

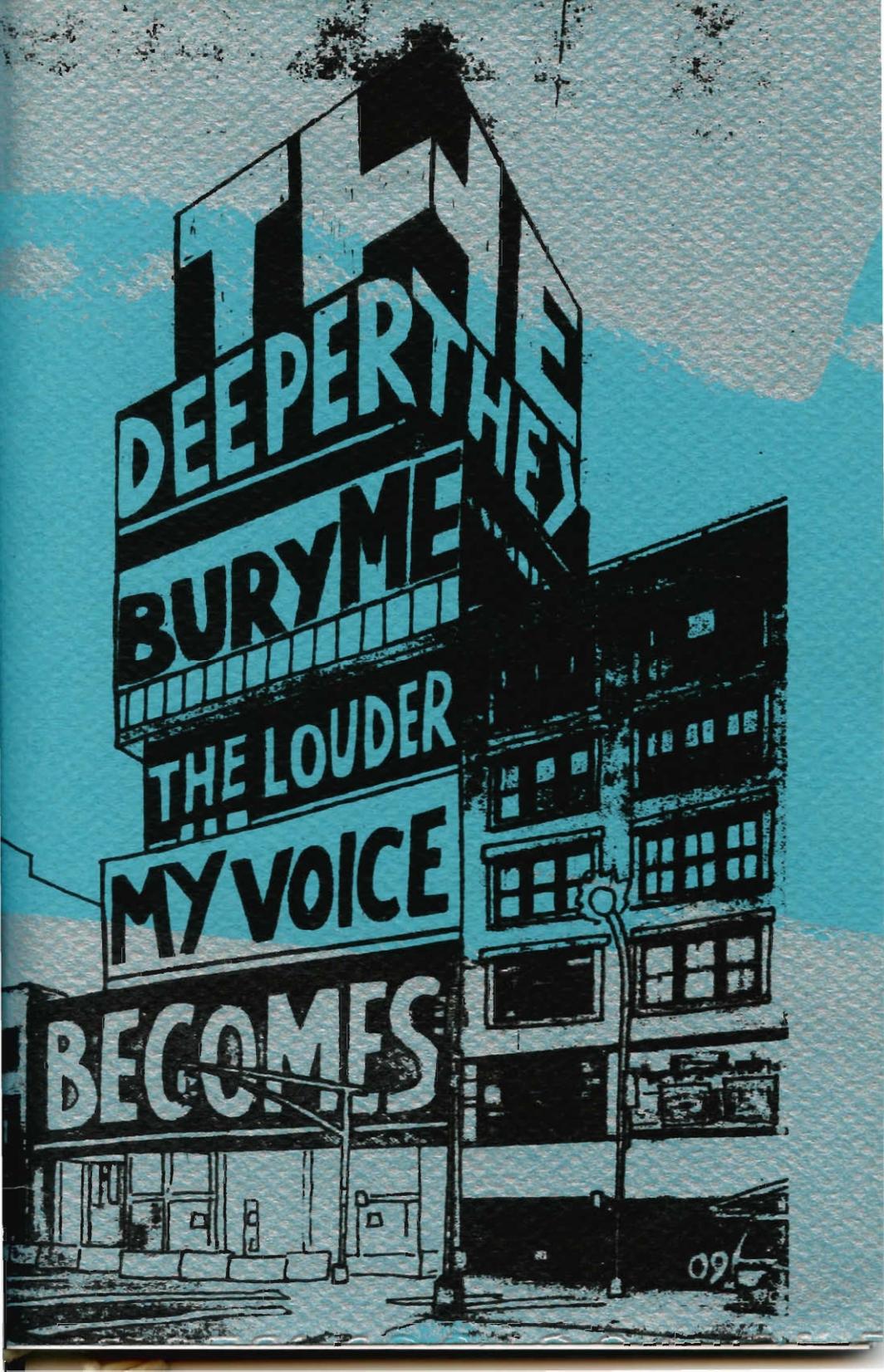
THE
DEEPEST

BURY ME

THE LOUDER

MY VOICE

BECOMES



09/5

SUMMER 2009
N.Y.C.

NEW MUSEUM - JULY 21ST - OCTOBER 11TH

FEELINGS
OF GREAT
LOVE
LEAD TO
REVOLT.

THIS PUBLICATION ACCOMPANIES THE EXHIBITION
"THE DEEPER THEY BURY ME - THE LOUDER MY VOICE
BECOMES" BY RIGO 23 . . . CURATED BY AMY MACKIE .

**YOU THROW PEBBLES
IN A POND
YOU GET RIPPLES,**

SOME TIMES I'D LIKE TO THROW IN A MOUNTAIN.

— ROBERT KING

GUANTANAMO BAY - THE WORLD'S FIRST KNOWN OFF-SHORE TORTURE & CONCENTRATION CAMP RUN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, HAS BECOME A PLACE SO CLOSE TO HELL ON EARTH THAT IT'S GUARDS ARE RUNNING OUT OF TECHNIQUES TO ENSURE MASS SUICIDE AMONG THE "ENEMY COMBATANTS" DOES NOT BECOME A REALITY ON THE GROUND.



"SWAT TEAMS IN POLICE COME IN AND TAKE THE PERSON OUT; IF THEY RESIST, THEY ARE FORCED AND THEN BEATEN. IT IS SO BAD THAT THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH CHAIRS TO STRAP THEM DOWN AND FORCE-FEED THEM FOR A TWO-OR-THREE HOUR PERIOD TO DIGEST FOOD THROUGH A FEEDING TUBE. BECAUSE THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH CHAIRS THE GUARDS ARE HAVING TO FORCE-FEED THEM IN SHIFTS"

— LAWYER FOR GUANTANAMO INMATE, BINYAM MOHAMED, AS QUOTED BY LUKE MITCHELL IN "WE STILL TORTURE", HARPER'S MAGAZINE JULY 2009.

GUANTANAMO DETAINEE MOVED 112 TIMES IN TWO WEEKS.

PROCESS IS KNOWN AS "THE FREQUENT FLYER PROGRAM"

An Afghan man on trial at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba says guards subjected him to 14 days of sleep deprivation.

Mohammad Jawad told a military judge during a pre-trial hearing Thursday that he was shifted from one cell to another 112 times during two weeks in May 2004, a process that has been dubbed the "frequent flyer" program. He said guards kept the lights on in his cell and made loud noises to prevent him from sleeping.

Jawad's lawyer argued that the treatment amounted to torture, and urged the judge to drop the attempted murder charges against his client.

"Day and night they were shifting me from one place to another place," Jawad said. "Nobody answered why they are giving me this punishment."

Detention logs indicate Jawad was not interrogated during that time nor for three months afterward, so the treatment may have been done "intentionally to inflict suffering," Frakt wrote.

Jawad is accused in the Guantanamo tribunal with throwing a grenade into a U.S. military jeep at a bazaar in Kabul in December 2002, injuring two U.S. soldiers and their Afghan interpreter.

Jawad, now 23 and sporting a short, dark beard, is charged with attempted murder and causing great bodily harm. He was 16 or 17 when Afghan police arrested him and turned him over to U.S. forces.

Jawad is one of two Guantanamo detainees captured as juveniles and charged with crimes that carry a maximum penalty of life in prison.

Prosecutors countered that the treatment was not torture and did not merit having the charges dropped.

FROM REUTERS UK AND VOICE OF AMERICA NEWS JUNE 20, 2008

"AS OF THIS WRITING AT LEAST THIRTY MEN ARE BEING FORCE-FED AT GUANTANAMO. THEY ARE BEING FORCE-FED DESPITE THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATIONS ORDER TO SHUT DOWN GUANTANAMO AND DESPITE ITS MORE SPECIFIC ORDER REQUIRING PRISONERS THERE TO BE TREATED WITHIN THE COMMON BOUNDS OF THE COMMON ARTICLE #3 OF THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS WHICH CLEARLY FORBIDS FORCEFEEDING. DOCTORS ADVISE THE RED CROSS THAT FORCE-FEEDING IS HUMILIATING AND DEGRADING: 'DOCTORS SHOULD NEVER BE PARTY TO ACTUAL COERCIVE FEEDING, WITH PRISONERS BEING TIED DOWN AND INTRAVENOUS DRIPS OR OESOPHAGEAL TUBES BEING FORCED INTO THEM. SUCH ACTIONS CAN BE CONSIDERED A FORM OF TORTURE AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD DOCTORS PARTICIPATE ON THE PRETEXT OF 'SAVING THE HUNGER STRIKER'S LIFE'."

— FROM "WE STILL TORTURE"
BY LUKE MITCHELL
HARPER'S MAGAZINE. JULY 2009



OOOPS, ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT
BMB - BAGRAM MILITARY BASE -
ANOTHER U.S. RUN OFF-SHORE CON-
CENTRATION CAMP SPECIALIZING IN
TORTURE AND AVOIDANCE OF HUMAN
RIGHTS, LOCATED IN AFGHANISTAN.

**REVOLVING
DOOR**

FROM BBC NEWS
JUNE 24, 2009

BBC NEWS

Ex-detainees allege Bagram abuse

By Ian Pannell
BBC News, Kabul

Allegations of abuse and neglect at a US detention facility in Afghanistan have been uncovered by the BBC.

Former detainees have alleged they were beaten, deprived of sleep and threatened with dogs at the Bagram military base.

The BBC interviewed 27 former inmates of Bagram around the country over a period of two months.

The Pentagon has denied the charges and insisted that all inmates in the facility are treated humanely.

All the men were asked the same questions and they were all interviewed in isolation.

Ill-treatment

They were held at times between 2002 and 2008 and they were all accused of belonging to or helping al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

" They put a pistol or a gun to your head and threatened you with death. "
Former Bagram detainee

None were charged with any offence or put on trial; some even received apologies when they were released.

Since coming to office US President Barack Obama has banned the use of torture and ordered a review of policy on detainees, which is expected to report next month.

But unlike its detainees at the US naval facility at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, the prisoners at Bagram have no access to lawyers and they cannot challenge their detention.

The inmates at Bagram are being kept in "a legal black-hole, without access to lawyers or courts", according to Tina Foster, executive director of the International Justice Network, a legal support group representing four detainees.

She is pursuing legal action that, if successful, would grant detainees at Bagram the same rights as those still being held at Guantanamo Bay.

But the Obama administration is trying to block the move.

Last year, the US Supreme Court ruled that detainees at Guantanamo should be given legal rights.

Speaking on the presidential campaign trail, Barack Obama applauded the ruling: "The court's decision is a rejection of the Bush administration's attempt to create a legal black hole at Guantanamo.

"This is an important step toward re-establishing our credibility as a nation committed to the rule of law, and rejecting a false choice between fighting terrorism and respecting habeas corpus."

Ms Foster accuses the new administration of abandoning that position and "using the same arguments as the Bush White House".

In its legal submissions, the US justice department argues that because Afghanistan is an active combat zone it is not possible to conduct rigorous inquiries into individual cases and that it would divert precious military resources at a crucial time.

They also argue that granting legal rights to detainees could harm Mr Obama's "ability to succeed in armed conflict and to protect United States' forces" by limiting his powers to conduct military operations.

A US federal appeals court judge is expected to rule soon.

— BBC NEWS · JUNE 24, 2009

"NOW WE HAVE ENTERED
WHAT WE MAY WISH TO CALL
THE POST-TORTURE ERA, EXCEPT
THAT IT IS NOT. WE HAVE
RETURNED TO OUR OLD PRACTICE
OF TORTURING AND PRETENDING
NOT TO, BUT THE OLD ROUTINE
IS NO LONGER CONVINCING. WE
KNOW TOO MUCH. WE KNOW
THAT WE ARE STILL
IMPRISONING MEN WHO ARE VERY
LIKELY COMPLETELY INNOCENT.
WE KNOW THAT WE STILL BEAT
THEM. WE KNOW THAT WE USE
A SERIES OF PUNISHMENTS AND
INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES THAT
ANY NORMAL PERSON WOULD
ACKNOWLEDGE TO BE TORTURE.
AND WE KNOW THAT WHEN THOSE
MEN PROTEST SUCH TREATMENT
BY REFUSING TO EAT, WE STRAP
THEM TO CHAIRS AND FORCE
FOOD DOWN THEIR THROATS."

— FROM "WE STILL TORTURE"

BY LUKE MITCHELL · HARPER'S JULY 2009

MAY 3RD

2008

A
DISCUSSION
WITH...



Robert King!

DISCUSSION LED BY
MARK BEASELY AND ARTIST RIGO 23.
ORIGINALLY PRINTED IN CREATIVE-
TIME'S HEY HEY GLOSSOLALIA:
EXHIBITING THE VOICE, 2008

THE GREATEST THING THAT WE HAVE IS
THE IDEA AND OUR SPIRIT, BECAUSE
IT CAN BE PASSED ON.

NOT IN THE SUPERSTITIOUS SENSE, BUT
IN THE SENSE THAT WHEN WE SAY SOMETHING
OR WE LIVE A CERTAIN WAY, THEN
WHEN THIS CAN BE PASSED ON TO
ANOTHER PERSON, THEN
LIFE GOES ON.

—HUEY P. NEWTON

REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE, 1973

INTRODUCTION

MARK BEASELEY: Good afternoon. I'd like to thank everyone for coming to the New Museum for the second in a series of projects and events titled *Hey Hey Glossolalia: Exhibiting the Voice* that presents the infinite shades, use, and deployment of the voice as communicative tool and disruptive agent. This afternoon, I'll be talking with the San Francisco-based artist, Rigo 23, and Robert King Wilkerson, formerly of the Black Panther Party and member of the Angola 3. Thanks to Robert and Rigo for agreeing to be here today.

I'd like to begin the talk by quoting the isolation prisoner Ojore Nuru Lutalo. "How does one go about articulating desperation to another who is not desperate? How does one go about articulating the psychological stress of knowing that people are waiting for me to self-destruct? I did nothing to deserve this." At the time of writing, Lutalo had spent thirteen years in solitary isolation in the U.S. and has not been charged with an infraction. The United States has less than five percent of the world's population, but it has almost a quarter of the world's prisoners.

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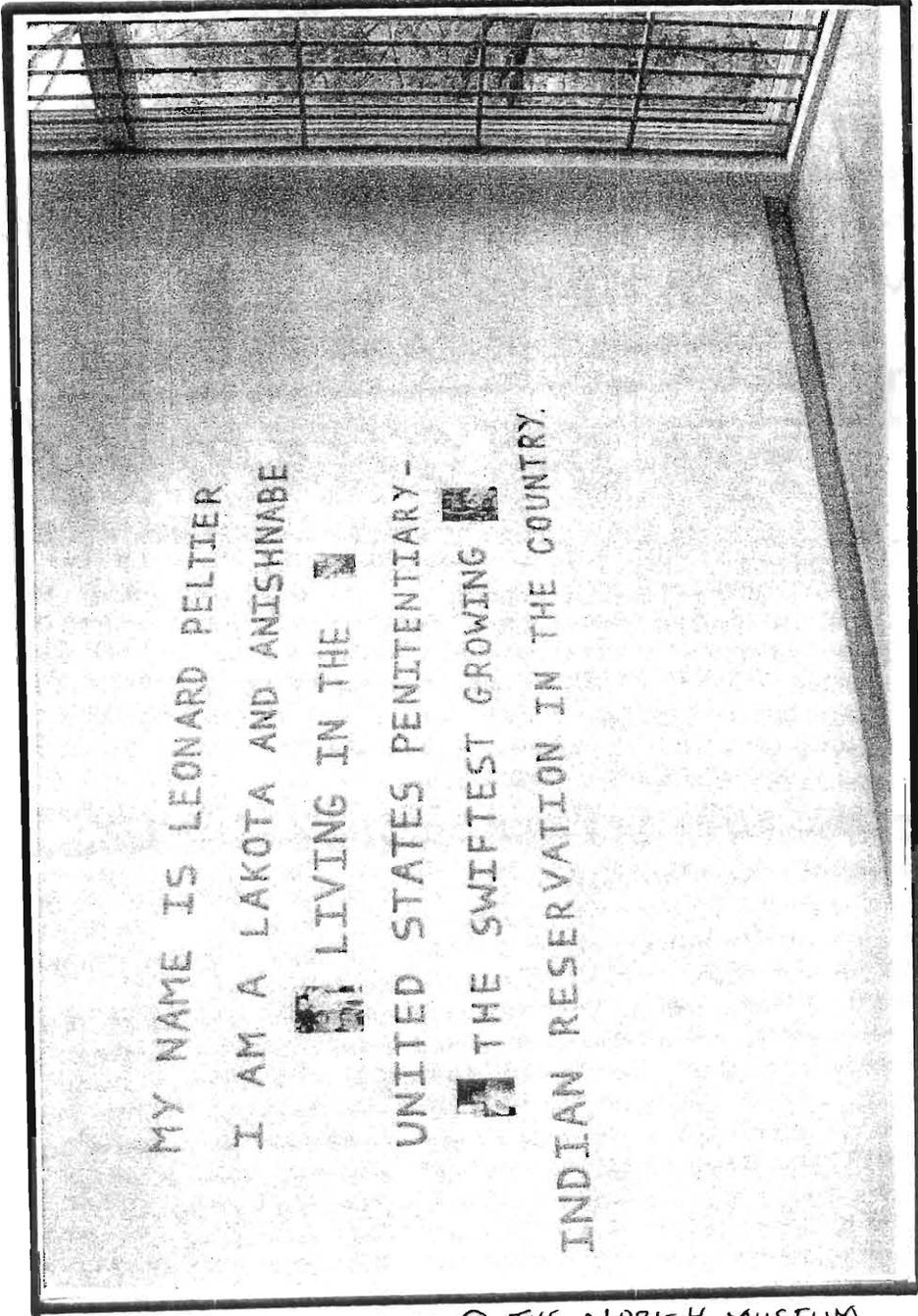
In terms of today's presentation, I wanted to touch briefly upon the moment that I first met Robert and Rigo 23, while working as a curator. My initial meeting with Rigo took place in 1997, producing a work titled *OCEAN* for the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England. We have remained close friends and collaborators since. In 2006, I traveled to Madeira Island for Rigo's retrospective exhibition *Jam Sessions: Rigo 84-23*, Centor Das Artes, Casa Das Mudaz, curated by Manray Hsu. The title itself reflected Rigo's desire to collaborate with others, a literal call to collaborate, to jam.

