

# MASS PRISON VOICE

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JDMC Massachusetts Chapter

## A More Perfect Union

Samuel Conti

*“We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the U.S. of America.”*

*Preamble to the U.S. Constitution*

In 1969, Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Justice to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, said, “When the Founding Fathers used the phrase ‘*We the People*’ in 1787, they did not have in mind the majority of the American citizens.” They still don’t. Marshall was speaking of marginalization, segregation, and discrimination. He was speaking of slavery disguised as citizenship, an apartheid state masquerading as Democracy. It was true then, and its true today. They still don’t have in mind the majority of American citizens.

There are approximately 3.1 million men and women currently incarcerated in American prisons, jails and houses of correction. There are 12,000 people in Massachusetts state prisons alone, which we’ll use as an example. Of that 12,000 do any have friends and relatives who vote? What if each prisoner in Massachusetts has 10 supporters, family and friends? That’s 120,000 votes. What if we went back 10 years? How many votes do we have now?

“We the people...in order to form a more perfect union...” We are “the people” and we can make the laws. Fair laws. Rallies on the Common are an excellent way to show elected officials that there is opposition to the laws they are proposing. (So are, I suppose, articles such as this.) However, we “the people”, can make our own laws. We can run for office. Seriously, what better way to beat the establishment than by becoming the establishment? And what about filing Initiative Petitions? The Initiative Petition process in the Commonwealth was established under Amendment Article 48 of the Massachusetts Constitution to provide concerned citizens with a way to propose laws as well as constitutional amendments. All one need to do is secure 10 signatures which support the initiative measure, and submit the proposal to the Attorney General ([www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov) can provide details).

The sad fact is the Legislature CANNOT protect you from natural disasters or terrorist attacks; they WILL NOT lower your taxes and they CANNOT bring down the price of gasoline. In addition, they are UNABLE to repair the economy. All they WANT TO DO is dismantle the constitution to look tough-on-crime, in order to substantiate the legislature being in (PAID) session 12 months a year. The problem with that, aside from unfair trials, overly-harsh sentences and the collapse of Criminal Justice System, is they have



broken the rule of law in order to feed the vast Prison-Industrial-Complex.

Prison was never meant to be a Business-certainly not a budget-busting immoral enterprise designed to build careers for the select few. There is no such thing as "tough-on-crime". There is only tough-on-inmates' families, and it won't change until we change it. Prison is evil. It is not a deterrent to crime, nor does it prevent crime. As prison exists in the Commonwealth today, it increases crime; it creates victims on BOTH sides of the fence. Without those victims, the Industry is out-of-business. This Commonwealth has thrown BILLIONS at this problem since Willie Horton. What will we do now? Spend trillions more because of Dominic Cinelli? Quite a price to pay for only 2 men, don't you think?

Those of us with loved ones “Behind the Wall” know that these “undesirables” are all human beings and deserve, under our constitution, to be treated as such. If you don't like a law, write your own or oppose the oppressive ones. The only way to ensure Social Justice, for all of us, the only way to form a more perfect union”, is for “We the People” to become our own Masters.

## How Do Race and Punishment Intersect?

Raph Hamm

*Excerpted from Manumission: The Liberated Consciousness of a Prison(er) Abolitionist, just published by Xlibris.*



Beginning in colonial times in America, leaders and magistrates in the colonies meted out punishment to the settlers that were interpretations from the Bible. Most offenses were petty prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the crimes were primarily victimless. Race and severity of punishment made an appearance with the advent of the system of perpetual slavery, wherein enslaved Africans held within the Southern States fell victim to capital punishment more frequently than other ethnic groups. However, Southern whites could also face capital punishment, especially if their crime was conspiracy with blacks to rebel against the conditions of chattel slavery. The main purpose of a more severe system of punishment appears to have been premised upon an effort by plantation owners and the social elite to control slave rebellions, or the collaboration of the enslaved with whites and other free men. Southern plantation states often maintained a slave population that substantially outnumbered white settlers and

property owners, therefore they feared being overrun.

