

MODERN PRISON RESISTANCE
FIGURING OUT "THE MAN"

by Timothy J. Muise

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Two hundred and twenty five (225) years of American corrections has afforded the great oppressor, the prison industrial complex, a vast education in how to suppress free speech and quell prison insurrection and resistance. The disciplinary regulations, which are pretty much cookie-cutter consistent from state to state, are designed to make it near impossible to organize in prison or to engage in acts of civil disobedience as a method of shedding light on prison abuse and systemic failure: failure which diminishes public safety and promotes the core separations which capitalism requires. In order to "fight the machine" today, to engage in modern prison resistance, the prisoner must figure out "the man" just as "the man" has figured him/her out.

Our phone calls are monitored, our mail is read, and the limits on contact visitation make it hard to get the facts about the abuse and failure out there without the gulag officials getting a heads up. We reach out to politicians, human rights advocates, and oversight groups and many times the warden and his/her henchmen will get the mess, whatever mess we are exposing, cleaned up before it can be addressed. Our letters are tossed in the trash, our visits taken away as a punishment, and our phone "privileges" suspended for any contrived reason the warden may create. What is needed is a more powerful avenue for free expression: for free speech. What is needed is the prisoner directed advocacy group.

What we have begun here in Massachusetts is to form advocacy groups which present the real voice of the prisoner, of the oppressed. The one who is oppressed is truly the only one who has standing to complain about the systemic failures as well as to ask for what remedies we know are needed. Now those disciplinary regulations that I mentioned earlier do not allow us to form such advocacy groups in prison, in fact they are fully designed to crush any such unity or free expression. Due to this fact our modern approach is to find the right people to form the groups outside of the prison wall, vowing to present an agenda fully developed by informal prisoner steering committees. We have already made great inroads in this modern effort. Men here in Massachusetts have found loyal advocates who

have formed now what we are seeing as formidable advocacy groups that will represent what the prisoner sees as our needs. CURE-ARM, Inc. and BREAD & WATER PRISONERS, Inc., have both filed Articles of Organization papers with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office. Their first public event was held in September of 2013 when they held a joint protest outside of the Massachusetts Department of Correction Headquarters. This year they participated in the "Jobs Not Jails" Rally in Boston Common and are currently planning their next protest to be held outside a Massachusetts state prison. These two groups represent the most underutilized resource in the resistance movement: the prisoner himself/herself. We are the experts on the failures.

Guard upon prisoner abuse, inadequate prison medical care, the aging prisoner population, the failed commutation and parole system, and the high cost producing/high recidivism rates=corrections failure are at the forefront of the protest movement. These groups educate and organize, all on the instructions of prisoners. They work to tell the real story about the failed prison system here in the commonwealth as well as demand that the rehabilitation mandate here in the state be met. Prisoners in the state of Massachusetts have a legally mandated right to be rehabilitated as well as a constitutionally protected free speech right to demand it!

In order to move into the future of modern resistance we must form such prisoner directed groups nationwide. They must use all the modern electronic media and communication modes. They must draw attention through protests and other acts of civil disobedience. The public must be educated to the fact that failed corrections promotes crime. Massachusetts corrections literally takes a billion dollars a year to sustain crime and recidivism. It is unacceptable to CURE-ARM and BREAD & WATER, and should be unacceptable to you. The groups that have "claimed" to represent prisoners, state funded and compromised groups, must be banished to the dungeon of the oppressor while the prisoner guided group moves to the head of the spear in the fight for human dignity, compassionate understanding, and justice tempered with mercy.

Please contact us and let us know what you think you can do to get

involved in this modern resistance movement. John F. Kennedy had it right when he uttered those wise words, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." What can you do for CURE-ARM and BREAD & WATER? Let us know? We will see you at the next protest!

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FIND OUT MORE AT:

<http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/101/>

Timothy J. Muise is a prisoner rights activist serving an 18-20 year prison term for a tragic manslaughter conviction. He works to educate and organize in an effort to enhance public safety and break prisoner stereotypes. By his own admission it is a daunting task but definite progress is being made with the help of outside supporters who listen to the prisoner voice.