

feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle

Durham, NC ~ May 2017 ~ volume 29

At a recent visitation time, we met D, whose partner is locked up in the jail. She was going to visit him in person and face to face. D reminded us of a very simple but very profound truth that is at the heart and the beginnings of this group: **"Whether you're locked up or not, you've still got power. They're trying to take it from you, but you've still got power."**

"This is just another hint to the new age of high tech slavery."

How are you doing G___? I hope all is well with you and your team. I received your letter on the 21 of March, but I had received the books two days before, which I am truly grateful. I am still waiting for the WEB DuBois "Souls of Black Folks," and yes, you can send me more books by similar authors that deal with the struggle of liberation and the fight against oppression. My mind has a thirst for knowledge, so please, keep the well running.

On another note, the video visitation is another form of control and the further removal of privacy. The whole point of an in-person-visit is to be able to converse with your people about your well-being (that can be seen with the eyes) if you are being mistreated, and most importantly things about your case that can't be said on the regular phones.

It's bad enough having to keep your loved ones in the blind about your fate with the Criminal Justice System because the phones is recording. Also, every single moment we are being recorded and watched and now they want to watch our visit. This is just another hint to the new age of high tech slavery. Also, its psychological warfare, the conditions of the mind to be more passive and non-rebellious. It is to imply we know what you're planning before you do, I see your every move and it's these very thoughts that become embedded, subconsciously, in our mind that causes the majority to be timid or content when it comes to checking the powers that be.

So, all in all, it's just another infringement upon our privacy and to insert the county dominance over the convict. Also, to take every little thing away that can bring joy to a convict soul.

Sincerely,
Black Holocaust

'Face-to-face visits are the only time we feel human'

It was good to get a letter from you in this dark place. How are you? I'm doing about as good as I can in here, you know. I read the magazine (feedback). It's nice, very informative and REAL! I feel that the video visitation is a horrible idea because it's the one time for twenty minutes to be free again and be a father and talk to and catch up with your children's life, to be a husband/boyfriend and speak with your significant other and feel human again. I am for face-to-face visits. It's the only time we as detainees feel human and are actually connected to our real lives outside of this filthy, overcrowded hell on Earth.

I definitely appreciate you writing me. In here, it's terrible, they barely want to give us toiletries, soap, lotion. Commissary comes when it wants to, most of the time when it comes half of the items are missing from the order and they are never replaced. It is terrible in here, for sure, I am so ready to get out of here.

I am finding God again and my relationship with him is growing and I am becoming a better person. Could you please pray for me every day? I appreciate it. (I wish I had) some money on my account so I can eat in here because I didn't get to bring my phone in here so I don't even have my mother's # or anybody's to help me out so I'm on "E," my account, I mean. But it's a test every day in here to stay sane and Godly, but I'm maintaining. Thanks for the letter. Have a blessed day... - MD

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.

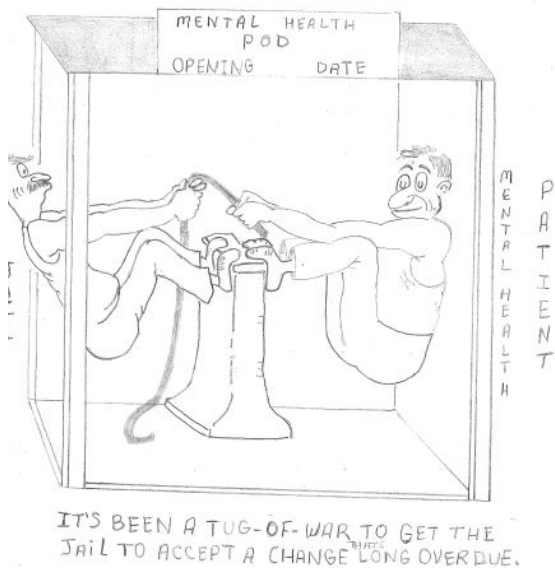
The name Amplify Voices Inside comes from something a brave and rebellious inmate wrote in the fall of 2012. This publication, Feedback, is a sampling of recent contents of the website. When something amplified is redirected at the source of the sound, the effect is called feedback. That is what this 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. ***



Mental Health Nightmare

Many times the call for help is sitting right in front of you. But can it be heard while we sit behind these narrow walls? When you arrive, medical asks if you have thoughts of harming yourself or others. If you say no, it's brushed off and never brought up again. The mental health staff are thorough here, but only if you have a pre-existing psychiatric history! What about everyone else, what about those who haven't been diagnosed yet or seen appropriate health care? From what we understand, the jail received more than \$280,000 to be trained with helping those who are mentally ill and even plans to dedicate a pod to better serve those specific detainees. That pod is still empty and those who suffer mental health problems remains in population with everyone else. The death of Matthew McCain in 2016 and the death of Uniece Fennell recently are examples of how poorly this jail and the officers have focused on mental health since their promise last year to increase its knowledge and awareness. We guarantee everyone in this jail suffers from some sort of depression during their stay here. Being stuck in this jail means you could lose your spouse, job, house, car and even the custody of your children. The bottom line is that the experience is stressful as hell, and what do they do? They lock you behind a door for 17 hours or more each day. The officers forget about you and don't care. There are signs when someone is suicidal or might harm themselves. And the way this place is run, it's easy to see how they missed or didn't notice. It's the jail's responsibility to maintain our health care, but it doesn't seem like much of an effort is being done. The community has fought hard to get the jail to recognize the increasing medical and mental health needs, especially in jail. It seems as if we are playing a tug-of-war! When will they remove their rose-tinted glasses, and recognize these serious mental health needs and the dire urgency to train staff and get the mental health pod open?

-- From several detainees

“It’s a vicious cycle where their goal is for you to lose everything you have”

I received two letters from you on March 31st, one was dated February 11th and the second March 27th. So I think there may be some lag time with the mail. You asked if I had received the Human Relations Commission’s Report and I have not! The only thing I received in the mail are two written letters and both March and April “Feedback” booklets. There is no report anywhere to be found if it was sent. Though, I wouldn’t be surprised if it conveniently was lost by the mail inspection here.

As for your inquiry about any knowledge in regards to Uniece Fennell. There is none in 3D, no one knows a thing here and the officers are tight lipped as if it never happened. When I called home the day after the incident my family was asking about the death - And I had no clue about it at all. When I asked the officer in the pod about it he would not comment and wouldn’t even confirm that anything happened. I watched the local news that evening, there was no story about it there either and nobody gets the newspaper. The women’s pod is on the 5th floor, we are in the dark down here on the 3rd floor. Sorry I couldn’t be of any help this time.

Video visitation seems to be a hot topic lately. I heard that the jail was going to transition to it like

Wake County but I didn’t realize it was happening NOW! A couple days in the past few weeks we have been prevented from coming out of our cells in the morning because they had someone working in the visitation room: They’ve already started installing metal mounts to house the video screen. It looks like they are progressing forward despite all the protests inside and out. The feedback booklet hits on a few critical points such as profiting GTL as well as the jail’s profit and how video visitation will dehumanize personal interactions. I want to point out how the District Attorney’s office will directly “profit” from it, too. Just like our phone calls I would think the video visits will be recorded. The district Attorney’s office has access to your phone calls and will now be able to pry into your visits. There is no privacy whatsoever. They read our mail, they record our phone calls, and now they will be keeping tabs on our visits. What would it be like if we had that privilege to listen to the prosecutors and DAs discussions and every phone call that they make. Invade their private interactions. Now that would be something. My point is that the deck is already stacked against you and anytime I speak my mind I have to worry whether or not what I say

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could be falsely used against me or perceived some other way. It's ridiculous!

