

Prisoner Radicalization and Sacred Terrorism

Mark S. Hamm

Prisoner Radicalization

- The process by which prisoners adopt extreme views, including beliefs that violent measures must be taken for political or religious purposes. (U.S. Dept. of Justice)

Trends in Prisoner Conversions to Islam

- Islam is the fastest growing religion in Western prisons
- 80% of all US prison conversions are to Islam
- Includes African-Americans, Hispanics and Whites
- Annual prisoner conversions to Islam: 35,000
- Percent Muslims in major prison systems: 18%
- Prison conversions to Islam since 9/11: 420,000

Clashing Viewpoints on Radicalization

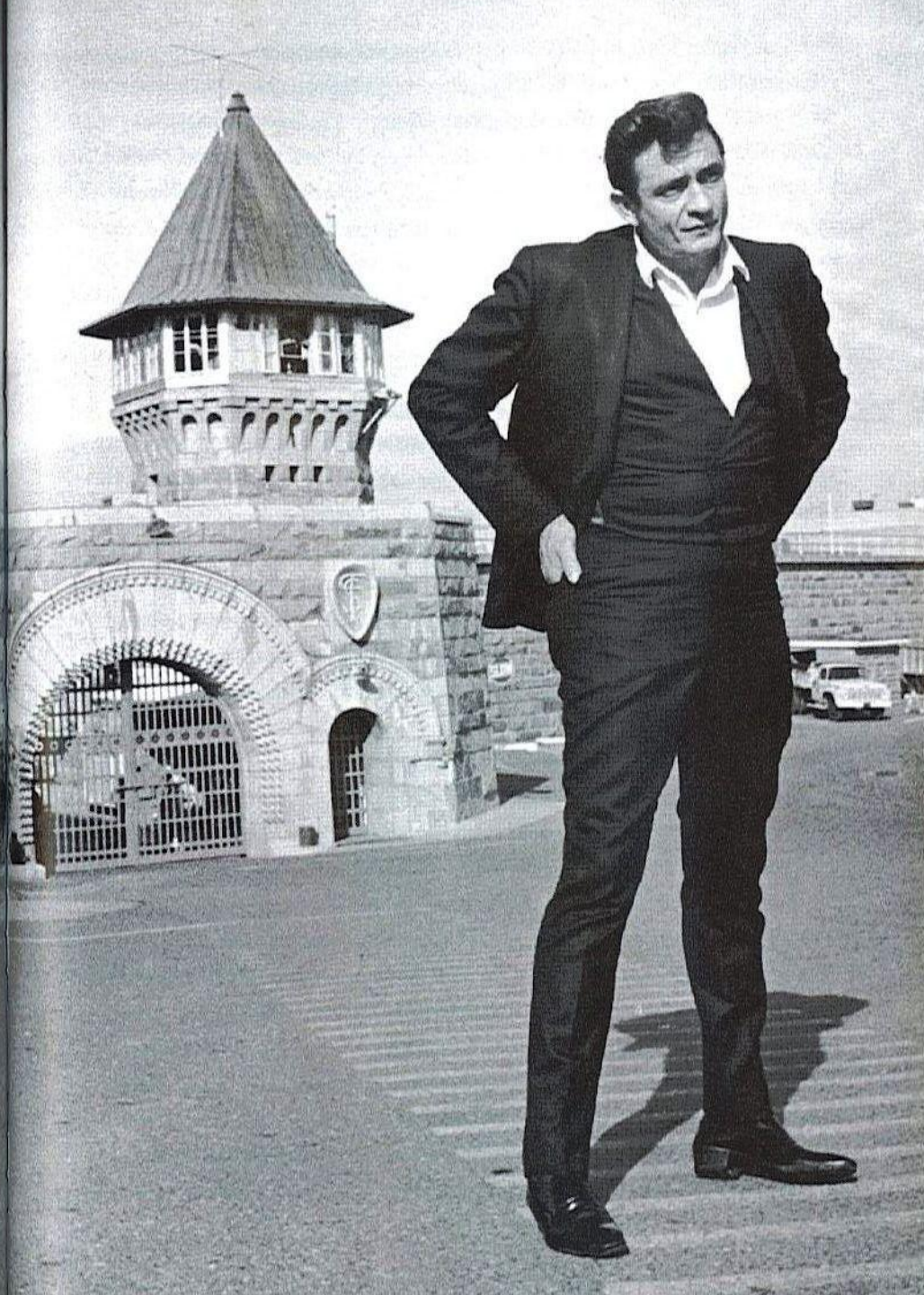
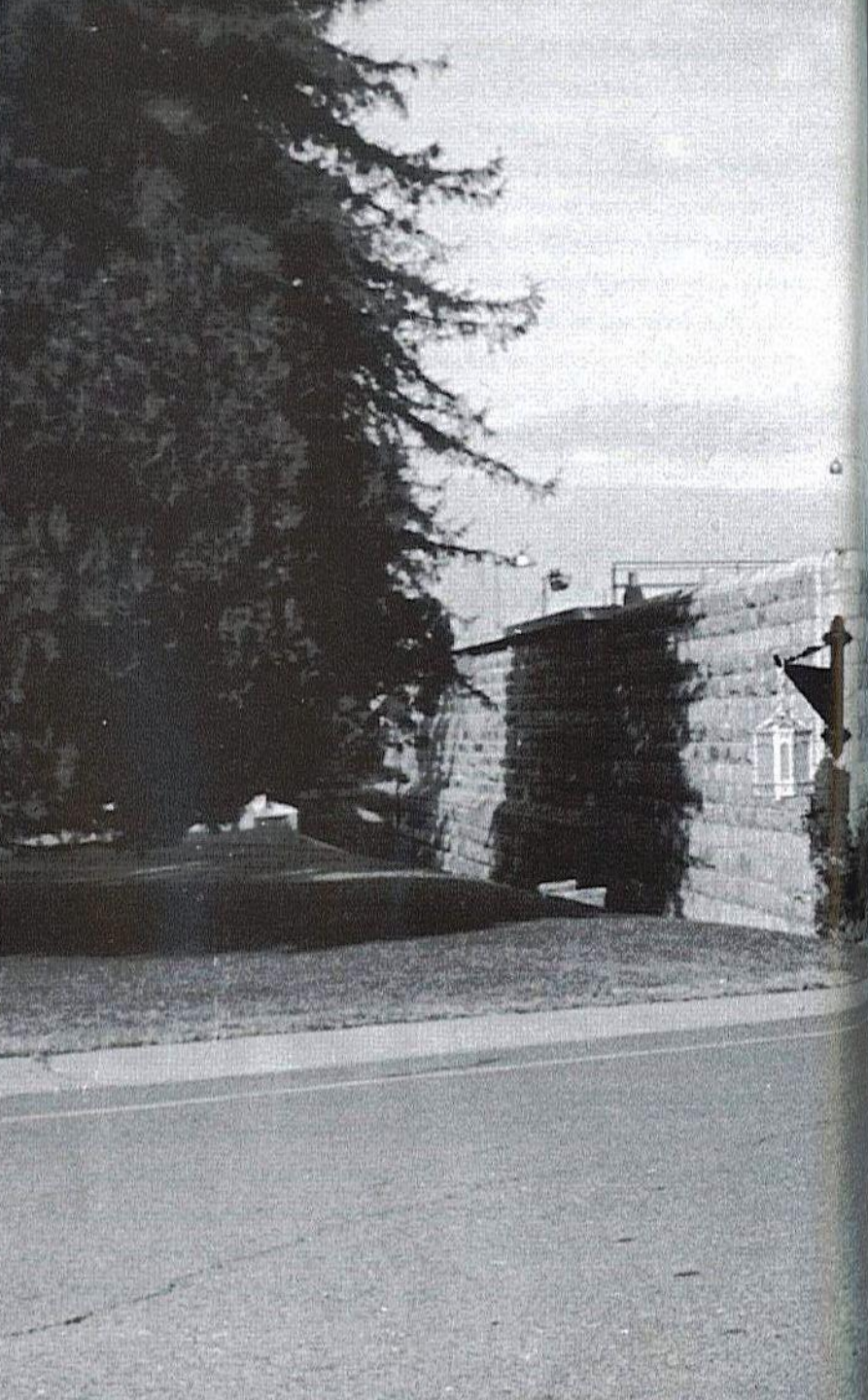
- 1) Western prisons are incubators for radical Islam and terrorist ideology
- 2) Prisoner radicalization is non-existent; if anything, Islam contributes to rehabilitation
- 3) Radicalization occurs only under specific conditions of confinement

