PREFACE

The hope of liberty and of opportunity is the only incentive to life, especially the prisoner’s life. Society has sinned so long against him—it ought at least to leave him that. I am not very sanguine that it will, or that any real change in that direction can take place until the conditions that breed both the prisoner and the jailer will be forever abolished.


The book you are holding is a tool for exposing a giant hidden monster in the political landscape of life in the United States. Criminal Injustice was designed as a primer for people who are working to raise consciousness in their communities, their schools, their workplaces, and inside prisons and the prison system.

Why produce a book such as this? The ideology of domination has enjoyed significant gains in recent years. Its priority remains creating a culture constantly policing and constantly policed. At this moment in history, there is significant activism aimed at fostering social justice, ending racism, and fighting poverty. Yet somehow, the project of dismantling the prison system is hardly on the progressive agenda. The reality is that we are not on the verge of any large-scale restructuring—much less abolition—of the repressive apparatus that imprisons, tortures, and breaks the spirits of such huge numbers of people. This apparatus is not limited to maximum-security prisons, but rather is made up of a vast conglomeration of institutions including federal, state, and local courts, police forces of all kinds, district attorneys and attorneys general, all part of what is called “the criminal justice system.” Language is powerful, and often serves to perpetuate the lies and distortion of domination. These days I try to use the term “criminal prosecution system.” It would be more accurate to call it “criminally unjust.”

The necessary changes in the U.S. system of imprisonment (and indeed, its eventual abolition) will not come from the benevolent initiative of government officials. The changes will be forced upon the system by prisoners organizing and by the collective action of an angry, educated populace. This book is one building block in the
overall work of raising consciousness, of sparking fires. As a political tool, it seeks to accomplish a dual task. First, it should raise questions for those whose assumptions regarding prisons tacitly or actively support the mainstream justification—"we need this punitive system to deal with all those 'sub-humans.'" Second, it should give facts and perspectives to fuel and focus the arguments and criticisms of those who already believe that "justice for all" is a lie.

This book should be a useful resource for prisoner support and prison reform/abolition activists. However, it is meant to reach beyond activists and educators already familiar with prison issues. Whether you are active around environmental issues, abortion rights, AIDS, housing and homelessness, open government, or domestic violence, the information presented here will help you to raise awareness of prison issues in clear, graphic ways. Whether you teach social science in a university or history to high school students, whether you're organizing a discussion group for friends, or workshops for a three-day conference, the resources in this book will help you to inform, inspire, and provide direction for further education, and indeed action!

A Hidden Monster

For most folks in the United States today, prisons are seen as an unfortunate necessity. How can progressive movements best respond to this characterization? Prisons do not occupy the same political space in the mind of "the Left" today as they did 10 or 20 years ago. Prisoner support and prison reform and abolition activism have largely been eclipsed by other concerns, such as homelessness, the environment, and reproductive rights. I believe that progressive and radical activists can and should increasingly make the prison crisis a central focus of our work, since the political, economic, and social dynamics at work in many of today's pressing issues are dynamics that are especially visible as they relate to prisons:

- The AIDS public health crisis is exposed most dramatically as it occurs in the context of prisons.
- The most graphic and brutal expression of racism in the United States can be found when looking at the nature of, and the statistics regarding, the prison system.

- The clearest and most exaggerated violations of due process and judicial procedure in U.S. history have been executed in the thousands of cases of political prisoners and prisoners of war.

This is not to suggest in any way that people working on any of the myriad issues facing us today should drop that work and devote all their energy to prison-related activism. It is to suggest that prisons are a key indicator, a crucial leverage point with which to expose the true nature of our culture and political economy. In a sense, prisons can be seen as a barometer for all that is ill at the core of our society, described most succinctly by bell hooks as "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy."

Prisons and the Larger Undercurrent of Repression

I wish to be clear as to the scope this book will cover. Its focus, though quite wide, is on merely the tip of a massive iceberg. Criminal Injustice deals for the most part with prisons, institutions where the federal or state governments confine people they have deemed "felons." But prisons are the extreme on a long continuum of repression, a continuum consisting of county and municipal jails, work camps, juvenile halls, detention centers, psychiatric wards, and other institutions increasingly driven by a law-and-order agenda. Indeed, throughout the United States, courts, police departments, and local and state governments must growing forces to execute a strategy of permanent repression—most evident in the literal occupation of urban neighborhoods such as South Central Los Angeles.

The same type of hegemony at work in the realm of economics exists with the criminal prosecution system. Just as every major newspaper has whole sections devoted to "Business" and almost nothing for "Labor," virtually all reports of crime and imprisonment are told from the perspective of the cops and the courts. While government and mass media have recently ushered in an enormous wave of fear about violent crime, the real nature of the criminal prosecution system is carefully hidden away from public view by those same individuals and institutions in big business and government who "manufacture consent" and engineer mass culture. Criminal defense attorneys and neighborhood organizers are rarely featured on mainstream TV. Rather, a staggering number of shows are dedicated to depicting DAs and the police as some band of mythical crusaders for justice and truth. Nothing could be more misleading. Addicted tele-
vision viewers are fed racist and scapegoating programs such as Cops, where shaky and sensational video operators accompany aggressive foot-soldiers on the front lines in the Reagan/Bush/Clinton drug war, traversing urban and suburban ghettos, glorifying the ideology of domination while rarely showing the brutality and harassment that are a daily reality for the nation’s poor people and people of color.

If we are to effectively confront the ever-increasing dehumanization and militarization of our society, activism around prisons must be enlightened now more than ever. The task ahead is to bring the issues explored in this book to the widest possible array of communities, thus raising not only our consciousness, but the political stakes as well.

How This Book Can Be Used Effectively

This book has been divided into six sections, each containing an introduction followed by several readings. The first section is an overview that helps to set the larger context of the prison system, both currently and historically in the United States. Each of the remaining sections focuses on a major aspect of the overall crisis. The authors included here come from varying backgrounds. There are attorneys, academics, activists, and prisoners; they represent a wide political spectrum from reformers to unequivocal abolitionists. While some of the contributors come out of the activism of the 1960s and 1970s, others were politicized during the Reagan/Bush years.

This range of perspectives should be a breeding ground for debate and critical analysis. Part of the point of a book like this is to examine ideas from different parts of our movements, and work towards synthesis, building strategy that can win radical changes in this extremely repressive time.

My vision is that Criminal Injustice can be used as an integral part of classes, forums, discussion groups, or even an argument with one’s brother-in-law. Having clear, readable, graphic resources should enable the user to draw people into discussion, to have a springboard for critical analysis, and perhaps to break through the prevailing resignation that we so often hear: “Okay, so conditions may be bad, but what else can we do? Violence is human nature and there is just no other way to deal with criminals!”

In advocating the ultimate abolition of prisons, I understand that there are some highly disturbed and ostensibly unrehabilitable individuals who—because of the likelihood that they will wantonly kill or otherwise violate other people (without government sanc-
Others of us are striving for a society where prisons would not be needed and could not be justified. To counter the individuals and institutions that devalue and destroy the human spirit, we must organize and agitate on every level in every arena. We can replace the society that these chapters describe.

We may feel that the problems outlined here are too vast for us to have any impact on what seems an intractable situation. Yet we should take courage and inspiration from the many stories of resistance coming from both sides of the prison walls. There is a plethora of resources for anyone wishing to learn more and take action. There are many different types of work that need to be done in building an effective prison movement. There are many ways of supporting individual prisoners, of educating, and of organizing campaigns and actions.

