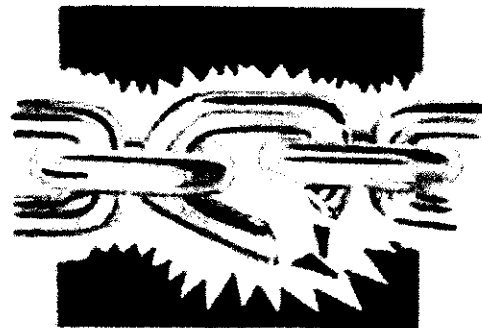




Voices.Con

Term-to-Life Prisoners Converse



Vol. 12, No. 7

www.VoicesDotCon.org

DECEMBER 2014

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As the year comes to a close, there seems to be an intense focus on judicial inequity within the U.S., and the apparent "civil death" that the incarcerated and other disenfranchised minorities are all too familiar with. Being economically challenged has been criminalized in the U.S., even though our nation has been slow to admit it. As incarcerated persons who have all been subjected to (and now must live within) this nation's justice system, we have a pretty clear understanding of how "justice" has very little to do with the U.S. justice system.

The criminal justice system in this nation has been pushed onto the world's stage in recent months, whether it likes it or not. The killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed teen from Ferguson, Missouri, appeared to incense the public out of their slumber when it was announced that the cop who needlessly shot the boy to death would not face a single charge in the matter. This was further aggravated when the cop who shot Mr. Brown was permitted an interview on a national TV news program, the very next day, where he stated he had no regrets, and would do the same thing again.

It is not lost on the term-to-life prisoner that it's these same "law enforcement" career cops that have traditionally sat

on the State parole boards, consistently demanding that prisoners demonstrate remorse for their crimes, prior to any grant of parole.

In late November, President Obama met with various city Mayors, police representatives, legislators, and advocates, to discuss America's current state of civil unrest that seems to be so squarely focused on the State's continued failure to provide even a semblance of civil rights to the politically and socially disenfranchised of this nation. Soon to retire U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder, announced in early December that he is sending out new guidelines to all State law enforcement agencies which will limit many of their current racial profiling procedures, and several other arrest procedures.

These moves are certainly in a positive direction, but do they really show an understanding of how deeply institutionalized the "governance NOT of the people" mentality penetrates the entire justice system? Let's consider what we have heard from 3 of the biggest prison States in the nation, California, Texas, and New York, since these announcements.

Earlier this month, we heard that the California Attorney General, Kamala Harris, has filed a motion with the courts

asking the judge to vacate a previous order that stayed (delayed) all executions in the State due to an unconstitutional process. (Victim rights groups have recently been upset about the delay in executions) Also earlier this month, we heard the Texas Court of Appeals announced that the State was clear to execute Scott Pennetti, a schizophrenic man who had been convicted in the deaths of 2 family members. The Texas Courts allowed him to represent himself at trial. During his trial, he wore a purple cowboy suit and a ten gallon hat. He called JFK, The Pope, and Jesus as witnesses. He was found guilty.

And most recently, we heard that New York's District Attorney will not be bringing any charges against the Staten Island cop who killed Mr. Eric Garner. The death of Mr. Garner was caught on video as he was strangled in front of a Staten Island store by a plain clothed cop, and aided by at least 3 other cops. After the announcement, the New York City Police Chief, was asked what he expected with regard to protests. He told the press that "We have brought in all possible additional resources to deal with any unforeseen inevitabilities." That sounds like a nice way to say "We have an arsenal of surplus military equipment and it stands at the ready."

No, it does not appear that even President Obama's words will dissuade the prison States from continuing their violence against the citizenry of this nation. Mr. John Thompson, a person who narrowly escaped a wrongful execution in the State of Louisiana, said it best, "It's about a system that is void of integrity. Mistakes can happen. But if you don't do anything to stop them from happening again, you can't keep calling them mistakes."

Note: "Civil Death" is a term used to define a person whose civil rights have been stripped away by State decree.

