

feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle

Durham, NC ~ december 2015 ~ volume 13

'I honestly just hope and pray for better conditions'

Thank you so much for your letters, it's great to know people out in the world care about what goes on in here. I will be getting out of here on... after graduating STARR GRAD.

Yes, they are still serving cold sandwiches for dinner. The food is a lot worse than it was last year. I have no problem with you putting any comments I make in the newsletter. I honestly just hope and pray for better conditions for inmates at DCJ. As far as time out, we get out from 9 am to 12:45pm and then again from 4pm to 6:45pm. So, we get about 7 hours out a day. Better than it was when I first got here. Thanks to you and everyone else who was protesting!

Once again thank you for everything you and everyone else does for all the inmates out here at DCJ...

Last year we spent a lot more time out of cells, food was better. I understand the jail was locked back a lot more than they are now, but it still seems a little cruel to have people locked in a cell for 12 to 16 hours a day. But I have to say it has



improved since everyone on the outside started protesting.

As far as medical care goes, honestly it sucks. The medical staff does not seem to take anything serious, nor do they seem properly trained. You have to pretty much pass out for them to take you seriously and then all they do is lock you in a cell by yourself for 3 to 5 days.

Now, as far as the mental health aspect is concerned, I think we have a great group of staff. I just feel we could use some more mental health staff.

When it comes to educational opportunities, I don't feel it is fair to only offer GED class to people under the age of 24; there are tons of girls in here who are older than 24 who I feel could benefit from GED class.

Once again, thank you so much for your support.

Peace,
A.C.

‘We are still struggling to be provided the simple necessities’

When the girls and I at the table realized who you were, we were excited. Your letter came just in time, for there is much to discuss. I want to start out on a good note, the girls and I realize how truly blessed we are to be surrounded by great women such as DO Taylor, DO Franklin, DO Solman, and DO/Chaplin Wynn. We are also blessed to be able to attend the STARR program, which helps us to understand our addiction and helps connect us to resources within the community.

It is unfortunate that we are still struggling to be provided the simple necessities, such as toilet paper, spoons, and cups. On Friday, October 2nd, 2015, I started asking for

toilet paper at 1pm and was told there was none. After complaining for six and a half hours, I was finally given a roll. The next day, I witnessed five to six other inmates with the same issue.

When a girl is brought up from booking and has no spoon or cup in her bag, she is made to feel like she is a burden to get one. Also, because of the continued moisture in the cups and our inability to wash them correctly, there is mold growing in them. Many of us, before coming to jail, were tax payers, and most inmates have tax-paying families. If for no other reason, we should be provided simple things.

I can say many things about
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What is feedback?

Feedback is a publication of Inside-Outside Alliance (IOA), a group of people trying to support the struggles of those inside (or formerly inside) the Durham jail, and their families and friends. We recognize that any of us can be outside one day, inside the next – the revolving door of incarceration. We also participate in struggles against police harassment and brutality. IOA maintains a website called Amplify Voices Inside (amplifyvoices.com) that publishes the words of Durham jail inmates and former inmates talking about conditions inside and outside and how they see the world.

The name Amplify Voices Inside comes from something a brave and rebellious inmate wrote in the fall of 2012. This publication, Feedback, is a sampling of recent contents of the website. When something amplified is redirected at the source of the sound, the effect is called feedback. That is what this is: the voices that have been amplified to the outside world being re-broadcast inside the walls of the jail. Feedback is also distributed on the outside and sometimes includes ‘outside’ voices. Unless a person requests use of their real name, then writers’ initials have been changed to protect identities and minimize repressive attacks and harassment.

To contribute words or art, write to: IOA, PO Box 1353, Durham, NC 27701.

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

*** Se habla español. ***

'They use the jail to break a person down'

The following letter is from someone who is now in a state facility.

Hi,

...I got the feedback and read it. It does bring back bad memories of that place (DCDF). I couldn't believe the sick calls have gone up to \$20 a visit. With the jail overcrowded, look for A LOT of pleas being taken.