This book can be a catalyst for change. It is not, of course, a definitive document. There are so many areas of the crisis and so many inextricably linked issues that I could not cover here in greater depth (or for some, at all). Some of these include: prison abolition literature and movements; prison uprisings; mandatory minimum sentences; gang violence and truces: "Three Strikes You're Out"; families of prisoners; grand juries as a tool for repression; police abuse and community control of the police; psychiatric abuse of prisoners and conditions on psychiatric wards; the criminalization of the homeless; youth, and immigrants; the racist movement for bio-medical intervention; conditions and struggles in other countries; war and military resisters and military prisons; rape in prisons; medical neglect; and jailhouse lawyers.

Yet, this book should be an evolving tool. To this end, the Prison Activist Resource Center (PARC) has created a companion volume— which will be updated on a continual basis—for educators and activists. This Organizers' Guide includes extensive resources, many of which address the above issues. I also encourage readers to contact us with suggestions, comments, or questions. Together, we can build stronger networks to effectively confront this growing crisis.

NOTES

5. The Organizers' Guide is a free manual that includes a directory of groups, a bibliography, a selection of leaflets and brochures, and examples of recent activism. The Guide is available through PARC (see the order form on the last page of this book).
Of the approximately 34 million serious felonies [committed in the United States] in 1990, 31 million never entered the criminal justice system, because they were either unreported or unsolved. This means that 90 percent of serious crime remains outside the purview of police, courts and prison officials. The remaining 10 percent is further eroded as a result of screening by prosecutors and dismissals or acquittals. In California, 65 percent of adults arrested for felonies are convicted, and of these, 20 percent are sent to state institutions.

—Joan Petersilia of the conservative think tank, the RAND Corporation

These chapters give a broad outline of the economic and political forces that make our current imprisonment system the cruel joke that it is. The authors provide a clear picture of the overarching issues, and lay bare, with statistics and critical analyses, the true nature of life behind bars, and the myth that the situation is anything less than a crisis. These selections show how racism and the criminalization of poverty are central to the maintenance of prisons as a system of social control. While the practice of incarceration may have been initiated by the benevolent ideas of Quaker reformers, it is quite clear that today’s prison system has instead advanced the vision of the slave-owners, business tycoons, and imperialists who founded this country.
This section does not address the day-to-day conditions in prisons—the situations that make them outrageous, and that make prisoners revolt. Yet to understand the crisis in prisons, it is vital to look at just what occurs in the specific institutions, to have at least a thumbnail sketch of the ongoing crimes against humanity that make up the material reality of incarceration in the land of the not so free. Therefore, the following section includes a compilation of excerpts that illustrate the conditions for so many of our caged fellow human beings.

Who is in prison and why? Why does the system seek ways to imprison as many people as possible in as harsh a manner as possible, having given up on even the pretense of rehabilitation? How do prisons act as an extension of the segregation and oppression that were the core of slavery and Jim Crow? Why are low-income defendants far more likely to be imprisoned when the loss to society from “white collar” crimes “far exceeds the economic impact of all burglaries, robberies, larcenies, and auto thefts combined?”

Since so many people see prisons as an adequate and unavoidable solution to crime, or misunderstand the criminal prosecution system, uncovering the myths and giving a detailed analysis of the situation are crucial. The pieces in this Overview help reveal the economic and political role that the prison system plays in the larger society. They also explore racism and the criminalization of poverty as foundations of the prison system.

In “The Fortress Economy,” Alexander Lichtenstein and Michael Kroll explain the place that prisons occupy in our economy (and indeed our culture). They argue effectively that while law-and-order policies have traditionally been conceived of as ensuring public safety, a broad range of evidence exists to show that social justice (e.g., the protection of civil rights and abolition of institutional racism) is an absolute requirement for true public safety. The authors also address issues such as drugs, the social bias against ex-offenders, and the recent debates regarding prison labor and the privatization of prisons.

Marc Mauer and the Sentencing Project in Washington, DC have done considerable work to help us see exactly who is, and just how many people are, locked up. Included here are tables from the most recent version of their important study, Americans Behind Bars: The International Use of Incarceration, 1992-1993.

The piece by Joel Olson of The BLAST! is an overview of the repressive role prisons play in our society. In his very readable rantings, the author smashes the myth that the purpose of penal institutions is to deter crime, arguing that imprisonment is, instead, about social control.

In an inspiring piece written as the keynote address for an International Human Rights Coalition meeting in December 1990, Sabina Virgo critically examines propaganda and socially constructed notions of crime, revealing how our ideas of what is criminal and deserving of punishment can, and indeed must, change. She goes beyond the statistics to analyze in depth just what they mean, and what they say about the society we have made. She reminds us that decisions to cut school funding, cut health programs, build prisons, or imprison people are political decisions, not removable from their context of wealth and power. She asserts that it is struggling individuals and communities who can and must “build a powerful, caring movement for change.”

Giving an historical viewpoint on prison labor and exploitation, Julie Browne’s piece “The Labor of Doing Time,” is an excellent explanation of how slavery still exists and is being re-institutionalized in the United States today. And finally, we have “The Politics of Super Incarceration.” The author, scholar-activist Mike Davis, is well known for his cogent analysis of culture and politics in Southern California, and has researched and written extensively about the new “law-and-order” agenda grinding its way through the “Golden State.” Here, Davis paints a vivid portrait of the culture and economy that support the massive growth in prison construction. The piece also serves as an excellent introduction to the political forces at work in the business of punishment, a business where California leads the nation on every count.

NOTES

SECTION TWO

CONDITIONS FOR RESISTANCE

Turn on almost any daytime radio talk show and it will be clear: the war against prisoners is on. Reactionary forces in the United States have popularized the false notion that prisoners have "too many rights," that it is unfair for convicted criminals to "have it so easy." Behind these complaints about "glamour slammers" and the supposedly easy lifestyle enjoyed by prisoners is a deep-seated vindictiveness, a nationwide call for increasingly harsh punishments. This conservative agenda is about criminalizing and dehumanizing people, and thus even the most basic of human rights are seen, instead, as "privileges." The ultimate goal is to make people believe that prisoners do not deserve any human rights, and to strip away the few rights prisoners maintain. In no way is this trend illustrated more sharply than by the brutality and the severe medical neglect that is endemic throughout the U.S. prison system.

Prison officials have long shown deliberate indifference to prisoner-health issues. Prisoners throughout the United States suffer from health problems ranging from toxic water supplies to psychiatric illness and tuberculosis, but medical care in prisons continues to be inhumane and inaccessible.

The horrifying statistics regarding heart disease, breast cancer, malnutrition, and so many other preventable diseases illustrate that
we live in a disposable society. This is enforced by policies of govern-
ment and the corporate medical establishment that continue to define
health care as a profit-oriented venture, treating symptoms with
band-aid fixes that fail to address the larger, more complex roots of
the health care crisis. The state’s health care agenda, as defined by
institutions such as the American Medical Association, the Food and
Drug Administration, and the insurance industry, demonizes alterna-
tive, holistic medicine and ignores the important roles played by
a massively polluted environment and the destructive lifestyles thrust
upon us all.

Now largely inaccessible and unaffordable to huge numbers of
people, health care must ultimately become something we practice as
an integral part of community life, instead of something we buy from
a corporation. Unfortunately, this is not on the immediate horizon.
There is now a large body of literature concerning nutrition, alcohol-
ism, drug addiction, the neglect of mental health, the neglect of
children and elders, exercise, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases,
work-related injuries, and the severe contamination of our bodies by
carcinogenic and neurologically destructive chemical compounds.
Even the most cursory look at this literature provides conclusive
evidence that our ongoing faith in Medical Progress is foolhardy.

