

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## WHERE IS THE ROOM AT THE INN FOR US?

The specific information in this article is about Denver, Colorado, but we are sure that the story throughout the country is very similar.

We strongly agree with the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (CCJRC, August 2009 report: "Homelessness and Parole: A Survey of Denver's Shelters," 1212 Mariposa St, #6, Denver CO 80204, 303-825-0122) that getting out of prison homeless is, to say the least, a "barrier to successful re-entry."

In Denver, as many as one-fourth of parolees are homeless. And in Colorado in 2008, 41% of prison admissions were of people whose parole had been revoked. The average cost in Colorado of incarcerating someone is over \$30,000 per person per year.

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### SHORT

#### PENALTIES FOR PRISON CELL PHONES

California Senate Bill 434, passed unanimously, would make it a misdemeanor punishable by fines of up to \$5,000 for possession of a cell phone or accessory by a prisoner, or prisoner's visitor while being searched or going through a metal detector before a visit, or by a person who intends to give such a phone to a prisoner. It was last heard of in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations

If and when signed into law, this bill will result in widespread and severe penalties for both prisoners and their visitors. This includes visitors who neglect to remove their cell phones before being searched. It is obvious that few of the CDCR guards who bring in thousands of phones will be punished.

There are 100,000 cell phones estimated to be in circulation in California's prisons. More than 2,000 phones have been confiscated from prisoners at CSP-Solano, in Vacaville. CDCR is publicizing a project using cell phone sniffing dogs. And at least three lifers have been issued serious 115s when their phones were discovered.

Among the homeless parolees interviewed for the CCJRC report, 59% said their DOC case manager was either "not very" or "not helpful" with their parole planning. In addition, 58% had been homeless at least once before; 90% had been out of prison for six months or less; 72% considered their P.O. to be either "somewhat helpful" or very helpful," and 71% were currently unemployed.

Unmet needs of the parolees interviewed, in addition to those implied above, included: getting mental health treatment, help with receiving substance abuse, assistance in dealing with feeling set up to fail and with fear of failure, dealing with feeling depressed, humiliated, stressed and/or overwhelmed.

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### TAKES

#### ONLY THOSE WITH MONEY CAN EAT

The medium security prison in Indiana's Plainfield Correctional facility in Indiana has eliminated lunch on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Breakfast is still served at 6 a.m. and dinner at 4 p.m. The IDOC says this pilot program would last "an indefinite length of time." Eventually, all 30 state prisons may adopt it.

The prison maintains that the no-lunch schedule provides the same number of calories, 2500, as the three-meal schedule. However one less "main course" item is served on the no-lunch days. In addition, the prison says that the reason is not to save money, but to give prisoners more educational, religious services, recreational and visiting time.

Food makes up about 5% of prison budgets. Food service is provided by Aramark.

But don't worry: the DOC reminds us that chips, cookies and Ramen noodles are available to buy in the commissary. "You'd be amazed at what prisoners can do with a bag of Ramen," one said. "It's as good as anything in a restaurant."

## VOICES

Huntingdon PA September 14, 2009

A National Campaign Supporting U.S. House Resolution #2289 "Juvenile Justice Accountability & Improvement Act of 2009." Sentencing our children to LWOP is no different than sentencing them to death. We say we believe in justice, rehabilitation, fair sentencing, reform and second chances. Certainly each convicted child is deserving of an opportunity for parole, and of demonstrating that they are not the same person they were when convicted as a child. Urge support of the landmark legislation HR 2289, giving your reasons, and send it to: your U.S. Representative and/or to Rep. John Conyers, Jr., Chair, House Judiciary Committee, 2426 Rayburn House of Rep. Office Bldg., Washington DC 20515

Waupun WI October 29, 2009

Write U.S. Rep. Robert Scott, 1201 Longworth Off Bldg, Washington DC 20515, and urge him to re-submit the Prison Abuse Remedies Act (PARA) which would fix the draconian PLRA. Tell him why.

One inequitable measure of the PLRA is to stop prisoners from suing for "mental or emotional injury" suffered while in custody, without a prior showing of physical injury.

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This 2 page version of the CPR monthly newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. Others who would like to receive it must send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope (up to 12 at one time) for every issue they would like to receive. We plan to send out our yearly holiday card/ calendar to our updated, but not expanded, mailing list in December.

Many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making the newsletter available on-line at: <http://www.realcostofprisons.org/coalition.html>. Download & mail it inside

Our debt remains at about \$10,000. Donations continue to be most welcome!

Thank you to RESIST; the CPR is proud and endlessly grateful to have received another three year grant for support to challenge the social and economic injustices inherent in the U.S. police, court, and penal system. RESIST funds groups like the CPR across the country; its mission is to support those who take a stand on a wide range of peace and justice issues. They can be contacted at: 259 Elm St, Somerville MA 02144, 617-623-5110. ¡Mil gracias RESISTISTAS!

## FROM INSIDE

Florida City FL November 1, 2009

We are getting charged at least a 200% mark up by Keefe in Florida. But it's only in the men's prisons. In the women's prisons, they are being charged less because they stood up to the high prices in the canteen.

Vacaville CA November 6, 2009

Keefe is worming its way in to the California canteens and, of course, the prices are rising.

Coalinga CA November 13, 2009

Full use of the following named document will save the taxpayers of California money and alleviate prison overcrowding. It is the Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons and Transfer of Offender Act. It is a Treaty currently in effect with over 75 other countries regarding the transfer of foreign national prisoners from U.S. prisons to prisons in their country of origin. In California alone there are currently 27,000 to 30,000 foreign nationals.

Brazoria TX October 7, 2009

Texas prisoners who take the anti-depressant Zoloft and who have failed urine tests because of it should note that CMHC have acknowledged that it causes false positives for several controlled substances including benzodiazepines. See CMHC Policy 1-68.4, attachment B.

## CALAVERAS

Cuando sube y bajas,  
Cuidadao con los lazos y puntos de navaja  
que tienen los huesos de la Calaca.

Son fuertes y abrazan a el que alcanzan.

Entre las nubes esconde su cara  
pero todavia se oyen las cadenas que arrastra.

No dejan de sonar sus dientes  
que siempre sonrientes  
gritan y imploran  
pero muy paciente  
and tras de las almas pendientes.

Todos lo saben pero no le entienden.  
Que sólo busca el calor y amor que se siente  
dentro de La Esperanza y su Buena gente.

-L.C. Menjares, *La Voz de Esperanza*,