

HOSPITALITY

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Prison Labor

by Murphy Davis

Our friend Thony is locked up for a sentence of 481 years in an infamous Southern plantation-style prison. He spends his days with a swing blade cutting grass on the edge of ditches over the 23,000 acre prison. For his labor he is paid 2 cents per hour. One penny per hour is banked until his parole consideration (2070); the other penny per hour is his to spend at the prison store.

Mary Louise sews blue stripes down the pants legs of prison uniforms at the garment factory near the Hardwick women's prison. For her eight hours a day she is paid nothing. She begs stamps from friends to write to her children.

Charles stands day after day in front of a machine, watching it stamp out license plates. The work is monotonous, and he is paid nothing for it. The prison tells him he is building "work skills." But since license plates are only made in prison industries, he is not being prepared for any work on the outside market.

Frank sits on death row. Day in, day out, he is, for all practical purposes, idle. Television, exercise, writing letters, playing checkers pass the time. Frank, though young, strong and energetic, is not allowed to work. He has spent the past 10 years of his life unable to do anything of use.

Thony, Mary Louise, Charles and Frank, like hundreds of thousands of men, women and children in the United States cannot control their own labor. They are slaves.

Slavery is, of course, not a fashionable word in the latter part of the twentieth century. We assume ourselves to be rid of it. But the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution did not abolish slavery in the U.S. It simply narrowed the practice. The amendment reads: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude EXCEPT AS A PUNISHMENT FOR CRIME whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

Prisoners are, by mandate of the United States Constitution, slaves.

In our day prisons are rarely called prisons any more. We have "Correctional Institutions," "Diagnostic and Classification Centers," "Youth Development Centers," etc. Wardens have become "Superintendents;" guards have become "Correctional Officers;" prisoners have become "inmates." Solitary confinement, or the "hole," has become the "Adjustment Center."

The language of scientific penology attempts to mask harsh reality. Prisoners are people from whom most rights of citizenship have been taken. They have no rights to control where they are, with whom, or how they spend their time—in forced labor or forced idleness. They are given over to the prison system presumably to be "corrected" or "rehabilitated." In fact they are in the system to accomplish only one goal: punishment.

Why? And for whom? Can we be satisfied to live with the commonly held assumption that people are in prison solely because they have done bad things? If this assumption were true then why would there be such wide variation in incarceration rates around the world and even within the United States?

The United States stands third in the world in its rates of imprisonment. We follow only South Africa (#1) and the Soviet Union (#2). But within the United States,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Rising Fawn Prison Camp
Georgia, August, 1941

3 of 22 prisoners confined for almost eleven hours in a sweatbox seven and a half feet square, smothering one of them.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

a few jurisdictions—including Georgia and the District of Columbia—exceed the incarceration rates of South Africa and the Soviet Union (state prisons, municipal and county jails and children's prisons are counted in this measure). That is to say that some of us in the U.S. depend—more than any other government in the world—on caging people as a response to our problems.

Prisons have not always been such major institutions in the United States. A bit of history:

The first state prison was opened in Milledgeville, Georgia in 1817. The prison was based on the "Auburn plan" which assumed that hard work would simultaneously punish and reform. The average number of prisoners stayed around 200—all white. Black people, of course, were slaves and were dealt with inside the system of private ownership. This development in Georgia roughly coincided with the opening of state prisons in other states. Thomas Jefferson took from Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria the notion of confined convict slavery and designed a prison for Virginia that opened to receive prisoners in 1800.

Centuries earlier governments had learned that the punishment of slavery could be used to the benefit of the state. Galley slavery of ancient Greece and Rome was used again in France and Spain during the 14th and 15th centuries. In the 19th century, slavery as punishment was tailored to the needs of the American system. The benefits of this form of punishment to general social control were frankly admitted. A prison report in 1820 stressed that convict submission was "demanded not so much for the smooth functioning of the prison but for the sake of the convict himself, who shall learn to submit willingly to the fate of the lower classes."

As the system of American prison slavery was honed, the controversy raged over the practice of chattel slavery. At the close of the Civil War, the controversy focused on the wording of the Constitutional Amendment to legally abolish slavery.

Those who argued for the complete abolition of slavery in the United States lost their struggle. The 13th Amendment as it was passed, and as it stands, forbids slavery "except as a punishment for crime. . ."

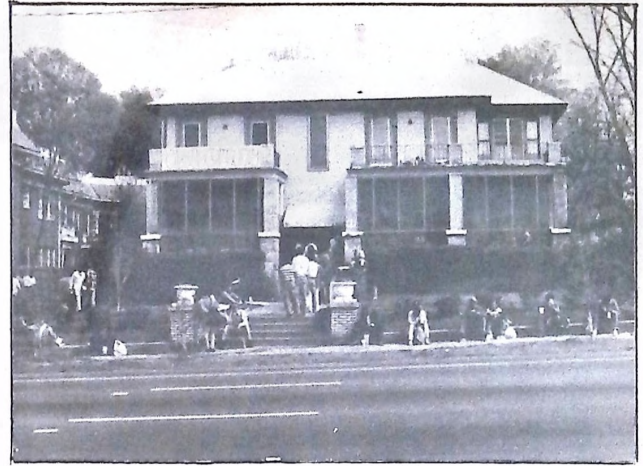
Rather than legally abolishing slavery, the amendment changed the system to permit the state, not private citizens, to be slave owners.

After the Civil War, Southern planters thought themselves lost without their slaves. The one legal form of slavery still available to them was imprisonment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Armed trustees at Parchman Farm, Mississippi around 1935. Note fingers on the triggers. A trustee who shot a fleeing prisoner would be granted a pardon.



