

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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WRONGS NOT RIGHTS

How Numbers Tell the Story

It is not a subtle story. People of color in the United States are disproportionately represented at every level of social and economic inequality. It will come as no surprise that in the U.S., Black people are incarcerated in state prisons across the country at nearly five times the rate of "whites", and Latinx people are 1.3 times as likely to be incarcerated than non-Latin "whites".

Although Black people are not a majority of the general population in any of the 50 U.S. states, they make up more than half of the prison population in a dozen of them: Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

New Jersey has the highest level of disparity in its incarceration rates, with a Black/"white" ratio of more than 12 to 1. Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Connecticut follow closely, with rates of about 10 to 1. Latinx people are incarcerated nationally in state prisons at 1.3 the rate for non Latinx "whites". The highest levels of disproportionate Latinx incarceration are in Massachusetts: 4.1, Connecticut: 3.7, New York: 3.0 and North Dakota: 2.4. In "raw numbers", Latinx incarceration is highest in southern and southwestern border states.

"Differential treatment on the basis of ethnicity sustains mass incarceration" according to a new report from **The Sentencing Project**, (1705 DeSales St. NW - 8th fl, Washington D.C.20036;202-628-0871)

Record Jail Deaths

Year to date Rikers Island New York jail deaths: 12. The most recent information we have is dated September 23. At least five of those deaths were suicides. The vast majority of people being held on Rikers have still to be tried, and therefore are technically presumed innocent. There is no question about how terrible and unsafe conditions there are, but nevertheless, the count goes on. How can the U.S. prison system as a whole continue as it is? The U.S. level of inequality continues.

BEYOND SENSE OR SHAME

We live in a time of very unequally shared, terribly negative, excessives. One current example is the gruesome situation regarding immigration. And a poignant particular of that is the too rarely referred to reality of the U.S. prison this country continues to operate in the country of Cuba, without its agreement or permission to do so. This is the same Cuba, which in all other respects the U.S. successfully engages in a wide variety of activities to overturn the government of. Perhaps the largest single U.S. effort to do so is the 60 year old ongoing U.S. economic blockade, which media in the U.S. rarely acknowledge in any way.

A relatively recent development regarding the U.S. continuing occupation of Guantanamo is the announcement in September that the Biden administration is looking for a contractor to run an immigrant detention facility there. Homeland Security is reportedly seeking security guards who speak Spanish and Haitian Creole. Haiti is Cuba's closest neighbor, located on the nearby island of Hispaniola. As a country we have so little sense or shame...

EXTREME SENTENCES BY GENDER

The number of women doing life-without-parole sentences (LWOP) has risen 43% since 2008. There are nearly 2,000 women with LWOP and 52 women on death rows - California has the most. More than four in ten women on death row are people of color. One of every 39 Black women have LWOP sentences. The states with the most LWOP sentenced women are: Florida, Pennsylvania, California, Michigan, Louisiana and Mississippi. In addition more than 6,600 women are doing "life sentences"-- one of every 15 women in prison.

As we know, differential treatment on the basis of race sustains mass incarceration. To decrease racial and ethnic disparities in imprisonment, we need a number of changes. We should eliminate all mandatory minimums and stop prosecution of low-level drug offenses.

Las situaciones de maltrato y de abuso sexual

Hay una crisis humanitaria que se desarrolla en la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México. Hay más de 160 informes desgarradores sobre los abusos que han enfrentado los solicitantes de asilo a manos de los agentes de inmigración de Estados Unidos durante los últimos cinco años. Los informes internos, que fueron elaborados por funcionarios encargados de los temas de asilo de la Oficina de Servicios de Ciudadanía e Inmigración de Estados Unidos, se obtuvieron a través de una solicitud de acceso a registros públicos. En dichos informes, los funcionarios compilaron testimonios que detallan los comportamientos brutales de alguna agentes de la Oficina de Aduanas y Protección Fronteriza, de la Patrulla Fronteriza, y del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas.

Ejemplos: un hondureño afirma que un agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza le dijo que se le negaría el asilo en Estados Unidos. Cuando el solicitante de asilo se negó a firmar el papeleo, el agente le dijo que lo enviarían a la cárcel, y que allí lo violarían. Otro incidente involucra a un agente que obligó a una niña migrante a desvestirse y luego la manoseó de manera inapropiada. Las agresiones el abuso sexual y el trato discriminatorio por parte de los agentes estadounidenses son una secreto a voces dentro del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional.

THE LEAST READ PART OF THE NEWSLETTER

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

Five pages (1 ounce), can be sent for one Forever stamp. Ten pages (2 ounces) can be sent for a twenty-cent stamp more.

Please continue to send us address changes, as soon as you can, including both your old and new addresses, to help us keep our mailing list up-to-date.

NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS.

Letters sent to us marked "Legal Mail" are NOT going to a lawyer, and could possibly result in our losing our access to the prisons they come from. *Please don't do it!* No matter how desperately you need legal advice/assistance, we do not have any.

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 its great site: realcostofprisons.org

MORE BAD NEWS: NORTH CAROLINA PRISON MAIL

In the Pennsylvania prisons in 2018, the corrections department maintained that there was a problem with K2, a synthetic cannabinoid. They said that staff were falling ill from exposure to it, although also medical toxicologists believed that illnesses were much more likely to have been psychogenic. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections responded by insisting that mail was being soaked in the substance. Their contract with a Florida company for scanning all mail, and delivering only electronic copies to the recipients – and destroying the all originals, will cost \$15 million over three years.

Recently, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety says that when they tested their program of scanning mail in four women's facilities, contraband was reduced by 50%. So it's clear that there are *many* other ways contraband enters prisons. In addition, in Pennsylvania, letters are scanned and stored in what is being called a "searchable database" vulnerable to further surveillance. But now all letters and photos those imprisoned in North Carolina will be e-mail copies only.

RESOURCES

The Promise of Justice Initiative

1024 Elysian Fields Ave, New Orleans 70117
504-529-5955

Has Newsletter and works in direct service, community engagement and impact litigation.

FAMM (Families Against Mandatory Minimums)
1100 H St NW, Ste 1000, Washington DC 20005
202-822-6700

Works for change through sentencing reform, prison reform and compassionate release.

The Marshall Project

156 W. 56th St - Ste 701, New York NY 10019
212-803-5200

Seeks to create & sustain national urgency re the U.S. criminal justice system.

The Florida Postconviction Journal - free
412 E. Madison St, Ste 1111 Tampa FL 33062
813-226-3138

From a law firm that focuses exclusively on post conviction actions and inmate issues.

Migrants

A record 1.7 million people from countries around the world were detained at the U.S. border in the last fiscal year. Nearly 147,000: children traveling alone.