

feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle

Durham, NC ~ october 2015 ~ volume 11

Water logged trays: 'I want these inhuman standards addressed'

To whom it may concern,

My name is ---- . I have been incarcerated at the Durham County Jail since ---- . I'm writing to inform you of an inhuman situation I and other inmates have been subjected to over our time incarcerated at this establishment. The issue at hand has been brought to the attention of the detention officers, sergeants, and grievance officers with no response or change. The issue at hand is trays that our food is being served to us inmates on. These trays are "Water Logged," meaning water and soap is being trapped in the inside of the trays and the tops to those trays. From the cracks in the trays the "stagnated soap water" leaks out onto our food. The trays themselves are washed daily, but the water which is trapped on the inside of the trays could be from days, weeks, months, even years ago.

I personally have becoming ill from the consumption of my food daily. Since then over the time I've been here, I've noticed blood in my stool. On August 15, 2015 at 4:43 p.m. I took the top off of my tray and sat it beside my chair upright

while I attempted to eat my dinner. Afterward I picked the top up to put it back on top of my then-empty tray. After doing this I noticed something. The top had cracks in it, and it was leaking "stagnated soap water" onto the floor. In this puddle of "stagnated soap water" I made an even more gruesome discovery. The puddle left by the tray top had specks of "black mold" floating all around in it. After telling (D.O. —) she told me to write a grievance to Major Couch on the inmate kiosk. After doing so, needless to say there has been no response or change to our situation. I have also been notified by Durham County Jail staff that the trays we eat off of every day are over ten years old. With that said, the "stagnated soap water trays" could have mold on the inside that has been there since the late 90s.

The reason I'm writing you is because I need your help. I understand you may be affiliated with the NAACP (*note: we are not*) and also know other individuals who can help bring an end to this in-

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Protest at Durham Jail, 9/11/15.

The front banner says: “*Outside to Inside: You Are Not Forgotten*”

***EDITORS’ NOTE: We hope you enjoy this new volume of **feedback**. We intend to distribute it on the outside and the inside. It features many ‘outside’ voices as well as those inside. *If you would like to contribute to future editions of feedback, please read the fine print below.*

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. Writer’s 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.

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

*** Se habla español. ***

'It's no use complaining to the people that are the problem.'

Dear Friends (I.O.A.)

I want it to be known I'm one of the prisoners at D.C.J. that first filed about the nasty trays and water logged lids. The pod kiosk can prove so. I've had a toothache for 1.5 months and said to be on a list for a dentist and I've yet to see one nor have a lot of other people. The nurse acted like I was wanting narcotic pain pills (I don't), I just wanted some 800Mg Ibuprofen. She was very rude. I had to say Miss, please give me antibiotics. I got the antibiotic and a increase from 400 mg to 600 mg 2x a day on motrin, which does not help. I am on mental health meds as well, so most staff, I feel, take me as a joke and brush me off.

I have rights and they are being violated.

I need a lawyer I feel. And someone to talk to about all this. It's useless complaining to the people that are the problem. Treating the symptoms are no good. We need to treat the problems.

Please contact me by mail or visit.
Love is love. Be easy.

I. S. V.

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human way of living. I personally have hired --- to represent me in all these matters against Durham County jail and Aramark Food Services. I want these inhuman living standards addressed and brought to the public's attention. There is no reason we should be subjected to these living conditions at all. Thank you for you time and God Bless.

Sincerely,
Chuk Manning, Sr.



‘I am not ashamed of what I write’

I got your letter today and I just wanted to write you back and let you know I read my letter I wrote you in the Feedback pamphlet but it had the wrong name at the bottom. It is on page 5 of the September issue. My name is Charles Kendall and I am not ashamed of what I write. I want everybody to know I was the one who wrote it.

I have another complaint I would like to see in your next issue. I have been here for 55 days. I am in the STARR program here and I need a pair of glasses, reading glasses so I can read and do my homework from class but I cannot get any. I filled out 17 sick call lists to try and get a pair, but they keep telling me

they do not have any right now or medical does not give out glasses. But I have seen them given out to other inmates since I have been here and I told medical so. So, they finally sent a nurse up here to see me last night and she told me that they had to buy the glasses and that she would try to remember to buy me a pair so I filled out another sick call today to remind her to get me a pair. So now I am going to fill out a sick call everyday and see how long it takes me to get them and I will be sure to write you and let you know how long it takes for me to them.

