for violent crime of any kind. However, when women are offenders in violent crime, victims report over half the women offenders were white and just over one-third were black. Moreover, victims describe an equal percent of white and black women robbing them (40 percent each) or committing an aggravated assault against them (43 percent each). Yet, from incarceration statistics, one would never know this because African American women are portrayed and punished as the primary violent, female offenders.



1857 – Due to overcrowding and a shortage of single cells (only 256 for an average population of 413), prison officials moved to purchase land to expand the penitentiary northward.

1865 – The abolition of slavery. In the two years following the end of the Civil War, the number of black inmates quadrupled.

1870 – Significant expansion of the prison: A new five-story brick dormitory was built to house 160 female prisoners. The two story brick building that housed the men's dormtitory and dining room was raised two stories for space for religious services, and a workshop or dormitory, according to need. One of the old dormitories was gutted and raised six stories, then 344 single cells built into its outter walls.

The War on Drugs

Overall, women's incarceration for drug offenses has increased from 10 percent of all women prisoners to 38 percent. In the Federal prison system, two out of three women are in prison for drug offenses, most of whom are women of color. Because these women often have the lowest positions in drug organizations, they typically have little information on the drug operation with which to bargain with when faced by zealous prosecutors. Women are much more likely to be given mandatory minimum sentences – and for smaller amounts of drugs such as crack, which carries a punishment ten times longer than powder cocaine, a drug more typically used by the white population. The War on Drugs has become a "War on Poor Black Women," who now comprise more than 50 percent of the women's prison population– yet they represent only 12 percent of the general female population in the U.S. The explanation for much of the increase in women's incarceration is that criminal justice system policies have changed, not women's conduct.

When women are incarcerated for violent offenses, the offenses tend to be of a much less serious nature than those of men. Only recently have these behaviors been defined as "offenses." For example, nearly 3 in 4 violent victimizations committed by women offenders are simple assaults (compared to about one-half of men's assaults). Moreover, what previously might have been viewed as a shove between a mother and daughter can translate now into a violent criminal offense. Laws put into effect to protect battered women now lead to three times as many women and girls being arrested than a decade earlier. With "mandatory arrests" for domestic violence the battered woman herself is often arrested along with the batterer. This is called "boot strapping" or "net widening," and it brings more and more women into prison for lower levels of crimes, but especially so-called violent crimes.

Many sociologists and criminologists have found that crime tends to reflect the role that "economic disadvantage" plays in a person's criminal career. So too does gender matter in the forces that propel women into criminal behavior. While it is true that both incarcerated men and women have histories of sexual and physical violence against them in a family setting, this seems to be more prevalent and longer-lasting in the lives of women than men who end up in prison. For example, 43 percent of women, but only 12 percent of men report abuse at least once prior to their current imprisonment; women's prior physical (33.5 percent) and sexual (34 percent) abuse is much greater than men's (10 percent and 5 percent respectively); and while 32 percent of the women started being abused as girls and continued to be abused as adults, only 11 percent of the men report abuse as boys, and, most importantly, this abuse did not continue into adulthood.

Most women convicted of murder or manslaughter have killed husbands or boyfriends who repeatedly and violently abused them. In New York, one study showed that in 1986, 49 percent of the women committed to prison for homicide had been victims of abuse by that person at some point in their lives and 59 percent who killed someone close to them were being abused at the time of the offense. In a more recent study of 84 Black women in prison, among those women who committed homicide, domestic violence was directly involved in 40 percent of the cases.

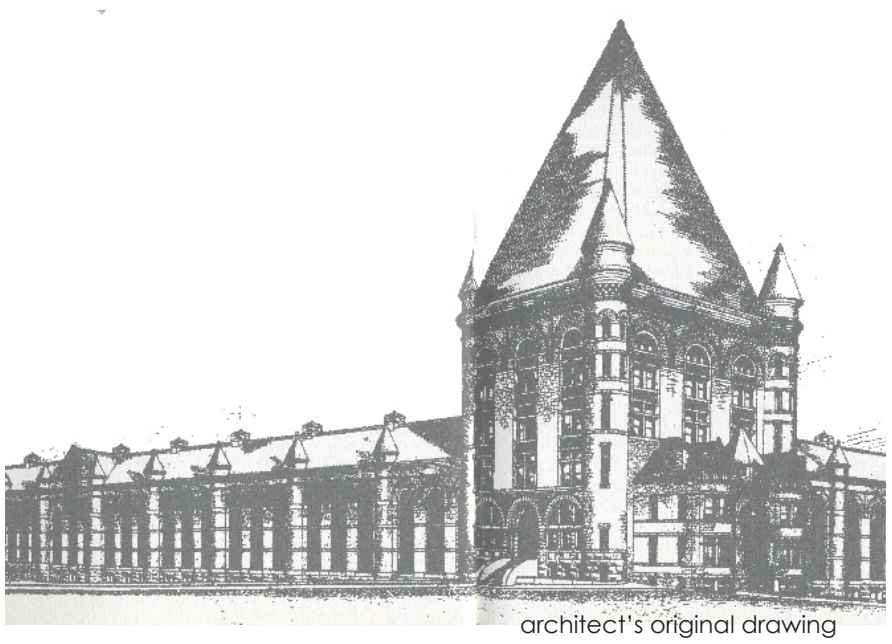
The Prison Industrial Complex

Once again, it is inadequate to discuss women in prison without taking into account the racialized nature of women's incarceration. One sociologist writes that in order to deal with the issues confronting women in prison we need a global perspective that examines the demise of minority inner city communities and rural white communities as a result of factories and other businesses moving overseas for cheaper labor. The result is the unemployment of large numbers of poor inner-city residents of color and poor, whites in rural areas, which leads to both increased crime rates and increased incarceration rates. At the same time, this process exploits, through very low wages, women and men in other countries throughout the developing world, while incarcerated men and women in the U.S. work for similarly low wages in prison industries. Simultaneously, the sociologist, Julia Sudbury, argues, a "profitable relationship between politicians, corporations, the media and state correctional institutions ... generates the racialized use of incarceration as a response to social problems rooted in the globalization of capital." The prison industrial complex, combined with the globalization of the War on Drugs, according to Sudbury, has led to the incarceration of poor women of color from around the globe in U.S., Canada, and many European countries.

As former prisoner Angela Davis reminds us, Black women, incarcerated in the U.S. at a rate eight times greater than white women and four times greater than Latinas have become "victims of racist and sexist discrimination."

Women in Criminal Justice System in the USA

Category	Statistic
Number of women in prison in 1970	5,600
Number of women in prison in 2000	94,336
Number of women in prison in 2006	167,000
Percentage of women in federal prison for drug offenses	67%
African American women as % US female pop.	12%
African American women as % women prisoners	50% +
African American women incarcerated vs. White women	700% more



architect's original drawing

1876 – Another female dormitory is added.

1877 – The arrival of federal prisoners resulted in the construction of a five-story building for 100 males called "central dormitory."

1878 – Another five-story male dormitory was built. The prison population reached a temporary peak of 984.

1894's – Construction of the granite buildings still standing on the corner of Eager and Forrest streets begins, designed by architect Jackson C. Gott. In 1899, prisoners move into their new cells. The new prison was hailed as a, "massive and handsome structure" that would stand for stand as an "imperishable monument to the humanitarianism of the state."

Who Will Take Care of the Children?

by Howard J. Ehrlich

It's four o'clock in the morning and a squad of heavily armed police in full protective gear make their way to a silent apartment. Reaching the door, the lead cop bangs loudly with his fist while screaming, "Police! Open up!" Waiting the official five seconds for a reply, they bring up their spring-loaded battering ram and in less than a minute they are inside in time to confront two bewildered adults still trying to wake themselves from what appears to be a nightmare. The kids clinging to their mother's house dress are screaming. It is their nightmare and they will re-live it forever. They watch as their father is thrown to the ground, handcuffed and taken away. They watch as their sobbing mother clings to daddy, screaming at the police. What none of the actors in this too-often repeated scene know is that event may be the end of the family, and the kids may never see their father again.

The number of minor children with a parent in state or federal prison is estimated at one and one-half million. Some ten million children under the age of 18 are affected by current or past parental involvement in the criminal justice system. Approximately five million children have a parent who is currently under some type of supervision, while five million have a parent who was involved in the past. Most of these children are less than ten years old. Their average is only eight years old.

Racial and Ethnic Background

About one-half of current Federal prisoners are Black, about 25% are White, and the remaining 25% are other ethnic minorities. Blacks are almost nine times more likely to have a parent in prison at any given time than White children. Hispanic children are almost three times as likely as White children.

Pre-prison Living Arrangements

Prior to their parent's incarceration 85 percent were living in poverty, and fewer than two out of five parents reported living with any of their minor children. Most of these households 89% did not have resident fathers, while approximately 11% of the households are without a resident mother. Of those parents who lived with their children, only one out of five lived with a spouse as well.

Caretakers

Incarcerated mothers most often leave their children in the care of grandparents. In fact, almost half of the children of incarcerated mothers live with grandparents. Only 28% of children with incarcerated mothers live with their biological fathers. Close to one out of four are left in the care of other relatives or friends, or are placed in out-of-home care. Often, where there are multiple minors, the children may be placed apart from each other.

In contrast, the vast majority (an estimated 90%) of children with incarcerated fathers live with their biological mothers. Only two percent are placed in out-of-home care, while the other eight percent live with relatives or friends.

Replacement caregivers tend to have low incomes and may lack the social support and other resources necessary to meet the children's needs. Furthermore, most child welfare agencies have no policies that focus specifically on children with incarcerated parents.

Children in foster care are often moved from home to home, and live in less than ideal situations. Multiple placements also make it difficult for mothers to keep up on the current whereabouts of their children.

