

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## THE LONGEST WAR?

By our count, it's been 121 years. It was in 1898, during what the U.S. calls the Spanish-American War, that this country invaded Cuba and established a military base on Guantanamo Bay, in the far eastern province of Oriente--facing Haiti--to be used as a coaling and naval station. After six weeks of fighting, the U.S. and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris, by which Spain ceded Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam to the United States for the sum of \$20 million dollars. Cuba gained formal independence from the U.S. on May 20, 1902, as the Republic of Cuba. Cuban independence was conditioned on constitutional provisions allowing the U.S. Navy to occupy the area "for the time required."

A lease for the base was signed in 1903. It is the oldest overseas U.S. Naval Base. The rent was for \$2,000 in gold per year. In 1934, the payment was set to match the value of gold in dollars. In 1974, the yearly lease was changed to \$4,085. U.S. Interest in the area came from pressure by president Theodore Roosevelt who wanted to expand the U.S. Navy and create an enduring presence in the Caribbean.

The U.S. enclave at Guantanamo is the only place in the world where the U.S. military forcefully occupies foreign land on an open-ended basis, against the wishes of the occupied nation. It is 45 square miles in area. It is separated from Cuban-controlled Cuba by land mines, concertina wire and thickets of thorny cactus.

And this is only the beginning. The Cuban government shut off water and electricity to the base in 1964. Yet it now contains McDonald's, Taco Bell, and a Subway, among other U.S. businesses. All Cuban civilian workers have been replaced by Haitians and Filipinos--many paid less than the U.S. minimum wage. A total of about 6,000 people live on the base today.

The U.S. government continues to send its "rent checks" to the government of Cuba--they are retained, but never cashed. Cuba does not recognize the validity of the "lease". And, unlike most leases, this one has no agreed upon end date. Cuba wants its land returned.

How unusual is it that U.S. military installations are in other countries? Not very. In fact, there are well over 725 of them outside U.S. territory, directly controlled by the U.S. military. In many cases, the presence of U.S. troops is kept secret. And, in addition, U.S. forces use countless military installations in other countries whose status has innumerable variations, including not being regulated at all. There are installations reported in 45 to 70 different countries, with those in Germany taking up six pages of the total 17 pages of the list (source: <http://www.kelebekler.com>)

Cut over in time and space to Guantanamo prison in the 1990s. The U.S. Coast Guard intercepted 45,000 Haitians fleeing in boats and brought them to the Guantanamo Bay prison, where they were held in tent cities. Most were denied asylum and sent home. But, 205 HIV-positive Haitian refugees were detained at Guantanamo for months. In 1993, a federal judge ordered all the Haitian asylum-seekers released. So, they were admitted to the U.S., but the unused facilities remained. In 1994, there were Haitian children held at the prison's Camp Nine. By 1995 there were still more than 200 unaccompanied Haitian children being held at Guantanamo.

Most recently, after 9/11 there were a total of 780 people held at Guantanamo prison. It is now down to 40.

Enter further current developments: The first week of May, it was reported that the U.S. Defense Department, at the request of the current president, had issued a \$23 million contract to construct a "Contingency Mass Migration Complex" at Guantanamo. It is to have a capacity of holding 13,000 people, *including children*. And, be built to last a minimum of 50 years. Additional amounts have been mentioned as being "needed," in addition to the \$2.9 billion requested May 1, such as an additional \$1.4 billion to provide "housing and care".

In April, U.S. authorities detained 109,144 migrants along the Mexican border, the highest total since 2007. More than 60% of them were families or children.

## **PLAN DE INMIGRACION PROPUESTO**

El presidente de Estados Unidos, presentó un plan para un nuevo sistema de inmigración "basado en méritos" que daría prioridad a los trabajadores altamente capacitados y a los hablantes de inglés, al tiempo que restringiría aun más a los inmigrantes solicitantes de asilo o que tienen familiares que residen en Estados Unidos. El presidente anunció su plan el 16 de mayo en la Casa Blanca.

"Mi plan acelera el alivio de quienes buscan asilo legítimamente porque filtra las solicitudes que no tienen méritos. Si tienen una solicitud de asilo justificada, serán admitidos rápidamente. Si no la tienen, serán devueltos enseguida a su país".

Muchos legisladores consideran que el plan de inmigración del presidente carece de detalles y es un fracaso. Las siguientes son declaraciones de la congresista demócrata del estado de Washington, Pramila Jayapal.

"Su plan no incluye protecciones para los jóvenes indocumentados conocidos como 'dreamers.'. No incluye ningún plan para los 11 millones de inmigrantes indocumentados que viven en Estados Unidos y que necesitan una vía para obtener la ciudadanía. Socava el sistema de inmigraciones de familias, que ha sido el pilar de la política migratoria de nuestro país".

More than 60% of the 109,144 migrants taken into custody along the Mexican border in April were families or children.

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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/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. The address listings in some lists 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.realcostofprisons.org](http://www.realcostofprisons.org)--this is a GREAT site! Thank you for all your support!**

**Ilhan Omar, Congressperson, MN says:**

"When you come after one of us, you come after all of us. And when one of us speaks, all of us are speaking....I know my place in this society. All of you know your place in this society. And it's one that is equal to every single person that walks in it.... Many of our colleagues can't stand that a refugee, a Black woman, an immigrant, a Muslim, shows up in Congress thinking she's equal to them. But I say to them, 'How else did you expect me to show up?'"

**Ruth Wilson Gilmore, City Uni., NYC, says**

"Capitalism requires inequality.... Private prisons are not driving mass incarceration. They are parasites on it. Which doesn't make them good. Which doesn't make them not culpable for the things of which they are culpable....Ninety-two percent of people locked inside American prisons are held in publicly run, publicly funded facilities, and 99 percent of those in jail are in public jails. Every private prison could close tomorrow, and not a single person would go home....If you follow the money, you can find all the people who are dependent on wages paid out by the Department(s) of Corrections....it is state-subsidized employment."

**For-Profit Health Care Companies Pay Out**

Corizon Health Inc, and Corizon LLC, have agreed both to pay a total of \$950,000 split among 23 former Corizon employees from across the United States to resolve a lawsuit that alleged it discriminated against employees with disabilities. This applies to all Corizon facilities, which exist in more than 20 states and include Arizona, California, New York, New Mexico, Michigan, Colorado and Tennessee.

## **Mothers Day Observance**

The National Bail Out collective, Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA), Black Mamas Bail Out, Southerners On New Ground, Law For Black Lives, and the Essie Justice Group and many others organized this year to post bail for dozens of mothers of color for the third straight year. The goal was to bail out more than 100 women in 35 cities in time for Mothers Day. A number of the organizations involved will offer mothers additional support, including court date reminders and rides. Studies show that bail amounts are sometimes set as much as three times higher for people of color as for others. Of incarcerated women, 80% are mothers, and most are the primary caregivers of their children. Yet bail amounts are typically a full years income.