

## *Locked Up*

*I'm seventy-seven now and I was first arrested in 2005*

When I was a little girl  
my older sister locked me in the chicken house  
with these chickens that were squawking  
and fluttering around.  
I was there for *hours*,  
and nobody came looking for me  
and after seventy-five years  
of remembering that,  
I think this idea  
*of being lost and not being found*  
is still with me

and then of course,  
when I lost my brother...  
I was in the car  
when the accident happened.  
it was snowing  
and there was ice on the ground which he didn't see,  
it was invisible ice.

And so, we were driving very, very slowly.  
And we were laughing and talking  
and all of a sudden, I heard this surprise  
"Oh!"  
and we were in the water.  
My brother was there on the seat beside me  
He wasn't moving and I knew that he was dead.

*There's something about the stillness of a body*  
that you just know when the life is gone out of it.

So his life was over.  
He was my best friend and I questioned  
*why he and not I?*  
And then I realized afterwards that it was because  
he had finished his work  
*and I was just beginning mine.*

And what came afterwards  
was that I've been able to stand before an open court,  
in front of a judge and a jury of my peers  
*to take a stand for peace and justice in the world.*

Early morning, January 11th, 2008

we were arrested on the steps of the Supreme Court  
for demonstrating to shut down the prison at Guantanamo.

We were locked up in DC Jail

I had shackles put on my feet.

I had shackles around my waist.

I had shackles around my wrists.

I mean,

the constant noise

the screaming

and sobbing

and cursing

and television going full blast

and the constant light,

twenty-four hours,

this florescent light, it's *never* dark.

One of the tortures

that was used in Guantanamo and other prisons

was light deprivation and light insistence.

And no private space.

One of the disciplines of being locked up

is trying to block out the noise,

block out the screaming,

block out the cursing

and just be quiet.

The women I encountered in jail called me *Grandma*

because I was the oldest one. They were my sisters in chains

but they were so much more vulnerable than me—

poor, uneducated, with no support system.

That was the thing...*no support system*.

Their crime was *being poor*, being poor and lonely and unsupported.

I remember one night,

two policemen came in with this woman,

and just shoved her down in the chair next to me.

Her clothes were filthy, her face was filthy, she didn't say anything.

One of the policemen was harassing her and she was just there,

with her head down on the table.

And then all of a sudden, she lifted her head,

and she said in a clear voice,

“YOU DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT ME!”

She went on and on about how *she was a person*.  
And they just stood there with their mouths open  
and then she stopped and collapsed  
and I was absolutely shaken because  
*you might think that a person is broken...*  
but this woman came out of her drug-induced stupor  
to assert that *she was a human being, a child of God....*  
*and the crime was attempting to break the human spirit...* just like torture

I learned to see in prison. I learned to *listen* in prison.  
I even learned to listen to the police and the marshal  
and the guards in prison.

When I was let go from jail,  
you had to go through one series of guards,  
and then another series of guards  
and each time you are accompanied by a marshal  
and this marshal was stony-faced.  
But finally, the gates opened.  
We stepped through the gates, and then they closed.  
And as soon as the gates closed,  
he started to *rail against the war*  
and tell me how the army had been his whole life,  
and how he came home from the war,  
and how he woke up screaming every night from nightmares  
and how he felt damaged from the war  
*And he thanked me for what I was doing.*

During the trial,  
we appeared in the defendant's box in orange jumpsuits  
in sympathy with our brothers in Guantanamo,  
and other people that were tortured in prison.  
And when we stood up to give our names,  
each of us would give the name of a political prisoner in *Guantanamo*  
and for the first time, the name of the prisoner was entered into the  
court record.  
And one of the defendants,  
after his sentence was pronounced, he said,

*"Your Honor. I request that we have a moment of silence  
for our Brothers in Guantanamo."*

And before he got the sentence out the prosecutor jumped up—  
“I OBJECT!”

But the judge and all the people in the courtroom *bowed their heads*.

And there was a moment of silence.

And that just may go down in the history books.

I have two more trials coming up in May and two trials in June

We pray that nations will turn their swords into plowshares.

*And Study War No More.*