

## **Racism, Repression & Racial Profiling The Three R's of the Indiana Reformatory**

### **Part I**

The Indiana Reformatory has a rich history of both racism and resistance.

#### *Some history of the reformatory:*

One of it's best kept secrets is the mass shooting of unarmed prisoners during a peaceful protest of censorship of leftwing and Islamic materials. In response to a sit down strike the D.O.C. opened fire killing two prisoners and wounding over 150 prisoners, setting the tone for places like Attica, New York.

The reformatory B/K/A amongst such prisons as Pendleton or P. Town, which houses approximately 1,600 to 1,800, was known to contain a climate of overt racism and ruthless brutality. The mentality of most guards were pro-white, rural, small town and dirt farmers who were not accustomed to not only being around black folks or people of color, but didn't fully see us as being human.

The overall climate was violent and the prison itself was called and had the reputation as "the gladiator school" because of the level of prisoner on prisoner violence and the level of pig on prisoner violence. Added to this mix was the predominantly youthful population.

D.O.C. staff who were affiliated with white supremacist terrorist groups like the klan or local militia's openly wore their rings and other symbols or jewelry that represented their affiliation. It was not a kept secret...this tradition has been kept alive with the I.D.O.C. audit and Indiana state police investigation and exposure of how pigs were collaborating with the Aryan Brotherhood at the Indiana state farm and was using prison industries to manufacture swastikas and other symbols of hate and targeting New Afrikan prisoners for abuse, including black pigs and other staff members. This report was released in 1997, the same year the D.O.C. printed it's handbook on security threat groups! How ironic.

Pendleton itself has a rich history of racial polarization amongst the prisoners themselves as well as a prisoner of color relationship tot he administration.

I first arrived at P. Town on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1985 as an 18 year old youngster transferred from the Indiana state prison after banging a guard up that sprayed me with mace. Even this it was common to see primarily New Afrikan prisoners dragged across the prison compound while being beaten with billy clubs. It was a common practice to take prisoners down in the infamous Max Restraint Unit (M.R.U.) where I was housed, which was a dungeon lock up unit where prisoners were often beaten and brutalized. Every prisoner knew that when a sheet was draped across the door so no one could see onto the unit that a prisoner was being beaten.

It was common for New Afrikan prisoners to be found hung in their cells and it be ruled a suicide when it fact it was murder.

It was common for white guards to collaborate with racist white inmates to target New Afrikan prisoners. Racist guards who smuggled in and distributed weapons, put contracts out on militant or revolutionary prisoners. In fact the racial tension was so thick that on M.R.U. in 1985 black and white prisoners were kept segregated from one another and not allowed to recreate with each other.

In 1983 a young brother named Tony Pyrtyle was murdered, stabbed to death while handcuffed behind his back and being escorted. It was common knowledge that the racist white male that killed him got the knife from a guard. When brothers on the unit began to demonstrate in protest radicals like Kalongi, Indrix and others were dragged outside by the goon squad and strapped spread eagle to picnic tables and beaten as if the racist pigs were making an offering to the Gods!

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1985 after a well-known Black Muslim prisoner named Lokmar (s/n Lincoln Love), who was being held on the infamous M.R.U. lock up, was brutally beaten and almost killed on the orders of the D.O.C. Commissioner, a massive rebellion was triggered. Rioting by militant prisoners in which approximately 9 guards were stabbed and several along with a counselor were taken hostage for 15 hours during negotiations took place. One of the demands was that the federal authorities come in and do an investigation.

After the smoke cleared the feds came in and uncovered a white supremacist organization called the 'Sons of Light' that was operating amongst the top rank and file of the guards here. During the trial of those who led the revolt several guards testified that that either knew of or was a member of such.

They testified as to how they targeted New Afrikan prisoners. The head of that organization at that time was a pig named Suhusky and had rank. Although Capt. Myers and others were fired the head remains and he is now the major of this facility.

While we had a Black warden (Owers) at this time and maybe 1 or 2 Black guards in the entire prison. The warden was just a token figure-head, the 'Sons of Light' in fact ran the prison. This organization is still very much functional but has since been forced underground.

After the rebellion a new administration was brought in which included Ed Cohn and John Nunn (a slave in the extreme) who's mission it was to restore the morale of the guards and make cosmetic changes.

Yet on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1986 this new administration orchestrated a race riot which left one white inmate dead, over 20 prisoners wounded and several guards wounded. This was orchestrated so guards could not only get some get back from the revolt of 1985 but also to seize better control of the prison from us.

In the fall of 1985 there was a large armed racial confrontation amongst prisoners where several black and white inmates were stabbed. The leadership or main participants were sent to lock up i.e. the hole. Yet less than 6 months later the administration let everyone involved go back to general population. Placing the whites in one cell house and the blacks in another. Then they turned around and ran both groups (a first) to the gym together fully knowing what would happen. As a result the prison was placed on total lockdown for 6 to 7 months

and for the duration of that lockdown the guards terrorized and brutalized prisoners.

Groups of 5 to 6 guards were formed where they were armed with clubs and guns that shoot teargas and wooden & rubber bullets. These roving bands of guards on all three shifts circulated the prison getting payback, shooting and maiming prisoners with rubber bullets at will. Paying particular attention to militant or rebellious prisoners.