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Circulation—Tim Wyse, Bettina Paul and a multitude of earthly hosts and guests.

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

—Howard Thurman

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Some states passed "Black Codes." But others, including Georgia, passed vagrancy laws, and similar laws, as a way to lock up black people who were seen not to be in their "proper" place.



In 1868 Georgia established by law the convict lease system modeled after the Massachusetts system begun in 1798. Convicts could be leased to counties or county contractors for use on public works. In 1874 the Georgia law was altered to permit leasing convicts to private individuals and companies.

By 1877 Georgia had 1,100 prisoners. 994 (90%) of them were black.

In 1878 former Confederate Colonel Robert Alston, serving as state representative from DeKalb County, visited convict work camps all over the state. As head of the Committee on the Penitentiary he wrote a scathing report:

"The lease system at best is a bad one, and seems to have been forced upon the State by an inability to provide for the great increase in the number of criminals growing out of the changed relations of labor. . . To turn the prisoners over to private parties, who have no interest in them except that which is prompted by avarice, is to subject them to treatment which is as various as the characters of those in charge and in many cases amounts to nothing less than capital punishment with slow torture added."

Alston encouraged leading citizens to withdraw from the companies leasing convicts. He was promptly murdered by a man who leased convicts.

3

That slavery has begun its fall is plain, but . . . its fall will be resisted by those who cling to it. . . The end will be slow. Woe to abolitionists, if they dream that their work is well nigh done.

Theodore Weld, 1852

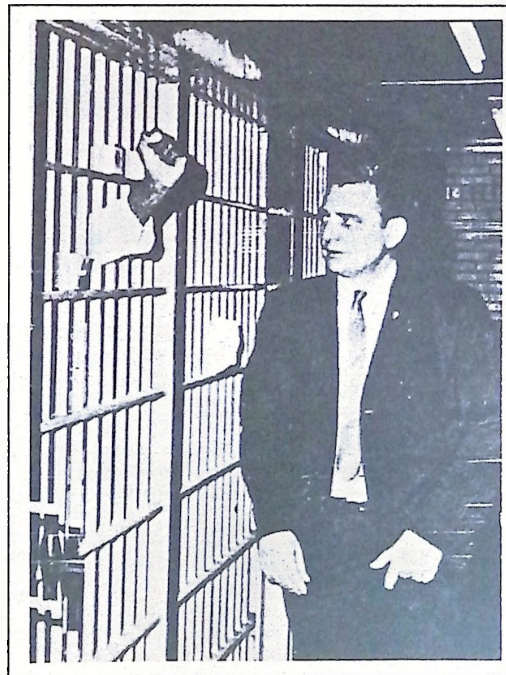
As difficult as it must have been in the harsh days of the post-Reconstruction era, the black community found various ways to protest the lease system. One of their methods was an annual memorial service and "decoration of the grave" for Alston as the first white person to "condemn and denounce the workings of the abominable, blasphemous and vile penitentiary lease system, under which so many of our race are doomed to horror, agony and pollution."

In 1908 the Georgia Prison Commission reported that in the penitentiary and chain gangs combined there were 4,290 negro males, 209 negro women, 461 white males, and six white women. In that same year a committee report to the legislature on corruption and cruelty in the lease system led the legislature to abolish the lease.

From then on, chain gangs worked on public works rather than for private individuals and companies. But abuses and cruelty continued. One infamous warden used to send black trustees out with a pitchfork to make the hogs squeal so that the townsfolk would not hear the human screams as the warden beat a prisoner with hose pipe. Submission to the "fate of the lower classes" seems to have continued as an agenda in the prison system.

In 1957, forty-one prisoners at the Buford Rock Quarry broke their own legs with their sledge hammers to protest harsh working and living conditions. When the investigations promised by prison officials never took place, a second and then a third group of prisoners broke their own legs.

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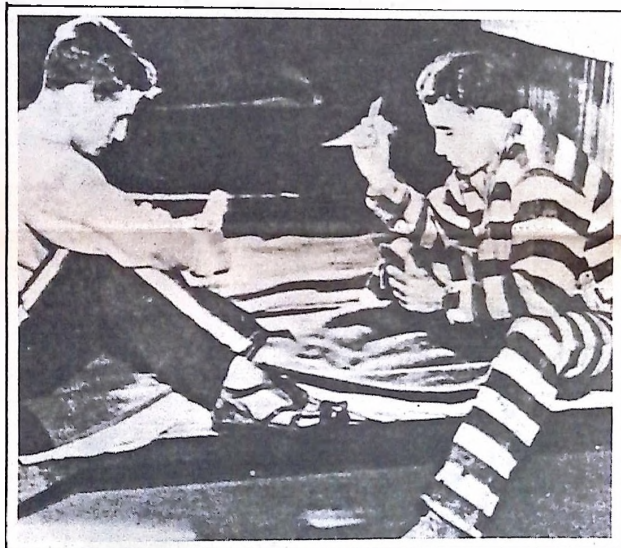
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As recently as 1979, a number of prisoners at the Wayne County "Correctional Institution" cut their own achilles tendons in protest of working conditions.

I will never forget my first visit to the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville in the Spring of 1978. We drove onto the prison reservation and there, as far as I could see, were groups of men (mostly black) bent over working in the fields. Over them sat a uniformed white man on horseback with a rifle across his lap. I was utterly amazed to see this picture of slavery.

I did not realize then that slavery still existed as a legal institution in the United States. Most people probably don't. But as the Committee to Abolish Prison Slavery has said: "In any form, slavery dehumanizes, cripples, and destroys anyone who willingly, or unwillingly, partakes in its practice."

Prisons and prison slavery are crucial institutions in this country for controlling labor in the interest of the powerful few and to the benefit of us all. It is beyond dispute that imprisonment rates go straight up and down with unemployment in the lower class.