It is in this context of the state’s blatant disregard for people’s
health and well-being overall that we must place the health crisis,
especially that faced by prisoners with HIV and AIDS.

AIDS is, as many health issues are, about wealth and political
power. It is about race, gender, and economic inequality. It is about
greed, education, and a basic lack of democracy. Largely, AIDS has
also been about the politics of the everyday lives of lesbian, gay, and
bisexual people. It was only a few years after the onset of the AIDS
pandemic, however, that it was no longer seen as exclusively affecting
homosexual communities. When straight conservative white people,
famous people, and children started to test positive for HIV and
eventually die from AIDS, a long and historically significant process
of perception shifting began. But mind you, these drastic shifts were
not due to an aware and caring media acting in the public service.
Rather, a mass movement — spearheaded by groups such as the AIDS
Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) — through direct action, educa-
tion, and grassroots public pressure, changed not only many public
policies and municipal and state health care agendas, but the very
nature of the language that we use when talking about the issues.
There were several elements of this shift: Much of our culture slowly

began to see the crisis as not limited to sectors of the population they
could marginalize; a heated intellectual and practical debate arose
regarding “guilty” and “innocent” victims of the disease; and the
mind set of a significant portion of the population began to move from
myths to facts and from fear to understanding.

Despite these advances, we have a long way to go. Prisoners
with AIDS are precisely the underclass that mainstream culture
refuses to look at, refuses to deal with. Prisoners with AIDS often face
what amounts to a death sentence. I believe our activism needs to
assert loudly that their criminal status is not the issue — prisoners with
AIDS have the right to live.

The physical and mental health conditions that exist for prison-
ers, and especially prisoners with AIDS, are sharp and graphic illus-
trations of the skewed priorities of the medical and penal
establishments. In exposing and denouncing the reality of AIDS and
other aspects of the health crisis in prisons, we assert that health care
is a human right — not a privilege. Creative and pointed activism that
stirs for this can lead our society to more seriously address the
emergency of how we take care of ourselves and each other.

The chapters that follow are very successful at bringing these
issues to the forefront. Cases like that of Vaughn Dortch, ruthlessly
scalded by guards at California’s Pelican Bay State Prison and left with
second and third degree burns over one third of his body, are not
isolated incidents. “Exposing the Myth of Humane Imprisonment,” a
1991 report of the Prison Discipline Study (PDS) in Sacramento, CA,
details the legal, physical, and psychological abuses to which prison-
ers are routinely subjected, and dissects the fiction of “humane”
imprisonment. Although it is now five years old, the central findings
of the PDS are still relevant: “1) That severe physical and psychologi-
cal abuse are the norm in maximum-security prisons throughout the
county; and 2) That the most frequently disciplined groups of prison-
ers are jailhouse lawyers, Black prisoners, and prisoners with mental
handicaps. There is no significant variation by state or region.” (Many
of the worst conditions exist in the nation’s control unit prisons. See
Section Six, “The Nationwide Lockdown.”)

In this period of history, when politicians and corporate elites
are manipulating language to fit imperialist policy objectives, it is
important to realize who the real criminals and terrorists are. It is
instructive to remember that the United States is the biggest warmon-
ger of all time. It is important to recall that everything done by Hitler’s
Third Reich was preceded by a "legal process" in which the masses of people supposedly had a say.

Despite reactionary fuming about prisoners in the United States having too many privileges, in actuality, prisoners are daily being stripped of their basic human rights. C. Stone Brown's piece on the Federal Crime Bill and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act gives us a chilling reminder that the protections of our human and civil rights as supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution are extremely elastic. The passage of laws that limit habeas corpus and the Bill of Rights, such as those described in Brown's article, indicate that the government is in the process of rolling back fundamental rights for both prisoners and non-prisoners.

Our culture leads us to believe that prisoners are simply either crazy, or passive objects bemoaning their fate. A closer look at prisons shows us thriving pockets of culture: vibrant sub-cultures, loving relationships, family ties; creative expression that is at once graceful, loud, poetic, and angry; significant academic and scholarly achievement; dynamic legal representation; strong organizing efforts; spiritual growth; and, of course, sustained resistance. The resilience of the human spirit portrayed by Laura Whitehorn in "Resistance at Lexington" reminds us that behind the prison walls, dignity and humanity are upheld by the simplest acts. Prisoners struggling against the brutality of the prison system remind us of the connections to be made, and that we are fulfilling our humanity in the fight for justice, not the application of law.

In "Building Bridges," Lin Elliot begins, "To be queer in prison is to be silenced." Elliot struggled for, and eventually achieved, some recognition of lesbian and gay prisoners by the political lesbian and gay communities outside the prison walls. As he outlines, however, this struggle for visibility continues. Elliot offers a much-needed perspective on how society's oppression of gay/lesbian/bi/transgendered people manifests itself inside prisons, and specifically in the Washington state system. Much of the work of prison activists involves responding to and issuing calls for solidarity. Now, as lesbian/gay/bi/transgendered prisoners and their advocates are organizing in dynamic ways for human and civil rights, our solidarity and unremitting advocacy are invaluable.

Some of these pieces come from a collection of materials prepared by ACT-UP. In 1991, ACT-UP gave its work on prisoners with AIDS new life by joining with prisoners themselves to form the California HIV Activist and Inmate Network. This network, pulling together the efforts of a dedicated and talented array of activists throughout the state, demonstrated and issued demands that clearly articulated the needs of prisoners living (and dying) with HIV/AIDS. Things changed. Direct action got the goods. Statewide, ACT-UP placed sufficient pressure on the California Department of Corrections, the California Medical Facility (CMF) at Vacaville, and the California Institution for Women to bring a major review process and some meaningful gains for the struggles of those behind the prison walls.

As with any long-term struggle, however, battles won do not herald an end to the fight. In the late summer and fall of 1992, health care at CMF-Vacaville deteriorated, and several prisoners went on medication strike and later hunger strike to protest the conditions and the deaths of several prisoners with AIDS.
SECTION THREE

WOMEN IN PRISON

Prisons reflect and amplify the male supremacist dynamics of our society. In fact, because prisons and the criminal prosecution system are so carefully removed from the scrutiny of prisoners' supportive communities and advocates, blatant sexism and victimization often go unchecked. Cops, attorneys, judges, and guards go out of their way to brutally enforce control over the lives and bodies of the women they imprison.

Although the percentage of prisoners who are women is relatively small, women make up the fastest growing subset of the entire prison population. The issues of women in prison cut across each of the other topics to which sections of this book have been devoted and male supremacy and sexist injustice are intimately connected with the overall dehumanization so apparent in other areas of the crisis. Male privilege (and domination), and the protection of that privilege have long been and continue to be central to the criminal prosecution system.

Perhaps most illustrative of the unequal justice that applies to women are the countless cases of battered women in prison, convicted and sentenced for fighting back or killing their abusive partners in defense of their lives and/or the lives of their children.
This section’s opening piece sets the context by giving some statistics and analysis of this crucial issue, compiled from reports prepared by groups such as the California Coalition for Battered Women in Prison and the National Clearinghouse in Defense of Battered Women.