Your brother in “Christ God,”
Charles Kendall

Above and Beyond

My life dreams go above and beyond, daydream on what's soon to come, in my cell I can't sleep at night cuz my mind is going above and beyond.

When I was trapped helpless without a path 2 hard to solve the problem, couldn't think of the correct math my heart still search above and beyond 4 a purpose of life 4 which I am under the sun.

Above and beyond, a life of no limits my ambitions will become reality when I leave from this prison.

And when I soar above man's reach I'll bestow my knowledge 2 those beneath my feet, above and beyond

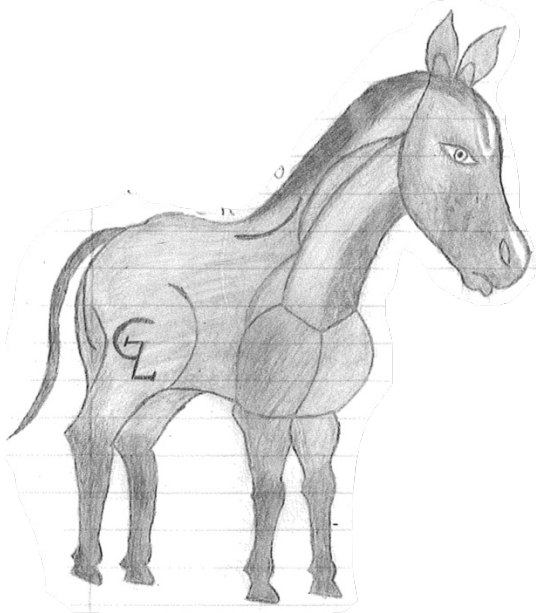
That's where I shall go, before I become a part of the earth and
BREATHE NOMO!!

'This goes higher than just this jail'

What's good?

I'm not going to lie. I was down before I seen your letter come under my door. Just reading that newsletter (feedback) put me back into my right state of mind. I haven't heard from no one in the past two weeks. No letters, no lawyer, nothing. Until now. I seen my letter I sent you in the "feedback". It helped me remember what I was striving for. Low key it helped me regain Focus. I apologize for the many typos in my last letters. I now have another roommate. And he was telling me in Person County there is far better than the shit we face in here. You should have seen my face when he told me that they get to listen to the radio and get cereal and coffee every morning. That alone brought me to the thought that if Person can do it, why can't Durham? You're right about people getting almost used to the deprivation and oppression that it becomes almost second nature. Every night before I lay down to sleep I remember where tf I'm at and not to conform to this bullshit and to actually rise above it. That's easier said than done. I'm one of the few that still remembers what it feels like to want better not just from only myself but my fellow brothers. It's kinda crazy that I am able to talk to you about things like this more comfortably than some of my peers. Imma continue to try and overcome my current situation day by day. I'm in — not — by the way...Like I said this goes higher than this just jail. It's a system that works against us...No, we haven't heard anything from the jail administration about this only from the letters we get from y'all. Also, I think it's messed up how there are two pods that get to be out all day. Right about now that doesn't sound bad. But it's unfair to the rest of the people who doesn't get that opportunity. It's been an honor to be a part of something greater than myself. Take care and write back.

Kester



VOICES OUTSIDE

Windows to the World

by Steve

On any given day, at almost any given time, you might see someone outside of the Durham County jail waving, signaling or otherwise communicating with a person inside the jail. If they happen to be lucky enough to be on their 'walk,' the person might be in the large full window at the end of their pod. For the rest of the 20 hours of the day, the person is confined to their room, and the window of communication is a thin, rectangular one that is high up in the room. Communication by the people outside is full of love, sadness, information, sometimes anger or regret, but it is almost always spirited and emotional.

And to think, if it were entirely up to the sheriff's department, the county, and others, this communication wouldn't happen at all. Yes, deputies do occasionally try to tell people they cannot wave or signal to people inside the jail. But if they tried to entirely stop it, they would spend their time doing nothing else.

