

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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JUNK SCIENCE

For example, as Nell Irvin Painter, a retired African-American history professor, states in the opening of her invaluable book *The History of White People*, "race is an idea, not a fact". Her argument is that in Greek and Roman antiquity, there was only geography and the opportunity to conquer and enslave others. Not until the eighteenth century did an obsession with whiteness flourish, with the German invention of the notion of Caucasian beauty. And in fact, much of the justification of the entire U.S. police, court and penal system is still rooted in related systemic beliefs.

Fast forward to 2015. In April of that year, we have the "news" that the FBI faked an entire field of forensic science. The Justice Department and the FIB formally acknowledged that 26 out of 28 examiners in the FBI microscopic hair comparison unit gave overstated forensic matches in ways that favored prosecutors in more than 95% of the 268 trials reviewed so far over more than a two-decade period before 2000.

The cases include those of 32 defendants sentenced to death. Of these defendants, at least 14 have already been executed or died in prison. Flawed forensic hair matches date back at least to the 1970s. The same kind of mistakes and faulty testimony are likely to have been presented in any state prosecutions that relied on the between 500 and 1,000 local or state examiners trained by the FBI. Much of the evidence is now lost.

And in December 2015 it was announced by the Texas Forensic Science Commission that more than a dozen people around the country have been released or exonerated in cases involving bite-mark testimony that was later debunked. The chair since of the Texas Commission since 2012 has stated "Some aspects of forensic science have never been validated."

Some forensic tools, including comparisons of lead chemistry in bullet and the matching of aural voice prints, and the accuracy of many supposed signs of arson have also have been largely discarded. And on and on.

But now it appears that we don't actually have to do any lab work to come up with fake conclusions. In mid-April Massachusetts prosecutors announced that they would (in reality, had been forced to) throw out 21,587 street drug case convictions. This was because all those cases had been prosecuted based on evidence or testimony supplied by a former state chemist who admitted to faking tests and identifying evidence as illegal narcotics *without even testing it*. The chemist who did this had worked for a state crime lab in Boston for nine years. Many of those so convicted have already completed lengthy prison sentences and continue to suffer the consequences of being convicted of a drug offense.

Prosecutorial Discretion

Closely related to the issues raised in the article above is the enormous influence that prosecutorial discretion has on the lives of defendants. It is they who decide on what the charges against people will be. It is they who can withhold "exculpatory evidence" from defendants. It is they who become judges and other elected officials, thereby directly influencing sentencing laws and the necessity of pleas bargains.

As "experts" struggle to explain away the reality of mass incarceration, the role of prosecutors in the great increase in numbers of those imprisoned is now sometimes recognized. Since the early 1990s, prosecutors in the 3,000+ U.S. counties have charged arrestees with felonies at a higher rate. This more punitive exercise of prosecutorial discretion has led directly to more people doing time.

Resources:

John Pfaff, *Locked In*
Families for Justice as Healing, PO Box 14, Boston MA 02121; 617-905-2026

* * * BLACK LIVES MATTER * * *

Desestimarian 21.000 sentencias

La fiscalía de Massachusetts anunció el 18 de abril que estaría por desestimar 21.587 condenas penales de narcóticos, en lo que podría ser el mayor sobreseimiento de casos judiciales de la historia estadounidense. Las sentencias en cuestión fueron dictaminadas sobre evidencia o testimonio brindado por una especialista en química que trabajaba para un laboratorio forense del estado. La ex funcionaria admitió haber falsificado pruebas y catalogado evidencia como narcóticos ilegales sin siquiera analizarla. En el año 2013, la química, se declaró culpable de alterar evidencia judicial durante los nueve años que trabajó para el laboratorio forense estatal en Boston. En ese período, sus declaraciones falsas dieron lugar al encarcelamiento de miles de personas.

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 as we work 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! *****

LIFELINES ESSAY AWARD

Open to all prisoners who are or have been on Death Row, the Sam Johnson Essay Award 2017 of the *LifeLines Quarterly Newsletter* will consider entries of up to 500 words, but no more than three per person. Submissions must be by their authors only and not have been published elsewhere. All subjects are welcome. Cash prizes and winning essays published in the Fall issue of *The Wing*. Send essays not later than Monday, July 3, 2017, to: Christopher Stokes, 2 Northmead Drive, North Walsham, Norfolk NR28 0AU, United Kingdom (postage: \$1.15 per ounce--5 pp.)

Numbers About Women in Prison

Number imprisoned: 200,000
Number on probation or parole: 1,000,000+
Rate of increase in incarceration of women compared to men from 1980 to 2011: 637% increase of women, 419% of men
The number of women in prison has multiplied 8 times in the last 30 years
Lifetime likelihood of imprisonment of women as a whole: 1 in 56
Of Black women: 1 in 45
Of Hispanic & "white" women: 1 in 118
Women in state prisons who report being parents of children under 18: 65%+
Of mothers in state prisons, 64% lived with their children before they were sent to prison--compared to 47% of fathers
Women pregnant when admitted to prison: 1 in 25 in state prisons, 1 in 33 in federal prisons
Women in state prisons in 2004 with symptoms of current mental health problems: 73%--compared to 55% of men.
Many prisons continue the shackling of women during pregnancy, labor and giving birth

Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor Says

"The Black Lives Matter movement differs from past civil rights movements, often led by ministers and male activists, by putting women at the center of the fight and prioritizing the struggles of queer, transgendered, and disabled African-Americans--oppressed groups within Black communities....The idea that we should have a society based on the equal distribution of wealth and resources is deeply embedded in the Black experience...so we have to think through what that means...."
in *#BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Haymarket Books.

A DYSTOPIC RIDDLE

What do you get when you bring U.S. police, border agents, ICE officers, and FBI officials together to learn with soldiers and cops in Israel?
> An apartheid army empowered as a global gold standard.
> Police and soldiers shooting people in the streets with total impunity
> Massively expanded spying and surveillance programs holding entire communities captive.
> Unprecedented levels of deportation and imprisonment separating families.
> Physical and legal attacks on human rights defenders, gutting movements for justice.
from *JVP*, 1611 Telegraph Ave, Suite 1020, Oakland CA 94612.