

# PRISON COVID

★ COVID-19 Information for Prisoners and Staff ★

★ Volume 1, Number 7 ★

## “WE’RE SUFFERING IN HERE”

### REBELLION AND BLOODSHED AMIDST OREGON PRISON EVACUATIONS

**As one of the most severe fire seasons attacks the West coast, prisoners across Oregon are being shuffled into sub-standard conditions and possible COVID-19 exposure as Governor Brown continues to deny releases.**

by Lena Mercer, *Perilous Chronicle*

The newest disaster inside Oregon prisons is raging from the outside in. As one of the most severe fire seasons attacks the West coast, prisoners across Oregon are being shuffled into sub-standard conditions and possible COVID-19 exposure as Governor Brown continues to deny releases.

The COVID-19 pandemic is slow moving in comparison to the fires cascading across the state and threatening several major metro areas. But these two calamities are joining forces along with a seemingly steadfast Governor to further endanger the lives of Oregon Adults in Custody (AIC)

as they are classified by the Department of Corrections.

The risk of infection of and death from COVID-19 has not diminished as other emergencies have escalated. This is clear in the 6th prisoner death in the Oregon system at Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI) on September 8th. Snake River is near the Idaho border and has had a major outbreak of COVID-19, along with allegations that the majority Idaho-based staff have been flagrantly ignoring quarantine protocols.

On the other side of the state, the fires moving quickly up and down the I-5 corridor have put several prisons in the path of destruction. On Tuesday September 8, the ODOC announced on Facebook that it had evacuated 1,450 prisoners from Mill Creek, Santiam and Oregon State correctional institutions which were threatened by the Beachie Creek and Lionshead wildfires. The prisoners were evacuated to the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP), also in Salem, where they will be housed on “emergency beds throughout the institution” until the threat has passed.

At the time of that decision, OSP was already in the throes of its own COVID-19 outbreak. At least 143 positive cases of COVID-19 have been reported at the facility.

Bryan MacDonald, one of the prisoners evacuated from the Oregon State Correctional Institution (OSCI) to nearby OSP, says he thinks the transfer process was both flawed and an unnecessary move to fulfill gluttonous budgetary needs. “I personally believe that if one person from OSCI catches COVID-19 and dies because they came to OSP and that can be attributed to the fact that this was done just for a budget, that’s murder” MacDonald told *Perilous*.

MacDonald also spoke about the seemingly arbitrary nature of the evacuation itself, with the smoke conditions in OSP being equal if not worse than his original facility. “We were evacuated more because of smoke and air conditions. And that doesn’t make a lot of sense to us because here over at OSP, the smoke and the air conditions are the same. It’s only a couple miles down the road” he said over the phone. He also noted the severe lack of space at OSP and the ways in which housing units at the origin facilities were ignored leading to interpersonal conflicts and a constant state of violence.

“We’re suffering in here,” MacDonald continued, “and we’re hoping that our suffering can lead to change where people down the line don’t end up suffering like this. We hope and beg for somebody to investigate this entire process that’s happened

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here because what the Oregon department of corrections has said makes no sense.”

According to MacDonald, fights are being broken up by corrections officers with pepper spray, exacerbating already miserable conditions. “If you’re sprayed per the policy, in the Oregon department of corrections, if you’re sprayed, you’re supposed to get a shower. I got sprayed and I wasn’t even a part of the fight. And I wasn’t given a shower.”

According to MacDonald and others inside, backpacks full of bleach are being used to hose away blood after violent attacks in between prisoners. The close quarters, lack of food and disregard for protective status is leaving the evacuees vulnerable as tensions continue to escalate.

As he is shuffled from one place to another without any information from prison officials as to why, MacDonald says he feels like a “pawn.” He notes that often the officers on duty have not even been filled in as to what the next step may be or what the current protocol entails. “Just literally at shift change, like whatever the person in charge was coming up with in the morning and the person in the afternoon seems to have a completely different plan,” MacDonald explained. “The officers seem to be just as frustrated with it as we are.”

Evacuations have also occurred from other Oregon prisons. On Thursday, September 10, 1300 female prisoners were evacuated from Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville to Deer Ridge Correctional Institution in Madras.

Deer Ridge is a mixed security facility with a 774-bed minimum-security unit and a 1,228-bed medium-security unit. In order to accommodate the nearly 1000 women transferred into Deer Ridge, a minimum-security building not used since 2016 was opened to take in men from the larger me-

dium security unit at Deer Ridge. The units lacked phones, adequate ventilation and was infested with mice and mold according to the prisoners able to get communications to the outside.

Lawyers for some of the women transferred have detailed harrowing accounts of neglect and deplorable conditions during the transfer on social media. “Women were urinating on the bus, others bleeding through their menstrual products” one account reads.

Prisoners were reportedly zip tied for the duration of the several hour drive between the two facilities. Upon entering they found supplies were spread thin including meals being offered and that they would not be given their daily medications, some of which they are going on two days without.

On Friday September 11, according to reporting from The Bulletin reporter Garrett Andrews, around 200 prisoners in Deer Ridge kicked through doors and forced their way into the yard as smoke conditions became uninhabitable inside. According to a Oregon DOC news alert all but 12 of the people originally staging the mass refusal had returned inside by 2am. And while the Crisis Negotiation Team was deployed, the DOC assures that no force was used to clear the yard.

Back in Salem, at OSP conditions are being reported as deplorable at best. A coalition of community organizations addressing the rising crisis of incarceration in Oregon including, Lane County Mutual Aid, Care Not Cops, Critical Resistance PDX, Lane County Hunger Strike, Black and Pink Pdx and the Siskiyou Abolition Project crafted a series of demands of Governor Brown on September 9.

These demands were an attempt to address the multiplicity of issues in Governor Brown’s refusal to reduce the prison population as the number of emergencies compounded. These demand call-ins or ‘phone zaps’ have been a consistent tactic used by outside support organizations to apply pressure to various public and private institutions involved in a state’s carceral system.

