

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504-1911

March 2012

## WHO'S THE WORST OF THE WORST?

Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Ohio and Washington are planning to reduce the number of prisoners held in solitary confinement. In February, the governor of Illinois announced that its infamous supermax prison in Tamms would be closed. California, New York, Vermont, Mississippi, Ohio and Wisconsin bar solitary confinement for those with serious mental illnesses. In Mississippi, 1.4% of prisoners are currently reported to be in solitary-- down from 12% in 2002.

A federal class action lawsuit, *Gamez v. Ryan*, was filed at the beginning of March in Arizona. The suit's legal team is led by the ACLU, the Arizona Center for Disability Law, and the Prison Law Office (in California). It is on behalf of the 33,100 Arizona state prisoners and documents the torturous conditions in Arizona's supermax prisons and other lockdown units. It also challenges solitary confinement there, with claims of grossly inadequate medical and mental health care, resulting in cruel and unusual punishment.

## ELIMINATE JUVENILE LIFE WITHOUT

Among the punishment inventions of the late 1980s were a spurt in the popularity of both Life Without Parole (i.e. death by imprisonment) sentences and a lowering of the age at which children could be tried as adults. This led to Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP) prisoners. Characteristics shared by the 2,500 plus people who have received such sentences are an even higher proportion of prisoners of color than are in the prison population as a whole and the distinction of receiving a sentence that is outlawed by the United Nations as well as the rest of the world. In March, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in two cases, *Jackson v. Hobbs* and *Miller v. Alabama*, concerning whether children can be sentenced to JLWOP after a homicide conviction stemming from events that occurred when they were underage.

## VALLEY STATE PRISON CONVERSION

March 8: International Women's Day!

As part of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling mandating that California significantly reduce its state prison population, the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation (CDCR) is planning to convert Valley Prison for Women (VSPW) into a men's prison. Instead of releasing the thousands of women who are eligible to go home, CDCR is planning to transfer them to the remaining women's prisons in California: Central California Women's Facility (CCWF), and California Institution for Women (CIW).

This conversion and crowding of people into facilities that are already far above capacity will intensify by horrific proportions the medical neglect and premature death already rampant in California prisons. Cells that were designed to house four and now house eight, will house ten.

Now, when state funds are desperately needed for a wide variety of social, educational, health and employment programs, there is no reasonable rationale to continue warehousing those imprisoned at great public expense--especially when they are already eligible for release.

As a woman currently held at VSPW puts it: "For us, the proposed prison conversion and purposeful, escalated overcrowding of California's women's prison system are matters of life and death. We inside cannot vote. We cannot lobby Sacramento. All we want is to live."

These women and their allies call on gov. Jerry Brown, CDCR head Matthew Cate and federal judge Thelton Henderson to stop the conversion of VSPW and the transfer of women and trans people into other overcrowded facilities.

Demands include:

- \* An immediate halt to the conversion and the transfer of women,
- \* Release of sufficient people to deal adequately with prison overcrowding,
- \* And, when the prison system overcrowding has been eliminated, that the State close down VSPW completely.

## Alumnos indocumentados

'Soñadores' de Nuevo México en Acción o New Mexico Dreamers in Action (NM Dia, por sus siglas en ingles), es para estudiantes universitarios indocumentados. Los alumnos buscan el apoyo de la comunidad en general para una reforma migratoria integral, al igual que el apoyo para el Dream Act, una propuesta de ley que pudiera ayudar a los jóvenes indocumentados a eventualmente obtener sus documentos legales. El Dream Act es una pieza de legislación, limitada, conservativa. Se necesitamos más que eso.

Ahora hay un movimiento nacional que lleva por nombre 'Surgiendo de las sombras' o Coming Out of the Shadows. Los alumnos, en su mayoría universitarios, quieren darle una cara al Dream Act. Y sin temor se están declarando "indocumentados, sin miedo y sin disculpas", como lo marca el lema de esta campaña nacional.

Varios estados, como Nuevo México y California, han adoptado medidas para ofrecer asistencia financiera estatal a universitarios indocumentados. Hay 2.1 millones de niños y jóvenes indocumentados que residen en EE.UU. y quienes se podrían beneficiar del Dream Act. Debido a las barreras en continuar con su educación y su exclusión del ámbito laboral legal, muchos estudiantes indocumentados se desaniman y no entran al colegio. Los opositores a una reforma migratoria simplemente no comprenden la bienestar de todos.

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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 on-going support!

## VOICES FROM INSIDE

Goldsboro NC September 13, 2011

The SBI crime lab has been found to use questionable forensic science in testing for DNA, ballistics, blood stain pattern analysis and fingerprints. You can request a SBI Crime Lab Quality Assurance Record Form from: NC SBI, PO Box 295000, 3320 Gardner Rd, Raleigh NC 27626, and also NC Prison Legal Services

Rosharon TX January 18, 2012

A TDCJ inmate has filed a 1983 Civil Rights law suit against TDCJ for violating his 1st Amendment Freedom of Religion (Catholic) at Eastham Unit. Contact: Juan Ramon Jr, 1501378, Terrell Unit, 1300 FM 655, Rosharon TX 77583.

Soledad CA January 30, 2012

This may be the year that us non-serious/violent third strikers are voted out in the November 2012 elections. Stanford Law Clinic has an initiative going on the ballot that would require the third offense to be serious/violent a 25 to life sentence with two priors that are serious/violent. And this has a resentencing provision for those already down 25-to-life.

Corcoran CA February 2, 2012

Any news on reduction of population in CDC? No time is being cut and it's just as crowded as ever. Medical is just as bad and people are dying every week from neglect.

Bessemer AL

As an Alabama Death Row inmate, I'm writing to you as a member of a small group that hopes to start our own Innocence Project. Our goal is to raise awareness of issues that place innocent men and women on Death Row. We want our message heard here in our state, but hope to reach a much larger audience. We want to set up a contact/resource list with the hope of our supporters joining together as one voice. We welcome help in any form. Contact: Donald Deardorff, z-681 U22-1A, 100 Warrior Lane, Bessemer AL 35023.

### Lifelines Poetry Competition 2012

Open to all U.S. prisoners who are or who have been on Death Row; no more than 3 entries per person please. You must be the author and your poem cannot have been published anywhere else. Send to: *The Wing* Editorial Team, 107 Monarch Dr, Kemsley, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 2GR, United Kingdom. (postage/oz ) Must be received by: April 9, 2012.