

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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More Progress Against Solitary Confinement

The federal Bureau of Justice Statistics surveyed more than 90,000 adults in state and federal prisons and local jails from 2011 to 2012. Of those almost 20% stated that they had spent time in "restrictive housing" in the past 12 months or since arriving at their current institution. "Restrictive housing" included three types of segregation: disciplinary, administrative and solitary confinement. These housing assignments disproportionately affected the young, those with less formal education, those with mental problems and those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Also another recent study found that decreased use of solitary did not result in decreased safety inside prisons.

The good news is that, as a result of a settlement in the 2012 class-action lawsuit, *Peoples v. Fischer*, the policy and practice of solitary confinement in all of New York State is to be overhauled. Traditional solitary confinement for more than 1,100 people--one-quarter of the current population in solitary is to end. Under the settlement agreement, New York State has agreed to: 1) reducing the use of solitary, 2) limiting the length of solitary sentences and 3) increasing "rehabilitative" features in solitary and abolishing its most dehumanizing aspects.

Circumstances that solitary can be imposed as punishment are to be restricted; 23 out of 87 rule violations are no longer to result in solitary. Most maximum sentences are to be limited to three months. All those held in solitary are to receive automatic early release for good behavior and participation in programming. Conditions in solitary are to include: phone calls, reading materials and abolish use of "the loaf." Intensive monitoring will be carried out for a total of five years.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Business as usual is all those entities which have turned mass incarceration into money making enterprises to benefit the few. These include: commissary companies, like Keefe; key supply companies; the phone companies, like Global Tel Link and Securus; the food service companies, like Aramark; the for-profit prison companies, like Correction Corporation of America; their lobbyists, who write the laws that ensure long sentences, and so fill up prisons; and our politicians who pass these laws in exchange for campaign contributions. Corporations like Chevron, Bank of America, IBM, J.C. Penney, Sears, Wal-Mart, Eddie Bauer, Wendy's, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Motorola, Caterpillar, Microsoft, Texas Instruments, Pierre Cardin and Target.

G4S is a worldwide company that describes itself as offering "a suite of products and services--risk consulting & investigations, systems integration, security software & technology and security professionals that align to deliver innovative, essential and scalable solutions." In addition to claiming more than 50,000 employees in the U.S., they operate in 28 European countries, 10 Middle Eastern countries, 21 Asia/Pacific countries, 24 African countries and in 21 Latin American & Caribbean countries. G4S claims to work in over 2,200 prisons and jails in the United States and Canada. Wackenhut became part of this conglomerate in 2010.

To top it off, the United Nations has \$22 million in contracts with G4S. Which also includes among its accomplishments providing services and equipment to Israeli occupation prisons where torture and detention of Palestinians is commonplace. Since 2000, the U. S. has been involved in prison construction in 25 different countries.

Escuche

El 15 diciembre, destacados miembros del Partido Republicano en el Senado rechazaron una medida propuesta por legisladores demócratas destinada a extender la aplicación de las leyes de protección por bancarrota para Puerto Rico. Esto significa que Puerto Rico está ahora a solos dos semanas de declarar la mayor cesación de pago de la historia estadounidense.

To receive your Newsletter by postal mail monthly, send us self-addressed, stamped envelopes (with the CPR return address) --up to 12 at one time.

Keep sending us address changes and renewal requests to get the yearly holiday card/new calendar each January.

Also, note that the only address to use to be sure to reach us is: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504. Some resource listings are incorrect.

NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS, so, for our protection, please do not mark any envelopes sent to us as "legal mail."

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

National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women Created

On December 5, in New York City and by teleconference, 17 women met to determine how to include the women most affected by current criminal legal policies and to organize to create a more just system. In their Declaration they agreed to form a National Council and that no policies, laws, practices, organizing or services should be developed about women who are or were incarcerated without including them. Names and addresses of incarcerated women who are interested in participating should be sent to: Families for Justice as Healing, Attn. Andrea James, POBox 14, Boston MA 02121.

2016 LifeLines Poetry Competition

The competition is open to all U.S. prisoners who are or have been on the Row; a max of 3 entries per person. Poems must be received by Monday, April 4. Send entries to: Iona Teague, Wadham College, Parks Rd, Oxford OXI 3PN, U.K. (1 oz of postage, 5 pp, is \$1.15)

BAIL OUT STEPS

New Orleans LA Before Katrina hit the city 10 years ago, New Orleans had a rate of jailing its residents five times the national average: 6,000 on any given day before the storm. By 2010, the average daily jail population was reduced to 3,400 and by April of 2015 it was less than 1,900 per day. This is a 67% drop overall. In addition, the city's "crime rate" continues to decline. The city's practice has become largely to reserve the jail principally for those who are arrested for "violent felonies."

This has happened in large part because of community activism. Groups involved include the Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition, the Workers Center for Racial Justice and the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance. Additional tactics include two consent decrees forcing reform in the police department and the jail, the city's first Independent Police Monitor and an active Criminal Justice Committee of the City Council.

In addition, municipal ordinances were enacted from 2008 to 2010, requiring people to appear in court on their own-- for most nonviolent municipal charges, which now occurs in 70% of cases. Also, the continued reliance on financial bail without consideration for flight-risk resulted in many defendants remaining in jail because they could not pay even a low bond. In early 2012, New Orleans Pretrial Services was launched. Today, nearly 10% of low and low-moderate risk defendants are released through nonfinancial means in the regular court process. The number of people who were arrested declined, as well as others being released before their trials.

New Mexico There is bipartisan support for a proposed NM Constitutional Amendment that would clarify that defendants who aren't deemed dangerous or a flight risk could not be kept in jail solely because they could not afford to bond out. The proposed amendment guarantees a court hearing at which dangerousness has to be shown by clear and convincing evidence...and also guarantees that defendants not dangerous should not be held in jail pending trial simply because they are poor.

¡There Will Be No New Jail!

In the middle of December, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously rejected the city's proposed new jail! This was a two year struggle led by CA United for a Responsible Budget.