Abuse and Neglect

Often, parental incarceration leaves children at risk for abuse and neglect. One recent study suggests that, of the children of incarcerated parents who are placed in residential group care, group homes, or foster care, 37% have been sexually abused, 47% have been physically abused, and 58% have been neglected.

Psychological Consequences

An extraordinary proportion of these children—7 out of 10—appear to have psychological problems during their lives. Many of the children suffer from symptoms characteristic of post-traumatic stress disorder. High-end estimates indicate that about three-quarters of them report depression, difficulty sleeping, difficulty eating, concentration problems, fear, and flashbacks. Self-esteem problems are common. Some children even experience hallucinations related to the lost person, such as hearing their mother's voice. Many children blame themselves for their parents' absence and experience guilt.

Often the children withdraw emotionally from their families or begin to regress developmentally. These emotional difficulties have been linked to the separation from their parents, social stigma, and post-traumatic stress.

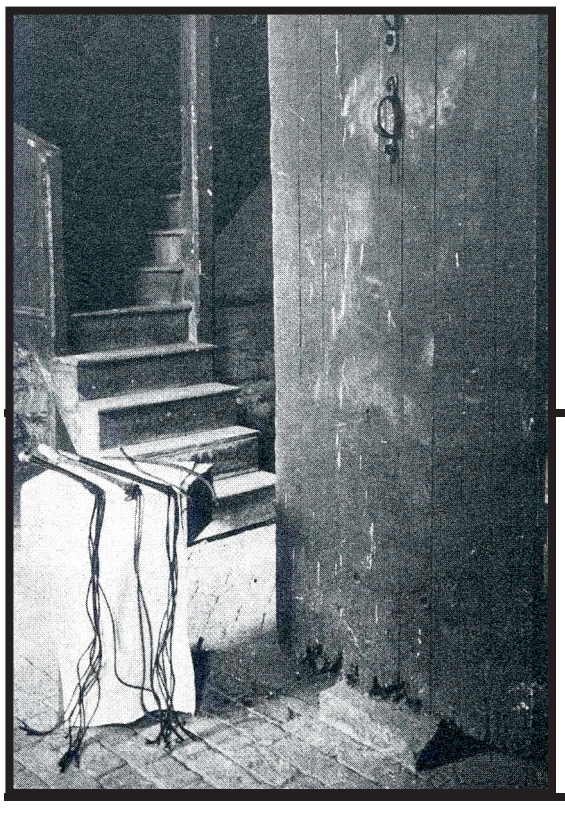
Growing With Trauma

The effects of incarcerated parents vary greatly depending on the age of the child. Parental incarceration during infancy (zero to two years), seems to produce few effects on the physical and intellectual development of the children.

Those in early childhood (two to six years) are particularly vulnerable to the trauma of parental arrest and imprisonment, as they are extremely dependent upon and identify with their parents or primary caregivers. The development of autonomy in young children may be compromised by such traumatic experiences. The traumatic effects are compounded by the fact that the majority of children of this age witnessed the arrest of a family member. One study found that 53% of four to eight-year-olds had seen an arrest. The effects of parental incarceration may, in fact, be worse at this stage of development than any other stage because children can perceive the events, but cannot yet comprehend or adjust to the trauma.

Trauma during middle childhood (seven to ten years) can interfere with children's ability to work and be productive, and control emotions. As a result, a number of reactive behaviors begin to develop. Though aggression is the most common reactive behavior, anxiety, withdrawal, and attention deficit problems often occur as well.

Children in early adolescence (11 to 14 years) have various reactions to trauma. By this stage of childhood, many children have developed effective coping mechanisms and are able to overcome traumas associated with incarcerated parents, such as stigma, multiple care



1911 – A newly hired guard quits because he could not bear the outcries of three black prisoners being "cuffed up," a punishment in which the prisoner's wrists were handcuffed and then hauled up by rope until the tips of his shoes just cleared the floor. The story reached the newspapers, and Warden Weyler, known for his strict discipline and corrupt administration, felt compelled to write a special report in which he called the guard a "coward," and justified the use of such punishments on black prisoners, writing that "there are colored men – the class that generally comes here – who can not be made to understand anything unless it is beaten into them." This statement revealed the racial bias applied to the administration of torture in the prison. This episode prompted the Governor to order an investigation into the conditions at the prison.

1920 – Seven hundred workers in the prison shops went on strike over monotonous food. The warden responded by refusing to feed them. This led to a riot in which the interior of the C dormitory was wrecked and guards were beaten.

placements, and absence of a parent. However, many will form maladaptive patterns of behavior, such as aggression, violence, and abuse. Some children will also reject limits on their behavior set by parental or adult figures.

The cumulative effects of parental crime are seen in adolescence (15 to 18 years). Generally, by this age, most children have experienced multiple parental crimes, arrests and imprisonment, prolonged parent-child separation, and continuing trauma. Due to repeated separation, the likelihood of parent-child reunification at this age is greatly reduced. In fact, in one study, mothers' plans for reunification declined from 73% for infants to 42% for teenagers. Parental incarceration at this stage also commonly leads to reactive behavior and incarceration of the children themselves.

Antisocial Behavior

Recurrent trauma in early childhood can initiate a pattern of unfavorable life choices. Children with an incarcerated parent may engage in a variety of antisocial behaviors. The cumulative effects of an incarcerated parent tend to appear most in late adolescence, generally 15-18 year-olds. As teens and pre-teens, the children are at high-risk for juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and addiction. Removing a parent from the family can expand the role and influence of the peer group, encouraging many teens to join gangs. Children without a father are also likely to commit crimes. In fact, children of incarcerated parents are five times more likely to spend time in prison than their peers. One in ten of these children will be incarcerated before reaching adulthood. Approximately 50% of incarcerated juveniles had or have a parent who has been incarcerated.

School Performance

Of children identified by their teachers as having the most severe behavioral and disciplinary problems at school, an estimated 80-90% had experienced parental crime, arrest, or incarceration. Poor school performance is a common problem for most children with an incarcerated parent. The effects range from impaired achievement motivation to acting out inappropriately. A study of seven to ten year-olds with incarcerated parents showed that the children often have a hard time achieving in school and getting along with others, and may display aggressive behavior. It is also common that children without a father will drop out of school.

Visits and Contacts

Maintaining close family ties throughout incarceration results in the improved mental health not only of the children, but of the inmates as well. Close contact with their children decreases the chance of recidivism and increases the chance of success after release.

More than a quarter of female prisoners and almost one-half of male prisoners have never called or received a phone call from their children. A smaller number (21% of females and 32% of males) have never sent or received any mail from their children either. Even more significantly, only 46% of women and 43% of men have seen their children on a personal visit after admission.

Contact is often difficult due to limited financial resources, lack of transportation, and the distant location of prisons. More than one-half of incarcerated parents are held over 100 miles from their last residence. Furthermore, collect calls from jails and prisons typically cost the receiving household as much as three times more than a collect call placed from payphones outside the institution. Written correspondence can be complicated by some prison rules. Also, the literacy of both the children and the inmates is often limited.

Who Cares?

Children of imprisoned parents are unquestionably and deeply at risk. By ignoring them, society contributes unwittingly to reproducing a new generation of criminals.

There are organizations in the local area who are helping. Information and their programs are available.

Related Resources:

Alternative Directions, Inc.
Address: 2505 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218
E-mail: mary.j.davis@verizon.net; phone: 410-889-5072
Contact: Michelle Kelly, Assistant Director/ Office Manager
Mary Joel Davis, Director
Area Served: Maryland; established: 1979

Provides incarcerated parents with legal and social services: notarizes temporary guardianship forms for prisoners, assists with motions for court-ordered visitations, provides information about custody and paternity. Also assists women after release with employment, GED, parenting, home-purchasing, addiction counseling and treatment.

Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners
Address: 440 First Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001
Phone: 202-639-4030

Administered by the Child Welfare League of America, provides support and evaluation services to families of incarcerated parents at 10 demonstration sites around the country. The ultimate goal is to improve the quality of information available about children with incarcerated parents and develop resources that will help create better outcomes for these children and their families.

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars
Address: 4806 Seton Drive, Baltimore, MD 21215
E-mail: www.gscm.org; phone: 410-358-9711
Contact: Marina A. Gethers LCSW-C, Project Coordinator
Area Served: Baltimore Metropolitan Area; established: 1992

Provides scouting activities for incarcerated mothers and their children. Provides family reunification support, support groups, mentoring to mothers and daughters by volunteers.

Living with Incarcerated Parents and Surviving (LIPS)
Address: c/o Heaven on Earth Dance Min., P.O. Box 1050, Bowie, MD 20718-1040
Web site: www.Heavenonearthdanceministries.com; phone: 301-352-4145
Contact: Minister Carol A. Overton, Director
Area Served: Maryland
Parent Organization: Heaven On Earth Dance Ministries

Provides children of prisoners with theatrical activities, counseling, mentoring and bible studies. Provides parents with parent education, pro bono paralegal assistance, bible studies, mentoring and referrals. Families are offered church fellowship.

Long Distance Dads
Address: 101 Lakeforest Blvd., Suite 360, Gaithersburg, MD 20877-2629
E-mail: mtorres@fatherhood.org; phone: 301-948-0599
Web site: www.fatherhood.org
Contact: Marcos Torres, Executive Director of Incarcerated Programming
Roland Warren, President
Area Served: USA and International; established: 1994
Publications: Curricula on responsible fatherhood, interactive CD Roms and numerous other related books and resources. Order from our on-line book store.

Provides training and technical assistance on parent education for incarcerated fathers. The Long Distance Dads curriculum is used in over 145 correctional facilities in 24 states of the USA as well as in Canada, Great Britain and Africa. Provides extensive fatherhood resources and publications.

Maryland Justice Coalition
Address: 2521 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218
E-mail: khaven@povertysolutions.org; phone: 410-366-0600
Web site: www.povertysolutions.org
Contact: Kimberly Haven, Campaign Coordinator
Tara Andrews, Executive Director
Area Served: Maryland; established: 2002

Provides information and referrals. Advocates criminal justice reform in Maryland.

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1920 – A new warden, Claude Sweezey, introduces a period of prison reform. Sweezey moved the prison away from corporal punishment, believing in a program of treatment and rehabilitation with incentives for good behavior.

1922 – The prison stops using prison labor to produce goods for outside contractors. From this point on prison labor would go into making goods for the state only.

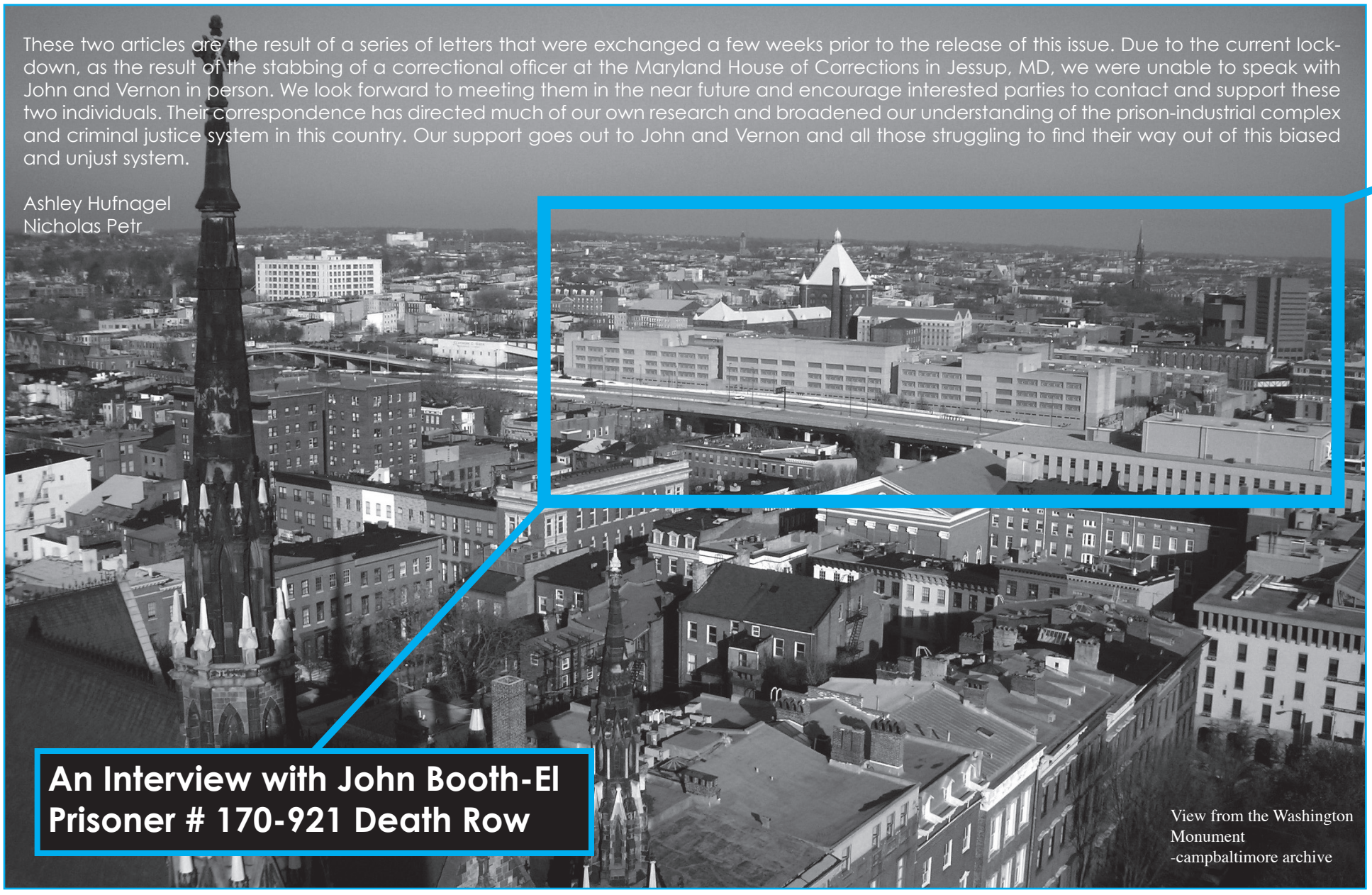
1922 also marked the end of public executions, from that point on executions would be conducted in private within the walls of the prison.

1929 – The annual report for the National Society for Penal Information described the Maryland penitentiary as being "in poorer physical condition than any other in the east, primarily because of its old buildings, cramped yard, and location in the heart of the city" which prevented expansion.

1931 – Maryland State Penal farm opens in Hagerstown.

These two articles are the result of a series of letters that were exchanged a few weeks prior to the release of this issue. Due to the current lock-down, as the result of the stabbing of a correctional officer at the Maryland House of Corrections in Jessup, MD, we were unable to speak with John and Vernon in person. We look forward to meeting them in the near future and encourage interested parties to contact and support these two individuals. Their correspondence has directed much of our own research and broadened our understanding of the prison-industrial complex and criminal justice system in this country. Our support goes out to John and Vernon and all those struggling to find their way out of this biased and unjust system.

Ashley Hufnagel
Nicholas Petr



View from the Washington Monument
-campbaltimore archive

An Interview with John Booth-El Prisoner # 170-921 Death Row

AH/ NP: ***We figure that you were convicted in 1983. What was the political atmosphere at this time?***

JB: The political atmosphere at the time of my arrest, trial and conviction was a racially charged one. I was a poor uneducated African-American charged with the murder and robbery of an elderly Jewish couple during an alleged home invasion. During the trial itself, it was proffered by the assistant State's attorneys, (there were four of them who prosecuted me), that only one of the victims had actually died by my hands, and for that person, the State would be seeking the death penalty. The transitory aspects of the decision by Mr. Schmoke (an African-American) in seeking the ultimate punishment against another person of African descent held an abundance of potentialities for him with regard to his future aspirations for success in a white male dominated society. It is unequivocally clear that the decision to seek the death penalty against me played a major role in Mr. Schmoke's ability to cull votes. My life for all intents and purposes, was sacrificed at the altar of political ambitiousness.

AH/NP: ***You have mentioned that the prison is a "microcosm of society" and functions as a "compass of the larger problems which exist in the outside communities". Could you elaborate on the dialectic between outside and inside?***

JB: The correlation of ideals that exist in an external, objective outside community, and the society behind the walls of a prison are interchangeable. They both involve the thinking and working towards an alternative future consisting of the same goals. The only difference is that one is considered a daydream and the other an aspiration. The ability to actualize the objective is however, influenced and in some instances completely controlled by the same entity; i.e., a system that is sustained by class and race. Dialectical thinking is for the most part an acute consciousness of the inner nature of things no matter how many masks are used to alter its real face.

The same flawed domestic policies that are so much a part of what is wrong in our society, also impact adversely on prison policies and regulations. When inflationary trends impact the larger economy, outside of the prison walls, we feel its repercussions also. When the costs of basic commodities goes up it impacts adversely on the number of visits we receive from family and friends, the quality of the meals that are served, everything from collect phone calls etc. Even the quality of medical services takes a back seat to fiscal constraints. Recidivism unfortunately becomes the order of the day because there simply are no programs that guarantee job placement for ex-offenders once they are released from prison.

Finally, once it is shown how racism has saturated the present fabric of all levels of our government and the ensuing programs that have been erected by mendacious politicians, the concept of fascism comes to mind. Indeed, fascism can be broadly defined as a police state wherein the political

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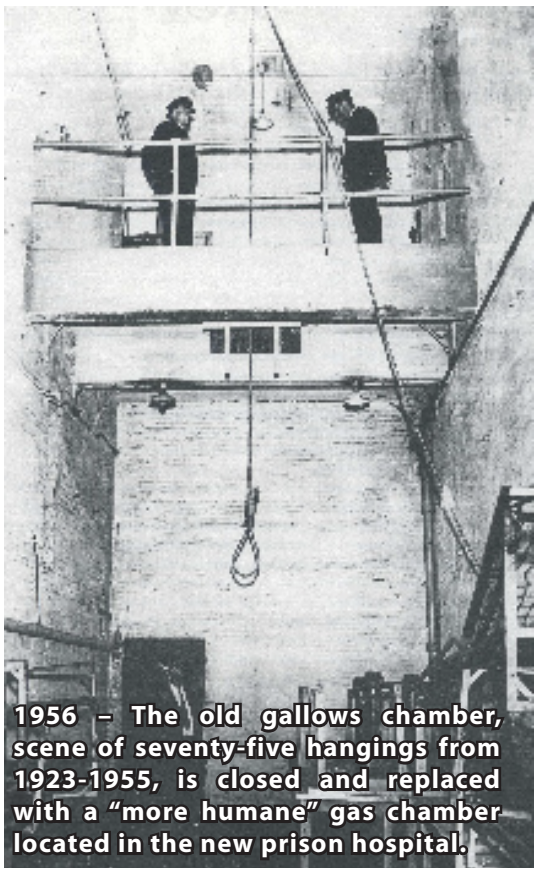
1939 – Women's Prison of the State of Maryland in Jessup opens.

1946 – After the end of the war, a shortage of work producing goods for the military contributed to 33 percent of inmates statewide being reported as "idle." Federal law restricted the interstate transport of prison-made goods, but they did continue to manufacture state license plates, schools lockers, cloths for state institutions, and furniture for offices and schools.

