

April 4, 2011

Ms. Nancy Ahmadifar, Ph.D.
Criminal Justice Policy Coalition
Member of the Board
Post Office Box 5896
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Nancy:

Regarding the relentless harassment and persecution I've suffered at the hands of prison officials at Old Colony prison because of my religious beliefs, this is the letter I would like circulated to the news media, politicians and community activists.

It began on Thursday, December 18, 2008 when Captain Paul Gordon entered my cell and confiscated four Catholic and Celtic crosses I made from Styrofoam food trays that I intended to send home as Christmas gifts. He returned two weeks later on Friday, January 2nd with a trash bag in his hand and took two more crosses that I had just finished, then returned exactly two weeks later on January 16th and took not only two more crosses, but my bible cover, drawings, patterns and virtually every religious item in my cell.

On Monday, January 19, 2009 my friend Nancy Ahmadifar, Ph.D. contacted Superintendent O'Brien and Commissioner Clarke with her concerns regarding Gordon's harassment, and sent a photo of a Catholic cross that I made for her from Styrofoam. (see enclosed)

As a result of Ms. Ahmadifar's communication with Mr. Clarke, the Commissioner contacted the Director of Treatment here at OCCC, Ms. Jeanie Lahousse and instructed her to begin an art program, which began the first week of May, 2009. However, OCCC officials refused to make Styrofoam available until my sister Donna Karo again contacted Harold Clarke via e-mail on May 21st on my behalf. And on May 28, 2009 she received a response from the Commissioner's Executive Assistant Michelle Farrell advising her that, "Deputy Commissioner James Bender has asked Superintendent O'Brien to see if they can get 'clean' Styrofoam material into the art program so that your brother can participate." (see enclosed)

The Director of Treatment then purchased professional grade Styrofoam material specifically for model building and I was allowed to participate in the art program for approximately an hour a week until staffing allegedly became a problem and the art program was discontinued about six months after it began.

I was then given written permission to keep a small amount of Styrofoam material in my cell and work from there, just as I have on and off for the past 26 years without incident. Yet, even though I had written permission from the DOT with the Superintendent's approval I was still continuously harassed from IPS Sgt. Dennis Butler and others.

On November 19, 2009 Butler searched my cell and removed the Foam-board I had permission to retain, promising to return it if it's con-

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firmed by the Superintendent that I do, in fact, have permission. It was confirmed and yet Butler not only didn't return the material to me, he refused to return the Foamboard to the Director of Treatment or the art program as well.

Shortly after being harassed by Butler, Lt. David Litchfield searched my cell and again my Foamboard was taken as well as a free-standing Catholic cross, approx. 15"X10"X1½", that I made for the Altar in the Catholic chapel. Litchfield immediately had the cross destroyed. And as you can see from the enclosed document, the date was obviously falsified and ironically reads, "December 25th", Yet, of course the property dept. is never open on Christmas day.

On November 17, 2010 at approximately 5:00 a.m., for no other reason than more harassment, I was taken from my cell by IPS and taken to a holding cell while everything I owned was removed from my cell, searched and fluoroscoped. No contraband was found but once again Butler kept the Catholic and Celtic crosses I had hanging on the wall above my desk, as well as my Foamboard material until he could confirm one more time that I had the Superintendent's permission. He did and the property was returned to me.

Then on January 19, 2011, Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley visited OCCC with other religious leaders and held a very special Catholic Mass in the gym. I was asked by DOT Jeanie Lahousse if I had a cross I'd like to present to His Eminence and I made one specifically for him. Two days after that memorable event, the Fire Safety Inspector Lt. Costello was sent to my cell by the DOS Alden Cowen to again confiscate my own crosses and the Foamboard material, claiming that it's now a fire hazard.

