

- [INAUDIBLE] Right. He gave me a thumbs up. This is *The Prison* program. And most of tonight's program, I think, if this is going to work the way I want it to do, it's going to be in women's voices because we're going to have some women who are relatively recently out of prison to come in and share some thoughts with you about that experience or at least how it manifest in their lives.

My name is Ray Hill and I've been doing this program for a little over 15 years. Marta Glass is with me. Marta who has been on picket line in Louisiana somewhere. I call everything a picket line. You have to understand that picket line is my nomenclature for going out and doing the laird's work.

- Well, there's lots of the laird's work around these days.

- What were you doing-- what was going on last week in Louisiana?

- National Coalition to abolish the death penalty.

- Was it a you yelled and get mad and killed one another so it was-- I didn't read that in the newspapers.

- It was a conference. People conferred.

- Yeah. Would you say that feeling was optimistic, pessimistic? Or somewhere a mixture of all of the above?

- The feeling was the same.

- A lot of work there.

- Do I not sound enthusiastic?

- Yeah, a lot of work ahead.

- Yeah. The feeling was the same.

- Yeah.

- Not particularly to my liking, but that's another story.

- Actually, going to Louisiana. You lost a husband in Louisiana one time.

- That's correct.

- And I've been over there. Got invitation to the Lifers Annual Banquet. The Angola Lifers Banquet. And I may actually try to go again this year. It's a long drive for a one day trip. But I went last year and I was coming back about 4:00 in the morning listening to late night KPFT radio. It was fascinating.

- For a chance to dance with Wilbert Rideau, I'll go for a one day trip.

- Well yeah, Wilbert was there. I sat at Wilbert's table and it was a wonderful thing. Wilbert is not there that often and he goes out. I got a call from Gayle right after last week's program or during last week's program if you recall. And I asked her to call me at home and let's chat about this.

Gayle, G-A-Y-L-E-- get the pencil out because there's going to be some information I'm going to give you about that. Gayle lost a son while in Texas Department of Criminal Justice Institutional division last March the 19th.

Preston Roy Pennington, 25 years old at the time, almost 26, died under mysterious circumstances on the Eastham Unit near Lovelady. So those fellers out who were on the ham last March, listen up. He had been in isolation or solitary for a few days. We don't know exactly when he went to solitary, but it was after the 13th and he died there on the 19th. The local justice of the peace that passes for coroner and in that county ruled his death as suicide. He was alleged from the information they got from prison guards to have hanged himself with a rope made out of sheets and pillow cases and that is all. That's why Gayle called is because she didn't believe that story.

If you have information-- and I know how information exists within prisons. If you have some information that would help Gayle explore the cause of death of her son or any circumstances around that, even if it is to verify the story. If you have any information that will set Gayle's mind at peace, then you need to get in touch with me or her.

Getting in touch with me is relatively simple. You can write me here at the radio station. That's radio station KPFT as keep putting frogs together. KPFT 419 Lovett, L-O-V-E like love thy neighbor T-T, L-O-V-E-T-T Boulevard, Houston, Texas 77006. Or you can write Gayle directly. Address the letter to Gayle. 217 East Galveston, League City, Texas 77573. That is 217 East Galveston, League City, Texas 77573.

Dewey said he's got a call on line one from jail. This is KPFT, hello? This KPFT, you're on the air.

- OK, yeah. I'd like to say something to all those young viewers out there. You think your parents care about--

- This is nice, but we just don't have time to take on a new thesis in the course of today's program. And so-- Dewey, if the young man calls back, give him my home telephone number and ask him to call me there. So that's the story on Preston Roy Pennington. And Marta's got an editorial on some comments. If you've been listening to KPFT all the evening, you've heard discussions about tomorrow's activities at the Shape Community Center.

- OK. We got news from and about the Texas killing factory death row Huntsville. Though it has largely been ignored by the mainstream media in Houston, The Dallas Morning News and television crews from Germany and Great Britain are on the story. A number of death row prisoners led by inmate Gary Graham, who is now fasted over 40 days straight, are on hunger strike to protest state-sanctioned murder. More than 70 of these men have signed a pledge to fight back when officials come to take them to the ovens-- excuse me-- the death chamber.

This we will not go as lambs to the slaughter movement began when Ronald Aldridge fought his execution in June of this year. In a spontaneous show of support, mattresses were set on fire, cells flooded, and various means of protest employed in the multiethnic uprising in Mr. Aldridge's behalf. We have from several sources though again, TDC denies, denies, denies.

