

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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CONNECT THE NUMBERS

Federal

- > The President's budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 anticipates a 5% increase in the federal prison population.
- > That same budget also includes a plan to cut 6,000 jobs in federal prisons, including 1,800 positions for guards.
- > There are currently so many unfilled staff positions in federal prisons that medical staff, administrators and kitchen workers are being required to take on "corrections duties."
- > The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee recently passed the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (S. 1917) which would give federal judges greater flexibility in sentencing below a mandatory minimum in "low level" cases and in reducing "outsized" sentences, including Life Without Parole (LWOP) for a third drug crime conviction. Some currently imprisoned would be able to petition for retroactive relief, including the 3,100 people incarcerated under the old 100 to 1 crack cocaine disparity. S. 1917 also includes the creation of two new mandatory minimums for other convictions and a sentencing enhancement for trafficking of heroin laced with fentanyl.

State

- > New Jersey has achieved a 31% prison population decline since 1999.
- > Five states now have "racial impact statement" legislative provisions measuring Black/"white" disparities in incarceration. The states are: Connecticut, Iowa, Minnesota, Oregon and New Jersey. New Jersey has the highest level of such disparity. These statements provide legislators with a statistical analysis of the projected impact of police, court and prison policy changes before they are enacted.

Nationally

- > In 2017, 23 human beings were executed by a total of seven different states.
- > Of those so killed, eight were Black, two were Latino, and 13 were "white."
- > Seven were killed in Texas.

WHAT IS SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR?

New York State (NYS) holds more people in solitary confinement and other forms of isolation at rates above the national average--nearly 8% of those imprisoned--and in a racially disparate manner. On any given day, in NYS prisons, roughly 2,900 people are held in Special Housing Units (SHU) and an additional estimated 1,000 or more people are held in Keeplock (KL). The national average of those imprisoned held in solitary is 4.4%. Colorado, Connecticut and Washington have 1 to 2% in solitary.

African Americans are 13% of the total NYS population but are 50% of the people in prison and 60% of those in long term solitary confinement.

Southport Correctional Facility is located in Pine City NYS, near Elmira and close to the Pennsylvania state line. It is one of the two super-maxes in NYS with the primary purpose of holding people in solitary and has done so since 1991. Southport currently incarcerates about 400 people in the SHU. Nearly 90% of people in the SHU at Southport are Black (62%) or Latino (27%). Only 2% of the guards at Southport are Black (1.4%) or Latino (0.7%). Of all the people who were held at Southport for the entirety of 2015, 76% were Black.

Southport frequently imposes lengthy solitary sentences based on allegations of assault of staff, after staff themselves have actually brutalized prisoners. Solitary also is often a response to non-violent prison rule violations, such as disobeying an order, interfering with the count, drug use or retaliation for questioning authority. In 2015 and 2016 57% and 77% of the average annual population at Southport received disciplinary tickets in the SHU. Black people represented 64% of all people receiving a ticket in 2015 and 67% of people receiving six months or more additional time in solitary. The average length of stay in Southport's SHU is 7.6 months. People held in Southport's SHU almost always spend more total time incarcerated than others.

And then there are the over 1,400 people supposedly released from the SHU in CA....

"Somos perseguidos por un sistema injusto"

dice activista por los derechos de los inmigrantes habla desde la iglesia donde ha tomado refugio

Ella ha vivido en Colorado por 17 años y es madre de tres niños nacidos en los Estados Unidos.

"Todos somos defensores de los derechos humanos. Y pienso que la dignidad humana no está sobre un papel legal. He perdido el miedo a levantar mi voz. ¿Por qué?, porque soy humana, tengo sentimientos, igual que tú. Amo a mis hijos igual que tú.

Estoy siendo perseguida no por no tener un documento. Lo que ellos no entienden es que mi mejor documento legal es ser madre.

Todos los inmigrantes somos un negocio porque pagamos mucho dinero. Nos venden un sueño muy caro. Ya basta. Levantemos nuestra voz. Defendamos nuestra dignidad diciendo aquí estamos, cambien esas leyes injustas.

Ellos quieren debilitarnos, generar miedo y separarnos pero no van a poder. ¡Salir del miedo y de las sombras y levantar la voz!

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 the mailing list for our January holiday card/new calendar as accurately as possible.

Also, note that the only address to be sure to reach us at is: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504. Some resource address listings are incorrect in this regard.

And still: NONE OF US ARE LAWERS 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 free distribution. It is at:

www.realcostofprisonsproject.org--this is a GREAT site! Thank you for all your support!

JUST DETENTION INTERNATIONAL SAYS

"....No person, even a judge, can be expected to remain unmoved by monstrous behavior toward hundreds of young women, and to the institutional indifference that allowed his abuse to continue...Rape apologists have long drawn distinctions between people who deserve to be assaulted and those who do not. These same arguments are made about people in prison..... Rape is wrong and unacceptable. Always. Period. Sexual violence against any person, in any setting, makes all of us unsafe....Prisons where "bad" people get raped tend to be places where "good" people get raped, too...."

Lovisa Stannow, director

Where Are the Good Guys?

On May 12, 2008, at the Agriprocessors slaughterhouse in Postville IA, nearly 400 migrant workers, mostly from Guatemala and Mexico, were arrested in a bust which cost \$5 million. At the time it was the biggest workplace immigration raid in U.S. history. About 270 people were sentenced to five months in federal prison. The chief federal judge of the Northern District of Iowa oversaw this travesty.

In addition, before and after the raid, the judge's husband owned stock in two for-profit prison companies and he had bought additional prison stock. The companies were then known as CCA and Wackenhut, now each has been re-named as: CoreCivic and GEO Group. The judge's husband bought between \$30,000 and \$100,000 worth of additional stock five days before the raid. When he sold them about five months later, they were worth between \$65,000 and \$150,000. Those companies are the countries largest for-profit prison companies, operating nearly 150 facilities and holding in them 150,000 people. Between January 2003 and February 2011, CCA's stock price went up by about 434% and GEO's rose 642%.

The judge repeatedly met with immigration officials and federal prosecutors in the months before the bust. The entire proceedings were pre-scripted. She learned that about 700 arrests were anticipated and appeared to be in full support of them.

The Judicial Conference, a policy making body for the federal courts, is supposed to oversee the implementation of the code of conduct for federal judges. The Code states that judges "should refrain from financial and business dealings that exploit the judicial position."

When immigrants are convicted of federal crimes, they are often initially sent to government-run prisons for processing and classification before they are transferred to for-profit prisons. Currently, 11 for-profit prisons contract with the federal Bureau of Prisons; nine are run by GEO or CoreCivic. Postville prisoners were there.

Apparently, the Northern District of Iowa sends a significantly higher proportion of defendants to prison, and with longer sentences, than the national average.

Stealing IDs

The chief counsel for ICE in Seattle has been charged with stealing the IDs of seven immigrants to defraud several credit card companies, including American Express, Bank of America and Capital One. A plea agreement is apparently in the works.