On to other topics! The food and ABL. It has been a roller coaster with them and there is no consistency. When they began in October, there was promise, but now I can see that was just a front. The first 3 weeks were good! A variety of fresh fruit including Bananas, green vegetables, including chopped cucumbers and tomatoes, good portion sizes, and no soy. Currently, the fruit we get is not ripe, heavily bruised, and tastes awful, easily finding its way into the trash container. We have not seen a banana since the first couple of weeks. We hardly get greens, nothing like we got the first few weeks even if we do. Lately the food has been so salty you can't even eat it. The pancakes yesterday were hard as a rock. At this point I don't know which company was worse, ARAMARK or ABL. There is absolutely no variety either. You get the same meals every week multiple times a week. It's getting old very quick. Honestly, at this point I hope the jail does not renew ABL's contract. What reviews I saw and the article about ABL in the newspaper raving about their good quality and healthier menu is a lie. My vote would be to kick them out too. Their quality and service has been declining since day 1.

I wrote last time about the DA's office and the prosecutor threatening to obtain another search warrant after a judge has already noted significant misconduct by officers. Well they managed to get one, how, I have no clue. The only way is by lying and bad faith, which the DA's office is notorious for so I'm not surprised. I just read an article in the newspaper on 3/31/17 quoting a supreme court judge. In summary it mentioned that the average person does not think the justice system within North Carolina is fair and a large percentage think the process is too slow. My follow up question to that would be to isolate Durham and see how it compares. My guess would be that Durham would be far worse. I sit here day after day watching how the system in Durham works and it is concerning. Most of the prosecutors are no better than Mike Nifong and Tracy Cline, maybe even worse. I swear they teach a class to these prosecutors on the best way to hide the truth, withhold evidence, and when all else fails keep them in jail and delay, delay, delay. It's a vicious cycle where their goal is for you to lose everything you have; whether it's your job, house, car, marriage, etc. And once they've exhausted and beat you down by holding you in jail they wait until you give up. It's just crazy to me and something needs to be done.

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Oh, I want to give my thoughts on this jail with regards to Uniece Fennell. I don't know what happened, but if it was suicide I don't think that means the jail can wash their hands from liability. My understanding is that this jail was supposed to get more funding for mental health. Officers were supposed to get training on how to better handle mental health issues. If Uniece was troubled enough to harm herself, there were obvious signs that should have been caught. These officers don't care about anyone in this jail and they are certainly not observant enough. Next, how does the jail provide the means for someone to commit suicide. This should not have happened and should not have even been possible. I've lived in these cells for 17 months, if she was able to be successful in her attempt - something was not right and something needs to change. You stress the hell out of people and then place them in a harsh environment. We already know that mental disorders are widely prevalent within the jail. It's a shame that yet another person dies in this jail.

Alright! Thanks for the letters and Feedback! Looking forward to hear from you soon and any new updates!

- E.X.

“The smack of the whip has been replaced with the slap of the gavel”

Peace,

How are you doing? I hope all is well with you and your team. Also, I am sorry to hear that y'all been sucked into the “system” and now all have court-dates. As always, standing up for what's right or disrupting the system come with a negative price. Hopefully, nothing over bearing will come out of y'all court situation. Also, I seen I.O.A. protesting against video-visitation. I want to say GOOD JOB and keep up the good work.

I received “Mama's Baby Papa's Maybe” and WEB DuBois “Darkwater.” I have read both of them and found the Mama's Baby Papa's Maybe to be the most interesting. The Author really gives it up to let you see how

America “thinks.” She really hits home when she explain the misnaming factor which I think is so true. I look at it this way. We have been stereotyped so much with negative notions that whenever we are viewed by the public that's all that comes to mind is that we are a people without a culture, a bunch of thugs, as Hillary says “super predators,” etc. So, when society is fed these negative images, they really don't care that we are being incarcerated at an alarming rate. They don't care that we are being mistreated inside the prison all, because by popular thinking we are not fit for society anyways.

Furthermore, America was built off white supremacy and free labor (slavery). America has hid the ugly face

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of racism and slavery within the legal system. So, instead of a black man being “lynched” by a lynch mob and tree wise he is being lynched legally in the decency of a courtroom, and the smack of the whip has been replaced with the slap of the gavel. As a result, discrimination against race and class has forced the black woman to be the head of the family, this, too, being by design, because children coming out of a single parent home are more likely to travel on a road leading to prison.