But the day after the Aldridge murder, a TDC jail guard, who had assisted in dragging Mr. Aldridge to his death, quit his job. He stated that he could not be a participant in dragging a man to his death. We wish to commend this man and we are sure now that he has taken the first steps to redeem his soul, he sleeps a lot better at night. We encourage and pray for others in like position to follow his courageous lead. Remember, there is a much bigger boss than warden Bubba Neckred.

This weekend, Houston is hosting the National Death Penalty Abolitionist Institute sponsored by Amnesty International, and NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and a number of religious organizations. Noted abolitionists from around the country are in town teaching workshops dealing with the horrors of the death penalty. This event is taking place at the Shape Community Center at Live Oak in Alameda. If you're interested in this or the event I'm going to discuss, call 432-1227 for more information, 432-1227.

Tomorrow, Saturday the 12th, there will be a press conference in front of the Shape Center at 11:00 AM. There will be a number of speakers, including yours truly, discussing the ongoing battle for the life of journalist, Mumia Abu-Jamal and in support of the Huntsville prisoners' resistance. I would like to personally invite everyone who cares about this issue to attend the press conference and show your support. For the gentleman at Texas House, who asked to be kept informed of such events, here is your chance to come out and stand in support of your brothers and sisters on Texas death row. That is 11:00 AM in front of the Shape Community Center, Live Oak in Alameda.

There are a number of other events planned and we will keep everyone informed as they come up. It does appear that the anti-death penalty movement is gaining momentum in Houston as more and more people see it as not only an absolute moral wrong, but see their hard-earned tax dollars drained away from schools and healthcare to spend in excess of \$2 million per case for something that does nothing to affect the crime rate and only leaves one more set of victims. I am Marta Glass and *The Prison* program opposes the death penalty.

- The Prison program has always been in position and allowed the freedom to oppose the death penalty. Tomorrow, at Shapes Community Center, there will be some workshops. News conference at 11 o'clock at the Shape Community Center. I believe that demonstration begins at 4:00. And then there is another demonstration planned for the Federal Building on the 17th.

Jamal has received a stay in his execution. But also scheduled, on the 17th for execution, is Texas's own Thomas [INAUDIBLE]. And so the focus may shift.

- Thomas has received a set off.

- His got the set off?

- He's got the set off--

- But that doesn't stop any of the above.

- We have executions scheduled for tonight and tomorrow night, which I think are stayed. We have one for next Monday night, which has not been stayed and is very serious for [INAUDIBLE].

- Oh, [INAUDIBLE].

- So we're going to be doing something around that too which will be planned tomorrow at the press conference.

- OK, anything in the mail of interest that we need to chat about?

- No healthcare, guards brutalizing prisoners, et cetera, and et cetera every unit in this system.

- John, as you heard last week, I got your memo on the reduced portions. I called public information and there was another memo issued a couple of weeks later that restored some of them, but still no peanut butter for breakfast, fellers. Peanut butter for breakfast-- everybody looks at me like I'm crazy. But peanut butter for breakfast-- if you're going to work in the hot sun in the fields all day, peanut butter for breakfast is a big deal. Because the starches-- and they went back up to two biscuits from one and two rolls for one. Dewey's got some peanut butter.

- Yeah, not only about peanut butter, not only does it stick to your ribs, but also sticks to the roof--

- Roof of your mouth so you eat it all day.

- Oh, yeah.

- Well, it got stuck to the roof of your mouth, and that was such a difficult thing to getting out on the air. [LAUGHS]

- You two are disgusting.

- Dewey has no teeth and I have two. And they're both bottom teeth so it's difficult for me to chew. But that's good old TDC healthcare. Next week we're going to have folks from Rio. We're going to have public relations person in to tell you about Rio and what's waiting for you when you get out. And in the week following that, the whole community of talk show hosts on KPFT are going to do a week on the capital punishment soon. And that's including all of us, including Thursday night and Friday night. And so we're to-- we're going to be doing that sort of thing as soon as they get that coordinated.

So that's where we are and that's what's going on. We're going to be reshuffling the way people are sitting around here for the next few seconds. And then we're going to come back and we're going to have a discussion of women behind bars. I've been wanting to do this program for a long time. And I think the best way to do it is to do it almost all women's voices if we possibly can. Wayne's sitting at home, he's totaled out the truck again. And so he's listening up and he was a real strong believer in setting this program up. Wayne, wish you were here to play with us, but we're going to continue even in your absence. So--

- You have another guest who is circling the block trying to find the place.

