

VOICES OF THE LUCASVILLE UPRISING VOLUME 2



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STILL FEELING THE DOWNPOURING OF INJUSTICE



Written February 2006 By Greg Curry, and published on
Prisonersolidarity.org

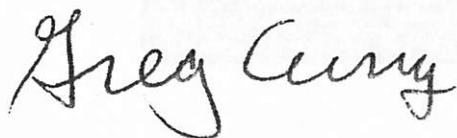
My name is Greg Curry and I am a prisoner at the Ohio State Penitentiary. As a human being who loves humanity, I believe the current climate--socially, politically, morally and economically--is starving for justice, particularly along the lines of "race."

As a male of African descent, I have felt the downpouring of injustice even before I could identify it. As I grow in my consciousness, I've come to realize that White Americans need to stand on the

frontlines against racism. After all, they are the beneficiaries of both direct and indirect privileges, such as large inheritances, stewardships over governing positions, and the ability to visit areas where Blacks reside without being a "suspect" due to their skin tone. We cannot ignore it any longer. This battle against racism is theirs as well as ours. I hear a lot of talk about being a true patriot. Well, if you're not a patriot for humanity, you're a soldier for racism.

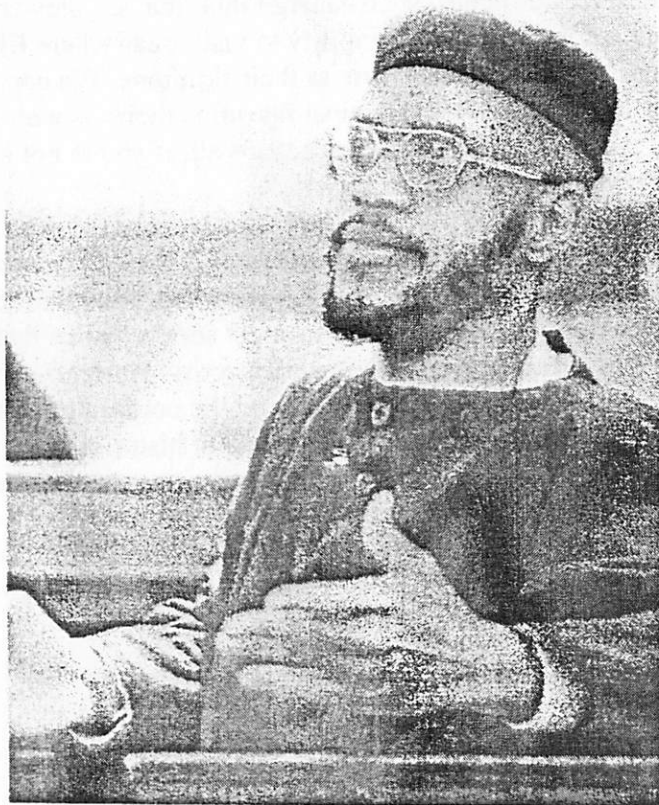
Human patriots must demand justice as if the victim were a child that once played in their own backyard, a child that once went camping with their own children. Human patriots must seek a justice that's not left to chance or circumstance. When police across America can collectively shoot unarmed Black males, and the corporate press can demonize the victims by releasing their criminal histories and subliminally questioning their innocence, one knows that racism is very much alive. True to this negative trend and stereotype of Black males, I was convicted of crimes I didn't commit during the 1993 Lucasville uprising. As a result, I currently seek justice from false convictions. I'd be grateful for your interest in my fight for justice.

Freedom first,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Curry". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent "G" and "C".

WRITE TO GREG:
Greg Curry, #213-159
Ohio State Penitentiary
878 Coitsville-Hubbard Rd.
Youngstown, OH 44505

UNITED WE STAND



by Imam Siddique Abdullah Hasan

Written in solidarity with the Pelican Bay SHU Hungerstrike, 2011

Revolutionary Salute and Shields Up! It has come to our attention that the brothers at the Pelican Bay State Prison Security Housing Unit will commence on indefinite hunger strike on July 1, 2011, to protest the inhumane and dehumanizing conditions they've been forced to endure for 25 years. Further, it is our understanding that their protest has been inspired by the successful hunger strike that two of my comrades and I participated in during January of this year; where we received massive international support from those on the outside who believed in the righteousness of our protracted struggles to fight to

secure the same privileges as other condemned prisoners at Ohio State Penitentiary (OSP).

The call has been made by those at pelican Bay State Prison for prisoners throughout the state of California who have been suffering injustices to join them in their peaceful strike to put a stop to blatant violations of California prisoners' civil and human rights. Moreover, their call made it perfectly clear that "if [California prisoners] cannot participate in the strike, then [they should] support it in principle by not eating for the first 24 hours of the strike." While their heartfelt plea was not made to Ohio prisoners, a growing number of us at OSP have decided to join them in their peaceful protest. We hope and pray that our united stand with those brothers at Pelican Bay will have a domino effect throughout the nation—that is, with prisoners in other states, as well as their outside supporters, will come together and stand united with the oppressed soldiers at Pelican Bay.

Their injustices have been going on for far too long. How long? Too long!

Twenty-five years is too long for human beings to be subjected to the cruel terms and dictates of their oppressors.

Regarding their challenges and the protracted nature of their struggle, we urge those brothas to brace themselves for the battle ahead. There will no easy victory, yet those soldiers at Pelican Bay must be determined to stay the course and to go forward in the spirit of past and present revolutionaries to change the oppressive conditions of their confinement. No matter how difficult the circumstances may become. As Comrade George L. Jackson wrote, "Revolutionary consciousness is the only real hope of those oppressed by the system."

Power to the oppressed People!

DEATH PENALTY

By Siddique Abdullah Hasan, delivered via telephone at a Georgia tour stop of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty National Speaking Tour in 2010. Originally published in Socialist Viewpoint

In the revolutionary spirit of past, present and future revolutionaries, I greet each and everyone of you in attendance with the revolutionary salute: SHIELDS UP!

First and foremost, I want to thank Brotha Patrick Dyer, a good friend and comrade of mine, for inviting me to speak at this year's Campaign to End the Death Penalty national speaking tour stop in North Georgia. Being born and raised in the projects and war zones in Savannah, I know all too well about lynching and the lynch mob mentality that, exist in Georgia and the surrounding states. So I have to admit, I am profoundly moved by the honor bestowed upon me to speak with you about this year's theme: Lynching Then, Lynching Now.

During the Fall of 2008 [October 13, 2008], Ted Koppel, an award-winning journalist and former anchorman for Nightline, hosted a television program called "The Last Lynching." I'm not sure if any of you have seen this program or not, but this one hour special aired on the Discovery Channel, where Mr. Koppel was the managing editor. While the backdrop of the program offered a look at "how far this country has come on the racial front" and "how acts of hatred and racism have affected the lives of three Americans," the focus was about the 1981 lynching of Michael Donald, a 19-year-old Black man who was murdered and then his limp body was hung from a tree across the street from one of the perpetrators' apartment. The fact that most of you probably never even heard of Mr. Donald's story and the fact that the program was incorrectly called "The Last Lynching," I can think of no better way to begin my presentation than to begin it by narrating the story of this innocent, courageous, young man.

Mr. Donald was murdered in Mobile, Alabama, by Henry Francis Hays and James "Tiger" Knowles, two members of the Ku Klux Klan.

The Ku Klux Klan in Southern Alabama had met that week and discussed the fact that a Black man was on trial in Mobile, accused of shooting a White police officer. The members of the Klan, including Hays and Knowles, felt that there was a risk that the killer would be acquitted and they were very concerned that a Black man would be able to get away with killing a White police officer.

Ultimately on Friday evening, the jury reported it was unable to reach a verdict since it was "hung." Infuriated and fueled by that, Hays and Knowles borrowed 15 feet of rope from Hays' brother-in-law and went out looking for a target to lynch or "harass." Notice, included is the word "harass," because some people were of the opinion that the perpetrators only wanted to frighten someone. Anyway, they took Mr. Donald to the middle of a pine forest. The branches on the pine trees were at least 20 feet above the ground so they realized there was no way they could throw the rope over the branch and hang their intended victim. Nonetheless, as they pointed the gun at Mr. Donald, he courageously fought back and ultimately managed to seize the pistol. At that point the two tackled him, knocked him unconscious, went to the trunk of the car and got the rope, placed it around his neck and choked him to death. Afterward, they put his limp body in the trunk and then drove around Mobile trying to figure out what to do with the body. They finally decided to hang it from a tree across the street from where Hays lived.

