

# feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle

Durham, NC ~ july 2016 ~ volume 19

## They need a price check — ASAP

To Who It May Concern,

Who in the fuck charges a black man of a crime and put a bond on him of one million dollars? So, basically you've made one's freedom worth one million dollars—that's just one arrest out of many a day. That shit not even logical. Help this city, it's sad. No help. Also, while are in here (jail), the food is harsh and commissary/canteen is ridiculously expensive. And there's nothing really to eat—it's mostly snacks. Ramen noodles is 82 cents a pack, that's 3x as much as if you were at a grocery store. And that's the closest thing they got for so-called food, or if you wanted to buy a meal other than the over-expensive hot plates. They need a price check ASAP.

Durham County Jail will kill you. You will be hungry, sick, and locked in a cell for most of your time here. Help.

And please check out how they put crazy stuff in our food that makes us sick most days. They put stuff in our food and make us eat it, and it take effect on our bodies daily. Our food and drinks. And they make us eat it. One way or another our body is affected by whatever is put inside of our food and drink.

Head hurts for days  
off just ONLY ONE sip.  
Being in Durham County Jail  
It's so Unhealthy  
Lock us in a room all day  
Some time it's hard to breathe  
and sleep.

— Durham County Inmate

*“Had an attorney been hired to represent me, the outcome in my case would have been different, but, unfortunately my family was able to provide for me only moral support... I do hope that somehow you guys can help me put it out there that the Durham justice system is very corrupt, and hopefully my unfortunate outcome will help others who may be in similar situations...”*

— Gustavo C.

## ‘This jail needs to be flushed out and reorganized’

Hello IOA,

My name is Bernard Cheek. I don't care if anyone see my name. I'm not afraid of any man or woman but Jesus and God. I would like to say the medical screening is a joke here, they don't have the right size blood pressure cuff for my arm. The commissary is too high for the inmates, GTL is making a killing off of inmate phone calls. The hot trays they sell are very expensive. The c.o.s get wholesome food at very reasonable prices. The inmates pay for the c.o.s food, because Aramark, the jail's food service provider triples the inmates' hot tray price... The ridiculous thing about this is Aramark makes \$500.00 in profit just from one day of hot tray sales. Wow!!! The inmates are the work force in this jail. We need to be compensated for the time we give this jail and treated with respect and common decency. Some areas I see the jail is trying to improve—they have a long way to go. This jail needs to be flushed out and reorganized. These guards (c.o.s) stop doing their rounds after 3 a.m., also. Other than that I have no other issues. I speak my mind, and I bow to no man except God. It's a few people who care in this jail. I would like to send a shout out to my comrades in this jail. Keep your head up and God bless you.

### **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](http://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](mailto:insideoutsidealliance@gmail.com)

**\* Se habla español. \***

## ‘The 360’

Hello, thank you for reaching out to me. Most people don't understand the stress that being locked up in a building brings a person of my kind. My kind is the kind that works every day to make sure the bills are paid, go to school so that I can one day have a better career, give to those in need without looking for return, and being an all-around family man. Being in here has set me back, way back. I lost my job as a manager at McDonald's and I had to drop out of college. My fiance helps me out a lot. I am glad to have a wonderful person as her and my mother in my life. My fiance takes care of all my bills and responsibilities which is a LOT. Because she has to care for her grandmother who is sick, she has her own business to run, she works and takes care of everything and anything else that needs to be taken care of. She is my blessing from GOD. But, as you know, I'm in here for —. A — that I didn't do. It's crazy how they will incarcerate before they investigate. That's why I'm in here, to show how much power over people the “system” has. I call it the 360—why? You walk for days in a circle, then you take a plea, then it's hard for you to get a job, so back to the street and police, then back in jail to walk the same circle. Instead of locking people up, help them or find help for them.



*Circles of hell.*

Instead they need NEW police cars and headquarters. Why? If you're not going to help the people you hurt. The 360 goes on and on and on with NO ONE trying to find out why or trying to help the people get out of the Hell circle.

Thanks for listening to me. Write and I'll be glad to write back.

