

SANCTUM OF EVIL

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7-17-15

Friday

Greed is contagious. It overwhelms men's hearts and breeds evil. Constricting logic and fostering fear, the minds of good men are polluted and darkened. When wounded, greed howls like the demonic beast it is; now identified, it can be slain with confidence.

In the penological interest, rights of those held before trial are deferred, because putting citizens rights aside is in the penological interest. Slavery is not dead in America; it was merely wounded. The masters hid this thing in a barn out of sight as it healed. Unbeknownst to some, it mutated, changed, metamorphosized, into a form of civility that indeed would seem to pass for one of our own brethren, whom we might walk with. Then when the town had relaxed, and the lanterns of freedom flickered lowly on the windowsills of all who would watch, this vile thing did slither off into the darkness of night.

- - - In the beginning, there was crime. And crime was the enemy. Good sought to inhibit crime; to understand, regulate, control; and when that failed; to isolate.

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CFCF is the epicenter of the "New Morality" in Philadelphia. The goal is no longer stopping crime, it is locking people up who are estimated to commit crime. If you have a record in Philadelphia, you have been targeted. Any release or relief you may have received is temporary. Any scrutiny brought upon your person by police; you get locked up. Doesn't matter if you commit a crime. Doesn't matter if you have proper I.D., papers, drivers license or registration. If you are pulled over, stopped, questioned or suspected, "you locked up". That is why the jails and courts are crowded, and for no other reason. The city of Philadelphia, conspiring with the District Attorneys office and judges and lawyers working out of the Criminal Justice Center, have conspired to keep a specific group and number of persons incarcerated within this jurisdiction. Rights of the accused have become less important than keeping us behind bars. In this path of logic, the basic freedoms and liberty promised inviolable within our sacred Constitution are ignored, circumvented, jettisoned, disrespected, charged. We have no rights within this system of injustice. The voluminous violation of human and civil rights is the primary excuse cited amongst the plethora of those used to justify → → →

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these same violations. In effect, "its gonna take us a long time to let y'all go because we locked so many of y'all up!" And, "apparently we gonna have to lock more of y'all up because we aint finished locking y'all up yet." Once one batch has been interred within the confines and persecutions that is CFCF, the process begins for another. Probable cause, evidence, arrest procedure or police conduct are of small consequence, as by the time any prisoner sees the inside of a courtroom, 6 months or a year has passed and they will say or do almost anything to get as far away from this hell-hole as possible. In Philly, you go to jail first, then you get a trial. Petitions to the courts calling upon implementation of rules of criminal procedure, civil or constitutional rights, are viewed frequently with contempt or annoyance. Mostly, "you locked up".

At CFCF, you have no rights. This is, for the most part, a pre-trial detention facility. Length of stay here has been extended as the pre-trial processes have excluded detainees; the purpose of detention being to insure our presence at CFCF rather than trial. Men wait months for a pre-liminary hearing, sometimes years for a trial. These facts raise few eyebrows in this jurisdiction.

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The supposed AND implied relative brevity of pre-trial detention precludes facilities such as CPCC. From being required mandatory educational, vocational, or creative outlet guidelines. In actuality, the city of Philadelphia has transformed CPCC into a warehouse, and men are shelved here for extended periods under the pretense of imminent trial proceedings that are not forthcoming. During this process, pre-trial detainees are treated worse than those convicted and sentenced to state prison, while purposefully subjected to extortionate phone, commissary, and financial practices. Men here essentially have significant portions of their lives stolen from them while they languish in political, social, economic, and educational exile; being offered not much more than "3 hots and a cot" for months, even years. Separated both physically and psychologically from society, those accused now have festering inside them an increased distrust and hatred for society, to which most will eventually return.

