

SAN

BENTON

SIX

THE SAN QUENTIN SIX



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'UPON ENTERING THE PENAL COMPLEX I WAS SOMEWHAT SHOCKED AS TO WHAT WAS COMING DOWN....IT WAS LIKE ENTERING A WAR ZONE.

David Johnson

IN 1971 AMERIKAN PRISONS WERE A WAR ZONE. The murder of George Jackson and the Attica Rebellion washed away any doubts as to the nature of Amerikan prisons.

At San Quentin, the men who signed themselves the George Jackson Brigade described the scene on August 21, 1971 as 'Fascism in its rawest form.' For hours after George Jackson was killed in what prison authorities call an 'escape attempt' the 27 prisoners of the Adjustment Center lay naked on the ground.

'We were subjected to all types of physical brutality, beaten with clubs, kicked, tortured with lighted cigarettes, cursed at, spit on, dragged, stuck with pins, etc., etc. All this was going on while we were chained like animals lying naked upon the grass.'

When it was over, six of these men were indicted with a lawyer on five counts of murder, kidnap, and conspiracy.

George Jackson was hated by prison officials, because of his abilities to educate and unite prisoners, and because his book, 'Soledad Brother', had alerted people throughout the world to the horrors of Amerikan prisons. George's supporters feared that prison authorities would retaliate. On August 21, 1971, George Jackson lay dead with a bullet in his back.

So, if they would reach me now, across my many barricades, it must be with a bullet and it must be final.

George Jackson



Prisoners are killed in California prisons all the time, but previously a guard did not have to shoot the troublesome prisoners himself; he could get others to do it for him. Numerous prisoners have testified how Soledad Captain Charles Moody threatened or bribed them with parole to start trouble with or kill another prisoner - generally of another race. An affidavit from white prisoner Allen Mancino declared that he had been questioned by Captain Moody concerning his feelings about George.... 'He asked if I would care if anything happened to George Jackson, to which I answered that I didn't care one way or the other. Moody then asked me directly if I would kill George Jackson. He said he did not want another Eldridge Cleaver.' Mancino refused to kill George Jackson, although Moody made it clear that Mancino's life was in danger if he did not.

Inside prisoners were getting it together.

They were beginning to look at the prison administration as their common enemy and refusing to do the work of the prison guards. As an additional threat to the guards, many prisoners had decided that their only means of self-defense was swift retaliation. George Jackson frequently used the analogy of Germans and Jews, asserting that the prisoners had made up their minds they would not walk meekly into the gas chambers and death-traps the prison system had set-up for them. But what defense did an un-armed prisoner have against a guard with a sniper rifle determined to kill a nigger? W.L. Nolen was a much loved and respected black prisoner, a leader and teacher among blacks. When he was gunned down on January 13, 1970 in a Soledad prison yard along with two other black prisoners, Alvin Miller and Cleveland Edwards, there was nothing the prisoners could do but stand in agonized silence and wait for the shots to stop reverberating off the metal and stone, then plead for the right to take their bleeding comrades to the hospital. When three days later the local district attorney described the deaths as 'justifiable homicide' on a TV newscast, the response was quick: in half an hour, a white guard was dead.

Three militant black prisoners were charged with the guard's death. The Soledad Brothers--George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo and John Clutchette--were able to attract widespread support for their case. The flimsy evidence, which in earlier days would have been more than enough to convict any prisoner, now began to look shakey. John Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo were acquitted in March, 1972 but George Jackson was dead.

When George Jackson was murdered, the Weather Underground called on people outside the prisons to carry out actions the prisoners had been forced to undertake alone. In a communique accompanying the bombing of several prison administration offices, the Weathermen declared:

There must be a price for racist attacks; a higher price for murder. Mass actions outside the Tombs (NY) last year might have prevented the murder of two Puerto Rican prisoners a week after the rebellion. If Edward Hanrahan had been dealt with for the murder of Fred Hampton, James Park might have thought twice before participating in the murder of George Jackson. Every prison official must learn to balance his actions with his desire for personal safety.

James Park, Associate Warden of San Quentin, did not think twice before murdering George Jackson. At one press conference he was asked:

'Do you know what the reason was that he was shot?'

'To kill him!' Park exploded,

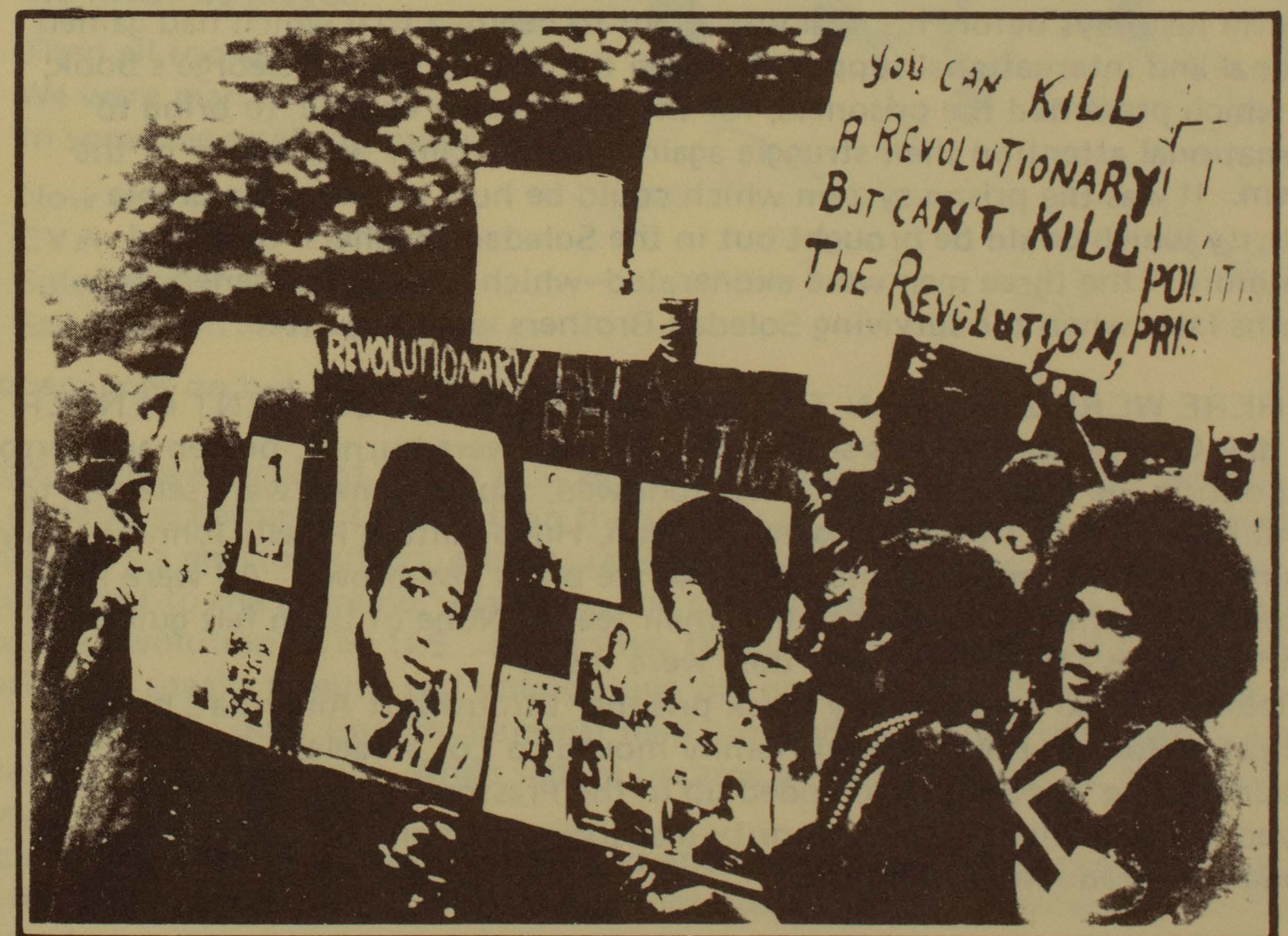
'Well, I mean...'

'There was no other goddamn reason except to kill him!'

In other press conferences, Park recited the official version of George's death:

'At about 3 P.M. there was an attempted break from the Adjustment Center, which is our maximum security facility. Apparently a gun was smuggled in and was in the possession of George Jackson. They captured the officers...they murdered three of the officers, they murdered white inmates that were tier tenders or working at the Adjustment Center. George Jackson was killed as he broke and ran outside the Adjustment Center.

These are the bare facts. We are investigating. The prison is locked up. We are running a very tight schedule, and will continue to do so for an indefinite period of time. This apparently was a carefully planned attempt to break out of the institution. A foolish attempt, I believe but an attempt that showed again, complete disregard for the lives of the officers who did not deserve to die and three inmates who did not deserve to die. I'm sure there was a conspiracy, certainly.'



This story which changed drastically in the days and weeks following August 21, depicted George drawing a gun from his 'long, Afro hair' (later changed to a hat, then a wig) following a visit with an attorney, Stephen Bingham, capturing several guards, freeing the prisoners in the AC, killing several guards before running out into the courtyard, where he was shot in the head by a guard in the watchtower. The gun was supposedly smuggled into the prison by Bingham, hidden in a tape recorder. The facts that the 'Official Version' ignore are:

--The prison system has a search procedure for visitors, including a metal detector, which makes it impossible to smuggle a gun into San Quentin.

--Prisoners from the AC are strip-searched before and after visits. Before being returned to the AC, they are given a search which includes a guard running his fingers through the prisoner's hair.

--No hairstyle could support the weight of a 9mm gun.

--The courtyard into which George supposedly ran was completely enclosed by a twenty foot wall mounted by guards with sniper rifles.

--The original autopsy report released by the prison, confirmed their statement that George was shot in the head while running into the courtyard, since it indicated the bullet entered his head and exited his back. The final autopsy report made after the pathologist was finally given George's clothing, revealed that he had been shot in the back, with the bullet exiting through his head. The pathologist concluded he could only have been lying down, or kneeling with his head lower than his knees for the bullet to have followed that path.

In attempts to make the prison's garbled version more reasonable, James Park altered the official version almost daily.

Nothing explains why George Jackson would attempt to break out of San Quentin just days before his trial was about to begin--a trial which had gained national and international support through the publication of George's book, and which presented the prisoners, for the first time, a chance to bring to international attention their struggle against the brutality and racism of the system. It was the prison system which could be hurt by the unfavorable publicity which could be brought out in the Soledad Brothers' trial, and even more if the three men were exonerated--which is what happened six months later when the surviving Soledad Brothers were acquitted.

THERE WERE 27 MEN IN THE SAN QUENTIN ADJUSTMENT CENTER the day George Jackson was shot down; 27 who were burned, beaten and terrorized during the hours and weeks that followed. Six prisoners were selected to stand trial: Fleeta Drumgo, David Johnson, Hugo Antom Pinell, Johnny Larry Spain, Luis Talamantez, Willie Tate. All are black and brown. All were introduced to Amerika' jails while still in their teens. None of them felt guilty for their 'offenses'--they knew why they were there.

Fleeta Drumgo could be any black prisoner throughout Amerika's prisons and jails. Born in Louisiana, his family moved to Los Angeles. At 13 he was picked up as a 'runaway' and ended up in the Preston 'School for Boys.' He stayed in California Youth Authority institutions off and on until he was old enough to 'graduate' to Soledad.

Soledad did nothing to help him adjust to life back on the streets. 'When I was released, things had changed tremendously. Black people had made a step towards unity and self-dignity. The Watts riot had happened--brothers and sisters wore Afros. It was a new world to me. I was in Tracy when Malcolm was killed. Stokely and Rap were burning up when I was released.'

The world was changing, but those who had watched it pass by from behind bars and wire fences couldn't quite catch up. 'I didn't have any consciousness of the struggle at the time,' Fleeta explained. 'My thoughts were wrapped up in trying to 'style' and live above my means. I wanted to be a player, so-called slicker, I wanted suits galore and a blade (Cadillac).' When hustling didn't get him the money he wanted, 'I hit the streets.' Picked up for burglary, Fleeta was sent back to prison. The Court ruled he was 'unable to be helped' and 'set in his ways.'

David Johnson was 15 when the CYA jailed him for 'petty gang' activities. He later went to a 'county camp' for assaulting an officer who testified that David did not strike him. Then, a forced guilty plea to a burglary charge landed him in prison. David's story is typical for young blacks. A friend who grew up with David in San Diego, and who also did time, expressed it in a poem:

Oceanview Blvd., Harrison Ave.
Just kids -- we lived, we played
(did we Jap, did we laugh, did we play?)

Remember Meekin's TV
Weber's Market
30th and Imperial
The Park?

Remember SDPD
We were just kids...
We lived, we played.

Then all too soon
We were man-childs
In someone else's promised land.

Now we remember
CYA
Soledad and
San Quentin

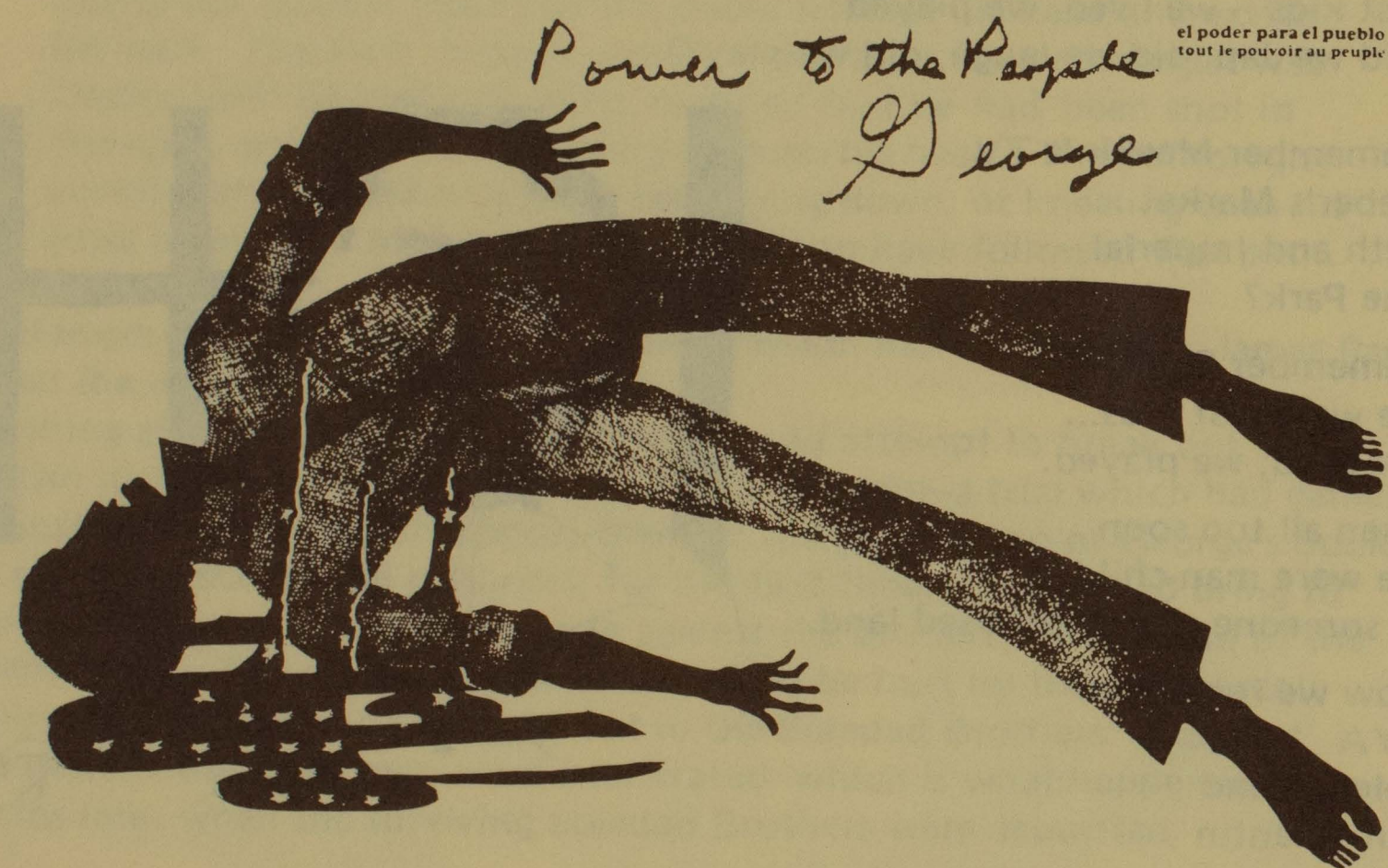


The poem goes on but the story is the same.

Hugo Pinell was brought to the U.S. as a child by his mother who wanted him to have something better out of life than the squalor of Nicaragua. He once described his country: 'It's a ghetto, gutters, stench, rancid pollution, poverty, hunger, underdevelopment to the extreme.' Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, is 'like Havana before the revolution.' The U.S., his mother thought was the Land of Opportunity. But opportunity speaks English and young Hugo did not. Although he scored well in all other subjects, his poor English grammar held him back in school repeatedly, and in frustration, he dropped out. When school became a dead-end for him, he recalls, 'I quit, and my incarceration began.'

Once in 'Juvy' the more likely you are to end up in prison, and once in prison, the more likely you are to stay. There you can get busted for any number of infractions of prison rules.

Luis Talamantez also clashed with the capitalist culture and spent 10 years in and out of state controlled 'homes' and 'camps' before graduating to San Quentin for robbery. A Mexican-American, he was early robbed of his culture. 'I had to relearn to speak, I was made to feel it was wrong to speak 'Mexican,' identify with 'mexicanismo' ...,or for that matter, to even bring tortillas to eat in my lunch bag. I can't remember how many fights I had with the other kids (mostly gringos) when they'd call my tortillas 'flying saucers.' That really used to turn me off. So I used to isolate myself at lunchtime to eat alone, 'cause I was damned if I was going to stop eating my tacos and whatever else was left over from the previous dinner. We were too poor to buy bread and Amerikan food...' Luis wanted to be 'sharp' in those days. 'Someone had already tatoored me. I never got a haircut. I didn't used to have no pomade to put in my hair so I'd use butter or a little lard, (I really thought I was slick, too). Then my pants would always be lowered around my knees - a real 'pachuco'...' It was hard to look, dress and act slick when you have no money for clothes, and your stomach is growling because there wasn't any food for breakfast. As a teenager Luis hustled to look sharp, and ended up in a juvenile detention center. When he got out, he hustled and ended up in San Quentin. His armed robbery conviction brought him a double indeterminate life sentence.



Willie Tate was born in Selma, Alabama. His parents were poor and black. California seemed to offer the possibility of giving a better life to their children. In 1952 they moved to Fresno, California. The family survived picking cotton, berries, grapes - whatever they could. But in 1959, with 12 in the family, Willie's father's meager earnings weren't enough to feed his family, and they had to receive assistance from the welfare department.

Willie's family thought they would help their children by removing them from the South. They weren't prepared for the insidious racism of the North. Least of all was Willie, who struck back when slapped by an older whiteboy. At 15, he began his first term in CYA. Released after 21 months, he was juvenile 'with a record' and his actions were always under surveillance. With less than 90 days on the streets, he was picked up for 'gang activities' — hanging around with other 'bad niggers' after curfew.

He fought with a counselor who 'had a nasty habit of yelling at Blacks,' and as punishment was sent to Deuel Vocational Institute at Tracy, a combined youth and adult institution. 'I was taken directly to Tracy's AC where a guard informed me: 'There is a big white boy you will be living by--if he spits on you or race-talks you, don't say nothing.'

There were five Blacks among the AC prisoners at Tracy: throughout the night, they would hear 'nigger, nigger, nigger.' If they met the nigger-callers face to face, their tormenters invariably backed down--or were beaten.

At Tracy Willie met two Black brothers who 'strived tirelessly to educate us and raise our consciousness politically. They taught us to respect Blacks, not to fatmouth, not to play with racists, to preserve our lives by taking concrete steps when necessary. In short, they taught us to survive and win respect from our fellow prisoners regardless of their color. They also taught us the importance of prisoners. unity.' The two Black youths were 'Comrade George and Big Carr'--George Jackson and Jimmy Carr.

At 17, Johnny Larry Spain was sent to prison because of a street fight in Los Angeles that left one man dead. Johnny says he was defending himself against a man who attacked him. 'In Ameriklan society, when a Black defends himself, if the attacker is 'not' Black, the former is automatically sent to prison: regardless of age, circumstances, guilt or innocence. It's custom.'

Johnny was born in Jackson, Mississippi to a white southern woman and a Black man. At the time his mother was married to a white southerner. Johnny states:

'Most women have told of the unique pains they experienced at birthright. But I don't believe my mother felt even one labor pain at my birth. She experienced another sensation, a pain so refractory in nature until my tiny kicks inside proved to be bearable in a comparison to the inculcation of the fact that she was a white woman in Amerika and the doctor was soon to pull my wooly head out and exclaim: 'This is a goddamn nigger!!'Amerikla has never seen my Black father, nor have they wanted to see him.' Growing up in Jackson wasn't easy. He remembers his mother's tears when other children called him 'nigger.' He didn't understand.

By the time Johnny was six it had become too dangerous to raise him in Jackson. Johnny was sent to Los Angeles where he was adopted by a Black family. Johnny says: 'In reviewing those first six years of my life I see now that it wasn't my mother who didn't want me, it was Amerikla that couldn't and can't stand for this intricate organism, this nigger baby, to exist. It was Amerikla that turned what should have been a normal birth into a perilous, adventure-type terror.'

A WHOLE SERIES OF FACTORS INTERACTED TO PUT THE SIX IN THE San Quentin Adjustment Center on August 21, 1971. The single factor that draws them all together is that each of their lives was touched by the life of one other: George Lester Jackson. Fleeta Drumgo recalls: 'I remember being in the gym punching the bag when a brother came up and said 'Come meet the Comrade'--speaking of George. When we got over there George was in a heavy conversation discussing the war (in Vietnam), He was the one who introduced us to Uncle Ho and Mao and Che and Fidel. When we got together, he gave us some literature and told me to read it.... He spent most of his time schooling us and himself. He used to stay up night after night after we was locked up, explaining Marxism to us.'

I know I am black. I know that no one can better represent his blackness than I. I can and have always represented mine. But that is as far as it goes. I'm an internationalist. Marxist, Leninist, Maoist, Fanonist and an admirer of the Cuban revolution, the Vietnamese revolution, the world's workers-people's revolution. If a man wants to relate to my blackness, fine, but I would prefer he relate to me on the basis of my status as a soldier in the WORLD revolution. In fact, if he can't I'll just leave him in my smoke.

George Jackson

Each of the Six put into practice what they learned, building a sense of unity with other prisoners in opposition to the prison authorities and the system that put them there. They helped raise the political consciousness of prisoners; they organized study groups, work stoppages and hunger strikes. Their reward was isolation, strip cells, beatings, contaminated food--and August 21st.

Johnny Larry Spain summed up what most of them felt in a poem written after August 21st.