As a simple statement of intent, I wish to provide a platform for the work of two people who strive for and have succeeded in speaking out for the truth. In the words of the Marxist commentator and writer, Ernst Fischer, "In a decaying society, art, if it is truthful, must also reflect decay. And unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it." My suggestion being that the wall of silence built around prisons and unlawfully held prisoners must be broken down.

Firstly, I would like to present a quick summary of our speakers' backgrounds. Robert King Wilkerson is a former member of the Black Panther Party. Robert spent twenty-nine years in solitary confinement in a Louisiana state prison, otherwise known as Angola, for a crime that prison officials pinned on him in an effort to neutralize his effective organizing abilities. They planned to keep him in a six-foot cell for the rest of his life. But he finally proved his innocence and was released from prison in February of 2001. Since his release, King has worked to free two other former Black Panthers: Albert Woodfox

and Herman Wallace, who are still incarcerated at Angola. They were also framed, and even though extensive proof of their innocence has been established, both still remain in solitary confinement after thirty-six years. Collectively, they are known as the Angola 3. Robert King Wilkerson, who is known as Robert King, has spoken before the European Parliament in Belgium and Portugal, and spoken in Netherlands, France, Indonesia, England, Germany, and Venezuela in regards to the Angola 3 and all political prisoners in the United States. King was received as a guest and dignitary by the African National Congress in South Africa and has spoken with Desmond Tutu about the case. Amnesty International has added Albert and Herman to their watch list of "prisoners of conscience". Robert is the author of the memoir, *A Cry From the Bottom of the Heap*. He continues to lecture across the U.S. besides making a living wherever he is as a maker of "Freelines" - a preline-style candy Robert produced from his cell in Angola for other inmates. Since being flooded out of his home in New Orleans, he has resided in Austin, Texas, with his famously enthusiastic dog, Kenya. Today, the Los Angeles Times leads with a story about Robert King and the case of the Angola 3. Welcome to Robert King.

Rigo 23 is a Portuguese muralist, painter, and political activist residing in San Francisco. He describes himself as a post-revolutionary artist, a reference to his direct experience of the Portuguese Democratic Revolution in 1974. A recent work in honor of Robert - visible from Civic Center of the United Nations Plaza in San Francisco - is the mural simply titled *Truth*, which was completed after the start of America's attack upon Afghanistan in 2001, and dedicated to Robert on April 22, 2002. Mayor Willie Brown declared the day to be Robert King Day in the city of San Francisco. Rigo has collaborated with many political activists and prisoners over the years. Select projects include a work with and for the 1968 Summer Olympians, Tommy Smith and John Carlos, two U.S. medalists who famously gave the black power salute during the playing of the American national anthem. He also produced a nomadic institution titled the *Tate Wikikuwa Museum*, which holds the paintings of the Native American activist, Leonard Peltier. Peltier is currently incarcerated at the United States penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Before we begin the talk, I wanted to read from a poem written by Leonard.



MY NAME IS LEONARD PELTIER
I AM A LAKOTA AND ANISHNABE
LIVING IN THE
UNITED STATES PENITENTIARY -
THE SWIFTEST GROWING
INDIAN RESERVATION IN THE COUNTRY.

TATE WIKIKUWA MUSEUM @ THE ALDRICH MUSEUM
NO RESERVATIONS - 2006

"SILENCE, THEY SAY, IS THE VOICE OF COMPLICITY. BUT SILENCE IS IMPOSSIBLE. SILENCE SCREAMS. SILENCE IS A MESSAGE, JUST AS DOING NOTHING IS AN ACT. LET WHO YOU ARE RING OUT WITH EVERY WORD AND DEED"

— LEONARD PELTIER

THE DISCUSSION

Robert, when I first thought of inviting you to speak about your experience, I'd imagined you being the voice of Albert and Herman, and when we talked about it last night, you inverted that and said, "No, actually, I'm the visual voice of Albert and Herman. I'm out, I'm here; they have their own voice." And I wanted you to talk a little about your relationship to the voice and speaking on behalf of them.

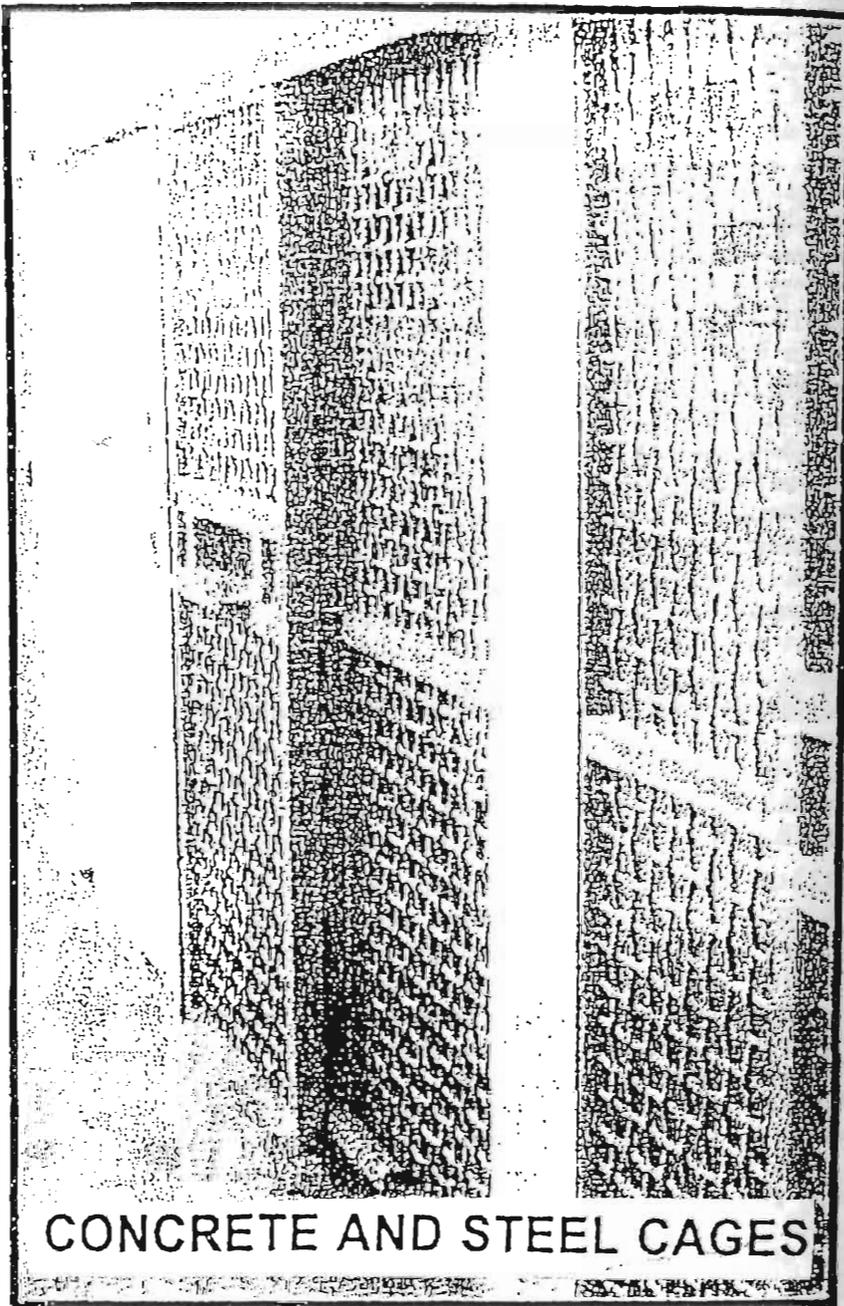
ROBERT KING WILKERSON: Yes, like Mark pointed out, in our conversation I explained that I might be a visual voice, but Herman and Albert have always been a voice up in the cell. Because from prison they have communicated with thousands of people, and they take the time to write thousands and thousands of letters to people all over the world. They have been very, very vocal about their situation and about their conditions, and the conditions of others in a position similar to theirs. So I inverted that concept because they deserve it. They are the biggest voice. While I may be the visual voice, Herman and Albert, even though they are entombed in prison, and despite the fact that they have been sent to solitary dormitories instead of the solitary six-by-nine-by-twelve-foot cell that they endured for thirty-six years, they are the loudest voice. I think they are heard the loudest. I think it is necessary that I make sure everyone

knows, while everyone else may speak for them, that their voice is heard the loudest. Herman came up with the phrase while he was at Camp J (they had sent him to Camp J a couple of years ago): "The deeper they bury me, the louder my voice becomes." And he repeated that three times, so, with that thought in mind, it was incumbent upon me to make sure that Herman and Albert's voice are the loudest.

MARK: I wondered if you'd speak a little about their case at the moment. I believe you had a three-hour visit with them recently. And I believe from our conversation last night that there's more hope than ever. How did you finally meet with them again?

ROBERT: Well, we have a lot of things going on as regards the cases. We have the two cases, the legal cases, which are the permanent cases, and they are both in different stages within the permanent court. But we also filed, about ten years ago, a civil suit regarding the conditions of our confinement. As a result of that, the status is in process and I imagine that's because of the attention that the case has been getting in recent months. They want to negotiate and make a settlement, but Herman and Albert didn't want to make a settlement without my input. (They had ruled that I was *persona non grata*, which was alright with me, you know. Keep me out of your prison. I didn't even want to go anyway!) So, in spite of the fact that they ruled that I couldn't visit a prison in the state of Louisiana, it was a result of the efforts of Herman and Albert insisting that I be there, that the state had to relent and allow me to go visit them. So, I visited them in the dormitory-like setting they are in now. And Herman and Albert, they doing pretty good, they have adjusted well. They are amenable. After nearly thirty-six years of being in six-by-nine-by-twelve-foot cells, they have more access to a few things. But it has not done the thing that is necessary to free them. I like to say to people that it wasn't the real quest to get them out of solitary confinement, the main quest was to get them free from prison. Because both of them are still in prison, they are still entombed. Regardless of where you are in prison, it's a tomb. You might be in a bigger space, but it's still a tomb. They are innocent,

CAMP J



CONCRETE AND STEEL CAGES

and all of the evidence shows that they are innocent. The fact that the cases ran together is coincidental, and its good, but the lawsuit is a separate entity as regards to trying to get them out of prison.

MARK: Robert, last night we were talking late into the night and I was approaching the idea of talking to you about what it must have been like being in a cell twenty-four hours a day with one hour off, and I couldn't come around to talking about that. Luckily, Sam, my wife, asked and you talked about it. I had this idea of what it was like from movies (like Steve McQueen hanging out in the yard and chatting to everybody) and when we talked about it, the reality of what it was struck home to me, about these twenty-three hours in solitary and then this one hour which wasn't exactly outside. That basically you had the run of the corridor, which was directly outside the cells, and that actually only on occasion did you see the outside world, and when you did, you were in separate bull pens outside of the walls. Could you speak a little more about that just so we get a sense of what that was like?

"THE POLICY IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IS THAT YOU ARE IN A CELL TWENTY-THREE HOURS A DAY."

ROBERT: The policy in CCR (which means Closed Cell Restricted, or solitary confinement) is that you are in a cell twenty-three hours a day. It would be twenty-four if the guys hadn't at some point filed a lawsuit in 1983 that allows them an hour in the hallway. This hallway was a corridor, as you pointed out about six-by-eight-feet wide and maybe forty-five or so feet long and that was the only mobility you had. You couldn't go beyond that point. Other than that, you could have passed by a cell, talked to someone in a cell. I think this condition lasted about well, for me, about nine years, because I was at Camp J when they allowed inmates from CCR to go in the yard like inmates from Death Row. We were in the same area as Death Row. In fact, there were some Death Row inmates living on the tier with us, and they were allowed to go in the yard, but CCR never did. So we talked about it and eventually we filed the lawsuit, and by the time the

lawsuit was adjudicated, I was at Camp J. But at some time around 1977 or 1978, I believe, they opened up the federal court rule that inmates in CCR would be allowed to go in the yard one hour per day, three days per week, weather permitting. If you had inclement weather, no go, you were still confined to your cell, although every day it was designated that you got an hour out of your cell.

MARK: Were you able to communicate with other prisoners?

ROBERT: Wes, we were allowed to communicate. Of course, they did a lot to discourage it. In a camp like Camp J, they liked to discourage that in CCR. I don't think they wanted inmates to communicate, but, hey, we decided we would talk anyway, communicate anyway, we would holler anyway, we would scream anyway. It was a small price to pay for the vocal, a very small price. The price was they would take you from your cell and they would put you in a dungeon, and probably go to court and get ten days or maybe fifteen days in a dungeon for aggravated disobedience or defiance -- that is the disciplinary report that they would write up for you. But, hey, we got a lot of aggravated disobedience and defiance and we used to tell them. Sometimes they'd say, "I'm going to write you up for aggravated disobedience," and we'd say, "Write me up! I'm aggravating you right now! Write me up!" And we kept it going. We kept the voices going, and eventually they got the idea that we would continue to talk no matter what because we were willing to make the sacrifice.

MARK: Rigo was telling me that everything you said was written up, that there was a big file somewhere.

ROBERT: In CCR, we got them to kind of back up a bit, but at Camp J they were persistent. When they opened up Camp J, it was considered the punishment camp, and they did their best to discourage conversation. If you held a conversation, or if they heard you talking (and the place, I must admit, when they first opened it up, was pretty acoustic, it was pretty vacuous and voices carried you could talk really low and they'd still hear you), as long as they heard you, they could tell you that you were making too much noise and to shut up. You would continue to talk, and before long they

NORMAL

VOICE:

would bring you a write-up, telling you to pack your belongings, because you were moving to an isolation cell. The write-up would say something like this: "This inmate was told seven times to stop the loud voices. He insisted. He persisted." As a result, you got written up for defiance or aggravated disobedience, that was the way they tried to discourage you. Even after a period of time at Camp J, the guys really began to defy that unwritten rule. (It wasn't a written rule. I think they had enough sense to know that if they tried to write a rule that said you couldn't communicate at all, it would be unconstitutional.) Even though you were talking in a normal voice, they would insist you were talking in a loud voice and say you were disturbing the other inmates. The irony of it all was that many of the other inmates were scared to even talk, and they were delighted to hear your voice.

**:LOUD
VOICE**

Dear Robert King,

Thank you very much for coming to my school to talk about political prisoners. I never understood before how harsh the conditions could be when in jail. I couldn't believe that you had been put in a 6 by 9 by 12 foot jail for something you didn't do.

It shocked me when you talked about people going insane. It was very upsetting when you talked about the prisoners that lost control. I guess if people are feeling trapped without any hope, sometimes they just give up. I am very glad you didn't give up. You still have spirit and that really inspired me. I also thought it was awful how they just shove the food under the door. I am glad that you stood up for your rights.

I thought you were a very brave and determined person. I hope you continue to talk to the public about your story so that everyone can join together to stop political imprisonment.

Sincerely,

Cassidy Hill

Suicide Rate High

in Violent Death Data

Type of incident

14%

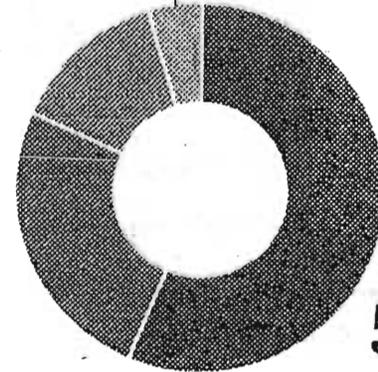
Undetermined

25%

Homicide

5%

Other



56%

Suicide

MORE THAN HALF OF ALL VIOLENT DEATHS IN THE U.S. ARE SUICIDES, ACCORDING TO CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION 2005 STUDY.

SOURCE: NEW YORK TIMES

IN A 2005 STUDY OF 45 STATES,
CBS NEWS FOUND THAT AT LEAST
6,256 U.S. WAR VETERANS
COMMITTED SUICIDE THAT YEAR.

THAT IS 120 SUICIDES PER WEEK.

VETERANS WERE TWICE AS
LIKELY AS NON-VETERANS TO
COMMIT SUICIDE.

VETERANS AGES 20 TO 24
WHO HAD SERVED DURING THE
WAR ON TERROR HAD THE
HIGHEST SUICIDE RATE OF ALL,
ESTIMATED BETWEEN TWO AND
FOUR TIMES HIGHER THAN
CIVILIANS THE SAME AGE.

SOURCE: CBS NEWS. NOV. 13, 2007

MARK: Robert, I was interested in that while all this was happening, the oppressive voice from without, you were self-organizing, learning your rights, and ultimately wrote writs of appeal for all three of you - the Angola 3 - and you've got a version of one of those early writs here. That was a part of your role, and as a result that was why you were penalized to a greater extent, but obviously it didn't stop you. Could you talk about how you found law in a situation of no law?

ROBERT: While they didn't have law libraries or anything like that, you could find random law books hanging around. Since that time they have established what they call a law library, but people in CCR didn't have total access to it, they weren't allowed. Even now, there's an inmate-lawyer system that they implemented to deal with the law issues of prisoners who don't know anything about the law. But in CCR you got a chance to read the transcripts of other people who had lawyers file writs for them, and people who had been to court. I always found it intriguing, hypocritical really, to read a transcript from anybody. You learned a little, just by reading I could get an idea of what I was up against. I must admit that I had other things in mind. I had other ideas about how to approach freedom, but I thought, "I'll just hold that back for the time being."

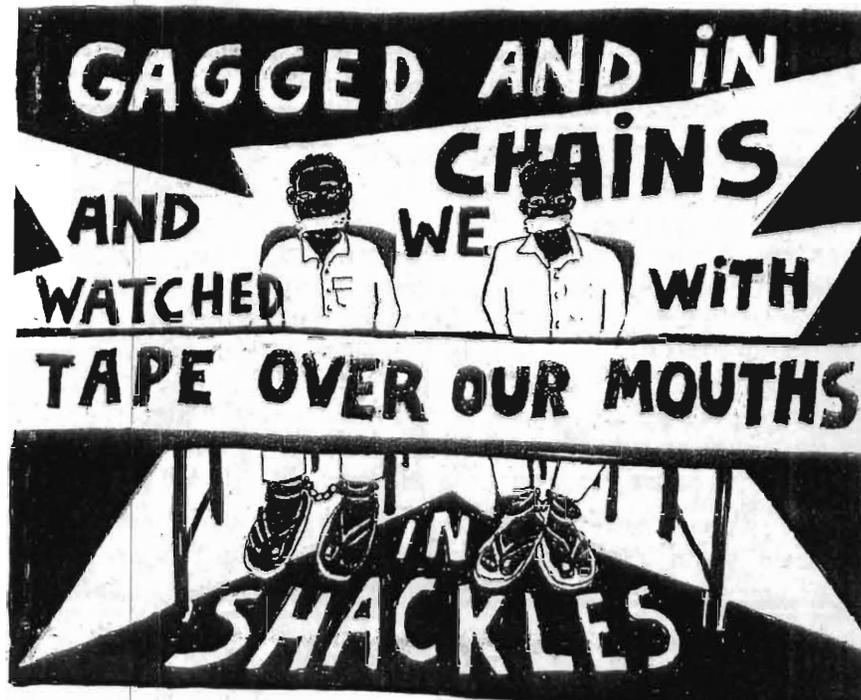
At this time the writ was the only tool available to us. We had to use it, and even though I understood it as hypocritical, I also understood that there was a possibility that it could open up a doorway if approached correctly. I felt that our case was a primary case because we were dealing with the truth. We were all innocent, and we had all been targeted, framed, gone on trial, and been given additional sentences. I figured that we could perhaps make a showing in court by petition, we deserved to be heard. This petition was written in 1991 and ultimately resulted in Albert Woodfox getting a new trial. Albert, Herman, and myself all worked together on it, it was something that we felt we had to do. Albert went back to trial and he was found guilty again, and given the same unjust life sentence that he had been given. This

ROBERT KING WILKERSON DISCUSSION
5/3/2008 CONTINUED

sentence was for his alleged participation in the death of a corrections officer. Of course, all evidence shows that he, Herman, and other people who went to trial had nothing to do with it.

MARK: Robert and Rigo, I wanted to connect your work together, I talked to you last night about art's role and when you said that art can be very loud, it struck home. You talked about your interest in art and activism, about the examples you'd seen, specifically Emory Douglas - who was the Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party - and how some of his imagery woke you up to the visual noise of artwork. We have posters that Robert brought, the latest posters from Emory - "Free all the Angola 3". I'm interested in you talking a little bit more about that role, and Rigo talking about how and where you initially met. How you ended up collaborating over many years, where you've traveled throughout the world speaking about the case of the Angola 3, and how you've presented Robert's life and experience; a conversation between you two.

ROBERT: Rigo and a lot of other artists I know have managed to combine art and activism. I think Rigo did an image when I got out of three black panthers in a cage, and one breaking out, so to speak. I looked at the drawing and I had to take a second look, because of what it depicted, and what I saw. Even though there was no word spoken-- no one defined it -- it spoke loud to me. I saw three panthers and one breaking out and the other two on the process of breaking out -- it was loud. Rigo, with that picture I was able to look into the fact that you don't have to speak vocally, but that you can use your hand, your talent. Emory Douglas is a shy individual, he doesn't like to talk, but he does like to draw and through his drawings, he speaks. That poster that Mark alluded to has "free all" and "the Angola 3" (it also has targeted, framed, isolated, and so forth), but it tells not only the Angola 3 story in my opinion, because it says "free all". The Angola 3 has always wanted to include everyone else, and he captured that thought. The poster might be saying "free all" and "free the Angola 3", but in actuality it talks about freeing ALL political prisoners and beyond that -- those that don't even realize they are victims of corrupt politics, especially in America. It tells a lot of story and covers a lot of ground.

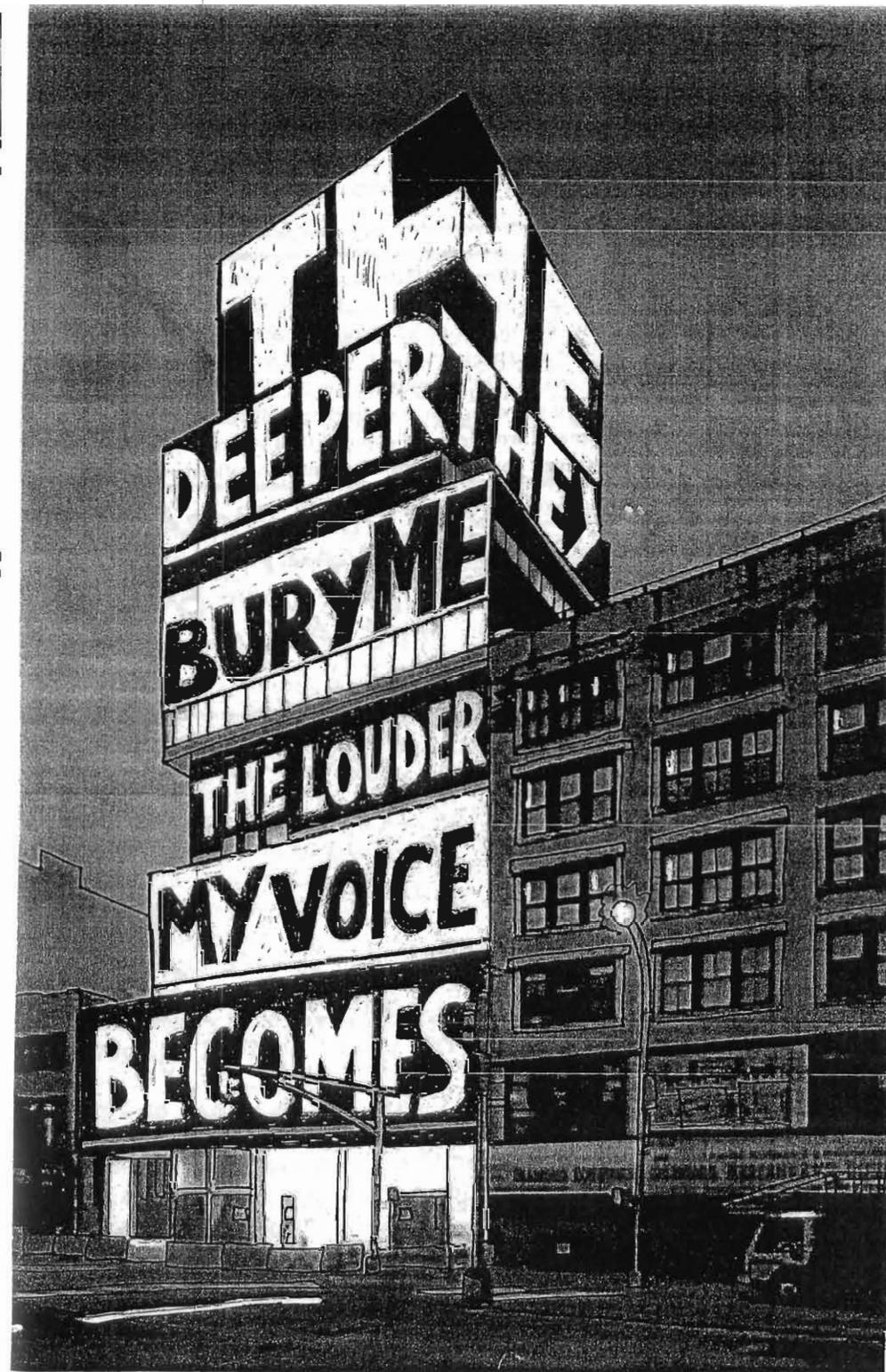


RIGO 23: I had done some work about another Black Panther who was in prison for a long time, Jeronimo Ji Jaga -- formerly known as Geronimo Pratt -- and it was through him that I heard about Robert and the case of the Angola 3. It was very difficult for me to fathom. Getting a ticket when you park your car is a bitch. It ruins your day. But the notion of twenty-three hours of every day, of every month, of every year; I was mostly incapable of understanding. When I first met Robert, he had just come out of the airplane in San Francisco in April 2001. He had gotten out of Angola on February 8, 2001 and he was traveling with Althea Francois, and I went to pick up Robert at the airport with Marina Drummer. As we were coming into the parking garage-- (it's a parking structure that has no walls around it; it has floors and pillars-- and as we were getting into the car, Robert asked if he could smoke cigarettes there, if it was legal to smoke. At that moment, something special was going on, I thought, "How could somebody that has had this happen to him care whether or not it's legal or not to smoke in a place like that?" This has never stopped, this capacity that Robert has to surprise; and how careful and considerate he is of the people around him. It's already been seven years. I didn't think it was a high that would last long, but it's been a joy. You have to address every situation that comes to you, in a way that will guarantee not only your physical survival but also somebody who is defying, or abiding by rules of their own making. It's been great.

QUESTION: Two related questions: When did you actually have opportunities to strategize with your fellow prisoners since you weren't allowed to talk through cells? Also, you mentioned so-called Ebonics; I wondered whether you guys had code words that you used to communicate?

ROBERT: Every prisoner in whatever country develops codes, or they learn a code. For the first part of the question, they discouraged communication, but, look, we weren't going to let anybody keep us from talking. Whatever sacrifice we had to make in order to speak, we were going to do it. It was Herman who said, and the actual statement he made was, "The louder my voice, the deeper they bury me." We converted that. We turned it around: "The Deeper they bury me, the louder my voice." They tried to discourage us and we continued to communicate, eventually they got the idea and then kind of backed off a little bit in CCR.

"IT WAS HERMAN WHO SAID, 'THE LOUDER MY VOICE, THE DEEPER THEY BURY ME.' WE CONVERTED THAT AND TURNED IT AROUND: 'THE DEEPER THEY BURY ME, THE LOUDER MY VOICE.' THEY TRIED TO DISCOURAGE US AND WE CONTINUED TO COMMUNICATE."



QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

MARK: A Louisiana voice, an English voice, and a Portuguese voice speak about miscarriages of justice. At this point it seems pertinent to turn questions over to and hear from the floor.

QUESTION: I wanted to return to the overall theme of the series of events, which is the voice, and the spoken word and sound. I was thinking about how your colleague described being in solitary as being in a tomb, a place that's silent. I wondered what its like to experience your own voice in that tomb, when talking to yourself is conventionally - in the outside world - considered a sign of going crazy. In the situation you were in, it was entirely possible that talking to yourself was a way to keep sane. I wondered if you did find yourself talking to yourself, and what were the things you said, and what function did they serve?

"... IF I COULD NOT TALK VERBALLY THEN I WOULD WRITE. I BEGAN FILING WRITS. THEY WERE MY VOICE, NOT ONLY TO THE COURTS OUTSIDE THE PRISON, BUT TO MY KEEPERS..."

ROBERT: I was at Camp J around 1977 or 1978, and I had had numerous write-ups for having talked, for aggravated disobedience, and they sent me back on regular tier, which I lived on. It had never happened before, but I did find myself at this particular time, walking the floor and I remember talking, but I wasn't talking to anybody but myself. I said, "Wow, I'm at the threshold of something." I said, "I have to back off from this." What I did was continue to defy them, but I also said I needed some time to get my thoughts together, because if I could not talk verbally, then I would write. At that particular time I decided to focus intently on the law and the constitution at this time, I was dealing with civil law, which would only impact the conditions of my confinement, but not on my sentence. I decided to focus on the criminal case, if I couldn't talk, I would do some writing, and I began filing writs. I started filing what they call 1983s and these 1983s were voices, in my opinion. They were my voice not only to the court outside of the prison, but they were my voice, my protest, and my dissent to the keepers who were keeping me. But I also knew that while the 1983s would get their attention, it would not release you from prison. I had to step up. Eventually

Herman, Albert, and I -- it was a collaborative effort -- began working on our cases. I think it helped to alleviate some of our condition because you had an opportunity to write out some of your frustration. I imagine if you had read some of my writs you would see the frustration in it, but it was something that I, being a layman, was allowed to do, as long as I spiced what I did with some legal foundation. As long as it was an issue that required some judiciary scrutiny, regardless of how frustrated I was when writing it.

QUESTION: I would imagine that in writing the writs, it would be like learning a new language. I'm curious, did you get assistance in translating what you were feeling in a language that would be recognizable in the justice system, or did you come up with that yourself?

ROBERT: No, no assistance, and, yeah, you have to learn a different language without a doubt, and that was deliberately and purposefully done. It might sound condescending, but we would always say you have to learn the language better than -- not just equal to -- their knowledge of the language. We got the idea that if you learn the language, and you know your case, no lawyer, nobody in the world could articulate it better than you. Yes, we had to learn a different language (besides Ebonics or whatever you might want to call it). We became multi-lingual, and you pick it up, you allow yourself to become flexible and amenable. Even though you may have some frustration with it, you still have to learn the language in a way that would be presentable, because, in spite of everything else, the court has rules and you are required to do it. If you vary from it a bit, they tolerate it. One of the reasons why you made your voice heard on paper is that they appoint a lawyer to represent you they won't allow you to represent yourself. They are required to do this if you have an issue that requires judicial scrutiny.

"HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THE U.S. HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF CRIMES BUT HAVE BEEN MORALLY AND ABSOLUTELY INNOCENT OF THESE CRIMES? MORALITY AND LEGALITY... AREN'T FRIENDS. SLAVERY WAS LEGAL... YOU MIGHT BE A LEGAL SLAVE, BUT THAT IS MORALLY WRONG. I THINK PEOPLE HAVE TO SEE THAT PRISONS ARE ABSENT OF MORALITY, AND IF THEY ARE ABSENT OF MORALITY, WE HAVE A WAY TO ATTACK THIS SYSTEM..."

QUESTION: I'm wondering what we as individuals could do to help or support your colleagues who are still incarcerated in Angola?

ROBERT: I've been asked this before, and I give various answers to that question. The usual answer I give people is to see what's going on at the website

But I think the best way to help Herman and Albert (and by the way, a lot of people are on board and hopefully this will be the catalyst we need to really get them free) the best thing to do if you really want to help is to drop them a line. They will tell you what to do, especially Herman. You want to know what to do to help the Angola 3? Write to Herman Wallace and he will tell you!

HERMAN WALLACE
#76759

EMINE HUNT CORRECTIONAL CENTER
UNIT 5, E-TIER
PO BOX 174
SAN GABRIEL, LA 70776
U.S.A.

ALBERT WOODFOX
#72148

CCR, LOWER A5
LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY
ANGOLA, LA 70712
U.S.A.

QUESTION: As a tool, do you see any way that your voice has changed from being inside a prison to being outside now? The things you wanted to communicate, and how you vocalize them, have changed from being inside to now being outside and discussing things here?

ROBERT: I don't think there has been any change in my voice. There has been a change in my approach because I have mobility now, but the voice, the words are basically the same. It is all about continuing the struggle to get the voice out there. I made a statement when I got out of prison that I might be free from Angola but Angola would never be free from me. I really meant that in the sense that I would not allow myself to forget Angola, to forget other people who are in the same situation, my comrades, I made that promise. I was restricted when I was in Angola. But

"I MADE A STATEMENT
WHEN I GOT OUT OF PRISON
THAT I MIGHT BE FREE FROM
ANGOLA, BUT ANGOLA WOULD
NEVER BE FREE OF ME..."

people misconstrue a lot. I remember I was in Chicago some time around 2001, and I spoke before a law class and the professor asked me, "Well, you're out of prison now. You are free, so what is left? What else can you do? You have achieved your purpose," as if justice was delayed but nevertheless you have it now. I believe that justice delayed is terrorism. Look at Herman and Albert, and all of those other people who were convicted of a crime that they didn't commit. What I ended up telling her was that she was a law professor and I'm just a plain, old layman and I don't know anything. I had been in prison for thirty-one years and just got out. Two or three months later I'm talking to this lady and she's telling me that I'm free, but I don't feel it, I've never felt it, even though I was free from Angola. I told her, "You are right to some degree,"

and then went on to explain to her that while I was in prison I saw myself in a dark tunnel, and at the end of the tunnel, I saw light. For me, the quest was to get out of prison to that light, and once I got out of prison I finally got to that light. But once I got out and walked a few paces, I found there was another dark tunnel. I saw how wrong and how wretched it is for some people, and I assumed that even though I had made it through that darkened tunnel to the light, there was still another tunnel, and I was approaching it. My point is that I ended up telling her, "Look, I went through that tunnel. I got out, and when I went through that tunnel I saw another one and then another one." I went on to tell her that I saw the struggle as an upward spiral-- it goes on and on and it doesn't stop. The belief that I got out and it's all over with could never be further from the truth. It's not over. The struggle goes on. It's an upward spiral. And it goes on and on and doesn't stop.

15 Mulligan Drive
South Hadley, MA, 01075
April 9, 2009

Dear Robert,

Thank you very much for coming to speak at the PVPA. I learned a lot from your speaking. I knew that there were political prisoners in the US but I barely knew anything about them. I wonder what I could do to help your cause. Is there any way I could spread the word or somehow help get your friends and the rest of the political prisoners in the US to be know and heard about.

I learned about how you had started a candy company after you had left. That is really cool. Where can I get your candy? Is that another thing that you wanted when you got out of jail? I don't know if I could survive in those conditions. I love the outdoors and I don't think I could stand being in that tiny of a cell for 23 hours a day. I would go crazy not from being alone (even though I probably would) but from not being outside. How was the library collection where you were? You had unlimited books but how could you either afford to buy them and if it was a loaning system didn't you run out? What kind of literature do you like most and do you still read after you got out of prison? Are you a conspiracy theorist at all? Several people in my family are. What kind of reactions do you get from different crowds? Have you gotten good reactions and bad ones? Do you ever get stage fright? How did you get to know Justine?

Sincerely,

Darren Macpherson

QUESTION: You could take a look at the prison system as a symbol of the ills and the disease within our country – economically, socially, racially, class issues, you know, everything combined. And I'm wondering about your thoughts in terms of activism and education around the gross failures of the prison system in America.

"THE IDEA IN AN ACTIVIST COMMUNITY IS THAT THE PRISON CONCEPT IS AN EXTENSION OF SLAVERY... "

ROBERT: Yes, that is something that has been done, and that I consistently do. The idea in an activist community in my mind anyway is that the prison concept is an extension of slavery. Its neo-slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment (Emancipation Proclamation) did not outlaw slavery; it gave slavery a much stronger foothold in society. It says something to the effect that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist on these shores except for one who has been duly convicted of a crime". How many people in the United States have been duly convicted of a crime but are morally and absolutely innocent of these crimes? Leslie George did the first interview from prison with Albert and myself, and I think that somewhere in that interview I pointed out that legality and morality are not friends. At one time I thought that which was legal was holy and morally right. At one time I foolishly believed that morality and legality are two sides of the same coin, but they aren't friends. They are adversaries— in the American system, in the court system too because, hell, slavery was legal, and it wasn't until people brought it to a moral level that people began to see that you might be a legal slave, but that is morally wrong. So I'm thinking that the same thing has to be done with prisons. I think people have to see that prisons are absent of morality, and if they are absent of morality then we have a vehicle, we have a way to attack this system, to say, Hold up, something is wrong, especially if you read the stats. Over the years, how many people have been executed and later we found out that they were actually innocent? Nevertheless, Mr. Legal killed them. I say Mr. Legal because that is what it is about. They have put legality on a pedestal. It's the precedent that is unnatural, it's a precedent that is amoral.

QUESTION: I'm curious to know what kept you walking toward the light at the end of the tunnel and if you had moments when you wanted to stop.

"THERE WERE A LOT OF THINGS TO KEEP ME GOING: THE FACT THAT I WAS INNOCENT AND THAT I ALSO WANTED TO GET OUT... SOMETIMES THE MIND OR SPIRIT IS GREATER THAN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WHATEVER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT BE... "

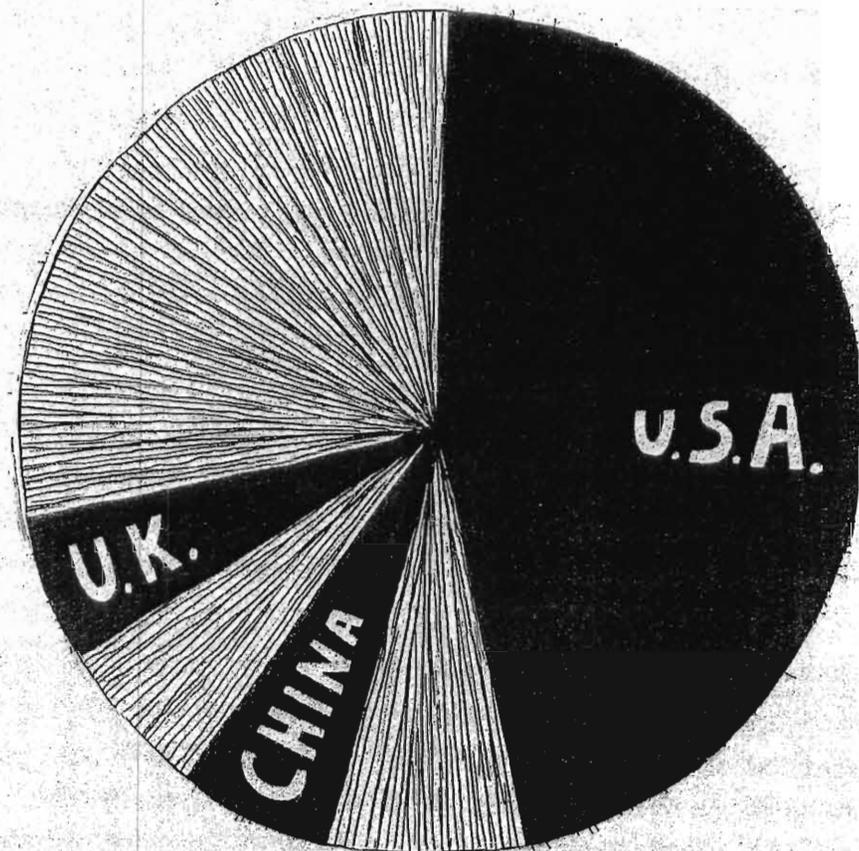
ROBERT: I guess at each tunnel there might be different circumstances, but the objective is the same. When I first got to prison I knew I was innocent and I knew that I had the truth on my side, even though people did not care about the truth. There were a lot of things to keep me going: the fact that I was innocent and that I also wanted to get out. I also convinced myself that I was in prison, but I wasn't going to let prison get into me. I did a lot of reading and exercising. I read everything -- funny books, unfunny books, in between books. Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, every book from the Harlem Renaissance, and everything that Louis L'Amour ever wrote, every one I could get. But what really kept me focused and going was that I love to think. I love to have daydreams. I guess that is a form of talking to myself. I had some beautiful dreams and I had some nightmares, too, but the dreams and the thoughts that came with the dreams outshone the nightmares. Sometimes the mind or spirit is greater than the circumstances, whatever those circumstances might be.

QUESTION: Rigo, in terms of your art practice, can you talk about your relationship to activism and social change in a broader context? What is your personal practice and how does it apply to a broader activist community?

RIGO: Its hard not to be overcome with a sense of futility. The realm where a lot of my actions appear is the real of the symbolic -- trying to speak back or to inspire. With the Angola 3 case, it seemed so outrageous that something like this could go on and not make a huge noise. I thought that if you pay attention to this, it would spread like a disease. Instead, all of a sudden, it just goes whoop, and you have Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib. Its like you are standing in the middle of the road and a teenager on a motorcycle comes by really fast and you want to point out how this behavior can be potentially dangerous and pretty soon a train comes by, and this crazy traffic has been going on but it still doesn't seem to attract attention. I think at some point I got overwhelmed by the distractions. And that's what led me to Robert's case. Instead of making art, I tried to work with Robert, and to be in situations where I could see that something was being done.

Artists have always resented having to make art in times of war. I live in a country that is at war, whose president is a war criminal, and it's not easy. It's hard to function fully; there's big soul damage. In being close to Robert I was trying to learn how you deal with that. Unfortunately it's not contagious. I think there are some stories, some parables, that are meaningful, that can have an effect like a virus and spread. I heard this parable about someone talking with a Native American elder about duality and good and bad. The elder said, "I feel like I have two dogs inside of me. One is friendly, social, wagging its tail -- the goofy dog. The other is a little bit more protective, nervous, aggressive, anti-social." And the person listening asked, "If that is a conflict, which dog will ultimately triumph?" To which the elder replied, "That part is easy - whichever dog I feed the most." We live in a social/political/emotional contract called the United States of America, and this place with about four-point-seven percent of humanity spends more than fifty percent of the resources humanity puts towards weapons manufacturing, weapons construction. As far as a collective project, this place right here has been feeding the wrong dog for a long time with an incredible voracity. We can't go anywhere before we stop putting so much money aside to feed this dog. It's a collective enterprise and being an artist doesn't give me any more responsibility to do anything about it. Actually, its one of the weakest starting points. If I were a doctor, an engineer, or a lawyer, I would be at a better starting place. Being an artist just happens to be what I do.

(NOTE TO ETHAN: THANKS FOR SHARING WITH ME YOUR SISTER'S FEELINGS ABOUT MY REPLY. SHE IS RIGHT ART DOES MATTER - LOVE, RIGO)



TOP 3 COUNTRIES SHARE OF TOTAL MILITARY EXPENDITURE WORLDWIDE

- U.S.A. 45% - CHINA 5% - U.K. 5%

SOURCE: SIPRI - STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (YEAR 2007)

As American as Cherry Pie, Rigo 23, 2008

Rose

Dear Robert King,

I was really moved, enthralled and impressed by the presentation and answers you gave to us all today. I had no idea about the severity of what political prisoners in the US face and you really opened my eyes about problems I didn't even really know about.

I cannot even imagine what it must have been like to be locked in a tiny cell, 23 hours a day, for 29 years. I can't imagine how horrible it must have been, how much you must have missed. I think it is absolutely amazing that you were able to endure that kind of torture and somehow be disciplined enough to keep your sanity. I can only guess how strong you must be to endure that, and I don't know if I would be able to. I also think that you are extremely selfless to, even after being released, still keep fighting to help other political prisoners, and to go around educating people like me on the problems we face.

Thank you so much for coming to our school and taking the time to talk to us and answer our questions. I loved how you understood that we are artists and tied art and activism into your presentation. Thank again.

Sincerely,

Rose Kendrick

P.S. What is your book called? I would love to read it.



HERMAN WALLACE

ON PRINCIPLES

**I was born on October 18th, 1941;
25 days prior to America entering
World War II.
African Americans were identified as
Negroes and completely segregated
here in the southern parts of the
United States.
Everything was segregated from
outhouse toilets to indoor churches.
Even the jails and prisons were
segregated; all socially designed to keep
African Americans as
an inferior people.
This is the type of society I was forced to
accept or end up in the grave or
in some remote prison cell.**

I was the 4th child out of 9, the Black Panther of the family who couldn't adapt. I vividly recall, at the age of 8, taking my little red wagon to a certain scrap yard on Sundays (the only day the scrap yard was closed) and I would load my little wagon with lots of copper and aluminum they left out in the open yard. My parents believed I was finding this stuff on the streets and in old abandoned card and trucks. I would bring my wagon load home and keep it there until the following Saturday and go sell it all back to the same scrap yard. I kept that going for a few years. I used the money to care for my sisters. I tried my ultimate best to always be there for them. I chopped the wood to keep the house warm and for cooking. I cooked, cleaned the house, and washed clothes on a scrubbing board long before we got a washing machine. I ironed the family clothes, plaited my sisters' hair before we went to school and secured their respect on the street.

My problem was that I was going nowhere fast and just could not understand why my parents worked so hard and yet were so poor.

Later in life I was introduced to the teachings of Malcolm X and he took me by storm. I could not get into his advocacy of religion, but his revolutionary political views stuck with me. In 1970-71, I met with the Panther 12 who introduced me to a whole new mode of thinking. I met Chairman Mao, Marx & Engels, Chou en Lai, Fidel, Che, General Giap, George Jackson, Ho Chi Minh, V.I. Lenin, Stalin, Kwame Nkrumah, and especially Frantz Fanon, who allowed me to make the transition from a criminal mentality to a revolutionary mentality.

We must keep in mind that the majority of members of the Black Panther Party came out of the jails, prisons, and the so-called "thug on the streets." At that time, we went directly to the "they" and the "mugger," and armed them with the correct methods of thinking. The thug and the mugger thus became the protectors. Instead of unconscious efforts to remain scum of the earth we followed the leadership of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. We created meaningful programs to save lives as opposed to destroying lives. The reasons our sisters and brothers are killing each other today at the blink of an eye is

PHOTO: CAROLYN WACHNICKI



LOOKING AT THE NEW MUSEUM FROM THE

SIDE — SUMMER 2009

not out of hatred (the same thing was going on 40 years ago, just brushing a brother's shoulder or accidentally stepping on his feet). The problem is because we lack real leadership. The conditions of today are no different than they were 40 years ago. Names have been changed, but the substance is still the same. It is a cycle we must challenge and the only way we can do this is by going among the "gangsters" and the "gang bangers" and arming them with Methods of Thinking. We are in an emergency situation and it calls for emergency solutions. Mumia once said that he was told our young brothers are lost. Mumia responded; "If they are lost, then it is our duty to find them!"

It is not by accident that the U.S. government spends \$60 billion a year to imprison its poor and uneducated - we are talking about 2.2 million people in prison. You hear and read of the gang attacks, the rapes, brutal abuse by prison guards and exploitation in the prison settings. These acts mirror the social acts of society and if we are to seriously change our emergency situation; then we must think in terms of seriously changing our mode of thinking. No one became a member of the Black Panther Party without having experienced a change of their social thinking.

There is nothing greater than a human being with principles. Mine were born out of the unified efforts of the Black Panther Party. It was these tools, the 10 Point Program and Platform, which gave us guidance and the will to enable us to challenge the worst of this government's terror. I will never denounce the Party's ideology nor its philosophy. I will never intentionally bring shame upon my sisters, brothers, and comrades who paid the supreme sacrifice under the banner of the Party. After 34 ½ years, this government continues to persecute Albert and me. The Warden, Burl Cain, of this plantation, has personally stated as a matter of record; "I will never release these men from lockdown until they change their political beliefs."

That can never happen with Albert and I any more than the Apartheid government's attempt to force Mandela to denounce violence. So you see, without fundamental principles, you are already doomed.

All Power to the People
Herman Wallace
Angola 3

IN THE PAST EIGHT
YEARS THERE HAS
BEEN ONLY ONE PHONE
CALL FROM AN INMATE
AT GUANTANAMO TO
A MEMBER OF A
NEWS ORGANIZATION.

Al Jazeera reported on Tuesday that Mohammad al-Qurani had been beaten and tear-gassed by guards after Barack Obama, the US president, pledged to end abuse at the camp in January.

Al-Qurani said in a phone call to Al Jazeera that the alleged ill-treatment "started about 20 days" before Barack Obama became US president and "since then I've been subjected to it almost every day".

He made the call to Sami al-Hajj, an Al Jazeera cameraman who was himself held at Guantanamo Bay for more than six years.

On Thursday Robert Wood, a US state department spokesman, said he had not seen the allegations regarding al-Qurani and "did not want to get into specific cases".

However, he did say that the state department would "certainly have been looking into a number of these issues".

The call is believed to be the first made from a Guantanamo Bay inmate to a media organisation.

FROM
ENGLISH
AL-
JAZEERA
MAY 22,
2009

ECHOES

Echoes of wisdom I often hear,

A mother's strength softly in

my ears, echoes of womanhood

shining so bright, echoes of

mother within darkest night.

Echoes of wisdoms on my mother's

lips, too young to understand it

was in a gentle kiss!

Echoes of love and fear, arrogance
of manhood wouldn't let me hear,
Echoes of heartache I still hold
close, as I mourn the loss of my
one true hero! Echoes from a mothers'
womb, heartbeats held

so dear, life begins with my first tears.

Echoes of footsteps taken in the past,

echoes of manhood standing in a looking

glass, echoes of motherhood gentle and

near, echoes of a lost mother I will always

hear!

Cinque (aka)

ALBERT WOODFOX



ALBERT WOODFOX

ART: EMORY DOUGLAS

THE FIRST STEP

An old Chinese proverb says that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.

My journey for revolutionary change began over thirty years ago, and although it is far from complete, and time has changed my body, the spirit that caused me to take that first step still burns as strong as ever.

But it is that first step that is most important. It has made all that has happened in my life possible. I don't know how my journey will end and since that mystery still exists, I must take solace in the journey itself – the many revolutionary acts that I have been a part of which have changed the prison and changed people I have encountered.

In 1969, after being convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to 55 years hard labor, my strongest instinct was to survive. To me that sentence was a direct threat to my life and I made my decision to survive by any means necessary. I escaped.

With the aid of friends and a corrupt prison system, I was able to escape and make my way to New York City. My second day there I found myself in Harlem. But this was not the Harlem I had visited as a petty criminal seeking criminal enterprise – in this case drugs. This Harlem had a new force at work. That force was the Black Panther Party.

For the first time in my life, I saw African men and women who showed no sign of fear; but were very proud, strong, focused and with purpose. That purpose was not to survive at any cost even if it meant the destruction of the community or the people in it. The purpose I saw in these people was to survive by taking control of their communities, by protecting and serving the people.

THEY WERE TEACHING THE PEOPLE THAT THEY HAD THE RIGHT, AND POWER, TO STAND AS A UNITED FORCE AND DETERMINE THE CHARACTER OF THEIR COMMUNITIES.

IT HAS BEEN FORTY YEARS SINCE THAT DAY, AND I WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT I HAVE CHANGED IN MANY WAYS. EXPERIENCE HAS GIVEN ME WISDOM AND MANY ACHIEVEMENTS, AS WELL AS FAILURES. IT HAS HELPED ME BUILD CHARACTER. MY STRENGTH HAS ALWAYS COME FROM THE PEOPLE, EVEN IN VERY DARK PERIODS OF MY LIFE. I HAVE NEVER LOST THAT BELIEF.

Eventually, I was once again the victim of Amerikkkan justice and found myself in the infamous Manhattau House of Detention, also known as the tombs. I was placed on a tier that held several members of the Black Panther Party. I'm sorry to say that time has robbed me of their names, but not the impact they had on my life.

For the first time, I was part of a discussion that involved subjects I had never been exposed to. Economics and its impact on shaping society; poverty's direct relation to prison and so-called crime. I had my first glimpse of African history, both in Africa and throughout the world. I heard discussions about enormous achievements made by many people – from the first colonists who landed in America through the present time, and I was astounded to learn the men and women being discussed were Africans.

But being confronted with so many new ideas, I was afraid, confused and lost. That is until I read a book I borrowed from another brother in one of New York's many prisons. This book was the beginning of my life. It is called "A Different Drummer," by William Melvin Kelly. After reading this book I suddenly understood all the discussions, debate, ideological struggles that these brothers waged and put forth in the name of the Black Panther Party.

This book was the catalyst for change in my life. And it led me to be open to the courage, dignity and pride of the Black Panther Party and its platform for change and empowerment of African Americans, other minorities and poor whites. It was the Black Panther Party that gave me the courage to take the first step.

My journey is far from complete and the Panther Party no longer exists as an organized unit. But I would hope that as long as I, or any other comrade who once pledged to uphold the principles of the Black Panther Party, still lives, that the spirit of the Panther Party will live. Remember that "Power to the People" is an eternity, a reality and an achievable goal, but only if we never give up in our struggles to serve and protect the people, as long as we keep the Panther Party alive in our hearts and memory.

A. Shaka Cinque
Aka Albert Woodfox
Angola 3

"I WAS CLEAR THROUGHOUT THIS CAMPAIGN AND WAS CLEAR THROUGHOUT THIS TRANSITION THAT UNDER MY ADMINISTRATION, THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT TORTURE. WE WILL ABIDE BY THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS. WE WILL ABIDE BY OUR HIGHEST IDEALS."

— BARACK OBAMA,
WHEN ASKED AT A NEWS
CONFERENCE WHETHER HE
WOULD CONTINUE THE BUSH
ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY
OF "HARSH INTERROGATION."

CHAPTER 22

AS OF THIS WRITING, HERMAN WALLACE and Albert Woodfox have been held in solitary confinement for more than thirty years. To be held guilty of a crime that one hasn't committed — with exculpatory evidence to prove innocence, evidence that has been willfully overlooked by the courts — is an act of terrorism. But what is even more terrifying is that unless there is an intervention by a court showing integrity, Albert and Herman will have to spend the remainder of their lives in prison, in solitary confinement for a crime neither committed. "Justice delayed is justice denied" and I agree. However, suffice it to say that justice delayed is equal to terrorism, especially in this case. Solitary confinement is terrifying, especially if you are innocent of the charges that put you there. It evokes a lot of emotion. For me, being in prison in solitary confinement was terrible; it was a nightmare. My soul still cries from all that I witnessed and endured. It mourns continuously. Through the course of my confinement, I saw men so desperate that they ripped prison doors apart, and both starved and mutilated themselves. It takes every scrap of humanity to stay focused and sane in that environment. I should be anything but what I am today; sometimes the spirit is stronger than the circumstances.

At some point, we are going to have to call prison exactly what it is: a perpetuation of slavery. The 13th amendment did not abolish slavery. It reconstituted slavery instead, by putting it on another plane, the prison plane. The 13th amendment says

"neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist on these shores except for persons duly convicted of a crime." But how many have been legally convicted of a crime even though they were innocent? At one point, I mistakenly believed that legality and morality were synonymous, that everything judged legal was also wholly and morally correct. Through hard experience, I learned that this is not true.

The Black Panther Party's slogan "power to the people" centered around the concept that power actually does belong to the people. But the people have relinquished that power to a small faction of people called politicians, and in relinquishing power they have left themselves at the mercy of ever-changing restrictions defined as laws. Many of these laws deemed legal are in no way moral. In reality, we are empowered en masse to direct or redirect our own course. In redirecting our own course, one of the main focuses must be the prison system and how it is connected to slavery.

So let's call prisons exactly what they are: an extenuation of slavery. And we must let the politicians know that we know this. Mumia Abu-Jamal is in prison because slavery was never abolished. Jalil Alamin, formerly Rap Brown; the San Francisco 8, the remaining two of The Angola 3, Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox; Leonard Peltier; the Jena 6... we could go on naming people, all political victims of a legal system that is in fact immoral. It is a system like this that allows a district attorney, Read Walters, to say to Jena youth Mychael Bell with impunity that "with a stroke of a pen, I can take your life away." It is a system like this that gives district attorneys, defense lawyers, judges, legislators, politicians a vested interest in passing the laws, regulations, decisions and judgments that keep people in prison. Justice cannot exist when the people charged with defending the rights of people are invested in their incarceration.

During my twenty-nine years of solitary (and the two prior years in parish prison), I lived out the conclusion that the Black Panther Party's assessment of America, as it related to Blacks and other minorities, was correct. Without the Party's appraisal, and

my total acceptance of this appraisal, I could not have survived intact those twenty-nine years. I had been given a truth to live by, a truth to cling to. And despite the internal friction among the Party's leaders and cadres (orchestrated by the FBI and CIA), and in spite of the eventual elimination of the Party as an organization by these same forces, this truth has sustained me. I made a vow to myself that no matter what, I would do my best to live out this truth, even in solitary confinement. I told myself that no matter where one resided in America — whether in minimum (society) custody or maximum security (prison) custody — the struggle must continue.

CCR or Closed Cell Restriction (when it was located at the front gate of the prison) was a unit that also housed Death Row prisoners. The entire unit had seven tiers; each tier (save one) had fifteen single man cells. We were kept in cells twenty-three hours a day, seven days a week. For years, we were denied any yard time. The one hour we were out of our cells was used for showering. Each morning the officer on duty, standing outside of the tier by the control box, would open all the cell doors. When the doors opened, the men wanting to shower would file out of their cells into the hallways. This was the practice until 1974.

On the morning of June 10, 1973, I was still on B-tier. It was on that date that one prisoner, with the intention of knifing another prisoner, but not realizing that his intended victim also had a knife, was killed. Ordinarily, the incident would have gone into the prison books as being a clear case of self-defense.

ROBERT HILLARY KING

But that didn't happen. Instead, officials at the prison issued a "blanket indictment" against all the men who were out of their cells that morning — eleven of us. A short time later, this blanket indictment was dropped against nine of those originally charged. The remaining two men — Grady Brewer and myself — were officially indicted by a Grand Jury on charges of murder.

Neither Grady nor I were actually disturbed by this turn of events, and we both were eager to go to trial. Grady felt that no reasonable jury would find him guilty of murder, for he had acted in self-defense. I was eager because I had nothing to do with the incident, and was sure that I could prove it to a jury.

The trial was held in rural St. Francisville, about 20 miles south of the prison. The town's residents, especially the whites, didn't take too kindly to prisoners confined at Angola, in spite of the fact that many of them (the males, that is) worked at the prison. Those who didn't knew someone who did and it was from this linkage that jury pools were created.

Grady Brewer and I were to be tried jointly and the trial began on October 10, 1973. Our appointed council made it known to the judge that he hadn't enough time to prepare, and asked for an extension, which the court promptly refused. At that point, Grady and I got into the act. We tried to convince the court that we needed more time; the judge was adamant. Some more words were passed, resulting in our having to stand trial with our hands cuffed behind our backs, in shackles, with tape over our mouths.

For two days, we sat in court, gagged and in chains, and watched the jury being picked to try us.



The state began its case by entering nine knives allegedly found near or in close proximity to the body, into evidence. This was despite the fact that the coroner's report stated that "all of the wounds appear to have been made with the same weapon." In the subsequent testimony, none of the officers who were on duty that morning implicated me as a participant. No fingerprints of mine were found on any of the knives. Nevertheless, the state produced two surprise witnesses in the persons of two of the inmates who were out of their cells that morning. Both inmates — with tailored testimonies — testified that I had participated in the murder, which in fact was a self-defense killing. Both their testimonies were riddled with inconsistencies, and they both lied about the events of that morning. One was in fact caught in a lie on the witness stand. Nevertheless, on the testimony of the other inmate — who had not witnessed the incident — Grady and I were found guilty as charged.

In 1974, the Louisiana State Supreme Court reversed my life

sentence and ordered a new trial. The reversal was not based on my innocence, but because the trial judge had abused his power by having me bound and gagged. In 1975, a second trial began and on the same frail evidence as before, I was found guilty a second time.

Some time during 1975, I found myself back on D-tier, right next door to Woodfox. We resumed our political education classes, holding discussions and teaching those who couldn't read or write to do so. Our efforts did not go unnoticed by our keepers: we were constantly being harassed, and worse. Once, an inmate "trusty" approached Woodfox, saying: "I know y'all wants to escape, so I'm gon' help y'all." He pulled out a fully loaded .32 revolver and handed it to Woodfox. After taking the pistol and examining it, Woodfox handed it back to him, telling him, "Thank you, but I'll find another way." Woodfox had seen that the firing pin had been filed to the nub. It was obviously a set-up. Not long after that incident, a group of security officers went to Woodfox's cell to "shake him down," or search his belongings. After handcuffing Albert and placing him in the hallway, the search began. I heard one of the officers yell, "Bingo, look what I found." The officer came out of the cell holding a small pouch containing gunpowder. As a result, Woodfox spent quite a few days in isolation. There is no doubt that the item "found" in Woodfox's cell was planted. It was a set-up that gave them the excuse needed to justify a major shakedown and to literally "tear up" our cells.

The fact that we were constantly harassed and targeted by prison officials did not deter us in our efforts to change our conditions. We clearly understood the extreme limitations the keepers placed on us, but we were determined to eliminate some of those unnecessary restrictions. Therefore, we continued to set examples of resistance, examples that other prisoners in other areas could identify with.

During the years from 1974 to 1978, we experienced some successes from our willingness to struggle; prisoners throughout the prison (and even in some parish jails) began hearing of our

CCR - CLOSED CELL RESTRICTED

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN CCR, ESPECIALLY IN D-TIER. QUITE A FEW PRISONERS WANTED TO BECOME PART OF US AND DO WHAT WE WERE DOING. SOME DID.

EACH TIER CONSISTED OF FIFTEEN CELLS, SIX FEET BY NINE FEET, AND THE DOORS WERE BARRED. A LONG WALKWAY CONNECTED THEM, WITH THE SHOWER AT THE FRONT OF EACH TIER. THE ONE HOUR A DAY THAT WE WERE RELEASED FROM OUR CELLS WE SPENT TAKING OUR SHOWER, AND THEN IN THAT WALKWAY. THAT WAS HOW WE TALKED, PASSED PAPERS, EDUCATED EACH OTHER, AND COORDINATED OUR ACTIONS.

ONE OF OUR SUCCESSES WAS THE ELIMINATION OF A LONG-STANDING PRACTICE OF FEEDING US. AT MEAL TIME OUR FOOD WAS TAKEN FROM A CART AND PLACED ON THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF EACH CELL. THE PRISONER THEN HAD TO REACH DOWN AND RETRIEVE THE TRAY BY SLIDING IT UNDER A FILTHY DOOR, LOSING SOME OF THE FOOD IN THE PROCESS.



ALMOST EVERY CELL BLOCK WAS FED IN THIS DEHUMANIZING MANNER. SENSING HOW HUMILIATING THIS PRACTICE WAS, WE BEGAN TO FEEL UNCLEAN, AND ANGRY WITH OURSELVES FOR HAVING ALLOWED OURSELVES TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR OWN VICTIMIZATION. AFTER DISCUSSING THE MATTER AMONGST OURSELVES, WE DECIDED THAT WE WOULD TRY TO NEGOCIATE WITH THE KEEPERS.



THE PRISON ADMINISTRATION TOLD US THAT THIS WAS NON-NEGOTIABLE, THAT "WE ALWAYS FED THAT WAY, AND IT WILL CONTINUE." PLAN B WAS SIMPLE ENOUGH: WE WENT ON A HUNGER STRIKE. AFTER MANY DAYS OF HUNGER, A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WARDEN CAME TO US, TELLING US THAT IF WE WOULD DISCONTINUE THE HUNGER STRIKE, THE WARDEN WOULD AT SOME POINT HONOR OUR REQUEST, BY CUTTING HOLES IN THE BARS LARGE ENOUGH FOR A TRAY TO PASS THROUGH. KNOWING THAT "AT SOME POINT" MEANT MANY MONTHS, WE CONTINUED WITH OUR HUNGER STRIKE. WE FASTED FOR MORE THAN THIRTY DAYS, AND SOME TIME AFTER THAT POINT, THE REPRESENTATIVE CAME BACK. AFTER TALKING AND WRANGLING A BIT, IT WAS AGREED THAT UNTIL THE HOLES WERE CUT IN THE BARS, WE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO TIE A SLING MADE OF CLOTH TO OUR BARS THAT WOULD HOLD THE TRAYS. FOR NEARLY EIGHTEEN MONTHS WE ATE FROM SLINGS, STANDING UP AT THE BARS. AFTER THAT, THE PRISON BEGAN CUTTING

HOLES IN EVERY AREA. HOWEVER IT MUST BE NOTED THAT IN A FINAL GESTURE OF UTTER CONTEMPT FOR US, THE PRISON ADMINISTRATION MADE SURE THAT



D-TIER WAS THE VERY LAST TIER TO BE CORRECTED.

We were also successful in curtailing another routine, a dehumanizing, long-standing practice by the prison — the unnecessary and random rectal searches. During a strip search, we were required to undergo a visual anal search. We told ourselves that this practice served no penological purpose whatsoever; wherever we went, we were chained up, hand and feet. Coming to a consensus conclusion that this practice was a carryover from slavery (before being sold, the slave had to be stripped and subjected to anal examination), and after months of appealing to our keepers, we decided to take a bold step: we would simply refuse a voluntary anal search. We would not be willing participants in our own degradation. We knew that there would be consequences, but we were more than willing to make the necessary sacrifices. We knew it could even mean death. We also knew that we, as a unit, would be disunited — separated by our keepers. With this in mind, addresses and telephone numbers of relatives outside were exchanged.

After having tried for months to get the keepers to discontinue this dehumanizing practice, we began refusing. They came, as we knew they would. My turn came around. I was taken from my cell, handcuffed and shackled, to a remote office room where prison guards lined the walls, some carrying bats, other brandishing billy clubs and other assault weapons. I was ordered to strip, after their removal of the chains. I did. Mind you, we were not refusing the strip search, only the visual anal examination. I was then told to turn around and bend over. Naturally, I refused. I then readied myself for the ensuing onslaught which had to come. It came. We fought. Finally, I was subdued by sheer force of numbers. This was 1977.

After being taken to the prison hospital to have my many bruises examined, I was removed immediately to Camp J, the newly-built punishment camp, and charged with multiple counts of assaulting officers (charges were later dropped). The irony is, no anal examination occurred that night.

Meanwhile, Woodfox, who remained at CCR, managed to contact some of my relatives who called the prison inquiring about my health and wellbeing. This gesture saved me from additional injuries, and perhaps death as well. Someone on the outside had shown concern.

Camp J was purely punitive. The practice of feeding prisoners was identical to the way we had been fed in CCR, prior to our protests. I was told that I would not be allowed to even put a sling on the bars as I done at CCR. Thus, I began a one-man protest.

After making my point, by making clear to my keepers that I would absolutely not “eat off the floor,” I ceased my hunger strike. I talked to the inmate orderlies, explaining to them why I wouldn’t touch a tray they had set on the floor. Most understood, and would put the tray into my outstretched hand. I would then take the food I intended to eat from the tray folding the paper plate and pulling it through the bars. I always kept a cleaning rag to wipe up any spillage. I did this for better than two years. It wasn’t until after I was sent back to CCR that the keepers cut holes in the bars at Camp J.

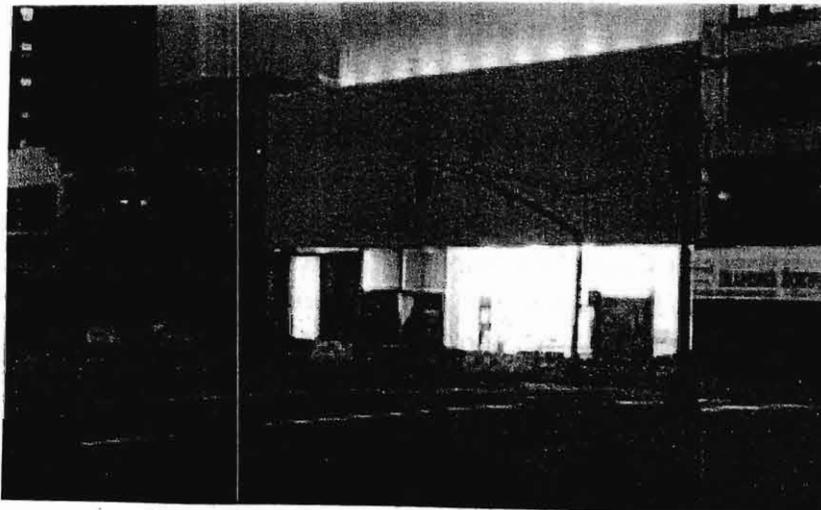
Prior to our having decided to resist the dehumanizing anal searches, we had talked about contacting an attorney to assist us in a civil suit. And during intervals, when Woodfox wasn’t in the dungeon for refusing the search, he contacted NOLAC, or New Orleans Legal Assistance. Recognizing the merits of the case, they decided to assist us in the case, representing us jointly. The suit (Woodfox, et al v. Phelps, et al) was filed in the Nineteenth District Court, and less than a year later the court issued a ruling, outlawing “routine anal searches.” Sulking, the prison officials reluctantly ceased this practice. Presently, anal searches are conducted only when “warranted,” whatever that means.

I was at Camp J for more than two years, and the Struggle continued. Besides the inhumane practices, there were far greater atrocities. The physical and psychological torture of prisoners was unchecked. I was told by officials at the camp that what

FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE HEAP

they were doing was condoned by persons in high places. I believed them; how else, unless it was "condoned by persons in high places," could it have gone on for so long? Prisoners had no access to personal phone calls and could not inform their relatives as to what was happening to them. There was no access to law books to properly challenge the practices. We were in cells twenty-three hours a day, at times twenty-four. Yard privileges were non-existent. Death by alleged suicide emerged around the same time as Camp J came into existence. A psychiatric unit was built, mostly for victims of Camp J's atrocities. After my stint at Camp J, I was returned to CCR. This was around November 1979.

In early 1981, I was once more residing on the tier with Woodfox. We shared the same tier until 1996, when — after having his original conviction and sentence of fifty years overturned — he was immediately retried for the alleged murder of prison guard Brent Miller. As in the first trial, Woodfox was convicted and given a life sentence. He was returned to the custody of the Department of Corrections, back to CCR and his former solitary confinement status within the prison. His struggle continues...



A 37 Year-Old Case

The San Francisco Eight (SF8), former members and associates of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, were charged in 2007 with murder and conspiracy stemming from a 1971 case! Herman Bell, Jalil Muntaqim (aka Anthony Bottom), Ray Boudreaux, Richard Brown, Hank Jones, Richard O'Neal, Harold Taylor and Francisco Torres range in age from 56 to 73. They are husbands, fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and they have been employed for many years in professions including licensed electrician, building engineer, real estate appraiser and community court judge. They are well respected in their communities and deeply loved by their families.

The case against the SF8 is a frame up, based on torture-induced "confessions" and fabricated evidence.

IN 1975 THIS SAME CASE WAS THROWN OUT OF COURT. IT HAS BEEN REVIVED BY HOMELAND SECURITY USING FUNDS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO TARGET POLITICAL ACTIVISTS AS "DOMESTIC TERRORISTS" IN THE POST-911 ERA.

THE CASE AGAINST THE SF8 IS BUILT ON TORTURED 'CONFESSIONS'

"Do you remember me?" Those words, smugly uttered in 2003 by Homeland Security deputized agents, Frank McCoy and Ed Erdelatz, sent shock waves of pained memories through

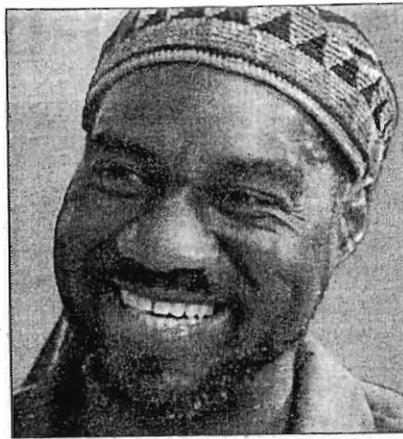
John Bowman (now deceased but named in the criminal complaint against the SF8 as a co-conspirator), Ruben Scott and Harold Taylor. Back in 1973, McCoy and Erdelatz were inspectors with the San Francisco Police Department investigating the death of Sgt. John Young who had been killed in an ambush of the Ingleside police station in 1971. The two inspectors believed that the ambush had been carried out by Black militants, most likely members of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP), but they were unable to bring charges against anyone until they learned that New Orleans police had arrested 13 alleged members of the BPP. They rushed to the scene to join detectives from Los Angeles, New York City and FBI agents, and over the next several days this joint team of detectives and agents attempted to

extract confessions from Bowman, Scott and Taylor. When the three former Panthers refused to give the desired answers, the interrogators exited the room and the goon squad from the New Orleans police department took over, literally determined to beat confessions out of them. After the beatings, the New Orleans "team" exited and the interrogators returned.

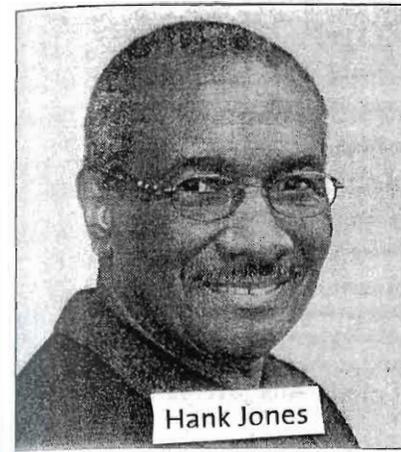
The methods used were eerily similar to those used in Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib in recent years. Suffocation using plastic bags, wool blankets drenched in boiling water, beatings with blunt instruments and slap jacks, blind folding and the use of electric cattle prods on the genitals and sensitive areas of the body were just some of tools of torture employed by the New Orleans police department. McCoy,

erdelatz and their cohorts carefully crafted the story they wanted each man to provide, and once the men were at a breaking point, they got them to "confess" to their version of the story as the price for making the torture stop. Returning to San Francisco, McCoy and Erdelatz provided the District Attorney with the coerced statements and the trio was indicted

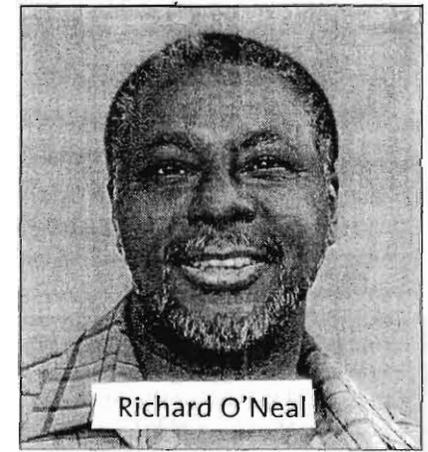
in 1974. However, the District Attorney failed to inform the grand jurors that the confessions he heavily relied upon were coerced. Defense motions to dismiss the indictments were granted by a San Francisco judge in 1975 and 1976, and the case was dormant for the next 30 years.



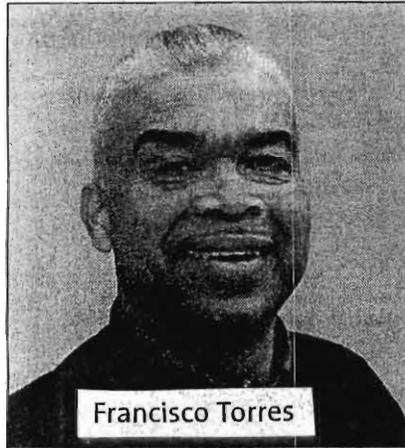
Jalil Muntaqim
(aka Anthony Bottom)



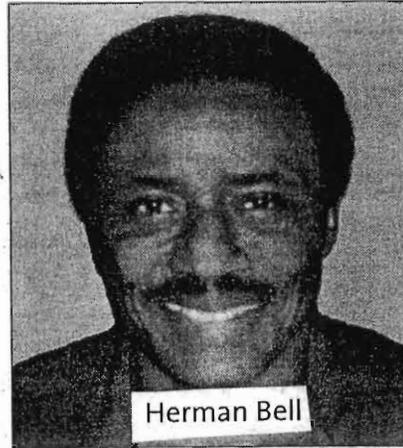
Hank Jones



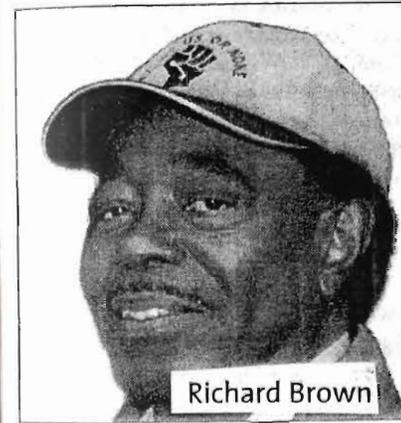
Richard O'Neal



Francisco Torres

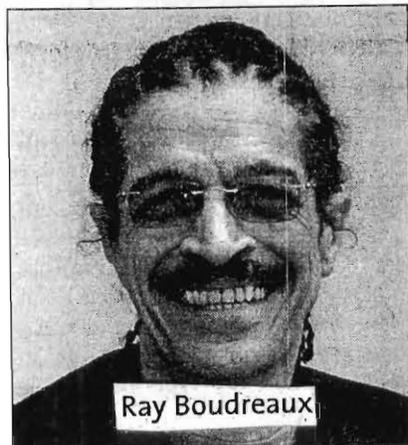


Herman Bell

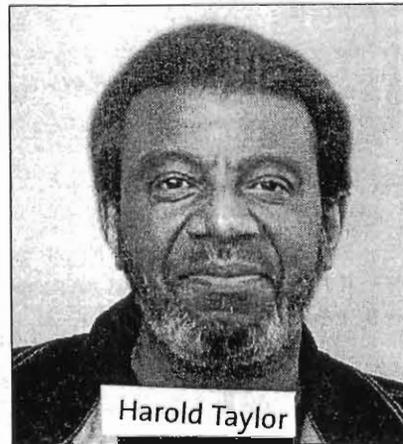


Richard Brown

SAN FRANCISCO 8
CASE COMES TO AN
END AS GOVERNMENT
THROWS IN TOWEL!
NEWS REPORT
FROM SF INDYMEDIA
JULY 6, 2009
BELOW...



Ray Boudreaux



Harold Taylor

Last week, after Herman Bell agreed to plead to voluntary manslaughter and Jalil Muntaqim agreed to plead to conspiracy to voluntary manslaughter, all charges were dropped against Richard Brown, Hank Jones, Harold Taylor and Ray Boudreaux. Charges were dropped against Richard O'Neal last year. Francisco Torres, of NYC, is the last person still with charges.

Herman Bell and Jalil Muntaqim have been in prison in New York for almost 40 years on similar charges based on the US Government's COINTELPRO actions to disrupt and destroy radical organizations, especially the Black Panther Party. Showing the weakness of the prosecution's case, Bell and Muntaqim were given no additional prison time, and will be returned to NY where they will continue to fight for parole.

Two and a half years of mass support for the Brothers, including resolutions from the San Francisco Central Labor Council, the Berkeley City Council, and several San Francisco Supervisors, have almost broken the back of a vindictive prosecution organized by Homeland Security, the FBI, and California Attorney General Jerry Brown. The defense committee has vowed to keep up the pressure until charges are dropped against Francisco Torres and Herman and Jalil are back on the streets.

IN 2009 FOUR MEMBERS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING CITYWIDE RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DROP ALL CHARGES AGAINST THE S.F. 8. THE CASE CAME TO AN END BEFORE THE FULL BOARD COULD VOTE ON IT.

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed resolution No. 050259 in 2005 stating that they are adamantly opposed to torture and condemned the use or threat of torture by the United States government as a barbarous violation of human rights; and

WHEREAS; The use of torture violates the US Constitution in (a) the Fourth Amendment right to be free of unreasonable search or seizure (which encompasses the right not be abused by the police), (b) the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination (which encompasses the right to remain silent during interrogations), (c) the Fifth and the Fourteenth Amendments' guarantees of due process (ensuring fundamental fairness in the criminal justice system) and (d) the Eighth Amendment right to be free of cruel or unusual punishment; and

WHEREAS, The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Article 5, defines torture as a human rights violation; and

WHEREAS, The Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions specifically bar the use of torture during interrogations; and

WHEREAS, The United Nations Convention Against the Use of Torture has been ratified by 145 countries; and

WHEREAS, The Bush Administration justified the use of torture at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and Bagram detention centers, leading to worldwide condemnation of torture; and

Whereas, Herman Bell, Ray Boudreaux, Richard Brown, Henry (Hank) Jones, Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom), Harold Taylor and Francisco Torres, are seven men collectively known as the San Francisco 8 defendants [charges having been dropped against Richard O'Neal]; and

WHEREAS, All of these men were members or associates of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP), a primary target of the FBI's unconstitutional COINTELPRO program in the late 1960s and early '70's designed to disrupt and destroy progressive and community based organizations; and

WHEREAS, In 1973, three Black activists, including one of the defendants, were arrested in New Orleans, tortured by local police, and interrogated by two San Francisco police detectives at intervals between the torture, which lasted several days; and

WHEREAS, During this torture, the three men were separated from each other, stripped naked, covered with wool blankets soaked in boiling water, beaten with slapjacks, suffocated with plastic bags tied over their heads, sleep deprived, kicked, beaten, shocked with electric cattle prods on their genitals, in the anus, and under the neck; and

WHEREAS, Statements resulting from the New Orleans torture were used to bring charges in the mid-1970s in several jurisdictions including charges for the 1971 killing of Sergeant John Young, a San Francisco police officer; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco charges were dismissed in 1975 after Superior Court Judge Edward Cragen learned that these "confessions" had been coerced under torture; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, after 36 years, the prosecution re-filed the charges against the San Francisco 8 based on the same tortured "confessions" illegally obtained in 1973; and

WHEREAS, By September 2007, six of the eight who were eligible for bail were released thanks to the determined efforts of their communities, their families and supporters, who saw the case as an attack on respected and valued community elders and a continuation of the COINTELPRO attack on the Black freedom movement; and

WHEREAS, This case was reopened based on questionable claims of "new" evidence; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of individuals and many organizations such as the San Francisco Labor Council and the Center for Constitutional Rights have signed an open letter or passed resolutions urging Attorney General Jerry Brown to drop the charges against the SF8; and

WHEREAS, Among those individuals include three Nobel Peace Laureates: Reverend Dr. Desmond Tutu, Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Betty Williams (Community of Peace People, Northern Ireland); Darryl Jordan, Director, American Friends Service Committee Third World Coalition, Danny Glover, Cindy Sheehan, Cynthia McKinney, William Wardlaw, Executive Director's Leadership Council, Amnesty International, Marjorie Cohn, Esq., President, National Lawyers Guild; and

WHEREAS, During this time of economic hardships and cutbacks in services for the people of San Francisco, the jail and court costs to the City of San Francisco and its taxpayers have mounted to millions of dollars; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That in the name of fairness, justice and human rights, The Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco urges California Attorney General Jerry Brown to drop all charges against the San Francisco 8 defendants; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors strongly opposes the use of torture against suspects; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Board forward this resolution to Attorney General Jerry Brown.

STATES COULD LOSE MONEY OVER PRISON RAPES

BY JENNIFER C. KERR
TUE. JUN 23, 5:20 PM ET

AP
2009 ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — NEW MEASURES AIMED AT REDUCING PRISON RAPES ARE IN THE WORKS — AND STATES THAT FAIL TO TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT THEIR INMATES COULD SEE THEIR FEDERAL MONEY CUT.

THE NEW STANDARDS WERE PROPOSED TUESDAY BY THE NATIONAL PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION COMMISSION, A BIPARTISAN PANEL THAT SPENT FIVE YEARS STUDYING THE ISSUE. IT'S ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 60,000 (SIXTY THOUSAND) INMATES ARE SEXUALLY ABUSED EACH YEAR.

WITH MORE THAN 7.3 MILLION PEOPLE BEHIND BARS OR ON PAROLE AND PROBATION IN THE U.S., THE REPORT SAID JAILS AND PRISONS SHOULD TAKE A SERIES OF STEPS TO ELIMINATE SEXUAL ABUSE OF INMATES. THOSE STEPS INCLUDE THE ADOPTION OF ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES, BETTER STAFF TRAINING AND IMPROVED

SCREENING TO IDENTIFY PRISONERS VULNERABLE TO ABUSE.

"INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE INCARCERATED HAVE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS" SAID U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE REGGIE WALTON, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION. "JUST BECAUSE THEY'VE COMMITTED A CRIME AND THEY ARE INCARCERATED DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEIR HUMAN DIGNITY CAN BE ABUSED." (...)

SOME OF THE REPORT'S KEY FINDINGS:

- INMATES WHO ARE SHORT, YOUNG, GAY, OR FEMALE WERE MORE LIKELY TO BE VICTIMIZED THAN OTHER INMATES.
- EVEN WHEN INMATES ARE WILLING TO REPORT ABUSE, THEIR ACCOUNTS ARE NOT ALWAYS TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND REPORTED TO APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS.

IN A 2007 STUDY, THE BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS FOUND THAT MORE THAN 60,000 INMATES ARE SEXUALLY ABUSED EACH YEAR.

THE STUDY FOUND THAT 4.5 PERCENT OF THOSE SURVEYED REPORTED BEING SEXUALLY ABUSED IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS.

THAT STUDY ALSO SAID MORE PRISONERS REPORTED ABUSE BY STAFF THAN BY OTHER PRISONERS: 2.9 PERCENT TO ABOUT 2 PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY.

THE COMMISSION'S REPORT RECOMMENDED THAT PRISON AUTHORITIES ADOPT MORE INTERNAL MONITORING, SUCH AS VIDEO CAMERAS, AS WELL AS EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT BY REVIEW BOARDS. (...)

JAMES GONDLES JR., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION, SAID HE'S OPTIMISTIC THAT "WE CAN GET SOMETHING THAT'S WORKABLE". BUT GONDLES SAID HE'S CONCERNED THAT COUNTY JAILS, WHICH HAVE FEWER RESOURCES THAN PRISONS, MAY NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO IMPLEMENT SOME PROPOSALS, SUCH AS ADDING STAFF FOR MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT OF ABUSE VICTIMS.

AT THE COMMISSION'S NEWS CONFERENCE TUESDAY, HOPE HERNANDEZ TOLD A CROWDED ROOM OF HER ORDEAL IN A WASHINGTON D.C. JAIL IN THE LATE NINETIES

WHEN THE THEN 23-YEAR OLD WAS AWAITING TRIAL ON DRUG CHARGES.

AFTER BEGGING FOR A SHOWER FOR TWO WEEKS, HERNANDEZ SAID A CORRECTIONS OFFICER SHOWED UP ONE NIGHT WITH A TOWEL AND SHAMPOO TO TAKE HER FOR A SHOWER. SHE SAID HE LED HER TO THE SHOWER WHERE HE RAPED HER.

"RAPE MUST NEVER BE PART OF THE PENALTY," SAID HERNANDEZ, A MOTHER OF TWO WHO LATER EARNED A MASTER'S DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.

HIS PUNISHMENT — SHE SAID — WAS A SEVEN-DAY SUSPENSION WITH PAY BEFORE RETURNING TO DUTY.

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER DEVLIN BARRETT CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT.

JUNE
26Th

2009

MORALLY INNOCENT,

LEGALLY GUILTY:

ROBERT KING OF THE ANGOLA 3
INTERVIEWED BY AMY MACKIE OF
THE NEW MUSEUM. JUNE 26, 2009

In 1970, a jury convicted Robert King Wilkerson (now known as Robert Hillary King) of manslaughter, a crime he did not commit. He was sentenced to 35 years in prison and sent to the New Orleans Parish Prison. In April 1972, prison guard Brent Miller was stabbed to death at the Louisiana State Penitentiary also known as Angola. Only one person, inmate Hezekiah Brown, witnessed the killing. At first Brown said he could not identify anyone involved because their faces had been covered. After several days of pressure, however, Brown changed his story and identified four men: Albert Woodfox, Herman Wallace, Gilbert Montegut, and Chester Jackson. They became known as the Angola 4. Montegut, a revolutionary activist like Woodfox and Wallace, was later acquitted. Jackson struck a deal and testified for the prosecution. Years later, evidence emerged that both Hezekiah Brown and Chester Jackson were paid off with sentence reductions and material incentives. Following this incident in 1972, King was transferred to Angola joining Woodfox and Wallace who had established the first prison chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1971. The three men, who became known as the Angola 3, fought for prison reform from within the system by a variety of methods. They staged hunger strikes to demand that prisoners were handed their meals (rather than having them served on the floor), they protected young prisoners from sexual predators, and perhaps most importantly, they insisted upon equal rights for all prisoners. After years of appeals, Robert H. King proved his innocence. His first conviction was overturned after he pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of conspiracy to commit murder. In February 2001, King was released from Angola after spending 31 years in prison 29 of which were in solitary confinement. At the time of this interview, Wallace and Woodfox remain in CCR (Closed Cell Restriction) at Angola.

April 9th, 2009

Dear Robert King,

Thankyou so much for visiting our school! I learned so much from listening to you speak about political prisoners and your own personal experiences. It's not fair, or right, for anyone to be held for a crime they didn't commit. Everyone needs to learn more about these terrible things that are going on within our country. The more educated people are, the more we can take a stand against the things that are wrong and the government doesn't tell us about. I was shocked to hear about the conditions you were living in in prison (and in solitary confinement). Thankyou again for coming and speaking at our school! I learned so much and I especially liked to hear how the arts and activism can come together in unity. That really inspired me!

Thankyou so much!

Gabbie Bouyea

Amy Mackie: I'm interested in the fact that a large part of your recently published autobiography, *From the Bottom of the Heap*, focuses on your childhood. It's almost as though your years at Angola were a void and yet that's where you spent much of your life reading and writing and where you became a member of the Black Panther Party. Now that you've been out a while (since 2001), can you talk about how you negotiate between inside and outside? You've said you were free of Angola, but that Angola would never be free of you, can you explain what you mean by that?

Robert King: After becoming politicized I began to see America as one big prison and that I was in a prison, formerly known as a plantation (Angola). I was in a prison that was maximum security and people who were left in society were in minimum custody. In making this sort of equation, it lessened or minimized the impact of my incarceration. This seemed the real political way to look at it. It was a way to extend or expand this concept, to look at things through a different frame or a different mindset. I think I kind of caught up with myself. As a young kid in school, from maybe first to sixth grade I used to love to read and I used to love to go to school. I think I learned everything I needed to learn in those formative years. Everything else I came into contact with wasn't a different reality, but an expanded reality on the same subject. I kind of caught up with myself when I went to prison.

AM: How did you access books when you were at Angola? Was there a prison library? What did you read?

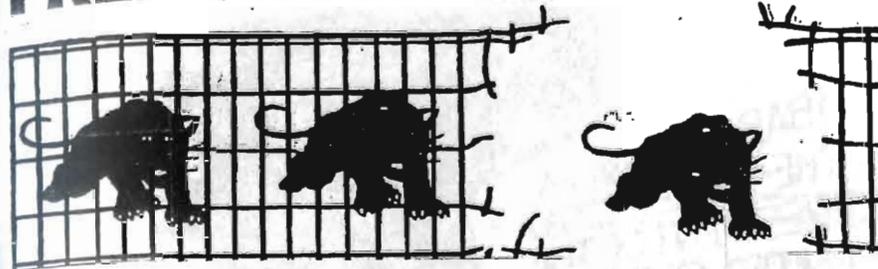
RK: No, we did not have access to the library, but the library was brought to us. When I went to Angola they sent me to a place known as CCR (Closed Cell Restriction). It was allegedly for security so I was in a cell 23 hours a day, sometimes 24. Those who are in less restricted parts of the prison could have access to the Chaplain and the library, but not those in CCR. However, we were allowed to receive books that were sent in or we could get them from other prisoners. At that time there weren't restrictions on certain books, but sometime later, in maybe 1979 or 1980 they started putting restrictions on the amount and the types of books you could have. Before that a lot of books came

through. Even before I went to Angola, when I was in the prison in New Orleans, I came into contact with all of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance: James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and on and on. I even went back to writers before them such as W.E.B. Du Bois and David Walker. I thought Frederick Douglass was really impressive. I also came into contact with the collected works of Mao Tse-tung. All of these books were available at that time. I read HỒ Chí Minh and Che Guevara and then I started to see the connection to people like George Jackson and his situation. He was assassinated in San Quentin one year after his brother, young Jonathan was assassinated in a so-called escape attempt. This was the same case in which Angela Davis was wanted in 1970 over some guns that Jonathan had in possession in his attempt to free George who had been in prison for nearly ten years. Following this I read Jackson's *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* and *Blood in My Eye*. Of course I also came into contact with the writings of Malcolm X and then later writing by Panther members. It was at this time that I not only acknowledged the importance of these writings, but as the expression goes, I heard it with my heart. I think it helped me put things into perspective.

AM: I was in the midst of reading Obama's memoir, *Dreams from My Father* when Rigo brought be a copy of your autobiography and I got to thinking how your backgrounds couldn't be more different, but yet you share a hope for change. What are your thoughts about Obama's ideas of change and what do you think about finally having a black president?

RK: Many people have asked me my thoughts about Obama. I haven't read either of his books, not that I wouldn't, but I just haven't gotten around to it. I guess initially I thought that it wasn't possible to have a black president that it was maybe decades away if it ever would happen, but being a student of history, I began to see that there was a possibility of it happening. Given Obama's background and intellect, I saw people make a great leap in their thinking and I think that Katrina and the events of the last eight years had a lot to do with him becoming president. Sometimes dialectics hit us in unexpected ways. Originally I didn't conceive of us having a black president, but that changed when I started to connect the dots and look at things through a historical perspective. I think we saw

FREE THE ANGOLA 3 NOW



HERMAN WALLACE

ALBERT WOODFOX

ROBERT KING
February 2001

nature in its highest form. We saw two realities created. Those in McCain's camp would have done anything for that reality and by the same token there was also a reality that Obama created and his people would have done anything for him. We live in a supposed democracy and many young people were encouraged to take a great leap. Obama just happened to be black. What makes him different is that he is one of the most informed presidents we've ever had. He's an intelligent man. He can be linked with John F. Kennedy or Robert Kennedy or even Abraham Lincoln. I don't think it's about Obama himself, but the way he reached out to people. The way he utilized technology was definitely a part of that and also the way he was able to connect to a younger generation. As long as he remains connected with the masses and working for the people he can go far. He's doing things that Roosevelt should have done in 1933. Obama seems to have destiny in his hands, he's been given a mission to re-write many things, to fight for what should be a democracy not a capitalist society.

AM: I think your assessment of Obama is right on. His early days in Chicago working as a community organizer were clearly about communicating with people and I've been thinking about how this is connected to the Black Panther Party's methods and how they relied on grassroots organizing to inspire change. I believe this way of working is the very reason why Obama became president. Americans were starving for someone who connected with them. I also agree that the Internet played a big part in this, especially for a younger generation. The power of people is truly amazing.

BARACK OBAMA
THE 44th ELECTED
PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA APOLOGIZE
FOR SLAVERY.



RK: That's the truth. People have the power.

AM: Has the Angola 3 contacted Obama and his administration?

RK: Herman Wallace's sister, Vickie wrote a letter about the Angola 3 and she received a formal letter in return. In essence it thanked her for her letter, but of course it was from someone a thousand times removed from President Obama. It was a perfunctory gesture on the part of the White House, but of course this case is known internationally. In fact, Congressman John Conyers, Jr. accompanied me on a visit to Angola. We

"HERMAN WALLACE'S SISTER, VICKIE, WROTE A LETTER (TO OBAMA) ABOUT THE ANGOLA 3, AND SHE RECEIVED A FORMAL LETTER IN RETURN. WRITING LETTERS TO A JUSTICE DEPARTMENT THAT IS BROKEN ISN'T GOING TO CHANGE THINGS..."

went to see Herman and Albert. Anyway, the letter that Vickie received from the Obama camp suggested that they could help us get lawyers, but we have lawyers. We have civil lawyers and criminal lawyers. That's not the problem. Something is wrong with the justice department. Things need to be repaired from a different level by Obama's administration. Writing letters to a justice department that is broken isn't going to change things. They are not geared to handle the injustices that happen within prisons. Not just for the Angola 3. Our case just happens to be one that is highlighted, but there are many prisoners in this country who have been wrongly imprisoned or falsely convicted of crimes they have not committed. We've had state legislators get on TV and say that the Angola 3 is a case that should be looked into, but of course nothing has been done about it. There needs to be a change in how people look at prisons, especially in the South. Even the wife of the woman whose husband was killed (a prison guard named Brent Miller) has said that she isn't sure whether Herman and Albert are really guilty and that they should be set free. This case is known worldwide, it's been discussed on NPR, ABC, CBS as well as Color Of Change, Mother Jones, San Francisco Bay View, and radio stations such as KPFA and KPOO, but we are still dealing with a matter that is much larger. People need to take a second look at prisons and raise the barometer of concern for prisoners and support the argument that prisons are de facto slavery. I am an example of this. The 13th amendment allegedly abolished slavery, but you can be re-instituted as a slave once you've been convicted of a crime, whether you're guilty or not. There's a difference between legality and morality. I think people need to bring their thinking up to par, especially in terms of people who have been imprisoned unjustly or those who are political prisoners and even those who are political victims.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 13, 2009

Mrs. Victory Wallace
1109 Robinson Avenue
Marrero, Louisiana 70072

Dear Mrs. Wallace:

Thank you for contacting the office of President Barack Obama. The President appreciates your taking the time to voice your concerns and opinions.

We have taken the liberty of forwarding your concerns to the Department of Justice for review. We have asked the agency to respond directly to you in a timely manner.

Again, thank you for your correspondence.

Sincerely,



F Michael Kelleher
Special Assistant to the President and
Director of Presidential Correspondence

THE WHITE HOUSE RESPONSE
TO HERMAN WALLACE'S SISTER,
VICKIE'S LETTER TO OBAMA
ON BEHALF OF THE ANGOLA 3.

AM: There has clearly been a lot of writing by and about political prisoners, but I find it really disturbing that it wasn't until photographs of prisoners being tortured at Abu Ghraib were circulated through the Internet that there was a kind of mass hysteria about the treatment of prisoners, when the reality is that people have been unjustly imprisoned, tortured, raped, and placed in solitary confinement for years and years within the prison system in the United States. What are your thoughts about the way the world reacted to the abuse that was later publicized at the Abu Ghraib prison?

"THOSE WHO WERE ABUSING PRISONERS AT ABU GHRAIB WERE TRAINED AND WORKED IN PRISONS IN THE UNITED STATES, SO IT MAKES ME WONDER WHAT MASS PSYCHOSIS EXISTED IN THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT THEY COULDN'T HAVE SEEN THIS BEFORE..."

RK: Those who were abusing prisoners in Abu Ghraib were trained and had worked in prisons in the United States, so it makes me wonder not what mass hysteria, but what mass psychosis existed in the American people that they couldn't have seen this before. There have always been things going on in jailhouses in America. Many people, other than just Panthers, have been tortured. Now it seems that psychosis has been partially lifted. As you said, people should have noticed it before. This is something I saw years and years ago. I've seen it all my life. There are many people who have collectively seen this. As a nation, I guess it was those photographs that helped people see. Nature caught up with the people. And people caught up with nature. Their consciousness caught up with the circumstances and allowed them to see things differently.

AM: Clearly something needs to change. The number of people in prison in the United States continues to rise. Do you know if Obama has spoken publicly about his thoughts on the prison system in the United States?

RK: To my knowledge, Obama has not addressed the issues concerning prisons in the United States. That's just the way it is, but we need to refocus our attention to the way the prison system is viewed.

"TO MY KNOWLEDGE, OBAMA HAS NOT ADDRESSED THE ISSUES CONCERNING PRISONS IN THE UNITED STATES..."

AM: Can you tell me the latest on the cases of Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox?

RK: Herman's case is still in a State Supreme Court. It has been there for close to a year. The state judge did not accept his commissioner's recommendation to grant Herman a new trial. He appealed to an Appellate Court of Appeal in Baton Rouge and that court in a 2 to 1 decision affirmed what had happened in his case and now it is being appealed to the Louisiana State Supreme Court. Albert's case is in a Federal Court, he's in a fifth circuit US Court of Appeals and they are deciding now whether or not they should allow him a new trial in a matter of days or be released from Angola. His case has been going on for the last few months and has now been overturned. We're thinking that in another two and a half months or so we will hear the decision. Rest assured a decision will be made in Albert's case and it is possible he could be freed from Angola, but for now he still remains in solitary confinement (after 37 years). Briefly he was sent to a dormitory, a solitary like dormitory for about 6 months, which was a result of a suit we had filed. He had been removed after the state ruled that keeping him in solitary confinement was cruel and unusual punishment, but now he's back in that situation. His expectations are high and it really does seem possible that he will go home within the next couple months or so. I don't think the state has the ability to retry him. All of the evidence has been undermined.

AM: It seems as though Albert's case is in a much better place than Herman's. Is that true?

RK: Not necessarily. I talked to Herman about this recently. They went up the judicial ladder in different

ways and in different jurisdictions (state and federal). When a federal magistrate overturned Herman's case a while back everyone thought he would be getting out in a matter of time, but while Herman's case was still being considered, Albert's case was heard and subsequently overturned so he moved more quickly up the judicial ladder. The cases are always seen in tandem, even though they are separate so it's kind of hard to mention one without the other no matter what court they're in. It's not so much that Herman has longer to go, but that he's just in a different place in the system. It's kind of illogical. You have to take into consideration the fact that the state can appeal. If Albert is released then it is likely that the state courts won't move Herman's case to federal courts since the cases are connected. Herman may not have to go through the same process as Albert.

AM: How was your case viewed in relation to Albert and Herman's cases?

"THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE MUCH DIFFERENT IN ALL OUR CASES, BUT WE WERE ALL KEPT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT BECAUSE WE WERE MEMBERS OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY..."

RK: Well, we became members of the Angola 3 because we were all members of the Black Panther Party and our belief is that we were targeted because of this. Herman and Albert were accused of allegedly participating in the death of a correction officer, but I was not even at Angola at that time. In the process, I caught another charge by being accused of killing an inmate who was killed by another inmate in self-defense. The difference is that in my case it was an inmate involved and in Herman and Albert's case they were accused of killing a correction officer. I was not connected to the same charge as Herman and Albert. Eventually they could not retry me and they charged me with conspiracy, even though they were trying me for manslaughter. If I had been charged for the same thing as Herman and Albert I'd be in the same place they are. The circumstances were much different in our cases, but we were all kept in solitary confinement because we were members of the Black Panther Party.

AM: Wasn't one other person charged in the death of that correction officer?

RK: There were four people. Initially there was the Angola 4: Albert Woodfox, Herman Wallace, Gilbert Montagut who was acquitted of the charge since there was an officer who confirmed his whereabouts the day the officer was killed, and Chester Jackson who plead guilty to manslaughter and testified against Herman Wallace and later died in prison.

AM: Do you think that some of the things that the Angola 3 advocated for within the prison system, such as having food served at chest level and education of young prisoners is still evident?

RK: The work we did in Angola has been paralleled in other prisons in terms of reform, but at Angola I'm not sure. They made it very difficult to change anything since there were different levels of imprisonment: CCR, the camps, and then what they called the big yard, which were the dormitories, and then there were also the cellblocks. It was only possible to organize people through letters, or through one person to another like a grapevine. So we could get in touch with other prisoners, but in the mid 1970s they started building penitentiaries within penitentiaries meaning there was Camp D, Camp F, Camp J, etc. Angola is 18,000 acres of land and it has many penitentiaries within those boundaries. They found a way to separate people. Seven brothers could all be at Angola for 50 years and never come into contact with each other. Each camp runs almost independently of each other. It was possible for them to separate people, isolate them, and some people even disappeared. It was all about intimidating people to keep them from coming together. There are still people who are conscious at Angola and who continue to try to do things to reach out for prison reform, but it is not the way it was in the early 1970s when Herman and Albert started politically educating people out on the yard and asking people to hang out and study. Despite the fact that we were held in cells we had political discussions at least two or three times a week. We discussed politics, educating those who couldn't read, and we even talked about what was happening out on the streets.

AM: How was it possible to have those conversations? Weren't you being watched all the time?

RK: It didn't matter. Not only were we being watched, we were also being recorded. They weren't supposed to do this, but we believe that they did. Prisoners downstairs would tell us that they heard people in the major's office listening to recorded conversations. We were led to believe that no one was listening, but they were. Now there are cameras everywhere. Technology has certainly changed things.

AM: Do prisoners have access to the Internet?

RK: It depends on where you are at Angola. Yes, some prisoners have access, but of course not those who are in CCR. They don't play that.

AM: Had you ever used the Internet by the time you were released in 2001?

RK: No. I knew that it had happened, but I had never experienced it.

AM: Were you surprised at how technology, specifically the Internet has changed the world since you were first imprisoned in the early 1970s?

RK: Not so much, but when I think in terms of how amazing the machine is, yes. It's taken me a while. I got a laptop about a year ago. I had used other computers before that, but now that I have my own I'm learning as I go. It is pretty amazing. I did have some idea of how technology was developing while I was in prison. There were so many leaps and bounds in a short amount of time. So I guess it was a bit of a shock the way culture has been shaped in the last few decades.

AM: What surprised you most about how the world had changed when you were released from Angola?

RK: I was surprised at how much people had forgotten in such a short period of time. I was amazed that some people couldn't tell you who Martin Luther King, Jr. was. Or Malcolm X or Kennedy. History has been forgotten. Why did we let it go?

"(WHEN I GOT OUT OF PRISON) I WAS SURPRISED AT HOW MUCH PEOPLE HAD FORGOTTEN IN SUCH A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. HISTORY HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN. WHY DID WE LET IT GO?"

AM: Perhaps that has something to do with the Internet. People feel as though they don't have to remember. They can just Google anything that comes to mind. There are many positive things about the Internet, but it can also make people lazy. Rather than supplementing education, it becomes something that people rely on. At the same time the Internet can be a positive tool for social change. Being able to get the word out about the Angola 3 via a website is something that wasn't possible before. I guess I have one more question. What do you think our government could do to reform our prison system, to make them more humane, to rehabilitate prisoners? How would you advise Obama's administration?

RK: I would say something like this: It is impossible to make something humane that is designed to de-humanize. Prisons are not designed for humanity. It is impossible. It wouldn't matter how liberal the person is, my approach would be too radical. You have to look at more than the cause, but the larger problem. Why is it necessary to have prisons? There are plenty of people who have done things in society that don't require imprisonment. I think it would need to be a forensic investigation. I think that it often has something to do with the medication that people take and mental illnesses. The dude who did the Perry Mason series once said that it is imperative to correlate medicine and prisons. The government needs to look at prisons from a moral perspective, legality versus morality. They are not synonymous. The mindset needs to be changed. The government would not want to hear about the problems of

the prison system from me. I still link prisons with slavery. I would say prisons are de facto slavery. And private prisons are a whole different issue. The biggest problem is the perspective of the US government. All I can do is keep getting the message out there with small ripples, trying to cause waves, or even a tsunami. You can be legally convicted, legally sentenced, legally die in prison, but be morally innocent of the crime. This is the problem.

"I WOULD SAY PRISONS ARE DE FACTO SLAVERY. YOU CAN BE LEGALLY CONVICTED, LEGALLY SENTENCED, LEGALLY DIE IN PRISON, BUT BE MORALLY INNOCENT OF THE CRIME..."

-AM: By sharing your experiences through your book, lecturing at schools, museums, and libraries and by talking about your time in prison you are going a long way to educate the public about the problems with the prison system in this country. Your ripples in the pond are already effective.

RK: The ripples can turn into tidal waves. Action, people working collectively and thinking together is a force within itself, one that seems to be intangible. It makes me think about Christmas and the term yuletide. It's all about people coming together with the same collective intent, creating their own reality. Again, I think this is what happened with the election [of Obama].

But, I want to conclude with one of the questions you asked me the other day about whether I had been in contact with members of the Ku Klux Klan in prison. Of course, Louisiana is a Klan state. Many of the officers and judges I was confronted with were members of the Klan. When I first went to Angola it was run completely by white people and most of the correction officers were members of the Klan or at the very least sympathizers. Racist to the core, that is the reality at Angola.

THE END

FREE
THE
ANGOLA
3

THANKS HENDRICK!

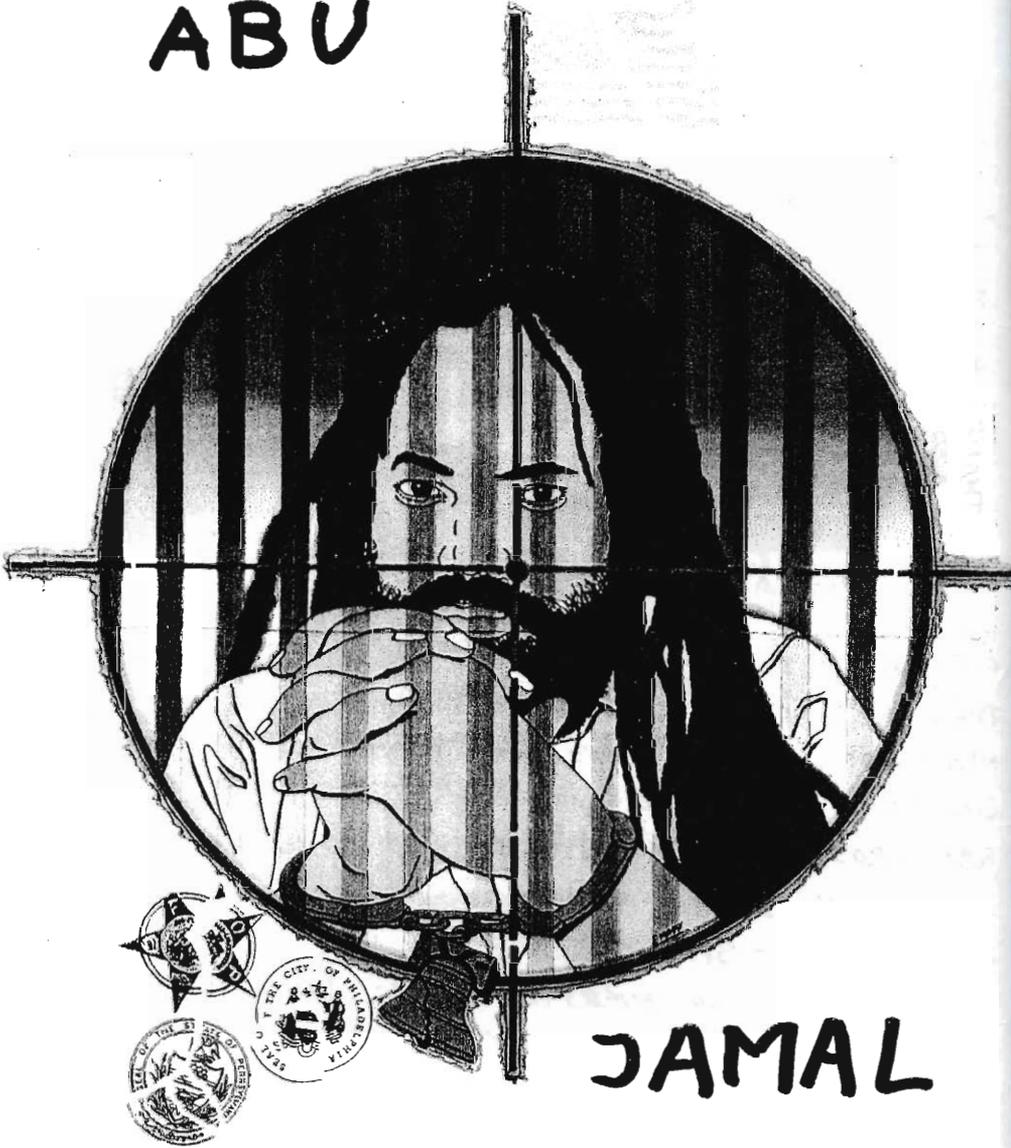


SPECIAL THANKS TO:

ERICK LYLE FOR ROCKING PRODUCTION UNDER THE... WELL, TYPICAL CONDITIONS;
MARINA DRUMMER AND COMMUNITY FUTURES COLLECTIVE FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT;
RAY CROSS FOR THE SILKSCREENED COVERS;
WD + AM - ANGEL COUPLE EXTRAORDINAIRE FOR MAKING ZINE AND EXHIBITION POSSIBLE;
EUNGIE JOO FOR EVERYTHING INCLUDING HOUSING THE CREW; MARK BEASLEY FOR SHARING HIS WORDS AGAIN. EVERYONE AT NEW MUSEUM'S INSTALL CREW AND ALSO MARTHA KIRSZENBAUM AND SHOSHANA ROSENTHAL - THANKS TOO TO LAURA HOPTMAN FOR BENDING THE RULES WHERE NEEDED AND POSSIBLE. VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO EMORY DOUGLAS AND ROBERT KING, HERMAN WALLACE AND ALBERT WOODFOX.

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