

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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BY THE NUMBERS

In China, the incarceration rate--how many people are imprisoned out of every 100,000 people in the population--is 111 per 100,000. In Norway, it's 73 people out of every 100,000. The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world: 743 are imprisoned out of every 100,000 people in the United States. With four percent of the world's population, the U.S. has almost 25% of the world's prisoners.

Further, according to federal data, 3.1% of Black men were in state or federal prison at the end of 2010. Compare this figure with 1.3% of Hispanics and 0.5% of non-Hispanic "whites." Among Black men 30 to 34 years old, 7.3% were doing sentences of more than a year. A total of 748,000 adults were in local jails, 1.5 million were in state or federal prisons, 840,000 were on parole and 4 million were under supervised probation.

In addition, among male high school dropouts born between 1975 and 1979, 68% of Blacks (compared with 28% of "whites") had been imprisoned at some point by 2009, and 37% of Blacks (compared with 12% of "whites") were incarcerated that year.

More young Black dropouts are imprisoned than have paying jobs. Black men are more likely to go to prison than to graduate with a four-year college degree or to complete military service. Black dropouts are more likely to spend at least a year in prison than to get married. By the time they turn 18, one in four Black children will have experienced the imprisonment of a parent. Racist policies and practices in this country result in African-Americans, who make up 12 to 13% of the population, making up nearly half of the more than 2.3 million people in the United States who are imprisoned.

Yet here is a great irony to compound this injustice: according to a study by sociologists Pettit & Sykes of a few years ago, imprisoned Black men (and women?) aren't figured into statistics

about the standing of African-Americans. This results in an overstatement of Black progress in education, employment, wages and voting participation.

Estimates are that, if African-American prisoners were included, the Black high school dropout rate would increase to 19% and the portion of high school dropouts who are employed would fall to 26%--quite different from the statistics usually cited. Also, voter turnout among young Blacks in the 2008 election would be at roughly 20%, about where it was in 1980.

The conclusion is that decades of penal expansion, along with the concentration of incarceration among men, Blacks and those with less formal education, have generated a statistical portrait that overstates the educational and economic progress and political participation of African-American (men).

WHY STOP-AND-FRISK

According to the New York Civil Liberties Union, in 2011 there were 1,137 out of 1,857 stops made in the Bronx of people suspected of criminal trespass without reasonable suspicion and were potentially unlawful. Some people are being stopped entering and leaving their own homes. Three proposed class-action lawsuits have been filed in federal court in Manhattan challenging the New York Police Department's stop-and-frisk practices.

RESULTS OF PLEA BARGAINS

By far most defendants--97%--with criminal charges opt to plea bargain, in order to reduce their sentences. This practice effectively moves much of the sentencing authority from the judges to the prosecutors. It has resulted in disparate outcomes in different regions; Black defendants are often less likely than "white" ones to obtain a reduced charge. Prosecutors can influence outcomes in a number of ways, although federal judges do have a review power.

CRIME OF THE MONTH

If you plan on attending a soccer match in Israel, be sure to bring along plenty of bananas. You'll also need to practice making monkey noises. Jewish fans in Israel regularly abuse Black players by pelting them with bananas and chanting monkey sounds ("hoo-hoo-hoo"), as well as the "N" word. Arab players are also taunted with racist chants, such as "I hate Arabs."

Racism is systemic within the sports culture in Israel. At a recent game in Tel Aviv, when Nigerian-born Israeli player, Toto Tamuz, scored a goal for his team, the crowd began taunting him with racial slurs and throwing bananas onto the field. He had the temerity to put his finger to his lips to quiet them. Immediately, he was penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct and ejected from the game. Astonishing but true.

There were discussions in the media about whether or not players should be ejected for such a simple gesture toward the stands, but no mention was made of the behavior which prompted the gesture. That's because blatant racial hatred is considered normal for Israel's sports fans. Zionism, the ideological foundation for the Jewish state, grants dominance and exclusivity to one ethnic group over all others. When one group is empowered by such a sense of exceptionalism and entitlement, it is hardly surprising that racist behavior would become normalized--as is certainly the case in other highly racist countries.

Our Crime of the Month is the continued financial and military support given to Israel by the U.S. despite the racist nature of Israeli society.

To receive the Newsletter each month, send us self-addressed, stamped envelopes (with the CPR return address) --up to 12 at one time.

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests, in order to receive the yearly holiday card/ new calendar.

Also, please note that the only address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504. And remember: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS.

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making our Newsletter available on-line for free downloading and distribution. It is at: <http://www.realcostofprisonsproject.org/coalition.html> This is a GREAT site! We continue to depend on your donations!

El Rico Sabe a Chicken

Con el pan en la boca
los Ricos no saben lo que
el hambre, ni la rata.
Los Pobres preguntan por qué.
La Muerte dice "no se".

Llegó el día--los pobres se juntan
y se arman en una discusión.
Que dónde pone el Rico su pan
Que cómo se creen muy chingónes
Que si siempre serán muy huevónes.

La Muerta escucha a la gente.
Dice "quien esta presente"
Mira y ve sólo inocentes
Mexicanos y Chicanos
Los Morenos y los Indios.

"Ya se armó!" grita ella.
"Vamos asar "Stockbroker Steak"
"Wallstreet Beef" con mucha salsa.
A Los Pobres les vamos dar "un
break."
A Los Ricos hay que asar."

"Miren" dice La Muerte
"Asi se mata el hambre.
Cómanse a los muy Ricos.
De sus gustos aprovechen.
El Rico sabe a Chicken."
--La Voz de Esperanza, San Antonio TX

CELL PHONE SAGA

In October, the Nevada Supreme Court, in a 3-0 decisions ruled that it is not a crime under state law for a county jail prisoner to possess a cellphone in a jail cell. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department however, stated that it is policy for jailers to automatically confiscate cellphones before prisoners enter their cells for security reasons.

The Pershing County sheriff's department had alleged that a state law prohibiting all prisoners, including county jail inmates, from possessing "any key, lock, bolt cutters, saw" or other tool that could be used for the purpose of escaping.

The state supreme court justices concluded that a cellphone was not a kind of device that could be used to escape from a jail or prison. "It would be virtually impossible to use a cellphone to forcibly break out of, or physically free oneself from a jail cell," wrote one.

Phone Regulation Change in N.M

The Public Regulation Commission has significantly lowered phone rates in NM prisons. What used to cost \$8 now is \$2.25 to \$3.25.