Union membership actually grew in the U.S. by the first "statistically significant" amount in 25 years: from 12.1% of the workforce in 2007 to 12.4% in 2008. Does this increase of 428,000 show that workers can rebuild unions in this country? No, it doesn't.

Almost 275,000 of the '08 gain was in government employee unionization, bringing these workers to a 36.8% union rate. In the private sector, union membership increased by on 150,000, to 7.6% of the workforce. The 2007 overall gain (public and private workers) of 311,000 union members was offset by the 2006 loss of 326,000.

The crisis of U.S. labor lies in the private sector, where more than million members disappeared between 2000 and 2007, 95% of them in manufacturing. The United
"MAYDAY" - MAY 2009, cont.

Auto Workers Union (UAW), for example, lost another 7% of its members in 2008, and is now 432,000 from over 1.5 million members in 1979. The loss of members is loss of bargaining power, starting union auto wages are now $14.50 an hour. Thirty years ago, about 24% of private sector workers were union members; now it's less than 8%. Most of the private sector gains in 2008 were in construction and are almost certain to be wiped out by the current housing and financial crisis.

Union auto workers still hold a big advantage over non-union auto workers in retiree benefits, particularly health care. About 40% of UAW retirees are not yet 65, so not eligible for Medicare. As part of the auto companies' bailout, lawmakers tried to wipe out any union advantage by pushing union retiree benefits back to levels of non-union plants. They want to used the financial crisis to completely bust the union, and it looks like they will have some success.

The vast majority of U.S. jobs are now in the service sector, and only about 10% in manufacturing. Union workers still hold an advantage in wages: $886 a week vs. $691 for non-union workers. Having a union raises the wages of the average service sector worker by $2 an hour. Union workers have a 19% greater chance to have health insurance and a 25% greater chance to have a pension.

So why are unions unable to organize new workers since there is still a union advantage? Because of what employers do and get away with. Under U.S. law, workers who want a union are harassed, intimidated, and fired. Workers must be ready to go to war with their employer, and most workers are too frightened to do this. About 1 in 5 union activist can expect to be fired during a union organizing campaign. Government redress takes months if not years, and the penalties against employers are negligible. Employers must pay lost wages to a worker, but only the loss of pay above what workers earned at another job over the time period. Employers must reinstate the workers if they want their old job back, but after months or years few workers do. Illegally firing union activist is very cost effective. Fighting their workers pays off for employers. If workers vote for a union in spite of the odds, employers can just refuse to negotiate, and the government does little to force employers to follow the law.

Unions are working for the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), the "card check" law. This bill would require employers to pay triple salary to activist workers they fire illegally, would cut months from the unionization process by allowing union recognition when the majority sign union cards and eliminate an election if workers choose this, and provide the mandatory government arbitration if a employers refused to negotiate with its workers. Unions say that when the EFCA is not a cure-all, it would help. Walmart is spending $100 million to oppose it, and passage is uncertain.
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. And the Coalition for Prisoners' Rights believes that crime is the bad, oppressive things we do to each other. The more people hurt, the bigger 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 people's 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, people of color, all 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 nos hacemos uno al otro. El peor criminal es aquel que hiere al mayor número de personas.

Los crímenes callejeros son solo 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 todo, trabajadores y prisioneros, desempleados y desaparecidos, los pobres y la gente de color tenemos que unirnos para ganarles a estos ladrones.

Estos ladrones - los empresarios, los burocratas y los políticos - que protegen sus intereses a costa de nosotros, no tienen ni rabo, no 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 quisieramos; pero cuando cruzan esa línea que les permite violentar y oprimir a un gran número de personas para mantener su tren de vida entonces se convierten en los más grandes criminales del país.
VALLEY FEVER
Coalinga CA
February 13, 2009

I am a prisoner who is currently filing suit on Valley Fever Contraction. Are there any other suits out there like mine on Valley Fever? If so, how are they doing? Contact: Steven G Menchaca, J-63872, D4-242, PVSP, PO Box 8504, Coalinga, CA 93210.

B.O.P E-MAIL
Florence CO
February 13, 2009

The federal BOP E-Mail program began in 2001 as a pilot project at select institutions. The BOP hopes to have each of its prisons outfitted by 2011. The program is operated by TRULINCS, a private corporation afforded the contract under the Bush’s administration. The e-mail system is intended to replace, not simply supplement, the traditional mail system and thereby permit the BOP to justify greater correspondence restrictions than it otherwise might with traditional mail. This can include limiting the amount of mailings per month, the number of permissible correspondents, and even limiting who may be corresponded with (i.e. immediate family and those on approved visiting lists). The e-mail program may appear more convenient now, but in the end the BOP is collecting this participation data to justify elimination of snail mail and the imposition of gross limitations and contact controls.

UPDATES
Beeville, TX
February 13, 2009

In the August 2008 issue there was a list of questions for inmates who could have experienced a deprivation of personal property while in ad-seg. The focus was on Texas ad-seg. Inmates who wrote me directly had their letters denied, inmate to inmate correspondence is prohibited, have your family or friends contact me. Joshua Martinez, 1076379, ML/048, McConnell Unit, 3001 S Emily Drive, Beeville, TX 78102.

HAIR
Frackville, PA
February 19, 2009

I would like to learn about any programs that permit inmates to grow their hair in order to donate it to charities that benefit children who suffer from hair loss. Contact: Kurt Danysh, DL-4879, 1111 Altamont Blvd, Frackville, PA 17931.
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 response, 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.

