

To Those With Ears and Conscious

A Protest Play Script

Assembled by Raquel Almazan and Lauren Whitehead

Made possible by The Prisoners Revolutionary Literature Fund¹

CHARACTERS: The script works best if you have at least 4 participants. If you have more or less, please feel free to divide the language up as you see fit.

SET: For each participant, draw an 11'x 20' box in chalk or with tape. These are the typical dimensions of a solitary confinement cell. At the base and/or top of each cell, please cite the sources from which this material was drawn by writing the following names and information:

-Prisoner from Pelican Bay SHU, June 17, 2013²

-Prisoner from Illinois, 2-22-2009³

-Prisoner in CA, 7/9/2013⁴

-Prisoner Unknown; Incarcerated since 1999⁵

-Prisoner from Pelican Bay SHU, CA; 5/23/2013⁶

-Prisoner location Unknown, Date Unknown⁷

While this is a found text (a mash up from several documents), the language is taken verbatim from letters written by incarcerated men and made available to us by the Prisoner's Revolutionary Literature Fund.

¹ <http://www.prlf.net/>

² <http://www.prlf.net/content/shus%25E2%2580%25A6are-human-storage-units-where-sensory-deprivation-certain-emotional-disconnect-inescapa>

³ <http://prlf.net/content/i-have-been-raised-cold-steel-and-concrete-which-i-do-not-wear-scar-honor>

⁴ <http://prlf.net/content/we-just-started-tha-hunger-strike-was-surprised-so-many-people-was-board-asians-blacks-white>

⁵ <http://www.prlf.net/content/first-time-my-young-life-guilt-left-bitter-taste-my-mouth>

⁶ <http://www.prlf.net/content/%25E2%2580%259C%25E2%2580%25A6-thing-links-pelican-bay-shu-guantanamo-we-share-same-torturer%25E2%2580%259D>

⁷ <http://www.prlf.net/content/%25E2%2580%259Cget-basics-%25E2%2580%25A6-hands-youth-who-are-danger-becoming-prisoners-themselves>

AT RISE: Each of the INCARCERATED is passing time with their activity of choice: working out; reading; writing; folding clothes, etc. They have full lives in the cell.

ALL:

To Those With Ears and Conscious:

INCARCERATED ONE:

Prisoner from Pelican Bay SHU, June 17, 2013:

Im a California prisoner in Pelican Bay's Security Housing Unit [SHU]. Ive Been Validated As A Member of a prison gang. I am also serving a life sentence for a crime as a junvile but tried as an adult. What this Means is I Will likely die Here, right here in this Cell. Im thirty-two. Im just one of thousands...

INCARCERATED TWO:

***SHUs...**They're institutions constructed specifically for long term Solitary Confinement. There exist an illusory six year minimum for each held here. SHUs are indeed designed for long term.

INCARCERATED THREE:

What these SHUs equate to in truth and reality are **Human storage units. Where sensory deprivation is certain, emotional disconnect is inescapable and mental stimulation challenged and undermined at every turn. .**

INCARCERATED FOUR:

We spend 22½ hours everyday in windowless, poorly ventilated Cells...The other Hour ½ is for "yard..."

(ALL perform 5 jumping jacks in unison and on each one call out)

ALL:

YARD! YARD! YARD! YARD! YARD!

INCARCERATED FOUR (continuing):

...“yard” that is adjacent to our Housing "pod", 27 feet by 11 feet with 20 foot high walls on all sides, a camera to watch us, no trees, no dirt, grass or any signs of life. Only a small patch of sky, so no direct sunlight, therefore the lack of Vitamin D Makes all sickly...

INCARCERATED TWO:

So How did We get here at Pelican Bay [SHU] ? Well according to Calif. Dept of Correction and Rehabilitation[CDCR], we are the "worst of the worst", members and associates of specific "prison gangs". Each of us Have supposedly met their criteria of "promoting gang activity".

INCARCERATED THREE:

But a true and Honest look into this absolutely destroys that Claim. You do not need to be found guilty of a single rules Violation let alone one of gang activity, But rather guilt by association, regardless How innocuous. The criteria is as ambiguous and arbitrary as tattoos and symbols which CDC Refuses to identify as prohibited, association; which can constitute a simple "Hello" in passing.

INCARCERATED TWO:

Obviously, I am no stranger to struggle and hardship. I ended up in prison by the age of 13...I am 30 now. I have been raised by cold steel and concrete which I do not wear as a Scar of Honor but as an indictment against a system that has been built on genocide and slavery, and has continued to insist on throwing away its “undesirables” generation after generation.

INCARCERATED ONE:

We just started tha hunger strike, was surprised so many people was on board. Asians, Blacks, whites, Hispanic. It's a beautiful thing... Im tierd of being treated like an animal.

INCARCERATED TWO:

Tierd of flies all over my food.

INCARCERATED FOUR:

Tierd of having 2 wait ‘til 9:00 at night 2 get mail that has already been at tha prison 4 over 2 weeks.

INCARCERATED THREE:

Tierd of them makin’ a mockery of tha appeals process. Tierd of seein’ them cover each other dirt and deny us our humanity."

INCARCERATED ONE:

Here in Pelican Bay you Have Human Beings who've Been held in Solitary Confinement for:

INCARCERATED FOUR:

INCARCERATED THREE:

15

INCARCERATED TWO:

20

INCARCERATED ONE continuing:

25, even 30 years, and many Have died in delirium in these Cells. While we're still capable to recognize and process the deterioration we're enduring, its effects on us personally and Our families and loved ones, we seek a change for Bettering our situation.

INCARCERATED THREE:

When people think about torture, one often thinks of physical torture but it goes more deeper than this. America's torture program is much more sophisticated than mere beatings with phone books, it has long passed the threshold of what the world has defined as human rights.