Let's take all the years of oppression.
Let's take from those years, 11 years experienced.
Let's take 11 years KNOWING that before those 11 years
there were hundreds, thousands-and-more years of oppression.
Let's take 11 years of hard study.
Let's take 11 years of fighting for the people and for survival
on unfavorable grounds (this being the longest any Guerrilla
has ever fought on such grounds).
Let's take 11 years of being attacked.
Let's take 11 years of developing defenses for every enemy attack.
Let's take 11 years of teaching others what they need but lack.
Let's take 11 years of building a body strong enough to hold up
the world.
Let's take 11 years of everything that was given.
Let's take all of this, and put it into one man, and we will come
out with George Jackson.
Let's not take that for granted!
Then, let's take a person who has learned almost everything from
what was given.
Let's take a person who loves The Comrade more than could be
imagined.
Let's take this person and put him in the same position; the same
condition; put him on the same road...
Let's let him see in a day what The Comrade saw for 11 years. .
Let's take him and beat him.
Let's kick him
Let's stomp him.
Let's spit on him.
Let's drag him naked over cement.
Let's put a gas gun in his mouth and tell him if he continues to love
George the trigger will be pulled.
Let's take a person who fears no consequences for loving The Comrade.
Let's place any type of opposition to The Comrade before him;
Let's ask him to understand..
He won't!!



David Johnson was at Tracy in 1969. 'I found out there how authorities proposition off people's lives. Since that time I have dedicated my life to exposing to the people the corruption that exists in these pig stys.' David's decision to expose the corruption that goes on inside did not go unnoticed--or unpunished--by the authorities.

In 1970, Fred Billingslea, was gassed and beaten to death in his cell at San Quentin. In response, a number of prisoners, including David Johnson, Willie Tate and Ruchell Magee, filed affidavits in court protesting the killing of Billingslea. It wasn't long before each of these prisoners felt the wrath of the prison system for their audacity.

Willie Tate said, 'After that the guards intensified their harassment of me.' Willie has a mandatory release date in 1975 but the charges of August 21 jeopardize this. Nevertheless, Willie writes: 'Whatever the outcome is, we shall not deny our love for Comrade George whose spirit continues to light up the world.'

Hugo Pinell also filed an affidavit. This one concerned the shooting of the three black prisoners at Soledad, January 13, 1970. Later Hugo refused an offer of parole in exchange for false testimony against George Jackson in the death of a Soledad guard. Soon afterwards, he found himself faced with a series of charges of assault on prison guards and other 'infractions of prison rules.' Hugo has been beaten and brutalized more than any other prisoner in the California penal system. Hugo is quick to point out: 'There's a guy with a gun over there who'd love to have us fight each other.' He is known to the prisoner population as 'a prisoner's prisoner', a mediator, a unifier and an organizer.

Luis Talamantez organized Mexican prisoners. It didn't make sense, he reasoned, for prisoners to attack each other when the guards and the system were the real enemy of them all. As a result, he received his share of harassment. In March, 1970, he was charged with an assault that he never committed. Later he began putting the pieces together, and realized that this accusation may have been linked to something else he had done: volunteer to be a defense witness for James McClain, a Black prisoner accused of assaulting a guard in retaliation for the murder of Fred Billingslea.

Luis was acquitted of that assault charge two years later. The frameup was so sloppy that one of the juror's commented that the charge was 'obvious persecution by the prison authorities against Luis.'

Johnny Larry Spain participated in a hunger strike while in Soledad in 1970. He was thrown in the hole for the 'crime' of having 'contraband literature.' The material the prison labeled 'inflammatory' was his diary. His writing had become a weapon that did not go unrecognized by his jailers.

Fleeta Drumgo, David Johnson, Hugo Pinell, Johnny Larry Spain, Luis Talamantez, Willie Tate: six men who organized, unified, studied and educated others. Six men who loved and learned with George Jackson. Six men who put their learning into practice. Six men, locked up in maximum security with George Jackson on August 21, 1971.

'If we've got a group out preaching revolution, and we think it's dangerous, we lock them up.'

Raymond Proconier
Director
California Department of Corrections

THE SAN QUENTIN SIX ARE TOTALLY ISOLATED FROM THE SOCIETY AT LARGE. They maintain themselves under conditions of existing fascism: They have no human rights, the guards beat them, the food they receive is infested with human excrement; their strongest weapon is their love for the people who wage war against oppression. It has been stated that we can judge the civilization and humanity of a country by examining its prisons.

Johnny Larry Spain writes:

'Our condition is as bare and minimum as the officials can make it. I'm sure that our presence is more accredited to the human being's need for life--rather than to the animalistic keeper's desire to afford us with the basic requirements of life.

The food has been--and is being--tampered with; spit, cigarette butts, match stems and countless other objects and matter have been found on numerous occasions, mixed with the cold food served us on unclean paper plates. This is presented as our 'meal' twice a day, but what is really being served us in another humiliation. This 'meal' is lacking in quality as well as quantity, and the result from such is a diminishing return factor where our health is concerned.

We are caged, confined to these 6' X 9' cells.... We are searched twice a week, thus we don't even have 'paper' contraband--the officials are the ones with the sub-machine guns, the tear gas, the mace! They are the ones with all the weapons, so how is it feasible for us--the caged culprits of injustice--to be 'dangerous?'

It is seemingly more appropriate for this prison to just outright state that they plan to test their omnipotent hand by denying us human rights. But then we are not dealing with rational beings at all, we are involved in a struggle with humanoid reactionaries--who by some unreasonable reason have an all powerful 'physical' upper-hand. Their foes cannot deny the weariness experienced, but we will continue to maintain as best we can the fight for--not only our lives, but also, and more importantly, the people's future.'

The San Quentin Six are housed on the first tier of the Adjustment Center, the name given to the hole or the maximum security segregation section of the prison. Cells are approximately 6' X 9', with a concrete floor and solid concrete walls. The cells are often filthy and infested with cockroaches, bedbugs and mosquitoes. A prisoner sleeps on a thin mattress on a steel slab. The Six are locked in these cells from 23 to 24 hours a day, with the sole exercise being that of a solitary walk on the tier for less than an hour on days when the guards feel predisposed to permit it. There are no recreational programs in the AC: no movies, no television and for two years no earphones for radio listening. Day after day, the routine is the same:

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exercizing, reading magazines, newspapers and books approved after extensive 'official' paperwork; sleeping; eating; writing and thinking. The brothers are exposed to a few minutes of fresh air and sunlight only on days when they receive visits. The guards shout the alert: 'AC man walking' and the brothers are 'escorted' in chains through the courtyard to the visiting area, under the eye of the sharpshooter on the gunrail.

Adjustment Center prisoners go to visits wearing easily identifiable white pajama suits, hands cuffed to a waist chain or leather belt, legs shackled. In contrast to other prisoners who receive as many as 16 visits per month for several hours at a time, these prisoners only receive 1 visit per week for one hour. They visit in one of two closet-like visiting rooms where they must talk with their visitors through a mesh screen and look at them through heavy plate glass. There is no physical contact and no privacy as a guard sits within earshot watching the visit. The visitor comes to the room after showing identification at two gates, getting a pass as an approved visitor and submitting to two metal detector searches. A visitor usually waits anywhere from 1 to 4 hours whether the two visiting rooms are in use or not. Complaining about the situation usually meets indifference or disdain on the part of visiting room guards: 'you want your visit? Wait,' or, 'Sorry, we don't have any escorts.' The latter is certainly a lame excuse since the prison sets up the visiting hours and knows there will be visitors then.



The chains? Woman, I just don't like it. You can never know how hard it is for me to pretend that they don't bother me. The visits; in court; people that I love; people whose love means everything to me, seeing me like that!

