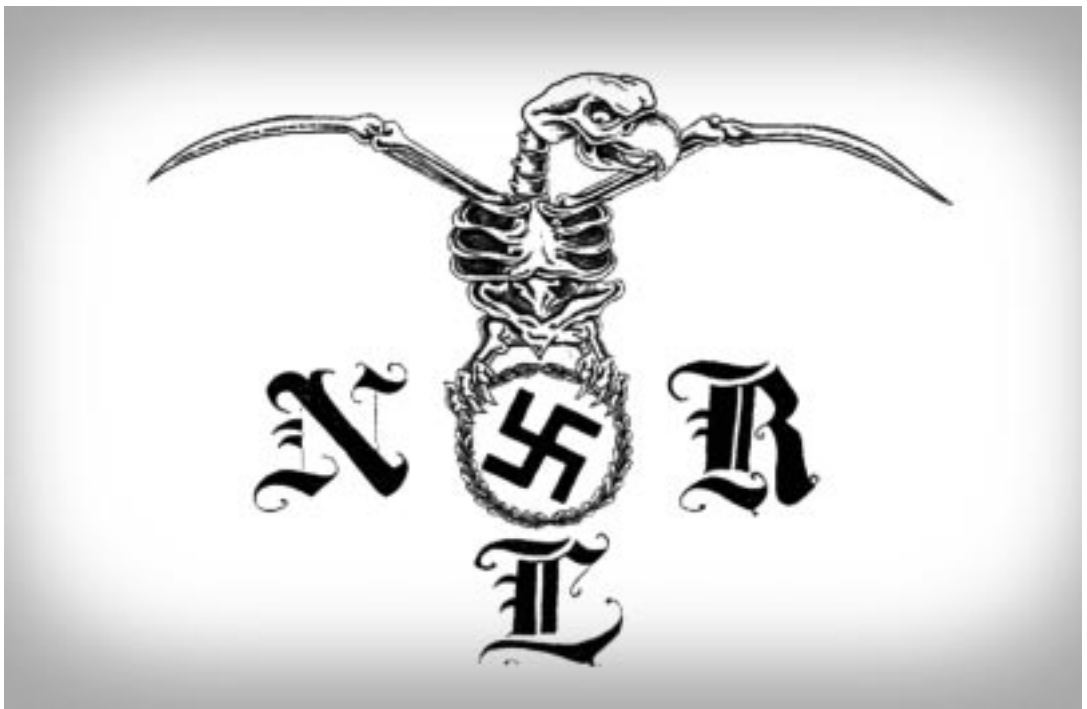




Dangerous Convictions:

AN INTRODUCTION TO EXTREMIST ACTIVITIES IN PRISONS





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INTRODUCTION

MURDER IN TEXAS

In the early Sunday morning hours of June 7, 1998, James Byrd, Jr., was walking by the side of the road. The Jasper, Texas, resident had spent a busy day Saturday, attending a wedding shower for a niece and several other parties; now, he just wanted to get home. He did not own a car, so was used to walking where he needed to go, but in a place like Jasper, whose 8,000 residents usually knew each other pretty well, rides were often easy to get.

Sure enough, just a few blocks from the party Byrd left, a pickup truck slowed down to pick him up. The truck belonged to another Jasper resident, Sean Berry, who already had two passengers, his friends John King and Russell Brewer. Byrd got in the back and Berry drove away. The group stopped first at a nearby convenience store before heading out of town.

It was the last time anybody else saw James Byrd Jr. alive.

Byrd's body was discovered later that Sunday—in several different places. The trio who had given Byrd a lift drove him to an isolated forest clearing, pulled him out of the truck, and brutally beat him. They spray-painted his face black, chained him to the back of the truck, then sped down the road. Byrd—who may or may not have been conscious at the time, according to autopsy reports—took some time to die. The dragging first ripped his clothes from his body, then tore Byrd's head and shoulder from his torso. The trio of killers dragged the rest of his body another mile down the road before unhooking it.

The Jasper killing and its sheer brutality shocked the entire nation. The ugliness of the racial killing—Byrd was black and his murderers were white—was something many Americans had hoped had been left behind in the dark cor-

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ners of the country's past. When the three killers were convicted, in separate trials, and given life sentences (Berry) or the death penalty (Brewer, King), many in the country hoped the dark episode had finally closed.

Yet the arrests and trials did not really provide answers to all the questions raised by the Jasper killing. In particular, people wanted to know how King, Brewer, and Berry could have been motivated to commit such a brutal and seemingly random murder. Jasper was a small town and many of its residents had known the three killers for years. African-American residents who had been students or co-workers along with King remembered him as quiet or sometimes violent, but not someone who treated blacks any differently than whites. Mike Twine, a black rodeo rider who used to compete against Berry in local rodeos, told a reporter for the *Houston Chronicle* he never thought Berry would do anything like this. Berry seemed friendly with no hatred towards blacks. Marshall Roberts, an African-American who had married into Russell Brewer's family, could detect no signs of racial hostility on Brewer's part. Yet these three people—in particular King and Brewer, who seemed to take the leading role in the killing—had targeted Byrd because he was black.

Eventually, however, as details emerged, the motives became clearer, though they seemed to make the case even more troublesome. It became more and more obvious that what transformed King and Brewer into brutal racial killers was their prison experiences. All three Jasper killers shared a history of serving time; they were all convicted criminals on charges ranging from theft to cocaine possession. But in their most recent stint in state prison, where they met each other, King and Brewer had become members of a small white supremacist prison gang, the Confederate Knights of America. They left prison as changed men. Even their bodies were different; Brewer now sported Nazi SS and KKK tattoos, while King virtually covered his body in startling racist tattoos, including one of a black man being hanged. Residents of Jasper found the differences alarming; Brewer's own father told him the tattoos were a "sickness." Even King's defense attorney admitted the significance of the prison experience. "What I do know," he told jurors, "is [King] wasn't a racist when he went in. He was when he came out."

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The evidence for King's later racism is overwhelming. Officers searching King's apartment found white supremacist literature, including a copy of *The Turner Diaries*, the fictional blueprint for white revolution penned by neo-Nazi William Pierce. They also found bylaws, recruiting letters, and other materials written by King related to a group he wanted to form called the Texas Rebel Soldiers, whose goal would be to protect the Aryan race. The TRS, which would be a "free world" offshoot of the Confederate Knights of America, was conceived by Brewer and King while they were still at the Beto I prison in Tennessee Colony. He even outlined plans to kidnap a black person and kill him in the woods.

In prison King wrote letters to people outside in which he complained about white women who were "traitors" because they dated blacks and suggested all such people should be hanged. That King's white supremacist awakening and his prison experience went hand in hand is demonstrated by his Zippo cigarette lighter—engraved with his prison nickname, "Possum," and the symbol of the Ku Klux Klan.

Brewer's experiences were similar. In prison, Brewer had risen to become the "Exalted Cyclops" of the CKA and had signed a blood oath to the Klan in 1995. In jail again after the murder, Brewer wrote to a fellow prisoner that he was now the "God-damned hero of the day!" It was a "rush," he wrote, saying that he was "still lickin' my lips for more."

During the trial, Assistant District Attorney Pat Hardy summarized their motivations. They were two people who couldn't fit into society, he explained, but they found a place in prison, among the members of the CKA. And when they left, "they brought their prison life out with them."

It became more and more obvious that what transformed John King and Russell Brewer — the murderers of James Byrd — into brutal racial killers was their prison experiences....They were two people who could not fit into society, the Assistant District Attorney said, but they found a place in prison. And when they left, 'they brought their prison life out with them.'

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PERMEABLE PRISONS

Prisons have been around in America for a long time, particularly since the evolution of modern prisons in the early 19th century. Indeed, the extent to which the United States relies on prisons to maintain societal order and control crime has even become controversial; the U.S. has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world. Yet Americans have discovered something comforting in the existence of prisons, as places where they can lodge criminals, at least temporarily protecting the rest of society from their ravages, real and imagined. The truth, though, is rather less comforting. Convicts are not nearly so insulated from the rest of society as many Americans would like to believe, nor are Americans somehow unaffected by what goes on inside prison walls.

The Jasper killing is a case in point. James Byrd Jr.'s death was directly related to the prison experiences of two of his three killers. And though the Jasper killing was a particularly brutal episode, it was hardly isolated. In particular, it highlights one set of prison-related problems that exists in America: the effects of hate and extremism in the prison system.

Most Americans have not seen the inside of prisons except through television and movies, and are grateful for that fact. The prison is an artificial environment, into which people must be unwillingly placed. They cannot leave, they have little control over their schedule or surroundings, and they have no choice over their neighbors and companions. Their interactions with people outside the institutions are strictly regulated. Given such conditions, it is not surprising that, over the years, a distinct prison culture has evolved in America. Prisoners have developed their own slang, their own fashion (in the form of tattoos, for instance), their own customs, and their own social groups and organizations.

The relationship between this prison environment and extremism (i.e., people with extreme ideologies and belief systems) is a complex one, but it can be divided broadly into internally and externally generated problems. Internal

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problems are those that the prison environment itself generates. Some of the dynamics of prison life lead naturally to the formation within prison of groups that possess extreme or hate-filled beliefs. The major internal sources of extremism within prisons are prison gangs. Over time, these gangs have adapted to their institutional confines and are able to use the social conditions of prison life to their advantage. Inmates entering the system are easily recruited into prison gangs, primarily because such gangs offer “protection” to prisoners as well as access to avenues of criminal activity. Racist prison gangs may also capitalize on, and sharpen, existing prejudices and hatreds held by incoming prisoners. These gangs, long a part of prison life, tend to form along racial or ethnic lines and use racism to recruit and fuel their activities, often indoctrinating new members with violent bigoted rhetoric and a strong animosity toward other races, beliefs that may stay with them once they are released into society. These gangs jeopardize the stability of the nation’s penitentiaries, presenting a threat to corrections officials and the general inmate population, and may well endanger the community to which they eventually return—as the murder of James Byrd Jr. readily demonstrates.

External problems are those caused by the insertion of extremists into the prison environment. Extremists who commit crimes, in furtherance of their cause or otherwise, may receive prison sentences. However, there is little to stop them from continuing their activities from behind prison walls. In fact, such inmates are often more committed to an ideology of racial supremacy than members of prison gangs, who tend to join such gangs for reasons other than ideological conviction. In addition to white, black, or other racial extremists, other sorts of ideological extremists often end up behind bars. Most notably, members of right-wing, anti-government movements such as the militia movement, the “sovereign citizen” movement, and the tax-protest movement often end up in prison for transgressions against the law. But left-wing extremists as well, particularly adherents of radical environmental and animal rights groups, also often end up in prison.

The presence of such extremists in prisons poses particular problems. Bank robbers cannot rob banks in prisons, but ideological extremists still can pursue their goals in many ways. A few may even welcome imprisonment as a

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new venue for their activities. In many cases extremists continue to author publications, teach their racist beliefs or religions to other inmates, or use their new-found status as “political prisoners” or “prisoners of war” to continue recruiting outside of prison. Timothy McVeigh, for instance, in the months before his execution, carried on a wide range of correspondence with a variety of groups and individuals (on both the far left and the far right), attempting to justify his actions and promote his cause. In some cases, these inmates are even able to continue criminal activity from their prison cells.

Bank robbers cannot rob banks in prisons, but ideological extremists still can pursue their goals in many ways.

