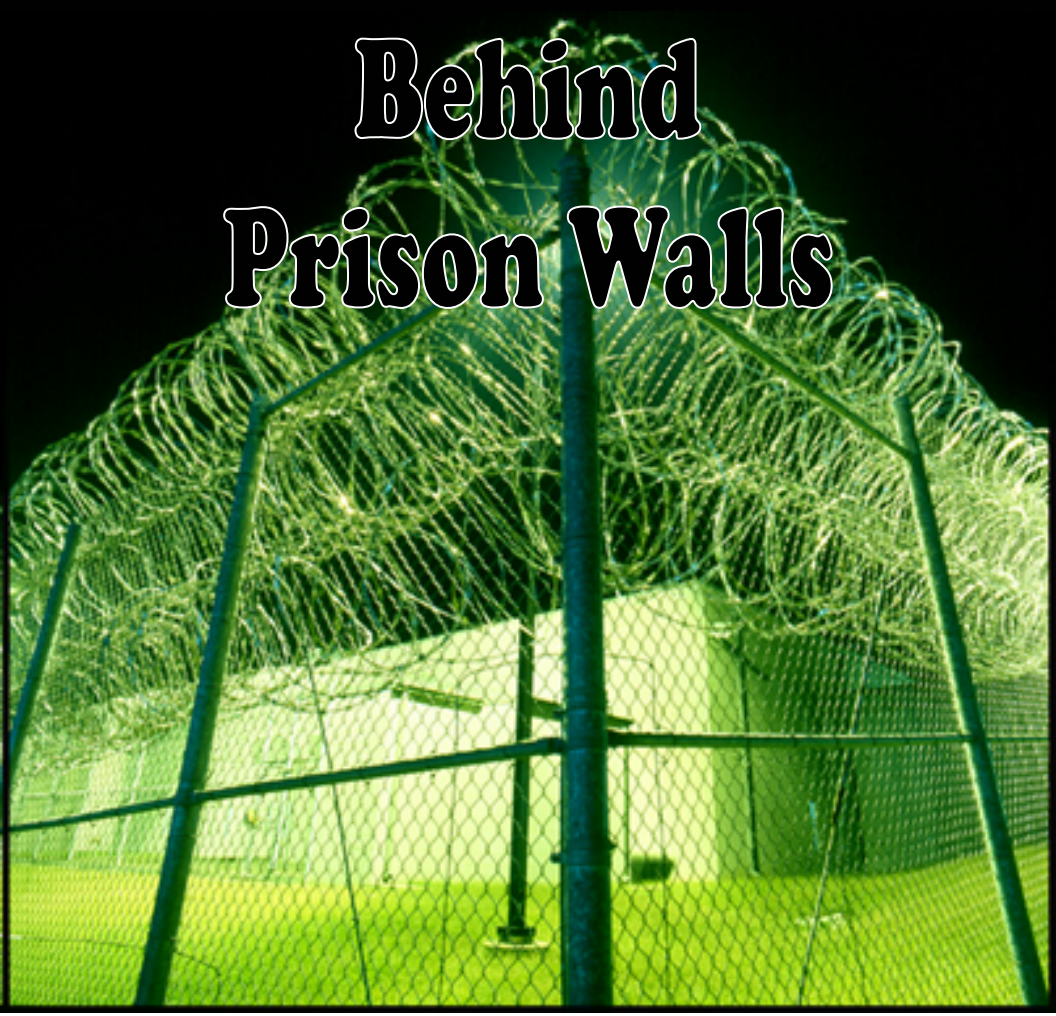
Race Treason Behind Prison Walls



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These two essays (minus the chronology) were originally compiled by the now defunct Austin Anarchist Black Cross.

"Back From Hell" is a short essay by Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, author of Anarchism and the Black Revolution (IWW, 1994).

"Black and White and Dead All Over" was originally published in *Race Traitor: A Journal of New Abolitionism*, #8, 1998. The author, Staughton Lynd, has also published a book entitled, Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising (Temple University Press, 1994).

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Back From Hell

Black Power and Treason to Whiteness Inside Prison Walls

By Lorenzo Komboa Ervin

The federal penitentiary at Terre Haute, Indiana had the reputation of being the most racist and brutal prison in the federal prison system. The city of Terre Haute itself had been known in the 1920s as one of the strongest base areas for the Ku Klux Klan in the Midwest. As I was to discover later, many prison guards were Klan members or sympathizers. There were no black guards at the time I entered it, in the summer of 1970.

The most famous inmate to do time at the prison was the 1950s rock and roll singer, Chuck Berry, during the early 1960s, and reportedly he spoke disparagingly about the state of Indiana for years afterward and said he would never have a concert in the city of Terre Haute. I do not know if this is true.

Usually racism is the best tool of the prison officials to control volatile prison populations. The warden and his guards intentionally keep up racial hostilities through rumors and provocation, and give a free hand within the prison to groups like the KKK and the Aryan Brotherhood to maim or kill Black prisoners. They use the racist white prisoners to confine both themselves and others, in return for special privileges and the fleeting feeling that they are "helping" the "white race" maintain control. This is how the system imprisons whites and uses them in their own oppression. The officials can usually count on recruiting a steady supply of racist murderers and henchmen from the white prison population. But an important part of the plan is to beat down or silence anti-racist whites, in order to make sure all whites toe the fascist line. In fact, without this conformity the whole plan would not work.

For years many black inmates had been beaten or killed at Terre Haute by both white prison inmates and guards. I knew from the stories I had been told by black prisoners in Atlanta that this was true. In fact, the black prisoners at Terre Haute had lived in total fear of the whites. I said "had" because by the time I got there things had started to change.

A group of young militant black prisoners had formed an organization called the Afro-American Cultural Studies Program (AACSP), which met every week and discussed black history and culture, as well as world

current events. The prison officials hated the group but had to grant their charter because of a lawsuit filed against the Warden and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. But the Warden, John Tucker, said that if they started "acting militant," he would grant a Klan charter for the racist white inmates – as if they secretly already didn't have one! Warden Tucker had a well-earned reputation for brutality against black inmates. The older blacks told us "young bloods" all kinds of horror stories about Tucker, and about the Blacks killed or mutilated over the years by white guards and inmates. Black men were hanged, stabbed, thrown into a threshing machine, beaten with pipes, burned alive in their cells and murdered in every other way imaginable. Tucker even had a group of white inmates who acted as his "hit men" against whites who refused to conform to the racist line. But the "young bloods," and especially the black inmates from AACSP, would not be intimidated and vowed that they would fight back to the death. Shortly after I arrived in the prison, I threw in my lot with them.

At one of their meetings held each Thursday, I asked what I had to do to join. The gentleman who had been acting as the moderator, a short, dark, bald-headed brother from Detroit, whose name was Nondu, told me all that was necessary was to actively take part. I was introduced to all the brothers there – fifty in all – but especially to Karenga, a huge but affable brother from Cincinnati, along with his prison rap partner, a relatively smallish brother named December, and then Hassan and Nondu from Detroit, all of whom were the principal AACSP officers.

They along with the general members, all welcomed me into the group and treated me like family. Karenga, the President of the group, actually became my best friend, and saved my life on more than one occasion.

These brothers all wore shaved heads, and were influenced by the 1960s cultural nationalist figure, Ron Karenga, along with the Cleveland, Ohio black nationalist Ahmed Evans (who, with his second in command, Nondu Latham, was serving life in Ohio state prison for killing several policemen in 1968), but their greatest influence was Malcolm X. I was not greatly enamored of Ron Karenga, who headed a Los Angeles-based group called "US" (United Slaves), which was implicated in the murder of two Black Panther Party members in 1969 and purportedly engaged in other internecine violence against the BPP. The Panthers believed that Karenga was a police agent, or knowingly allowed the crimes to take place because of some political sectarian reason. But my initial doubts did not stop me from taking part in the AACSP. It became my all-consuming passion while at the prison, and I would fight and die to defend it. In fact, I almost did make the supreme sacrifice.

We had to fight both the racist authorities and the white inmates on behalf of the black prison population, many of whom were intimidated into silence. We were bold and audacious, and carried on a virtual

guerrilla war to strike back at the killers of black men, whether they were guards or inmates. The whites hated and feared us because we were ruthless in defending ourselves and punishing racists. There was no mercy. Our retaliation was always swift and bloody.

Our kind of revolutionary blacks had never been seen before at Terre Haute, and it changed the status quo when we fought back. Many of the prisoners were white radicals who were in prison for anti-war cases, and they in turn began to educate other whites. The anti-racist organizing by white radicals was important because it ensured that white prisoners would no longer be indoctrinated or intimidated by the Klan as they had been for the previous thirty-five years at that prison. This re-education was something black revolutionaries could not effectively do alone, and prisoners began to check out books from the Black Culture library, to attend joint political study groups, and to try to understand in theoretical terms how racism was a way of enslaving us all – blacks and other non-whites as inferiors, whites as oppressors. They understood now how the Klan had been doing the bidding of the prison officials for years, just like the white workers in society do the bidding of the capitalists. Fascist politics became not only unpopular but unsafe.