A significant portion of staff members here exhibit callous, disrespectful, unprofessional behavior towards citizens that are already battling AGAINST AN outburst of pent-up frustrations

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borne from the failure and ineptitude of the "criminal justice system". Callous, flippant, sarcastic remarks made by staff in answer to prisoners' questions place both parties in danger consistently within this environment of "systematic injustice". Most persons are brought here having the mindset of impending release. After suffering through disappointment after disappointment expecting the courts to finally play by the rules, and then unexpectedly having to deal with separation from loved ones, in addition to the resultant estrangement, the last thing any person needs is an ignorant, vindictive, loud-mouthed, judgemental, wannabe cop with delusions of grandeur. The staff here believe not so much that they are above the law, but that we are most assuredly beneath it. The general public has been deceived and believe that "anyone who is in jail for that long must have done something".

CFCF was originally intended as a Federal detention facility. When the physical structure didn't pass government muster, this building suddenly supplanted the "Roundhouse" police Administration building as the primary receiving unit for persons arrested in Philadelphia County.

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What role and function do the Board of Trustees at CFCF play in determining policy in Philadelphia? Why are 75% of the Philadelphia Prison System population on any given day still awaiting trial? Why are rules of criminal procedure, which state pre-trial detainees are to be released on nominal bail after 180 days, and all charges dismissed after 365, ignored by the judiciary? That our lives mean little has been established; cops murder us in the street on national television and walk away scot-free. Those not killed are locked away in these warehouses like cattle in a slaughterhouse. We are at the mercy of a justice system that was never intended to free us.

Men here are locked into "isolation type" chambers with a sound-proof, steel reinforced door. No one can hear you scream, so the Federal government thought necessary to install "panic buttons" in each one of these cells to alert staff in the event of fire, assault, or medical emergency. Staff members quickly became annoyed at responding to prisoners' calls and began disabling buttons from the center console, leaving no way to call for help.

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Four men have died here since December because of this practice, that I know of.

One man fell out dead on the floor when a staff member opened the door during a "tour", which administration has promulgated in lieu of properly monitored and active panic buttons.

Men with serious health issues have their lives unnecessarily endangered every time they are locked into one of these cells. Diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, along with various psychological maladies are entombed within these cells with the men that bear them for days, sometimes weeks at a time. The commissioner and administration have created "triple ceiling", 3 men forced into an area designed for one. The aforementioned conditions are inhumane when a single person is subjected to them. To think it permissible, acceptable, constitutionally or politically correct for 3 men to be held in one of these cells is preposterous! The commissioner and administration insist this is not a violation of our civil rights. When I asked the Deputy Warden's secretary how she would feel being locked into one of these cells with two other people, she said, "I have not been convicted of a crime". Neither have we.

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BECAUSE OF THIS MASS INCARCERATION MINDSET, serious overcrowding in this facility has inhibited those held from access to court processes and other viable means that would aid in their defense or attempts to escape this conglomeration of injustice. On a single "pod" designed for 64 men, close to 100 now are held. The main link, the only link, to the outside, to freedom, is the phone. There are six phones to each pod. Logic would dictate, as safety for officers and prisoners should be paramount, that overcrowded conditions warrant installation of more phones, as phones and disputes over them are the lead cause of violence and injury here. Administration flatly refuses requests and petitions asking for more phones, citing mythical guidelines that they are complying with and "the penological interest". This "penological interest" is to maintain a combative, violent, atmosphere, thereby justifying cruel and unusual punishment to which pre-trial detainees are subjected here. Sheer numbers make it mathematically impossible to operate this facility safely, humanely, or within the parameters of standards of human decency.

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It has been established almost half the men here are held on charges that will not stand up in court. By the time most of us are afforded a trial, we are ready to take a "deal", or have already served the time we would have been sentenced to had we been found guilty. Court-appointed attorneys rarely consult with those held here before trial; most often they show up just prior to preliminary hearing proclaiming a "deal" negotiated with the District Attorney's office. Doesn't take a rocket scientist to know they are all working together to convict and incarcerate us whether we are guilty or not. One such attorney called a prisoner's parents and terrorized them with tales of the extended horrors of prison life if their son didn't take the deal he proffered.

Crime prevention efforts in this jurisdiction have ceased, and government has launched the preemptive strike of mass incarceration on a specific group of citizens. Erosion of rights of the accused precludes the rise of Tyranny, and the circumvention of justice may well incarcerate us all.

- Curtis Garner

semper Fidelis