The Study: Interviews

- 15 Chaplains
 - 9 Gang Intelligence Officials
 - 30 Prisoners
 - Native American, Islam, Black Hebrew, Buddhist, Hindu, Identity, Odin, Wicca
- New Folsom Prison
Folsom Prison
Franklin Correctional Institution



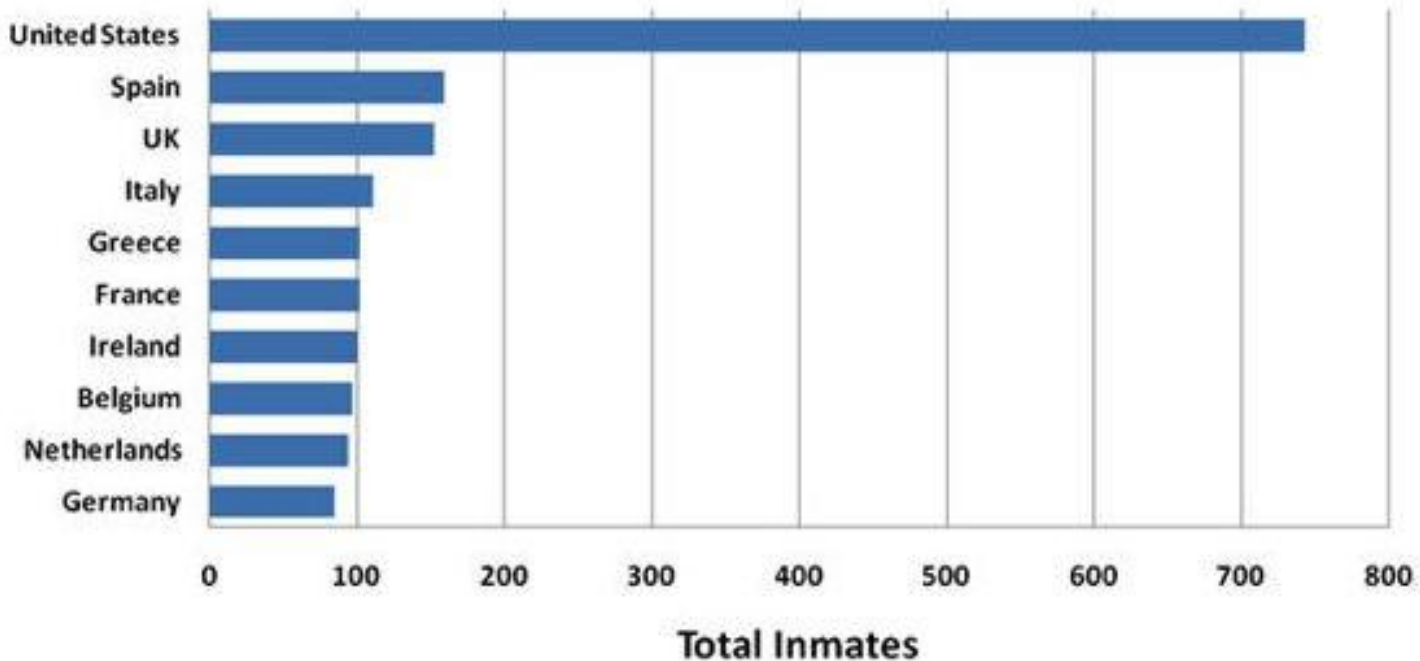






Prison Population Rates

(Inmates per 100,000 people)