Look, you and I could take the stage with the whole world assembled around us. I could pare you to the skin, and then you could do the same for me. The ritual right there. I would be completely relaxed. I could perform self-criticism on the same stage, reveal my deepest faults before the entire world without anxiety. But the chains...surface things from the pit! Things that I must keep hidden, things that would destroy me if they broke loose. Here I wish you could 'do a few' with me so that you would at least have an idea of what it has been like, 24 hours a day, in shifts, the foulest of thoughts from the language of racist Amerika.

George Jackson



A San Francisco mother with 5 children on welfare receives \$360.00 per month or \$4,320 a year. It costs \$7,000 a year for the CDC to keep one man locked in the Adjustment Center.

The guards in the AC take advantage of every situation to taunt the brothers. Remarks are made about mothers, sisters, brothers and other comrades. Pictures, books, letters and articles are ripped up or mutilated. Hugo Pinell has been called 'the dead man', Johnny Spain, 'the nigger communist.' Following the beating of several of the brothers in June, 1972, Luis Talamantez wrote: 'While Comrade Tate was isolated and being set upon, one racist pig guard told him that he wanted to kill all 'niggers and Mexicans' in the AC. He said the only reason he had taken the AC job in the first place was so that he would have the opportunity to 'kill some niggers and Mexicans.' No one died in the June '72 incident but it is the potential of each situation that concerns us.

That potential was realized on February 6, 1973 when Tommy Horn died in an AC strip cell. On his arrival in the AC, Horn was dragged down to the strip cells: a barren, totally isolated concrete cell with no water and a hole in the floor for a toilet. Though Horn was recovering from multiple stab wounds, he was physically abused and his requests for medical examination and removal to the hospital were ignored. Tommy Horn died less than 24 hours after his arrival at San Quentin. The prison administration telegraphed Horn's family: 'We are sorry to inform you that your son Thomas Alfred Horn passed away 2-6-73 at 3:35 A.M. as a result of natural causes.. ' What is natural about a 26 year old man dying in a strip cell?

Physical brutality, constant verbal harassment and poor medical treatment make life extremely precarious for the San Quentin Six and other prisoners in the Adjustment Center. Former chief psychiatrist at Soledad, Dr. Frank Rundle said: 'I don't think a place more destructive of a man's mental health could be devised if we tried.'

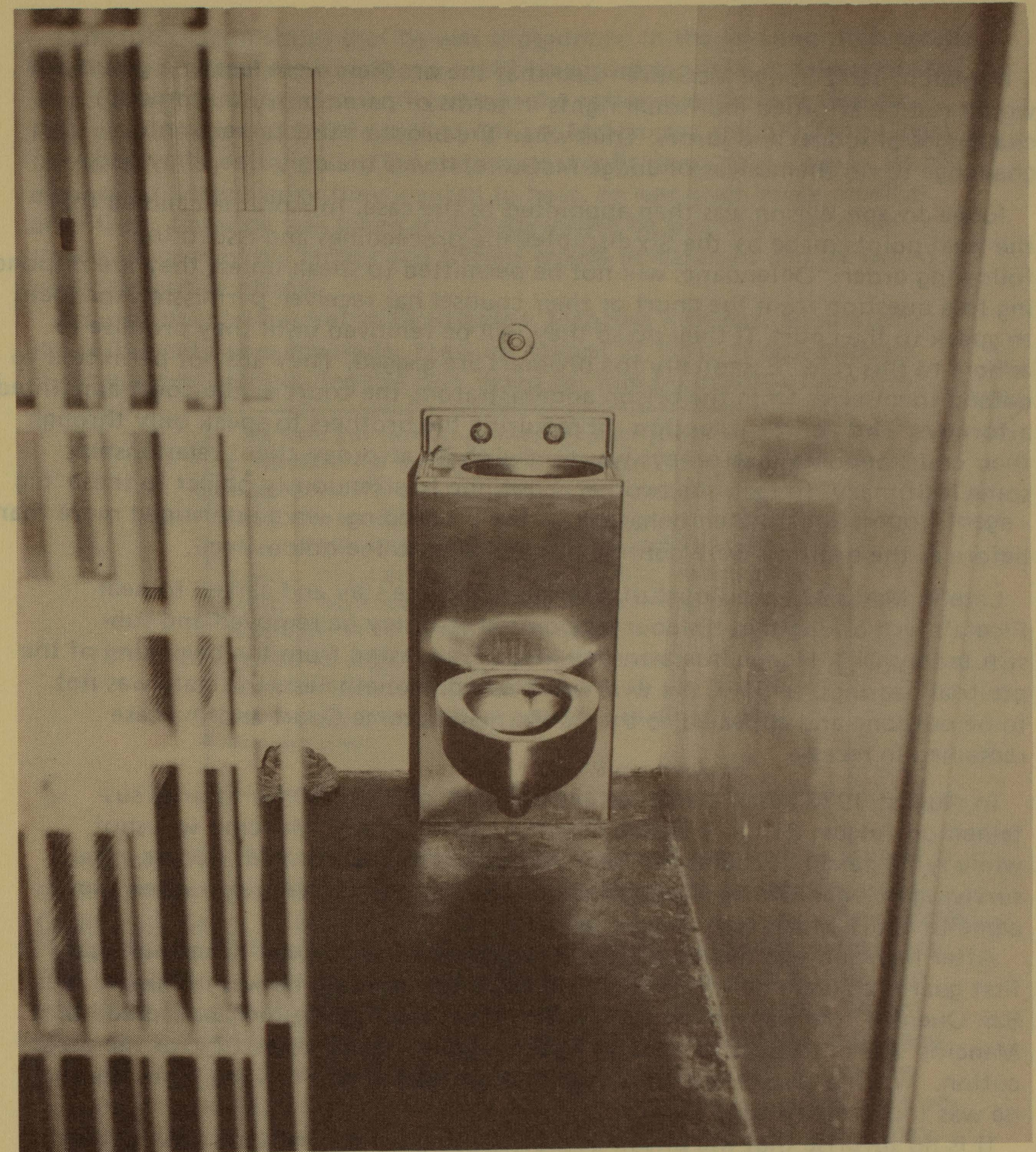
ON OCTOBER 1, 1971 THE SAN QUENTIN SIX AND ATTORNEY STEPHEN BINGHAM WERE INDICTED by a bare-minimum vote of 12 of the 19 members of the Marin County Grand Jury. Members of the grand jury are traditionally hand-picked by the Superior Court Judges and are usually the elite of the county. Members are usually 'honored' to be chosen and feel that they are part of the law enforcement process and have no interest in questioning or pressing the authorities. Such grand juries are notorious tools of the prosecution, a mere rubber stamp of the district attorney who is in complete control of the show. He picks the witnesses and coaches them. The 'accused' are not present, nor may they have a lawyer there. They may not cross-examine witnesses, nor offer their own.

In indicting the San Quentin Six, the district attorney presented no testimony from prisoners, only from guards and prison staff. When one Grand Jury member asked to recall three witnesses whose testimony had been contradicted, the request was denied. And when a few jurors insisted on asking questions of those testifying, the DA charged that they were delaying the case. In an unprecedented protest, three jurors walked out of the indictment session, outraged at the DA's slanted presentation and the secret nature of the proceedings. On leaving one said that the process promoted: 'not justice but vengeance.' Jerry Hawes who promptly resigned from the Grand Jury said, 'The unwillingness of this jury to seek impartial legal advice during the indicting session makes impossible a fair and just procedure which can mete out genuine justice.' Still, the San Quentin Six and Stephen Bingham were indicted on charges of murder, conspiracy and kidnap.

THE MARIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE IS NESTLED IN THE HILLS OF SAN RAFAEL. Designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright for the country's second wealthiest county, it was built for a mere 11.5 million dollars. It stands in contrast to the ghetto buildings of San Diego, Fresno, Los Angeles and San Francisco where the brothers grew up...and the dungeon like AC at San Quentin, but it is a torture chamber of undue proportions. It is here that the San Quentin Six battle for their lives.

