

# Jackson Called Blacks' Symbol Of Anger With Judicial System

Many Are Found Distrustful of What They Feel Are 2 Standards of Justice

By EARL CALDWELL

George Jackson was often described as a symbol, and he was. For many blacks, he was a clear reflection of the rising tide of discontent that they now hold with the judicial system as a whole.

It is a dissatisfaction that is deep-rooted and mixed now with anger and distrust. It showed as word of Jackson's death flashed across the country.

"I don't know what happened," black people were saying, "but I don't believe he was just shot trying to escape. There's more to it than that."

Once the black concern for negro prisoners was limited chiefly to the nation of Islam—the Black Muslims. And later it was the Black Panther party. But today, blacks at all levels often express the feeling that the judicial system has two standards—one for whites and another for blacks.

They assert that prisons are filled with blacks and that guards and administrators and parole authorities are white

### White Judges and Juries

They mention too, that often the juries that convict Negro defendants are white, that the judges are white, that the prosecutors are white and that the arresting officers are most often white.

In the late nineteen-sixties when the Panthers were saying that all blacks serving time in jail were political prisoners, the Panthers had little visible support. But there has been a remarkable change in that attitude.

Now, prominent Negro lawyers and even Negro judges are saying openly that the judicial process is being used to contain blacks and the poor. And often, when they cite examples, they use George Jackson.

"Something is wrong," they would say, "when a man pleads guilty to a \$70 robbery and spends 10 years in jail and still



George Jackson in a 1966 mug shot released by California prison officials.

has no hope of getting out."

When he was 18 years old, George Jackson was sentenced to from one year to life imprisonment for stealing \$70 from a gas station. On the advice of his lawyer, he pleaded guilty to the crime.

### With White Prisoners

On Saturday, he was shot and killed at San Quentin Prison in California. He was killed, the authorities said, while trying to escape. Three prison guards and two white prisoners also were left dead.

Perhaps the most significant aspect is that Negroes in their comments did not focus on the killing of the guards or the other prisoners but on Jackson.

"At least," as one of them put it, "he wasn't the only victim."

Jackson became a symbol when he was charged along with two other Negro prisoners with the killing of a white guard at Soledad Prison in California. The guard was killed just after three black inmates

were shot and killed by a tower guard.

Among Negroes, the right or wrong of the killings was not the issue. Rather, it was the conditions of the prison, the conditions that blacks saw behind the atmosphere of the killings.

Increasingly, Negroes saw the prisoners treated as sub-humans. And more and more, they accepted the argument that too many blacks were held not as criminals but as political prisoners. It is an idea that comes from Malcolm X and by other black militants and now by even the conservatives in the black community.

### Feelings in Book

George Jackson was not simply a symbol but a writer. He told much of his feeling, and that of other negro prisoners, in his recently published book, "Soledad Brother."

The book is a collection of his letters. In one, written just over a year ago, he conceded that he was no longer a nice person but he said he was not born that way.

"They created this situation," he wrote. "All that flows from it is their responsibility. They've created in me one irate, resentful nigger—and it's building—to what climax?"

There had been speculation that the climax for George Jackson would be violent.

But the opinion was widely expressed yesterday that the incident at San Quentin was only a beginning of what was yet to come.

"The prisons in California are seething," a white writer who visited Jackson before his death said. "They are on the verge of overt, open rebellion."

The writer said that he came away with a great feeling of sadness.

"I couldn't help but think," he said, "how pathetic it was that a man like this had to be an outlaw, a person on the outside looking in—that the American system is such that it could not reconcile a man of such high intelligence and dedication."

He, too, saw Jackson as a symbol—a symbol of failure.