Source: "World Prison Brief" International Centre for Prison Studies at King's College, London
Produced by: Veronique de Rugy, Mercatus Center at George Mason University

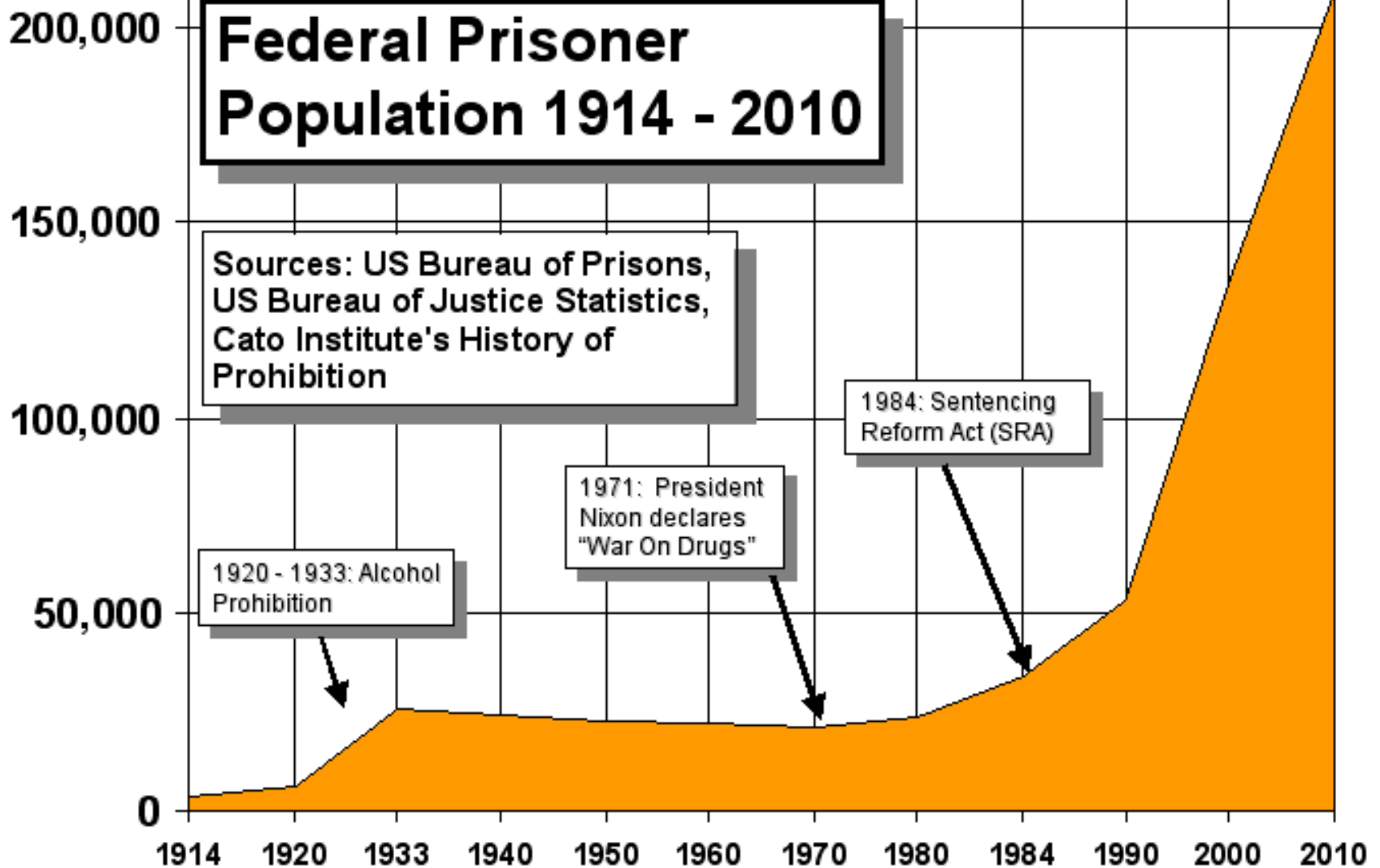
Federal Prisoner Population 1914 - 2010

Sources: US Bureau of Prisons,
US Bureau of Justice Statistics,
Cato Institute's History of
Prohibition

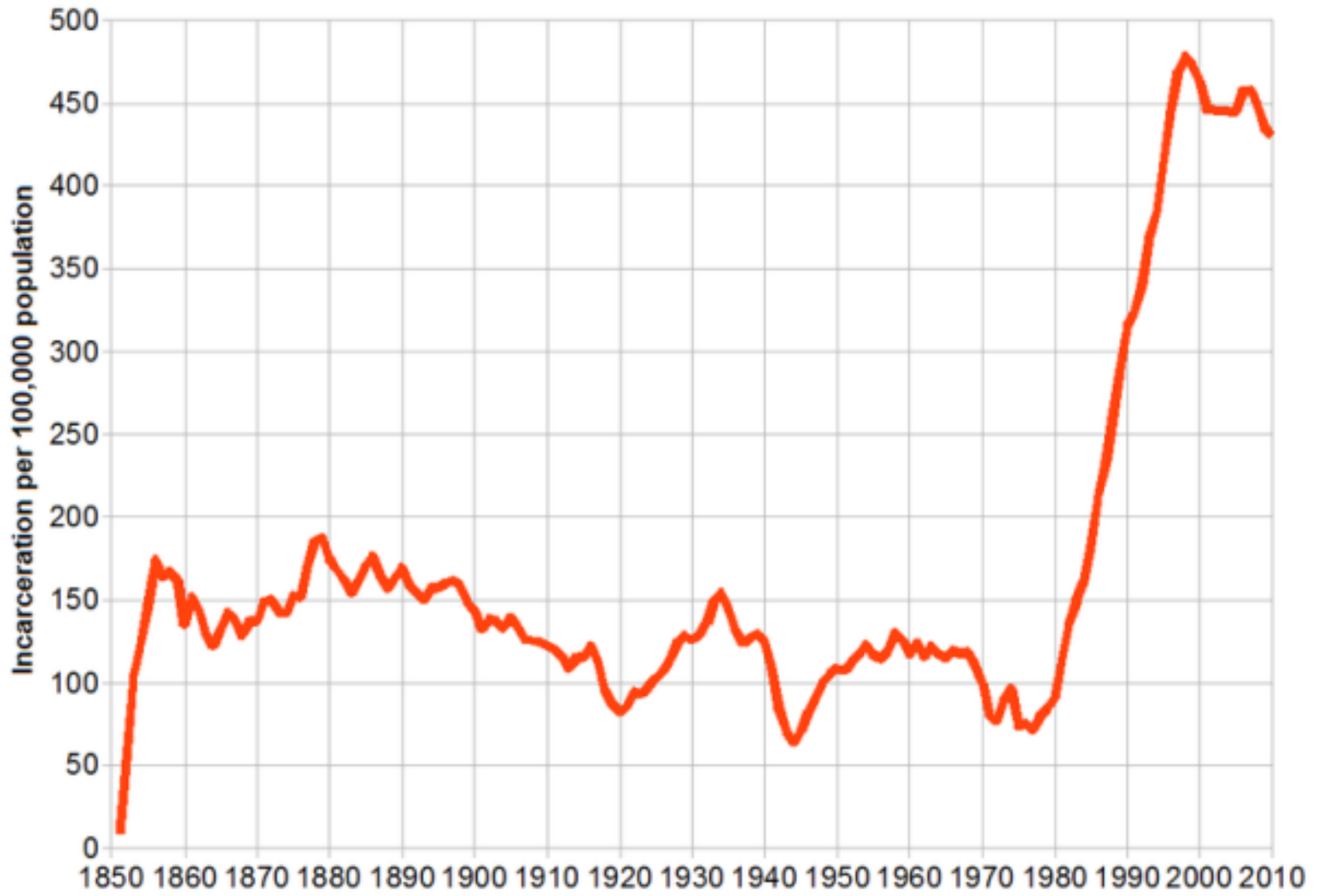
1920 - 1933: Alcohol
Prohibition

1971: President
Nixon declares
"War On Drugs"