Guards used to the old regime decided to suddenly "retire," and racist inmates begged to be transferred. The Warden and his staff were greatly alarmed, but powerless to take any action lest they precipitate a full-fledged riot, which would also get guards and staff killed in large numbers. The prison officials realized they were losing control and began to panic. All prison officials know that if racism is surmounted, revolt is inevitable.

Then in September of 1971 the Attica prison revolt erupted in upstate New York, and riveted the attention of the entire world on the U.S. prison system. Revolutionary prisoners – black, Latino, and white – had taken guards hostage at Attica and were running the prison. This terrified prison officials all over the United States. It also pushed forward the prison struggle and made it a red-hot issue.

Even after the repression of Attica, sympathy rebellions broke out all over the country, including at Terre Haute, where for the first time black, white, and Hispanic prisoners rose up to fight the prison officials. Buildings were torched or bombed, people tried to escape, strikes and industrial sabotage went on, and desperate hand-to-hand combat between guards and prisoners in the high-security L-unit was taking place, along with other acts of resistance which seemed to break out daily.

Warden Tucker and his staff panicked, and rushed to start building a new wing of high-security cells in L-unit to hold the "malcontents" in his prison. He then tried to provoke a confrontation, a "race riot" among inmates, but this didn't work because we had chased away most of the racists and had made alliances with progressive white and Latino

prisoners. These prisoners, many of whom were schooled in revolutionary politics, wouldn't fall for the old tricks.

The Warden could not convince the white prisoners, who had now struggled and suffered next to us, to accept the old racist "hate bait." They knew they were prisoners, and would not accept white skin privileges or resurrect the Klan to help the Warden run the prison. These white prisoners were standing up against their masters, and they were a different people entirely. They no longer saw anything in common with the Warden, not even "whiteness." The black prison population had overcome its fear and insecurity to become the vanguard and the backbone of a serious threat to the organized racial violence and repression which had ruled unchallenged for years.

Frustrated, Tucker then just told his officers to begin rounding up the AACSP leaders and throw them into the new security unit. But we had prepared for this eventuality, and had decided not to go down without a fight. So the first time they came for our leaders, it precipitated a twelve-hour standoff when we took over one of the prison units where most of them were, booby-trapped the doors with explosives and other traps, and held the unit guards hostage. The prisoners armed themselves with spears, knives, home-made dynamite, and other weapons.

Realizing how serious the situation had become, a truce was negotiated by Tucker for protection of our so-called constitutional rights to have disciplinary hearings for the leadership instead of just summarily throwing them into solitary, and for no reprisals over the protest. But this agreement for amnesty and standard disciplinary hearings with outside legal representation was swiftly broken as soon as the authorities re-took control of the institution. All of the known leaders of the AACSP, and their white and Latino allies, were snatched up and rammed into high-security cells.

The officials were thus satisfied that they had removed the threat, and that the absence of the fist level of leadership would cause the group to collapse. But on the contrary, the organization never missed a beat. We had set up AACSP as an organization which had several levels of leadership; there was no primary leader. So as soon as the original founding leaders were removed, the secondary leadership took over. I took over as President, and the other slots were quickly filled by a new wave of leaders. We kept up the struggle, continued our weekly meetings, and began sending out a monthly newsletter to tell our outside supporters and the press what was going on.

We had always had a number of programs to help prisoners: a library of radical and black books, political education classes, literacy classes and job training, and we kept these going. We even demanded that officials allow us to take books and materials to those leaders in the solitary confinement

units. The officials had to agree, since they saw they had failed to destroy us in the previous incident.

Finally, after several months of this standoff, officials created another provocation by attacking one of the leaders in solitary, Brother Hassan. He was badly beaten when he objected to a guard spitting and blowing his nose into the prisoners' food. We knew this was a set-up, so we did not violently respond. We demanded that the harassment cease, circulated a petition, and filed a lawsuit in the local court system. Even though we did not attack the guards like they wanted, they began to round us up anyway, claiming that we were "planning" to create a disturbance. The truth was the officials concocted this "conspiracy" to try to destroy the organization and justify these harsh security measures.

We were all thrown into the special security cells in L-unit and were only let out for showers and the law library. For twenty-three hours a day we were locked down in these cells, which were about the size of your bathroom. The guards taunted us by calling us racist and offensive names, and spitting and blowing their noses in our food. They would do this right in front of you hoping you would object so they would have an excuse to call you a "smartass nigger" and beat up on you. They would gang up and beat prisoners bloody, especially those they did not like.

After a discussion among the comrades in the unit, we decided to rebel against these conditions before things got worse and somebody got killed. As it was, Hassan was so badly beaten he required stitches and a back brace.

One day when they opened the doors to take me to the law library, I knocked the handcuffs away, leaped out of the cell, hit one of the guards in the face with my fist and stabbed the other one in the hip with a knife. I tried to force them to open the security door to let all the prisoners out, but the guard who had the keys ran and threw them out the window into a hallway. So I was trapped along with them, and decided in frustration to kill our keepers who had been tormenting us for weeks.

I jumped on the guard I had punched, and stabbed him several times until the knife broke in his side. He screamed, "Don't kill me! Don't kill me! I've got a wife and three kids." I hit him again and again until he fell to the ground. Then I picked up a mop wringer to crush his skull, but the other guard attacked me from behind. I turned to hit him in the chest, and then we started to wrestle. Meanwhile the pig on the floor jumped up and sprayed my face with chemical MACE. I also had cut my forehead on the mop wringer, and blood flowed into my eyes, blinding me. I fought on in a blind rage!

By this time the other guards in the hallway had been alerted and ran into the unit with riot equipment. they started to beat me, but the other prisoners in the unit broke their cell windows out and started throwing

coffee mugs, glass jars, and other things at the riot squad as they dragged me out of the unit, feet first, like I was some lifeless animal. But they were more afraid than I was, to see this stuff flying in the air at them, so they refrained from hitting me any more in front of the inmates.

I was dragged down the hallway by about six guards to the hospital where I was thrown into a "mental observation" cell on the second floor. They were treating me as if I had gone "crazy." They ripped all of my clothes off of me, and then threw me naked into the cell.

There was no bed, linen, toilet, or even a sink to wash my face – just a door, a window, a hole in the wall to "do your business," and padding all over the floor and walls to either cushion these "crazy" inmates from injuring themselves when they run their heads into the walls, or to cushion the sound of blows by guards when they beat prisoners.

For the week I remained there, they would neither feed nor clothe me, and except for when they would open the doors to spray me with a high-pressured water hose, and then open the windows to freeze my ass off with a blast of wintry air, I was left alone night and day. I caught pneumonia as a result and almost died. When they saw I was real sick and that my death would cause the other prisoners to revolt, they decided to see that I got some kind of medical attention. They made arrangements to send me to the prison hospital in Springfield, Missouri.

But even though I was being transferred by prison officials, who hoped to end the uprising, this did not happen. Although the prison officials ultimately took back administrative control from the "rioters," the prison was never the same place. Because of the united prisoner population at Terre Haute, the prison had strikes and violent protests for years afterward. The unity of the prisoners made many things possible: the creation of the Indiana prisoners' labor union, which fought for better working and living conditions, an end to the racially motivated killing and organizing by groups like the Klan, and of course better overall treatment. Some of the most brutal guards were fired or prosecuted after they had beaten or tortured prisoners, something which had never happened before.

Although I was to go through many years of torture at Springfield, Marion (Illinois), and other prisons, I lived through it all. I remember many things about those fifteen years in prison, but the struggle at Terre Haute, and how even whites who had been following the Klan line for many years rose up with the blacks against the prison officials, was one thing I will never forget.

Black and White and Dead All Over

The Lucasville Insurrection

By Staughton Lynd

In April 1993, an inmate rebellion broke out at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) in Lucasville, Ohio, near Cincinnati. Nine prisoners and one correctional officer were killed during the 11-day uprising.

In court proceedings following the end of the riot, five inmates were sentenced to death and are presently on death row at Mansfield Correctional Institution. They are: Siddique Abdullah Hasan (formerly known as Carlos Sanders), Namir Abdul Mateen (formerly known as James Were), Keith Lamar, Jason Robb, and George Skatzes. Hasan, Mateen, and Lamar are black. Hasan and Mateen are Sunni Muslims. Robb and Skatzes are white and are members of the Aryan Brotherhood.