On September 13, Lane County Hunger Strike, the outside support group for those on hunger strike in the Lane County Jail released a Twitter thread transcribing a call with a prisoner in OSP. The voice from inside the facility echoed many of the concerns from outside supporters that these transfers would lead to even higher COVID19 infection rates. “There are no Covid

protections. None. We are sleeping inches away from each other. There is very little cleaning, if any, being done. In fact, hygiene has completely been taken away. I’ve had only one shower in a week and I’m still wearing the same socks as I was Tuesday”

The situation in OSP continues to deteriorate as air quality in the Salem area grows worse with Air Quality Indexes (AQI) reaching unprecedented levels.

MacDonald hopes that this moment of crisis might lead to systemic changes in the way the justice system in the country operates. “This is an extreme circumstance and this may be a first for the state of Or-

**“We were evacuated more because of smoke and air conditions. And that doesn’t make a lot of sense to us because here over at OSP, the smoke in the air conditions are the same. It’s only a couple miles down the road”**

egon, but as the inmates and the people in the justice system, we would like you guys and everybody in the public to recognize that these kinds of situations are not new to us. These things happen in the prison system way too much and had been happening for decades. Justice reform is being screamed for because of the atrocity with George Floyd, we would hope that the public would recognize that justice reform doesn’t need to just happen on a level of the police officers who arrest people. It needs to happen throughout the entire justice process, which means the courts and jails and all the way up to the prisons that people are held in.” ♥



**I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change.**



**I am changing the things I cannot accept.**

# THE CDC'S ROLE IN THE URGENT HEALTH CRISIS IN JAILS, PRISONS AND DETENTION CENTERS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's revised COVID-19 guidance — that all asymptomatic people who have been in contact with infected individuals need not get tested — has alarmed medical experts.

Given the CDC's estimate that 40 percent of infections are among asymptomatic individuals, the politics of managing case counts may be trumping the interruption of transmission of the novel coronavirus in all settings.

In an April letter, more than 500 medical experts sought to correct another shortcoming in the CDC's COVID-19 guidance: the failure to recommend the depopulation of prisons, jails and immigration detention centers.

Despite longstanding scientific knowledge that prisons and jails are tinderboxes for contagion and criminological evidence that many incarcerated people in the United States can be safely released, the CDC has not recommended depopulating correctional facilities to reduce the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic inside these facilities and its transmission into the larger community.

Consequently, the 15 largest known coronavirus clusters of transmission in the United States have occurred in prisons and jails.

Many jurisdictions have limited the admission and accelerated the release of individuals in pre-trial detention or people convicted of non-violent offenses in jails and prisons and reduced the population in immigration detention centers.

Overall, this has brought down the incarcerated and detained population by approximately 11 percent during the pandemic, as we recently estimated in the journal *Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

These decarceration levels are insufficient given the scale of U.S. incarceration. Even before this pandemic, experts and policymakers were working to lower the United States' unparalleled level of incarceration.

Nationwide crime rates have fallen to half their level in the 1990s. Following a nearly 700 percent increase in the U.S. prison population since the 1970s, the number of people in prison finally began to decline in 2010, and prisons downsized by 9 percent over the next nine years.

But the U.S. prison and jail incarceration rate remains several times higher (670 people per 100,000 residents) than that of other industrialized countries (e.g., 94 per 100,000 in Germany).

This pandemic makes it critical to reassess the incarceration of nearly 2 million people in the United States, particularly those who are elderly or otherwise at increased risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19.

People of color, who bear a disproportionate burden of COVID-19-associated illness and death, are also overrepresented in U.S. prisons and jails, making up nearly two-thirds of the incarcerated population.

The reduction in incarceration levels is supported by reams of criminological evidence showing that many people need not be incarcerated to ensure public safety. Most imprisoned people, including half of the prison population who have violent convictions, are serving excessively long sentences.

The experiences of Connecticut and New York illustrates the country's excessive reliance on incarceration. These states have reduced their jail and prison populations by half since reaching their peak levels while outpacing the nationwide crime drop.

But even as leaders in decarceration, Connecticut and New York still maintain unacceptably high levels of incarceration, especially for Blacks. Moreover, they continue to imprison many elderly people who have served decades for violent crimes committed as young adults and who no longer pose a public safety threat.

Nationwide, people released following long sentences for violent crimes have what experts have characterized as a "minuscule" recidivism rate — far below that of most people released from prison. However, the politics surrounding their conviction has trumped medical and criminological evidence supporting their release.

The lives of incarcerated people now depend on the CDC working with, rather than resisting, the scientific evidence on health and public safety. ♥

**The only way to end slavery is to stop being a slave.**

*Chris Hedges*

## Virus Blurb

As of Sept. 11, 2020, COVID-19 now has killed at least 1,017 prisoners. And over 120,000 people behind bars have tested positive for the coronavirus inside federal and state prisons—a 5 percent increase over the past week. Over 26,000 prison employees also have tested positive for the virus but there have been only 75 reported deaths among prison staff.

## Free Electronic Copy

**Outside folks can have a free electronic copy of this newsletter emailed to them each month. Have them send a request for a digital copy to:**  
[contact@prisoncovid.com](mailto:contact@prisoncovid.com)

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<https://www.prisoncovid.com>

**Send article submissions and letters to:**

**Prison Covid Newsletter  
PO Box 48064  
Burien, WA 98148**

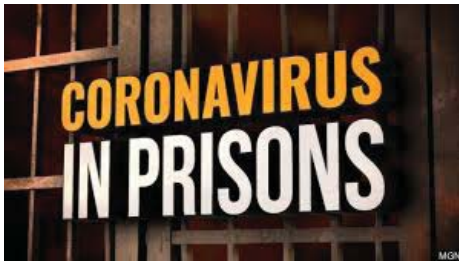
## A Nation's Treaty Ignored 2.2 Million US Slaves

**“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”**

*Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*

**“No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery ... shall be prohibited in all their forms.”**

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 4, a treaty the US is a signatory to.*



### **Congress must do more to protect people in prisons and jails and those re-entering the community**

While people are sent to prison to conceivably atone for mistakes, being exposed to deadly infectious diseases was never part of their sentence.

