

BRIDGE OF VOICES

Newsletter of Forum For Understanding Prisons (FFUP), a 501c3 non profit

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This is a strange time, one with new possibilities. As you will read in these pages, there are new discussions about our system of justice, partly fueled by our economic woes and partly by a growing awareness of the injustice of our system. The wonderful 11X15 campaign we featured in our last newsletter is reaching out to all comers and looks like is ready to let itself be the nucleus of a wide coalition. Director David Liner's letter to prisoners is enclosed.

FFUP's part in this movement is to bring forward, as best we can, the prisoners point of view and with the support of 11X15 campaign, which is concentrating on the front end of incarceration, (keeping the nonviolent out of prison), we are going forward with our campaign to release prisoners who are ready to be good citizens. We have been working on this for a long time and now there will be support and real potential for success. Two of our efforts are legislative- the elderly release bill and another to give pathway for release to those who were juveniles when they committed their crime. We are starting with the elderly bill as the great concern over the increasing cost of medical expenses for the elderly makes this bill almost certain to be seriously discussed. Discussions with the UW law school and some WI legislators and research of current practices around the country are underway. Screening of prisoner release candidates by law students would possibly be one factor, but this will have no effect unless a new mechanism for final decision making is part of the bill- perhaps a citizen panel or sentencing judge as final decider. We are told that the biggest obstacle for an effective elderly release bill is political – the bill would need to be bipartisan because that old fear of appearing soft on crime still drives campaigns. So our goal is at least to begin the discussion through this bill. Where does revenge and anger end and compassion, forgiveness and healing begin?

Besides the above legislative efforts, we would like to add to the 11X15 campaign and use the media to help turn the public's attention to "old law prisoners", those who are simply stuck in a system crafted in prison boom days when every prisoner was considered a gold mine and the powers that be wanted to hold on to inmates as long as possible. Those days are gone but the old machine remains, mindlessly. We all know the issues but the public does not. It has been spoon fed terror through the media and political tough on crime rhetoric. Everyone uses the crime issue and the demonizing of prisoners to get what they want: power, job security (there is no recession in prison towns), something on which to vent. . It will be along struggle to reeducate the public because we are talking about violent crimes including murder here, and the fact that people change and deserve a second chance. These are concepts hard to sell but we must try. This campaign will help us with the legislation on the elderly also.

We will be putting out our petition and pamphlets in new form and the web is getting a new look. If you will help, we can connect with the many state and national organizations that are also working on the issue of glutted prisons and cuts to programs on education and community. Below are a couple of short articles about old law prisoners- a place to start. These are models for the media- for the web, emails, newspapers, radio. We need to show that there are plenty of people who understand the waste and depravity of the present system- and no one knows that better than prisoner's families and friends.

1) Please ask family or friend to choose one of the articles below (or write new one) and send this to his/her local media outlet or go online and submit

OR/and

2) have friends or family call me at 1-608-536-3993 or email swansol@mwt.net and we can strategize together.

3) FFUP has petitions and Surveys to distribute that will verify the fact that many citizens do believe the days of revenge only should stop. - if you have friends on the outside that would help distribute these, contact FFUP.

4) All help from you is needed to work out a campaign – the time was never better. How do we get the word out? We need good, **short** essays on the subject of wasted lives and money with this present policy of no parole (all aspects that concern you) to spread over the media and people who will help spread the word. We will be working closely with the 11X15 campaign and together will make this a real movement affecting all aspects of the justice system.

TWO SAMPLE LETTERS FOR THE MEDIA/ PLEASE HELP SPREAD THE WORD.

Letter one:

In the state of Wisconsin the parole proceedings are frightfully unfair and morally inept, to say the very least. These administrative shenanigans are the cause of considerable vexation throughout the prison system, as well as enormous amounts of stress on the families of the inmates. A large number of inmates have given up any hopes of obtaining a chance at parole. Under the current system, it is ultimately impossible to gain parole, even for those inmates that have spent multiple years in prison, have completed every necessary educational/program and no longer present any danger to the public.

Wisconsin eliminated parole in 2000 and instituted the truth in sentencing policy (TIS), or "new law," largely due to politicians and the media capitalizing on the fear that criminals were being released without sufficient punishment. As a

(page 2)result, the bulk of the prison population will never see a Parole commissioner as this law calls for them to serve "every single" day that they were sentenced to. This "new law"(TIS) allows for "some" convicted of "less serious crimes" to petition the court for release after serving three quarters of their sentence. These petitions, however, are seldom Granted .

The group we are highlighting here are the 3000 to 4000 Wisconsin prisoners who were sentenced under the "old law" before 2000, and were eligible for parole after serving 25% of their sentence. Many of the old law prisoners have been eligible for parole for over 20 years!!! However, after completing everything that they should and after completing everything that was set forth: still no parole. These inmates have dedicated many years in prison pursuing rehabilitation for themselves through D.O.C. program as well as outside resources. However, it appears that the powers that be do not care about these life changing self-improvements. Determining factors such as years of positive adjustment are not factors at all to them.

These parole denials are costing the Wisconsin taxpayers extra financial burdens with the annual cost of \$29 to 50,000 per inmate. That's around \$2,764,000 per prison/ per year. As these inmates grow older, the policy of no parole looks positively insane and there is a health crisis nationwide as prisons scramble to pay the increasing health care costs of people long ago rehabilitated and now infirm. That is a shockingly inappropriate amount of tax dollars that could be doing so much better allocated in other areas, especially in our current financial situation. We need to release these people while they can still lead productive lives and contribute.

The sum of Wisconsin's parole system issue is yet another clear example of politicians being more tough than smart on crime. After all, a smart approach would recognize the importance of rehabilitating criminals, giving them incentives, training and the opportunity to lead productive lives. It seems to be a misconception circulating that if you extend inmates time structures they will be better people, or that giving vast amounts of prison time will make the problem go away. As we can now see-it will not. Wisconsin cutting its support for higher education by 6%(at least) and increasing corrections spending by 251%(at least) is not helping the matter. This fact is confirmed by NASBO(National Ass. of state Budget Officers). To be just, to be morally sound, to be the light that the U.S. asserts, we must grant parole to those that have earned it. It is also important to provide the appropriate amount of options to assist in prisoners' rehabilitation. If we are only as strong as our weakest link(prisoners),then we should strengthen the weak links to strengthen the whole.

From essay by Christopher A. Newhouse #307806 ;P.O. Box 233,Black River Falls, WI 54615 www.theapostolicroad.webs.com

Letter two:

WAKE UP WISCONSIN!! Why are we spending 20 to 60 thousand dollars a year to imprison people who are no longer dangerous- yes we have thousands of "old law" prisoners languishing in prison on the taxpayer dollar . These are the people who were sentenced before "truth in sentencing" became law(2000), and some have been eligible for parole for 20 plus years and are rehabilitated. STOP this madness!! Call the WI parole board and you legislators and tell them to Stop wasting lives and money. We need our husband, wives , fathers/ mothers/ sisters/ brothers back.

(by prisoner , now released due to incredible effort on the part of his family)

more FFUP news.

New blogs with studies , essays to amplify prisoners stories. All linked to www.prisonforum.org:

Prisons in the news and on our minds

New: 4 new wordpress blogs:

1) [SOLITARY CONFINEMENT DISCUSSED](http://studieonsolitary.wordpress.com-pdf-studies)

[studieonsolitary.wordpress.com-pdf studies](http://studieonsolitary.wordpress.com-pdf-studies) , lawsuits, essays follows growing debate over our national overuse of solitary confinement for the mentally and otherwise difficult prisoner.

2) [JUSTICE FOR JUVENILES : kidsinprison.wordpress.com](http://kidsinprison.wordpress.com): Pdf files on recent supreme court decision banning mandatory life sentences for kids who waived into adult court; Discussed issue of kids in prison, pathways for release.

3) [SECOND CHANCE FOR THE ELDERLY PRISONER](http://elderlyrelease.wordpress.com)

elderlyrelease.wordpress.com:discusses nationwide problem of elderly in prison-the \$\$expense and waste of life . Alternatives and a pathway for release. PDF studies, essays writings.

4) [PRISONWORLD VIEWS. prisonworldviews.wordpress.com](http://prisonworldviews.wordpress.com) Studies covering all aspects of prisons and the prison industrial complex. Latest supreme court decision affecting plea bargaining, the proiginal complaint filed in court, and much more

Needed: prisoners to read and write comments, reactions, essays , personal stories inspired by the essays above to be put on blog introducing the studies . Most readers will not read the studies but will read a shorter writings about and inspired by about the studies and perhaps be enticed to look the studies over. There is incredible information and ideas out there- FFUP hopes to make this work more accessbile. Also have excellent treatises on prisoner industrial complex and ALEC and how corporations are keeping the leaders from discussing our destructive overdependance on incarceration as we ll as other important issues like climate change. All essays will be posted- If you would like to help., let me know the subject you are interested in – soltary., elderly release, Second chance for juvenile offender , Prison Industrial Complex (including Alex) , gerymandering , voting.

ACLU, Amnesty International, Sentencing project, AFSC, Center on Juvenile Justice are some of the organizations doing the studies.

(page 3) **Supreme court bans mandatory Life sentences for Juveniles** **Democracy NOW on SC ruling Juveniles**

In a groundbreaking ruling on Monday, the Supreme Court ruled that states may not impose mandatory life sentences without parole on children, even if they have been convicted of taking part in a murder. The justices ruled in a five-to-four decision that such harsh sentencing for children violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. "[We've] been victims of the politics of fear and anger in this country for 40 years [with] tremendous investment into excessive sentences, mass incarceration," says juvenile defense attorney Bryan Stevenson, who filed the landmark Supreme Court case. "Many of the people who have been brought into that transformation have been kids." We're also joined by Azim Khamisa, whose 20-year-old son Tariq was killed by a 14-year-old gang member, Tony Hicks, in 1995. Khamisa co-signed an amicus brief on behalf of victim family members who oppose life without parole for children. "The brain of a child is not formed at the age of 14," Khamisa says. "So I think there is a lot of potential in these young offenders, that if we create the right kind of an environment ... these kids can come back into society, and not only come back into society, but come back as contributing members."

Guests: [Bryan Stevenson](#), attorney who argued the Supreme Court case challenging juvenile life without parole. He is the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative

NERMEEN SHAIKH: We turn now to the issue of juvenile justice. In a groundbreaking ruling on Monday, the Supreme Court ruled that states may not impose mandatory life sentences without parole on children, even if they have been convicted of taking part in a murder. The justices ruled in a five-to-four decision that such harsh sentencing for children violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. The ruling does not mean the 2,500 juvenile offenders currently serving such sentences must be released, only that they now get the chance for parole.

The two cases at issue involved 14-year-old boys who had taken part in murders in Arkansas and Alabama. Justice Elena Kagan wrote for the majority that children still had unformed emotional and moral structures. In her decision, Kagan wrote, quote, "Mandatory life without parole for a juvenile precludes consideration of his chronological age and its hallmark features—among them, immaturity, impetuosity, and failure to appreciate risks and consequences."

AMY GOODMAN: The court's most conservative members dissented. Justice Samuel Alito said the ruling could lead to the release of young murderers who could kill again. In his dissent, he wrote, quote, "Even a 17 1/2-year-old who sets off a bomb in a crowded mall or guns down a dozen students and teachers is a [quote] 'child' and must be given a chance to persuade a judge to permit his release into society. Nothing in the Constitution supports this arrogation of legislative authority," Alito wrote.

For more, we're joined by two guests. We go to Montgomery, Alabama, to speak with Bryan Stevenson, who won the landmark Supreme Court case striking down mandatory life sentences for juveniles. He's the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. And we're joined by *Democracy Now!* video stream by Azim Khamisa. He co-signed an amicus brief on behalf of victim family members who oppose life without parole for children. His 20-year-old son Tariq was killed by a 14-year-old gang member, Tony Hicks, in 1995. But let's first go to Bryan Stevenson in Montgomery. You argued this case before the Supreme Court. Talk about its significance, Bryan.

BRYAN STEVENSON: Well, yes, we're very encouraged by the court's ruling. This is an important step forward. For 30, 40 years we have been sending children to die in prison in the United States. We're the only country in the world that does that. Some of these kids were as young as 13 years of age when they were sentenced to life imprisonment without parole. And until the court struck down the death penalty for juveniles in 2005, this was an issue that got virtually no attention. So we're really pleased that in the last three years the court has recognized that child status is critical and important, even in the criminal justice system, where for decades we've really ignored the plight, the status, the conditions, the challenges that children have in all communities with regard to sentencing. And so, it's a really important step forward.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Bryan, you mentioned that the U.S. is exceptional in putting children into prison for life. Why is it that the U.S. does that? I mean, how did that practice come about?

BRYAN STEVENSON: Well, you know, we've, I think, really been victims of the politics of fear and anger in this country for 40 years, and we've had this tremendous investment into excessive sentences, mass incarceration. Our prison population in 1972 was 300,000; today it's 2.3 million. And many of the people who have been brought into that transformation have been kids. We lowered the minimum age for trying children as an adult in many states. In the late 1980s, early 1990s, we made mandatory transfer, mandatory sentencing a feature of the way we deal with kids. And at the same time, when the rest of the world has actually been recognizing that protecting children is a critical human right and adopting things like the [Convention] on the Rights of the Child, the U.S. has been an outlier. The United States and Somalia are the only two countries in the world that have refused to sign the covenant on the protection—on the rights of the child, which I think has undermined our integrity, our credibility and our reputation on human rights issues abroad.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to turn to Azim Khamisa. Can you tell us your own story, about your son Tariq, how he was killed, and the campaign you have waged since?

AZIM KHAMISA: Sure. Tariq was a student at San Diego State University, and he worked on Fridays and Saturdays as a pizza delivery man. It was the last delivery on a Saturday night, and he was lured to a bogus address in San Diego by a youth gang, and it was an apartment building. He knocked on many doors and found out that nobody had ordered the pizza, so he came back to the car, put the pizzas in the trunk of the car, and as he was about to leave the scene of the crime, he was accosted by four youth gang members. Three of them were 14 year old, and the leader of the gang was an 18-year-old who handed a nine-millimeter handgun to a 14-year-old and commanded, "Bust him, Bones." Bones was his gang nickname. And he fired one round, which came through the open driver-side window and entered my son's body under the left shoulder blade. The bullet traveled across the upper part of his

chest. And, unfortunately, it was fatal. And he died drowning in his own blood a couple of minutes later—over a lousy pizza at the age of 20. So, needless to say, it brought my life to a crashing halt. But I took a different response to the tragedy. This happened 17 years ago. I saw that there were victims at both ends of the gun. And I started with the premise that violence was a learned behavior. And if (page 4) you accept that as a truism, then nonviolence can also be a learned behavior. So I ended up forgiving my son's killer. And nine months after that, I started the Tariq Khamisa Foundation and reached out in forgiveness to the grandfather and guardian of my son's killer. And now we work together to keep kids away from gang, guns and violence. And 11 years ago, I also co-founded another program called CANEI, which is Constant and Never-Ending Improvement, alongside with the National Youth Advocate Program, which is based in Columbus, Ohio. And they're a fairly large nonprofit; they're present in seven states. And here, we are actually an alternative to incarceration. And that particular program is already in seven cities, and we are having success in turning around youth offenders and bringing them back into society as contributing and functioning members.

So I'm really excited about the Supreme Court decision. I think it's a step in the right direction, as Bryan mentioned. But I think, beyond that, I think that we need to look at youthful offenders as a resource, because the kid who killed my son is now 30. And he—and I forgave him and also told him, "When you come out, you can come join your grandfather and me," and gave him some love and hope. And when he was 22 years old, he aced his GED in prison at the 94 percentile. He's two-thirds of his way done with his first degree in child psychology, because he knows, when he comes out, he will join his grandfather and me. And in my heart of hearts, I know we've saved him. But I tried to get him out under the Schwarzenegger regime, not very successfully, because he's still—he was actually given a sentence of 25 years to life with parole, but he doesn't parole 'til he's 46 years old. But I look forward to the day, because I know that we've saved him, but he will save many other kids.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Azim Khamisa, the boy you're talking about, the boy who—teenage boy who was responsible for killing your son, was 14 years old at the time he did it, Tony Hicks. During his sentencing hearing, Tony asked for your forgiveness. Let's just go to a clip of that.

TONY HICKS: On January 21st, 1995, I shot and killed Tariq Khamisa, a person I didn't even know and who didn't do anything wrong to me. I wish I didn't have the type of life I had. I wish I had a relationship with my father. I think about the warnings that my grandfather gave me, and I wish I had listened to my grandfather. At night when I'm alone, I cry and I beg God to let me out of here, promising that I will be a better person. I won't mess up.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Tony Hicks's grandfather and guardian, Ples Felix, described the conversation he had with Tony in juvenile hall shortly after he murdered your son.

PLES FELIX: He just came over, and he sat in my lap, and he just started crying, and he started bawling, and he started screaming about how sorry he was. He said, "Daddy, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I never wanted to hurt anybody. I'm so sorry for what I did. And I hope that Mr. Khamisa can forgive me for what I've done, and I hope you can forgive me for what I've done. I'm so sorry."