On October 5, 1971 the San Quentin Six made their first court appearance. The brothers arrived in an armored truck escorted by additional San Quentin guards. Amidst shot guns and carbines the brothers stepped out of the van, chained and shackled.

Supporters walked through metal detectors as they entered the building and again on the court floor where they were pat searched. Picture identification was required and each spectator was photographed by the Marin County Sheriff's department before entering the plush courtroom. One deputy read Section 4570 of the Penal Code warning all spectators that any communication with the brothers would be punishable by law.



At the first court appearance each of the brothers was brought out separately, the state's tactic to encourage snitching and to isolate them from each other. However, as each of the brother's entered the courtroom, head-shaven, chained and shackled like a slave, he exclaimed: 'We will not be separated!' and demanded an end to the brutalization at the hands of the San Quentin 'goon squad', the same guards who were 'guarding' them in the courtroom.

In subsequent court appearances the brothers have been seated together, each chained into a specially remodeled chair which was bolted to the floor. No Marin County judge has yet to hold an evidentiary hearing on the charges of brutality.

The Six have demanded the court appoint lawyers of their choice. Instead, in a mockery of the 'effective counsel' guarantee, the judge appointed white middle class Marin County attorneys who the brothers neither know or trust. At the insistence of the Six, the court-appointed lawyers reluctantly made motions to be relieved.

In March, 1972 Judge McGuire ruled that the brothers were legally a group and would not be afforded individual rights in terms of peremptory (automatic) challenges of judges and jurors. Thus when the brothers used a peremptory challenge to rid themselves of Judge McGuire, it was the only one they had.

Judge Joseph Wilson was then appointed to the case. In April he claimed that the legal points made by the Six disrupted the proceedings and issued the following order: 'Defendants will not be permitted to speak unless they are responding to a question from the court or their counsel has received permission for them to speak to the court. If they do so they will be removed until they promise to adhere to this rule.' Essentially the brothers are gagged. They are not permitted to defend themselves from the prison administrators, the court or the court-appointed attorneys. The court's intention in requiring the brothers to speak only through their court-appointed attorneys was to give those attorney-client relationships some legitimacy. In fact, the brothers continue to strenuously object to these 'pig agents', operating on their behalf and the proceedings were interrupted more than before as the brothers were continually removed to the holding cell.

Late in May, 1972 the Court of Appeals granted a stay and agreed to hear Fleeta's writ asking that his court-appointed attorney be removed and substituted by Dick Hodge, the attorney he had requested from the beginning of the pre-trial hearings. In July, the writ was granted. Nonetheless, the state was not to be outdone and appealed to the California Supreme Court and the case remained in recess.

In August, 1972 Allan Mancino filed claims for \$450,000 for injuries sustained on August 21, 1971 at San Quentin. On that day, Mancino was shot while lying naked in chains on the yard outside the Adjustment Center. The surviving Soledad Brothers smuggled an affidavit out of the prison when they came to court which told about the incident.

After Mancino was moved off the yard, no one was allowed to see him. At first guards claimed he was in the hospital, then they said he was no longer in San Quentin. He was moved from prison to prison. The rumor was spread that Mancino was in protective custody because he was going to testify for the prosecution. When a lawyer was finally able to see Mancino at Nevada State Prison, he was too terrified to speak.

It is no surprise that the prison authorities singled out Mancino for this role. First of all, he is white and guards traditionally use racism to keep prisoners divided. All but four of the men who survived in the AC on that day were black or brown. Mancino was known to be hostile to the guards but prison guards, ignoring the growing unity among prisoners, probably thought that a white prisoner would be more likely to turn on his black and brown comrades and that his black and brown comrades would believe this. Once the rumor spread, guards could attempt to convince Mancino that to protect himself, he'd better go along with them. Prison authorities also had that other score to settle with Mancino dating back to the day when he refused to kill George Jackson.

In May, 1972 he'd been released on parole to Seattle--a typical gesture toward a prosecution witness, a form of reward giving the appearance that the witness is no longer under the direction or control of the Department of Corrections. Parole can be revoked at any time, however, so the witness usually does what he is told. Such does not appear to be the case with Allan Mancino.

Mancino's claim states that he was shotgunned in the legs and then denied medical treatment and anesthesia 'until he agreed to make a statement that was coached by the defendants (who in the action are Wardens Nelson, Park and Jacobs and Chief Medical Officer McNamara and 100 John Does) to make.' Only after giving the statement was he given pain killers. As he elaborated on the story they wanted to hear, he was given more medical attention. Later he was taken to Nevada where he was told that if he 'made any waves' his family and friends would be harassed and he would never get out of prison.

Though the suit has yet to be litigated, Mancino now has repudiated the statements he made under pressure August 21, 1971. It now appears that Mancino isn't playing the part slated for him by prison authorities.

We have got to be together. We have got to be in a position to tell the pig that if he doesn't serve the food when it's warm and pass out the scouring powder on time, everybody on the tier is going to throw something at him, then things will change and life will be easier. You don't get that kind of unity when you're fighting with each other. I'm always telling the brothers that some of those whites are willing to work with us against the pigs. All they got to do is stop talking honky. When the races are fighting, all you have is one maniac group against another. That's just what the pigs want.

George Jackson

In December, 1972 the California State Supreme Court heard arguments on the petition for Writ of Mandate in Fleeta Drumgo vs Superior Court, County of Marin. The court learned that Fleeta had requested Dick Hodge; Hodge had come to court to let the judge know he was ready, willing and able to take the case and qualified to do so and how in spite of this, the judge had appointed someone unknown to Fleeta. Chief Justice Wright asked Richard Breiner, Fleeta's court-appointed counsel, 'What is to keep an eager attorney from getting into cases which may attract statewide notoriety? Don't you see the danger in that?' He seemed to fear that politically aware lawyers might get appointed in similar cases and that they might win them! So, it was no surprise in March, 1973 when the California Supreme Court turned its back on the Six, stating quite simply that while a rich man may select counsel of his own choosing, a poor man can not.

More serious problems arise for the warden from those few attorneys who profess to be advocates for radical social-political movements. These doctrinaire, rigid, violently-oriented individuals use the prisoner and his discontent in the pursuit of their political philosophies, the actual welfare of themman being a secondary consideration. Not content to merely criticize the prison system, not to help particular prisoners, activists have inspired prison rebellions. San Quentin staff believes that the incident of August 21, 1971 which resulted in the death of three officers and three inmates, was caused by the intervention of Marxist revolutionaries, among whom there was at least one attorney.

San Quentin Wardens
L.S. Nelson & J.W.L. Park

Despite the continuing battle for attorneys of choice (now at the U.S. Supreme Court level) the San Quentin Six were brought to court in Marin County on May 11, 1973. Again, they were chained and shackled by the San Quentin 'goon squad'; again, spectators passed through two metal detectors and were pat searched. This time however all were confronted with the \$40,000 plexiglass bullet proof shield separating those in the courtroom from the people. The visual distortion is like looking through a fishbowl or in a mirror in the 'fun house.' It is difficult to hear as well. The proceedings are monitored on three electronic surveillance cameras. Attempts to discuss the prejudicial effects of all these measures on any prospective jurors were dismissed quickly by the new judge in the case. Judge Henry J. Broderick who replaced Judge Wilson as trial judge at Wilson's request, said he was 'offended' by one court-appointed attorney's remark that security measures had 'reduced the legal proceedings to that of a circus in the public view.'

The Queen said: Here is the king's messenger. He is in prison now being punished and the trial does not even begin until next Wednesday, and of course the crime comes last of all.

But suppose he never commits the crime, asked Alice.

That would be all the better, wouldn't it? the Queen responded.

Alice felt there was no denying that. Of course it would be all the better, she said, but it wouldn't be all the better his being punished.

You are wrong, said the Queen. Were you ever punished?

Only for faults, said Alice.

