

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## UNIONS HELP OCCUPY THE 1%!

Except for the rich, 2011 was bad for everyone, including union workers. Union members now total only 11.8% of the workforce, even though the total union membership edged up to 14.76 million. Of public sector workers, 37% are in unions. This is although the number of public sector union members dropped by 61,000 to 7.56 million. Private sector union workers are just 6.9% of the private sector workforce. In contrast, in the 1950s, more than 35% of private sector workers were in unions. The total current number of private sector workers in unions has increased by 110,000 to 7.2 million, mostly because of more manufacturing and construction work.

By age, union membership was highest among workers 55-64 years old (15.78%). Young workers, 16-24, had the lowest union membership rate (4.4%). Almost half of the people in the US are now officially either "poor" or "low income." That is 146.4 million people, or 48% of the population. In 2011, union workers had weekly earnings of \$938, compared to \$729 for non-union workers.

African-American had the highest unemployment rate, over 20% in Detroit, Milwaukee, Las Vegas NV and Minneapolis. For youth, the unemployment rate was about 20%, and twice that among African-American youth.

Not only do unions pull all workers' wages higher, they also make wages more equal for everyone. In Sweden, for example, about 80% of workers have a union. Sweden has the most even income distribution of any rich country. The United States is 45th in income equality for all countries, ranking with countries like Rwanda and Uganda. Sweden was 23rd overall in income equality. In Sweden, about 75 people per 100,000 are incarcerated, compared to 10 times that in the US. And, in the US, the poorest 10% of the population receive less than 2% of the income, while the richest 10% earn about 30%. Among rich countries, the US is at the top in income inequality, with Israel close behind.

The Occupy movement in the US has rightly targeted the top 1%. This 1% has nearly 25% of income in the US and controls 40% of the wealth. Between 1948 and 1979 however, the richest 10% accounted for just 33% of average income growth, while the bottom 90% accounted for 67%. Between 2000 and 2007, the richest 10% accounted for 100% of the income growth, while income actually declined for the 90%.

Why does the US have such economic inequality? One big reason is that the top 1% wants it that way. They complain about the government, but the truth is that they like it just fine. The lowering tax rates on capital gains, which is how the very rich receive a large portion of their income, has given the 1% a free ride. Virtually all US senators and most of the representatives in congress are already members of the top 1% when they arrive in congress. They're kept in office by money from the top 1%, and they know if they serve the top 1% well, they will stay in office and continue to be rewarded when they leave. The top 1% is blocking any meaningful change in this country.

A recent survey shows that seven out of 10 want to increase taxes on millionaires, and two-thirds would raise the minimum wage to \$10/hour. In another poll, 76% said the economic structure of the US "favors a very small proportion of the rich over the rest of the country." Unions have embraced Occupy Wall Street because the movement is succeeding where unions have stumbled -- turning national attention back onto those responsible for the biggest economic collapse since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and onto who should pay to clean up the mess.



# THE OTHER DEATH PENALTY PROJECT RELUCTANTLY SUPPORTS THE S.A.F.E. CALIFORNIA ACT

The Other Death Penalty Project urges a yes vote on the "S.A.F.E. California Act," which would end lethal injection executions in California but expand the use of life without the possibility of parole sentences.

Nevertheless, it is important to make few points to the writers and supporters of this ugly and mean-spirited initiative.

Life without the possibility of parole is not an alternative to the death penalty; *it is the death penalty.* If this initiative passes, and all 702 men and 20 women on death row are re-sentenced, there will then be over 5,000 men and women sentenced to die in prison in this state. It is a change only in method of execution.

Appealing to people's worst instincts is not an honorable way to achieve positive social change.

Gleefully advertising how much pain people will suffer sentenced to die by imprisonment, instead of by lethal injection, is appalling and disgusting. The supporters of this initiative can no longer call themselves progressives or reformers, not in good conscience. When this grotesque campaign is over we encourage you all to withdraw from the struggle to rehabilitate the prison-industrial complex. It will take years to undo the damage you have done to the greater goals of lifting up the lowest and most oppressed in this state.

Ends don't justify means, particularly not when the means are morally and ethically reprehensible.

The Other Death Penalty Project, which is a grassroots organization formed and operated by prisoners serving life without the possibility of parole, deplores the tactics taken by the writers and supporters of the "California Act." Prisoners in this state have been demonized and dehumanized for far too long. When organizations like the A.C.L.U., which is supposedly dedicated to the advancement of society, adopt the rhetoric and viciousness of the special interest groups in support of the prison-industrial complex, it is a sad day for everyone concerned. As for the celebrity supporters of this initiative, all we can say is shame on you.

Yes, we encourage a yes vote because any other vote would be in favor of state-sanctioned executions, but for that reason alone.

## More Life Without Parole Law

In April, Connecticut abolished the death sentence of execution. It was replaced with the death sentence of Life Without the Possibility of Parole. A particularly harsh version.

Under the new legislation, there are new imprisonment standards for future Class A felony murder convictions of "murder with special circumstances," what is currently known as a "capital offense." Those so convicted must be housed separately from others, on high security status. They will be subjected to twice-weekly cell searches, and their cells must be changed every three months. They would get no more than two hours a day outside their cells/ recreational activity and would be allowed only "non-contact" visits.

In addition, their movements must be escorted or monitored. Work assignments must be within the assigned housing unit.

Truly The Other Death Penalty.

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Copies of the Newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. To receive the Newsletter monthly, 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 receive the yearly holiday card/new calendar.

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. And remember: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS.

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

We continue to depend on our readers' financial contributions to be able to go on with our work. Thank you so much for your ongoing support!

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## Ordenes de sujeción de ICE

La orden de sujeción de ICE sólo autoriza a las cárceles locales a detener a un preso por 48 horas adicionales más allá de su fecha de libertad. Si las 48 horas han pasado y un traslado de custodia de la cárcel local a agentes de inmigración no ha tomado lugar, entonces la persona debe ponerse en libertad siempre que no haya ninguna acusación