To complicate matters still further, in addition to extremists in prison, there exist in the “free” world a wide variety of groups and individuals with extreme beliefs (both right-wing and left-wing) who actively attempt to recruit from and proselytize to prisoners. Prison offi-

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cials must cope with groups and organizations outside the prisons who view prisoners as a viable source of recruits or converts to their extreme causes. A number of racist groups and religions, as well as many anti-government groups, sponsor prison “outreach” programs designed to send literature and propaganda filled with anti-government and racist messages to inmates. This is a particular problem because inmates, even those who may not harbor extreme sentiments, are often quite susceptible to such messages. Feeling isolated from family, friends and society, and looking for anything to connect them to the outside world, prisoners can be easy targets for extremist groups looking to spread their message. Extremist newsletters and publications (again, on both the left and right) regularly contain letters from non-extremist inmates who are simply seeking contact with the outside world. Many extremist groups capitalize on the psychological vulnerability of such prisoners. Others, equally cannily, help prisoners rationalize their imprisonment by treating them not as mere inmates, but as “political prisoners” or “prisoners of war.” They give prisoners a convenient way to excuse their imprisonment, while in the process instilling or fueling bigotry or anti-government sentiments.

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These dynamics pose enormous problems for America's prison systems. Prison officials are responsible for balancing the stability of the penitentiaries and the safety of inmates and guards with the constitutional rights of the inmates who reside within those penitentiaries. In many cases, this can be a challenging task. Extremist ideology can be violent, even advocating the overthrow of what its adherents see as illegal or illegitimate government authority, yet extremist speech is still protected speech. While prison authorities are able to limit an inmate's access to material that could compromise the security of the prison, inmates still have the right to First Amendment protections.

Freedom of religion similarly becomes an issue. The First Amendment mandates that prisons make religious accommodations for prisoners. Yet this can create problems when inmates adopt a pseudo-religion in order to subvert prison regulations or when inmates become adherents of a theology that promotes violence towards those of other religions or races. Disputes over constitutional rights many times end up in court, where prison officials must prove that withholding literature or religious services is reasonably related to legitimate penological objectives. The sticky intermeshing of prison culture and dynamics; inmates and outside groups with extreme ideological goals; and the need to ensure both security and constitutional rights within prison walls, suggests that these are problems not easily solved. As a result, their effects will continue to be felt both inside and outside America's prisons.

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PRISON GANGS

*I will stand by my brother
My brother will come before all others
My life is forfeit should I fail my brother
I will honor my brother in peace as in war
— Aryan Brotherhood Oath*

PROBLEMATIC PROTECTION

Prisons are unpleasant places. The physical conditions are at best Spartan, the routine is disagreeable, the inhabitants themselves are, except for prison officials, by definition criminals. Indeed, the social elements of prison life, rather than the environmental elements, generally play much more of a role in the ugliness of prison life. Violence and crime are endemic in prisons—so much so, in fact, that many prisoners feel the need to join organized gangs for protection. Yet prison gangs themselves, often highly organized and typically engaged in criminal activity, serve to worsen still further the conditions for prison inmates. For instance, prison gangs may engage in protection rackets, extortion efforts and reprisal attacks.

Problems within American prisons, gangs included, are frequently dismissed by much of society as the price convicts should pay for having committed a crime. Prison gangs capitalize on this, knowing that law enforcement and corrections authorities have only limited resources to devote to a myriad of problems; as a result, they flourish within the nation's penitentiaries despite the best efforts of prison officials to cope with them. These gangs, from the Mexican Mafia to the Black Guerrilla Family to the Aryan Brotherhood, typically unite and recruit along racial lines. Much of the motivation for the formation of these gangs comes from a need for protection and as a vehicle for conducting criminal activities while in prison. Their criminal pursuits include drug trafficking, prostitution, extortion, victim or witness intimidation, assaults and murder.

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Like the more well-known street gangs, prison gangs often develop their own cultures, ranging from rules of conduct to distinct fashions (in prisons, where dress is regulated, such fashions more often take the form of tattoos or other physical distinctions). Indeed, over the years, the differences between prison gangs and street gangs have sometimes become obscured, particularly because of the incarceration of street-gang members who bring their tactics and connections into prison with them. Both prison and street gangs utilize female gang members, supporters and girlfriends for personal and financial support and as a way to continue their criminal activities. For example, female supporters often act as liaisons between gang members unable to communicate directly because of prison restrictions or take part in the gang's involvement in narcotics trafficking.

In prison, racist gangs are able to spread their ideology while at the same time engaging in the criminal enterprises typical of other prison gangs.

Like street gangs, prison gangs are generally drawn along racial and ethnic lines, but the composition of street gangs usually includes a geographic component (the “neighborhood” gang) totally lacking in prison gangs, with the result that prison gangs are even less likely to be multiracial or multiethnic. Most street gangs are not ideologically motivated by a belief in racial superiority or a desire for a racially pure society; many prison gangs, however, do profess an ideological motivation. While such professions are often mere camouflage or rationalizing for criminal activity, the extreme racist nature of many prison gangs cannot be denied. In prison, these gangs are able to spread their racist ideology while at the same time engaging in the criminal enterprises typical of most prison gangs.

Moreover, these racist gangs are as violent as other gangs in prison and have been responsible for prison riots as well as attacks on corrections authorities and other inmates. At the Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Oregon, for example, nine members of a white supremacist prison gang called the New Family Mafia launched a riot in February 2001, during which they assaulted a corrections officer. The riot resulted in \$57,000 worth of damage to prison facilities. That same month in Arizona, corrections officials revealed what

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they described as an “ongoing plan” to kill Arizona Department of Corrections Director Terry Steward and other officials. Six months earlier, federal authorities in California indicted members of the Nazi Low Riders, a California-based racist prison gang heavily involved in the drug trade, for attacking a black inmate at a San Bernardino County detention center with a knife, allegedly for the purpose of “maintaining and increasing their position” in the Nazi Low Riders. Such activities are common, although certainly not limited merely to white gangs.

Many white gangs profess an ideology of white supremacy and use this to increase their ranks and unite white prisoners in a struggle for control of the prison in which they are housed. These gangs often devise complex organizational structures to recruit or punish members, thwart prison officials and outline the gang’s sphere of activity. They may engage in regular meetings, often under the guise of attending “religious” ceremonies, or they may produce prison ‘zines (slang for a self-produced magazine) in order to recruit or enhance communication between members. Many gang members will produce elaborate works of art on racist or white supremacist themes—or incorporate similar art onto their own bodies in the form of tattoos. Many members of racist prison gangs leave prison virtually covered in white supremacist art and slogans, ranging from portraits of Adolf Hitler or Heinrich Himmler to slogans such as “White Power” or “Rahowa” (an acronym for “racial holy war”).

Yet though prison gangs (white, black, or Hispanic) will often use racist rhetoric as a unifier, close inspection of such groups reveals that it is often the desire for power, profit and control that really drives gangs to action. Some gangs purport to have a racial component when, in reality, criminal enterprise may be the true focus of the gangs’ attentions. Criminal activity, including narcotics trafficking, extortion and assaults, is a normal part of prison life. The evidence that larceny often trumps racial purity can be seen when gangs of different racial makeups form “alliances” in order to strengthen their control of money-making ventures behind prison walls. The Aryan Brotherhood, for example, evinces considerable hostility towards black prison gangs, such as the Black Guerrilla Family, as might be expected. However, it is broadly allied with the Mexican Mafia, in order to control the drug trade to mutual benefit (and as a result opposes the rivals of the Mexican Mafia, La Nuestra Familia).

IMPERFECT UNIONS

The idealized view that white supremacist prison gangs have of themselves can be seen most clearly in the constitutions that they create for their groups. Such constitutions are so widespread among prison gangs that they play a major role in the decisions of some state prison systems to classify groups as prison gangs. The constitutions are important because they help create a sense of legitimacy for the group, giving new members something with which to identify. Constitutions lay out the ideological foundations on which the gang is supposed to be based, the power structure within the gang, and the goals of the gang. Prison gangs often want to give the illusion that they are the embodiment of the Aryan ideal and, as such, may attempt to prohibit behavior that they believe to be characteristic of African Americans, Jews or other minorities. To this end, the conduct of gang members is also often governed by their constitution. Several examples, taken from gangs present in the State of Utah's prison system, illustrate the nature of prison-gang constitutions.

Many prison gang constitutions focus on the structure of the gang. The Utah-based Silent Area Warriors created a gang constitution, "Philosophies and SAW Laws and Codes of Conduct," which delineates gang structure as well as the roles and responsibilities of SAW leadership. The constitution decrees that the gang will be headed by Commanders charged with management of the gang, approval of new members and enactment of new laws. Generals report to Commanders and act as the spokesmen for the gang in dealing with prison administration. They are also required to hold weekly meetings during which they deal with any pressing issues. Lesser ranks include Majors and Captains. Majors report to Generals on members who violate the codes of conduct, while Captains are responsible for recruitment and security issues and report to Commanders. Lieutenants are lower in rank than Captains but are accountable for many of the same functions. Sergeants and Enforcers are the muscle in the gang, taking control of "arms and preparation of all personnel for combative situations." They are also in control when leading members into "suppressive or pre-emptive actions" ordered against SAW. enemies. Non-ranking members are referred to as Warriors and are considered members for life. Such structures are unlikely to be followed too closely. Internal

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power struggles, lack of members and apathy, more often than not, preclude a gang from actually achieving the hierarchical, military-like ranking to which they might aspire.

More members may pay attention to the stated purpose of the gang, which is an important feature of gang constitutions. The Soldiers of Aryan Culture, for example, have developed “An Instruction Manual of Conduct” that identifies the philosophy, objectives and laws of the gang. The SAC manual is typical of that of many other white supremacist gangs in requiring that members remain loyal to SAC, have pride in themselves and their race, and show “strength” at all times. Unlike some other gangs, SAC is frank about its criminal nature: “At times, crime is used to fund our cause. We will do what we must to achieve our goals.” This includes using prison time to become physically fit in preparation for the war with the “Zionist Occupied Government,” or “ZOG.” Other stated objectives indicate SAC’s long-term goal of becoming a force in the free world: first to recruit “higher caliber Aryans” from within the prison, then uniting whites in the Utah Department of Corrections, and finally taking their philosophy of white superiority to the streets.

A third Utah gang, Krieger Verwandt (intended to be translated as “Warrior Kindred”), uses its “Mission Manual” to inform members of gang policy and philosophy. The Manual, described as “instructional material concerning the indigenous religious, cultural and political beliefs,” informs members of the gang’s philosophies on spirituality, race and character as well as providing a grooming and hygiene regimen. It includes a runic alphabet, the “Reconstructed Krieger Verwandt,” which gang members are required to learn. Runic alphabets, ancient Norse and Germanic alphabets of which several versions exist, are often used in written correspondence to thwart prison authorities.

Once established, prison gangs must maintain solidarity; they must attract new members and retain old members. In addition, if a gang spreads beyond the confines of a single prison, they face increased difficulties in maintaining cohesion and control. While rituals and traditions, or the threat of reprisal, may be enough to keep prisoners close at hand in line, they are not sufficient

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for dispersed gang members. Many prison gangs use visits from outsiders to help maintain contacts between separated gang members. Others turn to publishing homemade newsletters or 'zines, a practice which can also be used as a recruiting tool as well as a way to maintain solidarity. Additionally, newsletters and 'zines also provide convicts, who are often stripped of all forms of social identification, with a sense of community. Gang members can read about other inmates' problems with corrections authorities, find addresses of like-minded free-world groups supportive of inmates, or even submit artwork and articles. Newsletters serve to draw new members and reinforce the gang's ideology. These publications are circulated in prison systems and the free world, and help to establish and maintain a gang's existence.

One Michigan prison gang, for example, the United Brotherhood Kindred Alliance, uses their 'zine, *Strife*, to further goals of creating an organization under which all white supremacist gangs could come together to "concentrate on the survival of our Folk." Like most prison 'zines, *Strife* comes under the scrutiny of Michigan corrections officials, who have the power to restrict literature that may in some way pose a security threat. As a result, *Strife* not only avoids making explicit calls to violence, but also asks those submitting articles to "refrain from using ethnic/racial slurs and insults. If your article will put us on the Restricted Pub[lications] list in the Gulags, WE WILL NOT PRINT IT." In fact, *Strife* claims to promote "love, unity and pride...not the attacking of other groups and races."

However, the contents of the 'zine belies its claims of love and harmony. The 24-page inaugural issue of *Strife*, published in late 2000, bears the logo of World Church of the Creator, an Illinois-based virulently white supremacist and anti-Semitic organization led by Matt Hale that promotes the pseudo-theology of "Creativity." Inside, articles focus on racial superiority—including a tribute to Robert Matthews, the deceased leader of the 1980s white supremacist terrorist group The Order—as well as a fictional story about a white child suffering because her mother is engaged in an interracial relationship. A pro-Hitler article entitled "Far from Evil" winds up the 'zine. The issue also provides readers with contact information for various prominent white supremacist organizations, including Central New York White Pride, 14 Words Press and the National Alliance.

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Such newsletters and 'zines are always at risk, however, of being confiscated by prison authorities because of the potential security risks. In New York, for example, state prison officials in the late 1990s banned all literature from the Five Percenters, a racist African-American group with a strong prison presence. Prison officials cited a long series of violent and disruptive acts by gang members. A federal judge upheld their ban, writing that “even peaceful literature can be detrimental to prison security, because it can assist a gang in remaining organized. Written material is the most effective tool for uniting gangs in prison.”

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Gangs are routinely involved in narcotics production and sales, extortion, intimidation and contract murder. Ideology becomes secondary as alliances are formed between gangs of different races to increase status or power within the prison.

For most racist prison gangs, any effort spent in promoting the group's ideology is more than matched by its energy in promoting criminal activity. Motivated by profit and power, these gangs are routinely involved in narcotics production and sales, extortion, intimidation and contract murder. Ideology becomes secondary as these gangs even form alliances with gangs of other races to increase their status or power within the prison. Moreover, these gangs often find that by moving from the prisons

into the streets, with the help of gang members released into the free world, they can increase their money-making operations.

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Aryan Brotherhood, one of the best-known racist prison gangs, provides a textbook example of a prison gang that resembles organized crime more than a typical hate group. Aryan Brotherhood, which emerged in California's San Quentin prison in the late 1960s, originally formed to protect white inmates from Hispanic and black gangs, but over the years it evolved into a criminal syndicate responsible for violent attacks, drug trafficking and other illegal ven-

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tures. Although they still promote a message of white supremacy, many Aryan Brotherhood members spend much more attention on criminal activity. When prison authorities successfully disrupted the Brotherhood's criminal activities in the 1990s, the gang responded by recruiting young white males incarcerated in juvenile facilities to act as middlemen, allowing Aryan Brotherhood to continue to cash in on criminal activity while incidentally creating a whole new generation of violent, racist gang members. These middlemen, members of a newer gang called the Nazi Low Riders, quickly took advantage of their affiliation with Aryan Brotherhood to expand both in the prison and onto the streets.

In the struggle for control of criminal enterprise, gangs often choose to form business alliances to strengthen their presence, allowing them to push a weaker gang out of the way. Profit motive often trumps racism in such cases. In one of the most famous examples, the Aryan Brotherhood forged an alliance with the already well-established Mexican Mafia (EME) in the early 1970s. Through this alliance, Aryan Brotherhood gained power and prominence, which they maintained with shake-downs and even execution-style murders. In addition to their alliance with EME, Aryan Brotherhood factions in federal prisons began doing business with the organized crime group La Cosa Nostra. Aryan Brotherhood offered incarcerated mafia members protection and took care of La Cosa Nostra "hits" on the inside. In return, La Cosa Nostra provided money, drugs and assistance to Brotherhood members. These alliances helped cement Aryan Brotherhood's position of power.

These alliances have not seriously affected Aryan Brotherhood's ability to use racial rhetoric to recruit other white inmates. Membership in Aryan Brotherhood is limited to white inmates who successfully complete a probationary period, during which they may be required to prove their loyalty, or "make their bones," by accomplishing major tasks or perhaps even attacking an inmate or corrections officer. Non-white individuals who are connected to the gang for business purposes are often referred to as "associates." The use of business alliances and "associates" has, however, led to confrontation with other white supremacist gangs who adhere more closely to the ideology they profess. Aryan Brotherhood has been known to "go to war" with other white

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supremacist gangs because of their ideological disparity as well as for control of criminal enterprises. In the Texas prison system, for instance, Aryan Brotherhood has often feuded with another white supremacist gang, Aryan Circle. As one inmate described the situation, “AC and AB are constantly at war, in fact...last I heard 5 or 6 lost their lives. No telling how many stabbed, etc. It’s a sad site [sic]. With most AB being white trash AC has a good excuse for smashing them.”

NEW KIDS IN THE BLOCK

Prison gangs that are too successful in criminal ventures and violence inevitably attract the attention of corrections officials, who may be forced to take measures to bring them to bay. In California, when Aryan Brotherhood grew powerful enough to threaten the stability of the prison population, authorities eventually launched a policy of removing Aryan Brotherhood gang

Aryan Brotherhood members found a way to elude prison authorities by lending support to a new prison gang, the Nazi Low Riders.

members from the general population by placing them in segregated housing units, thus effectively limiting their power and involvement in criminal enterprise. Aryan Brotherhood members, intent on thwarting efforts to rein them in, found a way to elude prison authorities by lending support to a new prison gang, the Nazi Low Riders.

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The Nazi Low Riders (NLR) evolved in the California Youth Authority, the state agency responsible for the incarceration and parole supervision of juvenile and young adult offenders, in the late 1970s or early 1980s as a gang for white inmates. As prison officials successfully suppressed Aryan Brotherhood activities, the Brotherhood appealed to young incarcerated skinheads, NLR in particular, to act as middlemen for their criminal operations, allowing Aryan Brotherhood to keep control of criminal undertakings while adult members were serving time in administrative segregation. Through their connections

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to Aryan Brotherhood, NLR was able to become the principal gang within the Youth Authority and eventually to move into penitentiaries throughout California and across the West Coast. NLR maintains strong ties to Aryan Brotherhood and, like the older gang, has become a source of violence and criminal activity in prison. Aryan Brotherhood still maintains a strong presence in the nation's prison systems, albeit less active, while NLR has also become a major force, viewing itself as superior to all other white gangs and deferring only to Aryan Brotherhood. Both gangs engage in drug trafficking, extortion and attacks on inmates and corrections staff.

Inside prison, NLR followed a path much like that of Aryan Brotherhood. Once aligned with the Brotherhood, the Nazi Low Riders grew rapidly, recruiting new members with propaganda revolving around white supremacy. Taking its cues from Aryan Brotherhood, NLR aligned itself with southern Hispanic gangs like the Mexican Mafia in a power struggle against black and northern Hispanic gangs (Black Guerrilla Family and La Nuestra Familia) in an effort to control the drug trade and other criminal activity within the prisons. NLR has accepted members with Hispanic surnames as well as members with Hispanic wives or girlfriends. One former NLR member explained, "You must have at least half white blood but no Black blood." NLR also mimicked the brutality that was a hallmark of Aryan Brotherhood and at one point was credited with the majority of California prison violence. Violence is generally related to the drug trade, but NLR members have also been known to lead revolts and instigate confrontations among inmates and with officials in correction facilities. In September 1999, William Richie and David Rolph, NLR members incarcerated at San Bernardino County jail, attacked a black inmate, using a "shank" (slang for homemade knives) to slash the inmate's face and body. Three other NLR members, Jason Schmaus, Danny Black and Michael Beattie, were recently convicted of the 1995 murder of an inmate who admitted to being behind bars for committing a sex offense (NLR and Aryan Brotherhood both forbid sex offenses and may punish violators with death).

Corrections departments have taken a hard-line response to NLR and have had some success in stopping some of its criminal acts. In response, NLR, like

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The Nazi Low Riders have also successfully established a gang presence on the street, allowing members to continue their criminal and hate-inspired activities in the free world. NLR members have been involved in property crimes, narcotics production and sale, murder, robbery, victim intimidation and weapons violations.

Aryan Brotherhood before it, has recruited other white supremacist gangs to continue its activity. NLR is believed to be associated with the Dirty White Boys and the Skinhead Dogs and may have created a gang called the Aryan

Warriors in an attempt to avoid gang validation and the consequent disruption of its activities. Gang validation is a process by which corrections authorities identify gang members to deal with the threat they pose, which, in many cases, means placing the inmate in segregated housing units. Gang members are identified by a number of different factors, including tattoos, self-identification as a gang member, or possession of gang-related material or literature.

With its presence and power established in prisons, particularly on the West Coast, NLR has also successfully estab-

lished a gang presence on the street, allowing gang members to continue their criminal and hate-inspired activities in the free world. NLR members have been involved in property crimes, narcotics production and sales, murder, robbery, victim intimidation and weapons violations. In March 2001, to give one recent example, law enforcement authorities in Southern California confiscated 73 firearms, three hand grenades, body armor and a sheriff's uniform, arresting two reputed NLR members, Marcello Castellano and Scott Kuhn.

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NLR members, adhering to their racist foundations, also have a propensity for violent racially motivated attacks and murder. In 1995, NLR members were involved in a number of incidents, including a machete attack on two black teenagers, the murder of a black homeless man, and shooting into a car occupied by African Americans. Since that time, NLR members have committed a number of violent crimes, including one incident in which Shaun Broderick and Christopher Crawford used a hammer to attack an African-American man in a Wal-Mart parking lot. In March 2000, another NLR member,

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Anthony Conrad, received a seven-year sentence for a racially motivated assault on a black woman in San Bernardino. African Americans have been the victims of many brutal assaults by NLR members, particularly in Southern California. However, NLR members have targeted others as well, including law-enforcement officers.

NLR members have become particularly dominant in the drug trade, both in prison and on the street in California. Specifically, NLR members have established themselves as major players in the production and trade of methamphetamine (“meth” or “speed”), having set up numerous labs in San Bernardino, as well as a lucrative meth distribution business in several communities in southern California. In August 2000, NLR member Richard Leverich was charged with intent to distribute 83 grams of methamphetamine (he later pleaded guilty) while another member, Michael Glatfelter, received a conviction for running a meth production lab for the gang. Gang members have also been implicated in the transportation of narcotics to NLR members inside prisons. A number of NLR are also heavy drug users themselves, increasing their propensity for violence; some NLR members have even robbed the people to whom they have sold drugs. NLR has also made alliances with street-based skinhead gangs, including Vicious Circle, Public Enemy Number 1 (PEN1) Skins, Orange County Skins and Independent Skins, in an effort to control criminal activity and establish themselves as a presence on the streets. Some law-enforcement officials believe that NLR is attempting to control other white street gangs to “tax” the proceeds of all criminal activity to support NLR members who remain incarcerated.