1951 – Joseph Holmes escapes from his ground floor cell by tunneling his way seventy feet under the penitentiary's wall and moat, to surface in a grassy plot on Eager St. Warden Swenson called it, "the most fantastic escape I've ever heard of."



1956 – The old gallows chamber, scene of seventy-five hangings from 1923-1955, is closed and replaced with a "more humane" gas chamber located in the new prison hospital.

Vernon Evans on Living the Death Penalty
Prisoner # 172-357 Death Row

Dealing With the Sentence of Death:

When I first went to the row, because of the way my trial went, I had the attitude that I did not care. I was on the row for eighteen months before the feds came in and took me to Marion federal penitentiary, a prison that only lets you out of your cell one hour a day. I stayed there for six years. My attitude changed when I was suppose to go to Leavenworth penitentiary, but the warden said that he would not admit me for fear that I might kill a staff member or inmate. I wanted to change the way that they looked at people who are sentenced to death. I helped a man learn to read. I took college courses. I was stabbed seven times and never went after the men who did it. I had a problem with drugs so I went to a drug program. I worked in UNICOR for over fifteen years. (UNICOR is part of the prison labor industry.) Leavenworth penitentiary took me in 1992 until I left there in 1994 and went to Atlanta penitentiary. I stayed in Atlanta until the governor of Maryland signed the paper to keep me here in Baltimore when I came back for a hearing in 2002. Before I left Atlanta I had started getting to know Jesus Christ. Once I got settled on the row here, my spiritual happiness was on. I have had two death warrants lodged against me. Each time many prayers were said to get them lifted. I believe this.

Because of three prior convictions it was always hard for me to adjust to society once I returned. I didn't have a social life that I could fit into, or perhaps I really did not give society a chance. I had seven kids who wanted designer tennis shoes, and society wanted me to work at a job that paid three to four dollars an hour and expected me to pay bills on time. I wanted to feed my woman and the kids that were living with me. I was prepared to survive by any means necessary. So I was dealing drugs. I had my son's mother on the block selling her body along with her girlfriends. I was robbing people. I was out of control. I used the product I was selling. So I had no remorse for any of my actions. I did not have God as part of my life so I knew no mercy.

Each day I try to make something positive happen. For instance, when students are back in college, I write to them and use my life and the mistakes I have made as an example of how not to live. When I reflect on my past confinement I think that if the prisons had offered counseling on returning to society, I might have adjusted better. Being constantly around criminals taught me how to beat the system. It's like that today in some prisons. Nowadays the courts are giving so much time out that in adult prison they don't need counseling because they are never going to get out. People would have a better chance if the justice system wasn't a revolving door.

People with HIV have influenced my life. In Atlanta I lived with a person who had HIV. At first he showed signs of not wanting to live and then I kept pushing him to take his medicine. I would tell him that people in this world had more reason than him to die but they managed to keep going. He is still living and will be out after 30 years. In fact, he is the one that got me to start seeking Christ. So after living with the death penalty for 23 years, so far and going through two death warrants, I still believe that my problems are not as bad as some people's situations in this world.

A Day on "The Row":

We are awakened each morning between 5 and 5:30 for breakfast. Because our meals are the same each week, I choose when I actually want to eat. Usually I just come out to get the juice. I used to eat breakfast, but after so many years of eating the same thing, I just let a lot of meals go by.

Around 8:30 AM, we are told to come out of our cells for morning recreation. They'll check our cell window and see if we're digging holes. We don't have to stay out the whole time. I usually go back to bed until 9:45 AM. I prepare myself at my sink and turn on my TV to catch the Regis and Kelly Show. I usually work out during the show.

At 10:45 AM they lock down and count us. They let us out again around 11:30 AM for lunch. We can watch TV, use the phone, look up legal cases, sit and play cards, or just talk.

At 1:45 PM we lock in for count again. That's when I begin to read, type, or listen to CDs or the radio. We come back out around 4:10 PM to start the same activities all over again. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday we go outside in a cage for two hours. Death Row usually goes out around 6:30 PM. We never stay out for the whole two hours, because we lock in again at 9:45, so we go in around 8 to have enough time to shower. Tuesdays and Thursdays we go out at 10 AM, but I've never gone out at that time. Perhaps if I were younger I would, but I'll be 57 in October and I see things a little differently than the younger one's. There are 8 of us on the row and three of us are in our fifties. There are twelve cells, four of which have been broken for many years. One of those broken cells is used for our legal work. We do accumulate a lot of legal work during the years of appeals and potentially even new sentencing hearings.

There is no library. There are no church services, no form of education offered, so we educate ourselves. We order books from stores. I have a lot of religious books to uplift my spiritual growth.

Most of the people that I have connected with are Catholic and true Christians. They are part of groups that oppose the death penalty.

There is no way for society to know if a person is making a sincere transformation because most of society has deemed us rejects. In fact, I've heard us referred to as animals. So there is little to no interest in knowing if a death row prisoner has changed.

Justifiable Homicide:

When you think of the word homicide, you think that someone has committed a crime. Yet, when the state kills another human being, they write on their death certificate "death by homicide". (Many states actually handwrites the word "justifiable" over "death by homicide" on the death certificate). Does the public know what is on the death certificate? I think not. Does society know that only two drugs are stated in the protocol for executing a person or that legislature never put into law the use of three drugs? Right now, I'm in the appeals court arguing that this system took it upon themselves to use three drugs in executing individuals when in fact they are only legally allowed to use two. This is what the legislation agreed on, two not three. In this state they have cut men's arms open to get a vein. I have that in my appeal. I also challenge it in federal court where I have a trial in September. After a while, It gets easier to discuss things about our justice system.

This country is so quick to judge other countries for their inhumane practices. Its citizens are quick to send their sons and daughters to their death in other countries, especially when they are fooled into believing there is a need for reform in someone else's country. But, right here in their own back yard, 122 people almost lost their lives under a faulty justice system. (In the last 30 years, 122 death-row inmates were found to be innocent and released.) It is also believed, that in society's name, people have been put to death that perhaps were innocent.

The saddest part about the death penalty is that even with 250 murders a year in the state of Maryland, society still believes that the death penalty is a deterrent. It is very sad.

Peace,
Vernon

1964 – A riot erupts at the House of Corrections in Jessup. In response to rumors of guard brutality, prisoners took control of a tier of cells for two hours and held twelve guards hostage. State police eventually subdued the prisoners using fire hoses. Three days later five-hundred inmates staged a sit-down strike in the prison's workshops, demanding the dismissal of the guard involved in the alleged abuse.

1965 – Seven hundred inmates participated in a non-violent sit-down strike in the workshops of the Maryland Penitentiary. The commissioner at the time blamed the incident on, "the contagion of civil disobedience demonstrations throughout the nation."

1966 – riots at the Penitentiary involving a thousand men set four buildings on fire.
Later that year Attorney General Francis Burch ordered a full-scale investigation of the entire prison system, which resulted in the dismissal of Commissioner Peppersack.

1971 – Commissioner Canon is fired for "administrative failures." He is replaced by his deputy, James Jordan, who would become the first African American to head the entire system, whichat that time had 80 percent black inmates.

ascendancy is connected or fused into and protects the social, economic, and political interest of the upper class. It is characterized by militarism, (we see police conducting paramilitary maneuvers in the arrests of poor people in this country everyday), racism, (which we have already conceded, shapes the policy of most of our social institutions), and imperialism, (which our government is currently engaged in).

AH/NP: In the 23 yrs that you have been in prison, how has prison organizing developed or changed?

JB: In the 23 years that I have been buried in this steel and concrete tomb, I have seen the state's penological objective for long term offenders change from one which tolerated rehabilitative programs within the institutions, and a light at the end of the tunnel; to the current warehousing of human beings with no light at the end of the tunnel. This change more than anything else is the root cause of an escalation of violence behind prison walls. The violence is the result of overcrowding, feelings of frustration, self-depreciation, helplessness, boredom, and desperation.

Racism is probably no more profoundly demonstrated than in the history of slavery in America. As if destroying a native people and culture was not enough, the African peoples were then brought to this country in chains, after being stolen from another continent. What makes this act of racism even more egregious is the fact that many slave owners professed that slavery was morally correct because certain biblical passages (Genesis 9:25 – 26) were used to support the institution of slavery.

Not only was the African person abducted and placed into a ship too small for the number of persons it was designed to carry, but during this inhumane export many were murdered, not only by slave traders but also by one another just so they could breathe during the grueling journey.

Today in our inner cities, similar conditions exist. People (especially members of the African-American community) are forced to live in crowded projects, imprisoned by their poverty and dominated by an uncaring, ineffective, politically biased, and inherently racist system. In this we can experience not just the phenomenon of history repeating itself, but also the interrelation of those conditions, which are tantamount to the prison experience. As such, this writer is particularly offended by the callous use of the "micro and macroaggresions" in depicting the status quo of members of the African-American community; conditions that America's role in the slave trade helped to foster from the very beginning.

Prisoners are brutalized by their environment, not the reverse. There is a virtual vacuum that exists in maximum security prisons in Maryland, i.e., a lack of jobs, a lack of advanced educational opportunities, and banishment of the former self help organizations that provided prisoners with an opportunity to interact with individuals from the communities that they came from, and to participate in worthwhile projects (book drives etc.,) which contributed to the quality of life in the outside communities, and of equal importance, the self worth of the offender. The biggest change is that in Maryland, there are no more penitentiaries, but rather there are now correctional institutions and centers which are under the direction and control of the division of corrections, which in turn is a unit within the department of public safety and correctional services. One of the biggest non-elected political prizes in the state of Maryland after that of Governor, is the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services. America is famous for its use of euphemisms of assigning a seemingly benign name to a horrific condition or action i.e., capital punishment instead of state sanctioned murder. The title division of correction is a misnomer, because it does little to correct the behavior that led to the offender's incarceration in the first place. The care, feeding, even medical and psychological services have been outsourced and privatized through contract to the lowest bidder. Consequently, prisons have become corporate business entities. In some states, the prison itself is under private ownership and the confinement of prisoners has been outsourced to private companies. As such, prisons have become commodities with shares to be sold or traded on the stock market.