In spite of it being hung just across the street from where a known racist and member of the KKK lived, amazingly, it was two years before the FBI was able to develop evidence which led them to Knowles, who ultimately cooperated in the prosecution of his co-defendant, Henry Hays.

Hays was convicted of capital murder and was eventually executed for his part in this senseless crime. In fact, to the best of my

knowledge and belief, his execution was the first time a white person was ever executed in the United States for killing a Black person, notwithstanding there is documented evidence that thousands-upon-thousands of Blacks have either been lynched or unjustifiably murdered between the end of Reconstruction [mid-1870] and World War II. This within itself should tell us volumes about our so-called criminal justice system and how it regards the lives of Blacks to be insignificant in comparison to others. Another reminder that our criminal justice system is broken can be seen in the fact that Blacks and whites are murdered at relatively the same rate yet 80 percent of those whom have been executed in the United States since its [the death penalty] resumption on January 17, 1977, have been executed for murdering whites, while only 13 percent have been executed for murdering Blacks. These statistics alone send a clear and alarming message to any would-be murderer: Blacks are fair game.

So the question becomes: What is lynching, and does it still exist today?

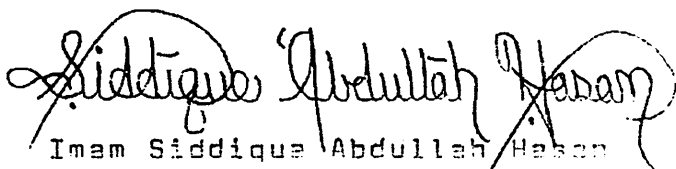
According to the Establishment and their sympathizers, lynching is the process of putting someone to death by hanging—be it from a tree, bridge, tower, flagpole, or atop of a bonfire—and is executed by mob action and without legal authority. Since Ted Koppel belongs to the media Establishment, it should come as no surprise why he and his colleagues possess a narrow view as to what constitutes lynching. To accept their narrow definition is to deny that James Byrd was lynched in 1998 in Jasper, Texas, where three white men put a chain around his neck, tied it to the back of a pick up truck and then drove his body down a street until he was decapitated. Likewise, to accept their narrow definition is to deny that Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Tamika Wilson, Oscar Grant III, and too many others to name, were summarily executed. No, no, no! We cannot passively accept their narrow definition when we know it does a disservice to humanity, and especially to the family members of those who were lynched.

Understand and understand well, racial hatred and violence, as well as domestic terrorism, have always been the perverted ingredients that prompted the killings of innocent Blacks, Jews, Italians, Native Americans, and other minorities in this country. As activists and revolutionaries, we have a moral and social responsibility to stand up to

evil and change the course of history. It shouldn't matter if the perpetrators or facilitators of these lynchings are Klans, cops, judges or even governors, nor should it matter if the lynchings are done via a rope, gun, lethal injection or an electric chair. In the end, a lynching is still a lynching—plain and simple. Our predecessors, both Blacks and whites, fought against lynching and we should send a clear message that we will fight against it today.

In conclusion, I want to remind you that to be a revolutionary is to be an agent of change, which is virtually impossible to achieve if one doesn't know what needs to be changed. I also want to remind you that in this past presidential election, this country voted for change and Barack Obama promised it. Therefore, we should hold him accountable to his promise. As a revolutionary, I urge you to continue with your fight to save the lives of Troy Anthony Davis, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the other innocent men and women on death row waiting to be lynched.

From death row, this is Siddique Abdullah Hasan.



Imam Siddique Abdullah Hasan
Ohio State Penitentiary

WRITE TO HASAN:

