"There is something really profound going on," said David Kennedy, director of the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "There is movement on mandatory minimums (sentencing), there is movement on solitary confinement, there is movement on the death penalty. "What ties them all together," he said, "is the basic recognition that the application of power without justice is brutal. And there is nothing democratic about brutality." USA Today, May 2014

Inmate advocates decry prison conditions, overly long terms

**Initiative's goal is reducing state's prison rolls**

By **Annysa Johnson** and **Gina Barton** of the Journal Sentinel

May 5, 2014

Men and women are languishing in Wisconsin prisons long past their eligible parole dates, families and advocates told lawmakers gathered at a Milwaukee church Monday. And many of those prisoners, they said, are subjected to solitary confinement in small windowless cells for months, even years, a practice one chaplain characterized as torture.

"You may want to believe that torture doesn't go on here, but let me assure you that it does," said the Rev. Kate Edwards, a Buddhist chaplain. "The Wisconsin Department of Corrections is using our tax dollars to torture people in a system that is dangerous, ineffective, immoral and very expensive."

Edwards was among the speakers at a listening session at Mount Zion Baptist Church on a faith-based initiative aimed at cutting the state's prison rolls.

Several legislators who turned out vowed to investigate whether the Department of Corrections is holding prisoners unnecessarily past their eligible parole dates, and how extensively and under what circumstances it is using solitary confinement.

"I'm in total support of any type of policies and legislation, anything we can do to address this issue of parole being denied and ... of people being placed in solitary confinement," said state Rep. Leon Young (D-Milwaukee).

Rep. Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield) stressed the importance of treatment alternatives to prison in certain cases. "When their time has been served, it's time to get them back to society."

Efforts to reach a Department of Corrections spokeswoman were not successful.

Monday's session was sponsored by the Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope and WISDOM. They are lobbying to cut in half the prison rolls in Wisconsin, which leads the nation in the incarceration of African-American men.

The session focused on "old law" prisoners, those imprisoned before Wisconsin adopted its truth in sentencing law in 1998, and therefore eligible for parole at some point.

Speakers told of prisoners who had fulfilled their requirements for parole and were denied release. In some cases, they said, prisoners weren't provided the programs needed to meet the requirements. They spoke of excessive terms, in one case more than 100 years for an armed robbery in which an off-duty officer was shot.

One man spoke of his experience in solitary confinement. "Prisoners often lose their minds," said William Harrell. "The only way I endured it was my Bible."

**Rev. Kate Edwards: 'Dead Man Walking' vs. living men tortured**

Over 500 people gave Sister Helen Prejean of "Dead Man Walking" fame a standing ovation at the end of her recent talk. Then at least 2,000 Madison Opera-goers gave her and the cast and orchestra an even longer standing ovation, filled with thunderous applause and cheering bravos, at the brilliant opening night performance of the opera based on Prejean’s experiences with a Louisiana convict on death row. If you were in the audience and you woke up the next day grateful that Wisconsin abolished the death penalty in 1853, you might have found yourself able to drink your morning coffee with a sense of moral relief that at least we are not in the business of state-sponsored homicide.

Dig a bit deeper into the workings of our state prison system, though, and relief is not what you will find. We may not be executing people, but our tax dollars are being used to commit torture. The United Nations has said that no prisoner should be kept in solitary confinement for more than 15 days, and several states from Maine to Mississippi...
have been radically reducing its use. Yet the Wisconsin Department of Corrections is keeping living, breathing human beings, often including the seriously mentally ill, in various levels of isolated confinement for weeks, months, years and even decades on end, with absolutely no outside oversight or accountability.

As an ordained Buddhist chaplain, I have spent hundreds of hours volunteering inside the walls of Wisconsin prisons. I have personally heard unrelenting hours of screaming and banging coming from inside the segregation unit at the maximum security prison in Portage. I have stood inside one of the very small, windowless solitary confinement cells in the Wisconsin Secure Program Facility, formerly called the Supermax, in Boscobel, and I know men who have spent literally years in those barren cells 23-24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. I have witnessed the correctional officers suit up in riot gear for a violent cell extraction of a prisoner in segregation. I have seen the anguish of men who, hopeless and overwhelmed with despair in a segregation unit, have now been given yet another year in solitary because they’ve attempted suicide. What kind of world is this where self-harm and mental illness are considered to be brutally punishable offenses?

Perhaps you were one of the members of the opera’s audience who came to the conclusion that you do support the death penalty after all, regardless of Sister Helen’s strong and measured arguments against it. Perhaps you feel that some criminals have committed crimes so heinous that years of solitary confinement in a windowless cell are justified. Perhaps you also feel that some inmates are so dangerous that there is no other way to keep the staff and other inmates safe.

I ask you to think again. Recently, Rick Raemisch, a former Dane County sheriff and the former head of our Wisconsin Department of Corrections, spent a night in a solitary prison cell in Colorado, where he is now the head of their DOC. He wrote about that experience in an op-ed in the New York Times, and he testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee reassessing the use of solitary. Raemisch’s conclusion was that solitary confinement is "overused, misused, and abused." In his testimony, he stated, “By placing a difficult offender in isolation, you have not solved the problem — only delayed or more likely exacerbated it, not only for the prison, but ultimately for the public. Our job in corrections is to protect the community, not to release people who are worse than they were when they came in.”

Simply consider the fact that over 95 percent of Wisconsin’s prisoners will one day be released to live among us. Sometimes they are even released directly from some version of solitary. Torturing these people is not reasonable or sane as a correctional policy, and it is not reasonable, safe, or moral as a public policy. It is way past time for Wisconsin to step into the forefront of the movement that will ultimately eliminate solitary confinement from our prisons nationwide.

The Rev. Kate Edwards is a Madison resident.

**A Good Summary of National changes coming in the way we do prisons—From USA Today; April 2014, submitted by Charles Anderson**

By July, when McGregor and three other state lockups close for good, New York will have shuttered 24 prison facilities since 2011.

During that same time, 16 other states have either closed or proposed prison closings of their own in a bid to slice about 30,000 beds - more than the entire Ohio inmate population - from the vast penal system nationwide.

Prisons represent only one pillar of the costly justice system being dismantled or rolled back. Drug addicts, swept up en masse in the aftermath of New York's so-called Rockefeller Drug Laws of 1973 and the federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, are being treated as medical patients rather than criminals. Marijuana, once regarded as the gateway substance in the drug war, is increasingly being decriminalized. Stiff sentences for repeat offenders, meted out in dozens of states, have been eased, as has the application of solitary confinement.

In perhaps the most symbolic development in this erosion of support for hard-line justice policies, six states have abolished the death penalty in the past seven years. It is a movement fueled in part by the exoneration since 2008 of 20 people who had been languishing on death row for crimes they did not commit. The latest one: Glenn Ford, freed this month after 30 years awaiting death at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola.

What happened? Dwindling public resources jump-started a movement as stressed government budgets were unable to keep pace with the rates of prosecution and incarceration. It costs the United States about $80 billion per year to house more than 2 million in jails and prisons.

Lawmakers, criminal justice officials and analysts say there is a growing philosophical component to this seismic shift that is raising fundamental questions of fairness. The vanguard of the movement which includes such unlikely partners as Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., and Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., - for the first time in a generation is collectively acknowledging that some of the most extreme punishment policies have largely failed.
"If I told you that one out of three African-American males are still prevented from voting because of the 'war on drugs,' you might think I was talking about Jim Crow 50 years ago," Paul told a Senate panel last September, referring to long-standing voting bans for convicted felons.

"There is something really profound going on," said David Kennedy, director of the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "There is movement on mandatory minimums (sentencing), there is movement on solitary confinement, there is movement on the death penalty.

"What ties them all together," he said, "is the basic recognition that the application of power without justice is brutal. And there is nothing democratic about brutality."

NEW YORK CRACKDOWN Perhaps no other state has had more time to consider the consequences of tough justice than New York. In an effort to counter growing drug abuse, the state launched a crackdown in 1973 that sent shivers throughout the nation. Named for then-governor Nelson Rockefeller, the Rockefeller laws set punishment for some simple drug possession offenses at 15 years to life in prison. The result was overwhelming as the state prison population surged beyond capacity. A generation of offenders was provided little hope of release. New York has been unwinding the costly convergence of extreme penal policy ever since.

"This has been an evolutionary process," said Alphonso David, New York state's deputy secretary for civil rights. "People are now recognizing that the business of corrections is not really limited to incarceration."

Indeed, the state's prison population has been plummeting since 1999, dropping from 72,649 to 54,196 last year. The decline has been accelerated by a decline in violent crime, along with a continued emphasis on diverting non-violent drug and other low-risk offenders from the costly confines of prison to treatment or other outside supervision.

At the same time, state officials have pledged to restructure the use of solitary confinement, a form of extreme internal discipline used across the country. In an agreement announced last month with the New York Civil Liberties Union, state authorities will remove juveniles, pregnant offenders and the mentally ill from isolation. The settlement - reached after a class-action lawsuit brought by the NYCLU - makes New York the largest prison system in the nation to ban juveniles from disciplinary solitary confinement.

"New York is taking a substantial step in the right direction, and we hope it will ultimately join the many other states who have recognized that lengthy isolation sentences cause serious harm while accomplishing little, if any, goals of a rational corrections system," said Alexander Reinert, a Benjamin Cardozo School of Law professor who was part of the legal team that brought the lawsuit. Beyond the changes in penal philosophy, New York officials project that their actions will save huge amounts of money. Thomas Abt, the state's deputy secretary for public safety, said New York will save $221 million a year from closing 24 prisons.

NATIONAL FOCUS

Last summer, when he announced a plan to do away with mandatory minimum sentences that had condemned scores of non-violent offenders to lengthy federal prison terms, Attorney General Eric Holder brought a national focus to the debate about punitive criminal justice policies that had been largely playing out in state capitals.

Holder's entry into the growing national discussion thrust the issue to the top tier of the Justice Department's agenda.

Last month, Holder continued the campaign of highlighting what he described as "unnecessarily punitive" policy when he called for the repeal of state laws that restrict the voting rights of millions of former inmates.

He cited the estimated 5.8 million Americans banned from voting because of felony convictions.

Holder is not the only high-profile figure calling attention to inequities.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat and former proponent of capital punishment, surprised some of his own supporters last month when he imposed a moratorium on executions. Last year, Maryland became the sixth state in as many years to abolish capital punishment.

"There have been too many doubts raised about capital punishment," Inslee said. "There are too many flaws in the system."

NOTE: FFUP has lots of articles on each of the specifics mentioned above but included this for space economy. Will send other articles if you specify topic and send SASE. We also have "one night in solitary" by Rick Raemisch former head of WI DOC, now head in CO; and Governor Walker's recent edict calling for independent investigation of all deaths occurring in police custody. Also many articles on CA dramatic release of prisoners.

Finally, This breaking news, will follow this—June 4, NY Times: Federal judge in Oakland CA agrees to hear a case which allows inmates at Pelican Bay who have been held in solitary confinement for more than a decade to sue as a class. "This would really be the first case about whether the confinement itself is cruel and unusual punishment and about who can be legitimately confined in this way, given the draconian nature of the confinement," said Jules Lobel, a constitutional law professor at the U. of Pittsburgh and the president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which originally brought the suit on behalf of 10 inmates in the security housing unit at Pelican Bay. More than 200 inmates at Pelican Bay, California’s toughest prison, have spent over a decade locked in windowless 8-foot-by-12-foot cells for 22 hours or more a day. Dozens more have been in solitary confinement for 15 years — or even longer.
Human consciousness acts as kind of an entity in itself, all of us connected as in one great ocean, with little pockets of cold over here, warm over here- microenvironments. A few are in the vanguard foretelling what the future waves will be but generally opinion goes in huge waves. Nothing shows this more profoundly than recent changes in the prison scene. Solitary confinement back on the agenda, the death penalty is waning in popularity and prisons are closing. Much of this because the billions of dollars pumped into states by the Feds to fund the prison boom via the “violent offender act of 1984” is all gone, partly because scapegoating one class of people has gone as far as it can go and in the 30 years since the prison madness started, we have been learning. So pendulum or wave, changes are starting.

We need to help make the changes well considered and conscious. Because Wisconsin’s parole system is stuck not by laws but by unwritten rules, we are in a unique position among the states. As many of you know, we do not need to pass new laws, for the system is plugged by unwritten rules mandated by the Governor Tommy Thomson’s famous 1994 directive. We need those unwritten rules that plug the system overwritten by new rules that “make the Law do right” and/or, as is the tactic of WISDOM, by pressuring the Governor to quickly unplug the system by facilitating the appointment of a retired judge to oversee the parole process.

But nothing will happen without public pressure. I want to personally thank all the prisoner who helped to spread the word about the May fifth listening session in Milwaukee. All were moved by the testimonies and two articles generated by this event are post on front page of this rag.

One big take-away from the May Fifth listening session was that the legislators know very little about the workings within the prisons and almost nothing about old law prisoners. We have a lot of educating work ahead: of the legislature and judges as well as the general public. To that end, Wisdom, is preparing a report on four major facets of the WIDOC for publishing in the Fall while FFUP has submitted to WISDOM and some legislators a compilation of ideas and documents from you that give the paper trail that that led to this fiasco, outline the bogis rules and suggest real rules that would fix the broken system, along with a statute stating the procedure for rule change consideration. FFUP believes strongly that you the prisoner have the best view of what is going on and we continue to try to distribute that knowledge. And awareness that the prisoners voices must be heard if we are going to succeed is growing. For example, I am also told by Lena Taylor’s staff that they would like to hear from you, that prison issues are number one on their agenda. The legislators that were at the listening session were: Representatives Latanya Johnson, Leon Young, Mandela Barnes, Evan Goyke, Dale Kooenga and Senator Lena Taylor.

Brief outline of WISDOM summer event plans: WISDOM is preparing a report due for publishing in November called “Reform Now: An Urgent Call for Accountability in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections”. The report will deal with four main concern and they have divided the summer month’s events along these categories: Old law prisoners and parole, revocations, supervision and monitoring; solitary confinement and Compassionate release. All events are open and need family and public involvement. We will keep you posted on specifics as we get them. So far the first two are shaping up: On July 9th Wisdom and its allies will attend the Statewide Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) meeting -- which will be at the Department of Corrections building. A few of the members will address the forum during the comment period that finishes the session and their focus will be on old law prisoners and parole. Support is needed. For August the plan is for a joint Second Chance and WISDOM listening session in Milwaukee, with WISDOM concentrating on Revocations, Supervision, Monitoring and Second chance asking for further testimony by families and friend of old law prisoners and those acquainted with solitary confinement. This event with be for 12 to 4 pm on a Saturday so many can attend and all can be heard. We are looking at other listening sessions and will keep you informed as plans solidify.

And Second Chance and FFUP notes.

Second chance is a growing group of prisoners’ friends and loved ones and caring citizens. We meet by free conference call as does the “in- prison- working -group for 11X15. Both are open to all concerned who want to help. Outreach is hard yet we must get to talking to our neighbors and going into our churches and communities to spread the word. Second Chance has had one radio interview and three speaking session with local Milwaukee groups. Such events are important tools as are pamphlets and petitions, letters to the editor and the like but by far the best tool seems to be these listening sessions. They are great ways to educate the public-through the heart- plus they are healing, for those long suffering learn they are no longer alone and that we do care. If your friend or loved one can secure a place in whatever community, WISDOM and Second Chance will come up with the legislators, the media and I know we can count on most prisoners to help us bring their families and others to testify. We will also need people in specific parts of the state to contact their legislators and ask them to attend the sessions, to read our materials and learn about prison issues.( Legislators listen to their constituents first.) Please let FFUP know if you have a relative or friend who would like to help with any facet of this work. New on the horizon is a new newsletter to be going out to the general public. This will also be a good educational tool and way to bring those that know nada about prisons into the discussion.

Blog and web and data posting:. I am behind as usual in all things. Mail volume has gone way up as well as tasks in helping to organize second chance, and advocacy has become increasingly necessary and difficult. I cannot answer most letters but the post and data for old law you are sending are appreciated and all is safe and photos will be returned. As far as “lookups”, I get to the internet in town only about once a week so the lines are long and I have to pick and choose what I do according to urgency. This is a time of high anxiety for too many seeds are sprouting at all once but there is real help coming and FFUP will soon be able to retire to it is natural post- advocating for and writing prisoners, helping to build a bridge between prisoners and the public. Working with you has been a real joy and incredibly rewarding and we have made friendships that will last forever. Now is the time to make the extra effort to get this right for it may not come soon again.

ONE WAY TO HELP: Send the “letter to the community” at end of this newsletter to a friend or relative.
A Prisoner's Pathology: Part one: Meet the Parents

By Joseph Heru Cook

Author's note: A Prisoner's Pathology is a series of three essays. Part 1 details the influences on my early childhood to my incarceration, part 2 details my transition while in prison, and part 3 details how prisons are the New Jim crow for my generation.

Pathology is the study of discovering the root cause(s) of a dysfunction in order to attack the source and change the surface. Pathologies are generational and can be traced back from parent to child. Most pathologies are impressed upon children at a young age and grow thicker as the years pass. Depending on our own family background pathologies differ, but the results are the same: unhealthy lifestyles.

In order for me to understand how I could murder somebody at the age of 17, how I could destroy human flesh that mirrored my own, that mirrored my fathers, that mirrored the people I love most deeply I had to search and understand my personal history. I had to understand my story from two angles: my families' pathology and America's pathology towards Black males, which will be elaborated on in future essays.

I was born in 1985. My mother grew up unaware of her inner gifts and outer beauty. As a child my mother witnessed her mother prostituting, using drugs and being beat by men who also victimized my mother when no one was watching. Never once was my mother in a household where her growth and development was the aim. Constantly she was the target of circumstances beyond her control, visible rapes that left invisible scars on both her body and soul. Sure she was loved by her maternal family. Unfortunately it was the type of love that provided shelter and safety, not the rich and wholesome love that heals, that shapes healthy self-esteem and produces well-rounded adults. Being both African and Mexican my mother was made to feel like a misfit in her own body from society and family alike. As one of the first generations to participate in "integration" mother was chased by her white classmate's daily and shown indifference or intolerance from her teachers. When mother told her grandparents they told her, "You are only half nigger".

Never fully loved or accepted anywhere, when my mother met my father her desire to belong, to feel worthy of true love was so intense that she overlooked my father's current marriage while looking into his heart. My mother's identity quickly became attached to my fathers. And my father manipulated the pain of my mother for his pleasure. Being rapped of her gifts, purpose, and God given identity lead to my mother following the path of my father. Like many women, my mother was looking for love from the outside in, instead of having it flow from the inside out.

Both mother and father loved me unconditionally and I bear their loving souls. I don't question their love. What I question is my father's parenting that didn't equip me with the necessary tools required for personal growth and social progress. My mother tried but frustration and anger were the dominant vehicles in which her disappointment and discipline were delivered toward me, and that's how I received it. My mother had caring and loving intentions, what she didn't have is the understanding on how to transfer motherly intentions into good parenting results; she was never taught. And although maternal love is instinctual for my mother, motherhood is a process, a development, a combination of maternal instincts and wise instructions.

It was damn near impossible for my mother to love me in areas in which she didn't love herself, or teach me about my inner gifts and my purpose in life when she was unaware of her own. Some people have a natural resistance against the dysfunction around them and excel despite the odds. Unfortunately I internalized the external with little to no defenses and became a stereotype over a period of time.

The external factors told me that black males bear one of two gifts: athletic or rapping abilities; because I had neither, I thought I had nothing. Options for creativity and self-discovery are limited for black males. Even when presented they are not pursued due to the message told from the media, from family and from peers about what the standard of cool is. With those two options eliminated drug dealing became the most readily option for material success and respect from peers. Being in an environment where drug dealers where the most respectable males they quickly filled the void that was left empty from the absence of my father. Seeing drug dealers as a constant and concrete image of me limited my imagination. One of the most dominates messages rappers and hustlers send to black boys are: 'Look at what I have, now look at you,' Because I wasn't born into money and materials, or had a multitude of girls to mate with, I measured myself low. Our measuring stick was based on material possession void of human progress.

There were times when a group of friends and I would brutally beat people. We were a sick, dysfunctional ban of boys who disliked ourselves so we hated others who resembled us. Instead of changing the conditions that had all of us dysfunctional we tried to eliminate the people who reflected our conditions, the high prison rate and death rate of black males reveals a sign of self/collective elimination.

Smoking had me thinking cloudy and also allowed me to run from myself, instead of dealing with myself. Drug dealing (illegal acts) increased the poverty level I was seeking to escape along with increasing the corruption within me. Within me I thought I had no intrinsic value.

My mother introduced me to people like Mr. Banks in some form or another. Seeing my destruction ahead she constantly lectured me about black people. By this time my relationship with the streets was too intense and intimate while my relationship with positive black culture was too casual and common.

At this time in my life my ignorance was too thick for positive penetration, I had a deep and deafening feeling of not knowing why I existed; because I didn't know, because I didn't declare it, I was given a purpose from outside forces, My self-esteem and self acceptance became one with clothes and street culture. The more expensive clothes I had made me feel better about myself, the more drugs I sold, and guns I possessed gave me a feeling of power. The idea that within me was a power, a gift, and a gem given by God that nothing could reduce or no one render useless was absent. I was in oblivion to the fact that God created me, not my environment.

At the age of 17 my thinking was warped, and I was a willing participant in the destruction of self and community. I put money above men, guns above God, and murder was the case that they gave me.
The green spring grass proclaims a faith not many can understand. In silent whisper they sing the praise of life, as they sway in the cool summer breeze. The seed of the watermelon finds its way to the top soil as it strives in its direction to the sun, which gives birth to a flower, which blossoms into a tasty fruit. These are my spring's delight.

Ras Uhuru 4/29/2014

**INFORMATION ON FILING NOTICES OF CLAIM IN WISCONSIN**

Wisconsin has a law that requires people to file a notice of claim with the Wisconsin Attorney General before commencing any action against a state employee or body. The statute is § 893.82. Many meritorious cases have been lost solely based on errors in the plaintiff's notice of claim. I read one such case where the time was misstated.

I currently am litigating many cases, and have had to file at least five notices of claim. I had misguided information given to me when I was preparing those notices of claim. Now I am in the summary judgment in the earliest case (12-CV-559-WMC) and when I read the brief in support of the defendant's motion for summary judgment, I learned just how critical the notice of claim's contents are. Forget to enter a date or accidentally say it was 2009 rather than 2008 and you will lose out on your chance to litigate state law claims of any sort when You seek damages.

So, let me aid you by providing the proper way to file a notice of claim. The statute reads that we may not "bring an action against a state officer, employee or agent unless [we] comply strictly with the requirements of" section § 893.82. The operative word in that subsection (2m) is "strictly." The things a notice of claim must contain are: (1) the time; (2) date; (3) the location; (4) circumstances of the event giving rise to the claim for the injury; (5) and the name of the state officer, employee or agent involved. That may seem easy, but they use this statute in nearly every case we, as prisoners, bring to the courts and find a technical flaw in our claims. You must know the officer's name, the exact date, everything. Do your research on this before you impetuously write it down and send it in.

I strongly suggest you determine every bit of information that you need before you file this notice. Write to the security office in your institution and ask for the officer's name. Send a copy of the request you sent along with your notice of claim if they will not release their name. Review your records to determine any and all facts. Undoubtedly there will be something in there that will aid you in obtaining all of the necessary information to escape these pitfalls. Also, you must send the notice of claim by certified mail within 120 calendar days of the event giving rise to the claim.

The other pitfall that they have promulgated within the WDOC is the ambiguous rules of the inmate complaint review system. Specifically, the Adm. Code 310 states that you must send in a grievance with only one issue and that you are encouraged to first attempt to resolve the issue in an informal manner through the use of the chain of command. They state that we must wait five days to file our ICI if they do not respond. There is usually a three tier chain of command, and to wait five days for each would be ridiculous, and would force us to exceed the 14 days in which we must file our grievances. I suggest you write to each of the two or three people in the chain of command at the same time, keeping copies of each that you send. Then when the five days are up, send in the complaint and the carbon copies of your attempts to use the chain of command. Also, they attempt to use different tactics to return our complaints. The most common being contact the chain of command, with the issue being that we have more than one issue in the complaint. The proper way to file this without them returning it to you is to re-read it and have someone review it for you, ensuring that you have provided sufficient detail but not so much that you appear to be complaining about more than one issue.

Many inmates around us get their pen out way too fast and tend to believe that everything the state is doing or does to them is worthy of litigation. Not so.

In closing, I hope that you brothers and sisters out there in WDOC will take heed to this, and make sure you have a solid case, accumulate all of your evidence before you even file the notice of claim, file a proper one, and then prepare yourself for the arduous and extremely draining (physically and financially) process of litigating a case against the state. Good luck! In the next issue, I will provide a step by step tutorial in how to successfully obtain visitation and contact with your children through the courts.

Jeffrey Davis #353560 (CCI)
"Why must our kids continue to die?"

Our people- our evolution

By: Juan Quentin C. Ward

Fourteen-year-old Emmet Louis Till, had no idea of the terrorism practiced in the minds of bigoted white folks in 1955 Money, Mississippi, and indeed all over the continental U.S.

Like poet Nikki Giovanni, who traveled from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Knoxville, Tennessee, Emmet Till was not unique in traveling from Northern, Chicago, Illinois, to Money Mississippi, as I remember as a kid at schools end, how my mother would pack us up, go to Union Station and place us on the train to vacation in Southern cities to visit relatives. As I think, I am sure his mother says: "he would probably still be alive today if he hadn't gotten off that train." You see the children were protected by the Pullman porters and were safe as long as they stayed on the train. In her "Rosa Parks" (in "Quilting the Black Eye Pea," Harper Collins, 2002), Nikki Giovanni wrote this passage:

"It was the Pullman porters who whispered to the traveling men, both the blues men and the race men, so that they would both know what was goin' on. This is for the Pullman porters who smiled and welcomed a 14-year old boy onto their train in 1955. They noticed his slight limp that he tried to disguise with a doo-wop walk. They noticed his stutter and probably understood why his mother wanted him out of Chicago during the summer when school was out. Fourteen-year-old Black boys with limps and stutters are out to try and prove themselves in dangerous ways when mothers aren't around to look after them.

So this for the Pullman's porters who looked after that 14-year old while the train rolled the reverse of the blues highway from Chicago to St. Louis to Mississippi to Memphis and clear on down to Louisiana."

I got to thinking where are the Pullman porters within our community who smile and welcomed the 14-year old boy onto their train, to keep them safe when the police and sheriff would like nothing more than to secretly whisk that young boy away. The pullman porters must intervene before too late so his mother will not have to scream through tears: "I want the world to see what they did to my baby."

Why is it that so many Emmet Tills today had to find out-and tragically so-that the world can be a monstrous place? A place where the threat of Black-on-Black genocidal murder often crush the bright dreams of black boys and girls who are good at art, science and laughter, a world that removed Black fathers making them incapable of protecting our young boys, giving them vision and wisdom, instead of drugs, guns and alcohol, that lead them down the road to a jail or prison cell.

Emmet Louis Till got off the train in Money, Mississippi, and was brutally and inexcusably lynched and murdered on August 28, 1955. Within the last couple years we have heard the stories played out on the news, the likes of Trayvon Martin, Oscar Grant, or the Black teenager (Jordan Davis) killed because his music was being played too loud, and he didn't say, "yes sir," when told to turn it down, nor hang his head, grin or shuffle his feet, like the days of old, when told: "boy know your place!" It was said Emmet Louis Till whistled at a white woman which was an automatic death sentence by vigilantes in the deep south...

How do we overcome our own miscarriage of "just-us" that swings like the bodies of African people from Billie Holiday's popular trees, swaying in the wind.

For me, Emmet Till's story did more than call attention to how his death ignited the U.S. Civil Right Movement in the 50's and 60's. It points to the quiet heroism of Mamie Till Mobley in the face of unspeakable horror and unrelieved terrorism if we do not pretend.

It points to the strength of Black women, and women in general who with their quiet, undisputed dignity and strength continues to endure suffrage of being viewed as objects of desire or even trophies as husbands restricted them to the role of being seen and not heard, barefoot and pregnant, "get in that kitchen and fix me a meal," or otherwise shut-up and sit your behind still. Is anyone else disturbed?

I wrote this piece asking this particular question as a message to those of us incarcerated, and those within the grass-root communities isn't it time we pull the weeds and began to sow and plant knowledgeable and appreciative seeds, allowing them to sprout and blossom as they grow, which in turn will allow them to bear fruit a harvest that will feed knowledge and wisdom to the community, that will be continuously watered and fed, when we stop hurting each other and give love instead?

Isn't it time we as Blacks (African-Americans) come from behind the shoe polish of black face masks, or the depiction of being gangster and thugs as we walk around with our clothes sagged, the negative images of being a darkie
or displayed as an animal?

Perhaps many may ask how was it that I used Emmet Louis Till as the catalyst to present the questions that I have asked. Emmet Till story in 1955 was the last straw for everybody. And my continuing to watch the exodus of Blacks into these modern day vessels of disenfranchisement, and the continuous killing and destruction of our community with drugs, alcohol, violence and the ever present threat of ignorance. History says that Emmet till's death ignited the Civil Rights Movement. That's what this thesis is about.

If it had not been for his death, people may not have been that angry, to do what was done, but because of the way he died, things they did to this little boy for allegedly whistling at a white woman, was the strike to set the blaze afame. Are not the things we do robbing our neighbors who are just as poor, killing one another with drugs and guns, murdering the souls of our little boys and girls, stealing their dreams, their hopes, their ambitions or the esteem to be somebody? Are not these actions just as gruesome and even more unnecessary?

Isn't it time we as incarcerated fathers, brothers, uncles and sons, give our children a chance to live, by steering them away from harm, the poison of drugs, and alcohols; by protecting them from rape and mental assaults, and contrary to the political propaganda and rhetoric of keeping our kids safe by keeping those convicted of crimes out of our communities recognizing that many of the predators are living in their homes. The truth is horror has no face, and monsters are not only in dreams or movies, nor found between the pages inside a book. So as I bring this thesis to an end, I ask the same question as when I began: "Why must our kids continue to die?" (275760 GBCI)

I can't say Our Father
I can't say “our” if our religion has no room for others.
I can't say “Father:” if I do not show this relationship in my daily life.
I can't say “art in heaven” if all my interests & pursuits are earthly things.
I can't say “hallowed be thy name” if I worship other things above God.
I can't say “thy kingdom Come” if I can't accept my role in God’s community on earth.
I can't say “Thy will be done” if I sit back and let others do God’s work.
I can't say “on earth as it is in heaven” unless I make earth a fit place for all to live.
I can't say “give us this day our daily bread” without extending an honest effort for it, or by ignoring those who hunger.
I can't say “and lead us not into temptation” if I deliberately choose to stay in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.
I can't say “deliver us from evil” if I refuse to change things I know are wrong.
I can't say “Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever” if I fear what neighbors and friends may say or do.
I can't say “Amen” unless I honestly say also “cost what it may.” Amen
Samuel Lipsey (257878 FLCl)

Thugs in America

Salami (Greetings) to all my fellow Brothers and sisters of the struggle in the word yet to be heard, here to bring you the meaning and definition of the word “thug”.

Modern day youngsters misinterpreted and modified the true meaning of Thug to fit the “standards of the 21st century.” Some would define a thug as any generic brown skinned male with baggy -jeans hung low, exposed boxers, a wife beater t-shirt, and brand named ghetto gear. Others might point out that a thug is nothing more than a common criminal and only a criminal can be a thug but everybody knows all those baggy jeans people standing on the corner or sitting on the stoop are robbing, stealing and selling drugs. So of course they’re thugs. Certain lumpen proletarian gatekeepers like to proclaim that while there are many criminals, only the hardest and realest of those doing hard time can truly be thugs. The word thug derived from an ontology and philosophy of the “supreme Black goddess (Bhowani)” and its relationship to the power struggle in India in the mid-1800s that brought the word thug into the English language.

“Bhowani” ran thugs, defended heinous robbers/murderers with an iron fist. These thugs were members of a secret criminal organization said to have existed for at least five hundred years in what is now called India before being eradicated by representatives of the British Empire (the British East India Company) in the mid-1800’s. These thugs were said to be an organized system of religions and sects which urged them to the murder of their fellow creatures under the assurance of high rewards in this world and the next.

These thugs was defend to be vicious and malice; so much so they petrified and extorted kings and government, police and military. Etc. I find this to be completely fabricated, because in the traditional times they roamed the grounds of India, it would’ve been impossible for them to have run a period of five hundred years with no legitimate resources and form of government, they would’ve been hanged way before 1830.

October 3, 1830” Captain William Sleeman discovered the thugs and was the mastermind who brung their whole organization down. After bringing their attention to the British authorities, he formed and became the head of the department of thuggee and
Poem Called “Sorry My Father”

Matthew Stechauner 378235
RCI PO box 900; Sturtevant, WI 53177

Sorry my father for being buck wild and everything I did in life that was foul.
Sorry for not letting you see the real me, I’m so terrible, ridiculous, crazy
Sorry for not paying attention to school and for being in the street life and acting like it was all cool
Sorry for being a fool.
Sorry for not living right.
I should of stuck to the positive ways in life.

Sorry that your dead and gone do to a truck accident that caused you so much pain,
It is like sky gray standing outside in the rain, now that you are gone I am feeling so much heart pain.
What a shame for us doing drugs and drinking and gang banging and living bad life growing up raised that way caused
us to do some crimes and crimes we didn’t do got us framed.
Oh how I wish we would of did right in life because for not doing right we have no one to blame.

What a shame. Now you’re dead and I am in prison for a homicide and robbery I did not do.
Now I see the negative life I was in and we lived made me look like a fool and you look like a fool.
WHO MAKE THE LAW DO RIGHT
BY OLD LAW PRISONERS?

Letter to the community

Who are the community?
Businesses, Churches, Schools, families, friends, organizations and all citizens
We need your help.

We are not trying to change the law. We just want the law to do right by old law prisoners, who were eligible for parole after serving one fourth (1/4) of their sentence. These prisoners have matured; have taken all the programming available to them. Yet they are kept in prison by unwritten rules that make no sense. Why are these people not at home with their families?

Something is not right, that is why we need your help. You may say you don’t want to get involved, but if you are a taxpayer, you are already involved. We all make mistakes in our life and some have to pay for their mistakes by going to prison. If they do right in everything they should come home after serving one fourth of their sentence as the law stated. The law won’t do right, the prison is not right, they try not to give the old prisoners a second chance.

We have letters, pamphlets, petitions and website so you can learn about what is going on and how you can help. We are forming a speakers’ cores to help spread the word about this waste of lives and money we are all paying for. Another organization we work closely with on the issue is WISDOM, an interfaith coalition of churches and together we are setting up gatherings where testimony of families of prisoners will make it clear to all in power that we want these 2887 prisoners home.

Contact: Second Chance, c/o Peg Swan; 29631 Wild Rose Drive; Blue River, WI 53518, 608-536-3993; pgswan3@yahoo.com, Website: www.prisonforum.org (families and friends of prisoners, meeting by free phone conference, supporting Wisdom’s agenda and building solidarity and a grassroots campaign)

WISDOM: www.prayforjusticeinwi.org; 414-831-2070; david.liners1@gmail.com, 3195 S. Superior St. Suite 310, Milwaukee, WI 53207 (Churches throughout the state addressing prison issues-campaign called “11X15”)

NELSON MANDELA (1918-2013)
Submitted by Milton J Christensen #066280; WCI
"Prison is designed to break one's spirit and destroy one's resolve. To do this, the authorities attempt to exploit every weakness demolish every initiative, negate all signs of individuality..., all with the idea of stamping out that spark that makes each of us who we are."

FFUP (Forum for Understanding Prisons); a 501c3 non profit; 29631 Wild Rose Drive, Blue River WI 53518
Donations appreciated. We have no paid staff all moneys go to prisoners, mostly for writing supplies and stamps, mailing and copying; and for newsletter production and non profit fees. We would like to expand enough to buy books for segregation prisoners.
BOV Printed on 100% recycled Paper.