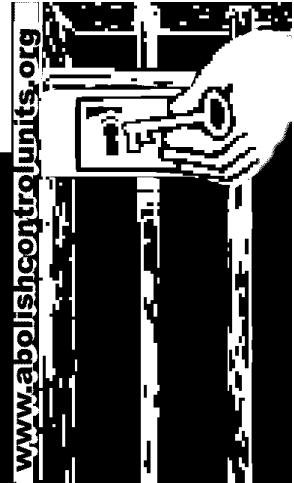


# UNLOCK THE BOX

An Organizing Conference to Shut Down  
Prison Control Units



**Saturday**  
**Oct. 8, 2005**  
**10 am - 6 pm**  
**Cell Space**  
**2050 Bryant St.**  
**San Francisco**



Greetings,

Enclosed in this letter is information on the upcoming Unlock the Box conference to shut down all prison Control Units. This event will take place on October 8, 2005 in San Francisco, CA. Your response to the questionnaire below is greatly appreciated. Responses can be sent by email to [railx@mim.org](mailto:railx@mim.org) or by mail to RAIL, PO Box 40799, San Francisco, CA 94140.

Unlock the Box

Unlock the Box is a product of many years of struggle to shut down the Security Housing Units in California. During this time, the United Front to Abolish the SHU was created as a forum to coordinate the actions of everyone involved in this campaign. Since its creation, the United Front has continued to expand in membership and in the number of people we reach with our message. This conference is a step in the process of building more unity with groups all over the country and the world who are engaged in the struggle to end this torture.

The goals of Unlock the Box include increasing communication between groups over a wider geographic area, coming up with plans of action that we can agree to work on as a whole to help strengthen those connections and strengthening our cause thru mass participation. The event will be a combination of presenters with vast experience in this struggle and working groups to come up with plans of action, with performances and food in between. As the date approaches we will be contacting everyone with a more specific schedule and plan. Until then, we welcome your input, help and donations to make that happen.

Unlock the Box: An Organizing Conference to Shut Down Prison Control Units  
Saturday, October 8, 2005  
10 am - 6 pm  
Cell Space  
2050 Bryant Street  
San Francisco, California

Sincerely,

the United Front to Abolish the SHU (California)

Please fill out the questionnaire below and return to:  
RAIL  
PO Box 40799  
San Francisco, CA 94140  
or email to: railx@mim.org

name(organization, if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
location: \_\_\_\_\_  
contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

We/I do not want to receive future updates on the Unlock the Box Conference.

We/I cannot attend the Unlock the Box Conference, but would like to support the struggle to abolish control units in the following ways:

sign me up for the Abolish Control Units email list to receive and share information  
( this is a low volume, monitored list)  
my email address \_\_\_\_\_

add our organization to the 'Shut Down all Control Units' petition  
(see text below)

We/I can pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help fund the conference  
(checks can be made out to MIM Distributors)

We/I plan to attend, please keep us updated by:  
email: \_\_\_\_\_  
mail: \_\_\_\_\_

We are interested in organizing group transportation from our city/area.

We/I can contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to cover the cost of the conference.

We/I would like fliers and outreach materials to help raise awareness around Unlock the Box.

We/I can provide housing in or near San Francisco for other participants.

We/I can bring food donations to the conference.

We would like a literature/outreach table for our organization at the conference. (Tables will be reserved for those who respond earliest. Relevant vendors are also welcome, but will be expected to contribute a portion of their proceeds to the cost of the conference.)

We would like a representative from the United Front to attend a meeting or event in our area to promote the conference

If you think you can help out in any other way, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

## United Front Mission Statement

The United Front to Abolish the SHU is dedicated to shutting down Security Housing Units (SHUs) in California prisons. The SHU is one type of control unit, which are solitary or small group confinement cells. The inhuman conditions in control units, including total sensory deprivation, amount to torture. The United Front to Abolish the SHU demands that all control units be abolished across the country.

### Member Organizations/Contact Info:

Barrio Defense Committee  
PO Box 1523  
San Jose, CA 95109  
tel: (408) 885-9785  
email: [barriodefens@earthlink.net](mailto:barriodefens@earthlink.net)  
<http://barriodefensecommittee.org/>

San Jose, CA (Donna)  
email: [dbwall@earthlink.net](mailto:dbwall@earthlink.net)  
tel: (408) 293-4774

Chicano Mexicano Prison Project  
PO Box 620095  
San Diego, CA 92113  
email: [info@uniondelbarrio.org](mailto:info@uniondelbarrio.org)  
<http://uniondelbarrio.org/cmpp/>

California Prison Focus (CPF)  
2940 16th St. Suite B5  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
tel: (415) 252-9211  
<http://www.prisons.org>

Chico, CA  
email: [diana.sottana@sbcglobal.net](mailto:diana.sottana@sbcglobal.net)

Maoist Internationalist Movement (MIM)  
Bay Area: PO Box 40799  
San Francisco, CA 94140  
tel: (415) 267-4879  
email: [mim124@mim.org](mailto:mim124@mim.org)

Los Angeles/National:  
PO Box 29670  
Los Angeles, CA 90029-0670  
email: [mim136@mim.org](mailto:mim136@mim.org)  
<http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/agitation/prisons/controlunits/>  
<http://www.abolishcontrolunits.org>

Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist League  
email: [railx@mim.org](mailto:railx@mim.org)

African People's Solidarity Committee  
email: [uhurureparations@yahoo.com](mailto:uhurureparations@yahoo.com)

Santa Cruz, CA  
email: [veloamor@yahoo.com](mailto:veloamor@yahoo.com)  
or [Frances\\_Ruiz@csumb.edu](mailto:Frances_Ruiz@csumb.edu)

*Below is the text of the petition we are asking groups to sign on to. In addition to adding your groups name to the list of signatories, we welcome statements of unity that we will print along side the petition and online at:*  
<http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/agitation/prisons/controlunits/signatories.html>

## **Shut down all Control Units**

Control Unit prisons confine people to small cells in isolation for long periods of time. These prisons were first officially used in Alcatraz and then in 1972 in Marion, Illinois to house prisoners who were "institutional problems" or "too dangerous." Since then the idea has spread, and control units have become a common tool of repression throughout the American prison system.

These control units are used for the political and social control of prisoners already locked in secure institutions. They target Black, Latino and indigenous people who are a disproportionate part of control unit populations (relative to their already disproportionate representation in prisons in general). Control units go beyond the usual constraints of maximum security prisons. Better defined as a prison within a prison, control units are used to defeat prisoners' revolutionary attitudes, organization, militancy, legal and administrative challenges, and anything else the prison administrators deem objectionable. While conditions vary from prison to prison, the goal of these units is always to achieve the spiritual, psychological and physical breakdown of the prisoner.

Control units have various names such as Adjustment Center, Security Housing Unit (SHU), Maximum Control Complex (MCC), administrative maximum (ad-max), Intensive Management Unit (IMU) and administrative segregation (ad-seg). Prisoners spend years of isolation in tiny cells, usually 6 by 8 feet for 22 - 23.5 hours a day. In some cases the long term isolation is complete, in others it is small group isolation; both conditions are tremendously damaging to humans. The short time that they do spend outside their cell is within a cement or chain link "dog pen" that lacks any kind of equipment and proper space for physical exercise. Participation in programs including religious services, educational programs, work and job training, congregate dining and exercise are all prohibited. Medical care is also greatly limited.

Control units may vary from prison to prison but they can be generally characterized as: Permanently designated prisons or cells in prisons that lock prisoners up in solitary or small group confinement for 22 or more hours a day with no congregate dining, exercise or other services, and virtually no programs for prisoners. Prisoners are placed in control units for extended periods of time.

Prisoners are usually placed in control units as an administrative measure, with no clear rules governing the moves. This makes it virtually impossible for prisoners to challenge their placement.

Control units are designed to administer the very most in sensory deprivation and dehumanization of inmates. The United Nations has put forward clear documents outlining acceptable treatment of prisoners. These documents reaffirm that prisoners retain fundamental human rights. The Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (1990) states: "Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration, all prisoners shall retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, where the State concerned is a party, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as such other rights as are set out in other United Nations covenants." The United Nations Human Rights Committee has further stressed the obligation of the state to treat prisoners with dignity and allowing them all rights set forward in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which the United States signed in 1977).

Control units are physical and mental torture and they very clearly violate the human rights of prisoners. They systematically target prisoners who are challenging the legal system and other manifestations of state authority. We, the signatories of this statement, condemn these units and demand that the United States abide by the UN principles it claims to uphold. We call for the elimination of all control units in prisons in the United States.