

# TIME/CUT

*Indiana Prison Newsletter*

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Perspective of a Woman of  
Color: Abuse at Miami CF

A Review of Post  
Incarceration Syndrome

Why the Code for Sentence  
Modification Needs to Be  
Amended

Massive Rights Violation  
and Hunger Strike at  
Wabash Valley

& more

*Presented by*



# **TIME/CUT**

is a publication for Indiana prisoners and their family and friends. It includes news, thoughts, and helpful resources from inside and outside the walls and around the world. The articles in the publication do not necessarily reflect on its contributors, creators, or distributors. Its contents are for informational purposes only. Time/Cut does not provide legal assistance or romantic arrangements.

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# Table of Contents

<b>The Perspective of a Woman of Color - Removing the Black Veil: Abuse &amp; Harassment of Trans &amp; Gay People at Miami CF</b> by Lakesha Norrington (listed in IDOC as Shawntrell Norington) #138726.....4 <i>What families can expect to be charged under the new FCC rules:</i> <b>A new order from the Federal Communications Commission lowers existing caps on rates and fees in the prison and jail telephone industry</b> by Andrea Fenster, PrisonPolicy.org.....10
<b>Indiana’s Jail Safety Standards are Effectively Meaningless. Here’s Who to Blame.</b> by Ryan Martin & Tim Evans, IndyStar.com.....11
<b>America is Still Locking People Up for Their Activism, Including Black Women</b> by Tamar Sarai, Essence.com.....17
<b>THE LASTING PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE OF PRISON: A Review of Post Incarceration Syndrome</b> by leon benson #995256, IDOCWatch.org.....20
<b>The Fox Designing the Henhouse</b> by Jessica Zhang & Bea Halbach-Singh, Vera.org.....23
<b>PLANT PROFILE: Burdock.....25</b>
<b>Why The Indiana Code Regarding Modification Of A Prisoner’s Sentence (35-38-1-17) Needs To Be Amended</b> by Antonio Jones #, IDOCWatch.org.....28
<b>Blurred Visions and Blurred Lines</b> by Shaka Shakur #1996207, IDOCWatch.org.....29
<b>IDOC Commits Massive Constitutional Rights Violations on Solitary Units To Terrorize Prisoners</b> from IDOCWatch.org.....31
<b>Episode 1: Screaming in the Shower</b> from SickPodcast.org.....33

## **The Perspective of a Woman of Color - Removing the Black Veil: Abuse & Harassment of Trans & Gay People at Miami CF**

*from IDOCWatch.org*

*by Lakesha Norrington*

Due to unfair and unsafe classification practices the Indiana Department of Corrections has, and is pulling the black veil over the eyes of the public locally, and nationally, and as a result internationally, by, when and where the Indiana Department of Corrections (“IDOC”) in its official capacity- (“working and business related dealings”) and its staff in their individual capacity- (“dealings in the workplace done but not permitted by or as a result of ‘working and business related dealings’”) subject women, men and children therein confined that identify as, has been, and is identified as, and is commonly known to be and present as Transgender, Intersex, Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and any variation thereof to: (1). Unfair and unsafe housing practices-though telling members of the free roaming public society that unfair and unsafe housing practices has no place in the operation and organization of the IDOC pursuant to state approved policy mandates such as, but far from limited to, Policy 00-00-101, The Use and Operation of the Department of Corrections.

Whoa! Free roaming public, who is unaware, the IDOC is subjecting confined minorities to the hardships of unfair and unsafe housing practices. The account of one woman, Lakesha L. Norrington, brings sight, light and truth to the perspective of a woman of color that the IDOC is, and has, subjected her, as others, to unfair and unsafe housing practices.

Though the accounts attested to are not limited to those provided, it is for the free roaming public society to make inquiries into the truth of the said attestments by contacting the state public agency, IDOC, requesting, even demanding, to see related records, policies etc., of which the free roaming public society is entitled to, by mandatory legal due processes, and is as follows: (A). Lakesha L. Norrington, age 36, height 6’3”, weight 159 lbs has been in the Indiana Department of Correction since 2003 and the Miami Correctional Facility since May of 2019. June 20th, 2019 Lakesha was sent to MCF A unit, then known as the “terror dome”, of which she was told by a staff person to stay clear of- it was a foreboding warning for Ms. Norrington that she noted.

While in A unit, due to staff harassment and lies, three men- No! Not men, men don’t do what these people did to Lakesha and probably countless others. We will refer to them in their true light- boys, perps, misfits, and offenders why? Because boys do childish things, perps and offenders do criminal unprogressive things, NOT MEN! At least not

the men that Lakesha knows to be R-E-A-L M-E-N! Few of them now-a-days eh?!, entered into Lakeshas cell, A-405, as she sat doing her legal work, telling her she had to go-had to leave the unit- because she made them feel “uncomfortable”- though she’d only been on the unit an approximately 4 days. For the love of love it is perplexing, free roaming society members as to how Lakesha doing her legal work, trying to stay out of prison while building upon her dreams and her planned dreams makes anyone not in her dreams or plans uncomfortable. Can anyone that’s somebody untangle this? The boys pulled a knife on Lakesha, robbed her of her prayer rug and all of her clothes, cosmetics, shoes-everything but the legal work she had-at knife point and told her she had two minutes to leave the unit or they were going to come back and kill her. The three boys hurriedly left her cell with her belongings while an officer and the unit’s security surveillance system looked on. Lakesha immediately left the room and sought staff help! She was taken off the range.

She reported the matter. Though reported the staff did not secure the dorm to retrieve the weapon or Lakeshas’ property, nor did they secure the crime scene, her cell which resulted in the perps’ destroying her IPAD, to date staff want her to pay for though Global Tel Link Corporation End User Agreement section 22 B. 2 states [Intentional Damage] “YOU ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE THAT THE RENTED DEVICE HAS A MATERIAL VALUE AND ANY INTENTIONAL DAMAGE TO A RENTED DEVICE MAY CONSTITUTE CRIMINAL VANDALISM THAT CAN BE PROSECUTED TO THE FULLEST EXTENT OF THE LAW”. I did not intentionally or otherwise damage anything so why am I being punished by the INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION staff by being kept away from my family and friends the avenues of GTL services otherwise provided to all confined persons? Who’s got the answers to the questions? Nor did they review cameras to hold the perps accountable for their criminal acts against Lakesha and her property though asked to do so.

Whoa! Free roaming public society members, can you shed light on what our state Agency, I.D.O.C., and its staff do in such a circumstance? What were the employment authorities that required the I.D.O.C. staff to take certain actions and what employment action(s) were those staff to take pursuant to said employment authorities of the State of Indiana? Did they comply? Who is entitled to the answers to these questions? Can you see? Hmmm! Still removing the black veil. Lakesha filed a request for protection asking to be kept away from the perps she did not know but the surveillance did. Rather than keep Lakesha away the MCF staff 6/28/2019 put her back on the range, same cell, with the three perps though she expressed fear of them and even though staff did not retrieve the weapon

the offenders robbed her with. The offenders again tried to harm her, on camera, when staff put her back in an unsafe housing condition she reported thus staff was aware of. Had Lakesha not busted out of her cell door onto the open range the misfits would have entered her room and harmed her as was the visible intentions.

Lakesha was then moved back to the other side of the unit pending a repeated protection request against and from the same criminals that initially attempted to harm her from where she witnessed days later a man get stabbed real bad on the side of the dorm she'd been robbed at knifepoint on. Was it by the same knife the 3 misfits robbed her with? Had the Indiana Department of Correction not engaged in unsafe and unfair housing practices the guy that got stabbed would reasonably have not been stabbed. What do you think? What does the I.D.O.C. think?

Lakesha contacted verbally and in writing just about every Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Counselor, Case Worker, Case Work Manager, Unit Team Manager, Superintendent, Internal Affairs personnel reporting the matter asking for help but was provided none. She asked for criminal charges to be filed but was denied. Rather than help, staff continued to lie to conceal: the reported criminal acts and the unsafe and unfair housing conditions Ms. Norington was subjected to. Lakesha even reported this unfair and unsafe housing condition to the State of Indiana Department of Corrections Central Headquarters from whom no help was given.

Whoa! Free roaming public society! How many times did Lakesha seek help by written communication? Verbal communications? to the I.D.O.C. and it's M.C.F. staff whom upon such verbal and written communications was made aware of the unsafe and unfair housing conditions to which nothing was done to remediate? How many of those written communications did I.D.O.C. file? Discard? Reply to? Not reply to? Was required to file?

Whoa! Free roaming public, why would the I.D.O.C. lie about reported and known victimizations against confined State of Indiana Americans resultant from unsafe and unfair housing conditions and practices within the I.D.O.C.? Can you see through the black veil? Speculations can here be made while facts can be ascertained by diligent, relentless, thorough inquiries and follow-ups from and by the free roaming public society members that are concerned. Free roaming AND confined public society members have a societal duty to hold OUR State, Local, National, and International agencies and the staff WE allow to operate them, to standards of what? Transparency? Accountability? Professionalism? Progressive Evolution? Tyranny? Prejudice? Discrimination? Progressive Digression?

If we had or have no type of societal duties we would not need the phrases: Election(s) or Voter Right(s); Legislatures; Aldermen/Women; County, City, State Representatives and there would then definitely be no need for what WE call OUR United States and State of Indiana Constitution in our lexicons or American vocabulary.; (B) Tyler Day, an openly gay white male age 37, height 5'2", and approximate weight 120 lbs, whom can do the best Brittany Spears anything at the drop of feathered eyelash, and recall just about all of Brittanys' songs, in and out of his sleep, has been in the I.D.O.C. 13 years and at the M.C.F. 3 years has provided the following account of his experience of unfair and unsafe housing practices by the Indiana Department of Correction:

In March of 2020 while confined at the M.C.F. Tyler was classified to be bunked with a gang member. Once the gang member saw a gay white man was assigned to be his cellmate the gangbanger, in the presence of staff, threatened all types of harms to Tyler if he went in or was put in the cell with him. Tyler told the staff he did not want to go into harm's room out of fear for his safety the staff had just witnessed was jeopardized. Tyler attempted to walk away from harm's room rather than willingly and knowingly walk into it. Staff rather than protecting Tyler put Tyler in mechanical restraints, of which there should be a mandatorily documented record for the use of mechanical restraints in Tylers I.D.O.C. files, that shows why mechanical restraints were placed on Tyler at what time, date and location, and for what reason(s) thereon stating who authorized the use of mechanical restraints on what date, and at what time, and for what reason(s), behind his back and carried him manually up a flight of stairs- which the use of both mechanical and manual force is mandated to be documented on The Use of Physical Force Report- to force him in harm's room. The gangbanger all the while still making threats toward Tylers' safety. Staff opened harm's door, put Tyler therein at which point harm, the gangbanger, jumped from his bed trying to batter Tyler who was cuffed behind his back, harm being way bigger than Tyler, swinging at him within his lunge toward Tyler. Then staff barely snatched Tyler back in the spring of time, then restraining harm, the gangbanger.

Whoa! Free roaming public society members, is it fair or safe for OUR Public Safety Servants and Officials to put US in situations that are sure to cause US harm? Is it fair or safe for US to ask for protection from OUR Public Safety Servants and be denied-whether within the I.D.O.C. or community streets? Is it fair or safe for US to express concern and/or fear for OUR safety to OUR Public Safety Servants just to be overlooked, shunned or laughed at and regarded as a nuisance? Tyler does not think so. Lakesha

does not think so. The Perspective of a Woman of Color does not think so. What does the free roaming public society think? Come from up under that black veil so all can see, hear and feel what you think...full force, no bars hold.

It is the Perspective of a Woman of Color that it is not fair to classify Americans to, in, and under any unsafe housing condition(s) within not only North Americas State if Indiana Department of Corrections but within all American places of confinement especially in what should be, and we would love to be, today's modern and progressively humane civilized societies. The only way that the American State of Indiana citizens confined to State of Indiana Penal systems can be housed in any condition is through and as a result of procedural due processes established by the State of Indiana Department of Correction Classification Policy for adult and juvenile confined citizens-as such applies to the I.D.O.C..

The State of Indiana Department of Correction, whose animus, of whatever sort, over the black veil, wants the free and confined roaming public, whom is unawares, and under the black veil, being suffocated and blinded, to believe that they wholeheartedly, and bare facidly, and thoroughly uphold and honor the purposes and policy statements of both the Adult and Juvenile classification policies and their related procedures.

Whoa! free roaming public society members, if the Indiana Department of Correction did in fact honor, wholeheartedly and bare facidly, both the Adult and Juvenile Classification policies, thus the Adult and Juvenile Classifications systems, are there, and would there be, any Adult and Juvenile informal and formal classification grievance complaints, tort claims complaints, civil or criminal complaints and/or classification appeals filed by or on behalf of any confined Adult or Juvenile citizen against the I.D.O.C. and its' staff for not upholding and honoring Adult and Juvenile Classification RIGHTS , due processes and procedures? Hark! Removing the black veil now.

Are you able to see yet? If not, change is gonna come! Help is here! The Perspective of a Woman of Color brings forth a pew of light that the black veil attempts to assimilate and decimate. Though the asserted purpose and policy statement of the State of Indiana Department of Corrections is promoted to be what it/they want OUR citizens to believe it is, it is not fair nor safe to house and classify women, men , and children to statutes and environments that only cause detriment to OUR well beings. Ask yourself and seek the answers to the following questions: How many men, women, and children whether they do or do not identify as Gay, Straight, Transgender, Lesbian, Two-Sprit or any variation(s) thereof, lost their

lives, by self or others, due to the unfair and unsafe State of Indiana Department of Correction Classification practices? How many of these society members have tried seeking help to be fairly and safely classified in accordance with the promoted State of Indiana Department of Correction policies and procedures prior to their lives being taken from US way too soon only to be denied? How many of US are scarred, for life or otherwise, due to the unfair and unsafe Classification Practices of the State of Indiana Department of Correction? How many of OUR loved ones are scarred? How many stabbings? Rapes? Extortions? Assaults? Batteries? Hunger Strikes? Suicides and Suicide attempts? Loss of meaningful relationships? Extended sentences has the State of Indiana Department of Correction caused as a result of subjecting OUR confined American Citizens to unsafe and unfair Classification practices?

Whoa! Free roaming public society members, the States' Indiana Department of Correction would, of course, want US to collectively and individually believe they are not the cause or effect of their unsafe and unfair classification practices against OUR confined American Citizens. What are OUR American Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary definitions of unfair and unsafe? Unfair: "adj. not fair:dishonest:unequal.-V.T.(Shak.)to deprive of beauty-adv. unfairly,-n.unfairness, the state of being unfair, dishonest, or unjust"; Unsafe:"adj. not safe.-adv. unsafely.-NS. unsafeness, unsafety."

It is unfair to respect, honor, and acknowledge the needs of one class or category of confined citizen while not respecting, honoring, and acknowledging the needs of all classes and categories of confined citizens in the same environment, situation or circumstances. For instance, the American laws say that female gendered staff persons are not permitted to strip or pat search male gendered confined citizens under non-emergent non-documented circumstances. This law is established by OUR American ("PREA")-Prison Rape Elimination Act and State of Indiana Executive Policy 02-01-115 section 14. Being this the law the unfairness arises when and where male gendered staff in predominately male institutional environments force female gendered confined citizens, as I, to illegal cross-gendered strip searches though prohibiting-through great measures-female gendered staff from forcefully strip searching male gendered confined citizens to the same illicit acts forced upon we females housed in male institutional environments.

It is the same unfairness for the men at predominately female institutions. I can assume it is the same unfairness OUR kids are facing. It's hard for us adults, so I can only imagine how hard it is for OUR kids! These criminal offenses thrust upon we confined citizens is unsafe for obvious reasons-it perpetuates criminal enterprise against men, children, and

women, as I, Transgender, and promotes such to other officials and confined citizens by sending the message that it is A'Ok to mistreat men, kids, and WE women that are gendered differently than our environmental counterparts.

Though the American mental and medical health societies acknowledge as truth women, men, and children that are Transgender the classification system of the State of Indiana Department of Correction does not. This perspective is shown by the misdeeds of the State of Indiana Department of Correction.

The following is an account subjected me by Indiana Department of Correction Correctional Officer M. Benjamin in a report of Conduct he filed under case number MCF 21-04-0472 on April 29th, 2021 for "Disorderly Conduct": "On 4-29-2021 at approximately 11:30 AM, I, Officer M. Benjamin, was working the phase 2 yard. I escorted Offender Norington, Shawntrell #138726 to phase one holding cells due to him being disruptive on phase 2. Once we arrived at the holding cells, I instructed Offender Norington #138726 to submit to a strip search. Offender #138726 refused, stating that a female staff member must be the one to conduct a strip search on him. At this time, I again instructed Offender Norington #138726 to submit to a strip search, and he again refused. I then called for assistance from Sergeant L. Cunningham, he came into the holding cell area. Sergeant L. Cunningham then ordered Offender Norington #138726 to submit to a strip search, which Offender Norington #138726 refused. At this time, I deployed a one second burst of OC on the target area." A female supervisor, Lieutenant D. Sowards on "4-29-21" at "4:51 PM" reviewed and signed off on the report.

