From the Prisonhouse to the Slaughterhouse: Reflections on Lives in Captivity

Anthony Rayson

Capitalism can only provide the "freedom" of the charnel pit and the "democracy" of the mass grave. Driven by slavery of all sorts - prison, chattel, contract, wage, sexual -- the global "market" is vicious and fights over the meat. Not just humans, but also animals are exploited in ghastly. Mengelesque form. Trapped in factory-farmed concentration camps, enduring the gruesome nightmare of mechanized murder, genetically altered pigs, cattle, sheep. chickens, hens, and turkeys are transformed from living beings into commodities for the machines of planetary profit. Industrialized animals are crammed into tiny cages, raped for breeding purposes, and their offspring are forcibly fattened, confined, drugged, and rushed to slaughter, all for the cravings of carnivorous consumers.

Of course, it doesn't stop with the torture and murder of non-human animals who suffer and die in an endless variety of barbarities. Human animals too are subjected to the horrors of forced imprisonment, slavery, starvation, and all manner of unnecessary suffering, experimentation, and commodification.

We know that for capitalism to survive, it must endlessly expand, as its whole modus operandi is driven by the quest for the profits of elites not the needs of the world. Mountains of non-biodegradable garbage, plastics, metal, and radioactive material continue to accumulate, as global capitalism devours and depletes dwindling natural resources. All the while, wars or talk of more wars are looming in the battle of the "fittest" for territory and scarce resources. It's a planetary ecological and social tsunami in the making.

It takes a response of equal intensity and clarity, bubbled from the underground up. For life itself, an orgiastic panorama of options, is based on "mutual aid," not the "survival of the fittest" like we've been deceptively led to believe. Evolution couldn't happen without cooperation. But, extinction is a distinct possibility, as a lying, dying murdering system goes through its disgusting death throes.

We're all gravely threatened by the otherworldly murderous intent and "star wars" capabilities of the U.S. system of neo-con warlord wannabes. Large corporations set their agendas in their mahogany boardrooms for their sycophantic media and other means they use to instill compliance and acceptance. Academia, even "radical" studies and the "academic Left," are centers for the detachment from and intellectualization of genocidal policy. The rulers of the global capitalist empire develop the "research" that enables maximal profit and control. NAFTA and the World Bank are there to "solve" the problems of third world "poverty" they generated in the first place. Hitler, no wonder you were so damned jealous. Your dream of a "Master Race" has been realized. Zeig Halliburton!

All aspects of coercive social life, such as the schools, the military, and mass culture constantly reinforce the "goodness" of their bullshit cause -- the Washington-run, global terrorist campaign of pillage, theft, extermination, and lies. Those left alive should wear a McDonald's beanie and bleat when

prompted. We get the "privilege" to dig our own graves, while we live a regulated life in service to our oppressors' addiction to wealth accumulation.

Of course, the authorities call their terrorist bombs, jails, guns, planes, and markets "counter-terrorism." We're supposed to be so proud when dead bodies of US GI's trickle back to the states (under orders not to be photographed), as the severely injured fade into the shadows of suffering. Talk about "animal abuse"! And just think of the "cradle of civilization," modern day Iraq. Bombed and poisoned and forced with infanticide, more invasion, occupation, degradation and constant bloodshed and suffering -- yet they live on. All the animals there no doubt are suffering terribly, too, unless under the care of normal people. The whole system of for-profit torture must end. It's a modern day, worldwide Gulag and system of slavery.

Hugo L. A. Pinell is a former comrade-in-arms of the legendary George Jackson. Here's what he has to say about how this system devastates our society: "Our oppression and dehumanization and our living conditions worldwide, are worse than ever because we are dealing with the most vicious, malicious and inhumane forces in history. They control just about every aspect of our physical and social lives, and that is a reality we can't deny or ignore. But as agonizingly painful as this reality is, the biggest damage these monster criminals have inflicted upon our humanity is the one done to our mental faculties, through a systematic and dogmatic process, generation to generation."[1] From this psychological imprisonment flow all the degradations we must live through.

The Art of Mind Control

Subjugation can't function amidst a society of thinking, feeling people who haven't had their humanity lobotomized. Education, knowledge, truth and the brave people who make them their life have been made "illegal" in a way. In the nineteenth century, it was against US law to educate slaves. Their native culture was beaten out of them and servility, Christianity, and hopelessness was forcefully inculcated.