On one note, the author quotes Goodell’s reading of the *partus sequitur ventrem*: the condition of the slave mother is “forever entailed on all her remotest posterity.” You have to ask yourself what is the condition of the slave mother or, conditions of the slave mother and why it’s forever entailed on all her remotest posterity. She’s born a female but she’s conditioned to act and perform as a slave just like the women before her and so on. So, it’s safe to say that a slave like mentality would be passed on from generation to generation. Furthermore, you can see the residue of slavery left in the modern day negro because we still choose to call ourselves “nigga” (the black community version of nigger) and the self-hate that we so adamantly express toward each other. Also, as this is passed down, the fact that you are going to prison one day is passed down also, subliminally. It’s to the point that prison is seen as a part of life now.

With this being said, I agree on the fact that we need to break apart, to

rupture violently the laws of American behavior that make such syntax possible. We need to empower people with the education necessary to seek out and destroy injustice anywhere.

Peace until next time.

– The Black Holocaust

PS: I read the WEB DuBois not so much to go off of, I need more information. Also, if possible can you send me anything by Dr. Cornel West – books, internet, etc. – or Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

‘We made ourselves obsolete’

The whole concept of marching and protesting is only a facade. It’ll never produce long-term results, only a temporary pacifier. The only way to fight against this type of injustice is through the local elections. You see, our people have a misconceived notion when it comes to the voting process. When it comes to voting for the president, we’ll show up in record-breaking numbers, but when it’s time to vote for local officials from the governor down to the district attorney, the majority of us won’t lift a goddamn finger! I mean, how can we a people be so misdirected and irresponsible? We made ourselves obsolete by neglecting to use our voting powers within our local governments, and as a result, our local governments can treat us in any manner they see fit without the threat of any political backlash. This is why the cops can kill us and get away with it, and why the courts can unjustly give us 100 years! It makes no goddamn sense!

Sorry it took so long to write back.
Forever fighting,
N.S.

‘Still being held hostage from the sun!’

What’s good IOA? Ain’t shit changed in this hell hole but the date. “Still being held hostage from the sun!” The jail still refuses to treat us like human beings. You know it’s been a whole thirty one days since I wrote my last letter and they still haven’t fixed the damn kiosk in our pod. They come on and look at it like everything is just normal. They’re making it hard on themselves and us because we have to ask for paper sick calls and canteen sheets, then they want to bitch and complain. The medical people take forever to check the medical box and when they do it’s still a wait. But they want that 20 dollars on command.

As far as canteen goes, Pam is cool she tries to get her job done the best she can but wherever they found (the other) girl they need to send her back because she always fucking some shit up and eating all the chips

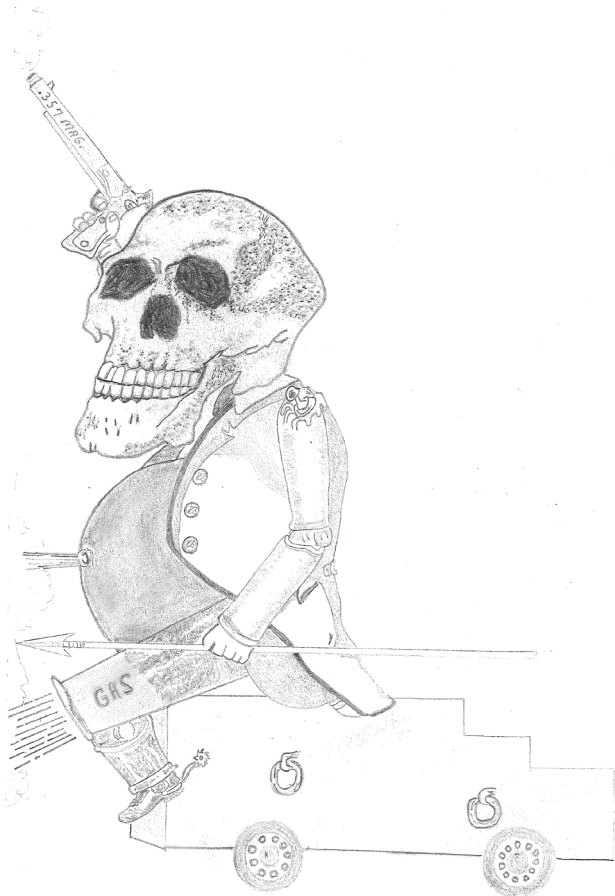
and shit. That high-ass canteen is meant for us. To those that protest for us and was willing to get locked up on March 13 to stand up on our behalf about this visitation thing, I say thank you.