The Emancipation Proclamation of President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 ushered in an era of Reconstruction in the South, with the helpful addition of the 13<sup>th</sup>, the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the United States Constitution. Michelle Alexander, in her book The New Jim Crow (page 31), rightfully contends that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment may have "abolished" slavery as a private institution, but the Amendment held the glaring exception of slavery being a proper "punishment" for those duly convicted of a crime. Southern legislators used the exception language of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment as their means to enact post-Civil war "Black Codes" and "Jim Crow Laws" whereby ex-slaves could not only be arrested, then duly

convicted with slavery and involuntary servitude for the petty crimes of vagrancy and idleness. Once convicted, under the color of state law, blacks were penalized and sentenced to hard labor on a convict farm via convict-leasing. The black prisoners also found themselves leased to the plantations of their former slave owners. Existence on these farms and plantations proved to be more punitive, and deadlier, than life under chattel slavery. Federal courts were not wont to act on the behalf of re-enslaved blacks because they determined that the re-enslavement was the result of state criminal statutes, and the federal court had no jurisdiction to dismantle the system. The court's principle was of thinking carried on for 80 years, or until the enactment of the 1965 Civil Rights Acts.

Southern post-Civil War Reconstruction was indeed short-lived. Democratic Party politicians in the South implemented a strategy of "Redemption" to force voting ex-slaves in their jurisdictions to switch party allegiances, and to retake the authority the whites had lost in the Civil War. The Mississippi Plan was devised and utilized as the formula of intimidation, murder, and unspeakable violence to suppress the black vote, and to usurp the mandates of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments; assisted via acts of terror and murder carried out by such racist groups as the Redeemers and the Ku Klux Klan (formerly, the Knights of the Golden Circle). The Plan was also instrumental in dissolving political coalitions between Southern black and white Republicans. Race has historically been utilized by the white politicians as the means to drive wedges between poor blacks and whites who have formed socio-political coalitions. Race-based laws, with their ensuing punishments, have been implemented to bribe poor lower-class whites into breaking allegiances with blacks, and then to join political forces with the oppressor-elite for illusive social gains and status.

1876: Mississippi Legislature passes "Pig Law" - The law defining the theft of any property over \$10 as grand larceny quadrupled the prison population. The burgeoning convict leasing system was the main beneficiary and became a key to cheap labor throughout the state.



"Chain-Gang Catechism"

Image: Woodcut from campaign literature published by supporters of T. M. Norwood, gubernatorial candidate in Georgia's Democratic primary. Norwood's opponent is Alfred H. Colquitt, whom the leaflet accuses of exploiting prison labor. Georgia's convict labor law is compared to those in Mississippi and other southern states.

The 1970's through the 1990's saw white politicians aligning themselves with the news media, via 'War on Crime' and 'War on Drugs' rhetoric designed to create and exact draconian race-based legislation (e.g., the crack cocaine laws), thus expanding the black criminal-class in America. These methods have manifested a new form of 'Redemption' in this country, as an effort to undermine the perceived political and socio-economic gains made by racial minorities during the late 1960's Civil Rights Era. According to Michelle Alexander, (The New Jim Crow, pages 55-56), President Bill Clinton was a tremendous influence in perpetuating America's "current racial under caste"; which was facilitated by his "tough on crime policies" and the dismantling of social welfare program safety nets. Clinton's policies have led to unprecedented numbers of black males incarcerated. Under the former President's direction, the expansion of punitive eviction policies utilized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development have produced expulsions from public housing, which has created an ever-increasing horde of homeless people in this country. The ruthless attacks by politicians upon the social welfare of urban America has incarcerated more citizens of color than in the history of the United States; and has socially, economically, and politically marginalized blacks to a limited space in society not unlike 'Jim Crow'.

### **A Letter of Prophecy? The Old Man in the Can**

When I came into the system in 1971 the rules were simple which both sides understood to prevent problems. They were: do not screw with the food, visits or the mail. Today the rules are out the window.

Now the food is all processed and loaded with salt. It's either chicken or turkey 'meatballs',

'hotdogs' or 'meatloaf' or soybean 'hamburgers or 'meatballs.' Then there's your turkey 'bologna and ham.' All that salt and they wonder why they have all the medical problems with the men and women who have been locked-up for the past 10, 20, 30, 40 years or longer. In the last 10 years the D.O.C. has changed its menu to mostly processed food.

The visits have been made so hard on the families. In 1991 when Bay State opened for lifers and long term inmates, visits were 7 days a week. Today it's only on Monday & Tuesday and ½ day on Sunday. The manner in which the D.O.C. employees treat and speak to the visitors is deplorable.

The mail is the latest attack by the D.O.C. Now, if you get a letter from friends or family and there is glue, an address label or any other type of label, or a lipstick 'kiss' upon the envelope the letter is considered contraband. You are forced to either send it back in a new stamped envelope or have it destroyed.