The perpetuation of criminal enterprise continues. On April 29th, 2021 Correctional Officer-Sergeant Larry Cunningham provides the following witness statement account: "On 4-29-2021 at approximately 11:30 AM I, Sergeant Larry Cunningham was working phase 1 yard when I was asked to signal 8 OSB1 holding cells. When I arrived at the holding cell Officer Benjamin was asking offender Norington, Shawntrell #138726 out of cell J-341 to strip out since when offenders are placed in the holding cells they have to be searched for safety concerns. Offender Norington refused to be searched after he refused several times Officer Benjamin sprayed a 1 second burst of CO mk-4. Offender Norington got sprayed, he still refused and at that time I had to leave the area for a signal".

Does anyone see anything wrong with the attestments of Correctional Officers M. Benjamin, and Sergeant Larry Cunningham, and the act(s) of Correctional Officer-Lieutenant D. Sowards? (1) Due to unfair classification practices of the States' Indiana Department of Correction

the officers feel it ok to misidentify thus misclassify Women as I? Due to unfair classification practices of the State of Indiana Department of Correction male staff are permitted and feel it ok to subject women as I to unsafe conditions of being battered and abused for asking for a properly gendered staff to conduct strip searches if needed as PREA laws and courts state men, OUR kids, and women as I are permitted to ask for as does State of Indiana Department of Correction policies and ruled themselves?

What Correctional Officer M. Benjamin has failed to mention in his report was/is: (A) on camera he attempted to make me submit to a strip search in the presence of another confined person though not permitted. (B) When I asked him to retrieve a female Correctional Officer or a Healthcare Official to do the strip search he replied harshly in an abusive manner in the presence of another confined citizen "You are not a woman!" WOW! Why such abuse, prejudice, and discrimination?! (C) While I was talking to his supervisor- Correctional Officer Sergeant Larry Cunningham, on camera, trying to resolve the issues while facing away from Correctional Officer M. Benjamin, and toward Correctional Officer Larry Cunningham, Correctional Officer M. Benjamin battered me by spraying me with a chemical agent from the South East of me- more south though as I did not see him in my sight's vision. Why omit these facts that are on camera from their reports? I was not harming anyone nor was I aggressive toward anyone as I was in the right lane. All of this transpired due to The State of Indianas' Indiana Department of Correction perpetuating unfair and unsafe housing practices that not only men, kids, and women that are of the L. B. G. T. Q diaspora face- it is against all persons there confined really.

(D) What was my alleged disruptive conduct on phase 2 yard that resulted in Correctional Officer M. Benjamin, as stated by Correctional Officer M. Benjamin, "I escorted Offender Norington, Shawntrell #138726 to phase one holding cells due to him being disruptive on Phase 2." (E) Correctional Officer M. Benjamin failed to list and cite as witness to my being "disruptive" behavior that he states is the cause of him escorting me from phase one yard to phase one holding cell, the cause of him attempting to force me to the illegal strip search-though the clearly written instructions on the report of conduct, State Form 39590 (R5/2-19), that tells the state public servant how to complete the form states, and I quote, "Identify the conduct violation that was committed. Describe the conduct violation in detail. Be sure to identify everyone involved in the conduct violation and all witnesses to the conduct violation. Explain in detail what you observed and how the offenders conduct amounts to a conduct violation of the adult disciplinary code. Note any unusual behavior of the offender, if applicable. If the conduct violation is for a violation of a B202, B231, or

C305, describe the characteristics that led you to believe the substance was a controlled substance or tobacco, or describe the characteristics/behaviors that led you to believe the offender was under the influence of intoxicants.”

So, if these are the required instructions that Correctional Officer M. Benjamin was to abide by in completing the Report of Conduct, where is the description, in detail, of the conduct violation of my being “disruptive” on phase 2 yard? In other words, what was I doing on phase 2 yard that was “disruptive”? Why was I doing what was alleged of me to have been doing that was “disruptive” on phase 2 yard? Who was present and witness to the disruptive phase 2 yard conduct of me that is to be cited in the Report-though not cited? What is the conduct violation that I committed on phase 2 yard as a result of the not cited, and not detailed “disruptive” behavior alleged by Correctional Officer M. Benjamin?

Whoa! Free roaming public society members, can anyone shed light on why Correctional Officer M. Benjamin’s “immediate supervisor” Lieutenant “D. Sowards” signed off on a report at “4:51 PM” on “4-29-21” that she did not question? She did not review for compliance with the written instructions thereon stating how the state form was to be completed and submitted? Did not question any gaps? Can somebody that is somebody see the answers? If so, please let us all hear what they are. Can somebody tell me why Correctional Officer-Lieutenant D. Sowards did not review the Report for violations by staff of...lets say... PREA laws? Let’s say...State policies that prohibit cited staff conduct such as, but not limited to, the States’ Use of Force policy the Indiana Department of Correction wants to keep confidential, the States’ Use of Chemical Agent policy the State of Indiana Department of Correction wants to keep confidential? Let’s say...for violation of employment standards of conduct? Let’s say...violation of any laws?; let’s say...violation of my RIGHTS!? Are you able now to see the perpetuation of criminal enterprise in the State of Indiana Department of Correction by the Indiana Department of Correction staff? If not, don’t worry the black veil is still being removed.

Since the questions have been posed I’ll answer what I’m able to say about what happened that caused Correctional Officer M. Benjamin to escort me from phase two yard to phase one holding cells. I was on phase one at a medical appointment, one of three that I had to tend to the day of 4-29-2021, and the last of three. I finished. Hungry, I asked a phase one yard staff if I could get a meal to eat as I had not eaten all day. This K-9 Sergeant stated that she would inform phase two yard staff that I was coming to eat from phase one from an appointment. Did she? I don’t know. I got my meal tray as staff working in the phase two dining

hall allowed me then heading back to my unit, J, with the unit that was next to mine going back to their unit, H. I was the only one out at that moment from my unit as I had been coming back from my appointments. I passed the check point Correctional Officer that was between my unit and unit H, he asked me whom I was and where I was going and coming from which I told him what I’ve told you which resulted in him letting me make it back to my unit-J. I got to my units’ door where Correctional Officer-Sergeant R. Edwards-(I believe is his name), was also going and met me at the door. I pressed the doors outer intercom so I could announce and identify myself and the Sergeant and I could be let into the unit. While we waited no one answered the intercom. As we waited we both noticed Correctional Officer M. Benjamin crossing the phase two yard toward us. I had bad past dealings with Correctional Officer M. Benjamin so I looked to Correctional Officer Sergeant R. Edwards for protection by asking him to tell Correctional Officer M. Benjamin, what he should have already known that J unit was my unit as I did not want to say anything to the officer. Why should I when a supervisor could handle the matter?

Correctional Officer M. Benjamin is known to be a shoot first and ask questions never type of Correctional Officer. Correctional Officer Sergeant R. Edwards did not intervene. Correctional officer M. Benjamin arrived and told me to throw my meal tray on the ground. I asked for what but was not told anything but because he told me so. I told the staff that I was allowed to have the tray, lunch, but that was not enough. I again looked to Correctional Officer R. Edwards asking him to intervene which he said “if that’s what he said then do it”. So, I said “Really?” then took the meal tray out of my right arm which held the one meal tray and a stack of legal case files and legal materials I had picked up on one of the three appointments I had that day and did as I was ordered by Correctional Officer M. Benjamin; I threw the tray behind me into the grass rather on the pavement where people had to walk. In the process of my trying to understand why I was being told to throw a meal tray on the ground Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas and his K-9 Correctional Officer-a dog- came up from behind me, South East, and stood in the grass behind Correctional Officer Benjamin’s line of perpendicular measurement-meaning:

Correctional Officer M. Benjamin stood about two feet to the left of my body as I was standing still facing the front of Correctional Officer Sergeant R. Edwards, now draw a line from right side of Correctional Officer M. Benjamin as you see him from where he stands, so from his right arm all the way across. Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas and his K-9 Correctional Officer stood maybe 4 feet to the left of that line measuring from my left arm.



The tray that I threw on the ground at the order of Correctional Officer M. Benjamin went behind me in my line of perpendicular measurement and close to the building as is seen on security footage that face/faced unit J the day of 4-29-2021-being so, Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas said "Why you throw your tray at me and hit me?" I said "What!? I did not throw a tray at you. That tray did not come near you." Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas said "Yes you did, it's food on me". He looked downward toward his clothes as if there was food on him that he would see. I asked Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas to show me where the food was, which is when I bent toward him not moving from where I stood looking and not seeing anything on him but LIES. But whoa! This is the kicker, he was standing in front of his K-9 Correctional Officer, a dog, so, if I threw a tray at him with food in it it would have hit the dog first, not Correctional Officer Sergeant Ornelas FIRST!

Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas then told Officer Benjamin to cuff me up and take me to phase one holding cells. I said "For what?" Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas said "Because you hit me with a tray." So I gave the legal work that I still had in my right arm to Correctional Officer Sergeant R. Edwards and turned around away from Correctional Officer M. Benjamin to let him cuff me up without any aggression or any argument.

Correctional Officer M. Benjamin then escorted me to be tortured! As we walked past Correctional Officer Sergeant M. Benjamin Orneleas I again looked closer at his clothes to see if there was any food on him which there was not telling him to make sure to write it up and to take pictures. I said nothing further. I was then taken to OSB 1 holding cells where Correctional Officers M. Benjamin, Sergeant Larry Cunningham, and Lieutenant Morgan violated me and once again traumatized me!

Whoa! Free roaming public society members, get this, on May 17th, 2021, the date I was notified of the Report of Conduct filed by Correctional Officer M. Benjamin, I requested a screening Correctional Officer, S. Melanson, to get a witness statement from Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas to state that I threw a tray on him and the K-9 Correctional Officer and hit him with it, and that he told Correctional Officer M. Benjamin to cuff me up and take me to OSB 1 holding cells as a result of him saying I threw and hit him with my meal tray, and that Correctional Officer Sergeant Edwards was present as witness to all that was going on with him, Correctional Officer M. Benjamin, Correctional Officer Sergeant Edwards, and myself, and his K-9 Correctional Officer.

Per the words of Correctional Officer Screening Officer S.

Melanson, on May 26th, 2021 Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas ``Refused @ 11:00" on "Phase 2 yard By Admin. Doors" to give a witness statement he is mandated to give per State policies that govern his employment conduct. Can anyone that is someone tell me why the correctional officer that said I hit him with a meal tray refused to provide a witness statement saying that on 4-29-2020 I threw and hit him with a meal tray, and that being the reason that he told Correctional Officer M. Benjamin to put me in mechanical restraints and take me to OSB 1 holding cells, refused to provide to me or hearing staff, or his supervisors a statement supporting his allegations made against me, and his order to Correctional Officer M. Benjamin (who let's not forget for some odd reason(s) refused to put these facts in his report, though as we have learned and seen he was to do) to cuff me up, failed to provide photo evidence of the battery, failed to designate security surveillance evidence of the battery on his person that supports photo evidence? Failed to list present staff as witnesses that would of course state what he said as truth as it is seen on camera? WHY SUCH REFUSAL?

After I was tortured by the Correctional Officers in OSB 1 I was let go back to my unit J. On the way back to phase 2 from phase 1 I stopped at a dining hall Correctional Officer asking if I could get me a meal tray as I was made to throw my meal tray on the ground earlier. The female staff person stated "Hold on" then got on her radio to call Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas asking him "Sergeant Orneleas are we going to let Norington have another tray?" Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas replied over the radio "No not until he says sorry for hitting me with his tray." I said "PSSST! Fuck that tray!" and headed with fireing purpose back toward my unit. Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas seen my pain and trail of flame and called to me from across the yard yelling to me that he wanted to talk to me. I turned on a needles point a yelled at him as I pointed at him so the yard could hear "FUCK YOU! I NEVER DID ANYTHING TO YOU! I'VE BEEN NOTHING BUT NICE TO YOU! FUCK YOU!" and headed to my dorm tears escaping my eyes, fear moving me, pain holding me.

I get to my dorm and push the button to get in. I announced myself and asked to be let in my dorm. The guard told me that yard told him not to let me in. What?! Guess who? Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas! I was so fearful! I was there by myself, noone around. I looked for help! Protection! No one was around and here comes the devil and his k-9! I saw a female staff person coming rather than going to another unit and I did the sensible thing and started making my way toward her-sister solidarity, she disappeared into G unit! I was beyond fearful! Why?

The same misfit that lied on me earlier, the cause of

**What families can expect to be charged under the new FCC rules:  
A new order from the Federal Communications Commission lowers existing  
caps on rates and fees in the prison and jail telephone industry.**

*from PrisonPolicy.org  
by Andrea Fenster, June 2021*

On May 24, the Federal Communications Commission released a historic order lowering existing caps on rates and fees in the prison and jail telephone industry. The FCC's newest order applies only to out-of-state calls, where the caller and called person are physically in different states, but not to in-state calls, where the caller and called person are physically in the same state. Importantly, the FCC says that companies must charge the out-of-state rate unless they know where the parties are physically located. Previously, many companies calculated rates based on area codes, which will no longer be allowed. (This means some third-party services that offer different phone numbers with a different area code to obtain better calling rates will no longer be effective). These newly lowered caps go into effect October 26, 2021.

**Rate caps:**

**For prisons:** With one exception, out-of-state calls will not cost more than 14¢ per minute. Previously, rates were capped at either 21¢ or 25¢ depending on whether the call was collect or debit. The exception is that the FCC is allowing companies to charge higher rates if a mandatory state statute or regulation requires a commission payment to the facility, however, "in no event...can the total rate cap exceed \$0.21 per minute." (FCC Order at fn309).

**For jails with an average daily population of 1,000 or more:** With one exception, out-of-state calls will not cost more than \$0.16 per minute. Previously, rates were capped at either 21¢ or 25¢ depending on whether the call was collect or debit. The exception is that the FCC is allowing companies to charge higher rates if a mandatory state statute or regulation requires a commission payment to the facility, however, "in no event...can the total rate cap exceed \$0.21 per minute." (FCC Order at fn309).

**For all other jails:** Out-of-state calls can cost no more than 21¢ per minute. Currently, collect calls can cost up to 25¢ per minute at these jails, but when the new regulations take effect, collect calls and debit calls will both be capped at 21¢.

**Single calls:**

From both prisons and jails, single call products, like Text2Connect™ and PayNow™, will now be capped at \$6.95 per call, plus the applicable per-minute rate. We have previously found that companies were charging \$9.99-14.99 for a single telephone call.

**Third-party financial transaction fees:**

In both prisons and jails, third-party financial transaction fees, like fees associated with Western Union and MoneyGram payments, will be capped at \$6.95 per transaction. Currently, these fees can be as high as \$9.99.

Correctional Officers M. Benjamin ,Cunningham, and Morgan violating me, traumatizing me was coming to do more damage to me and now no one is around and to me all the staff are complicit in my torture and traumatizations!

Correctional Officer Sergeant Orneleas got to me as I stood in front of J unit waiting not knowing what to expect. He asked me why I threw the tray on him and as seen on camera I emphasized to him and everyone else the distance between where he stood and where the tray laid by spanning my arms to emphasize the point. Orneleas told me that he sent me to OSB 1 for a “cool down”. COOL DOWN FROM AND FOR WHAT!? I complied with staff orders and I was lied on and victimized as a result! Orneleas told me that I could go and get me a meal tray.

And no! I DID NOT APOLOGIZE for something that I DID NOT do. I just needed to get far away from him as fast as able so I went back to the chow hall where I was surrounded by a lot of people, witnesses! As I sit with tears in my eyes my body is heating up as I recount what’s now in my head knowing that the report has not been heard and evidence requested is still being retrieved and looked into. By the time this is published all that should be resolved one way or many others. Either way the public will know what’s up.

Is it hard to believe and see that I am, and have been, subjected to the hereto reported tortures for years by the I.D.O.C.? Is it hard to see how the State of Indiana Department of Corrections promotes and perpetuates unfair and unsafe classification practices, and how such perpetuates criminal enterprise against confined and unconfined Americans? This is the Perspective of a Woman of Color- Removing the Black Veil. Now, let me see and hear what you do. I’m looking and listening.