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Azim Khamisa, that was Ples Felix, the grandfather of Tony Hicks.

AZIM KHAMISA: Correct. Yeah, we're together, still together 17 years later. In fact, we are in Rapid City speaking at a conference that deals with youth violence. And it just shows you what's possible. I mean, Tony is no longer about gang banging. He's—we have footage of him when he was 26 years old. We use the clip that you just shared with your audience in our programs, and we also have two-and-a-half hours more of him when he was 26 years old. And you see the change in him. I mean, at 14, you can see the gang-banging mentality; at 26, he comes across as a monk—as a result of me forgiving him and giving him some hope.

And as I said earlier, that a child—you know, the brain of a child **BRYAN STEVENSON:** They will be entitled to new sentencing hearings. We're going to have to amass the resources necessary to provide legal assistance to all of those people, but I think there's great enthusiasm, great hopefulness that this will become an opportunity to recover from some very extreme and some very unjust outcomes.

AMY GOODMAN: Bryan Stevenson, we want to thank you very much for joining us from Montgomery, Alabama, the executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. Bryan is the attorney who argued the Supreme Court case challenging juvenile life without parole. He won. Also, Azim Khamisa, thanks so much for being with us. Again, his son Tariq was 20 years old when he was killed by a 14-year-old gang member named Tony Hicks. He founded the Tariq Khamisa Foundation in his son's memory and co-signed an amicus brief on behalf of victim family members who oppose life without parole for children.

is not formed at the age of 14. I mean, research shows that the full brain is developed someplace in the middle twenties. So I think there is a lot of potential in these young offenders, that if we create the right kind of an environment—and I think the programs that I'm involved with, both in the foundation and the CANEI program, addresses that these kids can come back into society, and not only come back into society, but come back as contributing members. I mean, we have four full-time employees who are all ex-convicts that are so passionate that they don't want other kids to follow in their footsteps. And Tony will be that, too.

AMY GOODMAN: In 2009, PBS's Tim O'Brien interviewed Judge J. Rogers Padgett, a judge in Florida, on why he sentenced a 15-year-old named Kenneth Young to life in prison with no possibility of parole. Young helped a 25-year-old crack dealer pull armed robberies of hotels around Tampa Bay, Florida. Young would take down the video surveillance cameras and grab the cash while the boss held a gun on the clerks and barked orders. No shots were ever fired. This is Judge Padgett defending his ruling.

JUDGE J. ROGERS PADGETT: So, what we see is what we get in the way of a defendant. We get a person who shows no remorse. We get a person who is smiling in court, thinks it's funny. We have a person who, while he is under consideration for a life sentence, is flipping signals to people in the gallery.

TIM O'BRIEN: He's only 15, barely.

JUDGE J. ROGERS PADGETT: We have a person who gives no appearance of deserving any slack whatsoever in sentencing. So, we give him a life sentence.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Judge J. Rogers Padgett. Bryan Stevenson, as we wrap up this discussion, can you respond to what he said? Talk about the issue of race, when it comes to children who are in prison for life without parole. And also, what is the response of your clients? You argued this case. You won this case before the Supreme Court.

BRYAN STEVENSON: Well, I think what I've seen over 20, 25 years representing kids is that kids change, and the powerful story you heard earlier is just a testament to how we have failed many of the kids in our communities. We've allowed them to become hopeless. We've allowed them to be brought into violent environments and thrown them away. And we've got to change that. And (page5)that judge's perspective, which ultimately did change, is one of the reasons why I think this fight is so important. Kids need to (page5)be oriented. They need to be inspired. They need to be energized. They've already been condemned, long before they've been arrested. Too many kids in this country believe, by the time they're 13 and 14, that their lives have no hope, they're going to die, or they're going to die in prison. And that hopelessness is very much a part of what we are trying to respond to. It would make no sense to condemn a child, in my view, to judge a child beyond hope, beyond rehabilitation, beyond recovery, when they're still forming. And to say to any child that you're fit only to die in prison, we think, is cruel. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the kids that we have condemned in this way are kids of color adds to the problem, adds to the injustice. And so, we're excited to have an opportunity to kind of now fight for some hopefulness, for some recovery, for some rehabilitation, particularly in communities where poverty and marginalization and anger and violence and despair have already condemned and challenged the hope and limited the aspirations of too many children.