The same goes today in a much more sophisticated, all-encompassing manner. From the minute a child is born, s/he is deluged with never-ending television and social suffocation. Normal human activity is filtered through a blizzard of corporate ideology and consumerism, leading to the intellectual torpor and vapidity that passes for social life. Even families aren't really families, as the parents are slaving away in the rat race, the latch-key kids are taught nonsense and obedience in schools. Their "free" time is gobbled up by the idiot box, movies, fast food, and computer games that trumpet the fascist cry of "Long Live Death!"

So, we live in a society rooted in the need to zombify its citizens, to mass manufacture armies of uneducated masses oblivious to their own best interests, unable to think critically and resist. I read a story about a gung-ho moron in a government death squad who reveled in the "opportunity" to massacre people in Fallujah. Like many soldiers, he was a deadbeat and lost soul. His passion was Tupac Shakur. But Tupac railed against the US slave state, not for it! Yet that was lost on him. He was killing men, women, and children in Iraq and being told he was a "hero."

The German Nazis specialized in the "Big Lie" and advanced the "science" of propaganda. With the end of World War II, the US made it a [illegible] Nazi [illegible] and put them at the head of the

nascent CIA and other oppressive systems. The US competed with Russia, who had the same idea – a nationwide, deceptive system of capitalism, military aggressive towards others, and intense repressive at home. Russia had Stalin, Italy had Mussolini, and the US had John Foster Dulles. 3

All aspects of our lives are targeted, with the goal of mindless acquiescence to the wilting of our own being and the Time Machine-like response to the sirens that blare when the system wants us to do something -- be it to cheerlead for mass murder, work obediently in factories, participate in their genocide, or become their jailers and kidnappers. Exploiting people in this manner is just a reflection of the treatment the Global Gulag accords the ecology of the Earth. Species extinction, resource depletion, global warming, chemical and radiation poisoning, decimation of the rainforests, and other signs of ecological collapse are causes and effects of the oppression placed upon people. It's at the crux of our whole problem.

Drugs play a huge role in this too, because many drugs have a strong effect on our thinking and behavior. Heroin was brought in from the Marseilles Mafia in the wake of the massive bloodletting of WWII. Air America was the world's largest airline during the Vietnam genocide and they routinely smuggled massive amounts of heroin into the States, sometimes inside the bodies of dead GI's. I remember seeing pictures of junkies sprawled on stairwells, victims of a particularly pure dose. CIA agents inundated the inner cities with crack cocaine to destroy the environment of the Black community.

Strange Fruit of the Prison Industry

In the racist system of the US, it takes 500 times as much powdered cocaine (the drug of whites) as crack (the drug of blacks) to get the same mandatory sentence. Crack is a highly addictive and debilitating drug that ruins communities. Moreover, its hyper-illegal status makes it easy for police to round-up blacks and further devastate their community. Crack is the epitome of racist drug law. With few legal forms of commerce available, dealing drugs becomes a major part of the economic life in the 'hood. Even though most of the drugs are sold to white people, it is black people who are imprisoned and murdered because of them. Black women too are thrown into prisons, leaving their young children without mothers, in a slave-like acceleration in the punishment industry. An environment without love or hope is a doomed environment. Add the fact that poor black communities also suffer the lion's share of industrial waste dumps and inferior everything, and you have a systematically degraded environment that breeds despair and violence.

Prisons began as factories and police forces were created to capture slaves and suppress workers. This is still their function today. Cops of all kinds still basically take their orders from the corporations who pull the strings in Washington. "Gangs," "anarchists," and "terrorists" are all buzzwords that people almost automatically accede to in order not to involve themselves with whoever the government is targeting.

