

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504

November 2020

We Are People Here

The most recent number we could find for the population of Texas prisons is "about" 140,000 (from February 2020--down from 151,213 in 2018). As of a November 2020 report by the University of Texas at Austin, there were then more than 23,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Texas prisons. That means that those imprisoned in Texas are testing positive at a rate 40% higher than the national prison population average is. At least 190 deaths of imprisoned people in Texas are linked to Covid-19.

Texas has the largest population of people locked up in the U.S. as well as the highest number of Covid-19 prison and jail deaths of any incarceration system in the country. The Texas infection rate in prison, per 10,000 people, is the second-highest in the country, only behind Florida.

In August 2020, deaths of those imprisoned in Texas, Ohio, Michigan, and New Jersey ranged from 8 per 10,000 in Texas to 29 per 10,000 in New Jersey--roughly 30 to 40 deaths a month. Michigan, New Jersey and Ohio are reported to have reduced their numbers significantly. On average, the U.S. mortality rate within prisons was calculated to be 61.8 per 100,000, twice as large as the general public mortality rate after adjusting for the sex, age and ethnicity of those incarcerated. Generally speaking, the highest Covid-19 mortality rates have occurred within large prisons and those in the midwest.

In July 2020, the Covid-19 case rate for those imprisoned was 5.5 times higher than the U.S. population case rate of 587 per 100,000. The death rate in prisons then was 39 per 100,000. For the U.S. it was then 29 per 100,000.

In the U.S., Black people are currently twice as likely to die from Covid-19 as are "whites". And Black people are incarcerated 5 times more often than "whites" are.

All these grim numbers are almost certainly undercounts. More than half of those who have died in Texas prisons were eligible for parole.

Covid-19 has hit San Quentin prison in California hard. There have been 26 incarcerated people and one guard who have died as of this writing in mid-November.

A study by Stanford University between 1995 and 2010 found that of 860 people with murder convictions who were paroled in California, only five were returned to prison because of new felony convictions--none with a life term. As Marcus Henderson, Editor-in-Chief of the *San Quentin News* in its September/October 2020 issue writes: "It pains most of us who have done the internal work--those who have worked through the childhood traumas and accepted accountability--to still be considered politically "risky" and not for safety reasons.

"We also accept the victim/survivor rights; we believe in their voice. We learned this through participating in our self-help groups. It's not for us to tell people who have been harmed how they should feel. We must respect the process. We just want to restore what we can.

"As the coronavirus spreads and becomes our new reality, our fears of death are real. All we hope is for society to remember whatever the deed, most of us weren't sentenced to death by the state."

The organization, *Reform Alliance* was founded in 2019 by Jay-Z, Meek Mill and others "to move out at least a million people who are unjustly stuck in the criminal justice system within the next five years and to change laws and policies that perpetuate injustice in the U.S..."

It has a current specific goal of donating 100,000 masks to prisons to aid in combating the Covid-19 virus. Of the purchased masks, 40,000 were delivered to the Tennessee Department of Corrections and 5,000 were delivered to Mississippi State Penitentiary. New York's massive Rikers Island jail will receive 50,000 masks. It usually houses 5,000 to 6,000 incarcerated people and has at least 200 documented cases of Covid-19.

New Mexico, as reported on November 15, 2020, now has cases of the virus--including both those imprisoned and staff--in all 11 prisons in the state. There have been 7 fatalities to date.

SEND US: HOLIDAY/CALENDAR CARD DESIGNS

Imprisoned Readers: Please send us a black and white drawing for the 2021 New Year's card and calendar. All designs must be respectful of our diversity: We cannot use any with racist, sexist, or religious symbolism. The deadline is **December 15**. Submission of a drawing serves as artist's permission for use, and will be credited. Prize: As possible, book(s) of choice.

YEAR END SCHEDULED FEDERAL EXECUTIONS

NOVEMBER 19 Orlando Cordia Hall

DECEMBER 8 Lisa Marie Montgomery

DECEMBER 10 Brandon Bernard

We mourn your loss.

THE LEAST READ PART OF THE NEWSLETTER:

To receive the CPR Newsletter by postal mail monthly, send us a *self-addressed, stamped envelope* for every month's issue you are requesting, up to 12 at one time. Put the CPR return address on the upper left-hand corner of *each envelope* you send.

Continue to send us address changes to help us keep our annual calendar mailing list as accurate as possible.

NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS. Letters to us marked "Legal Mail" can hurt our access to the prison they come from.

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons project, which posts our Newsletter on-line monthly for free downloading and distribution. All issues since 2009 are at: realcostofprisons.org -- a great site!

Separaciones de familias inmigrantes

Biden designó a la principal exasesora de inmigración del presidente Obama, Cecilia Muñoz, para que formara parte de su equipo de transición. Ella a menudo justificaba las estrictas políticas de inmigración de Obama, incluida la deportación de miles de niños centro-americanos por parte del gobierno y su decisión de anular una orden ejecutiva que habría detenido las deportaciones.

En el año 2011, Muñoz habló así: "La conclusión es que si tienes una ley de inmigración que no funciona y tienes una comunidad de 11 millones de personas que viven y trabajan "ilegalmente" en Estados Unidos, algunas de estas cosas van a suceder, incluso si se ejerce la ley a la perfección. Se separará a padres de sus hijos. No es necesario que nos guste, pero es el resultado de tener un sistema de leyes disfuncionales. Y la respuesta a ese problema es reformar la ley."

"...There will be parents separated from their children....It is a result of having a broken system of laws. And the answer to that problems is reforming the law..."

COVID Related Prison Population Reductions

[excerpts from numbers downloaded 11/14/2020]

State + federal prison population:

906,385

Total prison population reduction:

44,498

The largest reductions:

Federal Bureau of Prisons: 6,300

California: 3,418

Colorado: 3,500

Illinois: 4,000

New Jersey: 2,200

Pennsylvania: 2,575

source: UCLA Law Covid-19 Behind Bars Data Project.

The extent of the pandemic being what it is, statistics are immediately out of date. They do, however, suggest trends.

In a July 2020 report by the UCLA project, the death rate was found to be 39 per 100,000 people. At that time, the U.S. population rate was 29 per 100,000. After adjusting for age and gender differences between the two groups, the death rate was modified to be three times higher for prisoners compared to the general U.S. population.

The only non-computer based contact with the UCLA project we were able to find, unfortunately, is: Kathy Wyer, Media Contact, 310-206-1766, wyer@law.ucla.edu

From a November 4 report of the release of almost 2,000 people out of New Jersey prisons from the AFSC Healing Justice program:

"To share the incredible joy of seeing bus load after bus load arrive--truly a 'Free Them All Event' with family members, advocates, children and many tears of joy. Also elders in wheelchairs, people needing to catch trains and planes, people who were hungry and those who needed clothing. Hundreds of volunteers were there from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., with a hotline set up for assistance as well...As long as the public emergency continues, people will be returning home on a rolling basis, which means the potential for another thousand out before the end of the year.

"Decarceration on our way to abolition!"

Resources: Prison Watch, AFSC, 89 Market St Newark NJ 07102

San Quentin News, 1 Main St., San Quentin CA 94964. Particularly Vol. 2020, No. 45, September/October 2020, Edition 129. Full of information and valuable resources.

* * * BLACK LIVES MATTER * * *