— *Anonymous*

**NEW booklet from IOA!**

**ON THE WORK POD: “Another chain link in the extortion process”**

**Interview with a former  
DCDF worker-inmate**

**Write to us and request one!**

## **‘This jail is nothing more than a dressed up trash can’**

Dear Amplified Voices,

It’s been sometime since I’ve written to you guys, and it has been such a disturbing setting within this jail AKA Prison as usual. It appears that as little things change and not even for the better per se, the more things get worse. We had a visit from an unknown lady that was supposed to be from the inspection department. What she inspected would need to be called basic observation. She didn’t look into the cells. She basically did a walkthrough with the Sgt. displaying a slightly grinned face, asking general questions and not much expecting. This Detention Center is a serious joke that isn’t even funny. You can even be in the right when it comes to protocol and discipline and you’re still made wrong due to the fact that the Lt., Col., Sgt. and officers all lie for each other, eliminating any chance of justice for the inmates, because of the allegiance that they have amongst the officers. No matter how the spokesperson for the jail tries to dress-up allegations that are factual as to the operation of this jail and the conduct of the officers, it’s nothing more than a dressed up trash can.

They have brand new bed mats that are not being given to the inmates, resulting in 95% of the jail sleeping on deflated or badly cracked open mats with you al-

ready having to sleep on a slab of concrete. The cells are filthy beyond what an inmate can clean. There is green corrosion all around the water faucet and it has no filter. We even sometimes have to bathe in cold water. Medical is still charging \$20 for a headache pill if you happen to need one. They also pass out medication whenever they feel like it. Just the other day everyone who received morning medication received them in the afternoon. Today, Wednesday, May 25, around 4:30pm, an inmate was denied access into his cell to use the bathroom being made to hold his urine, all because the officer refused to do his job. As the inmate vented about it they locked him back. Upholding whatever the allegiance is amongst officers.

I even heard a female Sgt. joke about an inmate that attempted suicide, laughing, saying that’s what he gets. This took place at between 5:00-5:15pm Wednesday, May 4, 2016, and the Sgt.’s name is Robertson. She lacked consideration for the inmate’s attempted suicide jump. Whether or not this man decided to jump off the balcony or not, it shouldn’t be made into a joke. I heard her making these jokes while I myself was in medical and she was awaiting assistance from medical for the jumper. And I must

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state when I make my allegations I use dates and time for specification that if ever an investigation is done, surveillance footage and audio can prove I speak the truth....Because as we know within this jail it's not what you know it's what you can prove, and I always provide proof.

Also, whoever is in charge of the distribution of the food here really needs to look into how the funds are being spent and what we're being fed. It's absurd. Rotten oranges, leftover rice, and other items from days before.

It seems to me that this jail is all about whatever funding it's getting instead of the professionalism that's required. Someone else with the correct mind-set should be put in charge of this jail, because it's just not being run properly. Point blank. There's also crooked activity going on inside this jail. As far as what the state itself wouldn't tolerate but they demand that we should follow their rules. Yes, we should conduct ourselves appropriately and very much safely also with respect. However, the employees should live up to these standards as well. If the state of North Carolina and the Sheriff's Department choose to really look into how this jail is run, it would be very obvious change is drastically needed immediately, unless they just don't care to acknowledge the problems. And why



they wouldn't shows that justice is something that is dying within this jail and the state of North Carolina as a whole. The power is within the people so says the Constitution of the United States. But when the people do speak collectively our voices fail to be heard. We're said to have unalienable rights, yet these rights are laughed at and frowned upon. We have freedom of speech, yet our voices are silenced. ....

So far the actions of this jail and its officers as well as the court that neighbors this jail are a complete disgrace. I guess nothing else matters, not unless the dollar that has no value isn't involved. We're just left as chattel with no voice, no rights, no respect and no one who cares. Shame on all those who make the law yet don't follow it.

Sincerely,  
*Tony K.*

## ‘Something gotta give’

Hey —

What’s going on? How are you doing? Fine I hope and all is good and well with you and IOA family and supporters. As for myself, I’m okay, I guess being that I’m still breathing. I want to apologize for not responding to your letters sooner, but I’ve been going through some things. Things that probably 95%, if not 100% of us Durham County Jail Detainees are going through that involves the court system. Things like:

1. Being held under outrageous bonds (ransoms).
2. Not hearing/seeing attorneys for months at a time.
3. Being held for bogus charges (He say/she say/word of mouth).

The list goes on and on as well all know. Like I said, “I been going through some things.” I’m not just speaking for myself, I’m speaking for others, all 510 Durham County Jail Detainees, “I hope.” They set up court dates, but we don’t go, not because we’re refusing to go, but because we’re not being taken to court. But if we were in society and we didn’t show up for court guess what happens? A warrant is issued for our arrest for failure to appear b.k.a. fta. I can go on and on about this shit but imma keep it moving. Moving to another subject that’s been kinda stuck on my mind: “Racism in the court system.” How is it that a white man bond is 500,000 for bringing a firearm inside the jail sally port (premises), and not only having a gun, but shoots at the same police officer that’s bringing him in?!?! First of all, if this was a black male that fired on a police officer on jail premises, he would’ve been a dead black male, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. And if the police didn’t kill him, he would’ve had a bond so outrageous he would have wished he was dead. But, guess what? It gets even better for this white man. He was just released days ago on pre-trial release, now ain’t that some crazy shit right there?!