They use the jail to break a person down to accept a plea. That is why the bonds are so high sometimes.

I remember when I was there, any time I moved around like to the library, or sick call, I looked in the sergeant's office and there is a picture of the jail and written in magic marker it says "OUR HOUSE."

It always bothers me how many people call their place of work "Our House." It seems unusual and weird.

It's crazy about their lockback time. If one pod has too many, send a few to another, it's simple. But they do it on purpose. So guards don't have to (watch) inmates running around the pod and the guard can go to sleep.

I could see I.O.A. growing. Every time someone gets locked up and can't make bail another family should hear about I.O.A. and contribute some time to help.

By the way, a sick call call here is \$5, \$7 for an emergency and \$10 for

a doctor's visit or dentist (in prison, people have the opportunity to earn money).

I was very glad to get your letter. I was going through a drought there for a while with no mail.

A lot of people were interested in the feedback, so I let them read it and gave them I.O.A. address and a little explanation of what they do.

Take care.

S.V.

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CCS (the medical provider) and none of them would be good. I was told by a guard that two men have died of heart attacks as a direct result of improper care by CCS. They probably still collected their twenty dollars as I have seen them do while giving nothing more than band-aids for infections like Mercer and cups of salt for abcested teeth.

There is much more I could say about that but I am going to end with this. I don't feel so voiceless anymore, now that I've been able to write this letter and have my concerns heard. I am also not ashamed of what I write, so please feel free to use my whole name.

Sincerely,

Brandie E. Foor

VOICES OUTSIDE

'What good is this place doing for anyone?'

After visiting his son, Paul shared some thoughts outside of DCDF:

I don't like coming down here. If it was something he (my son) had done I would accept it, but still wouldn't like it. But I'm old, and it takes a lot out of me to come down here twice a week. It isn't fun coming down here. Some people are in here, and they're laughing about stuff. It ain't funny. This ain't a happy or funny place to be. I've worked hard my whole life, and you know what? Life is serious. I've worked hard and been told 'why you sitting down?' Cause I'm tired, that's why. But they say 'get up, get to work.' Life is serious and this place should make you see that.

What good is this place doing for anyone? Even those who might have taken someone's life, how do they get any better by being in here? But when my son gets out of here, he is not going to be the same. My wife don't understand it, but he will not be the same. All that's being put in them in there. And taken away. It's their freedom being taken from them. Every living creature wants to be free. When I was young, we had animals, and we kept them in a pen, and you should just see them if they got out of the pen, they loved it. But the way they treat 'em in there, it turns you against Durham. It turns me against Durham. If I were him (my son) and they told me, '—, you're free,' I'd be just like a bird and fly away from here.

The thing is you get used to living like that and you got to try to learn how to live all over again. They produce criminals. Jail produces what? Crime and criminals. You see how big this jail is before us here? Before long you know it, they'll be building it bigger or building another one, to house all the criminals they have produced. Instead of that, this place across the street here (DPAC), why don't they build a place bigger than that where we can help people?

We need more people like you and me, who ain't afraid, who are gonna keep struggling for a better day.

Put my name on this, and any place you print it. What do I care or got to worry about? I'm old and they'll catch up with me if they want to catch up with me, but I ain't afraid of them.



'A direct threat and impediment to safety'

I am writing in hope of shedding some light on and taking a step toward lessening the tension and violence between officers/staff and inmate/detainees in jails and prisons.

I was assaulted on 9/30/15 by officer Perry at the Durham County jail. The video of the incident was reviewed and it was determined that Perry did not follow procedure and assaulted me. Perry was written up by Sergeant Mims, and not allowed to work in the pod by himself for a month. Had that happened on the street he would be facing criminal charges. Still I was told by Staff Sgt. Taylor that I could not press charges until I am released. Also, Lt. Perkins lied over the phone to my family and my attorney saying that Perry did nothing wrong, yet there was documentation proving otherwise which I was promised by Staff Sgt. Taylor would be made available along with the video to my attorney when I get out. Now Perry was allowed to return last week to the pod without a sitter, and almost immediately began trying to provoke me into a confrontation. Officer Perry's actions display prejudice and an inability to control his emotions. Most of the d.o.'s that work in the jail, in my opinion, are acceptably fair and professional, but a handful like Perry are a direct threat and impediment to the safety and security of both staff and inmates,

