

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

Vol. 25, No. 3

P.O. Box 1911, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1911

March 2000

## GENDER MATTERS

Women's issues and prison issues are part of the same struggle -- the struggle to create a society based on mutual respect and cooperation rather than dehumanization and coercion. As stated in the June 1987 edition of *Kinesis*, a publication questioning the use of imprisonment as a solution for domestic violence, "Prison is a type of violence which enforces a state's power over its citizens, in the same way that rape and battering enforce the power of men over women."

Penal institutions for women in the U.S. have their roots in the witch hunts, burnings, and patriarchal power structures of 17th century Europe and New England. Historically, the number

of women in prison has been few and the number continues to be relatively small compared to men. Since 1980, however, women have been the fastest growing prison population with the number of women in prison increasing at twice the rate for men. According to The Sentencing Project, in 1980 there were approximately 12,300 women in state and federal prisons compared to 82,800 women prisoners in 1997, an increase of 573 percent. Women incarcerated in local jails numbered 63,000, for a total of 146,600 imprisoned women.

Nationally, drug-related convictions accounted for half the increase in incarceration rates for women compared to a third of the increase in incarceration

(continued on next page)

*We dedicate this issue to Dylcia Pagan, Alicia Rodriguez, Lucy Rodriguez, Alejandrina Torres, and Carmen Valentin - the Puerto Rican women who, along with 6 men, won their freedom last September after nearly 20 years in prison. We salute their courage and determination in the struggle for justice.*



## GENDER MATTERS cont.

rates for men. In some states like New York, this number for women was 91% because of the laws mandating a 15 year sentence for selling two ounces or possessing four ounces of drugs.

Like men prisoners, women prisoners are disproportionately people of color and poor. Numerous studies show that women of color, particularly African-American women, are over-arrested, over-indicted, under-defended, and over-sentenced.

A 1991 study revealed that 80% of women in prison had incomes of less than \$2,000 a year. Not surprisingly, most are in prison for economic crimes such as forgery and illegal credit card use. 90% are single mothers and most are between 25 and 34 years old.

Of the women who were convicted of violent crimes, the vast majority are imprisoned for defending themselves or their children from an abusive partner, resulting in thousands of women nationwide being imprisoned for the "crime" of self-defense.

Women prisoners are often the sole care-givers and primary sources of financial support for their children; the effect of imprisonment on the family is devastating. Because there are few prisons for women, women are particularly distanced from home and family. As if this weren't bad enough news for families, there are laws prohibiting anyone who has been incarcerated from receiv-

ing public benefits including housing assistance.

While incarcerated, women are becoming increasingly subjected to maximum security control units and shock incarceration. In 1988, the Women's High Security Unit in Lexington, KY, was closed after an international human rights campaign. Women there had been held for years in isolation in subterranean cells, subjected to daily strip searches, extreme sleep deprivation, a policy condoning a complete denial of privacy, and an intense campaign of sexual abuse. Currently, many of the 6% of women who enter prison pregnant must give birth while shackled.

As the status of and conditions for women in prison demonstrate, sexism, racism, and classism continue to run rampant. We are all part of the same struggle.

### Resources

National Clearinghouse in Defense of Battered Women  
125 South 9th St, #302  
Philadelphia PA 19107

CA Coalition for Women Prisoners  
100 McAllister Street  
San Francisco CA 94102-4929  
(415)255-4036 ext. 313  
(415)522-3150 (fax)  
ccwp@igc.org (e-mail)

National Women's Law Center  
11 DuPont Circle NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202)588-5180 <[www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org)>



# MORATORIUM MAKES FOR GOOD NEWS

Maybe its the new millenium, the so-called dawning of the age of aquarius. Maybe its years of hard work finally paying off. Maybe its blind luck and coincidence. For whatever reason, anti-death penalty matters are in the news lately because things are happening.

The Florida Legislature has passed legislation making lethal injection the primary method for the State to murder people. Florida's action means that there are only three states that still have electrocution as the sole means of execution: Alabama, Georgia and Nebraska. The U.S. Supreme Court granted a stay of execution of Robert Tarver of Alabama, which may provide the Court with another case in which to consider whether electrocution is cruel and unusual punishment. Alabama has murdered 20 people since 1976; 65% were African-American.

On February 1, 2000. Governor George Ryan of Illinois announced that he would stay all further executions in Illinois until a Commission that he will appoint submits a report on the fairness of the death penalty as imposed in Illinois. As of this writing, the Governor has not appointed a commission or even indicated who will be appointed and has refused to engage in any further discussions of the issue. One argument for a moratorium has been that in recent years 13 of the people on death

row in Illinois have been completely exonerated of the charges against them. In at least one case, seven current and former DuPage County law enforcement officials, including police and prosecutors, face felony obstruction of justice or other charges for manufacturing evidence against Rolando Cruz and a co-defendant.

The Republican governor's action came as something of a surprise to members of the coalition formed to abolish the death penalty in Illinois. Governor Ryan is in the middle of trying to deal with a major political scandal that raises questions about whether he will be able to finish out his term of office. To complicate matters, no one knows the views of the Lt. Governor on the moratorium.

Illinois' action prompted Senator Russ Feingold, D-Wis, to write President Clinton urging a moratorium on federal executions and a review of the imposition of the death penalty in federal cases. Clinton says he is considering it. There are 21 prisoners on death row in the federal system. The federal government has not murderd anyone since it hung Victor Feguer in Iowa in 1963. Interestingly, at a press briefing on January 21, 2000, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno said that she had yet to find any evidence that the dealth penalty deters anything.





## VOICES FROM INSIDE

### **INTERNATIONAL WOMANS' DAY**

Gatesville TX May 1, 1999

I am a female on Death Row in the state of Texas...It is not mandatory for us to work because we do not get any credit or good time for working nor do we get paid to work. However behind these prison walls if you don't work you are punished and treated differently...

### **VIVID REALITY**

Starke FL December 30, 1999

...If anyone wishes to have a successful career in crime whether it's in the field of murder, trespassing, robbery or rape it is best to be a cop, a politician or a corporate electoral financial supporter or the manager of this country.

### **NEW MOUNTAIN STATES' NEWSLETTER**

Canon City CO January 20, 2000

We are gathering articles on prisons, prisoners, courts, law enforcement officials and lawyers for a Mountain States' newsletter: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, and WY. Please include the name of the publication and the date of the article. T. F. Willsey, 63529, Box 300-C, Canon City CO 81215.

### **SPEAK OUT**

Newark OH January 25, 2000

...In 1999, the CA DOC paid out millions of taxpayers' money in lawsuits...50 attorneys are being paid \$98/hr to defend guilty prison officials in lawsuits. If they had spent the time in Sacramento to just respond appropriately, there would not be a need for defense in court...Society must never lose track of the thought that prisons' are today's thermometer that measures society's repression tomorrow.



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Mailing list additions and address changes should go into effect within two months from their post-marked date. We don't have the resources to acknowledge these requests by letter. Requests for referrals and other correspondence will be answered within four to six weeks. Letters intended for publication must say "Do Print."

The Coalition makes information available on resources and services for prisoners. We strongly urge that readers keep copies of all papers, especially legal papers, sent to those offering assistance, and be careful about sending money. **In most cases we do not have direct experience with the quality or reliability of the services provided by the groups mentioned.**

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### **BUZZWORDS**

Amarillo TX      January 23, 2000

... Our society shocks the conscience: news-videocam-hungry bureaurats' (spelled correctly) ability to put a spin on the most basic problems of modern society and to identify the victims of society's injustice as "offenders."

### **EQUAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE**

Michigan City IN      February 4, 2000

We are currently involved in projects to eradicate Prison Health Services, Inc., remove Keefe Commissary Sales, abolish overpriced prisoner phone services and stop the prison building boom in Indiana. Help us help you. Please have your people contact us if they can participate or help in any way. Indiana Equal Justice Alliance, PMB-114, 973 North Shadeland Avenue, Indianapolis IN 46219-4809.

### **READING IS...**

Boise ID      February 8, 2000

Ad-seg prisoners in Idaho are denied books in excess of 2 volumes. Denied hardcover books from prisoner library or inter-library loan. We need to hear from people inside living under similar conditions and from people outside willing to help organize against these conditions. Frank Antill 34993 PO Box 51, Boise ID 83707. Prisoners send letters from streets.

### **WRITE LETTERS**

Lawton OK      February 9, 2000

...Get real, get active, write letters in your own right and urge your people to do so too. Don't stop there. Urge your people to vote for the right party, the right candidate, the right political agenda. change comes from within and through peaceful, smart efforts of those wishing changes.





## **VOICES FROM INSIDE continued**

### **ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS**

#### **Subscription Renewal Reminder & Thank You**

You must return the whole renewal form by May 1, 2000 for your Newsletter to continue. If you did not receive a renewal form with your February NEWSLETTER, send us: your last name, first name & middle initial, (if currently in prison) Prison ID number, Address, City, State & Zip, WRITTEN CLEARLY.

#### **PLEASE NOTE**

**January 26, 2000**

An error was made. Phillip Cordova is not suing for abuses by gangs. He is suing state officials who are retaliating against him. His lawsuit has nothing to do with gangs; please do not contact him about gang abuse.

**January 10, 2000**

The Texas Litigation Offenders Program consists of several members who have educated themselves on the Constitutions, Texas government code, and Code of Criminal procedures. We are not equipped with knowledge or books on other states' criminal laws. No Texas letters will go unanswered.

**January 25, 2000**

Sunnis for ALLAH, Estelle unit, no longer accepts out of state inmates because units in other states restrict inmate to inmate correspondence. Texas inmates only, thank you.

**January Newsletter**

The Department of Corrections of a large southwestern state considers the "N" word to be unacceptable no matter how used.

#### **INCARCERATED CITIZENS COALITION**

ICC is a socio-political prisoners' rights advocacy organization designed to educate the public about the realities of prison life. It serves to create a collective and effective response to injustices suffered by prisoners. We will design projects and programs that are fitting to serve as assistance to the multi-dimensional needs of prisoners and their families. Box 201, Quakertown PA 18951.





## VOICES IN SOLIDARITY

### CLIMBING THE WALLS

**Climbing the Walls**, an independent quarterly magazine committed to publishing the work of prisoners, their family members, and people of conscience everywhere welcomes unsolicited artwork and writing. Queremos contrabucciones escritas en espanol. POB 60677, Phila PA 19133.

### COALITION TO REPEAL THE 21-DAY RULE

In Virginia, under the 21-Day Rule, no court is permitted to review any newly discovered evidence presented 21 days or more after the initial sentencing. PO Box 4804, Charlottesville VA 22905, 1-888-567-8237, Charlottesville area: (804) 263-8148.

### A NEW MEANING TO: RUBBER STAMPED

The American Friends Service Committee in Massachusetts stamped this on their X-mas cards to those imprisoned: "THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS FORWARDED TO A MASSACHUSETTS 'CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION.' THE RECIPIENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS MAY HAVE BEEN VIOLATED REPEATEDLY. THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF ITS EMPLOYEES."

### WORTH CHECKING OUT: FAMILY DISCOUNT CALLING

An offer of half price prisoner calling services. Remote Call Forwarding (RCF) is one of the very few legal alternatives to reduce the high cost of prison calling. Under the dominant carrier guidelines (the AT&T tariff) prisoner phone providers (IPP's) are allowed to charge up to a \$5.50 surcharge and 55¢ a minute for interstate long distance calls. 700 Corporate Circle, Suite E, Golden CO-80401, 1-888-446-6283.

### NATIVE AMERICAN PRISONER SUPPORT (NAPS)

**NAPS** was created due to the numerous requests from both the general public and prisoners for information/or assistance concerning the religious rights of Native American prisoners. Its goals include a comprehensive directory to be updated regularly a major resource for communication and research on behalf of prisoners. PO Box 14 Pelly Bay, Nunavut, Canada XOE IKO. (46¢ stamp for 1st ½ oz., 52¢ for 1 oz.)

The Coalition for Prisoners' Rights Newsletter is published monthly by the Prison Project of Santa Fe, Inc., P.O. Box 1911, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1911. Subscription rates are: free to prisoners, their family members, and ex-prisoners who request it themselves; \$12/year for other individuals; \$25/year for government agencies and for-profit institutions. Please do not send names of other people; order only for yourself. We appreciate those who help us by sharing their newsletter and by sending stamps.



# Crime of the Month

## aka Crimetoppers

Citing humanitarian concerns, U.S. officials will eventually decide if 6 year old Elian Gonzales, rescued November 25th from seas that took his mother's life, will be returned to his father in Cuba.

Meanwhile, Cuba's legislative assembly has cited declassified U.S. documents including a 1960 State Department memo advocating "a line of action which makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring

about hunger, desperation, and the overthrow of the government." The Assembly also points to an American Association for World Health statement that the U.S. embargo "appears to violate the most basic international charters and conventions governing human rights."

So, Elian waits while the U.S. allows various factions to speculate on the humanitarianism of returning him. But we hear not a whisper about ending the embargo that is harming millions more.

That is our Crime of the Month.



03/00

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