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Funding Social Change Since 1967

RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

December, 1993

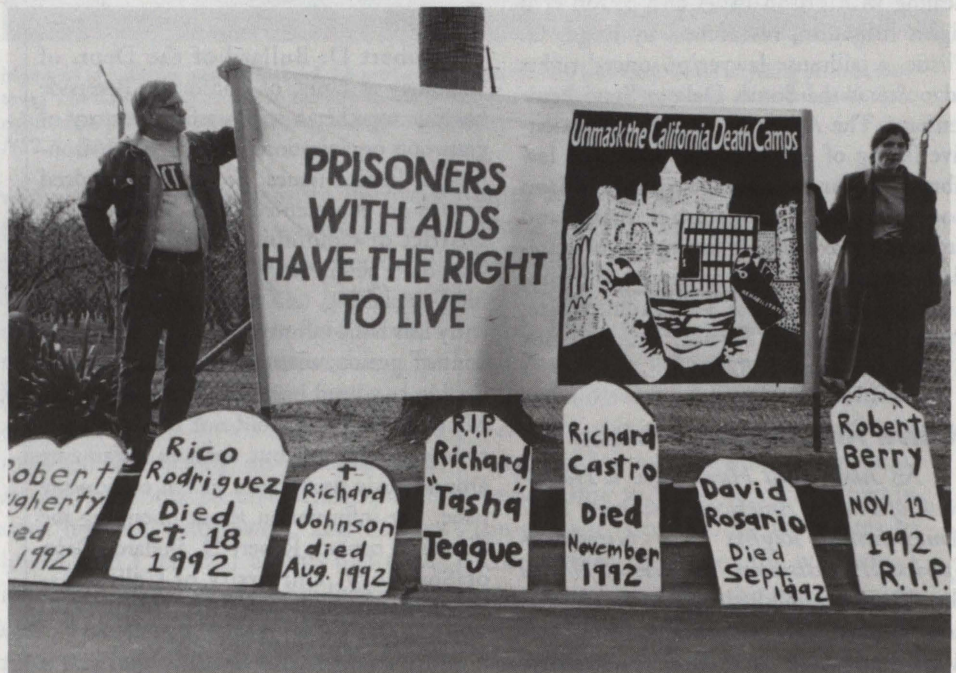
Prisoners Respond to AIDS— Inside and Outside the Walls

JUDY GREENSPAN

In the 1960s, inspired by the Black Power movement and struggles for independence and self-determination in Vietnam and elsewhere, a fledgling and defiant prisoner-led rights movement emerged behind the walls of jails and prisons throughout this country. The demands of this movement echoed the demonstrations, political upheavals, and rebellions taking place in the streets at the time.

Unfortunately, in the decades since the '60s and '70s, the prisoners' rights movement has waned. Some of its leaders, like George Jackson, were brutally murdered by the racist prison system. Control units emerged as a tool to isolate prisoner leaders from the general prison population. Many of the organizations on the outside that had helped with legal efforts and published prisoners' newsletters no longer existed, or no longer had the staff or finances to support these struggles. As the people's movements on the outside died down, so did the organizing efforts on the inside.

The AIDS activist struggle of the 1980s, however, has given rise to a new



ACT UP/San Francisco demonstrated outside the California Medical Facility at Vacaville on December 5, 1992, in observance of World AIDS Day. The tombstones are for prisoners with AIDS who died from neglect on the part of prison administrators at Vacaville during the fall of 1992.
Photo: ACT UP/San Francisco.

movement behind the walls. Led by prisoners with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and their supporters, prisoners have come together to combat the spread of AIDS and break the barriers of fear that surround the epidemic. The heroes and heroines of this new AIDS movement have faced enormous hurdles: hostile

prison administrators; AIDS phobic guards and medical staff; violence from other prisoners; segregation; punitive transfers; discrimination; parole turn-downs; and even death.

Donald Woods, a Wisconsin prisoner with AIDS, sued the governor and the Department of Corrections for violating his confidentiality rights by

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We Thought You Might be Interested...

In each issue of the newsletter, we try to let readers in on some of the many useful resources that come through our office. In most cases we try to review the book or film or manual before we include it here, but occasionally we'll print something that just looks good based on the PR sent with it, so please call the groups listed below for more info before making a purchase. And if you've got a resource you think other RESIST readers should know about, please write and let us know. THANKS!

Bibliography of Prison Cases

A *Bibliography of Selected Prison Cases* is an ordered listing of over 250 class-based, individual, and miscellaneous cases dealing with prison issues and prison civil rights litigation, researched by Roger G. Flittie, a jailhouse lawyer/prisoners' rights advocate at the South Dakota State Penitentiary. The Appendix includes an extensive listing of resources for prisoners: law library resources; damage awards; prison book programs; educational, news, and organizational resource listings; legal materials; women prisoner resources; and support groups. Copies: \$10 each. Write: Prison Information Service, Inc., PO Box 616, Sioux Falls, SD 57101.

Native Americans in Prison

An *Aboriginal Handbook: a Handbook of Native American Prisoner's First Amendment Rights & a Guide of Spiritual/Traditional Practices of Native Americans* is published by Prison Information Services, Inc. This handbook has sections on Native American Spirituality, Legal Rights in Prison, Model Prison Programs, and Facing Death the Native American way. It also includes illustrations and resource listings for sweat lodge construction, suggested readings, spiritual/cultural groups and networks, a Miscellaneous Prison Directory and Native American Legal Services Directory. Write: Prison Information Services, Inc., PO Box 616, Sioux Falls, SD 57101

Human Rights Watch Report

"Treatment of the ordinary prisoner is a crucial test of a society.... [Prisoners] are fellow human beings and are

entitled to be treated as such."

Human Rights Watch Global Report on Prisons reviews the physical circumstances, abuses by custodial authorities, work opportunities, medical care and other issues in some 20 countries around the world including the United States. Human Rights Watch provides a series of detailed recommendations, stressing that many improvements can be made at little to no expense through policy and attitude changes alone.

For copies of the report and more information, write: Human Rights Watch, 485 5th Ave, New York, NY 10017-6104. Call: 212-986-1980.