ROTTEN SMELL
Eloy, AZ February 21, 2009
There are extremely unpleasant smells 24 hours per day. We at Red Rock CCA prison, have to deal with a raw sewage smell. This is so bad that staff have found other jobs and prisoners have gotten sick. It makes us want to puke. The prison sewage is within 100 yards of the prison, open pits, and unbearable smell all day and all night. I've heard a lot of stories about CCA prisons; this one is extremely rotten.

LATINO ORGANIZATION FOR LIVER AWARENESS (LOLA)
Beaver WV February 24, 2009
A good friend to prisoners recently passed away. She was Phyllis Beck, dedicated and caring founder of LOLA. LOLA will continue to provided the inmate community with information on liver disease, testing and treatment options. Contact: LOLA, 1560 Mayflower Ave, Bronx NY 10461. 718-892-8697, www.lola-national.org

GRIEVANCE FORMS
Mount Olive WV February 24, 2009
At MOCC in Quillians unit, it is almost impossible to given the simplest problem corrected. The Administration changed the multipage set of carbonless paper grievance form to one single page. That leaves prisoners with no copy for their records. The unit team is supposed to send the inmate a copy as soon as the grievance is assigned a number; seldom is this done. No longer can the prison add comments concerning the unit team’s response before it is sent to the warden. Nor can the prisoner add comments concerning the warden’s response before appealing to the DOC commissioner. Now both the warden and the commissioner can reply with a simple check mark in a box.

"BLACK OPERATIONS"
Coleman FL March 28, 2009
All government “black operations” are done with drug money. How else could they get money from Congress to go kill people in other countries and overthrow other governments. So. They do it with drug trafficking money. If all drugs were to be legalized and controlled and taxed, there would be no drug war and no need to kill for territories as drug cartels are doing now.
¿QUE ES LA JUSTICIA? WHAT IS JUSTICE?

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 a lot 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.

La primera condición para que exista la justicia es saber que la justicia es un proceso, algo en lo que tenemos que trabajar todos los días. 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 traе la justicia, únicamente mantiene las cosas como son, y esto es lo que quieren las personas que están en el poder.

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

La segunda condición para que la justicia sea justa incluye el compartir equitativamente. Vivimos en un país rico. Aunque dejáramos de tomar más de lo que merecemos de otros países, tendríamos lo suficiente para que todos los que vivimos aquí tuvieran lo que necesitamos. No es justicia que algunas personas tengan mucho dinero mientras otras no tengan lo suficiente para pagar por sus necesidades básicas.

La tercera condición para que exista la justicia es tener control sobre nuestras vidas y poder para mejorar las. Es muy difícil luchar por la justicia, pero solo-mente puede haber justicia para uno, cuando exista la justicia para todos.
LIFERS SUPPORT GROUP/SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The prison population of advanced aged prisoners is growing at an alarming rate. To meet this sad reality, the Lifers Support Group at Mule Creek State Prison in California has formed a Senior Affairs Committee. We ask other prison groups and free dimension organizations for any advice, assistance, or information that help in our mission to improve the quality of existence for aged prisoners. Contact: Robert H. Outman, c/o M.A. Bunyan, PO Box 338, Moss Beach CA 94038.

IN SUPPORT OF RESTORING THE WORK RELEASE PROGRAM

Governor Paterson of New York should rescind Executive Order No. 5 issued in January 1995 and restore those with A-1 violent offender convictions to the Work Release Program. They are predictably and statistically the safest group among those imprisoned to successfully reintegrate into society, it would be cost efficient, it would reduce the NYS Department of Correctional Services budget and would access Second Chance Act resources. For a copy of the support petition and further information, contact: Judicial Process Commission, 265 Ormond Street, Rochester NY 14605, 585-325-7727, www.rocipc.org, info@rocipc.org

PAROLE SYSTEM CHANGE SOUGHT

The current Texas parole system needs to be changed. A grass roots campaign has been started to try to bring reform to the TX parole system. See: http://www.PetitionOnline.com/tcb123/petition.html As of mid-April over 600 signatures had been gathered. There is also a letter writing campaign to state representatives and senators. Once the lawmakers see the numbers start to rise, they will be more apt to bring about a much needed change in this broken machine of parole in Texas.

A TEAM FOR CHRIST

Offers 6 Gospel tracts and distributes about 100,000 tracts a year to the public and to prisoners. The Team goes to ten prisons each month and one jail. Contact: A Team for Christ, 154 Earnest Byner Street, Milledgeville GA 31051, 478-452-9709, ateamforchrist@allitel.net

The Coalition for Prisoners' Rights Newsletter is published monthly by the Prison Project of Santa Fe, Inc., PO 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 and other donations to us at the address at the top of this box.
Good news! The torturers, those “Hardworking people at the CIA [who] did what they were told,” according to the White House press secretary, have been given blanket immunity. “It would be unfair to prosecute dedicated men and women working to protect America for conduct that was sanctioned in advance by the Justice Department,” the Attorney General insists.

In other words, if you get a fancy government lawyer to say it’s okay, then you can do whatever you like. Way cool! Though this benevolent policy probably won’t be implemented for those currently incarcerated and being tortured in U.S. prisons. The notion that it is “time for reflection....” only applies to government sanctioned crimes committed in the name of “national security.” How convenient that the rule of law is so flexible.

Nuremberg Principle IV (you know, those quaint guidelines named for the trials of Nazi war criminals in the 1940s) states, “The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible for him.” Is a moral choice possible for someone about to torture another human being? Hmm...tough call. Japanese soldiers were hanged after World War II for waterboarding U.S. prisoners. Oh, but that standard of morality is so pre-9/11.

Our crime of the month is the continued arrogance of the U.S. Liberty and justice for all? Not these days!