

Some Facts You Should Know About Texas Prisons
By Ana Lucia Gelabert, 4th Ventose (February 24), 2008

Or, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) in its seven (7) or more branches: TDCJ-CID (Correctional Institutions Division), TDCJ-SJ (State Jails), TDCJ-PD (Parole Division), plus “therapeutic facilities,” “transient facilities,” private prisons by Wackenhut and C.C.A. (fully paid by TDCJ), sundry “pre-parole/pre-revocation” facilities, “industrial units” – you counting them? – then 14,000 state felons kept for months in county jails at TDCJ expense for lack of beds in the Greater TDCJ. *Each* a separate state prison system. Holding some 230,000 inmates – the exact number a heavily guarded secret. World’s highest incarceration rate of 1000 per 100,000 population – ten times England’s, 14 times Cuba’s – plus another 700,000 Texans on parole supervision. Half of this mass of humanity “people of color.” For each adult in prison, count at least one underage child being raised on the streets without parental supervision: “the next TDCJ generation.”

If *you*, dear reader, think that Abu Ghraib or Gitmo – or tens of secret Gitmos in “friendly” eastern European and third world nations – are but “exceptional mistakes by a few bad apples,” then you been brainwashed by the soothing snake oil of fascist propaganda. In the late 1990’s some TDCJ whistle-blower leaked the “Brazorial County Training Video,” that soon made coast-to-coast telenews sensation: prisoners chained on floor, screaming in excruciating pain, while attack dogs held by laughing prisoncrats bit them over and again. This horror film was *a training video* to teach newly-hired prison guards! Texas governor then was George Walker Bush: current de facto misruler of the U.S.A.

George W. Bush comes from a long line of criminals and traitors. His great-grandfathers were Herbert Walker and Prescott Bush, who in the 1930’s ran a New York bank and associated string of dummy businesses whose *only* real aim was to launder money for the Nazi regime in Germany. And kept doing so until October 1942 – nearly a year after Pearl Harbor and the U.S.A at war with Germany – when the FDR administration expropriated the lot under the Trading with the Enemy Act. A fact of public record¹ yet not a word about it in our flamboyant and oh-so-free mainstream press.

In 1994 the TDCJ employees PAC – “political action committee” to donate campaign funds *and* for heavy-handed strongarm tactics “to get the vote” -- helped Bush defeat incumbent Ann Richards for governor of Texas. TDCJ then had a total of 72,000 prisoners: deemed “overcrowded” by the federal *Ruiz Court*. In payment and gratitude, in only 16 months, by June 1996, Bush caused TDCJ population to swell to over 150,000. By appointing or manipulating a Board of Pardons and Paroles – BPP, then wholly separate from TDCJ – to cut parole releases from a historical average of 85% of those eligible, to a mere 16%! Ever since the TDCJ has steadily increased, based on parole release rates fluctuating from 20% to 25% of eligible inmates.

If parole release rates returned to pre-1995 averages, in one year TDCJ population would shrink from 230,000 to under 120,000. In two years, to under 70,000. In three

¹ Visit Canada-based www.northstarcompass.org or ask through mlucas3545@aol.com for details.

years, to under 40,000. Check it out! But then, where would the surplus prisoncrats find steady jobs and growth careers?

In 1994 TDCJ top echelons got embarrassed by tens of thousands of brand new prison beds – shoddily build by “brother-in-law” contractors that the *Ruiz Court* condemned for “lacking constitutional standards.” Bush to the rescue, he created a brand new crime: what until then had been misdemeanors, came to be “fourth degree felonies” headed for “state jails”: birth of the TDCJ-SJ, made from the onset a *separate* prison system and *not bound* to the *Ruiz Court*! Thereupon the other siblings of the Greater TDCJ family were similarly conceived. (The *Ruiz Court* supervision came to an end two years after Bill Clinton signed into law the Prison Litigation Reform Act.)

In 1994 TDCJ was “pestered” by having to answer citizens’ requests under the Texas Open Records Act (TORA), prisoners among the most zealous watchdogs of TDCJ shenanigans. Such as the “VitaPro scandal” for which TDCJ Director Andy Collins got convicted in Houston federal court; but many other scandals, like the “visitation room pizza scandal” or when some 1000 lavatories for which taxpayers paid \$200 apiece, were switched with others costing \$10 at K-Mart. Or when the pickup truck of TDCJ’s overall general auditor was found near Huntsville full of bullet holes and blood all over, but the FBI found, two years later, the “victim” alive, well, and much richer in Pennsylvania.

Well then, Bush signed into law *Government Code 552.028* by which TDCJ may refuse any disclosure by simply saying it came from a prisoner, or (no proof needed) by a “friend of prisoners.” Tus freed from any and all public scrutiny and free to commit any crime with full impunity – theft, murder, drug traffic, fraud, “pork barrel contracts”: all of which TDCJ prisoncrats do! – the honest public servants in the various TDCJ’s went into an all-out spendthrift and grand larceny crime spree. Which just in 2006 totalled \$17.5 billion expenditures!

