

# Justicia

## Life in Solitary Confinement: 12,775 Days Alone

By Brooke Shelby Biggs, AlterNet

[Editor's note: The following article, reprinted with the author's permission, focuses on what is known officially as Louisiana State Prison (Angola), a notorious facility that Justicia and many other publications and groups have covered extensively in recent years. Look for future coverage in these pages, including analysis of the connections between America's incarceration trends and the human disasters associated with such events as Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans.

In the meantime, readers may find Angola's PR efforts of some interest. For example, just as the anniversary detailed below was being observed, Angola was offering the following invitation to an event that has received wide scrutiny: "Louisiana State Prison Warden Burl Cain invites rodeo fans to the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Angola Spring Rodeo April 21 and 22, 2007. New construction begun on the arena in January will accommodate more rodeo fans and provide a 'birds-eye' view of all the wild action. The arena – built by inmates for inmates – will again showcase the incredible job skills training program available to inmates at

Angola through Prison Enterprises. Rodeo fans of *The Wildest Show in the South* are invited to witness more than 100 inmates of Angola's mostly urban population test their 'street-smarts' against professional rodeo stock in events like: Convict Poker, Wild Cow Milking, and the world-famous Guts-n-Glory. Come early to hear outstanding inmate bands, feast on a wide array of the south's best food, and shop the unique and affordable inmate-made arts and crafts, including jewelry, leather craft, paintings, woodwork, lawn and garden furniture, and toys. 'Little' rodeo fans will also enjoy special attractions just for them, including pony rides, space walk, carnival games, and lots more!" ]

**Around midday today** [April 17, 2007], Central Time, two men in Angola Prison in Louisiana will quietly mark the moment, 35 years ago exactly, when the bars of solitary confinement cells closed behind them. They will likely spend the moment in their 6-by-9 concrete cells reading, or writing letters to their hundreds of supporters around the world. And most of America and the rest of the world will still have never heard of them, or that in the United States of America, it is still possible to spend a life sentence in solitary confinement without interruption and without any real means of appeal. Americans shamefully imagine such things happen only offshore in places like Guantanamo, or in totalitarian countries half a world away. Not here, though. Certainly not here.

Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox are those men, who along with Robert King, are known as the Angola Three. (King established his

innocence and was released in 2001 after almost 30 years in solitary.) Collectively, the three of them have spent 100 years in solitary confinement. Wallace asked this week, "Where is the justice?"

It was also on this day in 1972, that Brent Miller, a young, white, newlywed prison guard, was discovered in a pool of his own blood, stabbed 32 times. Brent Miller was a popular, athletic, handsome local boy who dreamed of leaving Angola with his young wife as soon as he could get a job in the nearby paper mill or up in Oklahoma. He never got a chance.

And based on long-lost evidence uncovered by a new team of attorneys and investigators over the past year and a half, it is clear Miller hasn't received justice, either. Woodfox and Wallace were placed in solitary and under suspicion of the murder the day it happened, and were later convicted of Miller's murder following trials highlighted by key testimony by inmate witnesses who were promised items such as cigarettes and the warden's recommendation of a pardon for their testimony. One of the state's inmate eyewitness was a legally blind certified sociopath. Another inmate repeatedly confessed to the murder to his fellow inmates and assured them that the prison administration knew he was guilty, but wanted to make examples of Woodfox and Wallace, known activists and Black Panthers.

**But this anniversary**, unlike the 34 preceding it, has a tinge of hope to it. Wallace and Woodfox, convicted separately of Miller's murder by all-white juries, have finally begun to attract some measurable attention.

Two very important legal cases are wending their way through the courts on this anniversary. The criminal case addresses the now publicly documented payoffs of the state's key witness in the murder trials. The other tackles a legal issue that could reverberate across the country -- is indefinite solitary confinement a violation of the constitutional guarantee against cruel and unusual punishment?

By what few and murky laws exist, prisoners assigned to solitary should receive access to due process by which they can appeal their placement in solitary. For the Angola Three, the biweekly "hearings," during which they may use their clean records of good behavior to argue for their release back into the general population, long ago devolved into farce. Wallace reports that for decades now, he

has been led into the room for his hearings, has not been permitted to present his arguments, and has been simply handed a piece of paper, already filled out, stating that the prison administration has denied his appeal and that he will stay in solitary because of the "nature of the original offense." The appeals boards do not pretend anymore that there is anything meaningful in the charade. The same fiction plays out for Woodfox and did for King during his years on the solitary block.

At least once, according to Wallace, current warden Burl Cain offered to release Woodfox and Wallace back into the general population if they renounced their political views and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. (The megalomaniacal Cain is to media attention what a lobotomized moth is to an incandescent bulb; he wrote a book and has done hundreds of interviews about his "reformist" approach to penology, which involves converting prisoners to Christianity and holding the hands of those being executed so that his face would be the last they'd see before Christ's.)

**According to Sam Spital**, one of the attorneys from Holland & Knight, which represents the Angola Three in the civil suit, the lawsuit also challenges that there is "no legitimate penological reason for keeping our clients in CCR, and (2) there is persuasive evidence that, in light of the duration of their confinement and their advancing age, our clients are at risk of and/or have already suffered serious physical and psychological harm - it is cruel and unusual punishment to keep our clients in CCR, which violates the Eighth Amendment." Should the suit go to trial as expected within the next few months and should a verdict be rendered in the three men's favor, the face of (and regulations surrounding) solitary confinement in America could change drastically for good. The case could serve as a precedent, forcing accountability by prison administrators to reserve solitary as a last-ditch and temporary measure with sharply defined restrictions. In an age of Supermax prisons where huge populations of prisoners spends months and years in solitary, the ramifications could be enormous.

For the Angola Three, it could mean monetary damages, and release from solitary into the general population at Angola.

George Kendall, lead attorney on the case says, "We are moving to trial and we are quite hopeful to win."

Among the evidence are reports made by leading psychologists noting the terrible toll of solitary over long periods. King has spent the six years since his release campaigning for the release of his friends, and helping expose the abuses inside Angola Prison. Of his 29 years he said, "Being in solitary was terrible. It was a nightmare. My soul still cries from all that I witnessed and endured. It does more than cry -- it mourns, continuously. I saw men so desperate that they ripped prison doors apart, starved and mutilated themselves. It takes every scrap of humanity to stay focused and sane in this environment. The pain and suffering are everywhere, constantly with you. But, it's was also so much more than that. I had dreams and they were beautiful dreams. I used to look forward to the nights when I could sleep and dream. There's no describing the day-to-day assault on your body and your mind and the feelings of hopelessness and despair. By any logical and apparent reasons, I should be anything but what I am today, but sometimes the spirit is stronger than the circumstances." King now runs a small candy business making pralines, which he calls *Freelines*, from a recipe he had used to make the candy in a tin can in his solitary cell.

**In 2003**, when the ACLU was handling the civil case, a Louisiana magistrate was shocked by the filings she read: "The present matter, of course, involves confinements of 28 to nearly 33 years, durations so far beyond the pale that this court has not found anything even remotely comparable in the annals of American jurisprudence."

Late last year, the criminal case for Herman Wallace took a great step forward when evidence was presented at a hearing held inside Angola's prison walls, proving that a prison snitch who served as the state's main witness was paid for his testimony against Wallace with a carton of cigarettes a week for life, living quarters in a house on a hill with his own room and a TV, no work duty, and privileges unheard of by other inmates. It was further shown that the administration and many of the guards lobbied on behalf of the inmate for a pardon, which he eventually got.

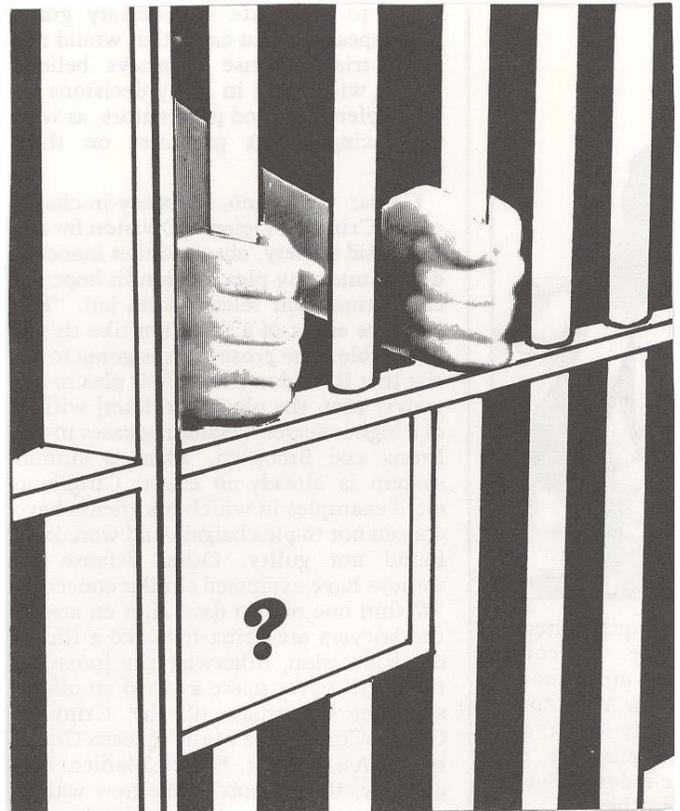
The commissioner who presided over the hearing recommended that Wallace's conviction immediately be overturned. The judge in that case granted two extensions to the state to prepare a response, and both parties now await a decision on when and if Herman Wallace may see his day in

