

feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle

Durham, NC ~ march 2017 ~ volume 27

'It's about to get rough all over'

February 16, 2017, 2:20 PM

Hello,

How are you doing? Well I would like to start off by saying that I am so sorry for taking so long to write you guys (IOA) back...

NOW they are cutting the TV off at 11:00 pm instead of 12 and on most shifts we can't even have the TV on while we locked back from 12:45 to 4 pm and from 6:45 to 8 pm. The food has got a lot better, but they don't have much variety and they took away the blueberry and sweet bread. But at least you know what you are eating. Canteen comes late or incomplete and late. Also, they run out of a lot of stuff. The c.o.'s still talk nasty to us and treat us like animals, medical co-pay is still high (\$20) and even the med-techs talk nasty to you.

Man, they even talking about changing face-to-face visits to video visitation. This is just so they can keep track of what we saying because our face-to-face visits are the only time we have privacy when talking to our loved ones. They record phone calls, open and read our mail, so them changing

visitation to video is to record what you are saying. I feel we should be able to have privacy, and be able to talk to our loved ones without people all in our business.

I think that our new president is full of shit (excuse my French) and that he is going to make America worse, and that if you don't have money then to him you don't matter... I didn't hear about the prisoner uprising in Delaware but would (like more info). I think that what they said is true, that because he is now the president, not only prisoners will be treated worse, but also those who are out in the world and "free." It's about to be rough all over. I think so, too, that once we all stand up and fight together things will change. Do nothing, you get nothing; do something then you can expect something in return.

Stay powerful and strong.

Inside the struggle,

Tanna Noel

I want to shout out Mel, T.Rex, Fox, Tray, D.J., Leek, Sarah and Justin. Y'all keep your head up, they can't hold us forever. Love y'all.

‘ARAMARK got fired! That is a great, great accomplishment.’

Hi!

It is good to hear from you again. Yes I am still here. I have been for here a year and a half now. The SBI Lab stuff finally came in. So I am hoping that my case will be finished this year.

Yes thanks to Inside-Outside Alliance jail life has got better. We get out 6 1/2 hours a day that is still better than 4. We got thicker mats to lay on. That's also a plus.

And last but not least ARAMARK got fired! That is a great, great accomplishment. The food is a whole lot better. I can dig it! We get milk in the mornings now also!

I hope that the Door didn't hit ARAMARK in the ass! On second thought, I hope their ass is sore!

Thanks for writing,
K.N.

What is Feedback?

Feedback is a publication of Inside-Outside Alliance (IOA), a group of people trying to support the struggles of those inside (or formerly inside) the Durham jail, and their families and friends. We recognize that any of us can be outside one day, inside the next -- the revolving door of incarceration. We also participate in struggles against police harassment and brutality. IOA maintains a website called Amplify Voices Inside (amplifyvoices.com) that publishes the words of Durham jail inmates and former inmates talking about conditions inside and outside and how they see the world.

The name Amplify Voices Inside comes from something a brave and rebellious inmate wrote in the fall of 2012. This publication, *Feedback*, is a sampling of recent contents of the website. When something amplified is redirected at the source of the sound, the effect is called feedback. That is what this is: the voices that have been amplified to the outside world being re-broadcast inside the walls of the jail. *Feedback* is also distributed on the outside and sometimes includes 'outside' voices. Unless a person requests use of their real name, then writers' initials have been changed to protect identities and minimize repressive attacks and harassment.

To contribute words or art, write to: IOA, PO Box 1353, Durham, NC 27701.

You may be able to reach us by phone at 919.666.7854

Or, if you are not in jail and are able to, send an email: insideoutsidealliance@gmail.com

*** Se habla español. ***

'Hope is good...but ACTION is the force behind change'

2/14/2017

To whom it may concern,

I'm a first time writer, as I wasn't aware of this newsletter until someone passed it on to me yesterday. Anyway, my name is Rasheem Sahib, and I first want to thank everyone with a voice to speak up for freedom and justice. I'm a born-again criminal and now I fight for freedom and justice. It sickens me to my stomach that these harden-ass criminals in here won't even stand up for themselves. They are afraid to lose their canteen or TV if they exercise their rights. They stand at the podium and kick it with the police all day but they disrespect one another and try to exercise conflict and chaos to their fellow brothers and sisters. If the powers that be feel that we accept things as they are, why would

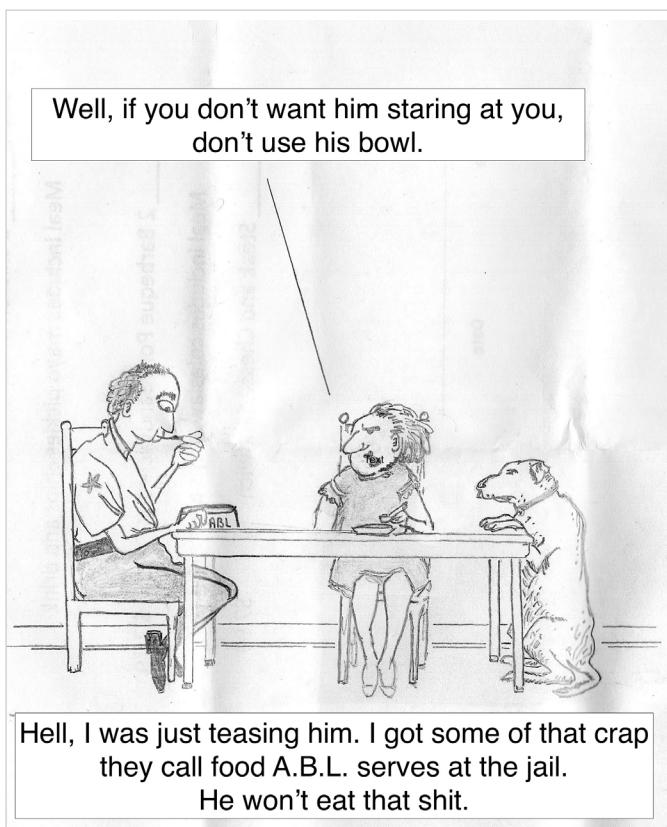
they change it? Let's let them know we don't accept this shit: Fight the Power!

It's crazy how people's priorities are twisted and yet they hope for change. Hope is good, never give up hope. But ACTION is the force behind change—and prayer.

Peace!

Rasheem

P.S. Please add me to your mailing list. Thank you!



‘One voice is but a whisper, a thousand are a mighty roar’

Dear IOA,

I am a female inmate currently in custody at Durham County jail. First, I want to praise the work and efforts made to give voice to any and all parties willing to speak out against issues that would otherwise go unaddressed. As a temporary resident in this jail I am expressing the need for all inmates, male and female, to be properly screened and searched. Lice were discovered in 5D (women's housing unit). The woman came into the facility with them, and was a part of general population for nearly a week before they were discovered. She was given one treatment, placed on medical lockback and virtually forgotten about besides meals. When approximately two weeks had passed, there was a breech in communication. One squad was told she was medically cleared, when she had not been. She again joined general population, only to be locked back until she was released. There have been grievances filed about females grooming and styling hair in the eating area, which is highly unsanitary, but no one has formally addressed this matter. Another issue in the female pod is the constant unnecessary request for toilet paper and feminine products, which should be kept on hand.

There is no reason a woman should have to wait for items that are necessary to ensure good hygienical practices.

About the food: the quality is substandard and at times unappetizing in taste or appearance. Even more so when hair is found in it. I don't doubt that those working in the kitchen practice good service by wearing proper attire, some things just happen but shouldn't. On several occasions we have been served spoiled milk, rotten fruit and molded bread. The sad thing is that the quality was obvious, and it was still placed on the serving cart. Canteen and hot trays are a godsend for some people who would otherwise not eat if these services weren't available. The down side is the unpredictability of the delivery. It feels to some as if their money is held hostage and delivery is intentionally delayed. The system should not let me order what is not available or in the inventory. By the time an order is processed or filled it is too late to guarantee delivery of items ordered with the money that is in the account. How can a company making upwards of a "guess-estimated" \$9,000 per canteen cycle continuously run out of the most popular items, such as honey buns

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and hot chips?

Clearly, they are in the wrong profession. No matter who the customer is there should be some type of integrity when it comes to quality of service. It is clear that nothing will change if we continue to be silent about how we are treated as inmates if we don't speak up. Although we must remember there is a way to speak up. One voice is but a whisper, and a thousand are a mighty roar. Speak up so we can all be heard. Thank you for the platform to express my concerns and don't stop what y'all are doing.

Respectfully
submitted,

— E.F.B.

'It's cold and there's nothing to do in here'

Hey,

It's cold and there's nothing to do in here...

I don't want the new visitation thing. My family comes from an hour and 30 minutes away. Crazy, rite? You can put this poem in.