NLR members have developed a strong network within their own ranks and with other white supremacist organizations. They continue to recruit new gang members, indoctrinating them with a racist ideology while providing them with an avenue into criminal enterprise. The idea of a “race war” gives gang members another excuse and outlet for their rage, while also providing them with an excuse for brutal attacks against members of minority communities. Clearly, the hostility and racism of NLR, combined with its propensity for violence, makes it a danger to not just other inmates but to prison authorities and to the society into which NLR members are released.

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BACK ON THE STREETS

Many members of racist prison gangs, particularly those who joined merely for protection or profit, end their association with such groups when released from prison. However, sometimes members become truly ideologically committed. Members of some white prison gangs, for instance, may become true white supremacists, committed to the idea of an all-white society. Some prison gangs, too, occasionally attempt to move to the streets to function as many traditional extremist organizations do.

Aryan Circle, a white supremacist prison gang, is one group that has attempted to project an image of a legitimate organization concerned with the rights of whites, both in prison and in society in general, and actively looks to the free world to spread its ideology. Aryan Circle was founded in the mid-1980s in the Texas prison system by inmate Mark Cooper Gaspard. The original rationale of the group was to defend white inmates in the “hostile prison environment,” but its objectives later became more grandiose — to preserve the white race throughout the world.

Describing itself as a “white family that advocates the betterment and advancement of the white race,” Aryan Circle built its organization by recruiting inmates rejected by Aryan Brotherhood. It soon became a vicious rival of the Brotherhood within Texas prisons. Yet Aryan Circle’s leaders wanted to establish a presence outside the prison walls as well. The gang increasingly relied on female supporters—usually wives and girlfriends of incarcerated members—to act as its vanguard on the streets. These women, often dubbed “sisters,” were involved both with conducting the gang’s “business” operations and with spreading racist propaganda. Sisters in Houston, Texas, publish Aryan Circle newsletters, including the *Get Smart Information Education Flyer*. Others created a “Women’s branch” based in North Carolina; an “Education branch” is also run by a female gang member in that state.

Male members of Aryan Circle are also encouraged to remain involved in gang activities once released from prison. Indeed, one Aryan Circle leader, Horace Scott Lacey, created a “Release Orientation” program to help ensure released

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members would remain active. Released Aryan Circle members often continue their involvement in the criminal activities of the gang. These activities provide financial support for gang members still incarcerated and help the gang to spread their message by funding the purchase of computer equipment used in the publication of newsletters and other propaganda. In April 1999, Texas prison authorities intercepted letters from an incarcerated Aryan Circle member who called for free-world gang members to gather in Jasper, Texas, on the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing for a “family reunion and annual Jasper tractor pull and drag racing event,” an obvious reference to the dragging death of James Byrd Jr.

Other Aryan Circle activities have gone well beyond mere calls for gatherings. In August 2000, two ex-cons and avowed members of Aryan Circle were arrested in Fort Worth, Texas, after law enforcement found the men and two others in possession of guns, cigarette packs containing explosive devices and ingredients for producing methamphetamine. Fort Worth law-enforcement officers have recently seen a dramatic increase in the street activities of Aryan Circle gang members, documenting more than 50 active gang members. Authorities have intercepted photographs of Aryan Circle gatherings in Texas as gang members have attempted to share them with other members behind bars.

Now active in several states, Aryan Circle has free-world members in Texas, Arizona, North Carolina, Michigan and New Jersey and is recruiting in the Oklahoma, Louisiana and Kansas penal systems. Recent internal struggles about the gang’s objectives have fragmented the group, causing dissent and the potential for splinter gangs. Nonetheless, prison authorities have expressed concern about released Aryan Circle members, noting that the gang breeds racial hatred among white inmates who often take these beliefs with them once released.

Aryan Circle is not the only prison gang with free-world aspirations. Many prison-based gangs realize the necessity of establishing themselves outside the penitentiaries if they are to further their goals at all. For most, the goals are criminal rather than ideological, but some gangs have been very successful in imbuing gang members with racist rhetoric to drive their criminal activities.

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EXTREMISTS ON THE INSIDE

All of the loyal imprisoned Order members remain defiant and committed to victory for the 14 Words. Several incarcerated members, most notably David Lane, continue to propagandize from their prison cells, and continue to wield influence in the movement. Some claim that he is even more dangerous now to the System's integrity than before his capture.

— 14 Words Press Web site

Although many prisoners become exposed to extremist philosophies while incarcerated, some prisoners are extremists before they even set foot in prison. Because extreme ideologies, whether in the cause of animal rights or white supremacy, often lead adherents to break the law, ideological extremists routinely enter the prison system. Often the crimes for which they are convicted were crimes to further their “cause.”

Such criminals pose particular problems for the criminal justice system. A “normal” criminal, such as a bank robber, may find it impossible or extremely difficult to continue his or her activities once placed in prison. However, extremist criminals are often under no such constraints. They can continue to advance their ideological goals through a variety of methods, ranging from recruiting within prisons to creating propaganda to be distributed beyond the prison walls. Some extremists occasionally express pleasure at being sentenced to prison, with the implication that they can use their sentence as an opportunity to continue their activities in a new venue, and even when one allows for bravado, there is still a kernel of truth to such statements. Prisons have proven fertile ground for extremists and revolutionaries around the world for centuries; in recent years prisons in the United States have experienced such activity on a widespread basis, particularly as increased extremist criminal activity on both the far left and the far right has resulted in greater numbers of ideologically extreme inmates.

In addition to inmates convicted of ideologically motivated crimes, there are also a number of prisoners who, not surprisingly, prefer to think of themselves

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as being in prison for “political reasons” rather than for the crimes they actually did commit. The example of Frank Jarvis Atwood may illustrate this phenomenon. Atwood was a drug user and sex offender who left California in 1984 for Tucson, Arizona, in violation of his parole, following prison time for kidnapping and molesting an 8-year-old boy. In Tucson, he kidnapped another 8-year-old, a girl, sexually molested her, then killed her. He was sentenced to death for the murder. In prison, Atwood decided to get involved with left-wing causes, reaching out to a number of far left groups as well as putting out a 'zine titled *Decidedly Radical*. His makeover was eventually successful; by the late 1990s, he had been adopted by the Anarchist Black Cross, which described him as an “anarchist prisoner” who was framed because he had been “an active militant since the late '60s and involved in the organization of demonstrations, bank robberies or bomb attacks against governmental policies.” Atwood was all of 14 years old in 1970. However, regardless of the real motivations of such people, the effect is much the same, because they act in many of the same ways that “genuine” extremists do. By the summer of 2001, Atwood was writing *Earth First!* magazine, noting that “I...do what I can to smash the state from here,” and volunteering to review, write, or edit for the extreme environmental magazine. “I’m already imprisoned for the duration,” he noted, “so have no need to worry about pigs.”

SPREADING THE WORD

Extremist prisoners tend to continue their activities in one of three ways. First, not surprisingly, they may attempt to rally support for themselves (see next section). Second, they may attempt to recruit other prisoners to the cause. Third, they may attempt to provide support or guidance to their associates in the free world.

For some extremists, the recruitment of prisoners is an important way to spend time. It not only represents a way to stay active, but may also be helpful in providing security or protection. Recruitment activities may be as simple as passing around one’s copies of fringe publications. These can range

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from white supremacist and anti-Semitic magazines (such as *The Way*, from Aryan Nations, or *The Struggle*, from the World Church of the Creator) to right-wing anti-government magazines (such as *The Americans' Bulletin*) to left-wing publications (such as *Earth First!*). Other recruitment tactics involve assisting inmates with legal strategies—a favorite of members of right-wing anti-government groups like the Montana Freeman—or bringing in visitors from the outside, sometimes under the guise of religious instruction.

Other extremists may tie their activities with those of prison gangs. Although prison officials have noted that there is often friction between members of racist prison gangs such as the Aryan Brotherhood and those who come into prison dedicated white supremacists, friendly associations or alliances may be just as common. When Michael Knight, the Exalted Cyclops of the Aryan Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, a Texas-based white supremacist group created in 1999, was in prison the following year, awaiting trial on weapons charges, he was supported by members of the Aryan Reich and Aryan Circle. “Though I wasn’t a member of their group,” he reported, “They treated me no different than one of their own.” Soon Knight was able to boast that the Aryan Knights had an “established and self sufficient POW wing,” with the capability of working “completely independent of the free world A.K.” The Aryan Knights in prison were “very well liked and respected,” and had begun publishing a ’zine called *Exist* directed at the needs of prisoners, with the clear goal of recruiting. The Aryan Knights also tried to coordinate protests at prisons with the New York-based Racial Nationalist Party of America; again, a measure designed to get the support of inmates.

In addition to, or instead of, recruiting prisoners, other extremist inmates may spend their energies directing communications at their associates outside the prison walls. Many extremists write to or write for extremist publications, their efforts ranging from brief letters to the editor to regular columns. John Pitner, the founder of the Washington State Militia, for instance, in prison following his arrest on weapons charges, became an “honorary columnist” for the *Vigo Examiner*, an Indiana-based right-wing

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publication. Similarly, animal rights extremist Rod Coronado, serving a five-year sentence for helping firebomb a Michigan State University laboratory in the early 1990s, wrote for *No Compromise*, a 'zine supportive of the Animal Liberation Front.

Such writings may consist of a variety of themes. One common subject consists simply of describing conditions in prison. Lynda Lyon, for example, a right-wing anti-government extremist on death row in Alabama for murdering an Opelika police officer in 1993, published an article in *Resurrection*, an Arizona-based militia newsletter, titled “The ‘Hole,’” in which she provided opinions on her treatment in prison. “Reverend Vincere,” a prisoner who became a member of the World Church of the Creator due to the recruiting efforts of a fellow inmate in the maximum security block, writes articles for the WCOTC newsletter, *The Struggle*, and the WCOTC Web site on subjects such as “The Breeding of Hate in Prison From a White Man’s Perspective.”

However, one of the most frequent—and perhaps most alarming—themes is the call to action. Extremist prisoners commonly urge followers or fellow movement members to take radical actions, often in no uncertain terms. This should probably not be surprising, as clearly the authors of such calls to action were radical enough themselves to commit crimes serious enough to put them in jail. Moreover, were others to follow in their footsteps, it would—in their own minds, at least—vindicate their own decisions.

Such calls for violent or radical action come from all parts of the political spectrum. Environmental extremist Craig Marshall, aka “Critter,” a prisoner serving a five-and-a-half-year sentence for conspiracy to commit arson and possession of a destructive device, told *Earth First!* readers in the summer of 2001 that “the truest form of solidarity that anyone has shown me has been the continuing ELF/ALF actions, and the anti-authoritarian/anti-capitalist actions happening throughout the world.” Only by continual actions such as those, Marshall said, would activists ever be able to overcome the system. “Writing letters to fallen comrades raises the spirits of those of us who are incarcerated, but when someone picks up a bomb, instead of a pen, is when my spirits really soar.”