You do the math, and once you do, let me know what you come up with. It’s people that’s locked up for straight bullshit that got bonds higher than his and (they are) denied pretrial release. Moving on...I guess there won’t be no justice for Matt (McCain), because I still see d/o Boria working on the 3rd floor, not 3D though but a different pod. It don’t matter what floor he’s on, he shouldn’t still be working in this jail, period. I been here going on 8 months and I was here (3D) when it happened. The situation was totally fucked up. Rest in paradise, Matthew McCain. Shout out to IOA for representing and being our outside voice and shout out to all of the families and supporters. Until next time, be easy and hold it down, something gotta give. Fuck 12.

Sincerely, VA/June

## **'If we weren't down here doing it, they would have to...'**

Hey, my name is —, but you can call me Blaze. Well, first off I want to say nice to meet you... I have seen a lot of things, so let me get started. Yes, use the name BLAZE... Well, I worked in the kitchen here at DCJ and I seen things down there that wouldn't have known if I did not work, such as: Bugs (gnats) flying all in the kitchen, in the food when it's on the line to serve for the inmates, in the juice that the inmates drink, and when you tell the d.o.s or the Aramark people that's in charge, they say 'you are in jail,' and I say 'what's that got to do with it—these are still people's food. Then when the inspection people come in they try to make us scrub and clean hard as hell to cover up the REAL PROBLEMS in the kitchen and if we try to talk/tell the inspector people what's going on or try to show them anything they will get mad, look at us funny or worse FIRE US. that is crazy, it's like they don't care about us (Well, I know they don't) Then they always pass inspection I don't know how, has to be some under the table stuff going on or something, because the kitchen here is nasty. Mold on the walls, covered with paint, but you can see it and tell. Then it's this lady down there named Pam who work for ARAMARK, too, she thinks she can talk to you any type of way, curse at you and think

just because you are an inmate and working in the kitchen she can do that and you just supposed to sit there (SMH). She knows if you say anything back, and she tell the man who hires you to work (Tyler) it's over and you will be fired and that's not fair. That is why people don't be wanting to come to work like that in the kitchen because she talk to you like you ain't shit because you in orange/in jail. It is one new lady down there in the kitchen and she so sweet, kind, respectful, never get loud with you or curse at you, we need more people like her. First shift work from 3:30 a.m. or 4:00 till about 10:00 a.m. Working hard as hell, never get no good food for working, thank you or non-thing, just the same food as the inmates and a bye? Second shift work from 9 or 10 a.m til 6 or 8:00 pm, working like slaves while Aramark sit on they AZZ and talk shit to us workers all day. If we weren't down here doing it, they would have to, you know? If they had more people down there like the New Lady and gave us different food, then the inmates, then more people would want to come to work...That's it about the kitchen part.

Showers: These showers here are the worst and the water is, too. It's rust, mildew all in the shower and bugs flying in the shower and

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## 'We want respect'

I don't know what it is about your mail, but the stamp went through Raleigh on June 2 and they say they did not receive here until June 8. That is a lot of days to come from Raleigh to Durham. Right! But it seems there is always something going on with the mail...

I am with you and others that snacks and hot trays are too high, but the people feeding us are making sure that we eating just so you have to buy the snacks to get by and the hot tray if you want a taste of home, well the outside anyway. The cost of the food they sell in the jail is way too high and needs to go down.

I think that many of the c.o.s need more training. The ways some of them talk to people they really should not be working on this job, or any job dealing with people. I have seen c.o.s trying to fight inmates, calling them out of they names. In the pod I am in there are a few Hispanic (people), and few if any of the c.o.s can talk to them and they don't speak English. (Sorry for Matthew 3D #21)

I have also seen some good c.o.s there who like their jobs and want to help the people in here, but I would have to say that by far the biggest thing

that I have seen is the c.o.s need more training, few of them really know how to deal with people. Many of them cause problems in the pods because of the things they do and say. Yes, we are in jail, but we are human still. We want respect, just as they do.

All jails are set up to make you take pleas, but sitting here missing court date after date is sick. But I guess they make money to hold you. If so, it has become big business.

