

feedback

inside & outside, voices from the jail struggle

Durham, NC ~ July 2017 ~ volume 31

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.”**

‘Jail is a perpetuation of slavery’

My name is Jemar Beulah Jr. You can put my name in this if you copyright it. But to me jail is a perpetuation of slavery. I say this because the 13th Amendment states that “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist on these shores except for a person duly convicted of a crime.” But me and a lot of others are not convicted, we’ve been accused or they’re using the hearsay law and it’s BULLSHIT. Let’s say I get mad at you or anybody. I can easily shave my own dog and put the shavings on your porch and call the police and say I watched you kill your dog and you going to jail then, probably. Well, mostly you’re going to prison. It’s that simple now.

Then they got public defenders. How can they bring justice when the people charged with defending us are investing in our incarceration? And there is no lawyer-client confidentiality. The lawyer will give the D.A. hints. If you be real with them, they’ll tell. There’s no beating this shit.

I’m an innocent man in jail. THIS jail has bullshit food. We only come out 6 hours 30 minutes a day. We only get 30 minutes recreation. The shower water breaks you out and dry your skin out. They charge you 20 dollars for a sick call. Canteen high as hell. COs act like they tough all the time. That’s why we locked down. The police will put you in handcuffs and throw you around like a rag doll and when you fucked up they still charge you 20 dollars. Shit crazy up in here.

Ms Parker, Ms Ferguson, Maye, Kobe, Baker, Sgt. Steveson, Elibi — they’re some staff, but these 7 here are some staff that come to work, do their job and go home. They don’t yell at us. They don’t hassle us about little things. They don’t get buck with us or try to get us to buck at them. THEY’RE NICE GENUINE people and I thank them for that.

Oh, I forgot Sgt. Brown, Jerome, Ms. West -> Well, all the STARR staff.
THANKS FOR HEARING ME.

‘Could you imagine driving that far to sit in front of a video screen?’

Hi, I owe you a response from a letter you wrote to me on March 27. You met my dad outside the jail and he gave you my name and information.

Since I've received that letter, a lot has happened. Indeed, unfortunately, we lost Niecey from the women's pod, and I did not know her personally, but it still put everyone who heard of her death on edge. The tension could be felt in the air, and all of the detention officers were receiving dirty looks from detainees. Even those who were not even working on the night of the situation. Things could have grown dangerous on either side. Thank God, from at least my perspective and in my pod, we had no further issues pertaining to that.

Even so, more has gone on. The jail has started setting up the kiosks (video visits pads) upstairs in the visiting area. When they set them up, they even lock us back for half the day to be out of the way of the process! Thing is, we are inside the pod, on the outside, totally on the other side of the door leading to the visitation booths, so it makes no sense to lock us back for half the day! Either way, it seems as though our opinions thus far count for nothing...but that won't stop me from voicing said opinion.

I received a letter from IOA regarding the county commissioners office and I responded by writing them at the clerk of the board's office. Prayerfully, we'll make a dent in this video visitation situation. It sucks most because I'm not even from here, I just so happened to be working here when I caught my charge. All of my family and friends live 2-3 hours away! So the few that are able to come see me drive all that way

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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.

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

*** Se habla español. ***

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to see me for 20 minutes! Could you imagine driving that far to sit in front of a video screen instead of actually seeing their loved one in person?!

But I digress...I pray God fixes all. I'm sure he will. Till then, I'll keep on living. Thanks for reaching out!

-“Preach”

P.S. You are more than welcome to post this in your publication. These things
‘They got a lie for every question people throw at them’

What's up IOA, thanks for writing. Ain't nothing changed around here, it only gets worse. I do want to point out that the jail claims that they're not going to do away with our face-to-face visits, that they added the video visits to give us more time with our family, in other words it's pose to be a win-win for us. Damn shame! They got a lie for every question people throw at them. If it was all about us getting more visits with our family, then why not give us face to face visits all throughout the week instead of spending money on all this new equipment? I personally feel that the deputy that spoke to the STARR program was full of shit. He just told us what we wanted to hear. They're going to have to prove me wrong. But, at the same time, I sit back and listen to my fellow inmates complain about not wanting this whole video visit thing to happen, but act as though they're afraid to voice their opinion about the situation because of what the next person got to say. I feel like this: I don't give a damn what ya race is, what you bang, or where you from, cause if you got on that orange, blue or red uni-

form, you are fighting somewhat the same fight as the person next to you. All that other shit is out the window. If y'all really don't want to be visiting your loved ones on a screen, stand the fuck up—be the men and women you are and voice your opinion. Them guards get to go home at 5 and 8. While you're sitting behind these walls, they go home to their families. We don't, so stand up to your rights as a person. It's not their visits that's being taken, it's yours. Stop letting these disrespectful guards treat you any way. We human like them. Ok, they can lock us back. So why not get locked back for standing up for something that has to do with you? And I'm not just speaking on the visitation thing when I say that. I speak on the ways they treat us in general. Also, to my baby Bubbles, my brothers Fox LD and da fam over in 3D hold ya head.

Until next time

-Ghost

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

“17 plus hours in a cell is a lot, especially when we are supposed to be considered innocent.”

Thanks for keeping in touch and for the newest Feedback booklet. ... Video-visitation seems to be a hot topic raising significant controversy. I'm trying to remain optimistic throughout the whole process and shift to this “hybrid” approach. I agree that video-ONLY visitation should be prevented. Though, at the moment, I'm trying to see how the hybrid approach could be beneficial. They plan to launch the “hybrid” approach funded by the US Department of Justice sometime in the near future. The newspaper quoted Mike Andrews (Sheriff) today 5/12/17, stating that in-person visits will remain and that the implementation of this new technology was to better serve the community and allow more access to visitation. From what I'm understanding, there will be more days and times family members can come to utilize the video-visitation. And there is talk about the possibility of external use for visitation. Meaning that people can connect and speak to you face to face from their home device, without the inconvenience of coming down to the jail to do so. I understand the frustration everyone is having with the possibility of them converting completely to video-only visitation. And one can assume that this trial period with this “hybrid” approach is a way of slowly but inevitably transitioning to video-only visitation. So, I think it is important and a good proactive step that everyone is already voicing their opposition of the jail to utilize video-only visitation just like other counties including Wake. But, like I said, I'm trying to see what good things may come from these new

computers. My family does not live in this state and most of my friends have graduated and moved away to where their careers took them. I have not physically seen my family in over a year. I would love the opportunity to speak face to face with them even if it's on a computer. Talking on the phone only does so much, actually seeing them would be great. And I'm sure my family feels the same. I can't be the only one in this predicament at the jail. Hopefully the jail doesn't convert to video-only visitation but I can see how the technology may give people more opportunities to visit and more options to those who can't physically come to the jail. ...

Last week the gentleman that manages Aramark and the canteen at this facility, over both Paul and Ms. Myers, indicated that they have numerous items in their inventory that they “could” sell, however the jail and its “security” refuses to let them do so. Apparently every time sold must be approved by the jail. Interestingly, he said that they have small radios, like ones similar in most prisons, but the jail refuses to allow them to be sold. We asked the person in charge of security (Cpt. Barnes) about his position on allowing these radios to be sold. The only excuse he gave was that he was too concerned about them being stolen, lost, and/or broken. Is this a valid concern that outweighs what these devices could provide for us? If prisons across the country have permitted the use of handheld radios, I'm not sure why the County Jail cannot. 17 plus hours in a cell is a lot, especially when we are supposed to be considered in-

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nocent. I would love the opportunity to listen to music, news, and even NPR each day. Every day it's a fight with the officers to be able to even watch the news on TV for 30 mins, and don't even try to watch MTV, VH1, or BET;

... Now, the Food! ... Back in March, I sent a grievance to the kitchen and ABL notifying them on multiple occasions that portions of their meals are not edible due to massive amounts of salt. The one bite I took I had to spit out, I couldn't bear the taste. I didn't receive a response for almost 8 weeks and when they finally did they said, "we are working on training our cooks" and to be patient, the food will get better. If I counted correctly, we are in the 8th month of a 10 month contract with ABL. What? What has ABL been doing up to this point? Is their management that poorly handled? They obviously have problems. Yesterday, the officer refused to pass out the fruit and sent it back down to the kitchen because they were rotting. Why would they even send that up here? Probably the same reason they sent up curdled milk that looked grey, obviously past the expiration date. I will admit that over the past couple weeks the cooking itself has improved but their menu is nowhere near healthy or nutritious. It is filled with complex carbs, breads, starches, and processed meats or breaded patties. How is this healthy, especially when you can't even eat part of it due to its sub-standard quality? I've already mentioned before about them cutting foods from the menu they originally began serving. Where did the bananas, raw tomatoes and cucumbers, spinach/lettuce, and real meat go to that we saw the first couple

weeks? The only thing I see now is brown soggy lettuce overpowered with dressing. It's obvious they are cutting corners and the reviews I saw in the paper prior to their start here was nothing but a show. Whoever manages ABL at this facility needs some help, a better menu, and better quality food. What irritates me more is that I see the officers purchase food that ABL makes for them and it doesn't even compare to what we get. I've seen salads with freshly cut veggies, chicken on the bone - things we've never had prepared for us. I understand this is a jail, but they are being paid more in a 10 month period than Aramark. I don't know the obstacles ABL faces down in the kitchen, but they were given more funds to outperform Aramark and provide healthier, more nutritious foods. But I don't see much of an improvement. I'm left to think Aramark would have done a better job if given the extra funds. And that's crazy to think. I think part of the reason we were all so disgusted with Aramark and what they served us was partially the jail's fault with the limited funds they provided to them.