For more than 10 years, Nancy Kurshan has been an active member of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML). CEML is a Chicago-based prisoners’ rights and anti-control unit group she helped to found. In “Behind the Walls: The History and Current Reality of Women’s Imprisonment,” she highlights the historical process by which the separate penal institution for women was created, and the roots it has in the witch hunts, burnings, and patriarchal power structures of 17th-century Europe and New England. This piece also examines the current material reality of women in prison today, and how women are rebelling against that reality.

Women in prison have always been made invisible by mainstream culture. Throughout this century, even progressives and reformers have been conspicuously unaware of the reality of women’s imprisonment. In “The Politics of Confinement and Resistance,” Karlene Faith details an inspiring movement for women’s liberation—a movement in which giving voice to women inside is central. Faith’s many years of experience organizing and teaching on both sides of the prison walls have given her valuable insight into the power dynamics that drive the sexist practice of incarceration, and how the many connections between the way women are seen and treated in society at large, and the specific indignities and harsh treatment they face in prison. Taking apart the very words we use to describe the problem of women’s imprisonment, she brings us to a new understanding of women’s experience of violence and repression.

Excerpted largely from her 1993 book, Unruly Women, this piece is not only a feminist indictment of the culture of mass imprisonment, but a dynamic story of educators and activists who came together and created the Santa Cruz Women’s Prison Project, a ground-breaking community building exercise that challenged and empowered hundreds of women prisoners, educators, activists, artists, and entertainers throughout California in the 1970s. Reading about this revolutionary program is a refreshing reminder of the potential power of a committed group of people with shared vision.

“Prisons and Social Control,” a piece from the Vancouver publication Kinesis, addresses the issues confronted at the crossroads of 1) the demand for justice by women in a society where there is little or no justice for women and 2) feminist vision of a culture without imprisonment. The article is rich as a springboard for dialogue among feminists, prison reform activists, and radicals of any stripe.

Sylvia Baraldini, Marilyn Buck, Susan Rosenberg, and Laura Whitehorn address the United States’ current control unit for women: Marianna, Florida. They point out the subtle yet extremely important differences between the type of control exercised at Marianna and that practiced at Lexington. (Also see Chapter 28, “Lexington Prison High Security Unit.”)

One of the most significant ways women are institutionalized in the United States is in psychiatric facilities. While the psychiatric assault on millions of women in the United States is a vital issue, it was outside the scope of this book. More information is available in the Organizers’ Guide available from PARC (see last page of this book).
SECTION FOUR

THE DEATH PENALTY IS DEAD WRONG

In his philosophical study, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, Michel Foucault details the historical process by which all punishment, but especially capital punishment, has been "humanized" by the state. He analyzes how penal establishments have adopted supposedly more civilized methods, leaving behind the public spectacle of torture.

But the punishment-body relation is not the same as it was in the torture during public executions. The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as a property. The body, according to this penalty, is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations, and prohibitions. Physical pain, the pain of the body itself, is no longer the constituent element of the penalty. From being an art of unbearable sensations punishment has become an economy of suspended rights. If it is still necessary for the law to reach and manipulate the body of the convict, it will be at a distance, in the proper way, according
to strict rules and with a much "higher" aim. As a result of this new restraint, a whole army of technicians took over from the executioner, the immediate anatomist of pain: warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, psychologists, educationalists... The modern rituals of execution attest to this double process: the disappearance of the spectacle and the elimination of pain.¹

So while the trappings and outward appearance of executions have been transformed and made to appear more humane, little has changed regarding the ultimate imperative: the state sees itself as the collective vehicle of revenge and the dispatcher of some necessary foreboding message to the criminal.

Even if the state were morally correct and its message to the criminal necessary, the penalty is simply not working. All the statistics bear this out.

The first piece, a compilation of facts collected from materials by Death Penalty Focus of California, assembles some good arguments to counter common rationalizations for the death penalty. I would caution that we may not want to make all of these arguments our rallying cry. The failure to challenge the life-without-parole "alternative"—in itself something akin to a penalty of death—is, I believe, a grave error. This piece does, however, arm us with explicit and detailed challenges to the myths that sustain capital punishment, with which we can begin to expose the racism, scapegoating, and class prejudice—the roots and essence of the modern execution—that fuel the death penalty.

A great deal of strong abolitionist work in recent years has shown that there are many options for action. Besides compiling the informational packet, Death Penalty Focus has organized demonstrations and vigils, organized religious communities to actively oppose state killing, put on educational presentations, and been a vocal lobbyist, pressuring lawmakers and California's governor to stop executions.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has also been a force for galvanizing legal communities to oppose the death penalty. They have filed appeals on behalf of death row inmates, consistently reaffirming that the death penalty is cruel and unusual. Though it overlaps with some of the information cited in the Death Penalty Focus compilation, the ACLU's Capital Punishment Project piece, "The Case Against the Death Penalty," contains key theoretical and philosophical arguments that complement the other selection quite well. While it makes what I see as false assumptions regarding our "democratic system" and our "civi-

lized society," and it, too, fails to challenge life-without-parole, it nonetheless provides a clear and well-defined moral and political critique.

Also included here is an insightful, incisive essay by Mumia Abu-Jamal, a political prisoner on Pennsylvania's death row. Mumia began his career as a journalist in the 1960s, when he was Minister of Information for the Black Panther Party. Later, as a supporter of the MOVE organization, he exposed the criminal conduct of the Philadelphia police in their infamous 1978 pre-dawn raid of the MOVE household. This journalism made him a target of local authorities, who railroaded Mumia in a 1982 trial in which he was convicted of killing a police officer despite evidence that Mumia was innocent.

First appearing in the Yale Law Journal of January 1991, the article moves from expose to legal primer to survey of the political landscape. More recently, this article appeared in Abu-Jamal's book Live from Death Row (Addison-Wesley, 1995), the publication of which has caused further repression for his candid journalism. The piece lays bare the massive contradictions on which capital punishment operates, not only for the general populace but for the people whose hands are more directly on the switch—politicians, wardens, guards, police, district attorneys, attorneys general, judges, and governors. Many careers have been and continue to be built on the backs of people sentenced to death.

"Killing Justice: Government Misconduct and the Death Penalty" shows the pervasiveness of illegal and unethical tactics, and the lengths to which agents of the state will go to secure death sentences and executions. This piece is excerpted from a report by the Death Penalty Information Center in Washington, DC.

NOTES

¹Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage), 1979, p. 11.
Many political organizers have made (and continue to make) the contention that all prisoners are political prisoners. In some senses, this is true. It is not necessarily that all prisoners are themselves politically active, or publicly identified with a particular movement or cause, but that the context in which human beings are caged is extremely political. The legal machinery that brings a person to be locked up is never objective or discriminatory; there are a multitude of socioeconomic, racial, and political factors that play into each case. So many prisoners are convicted, sentenced, incarcerated, and subjected to legal and physical harassment based on reasons clearly beyond the facts of the case: from their race or class backgrounds, to their associations or political beliefs.

"Justice" is far from blind. The unbiased administration of just laws described in civics classes or shown on television, does not exist. Poor people and people of color routinely receive harsher penalties...
from judges and juries than do white middle-class folk, for the exact same crimes. The whole process is riddled with DA, cop, judge, guard, and prison official misconduct. Framing of suspects, coercion of witnesses, and the gang-jacketing of defendants are commonplace. Arbitrary and unfair rulings and procedures are rampant. Thus, many activists assert that all prisoners, whether politicalized or not, should be considered in the political context within which they were caged. However, the point of using the term “political prisoner” is to draw attention to the huge variance in the treatment of different prisoners.

