

# feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle

Durham, NC ~ June 2017 ~ volume 30

At a recent visitation time, we met D, whose partner is locked up in the jail. She was going to visit him in person and face to face. D reminded us of a very simple but very profound truth that is at the heart and the beginnings of this group: **“Whether you’re locked up or not, you’ve still got power. They’re trying to take it from you, but you’ve still got power.”**

## ‘This damn jail is destroying my family’

What’s going on? Sorry it’s taken me so long to write back, but let’s just say I have not been myself lately. Sometimes I don’t know what or how to feel. Because I am so weighed down by personal issues and with the fact of being incarcerated for a year now. As far as this jail goes it’s still the same slave ship it has always been. These people act like they care about us, but they really don’t. They have made it much harder for our people to see us. Speaking of which, I have not seen my kids in 3 months. And that is the only way I can maintain. Hell, I have a son that’s about to be a year old, and one that’s soon to be 8 years old. I can’t take not seeing them...This damn jail is DESTROYING my family!

About the matter of Uniece Fennell, I heard about her death and I send my deepest regards to her family. I never had the chance to meet her, but from what I was told about her she was a wonderful, loving individual. But what I don’t believe is that she killed herself out the blue. Something was behind it, and it needs to be exposed for the sake of the family who lost their loved one...R.I.P. Niecey!

Sometimes I wish that the shoe was on the other foot so they can see how we feel everyday. We have to deal with these officers with these messed up attitudes. They also feel like they can disrespect us and when we do it to them, they wanna write us up and throw us in the hole. That’s the biggest load of horseshit I have ever heard in my life.

On the other hand, I am glad that someone is doing something to stop this nonsense that they call a justice system. If I would’ve been there I would’ve got arrested, too. So, you’re not alone, trust me. And, you’re so right, this video visit is some bullshit. But man to man, —, THEY JUST DON’T GIVE A FLYING FUCK!!! Straight up, and please don’t get me started on our president LMMFAO—he’s the most insecure, overbearing, psychopathic, dictatorial, egomaniacal, frigid, lunatic asshole, if I must say so myself.

I’m so thankful that we have you guys to vent to about everything. If we didn’t I would go crazy. Until next time, Reggie

## ‘When is that gonna start?’

Hi, Thank you for my X-mas card (months ago). Sorry I haven't been wrote you. It drains me, cause it takes a lot out of me. But, can you help me with getting this stuff out there?

I need my right meds.

I can't remember when, but some officers jumped me.

My name being cleared. It's always said I'm always starting things. Officers like Mrs. Solomon, and many more (say this). I rarely start anything. The things I do, I'll admit to it.

Disciplinary always finds me guilty!

Not getting enough supplies, like pencils, paper, envelopes, washing liq-uid.

They need to wash our clothes in Clorox since they are washing everybody clothes together.

There's a video about this jail that they show and at the end it tells you, 'You will be treated with Dignity and Respect while you're here.' That's funny, cause that doesn't happen. So, when is that gonna start?

An officer was telling me for some reason how they wouldn't eat anything from our kitchen. I said why. She said—they're nasty. Can that change?

These are the things that are problems that needs to be looked into! Even if you don't write back real fast. Please send me copies of the paper. Thanks. Me.

### **What is Feedback?**

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

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

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

You may be able to reach us by phone at 919.666.7854

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

**\* Se habla español. \***

## Video visitation: 'It simply shouldn't happen!'

Dear friends!

I was very glad to get your letter.

Thank you much for efforts to memorialize Niecey. It is extremely painful for me to think about her death.

Yes, I saw you many times on the streets in Durham. I used to work in one of the restaurants in downtown. But never did hear you being outside at the jail like now. I am on the 5th floor. Certainly I support from all my heart the protests against video visitation. It simply shouldn't happen!! And "upset" about it is not enough to say!

...Thank you for your attention. With love and respect, F.L.

### 'Not being able to see (mom) in the flesh would give me one less reason to live'

What's been up brother? How are you, me I'm fine. I just met a man not too many weeks ago. He's about 65 or so years old. His name is Ronnie Long. He did forty years for a crime that he did not do and there was no evidence of. His base is in Durham...They recently granted a retrial because of some help from some lawyers in Durham. I think you may know more about him than me. Anyway, how are you? I'm so glad to hear from you.

I am fine. I'm very hurt that a girl of 17 should lose her life in the jail. That's painful. I hate to say that I think more people die in DCJ than her where people are stabbed (fairly often). I know that it's a shitty comparison.