But we should be clear about the damage done to the human family by the increasing dependence on prisons. When a breadwinner is taken to prison her/his children often become wards of the state—by foster care or welfare. The family ties are damaged and sometimes completely broken.

Because prisoners earn nothing, or nearly nothing, for their labor, there is no possibility of helping to support their own families or making reparations to their victims.

Because prisons on state and federal levels have become multi-million dollar industries, an increasing number of individuals and institutions are dependent on their continued existence.

Most important is that prison slavery infects all of us, whether we make ourselves aware of its use or not. Prisons are off the beaten path for most people. Middle and upper class people have very little reason to know anything of prisons or prisoners except when it's time to keep a new prison from being built in "our neighborhood."

4



But pretending to be untouched by systems of degradation and dehumanization can only be a self-defeating game,

Prison slavery must and will someday be abolished. Until then we will not even begin to take an honest look at questions of labor, employment, fair wages and good work.

Let us be about the task of seeking human dignity and liberation for all of God's children.

Note: Helpful resources for this article were Prison Slavery by Barbara Esposito and Lee Wood and "Scientific Penology in Georgia: Chain Gangs to Behavior Mod," a paper by Gene Guerrero.

All photos from The Problem of Prisons by David F. Greenberg.

VAGRANTS:

Any able-bodied person having no property sufficient for his support, who loafs, loiters, or idles in any city without any regular employment.

In prosecutions for vagrancy, the burden of proof shall be upon the defendant to show that he has sufficient property from which to obtain support, or sufficient means of maintaining a fair, honest, and reputable livelihood.

Vagrancy is a crime, and any person convicted thereof shall be fined and may also be sentenced to hard labor.

—The Justice's Code of Alabama, 1941

"Then a new king... came to power in Egypt. He said to his people, 'These Israelites are so numerous and strong that they are a threat to us...' So the Egyptians put slave drivers over them to crush their spirits with hard labor."

Exodus 1:8,9,11 (TEV)

Thony Green -Prison Worker

by Ed Loring

Thony Green is a beautiful Black man. He is big and strong. Thony's human frame is full of African features: meaty lips, a flattened nose, coal black eyes that twinkle with mystery and love. He is dirt poor—Mississippi River—(south Louisiana side)—style poor: where the dirt is rich but the poor people are depleted. Thony completed the 8th grade in poor schools as he grew up along the levee from LaPlace to Norco. This area is a part of the infamous "Cancer Alley" where petroleum companies belch their waste into the grey sky, and the earth, water, vegetation, animals and human beings mutate, suffocate and die. Last year, Thony's younger sister perished from cancer.

During the winter of 1982, Thony Green became a member of the Open Door Community. Immediately he became a friend and co-worker. He took care of Hannah and Christina on a regular basis. He also worked in the kitchen and, as the strongest member of our family, Thony was often asked to help with the heavy work of hauling and moving. As is the case so often when God's love is the basis of family life, we began to love one another deeply and profoundly.

One morning, a few months after his entry into our lives, and just before soup kitchen was to open, two men from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation jumped the front hedge, broke into our home, grabbed Thony, threw him to the floor, stuck a pistol into his neck, cuffed his hands together, dragged him to their automobile and drove off at a speed almost as fast as the daily commuters from Decatur and Tucker who chase the death-dealing, sickle-wielding second hand of the clock down Ponce de Leon Avenue (It is not the fountain of youth that secular faithless moderns chase along this ancient, now-asphalted pathway, but the job, so that they may pay part of a bill for a product long ago consumed, broken, and forgotten. Ponce de Leon also, I think, travelled along "Cancer Alley" beside the Mississippi River. But I digress. That is really about tomorrow.).

News moves slowly out of jails and prisons. We learned over the next few weeks that Thony had escaped from jail in St. John the Baptist Parish. The local authorities were mad. At the conclusion of his trial the judge, robed in black garments but covered from head to toe with white skin, leaned forward and beetle-browed hissed to the defendant, "481 years. Parole is possible in the year of our Lord 2070."



Thony Lee Green, man-child and hungry for the simple amenities which make life good, had robbed the Bucket of Blood Tavern. In the course of the robbery a fellow human being was shot in the shoulder. To understand an event is not to justify the event. Thony's desperate act is understandable. Armed robbery is wrong.

On a warm Thursday morning not long ago, Murphy, Hannah, and I took our annual trip to Angola Prison to spend a few hours with our loved one Thony. The road from Baton Rouge is long and winding. The last twenty miles are especially difficult. But a nun-friend in New Orleans had loaned us her car and we were filled with joy and expectation as we reached the prison and our year-long longing was about to be released.

Angola Prison is an enormous plantation. 23,000 acres of land, with 18,000 under cultivation, comprise the outlay. 70% of the prison population is Black. Almost everyone there is dirt poor. However, there is one great difference between Angola and our state plantation in Reidsville, Georgia: financial payment for work. The U.S. Constitution upholds human bondage for punishment, but historically there has been no agreement among slaveholders that slaves should not receive any payment for services. Throughout Western history there exist systems of slavery which involve pecuniary reward for the slaves' forced labor.

Thony works for eight hours a day, five days each week. His job is to cut grass around the drainage ditches by hand. He uses a scythe. The state of Louisiana pays Tony two cents per hour for his work. One penny is put into a savings account and one penny is put on the books for him to spend any way he wants to at the prison store. The prison store, for instance, sells stamps. The prison does not allow convicts to receive stamps from any other source.

