

feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle
Durham, NC ~ april 2016 ~ volume 16

'Being treated equally is not in the math'

Dear ---

How are you? I hope all is well and that you are making progress in your efforts to support the inmates of the Durham D.C.J...Well I received your letter a couple weeks back. I guess it would be better to say last year lol, but anyways it was nice of you to write me back. I was in the window that night you all had the street blocked off and wouldn't let anyone through. Power is in numbers and you all have surely proven that...Hard work and perseverance brings forth results and you all are working super hard for us and I want to thank you and the rest of inside-outside alliance for all help, care and support.

So I see you said in your let-

ter they are supposed to be investigating the jail? That's a start, but these people will find some kind of way to cover up their mess—they always do...And they don't care if the food is nasty, cause they don't have to eat it! They don't care if the showers are not clean cause they don't have to bathe in them. They don't care that the mats are sour and every 3 days someone is bitten by a spider. You know why they don't care? Cause they only work here, as they say. Let me ask you something: how do you feed a man one piece of toast? A small thing of "oatmeal?" SMH...I understand that this is jail, but it's not the 1800s where prisoners are just fed

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"Other cultures and societies build temples, churches, museums, shrines, universities, etc... to show the world what they value. They devote their people, resources and money to supporting and operating those institutions. Durham Co has spent millions to build DCJ & DCC. As its temples,

Durham County must fuel these shrines with criminals to keep them functioning. No where else I've lived...does the local government devote so much of its money and resources to the criminal justice system or value the conviction and punishment of innocent people as they do here."

— M.H., recently liberated from the Durham County jail

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‘bread and water.’ And being treated equally is out of the question—you can forget that, it’s not in the math! If being treated equally was part of the ‘plan’ I wouldn’t be in jail!! But that’s a whole other problem by itself dealing with the Durham Police Department!!

Well, ---, it was nice writing again. Until next time, keep the movement strong!!

Sincerely,
Chris



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.

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

*** Se habla español. ***

‘The professionalism here is at an all-time minimum’

Hello,

I’m Tony King and let me first start off by saying my name may be used in any positive form of light that helps contribute to the awareness of what I.O.A. stands for within its public and private affairs. I must admit I am far from a perfect person; however, I am a good person, a person that believes that right is right, and wrong is wrong. With that being said, let me also say I’ve read several feedbacks and agree with all of the accusations that others have made in regards to the Durham County Jail.

Now I myself would like to shed some light on some of what my observations have come to see. Well, it’s so many where do I begin? I’ve witnessed officers one in particular, officer Neil (a woman) working 4C pod take her phone off the hook and set it on her computer monitor for at least 30 minutes ignoring all inmates’ calls, emergency or not, as well as deny myself and others access to church services held by volunteers with no legitimate justification. Which I filed a grievance and have yet to get a response almost 2 weeks now. Also, the professionalism here is at an all-time minimum, the officers curse at you and even fraternize with inmates on the lines of subordination. I also along with many freeze in my cell due to lack of heat, being told by Lt. Col.

Perkins that the building has to settle—whatever that means! However, it’s been almost 2 months and I guess the building is still settling, so there’s limited efficient heat. We’re also served 2 hot meals and 1 cold—the cold meal is served as dinner, it ranges from peanut butter and jelly to bologna sandwiches for dinner and for lunch you get a meal, the point is you eat 1 cold sandwich at 4:00 pm, which doesn’t hold you off until 7:00 am the next morning.

A lot of these things can be witnessed with observation of audio and surveillance footage. I personally feel that OSHA should pop up to check things out. I think they’d be surprised at what they’d find, maybe even shut down the jail until further notice. Also, as I was writing this letter the head nurse addressed my concerns about the med situation, and she was fair and very understanding as she could be and I was pleased with her specifically and how she handled my grievance. As I carry on, the mats that they give us to sleep on are very stiff and usually flat without any sterile covering. So, as I bring my letter to an end, I strongly feel that the DCJ is very unprofessional, understaffed and lacks the sincerity of the fact that we’re all human beings despite our mistakes...

— TK

‘They do not listen or care what happens to us...’

(The following letter features multiple writers; it was clearly passed from one to another inmate, like a telephone.)