as well as the orderly functioning of the facility. Also, I feel it necessary to point out that officer Perry as an employee of the county of Durham, North Carolina, and Sheriff Mike Andrews, has had other documented problems while working at the jail. And it is a fact that it's things like Perry's petty, and not so petty, inmate abuses in jails and prisons that are responsible for an avoidable number of assaults on corrections staff, including maintenance and medical (doctors, nurses) who are innocently doing their jobs, making people like officer Perry an indirect danger to the safety and even lives of their co-workers.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey Collins

"It's still the same in here:
oppression from officers;
bad, bad food; medical is still
taxed \$20 for ibuprofen, smh. I
believe that they took us off lock-
back only to cover up
EVERYTHING else. Maybe
thinking we would stop writing
so on and so forth. I'm ready to
leave this place. This shit is for the
birds, but we live and we learn."

--J.B.

'I was in fear for my life. I could've died.'

Hi,

My name is Genapher Page. I'm 22 years old locked up for felony probation violation, 2 counts felony assault inflicting physical injuries on detention employer, communicating threats and resisting a public officer. Here's the story behind my lockback situation. On 9-26-15 I was told to go to my cell because I was helping another inmate pack her stuff to go to prison so the detention officer Rachael Smith started yelling at me and I lost my temper and tried to walk past her. She jumped in front of me and two male officers grabbed me from behind while Smith grabbed my feet and I was carried into my cell where I was then jumped by 6 to 8 other officers, where I was being strangled by Sgt. Jones that left a cut mark around my neck and bruises on my arms, scratches on my back and bruises on the left side of my head, and a scratch mark on my right cheek. I was kicked by Smith in my head. I was in fear for my life. I could've died. I was put in the hole (3A) for a couple hours. When I came back to 5D Smith was making faces at my door everytime she walked by. So I chilled out for the rest of the day. So on 9-27-15 at about 15 mins till 12 I was told I had to go to booking. An officer named Alston came and I told her I wasn't going and went back to sleep. Smith was working that day also. She came and stood in my door looking at me so as Alston and a male put handcuffs on me Smith held her jacket over her nose and started fanning the air like something stinks. So I'm walking

slow, the male officer (I don't know his name) told me, "We ain't got time for that today." I said, "We got nothing but time." So as I'm walking toward the door keep in mind I got cuffs on, Smith comes and walks on my left side and I haul off and hit her in the face with my elbow. The male officer that was on my right side pushes me on the ground while Smith and Alston is punching me in the head. I'm being held down with cuffs on while being striked many times in the head. Now I'm locked back for 60 days, then even after that I'm on Admin Segregation. I was told that if I left and came back the consequences still stand. I put in a sick call on 9-30-15 and they still haven't seen me. Depending on the officer they barely want to open my door to feed me or if somebody gave me some noodles they don't want to open my door so I can get them. They won't let me get no hot water to cook the noodles. They think I'm going to hurt them when that's not the case. Just assaulting one officer messed me up getting the medical attention that I need...

* * *

Thanks for ya'll letter and concern. I'm okay I'm still alive ain't died yet. DCJ ain't shit! The officers come in here with attitudes just cause they can't be in the men pods or cause they don't want to be here, period. ... Anything I write to ya'll, please submit it in newsletters, facebook, whatever, cause I'm already locked back. So what more can they do? Beat me, rape, taze,

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etc. I don't care cause I be having real bad pressure on my brain and the only thing they tell me when I go to medical is, "Oh, that's your allergies."

* * *

So just to update y'all, so they fired Officer Smith and Officer Alston. Yes, please share my story on everything, newsletters and website. I'm not in the hole no more, but still locked back. Thanks for y'all support and love. I really do appreciate it.