Until next time—
Ghost

“This Too Shall Pass”

A note about the drawing on page 9:

Ebony Fields was in the STARR program in Durham. She was transferred to Wake County for about 50 days. She knew Uneice “Neicey” Fennell who died here in Durham at the jail on March 23rd. Ebony drew this in her memory and asked for it to be published in Feedback.



Thankful: a poem

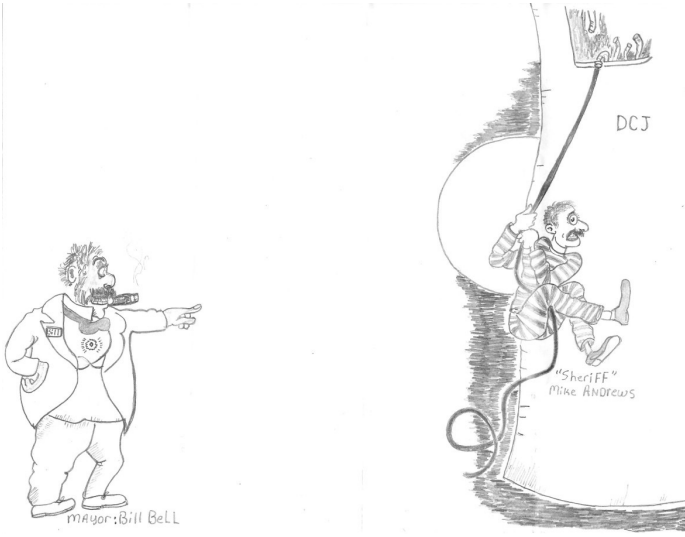
Getting locked up in a jail cell
For something I did not do
I wake up every morning hoping this
Couldn't be true
But it was a sign for me to come here
Because now I have found you
You're always here when I need you
When I'm having my UPS and downs
Even when I was at my lowest
Seven days in the pound
It's been almost two years now
Since I've been filled with your word
There's not a day that passes by
That I know I haven't been heard
My Lord, you are my friend
My savior and my might
You are the best thing that's ever happened
to me

You've shown me the light
While temptation and past memories
Are there nearly everyday
I close my eyes and pray
Asking for it all to just go away
It's time to grow up now
But everything takes time
Nobody said it's going to be easy
Not as easy as writing this rhyme
But I am grateful for my daily bread
I'm thankful for your love
And I look forward to being with my Lord
When I ascend to the heavens above.
-Melanie Battle

Shout out to my roomie. Britt Bratt, Pinky,
Lexx, Chop, and thank you, Ghost.
R.I.P. Niecey
We love and miss u.



'I can't stand another minute!'



ESCAPE!

Mayor : Hey, Sheriff Andrews, aren't you supposed to be raising money for charity by being locked up in the Durham County Jail? Where are you going? The Muscular Dystrophy Association needs you here collecting money for your bail!

Sheriff: Change of plans, Mayor Bell! I can't stand another minute in the Dur-

ham County Jail! The ABL food is horrible, the cells are freezing, and many of the officers are just plain jackasses. Plus, they gave me such an excessive bond, there's no way they're going to raise enough money for me to get out. And I better escape now, because with my office bringing in video visitation, the community might just pay money to keep me in jail!

Explanatory note: The above comic refers to Sheriff Mike Andrews' participation in the Muscular Dystrophy Association's "Lock Up" during which he pretended to be "a jailbird" (his words) in order to raise money for his "bail." His web page for the event shows that he did not reach his fundraising goal--which means he should be locked up, right?



Protest in memory of Niecey Fennell, March 31

VOICES OUTSIDE

On Friday, April 7, Inside-Outside Alliance began demonstrating at the jail against the proposed change to using video monitors in place of face-to-face in person visits at the jail. Along with a commitment to continue to be visible on a weekly basis, IOA has also written a petition to stop the plan for video visits. The petition, shown below, has more than 550 signatures.