### **Indiana’s Jail Safety Standards are Effectively Meaningless. Here’s Who to Blame.**

*from IndyStar.com*

*by Ryan Martin & Tim Evans, Oct 2021*

State law arms the Indiana Department of Correction with power to demand that county officials fix problems inside unsafe jails. But the IDOC does not use it.

Instead, an IndyStar investigation found, since 2010 the IDOC has allowed 84% of Indiana’s counties to continue operating jails while they repeatedly violated two of the state’s most important safety standards. The counties routinely crowded their jails past capacity or failed to hire enough corrections officers. Or both.

The consequences of inaction are deadly. The vast majority of deaths in Indiana’s jails — 89% — occurred in counties that the IDOC identified as falling short of those safety standards in at least four out of the past 11 years.

Put another way: The IDOC was aware of dangerous conditions inside specific Indiana jails for years, but state officials did not consistently push for improvements that might have saved lives.

A yearslong IndyStar investigation, titled “Death Sentence,” identified a sprawling crisis inside Indiana’s jails. People are being crammed into concrete cells designed for almost half the population. Lacking adequate supervision and medical care, they are dying by suicide, neglect, homicide and in several other horrifying ways. Some are overdosing, others are suffering the slow, torturous death of alcohol withdrawal.

The IDOC has been given a front-row seat to the crisis. Its employees inspect every jail every year, a responsibility enshrined in state law that is designed to keep every county in compliance with basic standards set at the state level by the IDOC.

And while the IDOC has followed through with its annual inspection program, its duty under state law calls for the agency to do more than simply document the crisis in an array of reports before moving on. Lawmakers have also trusted the IDOC with significant authority to push for changes that could keep people safe — both those held in jail and the officers who walk the cell blocks.

The authority includes seeking a jail’s closure, if necessary, until a county begins meeting the state’s standards.

It does not appear the IDOC, though, has used that authority since at least 2010, if ever.

IDOC Commissioner Rob Carter, through a spokeswoman, declined four IndyStar requests for interviews for this and other stories published as part of IndyStar’s “Death Sentence” investigation, which found someone has died in a county jail every two weeks, on average, since 2010.

In an email, the spokeswoman said: “Our inspections are meant to make sure county jails are complying with the standards required under the law that ensure the health and safety of offenders, and the security of the jail and public safety, and we take that duty very seriously.”

However, an IndyStar review of IDOC inspection records from 2010 to 2020, the most recent year available, revealed a damning picture: Indiana’s Jail Standards are effectively

meaningless.

IndyStar's investigation found:

- At least 240 people have died in counties where the jails violated crowding or staffing standards in at least four of the 11 years examined by IndyStar.
- A third of Indiana's jails were so full that they ran out of beds in at least four of the years. Overall, jails exceeded their state-approved capacity 27% of the time.
- But jails become dangerous long before they are cited by state inspectors. Jails are considered overcrowded once they exceed 80% of their capacity — something that occurred more than half of the time during the period examined by IndyStar. Forty-four jails were overcrowded at least eight of the years; 13 were overcrowded every year.
- Staffing shortages regularly contributed to unsafe conditions inside most Indiana jails. The years 2014–18 were particularly bad, when nearly 75% of jails were flagged for failing to provide adequate staffing.
- Rather than push for counties to comply with existing staffing standards, though, the IDOC quietly changed its interpretation of the standards in 2019. Suddenly, the IDOC did not consider any jails to be understaffed in 2020.
- The IDOC for years has been undercounting the number of people who died inside Indiana jails. IndyStar's investigation found more than 80 deaths that the IDOC had failed to acknowledge in its annual reports.
- When counties are finally forced to comply with state safety standards or constitutional requirements, it's typically not because of any particular action taken by IDOC officials. Most often, changes are driven through lawsuits filed by families of people who died or by the ACLU of Indiana.

"No one is ever surprised by these cases. No one ever says, 'Oh, we have a wonderful jail. Why are you suing us?'" said Ken Falk, legal director of the ACLU of Indiana.

In fact, sheriffs told IndyStar that intervention resulting from a lawsuit is sometimes the only way they can receive enough funding to make improvements they know are needed in their jails. By then, though, dangerous conditions have already lingered long enough to seriously harm people inside, often including death.

Without a strong inspection program and consistent enforcement, experts told IndyStar, unsafe conditions will continue to persist inside Indiana's jails.

The Henry County Jail in New Castle shows the devastating results.

After Brian Gosser's arrest in 2016 for drunken driving, other people on his cell block learned something that put him at risk. His dad was a former sheriff.

Gosser faced relentless attacks. The Henry County Jail's surveillance cameras recorded Gosser collapsing to the floor after being punched in the head by one inmate. Another video captured the moments following another beating, when Gosser walked out of a cell, wearing a bloody shirt, rubbing his face and bleeding from his eye and nose.

The jail's phones were recording, too, when Gosser's attackers spoke freely about their power over him. One man, describing his attack on Gosser, told a relative that he "beat a dude so bad in here he shit his pants."

The jail was so out of control, one Henry County jail officer quit because she felt unsafe. And she was afraid how her boss would react, so she dropped her keys and a resignation letter outside of his office before simply walking away.

In a court deposition, a nurse at the jail said fights regularly sent people to the emergency room for serious injuries. She described the troubling conditions in an email to her supervisor:

"There is NO discipline in the jail. At all," she wrote. "Inmates ask when the sheriff is going to take the jail back because this is their jail...Literally every day that I work I pray I come home unharmed to my family because our medical staff is in fear of no support from the jail staff."

The jail had been short at least 19 officers at the time, said Henry County Sheriff Richard McCorkle, citing an outside consultant's assessment in 2013.

"I agree that we needed more personnel and it needed to be safer," McCorkle told IndyStar. "The jail was as safe as we could make it. That's what I can tell you."

By the time of Gosser's arrest in 2016, the IDOC had already cited Henry County six straight years for lacking an adequate number of staff to keep people safe. And in four of those years, the jail also was overcrowded.

The IDOC, though, did not use its full power to enforce state safety standards.

It was nine days after his arrest for drunken driving, and just a few hours after losing consciousness during one of the repeated beatings he endured, when the 32-year-old Gosser finally grabbed the attention of one of the jail's few officers.

He raised a handwritten sign that contained the pleading words: "I NEED HELP."

Gosser died seven days later. An autopsy found several injuries to his head, chest and other parts of his body. His death was a homicide.

"If only sheriffs could feel what this former sheriff, myself, has gone through," said Doug Gosser, who served as Rush County Sheriff from 1991-98. "My son should have never died for being arrested for a DUI."

The circumstances of Gosser's death, as described both in the family's lawsuit and in a prosecutor's filings in the criminal cases against four men convicted in his death, highlights numerous failures in the Henry County Jail.

Officers failed to protect Gosser from several attacks. Jail staff also waited more than 15 hours to take him to a local hospital for treatment of his broken facial bones, broken ribs and fractured septum.

Gosser's health then deteriorated back in jail, causing him to sweat profusely and vomit repeatedly while struggling for breath. A physician's assistant in the jail gave him Tylenol, Ibuprofen and Prednisone instead of immediately returning him to the emergency room.

But the blame for Gosser's death extends beyond the jail. His death represents a systemic failure across the state, one created by local judges and prosecutors who have routinely filled jails past their capacity for more than a decade, and by local county commissioners and councilors, who have failed to address or alleviate the dangerous conditions.

Perhaps most of all, though, it's a failure by the Indiana Department of Correction, whose inspectors acknowledged that the jail failed to meet the state's standards every year but elected to do little about it.

There's a reason why lawmakers have tasked the IDOC with setting acceptable jail standards and the power to enforce them.

The responsibility for a county jail is shared among three groups in local government: county commissioners, who provide the building; county councilors who hold the money for staffing and improvements; and sheriffs, who run the jails and must ensure the welfare of people held inside.

The three groups don't always agree on priorities such as staffing and jail facility needs. Multiply that across Indiana's 92 counties, and it becomes clear why state standards and oversight are critical.

As outlined in state law, the IDOC's enforcement options begin with a written warning. The county then has six months to make a "good faith effort" to comply with the state's standards. If that does not happen, the IDOC commissioner has the authority to pursue two options.

The IDOC commissioner can recommend the county prosecutor and local judges call a grand jury to tour and examine the jail. Another option is to go so far as to seek a court injunction "prohibiting the confinement of persons in all or any part of the jail, or otherwise restricting the use of the jail" until the problems are resolved.

The law doesn't spell out what would happen if a jail were closed, even temporarily, but some sheriffs have addressed overcrowding or COVID-19 concerns by asking judges to release people until their trial dates or by sending people to neighboring counties who have room to spare in their jails.

In its yearslong investigation, IndyStar could not find any time that the IDOC leadership used its full enforcement authority. In addition to declining numerous IndyStar requests for interviews, the IDOC also has not fulfilled an IndyStar public records request on Aug. 6 seeking documentation of any enforcement action dating back to 2010.



*Commissioner of IDOC, Rob Carter*

In response to IndyStar's emailed questions for IDOC Commissioner Carter, a spokeswoman confirmed that Carter has not used his authority to demand changes since his appointment by Gov. Eric Holcomb in January 2017.

"This administration has not found it necessary to use this option," IDOC spokeswoman Annie Goeller said, "because we routinely communicate with counties about inspections and any issues found and steps being taken to address them."

In addition to Carter's denials, the IDOC declined to make any of its jail inspectors available for an interview even

though IDOC's website contained a sentence that said an inspector's job includes providing interviews to news media. After IndyStar's requests for interviews and public records, the IDOC removed that sentence from its website.

The IDOC initially would not provide copies of in-custody death reporting forms that would specifically detail how much information the agency knew about each jail death. IndyStar filed a public records complaint with Indiana Public Access Counselor Luke Britt, who issued an opinion on Sept. 3 in IndyStar's favor. The IDOC on Sept. 24 sent copies of forms for less than 15% of the deaths identified by IndyStar, but none of those forms were for the deaths for which IndyStar specifically requested more information.

The IDOC also first declined to provide copies of annual jail inspection records, which describe the conditions inside each jail, before telling IndyStar it would cost \$1,104. The IDOC later provided the records without a charge after IndyStar tracked down one of IDOC's internal policies that noted such records should be shared publicly.

Several sheriffs interviewed by IndyStar said their annual jail inspections do not reflect the reality inside their jails.

But it's not as if the reports are too tough on jails, sheriffs say. Oftentimes, they're too weak.

"I asked for the teeth. I said I want you to write a scathing report," Vanderburgh County Sheriff Dave Wedding told IndyStar. "I said I wanted it, I want the worst report I could get on this jail."

Without accurate reports, Wedding said sheriffs struggle to convince county and state leaders to acknowledge the extent of the problems he and other sheriffs face inside their jails. He keeps binders at his desk containing years of correspondence seeking help.

In Madison County, Sheriff Scott Mellinger said IDOC's inspections fail to accurately portray when a jail is short-staffed.

In 2018, as the jail continued running out of beds for the third year in a row, Mellinger sought an independent assessment from a consultant,

The consultant said Madison County needed at least seven additional full-time officers to cover every mandatory post, let alone provide enough security so people in jail could have access to programs and recreation.

"Because of staffing deficiencies," the consultant said in the report, "the jail is currently unable to consistently meet

required operational standards."

The IDOC, though, said the Madison County Jail was adequately staffed.

And that was in 2018. The IDOC's inspections have become less stringent since then.

That's because the IDOC quietly altered its criteria for determining adequate staffing levels starting in 2019, making it easier on each county that had struggled for years to reach enough staffing to meet Indiana's jail standards.

The IDOC would not agree to an interview to explain the necessity of the change.

In an email to IndyStar, an IDOC spokeswoman said: "Previously it was a decision made by individual inspectors based on the information the county was providing. In 2019, our executive leadership reinforced to jail inspectors that they should refer to state law and administrative policy, while also reviewing any significant incidents, such as an escape or death, which were directly impacted by staffing."

In other words, IDOC's leadership appears not to be considering the day-to-day needs of jails. Yet even by its new criteria — to flag a jail as short-staffed only if it played a role in critical incidents — the IDOC is not consistently noting when a jail falls dangerously short.

From 2014-18, anywhere between 56 to 75 of Indiana's county jails were considered by the state to lack enough staff to keep everyone safe.

After the IDOC changed its interpretation of state standards, that number dropped to two in 2019; and to zero in 2020.

A tour of the Allen County Jail in June showed several posts lacking officers. On one floor, for example, the jail's original design paired two officers in two posts to watch over two blocks. Then when an officer needed to walk the block to peek in cells or respond to a person's needs, the other officer could provide back-up. Now a single officer is expected to watch both blocks, which combined hold as many as 150 total people.

Last year, 52 officers were assaulted so severely in the Allen County Jail that they required hospitalization, Gladioux said. One person remained in ICU for nearly a month with a brain injury. All told, the assaults resulted in more than \$1 million in medical bills.

Those injuries were just the ones that required a hospital

bill. Other officers, he said, are struck routinely but shrug it off.

If the IDOC reports were true and his jail were adequately staffed, Gladieux said, most of those assaults would have been prevented.

The IDOC's new interpretation of the state's staffing standards also fails to acknowledge an uncomfortable truth: Indiana's jail deaths problem has been getting worse.

From 2010 to 2018, IndyStar's investigation found anywhere between 19 to 29 jail deaths per year.

But in 2019 and 2020, IndyStar found, the deaths jumped to 36 and 35, respectively. And this year is on pace to be just as deadly as the last two.

Not that the IDOC would know. For more than a decade, the IDOC has been significantly undercounting the number of people who have died in Indiana's jails.

IndyStar's investigation found at least 80 people that the IDOC did not acknowledge or count in its annual reports.

A few of the deaths, sheriffs told IndyStar, may not have been considered in-custody deaths in the very specific way that state and federal governments define the term.

Most of the deaths, though, clearly met the definition used by both sheriffs and the IDOC for in-custody deaths. The IDOC just didn't bother to track down the information.

IndyStar was able to independently verify every jail death primarily by reading local news reports and newspaper obituaries; filing public records requests; and interviewing sheriffs and jail commanders.

Corrections experts told IndyStar that any state jail inspection program should not only require consistent and reliable enforcement of safe standards but also an understanding of the scope of the problems, including an accurate number of people who have died

"If you call the Department of Correction and speak to someone in the jail inspection unit, and they say they don't know how many suicides they had, then that doesn't say very positive things about their inspection capability," said Lindsay Hayes, who has studied the problem of jail suicides for decades. "That should be something that they have right at the top of their head, if not written down somewhere in an annual report. So I suggest that that's not a very effective inspection agency if they don't collect that information."

With the IDOC shirking its responsibility, the role of pushing jails to meet basic safety standards has fallen largely to families of people who died and to the ACLU of Indiana.

Their efforts typically involve lawsuits focused on federal civil rights violations under the U.S. Constitution's protections against cruel and unusual punishment.

The ACLU of Indiana has filed at least nine federal lawsuits regarding jail overcrowding, including five that are pending against sheriffs and other officials in Allen, Gibson, Henry, Marshall and Wabash counties.

"One of the biggest myths is that somehow advocates for prisoners are asking for these country club prisons or jails," said Falk, legal director of the ACLU of Indiana. "They're not."

The U.S. Supreme Court has been clear, Falk said, in finding jails must meet only minimal requirements.

"But many of these jails," he said, "are subminimal and they know it."

The federal cases have slowly nudged local officials, who had been reluctant to open the county's checkbooks, to renovate or build new jails. One of the clearest examples might be the 35-year slog to address problems in the Marion County Jail that ultimately led to the construction of a new facility slated to open this year.

Federal judge Sarah Evans Barker, in a 2007 order, called Marion County a window into the difficulties of mustering support to provide safe facilities "even for people whose behaviors we disapprove of so strongly and seek to curtail by removing them from society."

The judge's order said that progress toward a solution could only begin once local leaders acknowledged they all had a stake in correcting the longstanding problems at the jail.

In another lawsuit in Vigo County, the sheriff, commissioners and county council acknowledged the jail "does not meet constitutional standards because of overcrowding, understaffing and inadequate space." State jail inspectors had reported the jail was overcrowded and understaffed for at least 16 consecutive years, according to the lawsuit, before the case was filed by the ACLU of Indiana in 2016.

"Correctional experts recognize that a jail is overcrowded when it is above 80% capacity," federal judge Jane Magnus-Stinson wrote in a 2018 order directing the county to move forward with a project to build a new jail.

Luke Woollard, an attorney with Disability Rights North Carolina's criminal justice team, told IndyStar that 80% is the ideal for determining when a jail's crowding becomes problematic. Woollard headed a recent study of dangerous conditions in North Carolina jails.

