

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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DEATH BY INCARCERATION

The United States condemns one in every seven prisoners – more than 200,000 people – to die in prison. Over two-thirds of them are people of color. In September 2022, several human rights organizations submitted a 31 page complaint to the United Nations, pointing out that the United States is committing torture and violating the prohibition against racial discrimination by condemning people death by incarceration through extreme sentences of “life” and “life without the possibility of parole (LWOP)”.

As we know, death by incarceration is the devastating consequence of our cruel and racially discriminatory criminal legal system. As a person with such a sentence points out: “These sentences of death by incarceration are disproportionately handled down to people of color of limited education, with fewer resources and they have failed to make communities safer. Death by incarceration sentences have not reduced crime...and they create prison environments of hopelessness which is a danger in and of itself. The recidivism rate of those who were paroled from death by incarceration sentences is lower than any other group of ‘offenders’”.

Black and Latino people are disproportionately sentenced to death by incarceration nationwide, with significant racial disparities in rates of release and parole. There are also considerable racial disparities at the charging and trial states, which, in turn, impact sentencing.

The Committee Against Torture is the official body that administers the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which the United States has ratified. When the U.S. ratifies a treaty, its mandates become part of domestic law under the U.S. Constitution’s Supremacy Clause.

Both the Committee Against Torture and the UN special rapporteur on torture have recommended the abolition of LWOP for juveniles. *The United States is the only country that allows the sentencing of youth to life without parole – of which 70% so sentenced are children of color.*

After the police murder of George Floyd, the International Commission of Inquiry on Systemic Racist Police Violence Against People of African Descent in the United States issued a 188 page report documenting racial profiling at every stage of the criminal legal system. As we know, both traffic and street stops are common precursors to police killings and uses of excessive force which have a disparate impact on people of African descent, Indigenous Peoples, persons of Hispanic/Latino origin and Asian descent and undocumented migrants.

In the United States, people of color are charged with the death penalty, sentenced to death and executed in disproportionate numbers compared to “white” people. The methods of putting people to death amount to torture. Brutal physical torture was used almost exclusively against Black suspects in Chicago for 20 years beginning in the 1970s and sanctioned at the highest level of the Chicago Police Department, the Cook County State’s Attorneys’ Office and Mayor Daley’s office.

Torture survivors still remain behind bars because of coerced confessions, as are many other predominately persons of color who have been and continue to be, subjected to all forms of physical and psychological torture –throughout the United States.

In 2011, the U.N. special rapporteur on torture called for a prohibition on solitary confinement beyond 15 consecutive days – but it remains common in the U.S....

Resources

Consortium News, 2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 102-231, Arlington VA 22201

Center for Constitutional Rights, 666 Broadway - 7th Floor, New York NY 10012; 212-614-6464

Abolitionist Law Center, P.O. Box 8654, Pittsburgh PA 15221

People’s Law Office, 1180 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago IL 60642, 773-235-0070

National Lawyers Guild, 132 Nassau St., New York NY 10038

The Innocence Project, 40 Worth St., Suite 701, New York NY 10031, 212-425-2345

EE.UU. CONFINAMIENTO SOLITARIO

Casi 50.000 presos están reclusos en confinamiento solitario prolongado en Estados Unidos, unas condiciones que las Naciones Unidas consideran equivalentes a la tortura. Investigadores de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Yale concluyeron que unos 6.000 de los 50.000 presos han estado encarcelados en régimen de aislamiento durante más de un año. El relator especial de Naciones Unidas sobre la Tortura sostiene que tales prácticas están prohibidas por el derecho internacional y pueden tener consecuencias psicológicas y físicas graves e irreparables.

La Universidad de Brown afirma que adquirió documentos personales del escrito y preso político Mumia Abu-Jamal, entre ellos sus registros penitenciarios, se correspondencia y sus obras de arte. Los materiales se incorporarán a la nueva colección Voices of Mass Incarceration de la Biblioteca John Hay de la Universidad de Brown.

***** 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. Five pages (= 1 ounce), can be sent for one Forever stamp. Ten pages (= 2 ounces and can be sent for a 20 cent stamp more.)

Please continue to send us your address changes, including both your old and new addresses.

NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS. Letters sent to us marked "Legal Mail" are NOT going to a lawyer. PLEASE DO NOT MARK YOUR MAIL "LEGAL MAIL"! 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 on its great site: realcostofprisons.org

SEND US HOLIDAY/CALENDAR CARD DESIGNS

Imprisoned Readers: Please send us a black and white drawing for the 2023 New Year's card & calendar. All designs must be respectful of our diversity: We cannot use any with racist, sexist or religious symbolism. The deadline is *December 1*. Submission of a drawing serves as the artist's permission for our use, and will be credited.

Prize: As possible, books of winner's choice.

DISASTER CAPITALISM

These are hard times for everyone and we have not been able to find anyone who is optimistic about the future.

Media coverage of a couple of current events offers telling contrast to the reality in the world today. First, it is not completely clear to us which inhabitants of what is now the United States actually benefited from the founding of this country. Certainly not the slaughtered and dispossessed native peoples, nor the enslaved people, (nor the "indentured" people), nor women in general. We aren't sure about white men in general, but it looks like it is the most likely that white men with more, benefited the most. Not what we've been told in school.

Which brings us to the recent long, plentiful and overwhelmingly positive coverage of the long reign and death of Britain's Queen Elizabeth. With, as far as we can tell, extremely little or no information about several of the most significant events of that time in England. One example is the lack of information and discussion of the conditions in England following WW II. For example, food rationing lasted until 1953, as did the rubble in London of many bombed out buildings from the war. It is unclear how long the direct negative effects of that war affected many peoples' lives.

So what has been gained from the coverage as it has existed: distraction from the realities of her reign and the building of a false common history. Soothing us all with lack of information.

In contrast, we have the realities of the continuing mistreatment of migrants to the U.S. and the scant attention paid to them, omitting almost all of the conditions and treatment that they have been put through.

One of the latest examples of the acceptance of the unacceptable are the recent actions taken by the governors of Florida and Texas (and Massachusetts?) of flying approximately 50 migrants from Texas to Martha's Vineyard, a rich community in Massachusetts. Even a mainstream newspaper commented how this: "appears to have deliberately been orchestrated for maximum cruelty and confusion." We need to think about the meaning of all this.

Prison Focus Announcement

We received a note from them saying they were no longer in print. Although we could not confirm this in detail, the latest issue we could find is dated Spring 2022, No. 63. Their last posted address is: