

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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POSITIVE MODIFICATIONS

Three California counties, in response to lawsuits by people imprisoned, represented by the Prison Law Office (address: General Delivery, San Quentin CA 94964, 510-280-2621, Don Specter director, www.prisonlaw.com), have made changes in their policies and procedures involving solitary confinement. Seven of the 58 California counties were sued, alleging that conditions had grown inhumane as jails absorbed inmates who previously would have completed their sentences in state prisons. This was the direct result of federal court settlements beginning in 2011 regarding prison conditions and requiring a lowering of the number of people held over capacity in the state prison system.

In addition to having the highest incarceration rate in the world, the U.S. practice of solitary confinement is much above the frequency of use of solitary and the United Nations recommendation of 15 consecutive days. The Vera Institute of Justice (34 35th St, Suite 4-2A, Brooklyn NY 11232, 212-334-1300), active in work to reduce the extent of solitary confinement, reminds us that it is not only dehumanizing, but can also worsen mental illness.

The California counties approach adopted as the result of the recent law suit is to limit the use of solitary "generally to those who engage in continued violent behavior" and has dramatically reduced the number of those held in isolation and the length of time they are required to stay there.

The three California counties said to be changing their policies and practices regarding solitary are Contra Costa in the East Bay, Sacramento, and Santa Clara. Fresno is considering changes. Contra Costa started 2019 with about 100 people in solitary, most for more than a year. In December, there were just three in isolation cells. Sacramento reports its numbers in isolation as roughly half of previously, to about 60 people. "Low cost incentives" are a strategy used to reward good behavior. Examples are: use of radios, watching movies and extra snacks.

Drop LWOP Campaign

The September meeting of 130 anti-LWOP activists in Los Angeles CA demonstrated the growth in organized opposition to LWOP sentences. It is a very positive change from the days when so many were working for it, and then were pleased when such measures passed. In addition to the work building up in California, there are other such groups like The Coalition Against Death By Incarceration in Pennsylvania (CADB), c/o Decarcerate Pennsylvania, PO Box 40764, Philadelphia PA 19107; Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) in New York, c/o Nation Inside, PO Box 448, Wilmington NC; and The Sentencing Project, 1705 DeSales St NW, 8th Floor, Washington DC 20036.

The central goals of the California #Drop LWOP! Campaign have been, from its beginning: the commutation of ALL people doing LWOP to a parole-able sentence, regardless of whether the conviction for the crime that took any one person to prison was violent or nonviolent, and the removal of LWOP and all extreme sentencing from the California penal code.

In September however, the governor of California did issue 7 LWOP commutations, 2 of which are women at CIW who are 79 and 80 years old. The governor has stated that he will continue to issue pardons and commutations. Continuing to slow down progress, there continue to be many county DAs who have filed injunctions against California SB 1437/1170.95 (the new Felony Murder re-sentencing law); CDCRs exclusion of people doing LWOP from re-sentencing consideration under 1170(d)(1); and the right to more programming.

There will be a Drop LWOP lobby and rally day on March 9 in Sacramento with workshops and contacting legislators.

Resources are available on droplwop.com: and updated 2020 commutation guide, postcards, and a summary from the September meeting. There are also regional material distribution sites. For more information concerning materials to use in organizing, contact the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, 4400 Market St, Oakland CA 94608 or PO Box 291585, Los Angeles CA 90029.

IN MEMORIAM

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2019

01/30	Robert Mitchell Jennings	TX	08/21	Larry Ray Swearingen	TX
02/07	Dominique Hakim Marcelle Ray	AL	08/22	Gary Ray Bowles	FL
02/28	Billie Wayne Coble	TX	09/04	Billy Jack Cruetsinger	TX
04/24	John William King	TX	09/10	Mark Anthony Soliz	TX
05/02	Scotty Garnell Morrow	GA	09/25	Robert Sparks	TX
05/16	Michael Brandon Samra	AL	10/01	Russell Earl Bucklew	MO
05/16	Donnie Edward Johnson	TN	11/04	Charles Russell Rhines	SD
05/23	Robert Joseph "Bobby Joe" Long	FL	11/06	Justen Grant Hall	TX
05/30	Christoper Lee Price	AL	11/13	Ray Jefferson Cromartie	GA
06/20	Marion Wilson, Jr.	GA	12/05	Leroy Hall Jr.	TN
08/15	Stephen Michael West	TN	12/11	Travis Trevino Runnels	TX

There were 22 people, all men, executed in 2019. One was Hispanic, 7 were African American and 14 were "white."

Of these killings, 9 of them or 41% were done by the state of Texas. Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee each killed 3.

El lenguaje hacia los presos

La Junta de Supervisores de la Ciudad de San Francisco CA aprobó recientemente una resolución que pretende humanizar el lenguaje que se utiliza para referirse a las personas que han estado encarceladas y que tienen antecedentes criminales. Esta resolución enumeró nueve categorías diferentes que serán modificadas, estas son

1. "persona formalmente encarcelada," envuelto con la justicia," no "criminal" o "ofensor,"
2. "persona en libertad condicional," o "persona bajo supervisión" no "parolee" o "en probación,"
3. "persona encarcelada" no "convicto" o "prisionero,"
4. "persona convicta por drogas," no "traficante de drogas,"
5. "persona convicta por un delito serio," no "ofensor violento" o "ofensor violento serio,"
6. "persona" o "individuo," no residente que regresa a la comunidad o "extranjero ilegal,"
7. "persona convicta de una ofensa criminal," no "criminal,"
8. "persona joven impactada por el sistema judicial," no "ofensor juvenil" or "delincuente juvenil."
9. "persona con una historia de uso de sustancias," no "adicto" o "adictos a las drogas."

ANGELA DAVIS SAYS:

about **Toni Morrison** that "she was my big sister, a friend who made me feel that without her friendship, I could never have become who I imagine myself to be today."

Toni Morrison kept in her bathroom only two of her many prizes--the Nobel diploma from 1993 and a 1998 letter from the Texas prison system saying that her novel *Paradise* had been banned from Texas prisons because it was written to achieve a breakdown of prisons through disruption.

To receive the CPR Newsletter by postal mail monthly, send us up to 12 self-addressed, stamped envelopes--with the CPR return address in the upper left-hand corner.

Keep sending us address changes and renewal requests in order for us to have our *only* permanent mailing list--the one for our January holiday/new calendar--be as accurate as possible.

NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS; to maintain our best possible access to all of our prison-based readers, *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 distribution. All issues since 2009 are at: www.realcostofprisons.org--this is a GREAT site! To all: **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!**

ONE STEP FORWARD AND

The governor of California, Gavin Newsom, signed a bill in October 2019 to ban contracts for for-profit prisoners beginning January 1, 2020. Present for-profit prisons would continue in operation until their current contracts expired.

However, in an example of its consistent support of profit-for-the-few, the Trump administration awarded billions of dollars in contracts to for-profit companies to operate *federal* immigration detention centers in California. They cut it close--this was done less than two weeks before the new state law will go into effect.

Worth a total of \$6.8 billion, the new facilities will initially be able to hold 4,000 detainees in San Diego, Calexico, Adelanto and Bakersfield. ICE maintains that technically the contracts are not subject to the new state law.