People of Color Environmental Groups

Robert D. Bullard of the Dept. of Sociology at Univ. of California, Riverside has put together a very useful directory of grassroots organizations working on environmental justice issues. Some two hundred groups are represented from 35 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Canada. The directory is designed as a planning, organizing, and networking tool. Each entry lists basic information about the group, contact person, constituency served, membership base, and issues the group works on. Many of the groups did not begin as environmental groups, but took on organizing around toxic wastes as a health or housing issue. For information about obtaining the directory, contact Robert D. Bullard, Dept. of Sociology, University of California-Riverside, Riverside, CA 92521-0419; (714) 787-5444, or fax (714) 787-3330.

New Book on Environmental Racism

The very same Robert D. Bullard has edited a new book just out from South End Press, *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, (350 pages, \$16.00) which is an anthology of writings by people of color. South End has also published *The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles Against Multinational Corporations* by Al Gedicks (270 pages, \$15.00). For ordering information, South End Press, 116 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA 02115, or call 1-800-533-8478.

Children Learn What They Play Protest War Toys!

Children learn values through their play. Violent play teaches that violence solves conflict. If we want peace in our communities, we must begin by creating a peaceful and just world in every child's toy box. Protest war toys every day.

Resources

Stop War Toys Campaign Packet. Includes background information, organizing ideas, toy alternatives, sample stickers and more. Updated regularly. \$7 each.

No More War Toys Video. One-hour video discussing the impacts of toys that encourage violence and stereotyping in our children and society and what you can do. ½" VHS. \$20 each. (Add 20% for postage to all orders.)

Children & Nonviolence Campaign/WRL, 339 Lafayette St., NYC 10012; 212)226-0450.



ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

Funding Social Change Since 1967

For information and grant guidelines write to:
Resist, One Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143

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Grassroots Report

Environmental Racism: A Personal Point of View

CHERYL JOHNSON

People for Community Recovery (PCR) was founded in 1982 by a group of women living in Altgeld Gardens, a public housing development on the Southeast side of Chicago. It is one of very few environmental organizations with its roots in public housing, and with a membership of predominantly low-income African Americans.

In the past decade PCR has managed to get a hazardous waste incinerator shut down; pressured city government to maintain a moratorium on landfills; documented myriad health problems in Altgeld Gardens; organized residents to fight a proposed incinerator; pressured the state Environmental Protection Agency to clean up three lagoons containing over 20,000 pounds of unknown contaminants; and fought the Chicago Housing Authority to remove asbestos from apartments. Hazel Johnson, considered the mother of the movement against environmental racism, has spoken at hundreds of conferences throughout the country.

RESIST recently granted funds to PCR to produce its quarterly newsletter, F.A.T.E. (Fighting Against a Toxic Environment) which is distributed to approximately 5,000 people, most of whom live in low-income communities of color. The newsletter focuses on how environmental problems affect the social, housing, and economic conditions of urban neighborhoods. We asked Cheryl Johnson, daughter of CPR founder Hazel Johnson, to write about the meaning of environmental racism in her life.

Being a grassroots environmental activist for the past eight years, and working side-by-side with my mother, Hazel Johnson, I can tell you what environmental justice means to



Members of a church near St. Gabriel, LA protesting a plan to site a hazardous waste recycling plant in the town. The Clinton administration recently agreed to investigate complaints that states are violating the civil rights of people of color by permitting industrial pollution in their neighborhoods. *NYT*, 11/19/93.

with People for Community Recovery (PCR) ten years ago, I was very reluctant to work with my mother at all (because she was like "the boss") and especially doing environmental work. I would only do administrative things for her, such as typing, mailing, and photocopying. But I would never get involved in working on environmental issues. I associated environmentalists with hippies, wildflowers, and nature-lovers, and I felt that all this had nothing to do with my everyday living process. The major focus of PCR at that time was landfills and incinerators, and it didn't concern me because it was all about garbage. The only aspect of the issue I would accept was we *did* have to have a place to discard our garbage.

Being a resident of Altgeld Gardens, a public housing development (I never considered my neighborhood a "project") on the Southeast side of Chicago for 31 years, and noticing the growth of landfills in the area, I used to literally think those landfills were placed there for recreational purposes. But I've never seen any recreational activities appearing on those moun-

tains. But that was my level of intelligence towards environmental issues back then.

When I became a staff person with PCR, I was forced to learn about the things that my mother was doing. This is when I discovered that those landfills were not mountains for recreational purposes, but were home to everything we consume as consumers and throw in the garbage, from home appliances to "disposable" diapers. This was how I started understanding the true meaning of North America being labeled the "throw-away society."

From this notion, my mind became curious about the whole concept of the environment, and on what level we as citizens must understand environmental issues. In high school and in college, my studies had always been science, learning about the human body and the chemistry that makes us function. But I could never connect my science background to our everyday living until I became interested in the environmental problems of my community.

Knowing about carcinogenic chem-

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icals such as polychlorinated biphenyls and carbon tetrachloride, to name a couple, and learning that industries in my neighborhoods are emitting these chemicals, made me more concerned and active in helping myself and others to learn about the environment. I started reading all the books, newsletters, and literature I could find. I became real disturbed when I learned, to my surprise, that many waste facilities in this country are located in poor communities of color.

Throughout my teenage life, I could not understand the term "minority communities" because I always through minority was a term applied to poor, Black people, not Hispanic or Native American, to say the least. Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in this country. I never had the opportunity to socialize or attend schools that had multicultural interactions. I was shocked to learn how America's powers-that-be can deliberately place hazardous materials in communities based on race and class, including Latinos and Native Americans as well as Blacks.

Then I started wondering about the term "environmental racism" and how communities of color, not only in the United States, but also abroad, were being affected by toxic pollution. It became clear to me that the reason that corporations that pollute the environment target communities like mine is because we have many social problems, and no financial resources to sustain our neighborhoods. And, most importantly, we have been mostly apolitical. This is not just about voting, but about understanding how the political process works. These are the very elements that corporations have used in making decisions about where to site their facilities.

Forced to Speak Out

It has taken me seven years to feel comfortable discussing environmental issues. My mother tried for years to make me speak out on how I feel about the environment. Having to network with organizations like Greenpeace, Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE),

the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), and the Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Waste during my tenure at PCR, I became quite comfortable making speaking engagements here in Chicago. What I have learned from these organizations has given me the ammunition I need. Also, working with these groups, I not only learned about the rainforest, acid rain, and ozone depletion, but CNT and CBE have given me the right information on *urban* environmental problems.