The Durham County Sheriff's Department is threatening to take away in-person jail visitation and replace it with a glorified phone call. Families would no longer be allowed to visit loved ones on the inside.

Detainees in the Durham jail do not want this system implemented. As is, families are required to show up 30 min in advance for a 20 min visit with plexiglass between them and their loved ones. The visits are cumbersome to schedule, especially for those who do not have internet access. The video system will require visitors to be physically present in the jail, and if/when external visits are permitted, it will cost visitors 20 cents to a dollar per minute – contributing to both the isolation and financial exploitation of detainees and their families.

Video visitation is dehumanizing and further isolates those on the inside from family, loved ones, clergy, and mentors. It negatively impacts mental health and makes it even more difficult for families to evaluate the status and well-being of detainees. 74 percent of jails using video-visitation have eliminated in-person visits, and the Durham jail is likely to follow suit (Prison Policy Initiative, 2015).

The county commissioners fund the jail, and the county approved a contract with GlobalTel the commissioners did not read. We the undersigned demand that the Sheriff and Durham County Commission do all that is necessary to ensure:

1. That there is no reduction in in-person visitation for any trial of video-
"visitation".
2. That glorified video-calls do not come to replace in any way in-person visitation.
3. That all video visitation equipment currently installed in the lobby be removed



Rest in Power, Uniece “Niecey” Fennell

The following is from a statement released by Niecey’s family on Friday, March 31, the same day her friends, some family members and IOA held a day to remember her and put pressure on the sheriff at the jail:

On March 23, 17-year-old Uniece Fennell was found dead in the Durham County Detention Facility. She was awaiting trial and had not been convicted of a crime...

As the family of Niecey Fennell moves forward in their push for justice in the Durham County Detention Facility failure to keep Niecey safe and alive while in their care, her family demands the following:

- An independent investigation beyond the SBI
- A copy of the SBI’s report based on its investigation
- The Durham County Sheriff, who is in charge of the Durham County Detention Facility, must be held accountable for the failure to fix the long-known problem of the risk of the bars in certain cells and all other unsafe conditions
- The Durham County Sheriff, who is in charge of the Durham County Detention Facility, must be held accountable for Niecey’s death

The following are excerpts of statements from family and friends:

Julia Graves, Niecey’s mother: “My daughter Niecey Fennell was a minor being held in adult facility that could not provide the basic necessities for a minor, including safety... You need to know she was innocent and I want her clear her name. I also want to put a law in place that will not allow minors to be put in a JAIL.

From Tulu: “This message is for DCJ EMPLOYEES: Y’ALL HAPPY??? You may not have physically killed Neicey but y’all mentally did shit. Y’all killed us all mentally. Y’all never gave us a chance. Y’all used are charges against us like we weren’t human. Y’all took y’all authority to far. Y’ALL ARE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS, THAT’S IT. Now look what y’all did. Niecey may have had an outstanding charge but she was far from what she was accused of. Thanks for nothing. Honestly, you guys are suppose to be there to support us and guide us in a beer direcon but you’re nothing more but the devil’s companions....

From Keyona: I’m writing in reference to Uniece Fennel I’ve known Niecey for about two years now, I met her through my cousin the first me we met it was like we’ve already known each other... Not once since I’ve known Niecey has she been a person that would break and I know for certain she didn’t kill herself. All it took was the headline of the sheriff’s department to say “17 year old CHARGED WITH MURDER commits suicide” they tried to portray what she was charged with as a gateway excuse to make the public believe she killed herself when in reality they’re hiding what really happened to her which was far from suicide... I’ve been in that jail and I’ve been in jail those officers have to do rounds every so often. When you’re suicidal, it will be known and you are placed in a single cell in a turtle suit and are watched closely. ... I believe the Durham county jail officials are harboring the truth and I and many others believe that it is vital that action be taken amongst them to get the truth behind Uniece Fennels death for the sake of peace and closure for her Family.”