The alarming facts raise many urgent issues involving money, income, jobs, race and ethnicity, gender, lawmaking, state agencies and the policies that propel them to act, rural communities, urban neighborhoods, uneven development, migration, hope, and despair.

Such breadth belies the common view that prisons sit on the edge -at the margins of social spaces, economic regions, political territories, and fights for rights.

This apparent marginality is a trick of perspective, because, as every geographer knows, edges are also interfaces.

For example, even while borders highlight the distinction between places, they also connect places into relationships with each other and with non-contiguous places.

So too with prisons: the government-organized and -funded dispersal of marginalized people from urban to rural locations suggests both that problems stretch across space in a connected way and that arenas for activism are less segregated than they seem.

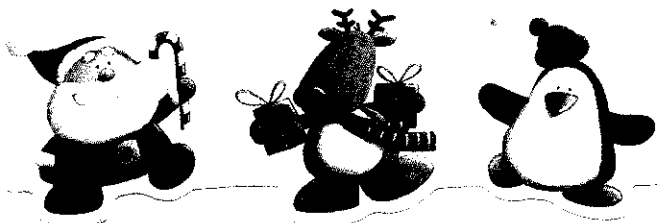
Viewed in this way, we can see how "prison" is actually in the middle of the muddle that confronts all modestly educated working people and their extended communities -the global supermajority- at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

RUTH WILSON GILMORE

SELF-DETERMINATION IS A LEAD ROLE

As term-to-life prisoners, our lives have been out of control for many years, in many different ways, and the result has been pain and loss for ourselves and others. The truth is that we've given up on ourselves and became willing to follow others in the pursuit of decreasing or eliminating the pain we felt. The simple premise is: if we are not in control of our behavior, and it is being driven or influenced by others, then they are the ones in control of our behavior. This does not absolve us from our crimes, we consciously and deliberately made those decisions ourselves, based on satisfying our basic needs and the goals we set for (Cont'd on page 3)

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!



a lead ROLE, cont'd
ourselves. But it does indicate a legitimate problem with our principles and beliefs, concerning responsibilities and accountability to self and others.

Taking control of our lives means that we must be responsible for our feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. And if we are not dealing with some trauma that we've experienced, or are still experiencing, then we are not being responsible to ourselves. We aren't being honest either, because the way in which we then seek to avoid or mask those feelings will place us in a state of denial, where we will only focus on the short-term pleasure or payoff of our actions. And we will ignore and deny any long-term negative consequences as not our fault, and certainly not connected to anything we aren't dealing with emotionally. While we are running from ourselves, we cannot possibly be in control of ourselves, or be responsible for our emotional state.

You might be considering your own personal life at this point in determining whether or not this is true for you. First, if you are a convicted felon of any crime, then it does now, or has in the past. And secondly, a good example of this would be that, even a shoplifter knows that he is committing an illegal act, otherwise he would do so brazenly and without reservation. The shoplifter's behavior is being dictated by his entitlement, greed, or desire for excitement. And each of these emotions can lead an individual to out of control behaviors when not controlled, which shoplifting obviously isn't. This is a relatively minor discretion, but nevertheless shows irresponsibility in dealing with these emotions.

In the case of a gang-member, they are obviously irresponsible in their behavior. Whatever feelings that person is having, whether it is anger, a need for acceptance, or something else, there are many other ways to satisfy those feelings in a responsible manner. Any violence also falls under the heading of obvious irresponsibility. The person is not being responsible for themselves, their feelings, beliefs, etc., and they are harming others and themselves as a result. Choose the crime, and recognize that that person isn't in control of their behavior, otherwise they wouldn't be harming anybody. Their lives are out of control

and they will be susceptible to following others at any point.