In 1994 the Texas constitution prohibited fiscal deficits. Governors had no choice but to “pay as you go” and limit expenditures to the amount of revenues collected. Then came “fiscal conservative” Bush and successor Rick Perry. State college tuitions, in 1994 limited by law to \$240 per full-time year, now cost \$5000 a year. Similar fate befell Texas farmers and ranchers, homeowners now unable to afford insurance, motorists now plagued with tolls upon tolls for much inferior roads, in general all social programs and educational programs – even those taught at TDCJ which went from free (after all, TDCJ *does not* pay for prison work) to costing \$1000 to \$1500 per semester; on top of which, released inmates are barred by law from working in 175 types of jobs!²

In fact, most aspects of daily life for Texans of humble position have deteriorated noticeably as a result of the Bush-Perry governorships. Except for the few prisoncrats feeding, at public expense, from the lush trough at “Texas *only* growth industry.”

Why should *you* care about Texas prisons’ overall corruption and hanky-panky? Because the “example” has spread across the U.S.A., in much due to Bush’s influence. Like depredations by his nominees for Attorney General or to the Supreme Court; or his attempts to nullify the federal Freedom of Information Act. To not go here and now into his likely complicity in the “9-11” catastrophe or how come evil Osama Bin Laden –

² *Texas Occupations Code*, Ch. 53 et. Seq., “The Costs of Criminal Conviction.” The 175 list from *The Echo*, Aug./Sept. 2006.

recruited and trained by the CIA to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan – timely appears on world TV every time his appearance helps Bush: like Bin Laden endorsing John Kerry in October 2004, two weeks before the election. Be on the watch for the coming “Bin Laden surprise telecast” this October 2008!

To sum it up, like in the 1920’s and 1930’s, *fascism* is a last-recourse saving device that the capitalist elite calls when really in trouble. Today it’s U.S.-style capitalism that’s in *deep* crisis. There is nothing “dumb” or “ignorant” or “feeble minded” in what Bush and his acolytes have done: be it in Texas or later on in Washington. It’s all carefully planned and premeditated. But not ever-lasting.

Prisons are becoming, as *you* and citizens like *you* learn about them, a sore spine on the side of the U.S. capitalist elite. Who fears the wrath of the people, as it becomes obvious, the negative impact that “the criminal justice and prisons industry” has on the quality of life of the American working class? To the college graduates burdened by debts of tens of thousands of dollars – what a way to start a family and one’s professional life! – yet unable to find stable well-paying jobs, now comes the home mortgage foreclosure epidemic; yet the “cure” proposed is more tax gifts to the very rich, and more debt to the workers and humble.

How long before *you* and me, We The People, decide that “enough is enough” and opt for REVOLUTION to restore America to a full and genuine democracy with fair and equal representations and social justice for the vast majority? The elite fears that prospect – horrible for them, glamorous for us! – like a plague. Or more so, since the very rich has money enough to buy anti-plague medical care, while 50 million of *us* lack any health care at all.

It won’t be long before the elite decides to “pull out and cauterize” the prisons sore spine: now holding across America some 2.5 million prisoners and another 10 million plus P&I on bonds to build the immense gulag, cost of rearresting/jailing/prosecuting replacements for those being freed, and “cost of corruption/theft” – some \$190 billion a year! That’s more than the combined costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan military adventures. Add the “lost productivity” of \$210 billion a year.³ A heavy burden on a system that is in crisis, precisely as result of the heavy burden... added to the insane expenses of the “military industrial complex.”

Like in the late 1930’s, the “final solution” will be the mass extermination of prisoners across the U.S.A. And Texas – always at the vanguard of fascism – has already begun. At first by “medical means” with the complicity of the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston, now charged with all medical care (or lack thereof) across various TDCJ’s. That is how TDCJ/UTMB *murdered* courageous “jailhouse lawyer” David R. Ruiz: whose *Ruiz v. Estelle* lawsuit brought TCCJ under the heel of the *Ruiz Court* for nearly two decades. UTMB denied Ruiz timely life-saving cancer treatment, much requested, until it was “too late to treat.” But there are many others: among the growing elderly population and the sick.

Besides “medical murders” the TDCJ orchestrates the current “suicide epidemic,” ostensibly in “high security wings.” Now folks, how can anyone “commit suicide” while

³ 2.5 million idle workers at \$86,000 each productivity per year: or \$12 trillion GNP divided by 140 million active workers.

under close watch? And so many!

It's anyone's guess how long before the ruling capitalist elite decides that "medical murders," "suicides," and similar "palliative remedies" as may be devised, are "far too slow" and resorts to the "good ole *vernichtunlagern*"⁴ of the times of Herbert Walker and Prescott Bush. Unless We The People stop it by overthrowing the creeps and their "bible-thumping christo-fascist" sycophants in favor of a real people's democracy.

Yes, We The People can do it! And the time is *now*!

⁴ Nazi lingo for "extermination camp."