It got so bad that a guard who was a union representative smuggled out a video taped shooting and beating of a black prisoner and turned it over to the local Indianapolis media who aired it on the evening news.

When this particular prisoner, who was less than 6 months from going home, hired a lawyer and filed a suit he came up hung in his cell on the newly opened E-A/S unit.

As a way of pacification and to make up for that brutal 6 months campaign of terror, before we were let off of lockdown the administration authorized for us to purchase our own personal T.V. sets. Up until then you could not have a personal T.V. in your cell. You only saw T.V. when you went to the gym.

In 1992 after hundreds of prisoners of all nationalities went out to the gym and had a peaceful march around the yard in solidarity with those of us on hunger strike at M.C.U. Westville - Supermax and to protest our treatment. Again the D.O.C. docked down for approximately 9 months, terrorized the population, did mass transfers of prisoners and further tightened up control of the prison by implementing a new system called controlled movement.

#### *Transformations...*

Every revolutionary process has a high tide and a low tide. From the mid 80's leading in to the mid to late 90's revolutionary movement and politicization was at a very high tide throughout the entire D.O.C. this period represented a new generation, new blood developing into militant resistance and transformation in the kkkamps.

While such was spearheaded by militant New Afrikan prisoners and black youth there were conscious or progressive white prisoners who rejected the racist ideology of their peers and instead waged struggle against the state.

This politicization produced militant cadre, revolutionary structures, political publications, newsletters, legal defense committees etc. Unity behind the walls were at a high level and some levels of inmate on inmate was reduced.

Links to outside progressive and revolutionary movements and organization was developed and cultivated. In response to this growing tide of revolutionary resistance the D.O.C. built and opened its first supermax prison at Westville, Indiana and later opened the S.H.U. (Security Housing Unit) in Carlisle, Indiana. Initially this backfired and only served to not only create more militants, it also intensified the level of resistance and struggle throughout the D.O.C.

*A Low Tide: Current Reality*

Currently at the reformatory in Pendleton and throughout the D.O.C. a low tide exists. The level of political awareness and organization hardly exists. In its place reactionary street organizations have filled the void. The state succeeded in breaking the back of the prison movement through a cointelpro style program of releasing or kicking out of prison a lot of the leadership or cadre that was active. Others they have either isolated in dungeons across the state or co-opted.

As the militants were isolated and marginalized and a younger breed of inmate was brought into the system who didn't know the history of the struggles in these prisons. The state was able to consolidate its machinery of repression. Now instead of books like Malcolm X, George Jackson, Bell Hooks, or Assata Shakur being mandatory reading its Donald Goines and porn. Instead of debates and conversations of a political nature its not which female pig has the biggest booty or conversations about past sexual conquests.

The reformatory houses approximately 1,600 to 1,800 inmates. A very large percentage of the population is on idle status meaning they don't have jobs and are kept confined to their cells up to 20 hours a day. They don't have jobs for us. If you have a lengthy sentence your not allowed to take trades, participate in substance abuse programs etc. then to compound the situation the majority of these foremans who are white will only hire white inmates in violation of the policy requiring a racial balance. Yes, white skin privilege and the class contradiction even exists behind the walls, prisoners who are political or outspoken are profiled and can't even get a job interview let alone a job unless they know somebody.

The state has already privatized most if not all of its industries and as the new governor and newly appointed commissioner from Kentucky has taken office they have moved towards privatizing the kitchen here and have plans to create private prisons in general.

In fact in June the entire I.D.O.C. food services were privatized and handed over to a company named Aramark. The state went from paying a \$1.50 per inmate meal to 99 cents per meal. The portions are smaller and the food has way less nutritional value.

The black female warder here name Zettie Cotton whose cousin was the recently fired commissioner has never managed a male max security prison and this is reflective in her many reactionary policies. Added to this mix is the fact that she is hated by the old guard staff who hate taking order from a black woman with an authority complex. Hence they themselves will implement rules geared to fall back on her. A coup attempt at our expense.

For the past year elements of this administration has intentionally attempted to provoke a riot which will 1) get rid of the warder, 2) get more funds from the legislature and 3) further repress the population.

For the past year the reformatory has been trying to get accredited by the A.C.A. (American Correction Association) so that they can get funding and move

further towards privatization. Repeatedly they have failed inspection and as a result we are targeted for greater repression and restrictions.

Just this week all our cardboard boxes were taken that we use to store our property in. We have been told that now we must pay for our drug test if it comes back positive. If you get caught with food from the kitchen you must pay outrageous fees for it, plus you get a ticket. The water is contaminated causing illnesses. Our access of the law library is becoming less and less. Then after law library clerks filed a class action lawsuit for the conditions during the recent 6 months lock down last summer she fired half of the law library in retaliation. Everyone who was involved was fired after the Indiana Civil Liberties Union agreed to take the suit.

The situation here is very tense right now and we need some outside support, investigative inquiries, etc. people are going to end up getting hurt unnecessarily.

-To Be Continued-

Shaka Shakur  
T.A.G.

SHAKA SHAKUR 135647  
10C A405/SHU  
P.O. Box 1111, W.V.C.F.  
CARC/51E, IN. 47873