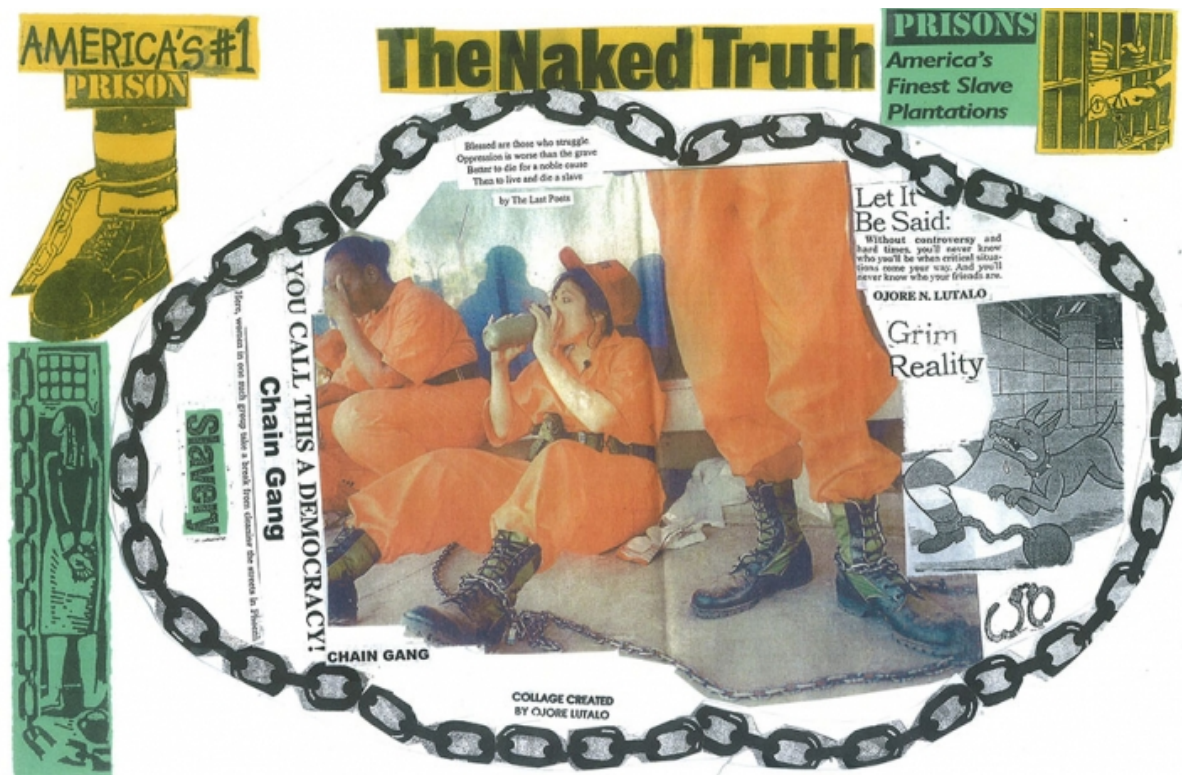


From the inside-out

Highlighting voices from those most affected by environmental conditions in New Jersey state prisons



collage art by Ojore Lutalo

**ISSUE #12 — AUGUST 2021 – A REPORT BY THE
AFSC PRISON WATCH COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT INITIATIVE**



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This is a community effort created by the voices inside.

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UNDERSTAND.....If you are confined in a state prison, you live in a cage or a tiny cell – usually with another person or in a dormitory. You cannot choose your placement or your cellmate. If the showers are moldy or appliances do not work you are either moved or told to deal with it.

AFSC Statement

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has been addressing the impacts of climate change through programs in New Mexico, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Baltimore, to name a few. These four U.S. programs are part of AFSCs “Farming for Social Change” Network which believes in the power of farming and land-based work with and for communities most impacted by historical oppression in order to increase self-determination, environmental justice, economic justice, and long-term wellbeing of our communities. This network envisions a world that values and centers the leadership of those most impacted by historical and state violence to create real systemic change.

For over 40 years, AFSC has had international and U.S. based programs that support farming to bring peace and economic, social, and environmental justice. Growing food is a practice that land-based people knew how to do before and after white supremacy and imperialism created forced migration, displacement, and environmental destruction across the globe. Today, AFSC is accompanying community members to (re)learn and practice traditional and sustainable farming ways, building economic and environmental justice while increasing the wellbeing of neighborhoods they live in.

As people are coming together across the globe to keep each other healthy and safe, it's critical that we extend that care to members of our community who are in prisons, jails, and detention centers as well as their families and communities.

quakerearthcare.org/article/farming-social-change

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Introduction

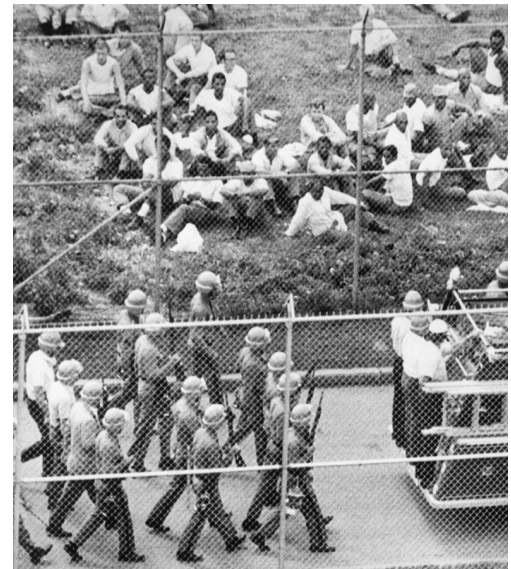
Nearly 70 years ago, New Jersey Prisons became the topic of national attention when two separate rebellions occurred in Trenton State Prison and Rahway State Prison; known today respectively as New Jersey State Prison and East Jersey State Prison.

The incarcerated people of Trenton State Prison struck first in a premeditated protest over the conditions of their incarceration, in 1952. Inspired by the Trenton State Prison’s protest-turned-riot, prisoners in Rahway State Prison were quick to organize their own protest that year. Based on these issues, then-Governor Driscoll created a Blue Ribbon Report to investigate. The Commission issued a report, which concluded that the purpose of these “rebellions” was not to “harass the prison authorities but (also) to attract public attention to the conditions and procedures which formed the basis of their grievances.”