AH/NP: How has the legacy of the 60s and 70s prison movement contributed to organizing today? Was there a systematic backlash following the peak of the movement? How has the system restructured itself to inhibit organizing on that level?

JB: Until approximately ten years ago, organizing within the prison complexes with the help of volunteers from the outside communities helped to foster a change in incarcerated individuals. This was directly related to the legacy of the poor people's movements of the 60's and 70's. People were as a matter of course, more politically astute, and socially conscious. As previously noted, there was less violence and more of a concerted effort towards self-edification by prisoners. However, because of political backlash, that conflicted with the interests of right wing ideologues, (a combination of both elected and appointed officials), most of the self help organizations were gutted from the internal programs which had for years been permitted to exist within the division of corrections. In much the same way that social programs in the outside communities were abolished under repressionist government regimes, prisoners serving life with the possibility of parole, were removed from prerelease programs and placed back in the system after working for years to turn their lives around.

Photo: erin hall

AH/NP: To who or what do you credit your education?

JB: I credit my education to life and adversity. They are both great teachers.

In a place where your physical environment does not change over the course of 23 yrs, how do you maintain an understanding of the outside world?

My understanding of the so called "outside world" is maintained by literally thinking "outside of the box". That is to say I embrace the outside world both personally and vicariously. I also employ the mediums of certain periodicals, radio talk shows and the like to stay abreast of current events, and issues, especially those affecting the disenfranchised members of society.

AH/NP: If state sanctioned murder is not a deterrent according to empirical data, then what ideological purpose/s does it serve?

JB: Just as the so-called war on drugs is a civil rights issue, which finds its origin in institutional racism, it is by no means unique in that consideration. The current drug war can be traced back (from an ideological perspective) to Jim Crowism, and it is in that analysis that one can discern that the current system of state sanctioned murder is for all intents and purposes, the grandchild of lynching. The same post reconstruction in-equalities that produced mass social disenfranchisement of African-Americans also witnessed unspeakable atrocities including, but by no means limited to, murder at the hands of unreconstructed Southern sympathizers. The decline of lynching however, in the early 1900's had a direct relation with the use of state sponsored murder in support of errant racist policies. In Virginia for example, between 1908 and 1930, of the 148 people put to death in the state's electric chair, 131 of the victims of that racist pogrom were African-Americans. Today, minorities still make up the majority of folks designated to receive the "ultimate punishment". Of the roughly 3, 370 people currently sentenced to death, a disproportionate 42% are African-American, 10% are Latino, and 80% of that total number is convicted of killing whites. Just as the so-called war on drugs further disenfranchises a people who are already classified as gauche, rendered politically destitute by removing them from civil society and then denyed the right to vote while their bodies are

1972 – A large riot breaks out involving fires and three guards being taken hostage.

1973 – Seventy-five prisoners took over the west wing, erecting barricades and smashing out the lights. Seven guards were taken hostage. The riot was broken up by City police using incapacitating chemical spray and rubber bullets. Commissioner Jordan speculated that overcrowding could have caused the outbreak.

1977 – The Baltimore Legal Aid Bureau filed the first of seven suits on behalf of penitentiary inmates to end overcrowding. At the time, it held 1,500 prisoners, twice the intended capacity. The facility lacked sanitation and space for recreational, educational, and training programs.

"Community corrections centers," which would exist in residential areas and offer inmates vocational training, are proposed to remedy overcrowding. But strong public opposition and a general "lock 'em up" attitude rejected

1981 – Thomas W. Schmidt is appointed as the new Secretary of Public Saftey and Correctional Services. Schmidt's tough reputation helps calm public outrage over the liberal penal philosophy of his predecessor. He moved quickly to tighten the pre-relaese program and stop early paroles. Schmidt also resumed double-celling to compensate for overcrowding.

Two new prisons open: a 512-bed facility at Jessup and a 400-bed Reception-Diagnostic and Classification Center near the Penitentiary.

Photo: erin hall

usede as rungs in a macabre ladder of political ascension; the death penalty for much the same reasons is not a deterrent but a means to an end that has long been in favor by mendacious political prostitutes running for elected office, or jockeying for political appointment. There are basically two primary rationales, which underlie the use of this ghastly relic from the past. Retribution (or just deserts) is the first and is a "backward-looking" philosophy, which predated the belief that the world was flat. The retribution rationale reasons that the condemned man, woman, or child "deserves to die" for whatever crimes they may have committed. The philosophy of retribution considers only past events in the life of the offender, and not the person's present accomplishments or even what "good" the offender endeavors to achieve in his or her present future. Secondly, state sanctioned murder relies on the incapacitation rationale and advances the argument that the condemned man, woman, or child must be prevented from committing future crimes.

As Daniel Singer queried during the Evergreen conference in 1987, "Is it possible for a class which exterminates the native peoples of the Americas, replaces them by raping Africa for humans it then denigrates and de-humanizes as slaves, while cheapening its own working class – is it possible for such a class to create a democracy, equality and to advance the cause of human freedom? The implicit answer is, 'No, of course not.'"

AH/NP: Some activists who are trying to abolish the death penalty see life without parole as an alternative. Do you see life without parole as a viable alternative?

JB: My reasoning for rejecting life without parole as a viable sentencing option is based on the fact that it simply provides another instance of support for the institution of slavery and fertile ground for further acts of state oppression. As it stands, the sentence (life without parole) is already being meted out for crimes that are not even so called death eligible crimes under state law. Again, just as is the case with state sanctioned murder, life without parole seems to be disproportionately reserved for the poor, the African-American, and the unpopular segments of society. Moreover, as is the case with State sanctioned murder, life without parole relies on the incapacitation rationale and advances the same as that used to support the death penalty i.e., that the condemned man, woman, or child must be prevented from committing future crimes. The philosophical fallacy is thrust upon the public in a maze of words, terminologies and/or concepts that defy comprehension by most laypersons. Finally, as is the case with the death penalty, the sentence relies on the misguided philosophy of retribution and considers only past events in the life of the offender, and not the persons present accomplishments, or even "good" the offender endeavors to achieve in his or her present or future.

AH/NP: You mentioned that the government has drastically cut funding for "educational incentives and other alternatives to warehousing human beings". What might some of those alternatives be?

JB: Some alternatives to warehousing people could be initiated by taking a different approach to non-violent crime, and drug offenders in particular. For instance in his book Drug Crazy by Mike Gray (Randomn House 1998), Mr. Gray recounts the following: "At the beginning of the drug war in 1914 a public health survey of narcotics addicts found that "a very large portion of the users... were respectable hard-working individuals in all walks of life...It seems shocking now to hear that 80% of these "dope-fiends" had jobs, homes, and reputations, but the medical literature is filled with addicts on maintenance doses who functioned normally throughout their lives. One of the most remarkable was Dr. William Steward Halsted." He goes on to recount that Halstead's skill and ingenuity as a surgeon made him world famous, and in 1886 he joined three other renowned physicians to create Johns Hopkins Hospital. He accomplished this in spite of his being hooked on 180 mg of morphine a day. Were Dr. Halstead alive today, he would probably be incarcerated and branded a criminal. That being said, drugs need to be decriminalized, and addicts treated at hospitals rather than incarcerated in prisons. Moreover, if we as a society were to decriminalize drugs, the violence associated with the drug trade would fade into obscurity because there would be no huge profits to be made. Property crimes should be addressed through community corrections, with a mind set towards restitution rather than incarceration. Long-term offenders should be taught skills that would enable them to truly pay their debt to society during the period of their incarceration.

AH/NP: What are some of the first steps to developing alternatives to our current justice system?

JB: One of the first steps would be to have an open and honest dialogue that addresses poverty which is one of the primary or root causes of crime in our society, with an emphasis on quality education, and political empowerment. Thereafter it would be prudent for our government to be willing to spend as much money to send a person to college as they do to send a man to the penitentiary, or to wage war and engage in nation building on foreign soil. After all, charity begins at home.

Abolition vs. Reform

In discussions of the prison system, one must always distinguish between two fundamentally different positions: abolition and reform. Prison abolition, as advocated by groups such as Critical Resistance, aims to eliminate the need for prisons, policing, and surveillance by creating sustainable alternatives to punishment and imprisonment. Prison reform, on the other hand, seeks to improve conditions within the prison that are seen to be inhumane while keeping the system intact (for example, eliminating overcrowding by building new facilities, or ending the death penalty by substituting "life without parole"). It can sometimes be hard to differentiate between an abolitionist and reformist position, as they will often share points of analysis and critique in regard to the prison system. The crucial difference, however, is that the while the reformist recognizes problems which exist within the system and works to improve them, they nevertheless accept the prison as a necessary institution within society. On the contrary, the abolitionist views all forms of punishment and imprisonment as part of an oppressive ideology that does not make society any safer. Abolitionists therefore refuse to engage in any activities that will ultimately function to sustain the existence of the prison system by making it appear more tolerable.

1983 – Funding for new prison construction is approved. The Maryland prison population reaches 13,000, and was growing at a rate of 125 inmates a month. This increase was attributed to tougher sentencing laws and tighter parole policies in response to public pressure to keep criminals in prison longer.