Siddique Abdullah Hasan

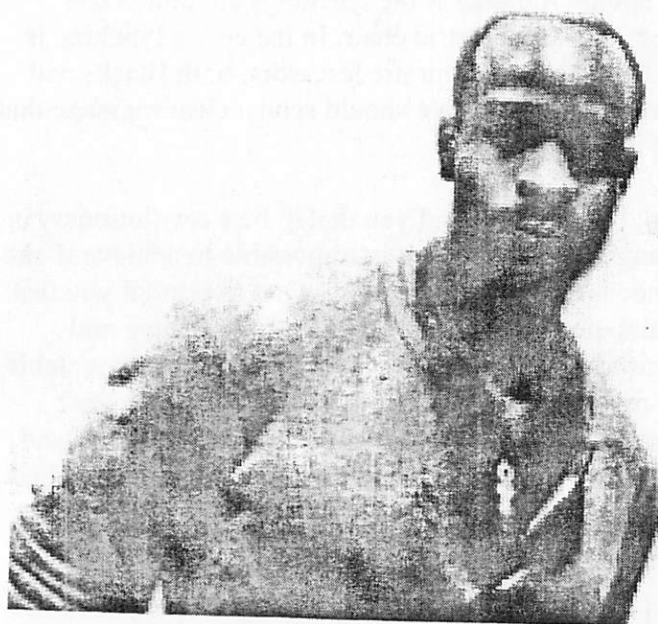
R150-559

Ohio State Penitentiary

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CRIME AND PUNNISHMENT



By Bomani Shakur, December 2011

“The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.”– Dostoyevsky

If what Dostoyevsky says is true – and I believe it is – then America, which boasts the largest prison population in the world, is perhaps the most uncivilized country there is. A bold statement, I know, especially coming from someone who has spent the past 23 years behind bars. But if what Dostoyevsky says is true, then what happens inside these places is crucial to understanding what kind of society we live in; and who better to speak to the reality of prison life than someone who is living the experience?

But no one wants to learn about the madness that predominates inside these places. People – average, law-abiding citizens – are losing

their homes and jobs and are struggling to survive, and the last thing anyone wants to hear is how hard prison is for a bunch of criminals. "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime" is the prevailing sentiment and attitude. It never occurs that the rising incarceration rate is connected to the same economic and political policies that resulted in the home foreclosure crisis and the rise in unemployment.

When people think of crime, what usually comes to mind is a poor person inflicting pain upon another poor person. Very seldom, if ever, do we stop and allow ourselves to consider the forces that create crime; trapped by the pull of our own necessities and fears, we live reactively, focusing on the effects instead of the causes of what we see and believe – and so we remain divided. And it's precisely because of this division that we are our own worst enemies – divided, they rule us!

But who are "they," and what do they have to do with the way in which we see and treat each other?

Howard Zinn, in his book "A People's History of the United States," tells us who they are and how they use us against one another:

"[T]he wealthiest one percent of the nation owns a third of the wealth. The rest of the wealth is distributed in such a way as to turn those in the 99 percent against one another: small property owners against the propertyless, black against white, native-born against foreign-born, intellectuals and professionals against the uneducated and unskilled ..."

Hence, in the context of a capitalistic society, crime is the result of an unequal distribution of wealth. As such, a distinction between guilt and responsibility must be made. For instance, a person can be guilty of selling drugs but not at all responsible for creating the conditions wherein selling drugs is the only viable option for survival. Indeed; when one lives in a society where profit takes precedence over human potential, one's very existence becomes a crime; and whether

this takes on the form of selling drugs, stealing food or joining a gang to fight over turf and limited resources, the goal is to stay alive.

When one lives in a society where profit takes precedence over human potential, one's very existence becomes a crime; and whether this takes on the form of selling drugs, stealing food or joining a gang to fight over turf and limited resources, the goal is to stay alive.

I grew up in poverty, born to a marginally educated Black woman who, because of a lack of opportunity, sought to raise me and my three siblings on welfare. In the whole 42 years I've been alive, I've only seen my father one time. By the age of 10, I was stealing food from the neighborhood grocery store in order to survive. I was 13 when I took my first joyless joyride in a stolen vehicle, which ultimately led to my being sent away for the first time. By the time I turned 17, I had been living on my own for several years and selling drugs in one of the most impoverished, drug-infested neighborhoods in Cleveland, Ohio. A few months after my 19th birthday, in 1988, the year crack cocaine became an epidemic, I was involved in a shoot-out over money and I killed a rival drug dealer. For this, I was sent to prison to serve a life sentence for murder.

In a nutshell, this is the story of my life, and if any of it was unique, the telling of it would be inconsequential, an unnecessary recounting of my own personal troubles. However, what makes my story significant is that it's the exact same tale told by millions of poor people who grow up in the slums of America, which points to the possibility of there being something larger than one's personal troubles at work in the process to determine where one ends up in this society.