Hello,

My name is Vincent. I am writing to you to inform you of what is going on here at DCJ. I put in a sick call for Blood PSI issues around lunch yesterday, 2-19-16 (11 a.m.) Willburn came to get me at 6 p.m. When I got there the nurse took my vitals. BP was 150/90, pulse was 100 and I informed her the meds I was prescribed was making me sick, for months prior. They refused to give me information on the meds they were giving me which indicate the side effects of these drugs. The nurse then informed me to keep taking the drugs. So no treatment was given to me. I am still waiting to see the doctor. They took 20 dollars from my account. These people in medical here do not know what they are doing. They do not listen or care what happens to us because we are inmates. The same can be said for the Aramark Co. The canteen here has ridiculously high prices on simple food items. I feel they are financially taking advantage of us here. The food is horrible and if we want anything better we have only overpriced Aramark CRAP!

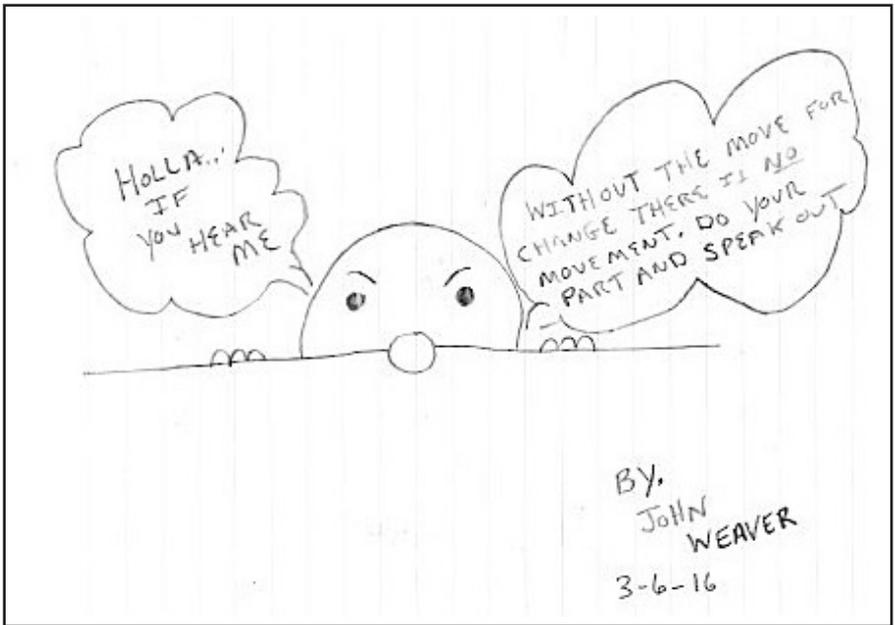
Me writing now. My name is Jason, I have written to you all before.

I myself got sick back in September, after 3 weeks of being sick with a respiratory problem I went to sick call, was charged 20 dollars and put on antibiotics, which did help, but the nurses couldn't get my prescription correct. Every day they were switching up my dosage because they were incompetent of reading simple instructions!?! WTF?

I talked to several inmates in 3D when Matthew McCain died and I can assure you the staff did NOTHING to help that man! He was DEAD when the medical staff got to him, whatever DCJ says they are lying to cover their own asses. He went into a diabetic seizure and tried to alert the pod officer who refused to take action to help the poor man until AFTER it was too late...My condolences to his family.

...Being here at DCJ for almost 12 months I have experienced prejudice first hand. The staff here are extremely prejudiced against ALL inmates. I understand we are in jail. Yes we all have committed some crime against the system, we here have rebelled against a broken system and stepped outside of the pro-

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verbial “box of conformity” but that gives no human being (the right) to treat another human being the way they do here. Not all officers are this way. Some are decent people, and treat us with respect. I could go on and on about all I’ve witnessed here, but I’m almost done with my time and will speak with you guys after I’m out. Perhaps we can help change to happen here for the men and women who are still here!

Mr. Cook was fired from the kitchen for asking an inmate to suck him off. Why does it go unheard of?

I’ve had a severe toothache for over three days and I’ve put in numerous medical requests and I’ve

only been seen once by a nurse who assured me I would see a doctor. Now over the period of three days my gums and mouth have become infected and I’ve developed an abscess inside my mouth and it’s causing more pain. I’ve told the medical staff sergeants and officers over and over again. They walk around saying it’s nothing they can do if I even get that response. My infection isn’t getting any better, only worse, and they still won’t even see me in medical. I truly need antibiotics or to be seen at the hospital by a doctor, but like I said they seem to refuse to see or treat me and by me being an inmate in the custody of the Durham County they are responsible for me because I’m under their care. -CG

VOICES OUTSIDE

‘That’s how it is. What are you gonna do about it?’

We recently spoke with M—and Y—about GlobalTel (GTL), the phone service contracted by the jail, along with all the ways families are exploited by the ravenous companies who set up shop at the jail. We also talked about the tremendous creativity of their dad and all the detainees.