1984 – Violence erupts in the penitentiary's notorious south wing, a segregation unit of for the most unruly inmates. Inmates stabbed three guards, killing one. A report by Attorney General Stephen Sachs made newspaper headlines, calling the penitentiary's south wing, "the innermost circle of Hell in the Maryland system." The Sachs report went on to describe the conditions in detail: "The South Wing is noisy and filthy. A constant racket reverberates and echoes in the granite building. It smells of urine, vomit, rotting food, and body odor ....There are pigeon droppings on nearly every flat surface .... Assaults and stabbings are an everyday occurrence. Contraband drugs and weapons flow in a steady stream of illicit commerce form cell to cell." The report prompted change.

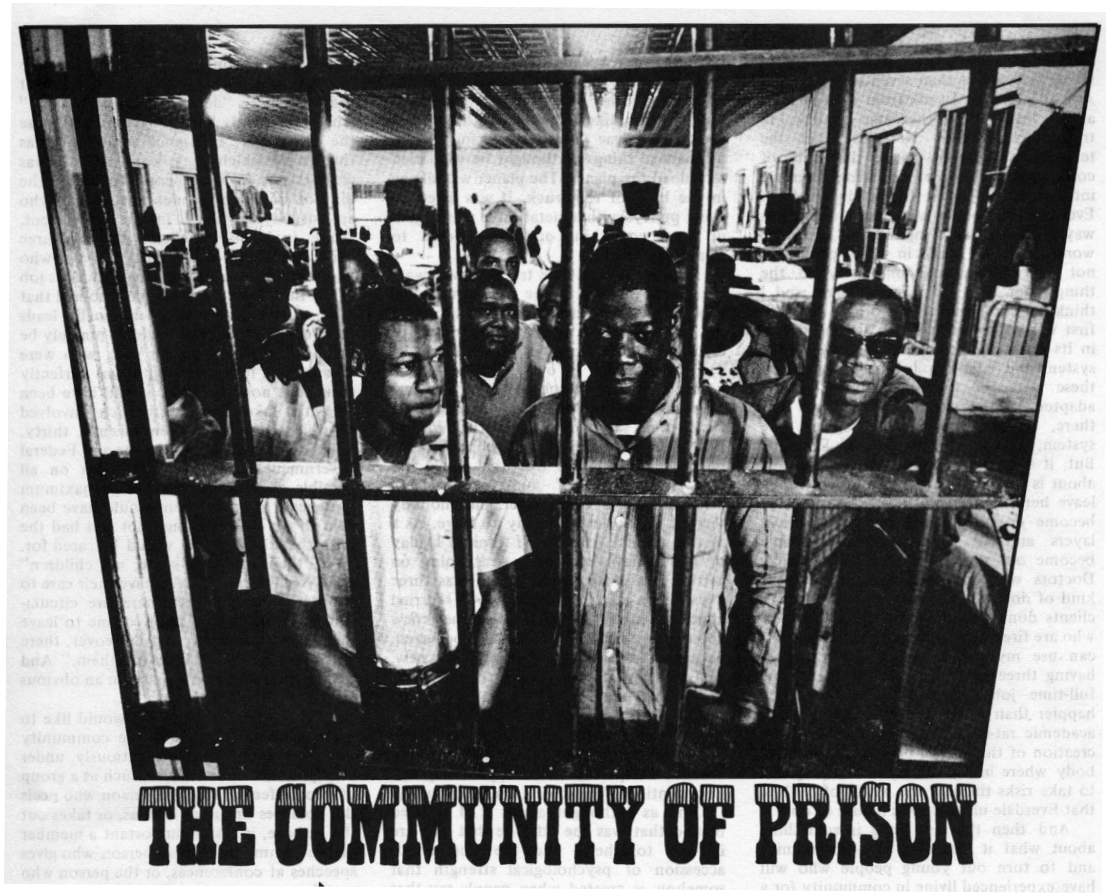
A proposal to construct a three-hundred-bed super-maximum security prison to replace the south wing is approved. Demolition to clear a lot across Madison St. begins for the new "Supermax."

1989 – Built at a cost of $21 million, the 288-cell Supermax opens. Even with the opening of two new prisons in two years (the Eastern Correctional Institution in Somerset County and Supermax) the State of Maryland could not keep up with the flow of inmates into the prison system. The total prison population was 14,268 – 22 percent over the system's functioning capacity of 11,681.

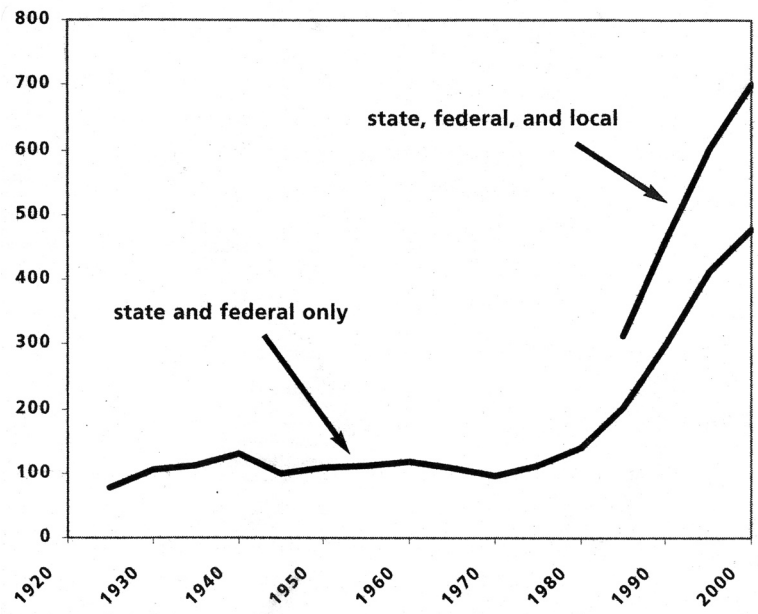
Blacks and Criminal Justice System in Baltimore and Maryland

Category	Statistic
Percentage increase in Maryland's prison population 1979-2003	313%
African Americans as percentage of growth in Maryland's prison population	75%
African Americans as percentage of population of Maryland	28%
Percentage of total population of Maryland in justice control	2.5%
Percentage of African American men 20-30 years old in justice system control in Maryland	30%
African Americans as percentage of those arrested for drugs in Maryland	68%
African Americans as percentage of those incarcerated drugs in Maryland	90%
Percentage of African American men 20-30 years old in custody in Maryland	10%
African Americans as percentage of population of Baltimore	64.3%
Percentage of African American men 20-30 years old in justice system control in Baltimore	52%
Percentage of African American men 20-30 years old in custody in Baltimore	20%
Annual cost to incarcerate an individual in Baltimore Area	$22,000
Annual cost to educate an individual in Baltimore City	$10,000
Annual cost to incarcerate in state prisons in Baltimore Area	$280m
Percentage of African American children with parents in prison	7%
Percentage of White children with parents in prison	0.8%

Sources: Critical Resistance Baltimore, Justice Policy Institute



U.S. Prisoners per 100,000 Persons, 1925-2000
[Monthly Review July/August 2001]



Critical Resistance seeks to build an international movement to end the Prison Industrial Complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. They believe that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure. As such, their work is part of global struggles against inequality and powerlessness. The success of the movement requires that it reflect communities most affected by the Prison Industrial Complex. "Because we seek to abolish this complex, we cannot support any work that extends its life or scope."
Contact Critical Resistance Baltimore at: phone # (410) 230-1876 email: crbaltimore@criticalresistance.org

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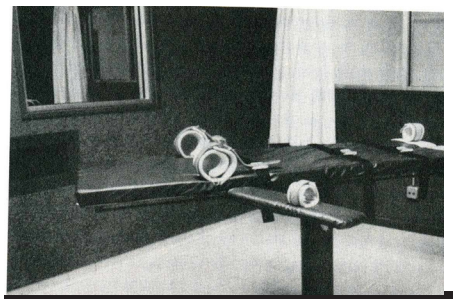
1991 – Harry Benjamin Dean escapes from Supermax, squeezing out of a narrow window and hoisting himself down with a makeshift rope of clothing. The dilapidated five-story south wing is closed.

1994 – John Thanos, is executed by lethal injection, the first execution at the penitentiary in 33 years.

1995 – The maximum-security inmates in the penitentiary's general population are transferred to the House of Corrections Annex in Jessup, a newly built facility with more efficient design.

1995 - Central Booking opens, a $56 million building.

1997 – Flint Hunt is executed by lethal injection



2005 – Raymond K. Smoot, 51, died after a violent confrontation with correctional officers on May 14, 2005, in Central Booking. Some officers punched, kicked and stomped Smoot's head, according to witness accounts obtained by The Sun.

2005 - April 27, A court order forced the release of at least 21 suspects from the Central Booking and Intake Center. The group of 21 suspects was set free from the downtown facility because they hadn't seen a court commissioner within 24 hours of arrest.

The information in this timeline was primarily found in, *Wallace Shugg, A Monument to Good Intentions: The Story of the Maryland Penitentiary, 1804-1995*, **Maryland Historical Society, 2000.**

Community Organizing in Caracas

23 de enero is a barrio of Caracas famous for its levels of community organization and revolutionary tendencies. Cira Pascual-Marquina recently met with Juan Contreras, director of the Coordinadora Simon Bolivar, located in an occupied police station at the heart of 23 de enero, and asked him about his work as organizer and his advice to organizers abroad.

CP: The conditions in the U.S. now are much closer to those of the Venezuelan IV Republic (1958-1998) than they are to today's. Do you have any advice or thoughts to share for people organizing in the U.S. today?

JC: My advice would be to be perseverant and constant: one has to maintain the political principles that informed one as an organizer – the years of struggles and fights are important. One must always maintain his or her objectives and aims in view.