PCR has been to the United Nations, received a gold medal from the White House, testified on Capitol Hill, participated in the Earth Summit, and has been in dialogue with dignitaries from the Department of State, but, here in America in the 1990s, we as a nation still do not want to do the right thing for the environment.

The urban environment is an issue the U.S. government has not been ready to deal with. Our government has observed the deterioration of urban communities, and has seen the industries which have closed and polluted the environment, leaving behind a huge liability bill, yet it has ignored the problem for years. In the case of Southeast Chicago, this area has been a dumping ground since 1863, when there were no laws to protect the air, water, and land. Southeast Chicago was one of the country's top industrial cities, and today it is one of the country's most polluted cities, with a huge environmental graveyard to clean up.

Only now are we finally getting some federal money to begin to assess the extent of the damage. Grassroots organizations like PCR are leading a movement called environmental racism, and demanding environmental justice.

What does it take?

In 1992, our organization undertook a professionally conducted community health survey to identify some of the health problems in Altgeld Gardens. As a result, we've finally moved out of stagnation, and the state Toxic Substance and Disease Registry has at last begun to take action after two years of meetings, delays, and disinterest.

Now the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has developed the Southeast Chicago Urban Environmental Initiative to evaluate 15 sites in the area, and has opened up avenues for community participation in this process.

None of this would have happened until we as a community were able to design and conduct a credible study. Our survey revealed that 75% of the respondents had some type of respiratory problem. A quarter of the respondents had been told by a doctor that

they had asthma. 2.3% had chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis. Approximately 51% of the 270 pregnancies reported in the survey resulted in abnormalities. Of these, a quarter ended in miscarriage, 12% were prematurely born babies that required at least two weeks of hospitalization, 7% were stillborn, and another 7% of the babies were born with health problems requiring special medical attention.

Sixty-eight percent of the homes surveyed had a least one person with health problems that were resolved after they moved away from Altgeld Gardens.

PCR has been to the United Nations, received a gold medal from the White House, testified on Capitol Hill, participated in the Earth Summit, and has been in dialogue with dignitaries from the Department of State, but, here in America in the 1990s, we as a nation still do not want to do the right thing for the environment.

Governments that regulate polluters cannot get these companies to pay for the pollution they have caused. Companies would rather pay court costs to prolong or delay the process of cleaning up their facilities. Lobbyists who work for polluters hold the purse strings to our politicians, so that corporations can continue to harm families,

destroy communities, and jeopardize workers' safety just to make profits. Then corporations blame lost jobs on public action groups who organized to fight for a stronger environmental policy to protect Mother Earth.

Because there is so much resistance to doing the right thing from the top level down, we grassroots organizations and concerned citizens must reverse osmosis in order to be heard, using the framework of environmental racism. (In osmosis elements move from higher concentrations to lower concentrations but in our work we have to move from lower to higher concentrations of power, to crack open the doors of government.)

The idea of environmental racism lets you realize how communities of color are being targeted by corporations to bring waste facilities into our neighborhoods; the demand for environmental justice is a vehicle that brings diverse people together who have a common interest in protecting our natural resources.

To be treated like human beings

To me, environmental justice means the ability to respect and communicate with diverse cultures; not to be burdened with toxic facilities in our communities based on our race and class; the right to have clean air, water, and land like other, affluent communi-

environmental issues to other issues in our lives. For example, lead paint is a housing issue, a health issue, and an environmental issue. When the connections are revealed, it gives people a clearer vision of what we mean by the urban environment.

We have to be creative in how we look at our own waste streams. The piles of rubber tires that are left in our communities, for example, can be converted to asphalt production and result in a profitable economic venture for the community. We need to educate our public officials about what is happening. PCR is going to schools, churches, and community organizations to continue our environmental education campaign among everyone affected. Our teenagers especially have to be motivated to lead this movement in the future.

We are developing hands-on workshops with students to dramatize ecological relationships, showing what happens to locally produced waste, and revealing the larger picture including global warming, acid rain, and ozone depletion. This kind of work not only will sustain our movement for the long haul, but will encourage young people to pursue their developing interest in science.

What I like about this movement is that it crosses class and racial lines. We

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Sixty-eight percent of the homes surveyed had a least one person with health problems that were resolved after they moved away from Altgeld Gardens.
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ties that have no waste facilities; the right to participate in decision making that affects the conditions of our communities; safety in the workplace; adequate access to quality health care; and the right to be treated as human beings.

There are forces that try to hinder the progress of the environmental justice movement, but everyday there are grassroots groups like ours who will continue to organize to fight the environmental degradation of our communities. For people to become active, however, we need to connect urban

work with people who have money and people who don't have money. We respect one another because we share a common need for the air, the water, and the land. Pollution has no boundaries, and it doesn't settle in one place. ◇

Cheryl Johnson is a mother of two children, a community activist, and an administrative assistant with PCR. For more information, write People for Community Recovery, 13116 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60627/ (312) 464-1645, or fax (312) 468-8105.

LOOKING FOR FUNDING?

RESIST has often been a resource for groups looking for funding. We recently published a small book entitled, *Finding Funding: A beginner's guide to foundation research*. The booklet gives people an idea of how to get started, and includes a bibliography of important foundation and fund-raising books, a list of Foundation Center Network Libraries, a sampling of large US foundations and what they fund, and a list of the Funding Exchange Network of foundations. We were surprised that no simple guide like this existed, and happy that we had the time, energy, and financial resources to put one together.

*For a copy, send \$1 to
RESIST, One Summer Street,
Somerville, MA 02143*

BEQUESTS

If you are in the process of writing or amending your Will, you might think about leaving a set sum or a percentage to RESIST, Inc. Over the last year a number of you have contacted us directly or through a lawyer, informing us of your decision to include us in your Will. For all of you who took that difficult but important step of writing a Will, and including RESIST in it, we are most appreciative. Wills can be a significant way of making sure the work you support today will be around for decades to come. And because RESIST, Inc. is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, including us in your Will can help lower or eliminate estate taxes.