I know that I'm here in prison, but if there is anything I can do from here, let me know. I'm reeling from so much, it seems, just a lot going on in the political atmosphere.

You know, on DCJ: at first it was a shock like being locked somewhere that's a void with no air. That's how I felt when I first was detained. It was some of the worst pain that I have felt in my 29 years. And I will never forget it. At first I just wanted to sleep and die. I felt separated from myself, like at anytime I could just die and be through with it. I don't like going back through this, but to help others I will call to memory the feelings and the thoughts of hopelessness that DCJ brings to me. I'm 29 years old. An Army combat veteran. I was an infantryman, a fighter. In all the training I received and skills I learned, it still was not enough to prepare me for the deprivation that I would experience in DCJ. Afghanistan did not help me in DCJ. My first week no one asked me if I was alright. If I was having thoughts of suicide. If I had family or someone they could call. No one cares. Don't care where you came from, how you got there.

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It was hopeless, after about a week or two someone came to my cell and said I have a visit. I didn't know who it was, or how they knew I was there. But I walked into the visitation booth and she was standing there with her hands on the glass and she told me, 'It's going to be alright, it's ok, I love you, you're going to be alright.' When I saw my mother standing there in front of me, I drew strength from seeing her there in front of me. From that day forward she came to see me at least once a week. I spent 4 years in that jail, and without being able to see her in the flesh, would have given me one less reason to live.

But I guess I'm fortunate. Some people aren't so fortunate. I guess they just give more money to DCJ

to make sure we kill ourselves. It's like paying someone for hopelessness. Durham County Jail wants me to commit suicide. That's why it is the way it is. That's what they do with the money—buy misery. Life is hard, people have little. But I guess it's easy to make things harder for people who are in a hopeless place.

No hope at 17 years old; whose baby has no hope? Who supports no hope. I guess you pay for suicide. Your money, your hopelessness, you want 17 year old suicide. Your money, your program, you're responsible for her death. Hopeless pain at 17—whose baby?

Sorry I got a little taken away. I'm so sad. I hope this helps.

Striving together inside and outside,

Timothy B.

### **“A male CO was picking on and messing with Niecey”**

Dear G\_\_\_,

First off I would like to thank you and many others from Inside-Outside Alliance for love and support, a lot of people on the outside as well as some of us in here are blind to how we are being treated in this jail so once again thanks. I read the newsletter that you provided and loved every page of it. I can relate to all the topics and I agree that the jail in some areas are getting worse. Canteen is at an all time high and the website to set up visitation is not working at all right now so some of us can't even see our love ones. As far as the situation with Niecey committing suicide, I feel that it could have been avoided. As you may know, we inmates talk to each other male and female through many different ways, one being jail house mail and what I discovered is that a male CO was picking on and messing with Niecey, this situation made Niecey commit suicide. It's sad and prayers go out to her family, as an inmate and a person who has been coming in and out of this jail for 12 years I can only hope for the best but I know it won't happen. Thanks for the letter and I will be looking forward to the next one but until then I'm out.

Sincerely, C

## **‘The only way they know they’re fine is through a real visit’**

How you doing?

Thanks for writing. It’s always good to hear from the outside even if it’s from a stranger. I happened to have read a magazine you guys have published that someone left behind before, and it was good to hear that people aren’t afraid to voice their opinion. About this (video) visitation, I think it’s bogus because a lot of parents come to visit their kids and the only way they know that they are fine is through a real visit. Seeing and knowing that they’re fine. You can’t tell through a phone visit, that doesn’t give that fist bump, that ‘I love you’ smile, or that one moment where you gotta shed that tear and the person on the other side of the glass tells you, ‘Hey, don’t worry, it’s gonnabe ok...’

As for me, a lot of my people are from up north, so it will be hard, but I don’t think it’s right. I could go on and on, but I’ll just stop right here...Y’all keep up the good work with feedback.

–Jersey Boy

## **“Being a freedom-fighter comes with its own particular vocabulary and diction”**

Peace,

How are you? I hope all is well. I got your letter with a copy of the “Feedback.” I really enjoyed this edition of Feedback (lol).

Can anyone explain to me the reason for these “excessive bonds” Durham County is giving people? Could it be that by law you can not deny a person a bond, unless he or she is an immediate danger to society, correct? It looks like to me that the excessive bond has taken the place of having a no bond. In reality, damn near everyone in jail has a no bond because the average Joe can’t post a hundred-thousand dollar bond and if he or she do post the bond he or she has to worry about the Feds coming to ask question about how they got the money.