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In a similar vein, right-wing extremist and Christian Identity adherent Michael Mugrage told readers of the newspaper *Jubilee* in 1994, “We have run out of cheeks to turn, folks. It’s easy to do nothing and pretend that it will all go away, but those who do so will end up in chains or dead...we must do what is right—which entails deeds—not words. For the Love of YAHWEH, prepare yourselves for the coming struggle.” Christian Identity is a racist and anti-Semitic religious sect whose members believe that whites are the descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel and are God’s chosen people; many also believe that Jews are descended from Satan. In the 1990s, many Christian Identity adherents waged war against the government and other hated symbols such as abortion clinics. One Identity believer, Willie Ray Lampley, an Oklahoma militia leader, plotted in 1995 to bomb a series of targets ranging from abortion clinics to Anti-Defamation League offices. Convicted on weapons and explosives charges, he was still defiant five years later, writing an article for the *American’s Bulletin* in which he told readers that “You will either fight for your freedom, or else you will die as a SLAVE! YOU WILL EITHER OBEY YAHWEH, OR ELSE YOU WILL DIE THE DEATH! SO BE IT, HALLELUYAH! PRAISE THE LORD AND PASS THE AMMUNITION!”

Members of anti-government movements such as the sovereign citizen and tax protest movements are just as likely to remain active while behind bars. Leroy Schweitzer, leader of the Montana Freeman, received a 22 1/2-year sentence on fraud, conspiracy and other charges following his 81-day standoff with the FBI near Jordan, Montana, in 1996. Since arriving at a federal penitentiary in South Carolina, he restarted his paper terrorism tactics, teaching a variety of convicts how to file bogus liens against public officials, attorneys and others. Prisoner John Robert Hasson, a jewel dealer serving a 40-year sentence on money laundering and obstruction of justice charges, used Schweitzer’s tactics to file a \$1.5 billion lien against the judge in his case and \$750 million liens against lawyers representing a party suing Hasson. Other students of Schweitzer in the past year who have filed liens, usually for \$100,000,000 each, have convictions that include solicitation to commit murder, armed robbery, and a variety of narcotics charges. Under Schweitzer’s tutelage, however, they have become “conservators of peace” and “justices.”

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Schweitzer is not the only sovereign citizen to instruct other prisoners on filing bogus liens and other harassing documents. Anti-government extremists around the country have shared their techniques with inmates who, with ample time on their hands, have started to use the bogus filings to exact revenge on those who put them in jail. Federal inmate Kenneth Speight, a convicted drug dealer and weapons-law violator, used these tactics in early 2001 to harass a federal judge with a \$10 billion lien, while also targeting prosecutors in his case with \$1 billion liens. Similarly, James S. Hill Jr., a career criminal serving time for drug trafficking, filed \$1 million liens in 1997 against a federal judge and three other law enforcement officials involved in his case. In an even more outlandish scheme, eight inmates in a federal prison in Georgia (with at least 10 accomplices outside of prison) filed liens in 1998 against former Attorney General Janet Reno, former FBI Director Louis Freeh, former President George Bush and the entire judiciary of the United States, among others.

Fewer female extremists end up behind bars than their male counterparts, but the ones who do, such as Linda Lyons, are just as likely to remain committed to their causes. One example is Michelle Benson, a World Church of the Creator member serving a life sentence for murder. From prison, Benson writes articles for a sporadically published newsletter called *VOR – Our Sister's Voice*. *VOR*, described as a “forum” for women in prison to express their thoughts about “their people, our cause and living behind the wire,” is a publication of the Michigan chapter of Sigdrifa, an extremist group that bills itself as “the premier voice of the proud white woman.” In her writings, Benson urges readers to “do whatever it takes to vanquish the Zionist regimes controlling our lands, and help our race recapture its rightful place as the great leader of culture and civilization. Hate and fight the enemy.”

Just as committed as Benson, but from the other end of the political spectrum, is Helen Woodson, originally sentenced to eighteen years in prison for taking a jackhammer to a missile silo in 1984. Woodson not only wrote to a variety of left-wing groups, but also undertook a series of stunts within prison designed to bring attention to her anti-nuclear weapon cause, including walking out of prison carrying a protest banner and setting fires on the recreation

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field (again, while displaying a banner). She filed a civil lawsuit asking to serve her full sentence and be released unconditionally rather than be released on parole with conditions limiting her activities (she lost). Paroled in 1993, three days later she robbed a bank with a starter's pistol, then lit the money on fire while reading a statement denouncing capitalism and the destruction of the environment. The robbery resulted in another conviction and a sentence of 202 months that sent her back to prison, where she resumed her writing.

THE NOT SO SILENT BROTHERHOOD

Imprisonment, however, did not inhibit members of The Order from continuing their mission. Several of them became prolific writers, contributing to a variety of extremist publications, or even starting their own.

The nation's most notorious white supremacist terrorist cell also provides one of the best examples of how extremists remain active even when placed behind bars. The Order, also known as Bruder Schweigen (a fractured German term for "The Silent Brotherhood"), was an early-to-mid-1980s group of some two dozen people led by Robert Mathews, who had the goal, loosely inspired by neo-Nazi William Pierce's novel *The Turner Diaries*,

of launching a white revolution. The Silent Brotherhood participated in four main types of crime. The first was armed robbery, particularly of armored cars, which netted them over four million dollars, most of which they funneled to various white supremacist groups. The second was counterfeiting, which they attempted with little success, to help bring down the financial system. The third was hate crimes that culminated in the assassination of Denver radio talk show host Alan Berg, because he was a Jew who mocked right-wing extremists. The fourth was murder, non-ideologically motivated, which they committed on one of their own.

Their actions brought swift response from law enforcement. By 1985, all of the members of the group were in jail or dead, with Mathews himself dying

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in a violent standoff with law enforcement authorities on Whidbey Island, in Puget Sound, Washington. Most core members of the group received extremely long prison sentences.

Imprisonment, however, did not inhibit members from continuing their mission. In fact, several of them became prolific writers, contributing to a variety of extremist publications, or even starting their own. David Lane, currently serving a 190-year sentence in federal prison in Colorado, is best known for his creation of the “14 Words” (“We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children”), a slogan that has become a rallying cry for white supremacists in the United States and abroad. For several years, he ran 14 Words Press from behind bars, using his wife, Katja, and former Church of the Creator leader Ron McVan to do the physical work.¹

Based in St. Maries, Idaho, 14 Words Press promotes a form of paganism its principals refer to as “Wotansvolk,” describing it as the fulfillment of “the upward evolutionary path of natural instinct and biological determination. It is the will to preserve our own kind by the acknowledgment of our genetic uniqueness.” According to 14 Words Press, “Nature decrees that ‘might is right’ and the will to survive justifies the means... .Racial integration is genocide, forced integration is deliberate and malicious genocide.” The main publication of the Press is *Focus Fourteen*, a monthly newsletter to which Lane often contributes. 14 Words Press sells other Lane-authored publications, as well as T-shirts and jewelry, and is a vehicle through which Lane is also able to continue his associations with members of The Order. Lane’s work has been reprinted in other white supremacist publications and also appears on other extremist Web sites.

Much like Lane, Richard Scutari, also serving a (60-year) sentence in federal prison in Florence, Colorado, has become a frequent contributor to extremist publications. His definitions of a political prisoner and prisoner of war have become the standard definitions used by most white supremacist groups, and have been printed in numerous publications, including the skinhead magazine *Hammerskin Press* (now defunct) and Tom Metzger’s *White Aryan Resistance*

¹ In October 2001, Katja Lane announced that operation of the press had been turned over to Steve Wiegand, a Maple Shade, New Jersey, purveyor of white power music. The following month, however, she listed an address in Napa, California, as the “new location” of the press. It remains unclear who currently oversees its operation, as well as to what extent it will remain active.

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newspaper. Scutari writes letters to the extremist newsletters and magazines to which he has access, including the National Alliance-owned *Resistance* magazine and *Fenris Wolf* (also defunct). Like Lane, Scutari also actively promotes Nordic paganism as a form of racist religion (Asatru, practiced mostly by non-racists).

Prisoner of War and Political-Prisoner defined

By Richard Scutari, bruder Schweigan, P.O.W.

A.P.O.W./Political Prisoner is:

- (1) A person incarcerated as a direct result of waging war against a power hostile to his Folk/Kindred. The person acts in a military capacity, as a soldier, but need not be personally involved in armed conflict. Support personnel also qualify.
- (2) A person incarcerated as a result of Folkish/Racist beliefs and or acts in furtherance of those beliefs. The beliefs and acts may be either legal or illegal. The person acts in a civilian-capacity.
- (3) A person who, because of his/her said beliefs, receives a more punitive sentence for an illegal act that he/she would have received had he/she not held those beliefs.

One point you should take notice of, is that the definitions (P.O.W.'s and Political-Prisoners) only encompass people who were actively involved in the Movement prior to their incarceration. Like all rules, this one has an exception. Non-movement people may be included if their incarceration results from either planned or spontaneous actions on behalf of our Folk. These standards need to be in place in order for the support of our Movement—fallen to have validity. Incarcerated Movement-Folk are there for one reason, and one reason only—they strove to secure the **Fourteen Words!**

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Order member Richard Kemp, also a copious writer, has become a “spiritual leader” at the U.S. Penitentiary in Sheridan, Oregon, where he is serving a 60-year sentence. As reported by David Lane’s 14 Words Press, Kemp is now the “gothi” of the Wotansvolk at Sheridan. Because of his involvement in Asatru, Kemp was invited to speak at the Nation of Islam’s Day of Atonement program at Sheridan and has also been instrumental in organizing a “Midsummer Solstice” celebration and weekly Asatru services at the prison.

Gary Lee Yarbrough currently resides at the U.S. Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, where he is serving an 85-year sentence. *Storm Watch*, white supremacist publication from Owensboro, Kentucky, recently published an interview with Yarbrough, in which he discussed the success he has had teaching other inmates about “our racial heritage and cause.” Yarbrough did, however, indicate that white prison gangs and white supremacists often have conflicting concepts of honor, loyalty, and racial cultivation.

Other imprisoned members of The Order still active include Randolph Duey, Randall Evans and David Tate. Duey is incarcerated in Wisconsin serving a 100-year sentence, while Evans is in Pennsylvania serving 40 years, and David Tate, convicted of killing a state trooper in Missouri, is serving a life sentence. Although not as active as the others, Duey, Evans and Tate have all published writings in extremist newsletters and magazines.

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THE FREE WORLD I: EXTREMIST RECRUITMENT OF INMATES

With the steady increase of members in the prison system, it is necessary for space reasons that we limit the contact point locations to only one inmate per prison, with preference given to those inmates who seek and successfully become ordained ministers. So, the race is on for inmate members to become an ordained minister!

—*The Struggle*; Issue LXIX, March XXVIII AC

Just as racist prison gangs and incarcerated extremists have both recognized the value of recruiting inmates to their causes, so too have extremist groups in the free world. To many such groups, inmates represent a valuable source of potential recruits, people who can carry on the struggle while in prison and after their release. In addition, most extremist groups seek to provide support to their members or adherents who may be behind bars. As a result, fringe groups and movements from around the United States and from all over the political spectrum attempt to exert an influence within the prison walls.

Prisoners are particularly vulnerable to such efforts. Many inmates are abandoned by family or friends once imprisoned; most inmates are eager for contact with the outside world. Such prisoners are often susceptible to extremists, who may be one of the only connections outside of prison that they have. The letters columns of extremist periodicals regularly print letters from prisoners desperate for contact. “I am looking for anybody that is interested in writing and getting to know someone new,” writes an Iowa inmate to the *American’s Bulletin* in 1999. “It is a lonely world in prison. A lot of people don’t understand this.” Such themes are commonly emphasized. “I would very much like to correspond with someone,” one letter written to the right-wing *Voice in the Wilderness* in 2000 pleads, “It gets so lonely being here without any visits, mail or phone calls.”