"That's not just advocates. That's also based on standards put out by jail administration organizations," Woollard said. "Overcrowding just affects everything else. If you're overcrowded, the corrections officers don't have as much time to do proper supervision, it becomes more difficult to get to everybody, your medical resources and things like that start to be stretched a little bit more. It really does make everything much harder to do and the jail as a whole, both for staff and for folks who are incarcerated, much more of a dangerous environment."

And when jails start exceeding 100% capacity, they typically add portable beds, often called "boats," into already cramped cells. But that is not an adequate solution, Woollard said, because the jails remain unsafe.

"Certainly, there are serious concerns beyond just making sure everybody has a place to sleep," Woollard said.

In the Vigo County lawsuit, the federal judge also recognized the political and financial challenges that come with a controversial, big-ticket jail project. But she said the court would not allow the substandard conditions to linger if there was no effort to move forward.

Without action, she said the court could be forced to take "draconian" action or even close the jail.

"The time for a solution is now, not when financial circumstances have improved or until all of Vigo County's citizens agree on the size and location of a new jail," she wrote in an order. "Public officials are accountable to the citizens, but they also are accountable to an oath sworn to uphold the Constitution regardless of dissent or dispute from the public."

The roughly \$60 million, 500-bed project is slated for completion next year. It nearly doubles the jail's capacity.

In Wabash County, a lawsuit filed by the ACLU in 2020 noted that some people were forced to sleep on the floor of a recreation room. They were not always granted access to toilets or running water, the ACLU said, so they were "given cups in which to urinate and then dump down a drain in the floor of the room."

It's a jail built for 72 people but housed 108, according to

a 2019 inspection report from the IDOC, with another 64 people held in another county.

The jail has been considered by state inspectors to be over capacity, understaffed or both in nine of the past 11 years. During that time, IndyStar found, Wabash County also had the highest rate of deaths of any jail in Indiana.

County officials recently approved a funding plan to build a new \$33 million facility that would expand the jail's capacity to about 300. In the interim, the county has agreed to cap the jail's population at 90.

But it still took an outside advocate — not the state's own enforcement authority — to intervene.

Indiana sheriffs are not just worried about degrading conditions, such as forcing people to urinate in cups or sleep on the floor. They are also worried about the tension created by overpopulated cells, the fighting it creates and the injuries inflicted on staff caught in the middle.

Jailers need the flexibility of spare cells to segregate people who are at risk of violence, or likely to be violent.

"Having sufficient room in a facility so that these sort of classification decisions can be made is absolutely necessary so that the jail can be operated without excessive risk of harm to prisoners and to the staff who supervise the prisoners," said Kenneth Whipker, the IDOC's former top jail inspector, in the Vigo County federal lawsuit.

This option, called "administrative segregation" among corrections officials, is spelled out in the very first line of Indiana's Jail Standards. The standards describe why separation is often necessary to "protect the welfare" of officers and people held in jail.

Yet when the IDOC does not use its enforcement authority to push for compliance, most Indiana jails end up remaining either overcrowded or understaffed for years and years. And then administrative segregation, often noted as a critical tool to keep people safe inside jail, remains out of reach.

Brian Gosser's death in the Henry County Jail is a tragic, if typical, example of the failure.



Brian Gosser



As a relative of a former law enforcement officer, Gosser was likely to face animosity and violence inside the jail. Officers eventually segregated Gosser in a side cell, but that was only after several attacks and a trip to the hospital. By then, his injuries were so severe that his health began spiraling.

If the jail had not been chronically overcrowded and understaffed, jailers might have segregated Gosser earlier and protected him from repeated assaults on what one of his neighboring cellmates referred to as the “gladiator block.”

But there was just one problem preventing officers from keeping Gosser away from potential attackers, an officer acknowledged in a court deposition.

“There was no room,” she said.

Now, after at least eight years of work by two Henry County sheriffs asking for a larger facility to address overcrowding, the local councilors have approved a \$25 million, 246-bed jail that is set to open in 2022.

The new jail will contain 12 side cells that can be used to hold people who might need protection from assaults.

It wasn’t the IDOC that successfully pushed county leaders to begin meeting safe standards on crowding, though. It was a federal lawsuit filed by the ACLU of Indiana.

“That lawsuit was very helpful in getting the ball moving,” said McCorkle, the sheriff.

The ACLU lawsuit led to a federal judge capping Henry County’s daily jail population at 105 until the new jail is open. McCorkle has been sending overflow to five other counties.

“I’m working very hard to keep that number per the ACLU and per the federal courts,” McCorkle said. “Making sure that we stay in compliance.”



## **America is Still Locking People Up for Their Activism, Including Black Women**

*from Essence.com*

*by Tamar Sarai, Aug 2021*

For decades, the children’s center at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women, a maximum security prison in Westchester, New York, featured a wall with the words “Joy is Unbreakable” etched in large orange

lettering. In 2017, Joyce Powell, a 59-year-old woman who has been incarcerated at Bedford for the past 14 years, was interviewed at the facility for a documentary about political prisoners. During the interview, where guards were present and listening in, Powell spoke of how the message served as a hopeful, personal reminder to her. A week after the interview, she says, the words were covered by a fresh coat of white paint.

Powell laughs when recounting the story now in all of its absurdity, but it is just one example of what she describes as constant retaliation for speaking out against conditions at Bedford. That pattern—speaking up and then being shut down—is what Powell also attributes to her incarceration.

As a community activist in Rochester, New York throughout the late 90s and early aughts, Powell quickly garnered attention from the city’s police department. The two cases for which she is currently incarcerated—with sentences of 16 years and 25 years-to-life, respectively—were for offenses of which she says she was falsely convicted. The scope and impact of her past organizing—and her insistence that she is innocent—has won Powell some support from allies who advocate for political prisoners. Those supporters, along with Powell herself, argue that her identity as a woman has earned her less public attention, exemplifying the ongoing erasure of Black women not just from broader society but also within the movements they often fuel.

### **An instant target**

“There was a time in my life when I was a part of the problem,” Powell wrote in an open letter to the public. In the early 90s, Powell was arrested and sentenced to three years for drug dealing. Upon her release in 1995 she began organizing and became an ordained reverend, in an effort to “give back to the community that I felt I had at one point helped destroy as a drug dealer.”

Powell’s early organizing focused on ending gun violence, an issue that was close to her heart following the murder of her 18-year-old son. Powell ran a safe haven for youth out of her hair salon where she taught young people how to use writing and the arts to express their emotions, offered training on violence de-escalation, and took them on tours to nearby colleges. As an ordained reverend, Powell also made routine visits to hospitals to offer spiritual guidance to patients.

It was after the police murder of Lawrence Rogers, a Black man who was suffering a mental health crisis in a local Wegmans, that she began fervently advocating against police brutality. Powell launched an organization, Equality and Justice For All, and would lead rallies and protests

outside of the Mayor's office and city police department. Her group believed the police department was tainting evidence in investigations of police shootings, and a central demand following Rogers' death was to stop the practice. Powell, alongside other local grassroots groups, also called for the development of an emergency team that would be deployed in lieu of police for situations involving mental health crises.

"...the Rochester police department was supportive of her work when her focus was squarely on gun violence... But when she pivoted her bullhorn towards the department, Powell says that Rochester police officers explicitly told her she was becoming a target."

In 2005, the department established an emergency response team but routinely failed to deploy the team in appropriate situations, resulting in the 2006 police shooting of Patricia Thompson, a 54-year-old woman who died at the scene. Powell continued to organize protests and place pressure on the department after Thompson's death, inquiring with her bullhorn "Where was the team?" In addition to on the ground actions, Equality and Justice For All also developed a courtwatch program—a local organizing strategy that is increasingly used now, but was relatively new at the time.

During our interview at Bedford, Powell recalls how the Rochester police department was supportive of her work when her focus was squarely on gun violence. "They'd visit the church and ask when the next rally would be," she says.

But when she pivoted her bullhorn towards the department, Powell says that Rochester police officers explicitly told her she was becoming a target.

In 2007, Powell was convicted of burglary and assault, an offense she maintains she did not commit, particularly as she had an alibi and no DNA evidence could corroborate her presence at the scene of the crime. The only evidence she says was presented was an accusers' statement which was later altered. She also says that the jury was not allowed to know that she was a pastor or involved in community organizing against the city's police department. Powell received a 16-year sentence. Further, at the time of her arrest in 2006, Powell was in the midst of filing a complaint with the Rochester Police Department's Office of Internal Affairs about officer misconduct.

In 2007, while serving her first sentence, Powell was charged with murder in a cold case from 1992—another offense for which she maintains her innocence and for which the sole piece of evidence was a cassette tape found in her car which prosecutors say featured Powell rapping a "confession." Only a transcript of the tape—not the audio

itself—was provided to the jury. During her incarceration, she's been studying law and earned her paralegal certificate in the hopes that she can defend herself and overturn her conviction.

"Do Black women political prisoners matter too?"

Kerbie Joseph, a New York City-based organizer with the ANSWER Coalition says that it's incredibly important to name Powell, and others who have been targeted by the carceral state for their activism, as political prisoners.

"Political prisoners' is a completely leftist term used within the movement to identify these comrades," said Joseph. "But according to the United States [government] we're good and we don't have any political prisoners or prisoners of war."

Joseph says that naming people like Powell as political prisoners changes the narrative that the government attempts to portray to the world while highlighting how incarceration is often used to quell political dissent.

Powell's story was particularly compelling to Joseph because of how she infuses her organizing with her spiritual beliefs, embodying what Joseph calls "a revolutionary optimism." Joseph was also drawn to Powell's story because of how rarely the public galvanizes around Black women. While activists like Angela Davis and Assata Shakur are heralded, the discussion of Black women as political prisoners often ends and begins with them.

"While Powell says she receives a steady influx of letters from supporters, she notices the differences between how she's perceived and uplifted as compared to her male comrades who are also still inside. "I've done the work and there's proof of it," she said. "But my question is do Black women political prisoners matter too?"

Even during this past year with a renewed interest in political prisoners, much of that attention has fallen upon men who have faced decades of imprisonment for their membership in the Black Panther Party or the Black Liberation Army. Rarely do the names of women—such as Debbie Africa, Janine Africa, Janet Africa, and Merle Africa of the MOVE 9 have their names evoked too.

"Black women have always been invisibilized by this system and even though you're in the movement, it doesn't exempt you from patriarchy or misogynoir," said Joseph. "We are all victims of it and we all have our work to do. There are organizations that people look up to within the Black liberation struggle [like] the Panthers and the Young Lords where we had to fight tooth and nail to get to points

of unity because even in that movement, women, queer folks and trans folks were looked at as objects.”

While Powell says she receives a steady influx of letters from supporters, she notices the differences between how she’s perceived and uplifted as compared to her male comrades who are also still inside. “I’ve done the work and there’s proof of it,” she said. “But my question is do Black women political prisoners matter too?”

The key to answering that question in the affirmative is building relationships with women inside. That’s true not just for those who identify as political prisoners but for the over 230,000 other women and girls who are also incarcerated throughout the United States. Letter writing and personal visits can be a powerful tool to make prison walls more permeable. Last summer, Joseph hosted an online letter-writing event for Powell where she shared information about her story and walked guests through how to begin corresponding with her. That small action was something Joseph said anyone can replicate with their friends or family.

“It can be on different scales, it can be just you writing a letter [saying] ‘Joy, keep your head up, we’re with you’ and that’s it,” said Joseph. “It doesn’t have to be a huge essay, people don’t need dissertations. Just give them some energy, some hope. The smallest thing is enough because at least they know someone is thinking about them.”

#### Advocating inside

Organizers who coordinate letter-writing campaigns also say that maintaining steady correspondence can help those outside better advocate for the incarcerated when they’re being mistreated. Otherwise, the physical distance and lack of transparency by facilities and departments of corrections can obscure the public from knowing what’s happening.

In her years inside, Joyce has advocated for herself and her peers primarily through the power of her own pen. She writes countless letters to oversight agencies, New York-based non-profits and elected officials, such as former Governor Andrew Cuomo to whom she wrote last year after she contracted COVID-19. She’s also encouraged

other women at Bedford to take advantage of the five free legal letters that they are allowed to mail out each week, providing them with the names and addresses of different agencies to send their complaints and helping them draft their letters. She says that speaking out is a part of her nature and won’t be quelled regardless of where she finds herself— either by choice or by force.

But advocating inside has come with its costs. Between 2014 and 2017, Powell was placed in solitary confinement. She describes the three years as torturous, filled with time spent “counting the days and counting the bricks on the wall.” Even now, Powell often struggles with intercepted emails, packages, and confiscated items. Earlier this year, she says seven bags filled with legal materials that she was gathering for her case were taken by Bedford staff and have yet to be returned to her. For some of these issues, Powell has filed formal complaints through the facility’s internal grievance process, but all have been denied.

#### Little recourse against retaliation

The formal grievance process at prisons throughout New York State is notoriously ineffective. According to a 2019 report from the Correctional Association of New York (CANY), only 61% of survey respondents in Bedford Hills who filed a grievance within the past year received any response

and only 24% stated that the grievance was resolved in their favor. Eighty-one percent of these respondents also reported not feeling as if an adequate investigation of their grievances was ever conducted.

“That really gives this impression that the system is rigged—that grieving something, not only doesn’t resolve the issue but it also opens one up to the possibility of retaliation,” said Jennifer Scaife, Executive Director of CANY, “because as soon as you put it in writing and go on record, then there’s a paper trail and people know about it. But you must file a grievance and exhaust internal remedies if you are going to seek recourse outside of the facility. So it puts people in this kind of double bind by risking the perceived—or in some cases, very real— threat of retaliation.”

Indeed, 51% of Bedford respondents in CANY’s survey



reported facing retaliation for filing a grievance. That retaliation can come in the form of bullying or assault or what is known as “burns,” an unsanctioned and informal punishment that often amounts to the loss of some right or privilege, like recreation, shower time, or access to commissary. The informal nature of “burns” means that they can’t be tracked, so the public has little understanding of how often they occur and there is little to no recourse for filing a complaint.

Scaife says facility administrators also operate with such wide discretion that they can swiftly usher in new policies that disrupt the routines of women inside. For instance, last summer Powell filed a formal complaint about a new policy that removed privacy curtains from each cell, leaving women exposed when they exited the shower, used the toilet, or were otherwise in states of undress. Bedford’s incredibly high rate of sexual abuse at the hands of staff made the lack of additional privacy particularly worrisome. In 2020, Bedford unanimously denied Powell’s request to have the curtains restored. When CANY learned about the new policy, they were told by the facility that it was for the women’s own safety.

“It’s pretty common that prison administrators will cite safety as a reason for changing the rule or reducing a privilege,” said Scaife. “Sometimes I think it’s absolutely true that that’s an excuse and the real reason is more complicated, nuanced, and punitive. In other cases, it’s the discretion of the superintendent or staff and they have their own kind of perspective. So I think it’s complicated and hard to get to the bottom of.”

Ultimately, Scaife says, whether these actions are a result of direct retaliation or not, they can erode the quality of life for women inside and compound the “psychological stress of being incarcerated.” That idea was echoed by Powell who shared that “the only consistency [at Bedford] is inconsistency. I want people to know that the system is not broken, it’s operating exactly the way it is designed.”

That understanding informs Powell’s work as well as that of anyone who wishes to offer her support. For her, the work was and continues to be about dismantling this system through consistent assertions of our humanity, not simply reforming it. That struggle has taken place both on the streets against violent police departments and inside prison, against threats to her right to privacy. The work for those of us on the outside is to consider the difficulty—and profound loneliness—of that struggle for incarcerated Black women whose stories are shrouded by both prison walls and the patriarchy. And, hopefully, to let that consideration stir us to act.



## THE LASTING PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE OF PRISON: A Review of Post Incarceration Syndrome

*from IDOCWatch.org*

*by leon benson, Sept 2021*

“It’s extremely difficult for anyone to properly heal when they are still living in the same environment that causes their trauma. An example of this type of therapeutic blockage would be a person suffering from sensory deprivation while trying to heal while in solitary confinement”—leon benson, HEALING JUSTICE #2

According to Dr. Terence T. Gorski, an expert on substance abuse, mental health, violence, and crime, that over 60% of the people currently incarcerated in the U.S. have been in prison before; and there is hard evidence that “post-incarceration syndrome” (PIS) is the biggest contributing factor to this high rate of recidivism.

I personally felt the need to share this info with my IDOC Watch and Prisoner Lives Matter collective and that of other advocates of prisoner rights. Because the mental health of people exposed to the carceral experience is often overlooked. Please take notes for the sake of yourself and loved ones who are and have suffered prolonged incarceration.