A very pleasant guard escorted us toward Thony's camp. We had been driven by prison bus for a couple of miles and now we were walking into the compound. Everywhere we looked we saw Black men; I don't think I saw five white convicts during the entire visit. As we walked down the concrete and steel-barred corridor, I felt again that pang of pain and sipped from my cup of anger at George Bush and his filthy lies. Here were some of the Willie Hortons of our nation. Black men broken and battered by people who are simply too far removed to grasp the significance of poverty and racism and sexism in the human personality. Willie Horton's name and image became for the Republicans what the image of a Jew was for the Nazis. Willie Horton—the Black male of the United States of America—became an incarnation of fear, rape, death, and violence to white middle-class America. We in Atlanta are very happy for Louis Sullivan, the Black Secretary of Health and Human Services-designate. But Dr. Sullivan is, beneath the three-piece suit and behind the university patois, Willie Horton. His leadership in this nation must be, primarily, to lean over to Mr. Bush and Mr. Quayle, in the midst of a cabinet meeting, and smiling ever so slightly say: "George, it just ain't so."

Thony Green is Willie Horton. So am I, and so is Jesus Christ. Hannah reached her little hand up to the thick screen and through the wire mesh bulged tiny pockets of flesh that touched Thony's hard hands. As tears streamed down our cheeks, we laughed with joy. Together we were and after so long a time. The bars, the wire, the very different lives we lead could not separate us from the love we share. Then, suddenly, that death-dealing, sickle-wielding second hand cut us off. We had to leave. Thony back to the ditches at two cents per hour. We, back to 910—home, where we receive all that we need.

I am eternally thankful for the love and friendship of Thony Green. My wounds are healed and the desert places inside my rib cage are made oases of delight because I am loved by many in prison. I ask you who read this article to join me in setting your life over against prisons and slavery. Let's join together to bring love and justice to this land.

Celebrating MLK's Birth January 15, 1989

by Elizabeth Dede

I am too young to remember Martin Luther King, Jr., yet my life is profoundly influenced by his life and his teachings. I suspect that is the mark of truth, righteousness and greatness in his leadership: he leads now even though he has been dead for twenty years.

But I want to tell of his birth—his birth in me. On January 15, 1989, we should have celebrated King's 60th birthday. But he is dead, and so we mourn. Many, many years ago, King said, "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." At the time of Martin Luther King's 60th year, the U.S. is a spiritually dead nation.

On January 15, 1989, the U.S. government, and many of its citizens, chose to celebrate the birth of King by celebrating the arrival of the USS Tennessee at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base. The Tennessee is a Trident nuclear submarine—a weapons system that costs \$105 billion and is capable of death and destruction 7,296 times that of Hiroshima.



James Barr answering our phone.

Some peace activists asked, "How could the Navy be so insensitive as to bring this submarine and have these ceremonies and celebrations on this day, the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.? He was a man who lived for nonviolence and peace." Peace activists are sometimes unaware of the power of evil, sin, and death they struggle against. The Navy and the U.S. government are exquisitely sensitive to the meaning of King's life.

King is remembered now as a man who had an American Dream: according to this memory, his life and teachings strove only to bring about equal opportunity for all people. The twenty years since his death have dimmed his message of life together, of non-violence, of peace, of an end to militarism. King knew that militarism and its violence meant death and destruction for the world. And the first to feel that violence are the poor and the non-white. Dan Quayle could avoid the Vietnam War. James Barr could not. As a leader of truth and righteousness, King boldly proclaimed this message: In a world of nuclear weapons, violence means complete destruction. We must learn to live together in peace, or we will all die.

To a nation that spends billions on military build-up of arms, King's message of peace and non-violence was intolerable. And King was a man who could lead thousands of people and bring about immense social change. What

would happen if he succeeded in rallying the people of this nation to demand that the government cease its military spending and provide funds for homes, food, education, and health? Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.

Therefore, I mourn on the day of his birth that his life is now meaningless and his message is lost. The U.S. government deliberately chose to bring that submarine to Kings Bay on King's Day. His picture was plastered in the Kings Bay Naval Base newspaper. "I Have a Dream. . ." was the headline, and navy employees shared that their financially comfortable lives and their high-ranking minorities keep King's Dream alive today.

I mourned with two-hundred other people, who marched and gathered in protest of the arrival of the Tennessee. "Trident Equals Death" we proclaimed, as we carried coffins and died on the beach. Trident is not only spiritual death that King warned us of; it is not only the possible destruction of a dreadful nuclear holocaust; it is the very real, present and physical death of the poor.

As I carried a coffin down the beach where the Trident passed, I remembered other coffins, other deaths, other funeral processions. I remembered Harold Wind, a homeless man who made his home and found family with us. He was my loving uncle, who reassured me each evening as we sat together that my life was fine and good and that Mom and Dad would come around to appreciate its worth. Harold Wind died in our home, and we buried him at Jubilee. If the mind that developed the Trident submarine had used its creative energy to develop a cure for cancer, perhaps Harold would be alive today to celebrate the birth of Martin Luther King. I mourned for Harold Wind as the Tennessee passed by.

I remembered Joe Mulligan, who was executed by the State of Georgia. The St. Vincent de Paul Society helped me find a coffin for Joe. There was a funeral procession to the cemetery at Jubilee. His family and friends were overcome by grief. Joe committed a violent crime, and the State of Georgia violently killed him. There is only hate in the death penalty, and hate cannot bring an end to violence, hate, or death. It can only create more fear, sadness, and violence. Martin Luther King said, "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. . . . Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." I mourned for Joe Mulligan as the Tennessee passed by.

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Joe Mulligan's funeral.