Here in Venezuela, today, we are building a new society using the World Social Forum slogan "another world is possible." We are involved in the construction of another world, a society with social justice and with quality of life for all people. This translates into promoting education, health, housing, dignified work, and recreation; the latter needed by any human being in order to live well, whether in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe, or in the Americas.

For 40 years, during the IV Republic, our government never cared about the whole of society, the collective, but, on the contrary, excluded the weakest and the poorest. This led to a society full of inequalities and imbalances. Today, with the Bolivarian process, we aim to erase those differences and to build a more balanced society.

We believe that to construct the world we want from below, from the community, we must be creative, resolute, and daring.

The Organizer in the V Republic

As a collective, we have been committed to social consciousness raising and community work since before Chavez's election in 1998. The only thing that has changed is that now we have much more work than before. In a community like this - one that has been totally ignored by the social policy of the state and one with many deficiencies (access to water, transportation, etc.) - we have built a resistance that surfaces from the darkness of our problems and which kindles our willingness to fight.

We are now in a time of a revolutionary process as there we have a government that cares for the people, and we have a social politics that seeks to lower levels of violence. In these first few years the Coordinadora is focused on improvements in education and health. We aim to educate and to inform our people and our community such that the whole collective will benefit from the process. In other words, we wish to live well, but not merely as individuals – the whole collective of society needs to live well.

Architectural Context

It is interesting to see that there is so much social and political consciousness, indeed a quite militant and self-organized community, inhabiting these 1950s blocks that follow the architectural model of Le Courbusier. These models were designed in France to fragment and to depoliticize poor folks. Yet, here, in Caracas, and in Colombia too, the opposite happened. This should encourage people to realize that cultural activism and convivial cooperation can alter the way we inhabit our urban spaces.

These buildings were built between 1955 and 1957, in the middle of the military dictatorship here in Venezuela. Marco Perez Gimenez was in power and this complex was built under the premise of the new nationalist ideals that sought to foster urbanization by eliminating the "rancho", depicted as a unhealthy shed, in favor of the apartment. It was believed that in transforming the environment the quality of life would improve. 56 high-rise buildings of 15 flights and 42 small ones of 4 flights were built in under three years for a population of 60,000 people.

The color of the buildings -- red, blue, white, green -- aims to give an airy feeling and was copied from the French model. Although we live in dense buildings where each person has his or her apartment we feel that we are quite connected; in the East of Caracas, where rich folks live, it is common that no one knows who is his or her neighbor. Here, Families raise their kids together and everyone in the neighborhood knows everyone else – in fact we have a refrain that says 'in a little village there is a big hell' because everyone knows everyone else's business.

People come together because they care about what happens in their neighborhood, in the geographic space they inhabit. If there is a need for services, if there is a young boy in the community who is sick, folks collaborate.

In part this community fabric has much to do with the people who emigrated here. During urbanization people from the countryside, campesinos, came to the city to look for a better quality of life: health, education, housing, recreation, and work. So I would say that the social fabric here has something to do with that and with architecture that, for us, enabled neighbors to live side by side in such a way that helps to foster solidarity. We have a neighborhood that has been contestable and irreverent from its very beginning.

Interestingly, in Colombia, where block 8 of 23 de enero was built, we find much contestation as well. This is a story that very few people know: here the blocks go from 1 to 7 and from 9 to 56. The 8th block, called "El Venezolano," is in the city of Cali, in Colombia. This is where the ELN (Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional) has emerged.

So we believe that there is something in the architectural structures of these buildings that allows for a communal, convivial living when taken to a Latin American context; through the years these buildings have become referents in fights and struggles.

CP: For us, the work of the Black Panther Party in the U.S. is an important referent. For the Party, an important part of their political consciousness raising work was their cultural work: recovering cultural roots, taking pride in cultural traditions. It seems that here too that – in revolutionary Venezuela but especially at the Coordinadora – there is a program of recovering traditions. So the question is how is the political work connected with the cultural?

JC: In our case we have used culture to establish a bridge within our community that connects our beliefs to articulation and to action. These cultural elements provide a basis for the common political work of pursuing shared visions for our country, for correcting the aspects of our country that we feel have been left in a bad shape by previous governments.

Culture and politics go hand in hand here. Who does not like to dance, to draw, to be involved in cultural events? When you come here to the 23, you see a huge number of murals everywhere. It's a cultural manifestation, but also through the mural you are manifesting an idea and you are identifying yourself with an ideology.

The fact that we have maintained our cultural roots and that we are engaged culturally has rooted us in a way of thinking about life – about what we want and about what we are searching for. This is the crux of who we are. And I think the same happened with the Black Panthers. A people that have been excluded because of a race and class struggle – this makes them irreverent, creates a culture of resistance, and elevates their own cultural roots and their desire to make their voices be heard. For the last 40 years we have resisted –with culture as a form of resistance - the government's indifference. If people are having problems – if they are not receiving water – we will begin to mobilize politically. We locate the institutions that are responsible as well as those who can be oue allies, and then we organize in order to denounce and then to resolve the situation.

International Solidarity

We have seen the need to have solidarity with other peoples. Many folks from the 23 went to fight in Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador. Venezuelans fought for the independence of Cuba and in the Civil War in Chile. We want justice around the world, not just at home. Right now, I think that many Latin Americans, Venezuelans, and folks from the 23, would go to fight alongside Palestinians and the Lebanese if we had a chance. Because what is going on there is not a war, it's genocide. Many would give their blood for the survival of the Palestinian people, of the Lebanese. This is an important part of justice in our political and ideological framework. We believe in the solidarity of all peoples with all peoples. There is a saying - solidarity is the tenderness of the peoples. This characterizes our fights. And solidarity not only in our militancy, in our going to fight for just causes internationally, but also humanitarian missions. We have helped expatriates from Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina. We received Argentinians as brothers and sisters while 30,000 Argentinians disappeared during the junta.

We are dreaming an internationalist world. We dream for Latin America and for the rest of the world, for a world without aggression or constant bellicose threats.

Baltimore: 'Social Justice' Through Real Estate Development

by David Sloan

Baltimore has 42,481 vacant units--the fourth-highest ratio of vacant units to occupied units in the country. This is outrageous when there are 3,000 homeless in Charm City. The *Indypendent Reader* attended the 4th National Public Housing Residents' Summit to gain insight on the city's largest program to provide affordable housing.

Michael Kelly the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the District of Columbia gave a presentation on how Washington has used Hope VI, a federal grant program begun in 1999. The program provided funds to redevelop aging assets in the Housing Authority's portfolio to change the shape of public housing in his district. Much of his discussion focused on the way in which the architectural style predominantly used in Hope VI redevelopments disguises public housing by creating neighborhoods that look as if they are composed of middle-class home owners. Many of the homes are row houses or similar-density structures that resemble suburban homes. This is accomplished by having pitched roofs, individual lawns, and front entrances that do not reveal that the building is a shared apartment space. It is believed that this architecture will create a "defensible space" where residents police and manage themselves because the housing style makes them feel like private homeowners with material property and a local identity worth defending.

In Baltimore, we can see the example of the development after the Lafayette Court high-rise was demolished along Martin Luther King Boulevard and replaced with Heritage Crossing.

Kelly noted that public housing residents cannot get a cab driver to come to their homes because the drivers recognize the address as a public housing project. "And how do you change that? Having a lawyer living next door to a school teacher, a fireman living next door to a welfare recipient. So, when that phone rings, that cab driver doesn't know if it's a congressman or a welfare recipient. It's economic integration. At the end of the day, you can't tell who's who or what's what."

Kelly explained how the management of these developments has changed "from a situation controlled by and dependent on federal bureaucracy, to independence and entrepreneurial spirit / from a resident dependency, to resident self-sufficiency."

Kelly defined the measurement of the "health" of an area of the city in terms of vacancy, housing price at sale, and the income of the residents in that area. He noted, "we look at vacancies as the prime determinant of distress."

In these terms Baltimore, with its huge numbers of vacant units, is a sick body. However, it is important to realize that, as private developers are brought into the game of building public housing, the same vectors that create the disease of ghettoized spaces are the ones that profit from curing it.

The bulk of the vacant units in the city are owned either by the city or by institutional investors, who employ a tactic called "land banking." The strategy of land banking is to buy up property as it becomes available, and then withhold any investments from the site while buying up any nearby property that also comes up for sale. As the presence of vacancies and of derelict buildings causes property values to drop, people tend to move out while they can still get a decent market price for their homes. Thus, an institution can buy up an entire area for relatively low sums, and then demolish and redevelop an area for a large-scale project. At another presentation at the summit, a city official joked that "the city of Baltimore is the largest slum landlord in the city of Baltimore." We might also note the practices of Johns Hopkins University on the eastside.

Under Hope VI, Baltimore has demolished large-scale high-rises, such as Lafeyette Courts, comprising better than 800 apartment units, to make room for low-rise, mixed-income communities, such as Heritage Crossing. Although it contains 260 units, only 75 of them are earmarked for use by public housing residents. Rather than disguising public housing projects as middle class developments, housing authorities are working with private developers to produce middle class developments within the city. Under pressure to move out, many former residents accept subsidy under section 8 vouchers and move to the county, rather than sitting on a waiting list to try and get a unit in a new mixed-income development. With the looming presence of the housing authority's power to oversee eviction and application processes, residents are obliged not to attempt to fight or to organize against relocation and redevelopment. In many cases the bulk of residents are kept unaware of long-term development plans and are only brought into the process at the latest possible, legally-required date. In the Sumerset Homes east of I-83, a facility that, according to Baltimore's housing website, has been open for less than ten years, residents are currently being relocated after having received no planning information or involvement, as the city claims that the facility poses an imminent health risk.