### WORKING DEFINITION

The concept of post-incarceration syndrome (PIS) grew from clinical work with people in prison within many of the criminal justice system’s rehabilitation, mental health, addiction treatment, and reentry programs. PIS is defined below as:

“A disorder with a set of symptoms that are present in many currently incarcerated and recently released people that are caused by their subjection to prison environments of punishment/violence deprived of opportunities of well being. The symptoms are most severe in prisoners exposed to prolonged solitary confinement and institutional abuses”.<sup>1</sup>

The severity of symptoms are related to a person’s level of coping skills prior to prison, length of imprisonment, number of episodes of prison abuse and duration of solitary confinement, and degree of involvement in rehabilitation programs”.

### THE SYMPTOMS

PIS is a mixed mental disorder made up of a five symptom cluster:

#1. Institutionalized Personality Traits. IPT are caused

by living in an oppressive environment that demands: a) passive compliance to the demands of authority figures; b) passive acceptance of severely restricted acts of daily living; c) repression of personal lifestyle preferences; d) the elimination of critical thinking and individual decision making; & e) internalized acceptance of severe restrictions on honest self-expression of thoughts and emotions.

#2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD is caused by both traumatic experiences before and during prison. Which include the following symptoms: a) intrusive memories and flashbacks of severe abuse; b) intense distress and physical reaction when exposed to cues that trigger memories of severe abuse; c) episodes of dissociation and emotional numbness; d) irritability, outbursts of anger, lack of concentration, and lack of sleep; e) avoidance of anything that trigger abusive memories; & f) hypervigilance, paranoia, and reduced capacity to trust caused by constant fear of abuse from prison staff, other prisoners and others after release.

#3. Antisocial Personal Traits. (APT) are developed both from preexisting symptoms and those developed during prison as an institutional coping skill and psychological defense mechanism.

Although, primary APT involves the tendency to challenge authority and victimize others. In the patients with PIS, these tendencies are hidden by passive aggression when dealing with authority figures, while being directly aggressive with their peers outside of views of those in authority. This is a direct result of internalized coping strategies required to survive in the harsh, violent, and restrictive world of prison.

#4. Social-Sensory Deprivation Syndrome. The SSDS is caused by the effects of prolonged solitary confinement that imposes both social isolation and sensory deprivation.

These symptoms include chronic headaches, developmental regression, inability to concentrate, repressed rage, lack of impulse control, inability to plan beyond the moment, obsessive thinking, and borderline personality traits.

#5. Reactive Substance Use Disorder. Many prisoners who experience PIS suffer from symptoms of substance use disorders. Many of these people were addicted prior to prison, did not receive treatment during their imprisonment, and continued their addiction in prison through its black markets. Others developed their addiction for the first time in prison as a means to cope with PIS and the carceral conditions causing them. Yet, others relapse to substance abuse or develop substance use disorders as result of using drugs and alcohol in an effort to cope with PIS symptoms

upon release from prison.

### MAJOR CONCERNS ABOUT PIS

PIS is most severe in people subjected to incarceration more than 1 year in oppressive environments, who have experienced multiple episodes of institutional abuse (inmate-on-inmate violence: assault, stabbings, robbery, rape, and human trafficking; and staff-on-inmate violence: rape, assault, falsely reports of misconduct, and extreme punishments), who had little or no access to rehabilitative or educational programs, and who have been subjected to 30 days or longer in solitary confinement.

PIS is less severe in people incarcerated for lesser periods, who have reasonable access to rehabilitative and educational programs, who been in solitary confinement, who have not experienced frequent or severe institutional abuse, and who have consistent communication with loved ones while incarcerated.

After looking at the above there should be major human rights and societal concerns because about 40% of the current 2.3 million of the U.S. prison population (40% of 2.3 million is 920,000)<sup>2</sup> are released each year. Meaning, the effect of releasing these 920,000 citizens with psychological damage from prolonged incarceration can have devastating impacts upon American society. Which include the further devastation of inner city and rural communities, and the destabilization of working/middle class sectors unable to reabsorb these returning citizens who are less likely to get jobs, yet more likely to commit crimes and disrupt family structures.

When we factor in how many of the lower income and communities of color are barely recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic. Adding more citizens in dire need to this equation can unravel these communities that are already held together by loose seams.

### THE SYSTEM IS NOT BROKEN

Each year many prisoners suffering from PIS are recycled back into society. Most are more broken than when they first went into prison. Which seems to keep the recidivism rates high, yet stable. Basically, the criminal justice system should no longer be viewed as broken, rather it be seen for what it has always been: a systemic weapon, designed by the Euro-American ruling class to control and disable lower income and communities of color.

Therefore, we will be met with an immense amount of resistance from the shareholders of the Prison Industrial complex when attempting to inactive authentic therapeutic and rehabilitative change within its facilities nationwide. However, we must keep the pressure on prison craft and

legislation to influence the changes that can, despite how slow.

### REDUCING PIS's COMMUNITY HARM

Since PIS was created by the criminal justice system's policy and programming, as misguided and often insensitive attempts to reduce crime, we must become more PROACTIVE in ways to help ourselves and loved ones.

We have to take the initiative to heal our own communities because we can not depend on most of our state or federal officials nor on many of those who live outside of our experiences to properly do so. This type of initiative can seem overwhelming due to all of the other problems we seem to have already.

However, working from the scientific and philosophical thought and approach of Healing Justice—while chanting “An ounce of prevention is better than a ton of cure”—can make our collective efforts less intimidating.

i propose we start with the Healing Justice<sup>3</sup> that can be loosely defined as:

“How leaders/teachers/activists/mentors respond to the crisis of hopelessness amongst the risk of communities (youth, women, people of color, PIS victims ect.,) In which both organizing and healing are required for lasting change. While identifying, confronting, and transforming structures of violence (i.e. any system that deprives people of the opportunities of well being)”.

Two of the four approaches to Healing Justice can be immediately utilize in reducing the devastating personal and societal effects of PIS:

1) Transformative Organizing. Which views social change as an ongoing process of individual and collective reflection, growth, healing, and transformation. The broad goal of transformative organizing is to re-imagine ways to restructure our economic, political, and judicial systems in ways that create justice, democracy, and equality. This process requires that we first develop an awareness of how these structures influence our values, relationships, and behaviors.

2) Restorative Justice. Which focus on repairing the harm and crime to victims and community peace. Opposed to punishing offenders with extensive and unnecessary prison sentences, restorative justice seeks to use therapeutic and civil agreements. Which involves the offender accepting responsibility for the harm created and agreeing to some form of compensation.

I feel the importance to include the above Healing Justice frame and approaches to assure that those who work

to reduce PIS keep a mind set of empathy, healing, and hopefulness. Because, from my experience, those trying to help others without such a mind set can undermine true healing and cause them to act out of what the late, Dr. Martin Luther King called “conscientious stupidity”.

Conscientious stupidity in my interpretation mean that someone with the best intentions in attempting to help another, but doing so in the wrong ways. For example, we can not truly help people heal if we do not properly analyze the harmful circumstances and empathize with those who are harmed by them. Conscientious stupidity then would make us more of sympathizers to the people we seek to heal, rather than allies to them. There is no progression in that.

In addition, although we BELIEVE the current prison SYSTEM should be abolished that causes PIS, we KNOW that such change can not be an event because it takes mindfulness and persistent process for lasting change. Therefore, it is logical and practical that we evoke this PROCESS from our current positions, available resources, and critical visions.

Now let's look at the following areas we can focus to implement Restorative Justice to transform the current Judicial system: a) lobbying to eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenders; b) expanding the role of drug and mental health courts to promote treatment alternatives to incarceration; c) increase funding and expansion of community based addiction and mental health programs staffed by professional and peer expertise trained to meet the needs of the court defendants diverted to treatment instead of prison; d) convert 80% of county, state, and federal correctional facilities into Restorative Centers equipped with the proper rehabilitative, educational, and vocational programming; e) implementing universal prerelease programs for all offenders with the goal of preparing them to transition into community based addiction and mental health programs before integrating into society; & f) assuring meaningful and consistent communication between those incarcerated for prolonged periods and their families/friends through visitation, phone calls, and mail to reduce PIS.

### THE FINAL LIBERATION

“You are not yet free, you still search for freedom. You aspire to the free heights, your soul thirsts for the stars. But your wicked instincts, too, thirst for freedom. Your wild dogs want freedom; they bark with joy in their cellar when your spirit plans to open all prisons. To me you're still a prisoner who is still plotting [their] freedom: alas, in such prisoners the soul becomes clever, but also deceitful and bad. And even the liberated spirit must still purify itself. Much prison and mustiness still

remain in [them]”.

—Fredrich Nietzsche, THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

While i'm not a huge historical fan of Nietzsche, a 19th century German philosopher, i do recognize the universal truths in some of his work. So i used the above passage as a metaphor of how PIS barks like wild dogs in the minds of myself, and many others who are currently incarcerated.

This disorder's acronym is rightfully PIS, because we are PISSED for being forced to endure prolonged imprisonment; for being left in solitary confinement for decades; for being under unrelenting attack and threat by prison staff; for being neglected by loved ones; and for being betrayed by the very society that we must some day return.

Rather than senselessly wallowing in the muds of hurt and unrefunded time; it is vital that we attempt to heal ourselves while within this epic struggle, by using the best ways we can through spirituality, therapeutics activities, and by challenging our toxic conditions. And hope; and do mean hope, that we are able to subdue most of the damage that has been committed against us, before we are finally released.

Notes:

[1] When Dr. Terence Gorski first developed the diagnosis of Post-Incarcerated Syndrome he used the acronym PICS for it. However, for purposes of this article i chose to use the acronym PIS. For a deeper study of Dr. Gorski's publications go to [www.relapse.org](http://www.relapse.org).

[2] i amended the prison population statistics from Dr. Gorski's 2011 paper "Post-Incarcerated Syndrome" And Relapse" with updated 2021 statistics.

[3] Healing Justice is a term and framework work developed by Shawn Ginwright from his community activism and research. In addition, the other two of the four critical approaches to Healing Justice are Healing Circles and Contemplative Practice.

[4] i first encountered "conscientious stupidity" when i read this quote by Dr. King: "The most dangerous thing in the world is sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity." And from this I had to draw a meaning of the term from my own intellect.

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## The Fox Designing the Henhouse

from *Vera.org*

by Jessica Zhang and Bea Halbach-Singh, Oct 2021

Vigo County is a deindustrialized, mostly white county on the western edge of Indiana. For more than 20 years, the county has been the subject of a spate of federal civil rights lawsuits regarding overcrowding at the local jail, located in the county seat in Terre Haute.

In August of 2002, the Vigo County Sheriff and Commissioners entered into an agreement with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Indiana capping the jail population at 268 except in the case of "short-term emergency situations." But in 2013, with jail populations nearing 300 people on a daily basis, the ACLU sued again to enforce the terms of the agreement. In response, the Vigo County Board of Commissioners convened in Terre Haute to discuss a long-term solution for the jail.

Although the litigation presented Vigo County with an opportunity to reduce jail incarceration, a subset of political actors stepped in to influence local government to build a new and expanded jail instead. While many in the community favored decreasing the jail population to address overcrowding, county officials were ultimately swayed by law enforcement officers such as Greg Ewing, the then-county sheriff who insisted that additional jail beds were "inevitable."

In January of 2015, Vigo's county commission paid jail architecture firm DLZ—an Ohio-based company with offices throughout Indiana—\$14,500 to study options for the jail's future, including the possibility of constructing a new jail. DLZ, which bills itself as "one of the top design firms in the Midwest" for correctional, judicial, and law enforcement design services, is the largest of the three jail architectural firms that account for 90 percent of Indiana's jail construction. As of 2019, the company had provided consultations for jail and courthouse projects in 59 of the state's 92 counties. In October, DLZ presented a recommendation for a new security center that would cost Vigo County at least \$28 million—while almost doubling its jail capacity from 268 to more than 500.

While the commission debated its options, the jail population continued to climb. In 2017, facing yet another lawsuit in federal court, Vigo County awarded an additional \$2.25 million contract to DLZ—for the design of the multi-million dollar facility the firm had recommended two years prior.

County residents came out in opposition to the new jail. They were also concerned about the conflict of interest

inherent in hiring DLZ again, which allowed the same firm that dictated the size and cost of the jail to profit from its construction. As one man told reporters from Indiana Public Media, “That seems a little like the fox designing the henhouse, and then telling you how many hens to stock it with.”

Lisa Spence—a member of the watchdog group Citizens for Better Government in Vigo County, who would later go on to serve on the Vigo County Council—described for Vera how residents’ concerns about the jail plan were met with hostility. She characterized the county commission’s decision to hire DLZ as “made behind the scenes,” with few opportunities for public input. “It was easy to think that something was going on because of the way that things were handled,” Spence said.

Debate over the new jail occupied the community for the latter half of 2017, but the Board of Commissioners had already moved forward in July with a funding proposal: an income tax increase. At public hearings, opponents of the new tax argued for better uses of public resources and distributed pamphlets adorned with the slogan: “Fund Schools NOT a Mega Jail.”

Vigo County’s public schools, which were last renovated in the 1970s, are in a state of disrepair. Kevin Christ, an economics professor at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, told Vera that the 2017 tax proposal presented “a classic choice under constraints problem”—was the community going to spend its limited resources on a new jail or new schools?

Vigo is not the only county in Indiana to have adopted local income taxes to fund jail maintenance and construction in recent years. As of November 20, 2020, 26 counties had adopted a “county jail tax”—a portion of local income tax revenue that must go toward correctional or rehabilitation facilities, and 22 counties had adopted a separate “special purpose tax,” primarily to fund jail construction or, to a lesser extent, juvenile detention centers.<sup>1</sup> Statewide, revenues from these two taxes represented more than \$190 million spent on jails in 2020.<sup>2</sup> Indiana justifies the use of income taxes—rather than property taxes—to fund jails in terms of a specific sort of development strategy that aims to keep taxes low for businesses and homeowners and to shift the tax burden onto working people. The language in Indiana law for establishing a special purpose tax reads “Maintaining low property tax rates is essential to economic development, and the use of a tax under this section . . . rather than the use of property taxes, promotes these purposes.”<sup>3</sup>

Christ has studied the local economic situation for nearly

a decade. He explained that for low-income areas like Vigo County, a higher tax burden on residents can affect the county’s growth rates and opportunities for development—depending on where the tax is spent. “Nobody considers relocating to an area because it has a great jail,” he told Vera. “People want good schools.”

Throughout the jail proposal process in Vigo County, county commissioners maintained the position that adding jail beds was the only option to reduce overcrowding and resolve the ongoing lawsuits. Judge Michael Rader of the Vigo County Superior Court disagreed. Rader told reporters in 2017 that “60 percent of the county’s jail population [were] non-violent offenders,” with many held on charges relating to substance use disorders or mental health issues. Rader advocated for a less costly community corrections model that would prioritize treatment for these issues. “[W]e have to face the fact that we are housing the mentally ill in very expensive housing,” he said. According to Judge Rader, a larger jail would be a band-aid solution—the county would quickly fill it if the underlying problems remained. But Rader’s calls for reform went unanswered, and by 2019 the number of people incarcerated at the jail would be even higher, ranging from 323 to 359 occupied beds in a facility still “capped” at 268 people—with another 30 people on any given day incarcerated in rented jail beds in neighboring Knox County.

An analysis of the population data that Vera obtained from the Vigo County Jail roster on October 1, 2020, confirmed that the criminalization of substance use was a significant driver of the jail population. Of the 304 people in jail on that day—well above the 2002 settlement cap of 268—39 percent (119 people) had at least one drug-related charge, making drug-related charges the most prevalent charge for people in jail. Of these 119 people, 36 had one or more possession of drug paraphernalia charges stacked on top of other drug-related charges—and for nine of these people, possession of drug paraphernalia was their only charge. The most common felony charge was for possession of methamphetamine. The most common misdemeanor charge was for possession of marijuana, hash oil, hashish, or salvia. The median bail amount for people held pretrial on only drug-related charges was \$30,000—several thousand dollars more than the annual income of an average Vigo County resident. In Vigo County, as in many communities across the country, a significant number of people are likely in jail because they cannot afford bail.

Also, as in many communities across the country, Black people in Vigo County are disproportionately criminalized. The data obtained by Vera shows that in October 2020, nearly one in four of the people incarcerated in the Vigo County jail were Black—almost four times their share of



## Plant Profile: Burdock

*The isolation of prison extends beyond separating humans; it also separates the imprisoned from most of the rest of the world, from nature, from animals, from plants, all things that are vital to our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. But for those who are allowed time out in the yard, there remain small opportunities for exploration and encounter. Here is brief profile of a plant you may be able to find growing near you*

**Common name:** Burdock

**Scientific name:** *Arctium lappa* (All plants known to western civilization have a latin binomial name to help with classification and identification.)

