

Text of Rahway Inmates' Demands and Grievances

Following is the text of a petition by inmates at Rahway state prison as duplicated and distributed to newsmen by prison authorities:

Petition Re: Inmate Grievances, Rahway State Prison

We, the inmates, who are presently confined at Rahway State Prison, appeal to you, the people of the state of New Jersey. We are desperately asking that you help us to obtain the right to exist as human beings. We are also desperately seeking outside concern from you, in order that we may present this petition to the prison administration and Governor of New Jersey. We are asking for cooperation, by signing the petition. The demands that are listed are brief due to lack of space, but, an entire list can be obtained from the above address.

Rahway Prison is a place where:

1. **MEDICAL CARE:** Rahway Prison is a place where aspirin is the wonder drug for all ills, regardless of how serious the problem may be. The examining of inmates is done with inmates fully clothed. If an inmate is taken out in an ambulance, he is carelessly taken 45 miles to the prison's infirmary in Trenton.

2. **INMATES' DIET:** Rahway Prison is a place where the diet is so bad that various blood banks have refused to accept donations from inmates. Inmates have tried vainly to donate blood to hemophiliacs in and around the state; 95 per cent of the 1,300 inmates suffer from tooth and bone decay, because of the lack of calcium in their diet.

3. **COMMISSARY:** Rahway Prison is a place where the prices in the commissary

(store) are higher than the Acme markets, and our pay is less than that of a coolie or slave. There are no bargain sales here and coupons have no value. The commissary makes \$30,000 a month!

4. **PAROLE BOARD:** Rahway Prison is a place where you never know how to make parole. The parole decides the fate of inmates without any thorough investigation of the inmate's parole plan. First offenders are supposed to be eligible for parole after serving one-third of their sentence, but this is a rarity.

5. **EDUCATIONAL-VOCA-TIONAL:** Rahway Prison is a place where the educational system is truly inadequate, the programs are irrelevant to the needs of the inmate. There is no vocational training at all. General Motors has tried in the past to put a plant in the prison so that inmates could at least learn a skill that would be beneficial to them upon release, but unfortunately they were turned away by people who deemed it unnecessary, because their way was the best way to rehabilitation.

6. **DISCIPLINARY AC-TION:** Rahway Prison is a place where frustrated officers come to work with their personal problems and take them out on the inmates. There exists here an illegal kangaroo court that takes the word of any officer, and in return convicts an inmate within two minutes and has him sent to the hole, where he is forced to live in a groveling sub-human existence in filth and vermin.

7. **RACISM BY OFFICERS:** Rahway Prison is a place where racist officers exercise their prejudicial attitudes towards black and Puerto Ricans all the time. The favorit-

ism of white inmates over blacks and Puerto Ricans is overt. This is a method that is used to keep inmates dis-united so that they do not come together to discuss dissatisfaction with prison policies.

8. **CULTURAL IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND HISTORY CLASSES:** Rahway Prison is a place where black inmates cannot learn and practice their own cultural identity. A cultural identity can truly expunge the criminal character that exists in most inmates.

9. **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM:** Rahway Prison is a place where only certain religions are allowed to be learned and practiced by the inmate.

10. **MAIL-PACKAGES:** Rahway Prison is a place where prison officials purposely delay inmates' mail for as long as three to four weeks. The courts have constantly admonished the prison administration for its practice in dealing with inmate mail. Federal law officers have arrested a number of prison officers for stealing checks and merchandise from inmates mail.

11. **JOB ALLOTMENT-WAGES:** Rahway Prison is a place where an inmate is not allowed to quit his job if he is not in accord with it. Refusal to work results in the loss of six months' good time and several days in the hole. Wages are extremely low and, if an inmate goes on sick-call, he loses half a day's pay. Per capita income at Rahway is approximately 60 cents per day.

12. **WORK RELEASE:** Rahway Prison is a place where the work release program caters to three or four inmates out of the entire population. The work release program is a farce in every

sense of the word; the superintendent can attest to this assertion.

13. **GATE MONEY:** Rahway Prison is a place where an inmate may serve a number of years and upon release is given a meagre \$25 where inflation would relieve him of that amount in less than a day.

14. **REHABILITATION:** Rahway Prison is a place where rehabilitation just does not exist; before it could ever exist there must be a humanitarian desire coming from the prison administration.

This can only come about by recognizing the needs of the inmates, here listed.

15. **CONCLUSION:** We, the petitioners, having tried every other possibility to bring about changes in the above stated complaints, therefore demand that no reprisals or corporal punishment arise from this incident. The same in accordance with the stated and sworn request of the superintendent by means of affidavit.

To be treated as human beings is all that we ask of this administration. We are sincerely trying to correct the mistakes we have made in the past against other people. We not only want to correct the mistakes but we wish to prevent mistakes. The help must come from you and we are desperately asking you for this help. We want to come home to our families and loved ones. We too have someone who loves us and misses us and needs us. We have children that we love and wish to be near. Do you agree with these demands? Do you think that we should ask for the right to exist as human beings? Yes or no?

RAHWAY INMATES.

11-27-71

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