

Justice: A can of worms

Jerry Rubin

1969

CHICAGO, Oct. 1 (Liberation News Service) — I am at this writing locked in a tiny cell in the Cook County Jail, a cell which I share with too many friendly cockroaches. I can't get out except to go to court. I can't see any other people, but I hear their screams. The hysterical cries of people going mad because they're treated like caged animals.

The man in the cell next to me talks aloud to himself all night and I find it hard to sleep. Prisoners satisfy their frustration by cursing at each other. "Fuck my dick!" Every man crushed by the Machinery of Injustice. One man vs. the State. What chance do you have? Cynicism! Anger! Desperation!

Inmates in jail have little to look forward to. You wish the time would fly, that the hours would rip off. Tomorrow brings more boredom, loneliness, isolation.

Yes, there is a Hell. This is it.

I entered Santa Rita Rehabilitation Center in Oakland, California, on Monday, September 8, on an all expense paid trip backstage into the nightmare of America's dark soul. My 45-day sentence was for a 1966 sit-in on the Berkeley campus.

If the officials were really trying to "rehabilitate" me, they did everything backwards. I wish everybody could be sentenced to spend some time in any jail in America. If you do not come out a determined revolutionary, it's because the system has smashed your capacity for compassion, love and hope.

Santa Rita Rehabilitation Center tries to "rehabilitate" by destroying one's individuality, ego, self-respect. We are given numbers, identical clothing, counted and re-counted five times a day, degraded by 1001 rules and regulations, and placed at the total mercy of non-merciful cops. You don't call a cop a "pig" while in jail. You jump to attention when the "bull" approaches. Any slight show of disrespect means automatic banishment to the "hole", the jail within the jail.

My brother, Stew Alpert, was ordered from a sick-bed in the hospital and sent to the hole for 10 days because he dared to question the word of a prison bull.

The first thing that happened to me at Santa Rita was that I was ordered to get a haircut. Jail regulations demand that every inmate have a one to one-and-one half inch standard haircut. I was turned from a beautiful long-haired bearded beast to a crew-cut bare-chinned ugly pig by the murderers of Santa Rita.

Cultural genocide.

You can cut off my long hair, but you cannot cut off long hair. The pigs think that if they shear our hair they will destroy us. They know that long hair represents our new community's sense of identification. As part of the brainwashing in jail, they try to destroy our identity by cutting our hair.

But surprise! Hair grows back! They can cut our hair, but they cannot cut our soul.

As an act of solidarity with a scalped longhair, Yippies from all over America are symbolically clipping a lock of their hair and donating that lock to a wig which I will wear when I get out of jail. Mail your lock to Jerry Rubin's Wig, Federal Court Building, Conspiracy Trial, Chicago Ill. 60604. My wig will therefore be tribal community hair,

respecting our solidarity against those who try to destroy us. (If you have any locks left over, Yippie judge Julius is also badly lacking in hair.)

On Wednesday, September 17, I was sleeping in my bunk when at 2 a.m. cops threw a flashlight in my face and told me to get dressed. I was then locked in a packed bullpen with a couple hundred other prisoners until 9 a.m. when two Federal marshals put me into a 1969 Rambler and told me they were taking me to Chicago by CAR.

I asked the logical question: "Why don't we fly?" They said they would not fly because they feared a hijacking to Cuba.

They refused to let me notify my lawyer, family, wife, brother or friends. For five days I was prohibited from calling anyone or mailing a letter.

Kidnapped.

It was a clear case of kidnapping by the federal government.

For five days I was held incommunicado. I was told that until I got to Chicago "in a week or so" I could maintain contact with no one!

To enforce their kidnap and prevent any attempted escape I was double-handcuffed, chains were put around my stomach and hands, shackles were placed on both my legs. Hand cuffed, chained in shackles from San Francisco to Chicago! There were two other prisoners in the car. One was on a five-year to life sentence in San Quentin for armed robbery. The other, Art, was one of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Men, a bank robber, going to prison for a 45-year jail sentence. I was chained to Art.

The two federal marshals sat in the front seat. Don, the driver, packed a gun, played the radio occasionally and kept asking me questions about "the revolution." The other marshal, Percy, spent his time dropping gun-drops and eyeing us with hate.

As the trip rolled on, I learned that two years earlier in a similar trip across the country, Art unlocked his handcuffs and chain, grabbed the federal marshal's gun, and said, "Now you'll take orders from me." He handcuffed, chained and shackled both marshals to a tree in the woods, and drove off with their car, gun and money. He was caught in a shoot out with cops in Hayward, California after a bank robbery two years later.

The marshals drove every day from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. At lunch hour our leg shackles were removed and we entered small truck stops for lunch, eating with our handcuffs on. At night we were placed for "safe keeping" in different jails along the route. I spent my nights in the county jails of Reno, Salt Lake City, Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Coral Bluffs, Iowa.

When I finally arrived at Cook County, I was met personally by the warden who warned me, "We allow no organizing here—jail is for the forgotten." (Just as I was removed from Santa Rita, Stew, a number of other prisoners and I were starting to circulate a petition in the jail for humane treatment.)

Inmates are the most oppressed class in society. A prisoner has NO rights—"no matter what they want," is the way the cook at Santa Rita put it, referring to the long long lines of prisoners lining up for the pure starch slop that ought to be flushed down the toilet.

In Cook County Jail, prisoners are stripped and searched every time they move. "OK everything off, including your drawers. Spread your cheeks." Last time I was in Cook County jail, during the Democratic convention, a guard put a rubber hose on his finger and stuck it up our rectums, looking for what? That medieval practice has apparently been dropped. The stripping and searching is part of the process of dehumanization.

Justice. Justice! What a can of worms! Prisoners must be grateful for the simplest human decency. A smile, politeness, a bit of information. We are constantly told: "You are shit. Who are you to ask for anything? You are a dirty pool of urine."

Malcolm X said that no man "reforms" when he is behind bars. I agree. I've met hundreds of prisoners in jails across the country and I have never met one who regretted what he did or didn't do. When you meet a prisoner you begin by asking, "What's your beef?" Never, never, never, have I met a prisoner who was ashamed to say. It's a standard question and everyone answers proudly. We all know the real criminals are the pigs who put us in jails like these. The criminals have the keys.

One of the most frightening things about jail is how quickly you are forgotten. The convicts will make the revolution—but prisoners cannot move until they get support from the outside. We must relate at all times to those behind bars. We must throw America's death jails into her smiling Sunday school face.

In Cook County jail I am with Bobby Seale, national chairman of the Black Panther Party, who is the subject of the most severe repression you can imagine. Bobby is being railroaded with us in the Conspiracy trial, and has been jailed without bail on a frame-up, the ridiculous charge of conspiracy to murder based on the lying testimony of a police agent. Bobby is in high spirits. He realizes that it is the revolutionary power of the Panthers that has forced the power structure to expose its dirty hands. Bobby is an inspiration to anyone who meets him in jail.

Anyone who has heard anything about the Conspiracy trial so far sees that the government has ripped off its “liberal” face and is determined to jail us—whatever the cost. The trial has become the symbolic attempt by the government to turn back the New Left, the movement, and the hippies-yippies. It is a “show trial.” The 74 year old menopausal judge belongs in a mental hospital. We have been denied our attorney, Charles Garry, and two of our other lawyers have been jailed. Every motion we make is denied. The FBI has tampered with the jury. The government controls the courts—but we, the people can stop the trial if we move into the streets.

We demand immediate freedom for John Sinclair, jailed for ten years in Michigan because of possession of two joints.

Free all prisoners! Jail the judges!

Jail Julius Hoffman!

Solidarity! We are ALL one!

Give me some hair!

Love from Hell, Jerry Rubin

You can jail a revolutionary but you cannot jail the revolution.

This is an excerpt from Jerry’s forthcoming book, *Do It!*, to be published by Simon and Schuster this January.

fifth Estate

Jerry Rubin
Justice: A can of worms
1969

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/90-october-16-29-1969/justice-a-can-of-worms>
Fifth Estate #90, October 16-29, 1969

fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net