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2020/09/09/covid-19-exposes-injustice-treatment-people-in-exiting-prisons/5685625002/>

### **COVID-19 outbreaks in Umatilla County prisons still growing**

The two state prisons located within Umatilla County continue to report additional cases of COVID-19, with a combined total of 357 cases between them as of Wednesday, Sept. 9.

[https://www.eastoregonian.com/coronavirus/covid-19-outbreaks-in-umatilla-county-prisons-still-growing/article\\_86d991e0-f2bc-11ea-9d9c-b392252c5801.html](https://www.eastoregonian.com/coronavirus/covid-19-outbreaks-in-umatilla-county-prisons-still-growing/article_86d991e0-f2bc-11ea-9d9c-b392252c5801.html)

### **COVID-19 is spreading in state prisons. Families say Oklahoma is not doing enough**

A coronavirus outbreak at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center has generated widespread criticism from inmates, their families and criminal justice reform advocates, who say the Oklahoma Department of Corrections isn't doing enough to slow the spread of COVID-19 and is ill prepared to handle surges of the virus.

<https://oklahomawatch.org/2020/09/08/covid-19-is-spreading-in-state-prisons-families-say-oklahoma-is-not-doing-enough/>

### **Inside the COVID explosion at San Quentin**

San Quentin alone currently has 1,379 people who have tested positive for COVID-19— more than a third of the prison's population. That number is likely growing every day. With 26 dead and at least a third of the population infected, why isn't medical parole part of the solution?

[https://48hills.org/2020/09/inside-the-](https://48hills.org/2020/09/inside-the-covid-explosion-at-san-quentin/)

[covid-explosion-at-san-quentin/](https://48hills.org/2020/09/inside-the-covid-explosion-at-san-quentin/)

### **Virus deaths at 39 in state's prisons; 11 inmates were eligible for parole**

More than a quarter of the 39 state prisoners who have died after testing positive for the coronavirus had been eligible for parole, according to a review of those deaths reported by the Arkansas Department of Corrections.

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/sep/08/virus-deaths-at-39-in-states-prisons/>

### **Florida inmate COVID-19 death toll at 111**

Another four Florida prison inmates have died of COVID-19, bringing the inmate death toll to 111, according to numbers released by the state Department of Corrections.

<https://miami.cbslocal.com/2020/09/08/florida-inmate-covid-19-death-toll-at-111/>

### **Act now or coronavirus will sentence more prisoners to death, say experts**

Jails and prisons continue to be among the largest clusters of Covid-19 in the United States, and experts believe disease will continue to spread inside them and out into the surrounding community without more concerted containment efforts – chief among them, releasing people from confinement.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/08/coronavirus-prisons-jails-us>

### **Virus writes new chapter in longtime allegations of poor medical care in Utah lockups**

The spread of COVID-19 throughout Utah's prison system and several of its jails is writing a new chapter in what advocates, inmates and their families say is a history of inadequate medical care for those incarcerated. "It's been a problem for a long time," said Sara Wolovick, an attorney with the ACLU of Utah pushing jailers to release vulnerable inmates who pose little risk to the public. "People have died or had serious and permanent consequences because they haven't gotten adequate care."

<https://www.deseret.com/utah/2020/9/6/21404426/coronavirus-allegations-poor-medical-care-utah-state-prison-jails>

### **Broad River Correctional leads**

### **state prisons for number of inmates with COVID-19**

South Carolina Department of Corrections data shows the Broad River Correctional Institution leads all other facilities with 329 active cases among its inmates as of Sept. 7. Twenty-eight employees are also in quarantine.

<https://www.wistv.com/2020/09/07/broad-river-correctional-leads-state-prisons-number-inmates-with-covid-19/>

### **Oklahoma Department of Corrections reports inmate's covid-related death**

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections said on September 5, 2020, an inmate passed away at a hospital where she was admitted for symptoms associated with COVID-19.

<https://www.fox23.com/news/local/oklahoma-department-corrections-reports-inmates-covid-related-death/RCFA-JQ64EZGFTGFVFO3PDKQPY/>

### **Outbreaks in Prisons, Spread in College Towns Drive COVID-19 Hotspots**

A large coronavirus outbreak in a women's prison near Muskogee and community spread in college towns drove the hotspots for active cases this week in Oklahoma. Eddie Warrior Correctional Center in Taft, just outside Muskogee, had 721 inmates and 16 staff members with positive cases as of Sept. 3rd, according to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. That pushed the 74463 ZIP code in Taft to the top hotspot in the state.

<https://oklahomawatch.org/2020/09/04/outbreaks-in-prisons-spread-in-college-towns-drive-covid-19-hotspots/>

### **Should COVID-19 vaccine testing be done on prisoners?**

As the COVID-19 infection toll inside United States prisons and jails reaches 100,000, some researchers are wondering if it's time to reconsider bans on using prisoners in medical trials, such as the vaccine trials currently underway across the country. Though often in the center of the discussion of a contentious topic, prisoners have had little input into the conversation.

<https://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2020/09/04/should-covid-19-vaccine-testing-be-done-on-prisoners/>

### **Cumulative number of COVID-19 infected Missouri prisoners nears 1,000**

The number of Missouri prison inmates who have tested positive for the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic is approaching 1,000, and the number of infected prison staff has topped 300.

[https://www.kmov.com/news/cumulative-number-of-covid-19-infected-missouri-prisoners-nears-1-000/article\\_e8fdb830-98ff-5ce1-b0bc-a7d4a1d0fb2b.html](https://www.kmov.com/news/cumulative-number-of-covid-19-infected-missouri-prisoners-nears-1-000/article_e8fdb830-98ff-5ce1-b0bc-a7d4a1d0fb2b.html)

### **Prison inmates are twice as likely to die of Covid-19 than those on the outside, new report finds**

The Covid-19 infection and mortality rates are significantly higher in prisons than in the general population, though the severity differs widely among states, a new study found. With their crowded conditions and inadequate resources, jails and prisons have been the source of some of the country's largest Covid-19 outbreaks.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/02/us/prison-coronavirus-clusters-report/index.html>

### **Prison housing unit 'completely destroyed' in what union president calls a riot**

Prisoners took control of a housing unit at Chippewa Correctional Facility for about five hours on Sept. 13th, Michigan Department of Corrections spokesman Chris Gautz said. Prisoners did extensive damage to the unit, breaking equipment and glass and causing minor flooding, but Gautz said he was not aware of injuries to officers or prisoners.

