

The Battle of Herman Bell

More than 500 Post readers already have sent in their pleas that cop-killer Herman Bell — who goes before a parole board in three weeks — remain behind bars.

Today, on the opposite page, actor James Woods adds to the growing calls for Bell's continued incarceration.

Woods has his own connection to the case: In the 1985 movie, "Badge of the Assassin," he portrayed the prosecutor who sent Bell and his two accomplices to prison for the 1971 cold-blooded killings of Police Officers Waverly Jones and Joseph Piagentini.

The three, members of a self-styled revolutionary "army," killed two young cops for no other reason than that they wanted to, well, kill cops.

Bell shot Piagentini with his own gun.

But this was about more than just a thrill killing, as Police Commissioner Ray Kelly has noted in his own appeal to the

Parole Board: Piagentini and Jones "were drawn into a trap for the purpose of killing them and fomenting social unrest," writes Kelly, then a uniformed cop on duty the night of the murders.

Herman Bell's extremist supporters — who fancy him a "prisoner of war" — have for months been collecting signatures from those who want him freed.

Fortunately, the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association has also been at work; it has 20,000 signatures of its own demanding that Bell remain imprisoned.

You can contact parole officials directly or through The Post. But all correspondence must be sent by Feb. 2. So voice your opinion now, to:

KEEP HERMAN BELL ON ICE

N.Y. State Board of Parole

97 Central Ave.

Albany, NY 12206

Or e-mail your view to:

justice@nypost.com