TORTURE THROUGH A 'CHILD'S' EYES: The Hole at Hellzdale Prison – A Report

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(For the October 28th-29th Conference of the Pennsylvania Network Against Torture) - Updated and revised

"To deny modes of accountability reinforces impunity" - Justice Richard Goldstone, The Nation.com, pg.8, May 2, 2011

"We now must pay for the soap, toilet paper or sanitary napkins and can't get them until the Unit Manager feels... we need them... those who are terminally ill can't hurt no one, are still not allowed to leave... Sharon Wiggins... came here when she was 15. She is now 60. Male officers here touch our private parts and smash our breasts like they belong to them." – Geraldine Lucas, Muncy Prison (From Leon Williams' Journal, Dec. 1, 2011, pg.22). Mrs. Lucas is 79 years-old and has been imprisoned now for 40 years. Mrs. Wiggins is now blind and was sentenced to Death-by-Incarceration as a child.

Now jailed 45 years.

"Solitary confinement... can be as clinically distressing as physical torture." – The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law

"It is a crime under Pennsylvania law for a corrections officer to see assaults or be aware of assaults and not stop them or report them." – Stephen A. Zappala, Jr., Alleghany Co. D.A. (Associated Press, Sept. 2011)

At the tender age of 17, on May 4, 1981, like the biblical Joseph, I was falsely accused and convicted for a crime (homicide-robbery) I did not commit. Not only am I actually INNOCENT, but we have the evidence to prove it. Upon arrest, I was sent to the Youth Study Center (YSC) – commonly called 'the Center' – which is a county jail for children. The Center had a special wing for children that were to be certified and tried as adults.

I hadn't been up the Center for a full week when I walked into the bathroom (showers, toilets and sinks) and a large fifteen year-old was sexually threatening a much smaller, and very frighten, fifteen year-old. The smaller boy, had just arrived like I had, but I don't think he'd been there for a month. The taller boy was about to sexually assault – if he hadn't already – or rape the shorter one. He was so engrossed that he didn't even turn towards me. The smaller boy, who was trapped in the corner by the showers, was facing me, "Yo! What da fuck you doin'?" I confronted the aggressor. "I'ma break this little bitch down", the bully replied without even turning around to see who I was. The smaller boy was frantically trying to make eye contact with me, asking for help inaudibly. I moved on his cue, "Get da fuck out of here with that 'mo shit cuz'." The bully turned around immediately realizing I was warning him! "You betta not touch 'im." "What if I do? It ain't none of your bizness!" I took a half step forward and as if I were spitting my words into his eyes, "Touch 'im and find out." He back up and stepped to the side in order to let the victim pass by, freeing him from his corner. At first the shorter boy was afraid to move. I titled my head towards the door and told him to leave, "Main man, roll." "Thanks cuz." "It's nothin", I replied, never taking my eyes off the bully. Once he was completely out of the bathroom, the bully tried to cop a plea. "All Cas, I wasn't gonna do nuffin' to 'im. Carp' and Bennis told me to fuck 'im up and they would give me some extra snacks all week. I was just scarin' the lil' nigga."

Just like the children we were, the staff would give us snacks at night, but some guards would use 'snack time' as leverage to bribe some of the boys to do their dirty work against stand up prisoners. Especially those of us who stood up to the violent guards. Carp' and Bennis were two such brutal guards at YSC's security unit.

"What chu think I'm a nut? You was tryna *fuck* that boah!" "Carp' and 'em wanted me to fuck 'im up, but I was just gonna scare 'im. I swear to God cuz!" "Then what happens next week when Carp' and 'em pay me to <u>fuck you</u> up?" The look of bewilderment on his face told me that he was clueless and had never contemplated that inevitable betrayal by the guards. "You trippin' Cas, I ain't got no beef with you, I'm just tryna get some extra snacks."

"We have to recognize that incarceration of youth per se is toxic." – Dr. Barry Krisberg, President, National Council on Crime and Delinquency

After being sentenced to Death-by-Incarceration (DBI) and then shipped up state to the maximum security prison at Graterford, the fourth largest prison in the country, three jails since then, I'm now at Houtzdale; still in prison 30 years

later. I'm just learning that the practice of staff 'hiring' inmates to attack fellow prisoners has a name: the guards call it "Nigger Gladiator Games" (NGG).