court again. Ever hopeful and almost never bitter, Wallace said from his cell this week, "Albert and I have been in solitary confinement for 12,775 days. We're two men who are innocent of a crime we never committed. The state just won't let go."

Meanwhile, Woodfox, who was tried separately albeit on essentially the same evidence and testimony, has filed his last-ditch habeas corpus appeal in the hope that new evidence and developments in the other cases might provide him one last shot at freedom.

Said Scott Fleming, one of the criminal defense attorneys representing the Woodfox and Wallace, "I've been representing Albert and Herman for nearly a decade. Even so, they were placed in solitary confinement before I was born. Their cases are getting more serious consideration from the courts than they ever have, and we are all hoping this nightmare is nearing an end."

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## ***Journey Toward Justice,*** **by Dennis Fritz**

A Review by Joel Freedman

A school teacher whose wife was brutally murdered on Christmas day in 1975, Dennis Fritz was entrusted with the responsibility of raising his young daughter, who was only two years old when she lost her mother. Six months after his wife's death, Fritz took his daughter Elizabeth on a camping trip to help alleviate the trauma of the murder. Sitting in front of a crackling fire, Elizabeth exclaimed, "Look Daddy. Look at what's by the fire." Elizabeth enjoyed watching a large gray moth circle erratically above the flames, trying to keep warm by the fire. Suddenly, the moth lost its bearings and dropped into the flames. "Where'd it go?" wondered Elizabeth. Fritz told her the truth. "Elizabeth, honey, the moth flew into the fire and died."

In seconds her look of worry changed to a grimace of pain. She began screaming at the top of her lungs. Her little body shook violently. I wrapped my arms around her and held her tightly to my chest. For what must have been several minutes, her piercing screams railed against the night, and her body rocked and trembled. At last her convulsions began to subside. I held her close as I realized what had happened. All of her tightly held emotions over the months since her mother's death had spilled out all at once.

Many years later, Fritz thought about this episode during his trial for the murder of Debbie Carter. He could understand why Carter's family gave him hateful stares. Fritz knew only too well what it was like to lose a loved one to a brutal crime. Fritz did not realize it at the time, but the moth in the fire would become a symbol of the plight of a man who would spend the next 12 years in prison for a murder he did not commit. During those years, starting with the jury's guilty verdict, Fritz would lose seven court decisions during his struggle for justice. Centurion Ministries, a non-profit agency devoted to helping the wrongly convicted, would tell Fritz that he "was too far away for their budget to extend to." A prison doctor would inform him: "Mr. Fritz, your blood test came back. It shows that you have hepatitis C." In the lonely and sometimes violent world of the prison environment, Fritz would experience a daily struggle to maintain his health, sanity and spirit.

Unlike the moth, Fritz was able to eventually emerge from the flames. At about the time that a federal judge reversed the conviction of Ron Williamson who with Fritz had been indicted for the murder of Debbie Carter, the Innocence Project informed Fritz that "based upon the information you have provided us, we are prepared to work with you in your efforts to prove your innocence."

Eventually the district attorney agreed to include both Fritz and Williamson in DNA testing on crime scene physical evidence. The semen found in Carter's vagina, anus and on her underwear matched the DNA of Glen Gore - an individual with a violent past who testified for the prosecution in the trials of Fritz and Williamson. Fritz and Williamson were freed. Gore is currently serving a life imprisonment sentence for what he did to Carter.

Williamson died five years after his release from death row. After he was exonerated of all charges and released from the Pontotoc County Jail, Fritz returned to Kansas City, Missouri, where he lived with his mother. He experienced post-traumatic stress disorder. Due to the state of Oklahoma's failure to provide medical care for hepatitis C while Fritz was in prison, his health deteriorated following his release.

