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O.S.P. Correspondent

Behind the Walls

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Assistant Editor

There are times when a prisoner locked inside a prison can forget some of the simple things in life that are free. But, it is sadder yet, when those things are something he or she may never regain again. The one thing that comes first to this correspondent's mind, is having the freedom to vote.

How strange it was for me to walk around the "Big yard" the other evening, making small talk among groups of prisoners about which candidate might win the Republican race or what democrats are going to retain their seat in the legislature. Would you believe that most of the prisoners with whom I spoke, have never cast a vote in a ballot box or booth in their entire lives. Very few even knew one name of a legislator or candidate running in the state primary. And if you think that's strange, how about this; no one cared.

For those of us who've developed some political awareness over the years can sigh with relief for neither the Community Correction Act, the Metric System nor the death penalty are issues concerning the voters. Believe it or not, even the prisoners are silent about the need for a bill being submitted to the legislature for Conjugal visits and acquisition of their own personal television sets. Now if someone will shut Hal Haas's mouth for a minute, on his bid for the state Attorney General's position, those who pay taxes in Oregon won't have to pay out their hard earned dollars to build another penitentiary. This topic seems to be the main thrust in Haas's campaign.

Now the question becomes, why



State Representative Nancy Ryles (L) and Alice Ford (R) discuss OSP conditions with J.C. Keeney, Assistant Superintendent.

are so many inmates at the Oregon State Penitentiary not aware of who's who in state and local politics? I don't believe there is another state penitentiary in the United States that has had more personal contact with politicians than this prison. During the past two years we've had the opportunity to invite many politicians to lunch and dinner on a regular basis. When the legislature is in session, it is common to see a state Senator or a state Representative lecturing in the prison's education classroom or sitting among prisoners in their club meetings. But then again, what other prison in this country could find the state's Attorney General, playing basketball and softball against the inmates, as I have witnessed here at O.S.P. On the upswing, you can witness some of the sentencing judges of this state, par-

ticipating in O.S.P. church services on a Sunday morning.

This brings up the following question:

What would happen if the inmates had the right to vote? Would they become more politically motivated? Who knows, maybe Jimmy Carter or Ted Kennedy would come knocking on these prison gates. Fifteen hundred votes is a feather in your hat if you are running for office and you can obtain that many from one source in Oregon. Maybe that's what the inmates should be pushing for in the next legislative session...the right to vote.

It's a proven fact that violence no longer brings about positive change in our penal institutions. Just for one example: If the law was changed allowing inmates to vote, I bet you each one could sway at least three relatives or friends to vote the same way, and a great many things would suddenly change. Because, if all the inmates team up along with relatives and friends -- wow! that's 6,000 votes!

Could this be the reason it's so important to the powers that be, to take the right to vote away, from those incarcerated?

Surely it can't be a form of punishment because how can you miss something you've never been concerned about? The right to vote. The average inmate in this institution has been incarcerated two or three times before the age of 18 years of age. So, he was never taught the value of his voting powers. Would it play an important role in his rehabilitation? I don't know, I'm just posing the question and leaving it up for you to answer.

Cell Talk

Asmar Abdul Seifulla, Editor
aka Joe West 40404

Because of the last article that "Cell Talk" featured I find myself in the precarious position of either printing a retraction or proceeding full steam ahead. The article was based on racism and it was the sentiments of a majority of Black inmates and not a figment of my writer's imagination. You can believe me when I say that there were many comments made concerning "Racism O.S.P. Style" and at this point, I'd like to take things a step further and give some clarification on the position taken previously.

It's my sincere belief that racism isn't a self-sustaining mechanism that it has to be perpetuated by people who have something to gain. In other words, there is a measure of profit in racism and how you measure that profit is up to you. But please bear in mind that in a democratic form of government such as the one that exist in America -- someone has to lose, someone has to win. It's my belief that if Black people are to be successful in their struggle for total freedom, they must attack the pertinent issues on all fronts. "Prison and its relationship to Blackfolks is very important because the prison system in this country isn't designed to rehabilitate Blackfolks but to destroy them.

Prison not only destroyed the basic humanistic attributes in prisoners, it also makes money in the process. Try to imagine how many people are dependent on their livelihood in relation to corrections. Crime prevention is big business in this country, every Black man, woman and child in Portland, Oregon has a market value of zero when you consider the economic standing they hold in their community or in the state. Count the number of Black people in Portland who're on the welfare rolls, consider the type of jobs Black people have and you'll get a small idea how expendable we are. Now consider every Black man, woman and child in portland as potential inmates in the penal system. Place them in a closed environment -- create in them a sense of fear and inadequacy -- the final outcome is dependency.

While this is being done you then provide X number of non-colored people with jobs, pensions, security, self-worth, confidence and so on -- the final outcome is independency. Malcom said, "Democracy is a vulturistic form of government because it has to have something or someone to feed off. In most cases it's the poor, the Black, the disenfranchised that fall prey to the system. The same is true of the American penal system -- it has to have something or someone to feed off."