Despite these statements about the benefits of private subsidy and the inadequacies of high-rise projects, Kelly framed a contradictory view when interviewed after his presentation. We asked him to define what specific problems occured in the modernist architecture, that was favored in public housing in the 1950's and 60's high-rise projects such as the Cabrini-Green development in Chicago. Kelly stated that the move to the Hope VI style of creating "defensible" architecture to fight high-rise sprawl and crime was motivated by a platform of governmental mismanagement. "There's nothing inherently wrong with the architecture," Kelly said. "It was an effort to concentrate low income folks ... [and it did] not provide the requisite services for those folks, and the maladies around drug addiction, when crack cocaine kicked in, etc. without having the programming to respond to these sort of social crises." He noted that during the Reagan years, there was, "no money for modernization, and it's incredible blight, physical blight, that occurred from deferred maintenance."

Asked if the shift to private development could be seen as an attempt to use "defensible space" as a control mechanism because of a lack of federal involvement, Kelly agreed. He continued "the failures of that movement [were] to have the

[continued next page]

whole thing contingent on the whims of the political party in power - but when you have the private sector market forces and the private sector investment having an investment in the upkeep of the property - it's a pretty good chance you're hedging the bet that there will not be the same level of deterioration because there will be the private sector motivation to keep these places up, where in the 60's and 70's there wasn't that motivation - there was just the opposite - it was sort of demolition by neglect." Counter to this, he summed his practice as "social justice through real estate development."

However, if this process involves the relocation of many residents outside of public housing programs without any real change in their socio-economic condition, then the city's current practice of urban renaissance is really neglect through real estate gentrification.

resources continued from page 7

National Trust for the Development of African-American Men
Address: 6811 Kenilworth Ave., Riverdale, MD 20737
E-mail: mendez2us@yahoo.com; phone: 301-887-0100
Web site: keepthetrust.org
Contact: Garry A. Mendez Jr., Executive Director
Area Served: USA; established: 1989

Provides training and technical assistance on value-based leadership training and community development for incarcerated men. The program emphasizes family responsibility and includes re-entry support and self-help support groups.

Power Inside
Address: P.O. Box 4796, Baltimore, MD 21211
E-mail: info@powerinside.org; phone: 410-262-8484
Web site: www.powerinside.org
Contact: Jacqueline Robarge, Director
Area Served: Baltimore
Parent Organization: Fusions Partnerships Inc.; established: 2001

Provides pre-release and post-release case management, literacy tutoring, legal assistance, support groups, advocacy and public education for women and girls impacted by incarceration, prostitution and street life.

U.S. Dream Academy
Address: 10400 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 300, Columbia, MD 21044
E-mail: jransom@usdreamacademy.org; phone: 410-772-7143
Web site: www.usdreamacademy.org
Contact: Jesse Fairchild-Ransom, Executive Assistant to the Vice President and COO
Diane Wallace Booker, Executive Vice President and COO
Area Served: USA; established: 1998

Provides children in grades 3 through 6 daily after-school programming that includes on-line academic enrichment, healthy lifestyles instruction, homework assistance, values training and mentoring. Provides video-visiting to support communication between prison and home. Programs currently in Washington, DC; Baltimore, MD; Newark, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Jamaica, Queens, NY; Houston, TX; and Atlanta, GA.

Urban Leadership Institute
Address: 28 Allegheny Ave., Suite 503, Baltimore, MD 21204
E-mail: dmiller@urbanleadershipinstitute.com; phone: 410-339-4630
Web site: www.urbanyouth.org
Contact: David Miller, Chief Visionary Officer
Area Served: USA; established: 1997
Publications: Dare To Be King: What If the Prince Lives - a Survival Workbook for African American Males; Dare To Be King: What Happens When Daddy Comes Home (curriculum for fathers who return home from prison).

Provides training and technical assistance on mentoring children of prisoners, with emphasis on working with African American males.

Why Indy Reader? (continued from 2)

formed the social movements which worked to change US policy on the Vietnam War.

Throughout the twentieth century, oppositional and minority movements, including workers, welfare mothers, people of color, gays and lesbians, and disabled persons have used the alternative press to develop the vision and power their struggles have required. From *The Nation*, founded in 1865, to *The Progressive* (1909), to *Monthly Review* (1949), to *Studies on the Left* (1959), to *The Black Scholar* (1969), to *In These Times* (1976), to *Z Magazine* (1988), to *Counterpunch* (1993), to the Independent Media Centers of the new century, the independent critical, press reports the news, analyzes the social relations, and nurtures the oppositional movements whose interests are in direct conflict with those of the liberal capitalist oligarchy.

Consider a few events of the 1960s:

*The murder of Fred Hampton and the intense pursuit of other Black Panther leaders by the FBI and other government agencies;
*The Trial of the Chicago Eight on conspiracy charges;
*The publication of *The Bitch Manifesto, The Red Stockings Manifesto* and other events catalyzing the increased radicalism of many feminists;
*The rise and fall of the Students for A Democratic Society;
*The increasing determination of the antiwar movement in the face of the Nixon administration's commitment to pursue and intensify attempts to destroy the National Liberation Front in Vietnam.

However, the analytical journals continued to publish and the work of their writers has likely influenced a new generation coming of age in the 1990s and the new century. From the radical caucuses in the academia sprang *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, *Insurgent Sociologist, Feminist Studies, New Political Science, Radical History Review, Review of Radical Political Economics*. While 1960s activists tended to refer their critique to "The System" or "Advanced Industrial Society", relying as they did on maverick scholars, like C. Wright Mills, who wrote under the pressure of the conservative 1950s, activists in today's alternative globalization movement, many "social anarchists" of varying tendencies, simply say "It's capitalism!"

Independent Media Centers

The first Independent Media Center was founded to report on the protest against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999. This first IMC created an environment for independent media makers of all types (audio, video, print, Internet) to work together covering the protests in a democratic and collaborative manner. It took three months for the Seattle IMC to get organized to provide grassroots coverage of the Battle of Seattle. It turns out that this was the beginning of a global independent media movement which focuses on reporting on the worldwide struggle against neoliberal capitalism and a range of local issues. There are now over 140 IMCs around the world. Baltimore Indymedia is one. Besides local coverage, Baltimore IMC has written on the activities in the streets at national protests in Washington DC, New York City, and Miami. Most members of our group are activists with social movement experience, and this is true of other IMCs.

"A people that wants to be free must arm itself with a free press."
- George Seldes

Only a handful of stable independent left periodicals, all with limited circulation, were documenting these events and analyzing them from a left perspective during most of the 1960s. But, by 1969, the year of massive anti-war demonstrations, the world of alternative periodicals was expanding.

With the 1960s we see the resurgence of autonomous advocacy journalism and intellectual projects. Titles were as diverse as the *North American Congress on Latin America's NACLA Report,* initially a newsletter, the academic *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Toronto's, *This Magazine*, and the radical urban weeklies. Theoretical perspectives included anarchism, feminism, socialism, ecology, black liberation, and gay liberation, documenting the efforts of women, people of color, rank & file workers, environmentalists, anti-apartheid student groups and Latin American solidarity supporters.

Almost all the radical weeklies and bi-weeklies of the 60s and 70s are gone--Atlanta's *Great Speckled Bird*, the *Ann Arbor Sun*, the *Portland Scribe, New Orleans's Nola Express*, the *Berkeley Barb*, the *DC Gazette*, and Baltimore's *Harry*. This partly related to the waning of the 1960s movements and the lack of development of institution-building skills, but also to the decision of the Underground Press Syndicate to be open to advertising in member newspapers, changing its name at the same time to the Alternative Press Syndicate. So, instead of the *Great Speckled Bird*—one of the best weeklies—we have entertainment weeklies like *The City Paper*.

In a sense, the current Indymedia movement is like the radical weeklies of the 1960s and 70s. Both are or were urban-based. Both have or had high levels of activist involvement. Both report or reported the advocacy of radical social change. Both express or expressed a commitment to independence and free speech. The IMCs, being Internet-based, are less costly. However, even in the IMC network there's recognition of the crucial value of print periodicals. New York IMC's The Indypendent is published bi-weekly and aspires to become a weekly. Baltimore's Indypendent Reader begins as a quarterly.

Thus, there is a parallel between the 1960s radical weeklies and the 2000s IMCs--one which notes the social movement-alternative media connection; broad-based left libertarian politics connecting with a similar media movement.

So, why the *Indypendent Reader*? First, we are partisans for grassroots participatory democracy and radical change. Second, we are print because we hope to overcome the class and race biases of the Internet—not everyone can afford a computer and dsl connection. We are a collaboration of two autonomous collectives: the Baltimore IMC, part of the larger Indymedia network, and the campbaltimore artist collective, a formation in opposition to capitalist development of urban space. We hope to help "build a new society on the vacant lots of the old."

-- CD

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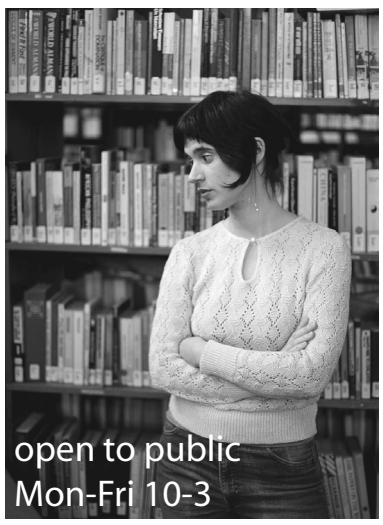

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❑ Pledge _____ monthly. ❑ Donate $100 or more and we'll send you a copy of *Annotations: A Guide to Independent Critical Press*, 3rd edition by Alternative Press Center.

Checks can be made payable to:
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Baltimore, MD 21218

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