When including RESIST in your Will, please identify us as follows: "RESIST, Inc., a Massachusetts non-profit corporation whose principal place of business is located in Somerville, Massachusetts." If you have any questions about including RESIST in your Will, or if you need a copy of our tax exempt IRS letter, please feel free to write or call the office.

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divulging his HIV status to other prisoners. Two years after the lawsuit, Woods was roughed up and restrained by guards who stuffed a towel in his mouth. Woods, whose HIV status was well-known throughout the prison, died of asphyxiation later that day.

Women and men prisoners with HIV/AIDS, peer educators, and prisoner activists on the inside have a very basic agenda — they are fighting for the right to live. They are asking for the most basic survival tools — decent medical care, compassionate release, and peer education programs. These demands are revolutionary within a prison system dedicated to custody, control, and punishment.

As the former AIDS Information Coordinator of the ACLU National Prison Project, and now a member of ACT UP/San Francisco's Prison Issues Committee, I have worked for many years with the prisoners who are part of this movement. I have written to and visited with these heroic men and women and, when necessary, I have demonstrated outside the gates of their prisons. I have learned that AIDS activism inside takes many forms. Calling a demonstration behind the walls is extremely hazardous, so prisoners have had to utilize a variety of other tactics to accomplish their goals.

Former Prisoners Join National Roundtable on AIDS

This past October in San Francisco, I had an opportunity, along with other AIDS activists, to meet and talk with some of the former prisoners who are leaders of this new prisoners' rights movement. The occasion was the first National Roundtable on AIDS in Prison, organized by the Correctional Association of New York. Former prisoners had fought to be included at this conference, and we worked to maximize their voices. Their stories are crucial and need to be told.

Organizing in prison is as dangerous as being an open member of the Communist Party was during the height of the McCarthy era. Your very *being* is illegal. Prison administrators

have only one modus operandi for prisoners who associate with other prisoners or with people outside, in order to improve prison conditions. These prisoners are treated as subversives and/or as gang members. They are locked down, removed from public view, denied membership in inmate councils, and often transferred to maximum security prisons or control units far from home.

Brian Carmichael, a prisoner organizer at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville (California's prison hospital

RESIST grants since 1989.)

For his efforts, Magner spent a lot of time being transported from one federal prison to another — a tactic known as "diesel therapy," and one reserved for prisoner organizers. Magner even survived incarceration at the Springfield federal prison hospital, notorious for its miserable living conditions, unlicensed physicians, and poor medical care. Jimmy Magner was released last year and continues to publish PWA-RAG from the outside.

Many prisoners fight the spread of

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Women and men prisoners with HIV/AIDS, peer educators, and prisoner activists on the inside have a very basic agenda — they are fighting for the right to live. They are asking for the most basic survival tools — decent medical care, compassionate release, and peer education programs. These demands are revolutionary within a prison system dedicated to custody, control, and punishment.

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for men), who was working closely with ACT UP/San Francisco, was thrown into the "hole" and charged with being a member of a gang called "ACT UP." On its face, this incident sounds humorous, but for Carmichael, who was to be released on parole in two months, the accusation of "gang membership" was extremely serious. Fortunately, the charges were dropped due to public exposure of this ridiculous charge by ACT UP and others.

PWA-RAG, a voice for prisoners.

While Jimmy Magner was a federal prisoner with AIDS, he was a thorn in the side of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. He was openly gay and just as openly outspoken. While inside, Magner founded a newsletter for prisoners with HIV and AIDS called PWA-RAG (People with AIDS, Rights Advocacy Group) which has become a voice for prisoners around the country. With the support of his mother, and the assistance of individuals in such groups as the American Friends Service Committee and the ACLU National Prisoner Project, Magner was able to distribute his newsletter to prisoners and their advocates nationwide. [Ed note: PWA-RAG is also the recipient of several

AIDS by learning about the disease and teaching others. Prisoners routinely write away to outside AIDS service organizations for HIV/AIDS education brochures which are passed from hand to hand through the prison. Unfortunately, since the epidemic was first recognized behind the walls, prison administrators have been loath to provide educational materials at all, and what they have distributed has been filled with messages of abstinence and threats about the illegality of sex and drug use in prison, rather than practical information about protecting oneself from HIV.

Despite the recommendations of such organizations as the National Commission on AIDS and the World Health Organization, most prisons and jails do not distribute condoms or bleach, thus making it very difficult for AIDS educators to teach prisoners how to have safer sex and to clean their works. In one prison in New Jersey, a group of prisoners ordered 1,000 copies of the Surgeon General's report on AIDS. When the brochures arrived, they were seized by hostile prison administrators who considered the brochures contraband (illegal) and refused to distribute them.

Prisoners, both HIV-positive and their supporters, have been forced to begin peer education programs with or without official sanction from the prison administration. The most successful of these programs is the AIDS Counseling and Education Program (ACE) at Bedford Hills, a women's prison in New York state. ACE was formed in the mid-1980s as a result of organizing by a few HIV-positive women, concerned HIV-negative women, and two seasoned organizers and political prisoners, Judy Clark and Kathy Boudin, both doing time at Bedford Hills. ACE flourished openly at the prison for some time, but when word of the group got to the powers-that-be in the state Department of Correctional Services, it was officially shut down.

With great perseverance and courage, the women inside Bedford Hills quietly kept the program going and did what they could to gain outside support. The Superintendent at the prison seemed to play ACE both ways, sometimes being supportive, and sometimes very controlling, targeting certain women for expulsion from the group as it gained public attention. In order to survive, ACE has had to accept some limitations in its work, but it is nevertheless recognized as a model peer education program.

Many of ACE's graduates have become AIDS educators and prisoner advocates upon release. Maria Hernandez, one of ACE's founders, helped start ACE Out, a support organization for HIV-positive women leaving Bedford Hills. Hernandez travels around the country showing the video, "I'm You, You're Me, Women Surviving Prison, Living with AIDS." Hernandez' goal is to go inside women's prisons to meet with peer educators and support groups and show the video.

Peer Educators Face Reprisals

Early attempts to set up peer education programs at men's prisons in New York state were largely unsuccessful. Prison administrators seemed to be even more threatened by the idea of men organizing around this issue than

they had been by the women at Bedford Hills, in part because there are so many more men in prison than there are women. Also, because of the geographic isolation of the prisons, the activists found it nearly impossible to rally the public awareness and support that is essential for such organizing efforts. Thus, prison administrators easily clamped down on all rumored peer education projects.