* * *

Oh, yeah, I almost forgot:
They passed the inspection!!

W.T.F!! The inspector really didn't look at nothing but the shower.

How? Why? Mildew on the walls. People getting bit by the 'no-see-em' bugs in the shower. Downstairs it's clumps of dirt in the cells. People got old dried up blood on cell walls, and writing on the walls.

Something just not right here. Dirt in vents that we inhale every day. That can be toxic and kill us. Let's not forget the safety hazard--what happens if a fire breaks out. We got to wait for them to pop the doors and to unlock the door to the stairs. The mats got holes in them, some bigger than others. WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON???

'Why are we as black people still enslaved by the system?'

It's the land of the free, but are we really "free?" I sit in my cell every day and think why are we as black people still enslaved by the system. It doesn't matter how far along we come, the math always adds up the same. Prisons around the U.S. still house black slaves. 85% (or some such number) of inmates are black, and they make 2 dollars a day for farming and other road jobs. The system believes its better off building a new jail or prison than paying teachers. And if your record is bad, they don't give you a job. But they don't care what type of record you have when you are working for 2 dollars a day in prison. The system is full of shit and they know it. So as black men we really don't have no wins, but the longer they hold me the smarter and wiser I become.

I just had to write and let you know what was on my mind. This jail still on some bullshit. Also, they give us only 6 hours and 35 minutes when they told the newspaper we get 8 hours out of our room. Also, they don't even give us 6 hours because they will come up with some bullshit like the jail's on lockdown. We can't win in here. But I'll never lose faith in the man upstairs. He see all the wrong. They gonna have to answer to god sooner or later.

I respect the IOA. Y'all are our voice outside and I like how y'all stand for something and don't look at us that locked up like we are animals. May god bless all of y'all hearts and I will always have a spot for y'all in my heart. —K.M.B.

'I really want to be a part of all this'

Friends,

Just saw you outside the window and you really brought emotion with you. It is so hard and lonely in here under this oppressive Misdemeanor Confinement Act. My roommate and I are both serving long sentences (his 12 months and mine 36 months) and haven't seen any sunshine except you guys faces outside the windows. No one comes in here. The guards don't care. They are not interested in the humanitarian atrocities that are taking place in here. Our feet are swollen from living, working, stepping on concrete. I am a god-



damn misdemeanor and cannot get shoes from my family or medical care. I cut my hand at work and was given a wet band-aid. The cut finally stopped bleeding. It required a butterfly or super glue. I have work release but can't go out and find a job or use a phone.... I am not getting shit for mail. The mail lady says she has not seen anything. I don't get mail and I really want to be a part of all this. I am a revolutionary. I am tired. I am going to or have been dedicated to raising hell with letters and conversations.... Hit me back.

In struggle, Eli Davis

VOICES OUTSIDE

Broken

by Cynthia P. Fox

I do what I do, as an activist for the underdogs of North Carolina, because I am broken, too. Many years of struggling against inequality, abusive power, poverty, oppression and injustice has revealed something to me about myself. Being close to suffering, death, violence and cruel punishment didn't illuminate the brokenness of others; in a moment of anguish and heartbreak, it also uncovered my own brokenness!

You cannot effectively fight abusive power, poverty, inequality, illness, oppression or injustice and not be broken by it. We are all broken by something. We have all hurt someone and have been hurt. We all share the conditions of brokenness even if our brokenness is not equivalent. Our shared brokenness connects us. Let's stand up for justice so we no longer remain broken.

‘Am I a commodity to Durham County?’

.... It all boils down to this: Durham County Jail and Durham County Court System are sub-contracted under the state of North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections to house inmates, and are making a shitload of money doing it. Judges are handing out maximum sentences to keep people in their fucked-up fun house of torture for as long as they can get away with it to gain as much “funding” from the state budget as they can squeeze out. This is wrong, and something needs to be done to stop this criminal activity. People are not inherently bad. I didn’t wake up one day and decide to get a DWI and go to jail. I lost everything I had, though, including my daughter. I have an alcohol drinking problem and no amount of incarceration will fix the problem. But they don’t want the problem fixed because they would lose all that money! So I am a commodity? Not, a father, a son, a brother, uncle, nephew? I am not human because I have fallen into the grips of alcoholism? Despite what the system labels me as, I will recover from this disease on my own without the help of the sovereign state of N.C.