- Yeah, if Dewey will stick something in you folk's ear, we'll make the transition and be right back in a flash.

- At the end of the fiscal year just around the corner, preparations are underway to tally up the financial figures for the 1995 fiscal year. The need for KPFT to finish in the black is greater than ever. This year alone, KPFT has made great strides to bring you the unique programming you've come to depend on while still maintaining a tight and sound budget. Of course, KPFT has been making these strides for 25 years now. How to celebrate the end of the fiscal year in our birthday by participating in our September membership drive.

There are two ways to participate. You can pledge your support during the drive or call me at 526-4000 to sign up to answer the pledge lines. The drive gets underway on Friday, September the 8th and goes through Friday, September the 22nd. We need volunteers at all hours during the drive so check your calendar and give me a call, Annie at 526-4000, 526-4000, to sign up to answer the pledge lines during your favorite show.

- It must be Sunday morning.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Because you're hearing a solid blues block on 90.1 FM KPFT in Houston, Texas from 6:00 AM until noon.

You told us what you want on Sunday morning.

(SINGING) It must be Sunday morning.

- It's been Sunday morning. A full block of blues on Sunday morning and full block of talk on KPFT. Beginning, oh, fresh air starts around 6 o'clock and goes on into the evening and Malvo kicks in there sometimes and it's a mix. Tonight, we have a, right now, four women from Texas prisons. Why don't we begin over here who can see me, all right. Tell us who you are, how much time you did, and when you got out.

- Hi my name is Rolanda Wright. I did two and a half on a parole violator.

- Work the mic closer.

- OK. OK, I did two and a half on a 10-year violation.

- OK, you had done time before that?

- No, sir. First time.
- OK. So you're a probation violation?
- I'm a parole violator.
- Parole violator.
- Miss one parole visit, went straight to TDC.
- Boom. No question-- oh, you had paroled out of county?
- Yes, sir. [INAUDIBLE] County.
- And how long you been out?
- I got out June the 27th.
- June 27, so the ground got steady under your feet yet?
- Well, shaky, but it's fair.
- OK. Who's next?
- Hi, I'm Laurie Burnett. And I've done 20 months on a non-aggravated five. My first time down.
- 20 months on a five and when did you get out?
- July the 11th.
- OK. Both of you, are you all on parole now?
- Yes.
- Yes, sir.
- Or is that mandatory for you and parole for the other? Or does it make any difference?
- It's mandatory for both of us.
- OK. OK. Who's next?
- Hi, this is Janette Sherlock. I've been out since January the 11th. About seven months now, I did five and a half flat on a 35. I got a two-year put off for-- adjust to the institutional environment and I was a second class trustee and had been on two furloughs when I got that put off.
- And Jeanette, you've got a job?

- I have a job now with *Prison Life* magazine.

- OK. And *The Prison Show*.

- And *The Prison Show*.

- You don't get paid for *The Prison Show*--

- I don't get paid, but I love it.

- All right and who's next?

- OK. I'm Sally [INAUDIBLE]. I discharged a seven-year sentence.

- Discharge--

- Non-aggravated and it's my second time down.

- How much time did you do the first time?

- I did almost a year.

- OK. And so then you discharge this seven?

- Uh-huh.

- In your own mandatory supervision?

- Mandatory supervision till 99.

- Till 99? Gosh. Well, to give us a hint of what women's prisons are like and how they may be different from men's prison, let's go back to the front end of this line and tell me what it's like to go into a women's prison.

- Well, for your first time, it's very scary. You don't know what's coming up in front of you. You just really paranoid like being in this little white room. You're all alone. That's how you feel when you first walk in. For myself, I'm like the quiet type. I like to look and observe and it scared the shit out of me. It really did.

- Yes, you can say that. She can say anything she wants during my show.

- Thank you.

- All right. Anybody want to add anything to that?

- I just want to say it's like something you see on TV and you just don't quite believe it, but it is real. It's like walking into hell. Real cold and hard.

- Somebody tell me something about how do you get a number, what do they do about your hair?

- Well, when you go in you're like shuffled through like cattle. There's a massive amount. Like when I went in this last time, 48 of us pulled a chain. And they just shuffled you through cattle. You go in, you strip down. They throw a big old white gown on you. They go through your hair, check you for lice. They throw you in the shower. You shampoo for lice.

- And yes--

- It's all very inhuman.

- And some for the Black females, if your hair cannot come down, you will be shaved bald.

- You mean, if you can't get implants out there while you're--

- That's right.

- --standing in that line, it's the--

- That's right.

- --end of your hair.