We begin with a chronology. Lest we be suspected of slanting our presentation, we take these facts from the opening statement of Special Prosecutor Daniel Hogan in Skatzes' trial.[1]

April 11, 1993: Inmates take over the L cell block. Six inmates are killed. More than half a dozen guards are taken hostage.

April 14, 1993: A truckload of food and water is left next to the occupied cell blocks.

April 15, 1993: The body of Corrections Officer Robert Vallandingham is dumped in the yard about 11:10 a.m. About 7:30 p.m., George Skatzes escorts Corrections Officer Darrold Clark onto the recreation yard. After Skatzes speaks on the radio, Clark is set free.

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[1] "Opening Statement of Special Prosecutor Daniel Hogan," Skatzes trial transcript, p. 1556 -1562.

April 16, 1993: Corrections Officer Demons is released, and a Muslim named Stanley Cummings makes a TV broadcast.

April 17, 1993: Anthony Lavelle, representing the Black Gangster Disciples; Jason Robb on behalf of the Aryan Brotherhood; and Hasan (Carlos Sanders), a leader of the Muslims, meet representatives of the authorities in the yard for settlement negotiations. The inmate negotiators are assisted by Attorney Niki Schwartz

April 21, 1993: After a second meeting between the authorities, Attorney Schwartz, and the three spokespersons, a settlement is finalized. The settlement provides among other things: "(2) Administrative discipline and criminal proceedings will be fairly and impartially administered without bias against individuals or groups... (14) There will be no retaliating actions taken toward any inmate or groups of inmates or their property." Between 3:56 p.m. and 11:20 p.m., inmates walk out of the occupied cell blocks in groups of twenty.

April 22, 1993: The bodies of inmates David Sommers and Bruce Harris are discovered.

I. Anatomy of an Uprising

What caused the uprising at Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) at Lucasville, April 11-21, 1993?

There is general agreement that the triggering event was the authorities' attempt to conduct a tuberculin skin test by injecting a substance containing alcohol. Muslims prepared an affidavit stating in part: "we firmly believe that the Mantoux tuberculin skin test which consists of the injection [of] Purified Protein Derivative under the skin of the forearm of an individual... contains alcohol which is not permissible for Muslims."

But a long train of abuses contributed to the final decision to rebel. Longtime inmate John Perotti has written: "The SOCF had a reputation for being one of the most violent prisons in the country... SOCF was built to house 1,600 men, one to a cell, but the cells were doubled up and the population was close to 2,300... [M]edical treatment was atrocious." In 1983, a prisoner killed a shop supervisor, after which twelve guards beat to death a mentally disturbed prisoner, Jimmy Haynes. Two black prisoners, Lincoln Carter and John Ingram, were alleged to have touched white nurses, were beaten by guards, and were found dead in the hole. Inmates filed numerous law suits. Wardens were replaced. Abuse of prisoners continued.

Lucasville inmates organized a branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), but the courts held that inmate workers were not "employees" entitled to a minimum wage. In June 1988, inmates filed a complaint with Amnesty International detailing violations of the United Nations Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Prisoners. The complaint set forth instances in which prisoners were chained to cell fixtures, subjected to chemical mace and tear gas, forced to sleep on concrete floors, and brutally beaten. Then-Governor Celeste ordered an investigation.[2]

The upshot was appointment of a new warden, Arthur Tate. Chrystof Knecht, a Lucasville inmate at the time of the 1993 uprising, describes the indiscriminate oppressive treatment placed on all SOCF prisoners after Tate's appointment.

Under Tate's regime, SOCF prisoners were told how and when to eat, sleep, talk, walk, educate, bathe, and recreate. Privileges were taken away on a regular basis. New rules were enforced daily, disregarded, then re-implemented weeks later. Psychological conditioning techniques were upgraded. Integration was enforced and agitated by guards to create racial animosity in the form of fights and deeper racial hatred.[3]

Another inmate, William Martin, gives greater detail in a letter written on February 20, 1995, to Attorney Richard Kerger:

> *King Arthur [Tate] repeatedly demonstrated his ineptitude... For example, King Arthur followed Otto Bender's advice of closing all the windows during the summer because SOCF was designed to have a flow-through ventilation system to keep the institution cool. Without any investigation, King Arthur signed Bender's decree which ordered all the windows closed... My supervisor, Pat Burnett, subsequently went into King Arthur's office and inquired about his "window decree." King Arthur... had the institution's blueprints on his desk and, as he was gently patting them, he told Burnett, "I have it all right here. The institution was designed with flow-through ventilation. It will keep the institution cooler if the windows are kept closed." Burnett then informed King Arthur that the flow-through ventilation will not work because most of the blowers on the roof are burnt out... [You would think that King Arthur would have rescinded] his "window decree." But he did not want to appear foolish so we all suffered through a very hot summer.*

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[2] John Perotti, "Lucasville: A Brief History," *Prison Legal News*, Dec. 1993.

[3] Chrystof Knecht, "Letters from Lucasville Prison," *Race Traitor*, Spring 1994, p. 21.

Martin went on to list new rules implemented by Warden Tate. According to Martin, perhaps the "most bizarre" rule was the one requiring prisoners to march to chow, recreation, chapel, work, school, commissary, etc. After the [school teacher Beverly Taylor] was killed at SOCF in 1990, the Speaker of the General Assembly (Verne Riffe) publicly criticized the uncontrolled movement in SOCF's corridors. Warden Terry Morris responded by painting yellow lines in the corridor... King Arthur took it one step further after becoming SOCF's warden. He not only wanted prisoners to stay behind yellow lines but walk in double-file formations. Prisoners who hated each other were forced to march next to each other. Everybody deeply resented this.

Warden Tate's decisions, from Martin's point of view, created an atmosphere of paranoia. There were repeated massive shakedowns "without regard for prisoners' property," and constant transfers of inmates from one part of the facility to another.

Finally, Martin highlights a policy of double-celling blacks and whites. According to Martin integrated double cells increased from 1.7% to 26-31% of the total number of cells at Lucasville (citing White v. Morris, 811 F.Supp. 341, 342).

A third, anonymous inmate account of the "situation at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility as it led up to the riot" is dated July 5, 1993, less than three months after the rebellion, and draws on the observations of several eye witnesses. Warden Tate and Deputy Warden Roddy, this account asserts, showed "total disregard for the opinions or professional insight of staff with many years at SOCF and in corrections." Poor communication between upper and lower level management led to constant uncertainty on the part of inmates as to what the rules were at any particular moment. Tate and Roddy "tore the college program down to bare bones" and "did away with music programs, literary programs and a lot of other positive" programs that men were using to do their time. The author believes that Tate would have liked to lock down the whole institution and make it another Marion, Illinois super-max.

Like Martin, the author of this third history says that Tate began mass transfers of the inmate population. "Inmates that had been in the same blocks for years were forced to move to other blocks... Guys were forcefully integrated with other races."

The third history also provides a vivid glimpse of Warden Tate's insensitivity to the Muslim inmates on the eve of the uprising. The author says that the Muslims

> *thought they had valid reasons and they voiced these concerns to both Tate and Roddy. Instead of trying to resolve this problem to the benefit of all concerned, Tate point blank told the leader of the*

Muslims that he would 'drag everyone to the infirmary in chains and force them to take the shots.' The Muslims told Tate that they would declare a "jihad" with Tate over this situation. They also stated that they'd been willing to take x-rays to test for TB. [Attorney Mark Devan in his opening statement at the trial of Jason Robb, declared: "The Muslims asked Warden Tate to please let them take saliva tests." Robb trial transcript, p. 143.] *They just didn't want nothing shot into their bodies.*

According to the history, on April 6 there was a meeting of Warden Tate and five of his staff with the leader of the Muslims and his "security chiefs." Tate said what he would do with the chains. On April 9, Tate sent the Muslim leader an Inter Office Communication "stating that it was the decision of the administration not to permit any group of inmates to dictate policy and that those men who had refused the TB test would be tested, whatever means it took to test them." By then, states the history, it was "common knowledge that the whole institution was going to be locked down to force the Muslims to take [the] TB test."

The inmate historian sums up that portion of history dealing with the prelude to the riot this way:

This was the situation as it stood before April 11, 1993 and the start of the Easter Day riot. The institution and the atmosphere of the institution had become very tense since the arrival of Arthur Tate as Warden. The incidents described so far... are but fractional in comparison with the everyday occurrences that degenerated the stability of the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility. There was a sense of impending trouble... The stagnation of any positive aspects to life had left a heavy air upon everyone at SOCF. Staff and inmates alike were very discontent with the operations of the institution. Either through bad management or by conspiracy, the attitude of the whole institution was at a boiling point without any outlet in sight. And this is where the complete breakdown of hope sowed the seeds of dissent.

