

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

Vol. 40-yy, No. 4

PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504

April 2015

BUT WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

MORE "STOP AND FRISK"

People in Chicago have been found to be stopped by the police more than four times as often as people in New York City at the height of its "stop and frisk" practice according to a recent ACLU report. In the summer of 2014, the Chicago police carried out over 250,000 stops that did not lead to an arrest--and those are just the ones that are documented. African-Americans make up about one-third of Chicago's population, but, guess what: they were nearly three-quarters of all stops. Uh-huh.

The current Chicago superintendent of police has spent most of his working life with the New York City police department.

From May to August of 2014, Chicago police carried out 93.6 stops per 1,000 people. New York City had 1.6 in 2014, 5.7 in 2013, 15.4 in 2012 and 22.9 in 2011.

ARE WE SURPRISED?

Surely we have noticed a pattern by now--the present administration says some things that might actually help poor and powerless people. And then....what happens? A current case in point:

A year ago, the Department of Justice announced it would expand its clemency criteria for those doing "longer (street) drug sentences than they deserve." And nearly half of the 209,000 people imprisoned in the federal system sentences qualify. Of those, 6,500 battled the paper work and filed petitions for clemency--nearly three times the previous record. And guess what: as of April 6, the president had commuted the sentences of a grand total of 22 people.

Tax the Poor More

New Mexico, one of the poorest states, has a more inequitable tax rate than 33 other states--those with less than \$17,000 a year at 11%, those with over \$330,000 at less than 5%. Utility taxes hit hardest.

NO SCIENTIFIC STANDARDS FOR FBI FORENSIC EVIDENCE

In more than 95% of the federal cases dating from 1996 and resulting in a conviction reviewed so far, 26 out of 28 forensic FBI agents overstated forensic matches, that is, used bogus scientific information--257 out of 268 from the microscopic hair comparison unit alone. There are 19 other forensic units which have also been allowed to operate without clear guidelines.

A total of 2,500 cases have been reviewed to date, with 1,200 still to go. Law enforcement agencies and prosecutors involved are actively delaying resolution of 700 of them. Of those reviewed, 28 or 32 (as variously reported) concern prisoners with execution sentences. And 14 of those individuals have already been killed.

One important question now, of course, is how state authorities and the courts will respond to findings that confirm long-suspected problems with subjective, pattern-based, forensic techniques--like hair and bite-mark comparisons--that have contributed to wrongful convictions in more than one-quarter of 392 DNA-exoneration cases since 1989.

As a Democratic senator from Connecticut stated: "These findings are appalling and chilling in their indictment of our criminal justice system, not only for potentially innocent defendants who have been wrongly imprisoned and even executed, but for prosecutors who have relied on fabricated and false evidence."

This information has been made public by the department of justice only because of the efforts of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL) and the Innocence Project.

Resources

NACDL Headquarters, 1660 L St NW, 12th floor, Washington DC 20036, 202-872-8600. The Innocence Project, 40 Worth Street #701, New York NY 10013, 212-791-4040.

General fue deportado

El 8 de abril el ex general Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova fue deportado a El Salvador desde Estados Unidos, poniendo fin a una batalla legal de dieciséis años. En un fallo emitido el mes pasado, el Tribunal de Apelaciones de Inmigración concluyó que hay pruebas suficientes de que el general Vides fue cómplice de la violación y el asesinato de cuatro religiosas estadounidenses en 1980. así como de la tortura de prisioneros políticos.

Es el primer líder militar extranjero de alto rango en ser deportado en virtud de una ley de 2004 aprobada con el fin de prohibir a quienes violan los derechos humanos pisar suelo estadounidense. Vides fue un aliado cercano del gobierno de Estados Unidos durante su mandato como ministro de Defensa de la Junta salvadoreña, de 1983 a 1989.

Las familias de las mujeres asesinadas han intentado durante años responsabilizar de las muertes al general Vides y a otros funcionarios salvadoreños que contaban con el apoyo de Estados Unidos.

Vides Casanova y Guillermo Garcia fueron hallados culpables de la tortura de miles de personas en El Salvador y también responsables por el genocidio llevado a cabo en la población salvadoreña. Defensores de derechos humanos y familiares de víctimas están celebrando esta victoria.

To receive our Newsletter by postal mail monthly, 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 87404. 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 as "legal mail."

Many,many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons PProject 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!

RELEASE AGING PEOPLE IN PRISON

Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) promotes the release of people incarcerated in New York State who are over age 50, have done considerable time, and pose no threat to public safety. The organization urges the governor and other policy-makers to use existing mechanisms--parole, compassionate release, and clemency--to release these people and also to pass the S.A.F.E. Parole Act to increase parole release rates for all.

For more information call: toll-free 24/7 at 877-410-4863. Also, director Mujahid Farid at 212-254-5700 x.317. Monthly meetings at the Correctional Association, 2090 Adam Clayton Powell Jr Blvd--2nd floor, New York NY 10027.

To All Who Are or Have Been on Death Row

For the Sam Johnson Essay Award 2015, imprisoned people are invited to enter essays of up to 500 words. You may write about anything at all. No poetry. You must be the author and entries may not have been published elsewhere. Up to three entries per person. Cash prizes: 1st prize of \$30, 2nd prize of \$20 and 3rd prize of \$10. Deadline: Monday, July 6, 2015. Send to: *The Wing* Editorial Team, 5 Park Lane, Greenhithe, Kent DA9 9RZ, UK (postage: \$1.15 per oz, 5 pp.)

Settlement in Parsons v. Ryan Information

This is a class action lawsuit that was filed in federal court in 2012, claiming that the medical, mental health and dental care in Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) state-run prisons and the conditions in the maximum security units are unconstitutional.

ADC and the lawyers for the prisoner class have reached a settlement that they believe is fair to both sides. If you are a prisoner in one of the ten ADC prisons (Douglas, Eyman, Florence, Lewis, Perryville, Phoenix, Safford, Tucson, Winslow, or Yuma), then you are a member of the class.

The full version of the settlement, and the motion for attorneys' fees, is available in your prison's library. Maximum security prisoners who cannot go to the library can check out a copy from the law library or view the Stipulation and exhibits on CCTV. If you have questions, want to share your experiences on issues in the case, or want additional information, please write the lawyers at either of these addresses:

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