We will continue to be a follower until we become a leader, a follower allows others to control them, because they are not controlling themselves. The solution is to become the leader we must all be in our lives. Becoming a leader means that we express ourselves responsibly and we conduct ourselves in a pro-social manner. It means that when things happen to us and we develop some negative feelings as a result, we act responsibly in how we work through our feelings and the situation. We do not give in to negative influences, nor do we return to old negative behaviors or ways of thinking. We live our lives correctly, just as so many other people do each and every day outside the walls of any prison. Being a leader in our lives means that we are able to determine the direction of our lives, without causing unnecessary pain or suffering to others. It means we are fully capable of finding inner peace and happiness in who we are and the things we do.

EXONERATED AFTER 40 YEARS

Two term-to-life prisoners, Mr. Wiley Bridgeman, 60, and Mr. Ricky Jackson, 57, have been exonerated of murdering a businessman, Harry Franks, back in 1975. They had both served nearly 40 years on the false conviction. The one witness that had testified at trial recanted last year and told the Cuyahoga County Court that the Cleveland police coerced him, Eddie Vernon, 13 years old at the time, to testify against the 2 men.

Their case was first published in Scene Magazine in 2011. This led to a 3 year court process which detailed the flaws in their convictions, and ultimately their release.

GOVERNOR BROWN REVERSED IN COURT

Term-to-life prisoner, Theodore LeLeaux Jr., was serving a 16-to-life term for the killing of his co-worker in 1984. After having his grant of parole reversed by the Governor for the third time, Fresno County Superior Court Judge Arien Harrell reversed the Governor's decision, finding that there was no evidence of any current danger to society. (That's right, Fresno!)

OVERCOMING THE TOXIC EMOTIONS

** PRISONER **

Terms like "Specific Performance" and "Reasonable Expectation" are ideas that most people never need to conceive of in their daily lives. As term-to-life prisoners, we have earned some tough choices. The above mentioned terms are external in nature, but it is very useful to know the concepts they embody.

Accountability can be defined as being answerable to others for my actions; while responsibility can be defined as internalizing the reason(s) for my actions. These concepts are internal in nature.

And so we have examples of both external and internal knowledge. The question is which one is more important? The answers will inevitably vary, revealing the nature of the person who is making the choice.

We cannot focus our energies on only the internal or only the external, there must be a balance. What we do and are able to do cannot stand on its own any more than our knowledge of ourselves, commonly now termed as "insight." But inner knowledge is a tricky and elusive quality. For those who want to pursue it, the prison system does not offer much help. We find few programs that help us with insight, or understanding our inner world except for small snippets couched in with some larger context. So many of us find ourselves denied parole at the Board, only to be left with no resources to address the Board's stated reasoning for our parole denial. This makes us feel disconnected and helpless.

This is why we must, as members of a community, share ourselves with others. We can still let our light shine, even in prison, if we show that we care about others by serving them. There is great healing potential in all of us, if we can only find the courage to share our talents with others, with an open heart.

We do not need to protect our shame and guilt. And again, with courage, when we share it with others, it naturally recedes (like our aging hairlines!). Exposure makes shame and guilt wither, while they only will grow when they're buried within.

We help ourselves overcome these toxic emotions by learning to "wear" them. Shoes only get comfortable after we've worn them awhile; likewise with jackets. Once we learn to wear our shame and guilt, we become comfortable wearing it and we learn that others will not reject us for it the way we

A K R P O R U S T E P Q I V E D O
 R C L E H O S T A G E P R I B A N
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|--------------|------------------|
| 1) Arrested | 13) Imprisoned |
| 2) Bondage | 14) Incarcerated |
| 3) Captive | 15) Jailbird |
| 4) Captured | 16) Oppress |
| 5) Confine | 17) Parolee |
| 6) Convict | 18) Person |
| 7) Deprive | 19) Reformed |
| 8) Detained | 20) Released |
| 9) Enclosed | 21) Restrain |
| 10) Enslaved | 22) Restrict |
| 11) Held | 23) Servitude |
| 12) Hostage | 24) Taken |

once feared. We fully own it when we wear it always. Until then, we direct our efforts at repelling or ignoring our feelings of shame and guilt. Worse yet, some of us self-medicate to escape what we feel. Here's the dividing line: anything that can be managed organically should not be managed chemically. We can and do help each other when we transact openly with others.