My friend, I stand in judgment now
And feel that you're to blame somehow
On Earth I walked with you day to day
And never did you point the way

You knew the Lord in truth and glory
But never did you tell the story
My knowledge then was very dim
You could have led me safe to him

Though we lived together here on Earth
You never told me of the second birth
And now I stand this day condemned
Because you failed to mention him

You taught me many things, that's true
I called you "friend" and trusted you
But I learn now that it's too late
And you could have kept me from this fate

We walked by day and talked by night
And yet you showed me not the light
You let me live, and love, and die
You knew I'd never live on high

Yes I called you friend in life
And trusted you through joy and strife
And yet on coming to this dreadful end
I cannot now call you my friend.

— Melanie Battle

Canteen and Tray Petition

The below letter was signed by 35 detainees on 5A.

To whom it may concern,

We the inmates of Durham County Jail are addressing fairness, equality and the expectation of appropriate functioning of services provided by this facility in associations with ABL food services and Aramark employees.

Food Trays

We are addressing the issue of continuous empty slots every morning for breakfast, and for lunch and dinner. This may not be all the time, but it is the majority of the time that they are not adequately filled.

Another issue is the fact that diet trays are not appropriately prepared in regards to an individual's specified diet which has been set by medical. We have witnessed on several occasions an inmate whose meal says no cabbage receive cole slaw, lettuce or straight cabbage; another, whose specified no onions/no red sauce receive exactly this and they are allergic. Not only did they receive this meal, but the detention officer wouldn't get it fixed, but forced the inmate to keep the tray even knowing the individual's allergies. Another inmate who is a diabetic and receives a 2800 calorie diet continues to get trays packed with starches, which is worse than the consumption of cookies. He will receive a tray with bread, pasta and potatoes with applesauce. That's ridiculous. And there is an individual who receives a Heart Healthy diet/ no red sauce and there are moments when he, as well, receives exactly what should not be on a cardiac diet. ABL needs to be addressed pertaining to the inmates who are in the initial care of this facility. Hands down.

Canteen Outages

We all know everyone was under the impression that Aramark was losing their contract and ABL (or someone else) was going to take over canteen. It didn't happen and Aramark renewed their contract...Fine, but this is where it concerns inmates. Since "Bull", the former canteen overseer was transferred or fired, a kitchen overseer temporarily took over Ms. Pam and shortly after that Mr. Kerry took over, then Ms. Myer began to dispense canteen. When Ms. Pam was doing canteen and working the kitchen, just like when "Bull" was here, on a regular during December and January we received our canteen Mondays, i-Cares Tuesdays, Hot Trays on Wednesdays, canteen again on Thursdays, and i-Cares as well as Hot Trays on Fridays. It never failed. And there were hardly ever any outages.

Unfortunately, since Ms. Myer has been working, we receive hot trays that are supposed to be hot!!! And when we receive them, we're supposed to also get them at a decent time of the day. We have been getting hot trays between 8 pm and 10 pm, and worst of all, they are always COLD. There have been constant shortages every week for the past month and a half. When canteen is received, items are forgotten to be packaged because of shortages or simply overlooked and we have to wait to get it the next canteen day, IF!!! they remember. But she NEVER forgets to charge our accounts—it's not fair.

And when inmates act out by kicking doors and yelling through the pod, it's due to these issues being added to the already terrible conditions of this facility. We are expected to act and behave in an orderly manner, some do and others don't, but we expect that those who are in a position to work on our behalf or resolve these issues will actually do so as they are supposed to. We as the inmates in Durham County Jail are all in agreement. This may cause troubles over time, which is not needed on either part's end, inmates or officers. We are asking for Inside-Outside Alliance to please be a voice for us immediately. Thank you and God Bless.

In addition, there was the below letter to Aramark about their poor service administering canteen. The company lost the meal preparation contract and ABL took over in October, but Aramark still controls the commissary.

Dear Aramark,

It's bad enough we go over half a day between dinner and breakfast than to not have food we've paid for not be delivered to us. This is how we feed our hunger pains. This is not just a complaint, it's the principle of it. You go anywhere to get food in the world, we as a people of the world expect to receive what we paid for not too long after we've paid for it, and if there is a mistake for the mistake to be fixed as soon as possible. It shouldn't be a problem knowing you the employer pays your worker to do their job and to fix their mistakes. So we as customers are seldom right! You don't want to argue with the customer because of the possibility of losing their business and leaves your company with a bad reputation. This is called in all business "customer service and customer appreciation." If your customer won't address the problem, who will, Aramark? We are being taken advantage of very badly. And constantly overcharged more than prison facilities. Why?

Cc: county commissioners, Capt. Bazemore

‘The system seems like it’s on its last leg’

The following is from a comrade in a state facility.