It is to highlight the fact that people who have committed heinous acts while not articulating an agenda the state finds threatening are often released within months or years of their sentencing, while people who challenge state authority are held for decades, lied to, harassed, abused, and ridiculed as “terrorists.”

Recognizing and raising awareness about political prisoners is also about drawing attention to the government’s true agenda: quashing the opposition of people who dare challenge either particular institutions or the whole economic and political system. The state’s rationale is that if it is able to keep these activists, agitators, and revolutionaries out of sight and out of mind, then it will be easier to keep the rest of the populace complacent. The goal is to make an example of political prisoners, to crush further resistance by intimidating those who would articulate the nature of the fight against their oppression. This rationale ignores the fact that wherever there is repression, there will always be resistance.

While the U.S. government denies that it holds political prisoners and prisoners of war, it cages hundreds of people who have been identified by all international standards to be clearly deserving of this status. Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the U.S. government to discontinue torture of its citizens; representatives from this human rights monitoring group have found the federal government and state prisons to be in violation of the United Nations’ Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (see Section Six on control unit prisons and Chapter Six, “In Critical Condition”).

Imprisonment in general is highly political. Yet, Mumia Abu-Jamal, for instance, is considered a political prisoner because the governments of Pennsylvania and the United States have treated him the way they have as a direct result of his work with the Black Panther Party, his support for the MOVE organization, and for his religious practices. Norma Jean Croy has been targeted for a crime she did not commit, not only because she is Native American, but because of her vocal resistance as a woman and as a Lesbian. Federal grand juries have been used as a tool to disrupt the Left—not the Right—for decades.

Many of the essays in this section are available through groups such as the Prisoner Aids Resource Center (PARC) and the International Anarchist Black Cross, as well as papers such as Prison News Service. The Freedom Now! network, now largely defunct, concentrated its efforts on those prisoners explicitly identified with particular liberation movements, or particular struggles. Other groups have continued where they left off. This is vital work, explored more fully in the readings that follow. Besides the national liberation and anti-imperialist movements discussed here, political prisoners also came from a variety of backgrounds, including anarchists, tax resisters, and activists in the animal liberation and disarmament movements. For more information, see the Organizers’ Guide from PARC (order form on the last page of this book). Please also note that Prison News Service has, in the last several years, been a unique and valuable resource on detailed information regarding the subtle and controversial political and tactical issues surrounding political prisoner support and the role of groups such as Freedom Now! See especially issues 21-29.

Included here are analyses of the practice of political imprisonment and highlights of specific cases. Most activists who address issues of political prisoners also provide a critique of the prison system as a whole, and specific abuses within it. For reasons of brevity and to avoid redundancy, this critique has largely been edited out of the following chapters.

NOTES

1. Gang-jacketing is the practice of creating public knowledge or conjecture of a person’s affiliation to a gang. The practice was used widely by the FBI in its infamous COINTELPRO, and is used today by agents of the state at various levels to condemn prisoners and activists.

SECTION SIX

THE NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN

Control Unit Prisons on the Rise

That foreign military intervention and domestic repression have most often been successfully framed by imperialist governments as the preservation of democracy says a great deal about the cultural and political power of elites and their institutions. As has been noted in many of the preceding chapters, the modern maximum-security prison is a key institution in the maintenance of elite power in the United States. Not only are these “super-max” dungeons effective in squelching a great deal of the righteous opposition to prison conditions, imprisonment strategies, and general social reality, but in the interest of elite agendas, they send a powerful message to the populace. That message is essentially that our solution to an individual’s violence must be to silence and punish the individual, not to address the root causes of this violence.

The state’s justification for these torturous conditions is that these prisoners are the “worst of the worst.” This rationale is shared by most
of the 36 or more states that have created control unit prisons. Often the people confined to these institutions indeed represent extreme products of our violent culture. However, as a number of the authors point out, control units (and for that matter, segregation, isolation, or "security" units in mainline prisons) serve just as often to put away jailhouse lawyers, Queers, those with organizing potential, and others whom prison officials see as a threat to their order.

In their piece, "Supermax Prisons: High-Tech Dungeons and Modern-Day Torture," Erica Thompson and Jan Susler look closely at the history of Marion, which has been used as a model for prison construction and for creating the conditions of isolation. They detail reports assailing the prison and various efforts launched by justice-minded folks to expose Marion's brutality. Thompson is active with the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, and her commitment to prisoner's rights is made clear in this piece.

The other pieces speak specifically to the conditions at other federal and state flagship institutions, such as the Lexington High Security Unit for women, which was closed due to public protest; California's Pelican Bay State Prison, heralded as the state of the art in maximum-security incarceration; and the newly opened federal lockdown in Florence, Colorado.

Erica Thompson

The United States Penitentiary at Marion, Illinois, opened in 1963, the same year the federal prison at Alcatraz closed. In 1983, the whole prison was permanently locked down and turned into the first control unit. It is currently the highest security prison in the United States.

Since the imposition of the lockdown at Marion, both the model itself and the violence by its employees have been strongly and continuously criticized by organizations. Consider the following:

- The 1985 report of the USP Marion task force observed that violence and misconduct by employees included sexual abuse; that evidence that Marion were not even classified as high-risk at the time; and that even in that fact that many of the most violent incidents were classified as low-risk.

- The 1985 report of the USP Marion task force observed that Marion reported a course that favors the con-
CONCLUSION

THE REAL DRAGON

As I was putting the final touches on the first incarnation of this project in April 1993, the boilerplate of anger erupted in Lucasville, an Ohio State Prison. Prisoners held out in 11 days of siege, during which hostages were taken by both prisoners and staff, and in some cases beaten or killed. All told, nine prisoners and one officer died in the uprising. Organizers issued a list of 21 demands, which officials refused to make public.¹

As I was working on this incarnation of the book, there were significant uprisings at well over 30 prisons in the federal system. The context for such widespread and pointed rebellion included several factors: first, a nationwide cell strike had been called for by New York state prisoners in September 1995 to protest against overcrowding and the attack on prisoners' rights, especially medical treatment, denial of visitation, and lack of educational opportunities. Solidarity with these prisoners and with political prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal was expressed coast to coast. Secondly, the "riots" were an expression of totally justified rage at a racist decision made by Congress and President Clinton to maintain disparate criminal sentencing for possession and sales of crack cocaine.²
Then and now, prison uprisings set an appropriate backdrop to the messages I wish the book to convey.

In the preceding pages, a great deal of territory was covered. For me, trying to process all of this information can be truly overwhelming. There is an unbelievable amount of information available on every aspect of the whole imprisonment process. One can read 20 books, keep up-to-date on relevant periodicals, and attend prison-related events (speak-outs, forums, seminars, debates, videos, benefits) and still not have the whole picture. At a certain point in putting together this book, however, I found that having all the most up-to-date statistics is perhaps not as important as one might think. Academics and activists are constantly putting out books and studies that go deeper into this or that realm of the crisis in prisons. By the time you read this, some new study crucial to prison reform/prisoner support movement-building will undoubtedly have been released—and not accounted for here.

This book, therefore, is an evolving work in progress. It has been somewhat difficult to craft this guide in a way that would make it of immediate, yet also lasting, significance. Unlike a handbook on organizing around the Gulf War, or the Nevada Nuclear Test Site, this book had to cover many diverse agendas, and plot diverse trajectories of theory and action.

