

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

Vol. 31, No. 5

PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504-1911

May 2006

MAY DAY, MAY DAY, 2006



This is a time of many painful lessons. Of course those of us living the reality of oppression know them well. Now we get to watch those who only experience our reality at second hand reject repeatedly some of this year's clearest and most dramatic lessons. Some are surprised at all the African-American people trapped first in flooded New Orleans at the time of Katrina and then outside of New Orleans in the months afterward.

Some are surprised that new immigrants feel strongly enough about being criminalized and deported to take to the streets in the hundreds of thousands. Sucked out of their home countries by the consequences of NAFTA, they have been forced to the U.S. and reasonably want to experience decent treatment here, as workers and as human beings.

And how can we continue to be surprised that people in the Middle East don't like invaders?

SERES HUMANOS NO PUEDEN SER ILEGALES/HUMAN BEINGS CANNOT BE ILLEGAL

ABOUT THE COALITION FOR PRISONERS' RIGHTS

MISSION STATEMENT

We work with others, nationally and locally, to build unity by gathering and disseminating information, analysis and constructive alternatives for those imprisoned, formerly imprisoned, their loved ones and allies. We strive to decrease the number of those incarcerated and to improve jail and prison conditions. We believe that the police, court and penal system depends on exploiting racism and poverty. We oppose punishment as a tool for positive social change and believe prisons as presently constituted are dangerous to community health, safety and development.

All of us who currently work with the Coalition are volunteers, ranging in age from 10 to 80+, of different backgrounds, life styles, ethnicities and abilities. None of us are lawyers. We are aware of the need for solidarity with prisoners because some of us were formerly imprisoned, some are family members of prisoners, and all of our lives have been affected by the multiple injustices of the prison system. We are pleased that, once someone starts to work with the Coalition, they are likely to continue because of dedication to its human rights passion.

There are different levels and types of participation. A couple of dozen of us work regularly on collecting information for, writing, and getting out our free, monthly, nationwide Newsletter, which always includes excerpts of letters from those imprisoned. About half a dozen of us work on putting together our resource lists and sending them to

those who write and ask for information and assistance. Many of the 5,000 to 8,000 on our mailing list consider themselves to be members of the Coalition and their participation and support is most valuable. In addition to mail directly regarding receiving the Newsletter, we get upwards of 500 letters a month that require a response. This is our most time consuming task, as each one needs to be opened, read, sorted and responded to, to the extent that our resources allow. In fact, we count ourselves lucky to be able to answer letters within six weeks. We work around a large table, which is convenient for discussion as we try to assist in dealing with more complex requests and situations.

The *Coalition for Prisoners' Rights Newsletter* is one of the oldest and most widely read prisoner focused publications. We are in the bind of the better we do our work, the more work there is to do. We are limited by the number of people who participate, the space (a living room) we have to work in, and often overwhelming, the shortage of MONEY.

We are funded from three main sources: generous individuals, including a number of those imprisoned, their family members and friends; churches on both the local and national level; and a few small foundations. We are always hanging by a thread. We couldn't make it if the local businesses from whom we buy goods and services didn't carry us on occasion. This is why donations from all of our readers are so crucial to the continuation of this struggle for justice. No contribution is too small. All are much appreciated.

WHAT IS CRIME? QUE ES UN CRIMEN?

The same social and economic system exploits us - in many of the same ways - as prisoners and as workers. The Coalition for Prisoners' Rights believes that crime is the bad, oppressive things we do to each other. The more people you hurt, the bigger the criminal you are.

So the big criminals in our country are the people who are rich when others are poor, those who make profits from other peoples' misery. We fight other countries for them.

Street crime is a very small part of all the crimes committed each day. Even mobster crime is small in comparison to unemployment, homelessness, the bad food, education and health care that hurt so many of us. Yet we have been taught to believe that street crime and organized crime are big enemies to us. And when we believe that, the real, big criminals are safe.

Enormous changes are needed to rid ourselves of the system that results in the big crime in this country. Workers and prisoners, the unemployed, the disabled, the retired - all people of color, poor and working people - have to work together to stop the big crooks.

