GEORGE JACKSON: TEACHER & ORGANIZER
INTERVIEW WITH JIMMY GARR

George Jackson was a modest man; he wrote little about himself as an organizer and teacher. The following interview with James Carr, a close friend and comrade of George Jackson over ten years, captures some of the flavor of how George functioned in prison.

First jailed as a juvenile in 1961, Jimmy Carr had his first contact with a political activist who emerged from the California prisons. Convicted of armed robbery in 1964, he continued his political development and education in prison, and when he was paroled in August 1970, he became a graduate student and teaching assistant at the University of California at Santa Cruz, majoring in mathematics and political science.

Currently, he is being held in San Francisco County Jail, on a "parole hold," following an arrest at the April 6 hearing of the Soledad Brothers when guards viciously attacked George Jackson, and chaos broke out in the courtroom. Since August 31, state authorities have been trying to pin a variety of conspiracy charges against him, having to do with a rumored plot to free George Jackson. None of these have been strong enough, however, to even produce an indictment, and appear to be yet another example of persecution of politically active convicts.

JIMMY CARR: As far as George and when he became political, it started happening in Tracy at Deuel Vocational Institution and in the Adjustment Center. I would say about 1967 when he really got involved in a strong way and reading particular matters.

He and I ended up in Tracy at the Adjustment Center (AC) and with a lot of time on our hands; so they had a library thing and his family constantly stayed in contact with him, so he started sending home for books with political and economic stuff like Mill and general, and then he started studying a lot of political and economic stuff like Mill and Ricardo and all of those writings and he would pass those on to us. And then we constructed our first collective, which was broken up quickly by the authorities. But a lot of people there, a lot of the so-called convicts, didn't receive money or anything like that. So some guys were going without. From George's viewpoint, no one should. So consequently, everybody put stuff together and it was just like distributed equally. He became a threat to the AC because he got a collective thing going. But George had a phenomenal mind. He read quickly, he read widely, and he read rapidly and he understood what he read and then he could teach what he read to other people, and this is what he was doing.

You remember all those political experts that you have a criminal mentality and transform it into a black revolutionary mentality. Well the Capone gang probably existed in 1961. But George took leadership of the gang and changed the orientation from just violence and hustling and gave it a political tinge. The Capone gang was originally constructed for the purpose of combating the very predominant thing at San Quentin because of the prison administration there at San Quentin. So what he did there at San Quentin in 64 was to start you know like teach-ins, like political education out in the yard, and George would instruct.

... the way that he carried himself and the way that he was able to communicate with any race. He always had that quality about himself. And a lot of people in my class couldn't believe those things wouldn't you know, because of the past things that have happened, just history in general. But anyway, he became pretty close friends with me ... and he knew that began to break down the racial thing there at San Quentin. It didn't break it down but it began to show that the way things were resolved like that. ... And so the race wars continued, but there was still intercommunication between groups.

Different people started reading different things, and George ... sometimes say there would be a conflict between say the bird gang or an off-branch of the bird gang and the Capone gang, and rather than just go out and take it in blood, he would go over and talk to the leader, and then they would talk and meet ... And they would say, look, we're standing here with knives on us, and right over us is a pig with a 9-8-9. That's where the contradiction lies. And so they tended to educate at that point ... in that here we are fighting each other, but we're oppressed by the same guy, so the same dude has his foot up your ass has his up mine. And so a lot of things were resolved like that. ... Anyway, from all the political education and so forth, and just the type of dude that George was, because all the blacks related to him and because the prison officials and printed as the "real, inside story," they had never been smuggled into George by a young attorney, Steve Bingham. When people pointed to the heavy search of both visitors (they must have all possessions checked while they go through a metal detector) and inmates (who are strip-searched on leaving and re-entering the Adjustment Center), Warden Park suggested the gun came in inside a tape recorder. It was smuggled back in George's long, Afro-style hair.

The next day, officials reported that George had lately taken to wearing a tight knit cap at the back of his head, and the gun had been hidden half inside the cap and half in his hair, but was spotted by a guard. Still not believed, they changed the following day to announce they had discovered an Afro wig flushed down a toilet—clearly the means by which George had hidden the gun. The San Francisco Chronicle reported Friday they had purchased an identical 9mm gun and had a black model try to hide the gun beneath it. At first it wouldn't fit. When he finally removed the wig and with great difficulty forced it back onto his head with the gun inside, the Chronicle reported "the wig was obviously askew and with every step he took, the gun nearly spilled dangerously, bringing his hands instinctively to his head."

The Chronicle observed without comment that if the prison's version were true, Jackson would have to have walked fifty yards under the eyes of a guard until he reached the Adjustment Center, without having the gun observed.

On Sunday the Warden calmly announced that the gun was not, after all, an 8½-inch Spanish Armes M-60, as had been reported, but instead a much smaller, similar type of gun. He did not explain why officials had given such a specific erroneous report previously. Even stranger was the fact that when the gun was described, it was declared to have been purchased by Black Panther Landon Williams two years ago, according to the gun's serial number. The warden did not state whether the gun he described on Sunday was also purchased by Williams.

In another attempt to bolster the "escape conspiracy" theory, officials announced late in the week that the slain prison guards had their uniforms removed. They did not explain why it took them five days to discover the dead guards' nakedness.

And now a reversal in the autopsy. Much like the contradictions found in the Attica autopsies, we now learn that the fatal shot entered George's back and exited through his head, or, in other words, that George was shot in the back while lying down. This is just the latest indication of how the facts must be changed in order to make a story an acceptable cover-up for murders.

These discrepancies are just the most blatant distortions and contradictions in the "official" story of George Jackson's death.