

GEORGE JACKSON AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN THE UNITED STATES

The mother of George L. Jackson, unable to accept any of several conflicting official reports of how her son was killed by a guard or guards inside San Quentin Prison in an alleged escape attempt on August 21, 1971, is petitioning the United Nations to investigate his death. She has asked IFCO to seek support for that petition through this newsletter.

Mrs. Georgia B. Jackson also seeks through this action to call to public and world attention the alleged violation of human rights of persons held in state and local prisons throughout the country. She is convinced that "only a complete renovation of the penal systems across this nation will permit those there incarcerated to live with dignity and humanity," she has said in a separate statement.

An individual may petition the International Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations if he complies with conditions and precedents contained in United Nations Resolution 1503.

The petitioning individual initially must exhaust all national remedies; or, if he can show that to pursue such remedies would be futile, then he need not exhaust these remedies. Mrs. Jackson, her daughter Penny Jackson and their lawyer Edward Bell, believe the futility of such pursuit can be proved "beyond any reasonable doubt."

The petitioner then must show that the incident being brought to the attention of the Commission is part of a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights perpetrated by the government involved. These violations must be such that they can be reliably attested to.

"There are few persons outside the prison system that would deny that penal institutions in this country fit the above formula," the petitioners state in a leaflet titled *An Imperative Move for Justice*.

George Jackson was accused when he was 18 of robbing a gas station of \$70, a crime he did not commit, he affirms in a brief autobiography included in a collection of his letters from prison published under the title *Soledad Brother*.

He accepted a deal, he said, agreeing to confess and spare the county court costs in return for a light county jail sentence. But instead he was given an indeterminate sentence of from one year to life, and sent to San Quentin Penitentiary. The year was 1960.

During his nearly 11 years in prison, he appeared before parole boards nine times. At an early hearing he was told to "Bring back a diploma," and did, after completing his final year of high school in prison.

Postponement followed postponement with, he

charged, little continuity in the makeup of boards before which he appeared and apparently no record-keeping of previous promises. At his eighth hearing, December 1968, he was told he was "granted a parole" and would be freed by March 4.

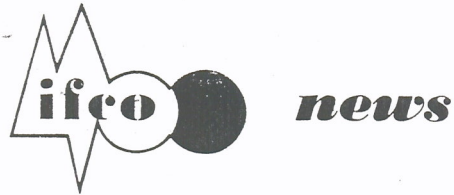
Three days later he was informed a mistake had been made. Consideration of his case was postponed for six months. He was being transferred to Soledad Prison; if he did well there for six months, he would be given a parole for certain.

When the June, 1969 hearing took place at Soledad, different persons were on the board; no one could find any reference to promises made by the earlier board and he was denied consideration for another full year.

Called up for a hearing again in June, 1970, he refused to go. At that time, he was already under indictment charged with two other Soledad inmates for the murder of a white guard following an incident in which three Black inmates were shot and killed by a guard from a tower during racial conflict in the prison exercise yard.

"It wasn't very likely that I would be given consideration for anything but the firing squad," he wrote in a letter to his editor, explaining his refusal to go to the hearing.

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SPECIAL ISSUE OF IFCO NEWS

This issue serves as a double issue—the biggest yet produced by IFCO. It takes the place of the November/December and January/February issues.

It is our purpose to inform you about what's happening in community organizations in the U.S. and liberation movements abroad. We also hope to garner your support for these important efforts.

The next issue (March/April) will feature an in-depth article concerning the situation in Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia); an article about the Encampment for Citizenship, and stories of new humane institutions being created in minority communities.

Your letters and comments are appreciated.

Apparent discrepancies in accounts of George Jackson's death are detailed in the December, 1971 issue of *Social Questions Bulletin*, publication of the Methodist Federation for Social Action, unofficial membership organization.

"George Jackson could not have been killed in the way San Quentin officials have described. This is perhaps the only uncontested or uncompromised fact of importance to emerge from the circumstances surrounding the 29-year-old Black man's slaying August 21 during an alleged escape attempt," concludes Rod Such, quoted in a piece written for the Oct., 1971 *Guardian* supplement.

"No explanation has been offered yet to adequately detail how Jackson, three San Quentin guards and two inmate trustees met their deaths—but the 'official' story has changed so often as to be without credibility."

Prison officials' versions of events as carried in San Francisco, Oakland and New York newspapers include the following, in the *Bulletin's* condensation:

It is alleged that Stephen Bingham, young white attorney, brought a gun concealed in a tape recorder into a visiting room in which he met George Jackson, escorted by a guard from San Quentin's Adjustment Center, a special security section. The visiting room was one normally used by men on death row. Jackson is alleged to have smuggled the gun back to the Adjustment Center under an Afro wig.