Hey —

What’s been up, I’ve been waiting for a letter from you for forever. Me I’m doing as good as I can. I’m at one of the worst prisons in the state. How are things? That draft (of Durham Human Relations Commission’s recommendations on the jail) looks great! What’s the status with things in the jail? Trump is...I don’t know...but what is very evident is that change is coming and not the kind that’s easy transitional type kind of stuff. This is more of the brute force, force feed kind of thing. I listen to the news radio about 3 hours a day and the global climate went from progressively hopeful and optimistic to almost hostile. You got Trump banning people from certain countries from entry, and Iran doing missile tests. Rumors of secret documents imply some plot to insert Trump in the White House. It’s just a lot going on out there, I feel that nuclear war is imminent...

Those books that you sent me are great—the poems from Margaret Randall are cool, too, powerful. I’ve learned a lot from the books you’ve sent me. I could try to explain some, but I’d fill pages up about Richard Wright and the others. I’ve definitely got a lot further to go. I respect the thinking of

the authors, but I don’t want to get caught up in the story more than the ideals and the motive and purpose of the story. But still remain to have my own ideals. *Middle Passage* is also a wild book. But the historical background is beautiful. Anyway, I’m glad to be away from the county (Durham), it’s a very sad place.

It seems that Durham is going through some serious changes, I just hope that African Americans can on a wider spectrum see the obstacles and oppositions we face, not just us but minorities and those that see the bigger picture. The system seems like it’s on its last leg. There’s been a lot of exposure these last couple years. And it seems there’s bound to be a lot more uncovering of the eyes with our new president. Well, I’m running low on writing space.

Thanks for the push.

Your brother,
T.B.

‘Sucked into the system because I fit a description’

Hey—

My name is ---, but everyone knows me as 700. This is my first time getting charged with anything in my life. I’ve been here 8 months and have only been to court once (after first appearance) to have my \$650,000 bond reduced to \$150,000, which is still too much even after I told the judge I was working at Kroger and attending -- High and living on my own. I mean, I only I’ve been in here. He the roof bond, it’s the next I get sucked cause I fit a descrip-mufucking right. started on this new It don’t make sense to come down here their loved ones for ready bad enough amount of time we to my people through a camera, ain’t that what cell phones are for? But this money hungry jail couldn’t care less what the kings and queens in this jail go through. It’s like the one thing you look forward to after being here so long is getting took away. And could someone tell me why co’s are wearing three layers, a uniform and a jacket and we in here freezing our asses off and get put on lockback for having too many jumpsuits? That shit’s crazy. — 700

“And don’t get me started on this new video visitation shit. It don’t make sense why our peoples got to come down here just to “face time” their loved ones for 20 minutes.”

just turned 18 while still gave me an out like one day I’m up, into the system be-tion--”pssh” yeah And don’t get me video visitation shit. why our peoples got just to “face time” 20 minutes. It’s al-with the scarce get, now I gotta talk



Despite how jail officials may try to spin it, this is NOT visitation.

Class War on the Color Line: Reform and Repression at the Durham County Jail

More than a year after the Sheriff's department's murder-by-medical-neglect of Matthew McCain, the Durham County Jail is, once again, in the news. On Tuesday, January 3, after receiving letters from almost a hundred detainees and after three individuals blocked the entrance to the jail on the night of November 18, declaring it #ANightWithNoDetentions, the Durham Human Relations Commission released ten recommendations for how to improve conditions at the plantation on Mangum street. Some of these, most notably that a community-based research team be allowed to do a survey in the jail, were things that detainees, their families, and the community at large have been demanding for a long time. Others were extrapolations from what detainees wrote to the commission, and what members of the public said in a forum the HRC held on September 15 of last year, including concerns about mental health, corporate price-gouging of detainees and their families, bail, and the Sheriff's department's cooperation with ICE.

Then, on January 6, the News and Observer reported that the jail will move to video visitation this summer and that retrofits are already underway. Inside-Outside Alliance has known for some time that this was in the pipeline – Global Tel's latest contract to provide phone service in the jail includes a provision for them to run a video visitation system – but we've never had a definite timeline before. Now it appears that, over the course of this summer, the jail will be retrofitted and its policies rewritten so that in-person visitation will be eliminated and replaced exclusively with visitation-via-videoscreen. It should go without saying that depriving detainees of even the limited in-person interaction with friends and loved ones that they now experience at visitation is the height of inhumanity even for an institution like the Sheriff's department that has raised contempt for human life to the level of a ghastly art form. We should also note that GTL advertises video-visitation as a way to derive profit from and reduce the costs of inmate visitation.