AMY GOODMAN: And finally—we have 15 seconds—for those who are now sentenced to life without parole currently, serving time, what happens to them?

BRYAN STEVENSON: They will be entitled to new sentencing hearings. We're going to have to amass the resources necessary to provide legal assistance to all of those people, but I think there's great enthusiasm, great hopefulness that this will become an opportunity to recover from some very extreme and some very unjust outcomes.

AMY GOODMAN: Bryan Stevenson, we want to thank you very much for joining us from Montgomery, Alabama, the executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. Bryan is the attorney who argued the Supreme Court case challenging juvenile life without parole. He won. Also, Azim Khamisa, thanks so much for being with us. Again, his son Tariq was 20 years old when he was killed by a 14-year-old gang member named Tony Hicks. He founded the Tariq Khamisa Foundation in his son's memory and co-signed an amicus brief on behalf of victim family members who oppose life without parole for children.

Transport to the prisons: Please spread the word about these services

At present FFUP knows of two services going from Milwaukee to most of Wisconsin's prisons. You must call for an appointment and prices vary.

Voices to the Prisons; Ms. Boyd ; 1-414-687-9828; voices2theprisons@yahoo.com

"Your family unification/re-unification program ministering to heal, connect and build families through transportation and support group settings." Servicing Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha and more. Please share this information with your families and ask them to contact me. If they don't get an answer, they should leave name, institution, phone number and a call will be returned."

P.O.H. Family Transportation Services; Robin Saffold ; 414-395-7413; 414-350-8571
pohtransportation@gmail.com

"Our #1 priority is keeping families with children connected"

Here we continue with the last of the wisdoms of the program called 12 STEP, submitted by a prisoners penpal/supporter. The method, good for all, is to take one of these sayings a day and think about it at odd moments throughout the day.

With the tools of AI-Anon, you can lighten your load.

Be good to yourself.

You are powerless over others.

This above all, to thine own self be true.

You don't have to be reluctant to show your feelings.

You don't have to feel guilty about the past.

Trust Is a stepping stone to accepting a power greater than yourself.

Courage is fear that's said its prayers.

You are only as sick as your secrets.

You don't have to feel alone.

Patience is the key to paradise.

Look within, the secret is inside you.

Today, work on loving yourself.

Life is as good as you think it to be.

When it gets dark enough, you can see the stars.

If one person gets well, the whole family situation improves.

God helps those who help themselves.

Life is for growth, both mental and spiritual.

The time to enjoy wasting is not wasted time.
Be willing to listen and consider an alternative.
No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched.
He giveth grace to the humble.
The twelve steps provide ways to live a new and different life.
Serenity opens your mind to new ideas.
People are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges.
God gave us memories so we might have roses in December.
You grow up the day you have the first real laugh at yourself
Your level of acceptance profoundly impacts your serenity.
I recover from the inside out.
Over time, you will find answers to your dilemmas.

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The Gamaliel Foundation in Wisconsin

June 27, 2012 (pages 6 and 7)

Dear Friends of the 11x15 Campaign:

The 11x15 Campaign for Safer, Healthier Communities is off to a great start. We have been quite effective so far in making people aware that there is a huge problem with our Criminal Justice system in Wisconsin, and that now is the time to fix it.

Though different communities are moving at different paces, we have significant work going on in every community with a WISDOM organization. A bit of a snapshot of how we are doing overall:

- More than 150 people have been trained to do presentations to groups.
- To date, more than 120 presentations have been done. These have been for audiences as small as three people and as large as 400. At least 2,500 people have attended a presentation.
- Dozens of presentations are scheduled in the next few months.
- At least 1,400 people have filled out "commitment sheets." They are asking at least to be counted as supporters, many have already said they want to participate in the Madison day in spring, and some have volunteered to serve on 11x15 Committees.
- We have done presentations in every part of the state – north, south, east, west and central.
- We have distributed more than 9,000 11x15 Brochures.
- The www.prayforjusticeinwi.org website is visited by about 75 people per day (about 25 of those seem to be robotic, but the rest are real people wanting to know more).
- We continue to get good media coverage of our efforts.

Some of the things coming up are:

August 17 at the Capitol with the Sentencing Project

Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too.
Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart.
When you stop looking for other people's approval, you gain their respect.
The serenity prayer is excellent medicine for discontentment.
The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice.
You don't have to take responsibility for other people's choices.
Detachment is not caring less, it's caring for your own serenity.
You can say "no" with love instead of with hostility.
Have the courage and faith to be true to yourself.

On Friday, August 17, we will gather in the Senate Hearing Room of the Capitol building in Madison. (Thanks to the office of Senator Lena Taylor for arranging that.) 11x15 campaign leaders and allies are all invited. And, we want to invite as many state legislators and/or their staffs as possible, as well as people from the Administration. Our guest speaker will be Ms. Nicole Porter of the widely respected, Washington DC-based Sentencing Project. She will give a presentation outlining what other states around the country have done, or are considering, to reduce their prison populations. The presentation will be followed by discussions about strategies and priorities.

Meetings with Public Officials, etc.

Our local 11x15 leaders are now starting to reach out to State Legislators, candidates for office, County Supervisors, and others. There are two categories of people we want to talk with:

**Decision-makers*: for example, State Senate or Assembly representatives who will vote on the state budget, or County Board members who might adopt a resolution urging state-level reform and committing their counties to implement alternatives.

**Allies*: people who might be able to endorse 11x15 and who might be effective in helping us to convince the decision-makers.

We want to learn where they stand on 11x15 as a goal, we want to invite them to publicly support our efforts, we want them to come to 11x15 events, and we want them to agree to keep working with us.

Forums/Public Meetings

Each of our local organizations will be having at least one major public event this fall. We are looking to have public officials and allies at these events, as well as a lot of our own people. Ideally, the officials will publicly commit to our organizations that they will support the goals of the 11x15 campaign – and perhaps even specifically commit to working (page7)for increased TAD funding or other reforms. And, our members and supporters will learn even more about 11x15, and will be challenged to make their voices heard and to continue to press for change.

March 14, 2013

March 14 is the proposed date for the big Madison Action Day. Our goal is to have 1,000 supporters of 11x15 in the Capitol that day, to learn, to pray, to rally, and to visit every one of our representatives in the Senate and Assembly. This will be right in the midst of the Biennial Budget process, which will be very important to 11x15.

The name for this event is “*People of Faith United for Justice.*” It is not just us. It includes the Wisconsin Council of Churches, Madison-area Urban Ministries, Interfaith Coalition of Greater Milwaukee and the Lutheran Office on Public Policy. The Milwaukee Jewish Federation is talking about being a co-sponsor. And, we are reaching out to many other religious organizations (including Universities, religious orders, campus ministries...) to co-sponsor the event.

* * * * *

Thanks for all the letters we continue to receive. Again, I am sorry I can't answer each one individually, but we do read them all – and it is important for people to hear what you have to say. (In the next month or two, we will start sharing segments of letters with a bigger audience – with the permission of the writer, and protecting the identity of the writer.)

As I have mentioned before, we are a pretty low-budget group with very little staff. We don't have the resources or the expertise to be able to help people with individual situations; what we can do is to try to mobilize many, many people to demand a change in the system that has gone wrong.

Many of you have asked what you can ask of family members who want to help in the campaign. First and foremost, have them contact us. (Your best bet is to have them e-mail me at the address below.) We can put them on a list to get updates. If they can arrange even a small group to see an 11x15 presentation, that would be great. They could, though, just show up at one of the events mentioned above and show their support that way. If they live in a city where we have an organization, we'd love to have them join our committee and meet some other folks working for the same thing. Thanks again for your support of this campaign. Together, I really believe we will make some big changes in Wisconsin! David Liners;(414) 736-2099; davidl_wisdom@sbcglobal.net

SOLITARY IN THE NEWS and on our minds

Wisconsin progressing toward more humane treatment of mentally ill prisoners. funding needed to expand model units but the intent is there.

I was recently privileged to be co speaker at the MENTAL HEALTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE of the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health or MHC for short. It meets bimonthly. I spoke of ways life can be improved for the prisoners by relaxing rules that keep the public from helping and it looks like we will be forming a subcommittee dedicated to working with the DOC to make book donations easier, restart interlibrary loan , allow craft materials etc.. Everytime I visit a certain prison I see the DOC reentry mission emblazoned on the wall " *to promote public safety by ensuring offender success from admission to custody through reentry and supervision in the community*". I read this statement to the committee. It should not be a joke-it is what the DOC should be about and what the public should fund, support and demand.

