Behind the wall

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On Sunday, March 5th, "Town Hall" on Channel 2 and hosted by Jerry Pratt, presented "Victims of Crimes," or was it "The Harold Haas and Ira Blalock Special?" That was the question asked by many of the inmates who sat watching at O.S.P. Some were the same men who had but just a few weeks prior found themselves being **used** in order to give their viewpoints and comments to the "Town Hall" taping called "Inside Prison Walls."

Used...is the proper word, not only were these inmates never given the opportunity to assemble themselves, in order to coordinate their subjects, so they could represent a wider cross-section of inmates within the prison, but also more in-depth and constructive answers to Jerry Pratt's questions. It is felt throughout this prison that the 75,000 viewers who watched "Inside Prison Walls" were cheated.

Many of the inmates who **did** appear on "Town Hall" now say they would have never exposed themselves before Mr. Pratt's cameras if they had known they were going to be the "subjects of exploitation." Some felt they were **used** by the "Powers That Be" -- the Parole Board, Multnomah District Attorney's Office, and Courts -- to justify the newly implemented "Metric System."

As a former federal judge stated in F. Lee Bailey's highly publicized book, "On the Defense Side," we no longer try cases in our courts of law. "We negotiate them." Well, the same can be stated about Oregon's Criminal Metric System, "We no longer consider an individual's attitude or future progress by his human ability to change -- we computerize his future by his past."

After viewing both "Town Hall" specials on "Prison" and "Victims," this Correspondent noticed that some very important areas were neglected that are too important to go unsaid or unwritten.

Question?...Why were there only two Black inmates from an audience of fifty individuals on the taping of "Inside the Walls?" Also there were no Indians or Mexican Americans.

Black inmates make up over sixteen percent of the Oregon's prison population and that percentage is rising, yet the Blacks in the entire State's population are a mere one percent. In fact the Oregon Department of Correction holds the honorary claim in having the state's second largest population of concentrated Black faces. The first being Portland.

Question?...There was not **one Black victim** on "Victims of Crime", nor Indian or Mexican American. Does this mean minority races commit crimes only against whites in Oregon? Or is the issue of racism too **"Hot"** to deal with in the eyes of the general public? Doesn't the Multnomah Criminal Court docket show that over one half of the victims are minorities?

Since many of Oregon's Human Resource agencies and courts will not address themselves to such topics or subjects, the voices of concern have grown silent, except for a group of individual Black people who will seek to combine their efforts to attract the attention of Mr. Benjamin Hooks, President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He and his national executive committee have been invited to O.S.P. prior to the NAACP National Convention being held in Portland on July 3rd through the 7th, so that these questions and issues won't be swept under the rug.

The group they meet will not be made up of Black inmates alone, but also Black guards, Black counselors, Black ministers, and community people. Hooks has been invited to attend a half-day workshop dealing with Black felons and victims in Oregon. The inmate group has also written a letter to Governor Robert Straub, who is on the NAACP's "Blue Ribbon" Committee, requesting he also support such an invitation to Mr. Hooks. There comes a time when Black people have to deal with Black people in order to solve Black problems.

Since it is also a true fact that Oregon's local NAACP branches are powerless to deal with the rising Black press population problem, it is hopeful that Mr. Hooks and his committee might offer some suggestions and assistance, not only to the local branches, but to the Department of Correction as well.

The surprising thing is this group will not be dealing with what goes on within the walls of this prison. The damage there has already been done. The inmates feel their efforts will serve a more valuable purpose in subjects such as, "What can be done by the Black community to keep Black men and women from returning to prison?" "What goals must Blacks achieve in prison so they may be accepted back in the Black community?" "Restoration being provided to Black victims." "How to deal with the fact that 83.1% of the Black people convicted in Oregon last year never went to trial for fear of white juries and white attorneys not properly representing them and so plea-bargaining their rights away."

Exploitation of Blacks in Oregon can come in many forms. Let us hope this avenue, "Courts and Prison," isn't another manner. Once we deal with the truth, then we can deal with the problem and work toward a solution. Those answers will not be found in any metric or computer system; the factors are too human.

