



Let my people go!

38,000 people in Michigan's prisons: Social distancing is IMPOSSIBLE!

Humanity for Prisoners has appealed to Governor Whitmer to lower Michigan's prison population. In a letter addressed to both the Governor and Heidi Washington on April 6, Director of the Michigan Department of Corrections, HFP and ten other leading advocacy agencies argue that the best way to deal with the COVID-19 crisis behind bars is to lower the number of inmates.

Who could and should be released?

- 5,000 are eligible for parole, many with fine probability scores.
- Individuals who are past their Earliest Release Date.
- Individuals who are serving time for a technical rule violation.
- Individuals who are infirm, elderly, and medically frail.
- People who are receiving care for cancer and other chronic conditions

We are also asking for improved treatment and care for those who have tested positive, and relaxed financial constraints on all who must remain in prison.

Agencies who signed this letter: American Friends Service Committee's Michigan Criminal Justice Program, Humanity for Prisoners, Citizens for Prison Reform, Detroit Justice Center, Family Advisory Board, MI-CURE, Michigan Liberation, Michigan Prisoner Rehabilitation Credit Act, Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc., National Association of Social Workers-Michigan, and Nation Outside. Our thanks to Natalie Holbrook of AFSC and Kay Perry of MI-CURE, for their invaluable work on this project!

Startling statistics!

While the coronavirus emergency has resulted in a serious drop of activities for some charities, the exact opposite is true in the office of Humanity for Prisoners. President Matt Tjapkes reports two new records set in recent days: a one-day total of contacts - 90; and a one-month total of contacts - 1,565! With all visitation canceled, prisoners are relying on HFP more than ever. Said one of our affiliates: "Now your work becomes essential. It was much needed before, but now essential." This has also resulted in a dramatic spike in postage needs, for mail and for email. A one time gift from your tax refund or stimulus check would really help!

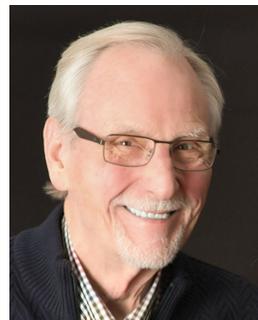
*Your work for prisoners goes so beyond serving them.
You have given those who donate and volunteer an
opportunity to be part of your journey. In doing so you
open us all up to God's Grace & Love. Thank you.*

-Thoughts from an HFP supporter

From the desk of Doug:

**No prisoner denied
Heroes on duty!**

*I'm sorry. Your email
message is in important to us.
We'll get back to you within the*



*next 10
days. If you
haven't
heard from
us by then,
please try
contacting
our office
again.*

NO

MICHIGAN PRISONER hears those words from Humanity for Prisoners! We're the only agency that specializes solely on one-to-one prisoner assistance. And I think I can safely say that we're the only advocacy agency that responds right now. That's the policy that Matt insists on, and that's the policy that all five of us adhere to.

Marcia and I were viewing an old Gaither Homecoming video the other evening. I do enjoy a bit of country gospel music from time to time. A well-known group presented a song that was not familiar to me. It was sung and played by the Isaacs, and I believe they wrote it.

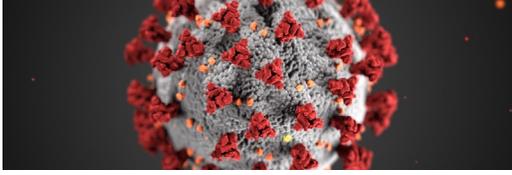
*He's a hero and she's a hero
It doesn't matter that nobody
knows their name
They keep on givin' to make life
worth livin'*

*Might go unnoticed but they're
heroes just the same
They might go unnoticed but
they're heroes*

And my thought immediately went to our team. I know their names: Matt, Susie, Melissa and Holly! I'm blessed to be working with these dedicated people down in the trenches, every day, responding to calls and pleas from prisoners.

The pandemic finds our prisoners lonely, angry and frightened. Our heroes are responding daily with "action with compassion."

Prisoners tell their stories



From Chippewa CF

"Well today an officer came in and he tells us 'no, I don't care what they said, you're not using the bleach to clean with.' He took all of it and dumped it down the drain, and then smashed every one of the bottles and threw them into the trash can. He says he hopes we call catch the virus and die.

From Gus Harrison CF:

I fear for my life because there have been officers who have made the statement, that if they were to contract the virus they were going to give it to us. I fear losing a loved one; I fear the overseers contracting the disease and intentionally spreading it to those of us on the inside; I fear that my underlying illness will prevent me from fighting off the virus, if I were to contract it

From Macomb CF

Housing units at the Macomb prison have 4 wings of 30 cells, each cell holding 2 people. There is a total of 12 toilets, 8 urinals, 16 sinks, and 8 showers in the housing unit. With the increase of 16 more people per unit, pushing the total to 256 people, there is a ratio of 21.3 people to 1 toilet, 32 people to 1 urinal, 16 people to 1 sink, and 32 people to 1 shower. With these types of ratios, can the spread of COVID-19 actually be prevented?

From Lakeland CF

There is A LOT of sickness going around on our compound. Another guy from my unit died this week. Ambulances are coming and going with regularity. Just today, two more rooms are being quarantined for suspected covid cases.

From Muskegon CF

I must say I'm impressed with how staff are handling this at this facility. Even though there are, so far, no reported cases of covid-19 here, they have taken the threat seriously, yet are also not abandoning common sense. Chow lines have slowed, to allow fewer prisoners at a time. Many classes are cancelled or reconfigured to allow for social distancing.

From Saginaw CF

Social distancing here is mostly a joke, but what little space a person can get, he wants. I've had to step away from at least a dozen idiots who still want to speak a foot away from me, and have even not used the microwave or hot water tap due to fools standing around talking without their masks.

From WHV

Our officers are working double after double. Their work load has tripled, while their sleep time has depleted. We are seeing the same officers day after day, shift after shift. Today I watched one awesome officer who has been here more than home, take the time to be with an inmate currently in a trying situation. Seeing that today made me realize what the staff at WHV is doing for us and the risks they take every day.

Why, indeed?

Observation by HFP client and friend Troy Chapman

If you push someone in front of a speeding car, or block them from getting out of its path, and they get run over and die, did you or the driver of the car kill them?

Anyone with common sense knows that the person who intentionally blocks another from saving him- or herself is the guilty party, guilty in fact, of murder. The speeding car is just the weapon used.

So why does society and the American legal system expect us to abandon this common sense when it comes to the deaths of what may be hundreds or even thousands of prisoners who are being held in the path of Covid-19? They want to say, "We didn't kill them, the virus did," but is that true?

A Poem

By Kitty O'Meara

And the people stayed HOME
And read books, and listened and rested
and exercised, and made art, and played games
And learned new ways of being and were still,
And listened more deeply.
Some meditated, some prayed, some danced, some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently.
And the people healed. And, in the absence of
people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless
and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people
joined together again, they grieved their losses,
and made new choices, and dreamed new
images, and created new ways to live and heal
the earth fully, as they had been
HEALED.