It’s the new way of holding people hostage in the blind-sight of the law. The 8th amendment of the Constitution states “excessive bond not

required.” So, what’s making it be required?

Furthermore, how does a non-violent offense get a greater bond than violent offenses? “It’s crazy.” Lady justice sure is blind, she needs to retire or get her vision checked. I believe we are political prisoners, we’re hostages held against our will, and are victims of law or victims of misused law.

We need to start protesting and agitating our local legislature to make them abolish all these racist and unjust laws.

The habitual felon law needs to be done away with, also prior record levels because it conflicts with the double jeopardy clause.

The state is adding more time to new offenses committed because of old offenses you did time for in the past. So, in essence, I am being punished all over again for something I already

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been punish for. "That's crazy."

...I believe words are powerful and very important. Words alone can provide certain thoughts or ways of thinking. We believe prisoners alone changes the dynamics of how society view prisoners. Society has been shaped and molded to believe that all people that are incarcerated are crooks, liars, murderers, and con artists. A people that can't be trusted. We believe prisoners says a lot, like, we believe that nobody is somebody, that's someone's mother, brother, uncle, wife, husband, etc. That prisoners can be the next world leader. Also, being a freedom-fighter comes with its own particular vocabulary and diction. So, the choice of words is very important, especially, when it come to liberating the minds of the people.

Now, the subject about the black woman, I never meant to imply or make it seem that she was weak. But to the contrary she was the strongest out of all. She endure countless rapes, whippings, having her fetus cut from her body while still alive and having her children sold off and toss about from plantation to plantation and still come out the mother and cradle of civilization. Of course, you going to have beautiful women like the ones that you named and the ones that haven't even been born yet.

Also, you got to keep in mind that a lot of the slave that were already here were country born slaves. So, most

grew up knowing nothing but how to be a slave. It was mostly the constant introduction of Africans from the ongoing slave-trade that kept the seed of resistance in the country-born slave also. For example, the Movie "Roots" by Alex Haley, which is a movie about slavery in America. The African, Kunta Kintae, is brought on a slave ship to America from Africa and is forced into slavery.

On the plantation, he sees other slaves that begin to try and communicate with him and show him what is required of him, but the whole time in Kunta mind is how will he escape "bondage." The country born slaves is trying to get him to conform to their way of life which is slavery. Kunta ended up running away twice and ended up caught each time. Once he got a whipping in front of all the slaves, second time they chopped his foot off. He was so strong minded that didn't even stop him from wanting to be free again. he didn't even acknowledge his slave name "toby." he was so rebellious that his master had him whipped in public until he said his name was toby and even then he kept saying his name was Kunta. The other slaves beg him to say his name is Toby, which he did in the end. This is to show you a person who is educated that knows his God given right oppose to the ones that don't know freedom. Also, this tactic was used to put fear in the other slaves and naturally the mother pass this fear on to the chil-

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dren. It was only self-preservation to ensure that her children don't get beat or killed. (Dang, I just realize I wrote a whole paragraph unrelated to the woman. It's still information). Even in the sixties, the parents of freedom fighters used to beg their children not to go bother the whites. For an example, every time black folks riot, they don't tear-up white folks stuff. They tear up their own stuff. Just like the jail and prisoners, the inmate will oppress and fight his fellow inmate for the simplest matter but the CO or the institution that is the real problem, he will not lift one finger to do any harm.

But anyways, Harriet Tubman said something back then that is relevant today: "I freed a thousand slaves; I could have freed ten thousand more if only they knew they were slaves." That quote is so damn powerful. That's what we are faced with today. The people is so damn blinded that they can't see the enemy. Instead of racism being in plain view they hide it because, remember, power is mostly felt, in other words, I don't got to call you a nigger, I can just treat you like one, this goes for nigger-lovers too! (lol)

I believe we have lost sight of our common enemy, and if racism isn't knocking at our front door, then it simply doesn't exist.

As far as jails and prisons goes, most of the people behind the walls do not know they are slaves and are

being handled unjustly because it has become normal. It, also, stems from a lack of proper education in our homes and schools. Frederick Douglass in his narrative didn't have a burning desire to secure his freedom until he became "educated." The prison industrial complex limited information to inmates behind their walls. They even got a ban on certain books that they want to allow in the prison. They reason being is to keep the people asleep!!