M: I work cleaning carpets and get paid every two weeks. And as soon as I get the money it comes here (DCDF). Pretty much all my money from my job goes to this place. Like take GTL. It is way too expensive for the service they give. So every two weeks I put \$50 on, because it’s down to nothing in that time. And that’s just for phone calls for me, cause I get the best rate of everyone in my family.

Y: On my phone, the rate is \$8 a call, and on my mom’s phone it’s \$10 a call. I called GTL to ask how this can be. They tell me, ‘Ma’am the rate varies by number.’ These are all 919 area code phone numbers. He tells me ‘the rates vary, depending on what the digits in your number are.’ I’m like ‘that doesn’t even make any sense.’ So I ask him, ‘Well, my brother gets a much better rate. What do I have to change my number to to get a better per call rate?’ He doesn’t have an answer. He says, ‘it depends on how far away you are from the jail.’ I said, ‘I’m a mile from the jail right now.’

We have three different rates for our phones, and we all have the same service! (Verizon).

M: We all live in the same house! I put money on my mom’s phone one time, so she could talk to my dad when he could call. I put \$30 on. He called three times that day, and there was nothing left on the account. When he called the next day, she wasn’t able to answer the phone.

GTL sucks bad. And it’s the only way to communicate with someone inside regularly, every day. I had calls a while back that were getting dropped in the middle of the call. At four minutes, the call kept dropping. So I called GTL and complained about this, and they told me, ‘we’ll look into it, and if we find out that it’s our fault, you’ll get a refund.’ I never heard back from them—but the dropped calls stopped.

The app takes a \$2.50 service fee each time you add money to the

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phone. And to get the app it takes \$9 the first time, to set it up. And that's the best way to pay. If you call them and put money on, they take a bigger service fee, and if you do it by Western Union, they take a \$10 service fee.

Y: When GTL first started, the calls were 15 minutes. But that was quickly changed back to 10 minutes. The other thing was, online and in their little brochure, it said that it would give the chance for inmates to text you—they can do this in Wake County, but not here. There has been no benefit, and the cost is outrageous.

M: It's like they say: 'That's how it is. What are you gonna do about it?' That's what GTL says, that's what Aramark says. That's what the jail says.

At this point, I asked him about the plastic cross he had around his neck.

M: My dad made that for me. And he sent in an envelope with a letter. He made it out of the plastic packaging they get commissary food in. He threads them together. The gold in here, that's from candy packaging. He makes them for other people and trades them for packets of soup or whatever. It's funny, when my dad went in there, he couldn't draw at all, he could barely write. And since he's been in there he's starting writing, writing cursive even, and he draws a lot, and he's gotten pretty good. And he's learned it all himself...

“They have fired the nurse that was on duty”

I received your letter in reply to me today. I want to thank you for your feedback. Many individuals in here have sent letters to the Inside-outside alliance or the members who originally contacted them and haven't heard a response yet. Many inmates are concerned that their letters are not being received. So I appreciate you taking the time to reassure me that my letter was indeed received.

Anyway that I can help, I'm more than happy to do so or at least try to do so. This includes any questions you may have.

I heard recently that they have fired the nurse that was on duty during Matt's incident, due to the events that occurred, which I find odd because I found officer Boria more so accountable for the events that occurred, and he is still present here many days...

Violations of inmate rights

To: Everyone out there

CC: Personal files

From: Pod 3D

Date: Feb 29, 2016

Re: Violations of Inmate Rights that has been protected by the Constitution and state law

We are respectfully reporting that officer Erick Boria has intentionally and willfully violated the unlawful and professional conduct at a workplace policy, which was put in place to form a more perfect union at a workplace, so we may secure the blessings of liberty and justice while waiting on the court process.

Officer Boria has violated the order by imposing vindictive retaliation, creating a hostile and unsafe environment that has put the inmates at high risk of losing complete control and failure to respond reasonably and respectable to perform his job description in a professional and suitable manner. These findings are as follows:

1.) On the 29th day of February 2016, officer Boria came into pod 3D and taunted the entire pod because he said he read some comments that inmates wrote about him to the newspaper feedback.

2.) He said that in his retaliation he would give everyone a hard time, because of the comments posted and would not respond to

the inmates requesting needs that are under his job description, and he promised to make everyone's stay here a living hell, and for us to go and write that to the newsletter. Then he laughed...

3.) This has created an unsafe environment because of his chaos and refusal for request of better conditions.

a.) His refusal to turn the phone on at the right time, refusal to let us out from our cells at the completion of lockdown, refusal to turn the TV volume to a respected level, refusal of inmates the right to medical care in a timely fashion, refusal to let them out of their cells to take their medications.

b.) He has also lied to the medical nurse about inmates refusing their meds just so he doesn't have to let them out. He has denied inmates the full amount of rec time all while making unjustified and smart remarks.