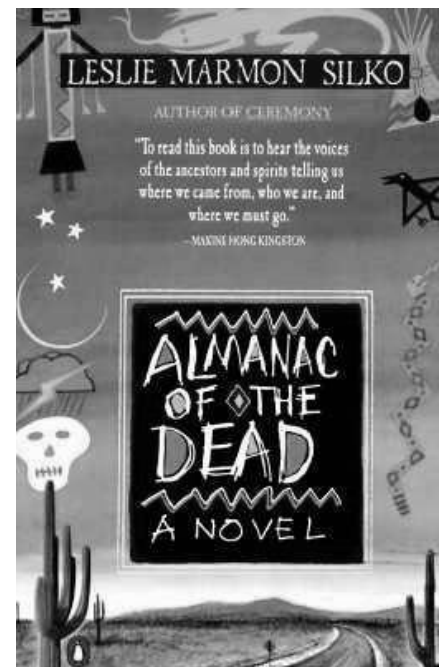
The bottom line is this new D.O.C. has forgotten the 3 golden rules as it were – it will only be a matter of time until one or more of the prisons go off – and there is no doubt it will happen. However, the bigger problem is society itself. Once a man or woman has paid their debt to society, served their time in full, it does not end there for them. Because they are convicted felons they are prevented from obtaining many professional licenses or employment. Likewise, many are refused housing simply because they are labeled as felons. Additionally, in many states a felon cannot even vote.

The ostracizing of these men and women, be they in prison or on the street, is not only dangerous, it is unconstitutional. What the so-called criminal justice system is doing is creating an army of discontented who cannot vote but must pay taxes, many of whom who feel they are no longer citizens of this country. And herein lies the danger; we live in dangerous times, there are many countries that truly hate America and

are planning on attacking this country. Well, if the criminal justice system keeps up disenfranchising this segment of its citizens which number in the millions, it is just a matter of time, if it has not already started, that enemies of this country start enlisting the services from this pool of millions with a variety of skills.

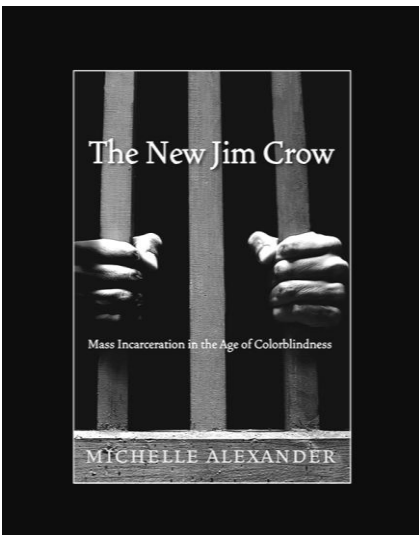
History has a way of repeating itself. Every great nation that has fallen has fallen from within. Is this the way America will fall? If there is to be change in the criminal justice system, be it in prisons or with people on parole or those who have served their time but are labeled as felons, you can no longer beg the powers-that-be, the politicians and media to provide real programs and money for these folks. You must use the same tactic which politicians use to get elected, the fear card as it were: the 'lock-them-up-and-throw-away-the-key' rhetoric and mandatory sentencing. You must use the rhetoric of fear to motivate the public and media, which will light a fire under the asses of most of these do-nothing legislators in Massachusetts and in Washington D.C.

The social network is probably the last real tool for freedom of speech that has not yet come under



the control of the 4 or 5 major news corporations. Maybe in time they will, but for now, freedom of speech is in the hands of the people.

Just think of it. In the past year there have been foreigners who have tried to set off bombs in this country, but luckily have failed. How long before luck runs out? There is a real possibility of millions of America's own citizens turning against it. This is a realistic fear and cannot be ignored. To do so would be foolish. For years groups like Mass Prison Voice have tried to make a difference, but with little success. Is it now time to try a new tactic or should I say an old tactic in new hands?



### Let Us Take It There!

Abdur Nadheeru-Islam

The enemy culture, the established government, exists first of all because of its ability to govern, to maintain enough order to ensure that a cycle of sorts exists between the various levels and elements of society. "Law and Order" is their objective. Ours is "Perfect Disorder." Our aim is to stop the life cycle of the enemy culture and replace it with our own revolutionary culture. This can be done only by creating perfect disorder within the enemy culture's life process and leaving a power

vacuum to be filled by our building a revolutionary culture.