In 1985 I began collecting the Styrofoam food trays from the trash and making picture frames, crosses, small houses and miniture furniture while I sat in a cell for 23 hours a day for 606 days awaiting trial. And because there is absolutely no rule in any manual precluding me from continuing that practice, that is exactly what I started doing again. Then on March 29th at approximately 12:00 noon my cell was again ransacked and three more crosses were taken, as well as all of the Styrofoam material I had collected, this time by Lt. Corey Cotta and C.O. Kelly Green. (see enclosed d-report and notice that it appears to be written by an imbecile throwing a tantrum)

I have no idea how many Catholic and Celtic crosses I've made over the years and shared with family, friends and even strangers. But these beautiful religious symbols of my faith can be found in the chapel, the SHU and the office's of both the Director of Treatment and the Recreation Director. There is one in the office of Investigative Services and one was also given to Commissioner Clarke. And after I had one given to Superintendent Karin Bergeron she went into a cell in the MPU, a unit that houses print shop workers, and

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confiscated a Catholic cross that I had given to a friend. She then gave the officer in the block an order to issue a d-report to the inmate for possessing the cross. Since then a number of guards in different blocks have been confiscating the Catholic and Celtic crosses that I gave to my friends and issuing d-reports. I also gave a Celtic cross to the IPS to hang in their office after I had it blessed by a visiting Catholic priest. Yet, as of today, no d-reports have been issued to any prison official or the Cardinal for displaying the crosses I've made.

According to the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy, the primary motivation of all people is just to be able to have a meaningful life. And it's been written that the way to a meaningful life is to dedicate yourself to loving and caring for others; to dedicate yourself to your community, and; dedicate yourself to creating something that gives you meaning. All I've done is found a way to give my life purpose in the most negative and counterproductive environment imaginable simply by engaging in a very positive and constructive pasttime.

I am also a lector, Eucharistic minister and acolyte in the Catholic chapel. I'm a donor to various charities, have sponsored a teenager in Nairobi Kenya for seven years so he could finish high school, which he did, and have provided nearly 17,000 meals through donations to Feed The Children. How can any of what I've done and accomplished in the last 26 years be considered a threat to the safety and security of this or any other prison?

I am now on my 27th year of two consecutive 1st degree life sentences, yet I am busy and happy nearly every minute of every day. I am an honorable person and I have a meaningful and valuable life. And I will never allow prison officials to devalue or contaminate my life, or stop me from making crosses and practicing random acts of kindness, generosity and Christianity for as long as I am alive.

In conclusion, please consider the following facts: Butchie Corliss, Gerald Hill and Dominic Cinelli, just to name a few, each served over 30 years in Massachusetts prisons and each were released within the last 2½-3 years. At an average cost to tax payers of 47 thousand dollars annually per prisoner the Commonwealth spent over \$4,250,000.00, and only for these three men. And what did they get for their money? One murdered a police officer, one murdered a convenient store employee and one was arrested for the armed robbery of a cab company. Is it really any wonder why this agency so aggressively opposes oversight of it's operations and policies, or review of it's employees and their own mental stability?

My name is John Feroli, and as always, I approve this message.

Post Script

This article is being sent to the news media, **FRONTLINE**, the Archdiocese of Boston, the Massachusetts Parole Board, the Governor and other offices and members of the Executive Office of Public Safety & Security. It is also being distributed to various activists and advocates for prisoners who will all assist in bringing attention to the monumental fraud and deception that is the Massachusetts Department of "Correction."

For example, the Governor's Budget Recommendation for FY 2011 is:

\$527,990,926.

The amount allocated for the Inmate Program Fund is: \$225,000.

And the amount allocated for Reentry Programs is: \$550,139.

In other words, out of \$527,990,926., exactly \$775,139. goes to "correcting and rehabilitating" while the remaining \$527,215,787. goes to employees salaries and other administrative costs. And that is how concerned this agency is about the "Safety & Security" of the public.

This article demonstrates with crystal clarity that prison officials like Butler, Cowen, Litchfield and Cotta have a vested interest in making sure that prisoners remain angry and unprepared to return to society. And they are intentionally creating a violent and dangerous underclass just to ensure their own job security.

It is therefore, incumbent upon every recipient of this article to call for the creation of an Oversight & Advisory Committee to monitor the practices and policies of this agency, and hopefully hold those responsible for the escalating rate of recidivism.

For a complete listing of the Governor's Budgetary Direct Appropriations for the Department of Correction, go to:

www.mass.gov/bb/h1/fy11h1/brec_11/dpt_11/hldoc.htm