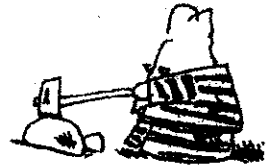
Many term-to-life prisoners feel inextricably tied to their crimes, unable to move on because of a parole board that remains focused on trying to satisfy a complex set of legal requirements to support their personal or political agenda. We aren't suitable for parole just because the Board is wrong in the way they conduct their business.

When we learn to protect our shameful crimes in a healthy way, we come a step closer to our freedom. This "protect" is very different from all the others we have known. We exercise

(Cont'd on page 6)



LITTLE KNOWN REASONS TO PAY ATTENTION



The following information was taken from California's "Status Report" filed on November 17, 2014, in the Plata case. This is the case where California was ordered to reduce its prison population down to below 137.5% of design capacity by February 28, 2016.

- * As of 11/12/14, the State's 34 adult prisons confined a total population of 116,492 (140.8%). Last month's population was reported at 116,520 (140.9%). It appears that their efforts to reduce the population have hit some kind of plateau.
- * As of 11/14/14, the total number of Three Strikes prisoners released under Prop. 36 was 1,924. This number was 1,901 per last month's Status Report.
- * The State claims to have released 607 prisoners during the month of October, whose crime was a 2nd strike and non-violent/non-serious/non-sex offense. These prisoners were calculated with 33% good-time credits earned.
- * Between Feb/2014 to Sept/2014, the parole board has granted parole to 97 prisoners over the age of 60 years who have already served at least 25 years.

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On November 14, 2014, the Three-Judge Court in the Plata case issued an Order Granting Plaintiff's Motion For Further Enforcement. This Order directed the State of California to implement the following immediately:

- * The Defendants are ordered to "complete creation and commence operation of 'a new parole determination process through which non-violent second-strikers' will be eligible for parole after 50% of their term is served.
- * The Defendants are also ordered to file a report describing a new parole process by December 1, 2014, as previously agreed to.

This Order was in response to a previous Motion filed by the Plaintiffs in the Plata case. The Motion asked the Court to please compel the Defendants to honor the original agreements made by the parties to the case.

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- * The CURE organization has begun publishing a new newsletter through their LifeLong chapter. The "LifeLong Newsletter" is targeted toward those serving a life term, and is based in the State of Michigan. If you are interested in subscribing or making a donation, write to: CURE: LifeLong, 665 W. Willis St., Ste. B-1, Detroit, MI 48201-1641. Membership is \$3.00 for prisoners, \$15.00 for individuals, and \$25.00 for family.
- * In an article last month, the newspaper's Editorial Board spoke on California's Prop. 47, a measure which was passed by the voters in the recent elections. Proposition 47 reduces several previously felony convictions to a misdemeanor. The article says, "Gov. Brown, who kept quiet on this measure as most other things on the ballot, might well find it is raining on his realignment parade. Ultimately, the desire to reform the state's criminal justice system is a healthy sign of a maturing society recognizing that true rehabilitation is a more humane way to fight crime than locking people up and throwing away the key."

toxic EMOTIONS, cont'd

it by defending the honor of those we wronged by being as transparent as possible with others about our shame, guilt, and other emotions that we shy away from sharing because they make us feel vulnerable.

If all our external changes are apparent and reliably documented, the only place for others to fault-find is our internal world. If we wear comfortably our most vulnerable feelings, it shows up in our program choices, self-help, outside contacts, leisure time activities, and how comfortably we present before others as we talk about how we impacted the lives of others. We need balance, and it can be found.

