

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## Cries of Children Echo Thru Years

Family separation is a fact of life here, happening hundreds--if not thousands--of times a day. Even the New York Times has had quoted: "In the United States, we call that law enforcement." Prosecutors and police routinely separate children from their parents--when parents or children are arrested, when incarcerated women give birth, even when a pregnant woman fails a mandatory drug test, or when a child skips school.

In addition, a quarter of a million U.S. children are estimated, in the mid-2000s, to have a single mother in jail. Another 150,000 had a mother in prison. And since then, the number of incarcerated women has risen. (Many children have incarcerated fathers--one in four black children can expect to have their father incarcerated before they turn 14.) No one in most communities, according to the *Dallas Morning News*, in the police, court or penal system is responsible for the safety (let alone well-being) of children whose mothers go to jail. Federal law states that any parent whose child spends 15 out of 22 months in foster care can permanently lose their parental rights.

More than 30,000 children are locked up in juvenile facilities in the U.S. Black children are incarcerated at a rate five times higher than white children are. More than 60% of children incarcerated are being held for nonviolent offenses and/or "status offenses"--those that only apply to minors. And children are often held in appalling conditions, such as those that have recently received a lot of press in Orlando FL.

There are approximately 400,000 children in the foster care system, many of whom are prohibited from any parental contact. Some 3/4s of these children nationwide involve not abuse but neglect, that "often looks just like poverty" says a Cornell University sociologist. He further states "There's no consistent evidence that removing kid is, on average, beneficial, and there's substantial evidence that it does harm." Child protective agencies disproportionately go after poor black and Latino parents.

## Over Incarceration

"In 1954, the year *Brown v. Board of Education* [supposedly ended the era of separate but equal, and thus school segregation], about one-third of the nation's prisoners were black. By 1994, the number was approaching 50 percent.... [Yet] by September 2014, 64 percent of blacks said the courts were "not dealing harshly enough with criminals".... African Americans have always viewed the protection of black lives as a civil rights issue, whether the threat comes from police officers or 'street criminals.' Far from ignoring the issue of crime by blacks against other blacks, African American officials and their constituents have been consumed by it.

".... Racism shaped the... context in which the black community and its elected representatives made their choices. From felon disenfranchisement laws that suppress black votes, to exploitative housing practices that strip black wealth, to schools that refuse to educate black children, to win-at-all-costs prosecutors who strike blacks from jury pools, to craven politicians who earn votes by preying on racial anxieties, to the unconscious and implicit biases that infect us all, it is impossible to understand American 'crime policy' without appreciating racism's enduring role.... African Americans just got the tough-on-crime laws.

".... Class divisions within the black community: Although mass incarceration harms black America as a whole, its most direct victims are the poorest, least educated blacks. While the lifetime risk of incarceration skyrocketed for African American male high school dropouts with the advent of mass incarceration, it actually decreased slightly for black men with some college education... By the year 2000, the lifetime risk of incarceration for black high school dropouts was *ten times higher* than it was for African Americans who had attended college.... class dynamics drove elected officials..."

-- excerpted from James Forman Jr, Introduction to *Locking Up Our Own, Crime and Punishment in Black America*, 2017

## SEEKING REDEMPTION PETITION

**Families United to End LWOP (F.U.E.L.)** in California has launched an online petition asking the governor to commute all first-timers given an LWOP sentence to life sentences that would allow them to be screened by an "expert" panel for parole consideration. FUEL's postal address is 9103 S. Western Ave, Los Angeles CA 90047. (The petition can be found at [www.change.org/seeking-redemption](http://www.change.org/seeking-redemption)).

Following are excerpts, as space permits from the petition:

"We, the undersigned, hereby request and urge you to grant commutations of sentence to all men and women serving the sentence of Life **Without** the Possibility of Parole to Life **With** the Possibility of parole, provided these men and women are first-time adult offenders....We are seeking this relief only because California's laws are inequitable and excessive and there is no feasible way to bring these back to balance. There are currently 5,086 men and women serving a sentence that is a *de facto* death sentence. We are asking only for the chance for those first-time adult offenders to prove themselves capable of becoming contributing members of society....

"A great many of these (people) are first-time offenders who were youths at the time of their offense, hope for the opportunity of parole affords them the courage and commitment to engage in rehabilitative programs and turn their lives around. This, in turn, fosters a safer environment with an atmosphere of respect and order....>

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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 our only permanent mailing list--the one for our January holiday card/new calendar as accurately as possible.

Also, note that the correct address to be sure to reach us at is: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 807504. 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 posting our Newsletter on-line for free downloading and distribution. It is at: [www.realcostofprisonsproject.org](http://www.realcostofprisonsproject.org)--this is a GREAT site! Thank you for all your support!

## Casi 600 mujeres arrestadas

"A la luz de los momentos oscuros que vivimos en este país, con niños que han sido arrancados de los brazos de sus padres, los fallos de la Corte Suprema sobre la prohibición musulmana y sobre las clínicas antiabortistas, la represión contra los trabajadores, el retiro del magistrado Kennedy, y tener que pensar cómo será nuestra Corte suprema en los próximos 30 o 40 años, me siento inspirada. Me siento inspirada por las mujeres de todo el país que vinieron aquí, arriesgándose a ser arrestadas, para decir: 'No nos vamos a quedar sentadas mientras ocurren estas injusticias.' Así que el mundo está bastante mal, pero me siento esperanzada e inspirada."

--por Linda Sarsour, coorganizadora de la Marcha de las Mujeres en Washington

## The Routledge International Handbook

The *Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism* (RIHPA) will reflect key abolitionist thought and also help set the agenda for local and global abolitionist ideas and interventions over the coming decade. It will consist of 35-40 chapters (5,000-6,000 words each) working toward the systemic and systematic dismantling of penal structures and processes, and toward social living that is grounded in relationships that take into account the needs of all. It seeks contributions from all around the world, and from scholars, non-academics, activists, and people in or formerly in prison. It seeks work that engages and furthers abolitionist practice, examines abolition empirically and "is situated within or at the interstices of critiques of ableism, capitalism, heteronormativity, militarism, patriarchy, state power, racism, settler colonialism and xenophobia....

Abolitionists work to establish and support networks of solidarity with the primary targets of penalty--such as communities of color and people who are socially and economically excluded--and to provide a platform for voices of resistance....

Abstracts of 400-500 words are due October 1, 2018 with an attached brief biography. Papers, due June 1, 2019, must contain original and unpublished work, and

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