The big crooks - the owners and bureaucrats and politicians who protect their interests at our expense - don't have horns or fangs or shifty eyes, just like the people now in prison don't. Maybe they're nice people, just trying to be comfortable like the rest of us. But the pursuit by these few of comforts and wealth and power mean violence and oppression against the vast majority of us. And that's more than a crying shame. It's a crime.

El mismo sistema social y económico nos abusa de la misma manera tanto a los prisioneros como a los obreros. Y la Coalición para los Derechos de los Prisioneros cree que los crímenes son las cosas malas y opresivas que no hacemos uno al otro. El peor criminal es aquel que hiere al mayor número de personas.

Los crímenes callejeros son sólo una pequeña parte de los crímenes que se cometen diariamente. Ningún crimen se compara con los crímenes del desempleo, la falta de vivienda, la mala nutrición, la mala educación, la mala atención médica que nos afectan a muchos de nosotros. Pero lo triste es que la gente cree que el enemigo es el delincuente callejero o el crimen organizado. Y si todos creemos esto, los criminales verdaderos se salen con la suya.

Un cambio enorme es necesario para deshacernos de este sistema que comete los crímenes más grandes en este país. Y todos, obreros y prisioneros, desempleados y discapacitados, los pobres y la gente de color tenemos que unirnos para ganarles a estos ladrones.

Estos ladrones - los empresarios, los burócratas y los políticos - que protegen sus intereses a costa de nosotros, no tienen ni rabo, ni cuernos, ni patas de chivo, parecen tan normales como cualquier pinto. Tal vez sean buenas gentes tratando de llevar una vida cómoda como todos la quisiéramos; pero cuando cruzan esa línea que les permite violentar y oprimir un gran número de personas para mantener su tren de vida entonces se convierten en los más grandes criminales del país.

Coalition for Prisoners' Rights Newsletter



VOICES
FROM
INSIDE
since 1976

MADE FOR WALKING

Graterford PA

March 23, 2006

PA DOC charges \$28 a pair for inferior boots. The VA Corrections Industries sells a good quality boot, which bought in bulk costs \$16 a pair. It has a solid support counter, appropriate size heel filler as well as a non-lethal support shank. Order a pair from each place, cut them in half with a band saw and you'll see.

PRESENTING COMMUNICATIONS

Angleton TX

March 27, 2006

A number of us on the Wayne Scott Unit are seeking an investigation by any state representatives as to actions by the gang sgt., property officer and inside yard squad officer who put an inmate in the dayroom and search his cell for 2 to 3 hours, reading all legal and personal correspondence, confiscate and keep fans, typewriters, radios and commissary items. This is in violation of the department's policy AD-03.72. Please contact Freddie Lee Walker, 457485, by presenting communications to: U.S. Legal Services, c/o Chas Neyra, 211 Margarita Dr, Killeen TX 76542. Non-prisoners write me at: Wayne Scott Unit, 6999 Retrieve Rd, Angleton TX 77515.

Disclaimer: Eds.' Note--None of us are lawyers.

HEALTH CARE

Munising MI

March 28, 2006

Anyone who has had problems with health care here at the Alger Maximum Facility with nurses please contact me with information that you have. I've filed a suit and I am looking for potential plaintiffs for a class action suit. Write: Fred Reeves Jr, 241575, Alger Max Facility, PO Box 600, Munising MI 49862.

Disclaimer: Eds.' Note--None of us are lawyers.

5/06

SET-OFFS

Tennessee Colony TX

March 28, 2006

Have you been given more than a one year set-off? If your offense is before September 1, 1987, and if your offense is not one of three certain offenses or if your offense is after September 1, 1987, and you are eligible for Mandatory Supervision you have had the incorrect parole guideline applied to your case. The Parole Board has been bringing people back up for Parole Review within 3 to 5 weeks of filing on this. If possible, contact: Ventura Lopez, 654846, Route 1, Box 150, Tennessee Colony TX 75884. Disclaimer: Eds.' Note--None of us are lawyers.