I decided to put this book together precisely because of the place perniciously occupies on our issues-of-the-day menu—the cruelty and social wastefulness of “our” state and federal prison systems is a cornerstone of the oppression of our time, yet in the media, popular culture, and the entire educational establishment, prisons and the whole travesty that is the criminal prosecution system roll on like some slow, unstoppable monster.

Having organized with various environmental activism groups, I am constantly amazed at the transformation that has taken place in the popular imagination with regard to “saving the environment.” We have become accustomed to the idea of doing something—now—to lessen the burden on the planet. The up-to-the-moment CNN exposés and Life magazine special reports have seemingly legitimatized a discipline once considered to be the territory of “hippies” and “freaks.” Granted, the ruling line is still that radicalism, oppositional politics, and grassroots ecological struggles are extremist terrorist plots to be avoided at all costs. But the truth is, huge numbers of people are recycling, are contributing to this or that foundation, and are convinced they have been “making a difference.”

The point I wish to make is that I have put this book together in an effort to make the imprisonment emergency every bit as real, as accessible, and as understandable to the public as environmentalism has become.

As the writers of the broadside Ammunition assert, “We are the sane ones. We are fighting to abolish human sacrifice.” By using the resources provided in this book, and the accompanying Organizers’ Guide (see the last page of this book), along with others we find and create ourselves, I believe we can reach people who are now asleep. The act of keeping people behind bars, behind walls, chained and restrained against their will, is a clear violation of the human spirit. Power’s unashamed denial of basic human rights, and the rape and torture that occur daily are fundamental reminders of the illness of our culture. Statistics will change, will become more and less frightening, but the interpersonal terrorism of brutalizing people and reducing their potential as human beings—especially as it has been outlined in these pages—will always be a powerful injustice against which we must continue to struggle. It has been said by many revolutionaries that a great deal of motivating, guiding energy for the overthrow of repressive structures can and will come from within prisons. This is exactly the sentiment I wish to end with. Ho Chi Minh put it this way:

Those who fight for justice are people of true merit. When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out!

NOTES

1. See Prison News Service, no. 41 and following.
APPENDIX

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

There are a multitude of possibilities for action that groups and individuals can take to effectively address the crisis in prisons. The following suggestions are listed in outline form, with some slightly more developed. For further inspiration, see the Organizers' Guide (order form last page of book); the experience of people from the organizations listed there can also be extremely helpful in planning and executing a successful project. The Organizers' Guide also includes copies of flyers from several recent events, to help spark our imaginations, and get a sense of what has been done thus far.

A. Events

1. **Forums**
   
   Forums can be especially effective as a means of galvanizing people or communities who otherwise are not directly involved in the issues. They can be as informal as small-group report-backs from a delegation that recently visited a control unit prison, or as formal as a panel of highly respected and internationally renowned scholars and activists debating and making connections among several different issue areas. In either case, the use of literature tables, art, videos, cultural presentations, and food and drink can make a huge difference in what participants come away with.

2. **Benefit**

   Entertainers with progressive or radical messages in their art should not be quickly written off as unapproachable. They should be prodded and coaxed and encouraged to put their politics out in the open. Even relatively simple efforts to contact them may yield surprising results. Often artists, from the struggling local poet to the world-famous rock star, will be waiting for the opportunity to aid a particular movement, and merely not know who to contact.

3. **Tribunals and Mock Trials**

   Recently, excellent examples of such events have taken place. They were well organized and received widespread attention. The International Tribunal of Indigenous Peoples and Oppressed Nations in the U.S.A. was held in San Francisco from October 2-4, 1992. The Special International Tribunal on the Situation of Political Prisoners and POWs Held in the United States convened in New York City from December 7-10, 1990. The International Symposium on Human Rights Violations of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in the United States took place in New York on April 28, 1990.

4. **Prisoner Art Showings**

B. Educational Organizing

1. **Classes**

2. **Discussion Groups**

   Groups such as San Francisco's Open Forum, Portland, Oregon's Red Rose School, and a number of free schools starting up (such as those out of the Berkeley Long Haul Infoshop and Chicago's Autonomous Zone Infoshop) can be very effective arenas for building critical consciousness, as they attract many people with a drive to learn and act on the information they might gain.

3. **House Meetings**

   House meetings are probably one of the best ways to bring a specific action or case to the attention of a specific community. It is out of these smaller, more social gatherings that many larger, more comprehensive campaigns have sprung.

C. Protest and Direct Action

1. **Demonstrations/Pickets**

2. **Civil Disobedience**

   Business-as-usual being stopped at the doors and in the offices of prison officials can be an effective means of drawing public attention to an otherwise ignored issue or case. Groups that use such tactics include ACT-UP and CEML, which are mentioned frequently in this book.

D. Campaigning

1. **Press Conferences**

2. **Letter-Writing Campaigns**
3. Phone and Fax Zaps
When calls and faxes flood an office, especially on a coordinated day having some practical or symbolic significance, the results can be surprising. Officials can be pressured very effectively, given a knowledge of their weak spots and strategically applied pressure from a variety of sources. In June 1996, PARC and prisoner advocates nationwide were quickly able to stop the retaliatory transfer of Willie Wisely, an eloquent writer and activist in California’s Tehachapi State Prison.

4. Petitions
Petitions are most effective when delivered in large numbers—for instance, during a well-attended press conference.

5. Walks, Runs, and Whatever-a-thons
People like to get outside, be active, go bowling, buy stuff, eat stuff, and out-do each other in contests. We can use this to our advantage. Be creative!

E. Direct Support

1. Book Mailings
Most prisons require individuals to go through some bureaucratic process before sending books to prisoners, so if you don’t know how to navigate the process, it’s best to work with established groups and publishers.

2. Fundraising for Legal Expenses and Commissary

3. Legal Assistance (Research, Administrative)

4. Writing Prisoners
Book mailings and writing prisoners are two of the most important and effective actions we can take to express and affirm our solidarity with those in struggle behind the prison walls. The strength that people in prisons can obtain from receiving supportive words from the outside is formidable. It also helps make real a phenomenon that may at times seem very unreal—we still live with the scourge of men with badges and guns putting people in cages.

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL is a freedom fighter and political prisoner on Death Row in Pennsylvania. He was sentenced to death in 1982 for the shooting and killing of a police officer. During the incident, Abu-Jamal suffered a serious gunshot wound and was badly beaten. At the time, he had no police record. He was a prominent radio journalist in Philadelphia and the president of the local chapter of the Association of Black Journalists. Abu-Jamal was a member and spokesperson of the Black Panther Party in the early 1970s and has been a supporter of the MOVE organization. He has challenged his conviction and sentence on numerous grounds, including: the prosecutor’s use of peremptory challenges to exclude Black jurors and the court’s refusal to permit Abu-Jamal’s challenge for cause of a juror who admitted uncertainty as to whether he could be open-minded; the court’s permitting the prosecutor to present Abu-Jamal’s political views and controversial group associations to the jury (the ACLU and the National Conference of Black Lawyers submitted an amici curiae brief challenging these references on First Amendment grounds); the prosecutor’s closing argument asking for the death penalty in which he told the jury that Abu-Jamal would have “appeal after appeal” and that the jury “was not being asked to kill anybody.”

Since his conviction, millions of activists have rallied around the effort to get Mumia off Death Row. During the summer of 1995, when the pro-death penalty governor signed Mumia’s death warrant, tens of thousands of people showed up in Philadelphia to protest his action, and (apparently) won Mumia a temporary stay of execution. Millions of people have signed petitions to the governor of Pennsylvania, and other officials, urging clemency. Thousands of prominent individuals have written letters on Mumia’s behalf, including French President Jacques Chirac, U.S. Representative Ron Dellums, Amnesty International Executive Director John Healey, Southern Christian Leadership Conference President Rev. Joseph Lowery, and Philadelphia Union Local 1034 President Charles Valenta.

The lower court, presided over by the same judge who supervised his travesty of a trial the first time around, refused to grant Abu-Jamal’s petition for post-conviction relief. On February 9, 1996, Abu-Jamal’s lawyers filed their arguments for an appeal at the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court level. At press time, Mumia was still awaiting a court date. Since his incarceration, Mumia has written articles on legal and social issues and prison life for several newspapers and periodicals, including The Nation, in addition to publishing, with the help of MOVE, the Jamal Journal, and producing radio com-
mentaries for National Public Radio (NPR). Although NPR canceled the commentaries at the last minute without offering explanation, they have been aired on radio stations nationwide and internationally, and hundreds of public and community networks. He also published a collection of these commentaries, *Live from Death Row*. For more information on his case and how to join his struggle against the death penalty, contact the International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal, PO Box 19709, Philadelphia, PA 19143, (215) 476-8812.

KANISKA AYANAKU is a self-described Pan-Africanist whose political activism began in the mid-'60s, when she was an undergraduate at Xavier University of Louisiana (New Orleans). Her work is about the achievement of self-determination by African people globally, and is inspired by the legacy of nation-building and resistance to oppression that she received from her ancestors.

**AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE (AFSC)** Criminal Justice Program works with organizations across the country to create a system that is based not on prisons, jails, and executions, but on the needs of both victims of crime and victims of poverty and injustice. They want to bring about a system that recognizes drug and alcohol abuse as main health problems, not criminal justice problems; allows communities to help create fair and humane responses to crime; and treats offenders as individuals, not as faceless criminals." The AFSC Criminal Justice Program publishes various materials on the criminal justice system, and can be reached at 1301 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, (215) 241-7130.

**SILVIA BURMANN** is an Italian national and a political prisoner serving a 43-year sentence here in the United States. She has been imprisoned since 1982. Her excessive sentence reflects the U.S. government's attempt to punish her for her support of the Black and Puerto Rican liberation movements and also for her refusal, since her arrest, to recant her political beliefs.

Baraldini came to the United States as a teenager. In the late '60s and early '70s, she became involved in the women's movement while a student at the University of Wisconsin and became a staunch opponent of the war in Vietnam. Later in the '70s, she became more involved in building solidarity with other liberation movements that were active in those years. In 1978, Baraldini founded a material aid campaign for Zimbabwe. In recognition of that work, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) invited her to be an international observer in the independence elections there in 1980.

During this same period, Baraldini's work in support of Black human rights inside the United States focused on exposing the illegal FBI program, COINTELPRO. Through this work, Baraldini became involved in campaigns to free many Black Panther and Black Liberation Army political prisoners arrested through COINTELPRO.

Militant political activities in solidarity with these liberation movements led to her arrest in the early 1980s. She is serving a 40-year sentence for RICO conspiracy charges, and she has received unusually harsh treatment in the U.S. federal prison system. Although her disciplinary record had been exemplary through 1987, shortly after refusing to talk to FBI agents, she was transferred from a medium-security prison to the Lexington High Security Unit. After that Baraldini was sent to New York Metropolitan Correctional Center for two years, a particularly cruel move, since Baraldini suffers from cancer—the New York prison has no health services because it is not a facility for long-term prisoners. In 1989, she was transferred to a women's high-security unit in Marianna Federal Penitentiary in Florida. After protesting this designation for years, Baraldini's security rating was lowered, and finally, she is in general population at FCI-Danbury. You can contact her through the Committee to Release Silvia Baraldini, 294 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11201, (718) 965-9164.

**HUGO ADAM BEDAU** is Fisher Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University. He has written and edited a number of books on political philosophy and on capital punishment, including *Death Is Different* (1987) and *The Death Penalty in America*, 4th ed. (forthcoming 1996). He gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Henry Schwarzbard, Director Emeritus of the ACLU Capital Punishment Project.

**DHORUBA BIN WAHAD** is a former leader of the Black Panther Party who was the target of a racist and politically motivated frame-up by the New York City Police Department and the FBI through COINTELPRO. As a result, Dhoruba spent 19 years incarcerated as a political prisoner. His March 1990 release was the culmination of an arduous and protracted legal battle. Bin Wahad presently devotes his time to writing an autobiography, working with the Campaign to Free Black and New African Political Prisoners and POWs in the United States (PO Box 339, Bronx, NY 10463-0339) and establishing a Pan-Africanist center in West Africa. Bin Wahad has been the subject of two award-winning documentaries that have enjoyed national and international exposure: *Passin' It On*, and *Framing the Panthers in Black and White*. He has traveled extensively across the United States and internationally raising public awareness about the existence of political prisoners in the United States and advocating for their release. Interviews and writings of Bin Wahad appear in *Still Black, Still Strong: Survivors of the War on Black Revolutionaries and Brother Man*.

**B·O·RITA D. BROWN** is an ex-political prisoner who did eight-and-a-half years in U.S. federal prisons around the country
because of actions taken as a member of the George Jackson Brigade, an underground group of revolutionaries active in the Seattle, Washington area during the 1970s. She currently lives in Oakland, California and continues to do grassroots work in the Bay Area Lesbian community (and anywhere else that is Butch Friendly). B2 works with the Norma Jean Croy Defense Committee and has produced a video about the case titled Shasta Woman. She also helped to found and is active with Out of Control: Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War, which has been doing this work for nine years.

**C. STONE BROWN** is a writer who resides in Philadelphia. A freelance journalist, he focuses on politics and African-American issues. He can be contacted at 76716.1442@compuserve.com.

**JULIE BROWNE** recently graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she wrote her senior thesis on convict labor exploitation. At UCSC, Julie was instrumental in organizing demonstrations against mass incarceration and prison construction. Through this work, she helped to start Building Alliances Across Differences, a multicultural student coalition committed to anti-racist organizing that connects the issues of public education fee hikes, increased prison spending, and the economic scapegoating of immigrants. She currently lives in San Francisco, where in addition to working in the prison movement, she is actively engaged in anti-racist organizing and programs for survivors of domestic violence.

**MARILYN BUCK** is a North American anti-imperialist political prisoner. At 48, she has now spent nearly 15 years in U.S. prisons and has experienced different control units, segregation units, and even an early Behavior Modification Program. Despite increasing levels of repression and dehumanization, she maintains an irrepressible spirit of resistance and commitment to justice, liberation, and human dignity.

**ERIC CUMMINS** is a writer and lecturer at San Jose State University. His book, *The Rise and Fall of the California Radical Prison Movement*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press) was published in 1993.

**MIKE DAVIS** is a writer and professor at Southern California Institute of Architecture. His latest book is on southern California's recent trial by riot, fire, and earthquake.

**LIN ELLIOT** is a gay man of Cherokee and Scotch-Irish descent. For the past several years, he has been working to promote prisoner involvement in community groups and activities—including the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender March on Washington. Along with John Fall, he is editing an anthology of writings by incarcerated queers entitled *Cold Iron: The Voices of Lesbian and Gay Prisoners*.

