

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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¡UP WITH THE NEW!

You just can't stop progress--or off-label uses of new products. One of the current most dramatic examples of this is the use of cell phones in prisons. And to think of all the time and trouble prisons have gone to keep the use of computers and access to the internet out. That all seems irrelevant now. Don't get us wrong: Cellphones are prohibited in all state and federal prisons in the United States. An August 2010 law made possession of a phone in a federal prison a felony.

However, in the first four months of 2010, 1,188 cellphones were confiscated in federal prisons. California prison staff have confiscated approximately 8,000 cell phones in less than three years. The New York Times reported in January that in California prisons last year, nearly 9,000 phones were discovered by officials. The South Carolina Department of Corrections confiscates as many as 2,000 cellphones a year.

DOC workers in Georgia prisons have claimed that they knew about plans for the

recent strike there well in advance and had confiscated more than a hundred cell phones. During the eight day strike, staff locked down the four facilities that were the most active and said they "revoked cell phone privileges (although) cell phones are contraband in Georgia's prisons, but widely available for sale from correctional officers." During the prisoners' strike, several prisoners used cellphones to call The New York Times from their cells.

Access to these phones seems to be the same as for other contraband. Prices vary tremendously. Depending on the type of phone and the service plan, a common price range is \$300 to \$1,000. In Georgia, one prisoner reported paying a guard \$350 for a basic pre-paid cell phone. Another report was \$800 for a phone worth \$50.

So, prisons are still part of the larger society. And a pool of prisoners with smartphones can seem an attractive new market--it's a pure business opportunity.

THE UNITY WE HAVE

For a week beginning December 9, 2010, prisoners in at least six of Georgia's prisons carried out the largest prison strike in U.S. history to date--a peaceful, planned, self-lockdown. The decision to end the lockdown is the beginning of the next phase of the struggle--as one participant said: "We needed to come off lock down so we can go to the law library and start the paperwork for a lawsuit."

The prisons involved were: Macon, Hays, Telfair, Baldwin, Valdosta, and Smith. Planning had begun in September, shortly after cigarettes were banned. The date set allowed time for prisoners to stockpile food and to have cool weather. Georgia has 52,000 people imprisoned.

The list of demands:
A LIVING WAGE FOR WORK
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
DECENT HEALTH CARE
AN END TO CRUEL & UNUSUAL PUNISHMENTS
DECENT LIVING CONDITIONS
NUTRITIONAL MEALS
VOCATIONAL & SELFIMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
ACCESS TO FAMILIES
JUST PAROLE DECISIONS.

There has been a great deal of public support. Resources include:
Black Agenda Report (blackagenda.com)
Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners' Rights
Human Rights Coalition
Louisiana Justice Institute
NAACP Georgia

We regret staff illness has delayed this issue of the Newsletter and other work.

CONCESSION: SEMI-CONTACT VISITS

This year's first victory came in mid-January after a two week, liquid only, hunger strike by three men on Lucasville OH's "administrative maximum security" Death Row. Six changes are supposed to be made: additional recreation time, access to computer-based legal research, phone privileges up to one hour per day, the purchase of more items from the commissary including food and clothing and, as of February 1, "semi-contact" visits. The one named privilege allowed to other Death Row prisoners that was not granted is full access to Access SecurePac catalog.

The prison describes "semi-contact" visits as: the imprisoned person and their visitor are separated by a glass window that has a small gap so that they can touch or hold hands.

The striking prisoners, Siddique Abdullah Hasan, Bomani sShakur, and Jason Robb believe that they have been singled out for retribution because they refused to provide snitch testimony against others who actually committed 1993 murders in Lucasville prison.

After the successful completion of their strike, the three sent a message of thanks, acknowledging that they couldn't have won their demands without support from people from around the world. They also pointed out that this time they were fighting about their conditions of confinement; now they begin to fight for their lives.

"Prison abolition is about building a new world." Angela Davis

END OF LETHAL-INJECTION DRUG

The only U.S. company, Hospira, that makes thiopental sodium, an anesthetic used in U.S. executions, has decided to permanently halt its production. The Illinois based company had planned to resume producing thiopental in the first quarter of 2011 at their plant in Liscate Italy. In December, the Italian parliament issued an order binding the government to ensure that Hospira's Italian-made thiopental would not be used in lethal injections. This could delay executions across the United States.

However, late in 2010, a drug used to euthanize animals was approved for use in executions in Oklahoma...

NEW BUILDING FOR DEATH ROW OPPOSED

Marin County CA officials are trying to stop a new, 1,152 bed, \$356 million Death Row complex at San Quentin prison.

VOICES IN SOLIDARITY

Information Sought

The fourth program in our series, *Fault Lines*, on U.S. prison issues, part of Al Jazeera English television, concerns deaf and hard of hearing imprisoned people. Please contact us if you have information on treatment, conditions and situations that you think would interest us. Send to: Jeremy Young, producer, Al Jazeera English, *Fault Lines*, 1627 K Street, 11th Floor, Washington DC 20006, 202-496-4543, Jeremy.Young@aljazeera.net

Lifelines Poetry Competition 2011

The competition is open to all U.S. prisoners who are or have been on Death Row, but no more than three original, previously unpublished, entries per person. Deadline: April 11, 2011. Send to: *The Wing* Editorial Team, 49 Ramillies Close, Chatham, Kent ME5 7SA, U.K. (Postage to England: \$.98 for 1st ounce.) Three prizes, from \$10 to \$30.

Cathie's New Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the military budgets of the United States of America And to the corporations which rule our land. One nation, with hand guns and junk food for all.

This newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. To regularly receive our monthly issues, send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope (with the CPR return address), up to 12 at a time.

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests in order to receive the year-end holiday card/new calendar. This is especially important for those in California and Texas.

Please note: the ONLY address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504.

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making the newsletter available on-line, for downloading, at: <http://www.realcostofprisons.org/coalition.html>. An altogether invaluable website!

El secretario de Comercio de EEUU

defendió la aprobación del Dream Act, que permitiría regularizar el estatus migratorio de decenas de miles de jóvenes indocumentados, con el argumento de que, entre ellos, están algunos de los "futuros líderes" del país. "Estos niños serán nuestros próximos doctores, profesores, científicos o emprendedores. Es un increíble talento que no puede ser desperdiciado.