Prisoner leaders, such as David Gilbert, Cruz Salgado, Juan Rivera, and Yusuf Shakoor, were routinely locked down (placed in isolation) and transferred from Auburn to Attica to Clinton and to Eastern (all New York state prisons located hundreds of miles from major metropolitan centers) to sabotage their activities. Under the guise of "security" concerns, prisoners are often transferred to another prison at no notice. The tactic can be very effective because prisoner organizers are separated from their personal belongings for weeks and sometimes months. Many of their papers, leaflets, letters, and newspapers, are "lost" during these moves.

David Gilbert, now at Great Meadow prison, points out that today, six years after his first attempt, there is still no comprehensive peer education program in any of the maximum security men's prisons in the state. He also says that support from outside has been sporadic at best.

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Mike Flashner, who did 17 years in Massachusetts prisons, has had more success. When he was first approached by another prisoner, Ed Marchione, about joining a campaign for AIDS education, he was reluctant. He was worried about the stigma involved with fighting the disease. However, after reading some literature and realizing how serious the epidemic was on the inside, he ran over to Marchione's hous-

ing unit to enlist in the program. According to Flashner, what other prisoners thought about him wasn't important any more. "Saving someone from contracting this disease while doing time outweighed that philosophy," he said.

Flashner jumped headfirst into this new movement and helped found the first peer education program at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk. The AIDS Awareness Program eventually spread to Gardner and other men's prisons and has now been accepted by the Department of Corrections.

The program has also become a springboard for other forms of activism. The men organized a compassionate release campaign for several prisoners dying of AIDS-related illnesses. Flashner and other prisoners testified, while still behind bars, at legislative hearings on medical care and compassionate release issues. While in prison, Flashner made plans to attend the AIDS in Prison Roundtable. He was released in September, and with the financial assistance and support of ACT UP/Boston, he was not only able to attend, but also brought Patricia Stoffere, a former prisoner and leader of the AIDS Education Program for Women at the women's prison in Muncy, Pennsylvania. Flashner is the founder of a new organization of prisoners and former prisoners, PAIN, Prisoners AIDS Issues Nationwide.

Vacaville prisoners go on strike

Some prisoners have been forced to take drastic action to respond to the AIDS crisis. In September, 1992, at the California Medical Facility (CMF) at Vacaville, prisoners with HIV/AIDS and their HIV-negative supporters in the Pastoral Care Services Program went on medication strike to protest the death of several prisoners with

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AIDS. Over 150 HIV-positive prisoners issued a set of demands focused on medical treatment, and refused to take their medications until conditions improved.

The striking men felt that some of the deaths could have been avoided if there had been an HIV/AIDS medical specialist at the prison and if the guards were sensitized to the prisoners' medical situation.

Lawrence Wilson, a former prisoner with AIDS, was at Vacaville when the medical emergency erupted. Although Wilson was released just before the prisoners began their protest, he provided a link between the prisoners inside and AIDS activists outside. This former prisoner brought the prison AIDS crisis outside the walls for the world to see. The combined intervention of the prisoners' actions, ACT UP demonstrations and media work, and a scathing report by a key state legislator, brought significant changes to Vacaville.

One month after the report was issued, CMF opened a prison hospice and a convalescent unit for terminally ill prisoners. The prison also began a national search for qualified HIV/AIDS treatment specialists. Buzzers were placed in the rooms of prisoners to alert medical personnel of any emergency situations. Extra blankets were given to prisoners who requested them, and long overdue repairs were made on the walls of the HIV and the hospital units.

Still Inside

Noticeably absent at the Roundtable in October were the voices of HIV-positive prisoners and peer educators still inside. Many are serving long sentences with little or no chance of parole, and have devoted their prison time to fighting the AIDS epidemic in whatever ways they can.

Linda Evans, a political prisoner at the federal women's prison in Dublin, California (FCI-Dublin), founded a peer education program for women prisoners called PLACE (Pleasanton AIDS Counseling and Education). When Evans got to FCI Dublin in the

beginning of 1991, there was no organized HIV/AIDS education or support. Using the Bedford Hills ACE program as her inspiration, Evans helped to pull together a group of women who began to research AIDS education materials. Soon this group received permission to present HIV/AIDS education to women at their orientation to the prison.

Later, PLACE began to conduct classes in the living units. And this past summer, PLACE opened a new chapter in prison AIDS activism when it was able to bring the AIDS quilt to the prison. Many women worked on quilt panels remembering women prisoners and children who had died of AIDS. These panels were sewn together and added to the International AIDS quilt. A candlelight memorial service was held on Saturday night, August 28th, and on Sunday, the women shared memories over an open microphone of loved ones who had died. According to Evans, at least 700 women prisoners and many staff viewed the quilt. Women at the prison were so moved by the event that they decided to adopt for their work the children's AIDS ward at Children's Hospital in Oakland. Hundreds of women are making cards and knitting gifts for children at the hospital for the holidays.

At about the same time as PLACE began, a similar project was started at the Shawnee Unit, the high security federal women's prison in Marianna, Florida. This year, women in the Shawnee AIDS Awareness Group sponsored an AIDS Walkathon inside the prison that raised money for an AIDS organization on the outside. According to Silvia Baraldini, a political prisoner and one of the groups' founders, "The walkathon put life into the group and transformed it, because it was activist."

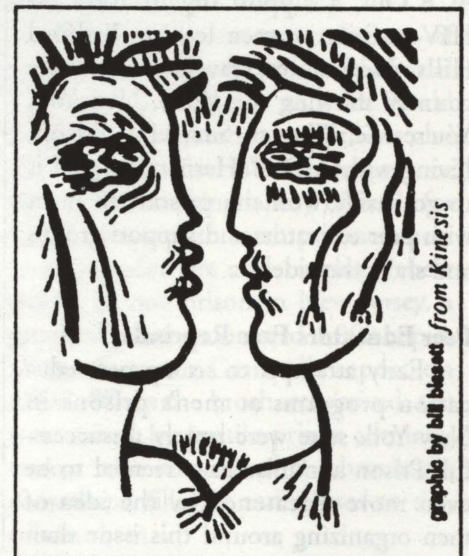
Outside support critically needed

AIDS activism behind the walls is often carried on boldly by one prisoner who is willing to risk the stigma and threats that come from an AIDS-phobic prison administration. One such prisoner is Fred Beasley, a prisoner with AIDS at Jackson State Prison in Michigan. For the past four years, Beasley has

been single-handedly educating and advocating on behalf of other prisoners. He has assisted several terminally ill prisoners with their medical parole. Unable to find support from anyone in the prison administration, Beasley has increasingly turned to organizations on the outside like ACT UP to assist him in his work. Beasley provides a clear and strong example of a prisoner activist loudly fighting the epidemic in one of the largest state prisons in the country.

Eddie Hatcher is another prisoner leader who has used his organizing experience to benefit prisoners with HIV/AIDS. Hatcher, a Native American political prisoner, is doing an 18 year sentence for occupying the editorial office of a newspaper in Robeson County, North Carolina, to protest racism and mistreatment of Black and Native peoples. [Ed note: RESIST has given two grants to Hatcher's support organization, the Robeson Defense Committee. In addition to publishing a prisoners' rights newsletter (with the assistance of his mother), Hatcher has filed lawsuits on behalf of HIV-positive prisoners and has conducted a national campaign for compassionate release on behalf of a prisoner who was dying. Hatcher was denied parole again at the beginning of November. It seems the parole board is reluctant to release such a dynamic organizer into the community.

In many prisons around the country, prisoners with AIDS and peer edu-



cators are struggling for simple recognition — for permission to be peer educators. A group of women prisoners at the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) at Chowchilla submitted a simple two-page proposal for an HIV/AIDS peer education program last March. They are still waiting for approval from the warden. This group of women has had to fight to receive AIDS education materials from the outside. Packages of literature from AIDS service organizations and resource groups have been routinely marked "return to sender" by the prison censors. Now, after several weeks of public pressure from the outside, materials are finally allowed into the prison.

The fight inside for medical care will be much harder to win. Joann Walker, an outspoken peer educator writes from CCWF, "The struggles here are hard and many! For HIV/AIDS incarcerated women, there is an ongoing war for proper medical treatment, high protein diets, and fairness from staff and inmates."

These prisoners need the advocacy and support of AIDS activists, human rights advocates, and all communities committed to social justice, to make their voices heard. All too often, their pleas for assistance have gone unanswered. While working for the National Prison Project, I tried to interest outside organizations in supporting prisoner struggles. I remember a series of phone calls to AIDS activists and ACT UP chapters in Texas. I couldn't get anyone to rally to the defense of Curtis Weeks, a Black prisoner with AIDS who was convicted of attempted capital murder for spitting on a guard. Weeks was sentenced to life in prison for the crime of being HIV-positive.

Later on, the ACLU National Office wrote a brief on his behalf, but no activist organizations responded to his case. On the other hand, one phone call from me rallied the entire ACT UP/Philadelphia chapter in defense of Gregory Smith, a Black, HIV-positive, gay prisoner charged with attempted murder for biting a prison guard. For several years, ACT UP put up a valiant

continued on next page

Voices from Inside

The Prison Issues Committee of ACT UP/San Francisco produced an anthology, Voices From Inside, to provide prisoners with HIV/AIDS and peer educators representation at two national AIDS conferences that took place in San Francisco this past fall. The anthology is free to prisoners and available for \$4.00 from Prison Issues Committee, ACT UP/San Francisco, P.O. Box 14844, San Francisco, CA 94114. The following piece is excerpted from Voices.

To my sisters in the battle against AIDS/HIV,

I am a 25 year old woman/mother/educator/counselor/ and convicted criminal. When I entered [prison] in June of 1988, I knew exactly nothing about the virus and how it would later affect me. Since my incarceration I have seen approximately 100-150 women die when they didn't have to. Most of them I would call my friends. In Bedford Hills Correctional Facility we have a program called A.C.E., which stands for AIDS Counseling and Education. It's a peer program run by the women for the women. I am a member of ACE, I will always consider the women there my sisters. I am a peer counselor/educator, and advocate for the women concerning medical problems. The infirmary was my second home, and burnout is no stranger to me.

I was transferred to Albion Correctional Facility in April, 1993. I fought it as I didn't consider my work done [at Bedford Hills]. However, as anyone in the system can testify to, you can't choose where you want to be. When I arrived I managed to get a job at AIDS RESOURCE, which is a program run by the women inmates. It is the only way I can do my life's work. I soon realized that there is a true epidemic here. We have a population of approximately 1,400 women, of that number 60-70% are HIV-positive. At first I couldn't believe it. In Bedford there are two full-time infectious disease specialists for about 650 women. There are none in Albion. Women who are HIV-positive have to go outside for treatment, sometimes after a long wait. I have written to people who could change this, and no one seems to care.

It is sometimes very difficult speaking to the women because with all the information that's out there, many of them still do not consider themselves to be at risk. I have counseled women who will go home negative and re-enter the system 12 months later and test positive. It breaks my heart to see them, knowing that it didn't have to happen....

I plan on doing my best not only to prevent anyone else from getting it but also to help those who are already infected. I fight stigma every day and it comes in many forms. I have seen medical personnel refuse to assist a PWA, why they never can seem to tell me. I have asked for help in teaching various medical issues and so far little or no help has been given. Albion Correctional Facility is in typical rural America, the counselors /civilians/and officers all need education. There [have] been breaks in confidentiality and women are afraid to say anything about it. ... If I see a woman in crisis and hug her I can be accused of a sexual act. I continue to do so and will accept the consequences if caught. It is sometimes all you can offer, simple comfort and a caring person to listen to you....

As a certified pre-post test counselor I am hurt by the fact that I am prohibited by Dept. of Correctional Services rules...from doing that work. I am working on challenging it, but I will more than likely be paroled before any decision is made. I also fight for the women who will follow in my footsteps....I have found some of the world's most beautiful women in prison, and I am glad that I have found myself at last.

I see whole generations of women dying and often their children with them, society sees them as dispensable. Until we can change society's feelings we will never be able to conquer this disease. It is up to us women to pull ourselves up and get to work. if we don't help ourselves, no one else will. ...

I can only end by saying that it will take all of us to beat this epidemic that is going to destroy our world if we don't stop it now.

This is dedicated to those who are gone but not forgotten. To my beloved Diana Di Gomez, A.K.A. Savage, who passed away on November 11, 1992. In addition to all of the women who are positive or who have cared for someone with the virus. Keep on fighting, I will.

Pride and Power,
Pamela Chase

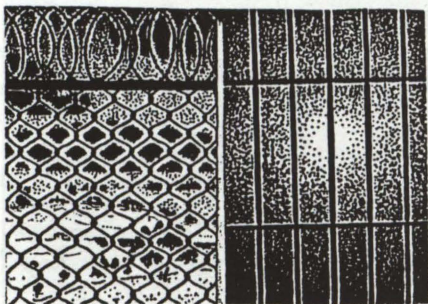
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political fight on Smith's behalf. I was lucky enough to attend many rallies and marches the group called. Unfortunately, Smith just lost his last state appeal and now faces 25 years in New Jersey state prisons, convicted and sentenced based on his HIV status.

More organizations and individuals are needed to support the work of prisoners with HIV and AIDS. Sometimes that support may be as simple as making a phone call or xeroxing an AIDS educational brochure. Activists on the outside can help find speakers for AIDS awareness programs inside, or organize a demonstration to demand that dying prisoners receive compassionate release. By working closely with prisoner AIDS activists and peer educators, we can help give prisoners a voice on the outside and make an important contribution to the struggle for justice and social change in this country. ◇

Judy Greenspan is a member of the prison issues committee of ACT UP/ San Francisco, was formerly the AIDS Information Coordinator for the ACLU National Prison Project, and is a long time activist.

For more information about prison AIDS work, contact: ACT UP/ San Francisco, Prison Issues Committee, P.O. Box 14844, San Francisco, CA 94114; Jackie Walker, AIDS Info Coordinator, ACLU National Prison Project, 1875 Connecticut Ave., #410, Washington, DC 20009; PWA-RAG, P.O. Box 2161, Jonesboro, GA 30237; or the AIDS in Prison Project, Correctional Association of New York, 135 E. 15th St., New York, NY 10003.



Puerto Rican Prisoners Status Unresolved

The following article is condensed from a press release sent to RESIST from Ofensiva '92, which is working for the release of 18 Puerto Rican activists held in U.S. prisons for their activities in support of independence and self-determination for Puerto Rico.

On Sunday, November 14th, the government of Puerto Rico held a "plebiscite" to determine the Puerto Rican's people's preference for the island's political status. While the vote narrowly favored current commonwealth status, what was *not* included or resolved in the process was the status of the 18 Puerto Rican political prisoners in U.S. prisons. As votes were tallied from the "plebiscite," these men and women are serving virtual life sentences for "seditious conspiracy" arising from their activities as *independentistas* opposing U.S. control of Puerto Rico.

In San Juan, on November 16th, Ofensiva '92 announced an international campaign for the release of the prisoners and formally applied to President Clinton for amnesty for these activists. According to the application,

While there is no right to statehood or commonwealth, as they exist only at the will of the U.S. Congress, there is a right to self-determination and independence, and the vote will occur while adherents to independence are in prison. It would be consistent with notions of justice and democracy to ensure that those in prison be released in order to permit their participation in this process.

The campaign also announced that along with the Center for Constitutional Rights, and the American Association of Jurists, it had filed a petition for a review of the prisoners' cases with the Organization of American States (OAS).

There is a startling disparity between the sentences given to the Puerto Rican political prisoners and those given to other prisoners. While the Puerto Rican prisoners' average sentence was over 70 years, the average sentence given for homicide between 1966 and 1985 was 22.7 years. Ten of the Puerto Rican prisoners were given sentences of 55 - 90 years, 19 times higher than the average sentence given for all crimes in that year.

Ofensiva '92 is asking President Clinton to grant amnesty to these prisoners, just as President Carter did in 1979 for five other Puerto Rican political prisoners. The OAS petition seeks not only an evidentiary hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, but also a declaration directing the U.S. to immediately release the prisoners. "The continued imprisonment and politically punitive treatment of the Puerto Rican prisoners violates the OAS charter as well as other fundamental international human rights instruments," said Michael Deutsch, legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, and one of the attorneys who brought the OAS petition.

Numerous individuals and organizations have written letters supporting both petitions, including the Puerto Rican Bar Association, the National Lawyers Guild, and the National Conference of Black Lawyers. Over 15,000 letters have been sent to President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno seeking immediate and unconditional amnesty. Now that the formal application has been submitted, the campaign is continuing to collect letters and resolutions of support to build momentum to win the prisoners' release. For more information, contact Ofensiva '92, Apartado Postal 02190, Rio Piedras, PR 00928; in the U.S., National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners, 1112 N. California, Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 278-0885. ◇

GRANTS

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gation into the political, economic, and social climate in Crescent City, CA where the prison is located.

PBIP seeks to inform the public about the horrors at this prison, and to provide support to prisoners and their families. The project also aims to increase educational opportunities for the prisoners and work toward four basic demands: ending human rights violations at the prison; ending use of long term solitary confinement in California prisons; rehabilitation of survivors of torture for prisoners who have been housed in the SHU; and closing of the Pelican Bay SHU.

Pelican Bay is a high-tech, "maxi-maxi" prison near the California/Oregon border. In the high security unit there, the 1500 predominantly Black and Latino prisoners have little or no face-to-face contact with other people, not even guards. Guards monitor inmates by video cameras and microphones. SHU prisoners are not allowed to work, take classes, attend religious services, receive counseling or practice hobbies. The cruel and unusual conditions

of punishment at Pelican Bay include the use of excessive force, denial of medical and psychiatric care, hog-tying prisoners, and prolonged solitary confinement. Prisoners are locked in 22 1/2 hours a day. Before being allowed to exercise, alone, in a small bare space called a "dog walk," prisoners are strip searched, a routine practice before any movement in the prison.

A civil rights suit was brought against Pelican Bay this past fall, citing excessive use of force by guards, inadequate medical and mental health care, and substandard access to the law library. Excessive force at Pelican Bay means that a team of 6-8 guards in combat gear with face guards and riot shields enter the cells of prisoners and forcibly "extract" them, for offenses as minor as refusing to return a dinner tray. These guards "extract" people using stun guns and weapons that fire rubber and wood bullets, and gas. Beating before and after restraint is common.