These new laws need to be redefined, lawmakers need to be exposed to the truths about what they are inflicting upon its people. Inmates, however you want to look at them, have rights, and they are being taken advantage of and it needs to stop NOW. And those responsible need to be exposed and held accountable for their actions. Period.

Recently, I suffered the tragic loss of my youngest brother. He was out of the state at the time. One of my best friends is a minister and knowing that I was incarcerated in Durham County, he contacted the Durham County Jail and had arranged a funeral service to be held in Durham County so I could attend. It was agreed upon by DCJ officials and the place where the service was to be held was checked out by a Durham County detective. All was good. Until the night before the service. I had no idea this was being done for me. I had called my girlfriend and she told me the next day, they would bring me to my brother’s funeral. Shortly after that call was made, DCJ contacted my friend the minister and informed him they were understaffed and that I would not be attending. My mother flew from China to attend this service. Yes, China, halfway around the world. All I was allowed to do was call (on the pay phone, mind you) and listen to the service over the phone, which cost my girlfriend over 30 dollars. That is the injustice I speak of, this is how they treat people here, like they are insignificant nobodies with no one who cares for them.

A commodity. Enough is enough...

We are people. Right or wrong, we deserve fairness and decency. Durham County Jail is none of those.

Listen. Hear. Act.

Jason

We, the Detainees: Top 10 Problems in Durham County Jail!!

Excerpted from piece by Garrett Hatch, aka G, & Dexter Poteat, aka Don Biggs

1. MATS: They are very unsanitary, hundreds of people use these mats and they are not wiped down or sprayed or cleaned in any fashion before the next person has to use them ... Also, most of these mats are old and worn out and very thin, they don't provide any support or cushion. There are many detainees who are having back problems and sleeping problems in general because of these mats. Detainees should be able to request a mat if the one they have... has holes, is too thin, or has not been cleaned properly.

2. MEDICAL: First of all the fee to go to medical has doubled from \$10 to \$20. There have been no noticeable improvements...to justify this increase in payment. Detainees don't feel it is right to have to pay more for the same services that were not adequate in the first place. For all injuries and sickness, medical staff only gives Ibuprofen or Tylenol.... When I first came to this jail, I was suffering from a shoulder injury...which I still suffer from today. When I had my physical I told the nurse about my injury and she brought up my medical records from Duke, which clearly show that I have been receiving different prescription medicines for swelling and pain. I been here 8 months and suffer most days and have many sleepless nights, because my shoulder requires surgery and they will not give me anything other than TylenolAt least my pain

would be bearable if they gave me my prescribed medications until I'm released. There are many other stories like mine.

3. TRAYS: It is no secret that the trays are very old. Every now and then they might get new trays, but they don't take the old ones out of circulation. A lot of these old trays contain holes and cracks in them, and when these trays are sent back to the kitchen they are not being cleaned properly.... Us detainees feel that the old trays should be replaced with new trays. The old ones are a clear health risk. We detainees feel that what we receive for dinner is not enough for adults....We detainees would like it to go back to us getting 3 hot trays.

4. AC & HEAT: The jail keeps the AC on year round. This is a problem because they only give us one thin blanket. It is hard to stay warm especially now that it is getting cold outside and these walls have no insulation and they don't turn on the heat... If being cold all the time is not bad enough, we also have to put up with breathing in dust and dirt from the vents. There are many people in here who have breathing problems, and the dirt and dust only makes it worse. We detainees feel that they need to clean the vents because it's not healthy for us at all or acceptable.