Although the protests drew national attention and emphasized the severity of the prisoners’ grievances, little was changed. Significantly, although the Commission strongly recommended that Trenton State Prison (now the West Wing of NJ State Prison) be abandoned, this second oldest prison in the country was retained, and new wings of the prison were built around it.

In 1971, incarcerated people at Attica in New York and Rahway State Prison in New Jersey rebelled once again over conditions of confinement and a culture of cruelty, including filth, vermin, lack of proper medical care, use of devices of torture, lack of adequate food and water and many other issues of inhumane treatment. This year is the 50th Anniversary of both the Attica and Rahway rebellions.

Prisoners across New Jersey still face many of the same



September 9, 1971 — people imprisoned after the Attica prison riots.
Photo: Archive, Buffalo news

injustices and poor environmental conditions that pushed prisoners to rebel decades ago. With this 12th issue of *From the Inside Out*, we hope to paint an accurate report on the conditions of New Jersey prisons through collecting testimonies of current and former prisoners and extensive research on reports from across the state

From the Inside Out has been assembled to educate the community about the impact of environmental racism and uninhabitable living conditions **inside** NJ state prisons. It is our firm belief that everyone should have the right to a habitable living environment. Our report has concluded that this is not the reality for most people imprisoned in NJ. The findings of our report are not surprising, given the location, age, and lack of maintenance of the prison structures; many of these facilities were built on top of or within a mile radius of toxic sites. Testimonies from people in New Jersey prisons confirms other reports of inhumane conditions inside cells, bathrooms and common areas.

Let us not stand idly by while the state continues to deny incarcerated people fundamental human decencies. The first step toward realizing institutional change is through properly informing and educating you, **the public**. This newsletter will inform readers directly from the voice of the voiceless, those incarcerated behind prison walls, who have written and called us, whose families have reached out begging that we recognize the humanity of their loved ones.

Prisons are the land of the forgotten in this state and this country, and we as a community must not let the voices of those inside go unheard. Below are the voices of men and women in NJ prisons illustrating their experiences and living conditions. Although the core purpose of prisons is to separate individuals from the larger society, this separation should not deny their fundamental humanity and NOT include poison in the water, mice, rats, roaches or mold, all of which we hear of in the testimonies. We also hear of cages with NO toilets other than a hole in the floor. Listen to these voices. Hear them. We will continue to provide this platform for their voices to be heard.

Perspective...Visions from a Cell....

‘Environment’ can mean MANY things. It is the air we breathe, the water we drink or bathe in, the temperature we are living in. All these impact health, safety, mental health, and ultimately, survival. From sitting in a cell, sweating so much you cannot dry off, to standing in a shower so cold you cannot breathe and you notice the water pouring on you is not clear, the conditions incarcerated people are subjected to are brutal and dehumanizing.

At your house, you can adjust or repair all these things. When you are confined you can impact none of them. You can’t move to a cooler spot, turn on the air, get a plumber to fix the water, or simply walk outside to get a break. We seek to bring this reality out to each of you. There are also testimonies of vermin, mold, walls that literally run with water, leaks that are never repaired.

It is often said that our incarcerated family members are sentenced to serve a period of time, but not to die (we do not have the death penalty in NJ). I would add to that not to be subjected to conditions that we would not allow our animals to live in. Each of you would call everyone in charge if you learned a dog was in the pound in 100 degree weather without clean water or any ventilation. You might break the window of a car if a baby or a dog was inside on a hot day. Why is it different here? In researching and digging into these issues, I have discovered there is virtually nobody and no department in the state that is responsible for checking these issues. How is the Health Department not part of ensuring the health and safety of water? How is there no checking on the heat levels as there is in any other institution in our state?

It amplifies again how vulnerable our prison population is, and how the human beings housed there are neglected in the most basic of areas—air, water, heat, safety.

There are no outside annual inspections of water, electrical, plumbing or construction integrity. The majority of repairs are done and maintained by those who live there, with no verification of safety. No consideration is made for the safety or health of the people inside.

COVID-19 has only amplified the vast disparities in how people live,

are perceived, or survive. It has revealed the vast differences between those inside and those outside.

I will close this as I began. No punishment should result in a less healthy person who has spent years or decades being consistently treated as if they are less important than an animal in a pound. This must change. It cannot be allowed to continue under only the watch and actions of the Department of Corrections. That has been a failure of abject proportions. More expert eyes must be on these locations, since the DOC cannot be relied on to review themselves, as has been proven over decades.

—Lydia Thornton, Editor

Prisons: New Forms of Environmental Racism

“How Are Prisons Sited?

As is often the case with other environmentally disastrous land uses, communities are shut out of public review of proposed prison sites. According to the Encyclopedia of American Prisons***, “Premature disclosure” makes siting a prison difficult because the public might find out before the deal is set. Not surprisingly, notice of any public hearing is poor, while intimidation by those pushing for the prison is great...The environmental justice movement insists that the political process be open and democratic, so that all who might be affected by a project have the information and access to participate in making decisions.”

—California Prison Moratorium Project

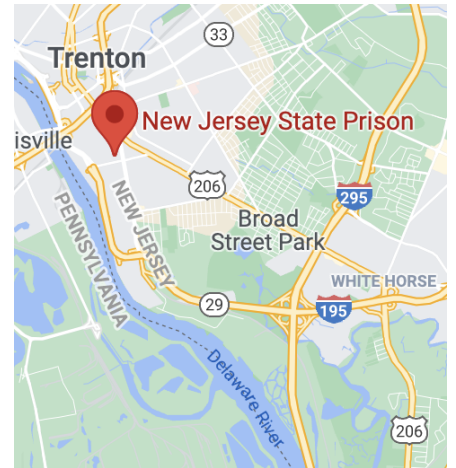


New Jersey State Prison

History

New Jersey State Prison is located in Trenton, New Jersey. It was formerly known as Trenton State Prison. This is a maximum security state prison. It was originally opened in 1836. The capacity of this prison is about 1,800 people. This prison has had documented class action lawsuits filed against them due to the uninhabitable living conditions. In this document many health and safety violations were documented. These health and safety issues include but are not limited to the following:

1. Asbestos
2. Rodents
3. Contaminated Water
4. No Hot Water
5. Inadequate Waste Sewerage
6. Inadequate Cell Space
7. Antiquated Toilet Basins
8. Faulty Plumbing
9. Inadequate Cell Ventilation
10. Excessive Heat
11. Electrical Service



*Unfortunately, these conditions have not changed. There are many reports from prisoners stating that the conditions stated in this 2010 lawsuit have not differed. Therefore, we have no reason to believe otherwise.

Testimonies

“The water often smells like sewage and chemicals and it's been like this for months. Chlorine and rust are the chemicals that I have often smelled from the water. Yesterday, the water came out as only rust. The water used to be tested every three to six months but it is not tested at all anymore. Also, the ventilation system pushes out dust and dirt. You can feel it when you put your hand on it. They serve us spoiled milk and expired food often. On June 22nd 2021, a live bat was found in the pantry. The pantry is located on what is supposed to be a closed unit. Therefore, how did a bat even get in?”

—Letter from J.E.

“My job assignment at one point was as a plumber. In my training they told me that I would never have to go into certain areas of the prison where people were being kept. I was told those cells had NO plumbing. The toilets were holes in the floor. This part of the prison is ancient. Those cages are called ‘dry cells.’ How can this be?!”

—Call from LW

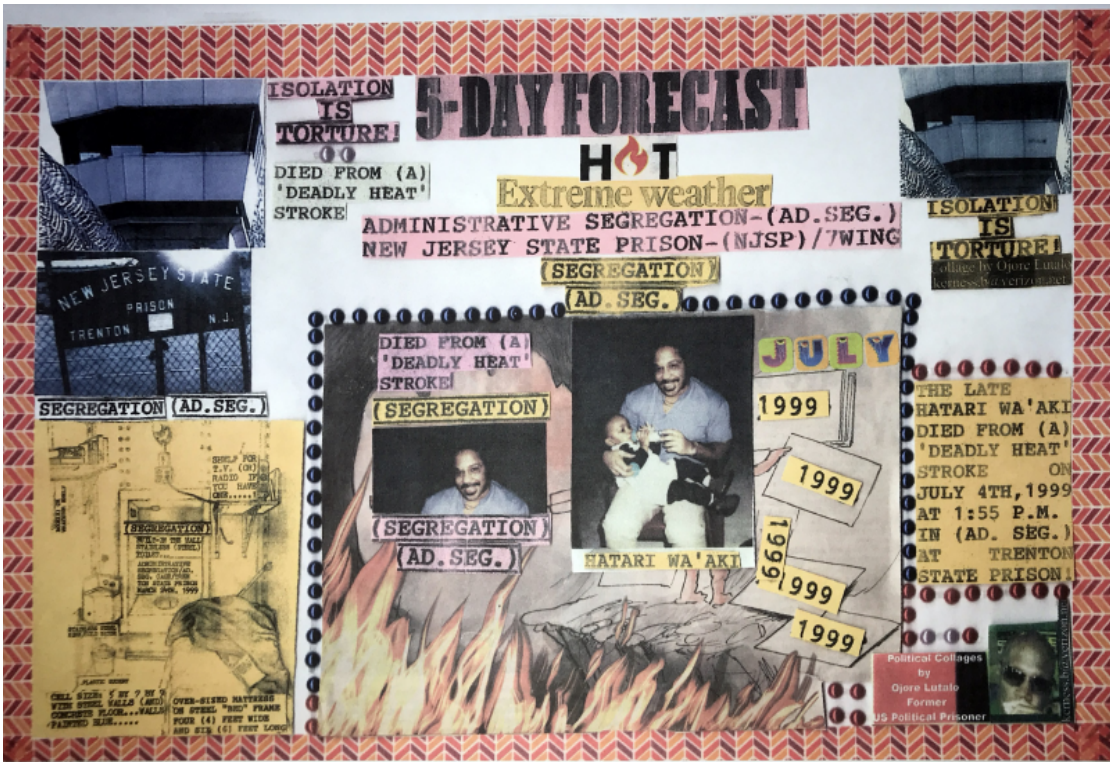
Interview On Environmental Conditions with Ojore Lutalo

Ayreanna P: “How were the environmental conditions in the cells at New Jersey State Prison?”

Ojore L: “We had to use cardboard to block the door to keep out the rats and other rodents. In the evening, you could hear the mice scratching at the doors. There are a lot of roaches, sometimes I would wake up and see them eating at the food I kept in my cell. Rats would come out the toilet of the cell so whenever we were not using it, we had to stuff it so they don't come up the pipes.”

Ayreanna P: “Is there anything else you would like to add about the overall conditions of the prison?”

Ojore L: “The showers were always moldy. You could visibly see the mold in the shower. I have asthma and was always worried about the impact on my lungs. You could also smell it from far away. You can stand at the cell gate and see the mice and rats running up and down the pipes on the wall.”



EXCESSIVE HEAT

Given the heat this summer of 2021, we heard from dozens of men at NJ State Prison noting that all they could do was lie on the floor naked. The heat was overwhelming, sickening. The above is a memorial collage, created by Ojore Lutalo, dedicated to **Hatari Wa'Haki** who died in 1999 of heat stroke.

NOTES

This summer, AFSC had reports of broken air conditioning in South Hall. We will credit the Department with repairing it after we called. The people living there reported it broken during the worst of the several heat waves, writing multiple remedy forms which were ignored. One man reported holding a tissue in front of the vent which did not move. They want to know why their requests for repair were ignored.



Edna Mahan Correctional Facility

History

Edna Mahan Correctional Facility was opened in 1913. The only womens' prison in the state has mixed security levels and is located in Clinton, NJ. Edna Mahan Correctional Facility is located on a toxic site and is within a half mile of another toxic site (Grist). The state has hired a private contractor to facilitate the cleanup. According to WNYC, this cleanup will take many years.



Time might be running out for NJ's only prison for women

“Advocates say that mold is a problem in at least one building and describe such other issues as “black sludge found in sinks, drains, toilets and showers, leaking sewage, brown and black water ... According to DOC spokeswoman Liz Velez, power was restored to most of the campus by 5 p.m. Saturday, though it remained out in one building known as the Stowe Cottage. Advocates said it was out there for about 40 hours, including Mother’s Day, when women had neither heat, hot water nor hot food.”

Testimonies

“The first few hours were typical of things here but once the lights did not come on that night we all began to worry and question what was happening. And of course they don't tell us anything, just leave us in the dark both literally and figuratively.”

—**letter from K.J**

“The water was blue and stinky—but they corrected this problem. A Lot of those types of issues happen because they send maintenance men to do work that they really need a plumber or another expert for. This place, as I'm sure other prisons do, likes to cut corners and save a penny today only to cost way too much down the line to fix the issue correctly. That is one of the big issues in all the buildings, they only fix when it falls completely apart. If they chose to, the buildings could be taken down and replaced one section at a time.” —**letter from A.M**

“However, North Hall and South Hall do not have any air conditioning at all! North Hall and South Hall get up to and over 95 degrees fahrenheit during the hot summer days and numerous inmates are harmed with heat stroke and forced to go to the hospital due to extreme heat in North Hall and South Hall.”

—**letter from K.R**

“While dealing with the environmental/health and safety problems at EMCF, prisoners ask for an investigation of the black mold in North and South Halls, which is like the mold present at the Hillcrest unit, which required the evaluation of that unit.” —**letter from Y.L (note the “Hillcrest Unit” has since been closed due to the mold)**

“Allegedly they will be installing bunk beds in the North Hall Gymnasium for the STOWE prisoners, similar to the way Reception is set up in South Hall's former Gymnasium. This is not a workable plan because North Hall and South Hall are both in severe disrepair, the plumbing is totally shot, we have drain floods and black sludge that comes out of our drains too and plenty of black mold as well.”

—**letter from J.O**

“There is little question the infrastructure at Edna Mahan has deteriorated to a condition that requires extensive remediation. I would argue that the expense is unavoidable. Choosing to fix the existing prison, relocation or even building

another facility altogether would require considerable construction and cost before a move could even be made.” —**letter from W.L**

NOTES

In one report to Prison Watch, a woman formerly imprisoned at EMCF noted that the prison is located at the bottom of a slope which was once used for farming. She testified that when it rained, you could smell the toxic runoff from old pesticides on the campus grounds.

Environmental Conditions in Dry Cells

(Interview with Ojore Lutalo)

Where were you imprisoned when you were thrown in a dry cell and for how long?

OL: I was in Bordentown Reformatory in New Jersey. The unit was G3 Bordentown Reformatory Segregation. They put me there as punishment for disciplinary infractions. I was there for about two months. I was also in a dry cell in Trenton (New Jersey State Prison) State Prison too. I was in One Left Flats with the ther dry cells. I was here for 15 days.

What can you tell me about the environmental conditions of the dry cell?

OL: The dry cells consist of three irregular cells. The front of the cell door had a steel door that opens and closes. The steel door was behind a set of bars so they could leave the steel door open but you were still locked behind the bars. Inside the cell there was nothing but one hole in the floor. The lights on the “toilet”were controlled outside the cell by guards. In the morning they would take your mattress if you decide to miss a meal. Then at 11pm they brought the mattresses back.

It was very hot in the cell. There weren't any rats because there was nothing for them to eat. It was a completely empty cell. The conditions in the Trenton dry cells were open bars and an opening in the bottom of the bars for them to slide me my meal. Similar to Bordentown, there was one hole in the ground to use the bathroom and that was it. I was only allowed to have a mattress and a very thin blanket. If a prisoner threatened to throw feces or spit at the guard they would put a screen door in front of that person's cell.

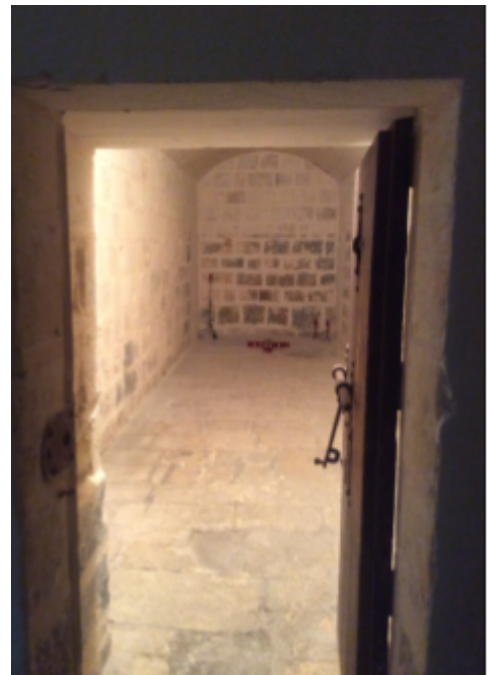


Image of dry cell



East Jersey State Prison

History

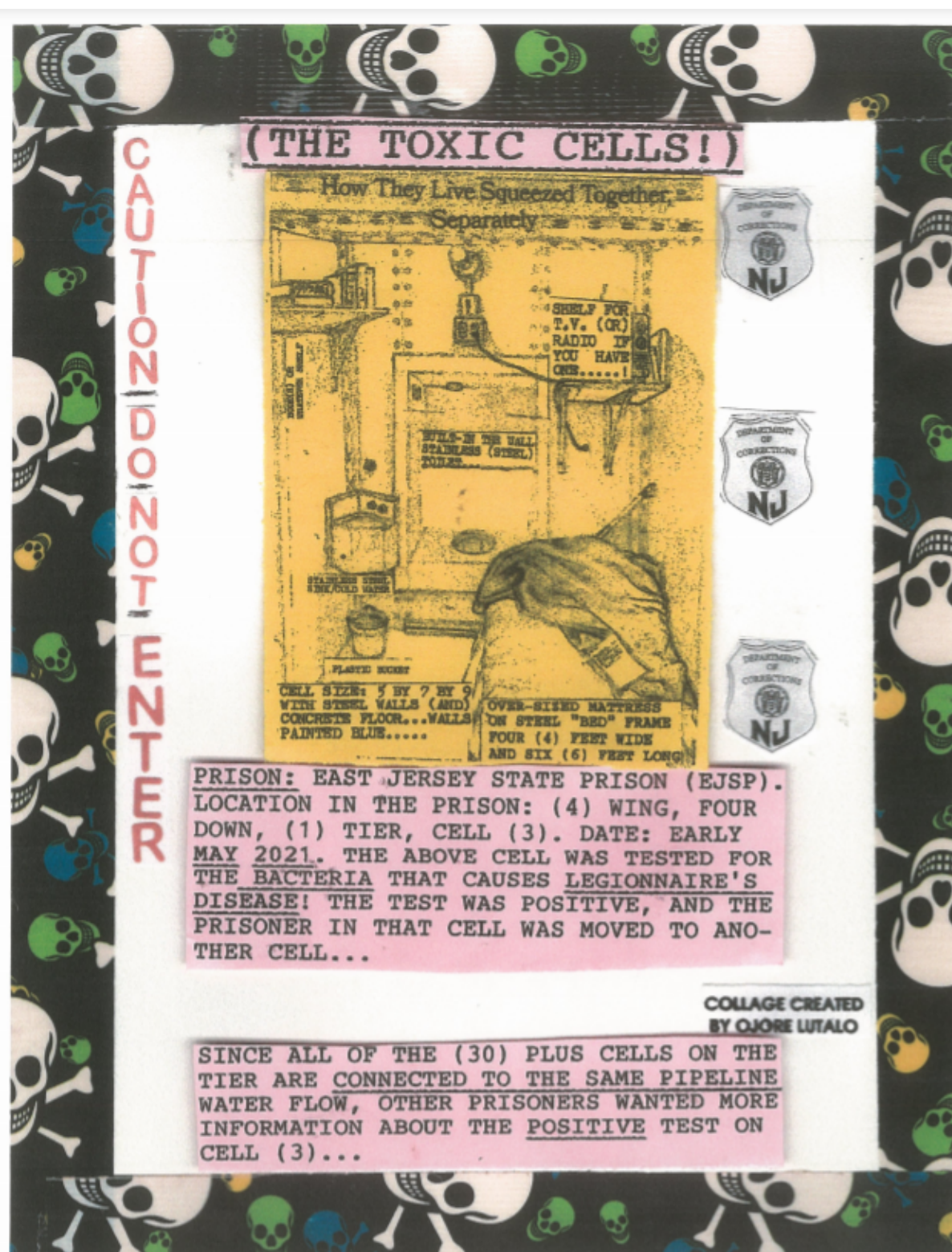
East Jersey State Prison is a maximum-security prison located in Rahway, NJ. The prison was established in 1896 and officially opened in 1906. It was a prison for youth. Over time, this changed, elders are currently housed in East Jersey State Prison (EJSP) too. The prison used to be named Rahway State Prison but the citizens of Rahway petitioned for a name change. The citizens believed that the name associated the town with negative stereotypes and brought down the property value.

The land EJSP is currently sitting on was formally called “The Edgar Farm.” The building was intended to look daunting and scary to portray a sense of power to both the citizens of the town and prisoners.

Most of the wings in this prison have remained in constant use since 1901. By 1905, the prison was overcrowded, which has continued until this day. Only four years after Rahway State Prison converted to a maximum security prison, a rebellion occurred. On April 17th 1952, a five day long rebellion began due



to poor living conditions and brutal beatings by officers. Both of these issues are still prevalent today according to people incarcerated at EJSP. Furthermore, this prison had an outbreak of Legionnaires disease this year, 2021. Legionnaires is widely known to be caught and passed through water. This outbreak was kept quiet until news outlets got reports from prisoners about the condition.



PRISON: EAST JERSEY STATE PRISON (EJSP).
LOCATION IN THE PRISON: (4) WING, FOUR
DOWN, (1) TIER, CELL (3). DATE: EARLY
MAY 2021. THE ABOVE CELL WAS TESTED FOR
THE BACTERIA THAT CAUSES LEGIONNAIRE'S
DISEASE! THE TEST WAS POSITIVE, AND THE
PRISONER IN THAT CELL WAS MOVED TO ANO-
THER CELL...

COLLAGE CREATED
BY OJORE LUTALO

SINCE ALL OF THE (30) PLUS CELLS ON THE
TIER ARE CONNECTED TO THE SAME PIPELINE
WATER FLOW, OTHER PRISONERS WANTED MORE
INFORMATION ABOUT THE POSITIVE TEST ON
CELL (3)...

Testimonies

“I have been in three different units. The first unit I was on was the ‘3-Wing.’ That unit is a two man cell. On that unit, there is mold on the shower walls, people getting skin irritation from the shower, mice running around the unit, and the sinks and toilets are always broken.

The second unit I went to was “1-Right.” That unit has mold in the showers, mice running around, and on the tier they have walls peeling print and the print chips falling to the ground or on people. The officials will not let the inmate workers touch it because they are saying it has asbestos at the same time they are making us breath in the air from the big fans that they have lodged on the same walls that they say have asbestosis.

The unit that I am currently located on is 4-Wing this unit have water running down the cell walls, water dripping from sealing on the tier, mice running around the unit, mold on the shower walls, we do not have clean drinking or shower water because it come out brown, dirty water and debris dropping on us while we are showering from the ceiling above, and when it rains, it floods the unit. The officials at this prison like taking short cuts that is why the issues do not get fixed. They hire inmates to be maintenance workers due to them not being trained. They break more things then they fix. This prison is not fit to hold human beings and everything is falling apart. They have scaffolds up everywhere with plywood laying on top of them to catch the falling debris.

The issue with the scaffolds is an OSHA violation because scaffolds are not supposed to be used for long-term usage and whoever walks under it should have a hard hat on. The scaffolds were put in place 13 years ago, that is how long this building has been falling apart.” —**Letter from A.G**

“Please take notice, there seems to be a very serious health concern at **EAST JERSEY STATE PRISON**, in Rahway NJ, of water contamination which has hospitalized a few prisoners. In **NORTHERN STATE PRISON** in Newark NJ there has been one reported death. Officials here at **EAST JERSEY STATE PRISON** are claiming that this matter is a ‘rumor’ while the fact is that prisoners have gotten extremely sick and have been having very serious medical issues ranging from breathing problems to severe headaches and pains that are not connected to Covid-19. Also a very concerning situation, officials are telling concerned family members that this issue is not serious and the facility is being inspected and the prisoners are being provided bottled water, which is false.” —**Letter from S.C**

“Enclosed is a list of what I’ve seen regarding the living conditions inside the prison:

- Many of the cells on 4 Wing have water that leaks from pipes behind the cells into them.
- Whenever there is a heavy downpour of rainwater flows from the roof into cell block tiers from 4 up to 4 down flats, which is four levels. A lot of water!
- 4 Down, 1 tier, cell number 3, has been emptied and has a sign on the door that says it's **Contaminated** for approximately six weeks. This was done after the water was tested for Legionnaires disease. This was after an inmate housed in 2 Wing became extremely ill with the disease.
- The shower on the 4 Down cell block has two ceiling tarps used to catch water that leaks from the ceiling which above is the 4 Up shower. The tarps are always transparent white color with brown stains, and what appears to be mold that has accumulated has been there for a long period of time.
- There are scaffolds that are being used as what appears to be permanent structures because they have been in place for more than a decade. The inner front of the prison is circular inside. That is, 1 Wing, 2 Wing, 3 Wing and 4 Wing. Outside of each wing are these in place as protection from dilapidated ceilings.
- The prison is rundown and the wings haven't been painted in a very long time.” —**letter from E.L**

“There are no cleaning supplies given out besides a liquid to wipe down the

phones.” —**letter from I.J**

“Three weeks ago a ‘Covid-19 clean-up’ detail was assembled consisting of unsupervised, poorly equipped and improperly trained inmates who wash down contaminated areas throughout the building several times each day; only to return to their respective housing unit without being subject to proper decontamination procedures -oftentimes, without even as much as a shower.” —**letter from J.H**

“The cells are also dirty, mouse infested, are covered with lead based paint, and do not contain any hot water or any type of filtration system.”
—**letter from P.E**

“The shower area, (which is never disinfected) is highly unsanitary and is routinely flooded, often leading to contraction of fungal infections like athlete’s foot and sepsis.” —**letter from E.H**

“We do not have access to paper towels.” —**letter from T.P**

“For nearly three months, inmates on my unit have not been offered any opportunity to practice cell sanitation; nor have they been provided cleaning supplies (broom, mop, disinfectant, etc.) during this entire period.”
—**letter from W.J**



South Woods State Prison

History

South Woods State Prison was originally opened in 1997. This makes this prison the newest (and largest) prison in New Jersey. The prison sits on about 85 acres of land and has a mixed-custody population. There are three medium custody housing facilities and a minimum custody housing facility. There are about 3,400 people that are currently housed at South Woods State Prison. Being the newest there should not be issues of mold, vermin or other health concern issues. However there are reports of all these.

This prison recently made headlines for its wide-spread COVID-19 outbreak last year. Since this outbreak, vaccines have been made accessible to prison staff and prisoners.



Testimonies

“...But the same day the nurse came to give me my medication, only at five the doctor had stopped all my meds. So after me yelling and stop eating like I told them they, later that same day they gave me all the medication that I get. But the nurse still will not help me in and out of the shower or help me get from my wheelchair to the shower chair. And without help, I can't not do it myself.” —**letter from G.H**

“I had not been to the shower in about 10 days. Although I try to wash up in the cell the best I could. But right after the Ombudsman left, the S.C.O came and asked me If I wanted a shower.”

—**letter from B.R**

“This letter is being written by someone else. I am a quadripalegic and am unable to care for or bathe myself. I need to be washed!”

—**SM is a diabetic who has to be transported to a hospital for dialysis twice a week.** The physician has written orders that he should only be put in “soft” cuffs as his skin tears and swells easily due to long term dialysis. Although he has let us know that the soft cuffs are being placed on his wrists, his swollen and bruised legs are still being placed in chains and shackles during transport to the hospital.



Bayside State Prison



History

This is a state prison for men located in Leesburg, New Jersey. The prison was originally named Leesburg State Prison. Similarly to the formerly known Rahway State Prison, the name was changed due to community opposition. The name was changed to Bayside State Prison in 1988.

Testimonies

“Today I slept right through count and woke to breakfast being literally thrown into the tent ... Am I now able to wash my body of the nine days of accumulation of heated perspiration, dirt and other body seepage?...I'm so tired that I dozed until workout and found the morning extremely cold with frozen water puddles along the floor.” —**letter from T.L**

“A nurse asking for the symptoms of my complaints administers an equilibrium test and prescribed ear drops for me. At no time did she even pretend to be concerned about my initial complaint. I made sure to tell her, Nurse Trudy, of the abusive practices going on in the tents and how I was attacked time and again by SOG and the Officers of Bayside. As if I said nothing of the kind, she dismissed me with an air of arrogance that could only rival the arrogance with which she had received me at the nurses’ station.” —**letter from Y.U**

“Extreme cold shocks the senses awake this morning with a temperature of perhaps thirty-seven degrees, so the walk to work was an additional hell. The wind chill made it feel as though it was ten degrees. But we made it okay, and work went very fast finishing up at 9:10am” —**letter from R.L**

“After the near-death beating that he received from SOG, the prisoner was cuffed and carried out of the barracks, physically unable to do so of his own volition as his blood painted a large area of the east side of barracks 2. Blood covered a hard plastic chair common throughout the prison’s housing units, which was placed in the pool of blood as a monument/reminder/warning of the inhumane violent brutality that is at the disposal of SOG and that awaits those that dare to cross the line of disobedience.” —**letter from I.K**

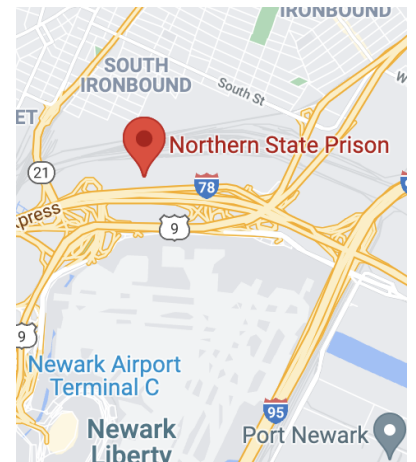


Northern State Prison

History

In April 2021, it was brought to the public's attention that Northern State Prison had an outbreak of a deadly bacteria called Legionella Bacteria. A prisoner's death was linked back to this lethal bacteria that was found in the water supply. This bacterium is naturally found in freshwater and has been found in a freshwater sample from building six at Northern State prison. Legionnaires disease is an illness that is similar to pneumonia but is considered more deadly. It is especially dangerous to those with compromised immune systems.

Legionnaires' disease is not transmitted from person-to-person, it is spread through water contamination. Jamil Robinson was incarcerated at Northern State Prison that drank the water from this prison and became very ill. The staff never announced that anyone had the illness. He was placed in a medically induced coma that lasted over 30 days. He later died from Legionnaires disease. According to prisoners, when the outbreak occurred they were still only offered the water that came from the sink. Only correctional officers and staff were offered bottled water. Some symptoms of Legionnaires disease include but are not limited to: shortness of breath, fever, muscle aches, headaches and severe



coughing.

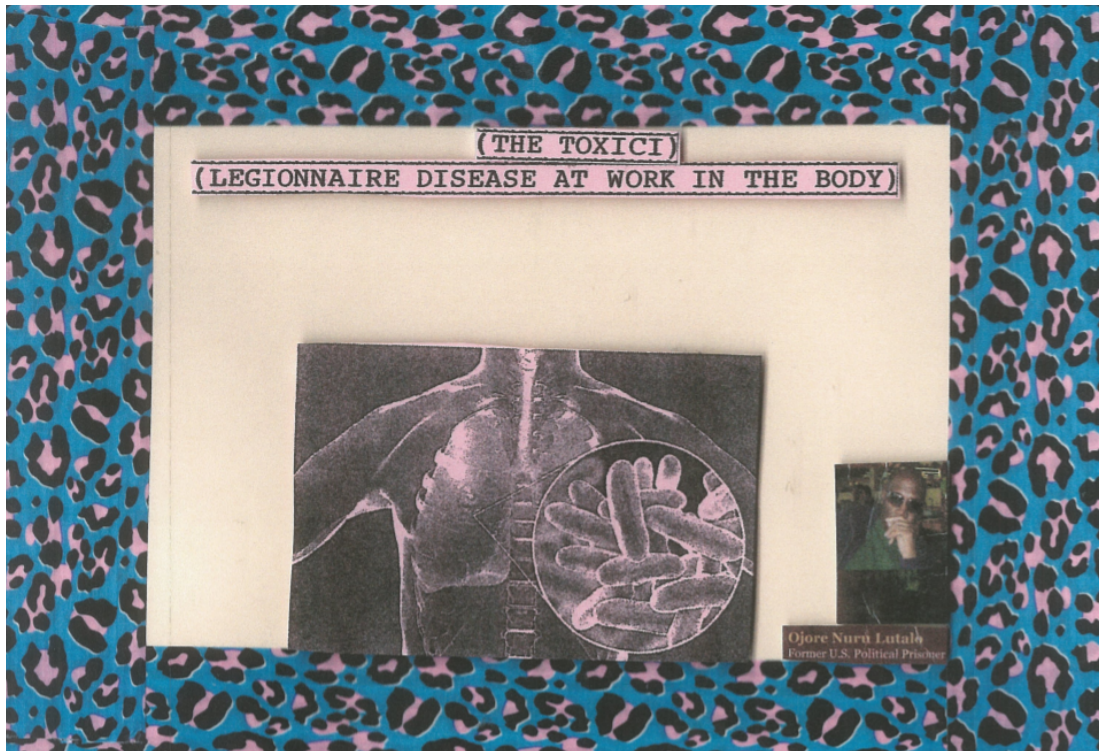
A member of the AFSC staff had occasion to visit a person in NSP recently. Upon signing in, the person was told “Don’t drink any of the water here. We’ve got Legionnaire’s.”

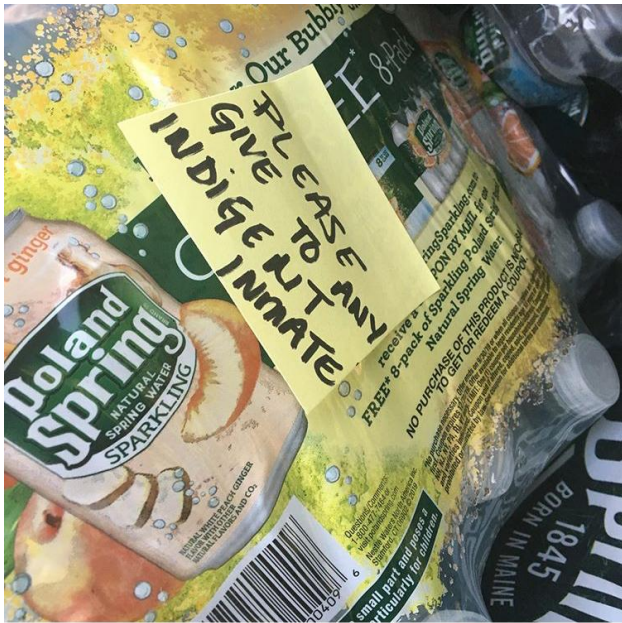
Furthermore, there were reports of very high amounts of lead in the water supply at Northern State Prison. On September 3rd, 2019 All of Us Or None sponsored a demonstration at the prison demanding that the prisoners are given clean water. Some of the staff from AFSC Prison Watch Program were also in attendance. Water bottles were given to the guards to give to the prisoners. There is no documentation stating if they actually received the bottled water.

New Jersey Legionnaires’ Disease Outbreak Kept Quiet in State Prisons

“According to Stout, the complex nature of prison water systems and the concentration of people at a high risk for Legionnaires’—the elderly and people with chronic lung and other health conditions—make prisons prone to Legionella growth and susceptible to outbreaks of the disease. Prisons use mixing valves to temper water, she explained, meaning that warm water comes out of a single fixture at an ideal temperature for Legionella to grow.”

—The Intercept (Akela Lacy)





Testimonies

"We are constantly faced with maintenance issues regarding excessive heat in winter & air-conditioning not working properly during the summer months." —**letter from H.A**

"Anyways it has the history of the prison showing that the cells here were designed for single occupancy which they converted over to double occupancy by just welding a bunk on top of the other bunk." —**letter from E.W**

"I was housed in the Fox building for over six years and observed numerous health code violations committed regularly. I have been in a position to try and have the violations addressed and remedied as I was an Inmate Liaison Committee Representative. I have brought many issues to the attention of administrators such as back mold and mildew growing in unit showers and cells; showers running all day without being shut off because of plumbing problems, which contribute to the growth of mold/mildew; black mold in the plumbing chases caused by leaks; ventilation filters not regularly changed; plumbing gas vents venting into the return ventilation chase, which then gets recycled back to the cells and units. These issues were rarely resolved." —**letter from U.L**

Other Issues Facing Prisoners at Northern State Prison

Although the contaminated water within Northern State Prison consumes much of the prisoners' and activists' focus, it is not the only environmental issue that ails incarcerated people during their incarceration. In addition to the contaminated water, incarcerated people have also noted several environmental concerns such as the heating/AC units and the overcrowding of cells.

Struggles for Environmental Justice in US Prisons and Jails

“Scholars have documented the fact that people of colour, immigrants, indigenous peoples, low-income persons, women and queer folk across the US and the globe who already experience social, political, economic, and cultural marginalisation are also more likely to experience disproportionate environmental and public health threats from state and corporate institutions than other populations.”
(Bullard 2000; Bullard et al. 2007; Cole and Foster 2000)

-Department of Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (David Pellow)

Prisons Have a Healthcare Issue—And It Starts at the Top, Critics Say

“...the senior official responsible for overseeing health care and safety in all of the more than 120 lockups was Nicole English, a career corrections officer with a graduate degree in public administration—and no hands-on health care experience. When she switched roles at the height of the pandemic, her replacement, Michael Smith, also had no formal medical education. ‘I would seriously question his understanding of science, but he was a nice guy,’ said Bill Axford, union president at the medical prison in Rochester, Minnesota, where Smith previously worked as the associate warden. Axford said that when he raised concerns that radon, an odorless radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer, could pose a danger to parts of the prison, Smith initially dismissed the potential threat. ‘He would say things like, ‘*Radon’s not real,’ ” Axford said. Axford said that after he forwarded Smith an email from an expert on the dangers of radon, Smith agreed to take the threat seriously....”

—The Marshall Project (Keri Blakinger)

**Radon: the chemical element of atomic number 86, a rare radioactive gas belonging to the noble gas series.*

“Environmental justice embraces the principle that all people and communities have a right to equal protection and equal enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.”

**-Dr. Robert D. Bullard, Distinguished professor at Texas Southern University
“Father of Environmental Justice”**

What you can do

The right to humane living conditions should not be limited or taken away when someone is imprisoned. No one should face the conditions where most New Jersey State prisons house their prisoners. The brutality incarcerated people face every day at the hands of prison staff mixed with the environmental concerns show us that change **MUST** happen . Prison conditions must be improved, staff who commit acts of brutality must be fired, and policies that restrict the rights of incarcerated people must be changed.

History does not judge us by our intentions in the good times but by our actions in the hard times. Perhaps the most noble and essential duty of a **Representative of the People** is to represent the needs of its most vulnerable individuals; the true test of a community's welfare. Where there is sickness in one of us, there is sickness in all of us. It requires downright courage and the deepest dedication to integrity and humanity. The system gravely demands the guidance of our community leaders. The only way to move towards justice and save lives is to release people, reduce overcrowding, and improve conditions. **-Ayreanna Pettijohn**

There are many ways people can take action to advocate for better conditions and for people to be released. You can:

- Call your local representatives and express your concern about prison conditions in New Jersey.
- Connect with people who are currently incarcerated to learn firsthand about what life is like on the inside.
- Educate yourself and your community! Read books and newspaper articles about conditions of confinement in prisons and jails. Listen to the voices of those who have experienced them firsthand.
- Join or organize protests against torture, solitary confinement, filthy environmental conditions, and the policies and practices that lead to incarceration.

Find more resources about these issues and how to get involved at afsc.org/FreeThemAll

Conclusion

We, as advocates, have come together to support those inside to make their voices heard on this life and death issue. There have been 11 previous issues of From the Inside Out that have highlighted conditions, specific situations, and overall issues within the Department of Corrections in the State of New Jersey. This issue is different. It is not just about things that ‘should’ change, but rather things that **MUST** change. Incarceration makes it almost impossible for people to follow COVID-19 safety protocols, and many have died as a result. However, in the State of New Jersey, unfortunately, there is not just a lack of transparency about those who are incarcerated but bold-faced lies being told about the incarcerated **AND** the staff numbers.

There is a complete disregard for life on all sides that is simply unacceptable. In her book, “Are Prisons Obsolete?”, Angela Y. Davis states, “[**Prison**] **relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism.**” This issue of From The Inside Out serves to hold the state legislators responsible for the lives of the prisoners they put in jeopardy every second, every minute, every day that unjust procedures and policies continue to further expose incarcerated people to this deadly virus. Prisons are the land of the forgotten in this state and this country. We, as a community of advocates, will not let prisoners go unheard, and will continue to provide this outlet for their voices.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Environmental **ROACH PRISON**

How They Live Squeezed Together,
Separately

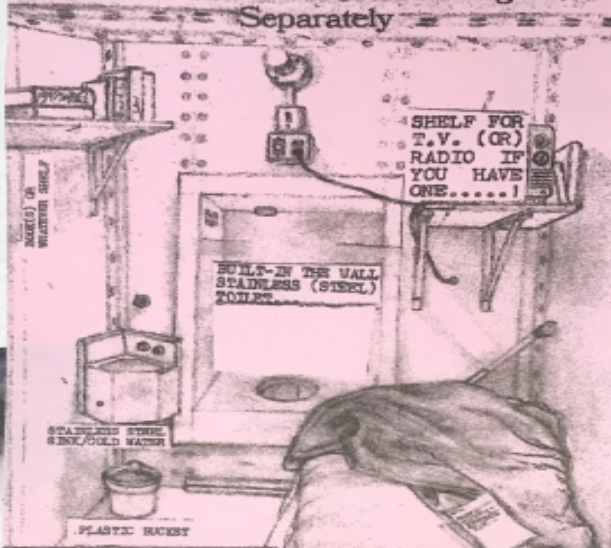


ENVIRONMENTAL

(MICE)



PRISON



CELL SIZE: 5 BY 7 BY 9
WITH STEEL WALLS (AND)
CONCRETE FLOOR...WALLS
PAINTED BLUE.....

OVER-SIZED MATTRESS
ON STEEL "BED" FRAME
FOUR (4) FEET WIDE
AND SIX (6) FEET LONG

(RAT)



PRISON



BONNIE'S
IDEA.....