Jackson, skin-searched and having passed through two metal detectors before his visit with Bingham, was undergoing his second skin-search in the Adjustment Center when he is alleged to have produced the gun, loaded it, turned it on three unarmed guards and ordered cells of 26 men in the first tier opened. He and the other inmates are alleged to have killed three guards and three inmate tier tenders. An alarm was sounded when a guard outside the Adjustment Center saw Jackson with a gun.

Prison officials allege that within 30 to 40 seconds after the alarm, Jackson jerked open an Adjustment Center door leading into a courtyard and began running across the courtyard toward a 20-foot high wall 75 yards away. Coming under fire of a guard on a gun-walk to the east and another to the south, Jackson was killed by a bullet from the south, falling near the corner of the prison chapel opposite the Adjustment Center.

Former inmates at San Quentin insist there was no way Jackson could have smuggled a gun into the Adjustment Center, because the skin-search following a visit is made before, not after, the return to the Center.

Members of the California Prisoners' Union held a press conference to refute certain aspects of the official story, pointing to this as the most serious discrepancy.

The skin search takes place in a building known as

the receiving and release building, directly adjacent to the building where visits are held. Prisoners strip naked for a thorough inspection, at the conclusion of which a guard runs his fingers through the prisoner's hair.

The gun Jackson allegedly used has been variously described as a .38 caliber pistol, a 9-mm Spanish-made Astra M-600 and a Spanish-made Llama-Corto.

There are also discrepancies as to how and where Jackson was killed. Preliminary and final autopsy reports gave diametrically opposite trajectories for the lethal bullet. An affidavit signed by 26 inmates is alleged to give a markedly different account of events that transpired in the Adjustment Center than the official version.

Among those demanding an investigation of George Jackson's death at the time were the following: Congressmen Dellums (D-Cal) and Rangel (D-NY); Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Cal) and the National Commission of Inquiry, headed by Ramsey Clark, according to *The Bulletin*.

In support of the effort to have the International Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations investigate the prison system of the United States, which Mrs. Jackson seeks through her petition, the Rev. Robert Chapman, director of the Department of Social Justice, National Council of Churches, has this to say:

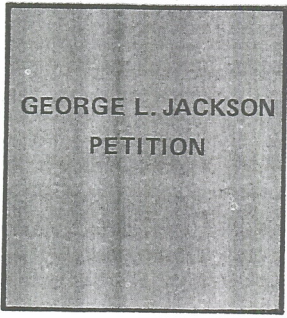
"So large a percentage of our total inmate population is nonwhite as to defy explanation on any grounds other than the fact that racism and racist practices permeate every level of our criminal justice system—from the causes of arrest to the refusal of parole.

In urging you to sign the petition included here, Rev. Lucius Walker, the director of IFCO, makes the following statement.

"The criminal justice system in America is one of our most neglected systems. In his book, *Crime in America*, Ramsey Clark says, "The nation spends more on household pets than on police . . . For all police, prosecutors, courts and correction—the entire criminal justice process, federal, state, and local—our annual expenditure by 1970 was barely \$5 billion. This compares with \$9 billion spent for tobacco and \$12.5 billion for alcoholic beverages."

Public apathy, negative attitudes towards the criminal, racism and brutality institutionalized and practiced daily by personnel in correction facilities, poor training and low education for personnel, add up to racist, inefficient, brutal, wasteful system which contributes to crime when it ought to be preventing crime, destroys liberty when it should be safe-guarding liberty; even the liberty of the criminal.

Increasingly, prisoners are calling the inhumane conditions to public attention. The George Jackson case would be reason enough for concern. But Attica, the Tombs in New York City, the Rahway riots all give grave testimony to the need for a new look at our criminal justice system. Mrs. Jackson's call for a UN petition is a creative and forceful idea. America is not correcting these daily abuses. Perhaps the International Commission on Human Rights will."



George L. Jackson's body was killed on August 21, 1971 by the Prison guards at San Quentin Penitentiary.
BE IT RESOLVED, that George L. Jackson was at one with those people of the world who became stronger in the face of the oppressor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the explanations of the State of California for the death of George L. Jackson are an insult to the intelligence of all mankind.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that neither the State of California nor the United States of America will conduct an unbiased investigation of the killing of George L. Jackson's body.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Nations Charter provides for international cooperation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights, and that the United Nations shall promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the right to live is a fundamental human right.

HENCE, I HEREBY DEMAND THAT THE UNITED NATIONS TAKE JURISDICTION OF THE CASE OF GEORGE L. JACKSON AND INVESTIGATE HIS DEATH.

SIGNED: _____

Name _____

Street, City & State _____

Please return this Petition to Mrs. Georgia Jackson, Penny Jackson and Edward Bell, Esq., P. O. Box 68
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94701