5. CANTEEN: Durham County is now considering this facility a prison (housing state inmates for sentences). No other prison in NC has canteen

cost this high. For example, the same soup that they are charging .82 a piece for, they are charging less than half that at any other prison. Also, the phone cards on the canteen are \$17 and \$27 when in actuality they are \$10 and \$20 phone cards at any other jail and prisons are selling them for \$10 and \$20... \$40 will last a month at any other prison, but here \$40 will last a week.... We as detainees feel we are being overcharged.

6. TV: The TV is a constant problem.... there is constant arguing on whether we will watch sports or movies. We detainees feel that if radio and more board games were available that this will decrease altercations. At any other prison, there are 2 TVs and radios and board games. We the detainees feel that with all the money they are making off of us, we should have more entertainment available.

7. SHOWER SHOES: At every jail in NC, they give you free shower shoes. Here in Durham County Jail/Prison they charge us to get shower shoes, which is a problem because not everyone has money to buy them... there are people coming in here in different situations that need to bathe. If they don't know someone that will lend them a pair of shower shoes, they can't take showers, which makes it uncomfortable for them and everyone around them. The shower shoes that they sell are low quality so they don't last long... We the detainees feel like Durham County Jail should give out free shower shoes or better quality like other county jails.

8. VISITATION: On average there are more than 50 people in a pod, but there are only 15 slots available each visitation. This means only 30 people max will receive a visit each week, if someone does not get two in a week, which will make that number even less. There are constant complaints about people not getting to see their loved ones...for lack of visitation slots. Many people prefer the old way, which was as long as you show up by a certain time with your ID you can see your loved ones... now you must have internet/email, which some people don't have. We the detainees feel that the jail should go back to the old way or make more available slots.

9. RECREATION: We are only allowed 30 minutes a day, with 50 or more people on one basketball court inside the pod it is impossible to have more than 3 games, which means not everyone is going to get ample recreation time. If this is now supposed to be a prison, recreation should be available all day. We the detainees need more recreation time.

10. TOE NAIL CLIPPER: ...There is not an established way to request the finger and toe nail clipper. They bring us nail files every month, but they don't announce when they are bringing them... Some people need clippers more than the files. We have to constantly buy new socks because they keep getting holes.... They should at least sell them on canteen since they act like it's a problem to them to give it to us when requested.

Happy Holiday...and New Year 2016.

'Let's roar loud and clear'

I liked your analogy, the lion that sleeps, Ima use that from now on, that's my title, my religious name was good but now I need some of that rebel energy, and anybody that knows me will inform you that's my personality. I was thinking of something though maybe like a committee, a big town meeting you should demand a sit down with the mayor, if declined: an all out mass protest!! Non-stop rebel energy. That one event could cause mass media coverage! It could make history. You never know--look what MLK did back in the 60s. Why can't we go harder than them, we're fighting for the same thing freedom! ... we're not stopping in Durham, this is just the BEGINNING! We're not gonna stop in america ... In ten years, if we get the right voices, the

right courage and fully organized we can be walking up the steps of the white house, ah, wouldn't that be beautiful, this party would look like the struggle, the wise, the old, the minority, the forgotten, the felons, the young, and the working class, the 90%. ... We will engage everybody equally with love, peace, truth, and justice no matter who they are and the only goal we want is true equality, not the 'throw a bone at the lion just to get it to stop roaring' like they've been doing these past 50 years. It's been going on too long, let's roar loud and clear. We will uprising, overstand, and overachieve. My kids will see this utopia we speak on. As long as 2 or more come in the name of god we shall make progress. Until then, keep fighting!



The Lion that Slept, part 1

Ever since a cub, this lion was strong as he could be.

A natural born king, oh so great was he.

But without reason to protest, he ate and slept, not knowing how much he could change.

Until one day a bee passed by, "Oh, lion you could do so much more, you sleep? Oh why, oh why?"

"Move" the lion roared. "I sleep and live my days, lay in the sun, and hunt my prey."

"But what about your brothers in the zoo," the bee protested. "Will you not save them, is there any courage in you?"

The lion began to ponder at this issue at hand, he shook his mane, awakened, roared, and took a stand.

— MMS--*The lion that slept!*