Blackfolks have always been considered expendable because of the plantation mentality that exist in America. We are expendable plus the powers that be want to make money in the process. What I'm saying is that the concept of corrections is not only a tool for genocide, it also creates a tremendous amount of revenue for the government. 55% of the people incarcerated in American prisons are Black, Hispanic or Indian.

The Black inmate population in

the state of Oregon in terms of percentages, in O.S.P., is seventeen times as great as the Black population in the state of Oregon. In many states the ratio of Blacks incarcerated reaches far beyond the national percentages. Now the next question you should ask yourself is who runs the penal system in this country? After you come up with the answer, ask yourself what majority of people work in the institutions (whites or non whites)? Who are the parole officers, police officers, judges and law makers (whites or non-whites), and then ask yourself why more Black people don't pursue careers in law enforcement.

What it all amounts to is racism, genocide and profit. It amounts to killing two birds with one stone; you get a tremendous amount of black men and women off the street, out of the job market, out of the educational system, out of government, out of everything and you create jobs for other people in return.

When things get a little slow, you make new laws, create more social conditions and force more Black people into crime. It's a never ending cycle and it's Black people who are being recycled. They aren't killing us anymore because there is a profit in incarcerating us. Plus, those of us that are caught in the net of criminal justice are then pointed out and used as justification for the perpetuation of the system.

The people that control this country keep the small white people so paranoid of Blacks raping their daughters, selling dope to their children and robbing their grocery

stores, that they are willing participants in the destruction of black lives.

...But, I don't think that it's fair to lay all the blame on white people or the power structure because a great many of the problems that effect Black existence in this country is because of the apathy of Black people in general. We don't seem to care enough about each other to prevent the injustices from happening again and again. It's alright if they off the brother down the street or whatevver, it's to easy to write off the large numbers of Blacks now confined in prisons all across the country.

It's ridiculous to say that people like myself are the problem when we had nothing to do with creating the condition that lead to our incarceration. If people like myself can be classified as criminal, then every Black person in Portland is a criminal for not destroying the criminal atmosphere that leads to crime. I'm not trying to white wash my own crimes, I'm only pointing out the need for Black moral consciousness in the community. Black people control nothing -- not even their own community, not the clothes they wear or the cars they drive or the schools that educate their children. Nothing is going to change until we recognize the difference between the victim and the victimized.

I pray Allah that the inadequateness of these lines sheds some light on a very important issue and I pray Allah that the need for articles such as this are soon erased.

May Allah bless you and may the path you walk be free of stones.

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FROM THE FRONT DOOR

By Tom Boothe

From the front door, I saw people on the move they were all going in the same general direction, but, their forward motion was like that of many butterflies; they were moving to the right, then to the left, up and then down, fast and then slow.

As I studied their motion, I could see that there were some that were leaders and some that were followers, some that knew where they were going and others that didn't, some that were concerned about where they were going and some that didn't care, some were enjoying the journey and some were complaining about it, some were producing and some were consuming, some were relatively independent and some totally dependent.

Yet, they were all moving as a body in the same direction, none ever lost sight of the main body, no matter how far they would stray from it, some strayed intentionally, others strayed because they were tired, but they would always return to the main body.

There were births and deaths in this process of direction and movement, but even these were carried along in the same direction nothing was lost everything was moving. No one could say exactly when this movement, and the perception there of, started; nor, could any one say when or if it would end.

Some called this movement life, others called it history, yet others called it nature. I couldn't see, nor hear, any absolute agreement coming from those of the present, nor, could I find any recorded agreements in any books on this process of movement. There were always differences of opinions and explanations.

As I stepped back, I saw that those who had an advantage in this group movement were those who had a specific purpose and had prepared themselves to achieve that purpose, they were also the ones who were setting the direction for the entire group movement, they drove toward their purpose consistently, these people who had purpose, preparation, direction, and consistency, they developed momentum for the group.

There were those in the group who had a purpose, but no preparation, or direction or consistency.

There were those who was always preparing but, had no set purpose, direction or consistency.

There were those who had direction, but no consistency, preparation or purpose.

Finally, there were those who were so inconsistent that they were consistently inconsistent. These were at the rear and on the sides, but because of the law of the movement they were not lost.

This process of movement had only one law and four rules which was:

Purpose, prepare, to implement it, know your direction and be consistent; and for those who failed to do this, they would immediately become subjected to someone elses purpose, and none could escape the law.

A PERSONAL MOMENT FOR THOSE WHO CARE

If a deaf man should sing on top of a distant mountain, no one would hear it so there would be no sound. If a beautiful picture is projected from a projector, but it never strikes an object such as a screen then there is no picture. The nicest smelling perfume is nothing until it reaches a nose to enjoy the fragrance. To love alone is like singing on top of the distant mountain. To live, love must be both projected and received.

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