

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504

April 2014

The worst of the worst? POPULATION CAP DECISION

There are too many candidates for the Worst of the Worst title. So we are forced to accept that it cannot be any of the parts, but must be the whole: The system itself is the worst of the worst. In any one article we can only discuss some of the most dramatic ways that this is true.

For example, solitary confinement. The numbers help tell the story: New York City alone has 1,000 people on any given day held in solitary. New York State has about 4,000. New York City currently uses solitary confinement four times more frequently than the national average. The state of Texas has more than 7,100 prisoners in solitary, 2,400 of which are diagnosed as being mentally ill.

To tell the horrors another way: There are 13,000 New Yorkers held on Rikers Island daily. Over 9,700 are pre-trial detainees, which generally means simply that they do not have the money to post bail.

In addition, 40% of Rikers Island prisoners have a diagnosis of mental illness and 80% have substance abuse problems, alcohol being the most serious and severe. The numbers put the biggest mental hospital in the country as the Los Angeles County Jail. Rikers Island is second. The largest mental health facility in Texas is the Harris County Jail in Houston.

Of the proportion of people in this country who are currently housed in a mental hospital or penal facility, about 95% of them are imprisoned and only 5% are in medical facilities. So a few of them appear to have more money than the rest.

In Texas, Death Row prisoners are housed in "administrative segregation," with a custody level of one to three. Even the guard's union there advocates for those level one prisoners to be housed two to a cell, with some other privileges. And Texas is presumably reviewing its Death Row procedures. But there is no time line for implementation

The three federal judges adjudicating the population cap in California prisons issued their latest and final decision on how long the state can take to reach that court-ordered level in February. The court is allowing the state until February 28, 2016 to reach a state prison population level of 112,547 people.

The decision and accompanying order list three benchmark dates the state must reach: By June 20, 2014--143% of design capacity, by February 28, 2015--141.5% of design capacity and by February 20, 2016--137.5% of design capacity.

There are basically three court-ordered actions that will affect Lifers: the promotion of an elder parole hearing schedule, expanded perimeters for medical parole and an advanced release for those already found suitable but with a date calculated in the future. The state has agreed not to continue litigating against the court population cap order and is to immediately begin to implement changes listed.

Also ordered and agreed to are new procedures to bring "nonviolent second strikers" to parole hearings after they have served 50% of their sentences, increase good-time credits for "nonviolent second strikers," and adding more women to those participating in alternative custody programs.

At present, the state has 34 prison facilities. Those facilities' design capacity has been calculated at 81,574 prisoners. By setting a cap at 137.5% of capacity, the judges allow the state to house 112,164 people. Currently, the 34 state prisons cage a total of approximately 117,500 people.

A Compliance Officer will be in place and have the power and authority to release the necessary number of people to meet the benchmark levels by the stipulated dates.

The court noted that: "California prisoners deserve far better treatment than they have received."

El derecho a volver

Despues de haber sido deportado a México de su hogar en Arizona a principios de 2014, Jaime Valdez darnos detalles de su intento de reingresar a Estados Unidos el 1 de abril. Valdez afirma que fue deportado en venganza por la huelga de hambre en la que participó su familia en una oficina de la Agencia de Control de Inmigración y Aduana de Phoenix, para protestar contra las políticas inmigratorias estadounidenses. "Toda mi familia está en EE.UU, por eso es que estoy tratando de reingresar", afirma Valdez. "Vamos a tratar de hacer llegar este mensaje al Presidente, para detener las deportaciones y la discriminación e injusticia que tenemos.

SAVE THE DATE: FREE HER RALLY

Saturday, June 21, 2014

Washington Mall, Washington DC

JOIN US!

The *Free Her Campaign* is organizing to end mass incarceration by: 1) raising awareness of the increase in the rate of incarceration of women in the United States and the impact on our children and communities, 2) demanding an end to voter disenfranchisement for people with felony convictions, and 3) urging president Obama to commute the sentences of women and men in the federal system who have applied for commutation.

Contact: Andrea C. James, Families for Justice As Healing, 197A Humboldt Ave Boston MA 02121, justiceashealing.org

To receive the Newsletter by postal mail 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 be sent the yearly holiday card/ new calendar each January.

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. There are resource listings which, unfortunately use an incorrect address.

Remember: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS. It is important not to mark any envelopes sent to us "legal mail."

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

We depend on our readers' donations & thank you for your support! Mil gracias!

CRIME OF THE MONTH

On Valentine's Day in southeastern New Mexico, a cloud of radioactive gas escaped from the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (W.I.P.P.--what a great name!) and polluted parts of New Mexico, Texas and the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Such nuclear pollution is particularly dangerous when it is swallowed or inhaled. It is particularly bad for pregnant women, infants and children.

W.I.P.P. is a huge artificial cavern dug out of a solid salt rock formation near Carlsbad NM. This artificial cavern is a half mile under the surface of the salt. Some elevator shafts and air shafts come to the surface over this salt cavern.

This cavern is where the U.S. has been storing its nuclear waste. The nuclear labs and industries, in order to make bombs or electricity, produce waste that is known to be poison for 10,000 plus years. To be clear: they make tons of waste that is poisonous for 10,000+ years. But, the public was told that this toxic waste would be safe at W.I.P.P. Uh huh.

On February 5, there had been a fire at W.I.P.P. Many workers had been exposed to radioactive smoke at that time, and the cavern was evacuated.

W.I.P.P. was supposed to protect us from this radioactive waste for 10,000+ years. Yet it didn't even last one generation. And corporations in the U.S. continue to make radioactive waste that requires a W.I.P.P. for 10,000+--yes 10,000+ years.

The actions of these corporations are the Crime of the Month. Their crimes include air pollution, water pollution, and extreme reckless endangerment. We should include a terrorism enhancement, for W.I.P.P. is certainly terrorizing everyone in its neighborhood.

VOICES FROM INSIDE

CURE-ARM, Inc.

March 2014

As Steering Committee Director of this newly formed group I hope you will list our contact information. We have a quarterly Newsletter, available on paper and on-line and a Jobs Not Jail Rally flyer--Saturday, April 26, 12 pm, Boston Common. At: PO Box 396, Billerica MA 01821 <http://www.facebook.com/curearminc>, tmuise63@gmail.com, also at Real Cost of Prisons

San Quentin CA

January 2014

In the pit of the U.S. prison system we stand firm to resist the horrendous conditions which we've inherited. The energy from a number of protests that occurred last year inspired thousands of prisoners to hunger strike on the west coast and across America.