INCARCERATED TWO:

I am not in a supermax prison. I live in a mental health prison. When I first came to prison in 1999, I had a sound state of mind. Now 10 years later, after living in and out of segregation for "disruptive" behavior, I have lost all sanity. I go in and out of reality. The psych doctors keep me and my fellow comrades heavily medicated. When a new drug comes out, we get to be tested on it, myself included.

INCARCERATED FOUR:

Today torture is no longer a secret that is talked about within the sterile halls of some non descript building one needs a security clearance to enter. **The vast majority of the U.S. population is realizing that torture is as American as apple pie.**

INCARCERATED THREE:

...the thing that links Pelican Bay Shu with Guantanamo is we share the same torturer.

INCARCERATED ONE:

Fathers, Sons, Husbands, Brothers and Nephews Have changed into such introverted Shells, its at times impossible to find them, their personality, character and ultimately their once distinct identity...

INCARCERATED TWO:

Not Being Able to call, Hug or touch your children, Mother, Wife changes a Man Counter productively. Witnessing your body deteriorate because of poor medical attention, immobility and lack of Visual exercise, to acquire insomnia, anxiety and depression,

suicidal tendencies only detaches us further from reality and ourselves.

INCARCERATED FOUR:

and **Women are suffering far more worse than the brutality that we face**

INCARCERATED ONE:

If this world is ever going to become more and more aware that people are being “condemned to an early death or a life of misery and brutality... even before they are born” because of the nature of the capital-imperialist system.

INCARCERATED TWO:

People are born into very difficult situations in the ghettos and barrios and even more so in reservations where life expectancy is similar to those that can be found in the Third World. In a very real way their fate has been sealed because of the workings of this system.

INCARCERATED FOUR:

Children are born into conditions that are not of their choosing, and are forced to make difficult choices as they grow up and confront these conditions. They are born innocent, deserving of a decent life, a life worth living full of joy and purpose, but this system doesn't, and can't, offer them that.

INCARCERATED THREE:

Here in the US, huge numbers of youth are condemned to a life of crime and prison, because there's not some capitalist that can exploit them. Around the world, others who can be integrated into this global system of exploitation are forced to work in conditions worse than slavery, because some capitalist can't turn a large enough profit to provide them a decent living and still remain in business. We have to come together and say no more of that.

INCARCERATED TWO:

Today a criminal freed from prison has scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a freed slave or a black person living "free" in Mississippi at the height of Jim Crow. Those released from prison or parole can be stopped and searched by the police for any reason—or no reason at all—and returned to prison for the most minor of infractions, such as failing to attend a meeting with a parole officer.

INCARCERATED FOUR

Even when released from the system's formal control, the stigma of criminality lingers. Police supervision, monitoring, and harassment are facts of life not only for all those labeled criminals, but for all those who "look like" criminals. A wrong move or sudden gesture could mean massive retaliation by the police.

INCARCERATED ONE:

A wallet could be mistaken for a gun.

INCARCERATED THREE:

The "whites only" signs may be gone, but new signs have gone up—notices placed in job applications, rental agreements, loan applications,

INCARCERATED TWO:

forms for welfare benefits, school applications, and petitions for licenses, informing the general public that

ALL:

"felons" are not wanted here.

INCARCERATED ONE:

A criminal record today authorizes precisely the forms of discrimination we supposedly left behind—discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service.

INCARCERATED THREE:

I refuse to allow myself to be crushed by these harsh and brutal conditions.

INCARCERATED FOUR:

I do have limitation and shortcoming as the result of living and struggling to survive under this system.

INCARCERATED TWO:

someone who got caught up in terrible things. They are also capable of great things. I in my pass I did go down the wrong road

INCARCERATED ONE:

However, let me be clear, I am in search of the truth and not pity. My struggle is linked with the struggle of millions across the globe.

INCARCERATED TWO:

A true leader is one who have walked or lived amongst the people. When V. Lenin organized his Revolutionary Party, he went amongst the most impoverished people.

INCARCERATED THREE:

To resist is to live, to surrender to injustice is to die!

INCARCERATED FOUR:

I just want to convey how inspired I am as I've watched the grassroots activism that has been unleashed of lately, from the Occupy Wall Street movement to the social movement in the making behind the tragic death of Trayvon Martin.

INCARCERATED ONE:

"...I'm glad that Shu prisoners haven't given up on the struggle. For, there are many people to quote Frederick Douglas, "who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation. They want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning."

INCARCERATED THREE:

So I say: "instead of saying; 'reform the CDCR into a rehabilitative system,' we should say: abolition of the prison industrial complex! Abolition of the Capitalist/imperialist system!"

INCARCERATED ONE:

Raise your sights above the degradation and madness, the muck and demoralization,

INCARCERATED TWO:

Become a part of the human saviors of humanity: the gravediggers of this system and the bearers of the future communist society.

INCARCERATED THREE:

This is not just talk or an attempt to make poetry here:

INCARCERATED FOUR:

there are great tasks to be fulfilled, great struggles to be carried out, and yes great sacrifices to be made to accomplish all this.

INCARCERATED ONE:

But there is a world to save – and to win – and in that process those the system has counted as nothing can count for a great deal.

INCARCERATED THREE:

What does n-e of us have 2 lose. N-E ways take care & remain vigilant.

INCARCERATED TWO:

We of the inmates in Ohio Prisons appreciate your support in keeping us connected with the movement. Take care and stay strong!

INCARCERATED FOUR:

Viva la Revolucion!

INCARCERATED TWO:

In Cognizance and Solidarity,

INCARCERATED ONE:

your brother,

(BEAT)

ALL:

P.S.

INCARCERATED ONE:

Let me know you received this letter as soon as possible...

END OF PLAY