

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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June 2014

HARMFUL TO A PERSON'S HEALTH

It is well established that solitary confinement/long term isolation is extremely harmful to a person's health--physical, mental and emotional. In August 2013, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture called for an end to solitary confinement in response to the California prisoners'hunger strike. He said solitary: "often causes mental and physical suffering or humiliation, amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...even amounts to torture."

Finding ways to build community and so fend off the damage caused by the isolation of solitary increases the quality of life of those of us struggling under such conditions.

The following suggestions appeared in *The Fire Inside* Newsletter, fall 2013/winter 2014 issue, of the California

Coalition for Women Prisoners and are from SHU survivors. Additional suggestions from readers are welcome.

1] Reading and writing help. Books can take you to new ideas and experiences. Writing (and drawing)--poetry, stories, letters or reports--expresses feelings, acknowledge the reality you're in and provides testimony exposing the torture.

2] Meditation and astral projection. For some, this includes praying. Allows your mind and body to rest and to be removed from the harsh conditions you are experiencing. It allows you to leave your cell in your mind.

3] Exercise. Done with regularity, it not only cares for your body, but also strengthens your mind.

4] Making a schedule for yourself and your time and following it. Vary your activities as much as you possibly can.

New Limits to Solitary?

State legislative activity to limit the use of solitary has increased recently according to the National Prison Project of the ACLU. In 2007, New York passed legislation to limit putting mentally ill prisoners in solitary. Maine and New Mexico have passed legislation to study the issue which is believed to be part of an effort to reduce the overall number in solitary. Nevada and Texas also passed bills to study the issue. Bills to reduce the overall use of solitary are pending in New York, California and Massachusetts.

In Colorado, there were 140 mentally ill prisoners in solitary in December of 2012. In December 2013, only eight were reported there. In April 2014, Colorado reported only one mentally ill prisoner in solitary. One too many.

Legislators have raised concerns in recent years that prisoners who are released directly to communities after spending long sentences in solitary pose a greater threat to society than others.

Cheap is Cheap

The federal government is relying on tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants a year to provide essential labor--usually for \$1 a day or less--at the mostly for-profit detention centers where they are being held awaiting disposition of their cases.

Last year, at least 60,000 detained immigrants worked in the federal government's nationwide patchwork of detention centers--more than worked for any other single employer in the country, according to ICE. The 13 cents an hour paid these people saved the government and the for-profit (including the British private security GSS) companies involved \$40 million or more a year. Outside contractors are required to pay workers at least the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

These immigrants are "civil detainees" Roughly half of the people who appear in immigration courts are ultimately permitted to stay in the U.S. The immigrant detention system costs more than \$2 billion a year.

Campana para mejorar atención a niños que llegan solos a fronteras

El Servicio Luterano de Inmigración y Refugiados (LIRS, en sus siglas en inglés) presentó una campana para mejorar la atención a los niños que llegan solos a las fronteras, sobre todo procedentes de Centroamérica.

Según los datos de LIRS, el flujo de niños sin acompañamiento de familiares procedentes de Guatemala, Honduras y El Salvador se ha disparado en los últimos tres años y se espera que este año ascienda a 60.000, la mayoría de ellos adolescentes, pero también algunos menores de diez años, y que se doble en 2015.

La campana, denominada "#ActofLove" ("Acto de Amor") y liderada por jóvenes, aspira a que el Gobierno colabore con los países de origen y con organizaciones no gubernamentales y destine una partida de fondos para mejorar la protección de niños que llegan solos.

"Necesitamos cambiar la manera en que estamos pensando en esta crisis. Esto no es simplemente algo más de lo que ya está pasando en inmigración, sino que es una crisis particular que requiere que la atendamos" explicó uno de los participantes en la campana.

To receive the Newsletter by postal mail each month, send us self-addressed, stamped envelopes (with the CPR return address) -- up to 12 at one time.

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests, in order to be sent the yearly holiday card/ new calendar each January.

Also, please note that the only address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504. There are resource listings which, unfortunately, use an incorrect address. Remember: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS. Please do not mark any envelopes sent to us as "legal mail."

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons project for making our monthly Newsletter available on-line for free downloading and distribution. It is at: <http://www.realcostofprisonsproject.org/coalition.html> -- is is a GREAT site!

We depend on our readers' donations & thank you for your support! Mil gracias!

The top 1% of people in the United States have seen their income rise 278% over the past 30 years.

The richest 5% of people in the United States have over 60% of the nation's wealth. The bottom 80% have

only 13%.

VOICES FROM INSIDE

Graterford PA

April 12, 2014

Lifers Inc. Parole Eligibility Rational The primary objective of Lifers Inc. is to secure legislation that will allow parole eligibility for all life-sentenced men, women and children in Pennsylvania. By parole eligibility, we are asking that parole will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The applicant must meet the requirements determined by comprehensive parole administrators. He or she must demonstrate remorse, have worked hard to transform his/her self, and no longer pose a threat to society...Why not allow those Lifers who might qualify an opportunity to provide the same stability and leadership in their respective communities on the outside as they have within institutions?

Jessup MD

May 30, 2014

Finding a way to keep convicts from repeating any criminal acts is much more important than punishing them with a term in prison. This includes developing empathy, compassion and remorse. Mistreatment, be it physical, psychological, or financial exploitation while imprisoned is a path to recidivism.

A public outcry is needed to end abuses and to parole Maryland's long-term prisoners and those serving Life sentences whose records reflect the desired goals.

Albuquerque NM

June 2. 3014

I have received no response from the NM Secretary of Corrections concerning the discontinuation of Family Visits at NM prisons. These Family Visits are with the inmates' parents. The reasons that the Secretary gave for discontinuation of Conjugal Visits do not apply to Family Visits. He also has not addressed: the lack of programs, the poor quality of food and the big increase in canteen prices.

National Call: "Show us Solitary"

Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) is seeking drawings of the SHU for an exhibit about the impact of prolonged solitary confinement. Please include a short description of the space and your experience being there, as well as a statement giving ADPSR permission to publish your drawing. All work will be displayed online and some will be part of a traveling exhibition. The exhibit will support ADPSR's proposal to prohibit architects from designing execution chambers and spaces intended for prolonged solitary confinement. Submissions will be accepted until September 1, 2014.