Therefore, education is a very important key to liberation. And not just any education, it got to be proper education. Information that will open the eyes of the people to see the condition that they are in and the tools to change those conditions.

As for visitation, they already installed the monitors and will start the video-visitation the beginning of next month. I heard a few say that they were going to break the monitors but that remains to be seen. In reality, nobody is trying to stand up for anything. To many people are for self and don't want to sacrifice for the collective. I told everyone all they got to do is refuse visitation, don't work the kitchen, don't work in the PODS, make the CO do everything and I promise they will take that stuff out. Nobody is trying to buck, so we will see what happens after the first visit, which probably nothing will happen.

You stand for nothing, you fall for anything.

Sincerely, Black Holocaust

## 'They're trying to get over on us inmates'

What's good IOA? Thanks for writing. Ain't nothing changed, it only gets worse by the day. To answer your question about the whole video visitation IDK what the hell is going on. I've heard one too many stories.

They claim that they're going to start off by letting us do video visits throughout the week and still have face-to-face visits on our assigned visitation days. Then they plan to move into all out video visits, which is dumb. They're trying to get over on us inmates. We all know we're going to be recorded through that whole process and all it takes is for somebody to start talking about their case with their loved ones saying ohh, blank blank blank, and the next thing you know the DA is playing the video as you whole conversation in court. Bottom line is there's no privacy! The

phones are already tapped and they're making hell of convictions off them. Now they want to tap the visits. One of the excuses is it would be better for our loved ones out of town. BULLSHIT. That's what we have the u.s. postal service for, and if that is true (NOT), why in the hell our families have to pay for their video visit. The damn phone and canteen already taking enough money, now the damn visits? Shit is crazy. But I have to go, got a couple other people to write to. Once again, thanks to those who were willing to get locked up for us. I hope everything went well for you in court. And Melanie, I liked ya new poem—you should try making a book.

Sincerely,  
Ghost

## Can't Incarcerate Faith

Wrongfully locked up in a place so DARK most listen to the devil speak, still I fear NONE except the one who sacrificed his only son for me. Family, friends even lovers are easily disguised in those streets outside and without a sober mind it's hard to truthfully see sometimes...UNTIL those cells doors close and you're within arms reach of the belly of the beast, where time stands still, as you detox from life's ills. Mentally and physically awoken renewed to a revealed truth, as blunt and hurtful as it may be, the only one I can rely on...the man I speak of is merciful and almighty,

keeping satan in line, he has even given me a sense of freedom and peace of mind as well as an unbreakable faith while I am unjustly confined, temporarily, because they can't hold us forever. When he is working miracles in the midst NEVER say never.

"My son you will be home hugged up with your kids" not just I, you, too, keep me in your prayers and vice versa, soon you will see. Through good times and bad times you can honestly and faithfully depend on GOD.

Peace and Love,  
Maryland

## Before the system swallows me whole

I'm quickly learning justice is not served correctly (at least in the Family Court system). I am facing 180 days of jail time because I can't pay \$2,870/month of child support when my take home pay is \$2,800/month. What crimes have I committed other than not making over \$150k/year? If I could make that much \$, why would I not??? Insane system. I see more and more the abuse of power. Before the system swallows me whole, I'm going to shine a light on it. . .

--John C.



## A Glorified Phone Call



Pictured above is one of eight video screens installed on the ground level of the DCDF. These will be where friends, family and loved ones see the detainee with whom they have scheduled a visit. As you can see, they will speak through a telephone receiver. Upstairs, detainees will go to the visitation room, where they will sit down at one of the windows, and, instead of see their visitor at the window in front of them, will look into a tablet-sized screen and speak into a telephone receiver. As this photo makes clear, our rallying cry—“video visitation is a glorified phone call”—is spot on.

Although the Renovo (owned by GTL) online visitation scheduling system is currently allowing people to schedule video visits\*, there is no word about this in the lobby at DCDF. In fact, hanging on the wall near the scheduling kiosk in the lobby, there are laminated instructions from Pay-Tel, the jail’s former telephone service provider (contract ended in June 2015). Also hanging on the lobby walls in two different places is a brochure celebrating a “Recovery Celebration” that is happening somewhere in Durham in September or happened last September (it is unclear). There is also no word about the fact that the Renovo system was “upgraded,” meaning that people with older operating systems

on a home, work or public computer, or on a personal device, can no longer use the online system to schedule a visit, and therefore must schedule at the lobby kiosk.