- You will go shower and everything else, but the hair is coming off.

- The hair is coming off.

- Yeah.

- Anybody else want to add to that? Is there any outstanding experience that you had that was different from the other women? Well, tell me, what's day-to-day life like? What were your jobs in prison? Or did you have jobs?

- Mine was the hoe squad out in the fields.

- You worked out in the field?

- Out in the field with an aggie.

- All right. How many hours a day is that?

- At first, you started off with four and then they started this year working eight hours a day.

- Women in the fields with aggies. How are you doing raising vegetables or--

- No, you flat weeded. We busted rocks up and made roads so the prison guards could drive on. We done everything. We went in this field and grass was taller than what I am and I'm. 5' 5". And time we left, you can see nothing but the dirt.

- So you just flat weeded, broke new land.

- Pick vegetables, toted watermelons for a mile, got hollered and screamed at, got body slammed. They just treated you real bad.

- What is it like in men's prison? They have high riders and men on horses?

- Yeah.

- Oh, yeah

- They have high riders because I saddle for the high riders every morning. I turned out between 4 and 4:30. And went down and we saddled for a men's unit and then all the surrounding women's units here in Gatesville.

- Get the horses ready to go.

- Do what?

- Gatesville take care of is the horses?

- Uh-huh.

- Pardon?

- One of the things women take care of at Gatesville is the horses.

- Yeah, we take care of the horses for huge unit and Gatesville, Hilltop, and Mountain View.

- OK. Other people--

- We take care of their horses.

- Other people have different kinds of jobs?

- Yes. As for myself, I worked full service. This was getting up like 2:30 in the morning preparing for breakfast for--

- Baking biscuits.

- What you call like 600, 700 people maybe, depends on what unit you're on. So it's like get up when they tell you, lay down when they tell, you shower when they tell you and so on.

- Go to the bathroom when they tell you. See, I was at Hobby and there's 1,500 women over there. And they just treated us just like we're with men. They had guns and everything on us. They told us if we want to act like men in the dorms, then we had to act like men out in the fields.

- Well, tell me about what it's like in the dorm? Who is respected there? How did the pecking order work?

- Who's respected? The one with the most power and the most money.

- Well, who is that?

- The one that can fight the best and don't care about the officers or nothing.

- The defiant ones are the ones that get the most respect?

- Oh yeah. Yeah thems ones you got to look up to.

- Why do you think that? Is because they put that resistance to the oppressor or--

- Because they just don't care. They don't care with them officers, they ain't going to care with you. You might lay down and go to sleep that night, who's to say you're going to wake up?

- Anybody want to add anything to that? That's pretty spooky.

- Well, I'm going to say it for myself. I'm Rolanda again. I was more of the kind of have to be horse-like. Like I said, when I first went in, I was very scared. I got hollered at and this and that. It's like OK, if you can do this on the outside, you can do this in here, OK. It got to where I had to talk and act certain kind of ways. Because like they say, you got women there, big women. They would push you around. If you just sit and let them do this, this is what happened to you. And it got to where I started doing the same thing, it got to where I had to stand up for myself and protect myself. So you're doing and talk certain kind of ways. And it's--

Today, I sit and look and think about what I had to do there and I know that wasn't really me. And it's like OK, I'm going to sleep now. What's going to happen next? So I perform this act here or whatever act like this person, I'm going to make it for the next day.

- So you have to adapt to survive?

- That's right.

- And what you adapt-- the thing that impresses me about men's prisons is that they're so artificially and stressfully male. It's kind of a sick, macho atmosphere. And everybody buys into that. Guards, inmates, everybody. I mean, that's all part of the thing. Well, women's prison are not obviously a twist of women's roles. It sounds to me what you're describing is women trying to impersonate men and create a society--

- You have those too. Yeah, you're correct.

- What is the society? Is that what dominates in that society?

- I don't know how to answer that one. Let me see. You got maybe some that might come in that way and you got some that just get that way for the-- yeah, or get turned out that way. And it's more to get that attention.

- Yeah, I'm not really talking about sexual thing because the sexual thing is kind of weird anyhow. It's all circumstantial. And if you're going to be sexual, you don't have a hell of a lot of choices there I don't get.

- No.

- Is there a lot of choices? What about the relationship between the male guards and the inmate?

- Oh, boy.

- It's going on every day, every night, every minute.

- Especially in the Lockhart prison. The private prison they just recently-- well, August of last year.

- Yeah, Lockhart.

- A lot. There's a whole lot of that going on where quite a few rank were fired a couple of months ago at Lockhart.

- Is the Lockhart prison a co-educational unit? It's a co-ed, but there's a interlock between the male and the female. OK. So although males and females are there, males and females do not live.

- They do not interact with one another. No.

- OK.

- It's co-ed for the officers and the inmates.

- Yes.

- The male officers and the female inmates.

- OK. Did anybody experience anything like that? Anybody want a share a confidential--

- I came close to it. I have a couple of phone numbers from officers as to this day.

- You plan on using them?

- No. If I used them, it wouldn't be for sexual purposes.

- OK. What about drugs in them in prison?

- You can find it.

- Everywhere.

- I think, be unanimous vote on that, but--

- I've always insisted there are probably more drugs on the sixth and seventh floor of the Harris County jail than there is up on [INAUDIBLE].

- Right.

- Right.

- And that's just the way that it.

- Food? Horrible. Horrible. If you can't make store, you just about starve to death.

- Do you all get VitaPro in women's--

- Yes.

- VitaPro every day.

- Hot steaming bowl of VitaPro.

- Yes, every day.

- If that's what you can call it.

- Like I said for myself-- like I said, I worked in the kitchen.

Preparing this stuff, it was like, I can't give this to no one, but that was my job. You take this and put it in this pan and add water onto it, and it swells up. And this is what you get served.

- Yeah, and if you don't eat it, you will get a case behind it.

- Wait a minute. I mean, at least in the men's unit we got a chance to pass it up?

- Right.

- No. If you do not eat it, you will get a case. You can lose your time behind it for not eating your food. You can be kicked off certain units behind it.

- Do they put it on your plate for you?

- Yes.

- You don't have-- you can't stand I want some of this and some of that?

- OK, it's like, if you come through the line, yes, that's correct. But you got something to come through the line, if you ask for this and you don't know where, it's OK. I might tell you it's OK because I'm behind the line OK. You get that I'm guarantee, you're going to sit there and eat it.

- You're going to eat that.

- If you think you're going to come through the line and see nothing that you don't want and think you're just going to walk through, no, you're going to get something off that line and sit down and eat it.

- And raise your hand before you get up to leave.

- If there is an item on the line that you don't want, do you have an opportunity to pass it up say, no, I don't want that, but I will take some of this and--

- Yeah, you can pass that.

- You can pass it up.

- But if you get it on your plate, you're going to eat it?

- That's right.

- And you have to raise your hand before you can get up?

- Yes. And sometimes you cannot talk when you're in the jail hall. Or if you're in line, you can't talk. It just depends on what kind of mood that officer or sergeant in that day.

- And what shift they're on.

- Now see I came off Hilltop and we didn't have to raise our hands or anything like that. But the jail hall itself was a madhouse. Food was being thrown, it was horrible.

- Two days before I made parole, I got mashed potatoes, which was fixed with milk that had been soured, it was curdled. I was made to eat the potatoes or else-- and the sergeant even told me, if you don't eat the potatoes, you won't go home.

- Jesus.

- I ate the potatoes, Roy.

- You ate the potatoes and-- yeah.

- And the meat's half raw.

- Most of the time the meat's not even done.

- The fat pork is not done?

- Right.

- And sometimes you will find bugs--

- Yeah, let's clarify what you mean by meat. People out there get visions of the beef steaks in medium rare and all of that good stuff. We're talking about fat food.

- The only real meat we get is chicken or pork.

- And the bones are red in the chicken?

- Right.

- And the pork is still greasy fat?

- And you're going to get all the fat we do not trim.

- Chicken. None of that--

- And when we say pork, that doesn't include bacon.

- No bacon.

- No bacon.

- No bacon.

- And pork chop is all grizzled bone and fat?

- Right.

- Exactly.

- You can gnaw on it a while, but there's not much--

- Soften it up.

- --else you can do with it.

- You forgot grease.

- Well, that's true. That's true. You have the grease.

- Sometimes, like at Hobby, you got through the line, time you sit down and took about two bites, you had to get up and leave.

- Well, did it get better? The longer stayed you got more used to it?

- No.

- No. You just have to be in acceptance when you get there. You don't know what acceptance is, you won't make it because like they said when you go in from the time you walk through that door, your 20 minutes start, unless you say, you sit down. If you sit there and think you're going to talk, you're going to get right up and going on out the door. That's just the way it was. And this will go on for so long. Like I said, depends on what shift they're on. You got some that come in with their home problems. And you're going to be there, and that's who they're going to take it out of. If you're a person to keep up trouble like--