Prisons aren't about "crime control," they're about for-profit repression. In fact, they are a huge, government-run, criminal enterprise, wildly profitable, and completely paid for by ripped-off taxpayers. Think about prison environments for a moment. People screaming day and night. Rape and the spread of serious diseases -- such as AIDS, hepatitis, venereal

diseases, and everything else – is epidemic, as if deliberately cultured in a Petri dish. Violence, longing, bitterness, hopelessness, and self-loathing are coupled with the schooling in criminality. Useful programs within this madhouse environment have been gutted. There's no real rehabilitation, no social re-entry programs. People are left to live or die in this minimalist warehouse nightmare. Then, after consuming the prime of many lives, people are spit out of their dungeon and shoved into the glare of day without any clothes, housing, job prospects, or money. And a vast array of laws and stipulations nearly guarantee that parolees will soon return for some parole violation or new "crime."

There is an endless poisoning of community environments. First the system snatches up young, dynamic men and women, then forces them through a hellish prison world, then dumps them back into the community like human refuse. This insane system leaves people shell-shocked, embittered, and farther from being a positive asset to the community than when it seized them. In Amerika, the state tortures and tries to kill the spirit of people, whereas in client states like El Salvador, the US-trained authorities were allowed to go all the way – to torture, kill, and dump the mutilated bodies for the vultures to pick over – just like the US perfected in the Phoenix Program in Vietnam. Given that a community cannot live without a positive spirit and hope of genuine humanity, what miserable kind of world is this prison system really breeding?

Many of the most articulate and courageous thinkers and doers are locked down and kept from the public. Once prisoners raise their voice, they can expect severe repression – beatings, transfers to control units and supermax torture chambers, forced drugging, shackling, and other techniques unique to the US. A huge percentage of the young men from the most oppressed communities – Blacks, Latinos and Native American men, and increasingly women – have been ensnared in round-ups. Not just in large cities, but also in reservations, rural communities, along the U.S.–Mexican border, suburbs, and elsewhere, people are continuously fed into the maws of Mammon to fatten the for-profit punishment industry.

So, really, the vibrancy of these communities, even though separated sexually, exists in the prisons of America today. Everything is concentrated from the violence and cruelty, to the love and insight. Meanwhile, the community state inmates came from is left without direction; it is fearful and subjected to low-level occupation, surveillance, economic hardship, constant brainwash, desperation, and ignorance. Grassroots groups struggle to do useful community support work, for, the young lions and lionesses and the wise elders that they so vitally need are locked away. The captives' families have a difficult, daily struggle just to keep on keeping on.

Those of us who have battled through a lifetime of lies and have regained our ability to think have overcome our fear. We are thus capable of contributing our unique talents and interests to concentrate on addressing the crucial issue of prison reform. This is where the Kevin (Rashid) Johnsons and the Jeffrey Leurs' are. To rebuild our communities and develop serious resistance requires that we collaborate closely with these brave and brilliant prisoners.

Another debilitating lie the government constantly tries to hammer into people is that prisoners are dangerous threats to the populace, when in fact they are culled from their own families and communities. Mostly, they

comprise poor people of color convicted of non-violent, often victimless "crimes." Yet, every night on the news, the headline story is about the latest gruesome murder. But, of course, the media never bestows the same attention to the innumerable victims of the government killing machines, the industrial accidents, or the hell of prison life, where behind the razor wire people die like flies. Incarceration itself is a crime against humanity. No other animal treats itself or other species with such cruel contempt. The prison industry is anti-life, constructed only to oppress, instill fear, and keep a monstrous regime in power.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

To successfully overcome this horrible reality will require a reversal of the brainwashing process. We must break out of our atomized existence and learn to be thinking, feeling people again. All the struggles in the world are interconnected and these connections must be made formed in political alliances. Solidarity, a basic anarchist tenet, is extremely important for revolutionary change.

As government is increasingly targeting activists and organizers, such as Ward Churchill and the Anarchist Black Cross, more and more of these people will become prisoners. For the truth they speak is powerful and dangerous, like water to a wicked witch. Go to the prisons for the real truth about this society and know that the garbage you see and hear from governmental mouthpieces is lies.

Prisoners have experience with deprivation, lack of resources, repression, and so forth. They have adapted to their situation in ways that show resourcefulness we need to learn from. How do you cook food on a heater? How do you barter coffee, stamps, food, and various services to get what you need? More generally, how do you adapt to such a restrictive situation and still keep your sanity? Prisoners can teach the rest of us these type of vital skills.