Back in the mid-1990s, however, when the county was planning to build a new jail, one of the components they sought was a design which vastly decreased, if not elimi-

nated, communication by detainees with the outside world. Although it is not clear in looking through old documents what their justifications were at the time, we know that those in power will offer up seemingly reasonable ideas for why they are attempting to enact something that is cruel and unusual.

What they ended up with at 214 S. Mangum St. were very narrow windows in each cell that could only be seen through when a prisoner is on the top bunk. Having a top bunk requires that there must be two detainees in the cell (which is the case in most cells). It makes for an odd downtown décor. "Oh, that's a jail?" said a person recently walking past on the way to a ball game,

happily oblivious. "I was wondering why the windows were so small." As if larger windows would give more actual freedom to the detainees.

Still, despite the stated goal of stopping communication

between inmates and people outside, there is much that is communicated on a daily basis, albeit with some lost in translation.

Shanice, whose boyfriend is currently in the jail, says she will just stop by to wave to him when she's passing by the jail. "We only get to

Despite the stated goal of stopping communication between inmates and people outside, there is much that is communicated on a daily basis.

visit with each other once a week, and the visit is SOOOO short,” she says. It’s important for me to just see him. He holds up a sign for me that he made and it lets us be together, even for a couple minutes.”

Asked how he was able to make the sign, given the ban on pencils in cells, Shanice says she doesn’t know, but she’s glad he did.

Others position themselves across from their loved one or friend’s window because they can’t visit. Whether it’s because of the narrow time frame of visiting hours by pod, the way the online visitation fills up so quickly, or because detention officers check IDs for outstanding issues, visiting inside is not an option, so they make window ‘visits’ work.

Brandie, whose husband is locked up, told me she holds this time dear. It seems that with so much going on around her—people going to and fro, cars whizzing past and the train rumbling by—it would be hard to feel connected, but she said she can disregard all those distractions because she has to: her husband is in a tiny cell for most of his hours every day. From across Pettigrew Street, she made various motions. People who don’t know the ‘language’ may not get it, but that doesn’t really matter.

With people outside sometimes very openly communicating with people inside at various times throughout the day and night, you might think detention officers would try to stop them. But the re-

ality is, they are powerless to stop it. Despite the sheriff’s office attempts to cut off or curtail communication at the very visible downtown jail, it hasn’t worked—because those whom they are trying to keep down have simply improvised, as those facing oppressive circumstances are apt to do.

Still, occasionally officers will come out and try to throw their weight around, telling a person outside that they must not try to communicate with prisoners. Sometimes, they’ll say this to people who aren’t even doing so. And, predictably, sometimes who gets reprimanded—or worse, threatened—appears to be racialized.

Kay, a Black woman in her 20s who tries to see her love as often as she can, says that sometimes a white officer will mess with her and tell her she has to leave immediately. But not everyone does so. Dora reports an anti-Latino bias that creeps into interactions with officers at the jail.

“My family has been told we had to leave when we were out here, and we weren’t even communicating. The officer said we had to leave, and there were other people around looking up at windows, too, and he didn’t say anything to them.”

When that has happened and she really was hoping to have a moment with her family member, she says she’s just waited for the officer to leave, or she’s gone across the street.

On a recent Monday evening, a Durham city cop was questioning a man about a bicycle right outside



of the front doors of the jail. After a couple of minutes, the deputy stationed at the desk just inside came outside, as if to assess the situation. What he saw demonstrated how powerless he was. Aside from the cop questioning the man, there were no fewer than four different groups of people all openly gesturing to people at windows inside. He knew he could do nothing, so maybe he pretended not to notice. Rather, he walked around a bit, and discovered some chalk writing on the ground: ‘Te amo Papi’ it said (I love you, daddy). He asked the people nearby to move so he could get in a position to take several photographs of this message. When he went inside, some people outside joked he might need to go inside and google translate the words, to see if they were ‘gang-related.’

Along with hand signals and ‘air texting,’ handmade signs are a way that people on both sides of the window communicate. Prisoners have

shown their appreciation for protesters by throwing up impromptu signs. “We (heart) y’all” and “God Bless You” in gratitude, and ones such as “End the Torture,” “Stop the Lockback,” and “IOA—Turn Up!” all buoy outside protesters’ spirits, and strengthen the connection between those inside and outside.

