

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## WHO GETS THE MONEY?

Detaining immigrant children is a booming industry now reaping \$1 billion annually. More than 11,800 children, from a few months old to 17 are being detained in states such as AZ, CA, CT, FL, IL, KS, MD, MI, NJ, NY, OR, PA, TX, VA, and WA. Three shelters in Texas have been designated for toddlers and infants. Health and Human Services Department grants for shelters, foster care and other "child welfare" services for detained unaccompanied and separated children reached \$958 million dollars in 2017.

Over the past decade, by far the largest recipients of these enormous sums of money have been Southwest Key and Baptist Child & Family Services (BCFS). Southwest Key has received \$1.39 billion and BCFS \$942 million to operate shelters. About a dozen contractors operate more than 30 facilities in Texas alone, with number of others contracted for about 100 shelters in 16 other states. Southwest Key Program most flagrant site is its super-facility, Casa Padre, which was gutted, redesigned and renovated, and holds nearly 1,500 boys at a former Walmart Super-Center in South Texas. In Texas alone, the total licensed capacity is up to nearly 5,300.

The president and of Southwest Key was paid \$700,000 in 2015 alone.

Several large defense contractors and security firms are also entering this lucrative field. They include General Dynamics, the global aerospace and defense company and MVM, Inc., which until 2008 contracted with the government to supply guards in Iraq.

MVM recently posted chilling job opportunities for "bilingual travel youth care workers...accompanying them on domestic flights and via ground transportation to shelters all over the country."

For the hanged and beaten.  
For the shot, drowned, and burned.  
*For the tortured, tormented, and terrorized.*  
For those abandoned by the rule of law.  
We will remember.

## What Do We Get?

There are more than 100 migrant youth sites overseen by federal officials in 17 states. About 15 of them are "residential treatment centers". They originally were opened to hold emotionally disturbed and convicted U.S. youth. But with the dramatic increase of unaccompanied migrant youth beginning about six years ago, many have been granted federal contracts to house immigrant young people also.

In recent years, between 25,000 and 60,000 immigrant children who are without a parent or guardian are arrested at the southwestern border. Of them, a vast majority are sent to these federally financed shelters across the country. Those considered to have "emotional disorders or other mental health and behavioral issues" are sent to "specialized facilities" such as the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center in Staunton VA, west of Charlottesville. We are learning more about conditions and treatment at Shenandoah because of the class-action suit against it now underway.

There is "the chair"--which sounds remarkably similar to one used in Israeli prisons. It is metal, it has a high back and wheels, so it can be tilted and moved. Those strapped to it are sometimes stripped down to their underwear--their feet, arms and waist are restrained by cushioned leather straps and loops.

There is also "the mask." This is a mesh hood that covers the face and head. Presumably this is used when it was thought the youth in question might spit on the staff. Sometimes its use has been combined with the use of the chair.

Lengthy solitary confinement has also been reported, as well as injections of psychotropic drugs, sexual abuse....

With hope because hopelessness is the enemy of justice.  
With courage because peace requires bravery.  
With persistence because justice is a constant struggle.  
With faith because we shall overcome.  
--Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery AL

## **Puerto Rico propone transportar a 3.200 prisioneros a cárceles del territorio continental estadounidense**

Puerto Rico planea trasladar a 3.200 prisioneros a cárceles privadas en el territorio continental estadounidense, a miles de kilómetros de distancia de sus familias, que viven en la isla. La propuesta es parte de una serie de medidas de austeridad impulsadas por la junta de control fiscal de Puerto Rico, un organismo que no fue electo, a raíz de la devastación causada por el paso del huracán María, en 2017. Según las autoridades, el plan significará un ahorro de 400 millones de dólares para Puerto Rico a lo largo de los próximos cuatro años. Los prisioneros se oponen al plan, argumentando que si se pusiera en práctica haría casi imposible que recibieran visitas de sus familiares.

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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 our only permanent mailing list--the one for our January holiday card/new calendar, as accurately as possible.**

**Also, note that the correct address to be sure to reach us at 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 addressed to us as "Legal Mail."**

**Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for posting our Newsletter on-line for free downloading and distribution. It is at:**

**[www.realcostofprisonsproject.org](http://www.realcostofprisonsproject.org)--this is a GREAT site! Thank you for all your support!**

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### **Freer Than Before**

About 75% of those in New York City (NYC) jails are being kept there pre-trial largely due to lack of money for bail. A new law now allows NYC prisoners to make free phone calls from the jail as they await a deposition of their charge. This is the result of a long campaign demanding an end to the exorbitant and exploitative rates charged by the billion-dollar prison phone industry. Until now, the for-profit phone company Securus, which manages phones in NYC jails, has gotten \$2.5 million every single year off of prisoners' phone calls.

## **PRISON HEALTH NEWS:CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Artwork, poems and quotes are requested from individuals currently incarcerated, to be showcased at the annual *Beyond the Walls: Prison Summit* which will be held in October, in Philadelphia. Attendees at the *Summit* include health workers, activists, clergy, and prison staff.

Submissions will also be considered for possible publication in *Prison Health News*. Written submissions should be about: "What kinds of support do you have on the inside?" And/or: "What type of role would you like to take on in the prison reform movement when you get out?" Art submissions should respond to: Draw a favorite memory.

Send to: *Prison Health News*, Attention: Summit Submissions, 1233 Locust St--3rd Floor, Philadelphia PA 19107.

## **Forty Years Later**

Sentenced as one of the Philadelphia Move 9, Debbie Africa, with a sentence to 30 to 100 years, became the first of the nine to be released from prison, in May 2018. It was her eighth time going up for parole, having been eligible since 2008. She states: "The main thing I would like to focus on is not only helping pull people together and unifying people to push forward for a better day, but also to bring about the example of being innocent..."

## **SUPPORT SOUGHT**

The Nonviolent Offender Relief Act of 2017, introduced by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee, (D-TX) has been set aside. Help bring it back to congress for further consideration. This bill would require that the federal Bureau of Prisons release early those who have completed at least half of their prison sentences if they meet the following conditions: are at least 45 years old, have no convictions for violent offenses, and have received no institutional disciplinary violations.

If your church or organization is willing to help this bill come to the floor for passage, please send your list of the names in support to: Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee, 2187 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515.

"We rise up this day in support of this bill." --Signed by 37 federal women prisoners.

## **Amazing Grace?**

In the United States there are actually 400 people who earn \$97,000 an hour.