Sheriff Mike Andrews and DCSO spokesperson Tamara Gibbs have claimed that video non-visitation will make for a safer environment and will save the county money. They have made this claim without ever saying how (and media has not forced them to provide reasoning, despite the fact that it is a preposterous claim). The online scheduling system does suddenly show wording about purchasing visits, internet visits, and the possibility of video nonvisits having a cost (see screenshots below). As always, changes are made and detainees and their families are not informed about them.

The station pictured here, and the seven alongside of it, are undoubtedly objects worthy of our unmitigated wrath and fury. In the great and long tradition of Ned Ludd, these machines should be summarily and swiftly smashed to bits or simply pulled out of their docking stations and trashed. But, even if that is done, we must remember, it is not the machines that are really the problem, nor are they the most suitable targets of our wrath. Rather, it is what the ma-

chines represent: a belief on the part of those in power that they can justify the increasing degradation of detainees and prisoners and their loved ones. Andrews, who never shows his face, and instead sends his lackey, Paul Martin; Couch, the interim detention director and so-called head of security; and the county commissioners, especially those who approved the

video visitation plan (Wendy Jacobs, Brenda Howerton, Ellen Reckhow). They must be held accountable.

\*We invite folks to share any and all information about experiences they have had using the scheduling system or with the video non-visit terminals. Share to our Facebook wall, as a comment on this blog, or via email (insideoutsidealliance@gmail.com)

## VOICES OUTSIDE

### **“Are we all inmates and we just don’t know it?”**

When we go down to the Durham County jail, I am asking myself who is the inmate? I didn’t know I had a number till they scheduled a visit for me. I thought I was a visitor, but they assigned me a number. I haven’t committed a crime but they treat me like an inmate and prevent me from seeing my son. By having that website down, and having to go to the desk to schedule a visit, it is all a part of the control. That’s why there have been less and less visits.

How do they control visitation? By limiting access to the person that needs to come and visit the inmate. The weak will get frustrated, and act out. That limits them and they can’t come back for 30 days. They get eliminated. Then it makes room for the next person to have access to their person.

The jail is eliminating those who won’t fit in the system. If you can’t fit in the system you’re eliminated. Only those who know how to act and work the system get access. Those who don’t get systematically eliminated from frustrations: not knowing how to get a visit

started, or keep a visit going. So that circle of visitation gets smaller. Because there are barriers, unless you know how to get around or through the barriers you are eliminated.

I know this because my son was on one pod and all the visitation spaces were taken. If you pay attention you learn how the jail eliminates access to visitations: through times, through the vehicle of access (ie. scheduling appointments), the number of appointments that can be taken at one time, the number of visits that can be taken. So you don’t get one.

On four separate occasions, I have gone down to the Durham County Jail and scheduled a visit to see my son through the desk only to be told when I returned for my appointment that “no appointment existed.”

It isn’t easy because I am disabled. You don’t have anywhere to park. Sometimes it’s really far, especially if DPAC is having something. I have to sit down before I get there and sit down before I

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leave -- just to have them tell me that I don't have an appointment.

I am glad I am strong otherwise it would have wrecked me. I have seen other people act ugly because it has happened. I don't say anything because I know they have my number. I know they are watching me on camera. They want me to act ugly. Un ugh, I just re-

main strong and go back and try it again. Next visit, I hope that it will come through, and I will get to do the actual visit.

But I am asking myself who is the inmate? Are we all inmates and we just don't know it?

- Visitor at Durham County Jail

## Anger and Animosity

Jail shouldn't be comfortable

We get that

But living and being treated

Like a savage

Not with that

Put yourselves

In our shoes

And let us

Be you

So you could really understand

The pain

We go through

The feelings of an inmate

Are hard to explain

I'm talking about built up

Mental, emotional and physical pain

And being locked behind

These doors

Could really drive you insane

For the way jail is run

We have the sheriff

To blame

With these crazy

Ass rules

And nasty ass food

Now video visitation

I mean really,

Who the fuck

ARE you?!

We don't like visitation

From behind the glass

So my advice to

You, GTL, and our camera:

Go kiss an ass

I speak for the whole

Jail population

When I say

I'm against the shit

To the jail

And the sheriff's department

We're tired of

Your shit

Fuck the government

And all

I truly mean this

And I hope you get mad

By the time you're done reading this.

-Ghost