

An Open Letter To Prisoner Advocacy Groups, And People That
Claim To Stand In solidarity with Prisoners

By; Lacino Hamilton

Incarcerated people are aware that prisoner advocacy groups and people that claim to stand in solidarity with prisoners, are not magicians. Incarcerated people are aware that these groups and individuals do not possess supernatural powers. The same way that incarcerated people are aware that the practice of wizardry did not create the many contradictions that pervade U.S. society, or lead to mass incarceration. The credit goes to the biases and prejudices of economic and political elites.

Prisons are U.S. society's ultimate means of control over people who are actually or potentially disruptive to the social order. The ultimate means of control over people who are marginalized due to the result of post-industrialism. The ultimate means of control over people who have minimal or no role in the production process. The ultimate means of control over people at the very bottom of U.S. society.

So, while most prisoner advocacy groups acknowledge in their mission statements and many speeches that police and courts and prisons need to be placed under more scrutiny, most incarcerated people do not share their sentiments of the need for reform in order to make the system work better. That would be like reforming cancer, which is impossible. Either you eradicate cancer, or it eradicates you. The entire prison industrial complex is structurally flawed. It can never do better. It can acquiesce for a moment to adjust to whatever pressure there is to stop or improve a particular practice, then return to a less offensive or more sophisticated way of exacting harm.

What are casually called problems within the prison industrial complex, are crises of genocidal proportions. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of genocide states in part, "In the present convention, Genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part...as such: [a] killing members of the group; [b] causing serious bodily or mental harm to the group; [c] deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring

about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and [d] imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

If questions lay out the contradictions and issues and guides our thinking, the questions asked should be clear and precise enough to recognize the pervasive fusion of institutional and systematic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in police, courts and prisons causes serious bodily and mental harm, deliberately inflicts on incarcerated people conditions calculated to bring about physical destruction both in whole and in part, and imposes measures intended to prevent births.

The challenge for every prisoner is how to survive this experience with humanity intact. How to emerge from this all so real nightmare, that has diminished and cancelled the resolve of the overwhelming majority of men and women unfortunate enough to be counted among prison's alum, with the necessary strength and ability to really live, as humans. The policies and rules that govern prison attempts to exploit everything in incarcerated people that is not above par; demolish every initiative, impugn all signs of individuality, and make incarcerated people co-conspirators in their own oppression.

This is why, at some point, if prisoner advocacy groups and people who claim to stand in solidarity with prisoners are to make more quality contributions to the prison struggle, incarcerated people must do the lion share of the work. They do not need people to do things for them, but with them, as facilitators. Incarcerated people must be agents of their own transformation. Sample polls, which prisoner advocacy groups love to conduct, and other statistical work which is always questionable, is not a substitute for participation by incarcerated people.

Incarcerated people appreciate the work that you do. They appreciate and acknowledge that with out you life on the inside would be much worse, but this does not erase the fact that many of the initiatives that prisoner advocacy groups and people that claim stand in solidarity with prisoners pursue, are initiated without any input at all from incarcerated people, which is greatly resented.

Incarcerated people are not looking to trade in one group of masters,

for another. Incarcerated people are looking for co-partners to co-create a new and better world.