In his groundbreaking work on "The Sociological Imagination," C. Wright Mills, using the example of unemployment, explains the difference between personal troubles and societal issues:

"When, in a society of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of

50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of society, and not merely the personal situation of a scatter of individuals."

Applying the same logic, it should be considered an issue that Black people – in a country wherein they represent only 13 percent of the population – make up 50 percent of those who are sent to prison. It is likewise an issue that virtually 100 percent of those behind bars are poor and come from economically deprived sections of society.

In addressing this issue, it's not enough to point the finger at a bunch of so-called criminals and, without first looking at the economic and political institutions of society, claim that they are the sole cause of their predicament.

Despite what those in power would have us believe, no one starts out with the goal of becoming a criminal and spending the bulk of his life behind bars and in and out of prison. As individuals, we make choices based on what we perceive our options to be; and those options, be they good or bad, are a product of the society we live in.

"When a society is industrialized," explains C. Wright Mills, "a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise and fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father."

Similarly, when a society is deindustrialized, a steel worker becomes a corrections officer; a would-be college student, a drug dealer. When communities are decimated and hemmed in by poverty,

families take new heart or fall apart. When a fictitious “War on Drugs” is declared on the inner-city, penitentiaries are built in rural areas and filled with criminals; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father.

When a society is deindustrialized, a steel worker becomes a corrections officer; a would-be college student, a drug dealer. When a fictitious “War on Drugs” is declared on the inner-city, penitentiaries are built in rural areas and filled with criminals; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father.

Contrary to what we have been told, this is how life (under the system of capitalism) unfolds – not in a picnic basket of unlimited opportunity, but in a crucible of socioeconomic forces that force us to assume positions of survival. Thus, a steel worker becomes a corrections officer, not in pursuit of a lifelong dream but in order to feed his family. A boy growing up in the ghetto becomes a criminal gang banger, not to glorify crime but in order to survive. And what C. Wright Mills would have us understand is that the various permutations that we as individuals undergo are directly connected to the economic and political permutations of the system.

When corporations, through Congress, lobby for the enactment of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), removing obstacles for corporate capital and goods to move back and forth between Mexico and the United States, they do so with full knowledge and understanding of the economic consequences. Cheaper labor means greater profits; but it also means the closing of factories, a lower standard of living, a subpar educational system and an increase in crime, as normal, everyday citizens scramble to survive. And what do those in power do in order to address the ramifications of their decisions? They build more prisons.

With the advent of deindustrialization in the 1980s, the prison population in the United States more than quadrupled, peaking at 2.5 million and surpassing both South Africa and Russia in per capita prison populations. During the same period (1980-2007) – while 30 million people languished below the poverty line – the United States produced

1,000 billionaires and 227,000 millionaires with the combined worth of \$30 trillion, more than the GDPs of China, Brazil, Japan, Russia and the EU put together. This is how the system of capitalism works: The rich get richer, and the poor get screwed – i.e., fucked in the anus sans grease!

In his book “Understanding Power,” Noam Chomsky talks about what he refers to as “superfluous populations,” which is a very intellectual way of calling people “trash.” From the perspective of the rich, whose main objective is to accumulate wealth, human beings are useless when they no longer contribute to profit-making so, as a result, explains Noam Chomsky, they want to get rid of them – and the criminal justice system is one of the best ways of doing it.

So prisons – it must be understood – aren’t about controlling crime and punishing those who commit it; they’re about controlling the poor. Looked at correctly, it’s not an exaggeration to say that what is going on now is very similar to what was going on in the 1940s when Hitler was exterminating the Jews. The only real difference is that those who are now being thrown away are considered “criminals” which, let’s face it, makes it a whole lot easier to accept. But just as Hitler created the justification for the mass extermination of the Jews, so, too, have those in power created the justification for the mass incarceration of the poor.

When Ronald Reagan declared the so-called War on Drugs in the 1980s, a finely honed strategy of imposing mandatory sentences for particular kinds of drugs (read: crack cocaine) was used to lock up those from predominantly Black and Hispanic communities. For instance, a young man in the ghetto gets caught with a kilo of cocaine or \$20,000 in cash, and he is sent to prison for 20 years. In the meantime, nothing is said about the chemical corporations who make billions of dollars from sending the necessary chemicals to Latin America in order to manufacture the very drugs that are destroying inner-cities throughout the United States.