Prisoners make signs just to make comment on what they are seeing outside, too. Recently, across from the jail on Pettigrew Street, I witnessed several cops giving a hard time to a young man sitting up by the railroad tracks. They said he “looked suspicious” and asked why he was in the area, questioning him for more than ten minutes. I was not the only person copwatching, however. During the encounter, a sign suddenly went up in one of the narrow windows across the street. In a beautiful economy of words it spoke to the moment and for all time: ‘Fuck police,’ it read.

Aramark delivers ‘biggest lie ever’ about damaged food trays

Hello,

Thank you for writing back so swiftly. I am so grateful to know God has put and I.O.A. in my path! To answer you about my letter being a copy, the answer is yes. I was blessed to attend — here and — made copies for me. This was because he knew that mail was interfered with when they see you alls name on the letter. I also sent a copy to my lawyer, —. I can't give you the — name because I gave him my word I wouldn't involve him. But with that said, he has my full support and also was the person who told me about you all. I have still been subjected to eat from these trays. I go to medical at least four times a week. They have been giving me Meclizene for my nausea. I still regurgitate every meal daily. Aramark finally responded to my grievance after I notified Capt. Bazemore and Major Couch. Aramark stated that they had “taken all damaged trays off the line.” This is the biggest lie ever!!!! I still receive trays that leak all on my food. I refused trays from 8/21-8/24 and I did not get sick once. At the same time I was starving and couldn't go any longer without eating. During the time I refused the trays I asked Sergeant Cusher if I could receive

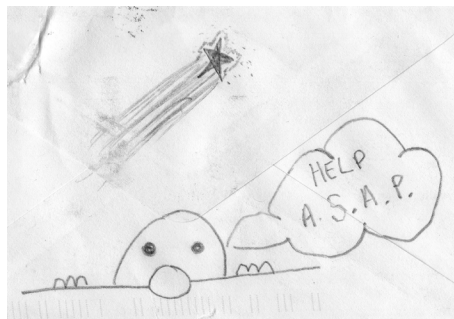
styrofoam trays. Sarcastically she said, “The only way you can receive styrofoam trays is if you try to kill yourself. Styrofoam is for suicidal only!” This was told to me with a smirk on her face. I have kept a log of every day since I have been going through this with detailed times, events and staff. My attorney told me to keep record of every time something happens. Please

post my original story with my name. I hope some one who is going through the same inhumanity in here reads it and speaks out about it!!! I go to court — so I might go

home. If I do I want to know how I can support the I.O.A. cause and where I can help. Thanks again and keep up the outstanding work. May God bless you and everything you touch!!!

In struggle,
Chuk Manning, Sr.

I still receive trays that
leak on all my food.
I refused trays from
8/21-8/24 and I did not
get sick once.



‘As women, we should stick together more’

I hope you are doing well, also.... I got my final plea offer — 12 years. I flipped out a little, which I think anyone would. I sign my plea Wednesday. I feel like God gave me that much time for a reason. There must be something I’m meant to do in prison. I want to help others with their faith while strengthening my own faith.... I’m nervous about the change, but I will adjust. I make friends easily, so I’ll be okay.

My favorite uncle passed away. Losing family while in jail is hard. It hurt but I am healing.

I was excited to see that one of my letters got published [in Feedback]. Things are pretty much the same in here. Medical is still \$20 and reluctant to do much. It is not the medical personnel. They are restrained by unfair regulations. There is a girl in here now with an abscess over her eardrum. They give her Tylenol and amoxicillin. She’s in agony.

On the milk, only pregnant women and girls under 18 get milk. I agree that everyone needs milk or a calcium pill. In truth, we all need a multi-vitamin.

I sleep a lot due to the lockback, and I think I was up at 4am because I couldn’t sleep anymore when I wrote your last letter. I have the luxury of a single cell. It gets lonely at times, but I enjoy the privacy.... For that reason, prison will be a different experience.

In here, we somewhat get along. It is exactly like high school as far as its social structure. There are about 3-4 arguments a month. Physical fights are rare, though. There is a lot of malicious gossiping, sadly. I try my best not to be a part of it. As women, we should stick together more. We should use our words to build up instead of tear down.