Demands

It would seem that the inmate demands made in the course of the uprising should shed additional light on the rebellion's causes.

On the one hand, the authorities made tapes from their listening posts in the tunnels beneath L block, recorded their conversations on the telephone with inmate negotiators, took notes on the radio presentation by George Skatzes, and put all this evidence into SOCF Critical Incident

Communications. Thus there is a contemporaneous, objective record of inmate demands.

On the other hand, there no longer exists any single presentation or list of demands that can resolve all doubt as to which demands were of highest priority.

Based on the Critical Incident Communications (hereafter CIC), the following were major inmate concerns:

1. Arthur Tate has got to go.[4]
2. Medical care is insufficient. There must be more medical personnel. "We're given Tylenol for anything and everything."[5]
3. The policy of integrated celling must be rescinded. There should be no forced integration.[6]
4. Overcrowding in all Ohio prisons must be reduced.[7]
5. Indiscriminate mixing together of prisoners with and without AIDS, prisoners with and without TB, mentally ill prisoners and those not so afflicted, and prisoners at different levels of security, must be ended.[8]
6. Punishment for alleged gang activity on the basis of physical appearance has to stop. "Say I wear a bandana, they spot us by the way people dress or act. If I draw a swastika, they shake me down and find it, they say it's gang-oriented. Frank Phillips took pictures of tattoos." People in the yard are spotted by the stuff they wear in their hair. The authorities must stop classifying people and charging them as gang members based on bandana, cap, etc. [9]

Of course these were not the only demands. Some were difficult to make specific, such as "No more oppression," "civil rights violations," "violations of due process when a prisoner goes before the R.I.B. [Rules Infraction Board]," "religious freedom violations." There were complaints that the law library was insufficient and that in the prison work program "you sit on your ass all day." Inmates wanted to grow their hair and beard as long as they desired. They thought the college program was "bullshit, that anyone can pass it." The offensive TB test was mentioned more than once, and one inmate said "the TB test could have been done by spitting." There was a desire that the administration be held to its promise of one 5 minute phone call at Christmas.

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[4] Skatzes radio broadcast on April 15, CIC p. 439.
[5] CIC pp. 466, 467, 511, 578-579
[6] CIC pp. 489, 510, 511, 564-567, 573, 576
[7] CIC pp. 511, 513, 578-579
[8] CIC pp. 466, 564-567, 591
[9] CIC pp. 507, 509, 511, 513

Finally, there were the demands that arise at the end of any strike or rebellion, here pressed with life-and-death urgency. There must not be singling out of any inmate or group of inmates.[10] "Worried about staying off death row. Must get Fed to take over for protection."[11] There must be no repercussions to inmates involved in uprisings. There must not be any singling out of leaders involved in the riot.[12]

Conclusion

There is a substantial fit between inmate accounts of the events leading up to the rebellion, and the demands that inmates put forward as they rebelled. Arbitrary decision making by the warden was one major cause of what happened. Overcrowding, compounded by a policy of double-celling black and white inmates together, was another. The conduct of the black warden and black deputy warden was offensive to white inmates. But in the end, a black warden's failure to listen carefully to the concerns of black (Sunni) Muslim inmates was, in the words of the third inmate history, "the spark to ignite the flames to a riot."

II. A Riot, a Race Riot, or a Black-and-White Insurrection?

The composition of L block as of April 11, 1993, was 429 black inmates and 327 white inmates.[13] About half of these L block residents withdrew from the rebellion as it began, by going out into the yard and from there to K block.

According to Special Prosecutor Hogan, the vast majority of the 407 inmates who surrendered at the end of the disturbances did not belong to any organized group. However, he also claimed that three organizations "ran the show" during what he called "this riot."[14]

The largest organized group were Sunni Muslims. Hogan said that there were about fifty to seventy Muslims at the beginning of the riot, and that their numbers grew as it went on.

The "second most powerful group," according to Hogan, was the Aryan Brotherhood (AB). They numbered about twenty at the beginning of the riot. During the riot they controlled cell block L-2, and many white inmates who were not members of the AB were permitted to stay there, also.

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[10] CIC, p. 505
[11] CIC, p. 510
[12] CIC p. 600
[13] Blackmon trial transcript, p. 201
[14] Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1529, 1553

Finally, a third group that in Hogan's words "had some control" was the Black Gangster Disciples (BGD). They numbered eight to twelve on April 11, 1993.[15]

The Muslims and BGD were all-black. The AB was all-white. Prosecutor Hogan told the jury that all of the inmates killed on the first day of the riot "were white" and that a "paranoia began that lasted for a number of days."[16]

Paul Mulryan's Account

Inmate Paul Mulryan has published a detailed account of the first hours of the uprising that is consistent with Prosecutor Hogan's remarks, and with the testimony of guards and inmates. Mulryan writes: "My first thought was that there must be a racial war... Down the range I could see several teams of masked convicts converging on the block... Then I saw both black and white skin showing through their masks. I was relieved." A little later, Mulryan recalls, "two Masks" announced: "Lucasville is ours! This is not racial, not racial. It's us against the administration! We're tired of these people fucking us over. Is everybody with us? Let's hear ya!" According to Mulryan: "Hundreds of fists shot into the air as the prisoners roared their approval." The convicts rigged up a public address system using a tape player and two large speakers taken from the rec. department. They set these up near the windows facing the large media camp in front of the SOCF. Mulryan says that the following tape recording was played over and over:

> *The prison authorities want you to think that this is a racial war. It is not! Whites and blacks have united to protest the abuses of the SOCF staff and administration.*[17]

Black and White Together

The banners and graffiti displayed in the occupied cell blocks expressed both racial separation and racial cooperation.

Sergeant Howard Hudson of the Ohio State Highway Patrol testified in Skatzes' trial about the insignia found in the occupied cell blocks after the surrender. They included:

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[15] Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1529-1530

[16] Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1501, 1550-1552

[17] Paul Mulryan, "Eleven Days Under Siege: An Insider's Account of the Lucasville Riot," Prison Life, n.d., pp. 32- 33, 91-93

* A six-pointed star, said by the officer to be associated with the Black Gangster Disciples;
* A shield containing a large "N" and a cross, said to be a symbol of the Aryan Nation;
* Swastikas and lightning bolts together with the words "Honor," "Aryan Brotherhood Forever," "Supreme White Power," and "Belly of the beast," an apparent reference to the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) at Lucasville;
* A crescent moon representative of the Nation of Islam.[18]

Sergeant Hudson also identified a photograph of the L corridor. This testimony followed:

Q. On the wall on the right there appears to be something written?
A. Says, "Black and White Together."
Q. Did you find that or similar slogans in many places in L block?
A. Yes, we did, throughout the corridor, in the L block.
Q. Including banners that the inmates produced?
A. Yes, sir.[19]

The prosecutor returned to the slogans in L corridor and the gymnasium, as if to make sure that the jury had taken notice.

Q. [What is photograph number] 260?
A. 260, the words, "Convict unity," written on the walls of L corridor.
Q. Did you find the message of unity throughout L block?
A. Yes...
Q. Next photo?
A. 261 is another photograph in L corridor that depicts the words, "Convict race."
Q. 262?
A. Again, in L corridor, "Black and white together," painted on the wall.
Q. 263?
A. Another shot of, "Black and white together."
Q. That slogan appeared a number of places?
A. Yes, it did.
Q. 264?
A. Again, another shot of graffiti in L corridor, "Blacks and whites, whites and blacks, unity."
Q. 265?

[18] Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1930-1945
[19] Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1922, 1978

A. "Black and white together." Then below that, written in different color ink, says, "Eleven days..."

Q. 266?

A. This is located in the M-2 gymnasium, the words, "Whites and blacks together," painted on the bulletin board.

Q. 267?

A. The words, "Black and white unity," painted on the wall in L corridor.

Q. 268?

A. 268, the words, "Black and white together," again painted on the board in L corridor near the gym.[20]

What George Skatzes Says

George Skatzes joined the Lucasville Aryan Brotherhood in about January 1993, three months before the uprising. Skatzes joined because he perceived whites to be a minority at Lucasville: a majority of the inmates were black, the warden and deputy warden were black, and the head of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction was black. For Skatzes, joining the AB was a way to carry out his philosophy of, "You respect me and I will respect you."

Skatzes says he had no advance knowledge of the uprising. When the insurgent inmates opened the cells in the L blocks, George was able to leave his own cell, L-6-58. "I didn't know what it was all about," he says.

George received a message asking him to go out on the yard. Skatzes went out on the yard, but then returned to the occupied cell blocks. Why did you go back?, we asked George. Because I had friends in there, he answered. In his words, The place was blowing up and "I had people I was concerned about."