**How to identify:** Burdock is most easily recognized by its burs, shown below, about the size of a grape. The spikes stick strongly to clothes and fur. (This is how it is dispersed: seeds being carried away on the fur of animals). The leaves are also recognizable by their matte, light green



color and sturdy, slightly rough texture. They can get very large! The flowers are pink or purplish, spikey, thistle-like blooms. Burdock is biennial, meaning a single plants lives for 2 years. The first year it remains a basal rosette: there is no stalk, all leaves grow out of the ground. The second year is when it sends up a tall stalk, with leaves getting smaller and less wavy edges as they go up, and goes to bloom in late summer. The taproot can be quite deep, thick, and sturdy. The outside is brown and the inside is white.

### Encountering Burdock:

As the latin name *Arctium* suggests, Burdock is a bear medicine. We can think about the patterns of a bear: fattening up all year in preparation for hibernation and reinvigorating each spring when they wake up. So a prominent aspect of bear medicine is hardiness, deep nourishment, being insulated and protected, an invigoration. Burdock acts primarily on the systems of the liver, kidneys, and skin and largely on the axis of moisture, both of water and oils. Burdock promotes liver function, especially in the metabolism and digestion of fats and oils. Through this, it can bring oils to all the places in the body that need them (nerves, mucous membranes, endocrine system) and improve their function as well. Burdock's support of the liver, which serves to remove toxins from the body (think of how excessive consumption of alcohol harms the liver; it's the organ that has to deal with all of that poison), is related to its healing of the skin also. When the liver is overburdened, the skin is one of the places where toxins end up in an attempt to excrete them. So if the liver is functioning better, the skin doesn't have to carry that weight. The oily aspect of Burdock is relevant here too, as a remedy specifically for dry skin conditions. Burdock also helps to balance moisture by supporting the kidneys and their filtering of the blood. Through this, it can be used for damp, stagnant, swollen tissue. So the nature of burdock is to, in the long term, dry the body by moving out excess water, but to simultaneously moisten it through better oil metabolism. In this way, it can have a seemingly paradoxical effect and this is part of its overall character. By relieving damp stagnation that drags us down, easing the burden on the liver, and lubricating the skin, nerves, and mucous membranes, it helps to strengthen, nourish, and invigorate us.





The leaves can be used externally as a poultice (just chewed or crushed up, maybe mixed with water if it needs it) to soothe erupting or dry skin. Both the root and the seed are used internally. The root, harvested in the autumn of its first year, as a decoction (a long, slow infusing in simmering water) and the seed eaten. Notes that it is important to carefully remove the pokey parts from the seeds to avoid splinters in the mouth.



The root has a slower but more long-lasting effect while the seeds act more quickly but their action is more short-lived. So roots for long-term, chronic conditions, and the seed for acute. The seeds are also more pungent than the slightly bitter and sweet root and have a more diffusive action.

Three things to be aware of, though, before eating wild plants: avoid the area if any lawn chemicals or other toxins are used in the area, make sure you've identified the correct plant (most easily done when its in flower), and avoid over-harvesting to make sure it is able to reproduce and come back next year! But Burdock does not have to be consumed to be encountering. Meeting the plant, getting to know it, or picking it just to have it around, can all add a little something to a perhaps otherwise dull day. Moving beyond the physical, to the aspect of spirit or personality, burdock is specifically indicated for (though by no means the only remedy for) those feeling unsupported and constantly worried, especially of the unknown.

the general resident population. And on average, Black people had been jailed for a month longer than white people.

In late 2017, the County Council—the body in charge of local funding—decided to address public concerns about the jail's size and cost. The council hired Dr. Kenneth Ray of RJS Justice Services—a small, independent consulting agency based in Ashland, Kentucky—to conduct a separate, independent study on the county's need for a new jail. Residents expressed appreciation at finally feeling heard. As the Tribune-Star reported, one woman said, addressing commissioners at a public meeting, "I wanted to thank you for approving this study. I think it is the best thing for Vigo County."

Dr. Ray started RJS Justice Services after a 30-year career in law enforcement and corrections, during which he worked as a police officer, deputy sheriff, and jail administrator. When Vera spoke with him, he described himself as a reformer fighting against "overuse [of] incarceration under the illusion that it is administering justice" in the United States.

Ray explained that firms such as DLZ use flawed research methods when determining whether a jurisdiction needs jail expansion, including the assumption that the current rate of carceral growth will remain unchanged. These methods

inflate projections for capacity needs and unfailingly lead to calls for bigger jails. According to Ray's observations, most counties facing jail overcrowding lawsuits hire a correctional design firm like DLZ before considering an independent consultant "because their goal is to build big." In contrast, Ray aims to incorporate reforms in his projections that would decrease the rate of incarceration and lower jail capacity needs in the long term. Ray submitted an evaluation in mid-2018 that recommended a new jail with fewer beds than the original DLZ proposal, a recommendation that faced immediate public opposition from local law enforcement.

Steve Lockard, a detective sergeant at the Terre Haute Police Department, described Ray's preliminary recommendation that the jail have a maximum of 462 beds to local media as "concerning." Lockard took it upon himself to conduct his own one-day "study" of Vigo's jail population to make projections of future needs and concluded that the county needed at least as many jail beds as had been recommended by DLZ two years prior.

Lockard also publicly questioned the effectiveness of the county's alternatives to detention program, implying that the program's participants—including people held on drug charges—should be incarcerated in the jail instead, because some of them continued to struggle with substance use

disorders while in alternative detention, resulting in new charges. “What is the point?” he told the council. “Why are we funding a catch and release program. It does us no good. We are wasting law enforcement resources getting the same people over and over again.”

After hearing from Lockard, the County Council asked Ray to confer again with local law enforcement and to reevaluate his recommendation. In late 2018, Ray amended his original findings and issued a final recommendation for a 527-bed jail—even larger than DLZ’s original design.

Although opponents of the expanded jail had hoped that Ray would check the county commission’s power in the jail approval process, the final recommendation ultimately validated local law enforcement’s calls to build a bigger jail, rather than decreasing the size of the jail while incarcerating fewer people for low-level offenses, expanding alternatives to detention, and treating people with substance use and mental health issues outside of the jail.

When Vera asked Lisa Spence about Dr. Ray’s role in the decision-making process, she seemed to view him as being caught between a rock and a hard place. Ray’s final report called for a larger jail while also emphasizing the potential for a significant reduction in the jail population—contradictory recommendations that Spence felt were a product of Ray’s desire to appease both the officials who were set on jail expansion and the residents who were fighting for alternatives. Spence felt that county officials were more than happy to use Ray’s report as justification to move forward with the new larger jail, while ignoring his proposals for decarceration.

Vigo County residents and council members who opposed jail expansion suddenly found themselves in the exact same position they had been in a year earlier—with more limited recourse. In August 2018, the County Council convened to finally vote on the tax proposal it had previously tabled—for a jail that would end up costing more than twice as much as the original estimate. Christ told the Vera team about testifying against the measure: “It was a four-hour long meeting. About 40 people spoke against the jail project and two people, including the sheriff, spoke for it.”

According to Christ, supporters of the jail presented the facility as beneficial to the county’s economic development. Law enforcement officers announced that it would lead to the creation of jobs such as sheriff’s deputies and jail administrators. “The chair of the County Council [. . .] at the time,” Christ recalled, “was a policeman . . . and at the end of all of that, the [Council] decided to pass a new tax to build a big jail . . . It was very frustrating to watch.” The final vote was 5-2 in favor of the tax.

This was not the first time that political actors and law enforcement in the county had linked carceral expansion to job opportunities and economic growth. Vigo first approved the construction of the Terre Haute federal penitentiary—now part of the FCI Terre Haute complex—in 1940 with promises of high-paying jobs for county residents. Since then, community members have continued to advocate for expansions of the federal complex as a response to economic decline. Yet federal corrections employees only account for 1.7 percent of total employment in Vigo County.

It is well-documented that carceral expansion does not lead to long-term job growth despite the political narratives that surround it. For example, a 2010 study of all existing and new U.S. prisons from 1960 to 2004 showed that prisons bring few, if any, employment gains to rural counties. Many towns with new prisons actually experienced lower growth in employment, household wages, and home values than comparable towns without prisons. In Vigo County, local economists have pointed out in economic forecasts developed for statewide business media that “the likelihood of significant new employment opportunities at the prison seems limited.”

If carceral expansion does not benefit the general community, the planning process behind the new Vigo County jail showcases how it does benefit a subset of actors—local law enforcement, jail consultants, and correctional companies—by positioning incarceration as the only funded response for people struggling with a range of social problems including substance use, mental illness, and poverty. These groups often advocate for jail expansion in the name of public safety while disregarding public input on other community priorities and placing the long-term financial burden on people who pay income taxes in the county.

DLZ and two other architecture firms—Elevatus and RQAW—account for 90 percent of Indiana’s jail infrastructure projects. Closer examination of these major players reveals a network of political influence that extends across all levels of government in Indiana. Within the last two decades, DLZ has contributed at least \$185,200—and RQAW at least \$131,487—to Indiana officials—including county commissioners, state representatives, and governors. The founder of Elevatus, Michael Gouloff, has alone contributed at least \$116,898 to political campaigns across Indiana. These figures likely under represent the full scale of financial influence of these three companies, as they do not include individual contributions from the entirety of their staff and leadership.

These scenarios illustrate how ties between private

interests and public officials—such as members of law enforcement and county government—are part of a political infrastructure that underlies Indiana’s jail construction boom. Coordination between jail architects, consultants, and government officials allows them to push proposals for bigger jails forward with little democratic input—determining, to a large extent, local governments’ reactions to the jail incarceration crisis in Indiana. In 2019, nearly two-thirds of Indiana’s jails were overcrowded, and almost 40 percent were at more than 100 percent of their capacity. The number of jail sentences in the state has increased by 368 percent since 2015. As of 2020, the ACLU of Indiana had filed civil rights lawsuits targeting over a dozen county jails.

Vera’s analysis of local news coverage showed that in 2020, approximately 40 percent of Indiana’s counties were planning or building jails. As Lisa Spence put it, “It seemed like attorney[s] [were] going around basically initiating lawsuits with various and sundry counties about the conditions and the size of their jails and then immediately afterward, DLZ would rush in, offer to do a jail study, and then build a bigger jail. And it seemed like that was happening over and over again.”

Today, on an old golf course just south of Terre Haute, lies the concrete and steel bulk of the new Vigo County Jail—one of many new or expanded jails in Indiana. Although many of the local officials who pushed for the facility’s original approval have since left office, their decision will have lasting effects. Having only just paid off the debt from its last jail expansion a month into the construction of the new facility, Vigo County will now be saddled with the financial burden of this jail for decades to come. Last December, a year after the county broke ground on the construction site, local news outlet WTHI-TV interviewed Vigo County Sheriff John Plasse on the status of the project. Plasse expressed his excitement for the jail to be finished so “the community can benefit.” According to reporters, he also described how, “when the building is finished and they do start to move [people] in, they’ll already be at 80 percent capacity.”



## **WHY THE INDIANA CODE REGARDING MODIFICATION OF A PRISONER’S SENTENCE (35-38-1-17) NEEDS TO BE AMENDED**

*from IDOCWatch.org*

*by Antonio Jones, Oct 2021*

Is the State of Indiana handing out death sentences by requiring prisoners to serve 75% or 85% of their sentence? Why are there no mechanisms in place to reduce a prisoner’s sentence once said prisoner has been rehabilitated?

Where is the line drawn between rehabilitation and over-incarceration? Is the State of Indiana incarcerating its own citizens to make a profit, rather than reforming prisoners? Indiana lawmakers ignore the above questions when creating and enacting laws. Indiana laws are specifically designed to oppress people of color.

For instance, for decades or more the federal government were discriminating against people of color when it came to different types of drugs. They knew that people of color normally sold crack cocaine and that our caucasian counterparts usually used or sold powder cocaine, so laws for crack cocaine were much harsher than laws for powder cocaine until President Obama took office and corrected this clear miscarriage of justice.

Likewise, the state of Indiana is dealing with a similar injustice and crisis. But instead of “crack cocaine” versus “powder cocaine”, rather it’s “violent offenders” versus “non-violent offenders”. The term “violent offenders” is used by lawmakers, prosecutors, and judges to instill fear in the hearts of the public. Moreover, it is used to justify the injustice and racial discrimination that plagues the black community. The term “violent offender” is no different than the term “superpredator” that Hillary Clinton used to describe black people.

This term should not be used.

Also relevant to this article, the readers need to know that the state of Indiana is giving out death sentences. A prisoner in the state of Indiana must serve 75% of their sentence, meaning that, if a person catches a case at the age of 35 years old and the judge sentences them to 55 years, they will most likely die in prison unless they live to be 76 years old. To be honest with the readers, there are only two ways out of prison: (1) you serve your sentence; or (2) you die in prison.

Most states give prisoners a second chance; wherein, (a) if the prisoner has served a certain amount of time on their sentence; (b) remained conduct clear for a substantial period of time; (c) completed numerous educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programs, and (d) maintained meaningful employment while in prison, etc., then they would qualify for early release. However, this is not the case in the state of Indiana. A prisoner’s sentence is not over until they either serve their time or die trying. For example, there is no parole board. The parole board was done away with back in the 70’s. Furthermore, and as it relates to the clemency board, the clemency board is a joke because even if you, by the grace of God, get the panel to grant you clemency, the final decision is up to the governor. Governor Eric Holcomb made it clear during the coronavirus pandemic

that he does not believe in releasing prisoners. So, in other words, he would rather a prisoner die in prison, than give them a second chance.

Lastly, the state of Indiana's sentence modification statute is a joke as well, because in order for a prisoner to get a sentence reduction, they must first get the approval from the prosecutor attorney. This law was designed by lawmakers to not be of any help to prisoners and give to the prosecutor a tool to racially discriminate against prisoners based upon their race and/or offense. For instance, a prosecutor could grant all white prisoners' requests for modification and deny all black prisoners' requests for modification. Or, a prosecutor could grant all drug, murder, and rape cases and deny all sex offenders' cases. We really don't know what criteria they use to say yes or no to a modification of a prisoner's sentence.

Besides that, there are other road blocks set in place to prevent prisoners from receiving a modification of their sentence. For instance, the 365 time limitation. A prisoner must file the modification of their sentence 365 days after their sentence in order for the judge to have jurisdiction over their case. Once that 365 days time limitation has expired, the prisoner must get consent from the prosecuting attorney before they can file a second request for a sentence modification. Let me explain to you what is wrong with this. First, a modification is a prisoner accepting responsibility for their action and asking the court for mercy. So, if you are innocent of a crime, they want you to admit guilt for a crime you are innocent of. Moreover, a prisoner must have served some time, completed some programs, remained conduct clear for a substantial amount of time. With that being said, how can you do that within a year? What can a prisoner accomplish within a year to convince a judge to reduce their sentence? This was designed for prisoners to be unable to get. Last, prosecutors also have political ambitions which prevent them from being impartial and unbiased. Some want to be judges, attorneys general, U.S. attorneys, etc., and don't want to seem like they're soft.

We need a system that is impartial and fair towards every prisoner. Black, white, and brown. No matter what the offense is, but as long as the prisoner has worked towards being reformed and becoming a productive citizen in society. There are two proposals I am suggesting: first, to create a guideline for the courts to follow in deciding modifications; and second, a board made up of the community, such as pastors, activists, counselors who study in this area, etc. As it stands now, the state of Indiana are just oppressing prisoners for a profit. They get kick back on the cheap food they feed prisoners, the cheap healthcare, the GTL tablets prisoners use, the expensive commissary, the high-cost phone calls, the jobs prisoners work, wherein half of their

pay is taken for room and board, etc. The state of Indiana is making billions, why change now? So, prison is no longer, nor has it ever been, about prison reform, but a big business and kick back for the State to oppress prisoners. Join our fight for change. WE FIGHT FOR TODAY, TO HAVE HOPE FOR TOMORROW.



## **Blurred Visions and Blurred Lines**

*from IDOCWatch.org*

*by Shaka Shakur, Aug 2021*

Today a ranking prisoncrat made the statement to me "you know black folks are their own worst enemy. We got the white folks against Us and then Our own." Not that i haven't heard that before from a prisoncrat, i usually just dismiss it as playing the race card or trying to be manipulative, but for some reason today i actually sat down and gave it some some thought and when i finished thinking about it, i was a little pissed and irritated by it. Here is why...Coming from Indiana where the klan originated down in Terre Haute, Indiana (you didn't know that, huh? Look it up) and arriving in Virginia, i was glad to finally be around some black folks. You see parts of Indiana is still stuck in the pre-integration era. The prison i came from had less than 5 black or brown ppl working in the entire prison and i think only one of them was a Sgt, this was at Wabash Valley. In Central and Southern Indiana very few Black folks work in the prisons or have any rank. (In fact in the 80's we had to fight for more diversity and hiring of black folks and during riots and takeovers they were some of the first hostages to be released..ISP "80/81", "83", "86"). There were even episodes and media accounts of Black guards and staff being hazed, harassed or forced out by their white counterparts. Klan literature found on their windshields, etc. So if that is how they treat their co workers, you can just imagine how they treat their New Afrikan prisoners.