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/09/14/chippewa-prisoners-take-control-housing-unit-michigan-prison/5790152002/>

### **Influx of inmates imminent: McDowell prison guards worry transfers could spread COVID-19**

Federal prison guards in McDowell County are concerned that a planned influx of inmates could pose a COVID-19 risk to the correctional center and the community. Plans are in place to soon transfer hundreds of inmates from southern states to the McDowell Federal Correctional Institute in Welch and facilities in Alderson and Hazelton, said Brian Lucas, president of Local 480, the union representing area federal correctional employees.

[https://www.bdtonline.com/news/influx-of-inmates-imminent-mcdowell-prison-guards-worry-transfers-could-spread-covid-19/article\\_bcf8b02e-ed8c-](https://www.bdtonline.com/news/influx-of-inmates-imminent-mcdowell-prison-guards-worry-transfers-could-spread-covid-19/article_bcf8b02e-ed8c-)

<11ea-a204-6bd396bc9db2.html>

### **1,144 of the 1,410 inmates at the South Central Correctional Facility have tested positive for COVID**

As of September 1st, 1,144 of the 1,410 inmates at the facility have tested positive for COVID-19. The South Central Correctional Facility is a private prison operated by CoreCivic. To add insult to injury, CoreCivic said "The health and safety of the individuals entrusted to our care ... is the top priority for CoreCivic."

[https://www.wsmv.com/news/davidson-county/nearly-1-000-inmates-test-positive-for-covid-19-at-wayne-co-prison/article\\_bacc1ed2-ebbe-11ea-948b-0b76e966254c.html](https://www.wsmv.com/news/davidson-county/nearly-1-000-inmates-test-positive-for-covid-19-at-wayne-co-prison/article_bacc1ed2-ebbe-11ea-948b-0b76e966254c.html)

### **Coronavirus in Tennessee: State reports 1,396 new cases, 27 new deaths**

According to the Tennessee Department of Correction, there are currently 1,206 active cases in state prisons. In total, 12 people incarcerated in state facilities have died. Three new deaths were reported September 1st.

<https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/health/2020/08/31/coronavirus-tennessee-latest-updates-numbers-cases-deaths-news-covid-19/5674135002/>

### **37 at SeaTac federal detention center infected with coronavirus**

Officials at the Federal Detention Center in SeaTac say it has a cluster of COVID-19 infections among inmates and staff. The Seattle Times reports that the Federal Bureau of Prisons said 31 inmates and six staff members at the facility had tested positive for the coronavirus.

<https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/what-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-saturday-covid-19-pandemic-washington-state-august/281-f21fe7a5-7fcf-4a89-b39c-a95d5ba5afa1>

### **Head of California state prison system is retiring**

State prisons chief Ralph Diaz, who presided over the final stages of a huge court-ordered reduction in inmate population as well as the system's sometimes-bungled response to COVID-19, is retiring in October, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Head-of-California-state-prison-system-is-retiring-15523157.php>

### **COVID-19 outbreak at Virginia jail infects 124 inmates, 20 staffers: Officials**

A COVID-19 outbreak has rapidly spread through a Virginia jail, infecting at least 120 inmates and 20 staff members despite emergency protocols officials say have been in place since March to prevent the contagion from infiltrating the facility.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/covid-19-outbreak-virginia-jail-infects-124-inmates/story?id=72925115>

### **Deaths Inside Venezuelan prisons doubled during pandemic**

Inmate deaths have doubled in Venezuela's jails during the coronavirus pandemic, a crisis that underscores how the country's anarchic prisons foment violence and spread disease.

<https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/deaths-inside-venezuelan-prisons-doubled-during-pandemic/>

### **3 inmates at SC prison die in a week after positive COVID results**

Officials said three inmates at a South Carolina prison have died after testing positive for COVID-19, bringing the death toll at the facility up to five.

<https://www.wfxg.com/story/42620837/3-inmates-die-in-a-week-span-after-positive-covid-results>

### **Eddie Warrior Correctional Center declared 'hot spot' after 504 inmates test positive for COVID-19**

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections is working to contain an outbreak at a women's correctional center in Muskogee County after 504 inmates tested positive for COVID-19. Out of the 504 positive inmates at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center that have tested positive, only seven inmates have recovered and 262 are in quarantine, according to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections website.

<https://www.fox23.com/news/local/oklahoma-corrections-works-contain-outbreak-eddie-warrior-correctional-center/ZUN4D6EP6NFPJA4Z7SANS6NG4/>

### **Inmate advocates rally outside Eddie Warrior Correctional Center over COVID-19 epidemic**

But the epidemic in the facility, which the DOC has acknowledged is a COVID-19 hot spot, affected upwards of 80% of the prison population at its worst point. The

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*Virus News..... Continued on page 10*

# LETTERS

*[Editors Note: Letters are edited for length and spelling. Send your letters, articles, or opinions to Prison Covid, PO Box 48064, Burien, WA 98148, or through J-Pay at contact@prisoncovid.com.]*

