

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

Vol. 42-yy, No. 10

PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504

October 2017

WHAT ARE REALLY THE PROBLEMS?

Symptoms are Not Causes

There has been a lot of uproar in New Mexico about the implementation of the so-called "bail reform" constitutional amendment. The widely held belief that such an amendment was needed is based on the understanding that accused people, the defendants, are poor. That sounds like an underlying cause for an unfair system to us. If people who are arrested and detained are, overwhelmingly, poor (as well as of color), why not work for more economic and political equality to reduce that situation? Fewer poor people and less racism could well result in fewer arrests. After the fact punishment of individuals for being recipients of unequal treatment and conditions will do nothing but perpetuate such biased conditions.

All of this is in addition to the fact that a lot of the resistance to changes in the bail system is coming from those in the so-called "bail bond industry" who make their money from people who have been arrested having to buy their way out of jail before they are tried.

And then it turns out that, somehow, never discussed before the bail reform amendment was passed, now the changes have as a condition, electronic monitoring (ankle bracelets) and street drug testing requirements. Which cost, guess what, money.

In turn, that means that people who are pretrial detainees--who have not been found guilty of anything--are being required to pay a \$25 setup fee, \$25 for each mandatory drug test and \$10/day for the ankle bracelet. And, to date, there is no reimbursement for these expenses should an accused person be found not-guilty. Civil rights advocates point out that these costs could pressure innocent people to plead guilty.

Throughout, many aspects of the program are left to the discretion of program staff and judges. Yet we say that accused are considered innocent until proven guilty...

Remember: follow the money!

The Opposite of Poverty is Justice

What follows is a non-police, court and penal system example of the same kind of exacerbating response to the situation of punishing the poor--for being poor.

In Puerto Rico, many of the 3.5 million residents, who are formally U.S. citizens, and half of the island's hospitals still have no electricity from the power grid more than a month after Hurricane Maria. Over a million people still lack clean drinking water and residents report eye infections as well as gastrointestinal diseases from contaminated water. More than a third of the local sewage treatment plants are not functioning and 40% of people lack a cellphone signal.

In addition, Puerto Rico has not only \$74 billion in government debt, another \$49 billion in unfunded pension obligations but also \$95 billion in storm-related damage. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a relief package with \$5 billion in loans for the island. But debt is not relief.

Yet there are reports of tons of undistributed food and water arriving and that there is a great deal of military presence, with police officers from many U.S. states and the U.S. military--so it feels like a police state.

For generations, the U.S. has extracted Puerto Rican land and labor. In the first 33 days after the hurricane, 55,000 people left for the mainland. There is fear that the same thing is going to happen to Puerto Rico as happened in New Orleans, where people had to leave, never came back and their communities were gentrified. There are 23 contaminated Superfund sites in Puerto Rico that have flooded and exposed the residents to a number of toxic chemicals affecting the quality of the water and the soil.

Although the mayor of the capital city, San Juan, is Carmen Yulín Cruz, who has been an outspoken critic of the low quality and quantity of aid provided to the island by the current federal administration, the governor of the island has played along with it. Again, follow the money.

EN PUERTO RICO DESPUES DEL HURUCANES

La ayuda se está distribuyendo arbitrariamente y los depósitos de residuos tóxicos se siguen desbordando. Hay más de un millón de personas en la isla que todavía no tienen agua potable y habitantes de la isla afirman que están padeciendo de infecciones en los ojos y enfermedades gastrointestinales como resultado de la exposición al agua contaminada. (10/27/2017)

¡Imaginen una recuperación de Puerto Rico diseñada por los puertorriquenõs!

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

Keep sending us address changes and renewal requests in order for us to maintain the mailing list for the January holiday card/ new calendar as accurately as we can.

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

And still: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS; for our protection, *please* do not mark envelopes addressed to us as "Legal Mail."

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

Keep Following the Money

Most U.S. drug epidemics over the past two centuries were sparked by pharmaceutical companies and physicians. according to an October AP article. In the 1800s, opium based products were sold over the counter for pain or sleep problems.

Then Merck & Co. of Germany developed morphine, which made battlefield injuries more bearable for Civil War soldiers. Merck also introduced cocaine, for sinus problems with energizing effects. And the German company Bayer began marketing heroin in the 1890s, for flu. In 1900, when cocaine and heroin were legal and popular, there were estimated to be 250,000 people in the U.S. with a drug addiction--about one in 300. The estimate today is one in 133.

Alcohol and cigarettes remain the nation's primary addictions and kill far more than street drugs. Arresting users and dealers doesn't seem to slow epidemics....
π

RESOURCE: DETENTION WATCH NETWORK, 1419 V St NW, Washington DC 20009, challenges the injustices of immigration detention.

More Money

CoreCivic, formerly the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), is the second largest for-profit prison contractor in the country, with 84 "correctional properties." Its business with ICE ("Immigration and Customs Enforcement"), has exploded since 2014.

For example, the Federal Bureau of Prisons had had a contract with CoreCivic to run a 1,129 bed prison near Grants NM. But the deaths of prisoners--associated with medical neglect--finally led to the Bureau of Prisons canceling its contract with CoreCivic. In October, 2016, ICE took over the prison, technically subcontracting it from Cibola County. In what amounts to a no-bid contract, the money, minus 50 cents per prisoner per day which was kept by the county, CoreCivic will be paid \$150 million for imprisoning immigrants at Cibola over a five year period. County commissioners disclosed the deal only after they had approved it. Local jobs were the big issue for them.

So far, CoreCivic runs nine ICE prisons with at least three others under contract with the U.S. Marshals Service. CoreCivic is a \$3.7 billion company and receives a fixed payment of \$2.5 million monthly when 0 to 847 detainees are being held at the Cibola facility. Starting at 848 detainees, ICE pays \$55.43 per additional person held, per day. From March through May, the daily counts ranged between 268 and 784 people.

From the beginning of January 2017 through mid-February, at least 185 immigrants were deported from the Cibola facility. Deportations can be ordered via video-conference by judges who are hundreds of miles away and be carried out in the middle of the night. For people who have been held at Cibola, the deportations take place from Albuquerque. CoreCivic is paid an additional \$97,638 per month for regular transports five days a week. In January and February, 342 deportees were flown out. Of those people, 302 had no criminal record beyond entering the U.S. without papers.

Immigration courts have no equivalent personnel equivalent public defenders. Asylum seekers do not qualify to be released on bond, nor do detainees who don't have legal residents to sponsor them. Most people face removal proceedings alone, although there are some hard-working *pro bono* lawyers available in some locations. Fortunately, there was an October 2 ruling by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals mandating affordable bonds.

Once again, FOLLOW THE MONEY. (It's not what you've done, it's who you are.)