**KARLENE FAITH** has been a community activist for human justice since the mid-'50s and began advocacy work with women in prison in 1972. Completing her Ph.D. in History of Consciousness at the University of Santa Cruz in 1981, she became the director of the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Criminology Distance Education Program. In 1989, she joined the criminology faculty and in 1990-91 served as the J. S. Woodsworth Resident Scholar for the SFU Institute for the Humanities. Her publications include works on prison education, the "female offender," the Ras Tafarians, Michel Foucault, women's music, First Nations (indigenous) women prisoners, and media images of "criminal" women. She is the author of *Seeking Shelter: A State of Battered Women* (with Dawn Currie) and *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance*.

**DEBORAH GARLIN** is a lawyer and president of the Center for Advocacy of Human Rights and a faculty member of the Criminal Justice Department at the University of New Mexico-Taos.

**JUDY GREENSPAN** is a longtime AIDS activist and prisoner advocate. She is currently the Director of the HIV/AIDS in Prison Project of Catholic Charities and a founding member of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners. She is the former AIDS Information Coordinator of the ACLU National Prison Project. In her heart and by her actions, she will always remain a member of ACT-UP Prison Issues.

**BONNIE KERNES** has been an organizer since the civil rights era, when she lived in the South. After moving North in the 1970s, she was active with tenants' rights groups and Vietnam Veterans Against the War. She has worked, as a professional organizer, on gay rights and welfare rights campaigns, and obtained an MSW in community organizing. Kernes is currently Associate Director of the American Friends Service Committee Criminal Justice Program in New Jersey and National Coordinator of the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons.

**MICHAEL A. KROLL** is a writer who has worked with the American Friends Service Committee on various publications. (See American Friends Service Committee.)

**NANCY KURSHAN** is a school social worker. She has been a political activist for the past 30 years, active in the political movements of the '60s. It was through those activities that she developed an understanding of the racist nature of the prison system, as well as the important role prisons play in the containment of social change. In 1985, Kurshan became a founding member of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML), which has been organizing to abolish
control unit prisons ever since. You can contact her at CEML, PO Box 57812, Chicago, IL 60657.

ALEXANDER C. LICHTENSTEIN is a writer who has worked with the American Friends Service Committee on various publications. (See American Friends Service Committee.)

JOSE E. LOPEZ was born in 1950 in San Sebastian, Puerto Rico. In 1959, his family moved to Chicago as part of the massive Puerto Rican migration to the United States. Born into a family of six brothers and sisters, Jose graduated from Tuley High School and received his B.A. in History from Loyola. He continued his studies at the University of Chicago, receiving his M.A. in history, and Danforth and Ford Fellowships to continue his doctoral studies. He has written extensively on the political and social reality of Puerto Ricans in the United States while serving as Executive Director of the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, and teaching at Northeastern Illinois University and Columbia College.

In his role as educator/activist, he has been invited to speak at over 30 colleges in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, as well as in international forums such as the United Nations Decolonization Committee. He is also the editor of two publications on Puerto Rican Nationalism. For nearly a quarter of a century, he has been a leading member of the Puerto Rican independence movement and has served as spokesperson for the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Puerto-Rriqueño. Presently, he is active in developing new praxis/theory in community and social empowerment, as well as educational reform, in Chicago's West Town/Humboldt Park community.

JOEL OLSON is co-editor of the radical tabloid The BLAST! and a member of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation. Currently, he is studying political science.

MARY K. O'MELVENY is an attorney in private practice in Washington, DC and New York. She represents labor unions and individuals in labor, employment law, and civil rights litigation. She was one of the attorneys whose litigation helped to close the Lexington High Security Unit. She currently represents Susan Rosenberg, one of the plaintiffs in that litigation, and provides legal assistance to other political prisoners on various issues. She has lectured and written extensively on a variety of civil rights and employment law topics, and participates as a faculty member in annual legal education projects sponsored by the DC Bar/George Washington University Continuing Legal Education program.

ROBERT PERKINSON is a longtime political activist. He is currently researching the recriminalization of U.S. criminal justice policy as a graduate student at Yale University.

SUSAN ROSENBERG is one of the three female political prisoners who was held in the Lexington High Security Unit, the first explicitly political prison in the United States. Her refusal to collaborate with the government and refusal to renounce her past were the reasons for her placement there. She was involved in the student, anti-war, and women's movements and has been an activist all her adult life. She is a Doctor of Acupuncture, and worked with the Black Acupuncture Association of North America. She was targeted by the FBI for her support of the liberation of Assata Shakur from prison, and her support of the Black Liberation Army. After going underground in the 1980s, she was arrested with Tim Blunk in 1984, convicted of weapons possession and sentenced to 58 years. She spent almost 11 years in maximum-security conditions. A writer and AIDS activist, she is now at FCI-Danbury.

ELIHU ROSENBLATT has been organizing and agitating for human rights and social justice for more than 10 years, mostly in the San Francisco Bay Area. After spending several years working with Food Not Bombs and the Brazil Action Solidarity Exchange, he honed in on prison issues and began working as a legal worker assisting attorneys with death penalty appeals. For many years, he has been active with the National Lawyer's Guild, the Real Dragon Prison Project, and the California Coalition for Battered Women in Prison. The original version of this book was compiled as Rosenblatt's senior project at Western Institute for Social Research, from which he earned a Bachelor's degree in 1993. Rosenblatt helped to found the Prison Activist Resource Center and the JusticeNet Prison Issues Desk, which make up his current political work. Currently also a news jockey and programmer for Free Radio Berkeley, he lives in the Bay Area with his partner Leona and numerous four-leggeds.

JAN SUSLER has been a lawyer for 20 years, working on issues such as police misconduct, civil rights, and human rights. She has done prison work for as long as she has been a lawyer, focusing on the treatment of political prisoners in the United States and on control unit prisons. She was one of the lead lawyers in the team challenging the Women's High Security Unit at Lexington, and was involved, when Marion was locked down in 1983, in coordinating lawyers and paralegals to go into the prison and write a report on the conditions. It was this report that was submitted to Congress and Amnesty International (AI), resulting in the first AI report condemning prison conditions in the United States. With the People's Law Office in Chicago since 1982,
Susler is the lawyer for the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War.

ERICA THOMPSON is a lawyer at the People's Law Office in Chicago. She is also a member of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown and the National Lawyer's Guild.

SABINA VIRGO is a social and political analyst and activist. She was the founding president of AFSCME, Local 260, as well as the material coordinator of the Foreign Affairs Network of AFSCME. Virgo serves on the national board of directors of the Rainbow Coalition, and has traveled to El Salvador, Palestine, Cuba, and Panama with labor, and with peace and justice delegations. She is a member of the National Committee for Independent Political Action and currently spends the majority of her time with TNT+ (Thinking New Thoughts plus Re-Thinking Old Ones), a collective of presenters, writers, and facilitators who teach skills and ideas that help people empower themselves.

JOANN WALKER was an outstanding activist at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) in Chowchilla, CA. Among other things, she helped to establish a peer education program on HIV and AIDS there. Walker died of AIDS on July 13, 1994, just two months after winning compassionate release from CCWF due to her illness. Many on the outside are continuing her fight for justice for prisoners. For more information, contact the California Coalition for Women Prisoners at (415) 255-7036.

COREY WEINSTEIN has been working in prisoner rights advocacy for 25 years. During this time he has served as medical consultant to the Prisoner's Rights Union and Director of Prisoner Health Advocates. Presently, he serves as co-director of the Pelican Bay Information Project and co-chair of the Jail and Prison Health Committee of the American Public Health Association.

LAURA WHITEHORN is a revolutionary anti-imperialist political prisoner, serving 23 years in federal prison for armed actions in solidarity with national liberation struggles.