1984: Sentencing
Reform Act (SRA)



California Prison Population 1851-2010



The California Crisis

- Severely overcrowded
- Two-thirds African American or Latino
- 70% read below 9th grade level
- Double/triple bunked by race
- 20 serious assaults per week/per institution
- More than half have HIV or Hepatitis C
- Highest suicide rate in US/rampant drugs
- 70% recidivism rate









Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheed (the Assembly Authentic Islam) JIS

- Founder: Kevin James, 29
- 76th Street Crips
- "Prison Islam"
- Cut-and-paste interpretations of the Koran
- Gang loyalties
- Waged plot to bomb Los Angeles targets, 9/11 2005



Findings

1. Inmate religious conversions happen through friend and kinship networks
2. Primary motivation for conversion is spiritual searching
3. Most conversions have positive effect on inmate behavior

Findings

4. Radical inmates are radicalized by other inmates, not by outside influences
5. Organizationally, radicalization is based on a prison gang model
6. Individually, radicalization occurs through one-on-one proselytizing by charismatic leaders

Findings

7. Maximum security is more likely to produce radicalized prisoners
 - little rehabilitation
 - yards are more politically charged
 - more overcrowded
 - more gang infested and violent
8. Conditions of confinement matter

Petri Dish for Terrorism



Prisoner Radicalization/Terrorism Database

- Based on open sources
- 51 domestic/international cases (1968-2011)
- Criteria: Inmates who were radicalized in prison and then involved in terrorist act, either upon release or from prison

Background Data

- Average age at attack/plan: 31 years
- Ethnicity:
 - African-American=35%
 - African=28%
 - Caucasian=24%
 - Arab=10%

Country of Incarceration

- United States: 33 cases (65%)
- Britain: 6 cases (12%)
- Spain: 5 cases (10%)
- France: 4 cases (8%)
- Jordan/Egypt: 2 cases (4%)
- Yemen: 1 case (2%)

Radicalization Characteristics

■ *Prison Religious Conversion*

- Islam 8 cases (15%)
- Sunni/Salafi Jihad 13 cases (28%)
- Nation of Islam 1 case (2%)
- Moorish Science 2 cases (4%)
- Prison Islam 6 cases (12%)
- Christian Identity 5 cases (10%)
- Odin/Asatru 4 cases (8%)
- No conversion (Salafi) 10 cases (20%)

Radicalized by Other Means

- Ayman al-Zawahiri, 47
- Radicalized through torture: Egyptian prisons
- Al-Qaeda
- Terrorist acts: multiple, 1998-present (including 9/11)



Age at Conversion (estimated)

- “Jihadi Cool”
- Under 20: 5 cases
- 20-24: 10
- 25-29: 10
- Other
- 30-34: 4
- 35-39: 1
- Unknown: 8
- N/A: 8
- Average age at conversion: 24.7 years

Organizational Type

	International	Homegrown
U.S. (34 cases)	7	27
U.K. (6)	4	2
Spain (5)	5	0
France (4)	4	0
Jordan/Egypt (2)	2	0

Nature of Terrorist Plots

	Executed	Operational	Aspirational
U.S. (34)	23	4	7
U.K. (6)	0	4	2
Spain (5)	3	0	2
France (4)	4	0	0
Jordan/Egypt (2)	2	0	0