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Inmates with racist tendencies or who harbor anti-government sentiments are most receptive to the messages of extremist groups. Such weaknesses combine with loneliness to create a mindset open to radical appeals. “I guess...people have forgotten how very important mail is to a prisoner,” writes a “racially conscious” inmate to the *Nationalist Times* in 2000. “It is especially important to me because I am the last of my family’s bloodline. All of the rest of my family has passed away over the years since my incarceration in 1984.” Inmates who are angry about their incarceration are also vulnerable to ideologies that provide scapegoats for their situation—ideologies that range from white supremacist and anti-Semitic rants against the Zionist Occupied Government to militia conspiracy theories about the New World Order to anarchist cries to “smash the state.”

REACHING IN AND TOUCHING SOMEONE

Extremist groups use a number of different methods to recruit and indoctrinate inmates. Newsletters and other forms of written correspondence keep inmates informed of day-to-day events and provide a frequently missing connection to the world outside. That is the lure to prisoners; the inducement to outside groups to distribute such literature is that it can be used to “educate” inmates in desired topics such as Christian Identity.

Many inmates are abandoned by family or friends once imprisoned; most are eager for contact with the outside world. Such prisoners are often susceptible to extremists, who may be their only connection outside of prison.

Some groups publish special periodicals aimed at prisoners. The well-known neo-Nazi and Christian Identity group Aryan Nations, for instance, published a magazine for prisoners, *The Way*. Its pages were filled with articles and artwork by and for prisoners. Other magazines devote special sections to prisoners. For some time, the *Jubilee* regularly printed a “Captive Christians” section, edited by the “Prison Services Coordinator” for its “prison ministry.”

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This racist and anti-Semitic newspaper, published from Midpines, California, by Paul Hall II since 1988, has paid a lot of attention to extremist inmates. Not only does it include prison news and encourage readers to visit inmates in prison, for some time it held a yearly arts and crafts auction to raise funds to send Christian Identity and other publications to the more than 150 prisoners on its subscription rolls. Other publications subsidize prisoner subscriptions. The *Hoskins Report*, for instance, a newsletter published by white supremacist Richard Kelly Hoskins, created a “prisoner book fund” to send materials to inmates. Other publications provide special subscription rates for prisoners; in addition, people will sponsor individual subscriptions, often anonymously. However, the pages of many fringe publications are still filled with requests by prisoners for free or sponsored subscriptions.

Other extremists visit inmates or encourage like-minded individuals to do so. In this case, religion often plays an important role. Inmates are generally allowed access to religious services and personnel, an avenue through which extremists sometimes are able to have direct contact with their adherents behind bars. Prison authorities are responsible for the security of an institution, but must balance this concern with the First Amendment rights of prisoners. If corrections officials determine that a specific religious group may present a security threat—usually because of a group’s advocacy of violence or history of causing disruption—they are able to limit access to services or leaders from that group. Otherwise, they must accommodate such groups. This allows prisoners a variety of opportunities to deceive prison officials, from establishing bogus religious groups to camouflaging prohibited groups as benign ones. Dan Gentry, a Christian Identity leader from Arkansas and editor of *Facts for Action*, an Identity newsletter sent free to many prisoners, explains how this can be done. “You are not compromising your faith or your race,” he writes, “by setting the services up on an established framework or constitution...or an established fundamentalist Christian denomination recognized by prison officials...Obtain a list and choose the most appropriate one, and study their organization. Then, when worship begins, the...Israel message may be gradually introduced and no red flags will pop up. If any minorities attended at the outset, they’ll soon leave out of boredom. The Holy Bible is the Life Manual of the white race!”

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Christian Identity and Asatru/Odinism are the two religions most commonly used by white supremacists to get religious privileges; sometimes prisoners are genuine adherents of the religions, but prison officials have noticed the common practice of prisoners “adopting” one of these religions, especially Odinism, just in order to get such privileges. Christian Identity adherents have the advantage that their sect, based as it is (however perversely) on Christianity, may deceive unaware prison officials as to its true nature. Thus, prominent white supremacists and anti-Semites have on occasion actually been able to come into prisons and speak to inmates. The World Church of the Creator, with its spurious religion of “Creativity,” is less often given recognition as a valid religious group.

Inmates who find that their access to religious services has been denied often file lawsuits against prison authorities, claiming that their right to free exercise of religion has been violated. By doing so, inmates who are successful in their litigation can be awarded access to the religious leaders, services and literature that prison authorities would otherwise withhold. A recent law, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, puts more of a burden on prison officials to make their case.

IDENTITY ACTIVISM

One of the first white supremacists to reach out to inmates in an organized fashion was Richard Butler, founder of the Idaho-based Aryan Nations, a neo-Nazi and Christian Identity group. Aryan Nations established its “prison ministry” as early as the late 1970s, setting an example that many other Identity groups and individuals would follow.

Its efforts paid off with support and recruits, so much so that in 1987 Aryan Nations decided to begin publishing a newsletter, *The Way*, specifically for inmates, courtesy of imprisoned Order member David Tate (son of an Aryan Nations leader). The newsletter—until its possible demise in the group’s disarray following its loss in a major civil lawsuit filed by the Southern Poverty

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Law Center—was a quarterly publication through which Aryan Nations could reach out to inmates. Its purpose, according to its inaugural issue, was to provide “a good source of Bible study into the Israel Identity message and its related histories and politics for convicts, while also providing news and happenings of concern to our chained brothers and sisters.” Much of the newsletter’s content was devoted to helping inmates spread Christian Identity in prison, from providing information about the history of Christian Identity (to refute assertions it was created to subvert prison regulations) to coordinating information about Identity-related prison lawsuits, which it encouraged inmates to file.

Aryan Nations is just one of many Identity groups that have attempted similar, if smaller scale, programs. Many Identity organizations have prison ministries. Kingdom Identity Ministries, based in Harrison, Arkansas, is one such organization. Describing itself as a “*Politically Incorrect* Christian Identity outreach ministry to God’s chosen race,” Kingdom Identity provides inmates with Christian Identity literature at a reduced rate. It also promotes the “American Institute of Theology,” a Christian Identity bible course. There is little doubt about the nature of the message preached to inmates; convicts receiving the “Doctrinal Statement of Beliefs” from Kingdom Identity Ministries are taught to “believe in an existing being known as the Devil or Satan and called the Serpent... commonly called Jews today. These children of Satan through Cain are a race of vipers, anti-Christians who have throughout history always been a curse....The ultimate end of this evil race whose hands bear the blood of our Savior and all the righteous slain upon the earth is Divine judgment.”

Wayne Walter Morin Jr. promotes a similar theology through his Calistoga, California-based Spark Gospel Ministries, which he describes as a “Christian outreach ministry” dedicated to establishing God’s heavenly kingdom and identifying the “true Children of Israel.” Morin helps inmates evade restrictions by offering to take care of certain services for them. “White Brothers in JOG’s [Jewish Occupied Government] Hellhole” receive a list of services they can purchase with stamps. These services include placing the inmate’s name and address in racist newspapers, resending in-house prison mail (because

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prisoners usually have restrictions on writing to each other), arranging a conference call, or setting up a post office box. In 1999, Morin boasted of his successes to the National Alliance-owned magazine *Resistance*, writing that he was “in the process of once again spreading our message of preparedness for an all out HOLY WAR with the Ragheads, Kikes, Indians and other mudraces. Yes, we will be prepared for the WAR with our enemy the Government.”

The Round Hill, Virginia-based Chuck Kuhler runs another Christian Identity prison ministry. His newsletter, the *Virginia Christian Israelite*, is sent to many inmates—in fact, it claims to have 637 inmates on its mailing list and programs in 48 states. One such program, referred to as the “congregations” of “YHWH’s Messianist Assembly,” was approved in December 2000 for the California State Prison in Solano.

PAGAN PRISONERS

White supremacists in prison frequently claim adherence to various religious sects not just to indulge in racist beliefs but also as a way to circumvent prison regulations. Inside America’s penitentiaries, Asatru is establishing itself as another religion of racism and a way in which white inmates can continue their organizing efforts. Asatru, an Icelandic term for an ancient pagan Northern European religion that has been revived in modern times, incorporates the worship of Odin, Thor and other Norse gods and goddesses. It is widely practiced by non-racists, but a number of white supremacists are increasingly attracted to it, especially to the form of it called Odinism.

Although there are clearly genuine believers in Asatru in prison—and non-racist Asatru groups who reach out to prisoners—the sect also attracts apostate inmates interested merely in gaining privileges such as meeting opportunities, either among themselves, or with people from outside prison. This is much more often the case than with more dogmatic and restrictive religions such as Christian Identity. White supremacists may claim to be adherents of Asatru not because they actually believe in the tenets of the religion, but

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Asatru/Odinism is the chief rival to Christian Identity in terms of prisoner outreach; some Asatru groups boast of as many as 700 inmates in their prison ministries. Both prison authorities and inmates acknowledge its strength. 'Asatru is one of the fastest growing Pagan religions in the Federal Prison system,' writes imprisoned Order member Richard Kemp. 'Our fellowship meets weekly in the second largest meeting room on the compound. We have built up a book/audio/video collection.... We established the Mid Summer Solstice as an annual even where outside guests can attend, complete with a pork feast provided by the Institution.'

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because they can then request religious services. An editorial in a recent issue of the UBKA newsletter *Strife* sums up why Asatru has become important to incarcerated extremists: "This issue of *Strife* comes to you with a purpose, which is to encourage Bruder within the gulags to file an affidavit with their institutional chaplain requesting to be recognized as believers in Asatru (also known as Odinism or sometimes Heathenism). This is necessary if we want to have a place within these dungeons where our people can congregate for worship and educational purposes. Those of you who are not Odinists, we hope that you will participate in and support this. The opportunity to congregate with our Folk is beneficial to all of us."

Asatru/Odinism is the chief rival to Christian Identity in terms of prisoner outreach; some Asatru groups boast of as many as 700 inmates in their prison ministries. Both prison authorities and prison inmates acknowledge its strength. "Asatru is one of the fastest growing Pagan religions in the Federal

Prison system," writes imprisoned Order member Richard Kemp. "I can speak from first hand experience, as we formed a fellowship at FCI Sheridan over a year ago. We've had dozens of guys join our fellowship in this short time and move on to other institutions to promote Asatru in other facilities. Our fellowship meets weekly in the second largest meeting room on the compound. We have built up a book/audio/video collection. We constructed a 60' x 60' outdoor grove area. We established the Mid Summer Solstice as an annual event where outside guests can attend, complete with a pork feast provided by the Institution."

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Kemp has also written numerous articles on his success in establishing Odinism for the women's racist group Sigrdrifa, which actively promotes the racist version of Asatru/Odinism in prisons. Sigrdrifa has several chapters in the United States and Canada, each responsible for a specific project or publication. The "Odinism in Prison" project is run by the Port Angeles, Washington, chapter and was established to provide inmates with "educational materials" as well as render assistance to inmates trying to get Odinism recognized as a religion in their penitentiary. Sigrdrifa lists prison facilities in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas and Washington as having active Odinist groups. Inmates who participate in the project receive a newsletter and monthly copies of the "White Pagan Calendar" in addition to other Odinist publications.

Another group prominent in recent years in promoting Odinism among inmates is the White Order of Thule, based in Richmond, Virginia, and its northwest chapter, the Pagan Liberation League, based in Deer Park, Washington. These groups were at one point responsible for publishing several magazines with a strange mixture of Odinism and occultism with Satanic or neo-Nazi overtones. The pages of the recently defunct *Fenris Wolf*, "the revolutionary voice of the Pagan Liberation League," were filled with racist, anti-Semitic, and violent anti-government rhetoric. Despite the radical rhetoric, it is clear from the many inmate-authored letters to the editor that it was readily available to prisoners. These letters, compiled in a section titled "Letterbomb the Rabbi," came from inmates in institutions from New York to Washington.

Racist Asatru/Odinism's ability to conceal itself behind mainstream Asatru has helped the religion gain strength in prisons. Many prisons now allow inmates to hold Asatru service; the Nebraska Department of Corrections, for instance, has allowed Odinist religious services since 1989. Other prisons allow inmates to wear a "Thor's hammer" as a religious symbol. According to Norse mythology, Thor's hammer, Mjollnir, is a symbol of strength and fertility. White supremacists have adopted Thor's hammer as an image of Nordic culture and

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white warrior ancestors. And there is little doubt that racist Odinism bills itself as a white warrior's religion. One need only look to "Wotansvolk Wisdom for Aryan Man" (Odinist "commandments" created by 14 Words Press) for an idea of what Asatru really represents to white supremacists. Wotansvolk VIII commands adherents to "thank Wotan after you have put the enemies of your people in graves, " while Wotansvolk X explains that "when the laws of men decree the death of one's race, then the laws of nature demand rebellion."

CREATIVE INCARCERATION

In addition to Identity and Odinism/Asatru groups, the World Church of the Creator is particularly active in the prisons. Unlike the others, which are actual religions, even if bigoted, the World Church is a pseudo-religion created by white supremacist Ben Klassen in the 1970s. Klassen and—after his suicide in the early 1990s—his successor, "Pontifex Maximus" Matt Hale, promoted Creativity as an alternative to Christianity and as a way to justify white supremacy and anti-Semitism under the guise of religion. Hale describes the World Church as "a racial religion whose prime goal is the survival, expansion and advancement of the White Race." Over the years, the WCOTC, now based in East Peoria, Illinois, has developed into one of the most active, well-known hate groups, both in and out of prison.

WCOTC has recruited just as heavily among inmates as among people in the free world, believing that many white prisoners have been unjustly incarcerated and would make exemplary members of the Church. Not only are inmates allowed to join WCOTC—unlike Aryan Nations, where inmates are not officially granted membership—they can also be "ordained" as ministers in the Church. WCOTC lists of contacts include inmates in several states, including Florida, Ohio and South Carolina. They have been so successful in some penitentiaries that only one inmate per prison will be listed as a contact for the Church.

Hale claims that Creativity will become the “religion of choice” and encourages inmates denied WCOTC literature—a common occurrence—to file grievances and lawsuits against prison officials who withhold WCOTC material. To this end, Hale, a graduate of Southern Illinois University law school, has prepared legal paperwork for inmates. The WCOTC Sisterhood, a WCOTC women’s chapter, has also undertaken a project to assemble “Prisoner Legal Packets” to assist prisoner complaints regarding diet and religious accommodation. These complaints are common, and range from protests over denial of religious literature (virtually all WCOTC literature is racist and anti-Semitic) to demands that their prison diet not include Kosher foods.

Another women’s chapter, the Women’s Frontier, also actively supports white inmates, under the rationale that “imprisoned Creators are in reality RELIGIOUS prisoners, having been railroaded for practicing the racial religion of Creativity or for self-defense.” Members mail the *Women’s Frontier Newsletter* to inmates, list “political prisoners” on their Web site, and provide a draft letter inmates can use if prison officials have determined WCOTC literature to be in violation of their policies.

THE FREE WORLD II: SUPPORT FOR P.O.W.S

They’re in there for us. We’re out here for them!
— Vinland Records

Like the WCOTC Women’s Frontier, many extremist groups not only recruit prisoners, but also provide support to members or adherents who are already in prison. Supporting prisoners is an action that not only displays a devotion to the cause on the part of the supporter, but also helps keep the prisoners receiving support committed to the cause. Not surprisingly, such groups particularly urge their followers to support those extremists who are jailed

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because of crimes committed related to their cause. These “celebrity” prisoners, who range from militia leader Mark Koernke to the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, may receive support and encouragement from around the country or even abroad.

ANARCHISTS AND AFRIKANS

Right-wing groups dominate prisoner recruiting. In terms of providing support to imprisoned movement members, however, left-wing extremist groups take the lead. The environmental movement, the animal-rights movement and the anarchist movement have created a network of prisoner support groups that cross movement lines and international boundaries alike.

Among different extremist groups and movements, right-wing groups dominate prisoner recruiting. In terms of providing support to imprisoned movement members, however, left-wing extremist groups take the lead. Over the years, left-wing movements such as the environmental movement, the animal-rights movement, and the anarchist movement have created a network of prisoner support groups that cross movement lines and international boundaries alike.

Currently, one of the major sources of prisoner support from the far left is Earth Liberation Prisoners (ELP), which produces an on-line newsletter, the *Spirit of Freedom*. ELP is an offshoot of the Earth First! move-

ment. Based in Great Britain, it nevertheless supports prisoners around the world, and particularly in the United States (it is starting a North American branch, in fact). It provides information about people it claims are political prisoners and attempts to mobilize support for them and aid to them. “Make no mistake,” ELP warns its followers, “a war is being waged on the Earth and all its creatures.... Failure to support our political prisoners is tantamount to sanctioning repression by the state.” ELP’s prisoner support listings include various categories of activist prisoners, ranging from “Earth Liberation” prisoners such as Jeffrey Luers and Ted Kaczynski to anarchists such as Robert Thaxton to “celebrity” prisoners such as Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu Jamal (each convicted of murdering law-enforcement officers in unrelated incidents).

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Other organizations particularly active in supporting alleged “political prisoners” include the Anarchist Black Cross, an international movement, and the Oregon-based Anarchist Prisoners Legal Aid Network. Anarchists in particular, with their cries to “smash the state” and to eradicate prisons, appeal to inmates, including many convicted of common crimes who only come to believe they are “political prisoners” after their incarceration.

The example of Ali Khalid Abdullah, a Michigan inmate, illustrates the breadth of anarchist prisoner support. Abdullah entered the prison sentence as the result of an 11-20 year sentence for assault with attempt to rob while armed. Abdullah attempted to rob a business he later claimed was used as a “front” by a “major drug dealer.” According to Abdullah, “my intentions were to appropriate the funds and redistribute the majority of it, and keep a portion to fund future operations along this line.” Regardless of his intentions at the time, in prison he became an active anarchist as well as an adherent of the New Afrikan movement, a left-wing black separatist movement that is sometimes racist and anti-Semitic. He founded a group, the “Political Prisoner of War Coalition,” and became a prolific essay writer for anarchist publications. Largely as a result of his prison activism, his own case was adopted by left-wing and anarchist groups around the world. His story was also sanitized and politicized—according to the *Earth First! Action Update*, Abdullah “is serving time for taking political action against drug dealers. Also for ‘redirecting’ funds from capitalist ventures to community groups.” Abdullah’s prison writings were translated into many languages, while his supporters started an international campaign to win him parole (which he has repeatedly been denied).

Abdullah has taken pains to remain in touch with his supporters; he has also guided them, even to the extent of drafting letters for followers to send to the Michigan Parole Board. Supporters are asked not to identify themselves as anarchist nor to express their true feelings. “It would not serve me or what any of us are wanting to accomplish (which is my freedom from prison),” Abdullah explains, “if we display our open hate and disgust for the state and their system.... NEVER LET YOUR ENEMY KNOW THAT YOU HATE THEM, BUT ALWAYS GIVE THE APPEARANCE TO THEM THAT YOU WISH TO WORK WITH THEM.”

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Abdullah is just one of a number of imprisoned New Afrikan adherents targeted for support campaigns by the left. Another is Zolo Azania (formerly Rufus Averhart), one of three men convicted in 1981 for bank robbery and murder following the robbery of a Gary, Indiana, bank and the murder of a Gary Police Department officer in an ensuing shootout. (Azania was on parole for another murder at the time of the robbery and shootout.) Now on death row in Indiana, Azania depends on the efforts of his supporters to win him his life. According to his followers, Azania was sentenced to death because of his “political history and beliefs” and “in order to permanently silence his militant voice for liberation.”

Another New Afrikan death-row inmate is Gregory Anthony Rouster (who now calls himself Gamba Mateen Rastafari), sentenced to death in 1987 for the murder of his foster parents. According to the Web site, “Voice of Indiana’s Political Prisoners,” Gamba Mateen met Azania and other prisoners who “transform[ed] his colonial-criminal mentality into a revolutionary mentality.” Azania and Rouster get more attention than others because they are on death row (and thus also have attention called to them by opponents of the death penalty), but the “Voice of Indiana’s Political Prisoners” site lists over 30 other New Afrikans or other “Afrikan Revolutionary Internationalists” in Indiana prisons as “political prisoners.”

In fact, the New Afrikan support campaigns illustrate the full extremism cycle within the prisons, in which incarcerated extremists, with the support of outside groups, recruit and indoctrinate other prisoners. Gregory Rouster represents a typically vulnerable potential recruit. Only 18 at the time of the murders, Rouster was emotionally disturbed and mildly mentally ill, an abuser of drugs and alcohol (according to the mitigating circumstances listed at his sentencing). In prison, however, Rouster found people who told him that he was a victim of “colonialism and exploitation” and who offered him support. Not surprisingly, he accepted it.

HAMMERSKINS AND HATE

In contrast to the activities of the extreme left, prisoner support from the extreme right is less well organized and very poorly coordinated. There are no overarching organizations designed specifically to support imprisoned members of hate groups or anti-government groups. Web sites established for that purpose (with titles such as “Caged Patriots” and “Patriots Undersiege”) have typically not lasted long. Moreover, fewer “celebrity” prisoners exist on the extreme right. Timothy McVeigh, now executed, was not supported publicly very much during his years of imprisonment. Among hate groups, imprisoned members of The Order receive the most support and attention; anti-government groups tend to support incarcerated militia leaders such as John Pitner (now released), Bradley Metcalf and Mark Koernke. None have the same profile as a Leonard Peltier or a Mumia Abu Jamal.

As a result of the lack of organization, prisoner support on the part of the extreme right tends to come mainly from individual groups and organizations. Extremist publications ranging from the *American's Bulletin* to *Alert* to *The Nutmeg Informer* regularly publish lists of prisoners for their readers to write, while extremist groups raise support for their own imprisoned members or for members of like-minded groups. Individual extremists, such as Christian Identity ministers, may visit prisoners or attempt to speak to groups of them. Though the organizational level is lower, there is no less support among right-wing extremists for their imprisoned comrades than among the left. Prisons are a major focus of extremist support and recruiting efforts on the right just as on the left.

Hammerskin Nation (HSN) provides a good example of how right-wing extremist groups may provide support for prisoners. HSN is a large skinhead group, racist and anti-Semitic in nature, centered around the white power music scene. It is recognized as one of the best-organized—and most violent—racist skinhead groups in the United States. HSN actively and publicly supports convicted members, whom they hold up as examples of white men willing to sacrifice for the betterment of their race, but does not recruit new members from the prison population. Like many extremist groups, HSN

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views prison as just another arena for activity. In a 1999 article in the now defunct *Hammerskin Press* newsletter, an “Update from Kansas” soliciting support and donations reported on incarcerated Kansas Hammerskins, noting that “though it has been tough and will remain harsh throughout the sentences it will be used productively. Those under indictment will put this time to use as a positive experience for our movement.”

Hammerskin Press, while it existed, was HSN’s main avenue for reporting on and reminding other HSN members of imprisoned Hammerskins. Prisoner interviews were frequent fare, such as a January 2000 interview with convicted member Louis Oddo. The article updated readers on Oddo’s life behind bars and provided an address for donations. It also gave Oddo, serving a 20-year sentence in Alabama for what he describes as an “alleged racial homicide” (he was convicted in 1993 for killing a homeless black man in Birmingham, Alabama), a forum for his views. Oddo was critical of other white inmates he felt were not worthy of Hammerskin membership. Oddo has also received support from other extremist organizations, such as Volksfront’s “Department of POW Affairs.”

Interviews were not the only way in which HSP highlighted imprisoned members. Letters, like that from convicted member John Edwards, also appeared regularly in the publication. Edwards, serving time in Springfield, Missouri, when his letter was printed, also in the January 2000 issue, wrote to thank other Hammerskins for their support and to warn those “who turned their backs on their race and nation [that] it ain’t over yet.” HSP included a list of imprisoned Hammerskins in every issue.

Pen-pal lists are common, but some groups are more imaginative in their efforts to support imprisoned extremists. Sigdrifa has a number of non-Asatru related projects, including a White Prisoner Book Drive, a prisoner’s poetry collection titled *A Bard’s Tale*, and crosswords and word searches using “folkish history.” Sigdrifa has asked prisoners to contribute artwork for a White Heritage Coloring Book and dates and events for a White Heritage Calendar. In addition to *VOR*, the Victoria, British Columbia, chapter is responsible for the publication of a newsletter called *Forseti*. “P.O.W.s” and

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“Political Prisoners” are not charged for this publication, which includes articles written by inmates and is designed to help them “stay focused on what faces us.”

Not surprisingly, Sigrdrifa enjoys a mutually productive relationship with the imprisoned members of The Order. Its publications provide an avenue for members of The Order to express their views—members of The Order are frequent contributors to its newsletters and Web site. In return, Sigrdrifa makes sure that The Order members continue to get attention. Each member has a page on the Sigrdrifa Web site with the address and case update, as well as their writings or sometimes interviews.

Unlike some other groups, who are not particularly discriminating about what it takes to be a “political prisoner,” Sigrdrifa engages in a screening process. To be recognized by Sigrdrifa as a political prisoner or prisoner of war, a convict must provide information about his/her case, including a pre-sentence report, names and contact information of co-defendants, statements made in case paperwork, and judgment and commitment papers. Other extremists are also sometimes choosy. San Diego white supremacist and anti-Semite Alex Curtis, former publisher (he is now in prison) of the *Nationalist Observer* newsletter and Web site, praised white inmates generally as Aryan POWs, but also engaged in a “verification” process for his list of inmates who were truly deserving of support. The list, a sort of *Who’s Who* among incarcerated racists, included members of The Order, World Church of the Creator members Michelle Benson and Jules Fettu, serial killer Joseph Paul Franklin, Hammerskins Louis Oddo and James Matchette, and others both in the U.S. and abroad. Ironically, Curtis himself is now behind bars, recently convicted of civil rights violations for a number of racist and anti-Semitic stunts.

Many publications draw support for prisoners by publishing articles or artwork by prisoners. Jack Friend, a self-described “racially conscious” death row inmate in San Quentin, has done the cover art for the Oklahoma-based ’zine *Blood & Iron*. The Portland, Oregon, based Thule Publications, for instance, ran a special feature in its magazine *Thule* titled “Character,” in which the author shares the insight he’s gained while serving time: “I’ve learned that we

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must show our enemy that we are not passive, that we will not be herded into a pen, like sheep. We must show them that we will not go quietly into the night, that anytime *one* of ours falls, it will cost them TEN of theirs!!” For its part, Thule Publications acknowledges a debt to imprisoned racists: “While these heroes fight to survive in the worst prisons the world over we their kinsmen have taken upon us the DUTY to spread the message of these heroes and provide them with essential mental and social support these men need to stand strong in adversity.”

Other publications arrange for subsidized subscriptions for prisoners—a tactic that helps both to support prisoners and to spread the publication’s message within prison. Tom Metzger, head of the prominent white supremacist group White Aryan Resistance (WAR) and editor of the publication of the same name, requests that supporters send stamps, business-size envelopes, or money so that *WAR* can provide an edited version of “no nonsense Aryan news” to white inmates. Metzger also publishes photos and addresses for members of The Order, urging readers to send them financial contributions. Metzger also consistently publishes letters and articles about imprisoned white supremacists in *WAR*. He has commented that prison should be considered a “time out” for racists, and urges them to educate other white inmates.

Some publications, such as *BrainKrieg*, published by the Aryan-American Atheist in Lakeview, Oregon, allow inmates to place personal ads. Others provide news about the legal battles of prisoners. The Mississippi-based Nationalist Movement, for instance, has been supportive in its newsletter *All the Way* of inmates filing grievances and lawsuits. Quite a few publications raise support for inmates by publicizing racially tinged prison news. The *New Nation News*, for example, promotes the belief that “voluntary racial segregation in all prisons is a constitutional right” and routinely reports on “integrated prison racial violence.” *NNN* publicized, for example, the case of Concord, Massachusetts, inmate Eric Balagot, a white supremacist who died after a fight with an African American inmate. Although murder charges were brought against the inmate, he was eventually acquitted. *New Nation News* reported that the inmate was found not guilty because the jury wanted to “go

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home for dinner.” Through stories like this, white supremacists encourage an atmosphere of racial strife and fear. Stories of white inmates victimized while in prison are reported on a regular basis in an effort to promote the idea that whites in general and whites in prison specifically are a group under attack.

Groups without publications resort to other means of raising support for prisoners. The white power music distributor Vinland Records, based in San Diego, holds The Order in particularly high esteem. It even launched a fundraiser for the group, because “few have attempted what these brave patriots began.” Vinland used its Web site to publicize the project and posted announcements about it to many white supremacist Internet discussion lists.

Other groups have also found the Internet a useful way to honor extremists they see as political prisoners. “MilitantSkinbyrd,” a self-described 20-year-old white woman, is the creator of the “Save John W. King” Web site. Describing King as a “proud, white Southern Aryan POW,” the site exhorts readers to action before King is executed and “our precious right to the exercise of political and religious freedom will die with him.” A letter, allegedly written by King, appears on the site asking for monetary contributions to his “defense and relief fund” through which he hopes to “obtain documentary evidence and the basic necessities needed to effectively challenge my conviction and death sentence.”

Militia and “patriot” prisoners such as John Pitner and Brad Metcalfe have also been the subject of specific support Web pages or campaigns. Often such campaigns attempt to raise money for the families of imprisoned extremists. One Michigan Web site, for example, asks people to “Help out a true Patriot!” It sells T-shirts promoting the gun rights group The Tyranny Response Team (the T-shirts, stealing from the “Got Milk?” advertising campaign, ask “Got Rope?”), and promises that \$3 from every order will go to the wife of imprisoned Michigan militia leader Mark Koernke to help her out with expenses. Other Web sites also solicited support for Koernke’s wife, Nancy, while more supporters used the Internet to help organize rallies for Koernke.

In addition to hate groups and anti-government groups, other far-right movements have also mounted campaigns on the Internet to support their

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adherents in prison. Most prominent of these movements has been the radical end of the anti-abortion movement, which has come to the aid of prisoners who committed crimes in the cause of halting abortions. Through the “Army of God” Web site, the Virginia-based minister Donald Spitz hosts “authorized” pages for Paul Hill and Shelley Shannon. (Hill was convicted of murdering Dr. John Britton and escort James Barrett in June 1994, while Shannon is serving an 11-year sentence for shooting Dr. George Tiller in Kansas in 1993.) Spitz also provides e-mail addresses for Hill, Shannon, and others (since inmates do not have access to e-mail, Spitz presumably acts as a courier). At another anti-abortion Web site, “StreetPreach,” run by Drew Hiss from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, visitors are provided with addresses for James Kopp and Dennis Malvasi and encouraged to send “letters of praise and encouragement.” Kopp has been charged with the October 1998 murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian, while Dennis Malvasi, a twice-convicted clinic bomber, and his wife, Loretta Marra, have been charged with helping Kopp remain a fugitive and with hiding Marra from grand jury proceedings. Supporters are also provided with addresses through which they can send financial donations for Kopp, Malvasi, Marra, and for general prisoner needs.

CONCLUSION

Many Americans would prefer not to think about prisons. They are uncomfortable places filled with unpleasant people isolated, for a time, from the rest of society. Yet contrary to conventional wisdom, Americans are less isolated from prisoners than we would like to think. Many ideologically motivated prisoners have demonstrated a considerable ability to transcend the bars and walls of prison in order to reach out to followers in the free world. Putting criminals in jail does not make us immune to their effects. Moreover, there are a number of groups in the free world that do, in fact, think about prisons—as avenues for propaganda and as recruiting centers. Extremists, whether subscribing to their beliefs prior to incarceration or converting once inside, are neither as isolated nor as inactive as we would perhaps prefer to think.

Dangerous Convictions:

AN INTRODUCTION TO EXTREMIST ACTIVITIES IN PRISONS

Prisons themselves are the source of some of the problems because, by their very nature, they create environments conducive to the rise of racially separated prison gangs. These gangs prey on the fears and prejudices of new inmates, capitalizing on the dangers and tribulations of prison life, in order to achieve ideological and larcenous goals alike.

It is, of course, not solely because of prison gangs that inmates become involved with extremist groups. Leaders of extremist groups like Matt Hale of the World Church of the Creator target and encourage prisoners, using “religion” to justify their hatred. Likewise, extremist groups and individuals exploit inmates looking for contact, recruiting them to the cause by simply acting as a connection to the free world. Knowing that many of their allies in the free world regard them as martyrs, extremists entering prison

are often imbued with a false sense of importance that encourages them to continue their associations and to become active within the prison walls. White supremacists and anti-government activists are told by followers that they are “political prisoners,” “concentration camp inmates” or “prisoners of war.” Radical anti-abortion activists are encouraged by free world support that is not only financial but also psychological in nature and which serves to reinforce their beliefs in extreme actions. Similarly, eco-terrorists receive support from those outside the prison walls that convinces them their actions were just. And members of all of these fringe movements and groups respond accordingly, continuing their activities as much as the limitations of incarceration allow.

These problems will not go away. There are too many members of extreme movements willing to commit crimes for their cause—too many people willing to burn down a synagogue or drag a black man to death—for the flow of extremist criminals to the prisons ever to cease. There are also too many members of such movements who are aware of the advantages that prisons

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offer—in terms of recruitment, for instance—for extremist groups ever to ignore the lure of targeting prisons. Nor are conditions in prisons likely to change such that prison gangs will fade away. Nor can the country shut down such activities completely without violating rights to free speech and practice of religion, rights that inmates as well as free persons have.

Yet, to some degree greater awareness and greater vigilance can help mitigate these problems. More resources—from manpower to training—for hard-pressed prison officials could allow authorities to better police America's penal institutions and to deal with those groups and individuals who pose security threats. Perhaps more importantly, Americans need to pay more attention to those people behind bars, in order to offer genuine support and hope for the future to inmates that might cancel out or at least offer an alternative to the messages of racist, anti-Semitic and other extreme groups and movements. Human nature being what it is, such endeavors will never be completely successful, but the alternative is worse: to lose by default.

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