At some point on this first day George saw a black inmate (Cecil Allen) talking through a bull horn to a small crowd of other prisoners. George went up to listen. To his surprise the man on the bull horn pointed to George and said, "There's nobody going to be talking to you guys but me or this man right here," meaning George Skatzes.

A little later the man with the bull horn approached George together with Hasan (Carlos Sanders). Skatzes did not know Hasan, or that he was Imam of the Muslims. Hasan said to Skatzes, "We've got to get this under control."

Finally, a third black man came up to George. He said that white guys were congregating in the gym and the blacks were paranoid. He asked George to go to the gym and calm things down.

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[20] Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 1993-1994

We asked George, Why did these three black men – the man with the bull horn, Hasan, the third man – ask you for help? Weren't you a member of the Aryan Brotherhood?

Skatzes answered that he did not want to make much of himself, but "I had a lot of respect." He told us of incidents before the uprising when white and black inmates had asked his help in settling disputes. One of these incidents involved the man who asked him to go to the gym.

So Skatzes did as he was asked and went to the gym. He went up to the group of black inmates and said, "This ain't no time for you to call me a honky, or me to call you a nigger." Then he approached the whites, who were sitting in the bleachers. Putting his arm around a black inmate, George said, "If the guards come in here they're going to shoot us all, no matter what color we are." We asked George who that black man was. He said, I don't know; I had never met him before.

On April 15 when George spoke on the radio his words were recorded by the authorities and a transcript was introduced as Exhibit 309A at his trial. He stated in part: "We are oppressed people, we have come together as one. We are brothers... We are a unit here, they try to make this a racial issue. It is not a racial issue. Black and white alike have joined hands in SOCF and become one strong unit."

A Tentative Conclusion

When people learn that Jason Robb and George Skatzes were members of the Aryan Brotherhood (AB), they may feel that they want nothing to do with the defense of the Lucasville Five. We urge you to reconsider any such inclination.

It is our tentative but carefully-considered conclusion, that Jason Robb and George Skatzes were targeted by the prosecution BECAUSE they made common cause with black inmates during the uprising, and presented themselves to the authorities as spokespersons and negotiators for both races. We propose that the authorities want to kill them because they committed an unforgivable sin in white America: they stood up together with a group of blacks in a life-and-death situation.

III. A Travesty of Justice

On February 3, 1997, the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association voted 280 to 119 to urge Congress and state legislatures to declare a moratorium on the death penalty.

The ABA calls for implementation of previously-adopted policies intended to "minimize the risk that innocent persons may be executed." These policies include: (1) Competent counsel for all defendants in capital

cases; (2) Availability of Federal court review of state prosecutions; (3) Elimination of discrimination in death sentencing on the basis of the race of either the victim or the defendant; (4) No execution of mentally retarded defendants or defendants under 18 at the time their crimes were committed.

The ABA House of Delegates acted on the basis of a Report by its Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities. Referring to the four previously-adopted policies listed above, the Report states that "the federal and state governments have been moving in a direction contrary to these policies," for example by ending Federal funding for lawyers helping death row inmates to pursue appeals. According to the Report, "fundamental due process is now systematically lacking in capital cases." It characterizes present administration of the death penalty as "a haphazard maze of unfair practices."

The trials of the Lucasville Five were just such "haphazard maze[s] of unfair practices" as the ABA condemns.

These unfair practices included the following:

1. Attorney Niki Schwartz of Cleveland, who helped to negotiate the settlement that ended the uprising, has denounced the criminal prosecutions of participants in the rebellion as a travesty of justice. According to Schwartz the prosecutions violated point 2 of the settlement, which said that "criminal proceedings will be fairly and impartially administered without bias against individuals or groups."

Schwartz has asserted in a letter to Chief Justice Thomas Moyer of the Ohio Supreme Court and in testimony under oath in the trial of Jason Robb that Special Prosecutor Piepmeier successfully aborted efforts by the inmates to obtain counsel during the investigative stage of the proceedings. Schwartz states that Piepmeier told him that if the inmates had counsel prior to indictment they would not incriminate themselves.

According to Schwartz, after the Ohio State Bar Association, the Ohio Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Ohio Public Defender Commission recruited and held training seminars for over 200 volunteer lawyers to provide individual representation to the inmates targeted for criminal charges, the Special Prosecutor blocked appointment of many of the volunteer lawyers, and through contacts with the judges persuaded them to appoint lawyers for the inmates selected and approved by the Special Prosecutor.

2. Millions of dollars were provided to the prosecution, while the inmates' defense was starved for funds. According to an article co-authored by Reginald Wilkinson, Director, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction: "Over 1,250 interviews were conducted. Investigators received

on-the-job training from FBI forensics experts. More than 4,000 items were tagged as evidence. A special computer program using over 1,000 megabytes of memory was developed to store and retrieve data on crime witnesses, locations, and events." ("After the Storm," *Corrections Management Quarterly*, 1997, pp. 20-21.) An article in the Columbus Dispatch, Apr. 6, 1997, based on "state records," summarizes the money made available by the State of Ohio to the prosecution and the defense in the Lucasville criminal cases as follows:

Prosecution
Criminal prosecution $1.4 million
State Highway Patrol investigation $1.3 million
Total $2.7 million

Defense
Defense attorneys, investigators, expert witnesses $892,000

Thus the state's own figures show that three times as much was spent on the prosecution as on the defense.

3. The prosecution conceded that there was no physical evidence linking any of the defendants to the murders and kidnappings with which they were charged. The allegations against the defendants rested altogether on the testimony of guards and other inmates. In the case of George Skatzes, the Ohio State Highway Patrol pressured him to cooperate with them, that is, to inform ("snitch"). They said they would indict Skatzes for only one murder if he would testify against other defendants. Skatzes told the prosecution that he could not help them. The next time the authorities came to see Skatzes, they told him that this was his last chance, that if he would not help them he would be indicted for three murders. Skatzes once again refused to plea bargain. The prosecution did exactly what it had threatened.

The testimony that caused the Lucasville Five to be convicted came from inmates who had themselves helped to kill the victims about whom they were questioned, but had entered into plea bargains. A statement to the press by Special Prosecutor Piepmeier indicates that thirteen months into the investigation, Anthony Lavelle, leader of the Black Gangster Disciples, agreed to cooperate with the authorities. (Cincinnati Post, Apr. 6, 1996.) Robert Brookover testified that he had killed David Sommers (Skatzes trial transcript, pp. 3668-69) but he received no additional time as a result of the Lucasville riot. Many of the witnesses conceded that their testimony at trial contradicted their initial sworn statements to the

authorities. In many instances, their testimony was inconsistent with the testimony of other witnesses.

4. The prosecution was permitted to question witnesses at length about events that occurred after the riot as well as about horrendous murders and beatings with which the defendants on trial for their lives were not charged and in which they were not involved. Inevitably this prejudiced the minds of the jury.

Robb and Skatzes are white and the men they were charged with helping to murder (Vallandingham, Sommers, and in the case of Skatzes, Elder) were also white. Yet the prosecution was allowed to spread on the record the facts that Robb and Skatzes were leaders of the Aryan Brotherhood and that many members of the Brotherhood are hostile to blacks and Jews. This must have had a prejudicial impact on the jurors, and may have been unlawful under the holding of the Supreme Court of the United States in Dawson v. Delaware, 503 U.S. 159 (1992).

5. The prosecution's theory as to the defendants was essentially that they were leaders, and therefore responsible for anything that happened during the riot. Inmate Johnny Fryman was so badly beaten and stabbed at the beginning of the rebellion that witness after witness who saw his body lying in a pool of blood assumed that he was dead. After the surrender, the Ohio State Highway Patrol told Fryman, "we don't care how we have to do it, we want Robb, Hasan and Skatzes... Give us those three." Special Prosecutor Piepmeier told him, "We're able to make any kind of deal you want."[21] Reginald Wilkinson, ODRC Director, later wrote:

> *[T]he key to winning convictions was eroding the loyalty and fear inmates felt toward their gangs. To do this, [Piepmeier's] staff targeted a few gang leaders and convinced them to accept plea bargains. Thirteen months into the investigation, a primary riot provocateur agreed to talk about Officer Vallandingham's death. He later received a sentence of 7 to 25 years after pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit murder. His testimony led to death sentences for Carlos Sanders, Jason Robb, George Skatzes, and George Were.*[22]

[21] Interview notes of Attorney Jeffrey Kelleher, Sept.30, 1995.
[22] "After the Storm," p. 21.

IV. On Death Row

The men sentenced to death as leaders of the Lucasville insurrection have been reunited on Death Row at the Mansfield Correctional Institution.

