

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights

Newsletter

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Prison Labor

Whole industries now rely almost exclusively on prison labor. Federal prisoners, among the highest paid among U.S. prisoners, make up to \$1.25 an hour. They produce military helmets, uniforms, pants, shirts, ammunition belts, ID tags and tents.

Prisoners also work, often through subcontractors, for major corporations such as Chevron, Bank of America, IBM, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T, Starbucks, Nintendo, Victoria's Secret, J.C. Penney, Sears, Wal-Mart, Kmart, Eddie Bauer, Wendy's, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Fruit of the Loom, Caterpillar, Sara Lee, Quaker Oats, Mary Kay, Texas Instruments, Dell, Honeywell, Hewlett-Packard, Nortel, Nordstrom's, Revlon, Macy's, Pierre Cardin and Target.

Prisoners in some states run dairy farms, staff call centers, take hotel reservations and work in slaughterhouses. Also, prisoners are used to carry out public services such as collecting highway and other trash street trash some states.

From 1970 to 2005, the U.S. prison population increased about 700 percent. For-profit companies presently control about 18% of federal prisoners and 6.7% of state prisoners.

And where, geographically, is all of the above happening? As we know, the U.S. imprisons well over 700 adults out of every 100,000 people in the population as a whole--this is the largest incarceration rate in the world, by a substantial margin.

As of the 2010 census, there were 1,800 state and federal prisons. There were 3,200 local and county jails. Florida, Arizona and California stand out as states with sizable imprisoned populations in just about every one of their counties. In the midwest, imprisoned populations tend to be concentrated in just a few counties. Nearly 85% of U.S. counties contain some number of incarcerated people--our imprisoned are everywhere.

ROOT PROBLEMS

Mass incarceration in the United States is a racist phenomenon. Extremely disproportionately, those who are locked in prison cages are people of color, predominantly Black. African-Americans are channeled into prisons through ethnically based policing and prosecution, among the root problems that are not addressed merely by changing sentencing guidelines. And we know the overwhelming majority of those who are incarcerated are poor. This is not an accident.

Strategies that work to dismantle and eradicate ethnic and class biases and the inequality of treatment that pervades every part of daily life and make our legal system what it is are not even being discussed. The basic needs of the same communities most devastated by police violence and mass incarceration are also those suffering the harms of structural racism in every other area of life.

Reentry support and increased "community corrections" are becoming ever more popular catch-phrases. But if their acceptance follows past experience, their form will merely be added to the existing system. See what has happened with the idea of "restorative justice"--participating in those programs, with the carrot of less punishment, generally requires admission of guilt to charges. Community-based surveillance and monitoring will be done by for-profit companies and the low-income individuals caught in their trap will be charged for the costs incurred. Prison populations may, over time, be somewhat reduced, but the (increased) number of bodies under some sort of "correctional" control is not even being mentioned.

The appearance of change is coming, but without dealing with the fundamental societal issues of ethnic and economic justice it will merely produce another confidence game, like "welfare reform" and the ever popular, increasingly for-profit, "education reform."

Resource: "Confidence Men and 'Prison Reform,'" Kay Whitlock, Critical Mass Progress, November 6, 2014, Truth-out.org

IN MEMORIAM

There were 35 U.S. people officially murdered by U.S. state governments in 2014. The names and dates of death are:

01/07	Robert Gleason	FL
01/09	Michael Wilson	OK
01/16	Dennis McGuire	OH
01/22	Edgar Tamayo	TX
01/24	Kenneth Hogan	OK
01/29	Herbert Smulls	MO
02/5	Suzanne Basso	TX
02/12	Juan Chavez	FL
02/26	Michael Taylor	MO
02/26	Paul Howell	FL
03/19	Ray Jasper	TX
03/20	Robert Henry	FL
03/26	Jeffery Ferguson	MO
03/27	Anthony Doyle	TX
04/03	Tommy Sells	TX
04/09	Ramiro Hernandez	TX
04/16	José Villegas	TX
04/23	William Rousan	MO

All but seven of the executions took place in Texas, Missouri and Florida. In 2014 there were 72 new death sentences.

La Liberación de Los Cinco Cubanos

Fue una prueba del fracaso de los esfuerzos de EE.UU. para destruir Cuba? Desde el 17 de diciembre de 2014, hay un nuevo capítulo en las relaciones entre EE.UU. y Cuba. Cuba liberó al contratista de la USAID Alan Gross y a un ex funcionario de inteligencia cubano, se llama Trujillo, que trabajaba secretamente para la CIA. Los Estados Unidos, por su parte, liberó a los tres presos federales que quedaban del grupo de "Los Cinco Cubanos"--asi se les llama en Cuba Los Heroes Anti-terroristas: Gerardo Hernández--que estaba sentenciado a doble cadena perpetua, Antonio Guerrero y Ramón Labañino. Estos hombres han sido separados de sus familias durante 16 años. Ellos siempre dijeron que estaban aquí in los EE.UU. espiando a grupos anticubanos violentos, trabajando con la cooperación del gobierno estadounidense.

Es una gran victoria para el pueblo cubano y para el gobierno cubano. El gobierno de EE.UU., que ha estado tratando de destruir a la Revolución Cubana desde el primer día, se trata de una admisión de que no ha tenido éxito, abajo 10 presidentes. Aunque todavía se empezó por relajar algunos aspectos del bloqueo.

Por qué pasó esto ahora? Parte de esto es el cambio en América Latina que ahora tiene gobiernos progresistas.

Of those executed, 18 were African American and five were Latino. Over 65% were people of color.

04/23	Robert Hendrix	FL
04/29	Clayton Lockett	OK
06/17	Marcus Wellons	GA
06/18	John Winfield	MO
06/18	John Henry	FL
07/10	Eddie Davis	FL
07/16	John Middleton	MO
07/23	Joseph Wood	AZ
08/06	Michael Worthington	MO
09/10	Earl Ringo, Jr.	MO
09/10	Willie Trottie	TX
09/17	Lisa Coleman	TX
10/28	Miguel Paredes	TX
11/13	Chadwick Banks	FL
11/19	Leon Taylor	MO
12/09	Robert Holeey	GA
12/10	Paul Goodwin	MO

In 2012, the number of people imprisoned with life sentences was over 150,000. Of these, 49,000 are doing Life Without the Possibility of Parole, an increase of 22.2% since 2008.

Some call it "Strip and Straddle"

In November 2014, a federal judge finally approved a settlement under which New Mexico is to pay a total of \$750,000 to approximately 500 currently and formerly imprisoned men who were forced to strip and sit front-to-back on the floor for long periods. It was more than a year after the prisoners and the prison reached an agreement after months of negotiations and two mediations. The class action lawsuit was filed in 2011 about occurrences at Los Lunas prison from 2009 and 2010. The settlement provides per-person payments of from \$528 to \$2,114. We have yet to hear of any further developments.

Bail Requirements

Also in November, the NM Supreme Court ruled that judges cannot impose high bail bond requirements for defendants based solely on the seriousness of the crimes they are charged with.

¡THANK YOU! ¡MIL GRACIAS!

We so much appreciate the many holiday greetings and good wishes for the New Year that we have received recently. All the best to our readers in meeting the upcoming challenges that we will be facing over the next 12 months. You are always in our hearts and thoughts. Together we can do what we cannot do alone.