And what about the bankers who launder billions of dollars in drug money through American banks? According to the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), it's estimated that a half-trillion dollars in drug money gets laundered internationally each year – more than half of it (\$260 billion) through American banks. But are any of these people in prison? The answer is NO! And the reason why none of these people are in prison is because those in power determine what constitutes a crime and, more importantly, who gets categorized as criminals. A white man laundering billions of dollars in drug money is a businessman. A Black man selling drugs in the ghetto is a criminal; and for his "crimes," he is sent to prison.

And what happens to that Black – or poor White or Hispanic – man when he enters America's prisons? If he makes it through orientation without being raped, he's lucky. It's a brutal world in here, and unless one is totally devoid of common sense, one very quickly learns that there is safety in numbers. In other words, the picture repeats and expands, and it's the ghetto streets all over again. But in here the police operate without restraint, and the old adage about "absolute power corrupting absolutely" is on full display. Not a day goes by without someone being sprayed in the face with mace, shot with a pellet gun or thrown down a flight of stairs.

Those in power determine what constitutes a crime and who gets categorized as criminals. A white man laundering billions of dollars in drug money is a businessman. A Black man selling drugs in the ghetto is a criminal; and for his "crimes," he is sent to prison.

A few weeks ago, while watching the news, I witnessed a group of college students in California being sprayed in the face with mace because they had the audacity to protest against the rising cost of college tuition, student-loan debt and the uncertainty surrounding future employment. In New York City and around the country, I witnessed members of Occupy Wall Street being forcibly evicted from their camps, some – as in Oakland, California – being shot with pellet guns, thrown atop automobiles, and kicked and shoved about like cattle. .

Watching these things, it occurred to me that this is what Dostoyevsky must have meant when he said, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." Indeed, what many Americans witnessed and experienced for the first time is something that those of us in prison witness and experience on a daily basis.

So why are normal, everyday citizens being treated as criminals, and for what crimes are they being punished? From the perspective of those who own society, it's considered a lack of appreciation when slaves rise up to question their masters; and of course when people come together and begin to talk earnestly about the inequity of the system, they automatically represent a threat to the status quo and must go. Then we learn how thin the veneer of civilization really is, and how fragile our so-called freedoms are.

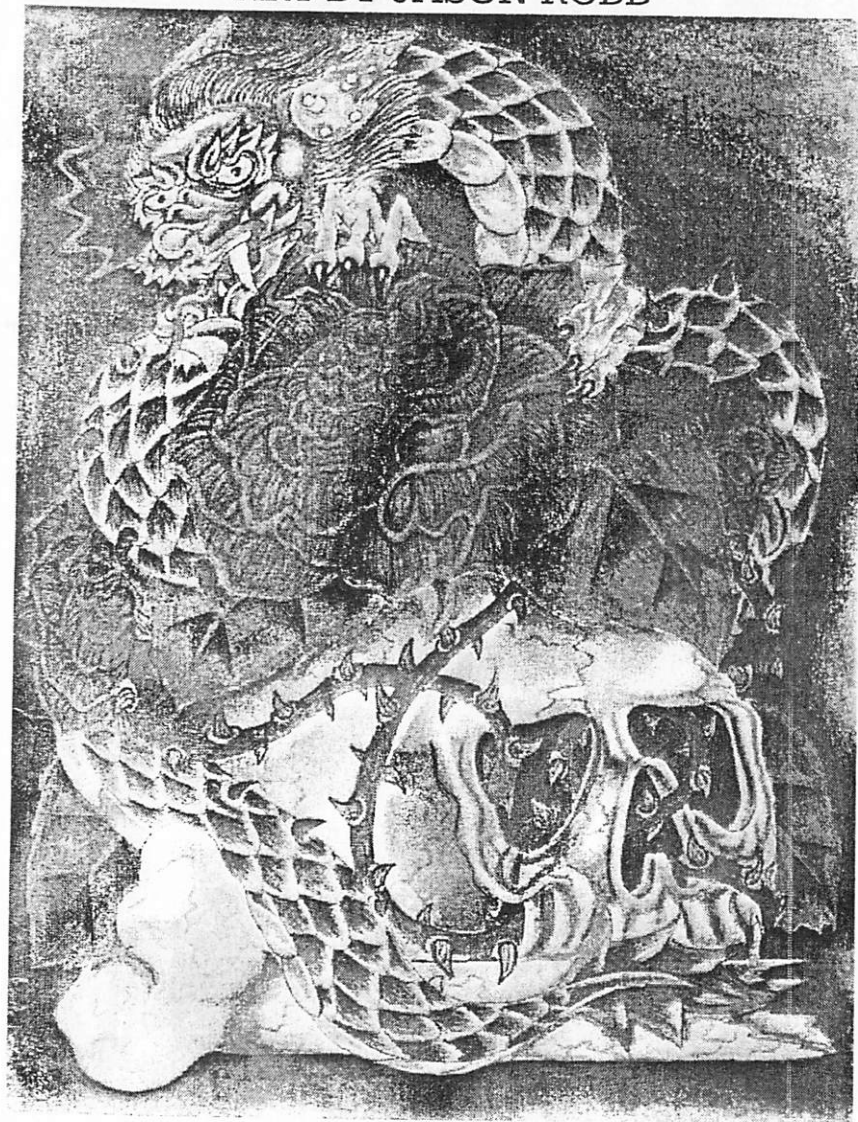
When eyes are burning with mace, when blood is dripping down the face, it all becomes frighteningly clear: Capitalism is a sham; and whether in or out of prison, as long as we live under a system that views everything and everybody as a commodity, we're all doing time. And that, at the end of the day, is the real crime – not that some of us are locked up, but that none of us are free!