What they have experienced there is described as follows by the lawyer who helped them in negotiating a surrender agreement:

> *Departmental regulations provide for three levels of privileges on death row and for newly sentenced inmates to be placed on the middle level upon arrival. However, Jason Robb (and all other subsequently death-sentenced riot inmates) was placed on the lowest level of privileges upon his arrival, notwithstanding two years of exemplary behavior since the riot. When I protested that this was "retaliatory" in violation of Point 14, I was told that this was the death row equivalent of administrative control. However, administrative control is not supposed to be punitive and death row inmates are already under very heavy security control. [My requests have] fallen on deaf ears...*[23]

The Lucasville Five have undertaken two hunger fasts to upgrade their security classification. In 1997, they were joined by another inmate on Death Row, John Stojetz.

The 1997 fast had two objectives: medical treatment for George Skatzes; upgrading the fasters' security classification from Level C to Level B. The following letter to Warden Coyle was written by one of the black inmates from Lucasville.

Mr. Coyle (et al):

This letter is in regards to the reasons we have elected to initiate a strike in order to protest against what we feel are the unfair conditions that we have been subjected to, since being convicted and sentenced to death, and subsequently confined here at Mansfield Correctional Institution.

Sir, as you know, we have consistently communicated with Mr. Israel concerning this matter, but, as of this date, there still seems to be some confusion with respect to our concerns and expectations. Therefore, to guard against further waste of each other's time, we all agreed that it would be more conducive to reaching a resolution if we simply stated our position, thereby giving you an opportunity to clearly consider the issues involved.

To begin with, we already understand that there are some concerns regarding security, and that, due to the nature of the circumstances that

[23] Attorney Niki Schwartz to Attorney Gerald Messerman, June 4, 1996

resulted in us being placed on death row, it falls within your responsibility to enforce whatever "Security" measures you deem necessary. Understanding that, we recognize your need to keep us in an isolated area. However, as we have repeatedly attempted to explain, keeping us in an isolated area and denying us privileges that do not constitute a security threat, is equivalent to punishing us twice for the same offense.

At the forefront of our list of concerns, we are asking that George Skatzes receive immediate medical attention for what is, as yet, an undiagnosed problem he's been having with his stomach. With respect to this, he has repeatedly tried, to no avail, to have the Doctor order some tests in order to determine what the problem is. Surely, he is entitled to the same attention that is accorded to everyone else. We're asking that he be given attention capable of addressing these concerns, and preventing his problem from becoming any worse than what it already is.

Secondly, as regards the privileges, we're asking that we be given "all" our personal property that doesn't interfere with you maintaining security. As this is a security issue, we're asking that we be accorded the same privileges that were given to all of the S.O.C.F. inmates immediately following the riot, when placed on Security Control Investigation here at the Mansfield Correctional Institution. These privileges consist of:

1. All personal property (T.V., Typewriter etc.)
2. Access to phones
3. Food Boxes (No canned goods per Institutional policy)
4. Full Commissary privileges
5. Full visitation privileges
6. Full recreation privileges
7. Legal services
8. Stop messing with our mail

[Referring to] the so-called "21 point agreement"... [o]f particular importance, in our opinion, are #2 and #14, which state that, there will be no retaliating actions taken toward any inmates, or their property.

In conclusion, let us assure you, that we understand your position and the concerns you have in maintaining a safe environment. We also realize that we'll never be allowed to mingle among other death row inmates and, though we disagree with the notion that keeping us isolated is the answer, we have no intentions to resist against this reasoning. Nevertheless, we set forth the fact that we have already been punished for our alleged participation in the riot, and that any further punishment is blatant retaliation.

Sir, as you know, being sentenced to death is the strongest penalty available to man. Having already been sentenced, we all understand and,

await the final decision. In the meantime, however, we request and expect to be treated in the same fashion as other death row inmates.

If you will take the time to investigate, you'll find that we have presented no problems since being here. The only problem exists in us being singled out and treated contrary to everyone else. This we are no longer willing to accept.

Finally, we ask that you acknowledge the urgency in addressing our concerns, as this is approaching the fourth week of the strike, and we have no intention of yielding, until we receive a legitimate response and appropriate changes are made. Sincerely,

1. George W. Skatzes
2. Jason Robb
3. A. S. Hasan
4. John Stojetz
5. Namir Abdul Mateen
6. Keith Lamar

The Lucasville Five ended their recent fast on July 24. The unit manager has been transferred. Skatzes' medical condition remains problematic.

V. Epilogue

On September 5, 1997, a disturbance occurred in DR-4, the area of Ohio's Death Row where the Lucasville Five and thirty-two other condemned men are housed.

The Media Version

Initial Reports of the disturbance told a relatively straightforward story. The incident began at 5 p.m. when inmates overpowered three guards, took their keys, and freed other death-row inmates. Several hours later, a prison tactical squad fired tear gas into the unit and regained control. Three guards and four inmates were said to have been injured, but there were few details. Authorities indicated: "We're not sure what triggered it. Nor do we know the leaders."[24]

Spin control started in Columbus, the state capitol. The Columbus Dispatch began its story: "Those responsible for the deadly 1993 Lucasville prison riot were among Death Row inmates who took control." The Dispatch went on to quote the first of many misleading statements from warden Ralph Coyle: "Some of the injuries may have been afflicted

[24] Cleveland Plain Dealer, Sept. 6, 1997

[sic] by other inmates before prison officials regained control, Coyle said." The story added without comment: "Wilford Berry, who has volunteered to become the first inmate executed in the state since 1963, was also housed in the same area."[25]

Within twenty-four hours Berry's presence in DR-4 had given rise to a full-fledged official theory:

> *An inmate who has volunteered for execution may have provided the spark that touched off a five-hour riot Friday among the most dangerous prisoners on death row... Berry, 34, suffered severe injuries at the hands of his fellow Death Row inmates during the uprising, Coyle said.*

Skatzes' sister Jackie Bowers told the paper that Berry was unpopular but that "her brother isn't among those who dislike Berry. She said he told her feels that Berry doesn't have the mental ability to make decisions about his appeal." Bowers also said that tensions had been mounting on Death Row because of the conditions that prompted the summer hunger strike. "They just keep taking things away and punishing them and punishing them," she said, adding that after the fast, the Five had lost the right to receive "sundry boxes" from relatives. Warden Coyle denied any connection between the fast and the disturbance, claiming that he had granted the Five more privileges after the hunger strike ended.[26] The controversy about the fast and the riot continued elsewhere. Sonny Williams of the Ohio Prisoners Rights Union

> *said prison administrators have ignored warnings for months that there could be problems of death row. He said inmates are not provided with proper medical care and some death row inmates have been denied privileges granted to others on death row, such as access to televisions and radios. Coyle said there were no warning signs... (Youngstown Vindicator, September 7, 1997)*

As the hours passed it became clear that all injuries to guards had been minor, whereas several inmates had been seriously hurt. Richland County Prosecutor James Mayer, Jr., entered DR-4 shortly after the riot ended. "You had to be careful because there were very few places where there wasn't any blood," he told the local paper. Mayer also confessed puzzlement as to how the state could punish those responsible. "I can't think of anything else we could do to them. They're already facing the

[25] Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 6, 1997
[26] Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 7, 1997.

worst the state can give them."[27] Warden Coyle concurred that if the most dangerous prisoners were involved in the riot, there wasn't much more that could be done to punish them. "You really can't do much more," he stated.[28]

What George Says

When George Skatzes was interviewed on September 10, his public defender reported visible lacerations over both eyes and on one ear, where guards had banged his head against a wall. By September 16 Skatzes' wounds had healed and he was ready to tell his story. He carefully distinguished between what he had seen, what he had heard from others, and what he inferred to be true.

The disturbance began about 5 p.m. when supper trays were brought in. George was locked in his cell at the time. About half an hour later inmates came to George's cell and unlocked it. He told them that he wanted no part of what was going on, and asked to be left alone. He remained in his cell throughout the disturbance.

Inmates were milling around in the public area of the pod. "No one was doing anything," George says. Inmates tried to arrange themselves two or three in a cell in case there should be violence.

At any time the guards could have come in and peacefully regained control, according to Skatzes. He saw no inmate-to-inmate violence whatsoever. He saw no shanks or clubs. The only object that could be considered a "weapon" was a body chain, after it was unlocked. "All they [the guards] had to do was come in," Skatzes insisted.

George advised others of the Lucasville Five not to get on the phone to negotiate, lest, as in 1993, this cause them to be viewed by the authorities as ringleaders.

Time ticked away. Inmates conjectured that the authorities were hoping "for the body count to pile up," so that inmates could be severely punished. But there was no body count, and unlike 1993, there were no hostages.

