

# Coup D'Etat

VOLUME 02

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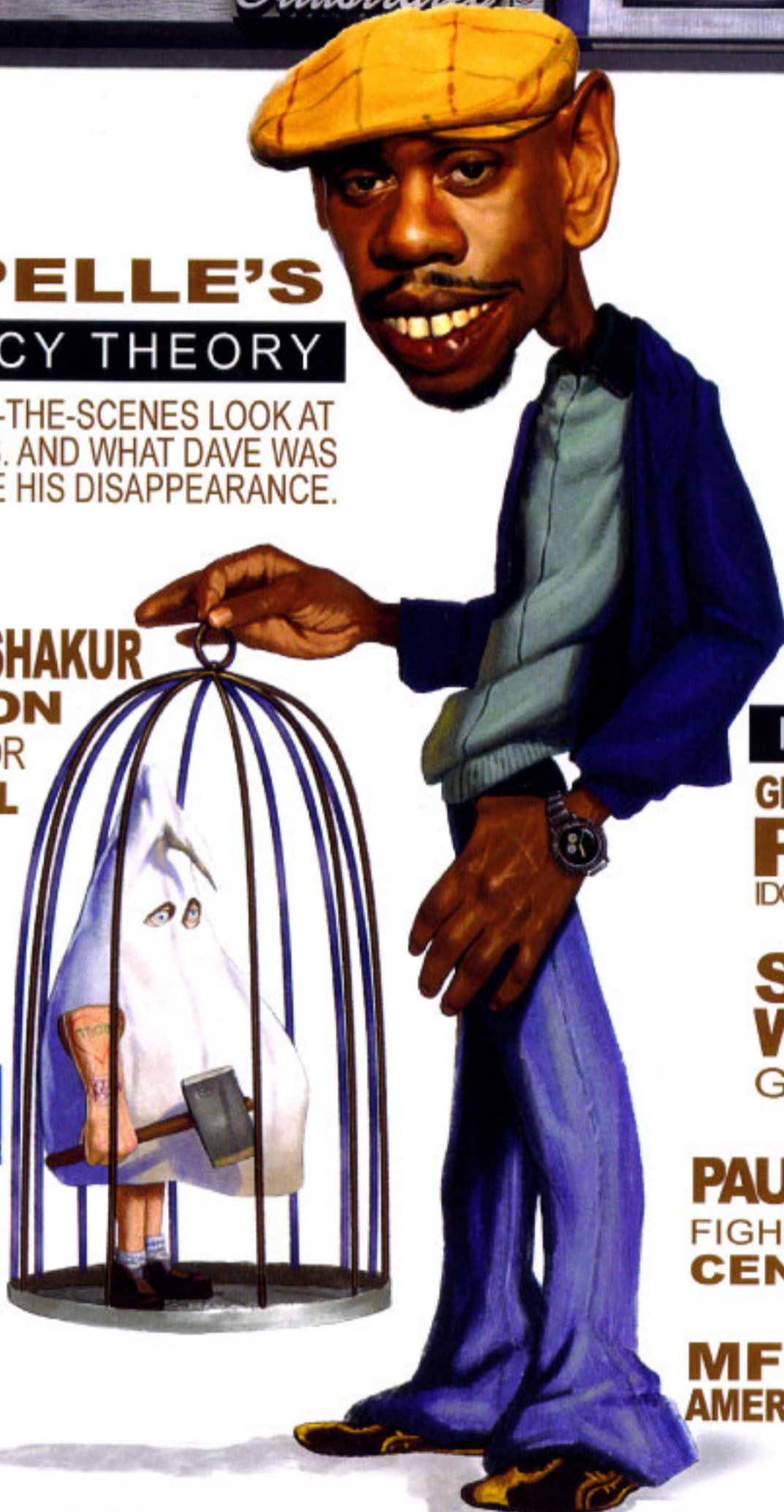
## DAVE CHAPPELLE'S CONSPIRACY THEORY

EXCLUSIVE: BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT THE LOST EPISODES. AND WHAT DAVE WAS LIKE WEEKS BEFORE HIS DISAPPEARANCE.

THE TUPAC AMARU SHAKUR FOUNDATION OPENS CENTER FOR THE ARTS IN THE ATL

COMMON CRIMINALS

COLUMBUS 1492 & BUSH 2005



INTERVIEWS:

GRAFFITI LEGEND  
**POKE**  
IDOLIZED BY MILLIONS

**SMIF N' WESSUN**  
GOTTA SAY IT

**PAUL WRIGHT**  
FIGHTING PRISON  
CENSORSHIP

**MF GRIMM**  
AMERICAN HUNGER



# FIGHTING PRISON CENSORSHIP

Meet Paul Wright, After Serving 16 Years In Prison, He Now Fights Censorship In The Penal System.