PBIP is monitoring the class-action suit and developing extensive publicity

around the trial. In addition, the project has organized an Adopt-A-Prisoner literacy program which sends books to indigent prisoners and matches prisoners to sponsors who will assist with them with their personal educational goals. PBIP provides speakers and information to outside organizations, community groups, and the media including recent CNN and 60 Minutes reports on the prison. Finally PBIP is placing these issues in a national and international context by working with Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the UN Commission on Human Rights.

RESIST's recent grant to the project was used for a one-time special issue of the group's newsletter, "Pelican Bay Express," which focuses on the civil rights trial. The issue was to include interviews with expert witnesses, notes from the trial, a street talk column from the vigil outside the courthouse, prisoners' testimonies, and reports on other high security units. (As this issue went to press the trial was still underway.)

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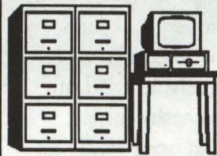
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In each issue of the newsletter we highlight a few recent grants made to groups around the country. In this issue we include our annual Salzman and Cohen awards, and a grant to a prisoners' rights advocacy group. The information in these brief reports is provided by the groups themselves. For further information, please write to them at the addresses included here.

Honor Our Neighbors Origins and Rights

2647 North Stowell Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Honor Our Neighbors Origins and Rights, (HONOR) is the recipient of RESIST's annual Freda Friedman Salzman Memorial Endowment Fund grant. This award, "is dedicated to the purpose of supporting organized resistance to the institutions and practices that rob people of their dignity as full human beings...(giving) a high priority to the efforts of Native American peoples to resist cultural as well as actual genocide."

In January, 1988, a group of concerned individuals gathered in northern Wisconsin in response to growing insensitivity, anti-Indian rhetoric, and activity against Indians exercising their treaty-guaranteed fishing rights. To these people, the U.S. government's treaties with the Indian nations "were a matter of national honor," treaties made by one sovereign people to another. The following June, HONOR organized as a coalition of groups who work together on events, actions, and educational campaigns that fit within HONOR's principles. The coalition's board includes Indians and non-Indians, and is supported by a diverse group of tribal governments.

HONOR's goals are to raise public awareness concerning treaty rights and the necessity of respecting indigenous peoples. The coalition disseminates information, investigates racial incidents, monitors and reports on anti-Indian activities, and works to broaden cultural understanding. The coalition's Return of the Homelands project researches the ownership, natural resources, sacred sites, and ecological aspects of land and works to return former reservation land to tribes that are interested in such land reclamation. A new campaign, the Indigenous Youth Environmental Education Project will combine hands-on experiments

and tours of Indian lands to re-connect urban Indians with the land.

A recent booklet produced by HONOR, "Questions and Answers on Treaty Rights," provides an excellent overview of treaty rights, what they are, and what relationships between Indian nations and other U.S. citizens ought to be. The booklet was originally produced in the 1970s by the National Coalition to Support Indian Treaties and was revised and updated by HONOR this year. The booklet also contains a short but very useful bibliography and list of resources.

RESIST's recent grant to HONOR was used to purchase a copy machine for the office.

Black Workers for Justice

P.O. Box 1863
Rocky Mount, NC 27802

Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ) is the recipient of RESIST's Arthur Raymond Cohen Memorial Endowment which "is designed to support the causes to which Arthur Cohen (1918-1986) was committed: opposition to the arms race, the cold war and American intervention abroad; and support for civil liberties, the fight against racism, and the struggles of workers and unions at home."

BWFJ was originally formed in the fall of 1981 as the Black Workers for Justice at K-Mart. Several Black women had been fired from their jobs, falsely accused of stealing money from the cash register. In reality, the women had been leading a petition effort among workers in the store, raising questions of discrimination in store policies. Eventually a massive community meeting was organized to expose the problems; a boycott was organized including a daily picket line in front of the store. Through ongoing efforts of organizers, the management was forced to resign and a Black manager hired. BWFJ was founded to continue supporting workers engaged in similar workplace struggles.

The organization supports workers of all races and nationalities to improve the quality of life, and protect their basic rights as working people. The Black Belt South is the group's organizing area, the poorest region in the U.S., and an area facing sharp declines in real wages, with low union membership, and few statutory worker protections.

Since its founding, a number of successful campaigns have been waged and won, including the struggle against the Schlage Lock Co. plant closing in 1988 that won workers severance pay, extended benefits, and exposed the toxic waste dumping practiced by the company. The Workers Want Fairness Campaign was launched in 1989, and led to the establishment of more than 10 workplace committees inside plants in North Carolina. BWFJ assisted the community of Hamlet, NC, in response to the deaths of 25 workers killed there in the fire at the Imperial Food Products chicken processing plant. BWFJ assisted workers in forming their own organization, organizing a national March on Hamlet, and raising over \$43,000 in relief. In September, 1992, owner Emmett Roe was sentenced to 19 years in prison, possibly the longest prison sentence issued to a plant owner for corporate murder.

BWFJ plans to continue working on its Workers Want Fairness campaign, a basic strategy to build workers' rights by strengthening local organizing. The group also plans to establish a Southern Labor Journal to highlight the struggles of various Southern workers, and to build new chapters in North Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Washington, D.C., South Carolina, and Alabama. BWFJ is also focusing on environmental justice issues, including health and safety issues in plants and contamination of surrounding communities.

RESIST's recent grant was used to support the Workers Want Fairness campaign.

Pelican Bay Information Project

2489 Mission St., #28
San Francisco, CA 94110

Throughout the winter of 1989 and the following year, the Prisoners Rights Union (PRU) and other prisoner advocacy groups were deluged with complaint letters from prisoners at Pelican Bay State Prison, especially in the Security Housing Unit (SHU), a longterm solitary confinement area. The PRU responded by sponsoring an investigative visit to the prison in the fall of 1991, during which 55 prisoners were interviewed. Pelican Bay Information Project (PBIP) is a result of that site visit, becoming an independent project of PRU by the winter. Since then PBIP has conducted a second tour including an investi-

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