But things got better for Fritz. He received psychological help for PTSD. He successfully

halted the progression of hepatitis “by implementing total body cleanses, along with a strict diet, interferon treatments, and a unique blend of Chinese herbs from a well-known alternative medicine liver specialist in New York.” In 2003, Fritz successfully sued the state of Oklahoma and received a financial settlement that has allowed him to provide a quality life for himself and his family. Fritz’s relationship with his daughter and his mother continues to get stronger. Interestingly, DNA testing not only exonerated Fritz; it also led to Fritz’s discovery that he had a second daughter, Misty. Fritz devotes much of his time and energy to serving the Innocence Project in New York and Kansas City. Fritz concluded his book: “It was through my strong faith in God that I survived this ordeal. To this day, my freedom has allowed me to be a whole person again, and I am so thankful for the miracle that brought me out of the gates of hell into the light of the day. I am still overly cautious when a police car drives by my house or when the phone rings and no one speaks, but I know now that I am still under a very special blessing that breathed life back into my once-broken body.”

I have a lot of respect for Dennis Fritz, a brave and resilient individual who succeeded in his journey toward justice and who remains devoted to trying to help other wrongly convicted prisoners. In his Foreword to *Journey Toward Justice*, Barry Scheck, director of the Innocence Project, wrote: “When Dennis Fritz testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of the Innocence Protection Act - legislation that ultimately passed that supports efforts to get post-conviction DNA testing for those claiming innocence - I actually saw tears in the eyes of worldly politicians who for decades had heard an endless stream of moving stories from a multitude of witnesses. Among them were Senator Patrick Leahy, Democrat from Vermont and the legislation’s sponsor and great champion, and Senator Orrin Hatch, Republican from Utah. Indeed, Senator Hatch said with unmistakable sincerity that he was humbled by what Dennis had to say. I thought that phrase deftly captured what everyone was feeling - a sense of awe that this man could survive and recount his incredible, hair-raising life story passionately modestly, and thoughtfully all at once.”

This is precisely what Fritz has accomplished in *Journey Toward Justice* - an unusual mix of personal tragedy and triumphs, suspense and unexpected twists. The prose in this

book is both precise and elegant and it is thoroughly readable. Fritz takes us to places where hope and heartache meet. Thankfully, in this particular case, hope triumphs over despair, and Fritz delivers a sharp punch to a “system” of justice that all too often is out of kilter with the way it is supposed to work.

(*Journey Toward Justice* is published by Seven Locks Press, Santa Ana, California, 2006. 458 pages. \$23.95. ISBN 1-931643-95-4)



## ***The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice In A Small Town, by John Grisham***

A Review by Joel Freedman

On December 7, 2004, Ronald Keith Williamson was buried in his hometown of Ada, Oklahoma. Permanently etched on Williamson’s tombstone are the words: “Ronald Keith Williamson / Born February 3, 1953 / Died December 4, 2004 / Strong Survivor / Wrongly Convicted in 1988 / Exonerated April 15, 1999.”

Two days after Williamson’s burial, John Grisham noticed Williamson’s obituary in the New York Times. Headlined “Ronald Williamson, Freed from Death Row, Dies at 51,” the lengthy obituary, written by Jim Dwyer, included a photograph of Williamson in the courtroom with Dennis Fritz the day he and Fritz were exonerated. DNA testing

revealed that Glen Gore was the actual murderer of Debbie Carter.

The obituary intrigued Grisham, the author of eighteen novels, including *The Runaway Jury*, *The Chamber*, and *The Pelican Brief*. For the next eighteen months, Grisham was consumed with the research and writing of his first book of non-fiction, *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice In A Small Town*. Grisham's book describes not only the Williamson-Fritz case, but also describes how law enforcement in Ada, Oklahoma, framed two other innocent men, Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot, for the murder of Denice Haraway. Because there is no biological evidence, they cannot be exonerated by DNA. However, their coerced confessions were inconsistent with each other and with key facts about the murder: e.g., when Haraway's remains were found after Ward and Fontenot were on death row, it was determined she had not been burned or stabbed as described in the "confession", but she had been killed by a single gunshot wound to her head (visit [wardandfontenot.com](http://wardandfontenot.com)).

While researching this book, Grisham came across the case of Calvin Lee Scott, who spent 20 years in prison before DNA testing exonerated him of rape.

In all these cases in or near Ada, the investigations were conducted by the same detectives. "Ada is a nice town, and the obvious question is: when will the good guys clean house?" Grisham wonders. The research and writing of *The Innocent Man* exposed Grisham "to the world of wrongful convictions, something that I, even as a former lawyer, had never spent much time thinking about. This is not a problem peculiar to Oklahoma. Wrongful convictions occur every month in every state in this country, and the reasons are all varied and all the same - bad police work, junk science, faulty eyewitness identifications, bad defense lawyers, lazy prosecutors, arrogant prosecutors."

Grisham looks at all aspects of our criminal justice system with unflinching honesty. He takes his readers to places that most people would ordinarily never visit. Williamson was not only an innocent man on death row, he also suffered from mental illness. While the medical staff struggled to treat Ron, the correctional staff was having great fun at his expense. For amusement, some of the prison guards enjoyed playing with the new intercom on H unit. Each cell had a two-way speaker to the control room, yet another smart toy to keep the guards as far away from the inmates as

possible.

But it wasn't far enough. "Ron, this is God," a haunting voice called into Ron's cell deep in the night. "Why did you kill Debbie Carter?" A pause, then the guards would snicker as they heard Ron screaming through his door, "I didn't kill anybody! I am innocent!" His deep, raspy voice rattled through the southwest quad and disrupted the quiet. The seizure would last an hour or so, upsetting the other inmates but greatly humoring the guards.

When things were quiet, the voice returned. "Ron, this is Debbie Carter. Why did you kill me?" His tormented screams would go on and on. "Ron, this is Charlie Carter. Why did you kill my daughter?"

The other inmates begged the guards to stop it, but they were having too much fun. Rick Rojem believed that two of the more sadistic guards, in particular, lived for the fun of mistreating Ron. The abuse went on for months. "Just ignore them," Rick pleaded with his cell mate. "If you ignore them, they'll quit."

Ron couldn't grasp this idea. He was determined to convince everyone around him that he was innocent, and bawling at the top of his lungs seemed the appropriate way. Often, when he couldn't scream any longer, when he was physically spent or too hoarse to continue, he would stand with his face close to the speaker and whisper incoherently for hours.

My own writings in *Justicia* often delve into miscarriages of justice in the courtroom and into deplorable conditions at many of our penal institutions. While reading *The Innocent Man*, I also was trying to keep up with the numerous letters I receive from prisoners who would like me to evaluate their claims of innocence or to assist them in their struggle for justice. And while reading about some of the grim realities of Oklahoma's prisons described in Grisham's skillfully and sensitively written book, a prisoner wrote me that "The abuse in these prisons is worse than you can believe. I have witnessed several beatings of inmates by officers. I have seen inmates so badly beaten they can't stand and can barely move... A lot of the violence in these prisons is created by the officers... Please don't use my name because I would end up dead or so badly beaten I would pray for death." Last summer, the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons concluded, "We can legitimately deprive prisoners of liberty, but we cannot allow anyone who is incarcerated to be

victimized by other prisoners, abused by officers or neglected by doctors. Jail and prison administrators everywhere must confront prisoner rape, gang violence, the use of excessive force by officers, contagious diseases, a lack of reliable data, and a host of other problems.”

For readers unfamiliar with the serious shortcomings in our criminal justice system, *The Innocent Man* is a revelation. For those of us who are already familiar with the injustices and abuses that exist in our criminal justice system, *The Innocent Man* is a dramatic reminder of the need for reform. It is a book that re-charged my own “batteries” and personal determination to continue writing about some of the systemic moral failures of our “system” of justice. And by allowing readers to feel as if they are actually present at the places and events described in *The Innocent Man*, Grisham instills in his readers a more sensitive awareness of the horrors that occur when basic standards of decency and justice are disregarded or obstructed. (*The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town* is published by Doubleday, New York, 2006. 360 pages. \$28.95. ISBN O-385-51723-8)



## **Inmate Claiming Retaliation For Exposing Prison Cat Killings Will Get His Day In Court**

By Joel Freedman

In March 2001, Ronald Hunlock, a corrections sergeant at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, found a box of kittens in an inmate’s cell. When the inmate, John Williams, disregarded Hunlock’s order to put the kittens in a trash compactor, Hunlock dumped them and the mother cat in it and turned it on. Five kittens were crushed to death. The mother cat escaped.

Inmate grievance council representative Jason Huntley contacted several animal protection organizations and other outside groups, in order to prevent sweeping the incident under the rug. The case received nationwide publicity. Huntley testified at grand jury and at Hunlock’s trial. Hunlock was convicted of cruelty to animals and sentenced to a year in jail. Hunlock was fired from his job.

In early August 2001, according to Huntley, a correction officer told inmates in Huntley’s housing unit he would deny privileges to all the inmates because of Huntley’s actions. Shortly thereafter, while Huntley was at work as a grievance representative, Huntley’s cell was set on fire. Because his cell was unlocked, Huntley suspected at least one officer solicited or condoned the arson.

Huntley was placed in involuntary protective custody and terminated as a grievance representative. A few days later, Huntley was transferred to another prison, where, upon receiving his property, Huntley found large portions of his legal paperwork missing.

Huntley initiated civil action against corrections personnel. Earlier this year, U.S. District Court Judge Lyle Strom denied the New York State Corrections Department’s motion to dismiss the case. The judge determined that “providing legal services to other inmates and reporting criminal activity are constitutionally protected activities,” and that “Huntley has elicited sufficient evidence to create a genuine issue of material fact as to whether retaliation was a substantial factor” in this case. “No other motive for the fire has been shown,” Strom concluded.

Whatever the outcome of this litigation, Huntley should be commended for his courage in exposing an abhorrent act of cruelty.

I continue to correspond with Huntley and with Williams, who also testified against Hunlock.

The mother cat, who tried to protect her kittens and who escaped at the last second, was later rescued. The ASPCA sent me photos of the cat enjoying her new adoptive home. I shared them with Huntley and Williams.

One of these photos remains on my living room wall – a reminder of the need for a compassionate ethic in our regard for all living beings.

(Freedman chairs the public education committee of Animal Rights Advocates of Upstate New York.)



## Remembering Clare Regan

-more testimonials from many who knew and worked with our beloved and respected colleague, Clare Regan, who passed away last December after a long illness.

(second installment; see January-February 2006 issue of *Justicia* for previous contributions)

When Clare Regan wrote "Thoughts on Death and Dying" for the Sept.-Oct. 2005 issue of her beloved *Justicia*, and asked for our prayer that she might go gently into the night, Clare's physicians believed she was near the end of her life. Thankfully, Clare experienced a temporary remission for another year, during which time she continued her *Justicia* writings. Clare and I had frequent phone conversations. We talked about everything from "the violence of power" to coping with terminal illness. Clare appreciated her reprieve, and when

her condition worsened to the point that she realized she would not be with us in the new year, she faced death as she faced life – with courage and dignity. In her final days, Clare was serene and largely free of severe pain. I am grateful she was able to "go gently into the night."

My friendship with Clare and my work as a volunteer writer for Clare's creation, *Justicia*, are experiences I'll always cherish. Because Clare remains part of my consciousness and my spiritual journey, I can honestly say she and I will always remain friends. May Clare's compassion, sincerity and sense of justice continue to be a source of inspiration and guidance to all who mourn her death.

-Joel Freedman, JPC volunteer, Canandaigua, NY

I was deeply saddened to read of Clare Regan's passing... For me, Clare was *Justicia*. For over a decade Clare had been publishing my work and offering constructive comments, even to the point of writing the governor in support of my clemency.

It was never my honor or pleasure to have met Clare. And I am deeply saddened by that loss as well. I will eternally owe her a big hug, from this lug, for all the empathy, strength and love she extended to me and countless other convicts.

When I think of Clare, I recall an honesty and compassion that deftly cut to the quick of the essential issues that confront our nation's criminal justice policies. She was never shy about speaking truth to power. She was never quiant in building coalitions and asking for support. She never stopped adroitly railing at the injustices she literally saw every day of her life that came across the desk or walked in the door. She was the mother of *Justicia*, and we shall ever be poorer for her passing.

Even in that passing Clare examples a life well and honorably lived. In reading her "farewell message" I had to smile and admire her grit in coming to terms with death on her own terms, in her own way, and in the love she so strongly imbued to all those who orbited her life. I grieve tears and smile comfortingly for her family. To have such a mother figure to champion the best of the human spirit is a gift. A precious gift that if we all had, there would be fewer of us consoling our collective loss from behind walls and wire.

As all so common of Clare, her final words were of concern for others and the injustices so needlessly and ultimately self-destructively and

myopically foisted upon our communities. It was this concern for the least among us that focused the beauty of her soul that so radiantly shined all these years from the pages of *Justicia*, and in countless meetings she chaired, programs she ran, and classes she taught. But her spirit also lives on in these pages. Clare's recruitment of volunteers, such as Jack Bradigan Spula and others to carry on the good fight, is a testament to Clare's foresightedness and practicality.

How I will miss her stewardship. How I will miss Clare's life force in the world. And how I will miss reading her thoughts in the next issue of *Justicia*.

Take care, my friend and editor, Clare. God speed!

-Jon Marc Taylor, Crossroads Correctional Center, Cameron, MO

Because of distance I knew little of Clare's health: whatever was told in *Justicia*. However, the December 2006 issue was a shock, as I was in denial that a person as precious as she should be taken! To me she had a simplicity that is a mark of a good, holy person.

I met her 20-odd years ago, but I remember it so well: her sharing in a "circle" we were in. So impressed, I tried to stay near her. There must be levels in heaven, and she must be in her place very close to Jesus. It saddens me to think we no longer have her presence. Yet she would want us to carry on!

-Sister Francita

Clare was an extraordinary person... She brought great passion, courage, intelligence and humanity to our mission [at New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty]. I stayed at her house several times during my visits to the Rochester area... When I assumed my role as NYADP executive director, I inherited a list of group moratorium endorsers organized by county. When I expressed surprise at the large number from Monroe County, a colleague responded, "Oh, that's Clare Regan." It wasn't until I became involved in trying to collect resolution signers myself, though, that I really appreciate the enormity of Clare's accomplishment. On my visits to Rochester, Clare took me by the hand and introduced me to a wide variety of people and communities. She also made sure I had vegetarian fare to eat, whether it was at a restaurant or in her home. Over the years, we became good friends.

She had me tell my story to the young women at Mercy High School on two occasions. It was a receptive audience, since Clare had spent so many hours herself making sure those young women would think about the world beyond their immediate concerns. There was a generosity in her commitment to the young, and also an effort to pass the torch of compassionate idealism. I found this deeply touching, and I find it even more so in memory.

Clare was dying for so long that somehow it didn't seem real, even when she had to cut back and leave the NYADP board because those long trips to meetings became too taxing. She reported on her health so factually that it didn't quite sink in for me that her death was, in fact, approaching. She didn't talk about herself, but rather about the work and its trajectory beyond her life. Her voice remained strong, at least until the last time I spoke with her, November 16. By then though, it was just a whisper. But she did take some time to reminisce about her life and to remember fondly her work with NYADP.

I am dedicating the next year of my work to Clare's memory. I hope to apply myself to the work as Clare would have – with persistence, patience and common sense, guided by empathy.

-David Kaczynski, NYADP, Albany, NY

[Editor's note: Kaczynski, in the spirit of Clare Regan, recently published a perceptive opinion piece on recent developments regarding capital punishment in New York State; visit [www.nydailynews.com](http://www.nydailynews.com) and search for "Kaczynski."]

I was somewhat numb when I read in *Justicia* of the passing of Clare Regan. I never met her in person, but I knew of her through her informative articles in the newsletter; a couple of times she answered my letters to her. I'm really happy to have known her through her written words. Please share my sincerest and warm condolences to her family and friends. I know for myself her articles were well-written, all of the time. Take care, and keep on keeping on!

-Mika'il Muwakil, Mid-Orange Correctional Facility, Warwick, NY

We here at the organization of Caribbean African Unity (prison-based) wish to express our heartwarming condolences to the family and friends of Ms. Clare Regan. She was truly a compassionate and uplifting soul.

Ms. Regan was without a doubt a true champion for the oppressed and neglected. Wherever injustice raises its evil head, she was there with the voice of a sledge to pound it and expose these ills to society. She was a giant, in words and deeds, that walked among us. We will miss her dearly. Rest in peace, Ms. Clare Regan!  
-Toindra Ramdeo, Green Haven Correctional Facility, Stormville, NY

I was so heartbroken to read an old Democrat and Chronicle newspaper (mid-December) and learn our archangel Clare Regan had passed. What an inspiration and true fighter for equal justice... I am so sad... but happy. I have many pleasant memories of listening to her – reading *Justicia* – and being a part, volunteering wherever she was. Remember when she was at the Little Theatre, when she showed the film/video *The Color of Fear*? She was awesome!...  
-Dennis Hale, Ayer, MA



## The Worst Massacre

By Bob Bonn

[Editor's note: The letter below was written in response to coverage in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle of the April 16 killings at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA. Here, for general background, is information excerpted from an introduction to the PBS series *Eyes on the Prize* (visit [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)): "In 1971, the Attica State

Correctional Facility... was overcrowded and the conditions for prisoners were inhumane. The majority of prisoners were minorities. A group of five prisoners representing the inmate population sent a letter to the authorities requesting reforms, including such humble changes as more frequent showers and more toilet paper...The prisoners also asked for more visits and less censorship of their mail. The new commissioner of correctional services, Russell Oswald, asked for more time to make the reforms. Understanding Oswald's reply to be a delaying tactic, the prisoners took over the facility on September 9 and kept 40 guards as hostages. One guard, injured during the uprising, died in hospital. After four days of negotiations, state troopers and correctional officers took the prison back by force, killing ten hostages and twenty-nine inmates, and brutalized other inmates they had recaptured."]

Please print corrections to the factual inaccuracies contained in your Tuesday, 4/17/07, front page headline, "Worst US Shooting," and front page Associated Press story: "A gunman massacred 32 people and wounded 15 more Monday at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. It was the deadliest shooting rampage in modern US history."

Monday's, April 16, 2007, killings in Blacksburg, Virginia, were *not* the "Worst U.S. Shooting" and "...the deadliest shooting rampage in modern US history..." (In fact, they were *not* the deadliest shooting rampage to occur in an institution in the US.)

The facts: The deadliest shooting rampage in modern US history resulted in the killing of 39 people and wounding of more than 80 others by gunfire. From beginning to end, this gunfire rampage took 15 minutes.

That rampage was characterized at the time as "senseless killings" and a "fiery hell." Those were the words used by RIT's Director of Development, the Dean of the New York University of Law, the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, a prominent New York City law firm attorney, the Deputy Dean of the Yale University Law School and former head of the Civil Rights Division of the US Justice Department, among others who investigated the killings. They served as members of the New York State Special Investigation Commission that investigated the killing rampage. At the behest of New York State's Governor and the majority and minority

leaders of the New York State Legislature, they were appointed to the commission by the chief judge of the New York State Court of Appeals and the four presiding justices of the New York Appellate Division.

The deadliest shooting rampage in modern U.S. history happened in an institution. The NY State Special Investigation Commission described the institution, and others like it, as being "essentially invisible in the United States" - an institution that "[w]e Americans made disappear from sight as if by an act of will." The institution was not a college. Here are the facts:

\* The deadliest shooting rampage in modern U.S. history: 39 people dead, more than 80 wounded

\* The date: September 13

\* The year: 1971

\* The location of the institution: a small New York State town just 47 miles from Rochester

\* The town: Attica

\* The "invisible" institution: Attica state prison

Could it be that the D&C, the Associated Press, and we Americans still make institutions like the prison in Attica "disappear from sight as if by an act of will" - and that is why we forget the 39 people who died and the 80 others wounded just 47 miles from Rochester?



## JUDICIAL PROCESS COMMISSION

121 North Fitzhugh Street  
Rochester, NY 14614  
585-325-7727; email: info@rocjpc.org  
website: www.rocjpc.org

### VISION

The Judicial Process Commission envisions a society with true justice and equality for all. We understand that in a just society, all institutions will be based on reconciliation and restoration, instead of retribution and violence.

### MISSION

The JPC is a grassroots, nonprofit organization that challenges society to create a just, nonviolent community which supports the right of all people to reach their fullest potential. We do this by:

- Providing support services for those involved in the criminal justice system
- Educating the public
- Advocating for changes in public policy.

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## **Professional volunteer facilitator is needed for JPC advocacy project:**

- **Tuesday nights**
- **2 to 3 Nights a month  
from 5:30 to 7:30 PM**

The Public Policy Group has been meeting for over 3 years. We are very grateful to past facilitators Peg Rubley and Kris Miller Blazak because the group has achieved much. Now we need someone to help us push forward reentry legislation that the group has authored. If adopted, this legislation will reduce recidivism and help parolees and probationers become successful taxpaying citizens. Do you know a service minded professional that may be interested in helping us move forward. Call 325-7727 Sue Porter or email at info@rocjpc.org.

## **JPC Wish List!!!**

JPC is serving more and more people coming home from jail or prison. In order to meet the demand we need your help.

### **Office Supplies**

- photocopy paper and stamps
- multi-line phone system with 20 lines
- 4 wingback chairs, 4 computer chairs
- 2 small tables & 2 book cases
- 2 floor lamps
- cell phones with minutes
- laser printers – three
- scanner
- high speed copier

### **Customer Needs:**

- bus passes
- gift cards from Wegmans or Tops
- gift certificates for VOA furniture or clothing