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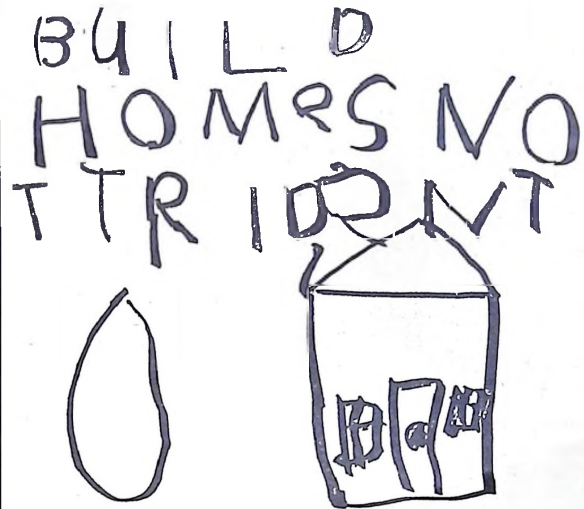
I remembered Al Smith and Greg Jordan and Pork Chop and all the many other homeless people who have died on the streets of Atlanta. If the \$105 billion that built the USS Tennessee had been used for homes, food, education, and health, Al and Greg and Pork Chop would very likely be alive today, marching in the parade to celebrate the birth of Martin Luther King. I mourned for Al Smith and Greg Jordan and Pork Chop as the Tennessee passed by.

Our nation is deaf and cannot hear the truth. King is dead, but we can proclaim his message. As we gathered in front of the submarine base, one protester turned to the gates and reminded the military forces that King fought against racism; he wanted justice for all people; he practiced non-violence; and he loudly preached that militarism must end. We went on to sing and share our messages of peace, but thirty seconds later an enormous, ominous navy helicopter began to fly low over us, circling our group, creating an ear-shattering noise. We could not continue our peaceful witness, so we sat down and kept a silent vigil. At least twenty Georgia State Troopers, anxiously and angrily pounding their billy clubs in their hands, threatened to arrest all two-hundred of us if we didn't get up and move on. Eventually, eight people were arrested as they attempted to bring King's message of peace onto the base. They were brutally dragged away and are now in bondage in jail.



Action protesting Trident, Kings Bay, 1985


This entire nation is enslaved to sin and in bondage of death. I wonder if there is any hope for life. Will we ever hear the message of Martin Luther King, or will it always be drowned out by the roar of death-wielding warplanes? How can we obtain our freedom? How can we bring life?



"BUILD HOMES NOT TRIDENT" was drawn by Benjamin Spears, age 5, for the parade celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, January 16, 1989, in Atlanta.

As Christians, our course of action is clear: we must "confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves." Then as repentant people, we must turn our lives around. We must live according to the words of Jesus, and his directions are unfailingly clear: "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me. . . . I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these sisters and brothers of mine, you did it for me!"

One protester prayed for the strength to be about the hard task of reconciliation. It is funny how sin has the power to make simple tasks of hospitality and love become hard. But in order to be released from slavery, we must freely live what we believe. As we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, open our homes to strangers, care for the sick, and visit the prisoner, we will find ourselves free at last from racism, from homelessness, from violence, from killing, from prisons, from war, from all injustice. And we will find that we no longer have the time, the money, the energy, the desire, or the will to make weapons, wage war, to hate and kill each other.

Happy Birthday, Martin Luther King, Jr.! May our long night of mourning quickly become the bright morn of celebration! 

Maria and Friends

by M.A.C. Norris
Hardwick, GA

Editor's Note: The following piece was received at Christmas time from one of our friends at the Women's Prison in Hardwick, GA.

Another Christmas at Hardwick is celebrated with so many mixed emotions and feelings. Would you believe this is my eighth? You may ask—"How do you cope or deal with your situation?"

There are times when it is not easy. The tears flow and are intermingled with laughter and prayers. Wanting to be with family and loved ones is painful, especially during this beautiful season, which is the time for family love, unity, and sharing. The most difficult part of incarceration is being away from the ones who mean the most to us. That, in itself, can be devastating.

Granted, we are human and subject to making mistakes. How many of us gave any thought to the consequences of what we were doing, or were even able to think rationally at the time? I venture to say, none, and the realization of suddenly being pulled away from everything and everyone is like a dash of cold water. What to do? Take this time to pray, meditate, take the opportunities offered and re-evaluate our life style in order to be ready and prepared for the world and society.

I've taken a long look at my life and know the mistakes I've made will not be repeated. For example: Will I ever allow a man to abuse me physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually because I was raised in a home of discipline, with love, and taught that a marriage is sacred and binding? No, I will not! I've learned over the years and now I'm capable of being an independent productive asset to any community, by giving and sharing of myself as I'm doing here.

It is by sharing with each other, by trying to be understanding, sympathetic, and not only hearing but listening to others around me who are crying for help, for some sympathy, for sisterly or brotherly love that has made me a better and stronger woman.

During these "holidays," we try to be "family" for each other, to be responsive and interact by sharing the good and bad moments. A hug from someone who genuinely cares is like a fresh breath of Spring, or a healing balm when one is in emotional pain. Gifts, cards, and well-wishes are welcome and mean more than any amount of money. We embrace love and caring for each other.

I try to share of myself with my "sisters" as much as possible and they return the good will. I can look back over the years here and smile at the thought of how much pleasure an offered cup of coffee or cigarette can be to someone who is unhappy or in need of a friend.

It is through sharing, loving and caring that we are able to cope and live in harmony. Love and prayers are powerful commodities and we can be whatever we make up our minds to be. "To DO is to BE!"