### George Jackson, Blood in my eye!

Ralph Hamm and Sam Conti (Sam whom I know personally) have undoubtedly defined the blatant "Crimes Against Humanity" that are being perpetually committed against us by the Massachusetts DOC and the totality of the Criminal Injustice Industrial Complex in the USA. (see MPV Jan/Feb/March 2012) To me, Ralph Hamm clearly outlined "Political Brainwashing" that permeated Massachusetts prison population that unquestionably overthrow the "Mind Shackles" that compels such defeatist attitudes that maintain such despicable and disheartened prison conditions. Sam Conti illustrates for us how so-called "Big Business" creates the conditions of the Prison Industrial Complex that punish the poor for being poor and capitalizes on such universal contrived deprivation and absolutely exploits them for their own selfish advantages and social control objectives.

Both of them have definitely outlined the total decadent collapse of social reasoning and rationality that permeates America's social establishments and which that completely guides the thinking patterns of America's law-abiding citizens and non-law abiding citizens too. The above explicates and extrapolates what must be our guiding objective: to alter the existing social reality to one that completely reflects our social reality. We understand and we can create what is best for us, for our children and the greater part of humanity.

We know well the problems, so today let us define what is we are suffering from so that we can overthrow it. To me this social system is entitled: "**CAPITALIST GENOCIDAL TOTALITARIANISM.**" This is what Robert Elias, in his prodigious 1986 book called The Politics of Victimization: Crimes of Domination, referred to as crimes of government (state power and state terrorism), corporate crime

(transnational corporate personhood) and more specifically Police State policies and practices in contrast to crimes of accommodation like street crime etc.

But, briefly let us define what Capitalist Genocidal Totalitarianism is. It is a social caste system of race, class and gender subordination through economic deprivation or the "destruction of the essential foundations of life" such as material well-being, personal security, liberty, health, dignity and the very lives of such groups. (See Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow and Ervin Staub, The Roots of Evil)

It is the absolute social control over human resources and behavior, through cultural deceptions, and institutional murder, violence, sexual harassment and intimidation, coercion, brutality, hunger (food deprivation and control) personal health care necessities, paralanguage etc. (Erving Goffman, coined the phrase Total Institution, a shorting of the Antidemocratic system called: Totalitarianism.) Further a social structure based on controlling personal wealth or "Purchasing Power" "to maintain the power and wealth of the ruling classes and those who enforce their policies and practices: the administrators and police forces, the bourgeoisie) also called **JUDICIAL COLONIALISM, PENAL SLAVERY AND SOCIAL DEATH.**

So what is the solution? We must file a Human Rights complaint individually or collective in our respective institutions. First to the Federal District Court and secondly to the Presidency, the Executive Branch of Government using among other relevant laws, two main statutes; the first, the 1987 Genocide Convention, 18 USCA 1901-1903; and the 22 USCA 8213: Violations of Humanitarian Act. That goes to the President or his office. Thirdly, we must get federal or state legislators to pass a bill into law citing these statutes and others. We need media exposure and all our activist friends and even members

from the Occupy Protest Movement could help in research, development and promotion of this comprehensive methodology to completely terminate **ALL OF OUR OPPRESSION!** I suggest we get to work! If you need more info, please feel free to contact me at OCCC, One Administration Rd., Bridgewater, Ma. 02324



**Tarek Mehanna, Oxygen, and the "War on Terror"**  
by Lana Habash

On April 12th, Tarek Mehanna, a 29 year old Muslim man from Massachusetts was sentenced to 17 1/2 years in prison for "material support for terrorism" and other related charges.

The purpose of the current domestic "war on terror"—the surveillance, the system of informants, and the political arrests of Muslims and Arabs—is the same as every other US campaign of repression: to demoralize oppressed communities; to convince us that we cannot trust our neighbors and that our oppression is "the way of history," inevitable and hopeless; to make us believe the narrative of "every man for himself;" and to make us accept the unacceptable—the systematic oppression and genocide of our people and the colonization of our land.

Every day in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, and Afghanistan, people stand up, at risk of death. They stand like trees against genocidal colonialism and neocolonialism.

The situation for Muslims and Arabs on this continent is a bit different. Speaking generally, as a community, we are pacified. Yes, there is racial profiling, intense surveillance, entrapment, and mass incarceration. And there are also members of our community who talk to the FBI, inform on their neighbors, or dig their heads in the sand and, at a critical moment, do nothing. The Daniel Maldonado's (a cooperating witness in the Tarek Mehanna case) of our communities are our creation. Where were we when he was interrogated 26 times? Make any excuse you like, but collectively, we are accountable.

Living in American society, there are many unspoken racist ideas that constantly get reinforced and go unchallenged. These ideas have silently colonized our minds:

"It is inevitable that Black and Brown folks (in this case, Arabs and Muslims) die."



"It's naive to think that things will change from any action we take."

In the world of white supremacy, "colonial and state violence is normal and legitimate, and resistance in the form of counter-violence is not."

This means we can hear about the most horrifying oppression of Muslims and Arabs—the bombing of their hospitals and funerals and schools, like what has happened in Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon. And we can see children buried in the rubble or dying from sanction-induced starvation, and it has become normal. We watch the news each night, prepared for what we will see, and sickened yes, but no longer surprised, outraged perhaps, but not enough.

And when folks hear about oppressed people, anywhere in the world, fighting back in self defense and in some way causing injury or harm to those who oppress them, all of a sudden people become very uncomfortable, and a whole discussion must emerge as to why we should not support that or this type of

resistance. Worse, we must explain away the resistance of our people as some form of PTSD or desperation instead of what it is: courage, sumoud (Arabic for "steadfastness"), and just plain human dignity.

The trial of Tarek Mehanna has been a flashpoint in the lives of Muslims and Arabs on this continent.

He was not our first political prisoner and he certainly won't be our last. When his trial started, even outside of the reactionary mass media, the questions being asked and statements being made were all the wrong ones:

"Did he really do it?"

"He's not really a terrorist. He never did anything except translate some texts."

"He was just a kid when this happened. He's grown up."

But by the time Tarek Mehanna finished his sentencing statement on the afternoon of April 12th, there could be no doubt that the entire paradigm of the discussion of Muslim political prisoners had changed. The discussion was no longer about whether or not "he was really a terrorist," but rather about the right of Muslims and Arabs and all oppressed people to defend themselves against colonialism and imperialism: the violence of the state.

And there Tarek Mehanna stood, with his supporters who witnessed every dirty trick the government had pulled during the surveillance, arrest, and trial of this brave young man, and his community refused to cower. This was not a demoralized audience. These were not alienated people accepting the white supremacist narrative of what Arabs and Muslims deserve. The energy among the observers was palpable... the community inspired. Over the next few days, Dr. Mehanna's speech made its way around the world, and we were proud to have been there, at a moment that will be remembered as historic.

We know the fight is not over. We have a lot of work to do to catch up with our brothers and sisters in the Arab world who, with much fewer resources, have been examples to us of what it means to be steadfast.

Through his actions during this trial, Dr. Mehanna has outlined a beginning for the Muslim and Arab community here:

No cooperation and no collaboration with our oppressors and defend the right of our people—of all oppressed people—to self-defense.

That was the take home message of the trial of Tarek Mehanna, and in this way, the government failed miserably in every goal of the "war on terror."

In Palestine, we say that the political prisoner is "our oxygen...the

air we breathe." They are vital—we cannot continue to live without them because they remind us of who we are, who we must be, and the task ahead.

We will continue to fight for the release of Tarek Mehanna and all our political prisoners, but perhaps more importantly, we have been galvanized to carry on the struggle that they have gone to prison for.

\*\*\* Tarek Mehanna's sentencing statement can be found at <http://www.freetarek.com/tareks-sentencing-statement/>

### **Feminism and Accepted Abuse: Was this the intent of the Movement?**

By Timothy J. Muise

Growing up in the 1970's, I was exposed to the feminist movement on a daily basis. Fair wages, equal rights, gender acceptance and abolishment of second-class citizenship all seemed legitimate causes to me. I was on board as most of the females in my life were compassionate and nurturing people who I felt deserved kind treatment. I admit I did not know much about Gloria Steinem, but I was all for respecting women.

Gloucester, Massachusetts in the 1970's was certainly not the bastion of fair treatment for women. Our females' "sweat shops" were fish processing plants where our mothers stood on an assembly-line like conveyor belt packing fish. Much tougher than it sounds, but it did actually pay a decent wage. We also had our fair share of waitresses, chamber maids and school teachers. I do not remember too many professional type females in the circles I traveled. It is more likely than not that I was afforded a pretty unfair view of the role of the woman in society, but I did develop a respect

for their gender and an affinity for their company.

As the larger battles for gender equality were being won at the national level, it became more common to find women in roles that were many times thought to be just for men. College presidents, company CEO's and high ranking politicians were women. I saw women "fishermen" in my hometown, and one, Linda Greenlaw, was the largest money-making fishing captain in the city one year. What was most shocking to me was the amount of women entering the field of law enforcement. My lifestyle at the time instilled in me little respect for cops as I thought they made their living off the misery of the downtrodden, but I felt that maybe the compassion of the women could improve the profession. Boy, was I wrong!



Today, women in law enforcement can be just as sadistic as the men in that position, and it is incredible that society is no longer shocked by this. I can remember when the first few high profile 'women in law enforcement' scandals broke, people were a bit taken aback, as society viewed women as a bit more ethical and honest than the power brokering men. When women supervisors signed off on the beating of Rodney King, I knew the ladies had broken a gender barrier in a very negative way. When Condoleezza Rice jumped on board the "Weapons of Mass Destruction" bandwagon, I think the final nail was driven into

the coffin of the theory that female compassion could outweigh the spiral into abuse that positions of power often bring. These days, we hardly bat an eye when a woman is involved in an abuse scandal. Female teachers seduce adolescents in their charge and society makes jokes about it. Female soldiers place electrical diodes on the testicles of a prisoner, arm in arm with their male counterparts, and the prisoner is the only one who is "shocked." No outrage. No public debate about gender equality. Just good old generic abuse delivered by a woman. Society now accepts this fallen form of equality as the norm. I cannot imagine this is what the feminist movement was looking for in my youth.



Today's prison system is full of women guards, supervisors and high ranking administrators. They are as abusive as their male counterparts, and sometimes more so. Massachusetts had a female Commissioner of Correction, Kathleen Dennehy, who signed off on crooked investigations into alleged prisoner suicides. Many in the reform movement believe some of these suicides were actually homicides committed by prison guards. They also had a female Superintendent, Kelly Ryan, who signed off on crooked investigation reports concerning the rape of a female prisoner in her charge. No public outrage, not even after the United States District Court found her liable when the prisoner sued her. In fact, she was promoted and now runs a male prison with over 1,300 prisoners. Outrageous! Who could have guessed that the female jailer could turn into the same shell of a human that her male counterparts

have been for over 200 years in American corrections? Under the hood of the executioner may well be a salon coifed head wearing lip stick and eye liner.

When did we, as a society, become anesthetized to women as abusers? Is this an effect of the cause that abuse is becoming more and more accepted as a whole, or is it an even more glaring depiction of how this value depleted time in our history is manifesting in more and more classes of the "less than?" The immigrant is "less than." The Muslim is "less than." The prisoner is "less than." When you make a class of humans less than another class, you erode the social fabric. You risk Hitler's ovens and you create female Heinrich Himmlers and Adolf Eichmans. I am forced to live with, for the next few years, some of the department of corrections female Himmlers and Eichmans, but that does not mean I will not tell their tragic tale to all who will listen.

"You can judge the level of any civilization by how they treat their prisoners," said Feodor Dostoevsky. In Massachusetts we're on the steep decline. Women now play an integral role in that rapid decline and, I am sad to say, have joined the ranks of those that Samuel Clemons so eloquently described when he said: "If you want to see the scum of the earth and the dregs of humanity go down to your local prison and watch the changing of the guard." More and more of these dregs are of what was once known as the "fairer" sex. No longer. Was this the intent of the feminist movement???

By Timothy J. Muise  
MCI Shirley  
P. O. Box 1218  
Shirley, MA 01464-1218

***One of the most sought-after of the faux-feminists & human rights abusers to whom Tim refers is none other than former MA DOC Commissioner Kathy Dennehy who is now a senior program manager at the National Council on Crime and***

***Delinquency. Nurse Kathy started out as a 24 year old social worker for the DOC.***

***She stayed for thirty years and presided over cover-ups (er, investigations) of the assaults, medical maltreatment and deaths of prisoners under her watch.***

***She investigated one of the many guard beatdowns of my own brother. She wanted to let me know that the beatings never happened; that he just kept running into walls and falling down the stairs of his own accord!***

***What a gal! We know many of you, too, have favorite reminiscences of Ms. D.***

***These days she's often to be seen gal-palling around with Prisoner Legal Services Director Walker out on the prison "reform" circuit. You've come a long way, baby!***

***Susan M.***

### **Keefe Canteen**

The Massachusetts Department of Correction recently awarded Keefe Commissary Network, LLC the contract to provide: canteen, clothing, appliances, and future kiosk services including MP3 players. Due to alleged deceptive trade practices and failure of the DOC to enforce parts of the old contract, a pro se civil action was filed in 2010 (See Haas v. MASS DOC, WORC 2010-01038). The action has survived a motion to dismiss.

Under the old contract Keefe was only allowed to mark up prices by 25% over their original invoice price. Under the new contract Keefe is not allowed to charge more in Massachusetts than it charges in any other state.

I am seeking canteen, appliance and clothing price lists for Arizona; Florida; Idaho; Maine; Mississippi; New Hampshire; Rhode Island and west Virginia. Additionally any contract information about kiosk services would be helpful. I hope to

post all information at  
www.betweenthebars.org.

Please contact Daniel Holland at  
MCI Norfolk, P.O. Box 43, Norfolk,  
MA 02056-0043. (Out of state  
inmate-to-inmate correspondence  
okay)

(MPV says: Keefe is yet another  
private corporation pigging out at  
the prison industrial trough.)



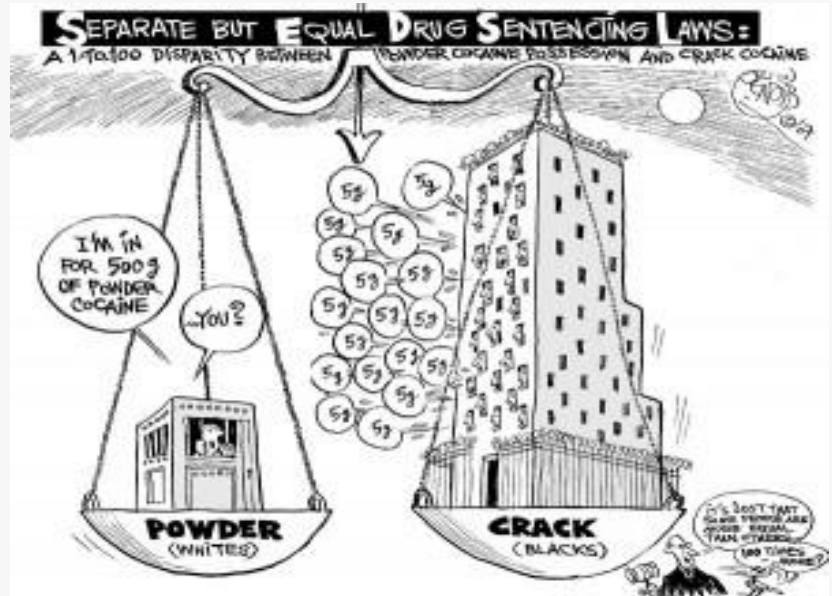
### From Sue's Desk

There is not a lot to talk about at  
this point. I do need to remind you  
that some of you are still writing to  
me at my address in Massachusetts.  
The mail is being forwarded but this  
will eventually stop. You should be  
writing to me at my address in  
Canada:

**137 Bells Point Rd.  
Port Mouton, N.S.  
Canada  
B0T1T0**

There is one thing that I want to  
let you know about. For those of you  
with Hep C issues, I did get a copy of  
a letter that was sent from  
MCLS/PLS to the powers-that-be in  
the DOC regarding the treatment or  
should I say the lack of treatment  
that you are receiving. They are  
monitoring this and will continue to  
address it in the future. I received a  
copy of the letter from one of you  
informing me of this and I will put it  
in the next issue of the MPV.

### Crack-to-Powder Equitable Sentencing Act: A Victory for Justice?



3 August, 2010 | TDX  
by Cyril Grossé

On August 3, 2010, the [Huffington Post](#) reported the passing of H.R. 2178, the "Crack-Cocaine Equitable Sentencing Act of 2009." This act has been touted as being a meaningful measure towards addressing the historically racist laws concerning the criminal penalties for crack and powder cocaine possession. However, this measure may not have the positive effect on race matters that is represented.

Historically, there has been a gross disparity in punishment between those caught and convicted of possession of crack cocaine – usually Blacks – and those caught and convicted of possession of the powdered form – usually Whites – of the illicit drug.

The penalty associated with the crack form carried stiff sentences of up to 10 years in prison for just 5 grams of the substance whereas only probation would be handed down in the case of up to 500 grams powdered cocaine.

Heralded as an act to end the racial disparity, organizations such as the NAACP and others who have lobbied to end the disparity have convinced the legislature to pass the Crack-Cocaine Equitable Sentencing Act of 2009 which alters the ratio from 100:1 to about 18:1.

However, this improvement does nothing to address the numbers of Blacks who are sentenced to unreasonably long prison terms for non-violent crimes. There will be no reduction in the mounting numbers of young Black men currently wasting their lives away at the alarming rate of 1 for every 20 over the age of 18.

Though many will see this as a step in the right direction towards racial equality, I would ask that you step back and reexamine what it is that you want? Which is preferable? Equal or Fair?

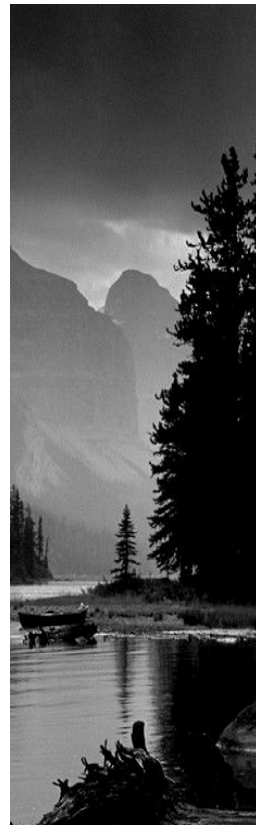
This act only serves to insure that even *more* Americans are needlessly sentenced to serve time in our already-crowded prison systems. Adjusting ratios while doing nothing to address the underlying broken methodology of our criminal justice system serves not to promote equal justice, but to simply ensure we all get equal injustice.





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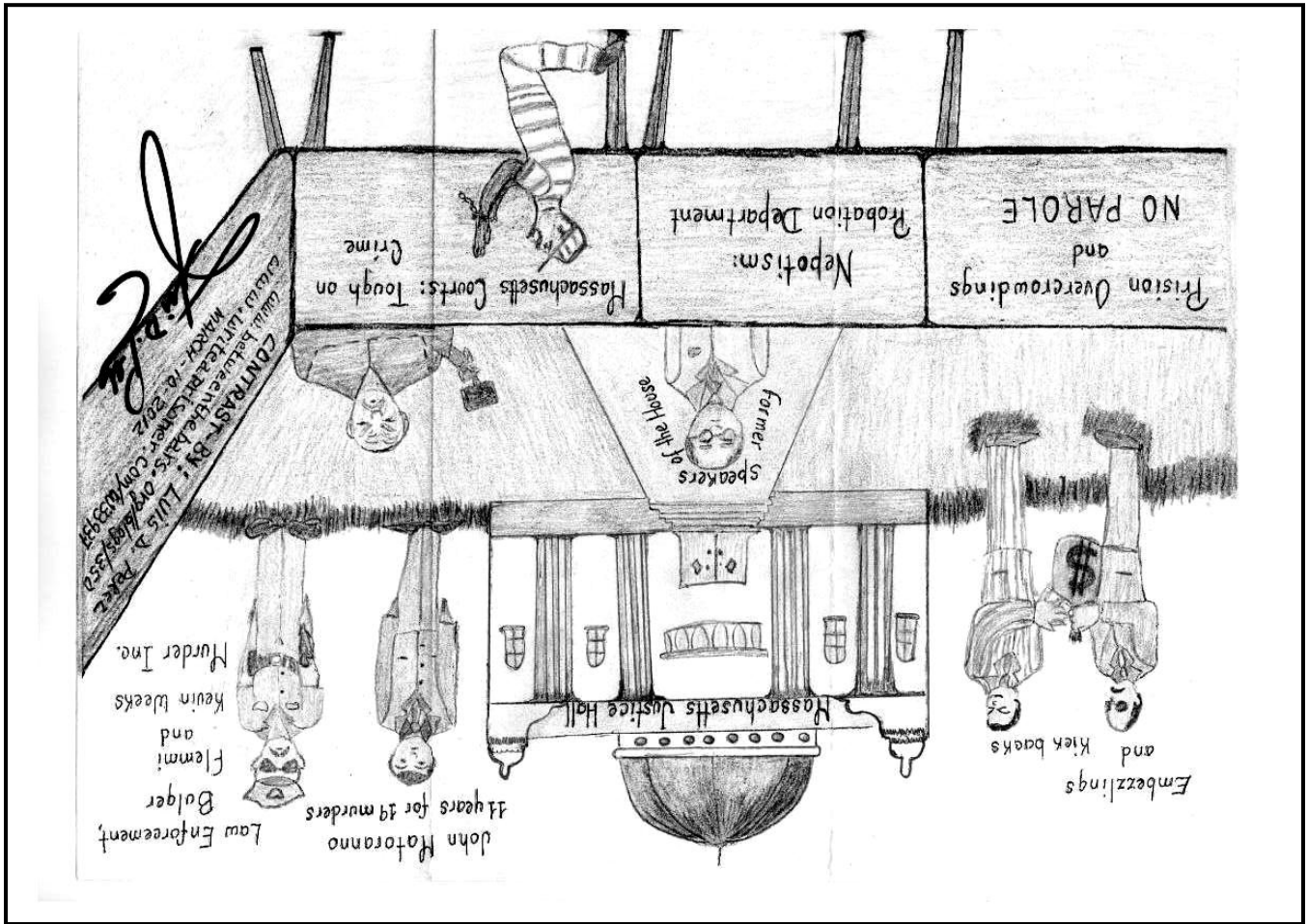
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