On the plus side, there is a lot of camaraderie, too. We have Bible study, play cards, watch TV, talk. On birthdays, we do cards and sometimes we make swoles and state cakes. I did a gift bag for my last friend to have a birthday. I took a sandwich bag and filled it with candy, pb, animal crackers, etc. I’m lucky to have such loving friends in here.

There is more tension as the population grows. We really need a 2nd women’s pod when it gets over like 55 women. The summer was bad this year. They had to open a 2nd women’s pod for a few days, but they only open it after the multi-purpose room is full.

I haven’t seen any more really good movies. During the day, we watch Family Feud and Maury. Then, at night, it’s BET or Lifetime. Sometimes, we watch a movie on FX. ...

The last book I finished was Private Down Under by James Patterson. It was a little too gorey in

spots, but it was otherwise good. My new favorite author is John Green. He writes young adult fiction, but his writing is so hilarious and captivating. I love To Kill a Mockingbird, as far as classic literature... and Shakespeare. A good Shakespeare play turned movie is Much Ado About Nothing, with Emma Thompson, Keanu Reeves, and Denzel Washington. Other great authors are Carl Hiaasen, Walter Mosley, Janet Evanovich, W.P. Kinsella (He wrote Shoeless Joe, the book Field of Dreams was based on), T.S. Eliot, Carl Sandberg, and Dean Koontz. As you can tell, I have a wide range

of literary interests... lol. What type of books/authors do you like? I'd love to discuss books with you. I rarely get to in here.

The 20 minutes in the library is definitely a lie. A cart of books is brought to the pod once a week. Why would DCJ lie about something so trivial?

I will probably be shipped out before you get this, but I have your address in my bible. I'll write you my new # and address when I get there.

Keep fighting and take care of yourself,

A.C.

Philippians 4:6-7

The New Fight

Fighting with a new stance, the new round has just begun.

Ignorance cast aside 4 a new road to success that I've realized

Although my quest for knowledge has just begun, my mind's been
humbled by the greatest one

Now with my emotions and my pride aside I swing my fist 4 victory in
this fight.

Time to make a song, time to write some rimes, put it on the paper
and get it off my mind,

All of the pain that I've reserved thru out this time, bleeds thru this
pencil

That illustrates these words so divine, let's rap about success and the
road from which it's traveled,

Negative and positive this internal battle, hop upon the saddle and ride
off into the field

And pray you reach your goals before you get killed. Then there's a
new fight looking 4 a purpose, in your mind

you know that your life's not worthless, but in certain circumstances
you don't see it in fact it's a lot of power

In being Black.

‘They don’t care about us’

Hey,

Thanks for the letters. I’ve been doing this time alone so your letters are really, really appreciated. Your time and effort you give up to reach out to me for support and help mean a lot. It’s crazy, cause you sent your last letter May 31st. I just got it like a week and a half ago. Crazy, rite? Anyways, I’ve read the feedback paper you sent and shared it with a couple people. We all are grateful for the things you and the organization does for us. We have four straight hours out a day now, so that’s better than before and you all got something to do with that. I’m in — now. I’ve been here for like two months. Far as visits I really don’t have any and haven’t had none in about 6 months, so if you wanted to come visit I would appreciate it.

As far as conditions, MAN!! I just got out of a room with another big guy because the heat was so damn unbearable. Like we would sweat all day. There’s like no AC on the whole left side of the pod. C.O.’s would bring us our food and

step back, shaking their heads with a look of pity at how hot and how much heat would flow out the room. But they would turn around when we would ask to hold the door open for a breather and to air the room out. They would say no. One night I had to kick the door just to get their attention and when they came and opened the door I stepped out without permission just to get a breather. It’s crazy cause during the summer time it’s crazy hot in the rooms and during the winter it’s super cold. Also, the trays are trays they “suppose” to clean and reuse and I’ve seen numerous days my food come and some of the food of what I ate earlier that day be still on the trays. They don’t care about us, so I’m glad we got some people like you who do. Thanks, bro. TTYL.

— S. B.

Editor’s note: Air temperatures in pods and between pods in DCDF vary widely, so that people in some parts of the jail tell of being super cold and others of being super warm.