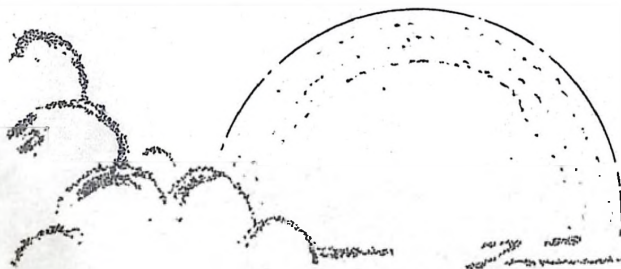
Fear can be our worst enemy. There isn't even a close second. It can and does immobilize women. Having a positive attitude helps a great deal. God made us human and subject to mistakes, but we can turn them around to our advantage by learning from them and growing.

What do I do? I think good thoughts, read, write, sing, and share with my "friends" and the women around me.

Keep a twinkle in your eye, a smile on your lips, and a song in your heart. Better days are ahead for all of us, but we must think positive. Be a significant human being and dream of a happy, healthy future. Dreams are known to become realities. Walk in the hand of God.

May you have a joyful, blessed, and happy Holiday Season. God bless each and everyone of you. I pray your next Christmas will be celebrated with your families and loved ones.

Once there was a rainbow,
I climbed it day by day,
When I reached the top I slide down all the way.
Oh, I love mountains, I Love hills and I love
Daffodils more than pills.



by - Christina Johnson
by - Hannah Larig-Davis

The Prodigal Son Revisited

by David Pritchard

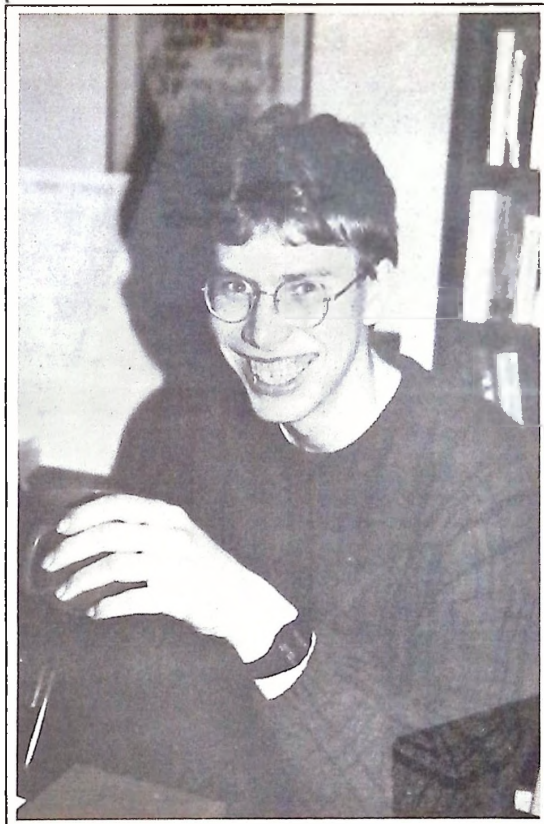
Editor's Note: David Pritchard is finishing his last year of studies at University College, Oxford, England. We look forward to his next visit.

It seemed like nothing had changed. Of course there were the minor differences, such as a new fridge in the kitchen and a different sofa in the lounge, and while the warmth and love was still evident in the members of the community, eighty percent of the faces had changed. It felt like I had been away for two weeks and meanwhile somebody had shipped in a whole different group of people. But that did not matter. What was important was that I had come back to the place of my "rebirth" and it did not take much time before I was laughing and talking with my new found brothers and sisters as if I had known them for a long time. A banner I saw in a friend's house could equally be applied to the Open Door—"There are no strangers here, just friends we haven't met yet."

My first stay at the Open Door was from January to May 1986. I had just turned nineteen and had come from my native country, England, to work as a resident volunteer for three and a half months before going back home to start university. During those two years at university, my mind would occasionally drift back to Atlanta, to the soup kitchen, the shower line, the Butler St. breakfast, and I looked forward to the day when I could return.

That day came on Saturday the 19th of September this past year. I only had one week to spend at the Open Door, but that week saw a mixture of emotions and at the end, in some ways, I was more reluctant to leave than I had been the first time around. What was particularly wonderful was seeing some good friends looking healthier and better than two years before, and whose eyes reflected the love of God that surrounded them. That gave me hope and joy and belief that things can change, that maybe the healing power of Christ will continue to bind up the wounds that we all, knowingly or unknowingly, inflict. But that was just one side of the coin. On the other side were other friends who looked sick, haggard and tired, some of whom I could barely recognize. That, undoubtedly, was painful and distressing. Life at the Open Door had often been a juxtaposition of times of joy, laughter and hope, followed by times of despair, disappointment and tears, and it seemed that had not changed. Furthermore, living in a community is not easy. Wearing my rose-tinted glasses and coming back to the community for short stays, life at the Open Door looks utopian. However, the mere fact of living so close to one another, and being confined to a small private space can lead to frustration and tension, and the intensity of the relationships can also bring disappointment, aggravation and disillusionment with other community members. But through the hardships and tension, there was still love: love between the members of the community, love of God for all those who come through the doors of 910 Ponce de Leon, and love given to me by people I barely knew.

The most disturbing thing of all, however, was the longer lines at the soup kitchen with more hungry people needing to be fed. The Sunday soup kitchen, which we used to believe was the most peaceful soup kitchen in Atlanta, had doubled in size, and as size increased, so did tension and so did my frustration. The same old questions kept coming back to me: why do we have to feed all these people? why do they have no homes? why are there so many people waiting to come into our house to



David, 1986

eat our food and to wash in our showers? Frustration breeds resentment, resentment towards those people who are victims of a society that has turned its back on God. I believe that it is only by the grace of God that the Open Door can continue to exist in the face of so much suffering, pain, and disappointment.

