

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## DIABOLICAL , DISPROPORTIONATE & DESTRUCTIVE

The total population doing a life or "virtual life" sentence was 206,268 in 2016. This is one of every seven imprisoned people, or 13.9%. The increase in the number of people doing Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP) sentences has grown much faster than Life with Parole sentences.

In eight states, at least one of every five imprisoned people is doing a form of life in prison. Those states are: Alabama, California, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, and Utah. One in five African Americans in prison is doing a life or virtual life sentence. In Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, and South Carolina, 2/3s or more are African American. And, 80% of children sentenced to life are youth of color--and 98% male.

Of the 206,268 people doing life or virtual life, one quarter of them will never have an opportunity for parole. As of 2016, the life-sentenced prison population was nearly five times its size in 1984. Disproportionate large shares of these indeterminate life sentenced prisoners are in Alabama, California, New York, Nevada and Utah.

There were 53,290 LWOP sentenced people as of 2016; one of every 28 imprisoned. The states with the highest percentages are: Florida (16.7%), Pennsylvania (10.1%), California (9.6%), Louisiana (9.1%), and the federal system (7.2%) make up just over half (52.6%) of the total LWOP population. In Delaware, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania more than 10% of the state prison population is doing a LWOP sentence.

Except in Alaska, all 31 of the states which have an execution sentence also have an LWOP sentence. In addition, 18 states that do not have an execution sentence also have a LWOP sentence. It is commonly believed that the spread of LWOP sentencing is due to the promotion of LWOP in campaigns to repeal execution sentences. There is no evidence that LWOP sentences are act as an "effective alternative" to executions. Between 1992 and 2016, there was a 12.7% increase in

the number of people on death row, while over the same period, the LWOP population rose 328%. With 53,290 people doing LWOP sentences as of 2016, it is impossible to believe that even most of them would be on death row without the "alternative" of an LWOP sentence. LWOP's widespread use in both capital and noncapital convictions has had a "normalizing" effect on extreme sentences--it places an upward pressure on sentences across the spectrum.

At the state level, African Americans are imprisoned at an average of five times the rate of "whites," ranging from ten to two times the rate. And so with life and virtual life sentences. Nationally, as of 2016, two-thirds (67.%) were of people of color. Nearly half (48.3%) are African American, and in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, and South Carolina, two-thirds or more are African American.

African Americans make up two-thirds or more of the LWOP population in nine states: Alabama (68.8%), Illinois (66.9%), Georgia (75.1%), Louisiana (73.5%), Maryland (66%), Michigan (68.4%), Mississippi (70.4%), New Jersey (66.2%), and South Carolina (68.5%).

Overall, those with life and virtual life sentences are 15.7% Hispano; the highest percentages are held in New Mexico, California, and New York.

People of color make up 65.6% of those with virtual life sentences. African Americans are 51.9% of that total and 11.7% are Hispano. States with the largest percentages of virtual life sentences done to African Americans are: Alabama (64%), Illinois (68.5%), Maryland (78.1%), Mississippi (75.6%), and South Carolina (68.4%).

Youth are doing life or virtual life sentences in every state except Maine and West Virginia. They represent 5.7% of the total life-sentenced population, or 11,745 for conviction of eligible crimes committed before they were 18.

Resource: The Sentencing Project, *Still Life: America's Increasing Use of Life and Long-Term Sentences* at 1705 DeSales St NW, 8th Floor, Washington DC 20036.

## ¡Santuario Si! ¡Criminalization No!

Sabers que para muchas comunidades de color, la furza del caos y el terror llega en forma de agentes ICE deteniendo a las personas en las escuelas, la policia local acosando y brutalizando a los niño Negros y Latinos, y los tanques de la Guardia Nacional protegiendo tuberías privadas que amenazan la tierra y el agua de los Americanos Indigenos.

El sanataria radical va más allá de las instituciones oficiales y se ve en las formas en que la gente está constantemente encontrando y haciendo todo tipo de santuarios para sí mismas y para las personas a quien aman. El Sanatario se el espacio donde nacen la resiliencia y la resistencia, un sentimiento cononcido por el corazón.

Las mujeres y los transeúntes de CCWF y CIW (en California) han desarrollado espacios intencionales para apoyar a las personas que han intentado suicidarse, que han sufrido una sobredosis, que viven con enfermedades mentales, o que son sobrevivientes de violencia doméstica y que complen penas LWOP.

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To receive the 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 in order for us to maintain the mailing list for the January holiday card/ new calendar mailing as accurately as we can.

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

And still: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS; 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 free on-line for 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!

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We stand in solidarity with the over 1,500 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails on a hunger strike to demand basic human rights and dignity. They are striking for proper medical care, visits from family, the end of solitary confinement and of administrative detention. Over 6,500 Palestinian children, women, men, elected officials & others are currently held.

## Summer Is A-Comin' In

The Texas state prisons are not air-conditioned. Prisoners and guards are stuck in cells and halls above 120 F. For \$20, fans can be bought that can save a life. TX-CURE provides free fans to poor and needy prisoners without family or friends for financial support. T-CURE Fans, PO Box 38381, Dallas TX 75238. Or on-line at: <http://www.texasecure.org>

## Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March

Will be in Washington DC on Saturday, August 19, starting at noon. Its primary focus is the 13th Amendment's Exception Clause that legalizes slavery; encourages lack of rehabilitation, treatment options and re-entry programs. To expand the national dialogue on the 13th Amendment and to expose its effects, included is a demand for Congressional Hearings. Sponsored by the IAMAW Prison Advocacy Network ([iamWeubuntu.com](http://iamWeubuntu.com)) and the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March.

## HOW TO START A LIFER GROUP IN PRISON

1) Survey the lifers (with a parole option and those without). If you get positive feedback from at least 25, write a mission for your group about the concerns of lifers relative to parole and/or commutation of sentence. Publish it in the prison newsletter.

2) Then, notify the prison warden and state director of prisons.

3) Do not consider the lifers' group as political leverage against the facility--that will lead to its being closed down.

4) Get to know your state lawmakers and state parole board members. Write them and express your concerns. Invite them to your meetings. Ask questions related to paroles and commutations. Ask for copies of their guidelines. Ask for improvements in laws and procedures that will help lifers.

5) Establish communication with the governor and express your concerns.

6) Establish communication with area colleges and universities that have "criminal justice" courses. Invite their teachers and students to your meetings.

7) A lifers' group should have articulate members with little or no history of discipline problems.

More information: CURE LifeLong, 665 W Willis St, Suite B-1, Detroit MI 48201.

## Cellsense Plus Detection Systems

Are provided by Metrasens and Global Tel\*Link; they can locate cell phones--on or off, inside or outside the body and can be free-standing or mounted (can also locate razor blades, paper clips and staples).