Lastly, Canteen! They need help and bad. it's a sad sight to see each week. Bull, the previous manager of the canteen here before he got fired, never had any of the problems I see now. The two women, Pam and Ms. Myers, don't get along and refuse to work together. It's a confusing mess. They can't keep anything stocked downstairs in their inventory. There are weeks without essential things like stamps, phone cards, toiletries, clothing including socks and underwear. In the year and a half I've been here

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I've seen nothing that compares to this dysfunctional management. Even when they have the items in stock it's hit or miss if they decide to come to the Pod to deliver our purchased items. They posted a schedule in our Pod when canteen is to be delivered each week – what good that did, they didn't follow it. And it irritates me every time they substitute the items I purchased with something else I didn't want and is usually at a cheaper price. I get responses like, "we don't have that item and we charged you for it so we are giving you this other item instead." Ahh, what? No you're not, I don't want that. And if you don't catch it and they sneak it in without you noticing, too bad, they won't refund it even though your order is wrong. The whole service is pitiful. Since Bull left Canteen has been falling apart. I'm waiting for it to finally crash and burn. Don't even get me started on Hot Trays canteen offers. The one time I order a meal it doesn't come until after midnight and was ice cold. Since then I refuse to purchase one and that's been a good thing. Lately they've been charging you, processing your order, and then deciding not to make the meals when scheduled, but at a time and date they want to even though you've already purchased it. Last week they decided out of the blue not to serve

meals with chips due to some "executive" decision, even though when you purchased it the order said w/ chips. I don't think they understand that some of their decisions are fraudulent. when I purchase something I don't expect to be cheated and deceived every time. Then they get mad at me for being frustrated with them!

Due to the new technology coming in, the jail has been replacing their computer systems. This inhibited us from purchasing anything from canteen for a week and a half. No stamps, phone cards, toiletries, nothing. We complained, so canteen provided us with physical paper ordering sheets. We asked over and over when our orders would get filled! PAM told us they had absolutely NO intentions what so ever of filling the paper order sheets even though they were provided. Some people went 2-3 weeks without the ability to purchase anything because of complications with the new system. This jail doesn't give you anything when you are forced through that door into this facility – and then Canteen refuses to process paper orders despite not being able to access the computer system. Again, pitiful, it's not Aramark that needs to change – it's the people who work here that need to change! Okay, thanks for your letter and checking in, hope to hear from you soon.

E.X.



‘Sometimes you got to take a stand to make a point’

Just give me some damn hot water!

I'm just writing to say thanks for your support. I've been here 4 years and I've watched the drastic changes and impact you and IOA have had on the jail. Where we won't be heard as inmates, you all at IOA are definitely our voice of reason that won't be denied. I had to base on officer Coleman punk ass (excuse my language) the other night. So the cell I've been put in, the hot water button don't work (not that if it did any would come out, anyway), so I have to resort to asking the night-time officer to let me out so I can get some hot water out of the janitor/mop closet just to cook my food. So, this particular night, officer Coleman of the 3rd floor was working. We've had problems in the past, so I assumed an altercation was inevitable. When I asked, he refused me water. When I told him my button didn't work, he said it wasn't his problem. Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but technically it is his problem. State regulations says we are to have access to hot and cold water while in our cells. When I requested the sergeant, he denied me, which I was under the impression was a request that was supposed to be obliged. He said he wouldn't call. So I kicked the door (of course--that always gets their attention). He came to my door and we had a verbal dispute before the sarge came and told me I couldn't have any hot water. You know what I realized though? I never got wrote up, after all the cursing and inviting his punk ass in my room for a physical fight and name calling, which we both said some disrespectful things, but I realize I wasn't wrote up because they were in the wrong from the start. Any other time I might have went to the hole. Lol, which I was prepared for. My point is even if you still don't get results, sometimes you still got to take a stand to make a point. If you stand for nothing you will fall for anything. - TomTom



CHECK THE MIRROR

L.O.D. has to be a vehicle of advancement. It must be understood by all members and soldiers in this struggle that in and of itself ignorance is our greatest enemy. Through ignorance we are made afraid. Through ignorance we're impoverished. Through ignorance we remain unskilled and unmotivated in the working world and repeatedly fall victim to the many pitfalls that ignorance provides for us. By designs drawn up and set in motion many years ago we've been trained to be so ignorant that we don't even recognize our enemy. In ignorance we blindly follow fads, trends, and the whimsical ideals of people just as uneducated, ignorant, and afraid as we are. To stand FOR something is to stand AGAINST something. Many have lived and died having never come to this realization. What is it that you stand for? What do you love that loves you in return? Life or death? Living in fucked up environments of racism destroying everything against the heart.