Bomani

Bomani Shakur
December 2011

WRITE TO BOMANI:
Lamar 317-117
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878 Coitsville-Hubbard Rd
Youngstown OH 44505-4635

ART BY JASON ROBB



Jason Robb doesn't like to write, he prefers drawing and painting. These were done in crayon and bic pen. He represented the Aryan Brotherhood faction during the uprising and is still a member, but does not consider himself a white supremacist.



WRITE TO JASON ROBB
Jason Robb 308-919
Ohio State Penitentiary
878 Coitsville-Hubbard Rd
Youngstown OH 44505-4635

The Lucasville Uprising was a rebellion against oppressive and racist policies at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) in Lucasville, OH. Nine inmates and one guard died during the uprising in April of 1993. Today, many people are serving time or condemned to death by the state of Ohio in relation to the uprising. We demand amnesty and freedom for all of these inmates. The conditions at SOCF were (and still are) intolerable and unconscionable.

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REDBIRD PRISON ABOLITION



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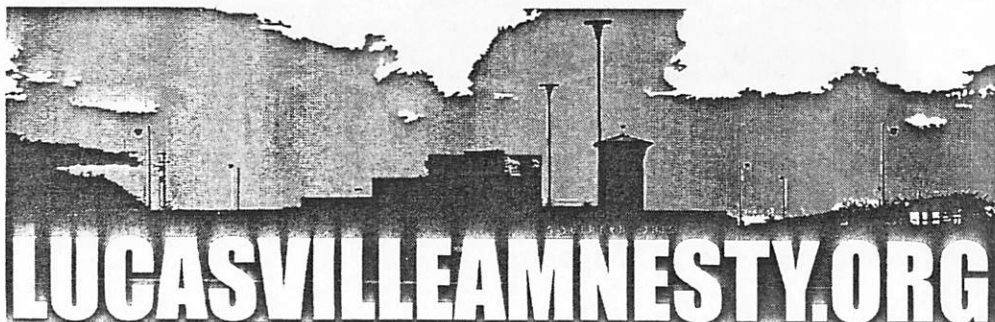
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redbirdprisonabolition.org

The distributors this zine do not support the various alleged affiliations of the prisoner contributors to this site, but strongly support their stand against government oppression, and will do what we can to amplify their voices. As shown by prisoner resistance nationally there is a need for to look past individual beliefs and alleged affiliations, to stand together. Unity takes away the power of their captors to play puppet masters and places power back to those enlightened prisoners who choose not to be puppets. These prisoners' united stand across challenging divisions and under the most trying of circumstances should be an example and inspiration to us all.

FREE ALL PRISONERS



LUCASVILLEAMNESTY.ORG