About 10 p.m. George looked through the window of his cell into the corridor and saw men in gas masks. Then came a loud banging, followed by a noise like the firing of shotguns. A canister came through the cell window, shattering the glass, striking George directly, and causing minor cuts on George's arms. At least five canisters were shot into his cell. One of the canisters lodged on his top bunk, among his legal papers.

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[27] Mansfield News Journal, Sept. 7, 1997.
[28] Columbus Dispatch, Sept. 9, 1997

He felt as if gasoline had been poured over him and set afire. The hair on his arms stood straight up, and turned white. He couldn't breathe. He lay down on the floor, thinking he was going to die. He could not see his hand in front of his face.

After about fifteen minutes, as if by miracle the fog of tear gas lifted. George got up and leaned toward the hole in his cell window to get some air. A guard sprayed liquid mace through the hole. George told him, "You don't have to do that. I'm no threat to you."

George put a blanket on the floor, sat down on it, and waited. Everything in the cell was white from the tear gas.

About an hour later "bunches" of masked guards, wearing black ninja suits, came into DR-4. Two of them told George to stand and put his face to the wall. His hearing is not good, and had been affected by the shotgun-like sounds when the teargas was first fired, but as soon as he understood what was wanted, he complied.

The guards went into Jason Robb's cell next door. Hasan was told to strip to his underwear. He was then beaten very badly (but did not lose an eye, as the prisoners' grapevine first reported). George could hear beating, screaming, mumbling from the cell next door. A man who was with Jason in the cell told George later that Jason didn't say a word to provoke the assault.

When the guards came to George's cell, they told him to get down on his knees, with his hands behind his head. At least three of them then opened the door and stormed in. They asked no questions but "started beating on me." George did not resist, but rolled himself into a tight ball, trying to protect his head. The guards pulled his arms and legs in different directions, trying to make him straighten out, face down. They succeeded.

The guards got his left hand behind his back and put on a plastic handcuff. They bent back his wrist and fingers, trying (George believes) to break the bones. One guard hit George several times with his fist on the left side of the head, causing cuts on his jaw and above his eye. Another put his foot on George's neck.

George's right arm was still under his body. He was told to "get your right arm around here." He told them he was sorry to be angry but they didn't need to do all this. When they took hold of his right arm they tried (he believes) to break his right index finger and right arm.

George was handcuffed behind his back, "ungodly tight." A guard tried to stomp on his private parts. He squeezed his legs together. The guards picked him up by the cuffs and half walked, half dragged him out of the cell. George thought he was walking to his death. He saw thick gobs of blood on the floor.

The guards forced the handcuffs up as high as they could, so that George was bent over like an old man as he moved. A guard told him,

"You are going to stand up and walk out of here." It was impossible for George to stand up. Another guard took him by the hair, and slammed his head against the wall of Jason's cell. George thinks he was "out on his feet" for a time.

The next he knew he was at an exit door from DR-4, a guard on each side, bent over with his arms up high behind him. In front of O17 a guard hit George in the head. He rolled with the punch. There were more punches. They walked him out.

For half an hour he was put in a cell with Hasan and two other inmates who complained they could not breathe because of the tear gas on George. The two officers, one female, the other male, walked George to the warehouse. The female officer who is from Mansfield said, "This man is saturated with that shit." The male guard (who George thinks is from Mansfield) told him, "You're a good man." When the guards cut off the plastic handcuffs to put on an orange jump suit and then re-cuff George, the female guard remarked on how swollen his hands were.

The inmates from DR-4 lay in rows in the warehouse floor for about three hours. A nurse gave medical attention to the most seriously injured. There was no opportunity to wash off the tear gas and mace, nor would there be any shower for five days.

George found himself on the floor next to an inmate named Combs, a man with only one arm – and therefore "totally defenseless" – who had been sprayed with gas and severely beaten. "His head was a mess," George recalls.

At this writing (September 17) George and the others from DR-4 are housed in Security Control Investigation in very burdensome conditions. All their personal property was left behind in the cells, and much appears to be missing. Everybody's commissary is gone. They have been given toothbrushes cut off after the bristles, apparently on the theory that the toothbrush handle could be a weapon. No one has shoes (although George has hospital slippers). Food is even more inadequate than before. Neither coffee nor cigarettes are permitted.

George wants everything to be told 100 percent truthful. What George saw was totally uncalled for, he says.

Some Recent Prison Uprisings

May 9, 2004 — Hwaseong, South Korea

21 undocumented immigrant workers escaped from a detention center by scaling the walls. Four were recaptured. The guards claim that they were overtaken when they opened the door to a cell. They say two guards were beaten and the detainees used wrenches to break locks at the entrance of the building.

May 29, 2004 — Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

A riot took place in a prison after 14 inmates broke through its main gate and escaped. The rebellious prisoners took 26 guards and prison staff hostage and stole their guns. Three of the escapees were recaptured.

The riot began in the early morning after inmates at Benefica Prison exchanged gunfire with police and began taking hostages. Two days into the rebellion, the rioting prisoners killed a 43 year-old captured guard.

Still, Brazilian prison officials held off on storming the penitentiary and continued to negotiate with the rebel prisoners, though the talks were complicated by the fact that participants of the uprising were not making any specific demands! Apparently anticipating a police assault, prisoners hung a sheet from one of the windows that said, "Don't make this prison another Carandirn!" – a reference to the 1992 police massacre of 111 inmates in the Carandirn prison.

Jun. 20, 2004 – Lancaster County, Nebraska, United States

Youths at the Lancaster County Juvenile Detention Center rioted for about two hours, after two inmates refused to return to their room. Guards were forced to flee as the young prisoners threw furniture and trashed a computer and a telephone, causing about $2,000 in damage. The rebellious prisoners then barricaded themselves in the "day room" and police were brought in to break down the door. Seven inmates were placed in lockdown.

Jul. 6, 2004 – Israel

A cop and a prison guard sustained moderate injuries in prisoner riots at Gilboa prison. The facility, considered Israel's best-guarded prison, houses dozens of what Israeli security forces label the "most dangerous terrorists in the country." The riots were initiated by about 60 prisoners allegedly belonging to the Fatah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad groups.

The prisoners poured hot oil on prison guards and burned mattresses. Inspired by the actions of the initial rebels, dozens of other prisoners joined the riots. Prison Service Forces managed to quell the uprising but remained on high alert at other prisons out of concern that riots would be staged there too.

Jul. 20, 2004 – London, United Kingdom

The British government's "Fast-track" asylum system suffered a serious setback when detainees went on the rampage in its "model" removal center near Heathrow airport. Rioters wrested control of the Harmondsworth immigration removal center from staff after a Kosovan detainee was found hanged in his cell. At first, custody officers managed to keep control of the center where 411 men were being held, but by midnight they had pulled out for their own safety after confrontations. Throughout the night waves of Tornado squads – made up of prison pigs trained in quelling riots – set about taking back the center, hampered at times by fires set by detainees. A tense standoff involving about 80 detainees continued in a recreation yard until the following day. The Home Office is launching an investigation into the riot and the center will remain shut for several weeks.

Discontent has been brewing at Harmondsworth; in May, 220 detainees took part in a hunger strike, complaining about the poor legal advice given and assaults by staff.

Jul. 21, 2004 – Olney Springs, Colorado, United States

Prisoners rioted and set fires at a privately run prison, destroying one living unit and extensively damaging four others. The disturbance at the medium-security Crowley County Correctional Facility began in the evening in the recreation yard and grew to include several hundred prisoners. A vocational greenhouse was also destroyed during the rioting.

The prison, which opened in 1998, is designed to hold 1,152 and currently has 1,807 prisoners from Colorado, 120 from Wyoming and 198 from Washington.

The prison is managed by the Nashville, Tennessee-based Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the United States' largest private prison operator.

Jul. 24, 2004 – United States

Troubles continued to mount in July for America's largest operator of private prisons. Nashville-based Corrections Corporation of America suffered through two prison riots in one week in late July – one in Colorado and one in Mississippi. The uprisings followed a July 7 homicide at a Nashville prison, which is still being investigated, and a smaller uprising in Oklahoma. The spate of bad news for CCA is providing plenty of fodder for prison abolitionists and has prompted a sharp drop in CCA's stock price.

CCA, with 62,000 prisoners in 20 states and the District of Columbia under their "management," says it is confident that nothing is wrong with its operations and has hired a public relations firm to assuage fears on Wall Street.

Aug. 17, 2004 – San Foca, Italy

Immigrants rioted and clashed with police at the Regina Pacis immigrant detention center in San Foca, Italy. Six immigrants managed to escape during the melee. Hours later, a firebomb was thrown at the home of Don Cesare Lodeserto, the manager of the center. An insert was found on the windshield of a family member's car with the words "War to Don Cesar, manager of the jail for immigrants – Regina Pacis." The following day, prisoners at the center set fires and used cooking gas-canisters to damage a living unit.