4.) He has created an unsafe work zone and has endangered the lives of everyone.

a.) He sleeps on the job and ignores inmates trying to make requests for help, tissue, medical and anything we may need that requires his help.

b.) He uses the intercom and pod phone for his own personal gain and entertainment, and when

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he's not using it, he takes it off the hook and doesn't answer it for inmates.

However, officer Boria's actions and behavior are not fairly based upon any legitimate policy, procedures or guidelines. He is unfit and a complete danger to the welfare of the inmate population where he has caused mischief and wrongdoing. He has already played a major role in the death of one inmate by refusing him medical attention and to answer his intercom call for help.

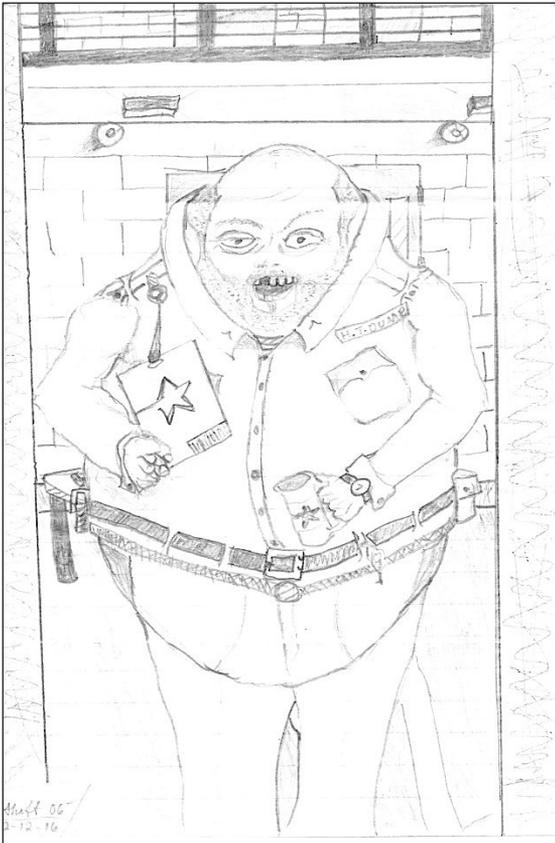
How many more incidents does it take?

Therefore, we have made aware to the rightful officials of his completely unlawful behavior and we are respectfully asking that all necessary measures be taken in a timely fashion to resolve this matter.

...Boria should be removed from all duties that surrounds the inmate population and matters of inmates' safety!!

(F**k 12)

Biggs and Twon



To my brothers and sisters:

Don't give up. That's what they want you to do. Keep your head up. Don't let them see you stressing. Stay prayed up and God will make a way, best believe that. A shout out to Cedrick 4D, my fella 3D and Everybody Else. May God bless yall.

— Melanie Battle

VOICE OUTSIDE: “I’m so scared to go back there”

The medical neglect Shermare Tuck Riley experienced while in the Durham County Jail was so intense that she is scared of what will happen if she has to go back.

During her two periods at the jail, Shermare — who suffers from epilepsy and heart palpitations, among other conditions — was denied her medication and proper care for her seizures. This neglect continued during the week following Matthew McCain’s epilepsy-related death inside the Durham County Jail on January 19, 2016.

Shermare first arrived at DCDF on August 12, 2015, for a “quick dip” – a short stay of maximum three days meant to “teach you a lesson”, as she says. At intake, Shermare told the jail staff of her medical conditions and prescriptions, which include Metoprolol, Gabapentin, and Effexor. The intake procedure included a 23-hour lockback that prevented her from taking her heart medication, Metoprolol, which she is required to take multiple times a day.

Despite their knowledge of her epilepsy, jail officials decided to place Shermare in a cell by herself – just as they would later do with Matthew McCain – putting her at risk of suffering a seizure without help or medical attention.

Indeed, the next day, August 13th, Shermare felt the onset of a seizure. She told the C.O. she wasn’t feeling well, and the C.O. called medical. There was no response for 20 minutes. In the meantime, Shermare began having an epileptic attack. Other inmates in pod 5D witnessed the attack and later told Shermare, who has no memory of the time that elapsed during the episode, that medical personnel merely observed her seizure without intervening. Once in medical, Shermare was put on bedrest. She was not allowed to take showers or make phone calls. Her family and friends didn’t know where she was or what had happened.