It is too cold in here, I am sure there is a reason to keep the temp down but to have to do a \$20 sick call to get a 2nd cover. Speaking of sick calls, tell them you need something, some days they get right on it other days you wonder is anyone down there. Nail cutters, you have to do a sick call to use them. Really. They should be in the pods. Even if you have to lock back to get them.

I also think we can use more time out of cells, such as three walks, morning, midday and night. Really, what else are they or we doing? We are all locked up in here together.

I am here waiting. Doing a lot of praying and reading, also writing. Doing my best to stay strong. Blessing to you. -H.R.

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in the pod. The water don't even be hot most of the time (4 real)...How do you take a shower with Dial Antibacterial Deodorant soap and get out the shower still itching and bumps all over your skin, chest, back, stomach? The water got to be dirty, then when you drink the water out your sink it feels like something in your throat/mouth. We need all this stuff I talked about to change. Please help. Thanks I.O.A. Thanks 4 the support/help...We need it.

— *Blaze, till next time*

## 'It's hard to give respect when they treat you like wild mules!'

Hello, Peace and Love!

I'm T.M., this letter is deep and means a lot to me...I've only been in here for a month and would love to give you feed back. I was taught to get respect is to give respect! Well, it's very hard to give respect to a c.o., when they look and treat you like wild mules! Like we are a stray pitbull or a gorilla that's gone wild! It's sad, yes, we are humans that make mistakes, but it doesn't give c.o.'s the right to treat us wrong! I'm 23 years old with a five million dollar bond! Hold on! Let me repeat that! I'm 23 years old with a 5 million dollar bond! I haven't killed nobody! Hold on! Let me repeat that! I HAVEN'T KILLED NOBODY! My bond is 5 million dollars as if i'm El Chapo or Bin Laden. It's sickening...I'm from Hampton, VA. Durham County is a rip off! From Aramark food to the nurses and also the magistrate! Something has got to change! I'll be proud when I go home and come back to protest against Durham County Jail! Hampton City Jail is way better than this hell hole!! I am a comrade and am willing to whatever it takes to change this place around!

Love and peace!

— T.M.

## 'How can you beat a capitalist machine bent on mass incarceration?'

Comrade,

How are you, hope all is well? I received your letter in good spirits. What you and the Inside-Outside Alliance are doing is beautiful. I was starting to think nobody cared. These institutions that house the mentally ill and the poverty-stricken need to be stopped. But how can you beat a capitalist machine, which has unlimited resources, and is bent on mass incarceration? Sometimes it scares me to think how evil these people are. We're dealing with a lot of illiteracy in places like this, all over the country, but in the south it's the worst. The publications that circulate through places like this are destructive and deal in destructive behavior. There's no dictionaries, no law books, nothing, how can I fight for my life?

— *Vanguard / Comrade NoFace/ Peace-War*

“ I do read the Feedback and enjoy what you all have put together. I enjoy it. In fact I just got a Feedback paper from another inmate yesterday so I find it ironic that I get my very own personal one today. Yes, I read it all over again.” —P.A.

Be sure to get your **feedback** each month--  
Write to IOA today!

## VOICES OUTSIDE

### **‘That’s not my son.’**

I’m upset because that is not my son in there. Who I saw is not my son. He’s in there for something he didn’t do. The cops took down a description after a shooting for two guys, dark skinned, 6 foot 2 and 6 foot 3, and they arrest my son, who is about 5’ 7”, and his cousin, who is smaller than me (5’ 5”). It says so in the discovery. He didn’t do what they’re pinning on him, but he’s been in there since January. I visit him, and it’s not him anymore. He is just torn up by all this. He says he doesn’t have anything to live for, that nothing matters. People are trying to fight him in there, he’s not eating. He doesn’t want to live. That’s not like him. It’s not how he was before all this happened to him. And I worry what more time in this place will do to him. — *Tonya*

### **‘She did that shit on purpose’**

I’ve been going up to visit my fiancé with his two kids for two months now every Wednesday. Two weeks ago, all of a sudden, the woman in there, who hadn’t been there on Wednesdays before, she says “Only one kid can go up with you.” I said, “they’ve been going up with me every week.” She points to the sign that says only one per adult. But online when you’re scheduling a visit, it lets you sign up to bring two kids. It won’t let you sign up three kids—that’s two many, but two kids is fine. It doesn’t make any sense. They were going up with me every week. Now all of a sudden they can’t go up and see their dad. I tried to bring one up, and then send him down, and send the other one up, but they wouldn’t let them do that.