## A Double Standard?

I have a lot of information on some messed up things they did. I wrote to Professor Michael J. Coyle a couple of months ago and sent him an excerpt about how this facility placed four individuals in segregation for alleged Covid quarantine from my tier in A-Unit A-Wing and placed our tier on a Fourteen Day quarantine, yet those placed in segregation were denied access to cleaning materials, access to the phones, or writing materials to contact their families, and kept in segregation for 17 days, and then released back into our same pod on April 14th 2020. I was helping these men prepare their grievances, and such but the grievance coordinator causes so much interference to cover things up, "Not Grievable", "Rewrite" until guys just get so frustrated they let it go. But to the public it would seem that they did this out of protecting all of us. Everything they are doing is for looks, and has no basis in stopping anything, and is more to punish us for what they are enduring at the hands of our public petitioning outside the prisons walls and gates. They have just taken our yard time from us, and made it where one unit goes out at a time for alleged 'Social Distancing' purposes, yet we are forced to live with another prisoner in closed quarter cells, and crowded day rooms, so their minimizing our outside yard periods where we would have the most opportunity to distance from others is without merit, and on top of that we have entire East Yard which was shut down in 2014 for no apparent reason other than to restrict us further. I have recently prepared a petition for that East Yard to be reopened as it's closure is without merit. And under our current circumstances it needs to be reopened, and I have sent that off to Nick Allen at the Columbia Legal Services but have yet to get through to him on the phone. These officers are blaming us for what is going on and punishing us, and rather than release many of us as they should be doing they are choosing to act as though they are taking measures which just make our circumstances more trying. We can't take our

mask off to take a picture for our families on JPay, or visit them on JPay, but they all take their masks off while in the unit booths two to six officers deep. We can't take our mask off during our yard times even when we are social distancing. They are using many rules which may seem to be for our protection to actually punish us for the truth of what you all are pushing for us out there to "Free Them All".

*Charles Webber, WSP*

## She Disagrees

My name is Amber Kim #315649 and I am incarcerated at the TRU in Monroe, WA. Please print my name, number, and location if you use my letter. I am writing in response to the letter to the editor in Vol 1, No. 6, Fall 2020 "Need high-powered lawyers." I take issue with your response to this letter.

I have spent the last 13 years in prison and during that time I have been a part of every single opportunity to work collectively toward prison abolition and reform that I can beg, borrow and weasel my way into. From Toastmasters to Black Prisoner's Caucus, from Coalition for the Trans Prisoners to HEAL, I have been doing the work. I have also spent the last decade in and out of that law library banging my brain against those books and computers desperate to understand the law even just a little bit. Yes, mass incarceration is a collective problem, but we cannot belittle the needs of individuals. The person who put out this obvious cry for help may have phrased things poorly due to their anger and frustration. However, the point stands. Many of us prisoners who are doing the work and struggling to live our values in the midst of terrible conditions need help to not die in here.

I was sentenced to double LWOP for aggravated first degree murder. I was arrested at 18 and convicted at 19. I need help to put in for the brain science thing which could get me resentenced to not die in prison. I have to do this before I can put in for clemency because of the requirement that I "exhaust all court remedies" before applying. So what about people like me? Can we get a group of lawyers who work to cement the collective gains that have been hard won? Are there still juvenile lifers who haven't been resentenced? Is there anyone out there helping incarcerated people write their prosecutors since the passage of SB 6164? These "gains" mean nothing if incarcerated people are not able to access them.

*[Ed's Response: As I said in issue #6, there are no individual solutions, only collective ones. Securing your individual release, while important to you, is not really a solution in terms of abolishing slavery or for extending democracy to prisoners.]*

## From Chino Prison

I am a 27-year-old (transfeminine non-binary) person. I received a copy of your volume 1, number 1 and loved it. I want to see if I can help. I am incarcerated within the California Department of Corrections at the California Institute for Men in Chino. I am on 24/7 lockdown because of COVID-19. We have been locked down for 127 days. As of July 6<sup>th</sup> our institution had 719 cases of the virus, with 19 prisoner deaths. Now we are over a thousand infections and 20 deaths. As of August 6<sup>th</sup>, the DOC had more than 8,400 positives and at least 51 prisoner deaths. My institution has the highest death rate of any institution in California. [As of Aug. 22, the 21st prisoner at the Chino prison died from COVID-19.]

I want a section in your newsletter to be like real Covid stories from the inside. I like your real-life application of medical advice. Also, Ed's editorial "Why We Fight" was great! I want to support you all. Other inmates want to know how to subscribe. Is it a certain number of stamps for a year? You should include your subscription information in the next issue.

Also, send us the latest newsletters. We'll pass them around and encourage people to send stamp donations in exchange for subscriptions. People are hungry for the type of information you provide for us, our ex-convicts friends, and families too. We totally want to know your views on the Thirteenth Amendment and modern-day prison slavery, slave labor, etc. Please write me back; We want to help with the cause.

*Prisoners at C.I.M. in Chino*

## From Washington

First things first, there is no visitation. Many of the men here are struggling mentally without their loved ones. It's one thing to be sentenced to spend time away from your family, but it's an entirely different thing to remove our visits entirely. There has been no visiting since March, and they don't anticipate visiting reopening until next year. Originally, they planned re-

opening when we flattened the curve. That quickly changed to reopening in phase four. And now, unofficially, not until after a vaccine is made available to the public. Our captors know the men are struggling with not seeing their families, they are showing no empathy for this or any of the other struggles we face during this pandemic. They've reduced our recreation, taken away all of our volunteer programming, and they've begun terrorizing us using the mail room. The officers don't social distance or wear their face coverings as directed, but they run roughshod on us if we don't, ie: terminate your video visits, cell you in, write you up, terminate your yard or, in the case of officer [name withheld], they'll accuse you of killing their officers. An officer at the camp contracted Covid and unfortunately succumbed to the virus. C/O [same officer] got on the microphone and announced to us all that this was our fault and it was just like [name withheld]. Referring to officer [name withheld] who was murdered at WSR a decade ago. C/O [name withheld] sits in the booth with up to five staff members (no social distancing) and refuses to wear his mask. He puts it on when an inmate approaches the booth but if this prick does have Covid, the air conditioner in the booth is forcing all that madness straight into your face when he opens the door. The staff at this prison tell us that we need to get rid of the "us against them" mentality but that is a one way street. We give the benefit of the doubt to them, they say we are "guilty as charged." We offer empathy for them in relation to their job or their lives and they call our request for empathy "whining." It will always be them before us in prison. It will always be them against us in prison. I have worked on myself regardless of the administration's view of me or my growth. I've served 28 years and am down to my last 4. I'm going home soon and look forward to advocating for those I leave behind. The desire to continue my good works I'll take with me. Thank you for your efforts. Be safe out there.