So arriving at Nottoway, Va. and seeing so many New Afrikans men and womyn in ranking positions, i mean Captain's, Majors, etc was a little refreshing, even if they were employed by the state. i was tired of racist ass settlers that i had been banging with for the last 30 yrs! Whew! wasn't i in for a rude awakening, a culture shock. i was sent to Sussex 1, Virginia's version of the Indiana State Prison where one of Ours just killed a Lt. and stabbed up a Sgt during the same incident earlier this year. Point of Clarity: It is my overstanding that most New Afrikans don't really want to work in a prison, it's usually strictly for economic reasons, a stepping stone to something better or because one don't have a college education and its not many jobs available with the benefits that the D.O.C. has to offer far as insurance, medical, dental, etc. This is the seduction and

recruitment tool of the state. It becomes either go to the military, take a chance on hustling and end up in prison, or work in one. So when it comes to New Afrikan guards and / or prisoncrats i can see passed the uniform. i understand the larger contradiction, this isn't to negate the neo-kolonial aspect and how the empire utilizes such to oppress our own people, but i know that many of these same ppl probably got a family member or relative locked up somewhere. So its always been my attitude that i can see passed the uniform as long as you treat me with respect and like a human being, i will reciprocate.



*Kwame Nkrumah.  
First President of  
independent Ghana  
and major theorist of  
Neo-Colonialism*

So to arrive at Sussex 1 and hear c.o.'s talk to grown men like we were in a cotton field and they were holding a shotgun on horseback was a culture shock and enraging. To hear New Afrikan womyn, specifically, mostly young womyn talk that talk to grown men, some of whom were old enough to be their father's, "you nigga's act like straight bitches" "Bitch ass nigga lockdown before i shoot yo ass!" was enraging to say the least. To see New Afrikan c.o.'s shooting Us with rubber bullets and other projectiles for a mere fist fight or hand to hand combat or sicking vicious k-9 dogs on Us and allowing them to maim Us was a shock. Here we are in a former slave state, a confederate state, in the 21st century and prisoners are being ate up by k-9 attack dogs handled by black folks like in bull conners Montgomery, Alabama back in the 50's n 60's. How fucking ironic is that?! The conditions and food was terrible, we were constantly locked in our cells, there were no real educational or vocational opportunities and for the few that existed, classes were rarely held (yet the checks continued to flow to those instructors!) and prisoner on prisoner violence and murders were at an all time high. So this brings me back to the original statement made by the prisoncrat that prompted this essay. While here at Buckingham Corr. Center aint no Sussex and is a lower level, it is New Afrikans who have been harassing, victimizing and oppressing one for the most part. It aint white folks, its yo ass/you! Its you with the disrespect, its you with the ratchet, ignorant, ghetto shit and lack of professionalism that set the tone for white folks here to follow. Its you playing with ppl lives and fucking ppl bids up. Its you with the lack of accountability. Its you with the fun and games and manipulations and orchestrations

of prisoner on prisoner reactionary violence. It aint white folks, negro its you! So i guess the statement about us being our own worst enemy would ring true.

All the issues ive had at BKCC has come from a small group/element of unprofessional reactionaries that has failed to be held accountable by their superiors and supervisors thus giving rise to a kulture that permeates and saturates BKCC like the stink from that of a rotting corpse. (You can hear our ancestors moans and wails from the graves that this modern day plantation was built upon!!) The other side of that dynamic (and the dialectical aspect),is that ive met a lot of good ppl here such as counselors (not u Ms Hunter who word aint worth a damn as u spend all day gossiping about other inmates while making rounds), good and professional teachers e.g. Mr Johnson, Plumbing Instr. ppl who will go out there way to help you. This is the first prison ive been at in 37yrs where kultural nationalism is both allowed and promoted e.g. Kwanzaa Celebrations, Pan Afrikan Programs, College Courses, etc where there is a certain wokeness, consciousness amongst the staff, where a lot of the staff wear dreads, afrikan prints and yet...Damn!!

This is where the blurred lines and blurred vision come in at. This is the smaller contradiction that speaks to the primary contradiction of National and Neo - Colonial Oppression and Genocide. This speaks to a nation of ppl that has been neo colonized and its own people used to facilitate that national oppression and super exploitation. So instead of a bull conners or a george zimmerman, u got a c.o. Penn or Woodson (f) or capt. McCargo or whatever slave name u can think of who is standing on your back/neck and then playing the black card when you counter attack! Then We all become black!! When the means of production of a ppl has been seized for exploitation leaving you dependent upon someone else to feed you, clothe you, house you, provide water n electricity to you and the only economy left in your community is the drug economy and small businesses and u must sell your labor power to survive, thus becoming a wage slave, then you're a dependent and colonized nation. On the other side of this equation we are abused or oppressed by Our own. New Afrikans that work in these prisons come from the same communities and environment that we do. Therefore they have to also deal with issues of krime, victims of robberies, rape, murders, etc. They have family members who are victims,etc so why would one feel any affinity or identify with those held captive? If you aren't in touch with your own sense of humanity as a human being, then how can you possibly see my humanity or any in me??

Neo-Colonialism and Imperialism consistently and constantly morphs, changes forms and becomes adaptable to certain realities in order to maintain control and domination over its colonies and peoples. Whether its coopting various

Black Lives Matters chapters and 'leaders' or corporations that has fed on the corpses and land of Afrikan folks suddenly getting a 'conscious' and dumping millions in its coffers. This all while making PSA's against racism. Again, misdirection. When u have no sense of self or your identity has been given to you by someone else then u will function against your own best interest, your own people and pledge allegiance to your proven enemy. Again the State/Govt manipulates and seduces and exploits Our oppressive and colonial relationship. When you look at a lot of these kkkop or prison shows like MSNBC Lockdown, etc who do you see mostly working in low budget ass jobs, turning them keys and pushing them buttons? Mostly New Afrikan/Black womyn tryjng to take care of their babies and feed their families but herein belies the contradiction....In Our struggle -- inside the colonial reality of New Afrika and its struggle to identify itself in the sea of imperialist distortion and neo colonial ignorance which as Ward Churchill points out is deeper than mere ignorance. Ignorance is: "...instead to be informed and then to ignore the information." So, to be ignorant is not to know, but ignorance is to know, but to ignore. Churchill says "there is a vast difference between not knowing and not caring..." (Churchill, p7.). So here we are trying to show that within this New Afrikan Nation there is a class struggle between those who identify themselves as "black" or "African American" and New Afrikans. And further, that those petty bourgeois forces are actually conscious of themselves as go betweens in order to steer the masses wrong (rightward) and serve their class interests and that they deftly employ ignorance. So, when We use "black" here it is to direct attention to this class and their role as collaborators. Like the "negroes" Malcolm called out when first bringing "black" into existence." pg. 33 Stand Up Struggle Forward by Sanyika Shakur....Some of these ppl know and have made a conscious decision to engage in ignorance. Lines get blurred because all u see is skin and the false concept of race. We struggle to free a Nation. We struggle to Free The Land and Socialist Revolution.

We aren't confused and Our vision isn't blurred.. FREE THE LAND!!



### **IDOC Commits Massive Constitutional Rights Violations on Solitary Units To Terrorize Prisoners** *from IDOCWatch.org, Sept 2021*

Around 9/16/21, IDOC guards, Indiana State Police and other police forces carried out a major operation with over 100 heavily armed officers and K-9s on the solitary confinement Secure Housing Unit (SHU) at Wabash Valley CF designed to terrorize people incarcerated throughout

the Indiana prison system.

The SHU houses people in both Disciplinary Segregation (DS) and Administrative Segregation (AS). People in DS, who are in solitary for a specific period of time as punishment for a specific conduct violation, are only allowed access to a small amount of their property and are not allowed to order commissary, must wear state-issue clothing, and only have access to the most basic hygiene products.

Those in AS, on the other hand, who have been held in solitary longer due to administrative order, are supposed to be held in "living conditions that approximate those of the general population," other than being in solitary confinement, according to IDOC Policy 02-01-111, "Administrative Restrictive Status Housing," Section IX: CONDITIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRICTIVE STATUS

HOUSING UNIT, p.19. Specifically, people in AS are required under policy to be allowed to order from commissary and have clothes and hygiene products like people in general population.

In the police action last week, many heavily armed police and guards descended on the SHU, violently confiscated the property of every person on the unit, and placed all 288 people on strip cell in frigid temperatures for at least two days - essentially robbing them at gunpoint. Then a small portion of each person's property was returned, the same as would be allowed to a person in DS - in clear violation of IDOC Policy 02-01-111, "The Use and Operation of Adult Offender Administrative Restrictive Status Housing Units," and Policy 02-04-101, "The Disciplinary Code for Adult Offenders," long-established legal precedent, and the Constitutional rights of incarcerated people.

The police said that their objective with this action was to "turn the SHU back into the SHU," referring to the 1990s, when people held in IDOC's segregation units were forced to fight with litigation and physical rebellion for their most basic rights to be recognized.

Effectively, the police operation last week eliminated the distinction between AS and DS solitary confinement units, by making everyone in solitary subject to the same rules as normally apply only to those in DS, the most restrictive housing status. So de facto, everyone in solitary is now in DS, regardless of how long they have been there or the reasons they are there, in direct violation of IDOC Policy 02-04-102, "Disciplinary Restrictive Status Housing," which clearly states, "An offender may not remain on disciplinary restrictive status housing longer than the given disciplinary sanction imposed by the Disciplinary Hearing Board in accordance with Policy and Administrative Procedure 02-

04-101, "The Disciplinary Code for Adult Offenders." (p 11)

Long-term solitary confinement is psychological torture that often drives people insane. The units are kept cold, and an overhead light is kept on throughout the day in each cell that the person caged there can't turn off. IDOC has long held hundreds of people, especially those who resist being dehumanized, in solitary indefinitely, sometimes for years or decades. Further restricting their access to basic human needs like sufficient clothing and hygiene makes the experience of solitary confinement even more tortuous, and in the 24 hours after this recent police operation two people on the SHU had already hung themselves.

Similar repressive operations were carried out at Indiana State Prison, Pendleton CF, and Miami CF earlier this summer, and we expect more will take place in other facilities soon. The DOC is doing this because they can't control the prisons. There have been several rebellions and attacks on staff recently in response to the brutal and inhumane conditions that IDOC imposes on the people in its cages, especially during the pandemic, but instead of improving conditions or releasing people as we have called for, IDOC chooses illegal terror and repression. Please reach out to us if you have a loved one who is facing repression in IDOC custody and you want to get involved in fighting back!

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## The DOC is cracking down on prisoners in Indiana

### WE NEED YOUR HELP

Do you have family and friends in prison?

By working together, we can figure out what this crackdown looks like across the Indiana prison system and how we can support prisoners fighting this abuse and repression.

Have you had issues with phone calls, visitations, ordering commissary, false disciplinary reports, revocation of "privileges," etc?

Have you heard about prisoners who are organizing against their conditions?



Please share this others and get in touch with us at [IDOCWatch@gmail.com](mailto:IDOCWatch@gmail.com) or at [IDOC Watch on Facebook](#).

As of Friday, Oct. 29 2021, at least 20 people incarcerated on the maximum security solitary confinement unit at Wabash Valley CF in Carlisle, IN, were on hunger strike to demand the reversal of recently imposed policy 02-01-111, which removed access to commissary food and hygiene purchases for people held in Administrative Segregation, or indefinite long-term solitary confinement. Several people remain on hunger strike as of this writing, and are refusing to eat until their families are allowed to visit them.

Policy 02-01-111 was imposed through a shock and awe style attack by over 100 police on the SHU a little over a month ago, wherein the police robbed the people in custody there at gunpoint, putting them all on strip cell and confiscating many property items that they had purchased legally and within policy from the IDOC's own commissary system!

The hunger strikers are also protesting the Indiana Department of Correction's obstruction of their communication with the outside world, and demanding that online scheduling for in-person visitation be reinstated immediately, that they be allowed to receive printed from their families and friends, and that Wabash Valley CF cease its censorship of literature critical of the carceral system.

On Friday, families and supporters held a rally at the IDOC headquarters in Indianapolis in support of the hunger strike

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Update 11/4/2021

We have some good news. There has been progress on the hunger strike at Wabash Valley Correctional Facility. As of now we have learned that at least two hunger strikers



have started taking meals again. The prison has returned some items to one striker that had been taken in the recent raid on Administrative Segregation. The prison has also communicated to inmates through their tablets stating that the issues with scheduling in-person visitation are being resolved.

This is not to say that the concerns of the strikers have been completely addressed. The IDOC has passed responsibility for communications problems to GTL in the past, taking months or even years to resolve basic issues. We will need to stay vigilant to ensure that in-person visitation is available as soon as possible. Additionally, the wider issue of revoking privileges to inmates on Administrative Segregation remains. Returning items which were already in the possession of inmates before the policy change does not meet the demand of revoking the new policy altogether.

Nevertheless, progress has been made and that is thanks to all of you who have been calling and emailing. Thank you so much for your support. We will continue to update everyone on the situation and please feel free to ask us any questions.

Solidarity!



## **Episode 1: Screaming in the Shower**

*from sickpodcast.org*

This podcast discusses issues including mental illness, suicide, trauma and abuse. There are also some curse words.

This transcript has been edited for clarity.

Jake Harper: After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, communication got weird for a while. We all spent way more time on the phone and on video calls, frustrated by slow internet and choppy audio. But those hard-to-hear calls that were so annoying for us, that's the norm for Natalie Medley. All our phone calls start like this:

Hello, this is a prepaid call from  
Natalie Medley: Natalie.

An inmate at the Indiana Women's Prison. To accept this call press 0. This call is subject to monitoring and recording.

Natalie: Hi.

Harper: Hey.

Natalie: Has everything been good on your end?

Harper: Yeah, I'm ...

Harper: Natalie has a reputation as a bit of a rabble-rouser. She speaks her mind, even when she knows it will get her in trouble. And it often does.

Natalie: So I'm a definite fighter. And when I say "fighter,"

I just mean, like, against the system. I don't have good relationships with staff.

Harper: Those staff members can take away Natalie's privileges, although you and I might not consider them privileges. Things like being able to watch TV or buy snacks. Worse than that – much worse – they can put Natalie in the segregated housing unit. Solitary confinement.

Lauren Bavis: At the Indiana Women's Prison, the segregated housing unit is a hallway with 25 cells. Natalie was sent to that unit in the summer of 2015. She remembers being there a couple weeks before she got some news.

Natalie: I was told to pack out. A new person had arrived in lock. I was told that she was 19. She was sent to lock from the chow hall that afternoon.

Bavis: People in prison talk in this sort-of shorthand. The segregated housing unit, that's lock, or seg. A correctional officer, that's a CO. The chow hall, obviously, is the cafeteria.

The woman coming to lock – her name was Princola Shields. She was Black and young. Really young. Just 19. She'd only been at the Women's Prison a few months. Staff took Princola to a bathroom, where she was locked in a shower stall behind a metal grate. It's a place for staff to strip search the women. A normal stop on the way to lock. Someone new coming in was exciting for the women on the unit.

Natalie: You know, you're in this dull environment with no, you know, with nothing. So it's like oh, OK, something's happening, right? A new admittee. So everybody's always excited about a new admittee, especially one that is bumping somebody out of lock, right? So the people who want to get out, are about to get out, are excited. So there was a lot of energy going on.

Harper: Natalie might get out. That was good. What wasn't good was that Princola, the 19-year-old coming into lock, she wouldn't stop screaming. And screaming. It was annoying for the officers, which Natalie liked. But as it dragged on, it was more and more troubling. Princola was threatening suicide.

Natalie: Screaming that she was going to kill herself. And she was begging staff to help her. It was heartbreaking that she kept crying and saying that she didn't do anything. Because I could relate, I could empathize with how it is. And the people who sent her to lock are very oppressive, period. And especially to young women and especially to young Black women.

Harper: Then Natalie got to go outside for a couple hours of recreation time.

Natalie: We had rec that day at 1 p.m. Princola was still screaming in the shower. When they brought us in at 3, it was quiet. It was completely quiet. The person across the hall from me, she asked me, "Where's Princola?"

Bavis: Natalie remembers coming in from rec at 3 p.m. It was quiet, so she assumed Princola was put in a cell. That she'd

left that shower stall. But 15 minutes later, something was going on around the bathroom. Natalie didn't know what. She couldn't see the bathroom from her cell. But women in prison use sign language to communicate while in lock or other places they might get in trouble for talking. Another woman with a clear view of the bathroom signed to Natalie what she was seeing. COs going in and out. Then medical staff. And finally, a stretcher. The next thing Natalie knew, the prison was locked down.

Natalie: We were locked in the cells. We didn't have dinner on time. We weren't allowed to shower. And the COs were mad if we would ask questions.

Bavis: Natalie had a question: What happened to Princola? Within days, she found out. Princola was dead.

This is Sick, a podcast about what goes wrong in the places meant to keep us healthy. I'm Lauren Bavis.

Harper: And I'm Jake Harper.

In the United States, health care isn't a right, except for one group of people: the incarcerated. The Eighth Amendment – the one against cruel and unusual punishment – that amendment has been interpreted by the courts to mean people in jail or prison are guaranteed a minimum standard of health care. It doesn't have to be the best care in the world, but while you're in custody, you get treatment.

Bavis: And that's important, because a lot of people in prison are sick. So this season, we're investigating prisons. Mostly one prison: the Indiana Women's Prison, a maximum security facility in Indianapolis.

Unlike last season, this isn't one story about one doctor. This is about a system, and the ways that system can break down. What happens when a place that has to keep people healthy is also built to punish them.

Harper: And we're starting with the story of Princola Shields. What went wrong with Princola's care? Pretty much everything.

911 operator: Fire and ambulance, what's the address of your emergency?

IWP staff: 2596 Girls School Road, the Indianapolis Women's Prison. There is a woman who has attempted to hang herself. She's received CPR for the last 15 minutes.

Operator: OK.

IWP staff: Nonresponsive. We shocked her with the AED. We need someone ASAP.

Bavis: As we started to report Princola's story, we saw her mugshot. A picture of a young Black woman with a serious expression in an ugly mustard yellow jail uniform. We also had a mental image based on what Natalie Medley described. Someone locked in a shower stall, screaming for hours. But that's not the same Princola you see on her Facebook page. That's where you get a glimpse of the 19-year-old she really was. She's vibrant and bubbly. Always smiling and laughing. This is Princola Shields.

Princola, on video: Shoutout to God, my No. 1. Shoutout to all the lovers out there!

Harper: She posted several short videos to Facebook from the months just before she went to prison. In her videos, Princola isn't serious or hysterical. She vaped and listened to music.

Princola, on video: What's up, y'all.

Harper: She cooked herself a burger and fries at home. She found a stray cat and reunited it with its owner.

Princola, on video: Look at its tail, it's so fluffy. So fluffy. Say hi. Say hi!

Bavis: Just normal, everyday moments for a teenager. Which made us wonder: How does a 19 year old go from this –

Princola on video: So everybody tell me one thing you're thankful for. I'll start. I'm thankful for my sister and my brother.

Bavis: To hanging in a prison shower stall?

Harper: The brother Princola mentions in her video, he's seven years older. His name is David Johnson.

David Johnson: My sister was a loving person. Never met a person that she didn't like. I mean, if she walked in here right now, she'd compliment the green on your shirt. You know, she'd compliment your hair. You know what I mean? She just was a genuinely good-hearted person.

Harper: David remembers Princola had a job at a burger joint in the fall 2014.

Bavis: David was excited when she started working



there. She'd recently been in trouble. Princola was caught shoplifting at a mall in a neighboring county that summer. But with a new job, it seemed like she was on a good path forward.

David: So I'm happy for her, you know. I'm also more technical. Like, OK, good, now you should start saving up your checks. I remember I called her and she's bought a rabbit. A white rabbit. I was just like, OK, why do we need this rabbit at this point in time? You know, we're trying to get jobs, we're trying to get life together and you bought a rabbit. But she just was a free spirit like that.

Me and her were in a disagreement, so to speak, the night she got arrested.

Bavis: David remembers in January of 2015, they had a fight. He loved that his sister was a free spirit. He also knew that being kind and loving didn't mean the world would treat you fairly, especially if you're a young Black woman. And he wanted his sister to be prepared for that.

David: That's kind of harsh, you know, to tell someone who's got a good heart and really just wants to be loved at the end of the day. And you're telling her that's not the way life is. That's not the way the world is. So unfortunately, yeah, we had a big disagreement, kind of spilled out, and she ended up leaving.

The next day, myself and my girlfriend at the time, both received phone calls.

Harper: Princola had been picked up by the police for marijuana possession. Remember, she had been caught shoplifting in nearby Johnson County the summer of 2014. She was supposed to go to court, but she never showed. So a judge issued a warrant for her arrest. Princola ended up in the Johnson County Jail, south of the city.

David: I blame myself. I blame myself 100% because when she left that night, I didn't do anything to prevent it. I didn't handle it the right way. That argument, that situation, was like, the last time I got to physically see her living.

Bavis: At the Johnson County Jail, Princola got into a few fights. During one of them, jail staff came in to restrain her. According to a report, she struggled, and gave a deputy a thin scratch on his eyelid. That added some new charges to Princola's record. Disorderly conduct. Resisting a law enforcement officer. And a big one: battery. It's usually a misdemeanor, but when you hit a cop or a corrections officer, it's more serious. It's a felony.

Princola stole two watches, a purse and an electronic device from a Sears in Greenwood, Indiana. She ended up in prison.

Harper: Princola got to the Indiana Women's Prison in May of 2015, and she was placed in the same unit as Noelle Green. Noelle remembers everyone called her "Princy."

Noelle: I remember her coming up to me and being like, "I love your glasses. You're so pretty. Blah, blah, blah. I like you." And I'm like, "Thank you." And you could tell she was young. And then we started talking about the glasses thing. And she said she can't see shit. So I helped her get a pair of

glasses so she could see. And from that point on, she was my buddy.

Harper: Noelle is a mom. She felt protective of Princola. She says she would get Princola stuff when she needed it. The glasses, a pair of her old shoes. And she got to know her as they palled around the unit. She remembers Princola was funny. And she had a great singing voice.

Noelle: She sang in church services or whatever. Little church songs. That was always a nice treat.

Harper: Other friends told us some of the same things Noelle and David did. Princola could be fun, sweet and goofy. But she struggled over the five months she was in prison. She got in trouble.

Noelle: We would have a church service a couple nights a week. And everyone goes, because we all want to get out of the room. And I think she was talking to whoever was next to her. And I kept telling her, "Be quiet." And the guard kept warning her. She wouldn't stop. It was like she didn't take that warning seriously enough. And I kind of realized at that point, she doesn't really understand the gravity of what was happening in her life. So she went to lock for that.

Bavis: On Sept. 21, 2015, Princola was a few weeks away from getting out. She was excited. Noelle would see her occasionally at lunch, and they sent each other notes after Noelle moved to a different unit.

Noelle: She talked about it all day long. She was like, "I'm gonna go eat this. I'm gonna go see my grandma. I'm gonna live with my grandma, get me a job. Blah, blah, blah," type of thing.

So what happened is – oh, God it was crazy. I was in the chow hall.

Harper: How far away?

Noelle: Probably like a table away. There was one table in between us, one of the ones that are like bolted to the floor. She was standing up in line.

Bavis: This is what Noelle remembers happening. A captain approached Princola. She was wearing a shirt like all the other women. But according to Noelle, there was a faint stamp on it, which meant it was supposed to be a pajama shirt. Noelle doubts Princola even knew there was a rule about which shirts to wear. Other guards never brought it up.

Noelle: He saw the thing on her shirt and told her she can't wear that shirt. And she was like, "What?" She didn't know. So he pointed it out and then, you know, was a dick about it, basically. And she was like, "Oh, OK. So what? Who cares? No problem, next time, I won't wear it." That type of attitude.

She was looking at me like, "Can you believe this motherfucker?" You know, that type of look on her face. And I just kept shaking my head telling her to shut up. But she didn't and he called some guards over and said, "Take Miss Shields to lock." Because it happens out of nowhere.

They took her, and at that point, she was hysterical. Because it's like, "What the fuck? I didn't do anything wrong."

Harper: Noelle felt like the confrontation in the cafeteria was unavoidable. That as soon as Princola copped an attitude, the captain was sending her to lock. Princola was young and impulsive, and COs don't respond well to that. But the prison knew something Noelle didn't: Princola's entire medical history. Specifically, her mental health history.

Bavis: Many women in prison have mental illnesses, or traumatic pasts. Or both. It's why some of them go to prison in the first place. Childhood trauma in particular can result in women having hair triggers. It's a defense mechanism they learn early in life. So they may be prone to conflict with their peers or authority figures. But mental health is health. Prisons are supposed to be equipped to deal with it.

Prison staff knew Princola had a traumatic past. She had bounced around from house to house as a child, sometimes living with her mom, sometimes her grandma. She spent time in a juvenile facility. She got pregnant, and her child was placed for adoption. All before she was 18.

When Princola got to jail, she was placed on suicide watch. After she got charged with battery against that guard, she first went to a prison called the Rockville Correctional Facility. And that medical history from the jail, that went with her. And at Rockville, it got longer. About a week into her time there, she used a razor to carve the word "pain" into her arm. She was placed on suicide watch again.

The staff at Rockville diagnosed Princola with PTSD and depression. She needed special care. That's why she was sent to the Indiana Women's Prison. It's the prison for women with the most serious mental and physical health needs.

Harper: There's no question that the staff at IWP knew about the potential difficulties in caring for Princola. Her medical records traveled with her. And the psychologist at IWP even warned the higher ups about Princola's conditions. He sent an email to the warden and the same captain Noelle remembers from the cafeteria. And several others.

And even if they didn't read that email, there were warning signs once Princola arrived at IWP. She tried to kill herself there, twice. Once in June of 2015 and again in August. She wrapped a bedsheet around her neck and prison staff had to cut her down. She was placed on suicide watch each time. By Sept. 21, 2015, the prison had a full file on Princola. Putting someone with a history of suicidal behavior into a high-pressure situation like lock could have deadly consequences.

We wanted to talk to someone from the Indiana Department of Correction about what happened to Princola. But a spokesperson denied our request for an interview. Not just about Princola, but for everything we reported on this season. They also declined to answer many of the questions we emailed them.

Bavis: A correctional sergeant brought Princola to lock just after noon. The sergeant placed her in a shower. That was normal. What wasn't normal was how long she stayed there.

Officially, staff should have checked on her every 15 minutes. And at first they did, more or less. Someone checked on her three times during the first hour. Sometimes they stayed for a few minutes, talking with Princola.

But after that, the checks were spottier. Twenty-five minutes pass between checks. Then 42 minutes. Three quick ones, then another 24 minute gap. Then finally, a 44 minute gap. It's likely during this period that she stopped screaming.

Harper: Princola was locked behind a door. Kind of a metal grate, with small diamond-shaped holes. And just on the other side of that grate was a shower curtain. A bedsheet, really, used as a curtain. Forty-four minutes is a long time. Long enough to figure out that if no one comes by and checks on you, you might be able to get that sheet through one of those tiny holes. And that's what Princola did. Bit by bit, she pulled the sheet through. Until she had enough fabric to tie it around her neck.

Investigators later found that it would have taken Princola at least 15 minutes to pull the sheet through the grate. Which means if the guards were checking on her when they were supposed to, they would have been able to stop her. But they didn't check on her every 15 minutes. At 3:14 p.m., a correctional officer discovered Princola hanging in the stall. It took about three more minutes to get her down. The custody staff started doing CPR. Despite the clear emergency unfolding at the prison that day, it took half an hour before someone called 911. Half an hour.

911 operator: OK, what door do you need them to use?

IWP staff: The very back door.

911 operator: You're still performing CPR now?

IWP staff: Yes, yes we are. The doctor's on site. Thank you.

911 operator: We'll get them on the way.

Harper: An ambulance got there another 10 minutes after that, and Princola was taken to the hospital. She was alive, barely.

Bavis: Princola's brother David started getting calls and texts while he was at work, from people he didn't even know had his phone number. His cousin told him he needed to go to the hospital right away. Princola was alive, but there was nothing the doctors could do. When she got to the hospital, she was unresponsive. Soon she would be brain dead.

David: It broke my heart. Broke my heart. Failed her, you know. It's my little sister. I mean, it hurts. She had, it was like black, kind of like a tar, coming out, running out of the side of her mouth. She had tubes in her mouth hooked up to everything. Eyes were swollen. Just not how I would've wanted to see my sister, ever.

I kissed her and just apologized. You know, I was there when they took her off the life support. And I literally watched

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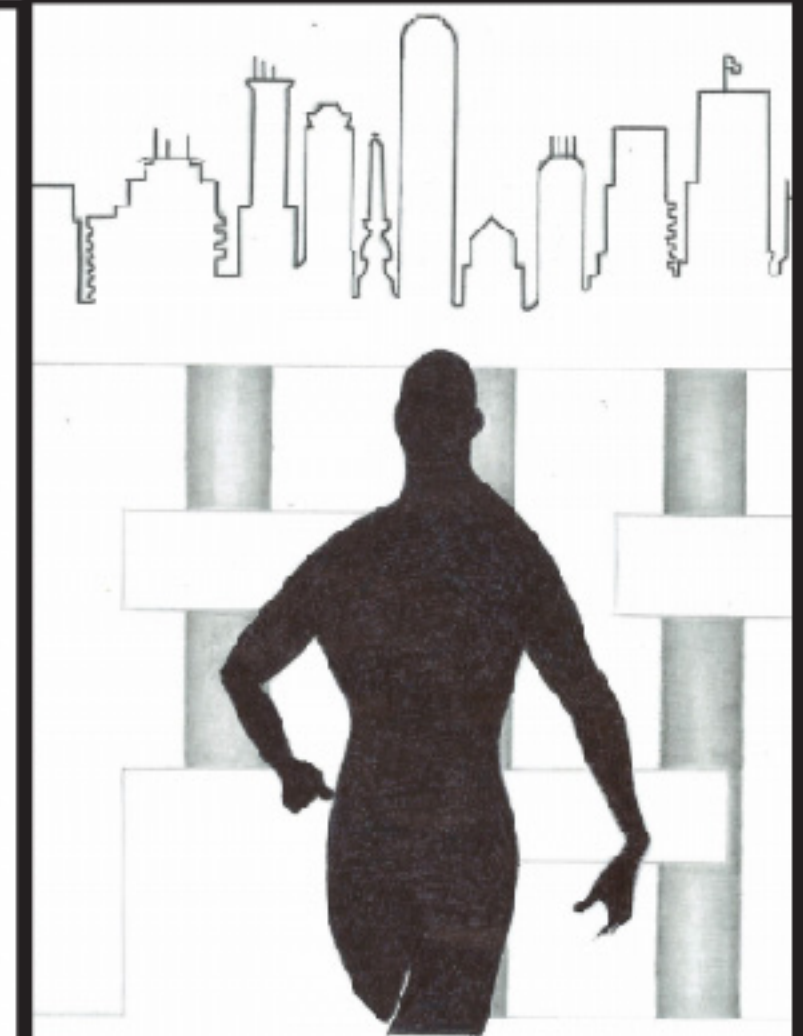
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her, I watched the decrease in her breaths. The sheet that's covering her going ... and just slowly, just not even making any movement at all. I watched all of that.

Bavis: Princola died at the hospital early in the morning on Sept. 22, 2015. She was 19 years old, and would have left the prison in a few weeks.

Harper: Noelle remembers the prison was locked down. Not long after, she heard what happened from another woman. That Princola had died. Princola was Noelle's friend. A young woman she wanted to protect. And now, so close to being released from prison, she was gone.

Noelle was stuck in prison, and her contact with the outside world was limited. But she made a decision right then. The outside world needed to know what happened to Princola, and Noelle needed to figure out how to tell that story.

Noelle: People have to know what happened here. Wrong is wrong. And if these motherfuckers want to come back at me and punish me for exposing what they did that day, then so be it. I understand what I'm risking.

Bavis: So how do you get justice from behind prison walls? That's next time on Sick.

Harper: Sick is a production of WFYI, Side Effects Public Media and PRX. This program was made possible in part by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation and the Corporation For Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

Bavis: This episode was reported and produced by Jake Harper and me, Lauren Bavis. Our editor is Robert Smith. Original music by Jordan Munson. Sound design by Kyle Long.

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Harper: Visit our website [sickpodcast.org](http://sickpodcast.org). And find us on Facebook and Twitter, @sickpodcast.

If you liked this episode, please follow and review us on Apple Podcasts or share it with a friend. It really helps.

I'm Jake Harper.

Bavis: And I'm Lauren Bavis. Thanks for listening.



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