



**Black Boxes and White Noise:
Prisons, Prisoners, and (Mass)
Media Access**

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 **KIRWAN INSTITUTE**
for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

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“The degree of civilization
in a society can be judged
by entering its prisons.”

× Fyodor Dostoevsky

DECEMBER 2010 – GEORGIA INMATES STAGE PEACEFUL, MULTI-PRISON STRIKE

“We committed the crime, we’re here for a reason. But at the same time we’re men. We can’t be treated like animals.”

- × 20-year-old inmate Hays State Prison, participant in Georgia prison strike

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PRISONERS MAKE 8 DEMANDS

- × A LIVING WAGE FOR WORK
- × EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
- × AN END TO CRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENTS
- × DECENT LIVING CONDITIONS
- × NUTRITIONAL MEALS
- × VOCATIONAL AND SELF-IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- × ACCESS TO FAMILIES
- × JUST PAROLE DECISIONS

No more slavery. Injustice in one place is injustice to all. Inform your family to support our cause. Lock down for liberty!

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2006 REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND ABUSE IN AMERICA'S PRISONS

- ✘ “FINDING: Violence remains a serious problem in America’s prisons and jails.”
- ✘ “FINDING: High rates of disease and illness among prisoners, [and] inadequate funding for correctional health care, endanger prisoners, staff, and the public.”
- ✘ “FINDING: The increasing use of high-security segregation is counter-productive, often causing violence inside facilities and contributing to recidivism”
- ✘ “FINDING: Most correctional facilities are surrounded by more than physical walls; they are walled off from external monitoring and public scrutiny to a degree inconsistent with the responsibility of public institutions.”
- ✘ “There is tremendous pressure within an institution to keep quiet.” (former U.S. DOJ Inspector General Glenn Fine)

http://prisoncommission.org/pdfs/prison_commission_summary.pdf

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EARLY RESPONSES FROM GEORGIA AUTHORITIES DO NOT SUGGEST OPENNESS

“If they want to get paid, they shouldn’t commit crimes....If we started paying inmates, we’d also start charging them for room and board, as well. They ought to be careful what they ask for.”

- ✘ State Sen. Johnny Grant, R-Milledgeville, chairman of the Senate Institutions and Property Committee, which oversees prisons.

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"I don't think inmates in Georgia have ever been paid. After all, they are behind those prison walls for a reason.I can't see paying inmates anything. I would much rather take that money and put 25 more state troopers on the highway."

- × Georgia Rep. Barbara Massey Reece, D-Menlo, who serves on the state House Institutions and Property Committee.

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INCARCERATION MAY **CREATE** CRIME

“Drawing inferences from existing data, [I] estimate that as of roughly a decade ago, incarceration practices were driving up crime rates by at least 7 percent, and were preventing as little as 13 percent of would-be crime. **However, given trends since then, we may now be at or near a tipping point where prison is causing a net increase in crime.**”

- × Martin Pritikin, “Is Prison Increasing Crime?” *Wisconsin Law Review* 2008 pp 1049–1108

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NEARLY 9 IN 10 AGREE PRISONERS “HAVE TOO MANY AMENITIES AND PRIVILEGES”

PRISONERS

Question: Percentage of adults who agree that prisoners have too many amenities and privileges.

Source: Public Agenda Foundation

Date: Feb. 10, 2002

Results:

agree 85%

Field Date - June 2001

Universe: Country: United States

Method: telephone

Sample Size: 2011

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4 IN 5 AMERICANS DON'T KNOW ANYONE IN STATE OR FEDERAL PRISON

PRISONERS

Question: How many (of the people that you are acquainted with) are you pretty certain are currently in state or federal prison?

