

"Contumacious Legacy"

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject at hand, I apologize in advance if it seems as if I'm divulging information better kept quiet. However, realize that I am only speaking on these terms with only intentions of expressing my perspective of the Truth to attain positive change. My goal is to give a brief history of protest on Death Row as it relates to my personal motivation/inspiration. Most of the time I do my best to speak on personal experience as it is sort of an insult to speak on the affairs of others because of the constant exploitation imposed upon Death Row prisoners. Plus, many times what is seen from the outside is truly backwards on the inside because of intentions. I ask that you read this without having to question my integrity or intentions.

I begin with a personal proclamation: I, Carlton A. Turner, support the DRIVE movement by individual choice.... Yet, this doesn't mean that I am an active ~~part~~ participant in the movement (Death Row Turner-communalist Vanguard Engagement) exclusively. The DRIVE movement is in a phase of non-violent protest and has its own evolution process that is best not disturbed by the virtue of an individual, but only by the will of all people involved. I doubt that the participants of DRIVE have planned an organization of phases, but from what I see DRIVE has the intentions of making changes and potential to foment revolution. Therefore, with that motivation it is apparent to me that the movement is transmutable, because I know that more radical tactics are necessary. Yet, I am enlightened to the fact that there is a process of justice which requires peaceful resistance (Ghandism). My actions and tactics do not reflect this process due to my personal history with the TDCJ officials and in recognition of the level of intensity that is truly needed to draw the attention of the proper officials. In simple terms: I know that they only understand chaos and madness. Filing legal documents and grievances are a part of their inept system and are easily ignored and suppressed. Yet, they are necessary to establish the fact that peaceful ~~order~~ resolve was sought and to prove that the legal process is ineffective in achieving its means. I have run through this part of the struggle already and activate radical tactics. So, in the light of protecting the constitution of DRIVE, I have to respectfully keep a distance until the movement reaches a phase which corresponds with all of my actions. Then, I can declare myself a DRIVE participant and not just a supporter. We work towards the same goals and therefore I do not feel left out. I'm sure many who read this will find it sort of counter-productive that I do not throw in my full participation, but let me explain the events that led to my understanding which gave birth to my level of involvement.

Since we've been on this oppressive unit of sensory deprivation there have been many transient uprisings by various people (groups and solitary). At one time there was a lot of corruption within the internal structure and hierarchy of TDCJ that was so intense that it was necessary to show solidarity and fight to maintain any semblance of humanity and the respect any man expects. Guards were gratuitously slamming prisoners

on their faces while they were handcuffed and helpless. Prisoners were being deprived of their food, recreation, necessities, and overall dignity. This was all due to sadistic fun. Had not these fellas stood up to this treatment with strong determination and endured the pains of prison warfare, all Death Row would be subject to this abuse at this very moment without question. Though these things still happen from time to time, it is quickly rectified internally by firing or transfixing the guard. I have been in the middle of one of these controversies and it is one of the examples of how TDCJ cannot resolve problems peacefully.

In April of 2003 I resided on the restriction pod by choice. I've always found the restriction pod as it retains a certain level of freedom, because there's not much else they can take away from a prisoner and if he can survive without the so-called privileges TDCJ offers, he can endure years of restriction. For us here, there is no incentive, because we are granted no privilege of worth. Therefore, I choose to stay on the restrictive pod. Plus, it is a bonus that I am surrounded by other prisoners that do not bow down to harassment or fear the loss of privileges.

At that point in time there were remnants of guards who abused and tortured prisoners. These were those who were smart enough to persevere and join together in a "Good Ol' Boy" system where they looked out for the well-being and best interest of each other. I will not speak on their criminal activities, because there are prisoners who colluded with these unsavory characters. Prisoners who hold personal virtue over civil rights. I do not seek to tread upon anyone, but encourage these same men to start caring and get involved with positivity regardless of past actions. Your tenacity is needed elsewhere! The "Good Ol' Boy" system comprised of many blatant and latent racist. Many times I had overheard these guards call prisoners: niggers, spics, wetbacks, etc.... At the time I just kept my mouth shut, because so many prisoners weren't willing to stand up for themselves and in prison people (guards and prisoners) see it as stupidity to get involved in affairs which do not effect your own situation. Yet, the way I see it - if I (or anyone else) just let them get away with abuse and racism with anybody - then they'll eventually come to the same thing on me. Therefore, stop it before it starts to spread!

One day I decided that enough was enough. I was standing at my cell door and overheard an officer call a prisoner a Wetback. So, I spoke up and got into a heated exchange of words with the guard. It just so happens that the same guard would have to escort me to the shower less than a hour later. Long story short - I was slammed and punched in the head repeatedly. Would you believe that I'm the one that got written a disciplinary for assault? True! I decided to fight back instead of accepting this abuse. So, that night they came to move me to a security risk cell, I refused to move. I was heavily gassed and a 5 man riot team was used to extract me. Yet, I fought and stabbed 2 guards on the riot team with a plastic spoon handle and pork chop bone. My goal was to prove that I was not helpless and am willing to seriously hurt guards to protect myself. ~~They~~ They eventually got me into the security cell,

but the next morning I went to recreation and refused to leave. Another team was called and we fought. This time I threw one guard into some bars helmet first. They finally extracted me after a good fight. When I got back to my cell I ate my lunch and refused to relinquish my tray. I was ready to fight again, but this time a swarm of officials were sent to investigate the problem. Only after fighting and causing disruption was I given the opportunity to be heard by a senior official. I made demands. Demands were met immediately. The overall attitude towards me changed. Guard gave respect and courtesy. Anything I asked for (within reason) was provided. This courtesy resumed until most of the guards and officials around at the time either quit or transferred.

This same process has been implemented by many. Some do it when they see that too many new guards and officials are hired. It's like a renewal. The problem is this: all of this effort is only used to attain that which should be granted to all prisoners. We have been selfish! There have been times where it was discussed that we should all come together and coordinate our efforts, but ego trips and philosophical differences get in the way. Most of the time it has been insecurity that nobody wants to be a follower and too many people want to be leaders. Then, there are those who fear the intentions of the virtue of the next man. Everyone worries about who will gain the most power/influence in the end. All just ego trips! Sometimes it came to a point where it was like city that planned a day where everyone would yell and make the biggest noise ever - only to have everyone fall in silence because they wanted to behold this event. Yet, they heard things they never heard before. The wind's wisps, birds singing, dogs barking, etc.... Many times we are not willing to make the efforts for others who will also benefit from our work. On top of all this, so many individuals have had so-called unforgivable arguments. Some belong to a collective and the malice spreads. This is a simple inability to get along. All of this is not so huge that we can't overcome it. We just need to make the effort.

During these attempts of agglomeration I have personally let it be known that I am willing to participate. Sometimes I fell out due to my own ego trips, so I am guilty too. There were so many fake starts that I kind of gave up and quit even considering invitations. However, I did let it be known that if I was shown a true and earnest effort to mobilize, I would throw in my hat. Meanwhile, I had other duties to address with my Peoples. Plus, I still have to find a way to survive. While I ruminated on personal issues, I kept an ear out for any efforts. It seemed the same individuals were doing what they've been doing. I highly commend those people who continue to shove lawsuits and grievances down their gullets (Roy Pippin, Hank Skinner, Tyrone Trotter, and Billy Mason just to name a few). Sadly, many of the men who risked harm by physically resisting have been murdered by the state. Richard Cartwright, Bobby Hopkins, Tommie Hughes, Gerald Tigner, Lonnie Puraley, Todd Willingham, Ponchari Wilkinson are just a few who died with the honors of a warrior. Countless others influenced us

all toward human consciousness and education to enable us to fight: Justin Fuller, Frederick McWilliams, Farley Matchett, Hasan Shakur, and James Albridge are a few who touched us with these positive vibes. A few continue to ~~refuse~~ influence the collective mind of Death Row with proactive thought and positive actions. Many think me to be arrogant, but I am always humbled in the shadow of these men's spirit and accomplishments. They have surely ascended! I am disheartened to see the absence of some powerful and influential men who are still alive while the fight ensues. I only hope that they soon feel the pull of the call.

About a year and a half ago I began hearing of DRIVE. First it was just a rumor I was hearing of something a few guys had in mind to activate. This wasn't the first time I've heard of a group of guys trying to do something. Mostly they disperse because they didn't feel like they had enough participants or supporters. For some reason the collective conscience believes that only a huge mass of us can make a change - which is true on a certain level, but it has to start somewhere and with someone. So, since they can't get everybody to participate - they give up! However, I kept hearing more and was handed the DRIVE Handbook in its original form. Me and another prisoner discussed the whole matter and I said that I could support something like DRIVE if it was serious. As time went by I began hearing of several protests and more people got involved. Though they were non-violent protest, I saw how it began to affect the prison. Change had begun.

I sought out ~~the~~ the key participants of DRIVE to get more information to pass on to associates of mine who tend to support anything I get involved in. We wanted to make sure that the movement was of pure intentions to achieve goals and not just to cause mischief. We also needed to be sure that the product and work was the will of the community and not the will of few. The movement also needed the ability to adapt to its situation. Meaning: when it was time to implement more intense measures - we wouldn't be limited to few actions. Neither could it be linked to one person as a leader. Everything must be amenable. It met these criteria and many more. In this, I was able to support it. However, I have my own way of fighting. I seek change by the methods I know to work with potency. I know that DRIVE will have to eventually step up to this level of intensity. Hopefully, by then I will have forged a path that will contribute to the swift advancement of DRIVE. Until then, I lean to the Left on my Can of Strength. The Golden Path I ~~could~~ tread is rough and I may not live to enjoy the temporal reward, but to fight for Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom, and Justice is to invoke the reward of the sublime and eternal. I ask for action towards fruition. I don't ~~each~~ prescribe specific action. I just ask that you do something... anything!