So then, last week I go up to see him, this time on a Wednesday with no kids, and I’m waiting there for him, and waiting. Everyone else on his pod is out visiting, but not my fiancé. He’s not there. So I go downstairs and ask, ‘did you say he had a visit?’ I go back up, and I’m waiting again. So I go back downstairs. I ended up going up and down 4 different times before I actually saw him, and by that time the visit was just about over. She did that shit on purpose. No doubt in my mind. Cause I had an attitude the week before about the kids not being allowed up. So after wasting my time like that I asked ‘Can I speak to the sergeant?’ But he didn’t do anything. He didn’t get my time back.

And what the hell is going on with the mail? When he first got in there it was 2-3 days for him to get mail. Now, it’s 2-3 weeks for him to get it, and 2-3 weeks for me to get mail from him. I sent him some photos of me (not naked or anything), and he didn’t get it, didn’t get it, and then they came back to

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## Survive and thrive

I find it difficult to thrive, so I settle with attempting to survive.  
Don't know what it takes to live so people rather die.  
Poverty's a sickness that spreads throughout the mind.  
Successfulness a cure that a few seem to find.  
If violence is the answer than I should have been fine.  
But it's only just an attempt to continue to survive.

— *M.M.S.*

### 'What's wrong with that picture?'

I'm doing good, thanks for asking. I'm really glad you all have reached out to me. To tell you a little about myself. My name is Niajel Slade, 24, and I been in the Durham Co. Jail since Aug. 26, 2015. Mind you, when I found out I was a suspect, I turned myself in. Even though the lack of evidence, my bond is 3 million. The media and police said a lot of inaccurate things about me. They treat me like a monster.

The c.o.'s they have here, a lot of them are incompetent imbeciles that can't even tie their shoes! They cut the phones off while we are on them. If we say something they don't like, they lock us back for no reason. We are only out of our rooms for 6 hr and 30 m each day and there are only 6 phones in the pod and there are at

least 50 inmates in each pod. That's not enough phones.

I know you all heard about the white man that shot the police officer down stairs. He was locked up (what for 2 months?) and he goes home on pre-trial. What's wrong with that picture?

The c.o. that let that man (Matthew McCain) die. They made him a sergeant! WTF. And they call us bad guys. This whole system is fucked up. When they can just lock you up without any evidence. Whatever happened to right and wrong? I'm a God-fearing man and only God can judge. What makes them better than us?

Question: the DA and judge are supposed to judge us, but who makes sure that they are following the law?

Thank you all for caring about us.

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me. I went in there and I asked an officer, 'Is he allowed to get this? Why did it come back?' He said, 'that's fine, he can get those.' So why didn't he get them? And why is it taking so long? I'm asking the post office, I'm calling Durham, I'm calling Raleigh, but all signs point to this place being the problem.

—*Anonymous*

## In Remembrance of Muhammad Ali (January 17, 1942-June 3, 2016)

"If I thought going to war would bring freedom and equality to twenty-two million of my people, they wouldn't have to draft me. I'd join tomorrow. But I either have to obey the laws of the land or the laws of Allah. I have nothing to lose by standing up and following my beliefs. We've been in jail for four hundred years."



*Former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was released from Dade County jail in Miami, Dec. 23, 1968. Ali served 8 days of a 10-day sentence on a 1967 traffic charge.*

*In 1972, while in Ireland to fight a former prisoner named Alvin Lewis, the champ dropped the following poem, a tribute to those who took part in the Attica Uprising of September 1971, at the upstate NY prison. In it, Ali imagines himself in the shoes of a black prisoner, responding to the white warden issuing a final ultimatum:*

### **Freedom - Better Now**

Better far— from all I see—  
To die fighting to be free  
What more fitting end could be?  
Better surely than in some bed  
Where in broken health I'm led  
Lingering until I'm dead  
Better than with prayers and pleas  
Or in the clutch of some disease  
Wasting slowly by degrees  
Better than a heart attack  
or some dose of drug I lack  
Let me die by being black  
Better far that I should go  
Standing here against the foe  
Is the sweeter death to know  
Better than the bloody stain  
on some highway where I'm lain  
Torn by flying glass and pane

Better calling death to come  
than to die another dumb,  
muted victim in the slum  
Better than of this prison rot  
if there's any choice I've got  
Kill me here on the spot  
Better for my fight to wage  
Now while my blood boils with rage  
Less it cool with ancient age  
Better violent for us to die  
Than to Uncle Tom and try  
Making peace just to live a lie  
Better now that I say my sooth  
I'm gonna die demanding Truth  
While I'm still akin to youth  
Better now than later on  
Now that fear of death is gone  
Never mind another dawn.