Some staff often make bets, like a sporting event, as to whether the hitman will be successful in carrying out the PA DOC's brand of Amerikkan cannibalism.

Corporate U.S. media represents the height of hypocrisy when it does in depth stories on prisons of foreign nations like China but is mute, deaf and blinded by color when concerning prison torture in America. China and the U.S. are nearly the same when it comes to prison violence, abuse and torture, etc... by staff. Some could even call it a parallel universe. But if we are truthful – and we must be – America is worst because she espouses all of the lofty platitudes on human rights and moral conviction. About being a world leader in these areas, but cannot explain – in plain English – how American prison guards have so much blood on their hands and boots, one would swear we were Red China and the big Communist Republic was merely pale pink in comparison. The series of broke, battered, brutalized, traumatized, terrorized, tortured, and dead bodies don't lie.

"Guards get prisoners to beat other prisoners – they call it 'playing hide and seek' and someone gets beaten to death" – wife of Qi Chenghuai (Qi Chenghuai is a prominent Chinese writer who was beaten and threaten by guards during his four years spent in jail for allegedly exposing corruption and government malfeasance) Newsweek, July 4 & 11, 2011, pg.50

The Houtzdale attacks for hire are deadly, and always end in a prisoner being maimed, scarred (physically, mentally and spiritually), handicapped or dead. How they have managed to keep the murders silent is a testament to both the public ignorance and the staff at Houtzdale's ability to lie with a straight face, bury truth, as the enemy and have absolutely no regard for human life that is the prisoners in their charge. This reality has me existing in a constant state of fear and paranoia and my mental health is in a perpetual state of *disease*. This state-sanctioned savagery is overwhelming for adults, but for children it is beyond instant devastation.

The DOJ under the Obama administration released a 2010 report on children in prison which revealed that, "More than half" the suicides at juvenile detention centers "occurred within six days" of a juvenile's commitment to the facility. See "Characteristics of Juvenile Suicide in Confinement" at www.ojp.usdoj.gov.

As Mrs. Lucas indicates, for girls and women it gets even more torturous. "Women represent 7% of prison population but accounted for 32% of victims in prison sexually assaulted, raped or harassed by staff. Women make up 13% of the jail population but 56% of the victims sexually assaulted or raped in jails by staff. — Dept. of Justice report on Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails, Jan. 2011.

These are the reports we've been getting from girls and women at Muncy and Cambridge Spring, female prisons, crying for redress but to no avail. The PA DOC just sweeps it under the rug each time. Currently at Cambridge Springs, the women are drowning in the midst of a mass food contamination outbreak, and battling to fend off staff-sanctioned extortion rings and sexual predation by prisoners and staff. In 2009, a report entitled "Hidden Injustice" told us that, "Facility staff sometimes instigate or facilitate fights or sexual abuse between youth." Two years later the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) report titled "Sexual Victimization Reported by Adult Correctional Authorities" was summarized by an independent legal watchdog group that, "The unfortunate conclusion one must draw from BJS report is that sexual victimization of prisoners — especially female prisoners — is still widespread in U.S. correction facilities." Yet the violence, threats, coercion, harassment, abuse, degrading, inhumane, and other cruel treatment continue unabated.

"TAKE THEM AWAY INTO THE HOLE" - Sept. 1, 1670, City's Chief Criminal Judge, London Court of Sessions

That was the order to the guards to take William Penn Jr. and his co-defendant to the hole because they spoke out against corruption. The judge had just charged and threaten the jury to convict young Penn who had been brought down from Newgate Prison. That was the seventeenth-century England, eleven years before Penn Jr. cross the pond and founded this state and named it after his father, Admiral Sir William Penn. Unfortunately 341 years later it is still called "the Hole" and very little has changed. Correction, technology has changed but the same basic spirit to torture, silence dissent and the fledging principles of democracy, abuse, oppression and degradation not only still exist, but have gotten worst. The offspring of this mindset have become, to paraphrase U.S. Justice Thomas, "high-tech" at "lynching". A level of sophistication where they rarely, if ever at all, leave finger or footprints, scars or evidence of their addiction to torture.

I've been in Houtzdale's hole (solitary confinement) for more than a year now, and have been subjected to, as well as witnessed multiple acts of torture, retaliation, threats, coercion, violence, abuse, degrading, inhumane, and other cruel treatment by guards and staff (e.g. medical, maintenance, mailroom, 'legal aid', kitchen stewards, etc...).

Prisoners call it 'Hellzdale' (the Valley of Hell). If this is true, then devils indeed operate, control and profit off this prison pit of fire. I was locked in the hole this trip—not much different than before... as retaliation for exposing some of the White supremacist practices and customs of some staff. This time I exposed Kenneth Hollibaugh, Major of Unit Management and other like-minded staff. Major Hollibaugh's retaliation stem from I found out that he had secretly, not only excluded all Black prisoners—in a predominantly Black population—from a meet and greet session with a law professor and his students to discuss prison, law and getting out of prison. The Major picked an all-White group of convicts to pow-wow with the law professor.

As soon as I found out, I cited the Major for it. That an "all-White anything" in this age of Barack Obama is unacceptable. Then Warden Britton, agreed with me. See Citation to Hollibaugh [1].

I also filed a grievance against c/o Clevenstein for threatening me that he was, "The Hangman of Houtzdale". This was right after he had been caught making a black hangman's noose and using it to terrorize other Black prisoners. C/o Clevenstein was fired because of my grievance. See Grievance #220132 [2].

However, in less than a year, he was rehired at the coercing, allegedly, by his union that filed a complaint to get him rehired so he can continue his hate crimes along with several other staff. See this writer's "Noose Crew Mentality... Back at Houtzdale..." [3].

Once Warden Britton left the prison, via a promotion, Major Hollibaugh began his campaign of retaliation. First, he secretly took my z-code (single cell status that forbids them from putting someone in the cell with you). He didn't tell me about this which set me up for 'Nigger Gladiator Games' by one of the Major's hires. To be physically assaulted and or sexually preyed upon. Then the Major ordered one of his subordinates to threaten me to cut my hair — which he knows I would not do, because it is sacrilegious. I have been growing my hair natural for nearly 15 years because it comports with my Spiritual Persuasion. This sent me to the hole where the Major has tried, 6 or 7 times, to NGG me. Upon my reception at the hole, Hollibaugh had another subordinate confiscate 5 boxes of my law work which I cannot fight my case without. To prove my actual innocence and be exonerated. See Confiscation Slip #A832282 (DC-154A). Also "Innocent Juvenile + Amerikan Just-US System = Child Abuse [4].

Nigger Gladiator Games is exacerbated by the fact that it is common knowledge that staff put (force) prisoners in cells with known homosexuals, some who have diseases. Shortly thereafter we see both convicts going to the dispensary to be treated for their disease. It is not known if the sex is consensual or rape, but either way it is illegal for the PA DOC to do that.

However, they engineer and facilitate it on a weekly basis. This is not a statement against homosexuals, because whatever two grown people consent to, is their business, but rather heterosexuals being endangered in this manner is another clear example of what is condoned and orchestrated as a practice and custom by the DOC but is unlawful in this state. This is to keep prisoners in fear, unsafe and insecure and running through an unending torturous gauntlet of degradation, destruction and death.

This first day I got to the hole, I hadn't been back here for an hour: "When c/o Long and another c/o, who is semi-rookie-ish (Cinko), came in and got some linen for a prisoner and c/o Long takes out two towels and throws them on the floor and begins to step on and kick them. The nameless rookie... starts doing the same thing. They both laugh as if it's their little inside joke." (Both of them leaned forward to stay out of the view of the security camera. Neither of them noticed me squatting at the bottom of the holding intake cage) – Excerpts from the Torture Logs: Torture by Any Other Name... Tuesday, 12.14.2010.

When I heard their laugh, I knew it was more to it than just two hateful people. Softpedia confirmed it for me with an article titled: "Why Do We Laugh". 'Psychologists and philosophers distill laughter down to "three basic theories" and the second of the three, "the superiority theory" is a propos here. It "dates back to Aristotle" thus speaks volumes on European culture. "We laugh when we see somebody else doing something stupid or 'HAVING SOME KIND OF

MISFORTUNE AND WE FEEL SUPERIOR TO THIS PERSON. WHEN WE FEEL SUCH SUPERIORITY WE LAUGH''' (emphasis added).

This is one of the telltale signs of White supremacy and it is rampant here. It is also an indication that those who hold these views and practices are very comfortable with their surroundings and their ability to get away with it, and not be punished by their supervisors.

The first week or so in the hole I was assaulted with a pair of handcuffs by c/o Rowles and needed medical treatment. The physician's assistant who saw me did nothing to heal or lessen the extreme pain I was in. I filed a complaint against Rowles. See Grievance #349287 [5]. Major Hollibaugh is in charge of Rowles, and everyone in the hole, so it was covered up and my grievance ignored.

The first month in the hole I watched in horror as the same c/o Rowles brutally beat a prisoner name Edward Solimini because he was Puerto Rican and rumored to be gay. See three sworn affidavits from the victim and two witnesses [6] [7] [8]. The beating was savage for several reasons, not the least of which was that Mr. Solimini was handcuffed behind his back and had a dog leash attached to it while he was slammed to the ground by c/o Rowles and pummeled while 3 other guards stood by and did nothing to stop him.

The entire ordeal was captured on the security camera and the now Warden, Steven Glunt and Major Hollibaugh were notified about it, but did nothing but cover it up, or ignore it, as if it were legal. But as Alleghany County D.A., Stephen Zappala has made clear, "It is a crime under (PA) law". The Office of Special Investigation and Intelligence (OSII) was notified about the Solimini beating but did nothing. The OSII is the PA DOC's internal affairs but functions more like an internal "who cares". They don't do anything until the media or public officials (things outside their control) get involved and start probing.

"The use of solitary confinement increases the risk that acts of torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment will go undetected and unchallenged." – Juan E. Mendez, U.N. Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council. Interim Report, Sept. 2011, GA Resolution 65/205.

"[As revealed by] the war on terror... with little concern or demurral we have consigned tens of thousands of our citizens to conditions that horrified our highest court a century ago. Our willingness to discard these standards for American prisoners made it easy to discard the Geneva Conventions prohibiting similar treatment of foreign prisoners of war". –

Prof. Atul Gawande, Harvard University.

Many staff here use this prison as a personal fiefdom for amusement by cruelty, abuse, violence and torture. Basic human, civil and constitutional rights denial is the standard practice at Houtzdale: The mandated one hour yard, law library, food, legal and paralegal mail, competent or any medical treatment. Just recently, I was denied 10 consecutive meals. I was starved for three days and a 1/3. On the second day a guard gave me a bag with feces in it for breakfast. I have lost over 30 pounds. I now have that Nazi Germany hollowed out face and eyes concentration camp zombie look. You can see the bone structure in my face and body.

The attacks against your being while in prison are multifaceted in general, but in the hole those attacks are accelerated. The cells are brutally cold... constantly! The heat, or lack of it, is controlled by staff. My hands and feet are always like ice cubes, numb and with very little or no feeling. According to the New York Times, harsh coldness is just one of many other devices of torture used in prisons across the country, "We're freezing. The air conditioner is blowing (full blast)." – Ronald Yandell, Hunger Strike leader at Pelican Bay State Prison.

Extremely bright fluorescent-like lights are left on all night. "Light at night suppresses production of the hormone melatonin, and this could have caused the brain changes." 'A new study gave one more reason for humans to shut (off) even the blurry light at bedtime'. That it, "caused hamsters to show signs of depression." That "autopsies of the animals revealed physical changes to the hippocampus, a region of the brain linked to mood." – Time Magazine, Nov. 29, 2010, pg.17

It is no accident that most of the men here in the hole are Black and of color. Princeton's Dr. Cornell West, had it absolutely right when he said, "We're talking about something that is somotic. It's at the level of body and it's sonic, at the level of sound. We don't even like the sound of your name. You see that's White supremacy at a deep level." My

spirituality takes the brunt of the attacks by staff. Though the denial of having spiritual services like many other men of faith, and constantly being threaten to cut my hair are huge violations of my rights, none are bigger for the Noose Crew Mentality than my name, which was legally changed by the courts nearly 20 years ago. Their attack on my name, Muti A. Ajamu Osagboro denies me multiple in-camp services and anything else in my life that is connected to my name – which is everything. Visits, phone calls, mail (legal and paralegal), education programs, mental therapy, showers, physical outdoor exercise, law work access, etc., etc., etc. All of these things are at one time or another, and still are denied arbitrarily because of the systemic hatred of my lawful name and its use. As well as the Spiritual Persuasion it is connected to. Prof. Molefi Kete Asante's words ring loud and true, "For some Whites our rejection of White names will be dramatic." The professor punctuates with unassailable ancient truth, "The essence of psychological health is that one deals and is capable of dealing with his identity." See writer's reply to a misconduct ticket [9].

At the beginning of Summer I watched in terror as Hellzdale guards denied a prisoner eighteen meals in a row. They did it because they said he'd been convicted of sex offenses against minors and he was basic White trash. After the eighteenth meal denial, I filed a grievance that night after dinner. The very next morning the guards came and moved him off the block so we couldn't see them starve him to death. Lt. Groce did nothing when I asked him was he alright with the starving. When the count was at 12 or 15, Warden Glunt came by on one of his rare tours, I asked him, "Are you alright with the fact that your guards have denied 12 cell (12 or 15) meals in a row? Without hesitation the Warden said, "Yup! It's all his choice." How do you choose to let someone starve you? That type of sick logic is typical PA DOC illogic. See Grievance #365859 [10].

This brand of lawlessness is practiced in the prison's general population and the hole, with cosmetic changes to fit the particular environment. Guards – sometimes openly – pay informants and hit men with ice cream, photo or concession tickets. Free t.v.. and/or radio and cable. Packs of cigarettes or bags of loose tobacco. Grant extra visits or return visits that were taken for a jail infraction. Allow the continuance of selective extortion, gambling and prostitution rings and other rackets and graft for which particular guards get a percentage. Guards from so-called security use these confiscated items to pay off or bribe hitmen and informants. Security, labelled as Security Threat Group (STG), various Black males who are friends, associates, religious brethren or litigators as a pretext because these men regularly expose human, civil and constitutional rights violations within the prison.

In the hole, the currency is an extra piece of chicken, a biscuit or watermelon (another one of their little sick inside neo Nazi jokes). A piece of cake, hamburger or tuna fish. Early release from the hole or the stoppage or lessening of some form of cruelty, abuse or torture. The denial of a desk and chair to hamstring or chill your ability to litigate. False positive on a urine test. Give your personal mail to other prisoners who work for them so their agent can harm your family and friends. Put litigators in the exercise yard next to one of their hirelings so they can throw urine and defection on you with nothing or nowhere to wash it off. Put you next door to one of their minions, who have been driven insane by the RHU toxicity, so he bangs on the metal, doors, tables, sinks, toilets or walls, constantly, to assure that you get no sleep at night thereby totally destroying your circadian rhythm. Sleep deprivation cause organ failure and weakens your immune system which opens the door for disease and keeps you sick.

Around the same time they starved the White dude, I watched the guards prepared to "cell extract" (*) two young Black men because they reported that unknown guards had come into the cell — while we were all in the yard outside — and left a hangman's noose with a threatening letter using White supremacist anti-Black slurs in it. The young men demanded to see the chain of command and know which guards had been in the cell. It came out the c/o Cinko had been one of the two. C/o Cinko was one of the same guards I'd seen stomping the towel the first day I arrived here. The ordeal, like most, was caught on tape.

(*) A cell extraction is when 5 or 10 guards put on all black war suits with several weapons (pepper spray, electric shock shield, etc.) and rush in the cell and violently remove the prisoner(s). It's the epitome of ganging up on one or two men. Gang activity for real.

Both of the men filed grievances and it was covered up. One of the young boy's grievance was dismissed because a staff member concluded that he was not personally effected by the ordeal. See the grievance he filed #365160 [11]. What many don't know, is that the culture of torture and campaign of terror, violence, abuse and dehumanization – the entire country was supposedly appalled by, on the news from overseas, in prisons at Abu Ghraib, Bagram and Guantanamo Bay were led by soldiers who were also prison guards in their civilian jobs. The ringleader and most ruthless of the torturers was a PA DOC guard, Charles Graner. Before deploying to Abu Ghraib, Graner walked fresh out of the cell blocks of Greene County State Prison in Western PA. As I explain in a letter to President Obama, Charles Graner merely honed his torture skills in

the PADOC and simply outsourced them when called up for military duty. Many staff here are current or ex-military personnel. See letter to President [12].

'Leaving no prints or visible scars', which is why I call these prisons sanitized torture chambers. These atrocious acts usually fall under three headings: 1. Human and civil rights violations, 2. Hate crimes / crimes against humanity, 3. Causing a threat to public safety and health. As a poignantly discerning sistah once pointed out to me, "Hurt people, hurt people." Particularly when they have not gotten the necessary help or healing. A sage jurist warned the nation about torture, violence and abuse against prisoners: [From a] society long-term perspective there are sound reasons for prohibiting cruel

violence and abuse against prisoners: [From a] society long-term perspective there are sound reasons for prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment; "people who are abused and treated with violence are those more likely to treat others abusively and violently." Confining people under conditions of extreme violence, fear and hostility "and releasing them back out into society is like throwing a ticking time bomb into a crowd." (emphasis added) – La Maire, V. Maass 44 F1 623 Aug. 31,190

Sadly, the judges warning has not been heeded but rather covered up like termites assuring a certain accelerated destructive process in our society which weakens daily public safety and health. The book BLACK PAIN by Terrie Williams does an excellent job in identifying the countless ways the seeds of this destruction reveal themselves in our everyday lives and in this society.

The more defenseless the person, the more brutal the torture. I've been at Hellzdale for nearly 7 years. For the entire time that I was not in the hole I was working with men who are mentally ill. Co-facilitating a support talk therapy group between men who have been sentenced to Death-by-Incarceration (DBI) and those with mental disability. The program is called "Friends Helping Friends" and I was recruited for the project as soon as I got here by Francis Schuster, head of the Psychology Department. Timidity notwithstanding, he is a good man, and a rare being in the PA DOC. We get to interact with the mentally ill on the Special Needs Unit (SNU) block in a way that brings the men out of the isolation their block seems to create. Schuster, started the program, after a rash of suicides on that block — we later found out because of mistreatment by block guards. It was here that I experienced firsthand that the torture, harassment, coercion, threats and retaliation against the mentally ill, in general population, is second to none. When you put them in the hole, the cruelty only multiplies. I tried to encapsulate that experience in some prose I wrote, paying homage to them and our group's role in helping them fend off predatory staff. It's titled "MIND GARDEN: WHAT WE HAVE AND NEED" See at [13].

Because of our efforts to empower, prison staff constantly sabotage your writings and reading material. Legal and otherwise. Incoming and outgoing. It is destroyed, withheld, lost, denied or given to one of their hireling inmates. Anything that educates the prisoner on how to better oneself relating to having a coherent thought, even after the DOC's mental butchering, about what was, and is being done to torture you, and most all others who fight against the injustice, is tacitly outlawed. This is why the quotes at the very beginning of this report come from two publications that were both banned by the PA DOC at one time or another. Still we dare to write, dare to struggle, dare to win. In the first volume of a trilogy I wrote: "A seemingly routine phone call becomes an introspective soul quake... Not just her voice, but the vibration from its sincerity, was an immediate extraction from the desert of privation. Heighten by the perfected eardrum caress of her endearing accent, both titillating and unwittingly inspiring... ending isolation and breaking the grip of unnatural solitary... Prison terrorizes even the most active imagination trying to fathom the magnitude of cruelty in governmental barbarism. America the unbeautiful, merely begins to explain the depths of depravity which is prison construction. Where one can hear the likes of Comrade Cinque, wax insightfully paradigmatic about Lady Liberty copulating with her Uncle Sam. Giving birth to an incestuous cracked baby: known worldwide as the Liberty Bell. But I digress.

I just cannot take out the hugeness of the human element in our (interview). Therein lies an uncontrived sensuality that heals without prescription... Sensuality that picks the lock of the shackles on Mother Nature's X-Y entangling enrichment that comes... without us calling."

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