HARMFUL TO A PERSON’S HEALTH

It is well established that solitary confinement/long term isolation is extremely harmful to a person’s health—physical, mental and emotional. In August 2013, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture called for an end to solitary confinement in response to the California prisoners’ hunger strike. He said solitary: “often causes mental and physical suffering or humiliation, amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...even amounts to torture.”

Finding ways to build community and so fend off the damage caused by the isolation of solitary increases the quality of life of those of us struggling under such conditions.

The following suggestions appeared in The Fire Inside Newsletter, fall 2013/winter 2014 issue, of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners and are from SHU survivors. Additional suggestions from readers are welcome.

1] Reading and writing help. Books can take you to new ideas and experiences. Writing (and drawing)—poetry, stories, letters or reports—expresses feelings, acknowledge the reality you’re in and provides testimony exposing the torture.

2] Meditation and astral projection. For some, this includes praying. Allows your mind and body to rest and to be removed from the harsh conditions you are experiencing. It allows you to leave your cell in your mind.

3] Exercise. Done with regularity, it not only cares for your body, but also strengthens your mind.

4] Making a schedule for yourself and your time and following it. Vary your activities as much as you possibly can.

New Limits to Solitary?

State legislative activity to limit the use of solitary has increased recently according to the National Prison Project of the ACLU. In 2007, New York passed legislation to limit putting mentally ill prisoners in solitary. Maine and New Mexico have passed legislation to study the issue which is believed to be part of an effort to reduce the overall number in solitary. Nevada and Texas also passed bills to study the issue. Bills to reduce the overall use of solitary are pending in New York, California and Massachusetts.

In Colorado, there were 140 mentally ill prisoners in solitary in December of 2012. In December 2013, only eight were reported there. In April 2014, Colorado reported only one mentally ill prisoner in solitary. One too many.

Legislators have raised concerns in recent years that prisoners who are released directly to communities after spending long sentences in solitary pose a greater threat to society than others.

Cheap is Cheap

The federal government is relying on tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants a year to provide essential labor—usually for $1 a day or less—at the mostly for-profit detention centers where they are being held awaiting disposition of their cases.

Last year, at least 60,000 detained immigrants worked in the federal government’s nationwide patchwork of detention centers—more than worked for any other single employer in the country, according to ICE. The 13 cents an hour paid these people saved the government and the for-profit (including the British private security G$S) companies involved $40 million or more a year. Outside contractors are required to pay workers at least the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour.

These immigrants are “civil detainees” Roughly half of the people who appear in immigration courts are ultimately permitted to stay in the U.S. The immigrant detention system costs more than $2 billion a year.
Campana para mejorar atencion a
niños que llegan solos a fronteras

El Servicio Luterano de Inmigración y
Refugiados (LIRS, en sus siglas en
inglés) presentó una campaña para
mejorar la atención a los niños que
llegan solos a las fronteras, sobre todo
procedentes de Centroamérica.

Segun los datos de LIRS, el flujo de
niños sin acompanamiento de familiares
procedentes de Guatemala, Honduras y El
Salvador se ha disparado en los ultimos
tres anos y se espera que este ano
ascienda a 60.000, la mayoria de ellos
adolescentes, pero tambien algunos
menores de diez anos, y que se doble en
2015.

La campaña, denominada "#ActofLove"
("Acto de Amor") y liderada por jovenes,
aspira a que el Gobierno colabore con
los paises de origen y con
organizaciones no gubernamentales y
destine una partida de fondos para
mejorar la protección de niños que
llegan solos.

"Necesitamos cambiar la manera en que
estamos pensando en esta crisis. Esto no
es simplemente algo mas de lo que ya
está pasando en inmigracion, sino que es
una crisis particular que requiere que
la atendamos" explicó uno de los
participantes en la campaña.

To receive the Newsletter by postal
mail each month, 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 be sent the yearly holiday card/ new
calendar each January.

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. There are resource listings
which, unfortunately, use an incorrect
address. Remember: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS
OR LEGAL WORKERS. Please do not mark any
envelopes sent to us as "legal mail."

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of
Prisons project for making our monthly
Newsletter available on-line for free
downloading and distribution. It is at:
http://www.realcostofprisonsproject.org/
coalition.html -- is is a GREAT site!

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

The top 1% of people in the United
States have seen their income rise 278%
over the past 30 years.

The richest 5% of people in the
United States have over 60% of the
nation’s wealth. The bottom 80% have
only 13%.

** VOICES FROM INSIDE **

Graterford PA 
April 12, 2014

Lifers Inc. Parole Eligibility Rational
The primary objective of Lifers Inc. is to
secure legislation that will allow parole
eligibility for all life-sentenced men,
women and children in Pennsylvania. By
parole eligibility, we are asking that
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Graterford PA April 12, 2014

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secure legislation that will allow parole
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parole will be considered on a case-by-
case basis. The applicant must meet the
requirements determined by comprehensive
parole administrators. He or she must
demonstrate remorse, have worked hard to
transform his/her self, and no longer pose
a threat to society....Why not allow those
Lifers who might qualify an opportunity to
provide the same stability and leadership
in their respective communities on the
outside as they have within institutions?

Jessup MD
May 30, 2014

Finding a way to keep convicts from
repeating any criminal acts is much more
important than punishing them with a term
in prison. This includes developing
empathy, compassion and remorse. Mistreat-
ment, be it physical, psychological, or
financial exploitation while imprisoned is
a path to recidivism.

A public outcry is needed to end abuses
and to parole Maryland’s long-term
prisoners and those serving Life sentences
whose records reflect the desired goals.

Albuquerque NM
June 2, 2014

I have received no response from the NM
Secretary of Corrections concerning the
discontinuation of Family Visits at NM
prisons. These Family Visits are with the
inmates’ parents. The reasons that the
Secretary gave for discontinuation of
Conjugal Visits do not apply to Family
Visits. He also has not addressed: the
lack of programs, the poor quality of food
and the big increase in canteen prices.

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National Call: “Show us Solitary”

Architects/Designers/Planners for
Social Responsibility (ADPSR) is seeking
drawings of the SHU for an exhibit about
the impact of prolonged solitary
confinement. Please include a short
description of the space and your
experience being there, as well as a
statement giving ADPSR permission to
publish your drawing. All work will be
displayed online and some will be part of
a traveling exhibition. The exhibit will
support ADPSR’s proposal to prohibit
architects from designing execution
chambers and spaces intended for prolonged
solitary confinement. Submissions will be
accepted until September 1, 2014.