

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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May 2016

All-Year Realities for Many Families & Youth

Raise the Age

When people are 17 they cannot vote, buy cigarettes or even adopt a dog from an animal shelter. But, as of mid-May in nine states, 17 year olds are still automatically treated as if they were "adults" by the court systems. In New York and North Carolina, so are 16 year olds. Some progress is being made to raise the age for being tried as an adult to 18. States where this is happening include Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas, Michigan, North Carolina, New York, Wisconsin and Missouri.

Since 2009, there are five states, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Illinois, Mississippi, and New Hampshire, which have raised their upper juvenile age limit to 17. Alabama raised the age in 1977. In addition, there has been some consideration in Connecticut, Illinois and Vermont to raise being tried as an adult to 21.

Prosecuting youth in the adult system can increase recidivism by as much as 34%, according to the national Centers for Disease Control.

Resource to raise the age:

Louisiana Center for Children's Rights,
1100-B Milton St, New Orleans LA 70122,
504-658-6860.

INCARCERATION RATES OF PARENTS

Nationally, seven percent of children have at least one parent incarcerated. In Kentucky, the rate is 13%, in Indiana it is also above 10%. In New Mexico, Alaska, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee, it is 10%. It comes as no surprise reports state that children with an incarcerated parent are predominantly in low-income families of color, with the majority of children under 10. African-American children are seven times more likely to have an incarcerated parent, Latinos two times more likely to than "white" families.

SHACKLING FOR ALL

There are reports from defense lawyers that children as young as nine are. In many juvenile court systems, young people regularly appear at hearings in handcuffs fastened to waist chains as well as in leg irons. Not to mention ill-fitting jail-issued jumpsuits with sweats. Some estimates are that this is done to as many as 100,000 youths, for their multiple court appearances, a year. In addition to the discomfort and the humiliation, in front of both family and strangers in positions of authority, this obviously runs counter to any presumption of innocence. Shackling biases judges, juries and media coverage. Any court appearance quadruples the chances that a young person will not finish high school. Courts recognize the right of adults not to be shackled, at least at trial, except where there are compelling security reasons.

There has been some progress to reduce such shackling since 2014. There are 10 states which have recently established some limits, as have some individual counties and judges. The states include: South Carolina, Washington, Alaska, Utah, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Nebraska, Indiana, Nevada, Maryland and Maine. This is in addition to the 13 states which had previously established limits.

Resources against shackling:

Campaign Against Indiscriminate Juvenile Shackling (CAIJS) of the National Juvenile Defender Center, 1350 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 304, Washington DC 20036, 202-452-0010;

Louisiana Center for Children's Rights,
1820 St. Charles Ave., Suite 205, New Orleans LA 70130, 504-207-4577.

* * * BLACK LIVES MATTER * * *

Luchamos por nuestras vidas

Desde la cárcel se comunican con nosotros para darnos información actualizada sobre el fin de una huelga de diez días realizada por presos de Alabama, en protesta contra el grave hacinamiento, las malas condiciones de vida y la decimotercera enmienda de la Constitución de Estados Unidos, que prohíbe la esclavitud y la servidumbre, "excepto como castigo por un delito", por lo tanto sanciona la legalidad del trabajo forzado y sin paga en las cárceles.

"Estas huelgas son nuestros métodos para cuestionar los encarcelamientos masivos, en tanto entendemos que el sistema penitenciario es una continuación del sistema esclavista, que es un sistema económico", afirma un preso que se comunica por teléfono desde una celda de aislamiento en el Correccional de Holman, Alabama.

Afirma que los organizadores de Alabama Libre trataron de presentar sus pedidos ante los tribunales y los legisladores, pero cuando fracasaron "entendimos que nuestro encierro estaba relacionado con el trabajo y el dinero que generábamos desde el sistema penitenciario; por lo tanto empezamos a organizarnos en torno a nuestro trabajo y lo usamos como medio y método de producir una reforma en el sistema penitenciario de Alabama.

receive a CPR Newsletter by postal mail monthly, send us up to 12 self-addressed, stamped envelopes (with the CPR return address).

Keep sending us address changes and renewal requests as we struggle to maintain the mailing list for the January holiday card/new calendar mailing as accurately as possible.

Also, note that the *only* address to use to be sure the reach us is: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504. Some resource address listings are incorrect.

NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS, so, for our protection, *please* do not mark envelopes sent to us as "Legal Mail."

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/html> -- this is a GREAT site!

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

Let Us Count the Ways

> The nationwide total of approximately 100,000 people in solitary confinement is more than the total prison populations of countries such as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

> At the beginning of May, the sentences of 58 federal prisoners, 18 of whom were doing life, were commuted. Most are now due for release in September, others over the next 2 years. A total of 306 people have been granted clemency by this administration.

> The *National Lifers of America* (NLA) has chapters/contacts in every Michigan Department of Corrections prison and camp, which contain a total of 50,000 imprisoned people. Membership also includes family and friends.

> More than 15% of the people in Washington state prisons have life sentences. The national average is 9%. Washington state abolished parole in 1984. Contact: WA Coalition for Parole, PO Box 9971, Seattle WA 98109.

> Thirteen states have adopted a rule recommended by the American Bar Association requiring prosecutors to come forward if they find "new, credible and material evidence" that an innocent person is doing time. There is currently an effort to do so in North Carolina.

> Called "advisers", 250 U.S. Special Operations troops are to be sent to Syria, bringing the total to about 300.

> The top 1% of U.S. households now controls 42% of the nation's wealth, the top 0.1% accounts for 22% of it. From 2010 to 2014, the number of U.S. households with at least \$1 million in assets grew by 1/3, to just under 7 million. For those with \$1 million+, estimated wealth grew by 7.2% from 2010 to 2014, 8 times the rate of gains for those with less than \$1 million.

WARNINGS

"Help from Beyond the Wall", giving as its address both PO Box 185, Springvale ME 04083 and PO Box 513, North Haven ME 04853 have taken peoples' money and not performed the services purchased according to a prisoner in Florida.

As of July 1, 2015, the Washington state DOC removed the categorical restrictions on non-English language mail and publications.