If the National NAACP is able to provide us with valuable assistance as they have done in many other states, then let this be a special invitation for Mr. Blalock, Mr. Haas and Mr. Pratt to sit in our Black audience -- since we were not in theirs.

A MUSICAL SCORE

I seem to be loosing it
Perception of time
Like counting notes
On endless stanzas
five bells in three-quarter time
Two shower overtures
Hard-rock lullabies
Two sheets in every beat
Three frames of meals,

But the hardest is
Constant repetition of this melody
Broken metranomes
Trying to keep tempo
Exhausted arrangements
finding no key in which to rest,
Amongst all these twisted strains
flat as a deadness
Sharp as a scalpel
That I can see and hear
And hum along with
Everywhere abounding inside
The no rhyme or reason
Of this twenty-four symphony.

by A.E. #38176

TOMBSTONE TERRITORY

The young
reactionary souls
pivoted,
down the streets of Tombstone Territory,
with boothill mentalities.

In this nation of Sodom strolled dope fiends,
cowboys, sluts and whores while a saloon door
swings and one more bites the dust as the smoke
from a 26" syringe settles, the slow assassination
of a troubled people...

In Tombstone, and the struggle continues, while death
flaunts itself in the streets, surrounded in sorrow.

Wake up people, turn off the t.v. another nightmare
in Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco and Portland
becomes the new Tombstone Territory, or mixed between
whorehouses on one corner and religion on another.

He'd make a cocktail -- a bloody Mary...

And the children
they pivot down the alleys, in the streets with hate
in their hearts and boothill mentalities to test their
mettle on the streets of...Tombstone Territory.

Vernon Woodrow Broadnax

Juvenile crime

(Continued from Page 1 Column 6)

the elderly.

In 1975, men aged sixteen to nineteen nationwide were victimized by robbery at a rate three times that of men aged 35-49. They suffered an assault rate three-and-a-half times that for 35-to-49-year-olds, and an astonishing eighteen times the assault rate for men over 65.

A 16-to-19-year-old woman is twice as likely to be raped as a 25-to-34 year old. A boy aged 12-15 in San Francisco is more than three times as likely to be assaulted or robbed as a man aged 50-64, and, if he is white, six times as likely as a white man over 65.

In a recent study of crime patterns in a Philadelphia ghetto, University of Pennsylvania criminologist Leonard Savits found that 46 percent of Black teenagers interviewed had been robbed, assaulted or extorted in the course of a single year, and 60 percent had over two years.

These researchers also found that, confounding popular beliefs, juvenile criminals were as liable to be crime victims as law-abiding youth; between a third and two-fifths of both delinquents and nondelinquents had been robbed in one year.

The same study turned up evidence that, for inner-city youth, belonging to a fighting gang may reduce the danger of criminal victimization. Fighting gang members were found to suffer fewer robberies, assaults and extortions, to be less fearful of their neighborhoods, and to be no more seriously involved in criminal acts than their peers.

Another common belief regarding urban crime in general -- that it will decrease as a result of a predicted decline in the youth population -- is also, unfortunately, apt to be wrong, since adults account for most of our urban violence.

Moreover, some experts doubt the contention that the numbers of crime-prone youth will decrease over the next 20 years.

Harvard criminologist Walter Miller, for example, has calculated that the part of the youth population most "at risk" in terms of violent crime -- urban minority youth -- is on the increase in major American cities. In Los Angeles, Miller predicts, that group will rise by 16 percent between 1970 and 1980. Similar calculations by Franklin Zimring of the University of Chicago Law School suggest that the minority youth population in big cities will increase from 12-20 percent of the total urban population from 1970 to 1990.

[Elliott Currie, formerly a professor of sociology and criminology at Yale and the University of California-Berkeley, served as assistant director of a task force of the government's national commission on the cause and prevention of violence. He now monitors public policy on criminal justice for PNS' foundation-funded urban task force.]

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