

## **PROPAGANDA: Debunking the Talking Points**

by: Crandell Ojore McKinnon, California

*"Deathrow, what a brothah know?"- Public Enemy*

Days after a recent United States District Court ruling, former Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti took to the airwaves to discuss the ruling. During his interview with Sonali Kolhatkar, on Uprising (7/18/14), a radio program airing on KPFA/KPFK, he made comments concerning the living conditions of California's death row prisoners. His statements of fact were skewed, bordering on half-truths, and an absolute lie. As are most "Talking Points" by politicians.

"They have their own cells, and a right to their own T.V.'s, and their own computers."- Gil Garcetti stated during his interview.

Garcetti's goal was to deceptively imply San Quentin's death row is "The Comfort Inn" for prisoners. To counter U.S. District Judge Cormac J. Carney's ruling (Ernest D. Jones v. Kevin Chappell; Cite: 2014 WL 3567365 (C.D.Cal.) July 16,2014), detailing the administrative dysfunction of California's death penalty system/system. He addressed the inordinate and unpredictable delays – during post-conviction – of appointment of counsel and appellant procedures that leave prisoners to languish for years on death row without any foreseeable threat of execution. He concluded California's system is unconstitutionally cruel and unusual.

For those interested in the truth, I as a California condemned prisoner will unravel Garcetti's statement to give you my poignant reality and the facts of my confinement.

First let me address the overt LIE.

I am not aware openly nor secretly, of anyone on S.Q.'s death row with a computer. If it's my right, I demand one! If this is the case, access is only afforded at the sole discretion of the administration – S.Q. Officials. I can assure you no one possesses one in their cell. Firstly, there are no outlets/connections for a computer within the cells. Secondly, the cells are regularly searched, and there is no place to conceal a computer.

Yes, every prisoner on death row is confined to a single man cell, 21 to 24 hours a day. These cells are not ours. We possess no keys to enter or exit as we're pleased; have no outright claims to a particular cell; nor any ability to keep C.G.'s (Correctional Officers) out. This policy is at the sole behest of the administration and they alone dictate who is assigned to what cell. C.G.'s also have full access to each and every cell to invade and ransack arbitrarily.

If I may, let me give you a descriptive tour of a S.Q. cell/concrete box that you can visualize: The dimensions are 5'x 12' and 16 feet high; walled in on three sides, and barred – with a grated mesh covering – at the front, and obviously windowless. Built within the box; a metal bunk (2,5' x 6') bolted to the cement floor, accompanied with a thin mat that offers no orthopedic comfort; a stainless steel sink and toilet. (The toilets operate on a flush timer. 1 flush every 6 minutes or 2 flushes every hour within six minutes.) A four-quarter (19,5" x 10") cabinet that's bolted to the back wall; and two light fixtures. Six (6) cubic feet of personal property is allowed within this space. A constant build-up of dust accumulates within the cell frequently. And never have I been offered a mop to clean the floor in 15 years. During summer months the cell becomes an oven, and during winter a freezer.

This box effects everyone differently. Some individuals endure; others become mentally debilitated, requiring medication; and others opt for suicide.

T.V.'s are not a "Right," but a privilege. A privilege regulated according to a prisoner's program status, and can be arbitrarily confiscated at the disposition of a C.O. Not everyone possesses a T.V. We must purchase our own appliances, or a prisoner may donate his old appliance to another, with the approval of the property office. T.V.'s must be 13", clear casing, with the speakers removed (headphones must be purchased); and purchased from an "approved" vendor, at an inflated cost, and usually operationally defective.

This is the "Undisputed Truth". Not some ideological talking point to deceive the public. Nor is my account an attempt to campaign for death row to become the "Comfort Inn". I fully accept and acknowledge the fact this is prison. But as a "Human" and prisoner living in a nation that professes to be civilized and a champion of Human Rights, I question and challenge their indignity! Likewise, their systemic disregard for violating the U.S. and California Constitution, as Judge Carney ruled in his final judgment.

To have a politician dismiss the U.S. and California Constitutional violations as a sideshow to the purportedly cushy living conditions of California's condemned prisoners, speaks to the willful disregard of the real issues regarding the application of the law. These violations question the notion we are a nation of laws. And highlights those appointed to uphold them freely and openly violate them capriciously, in the same vein Gil Garcetti, unapologetically distorted the issues of Constitutional Rights with prison privileges.

From my stance on Maa, this is a voice from DEATHROW.

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