And you were better for it I know, the Queen said triumphantly.

Yes, but I had done the thing I was punished for, said Alice. That makes the difference.

But if you hadn't done them, the Queen said that would have been better still, better, better, better.

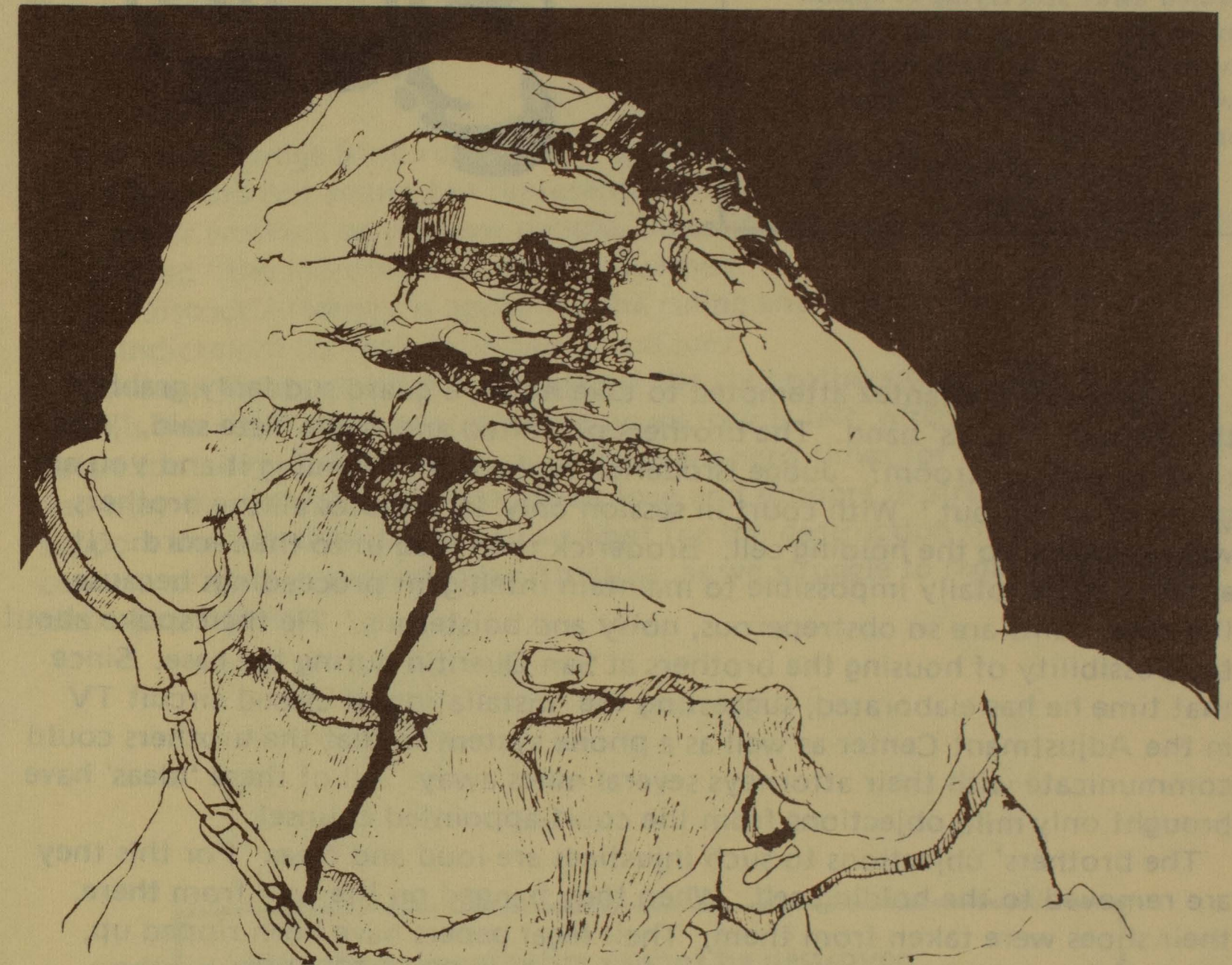
Her voice went higher with each better until it got to quite a squeak.

Alice thought, There is a mistake somewhere.

Through the Looking Glass

Judge Broderick was appointed to the bench by Governor Reagan in 1970. His salary is \$36,393 per year. He sits on his throne in the courtroom and speaks to everyone as if they were moronic, naughty children. He's interested in running the royal railroad as quickly and as smoothly down the state's track as possible. He concluded one court appearance: 'I just urge you to get to work because one way or the other, we are going to move forward.'

After the first court appearance, Broderick relieved three of the originally appointed counsel, taking into account their earlier commitments and the demands of their practices. Again, the brothers' demands were ignored and three unrequested white Marin County attorneys were appointed to represent Fleeta, Johnny and Hugo. When Fleeta protested Judge Broderick remarked in a condescending voice, 'The last time we did so much better... If you are unable to do so (maintain silence) we will take you from the courtroom and put you in restraint.' 'I'm restrained now,' was Fleeta's response.

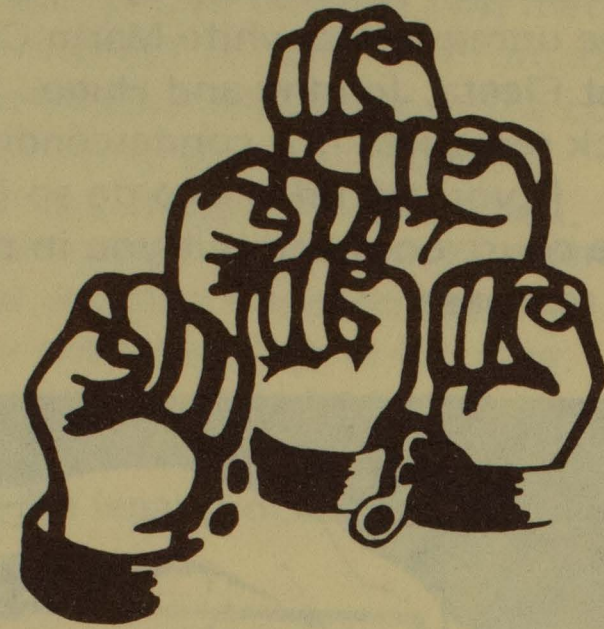


Blackmen born in the U.S. and fortunate enough to live past the age of eighteen are conditioned to accept the inevitability of prison. For most of us, it simply looms as the next phase in a sequence of humiliations. Being born a slave in a captive society and never experiencing any objective basis for expectation had the effect of preparing me for the progressively traumatic misfortunes that lead so many blackmen to the prison gate. I was prepared for prison.

George Jackson

"This is no trial,' he told the judges, 'but a farce or something worse...'
At this point the presiding judge ordered Myshkin's removal. Gendarmes rushed up, and an officer tried to hold his hand over the orator's mouth, but he broke away and continued: 'Here Senators of baseness and cowardice, for the sake of promotion and high salary, trade away other people's lives, truth and justice --' He was hauled away still trying to speak. Intransigent to the end, he was eventually shot in 1885 in Schlus-selburg Fortress for 'attacking a prison officer!'"

From the trial of a Russian Terrorist, 1877



While Luis Talamantez attempted to take notes, a guard suddenly grabbed the pen out of Luis' hand. The brothers protested and Willie Tate said, 'Who's running the courtroom?' Judge Broderick replied, 'I'm running it and you are going to be run out.' With court in session only 10 minutes all the brothers were removed to the holding cell. Broderick then read in to the record: 'It appears to be totally impossible to maintain intelligent proceedings because the defendants are so obstreperous, noisy and boisterous.' He then spoke about the possibility of housing the brothers at San Quentin during the case. Since that time he has elaborated, suggesting the installation of closed circuit TV in the Adjustment Center as well as a phone system so that the brothers could communicate with their attorneys several miles away. All of these 'ideas' have brought only mild objections from the court-appointed counsel.