Back to Basics

Before we ask what is to be done about all of this, we need to ask the more fundamental question, what is going on? Just what has the HRC recommended? What sorts of opportunities and challenges does it hold? And what does that have to do with this latest threat to the life, freedom, and dignity of the people the Sheriff's department keeps locked up in the middle of downtown? As IOA did nearly two years ago in our What We Believe. What We Want set of demands issued during the jail-wide lockback, the HRC recommendations explicitly oppose video visitation and raise a number of important concerns, for example, about the ways that bail makes having money a

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criterion for whether a person will be locked up or free. However, they also raise the spectre of “reform-by-expansion” – a specter which haunts all abolitionist organizing. For example, the HRC recommends abolishing cash bail, touting the pre-trial release programs of Charlotte and Washington DC as models; however, both of these programs include increased electronic surveillance, increased policing, and a massive bureaucracy of social workers and parole officers backed up by the armed power of the state – an expansion, not a reduction of oppression. But they say nothing about the forms of repression that can accompany other forms of pre-trial release in places like Charlotte and Washington DC (which the recommendations explicitly tout as models). Right now, in Durham, people who can pay cash bail are released, while people without money are “held” in the jail. But we must wonder: if the latter are given pre-trial release, will they experience the same freedom that the former currently pay for? Or will they be subjected to new forms of unfreedom?

What the HRC recommendations (and other liberal reformist approaches) lack is an understanding of the jail – and the whole prison system – as an instrument of class war, and specifically class war on the color line (where class wars are always fought in America). Swapping out one set of corporations for another to “provide services” in the jail, switching cash bail for some other form of control, and providing “transparency” by making the jail a place to give tours will not break, nor even loosen, the chains that bind our comrades currently locked up on Mangum. In this sense, they are part of the same pattern as the move to video visitation, which is a function of the Sheriff’s unchecked power and commitment to profiting off of prisoners, which the recommendations fundamentally do not challenge. We must seize the opportunity offered by these recommendations to bring a critical, abolitionist agenda to Durham County: the abolition of bail and all alternative forms of conditional pre-trial release, the removal of private corporations and their bottom lines from the jail, funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment through communities rather than through the jail, and the complete severing of all law enforcement ties with ICE.

From Crisis-Management to Abolitionism

The imminent move to video visitation can make it difficult to see where there is space to insert such an agenda. What we must remember is that, while the jail continues to pile inhumanity upon inhumanity, prisoners and their accomplices continue to resist. Through these resistances, they/we create a sense of crisis for the Sheriff’s department. Their response is to narrate a crisis and, then, to propose a solution to their crisis – whether it is to take pencils away from detainees, institute a jail-wide lockback, move to online visitation scheduling, or threaten to reduce detainees and their visitors to faces on a computer screen. When the Sheriff makes a “crisis management”

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Listen to me

Listen to me
How do we
Better ourselves
When all we know
Is the streets
Forced to live
In one element
Because we fear
The police
Black and Hispanic lives
Do matter
But they're being took
As we speak
Father's stole
From their young
While they're sleeping in peace
It's hard to win
In life
When you've got a government
and system
To beat

Don't play the racist card
Just yet
Listen to me
I know a lot of caucasians
In the same situation
As we
But when you look down
It's not their blood
That stream at ya feet
Their families don't have to
Identify that body
In the middle of the street
We're the ones
Dealt the ruinous hand
Of defeat
All because we're
Envied and disowned
By an enslaved
Country
— *Ghost*

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move like these, the temptation for us friends of prisoners on the outside is to “drop everything” to oppose the latest inhumanity. There exists a temptation to move into a “crisis mode” and drop abolitionism in favor of emergency management of the situation that abolitionists seek to do away with. Instead of shifting into the “crisis mode” of the state (whether the Sheriff’s Department, County Commissioners, or City Council), we should say: “We won’t pay for your crisis!” We must organize to intervene in situations of apparent “crisis” like the prospect of video visitation – and we will. IOA will fight video visitation by any means necessary. But we must always seek to convert these situations of “crisis management” into occasions for abolitionist politics. Taking the relay from prisoners’ ongoing resistance, we on the outside must campaign to oppose video visitation in the context of a broader abolitionist rearticulation of the HRC’s recommendations, fighting for bail abolition as one step on the way to prison abolition (or at least putting the Durham jail out of business). We must not give an inch, as we know the jailers will not. We must press on in our struggle for love and freedom until we break every chain.