*Mark, at WSR*

### **Denied Covid Medical Help**

Recently, about the end of Feb. 2020 I suffered COVID-19, when a MCC prison guard exposed me to his spit. I sent WA. St. governor, Jay Inslee, material information showing that MCC employees had wrongly exposed me to the virus: COVID-19. As soon as I began suffering the excruciatingly painful and debilitating CO-

VID-19 symptoms, I requested, but was denied, medical attention. I thought I would die. When I tried to file a grievance(s), several MCC employees retaliated, by torturing me: [1] an Intensive Management Unit (IMU) guard, (name omitted), said he'd spat in my food. And a chubby IMU guard tried to slam my hands in the cuff-port when I reached for my food tray, causing me to scrape the skin, and lightly bleed, from the knuckle of my right hand thumb finger I was left in the freezing cold, causing me to suffer excruciating pain in my feet/toes, hands/fingers, and body due to being exposed to the cold weather etc.. In order to make the torture stop, I had to promise to withdraw the grievance(s). Later, I was compelled to follow thru with the grievance(s): #20697797 and #20701987. Also, I filed correspondence with Governor Jay Inslee's office, and the WA. State Ombudsman.

*Jerome Alverto, MCC*

### **Arkansas Report**

I know we're feeling it down here in Arkansas. Aside from infections all inmates are forced to deal with shortages blamed on missed deliveries, yard and church being denied because of "lack of security", not coming around and doing cell clean ups and shave call. It's just one thing after another. Shit's really about to boil over down here. I'm sure yall are dealing with the same thing up that way. Really it just gives the CO's reason to take something or deny something and then have something to blame it on. It's really just hitting the penitentiary in AR for the last month or so, so they had all this time to formulate a plan but they aint done nothing but lock the whole penitentiary down. OK cool – but if you leave all the hot cases in their original cells instead of quarantining them all in one you aint getting nowhere. Nation Guard just came last week (8-18) and tested the entire DOC here and we found out we had 14 cases at this unit. Since then we've been on lockdown but like I said the last few months we've been dealing with b.s. they're blaming on the virus. So I don't know *what's* ahead for us now...

*Bill Blockmon, Tucker Prison*

### **Wyoming Report**

Here in Wyoming State Penitentiary they started out by giving no cloth masks and we were all out together, then a couple months later they started a separated tier schedule where the upper tier was let out

and then several hours later the lower tier was let out! Then they started a different modified schedule, and then yet another! Then they started giving us two free phone calls a week and now that testing has started they are all over the map to when they let us out, hell one time they tested us and then as soon as testing was over they let us all out! They take people to quarantine and then after ten or so days, they are bringing them back into the unit with those of us who haven't had it! Now they have had us locked down for a few weeks. Sometimes being four or five days before we can shower or call home and they say that our rights change and they can do what they want to do during a pandemic. The medical department will not even see us at this time. They say that everything including law library, medical, programming, religion, etc. is all on hold until after the pandemic and these are all constitutional rights! They claim that the health department is calling all the shots at this time because the WDOC never had a plan of action for a situation of this magnitude! So now we are stuck in our cells six days a week at 23 hours 45 minutes a day and 24 hours a day on Sunday! We now get 15 minutes a day out. Our schedule is Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday we get 15 minutes for the phone and Monday, Wednesday, Friday a 15 minutes shower and nothing on Sunday! I know that in contrast to some of the conditions around the country this is pretty good but our constitutional rights are being trampled on and our grievance process is controlled by a DOC employee and she rejects most claims and cover up WDOC wrongdoing! They aren't even keeping us informed on anything related to Covid-19 or progress they are making or not!

*Jonathan Pitts, Wyoming State Pen.*

### **And In Nevada**

We have been quarantine – locked down since March 18, 2020. No outside sunlight or fresh, clean air. No outside our cells, but for a half hour every three days; for shower and calling home only. A number of inmates and staff have become infected, but we're not told who, exactly how many or how many have died. I believe at least three staff have died, and I've lost some friend in the world.

*Joseph Brooker, High Desert Prison, NV*

### **From New Mexico**

I am an inmate at Otero Prison in Chaparral, New Mexico. If you go on the internet

under the address NMCD/OCPF or Otero County Prison Facility, you'll find a lot of info about how this place has mishandled the Covid-19 crisis. It even made it to the Albuquerque Journal but I still feel they're not managing it (Covid-19) well.

I had never tested positive but not long ago I was put in RHU for a week then put into a POD with inmates that had tested positive but then recovered. I tried to inquire about the why on this but never received a direct answer. Hmmm. We've had people die from this virus here at this prison at it's sad to say that ever since I got out of RHU I haven't been tested again and that's three weeks ago. Makes a person wonder.

*Leo Costillo*

### Can't Adjust

I would like to express my appreciation for your zine, especially the article by J. Lee in issue #6. I commemorate him for such a professionally written article, and Julien's interview was also well spoken and represented all of us. Keep up the good work.

I recently spent 16 months confined in segregation. A couple of months ago I was released into general population. What a shock. I was placed in seg pre-COVID, and acclimating back to GP was extremely difficult for me. No library privileges, no chapel (it was transformed into a Covid quarantine), only one hour of yard per day (only if it wasn't closed for one reason or another), restricted gym (no weights or sports equipment), and restricted day room. In addition, we are required to pick up our food trays in the chow hall and then eat in our cells. The administration said they were trying to social distance us, which made absolutely no sense as I was tossed into a cell with three other prisoners for a month before being assigned to a two-man cell. Of course upon my arrival I was not given COVID testing or even my temperature taken.

Unfortunately, I was unable to adjust and conform to the new reality so I'm back in seg pending transfer to IMU for another long stretch of confinement. No ones fault but my own poor decisions.

