

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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May 2022

MORE THINGS THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE

Juvenile Incarceration

New Mexico ranks with California, Nevada, and Alaska in its high rate of juvenile incarceration: 227 per 100,000 population. A more positive sign of how to deal with incarceration in New Mexico is the formation announced in April by the NM Supreme Court of a permanent commission composed of a number of state and local government entities which are to deal with mental health issues among the police, court and penal system youth population.

Of course it sounds good: "objectives shall be to promote fair treatment of affected individuals, to improve public safety through appropriate and meaningful behavioral health interventions, and to provide proper education and training to judges, lawyers, court staff and others involved in these governmental systems."

Of course the real measure of "success" is if there is a decrease in the numbers of people caught up in these institutions.

The state has now reduced the number of youth detention centers to four. And it is true that there are fewer youths now detained. But, an important part of the reality is that these teens are now less likely to be held in their own communities and are further from their families, lawyers and familiar community resources.

There are also some positive changes in other states: North Dakota has committed to enhancing social services available to young people. Idaho now prohibits out-of-home placement for accusations of minor offenses such as school truancy.

Six states have increased the minimum age for juvenile court jurisdiction. Five other states, including Illinois, Delaware and Utah have new due process protections for young people when they are interrogated by law enforcement entities. Other states have made it easier for young people to expunge their records.

Again, however, the real measure of the value of these changes will be whether, in fact these new, community based programs result in the reduction of the number of youth incarcerated.

We are told it is a priority...

The Cost of Elderly Prisoners

The state of California finance department reports the 2021 fiscal year of the multi-billion dollar operation of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) will be \$113,000 per prisoner. In May, the Legislative Analyst's Office reported the cost to incarcerate an elderly prisoner is two to three times more than the average cost per prisoner. That comes out to \$282,000 per year per prisoner.

In 2017, on the recommendation of the judiciary, academics and state legislators, Penal Code 3055 concerning Elderly Parole was passed. However, on October 20, 2020, 4th California Court of Appeals (In re Staich, 2020 cal.app.Lexus 974), assessing CDCR, cites: "Elderly Parole program does not appear to have had much practical influence on the parole process."

Confirming the Court of Appeal's observation, the Board of Parole Hearings, 2020, Report of Significant Events, reported on page 7: "Parole Denial percentage: "a high of 82% denial at Elderly Parole hearings."

Comment from a California prisoner: "Dancing to the pleasure of a master other than reason, the Board of Parole has chosen to practice 'senicide.' Many more elderly prisoners die in prison than as parolees, yet they are considered the most harmless class of prisoners..."

(Our thanks to these comments of an on-the-scene observer.)

"JUSTICE REFORM COALITION"

Its primary focus is on Kentucky. It seeks reform starting in local communities, local governments and state legislatures at the pre-trial level and throughout the justice system. For far too long the state and local news media have hidden the truth of a broken system. It will give a voice to a forgotten, ever growing jail and prison population:

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[after June 20th]

ASESINADA EN UNA INCURSION ISRAELI

El 11 de mayo, la periodista palestino-estadounidense Shireen Abu Akleh se encontraba trabajando para la cadena Al Jazeera en un informe sobre la vida de los palestinos bajo la ocupación israelí, como lo había hecho durante más de 25 años. Esa mañana, Shireen estaba cubriendo una incursión militar israelí en un campamento de refugiados de la ciudad de Jenin, en Cisjordania. Shireen se encontraba junto a otro reportero, apoyada contra un muro de piedra. Ambos portaban cascos azules y chalecos antibalas del mismo color en los que se leía claramente la palabra "prensa". Shireen murió en el lugar, tras recibir un disparo en la cabeza. Un camarógrafo que se encontraba junto a ellos giró inmediatamente su cámara hacia el cuerpo de Shireen, que yacía desplomado en el suelo. Testigos del hecho afirmaron que fue asesinada por fuego israelí.

Shireen Abu Akleh era conocida en todo el mundo de habla árabe por sus décadas de trabajo incansable para informar sobre la situación en Palestina.

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, up to 12 at one time. Put the CPR return address in the upper left-hand corner of each envelope.

Five pages (= 1 ounce), and 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 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

CORRECTION of April 2022 Issue errors:

The FIRST sentence of the next to last paragraph of the front page Border Closure story should read:

"ICE ('Immigration and Customs Enforcement') is to stop sending people to the dirty, dangerous immigration detention facilities in North Carolina and Louisiana."

And, the complete zip code for the Massachusetts Lifer's Group is: 02056.

THE LETTER, 1968 [timely then & now]

That he wrote it with his hand and folded the paper and slipped it into the envelope and sealed it with his tongue and pressed it closed so I might open it with my fingers.

That he brought it to the box and slipped it through the slot so that it might be carried through time and weather to where I waited on the front-porch step.

(We knew how to wait then - it was what life was, much of it.) So, when the mailman came up the walk and didn't have it, he might have it the next day or the next, when it bore the mark of his hand who had written my name, so I might open it and read and read it again, and then again and look at the envelope he'd sealed and press my mouth to where his mouth had been.

Marie Howe, The New Yorker magazine, March 21, 2022.

THE MAILGUARD PROGRAM STOPPED

The program, run by Smart Communications, is no longer profiting off of the pain and isolation of people in the custody of the federal government. The fight to protect prison mail isn't over by a longshot. Some federal facilities are still scanning and destroying mail inhouse. The growth of privatized, for profit mail services is continuing apace and spreading to state prisons and to local jails. By people working together, a privately run service in our federal prison system was shut down. Stand with us: Just Detention International, 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340, Los Angeles CA 90010

"The Rage of Innocence", Kristin Henning

"The policing of Black adolescence requires a special telling...We live in a society that is uniquely afraid of Black children. People become anxious - if not outright terrified - at the sight of a Black child ringing the doorbell, riding in a car with white women or walking too close in a convenience store. They think of Black children as predatory, sexually deviant and immoral...There is something particularly efficient about treating Black children like criminals in adolescence. Black youth are dehumanized, exploited and even killed to establish the boundaries of Whiteness before they reach adulthood and assert their rights and independence."

NJ, NY and CT are the 3 states which have ended long term solitary confinement.