That is what L.O.D. represents. The struggle. The fight. The stand against systems of ignorance, for the advancement of that which we hold dear to our hearts. How long will you be a faker in your own skin? Afraid to BE cause they say you can't BE. Afraid to do cause they say you can't do. A L.O.D. soldier is unafraid of the fears that ignorance provides. A L.O.D. soldier's greatest weapon is education. "Know how." Plain and simple. Once you know better you should show better. If we knew better we'd do better. In this technological age and time where the answers

are provided at a button's touch who can keep you from knowing something? As an L.O.D. soldier you have accepted the responsibility for not only your own personal advancement, but also for that of your brothers and sisters in the struggle because the best way to get ahead in life is to help someone do the same. The only way to break the cycle of this crabs in a bucket syndrome we're stuck knee deep in is to stop being the crab. Period. L.O.D. is not a gang and will not adopt the so called principles of such. What it is, however, is an alliance of like-minded individuals who've recognized the perilous situation we've had thrust upon us and hunger to be active in making a difference. L.O.D. recognizes that the Enemy (this governmental machine) does not discriminate and neither shall we. Any race, creed, color, or sexual orientation will and shall be accepted with open arms. L.O.D. is a movement that begs the question: is this life or is this Death? Where a person is born into a design of debt, poverty, incarceration, and death by age 30.

In today's America there are two species of human being: non-felons and felons. Felons, have become the new slave, alien, outcast, reject, undesirable, etc. The promotion of ignorance in today's society is at an all time high and it is this very ignorance that justifies the oppressive abuses we suffer at the hands of the law.

The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, EXCEPT as punishment for a crime. Look it

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up. We claim to be adults, but we're afraid to speak up and speak out against the ignorance in our own neighborhoods that steals our children from us. That same ignorance that claims our children is the very same ignorance that fuels the fears and frustrations of these quick trigger cops who kill seemingly in cold blood.

Living
In
Fucked up
Environments
Of
Racism
Destroying
Everything
Against
The
Heart

-L.O.D.

I salute the men and women of I.O.A. and thank you from the core of my heart for your courage and dedication to a selfless cause. I'd been meaning to reach out to you guys for some time now.

My only complaint would be the lack of educational opportunities for the long term detainees. I've made several requests myself to have some character education/ethics and choices work books sent in so that I can start a class but...instead, as you can see on the back side of page one, I've started a creative writing class and had a helluva turnout! Months back I'd started a men's group in 4-D

but I failed the young bros up there by letting my anger and frustration get the best of me. In life – especially behind bars – people will treat you the way you present yourself. I cannot echo the complaints you hear in every letter because hey...this is jail.

This building has saved many people from themselves, so as novel the thought of total abolishment of jail is, it would truly do more harm than good. In a perfect world these prisons and jails wouldn't be necessary. Having spent 21 1/2 years day for day with no breaks in between in prison, I can honestly say it (prison) is needed. I have met many a man who have lost all desire to change...if they ever possessed it to begin with. Sad, but too true. My Lord and Savior had different plans for me and so he filled me with the will to endure and to never give up. He filled me with compassion and the desire to help mend this broken picture of society. To let my own life and experiences be an example to our youth of not only what not do, but also of how to turn your life around for the better.

You have my permission to print this letter in its entirety and to use my full name. I stand on every word I've written and fear no reprisal from staff. I can honestly say that the vast majority of the staff I've encountered here are genuinely good people just doing their jobs to pay the bills.

Help me help our society.
I am L.O.D.
Sincerely fearless and able,
Curtis Barnette
God bless y'all and I love you all.

Letter to Wendy Jacobs from a Detainee in Durham County Jail

On Monday, June 12, Inside-Outside Alliance members brought the concerns of current detainees of the Durham County jail to the county commissioners' budget hearing. We read letters and poems in order to cast attention on the sheriff's plan to implement video 'visits.' Along with folks in Alerta Migratoria, we demanded the sheriff's office not: implement video visits at the jail, cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), nor receive any money unless and until the sheriff speak in a public forum.