*Jason Kalchbrenner, Airway Heights*



## WHAT ABOUT PC?

In the last issue I posted a letter from a prisoner in protective custody. I got some crap from "solid cons" who wrote to berate me for printing anything from someone in PC.

While I was locked up back in the mid 1980s the state legislature was trying to pass a law limiting the amount of good time earned by sex offenders. At the time I was publishing a newsletter, much like this one, called *The Abolitionist*. In that newsletter I asked prisoners to oppose that legislation, saying "if you fail to do so they will be doing it to violent offenders next." I got a lot of grief from "solid cons" over my standing up for stinking sex offenders. Well, the law passed and some years later the good time cuts were expanded to include violent offenders. Who could have guessed?

Well, here I am again, nagging you to do the right thing. Your status as a prisoner cuts across lines of race, class, and all other levels of division. You are all prisoners of the state, regardless of who ratted on who. When I was at the Walls some of the most respected stand up cons broke down—when the going gets tough, the tough get to ratting. Talk shit all you want, but when it comes to a choice between dying or ratting, most will choose to live.

My message to you is this, those who work to divide the population by any means, their type of crime, race, sexual orientation, or even status as rat, is serving the interests of your captors. PC can play a role in this struggle. You don't need to respect them, or like them, but you do need to allow them to contribute.

You also need to understand that prisoners often check-in out of fear. You are oppressing them in some way and there are no prisoner-based mechanisms they can turn to—the state is their only option. And that is your fault.

In the 1970s we used six homemade shotguns to put an end to prisoner-on-prisoner rape, we provided safe cells for the vulnerable, we escorted the elderly to and from the commissary shack. We are the ones who got you conjugal visits, or what's left of what you've allowed them become today. And we were faggots!

Please stop doing the man's work by further dividing the population with your reactionary ideas. The bottom line is that you are all prisoners. If you can't see that you're going to have a tough row to hoe. ♥

*Ed Mead*

## INMATE IS SAFER FROM COVID-19 IN PRISON THAN AT HOME?

Despite conditions that make social distancing difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic, a New Mexico state district judge ruled that keeping a man in state prison would be safer than going home roughly four months early.

District Judge Albert Mitchell ruled on Aug. 20 that despite his underlying health conditions and close living conditions in prison, Stanley Ingram would be safer in prison than at home with his girlfriend in Tucumcari.

In the order, Mitchell acknowledged Ingram's health conditions, including diabetes and heart arrhythmias, and how those conditions have been reported to create a higher risk of experiencing severe complications from COVID-19.

"The policies and procedures implemented at the Department of Corrections facility where Mr. Ingram is being held appear to be more effective in protecting the individuals in state custody from COVID-19 than the Governor's orders as implemented in Quay County, New Mexico," Mitchell wrote.

Ingram could still appeal the ruling, but he said he can not afford another attorney and that the issue would likely not be settled before his pending Dec. 15 release date. Earlier this year, Lujan Grisham issued an executive order allowing a subset of inmates to be released 30 days early.

"To the point that anybody would be safer in prison, versus at home with a family member out in the community, it just makes no sense, frankly," Moskowitz said.

Judge Mitchell acknowledged in denying Ingram's release that Ingram and other inmates in his unit are housed in bunk beds about four feet apart and that inmates are not required to be six feet apart when interacting with each other.

"The corrections department and the governor have the power to be releasing people, to be looking at this and taking proactive action, irrespective of our law students," Moskowitz said. "So we're still hoping that we could get them to the table to talk more about possibilities." ♥

<https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2020/09/13/judge-rules-inmate-is-safer-from-covid-19-in-prison>



## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The good news is that the newsletter now have readers located in state and federal prisons in all fifty states. While we started out focusing on only Washington and Oregon, we've now grown to a fully national readership.

The bad news is that his growth in readers comes at a cost. More paper, more stamps, etc. Accordingly, if this newsletter is of value to you, then you must pay two stamps per issue. If you want six issues, for example, send 12 stamps. If you don't have stamps, sell *Prison Covid* subscriptions to other prisoners.

For those of you who are new to this newsletter let me give you some background. I format, and print *Prison Covid*; volunteers do the work of editing, folding, sealing, affixing address labels and stamps, and then doing the actual mailing. We've been putting this publication out since April, often twice a month, and this is the first time we've asked you for any kind of payment.

I'm a 78-year-old state-raised ex-convict who has spent some 35 years behind bars—starting at the tender age of 13. Yeah, doing life on the installment plan. The prison experience has left me with PTSD and I'm nutty enough to still consider myself a convict. My only income is social security, which ain't much. I'm also a communist and my friends and I provide this newsletter as a service for prisoners.

We commies are anti-capitalist, against racism, sexism, and all other forms of social discrimination. We are against President Trump, for example, because he is a racist and a fascist. His playbook comes straight out of the mouth of Adolf Hitler's fear mongering. Slogans such as "Make Germany great again" and "Germany first!" were campaign when Hitler was running for public office during the 1930s. Oh, and let's not forget Hitler's tough on crime rhetoric that's now coming out of Trump's mouth. Indeed, Trump is on an execution spree, carrying out more federal executions in 2020 than in the past 57 years combined. When Hitler occupied the nations of Eastern Europe, the first thing he did was empty the prisons and execute all of the prisoners.

Both Trump and Joe Biden are anti-prisoner war mongering pig. They both represent the interests of the super rich, although in slightly different ways. We are living in

the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, after the rich have decided which two candidates you get to vote for, you then have a "choice" as to which representative of the super rich will rule you.

No matter who you vote for, you will be getting always increasing military spending and forever wars of aggression, usually against the poorest people on the planet.

What we socialists seek is the dictatorship of the working class. Yes, you can vote or worker A or worker B, but you will be voting for someone representing the interests of the working class—the people who produce everything. And you would be living in a society that puts people before profits, that creates jobs, rather than jails.

The constitution of the U.S. was created by white male land owners to serve the interests of that class. That document has long ago outlived it's usefulness. Think of it as a very old suit that has been sown on and patched until it is ready to fall apart. It's way past time for a new suit—the suit of socialism.

