

# The Prisoners Revolutionary Literature Fund challenges censorship

Censorship of political and other literature in U.S. prisons is on the rise. In response to the upsurge of the 60's, in 1974 the Supreme Court upheld due process for prisoners and determined that prisons can only censor mail for reasons of institutional security. Since that time the authorities have sought many different ways to deny prisoners access to news and ideas in periodicals and books, and this has expanded in recent years. In 2007, the Federal Bureau of Prisons started to cleanse all federal prison chaplain libraries of every book except 150 pre-approved titles. Thousands of texts, collected over decades, were destroyed before legal suits, filed by prisoners and a major New York law firm, together with a public outcry, halted that initiative.

PRLF has been sending *Revolution* newspaper (and its predecessor the *Revolutionary Worker*) to prisoners for over 25 years and has confronted censorship in many forms in almost every state. A discernable wave of censorship surfaces when *Revolution* newspaper prints articles covering national oppression and resistance against attacks on Blacks and other oppressed peoples, like the police murder of Sean Bell in NY.

Many of the prisoners being denied access to this literature are on lockdown in SHU's (Segregated Housing Units), subject to extreme isolation and sensory deprivation. TAMMS Supermax in Illinois has 500 prisoners on lockdown, including one who wrote to PRLF, "I am writing to ask you would you please send me a free *Revolution* paper to keep my mind occupied with something to read, to keep my sanity in this abnormal atmosphere call prison. I am lock up in this cell 24 hours a day. That's why I need to read to stop me from looking at these walls all day. I do not have TV or radio because TAMMS do not allow TV or radio. TAMMS is just like Guantanamo."

A new outrageous and spreading form of censorship is state-wide Banned Materials Lists. In the fall of 2007, Illinois refused to allow *Revolution* in any prisons in Illinois, and Pennsylvania and Michigan quickly followed suit. This new banning process is in direct opposition to previous clear-cut judicial rulings. The legal standard is that the censorship of any publication must be on a case-by-case basis, citing a particular passage or page that

*I would like it to be known that not only do these small minded people withhold certain issues of the \*R\*[Revolution] the same people will go out their way to use the rules of DOC to harm inmates further outside of the norm for receiving the \*R\*. I filed a complaint about the tampering of and with-holding of incoming \*R\*s. The reason I think its necessary that I mentioned the illegal confiscations of certain \*R\* is to let you good people at the \*R\* know that your work is of the nature of inspiration to the point every last \*R\* is censored or trashed. Here's a copy of another inmate censorship notification concerning issue #144. [A special issue "The Oppression of Black People, the Crimes of the System, and the Revolution We Need".]*

*I'm sending his copy as I'm still in my complaint process, concerning #144 and other missing issues. The notification to the other inmate clearly shows the reason these modern small minded people gave for withholding issue #144 as their alleging issue "can be used to instill violence or hatred among offender population." I say in reply to this outright lie is, The only thing issue #144 is probably capable of is inspiring inmates to see the truth of our constant oppression and those who are the gate keepers of said oppression, therefore instilling hatred toward the gate keeper. Even so I never received #144. I can only imagine the light it's shedding. I so desperately want to read issue #144! I hope the \*R\* will forward me said issue when I transfer to another plantation—as I will inform the \*R\* of move. I thank you good kind people over and over for giving the voiceless a voice in the \*R\* which I overstand that this is part of the \*R\*s goals, i.e., the greatest part.*

*Letter from a subscriber*

is determined to have the potential to cause harm to the security of a prison. If this blanket censorship is allowed to go unchallenged, a new norm could be established that would allow *Revolution* newspaper to be banned from a growing number of states, setting a dangerous precedent for all publications and books.

PRLF must wage a legal and political struggle against this censorship, starting with these blatantly illegal Banned Lists and the placement of *Revolution* newspaper on these lists in a growing of number of states. We are seeking volunteers to help document this censorship, lawyers to consult and file any necessary proceedings, and funds to cover the many costs involved in such a legal battle. Your contribution to help fight this censorship can make a huge difference for many prisoners and help challenge this reversal of hard-fought prisoners' rights.

***Substantial donations are needed to launch a struggle against censorship.***

PRLF is a project of the International Humanities Center, a non-profit public charity, exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code ([www.IHCenter.org](http://www.IHCenter.org)) To contribute to PRLF, checks should be made payable to IHCenter/PRLF and mailed to:

**International Humanities Center**  
860 Via de La Paz, Ste. B-1  
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

or

**Prisoners Revolutionary Literature Fund**  
1327 N. Milwaukee, #407  
Chicago, IL 60622

You can also make a non-tax deductible donation by mailing a check or money order made out to Prisoners Revolutionary Literature Fund to the PRLF address above.

To volunteer or contact PRLF:  
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