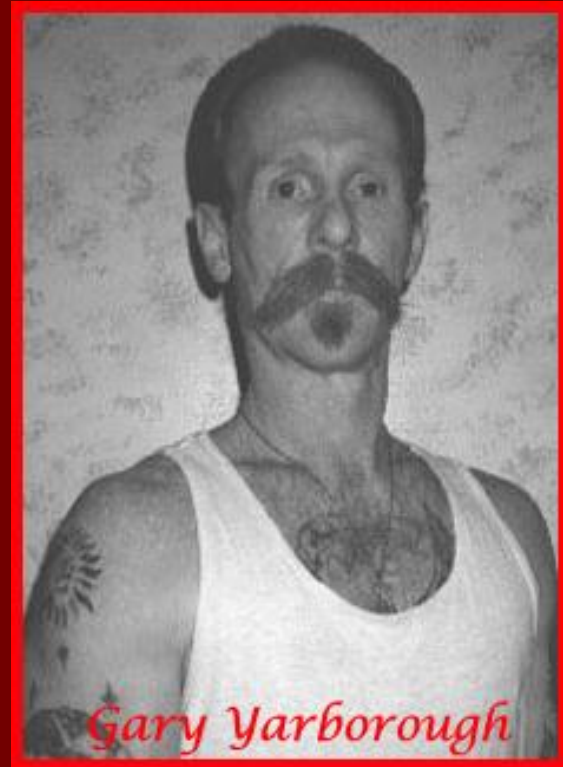
Executed Plot: U.S.

- Donald DeFreeze, 31
- No Conversion:
Marxism
- Symbianese
Liberation Army after
escaping from
Soledad, 1973
- Assassination,
bombing, Hearst
kidnapping
- Lag: 0



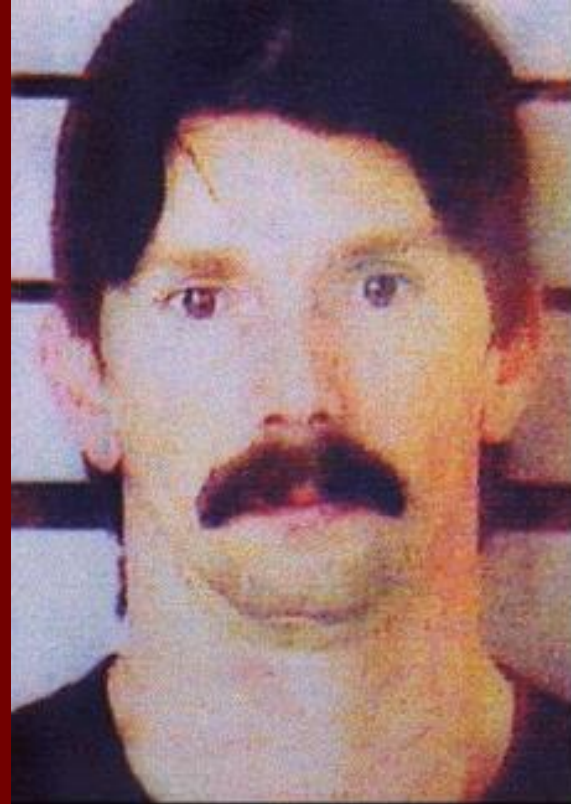
Executed Plot: U.S.

- Gary Yarbrough, 27
- Age at conversion
Christian Identity: 23
(Arizona State Prison)
- The Order
- Counterfeiting,
Murder, Bank
Robbery, 1983-84
- Lag: 4 years



Executed Plot: U.S.

- Peter Langan, 33
- Age at conversion, Christian Identity: 19 (Raiford Prison, Florida)
- Aryan Republican Army
- Bank robberies, attempted assassination, G.H.W. Bush, 1992-1996
- Lag: 13 years



Executed Plot: U.S.

- John William King, 24
- Age at conversion: 20 (Identity)
- Aryan Circle
- Murder of James Byrd, Jasper, TX, 1998
- Lag: 9 months



Executed Plot: U.S.

- Carlos Bledsoe
- Radicalized:
Yemeni prison
jihadists/torture
- Arkansas
recruitment center
shooting, 2009
- Lag: 1 year



Average Time Lags: Release/Violence

U.S.	2.6 years
U.K.	7.4 years
Spain	2.4 years
France	1 year

Social Networks: Place of Radicalization

- Four cases illustrate the connection between specific institutions, prisoner radicalization, and subsequent terrorism.