* PHONE JUSTICE CAMPAIGN *

Tell the FCC why it is important to enact permanent reform of prison phone rates for interstate and in-state calls, including rate caps and the elimination of "commission" payments to corrections agencies. Comments can be sent by mail to:

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Rm. TW-B204
Washington, DC 20554

Address the letter "Dear Secretary Dortch," and please speak from your personal experience. You must state the following in your letter: "This is a public comment for WC Docket No. 12-375." Your family and friends can find out more about this campaign by going to:

www.phonejustice.org

* PLN SUBSCRIPTION PROMO *

Prisoner subscriptions to Prison Legal News have been temporarily reduced to less than the normal \$30 per year (12 editions). This limited time promo offers the following rates for first time prisoner subscribers:

- > \$50 buys 2 one-year subscriptions
- > \$80 buys 4 one-year subscriptions

This offer expires on 12-31-2014, so take advantage of it now. Send requests to: PLN, P.O. Box 1151, Lake Worth, FL. 33460

PRIVATE PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION FOR LIFERS

Many lifers are receiving CDCR/BPH FAD psychological evaluations indicating a moderate or high risk that they do not deserve, based upon the misuse of actuarial measures. This will result in a BPH lengthy denial and many more years of suffering.

A private psychological evaluation, arranged with the help of your attorney, will correct this injustice and in many cases result in your deserved release. If you have such a denial, a new psych report is new evidence, allowing you to go back to the board sooner.

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The Voices.Con newsletter is written exclusively by term-to-life prisoners, unless otherwise noted, focusing on issues of primary concern to those serving a long-term incarceration. The newsletter is published monthly at the VoicesDotCon.org website. This information has been designed to be of potential benefit in any jurisdiction having term-to-life and long-term prisoners and is made available to any other supportive family and friends as well. No persons affiliated with the Voices.Con newsletter are lawyers. Information provided herein is not intended as a substitute for proper legal advice. All questions or comments on information contained herein should be directed to the above E-mail address.

ABOUT VOICES.CON

Voices.Con is an excellent source of nuts and bolts information relating to parole preparation, parole related politics, understanding parole law and current rulings and the importance of retaining the proper counsel and psychologists for parole hearings. This information is provided exclusively by long-term prisoners who have been there and are currently experiencing the ups and downs of the parole process. We are sorry to say that we do not have the resources to hire staff lawyers or provide legal documents of any kind. **We do maintain a mailing list for paid monthly newsletter subscriptions (\$11 annually.)** The Voices.Con newsletter and all past editions, may be downloaded at no cost by any friend or family member at the VoicesDotCon.org website. On occasion, we may have a current or past edition that can be mailed to a prisoner who has nobody else to download it for free. However, this remains completely contingent on the number of donations received at our mailing address. **Please include a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope in any correspondence requiring a response.**

A FEW FACTS TO REMEMBER

- ⇒ Today, more prisoners in U.S. prisons are serving life terms than ever before. With a U.S. prison population of 2.3 million people, 159,520 are serving life terms.
- ⇒ California's prison system peaked at 173,000 prisoners in 2007, making it the largest prison system in the nation. With 35,759 prisoners serving life terms, it also has the most lifers.
- ⇒ In Florida, California, New York, Texas, Georgia and Ohio, at least 85,800 prisoners are now serving some type of life term.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

1. We have only one agenda; advocating on behalf of the term-to-life prisoner and distributing information that will further this cause, enabling the term-to-life prisoner to effectively advocate on his or her own behalf.
2. You may write an essay/article on any related subject or issue of concern to the term-to-life prisoner population.
3. We prefer that all submissions be between 250 and 500 words. Please clearly print or type all submitted material.
4. We also accept and encourage all submissions of topical artwork. Please include a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope with any submissions of artwork or written material where a return has been requested.

OTHER AVAILABLE MATERIAL PUBLISHED AT VOICES.CON WEBSITE:

- * Preview or download our Prisoner Support Directory specifically designed for the needs of the term-to-life prisoners—Free
- * Preview or download a complete Newsletter Descriptions List of all previous editions of Voices.Con—Free
- * Preview or download all previous editions of the Voices.Con newsletter ever published—Free
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