One thing that really frustrates me is the obliviousness of outside people to the powerful education of which prisoners are capable. I focus much of my attention helping to get the word in and out of the gulags. Prisoners are immensely grateful when given empowering information. They start study groups and read zines until the cops confiscate them and then they write their own material. People on the outside seem to care only about how "professional" a zine looks and not the ideas it contains. Who is really in prison here, mentally? Without the humanity, freedom, and counsel from conscious prisoners, I myself would be in a constant state of dread and despair.

The labs where monkeys, cats, dogs, mice, rats, and all kinds of animals are forced to endure gruesome experiments which will destroy their sanity and life, is, was, and always has been, duplicated by people on human prisoners. Nazi vivisector Joseph Mengele learned his methods from US mentors and colleagues who came to Germany to teach him their techniques. At the close of WWII, the US grabbed the best and the brightest German "scientists" to learn the latest techniques in everything from developing hydrogen bombs to enforcing sensory deprivation in prisons and madhouses. Many of these evil police tactics we're seeing more of today – violent restraint techniques, high-frequency concussive blasts fired into crowds,

tasers, mass pens of "pre-emptive" arrestees, and so on -- are developed after experimentation on prisoners. Who better to learn from than the initial victims themselves? 6

The modern techniques of sadism, brainwashing, control, atomization, and obfuscation form an ever-expanding and all-encompassing field of "research." The shock-and-awe ghastliness of the US government knows no bounds, and the tens of millions of human beings vaporized in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, butchered throughout Central America, or killed and left for the starving dogs in Fallujah all bear grim testament to this sordid fact. The U.S. is fascistic, or if you prefer, "democratic," which only means militarized corporatism. Sham elections don't affect that status one iota.

Like everybody else, I feel the pressure and bear witness to the carnage and suffering experienced throughout our world, because of this extreme aggressor nation. Personally, I gravitated to dealing almost exclusively with the prisons, because it became more and more clear to me that this was "ground zero" on the assault on Americans by the system. It's the "black hole" of society, constitutionally sanctioned slavery, where anything goes in the dungeons of the state. Court cases brought forth by prisoners have been dismissed by no less than by the U.S. Supreme Court, citing a clause in the Thirteenth Amendment that sanctifies slavery for prisoners.

So, when the system makes anti-capitalist and anti-state activities "illegal," it has an unlimited source (or potential source) of slaves to exploit, without any moral accountability or economic responsibility. All expenses to feed and house prisoners are paid for by the governmental extortion racket known as taxes. Just as technological advances bring forth faster cars, so too does state repression evolve and streamline itself. And the folks with the brightest minds and who are the most giving to their communities are often singled out for the most physical and psychological torment.

Black folks face the extreme, but all of us are likewise being menaced and targeted, as this system devours everything in its path. We need to look to the most oppressed in this nation (Blacks, natives, women, undesirables of every stripe) and assimilate the analyses of their experiences, so we can thoroughly build a conscious counterforce of life, love, liberation and giving humanity.

Dirty Old Prison Town

Stalags are everywhere nowadays and affect everybody. They kidnap their young bounty, usually in urban areas, as opportunities for round-ups for a million-and-one "violations" of their pro-slavery laws abound. Rural areas have been besieged by corporate farms, and the government has most people where they want them -- atomized, television-watching, worker bees. Prisons come and the glowing promises turn into community nightmares.

A brother we were able to help parole (a real rarity) in Alabama was telling me about a struggle in his community to prevent the erection of a prison. He said that at first the prison builders claimed they were constructing a strip mall! The politicians, gutless wonders as ever, never fail to crow for the greased wheel deal of a prison as a means of "economic development" in rural communities. The whoring-out of these hyenas gets shriller and hoarser, so naturally, we must all acquiesce, as our conservative press tries to disdainfully explain to us the wonders of "progress." So slap your "bring them home" ribbons on the back of your SUV and don't think

anything of it. Condoleezza Rice, George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz will "take care of things." Kissinger is always there for advice.

A prison is the kiss of death to a community. They bully the whole country (and less convincingly, the world) with an unhealthy, deliberately ruinous, wasteful, oblivious, and punishing mindset. They also pollute pitilessly and "legally" cut local deals so they can maraud over all areas, economically and culturally. I'm talking about all the industries, factories, prisons, animal farms, military centers -- all of it. Our hard work is exploited for profits, then taxes, so that industry and government can ruin our communities, force us into being their jailors and soldiers, and wreak devastation on our brothers and sisters all across the globe. Democracy in bloodthirsty action!