Mailing list additions and address changes should go into effect within two months from their postmarked date. Our goal is to answer requests for referrals and other correspondence within six weeks. Letters intended for publication must say "Do Print." If requesting responses, state if you can receive mail directly from those imprisoned. The Coalition makes information available on resources and services for prisoners. We strongly urge readers to 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. NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS.

THOSE WHO ARE INDIFFERENT

Soledad CA

March 29, 2006

Prisoner abuse is not only being committed in places like Guantanamo Bay, Bagram Air Force Base and Abu Ghraib. Such places are simply the Rodney King examples of abuse. Yet daily in this democratic American society you will find that there are those who are indifferent to what their co-workers may do and they fail to realize that they are as guilty as the rogues themselves. There is no innocent bystander to a prisoner's suffering. Suffering from not only the excesses inflicted upon us by prisoncrats but also from those in the public at large who refuse to acknowledge the inhumanity of excesses and abuses imposed by overzealous bullies clothed in the authority of the state in violation of law.

PRISONS WITHIN A PRISON

Angola LA

March 31, 2006

Mace is sprayed here on a daily basis in the 6x9 cells. About 1,000 such cells, over 416 at Camp J alone, 180 at TU/CCR, 104 at Camp D-Hawk, 52 at Tiger-Camp C, 104 at Jaguar-Camp C and 100 on Death Row. Then about 100 more solitary confinement cells at the "hole" (administrative lockdown) at CBD-Main prison. Angola holds about 5,100 inmates on 18,000 acres, prisons within a prison.

NEVER REVIEWED

Manson NC

March 31, 2006

If you have filed a petition for writ of certiorari in the NC Court of Appeals to review an order denying your Motion for Appropriate Relief (MAR) and you received a 2 line order denying that writ, it's possible your writ was never reviewed by a judge and that it is the clerk who is denying these writs. Write me: Robert A. Sartori, c/o: Darlene Austin, PO Box 643, Glenville NC 28736. I am a NC inmate investigating these allegations.

Disclaimer: Eds.' note--None of us are lawyers.

FLAT YEARS

Amarillo TX

March 29, 2006

I am from Morocco and have done 22 flat years on a life sentence under inhuman conditions. I have experienced many forms of mental and physical torture--daily abuses by irresponsible racist officers. Abuses of prisoners should not be occurring in a civilized democratic nation



WEIGHTY MATTERS

New Lisbon WI

April 5, 2006

In early December, the Education Director at the New Lisbon Correctional Institution, fired all of the housing unit tutors. These tutors all had great work evaluations and were very helpful to their students. The inmates that used to spend a lot of time studying are now spending their spare time playing cards and dominoes and drinking kool aid. The institution has started a weight lifting course. If you would like to comment on this, please call the Warden or the Education Director at (608) 562-6192. Maybe they know why it is more important to learn how to lift weights than to learn how to read and write.

NO ONE IS LISTENING

Greenwood SC

April 6, 2006

Is anyone trying to get some relief for women prisoners? We're battered, abused, and controlled, not only by the court system, but also by the correctional officers. We have nowhere near the privileges that the men have, yet no one is listening! We need advocates. Tamika K. Grooms, 255189 M2-203, L.C.I, 2809 Airport Road, Greenwood SC 29649. Cannot receive mail from other prisons.

VOICE IN SOLIDARITY

The **American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)** is working nationwide against the use of solitary confinement in prisons, and has long condemned extended isolation and sensory deprivation as violations of human rights and fundamental human decency. In particular, the AFSC intends to monitor conditions in solitary confinement across the country--general conditions, medical and psychiatric treatment, racial discrimination and the like.

The AFSC is looking for input from current prisoners and those formerly incarcerated who are or have been in solitary confinement in California, Nevada, Utah or Arizona prisons. Please write the AFSC with your personal experiences in isolation. While the AFSC is not a legal organization and cannot provide assistance to prisoners on individual cases, the AFSC does continue to work with prisoners, families, government leaders, community members, and activist networks to strengthen the movement against solitary confinement.

For Arizona, write:

Control Unit Project

American Friends Service Committee

103 North Park Avenue--109

Tucson AZ 85719

For California, Nevada, Utah, write:

Solitary Confinement Project

American Friends Service Committee

1515 Webster Street--Third Floor

Oakland CA 94612

¿QUE ES LA JUSTICIA? WHAT IS JUSTICE?

La primera condicion para que exista la justicia es saber que la justicia es un proceso, algo en lo que tenemos que trabajar todos los dias. Pero estamos muy lejos de lograr esta justicia.

Cuando cosas malas nos suceden y reaccionamos hiriendo a las personas que creemos que nos han hecho daño, esa no es justicia - es castigo. El castigo sigue solamente a la injusticia. El castigo no trae la justicia, unicamente mantiene las cosas como son, y esto es lo que quieren las personas que estan en el poder.

Muchos de nosotros estamos tan enojados por la manera en que hemos sido tratados en nuestras vidas que es muy dificil pensar en como hacer cambios. Y todas las instituciones que existen hoy en dia como la policia, las cortes, las prisiones quieren que busquemos venganza.

La segunda condicion para que la justicia sea justa incluye el compartir equitativamente. Vivimos en un pais rico. Aunque dejaramos de tomar mas de lo que merecemos de otros paises, tendríamos lo suficiente para que todos los que vivimos aqui tuvieramos lo que necesitamos. No es justicia que algunas personas tengan mucho dinero mientras otras no tengan lo suficiente para pagar por sus necesidades basicas.

La tercera condicion para que exista la justicia es tener control sobre nuestras vidas y poder para mejorar las. Es muy dificil luchar por la justicia, pero solamente puede haber justicia para uno, cuando exista la justicia para todos.

The first condition of justice is knowing that justice is a process, something that has to be worked on every day. We are very far from it.

When bad things happen to us and we react by hurting the people who we think have hurt us, that is not justice - that is punishment. Punishment can only come after injustice. Punishment does not work toward creating justice, it works toward keeping things as they are. Which is what people in power want them to be.

Many of us are so angry about how we have been treated in our lives that it is hard for us to think about how to change it. We are encouraged to use all our energy to think of how we can get back at people and get more for ourselves. And all the institutions that exist now, such as police, courts, and prisons, encourage us to do so.

The second condition of justice, being fair, includes sharing equally. We live in a rich country. Even if we stopped taking more than our share from other countries there could still be enough here for everyone to have what they need. For some people to have alot of money while others don't have enough to cover their basic needs isn't justice.

The third condition of justice is having power to control our lives, and to improve them. Working for justice is hard work, especially since it goes against so many of the lies we have been brought up with. There can only be justice for one when it is there for us all.

Crime of the Month

aka Crimetoppers

There are not a lot of laughs on this topic: Opium is the thickened juice of a poppy plant which has been used over the years to make a large number of drugs, called opiates. Opiates tend to relieve pain and make people feel good.

Medically, the opiates can be wonderful, relieving the suffering of broken bones, cancer, and many other painful conditions. Repeated opiate use leads to addiction. This is sometimes called self-medication. In the U.S. such street use is illegal. If an active opiate addict stops using the opiate, they soon become quite ill--the opiate withdrawal syndrom.

The drug is like a chain, connecting the user to the drug supplier. Stopping the drug breaks the chain, letting the user fall into

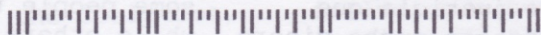
withdrawal--the only way to overcome an opium addiction.

Heroin is a commonly used recreational opiate. Methadone is a synthetic opiate, developed in Nazi Germany and legal in the U.S., now used by prisons. Its effects are much longer lasting and slower (no high) than heroin, and the withdrawal syndrome is also longer and slower (more difficult). Anecdotal evidence reports a great many bad effects of methadone use, both long and short term. So methadone is a heavier, stronger chain connecting a person to continued use and harm.

The prisons, together with officials at state health departments, are increasingly requiring addicts to take methadone instead of heroin. This is the Crime of the Month



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5/06

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