Sep. 14, 2004 – Beattyville, Kentucky, United States

A privately operated prison in eastern Kentucky was under a security clamp after prisoners torched three buildings during an uprising. It apparently started when nine prisoners tried unsuccessfully to tear down a manned, wooden guard tower in the recreation yard. With a guard still inside, inmates used large concrete ashtrays to topple the tower, then pulled boards loose to batter the maintenance building where ladders, wire cutters and axes were stored.

Beattyville Police Chief Steve Mays said smoke was billowing and inmates were yelling and throwing rocks at a Kentucky State Police trooper when he arrived to provide backup. "It was chaos when I first got up there," Mays said. Prisoners set fire to two dormitories and an administrative building. Inmates also broke windows and light fixtures in the dorm and damaged toilets and sinks.

Oct. 28, 2004 – Istanbul, Turkey

A five-person commando team of alleged left-wing "extremists" hurled molotov cocktails and tried to set off a homemade explosive device outside the Beyoglu courthouse in central Istanbul. The team, reportedly militants of the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), their faces covered with red bandanas, hung up a placard protesting against prison conditions outside the courthouse. They then hurled molotov cocktails through the building's windows, starting a blaze. The DHKP-C, considered a terrorist organization by both Turkish and European Union authorities, is accused of masterminding a

wave of hunger strikes among left-wing prison inmates and their friends and families that has resulted in nearly 70 deaths in four years.

Nov. 2, 2004 – Monrovia, Liberia

Detainees broke out of the Monrovia Central Prison in the wake of three-day riots by gangs in Paynesville, Gardnersville, and adjacent suburbs. The number of detainees who escaped prison is unknown, but police Chief Mark Kroeker, said seven of the escapees were recaptured. The police guarding the prison compound were reported to have opened fire to prevent the escape of more prisoners. The escapees were alleged to have "exploited" the weekend riots that swept across the city, as all attention was focused on the riots in which more than 14 people were killed and several properties damaged. Widespread violence erupted in and around Monrovia that weekend with youths going on the rampage, looting, killing, and destroying churches, mosques, and private dwellings.

Nov. 17, 2004 – Abidian, Ivory Coast

About 4,000 inmates escaped from a prison in Cote d'Ivoire's commercial capital of Abidjan in a hugely successful jailbreak. The escapees used a drainage leading to the nearby forest. Earlier in November, riots broke out in the same prison due to the lack of water supply.

Nov. 20, 2004 – Fairbanks, Alaska, United States

Two people have been indicted by a grand jury in a suspected plot to break a prisoner out of the Fairbanks Correctional Center. Misty Hoffman, 28, and Joseph Gilespie, 24, are accused of ramming a stolen front-end loader into the wall of an inmate housing area. In the attempt, sections of two parallel barbed-wire fences surrounding the jail were leveled. The loader's scoop was used to smash two windows and a portion of the building's wall. Damages were estimated at $100,000. Hoffman and Gilespie are also accused of possessing a gun Hoffman planned on giving a prisoner in case it was necessary for the breakout.

Nov. 27, 2004 – Stockholm, Sweden

Authorities in Sweden have arrested a man who shot mobile phones into the yard of a high-security prison with a bow and arrows. The 25 year-old man is charged with planning to aid a prison escape and could get up to a year in jail himself. The suspect, whose name was not released, taped two cell phones and a battery charger to three arrows, and fired them over the 12-foot wall into Mariefred prison outside Stockholm during the evening hours.

Nov. 28, 2004 – Palm Island, Australia

About 200 people protesting against the death of a man in custody burnt down a police station, a house, and a courthouse on a remote Australian island, before police reinforcements flew in to restore "order." At one stage of the riot some 20 police were trapped inside their police station as a crowd stormed the building, eventually setting it alight. Radio reports said the station had been set on fire with a petrol bomb in the protests that erupted after Cameron Doomagee, 36, died in

a police cell. Doomagee had been arrested for "being drunk" and "causing a public nuisance."

"This is cold-blooded murder," one rioter yelled at the crowd in television footage. "I am not going to accept it and I know a lot of you other people won't."

Dec. 1, 2004 – Panama City, Florida, United States

An inmate takeover, which ended with the shooting of a hostage and a prisoner, began when a Bay County Jail guard was ambushed during an escape attempt. The wounded nurse and inmate survived gunfire from a sheriff's SWAT team that stormed the third floor of the jail to end the 11-hour standoff. The Corrections Corporation of America publicly disclosed details of what happened for the first time on December 1st, nearly two months later. As a jailer entered a cell and tried to awaken an inmate "playing possum" on September 5, another prisoner sneaked up and struck the guard in the head with an improvised weapon, probably a bar of soap or a padlock wrapped in a sock. When the jailer radioed for help, a shift captain closed a riot gate and shut the elevators to keep inmates from getting off the floor. With the escape foiled, inmates rushed across the hall to a nurse's station, where they took a guard and three nurses hostage.

Dec. 9, 2004 – Nassau, Bahamas

Migrants set fire to a detention dormitory, clashing with guards who fired rubber bullets at detainees. At least 20 people were injured. The riot at the Carmichael Road Detention Center in Nassau began after immigration officials forced their way into a dormitory with mostly Cuban migrants who were refusing to unlock the door.

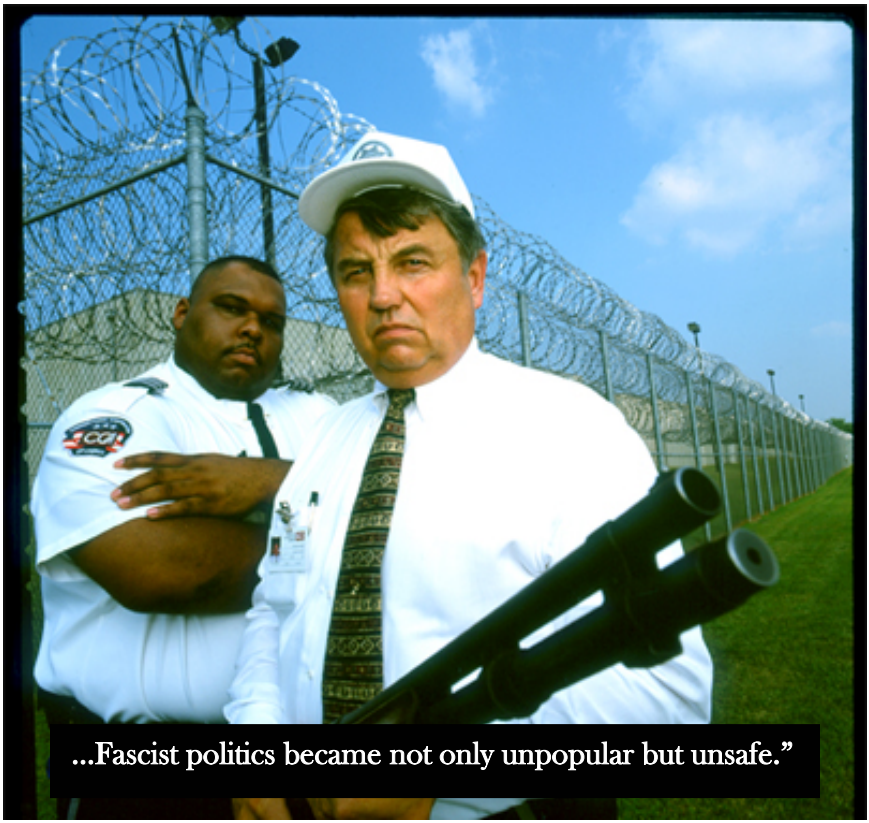
The detainees set fire to the room and hurled burning objects at the immigration officials, who fired rubber bullets to disperse the migrants. Eleven immigration officials suffered bruises and lacerations, though none were hospitalized. Three migrants escaped hours before the fire, though two were quickly recaptured.

Aug. 20, 2005 – Olmito, Texas, United States

Prisoners refused to go back to their cells, barricaded themselves in a room, smashed TVs and phones, and used makeshift weapons against guards, injuring two of them. Texas has had more than its share of prison disturbances and mutinies recently; earlier in the month, on August 6, five federal prisoners escaped from a privately run lockup near San Antonio. The prisoners apparently escaped while they were outside for an hour-long "recreation" period, said prison staff, who found that two perimeter fences had been cut.

June 2005 – Barcelona, Spain: Anarchist prisoner solidarity demonstration

"Prisoners began... to understand in theoretical terms how racism was a way of enslaving us all – blacks and other non-whites as inferiors, whites as oppressors. They understood now how the Klan had been doing the bidding of the prison officials for years, just like the white workers in society do the bidding of the capitalists...



...Fascist politics became not only unpopular but unsafe."

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