By: Seth "Soul Man" Ferranti  
[www.gorillaconvict.com](http://www.gorillaconvict.com)

**P**rison Legal News is a 48-page monthly with a circulation of nearly 6000. Since its inception in May 1990, more than 200 issues have been published, making it the longest-running prison publication in U.S. history. The publication can be found in prisons across the nation, as well as in public libraries, Ivy League law schools, judges' chambers and even the offices of prison wardens and corrections officials. Prison Legal News has broken dozens of stories whose legal and political reverberations have been felt on both sides of the razor wire. For prison issues and news from the inside, this publication is cutting edge. It stays on top of legal decisions that affect prisoners and their cases, prisoner's rights and censorship issues. It also serves as a liaison to the press. The newsletter was started from inside by a convicted murderer turned jail house lawyer turned prisoner rights advocate, Paul Wright. Wright served 16 years in the Washington State system after the botched robbery of a cocaine dealer which left the drug dealer dead. He started writing the newsletter after being subjected to the alienating, arbitrary, brutal and dehumanizing environment of prison. He felt that information about what was happening in different prisons amongst prisoners and with Prison Legal News needed to be circulated. It's been a constant battle for Paul though, as he has fought prison censorship since the jump, filing over 20 lawsuits in an effort to curtail prison officials from banning Prison Legal News in our nation's prisons. He's helped institute some very important First Amendment lawsuits around the country which have exposed the fear of prison administrators toward prisoners having and sharing information about their cases and inhumane prison conditions. Since his release in 2003, Paul has continued publishing – and has expanded – Prison Legal News, setting up a website with an extensive legal archive on prison-related issues. He also speaks at conferences and seminars on the state of American prisons. His journal's hard-hitting content has caused great controversy among prison authorities, and Paul paid the price for publishing the newsletter during his incarceration, as prison officials retaliated with intimidation tactics in an effort to stop his efforts to produce the newsletter. He was never told he couldn't write, but he was arbitrarily subjected to all types of discretionary decisions that affected his routine and status in prison including having his materials confiscated, being transferred and thrown in the hole, and facing disciplinary sanctions for bogus incident reports. But Paul persevered and lived through the unrelenting



pressure of prison officials. Now, he is out and still fighting the system and prison censorship. We sat down with Paul Wright, and here's what he had to say:

**CDI:** What is Prison Legal News all about?

**PW:** We're a small publication, but we've always had an influence that's pretty far out of proportion to our readership. We're targeting people who are doing something behind bars, and policy makers and opinion makers on the outside. There are 2.3 million people locked up in this country. We're the only publication that covers detention facilities. That's a crying shame.

**CDI:** Why have you taken it upon yourself to challenge prison censorship?

**PW:** Because no one else will or does it, and it makes little point to publish a magazine if your target audience can't read it, and the reason we are censored is because it is the information prisoners need to have the most. The sad thing is that few if any other publishers, who pay lip service to the notion of free speech, actually care enough about their first amendment rights or those of their readers to do anything about it when their rights are violated.

**CDI:** Why did you first start Prison Legal News?

**PW:** So that prisoner's would have a voice in what passes for criminal justice debate in this country and to raise public awareness about prison and jail conditions and educate prisoner's about their rights.



They act with total impunity and are pretty much not accountable to anyone, so they are free to violate the first amendment rights of prisoners and publishers alike and there is no downside to doing it.

**CDI:** Describe the prison administration mentality for violating prisoners' first amendment rights?

**PW:** They act with total impunity and are pretty much not accountable to anyone, so they are free to violate the first amendment rights of prisoners and publishers alike and there is no downside to doing it. They usually get away with it and occasionally, when they don't, they are just back to square one and at worst the taxpayers are out some money for damages and attorney fees.

**CDI:** What do you think of the bigger magazines, who unlike you don't fight the censorship battles?

**PW:** Not much, but they are in business to make money and there's no money to be made fighting government censorship. On the contrary, it costs money and resources to do that.

**CDI:** Describe yourself as a person, or how other convicts saw you? What's your reputation like inside?

**PW:** I'd say I'm well respected.

**CDI:** In today's prison culture it seems fewer prisoners are willing to fight for their rights. Why do you think this is?

**PW:** Because it mirrors non-prisoners as well where people are demoralized, beat down and defeated, and don't think they can fight for their rights and win. It is also a lot about American culture, where people have no concept of loyalty to anyone or anything beyond themselves. Part of it as well is that the government is fairly powerful and ruthless in crushing any opposition. And prisoners tend to know this first hand.

**CDI:** What are prison administrators so scared of?

**PW:** An ignorant and uneducated class of prisoners is a lot easier to manage and manipulate than an educated and politically conscious one, which is why publications that are political or aimed at any kind of legal knowledge or education, like Prison Legal News, get singled out for censorship.

**CDI:** What kind of feedback do you get from prisoners about Prison Legal News?

**PW:** Pretty much all positive. Prisoners like our coverage and what we are doing, and that is reflected in our rising subscriber numbers and the fact we're the only publication covering the news and issues that we are covering.

**CDI:** Do you feel like a crusader? Why or why not?

**PW:** Yes and no. No, because in many respects I think the American prison and jail system is so bad that if people knew what was going on things would improve. On the other hand, I think many people, even if they know, don't care. Hence, I feel like it's a crusade to bring the change about in spite of the unpopularity of the cause.

**CDI:** Why have the prison presses and magazines stopped when there are more prisoners now than ever?

**PW:** See the answer to question number 6. Apathy and indifference are hard to combat, and illiteracy is a real killer for magazines, too. One of Prison Legal News' strengths has been that none of its staff has ever had a background in professional publishing. If we had, then we would have probably never started the magazine since, in theory anyway, we shouldn't exist. Other reasons why prison publications have pretty much gone under has been political infighting in some cases, and the bigger one has been financial. There is little money in publishing a magazine aimed at prisoners and their family members and advocates. To do a decent job requires a full time, professional staff. And that requires money. But PLN started out with a \$50 budget and an all-volunteer staff. We are now at a \$450,000.00 annual budget, six full time employees plus work study students and volunteers.