Suwaqah Prison: Jordan

- Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (1966-2006)
- Age at regeneration: 26
- Al-Qaeda in Iraq, recruited from Suwaqah population
- Terrorism: multiple, 2003-2006
- Lag: 0



Spanish Detention

- Jamal Ahmidan (1969-2004), 34
- Age at conversion: 31
- Takfir wal Hijra/Morrocan Salafist
- Madrid train bombings, 2004
- Lag: 3 years



Spanish Detention

- Jose Trashorrras, 28
- Age at conversion: 25
- Takfir wal Hijra
- Madrid train bombings, 2004
- Lag: 3 years



Topas Prison: Spain

- Mohamed Achraf, 30
- No conversion (already Salafi jihadist)
- Plus 4 ex-prisoners
- Plot to bomb Spain's National Court, 2004
- Lag: 2 years



Topas Prison: Spain

- Abdel Benesmail (age unknown)
- No conversion (already Salafi)
- Plot to bomb Spain's National Court, 2004
- Lag: 2 years



Linked to Topas Prison Network

- Allekema Lamari (age unknown)
- No conversion (already Salafi-Jihadist; GIA French prison 1997-2002)
- Madrid train bombing, 2004
- Lag: 2 years



Feltham Young Offenders Institution: UK

- Richard Reid, 29
- Age at conversion: 20
- International: al-Qaeda
- "Shoe-bombing" plot, 2001
- Lag: 9 years



Feltham Young Offenders Institution

- Martin Mubanga, 28
- Age at conversion: 19
- Terrorist-related activities (found innocent)
- International (possible): Taliban
- Lag: 6 years



Feltham Young Offenders Institution

- Muktar Ibrahim, 27
- Age at regeneration: 19 (British adult institution), former Feltham inmate
- International: possible al-Qaeda trained
- London bombers, July 21 cell, 2005
- Lag: 8 years



Feltham Prisoner Network

- Mohammad al-Figari, 42
- Age at conversion: 33
(Wandsworth Prison, UK)
- Radicalized by
Mohammed Hamid,
former Feltham inmate
- Attending terrorist
training camps, UK
- Lag: 4 years



Other Young Offender Institutions: UK

- Sulayman Keeler, 35
- Age at conversion: 19 (Young Offenders Institution, UK)
- International: al-Muhajiroun
- Supporting terrorism
- Lag: 12 years
- Kevin Gardner, 23
- Age at conversion: 20 (Stoke Heath Young Offenders, UK)
- Bomb plot, UK military
- Lag: 2 years



Guantanamo Bay, Cuba: United States

- Abdullah Rasoul, 34
- Age at incarceration, 28
- Released 2007 to Afghan government
- Re-joined Taliban
- Roadside bombings against British troops
- Lag: 2 months



Guantanamo: U.S.

- Abdullah Mehsud (1974-2007)
- Age at incarceration, 26
- Released to Pakistan, 2004
- Re-joined Taliban
- Kidnapping
- Lag: 6 months



Guantanamo: U.S.

- Said Ali al-Shihri, 33
- Age at incarceration, 26
- Released 2007 to Saudi rehabilitation program
- Al-Qaeda in Yemen
- Bombing US Embassy, Yemen, 2008; 2009 Christmas airline bombing plot, Detroit
- Lag: 1 year



Guantanamo Protégé





Lethality of Prison-Based Terrorism

- Killed/wounded by Western prison radicals 2001-2011:
 - 3 (excluding Madrid train bombing)
 - Madrid: 191 killed, 2,050 wounded
- Killed/wounded by Western prison radicals 2012-2015:
 - 74 (including 6 police/3 children)
 - All soft targets
 - All firearms except 1 beheading

Conclusions

- 1) Conditions of incarceration produce radicalization networks.
- 2) What do New Folsom, Topas Prison, Feltham and Guantanamo share in common?
- 3) Prisoner radicalization is conceived as one of *several* turning points leading to terrorism.