Source: General Social Surveys

Date: 2006

Results:

0	523
1	80
2-5	42
6-10	8
more than 10	4
don't know	18
refused	14
not applicable	3821

Universe: Country: United States

Method: telephone

Sample Size: 4510

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MEDIA ACCESS TO PRISONS/PRISONERS VARIES ACROSS STATES; VERY LIMITED AND CONTROLLED

Arizona

- ✘ Interviews between media representatives and inmates shall be conducted by telephone only, unless otherwise approved.
- ✘ News media representatives may correspond with inmates through the mail
- ✘ Inmate phone interviews with the media for the purpose of conducting a live interview are prohibited.
- ✘ Requests to interview an inmate on death watch shall be denied.
- ✘ Recording devices, notebooks, paper and pencil are not listed as Allowable Property

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LIMITED SUNSHINE IN MICHIGAN

- ✘ Members of the media are treated as regular visitors.
- ✘ To receive a phone interview, reporter must be on the prisoner's approved telephone list, which is restricted to 20.
- ✘ To receive face-to-face access to an inmate, a journalist must be on the inmate's visitation list. An inmate can have any immediate family member and 10 others on his or her list.
- ✘ Lists only can be changed twice each year (June, December).
- ✘ If member of the media wants prison access without an inmate interview (i.e., tour of a facility), he or she can make a request.
- ✘ Audio or visual recording devices are prohibited when meeting with prisoners. Writing utensils "of reasonable size and quantity" and "approved" notebooks are allowed.

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LIMITED SUNSHINE IN PENNSYLVANIA

- ✘ Reporters are treated like anyone else who wants to visit an inmate. That means they must be placed on inmates' visitation and call lists in order to interview inmates.
- ✘ To talk to a prisoner by phone, reporters should write to the inmate and ask the inmate to place his or her name on the inmate's telephone list. Once the reporter's name has been added to the list, the inmate may call the reporter collect.
- ✘ Telephone calls may [not] last longer than 15 minutes.
- ✘ DOC has the right to monitor and record inmate phone calls.
- ✘ No recording devices are allowed in institution visiting rooms. That means no still or video cameras and no tape recorders.

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NEW YORK: LET THE SUN SHINE IN! WOO!!

- ✘ Inmates may be interviewed by news media representatives. Conditions are set by the superintendent of the facility where the inmate is housed. Press interviews of inmates by telephone are prohibited.
- ✘ To arrange an interview, contact the department's Office of Public Information. The reporter should first contact the inmate and receive the inmate's approval before proceeding.
- ✘ Inmates must agree in writing to identifiable photographs.
- ✘ All interviews between the news media and inmates shall be supervised by way of direct observation by an assigned employee. **Such observation does not mean monitoring or listening to the interview.**

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BIRMINGHAM PROTEST, MAY 1963



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GIRL FLEES NAPALM ATTACK, JUNE 1972



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DIANA COMFORTS HIV-INFECTED CHILDREN, 1987



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ABU GHRAIB: "SADISTIC, BLATANT... WANTON CRIMINAL ABUSES"



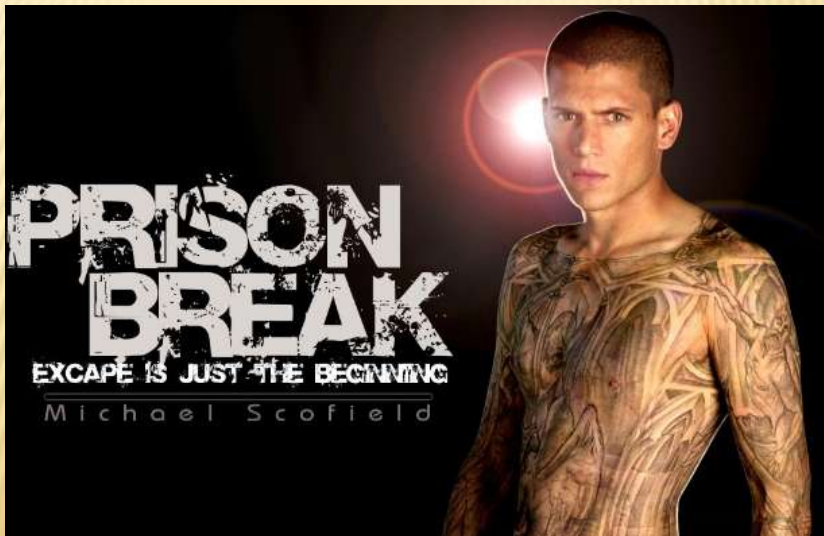
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LOCKUP: MSNBC PRISON DOCUMENTARY SERIES