The brothers' objections to such injustices are loud and clear. For this they are removed to the holding cell. When they banged on the wall from there, their shoes were taken from them, Their legal papers have been ripped up, David Johnson's glasses were broken and on June 29, 1973 all the brothers were beaten while hand-cuffed and shackled. Writing about the guards' attack on him, David relates: 'While standing in front of the door of the holding cell 'Smokey' Thomas suddenly opened the door. Lt. Foncannon snatched me by the hair and I saw guard K.E. Thomas standing on the stairs with a club or sap. The next thing I remember I was being lifted off the floor for I had been knocked unconscious.' The brothers have filed a civil rights action in Federal court against the Sheriff of Marin County, Judge Broderick and a number of San Quentin guards. Since its filing, the holding cell has been modified to include a steel plate fixed to the floor with six sets of chains attached to it. Johnny who has consistently refused to come into the courtroom in 1973, reported that in addition to the leg irons and hand-cuffs, he was further forced to be chained to the floor while attempting to sit on the bench and take notes. The holding cell is Marin County's answer to the Tiger Cages.

In August, Charles Garry entered the case on Johnny's behalf. Attorney Howard Moore made his first appearance for Fleeta in September and was promptly greeted with a fine and jail sentence (suspended) for contempt when he demanded to be heard on a motion. The challenge of the judge because of his prejudice and bias was denied after a brief hearing where the brothers were not in attendance and in which the lawyers were not permitted to put Judge Broderick on the stand and question him. Though a petition to remove the case from Marin County Superior Court to Federal Court was filed, the brothers were not brought to the hearings and were denied the right to argue their case and present further testimony. The railroad continues.

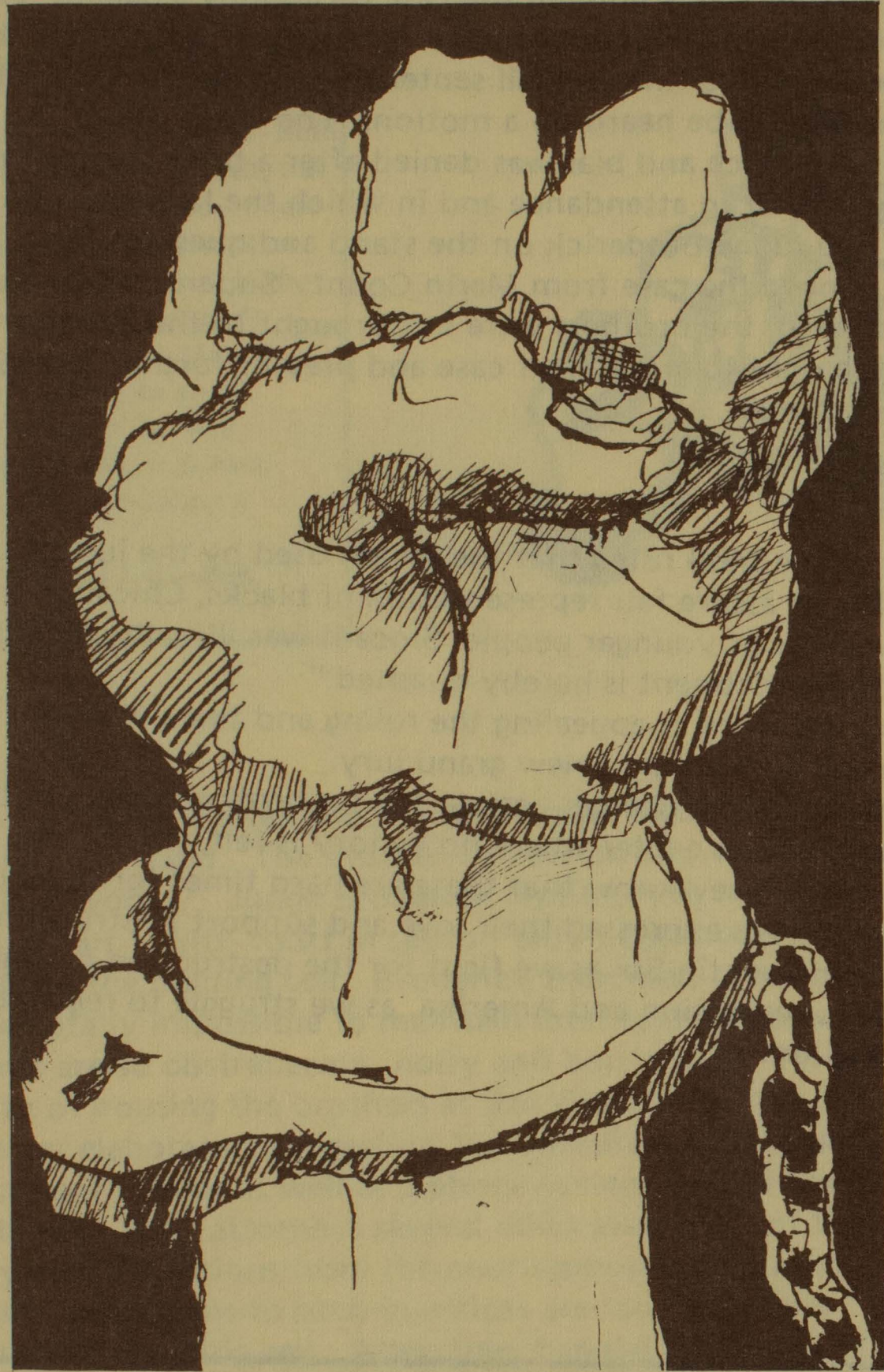
In January Judge Stoll ruled that the means used by the judges to select the grand jury did not assure fair representation of blacks, Chicanos and Latinos, blue collar workers or younger people. Since it was illegally constituted, Judge Stoll ruled "the indictment is hereby quashed."

The District Attorney is appealing the ruling and there is always the possibility of re-indictment by forming a new grand jury.

Although there are no charges against the six brothers they continue to be held in the adjustment center where no victory is felt, where they continue to battle for survival. They know that these are hard times for folks on the streets and they have always expressed their love and support to struggling people. We support the San Quentin Six as we fight for the destruction of adjustment centers, centers, prisons, repression and Amerika, as we struggle to regain our freedom through revolution.

International capitalism cannot be destroyed without the extremes of struggle. The entire colonial world is waiting for us to come to our senses. Their problems and struggles with the Amerikan monster are much more difficult than they would be if we actively aided them. We are on the inside....We have a momentous historical role to act out if we will. The whole world for all time in the future will love us and remember us as the righteous people who made it possible for the world to live on. If we fail through fear and lack of aggressive imagination, then the slaves of the future will curse us, as we sometimes curse those of yesterday.

George Jackson



Best wishes of peace, power and true revolutionary solidarity to the San Quentin Six and all other comrades working on their behalf to struggle for justice which will not come about unless The People bring it about.

We have hearts. We are men who are also politically and socially oppressed. We are the George Jackson's, Fleeta Drumgo's, Hugo Pinell's, Willie Tate's etc. etc. of Clinton, Green Haven, Attica, Comstock, Elmira, Sing Sing etc. We are those who were fortunate enough to survive the Attica massacre. We are the oppressed Black, White, Brown, Yellow men of New York prisons--who are still oppressed yet we are still smiling, still at war 24 hours a day, still fighting at each turn along the path of revolution, still alive, and refusing to die.

We are the Malcolm's, Jonathan's, Che's of prison camps 3,000 miles from California who are still struggling and just won't stop. The struggle is everywhere and we are everywhere be it Vietnam or Chino, Cambodia or San Quentin. Our spirit went to Bolivia with Che, to Cuba with Fidel, to Africa with Cabral and now, even after Attica, we send our true spirit to the San Quentin Six.

New York state prisoners

SAN QUENTIN PRISON

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

