

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

Vol. 44-A, No. 6

PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504

June 2019

Who Pays the Cost of Surviving?

We all do. But so differently. Ask Albert Woodfox, and Robert King, who with their now deceased comrade Herman Wallace (the "Angola 3"), endured a combined total of 114 years in solitary confinement at Louisiana's Angola Prison. The "land of the the free"? But certainly the "home of the brave"--and, most often, invisible. Such conditions are overwhelmingly due to racism and impoverishment.

Solitary confinement goes by a number of names which include: isolation, Special Housing Unit, administrative segregation, supermax, the hole and a current favorite "restricted housing." There are a number of minor variations in conditions of extremely limited human contact, lack of programming and care. The stated reasons vary. But, it occurs in at least 38 of the 50 United States. The most common estimate is that over 80,000 human beings are held in such conditions at any one time in this country.

Surprisingly, some of the most damning statistics appear in an October 2015 U.S. Bureau of Justice statistics article on the internet. It stated in part: On an average day, 4.4 % of those in prisons and 2.7 % of those jailed were held in restrictive housing. Nearly 20% of state and federal prisoners and 18% of local jail prisoners had spent time in solitary ing 2011-12. In 2011-12 an estimated 10% of all prisoners and 5% of people jailed said they had spent 30 days or more in restrictive housing in the past 12 months.

Yet, in 5 states that have reduced reliance on segregation (by whatever name), there was no increase in violence when prisoners were moved to less restrictive housing. After Mississippi reduced its supermax population by 85%, there was a 70% reduction in violence. Maine reduced its solitary population by 50% and found no rise in violence. Colorado reduced its solitary population by 37% and their prisoner-on-staff assaults are at their lowest since 2006. Not to mention having a savings of \$18.1 million from 2012 to 2014. Kansas and Ohio

also significantly reduced their use of solitary confinement.

The maximum amount of time currently considered acceptable for solitary confinement by the U.N. is 15 CONSECUTIVE DAYS. The special rapporteur on torture says it should only be used in "exceptional circumstances" and defines extended use of solitary as "inhuman and degrading treatment."

Joaquín Guzmán (whom the media likes to refer to as "El Chapo") has endured 2 1/2 years of isolation before his sentencing which will be on June 25--with no prison infractions. His lawyers call his conditions of confinement "cruel and unusual punishment" and requested "two hours of outdoor exercise every week, the same food and drink as other prisoners, permission to buy six bottles of water a week and earplugs."

An even more excessive example of the abusive use of solitary confinement is in "immigration jails" overseen by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). A review of more than 8,400 reports of solitary confinement in ICE detention found that immigration officers repeatedly used isolation cells to punish gay, transgender and disabled immigrants for their identities and to target other jailed immigrants for actions like kissing consensually or engaging in hunger strikes.

Almost a third of those held in solitary confinement suffer from mental illness. In at least 373 cases, immigrants were put in isolation for being potentially suicidal. This is despite it having been repeatedly shown that people held for long periods of time in solitary confinement become *more* suicidal. In nearly 200 instances, immigrants were held in solitary confinement for more than six months. Under U.S. law, repeatedly affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court, civil detention "cannot be used" for any form of punishment....

The Angola 3 continue to stand up to injustice in the U.S. legal system and to call for an end to the use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons.

El ataque económico contra Cuba

En el intento más reciente del Gobierno de trump desofocar la economá cubana, el Departamento del Tesoro de EE.UU anunció el martes 4 de junio que pondría fin al Programa pueblo a pueblo. Se trataba de la manera más común de los estadounidenses para visitar el país, mediante viajes grupales organizados a pesar del bloquero. Los cruceros privados a la isla también se prohibirán. El 5 de junio, las empresas de cruceros comunicaron conjuntamente que ya no viajarán a Cuba, lo que afecta a casi 800 mil reservas. En una declaración realizada por el secretario del Tesoro de EE.UU, dijo que la prohibición es en represalia por que Cuba "constituye una base comunista en la región y sostiene a los enemigos de EE.UU. en lugares como Venezuela y Nicaragua." Cuba apoya el gobierno del presidente venezolano Nicolás Maduro, mientras que EE.UU. respalda al líder de la oposición Juan Guaidó y exige el derrocamiento del Gobierno de Maduro. En el mes de abril, el Gobierno estadounidense también tomó medidas destinadas a permitir a los ciudadanos estadounidenses que inicien demandas judiciales contra cualquier empresa que desarrolle actividades comerciales en Cuba con propiedades privadas confiscadas durante la Revolución Cubana. El presidente cubano, Miguel Díaz-Cané, respondió a la noticia con la siguiente declaración: "Cuba no se dejará amedrentar ni distraer con nuevas amenazas y restricciones. Trabajo, creatividad, esfuerzo y resistencia es nuestra respuesta. No han podido asfixiarnos. No podrán detenernos."

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 our *only* permanent mailing list--the one for our January holiday/new calendar--as accurately as possible.

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

And still: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS 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 distribution. It is at: www.realcostofprisons.org--this is a GREAT site! Thank you for all your support!

Michelle Alexander says:

"I said to my daughter 'if we want gender and racial equality, and if we want the right to control our own bodies and destinies, we are going to have to stand up, speak out and fight for our right to choose.' "

U.S. Deaths Related to Pregnancy

The main risk factor is being Black. A U.S. mother today is 50% more likely to die in childbirth than her own mother. A May 2019 report from the government Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that "Black women, along with Native Americans and Alaska natives, are three times more likely to die (than those of other ethnicities)before, during or after having a baby--one-third of the deaths from each cause listed--and more than half of these deaths are preventable. There are now about 700 such deaths a year; the number has been rising for decades. It is heart related problems which currently cause the most pregnancy-related deaths.

Globally, maternal mortality fell about 44% between 1990 and 2015. But in the U.S., women die in about 17 out of every 100,000 out of every 100,000 U.S. births each year, up from 12 per 100,000 25 years ago.

"I propose that we declare war against the usage of the N-word and any other degrading word toward any race of people...study about your nationality and race, not for hatred, but for love of self and understanding and for stronger roots, and as you study of your own self, I challenge you to take pride in the people you come from and respect the other races that have pride in themselves."

-- S.M., TX

BOOKS-TO-PRISONERS CONFERENCE REPORT

Recommendations from the April 2019 Boston conference, at which almost 50 BtP groups were represented, include:
> to create greater opportunities for peer-to-peer information sharing;
> to organize a national Books to Prisoners (BtP) coalition;
> to reach out to include more prisoners and formerly imprisoned people in the work;
> to use connections made at the national conference and to provide member groups with opportunities to opt in or out of specific initiatives and programs
> to remain decentralized, to enable and facilitate organizing between and among BtP groups
--from Peter Esmonde, peter.esmonde@gmail
Vireo Fund, Berkeley CA