Recently, the state of Illinois was going to grace a poor black farming community in Kankakee County, with a women's prison. This was in Hopkins Park. They thought that they could use this to balm over centuries of slavery and institutional racism by bestowing a beautiful prison in their face. Well, guess what? The citizens responded with militant direct action! Living in Pembroke Townshie, they formed a group called Pembroke Advocates for Truth (PAT). Their newsletter, *Insight*, was the joyous rarity in activism - funny as hell and dead on. They didn't cater to the idea that they should welcome a prison. They saw it, rightfully so, as monstrous, as another example of the oppressive nature of this settler, cracker Empire!

Despite the fact that these folks vehemently rejected this project, poor though they continue to be, it was started anyway. Initially, it was planned to happen directly across from an organic farm. Due to agitation, it became known that this piece of land -- the first piece actually sold to a state government for a prison by any state in decades (all other land had been "gratefully" ceded by municipalities) -- was actually a sweetheart land deal between the crooked Governor, George Ryan and billionaire Kankakee developer, Tony Perry.

A prison always has its glaring lights on twenty fours hours a day. Most have ominous towers occupied by shotgun-toting guards. The dumping of sewage, along with excessive pollution caused by this dreadful economic system of mass incarceration, means that communities are flooded with problems, not "solutions." Your "prison town" environment has been degraded in the most depressing of ways. Your area will henceforth be known for human suffering and misery for the "cause" of profits instead of whatever vibrancy it once possessed or the human potential that is forever squelched by this demented society. Natural habitats of animals are also forever being menaced by this unrelenting paving of farmland and the introduction of diesel and gas-spewing vehicles into beforehand peaceful, pastoral productive farmland. Everything, alive or dead - even inorganic - has a price on it and is subject to the devastation the system clumsily and wantonly causes.

Total Liberation

These are serious times and we are greatly in need of lucid, well-written narratives and analyses, crafted to be empowering and to offer instruction and guidance. We can rise above our fears, develop effective working habits, and operate with a driven determination. Humans must learn to usefully

apply their energies to the greater good of their community, something that animals do instinctively. People would act spontaneously too, if allowed to be themselves as individuals who are naturally interested in mutually supportive, non-coercive community. But being programmed to function as obedient robots and soylent green-fed consumers is the opposite of genuine freedom and real life.

The marvelous brainpower human animals possess gives us the possibility to transcend this repressive and predatory social environment. But the baser instincts of power and greed which drive the small few who orchestrate this worldwide death march are holding our minds and bodies hostage, just like the animals they exploit. We must cross the fear line and develop our human capacities. Work your brain and decide where your greatest talents and interests lie, and weave your gifts into the social struggle. Mutual aid will see us all through, but it only works if you seriously apply yourself.

It's all part of the struggle for liberation -- be it for humans, animals, or the Earth herself. People wrenched from poor neighborhoods are a vital part of the slaughterhouse environment this system requires to keep creaking along. Take away a third of the young black men in poor communities -- in some areas the percentage kidnapped is well over 50%! -- and then warehouse them in dreary prisons, and the social environment has been effectively decimated. Family members have no brothers, sons, or husbands to deal with the occupation and forced immiseration of their "expendable" communities of people. Increasingly, it's the women, mostly mothers of young children, who are wrenched from the embrace of their families and forced to languish in a cage.

Those who have gained useful knowledge must become the serious educators for others. Free education must be a fundamental part of all activist activity. The knowledge is accessible, through websites, zines, distros, tapes, etc. We should seize the media and adapt what is useful to the situation at hand, as we continually, "raise some fucking issues" as Lorenzo Komboa Ervin eloquently puts it.

I call it "agitation-education." Our fellow humans are all being treated like minks on a farm, in one form or another. To liberate them means to be supportive of them and help them rekindle their sense of self. A person who overcomes his or her fear of the state, is an animal finally freed and capable of anything.

SOUTH CHICAGO ABC
ZINE DISTRO
POB 721 HOMEWOOD IL 60430