Back at university, what strikes me as being my most lasting impression is the realization of how long, hard and unglamorous the fight against injustice can be. While I had been away at university, the struggles of the Open Door had continued and still do despite the worsening problems. It is in this way that I felt like the returning prodigal son (and was certainly welcomed with similar love and affection), being aware of the continuance of the daily and often difficult thankless tasks during my absence. With more people homeless and hungry, with increasingly overcrowded prisons, with more chaotic and conflict-ridden streets, I was impressed with and challenged by the commitment that allows the Open Door to continue its work. The image I have brought back with me is one of the community running inside a treadmill—the faster you run, the more the treadmill turns, and the more time and energy you spend working against society's violence, the further the society travels down the road of hostility, alienation and conflict. This may seem a depressing and discouraging conclusion, and it probably is so to the world's eyes. But our goals are not the world's goals and our reasons for action are not the world's reasons for action. We are called to act because of our love of God and our love for our brothers and sisters, and to be able to do this is reward enough, even though "results" may be few and far between. There is hope in the Open Door Community, and I thank God that it is a "city on a hill" and "a light to the world," and I pray that it is enabled to continue to be so in the future.



The Dialogue Continues ...

READERS CONTINUE TO RESPOND TO
ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

Dear Ed,

Your proposal of a fixed long-term sentence for capital crimes as an alternative to the death penalty, has evoked general agreement. A number worry about long sentences in all cases since circumstances concerning the crime differ, as does the conduct of prisoners once incarcerated.

To find political support for abolishing the death penalty, it may be necessary to institute initially a long prison sentence. However, O.J. Keller in the November issue pointed out that under federal statutes previously a life sentence required the prisoner to serve a minimum of 20 years, but this was later reduced to 10 years. Thus, if public support for death penalty abolition leads toward a long minimum life term, such support later on might lead to a shorter minimum term.

You've made another critical contribution by raising the issue.

Best,

Courtney Siceloff
Atlanta, GA



Dear Ed,

Because of my busyness here, I haven't been able to write sooner, but I was deeply appreciative of your recent explorations into the alternatives to the death penalty. I was particularly impressed by your openness and humility and the dialogical tone of your comments.

I confess I have been put off by the "hard-liners" on both sides of this issue and I found myself seriously challenged to be more open to a forceful no to the death penalty as a result of your openness to a forceful no to capital crimes.

Interestingly (to me at least) I think 21 years a bit too long like another respondent or two.

I pray for you all. Please pray for us.

Yours,

Steve Rhodes
Academic Dean
Professor of Theology
Memphis Theological Seminary

Grace and peaces of mail

Dear Friends,

As one of your contributors, I receive your paper Hospitality. I was not pleased to see the article on page two of your December 1988 issue concerning handguns. If we would do anywhere near as much work on taking away people's lack of respect for their fellow humans and human life as we do on unnecessary gun control, I think things would be safer. Guns will always be available and are not the problem. The problem is people who have so little respect for others that they are willing to hurt or kill whether it be with a gun, fist or any other weapon or method.

I realize I am only one contributor out of presumably many, but I must let you know that I support your mission because I presumed that your contributions are used to help those in need and to add at least a small amount of quality to some portion of their life. I cannot, however, support attempts at political action such as requests for gun control, especially with the flawed information and incorrect conclusions that your article attempts to lead the reader to draw. In the future, I hope you will continue to use your funds to help the homeless and your prison ministry rather than avenues of political policy. Certainly your ministry to the homeless and to prisoners is your greatest gift to others.

Yours truly,

M.N. Coffey
Lafayette, LA

Dear Ed,

I took the time this Sunday to read "In Defense of Band-aids." As I read, the five homeless children who share our home played on the patio while their mothers planned the evening meal. It is true. Advocacy without direct service soon rings hollow. Daily our guests teach, inspire and bless us. Thanks for your insight.

Clare Hanrahan
St. Petersburg, FL

Dear Friends,

A friend and I were discussing the Israeli-Palestinian war, and he said, "Abused children tend to become child abusers," referring to the Jews and their mistreatment of the Palestinians. I thought that my friend's observation was most astute and accurate. In reference to the article by Ed Loring, I say right on!! Someone must help the dialogue get going between people who believe in and care about right and wrong.

Right on, too, for the Open Door and Hospitality and all the staff and volunteers.

Love,

Delbert Tibbs
Chicago, IL

Editor's Note: Delbert Tibbs spent several years on death row in Florida. His poetry has appeared in Hospitality.

The Cost of the Death Penalty

It has cost the State of Florida \$57 million to execute 18 men. It is estimated that this is six times the cost of life imprisonment. A report from the Miami Herald said that keeping a prisoner in jail for life costs the state \$515,964 based on a 40-year life span; it costs \$3.17 million for each execution. The newspaper broke the cost of execution down to show \$36,000 to \$116,700 for trial and sentencing; \$69,480 to \$160,000 for mandatory state review, which is not required in non-capital cases; \$274,820 to \$1 million for additional appeals; \$37,600 to \$312,000 for jail costs, and \$845 for the actual execution.

Kansas, an abolitionist state, remains without a death penalty because of the work of the Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty. A move to reinstate the death penalty in Kansas was defeated and much of the Kansas Coalition's success can be attributed to a cost study. The study concluded that after an initial \$7 million to build a death row, the death penalty would cost the taxpayers \$7 million a year over the regular cost of corrections. The question, "can Kansas afford the death penalty" was put to the legislature who answered by voting 22-18 against reinstatement.

(Source: the Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty Newsletter)

LOS ANGELES CATHOLIC WORKER

632 NORTH BRITANNIA STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033

Dear Catholic Workers and Friends,

During his recent 36 day fast Cesar Chavez made a personal request for support from the Catholic Worker Movement as a whole.

Even before the historic 1965 Delano grape strikes the Catholic Worker was vigorously supporting the United Farmworkers. Dorothy Day firmly believed that Cesar was a spiritual leader in the tradition of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

We believe that his recent fast was undertaken in a spirit of faithfulness and that it was directed not towards his adversaries and detractors, but rather towards his supporters and advocates, particularly communities of faith and resistance like the Catholic Worker.

Because the struggle is long, the work is difficult and the results are minimal, successful boycotting demands the participation of people of faith who have internalized an indelible vision of a just and compassionate world where—in the hungry are fed, the homeless are sheltered and the fruits of the earth are equitably distributed.

We realize that your community like our community struggles from day to day, from crisis to crisis, trying to respond to the demands of soup kitchen, hospitality and justice work. With constantly fluctuating community membership, volunteer commitment and financial resources, it is a miracle and a gift from God that any of us make it through the year with grace and sanity.

Thus, to ask for a substantial commitment of time and resources beyond what we already are doing is to ask for a sacrifice of the highest order. And that is exactly what Cesar is asking from us.

In the name of justice, in the name of our foundress Dorothy Day, in the name of the historical relationship between our two movements, Cesar has asked us to make room in our lives at the table of justice for the farmworkers. Here in Los Angeles we have constituted ourselves as the local boycott committee, committing ourselves to boycotting at least one day a week as well as organizing our supporters, Church groups and community groups to join us.

Though this commitment required a heroic effort in re-scheduling and re-ordering of priorities, it is still in view of the enormity of the problem, a small contribution. But we believe that even small efforts undertaken in behalf of Christ's kingdom and maintained in the spirit of faithfulness will be efficacious. Finally, we believe that the poor will inherit the earth, that justice will triumph and that farmworkers will one day taste the fruits of their labor.

Hasta la victoria siempre!

Jeff Dietrich

Jeff Dietrich
for the L.A. Catholic Worker

Dear Cesar,


- ☐ We are keeping the boycott in our house.
- ☐ We will get the word out through our newsletter.
- ☐ We will boycott at our neighborhood stores.
- ☐ We will organize our friends and supporters to boycott with us.
- ☐ Please send us boycott materials and updates.

Community _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Send to: Cesar Chavez P.O. Box 62 Keene, CA 93531



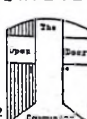
Holy Week with the Homeless

We invite you to join us for worship
and/or a 24 hour period of solidarity
with our friends on the street.

Holy Week on the streets
of Atlanta March 19 - 25

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE
with our homeless friends
March 26
Steak & Egg Breakfast Afterwards

910 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E. Atlanta, Ga. 30306 404-874-9652



Open Door Schedule

WE ARE OPEN...

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 1:30 until 6:00pm, and from 7:30 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days. (Both phone & door are not answered during our lunch break from noon until 1:30.) Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are closed until 1:00pm. Please do not make unscheduled drop-offs of clothing, food, etc. on Sunday mornings. Sunday afternoon our phones and door are answered from 1:00 until 5:00pm.

OUR MINISTRY...

SOUP KITCHEN—Monday-Saturday, 11am-12 noon; Sunday 2-4pm

BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST—Monday-Friday, 7:15am

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES—Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9-11am (Be sure to call; schedule varies) USE OF PHONE—Monday-Saturday, 9am-4pm.

SHELTER REQUESTS—Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon.

BIBLE STUDY—Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm.

WEEKEND RETREATS—Every 6th Weekend (for our household & volunteers/supporters)— February 17 - 19

Open Door Community Worship

*We gather for worship and Eucharist at
5:00pm on Sunday evenings
followed by supper together.*

Join us!

- January 15 Worship at 910
5pm Eucharist
5:30 Richard Deats—Fellowship of Reconciliation—Speaking
- January 22 Worship at 910
5pm Eucharist
5:30 Open Door Music Night (Bring your instrument and sing along)
- January 29 Worship at 910
Ed Weir Preaching
- February 5 Worship at 910
Randy Loney Preaching
- February 12 Worship at 910
5pm Eucharist
5:30 Panel on Women in Prison
Sandra Barnhill, Tanya Clarke, and Elizabeth Cheatham
- February 17-19 Retreat at Dayspring
Focus on Prisons and Criminal Justice
- February 26 Worship at 910
- March 5 Worship at 910
5pm Eucharist
5:30 Open Door Music Night
- March 12 Worship at 910
- March 19 Passion Sunday
Worship at 910 and Commissioning to the Streets
for Holy Week Vigil
- March 26 Easter Celebration!
6:30 AM
Worship followed by Steak and Eggs Breakfast
with the Homeless
(No evening worship)

Every sixth Sunday the Community has a weekend retreat outside the city.
This replaces our evening worship at 910 Ponce de Leon Ave.

NEEDS

SMALL CAR	CHAPSTICK
CHEESE	EASY CHAIRS
MAYONNAISE	ROCKING CHAIR
<u>MOUNTAIN BIKE</u>	COFFEE
VITAMIN C	DEODORANT
MARTA TOKENS	MEN'S COATS
POSTAGE STAMPS	HAMS AND TURKEYS
MEN'S LARGE SHOES (12-14)	LAMPS

*From 11am - 1pm Monday- Saturday,
our attention is focused on serving the
soup kitchen and household lunch. As
much as we appreciate your coming, this
is a difficult time for us to receive
donations. When you can come before
11:00 or after 1:00, it would be helpful.
Thanks.*

Newspaper Requests - If you or a friend would like
to receive HOSPITALITY, please fill in this form
and return to Willie London at the Open Door
Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Atlanta,
Georgia 30306-4212.

Name _____
Street _____
City, State, Zip _____