

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

Vol. 35-b, No. 11

PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504-1911

November 2010

NOT SO GOOD, FEW SURPRISES

POVERTY CREATES PRISONERS

As we know, poverty creates prisoners, since it is the major determinant of who goes to jails. Prisons in turn fuel poverty--not only for individuals, but for entire demographic groups of people. Studies have shown the obvious: once a person has been incarcerated, their earning power is more limited and, even decades later, it is more difficult for them to improve their economic circumstances. In 1980, one in 10 African-American high school dropouts were incarcerated. By 2008, it was 37%.

At present, fewer than 30% of male African American high school dropouts are currently employed. After being out of prison for 20 years, less than 1/4 of ex-cons who haven't finished high school were able to rise above the bottom 20% of income earners. And this economic handicap gets passed on to succeeding generations.

The high rate of imprisonment in the U.S. costs the country more than \$50 billion a year--one in every 15 of state general fund dollars. It reduces the earnings of those formerly incarcerated by 40% on average. And that loss is passed on to their offspring, who make up one in every 28 children.

DEBTORS' PRISONS: FOR THE POOR

The ACLU recently issued "In for a Penny: The Rise of America's New Debtors' Prisons." It reports that courts across the country profit from debtors' imprisonment by violating a Supreme Court decision ordering courts to investigate a person's inability to pay fees which are part of sentences. The policies and practices of the states of Louisiana, Michigan, Ohio, Georgia, and Washington were investigated. Such fines disproportionately affect people of color. African Americans make up 12% of the population. In 2007, they made up approximately 38% of the

incarcerated population. As we know, there are specific fines and fees that only people who are in prison and jail have to pay. In Washington state, as an example, Hispanics were likely to receive much higher fees than their white counterparts. Ethnic disparities in treatment exist throughout the system

IN THE NAME OF COST CUTTING

In New Mexico, the Department of Corrections is planning to transfer 114 prisoners out of several private for-profit prisons into state run prisons. The DOC estimates that this will save about \$2.1 million. Hmmm...

MORE VOTERS FROM STATE LAW CHANGES

Since 1997, 800,000 people have regained the right to vote as a result of felony re-enfranchisement in 23 states. So says a new publication of The Sentencing Project (1705 DeSales Street NW--8th Floor, Washington DC 20036). It states that nine states have either repealed or amended lifetime disenfranchisement laws. Three states have expanded voting rights to cover those on probation and parole. Eight states have eased the restoration process for those who have completed their sentences.

In particular: Rhode Island's repeal of a state prohibition on voting for people on probation and parole has resulted in the restoration of voting rights to more than 15,000 people. Maryland's repeal of its lifetime prohibition on voting for those who have completed their sentences resulted in the restoration of voting rights for more than 52,000 people. Connecticut's repeal of its ban on voting for those on probation has extended the right to vote to more than 33,000 people. New Mexico's repeal of its lifetime disenfranchisement provision restored the right to vote to more than 69,000 people.

CRIME OF THE MONTHaka Crimetoppers

“Dazzling Hearts and Minds: The Trapped Miners Rescue Spectacular in Chile”

We were visually and sonically inundated with blow-by-blow descriptions of the Chilean miner rescue operation. TV, radio and newspapers whipped themselves into a frenzy reporting the rescue of 33 miners. With a couple of months lead time, courtesy of the drilling process, this event has received more buildup than a Super bowl.

Naturally, everyone is glad the miners are out safely, but it seems this is an extreme case of media overkill that is designed to serve as a distraction from Mass-Murder Incorporated's (M-M Inc.--the U. S. government), worldwide killing spree. If not from the mine operator's greedy rush for profits that caused the accident in the first place.

Everyone waited with bated breath as one miner at a time rose to the surface with a digital clock ticking off the time of his ascent to the second, and, of course, a count of each miner rescued, replete with video footage of tearful reunions. Would it were so for those unsuspecting people blown-up in their homes by the predator drones the U.S. operates world wide, but it is not.

How many people did the U.S. government simultaneously put in the ground as the miners came out? How many people were murdered in Afghanistan and Pakistan by the drones over the course of the rescue operation? How many Palestinians, Iraqis, Somalians, and Yemenis? Do they not deserve a ticking clock and body count? Certainly. But there is little feel good factor in being confronted with a second by second ticking body count of the murders we are responsible for as the good citizens and shareholders of M-M Inc.

Why does the mainstream media ignore the big stories, the real stories? Why isn't there a body count of every human on this planet murdered by U.S. made weapons systems? Why not show the video footage of every single drone attack, replete with men, women and children dying in agony? This would be a stellar moment for U.S. television corporations. Real reality TV! Maybe, when fed enough reality, people in the U.S. will then treat themselves to the reality of the U.S. version of the Nuremberg trials.

Now that is a reality most of the world would love to see!
[Credit: Rand W. Gould, C-187131, MCF, 17601 Mound Road, Detroit MI 48212.]

Los Inmigrantes a Los EE.UU. y La Deportacion

Ademas de servir su sentencia de prisi3n, los Inmigrantes encarcelados en los EE.UU. por una "felonía agravada" se enfrentan con la deportación a sus países de origen. El Acta de Reforma de Inmigración Ilegal y Responsabilidad del Inmigrante de 1996 (IIRIRA) ordenó a las autoridades de la ejecución de la inmigración que deportaran a los condenados por un felonía agravada que no fueran ciudadanos y ha expandido su definición.

Las acciones que llevan una pena de un año, incluyendo delitos menores como hurtos en tiendas, se consideran "felonías agravadas" y se aplican con carácter retroactivo. Esto ha resultado en un aumento en el número de personas clasificadas y deportadas como los "extranjeros criminales."

La aplicación retroactiva de la nueva definición de lo que se considera una "felonía agravada" ha transformado miles de inmigrantes a "delincuentes extranjeros deortables," y un "sistema de identificación del extranjero criminal" ha sido desarrollado para localizar los inmigrantes con antecedentes penales que ahora califican para la deportación. Esto se aplica a los residentes legales y a los inmigrantes indocumentados.

This newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. To get on our mailing list, send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope (with the CPR return address)-- up to 12 at one time-- for each issue desired.

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests in order to receive the year-end holiday card/new calendar. This is especially important for those imprisoned in California and Texas, the two largest groups of prisoners we have been in touch with.

We remain debt free, but continue to need your financial contributions to meet our ongoing operating expenses.

Please note: the ONLY address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504.

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making the newsletter available on-line at: <http://www.realcostofprisons.org/coalition.html> Download and mail it in!

THANK YOU RESIST! This is the 2nd year of a 3-year grant. We are endlessly grateful for the ongoing support. At 259 Elm St, Somerville MA 02144; 617-623-5110.