The following is an excerpt from letter from inside and is directed to county commission chairwoman Wendy Jacobs.

I write and appeal to each of you who revere and fear the Lord God Almighty, to search your hearts and consciences and hear my complaints, and do your duty in Godly fashion. Keep in mind that as God has allowed you each to be in authority over how the Durham jail is operated, you each will be held accountable for whatever decisions you make when your every knee is bowed before Christ's Judgment Throne to give an account of your life's deeds.

We all can agree that jail is not a resort, and hardly anyone wants to be detained herein. But for those of us who are here, be we guilty or innocent of the charged offense(s), we should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. Nevertheless, we also know

that many abuses exist in jails nationwide and your office has the ability and duty to curb and put an end to such improprieties in the Durham County Jail. If not, then such violations and abuses will continue to exist with your Board's imprimatur.

VIDEO VISITATION

What is the purpose of video visitation? The Sheriff claims it's only an alternative – not a replacement – to face-to-face visits. If that's true, then it would be advantageous to those who live hundreds of miles away and out of state, provided they can utilize Skype or some other home computer video to implement such visits.

I believe most detainees' families live in or near Durham. If these family members are relegated to coming to the jail, only to sit before a monitor downstairs to see and communicate with us through another monitor upstairs, that would be a travesty of justice, an unnecessary invasion of privacy on our visits, and a waste of tax dollars.

Instinct and history tells me that video visitation is not going to be an alternative form of visitation. Rather, due time, face-to-face visits will be phased out to give the Sheriff a captive audience to charge exorbitant fees for visits. Otherwise, why try to fix what's not broken?

For the most part, detainees in jail have not been convicted of any crime. Under our system of jurisprudence,

we are supposed to be deemed innocent until we are proven guilty. But in reality, this jail treats us in opposite fashion with this Board's seal of approval.

MAIL

Our mail is unlawfully censored daily, particularly by a black female officer named Snipes. Too often she sits in the hallway outside the programs office opening and reading our incoming letters, line-by-line, on both sides of each page. She does this to every letter her hand touches in the name of "security." She is just nosy as can be and knows she can get away with this abuse of authority. She is not authorized to even touch our mail.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Likewise, our telephone calls are all recorded and are vetted by law enforcement to include the District Attorney's office. We don't get to listen to the Sheriff's and DA's conversations and strategies concerning us,

so why should they have this unfair advantage to hear ours? Our most intimate conversations are violated by jail officials – telephone calls that cost us or our families an arm and a leg to utilize. And now, the Sheriff wants to record our personal visits and charge this captive audience ridiculous prices for that too. When will this Board put a stop to "Big Brother's" abuses upon our privacy rights? We are detainees – not convicted felons.

If we could afford bond, many of us would not be subjected to these privacy rights abuses. We could talk unimpeded with absolute privacy to our attorneys and loved ones. Simply because we cannot afford these staggeringly high and needlessly excessive bonds, the Sheriff is permitted to fleece our families and us in a myriad of senseless for-profit schemes.

Sincerely,
KFO

PS: your office controls the Sheriff's budget. You thus have a lot of influence as to what occurs in the Sheriff's office. So use it!



READER'S POLL: What are your thoughts on education?

At a recent Durham County budget hearing, folks from IOA argued against more money allocated for the jail, while folks from the Durham Association of Educators argued for more money for Durham public schools. Clearly there is a relationship between education and incarceration — sometimes referred to as “the school to prison pipeline.” We would like to hear what YOU — Durham County detainees — think about this relationship, and about your “education” inside and outside of the jail.

What opportunities for education have you had (or even heard about) since being in DCDF?

What were your school experiences and/or your opportunities for education before you got locked up?

We are particularly interested in hearing from people of school age or recently of school age, but we welcome all responses.

Tears of an Inmate--2

Damn
What should I say
Other than I'm tired
Of being locked down
Every single day
I'm losing my mind
Cuz I'm running out of strategies
On how
To pull this time
Thought kidnapping
Was a crime
Shit, apparently not
Cuz the government get away with
The shit all the time
This shit crazy as hell
To this fucked up system
You call a government
I hope you
Burn in hell
What happened to
Treating us with dignity
Now you're sheltering us

From our visits
With our families
Face to face
Are you kidding me
You don't know
What it's like
To be us
Locked down
In a pit
Looked over by
A bunch of assholes
We can't trust for shit
The thought of this
Is killing me
I could go on
All day
Long story short
The system
Is an inmate's
Worst enemy
I want to say this
Before I finish
What does it mean to be
Innocent until proven guilty?
-Ghost