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PRISON BREAK



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ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT



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MY NAME IS EARL

A screenshot of the IMDb page for the TV series 'My Name Is Earl'. The page features the IMDb logo, a search bar, and a red banner for hotels.com. The main content area displays the title 'My Name Is Earl' (TV Series 2005-2009), a 30-minute comedy, and a user rating of 8.5/10. A synopsis describes a man who wins \$100,000 in the lottery and decides to right all the wrongs from his past. The creator is Gregory Thomas Garris, and the stars are Jason Lee, Ethan Phillips, and Jaime Pressly. There is an 'Add to Watchlist' button at the bottom.

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“12-YEAR-OLD MAY FACE LIFE IN PRISON”

12-Year-Old May Face Life in Prison
 CBS 43,743 videos | Subscribe

Click for vacation deals. South Carolina

Suggestions:

- 15 year old girl gets pregnant from swimming in... by DavePond 1,370,766 views
- 8 year old's murder confession by CBS 288,237 views
- Teen Girl Beaten in Wash. D.C. Tunnel by CBS 381,552 views
- Video: Man Struck By Lightning by CBS 1,782,081 views
- Students Attacked on Bus by CBS 72,881 views

1,088,784 views

Uploaded by CBS on Feb 11, 2010

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“PRISON ECONOMY SPIRALS AS PRICE OF PACK OF CIGARETTES SURPASSES TWO HAND JOBS”

Newsroom: Prison Economy Spirals As Price Of Pack Of Cigarettes Surpasses Two Hand Jobs
 the ONION 353 videos | Subscribe

Suggestions:

- Prison Economy by National Geographic 81,014 views
- Season 1 by TheOnion PLAYLIST: 195 videos
- Video Game Consists Of Shooting People... by TheOnion 919,254 views
- DEA Recruits Lt Wayne Use Up All Drugs In M... by TheOnion 1,332,459 views
- More American Workers Outsourcing Own Jobs O... by TheOnion 489,557 views

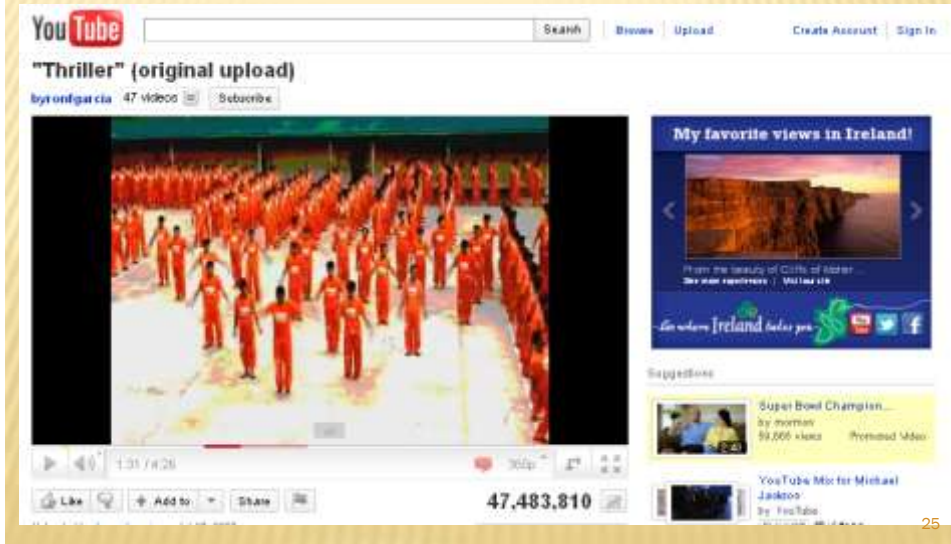
589,521 views

Uploaded by the ONION on Feb 11, 2010

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“THRILLER” (MICHAEL JACKSON)

“No prison wall can and will stop evil from lurking in the dark.”



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PRISON TYCOON

“Build and manage a profitable privately run *prison* from the ground up”



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THE PRISON LIFE: PARIS

“Paris is in jail and the warden has assigned her to design and build license plates.”



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SING SING PRISON FOOD TRAY (“FEED LIKE A FELON”)



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