On January 20, 2016, Shermare, who had been released earlier, was put back in the Durham jail. Again, intake procedure prevented her from receiving her medication for a full day (“even longer than the last time”, she says). This caused her to feel dizzy, light-headed, and panicky: “my heart was going crazy”. Again, she was placed in a cell alone.

Suffering from the withdrawal from her medication and fearing more neglect of her epilepsy, Shermare fought for her right to proper medical care. On January 21st, she wrote a petition, signed by inmate

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witnesses to her seizures, demanding that she be released on probation so that she could receive proper medical attention.

Two days later, Shermare felt the onset of another seizure and visited the nurse. The nurse told a doctor she was “faking it”, but in 15 minutes, once Shermare was clearly having an epileptic attack, the nurse called the doctor back to say that the “situation had drastically changed”.

Shermare also wrote a letter to Major Couch on January 24th detailing her situation. For her court date on January 25th, jail personnel had to take her to court in a wheelchair.

Shermare had another court date recently and was scared for her life. She knows people die in jail. Even more alarming, the jail’s neglect of Matthew McCain’s epileptic attacks preceding his in-custody death is eerily similar to the treatment she experienced.

Luckily, Shermare’s charges were dropped. But her case is a testament that the lives of those inside the Durham jail continue to be in danger. Jail staff accused a person diagnosed with epilepsy, of “faking” a seizure only four days after Matthew McCain died in the jail from an untreated seizure. If an in-custody death does not lead to sufficient medical care inside the Durham County Jail, what will?

Alabama Prison Erupts in Wave of Rebellion

On the night of Friday, March 11th, hundreds of prisoners took over the general population portion of Holman prison in Atmore, Alabama. Viewpoints from the prisoners varied, one described conditions of overcrowding, sending out pictures to accompany the description.

Another prisoner said “It has nothing to do with overcrowding, but with the practice of locking folks up for profit, control and subjugation.” He recounted “Things here are tense but festive. The co and warden was stabbed... Fires were set, people got control of two cubicles, bust windows. The riot team came, shot gas, locked down, searched the

dorms. Five have been shipped and two put in lockup.” Another prisoner stated simply, “We’re tired of this shit, there’s only one way to deal with it: tear the prison down.”

Though authorities regained control the following day, a second riot took place at Holman Prison early the following Monday morning involving up to 70 inmates. That morning prisoners built barricades and reportedly broke into other areas of the facility. Holman Prison has been a hotbed of organized prisoner activity, with the Free Alabama Movement operating out of the facility as well as anarchist prisoner Michael Kimble.

‘The judicial branch of government is made to recycle us’

I'm glad you put me in the newsfeed. I was shocked when I was going through the feedback and ran across my letter, but I was mad when I got to the end and saw the initials -. I don't know what they stand for, but let me tell you something bro, I'm far from afraid of any sheriff, police officer, deputy or c.o. They bleed like I do so don't ever hide my name in the feeds, bro, Thomas Clayton (TomTom) should be the first and last thing you see when you read a feedback from me. I want them to know I'm who coming for them. As much as I enjoy everything you all do I sometime try to avoid reading the feedbacks, reason being, aside from my own problems I ran across in my 3 years being here, when I read about others' problems and how they've been treated my heart goes out and I honestly want to answer these officers violence and disrespect with just that. But I am only one man. I'm a man of common sense though. And even though my common sense tells me I (we) can't win that way, another part of me says, at any given day it's almost 50 to 60 of us in one pod. It's not that many c.o.'s in the whole jail, and when they beating an inmate for something it takes eight of them. This is their game though, and the only way to beat them is unity. The best defense is to know your opponent's

strategy. For our opponent, it's divide and conquer. Think about it. Why you think they love reclassing us? Or, when you have co-defendants they try their best to separate you? It's common sense. You can't strategize a defense if you're not together (divide and conquer). It's hard to unite and come together in a pod if they keep reclassing (divide and conquer). I just want all my fellow brothers in this struggle I'm going through to open your eyes and ears. We got to do better.

I have a civics book and I been studying. I found out that the founders of the United States would sit down and map out our government and the constitution. To make things "equal" to figure out the laws, etc. My point is ladies and gentlemen, this shit was all part of a plan. It didn't just so happen to come about. The judicial branch of the government was made to recycle us, to keep down and them up. Us back and them forward. They base their government off of wealth, knowledge and power. Well, knowledge is power and we need it to beat them at their game along with unity. Anyways, just thoughts of mine I think while counting blocks...Real Soldiers gone make it yall. They winning now, but real soldiers gon' win in the end because we unbreakable. I salute y'all. — *Tom Tom*