Try to see any society as an ocean going luxury liner. The top half of the ship, the superstructure, is the political element that steers the vessel either this way or that. That superstructure can be anything from a liberal democracy to an authoritarian dictatorship, or anything in between.

The bottom part of the ship, the engine that drives it forward, we'll call the infrastructure. Here is the mechanism that produces the economic power (we'll call them the means of production). On the one hand this engine can be capitalist, meaning it is owned by private individuals for their personal profit. Or on the other, it can be socialist, where the means of production are owned by the working class for the good of those who produce all commodities.

Oh, you say, socialism has been tried in places like Russia and China and has resulted in authoritarian regimes, and it has clearly failed as an economic alternative to capitalism. It has not failed. It was strangled to death. Did you know that shortly after the revolution the U.S., France, and England invaded Soviet Russia in an effort to kill the revolution? The West has been attacking any nation seeking to improve the conditions of their peoples. Look at what they've done to Cuba, and are now doing to Venezuela. Think of the 1950s Korean war, the blockades, economic sanctions, etc.

But all that aside, Karl Marx wrote that societies must go through the course of social development before socialism can be

implemented. He said there could not be a revolution in Russia because its economic system was still feudal—it had not gone through capitalist development, a condition necessary to develop the means of production to a point of being able to meet social needs.

Lenin got around Marx's requirement by claiming that the three months of Russia's Kerensky regime was capitalism. China and Cuba were also essentially feudal when their socialist revolutions took place. Whereas the U.S. has fully gone through the capitalist phase of development and is now ripe for revolution. Not only ripe, but rotten to its core.

The capitalists are destroying the very planet in their quest for obscene profits. Look at the wild fires burning in the West, the melting ice caps, the increasingly harsh storms, global over population, a growth that comes at the expense of other the species with whom we share this Earth. And then there are the constant wars. In short, it is either socialism or barbarism.

You have a vote. You vote with your feet. Your small chunk of this struggle is to peacefully and responsibly engage in actions aimed at extending democracy to prisoners, including the right to vote, and to struggle against the slavery of prisoners. These are bourgeois democratic demands, which means they are not revolutionary. Working to implement these two demands puts you on the right side of history.

Pot is legal, gays can marry, inter-racial couples are okay. Times have changed. This is your moment. There are 2.2 million prisoners, 14.6 under supervision, tens of millions of ex-cons, and millions upon millions of friends and family members of prisoners. The strength to mount and support statewide and national movements is all around us. We need only vote.

You are victims of a social order so sexist that allows men to believe women are property that can be subjected to beatings and rape. You are victims of a society that engenders mass unemployment and poverty, causing many to rob and steal in an effort to survive this madness. Capitalism is a dog-eat-dog system that has us preying on each other to survive. This will not stop until we have a more sane social order.

Stop being a victim and become an active agent for progressive change. If you are unwilling to follow a socialist path, you can at the very least peacefully work to implement the bourgeois democratic demands. ♥

*Ed Mead*

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**Virus News..... Continued from page 5**

Department of Corrections' website said 352 Eddie Warrior inmates were still positive for the virus that causes COVID-19.

[https://tulsaworld.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/inmate-advocates-rally-outside-eddie-warrior-correctional-center-over-covid-19-epidemic/article\\_f68c71cc-f3ae-11ea-bc33-d330b0e87202.html](https://tulsaworld.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/inmate-advocates-rally-outside-eddie-warrior-correctional-center-over-covid-19-epidemic/article_f68c71cc-f3ae-11ea-bc33-d330b0e87202.html)

**As COVID spikes In Indiana prison, inmates and families report lax protocols**

Inmates and family members worry that the prison hasn't taken adequate steps to prevent the spread of the virus. The increase in cases follows spikes at the New Castle and Putnamville prisons in August.

<https://www.wfyi.org/news/articles/as-covid-spikes-in-indiana-prison-inmates-and-families-report-lax-protocols>

**Advocates protest, demand better conditions for Oklahoma inmates in 'COVID-19 hotspot'**

A group of advocates came together today to protest outside of the Eddie Warrior

Correctional Center in Taft, Oklahoma. The prison has been a COVID-19 hotspot, with over 700 women testing positive for the virus and at least one death. Advocates are calling on the governor and the board of corrections to make changes to help keep the women healthy and safe.

<https://www.fox23.com/news/local/advocates-protest-demand-better-conditions-oklahoma-inmates-covid-19-hotspot/JKY3ZO5KVZGCRA42FOAYFRPZAI/>

**"A silent pandemic": nurse at ice facility blows the whistle on coronavirus dangers**

The whistleblower, Dawn Wooten, says that Irwin, which is run by the private corporation LaSalle Corrections, has underreported Covid-19 cases, knowingly placed staff and detainees at risk of contracting the virus, neglected medical complaints, and refused to test symptomatic detainees, among other dangerous practices.

<https://theintercept.com/2020/09/14/ice-detention-center-nurse-whistleblower/>

**'It almost broke me.' How the pandemic is straining mental health at Allegheny County Jail.**

No personal visitors, hardly any time for

inmates outside of their cells and chronic vacancies in mental health and health staff raise concerns that the mental health of Allegheny County Jail [ACJ] inmates is deteriorating, according to inmates recently incarcerated there, family members of current inmates, advocates and current and former ACJ staff.

<https://www.publicsource.org/covid-allegheny-county-jail-mental-health-strain/>

**Nearly 1,000 inmates, more than 200 staff in Wisconsin prisons have tested positive for coronavirus**

After nearly flattening for about three months, positive coronavirus tests in Wisconsin prisons are back on the rise at rates worse than ever. More than 600 inmates in state-run prisons tested positive for coronavirus in the past month, bringing the total to 953 since the beginning of the pandemic. Further, 223 staff had tested positive as of Sept. 15.

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2020/09/17/wisconsin-prisons-see-new-spike-covid-19-cases-among-inmates-staff/5795329002/>

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**COMMUNICATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT**