



## THE MAINE PRISONER ADVOCACY COALITION NEWSLETTER

February 2010 Volume II, 2

### From the Editorial Collective

It is February and already we are well into a new year with relevant legislation ready to be presented. The Legislative Hearing of the Criminal Justice Committee is meeting February 17, 2010 at 1 pm at the State House in Augusta. Much energy has gone into this bill from constituencies in the State of Maine and also beyond Maine borders. Help is in the form of legal, professional and personal support. And it is all for you. . . Hmm, read on..

We receive many letters from prisoners and the ways your lives have progressed, first by being incarcerated, and secondly by realizing regardless of where you are and who you are, you are a human being with as much right to think as any person. The point being let those of us out here work on making your incarceration not so hardscrabble but rather a metamorphic experience regardless of your time in the incarcerated society.

It is very impressive the letters we receive from you. However, how many of you are writing to your families and friends (other than us at the call)? Certainly with the plethora of Hallmark holidays, this world is never free from some type of birthday, anniversary, new year, Mardi Gras celebration and a reminder to you that you might be missing out on home. Yet loved ones surviving on the outside without you feel similar pains exacerbated by the burden of a finger-pointing society not related to anyone incarcerated. As outsiders we are able to go physically go anywhere we want; emotionally it is a very lonely road. Yet maintaining your outside relationship while inside can take you to a new level of understanding that gives both of you (or all of you) a greater sense of identity and usefulness in this world. It is our hope that we can provide some help in assisting you to identify your strengths and use them in the most ubiquitous ways. Oh were we describing solitary confinement emotionally and its effects on mental, physical, and emotional health of prisoners? Hmm. . . This takes us to the issue at hand. Read this issue knowing that you are the one being represented.

Remember next month is our poetry, prose, and art series in which more works will be displayed from all corners of the State.

### SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IS TORTURE

The medieval horrors of imprisonment in cold dungeons, alone and without human contact for years is not just the conditions of classic novels such as *The Count of Monte Cristo* or *The Man in the Iron Mask* but the concrete reality for over a hundred men right here in our State of Maine. In our

state prison at Warren, often naked and without bedding on concrete floors humans are punished with 23 hours of solitary daily, at times 24 hours on weekends due to lack of staffing.

- Their **one hour of exercise** consists of being let out alone to pace a corridor in **The Kennel**: 40 feet, rather than the 5" by 7" ft. cell they are cubed in.
- **No stimulation**, radios, even books are denied, and only the muffled voices of others through ventilation
- is heard, leaving one denied of the near communication to make them human.
- **Visitors** to these prisoners are often **denied** or sharply reduced.
- **Lights on** throughout their whole time to facilitate camera surveillance in every cell.

It is no wonder these prisoners leave to us directly after their two or five year sentence legally insane and with a contempt for humanity that the State has created under the guise of **Corrections**. It creates more anti-social individuals than it cures.

Less than two years ago a man begged not to be released to the public after the brutal psychological torture of his lengthy solitary experience, vowing he was dangerous and society would pay. He killed three people within a month of his discharge. It is widely proven that the victims of child abusers grow up to abuse their own children. Institutional abuse that is practiced and accepted can only create a populace of those hardened to perpetuate the abuse they received. With the United States being the leading country in the world with the highest percentage of its population incarcerated, and the lengthiest of prison sentences for common crimes, our justice system continues to destabilize and contribute to our social dysfunction. We have nearly 3 million people incarcerated with over 50,000 in long term solitary confinement. This intent to harm exacerbates social conditions putting society in increasing peril by institutions said to protect us.

Two men have died within the Solitary Confinement unit in less than a year; not by suicide but by the medical negligence of inept guards. This segregation was up until the mid-1980s, limited to no more than thirty days as punishment by judicial decree for internal infractions or laws being broken. Reports to the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition of seven months to upwards of two years is very common. We have even heard that a man was in there for over 15 years in Solitary Confinement!

The **MAINE COALITION AGAINST the ABUSE of SOLITARY CONFINEMENT** is working to ensure the human rights of those locked away through Maine's Legislative Emergency Session bill LR2289 "An Act to Ensure Humane Treatment for Special Management Prisoners."

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**Here are a list of events coming up speaking to this issue. Let your family and friends know about this and call 207-807-3733 for more information:**

-Ex-solitary-confinement Massachusetts prisoner Bobby Dellelo speaks; movie on solitary confinement | February 9 @ 7 pm | Talbot Auditorium, Luther Bonney Hall, University of Southern Maine, Portland. Also February 11 @ 6:30 pm | REM Center, 93 Main St., Waterville; and February 12 @ 7 pm, Turrets Auditorium, College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor.

-Robert King speaks about 29 years in solitary in Louisiana before being exonerated | February 10 @ 7 pm | First Parish Church, 425 Congress St., Portland.

-Criminal Justice Committee hearing on LD 1611 | February 17 @ 1 pm | Room 436, State House, Augusta.

-Ex-solitary-confinement prisoner Ray Luc Levasseur speaks; film on solitary confinement | February 17 @ 6 pm | Belfast Free Library, Belfast.

-"People of Conscience Day of Action," talks, lobbying; Reverend Richard Killmer, NRCAT executive director, speaks | February 23 @ 9 am-noon | State House Welcome Center, Augusta.

## **Stopping Supermax Torture**

LANCE TAPLEY as it appeared in the *Phoenix* 2/3/2010

As the February 17 State House public hearing approaches on the bill to restrict solitary confinement at the Maine State Prison, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), which sparked national debate about Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, has announced its support. The group is contacting church congregations statewide asking them to become involved in the LD 1611 campaign.

The Maine Civil Liberties Union organized a well-covered January 21 press conference in Augusta at which the bill's sponsor, Representative James Schatz, D-Blue Hill, and other supporters discussed the importance of the effort, which has drawn backing from the American Friends Service Committee, Amnesty International, Maine Disability Rights Center, Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians, Maine Psychological Association, Maine Council of Churches, Maine Jeremiah Project (an evangelical political group), Maine People's Alliance, National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAACP, National Association of Social Workers Maine chapter, and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland. Bill cosponsors include House speaker Hannah Pingree.

## **LIBERTY NEWS SERVICE**

In June of 1972, inmates of the Men's Correctional Center in South Windham established an in-house newspaper entitled Liberty News Service. This was following a flurry of inmate activism that established the Inmates Council as an ongoing elected representative voice of those incarcerated. The newspaper was a creative effort of the inmates to communicate their concerns amongst the inmate population and to share poetry, humor, and prison news. There were three issues created for June, July and August. The prison Administration of Superintendent Merton R. Johnson disbanded the inmate council and the paper was also denied to continue. A lawsuit later resulted in the revival of the Council but the paper never did.

When the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Council established "The CALL" as its newsletter, honor was paid to this earlier effort of prisoners by naming the publishing component of MPAC as Liberty News Service. Both names were at the suggestion of a former inmate involved with that struggle in South Windham. This became the established property and label of The Maine Prisoner Advocacy Council.

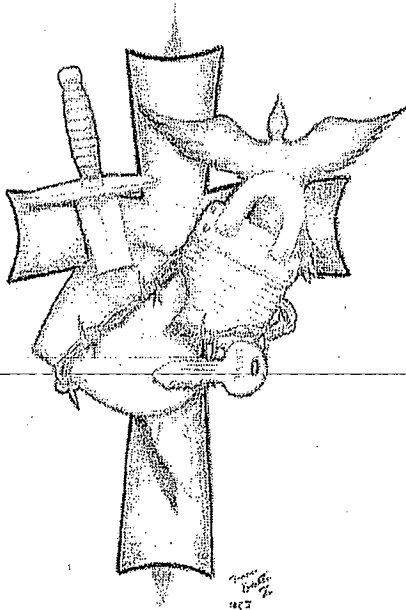
Detractors currently are seeking to duplicate this name and lay claim to it. The deceit of absconding with the established mailing list of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition is dishonorable, but attempting to assume our established entity is unconscionable. This is not merely due to a paucity of creativity and originality, but represents a serious intent to harm. At a time when all organizational efforts need to be focused on accomplishing the passage of legislative relief for those suffering and threatened with Solitary Confinement, these efforts to confuse, divide, dissipate, dissuade, and derail the efforts of established experienced organizers and prisoner activists are ill timed and an effort to create division that must be circumspect. Diverting organized efforts and energies into lawsuits and defensive postures only detracts from efforts to serve the mission of MPAC. This is due to an immature individual who claims ex-prisoner credentials but never saw more than a night in jail, let alone the sufferings of a conviction sentence. The ego of this wannabe has created conflict and dissension and conflicts within groups form across the country where he has infiltrated as a purported agitator only to be an irritator. It has been suggested by others having been victimized by his methods that he is an agent-provocateur, a government plant to disrupt and sow dissension and divisions creating confrontation and calamity to weaken established groups; an expert at throwing rocks and running, but incapable of crafting any truly constructive policy.

For clarification purposes, the mission of The Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition has been established for over a year and is made up of the families and friends of Maine prisoners, former prisoners and others committed to positive and humane changes in Maine's prison system. Liberty News Service is the recognized publishing component of MPAC and

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Its address is 125 Morning St., Portland, Maine - 04101

In the interest of furthering the education of those incarcerated it must be noted that the words Grammar and Safety is spelled thus.



From Travis Battis, February 2010

### AN EXCERPT FROM MYTH #4: BEING A PRISON GUARD IS A THANKLESS JOB FROM STAN MOODY APPEARING IN THE FEBRUARY, 2010 *VILLAGE SOUP*, KNOX COUNTY

The shroud of secrecy that envelopes a prison system feeds the public perception that guards are schoolyard bullies who never grew up. They cannot repair that image because the public never sees what really goes on there. You have to ride tall in the saddle to come to work every day, be faced with emergencies that demand the right action and know that you are there to back up a prison administration that wants to keep everything secret and under control without getting its hands dirty.

There is another type of guard who turns a blind eye to beatings by inmates of weaker inmates and routinely makes derogatory statements about certain types of offenders. That is the kind of guard who would put an injured inmate in solitary confinement for his own protection and let him die of his injuries, alone in his cell. That is the type of guard whose philosophy of incarceration is reflected in the saga of Abu Ghraib. Caring and human decency to that kind of guard are considered weaknesses.

The climate created by that kind of guard is reflected in the attitude of a prisoner currently incarcerated at the Oregon State Correctional Institution:

"The men and women who hold the key to your freedom (the prison guards) should be considered your enemy. There is a reason that surveys on job status and job satisfaction often rate being a prison guard as the lowest job a person can hold. No one respects prison guards, and they know it. What kind of man or woman would want to examine body openings for contraband, turn keys, and stand around and do nothing for a living? Prison guards hate their jobs and blame prisoners for their unhappy and unfulfilled lives...

"The Golden Rule to remember, not only about prison guards, but about anyone who works inside the prison in which you are held captive, is to stay as far away from them as possible and avoid even talking to them unnecessarily. Even if you happen to run across a prison guard who appears to be halfway human, don't befriend him ... Don't make eye contact with the people who work at the prison because if you avoid eye contact they will leave you alone. The less contact you have with prison employees, the better off you will be."

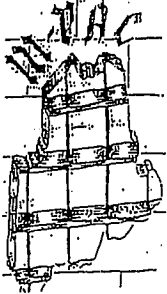
The golden rule for this inmate, then, is to do for others nothing under any circumstances, period. That is a sure path to repeating the same failure of respect for authority that got him there in the first place.

*Stan Moody, former state representative and chaplain at the Maine State Prison, is the author of "Crisis in Evangelical Scholarship" and "McChurches: 300 Million Served and Still Hungry." He currently serves as pastor at the Meeting House Church in Manchester. For further Myths please go to his Web site is stanmoody.com.*

### GUS HEALD CHAPTER I CONTINUED FROM JANUARY 2010 EDITION

Frankly this is not a nice little book, nor is it a pretty story. Indeed not. It is ugly and brutal; and I hope that it tears at your guts and eats at your soul, like it has at mine for the past twenty-six years. Primarily this book relates the not so hidden facts concerning an inhuman system of brutal repression, domination, and worst of all, the dehumanizing process IT IMPOSES ON ITS VICTIMS. It lays bare, for all to see, the ugly and brutal nature of a system conceived in the ignorance and cruelties of another era, cultivated, enlarged and sanctified into permanence by the inherent evils in our capitalist system which requires huge armed fortresses of torture and despair to keep confined the disenfranchised, the poor, emotionally sick, under privileged, and those who pose a threat or irritant to the establishment. Therefore, if you have the mistaken notion of getting comfortable in your easy chair and reading a nice little bull shit fairy tale on how wonderful our prostitute system is working and how God damn lucky we all are to be living under its vulture wings, forget it.

MPAC: MAINE PRISONER  
ADVOCACY COALITION  
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Continued from page 3, *Gus*

This book concerns the other side of the American dream, the nightmare part of it. This book is my hell, my friend, where countless numbers of brothers and sisters are existing in the mind-bending environment and soul-destroying atmosphere of the American prison system. I am your personal Vergil who will con conduct you through the different levels of this hell, form the WHOREHOUSE system of justice serving those best able to afford the luxuries of justice (offered only to preferred customers) to the victims of the vicious and dehumanizing prison system that leaves it wounded hopelessly locked into a syndrome of hate, rebellion and contempt for all authority.

I suppose that here, like in any book, there must be a beginning somewhere, a coming to grip with the facts and central issues. I will try to come to grips with these issues by setting out a short biography of my life and experiences. Perhaps, this will give you an insight into my motives so that you can better judge the validity of this book. They say that every author not only has an ax to grind, but that he also lays bare his soul. If this is so and you find my soul ugly, before you judge me, keep in mind that I am the sum total of all my experiences, the end product of my environment. Also remember, the system as had me for the most part of my adult life. I expect that much of me will shock your finer sensibilities; but of course, that is my intent and purpose. If this book does not shock you, I have failed at this task also. On the other hand, it may indicate that you have no humanity left, and if that is the case, then, brother, I wouldn't trade places with you even to save my life. I have always managed to retain intact my feeling of outrage and hurt for the pain and injustices of others, and it has been these very emotions that has brought me so much suffering in prison.

*To be continued.*

Please send any submissions for the March  
2010 issue to:

*The Call*  
125 Morning Street  
Portland ME 04101

We are always looking for articles about your jail or prison, poetry, artwork, letters to the editor or anything you would like to see published. Please e patient if you do not see your article in the next issue, we may not have received it in time for publishing.

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