The other speaker was James Greer, Head of DOC Health services and he spoke of his department's efforts to transform certain seg units into model treatment centers. There are two model units now and although the impetus was the TCI lawsuit, this has long been a plan and dream. The transitional unit at WCI is one of the models with group therapy and two hours of out of cell programming a day. A new treatment center was built at TCI and an outside recreational unit was recently opened in March. The prisoners here also have two hours a day of out of cell programming and another hour of recreation. And they are having success at Taycheedah in greatly reducing segregation times. Where beds use to be full at all times at 45, they now have 25 beds filled. They are using a model which allows for a psychologist to review a file and then submit his or her opinion to the segregation examiner as to whether the individual's conduct was a product or symptom of the persons' mental illness.

System wide, here is a new 2day training program for guards and staff who work with the mentally ill. This same crisis intervention training is being implemented in our communities and four DOC sessions have been completed thus far. It is (page8)difficult to program so staff can be away but the training proceeds and in the future will included volunteer trainers from groups such as NAMI. The training of staff to be sensitive to the needs of segregation prisoners will be vital in any improvement of conditions. Bravo Mr Greer.

(page 8) It is clear that a couple model units do not effect the great many of you stuck in seg without effective programming day in and dayout. Even so, It is important to acknowledge and applaud the efforts that are being made to improve conditions. Society is dumping all its problems into prisons without giving the prison system support or funding . Generally there is no effective treatment for the poor when symptoms start to show and dangerous behaviors are allowed to escalate until the cops must get involved. Yes, most improvements made are the result of lawsuits because the lawsuits mandate the use of those funds. The day may come when we have mental health hospitals and community group therapy etc- all the things we know work- but right now prisons are the only treatment centers. Lets make them true healing centers.

First Time Ever- Legislative Hearing on Solitary Confinement

A Prison Abuse

NYT July 1, 2012

Solitary confinement in America has devolved from a short-term punishment imposed infrequently for violating prison rules into a routine form of prison management. Today, tens of thousands of prisoners are held in prolonged isolation—in tiny, windowless cells for up to 23 hours a day.

On June 19, a United States Senate judiciary subcommittee met to consider the costs of this practice — the first time that Congress has acknowledged the problem.

More than 80,000 of America's 2.3 million prisoners are held in isolation. While defenders claim that solitary confinement is needed to control the most violent prisoners, prolonged isolation is known to induce mental illness. About half of prison suicides take place in isolation units. A 2006 study of prison safety and abuse raised concerns about higher recidivism rates when prisoners are released directly from solitary to the community. High rates of security segregation can actually increase incidents of violence.

Some of the most moving testimony at the hearing came from Anthony Graves, who was wrongly convicted of murder and served a decade of his 18 years in incarceration in brutal solitary confinement in Texas before his exoneration and release from prison in 2010. He described living in the "worst conditions imaginable" and the continued psychological toll.

The committee also heard from Christopher Epps, the commissioner of the Department of Corrections in Mississippi, one of a growing number of states that have reduced violence and reaped millions in savings by steeply cutting back on solitary confinement. But the director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Charles Samuels Jr., expressed scant interest in similar reforms even though 15,000 federal prisoners—7 percent of the total population—are currently serving time in solitary. That compares with just 1.4 percent in Mississippi, a state not known for being soft on crime.

Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois says he is working on legislation that would require greater transparency about state and federal use of solitary confinement and looking at ways to remove barriers that make it nearly impossible for inmates held in solitary to protect their rights in court. The first step, though, should be clear standards minimizing the use of this form of punishment, including an immediate, strictly enforced bar on holding children and mentally ill inmates in severe conditions of

isolation. (We have many articles, including the transcripts of ADX and Pelican Bay complaints and the legislative hearing featured above. This are available on the web at: <http://studiesonsolitary.wordpress.com/> or on prisonforum.org (main web) and by mail upon request)

Pelican Bay solitary confinement lawsuit

On May 31, 2012, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of prisoners at Pelican Bay State Prison who have spent between 10 and 28 years in solitary confinement. The legal action is part of a larger movement to reform inhumane conditions in California prisons— Security Housing Units (SHU), a movement sparked and dramatized by a 2011 hunger strike by thousands of SHU prisoners; the named plaintiffs include several leaders and participants from the hunger strike. The class action suit, which is being jointly filed by CCR and several advocate and legal organizations in California, alleges that prolonged solitary confinement violates Eight Amendment prohibitions against cruel and unusual punishment, and that the absence of meaningful review for SHU placement violates the prisoners' right to due process.

SHU prisoners spent 22 ½ to 24 hours every day in a cramped, concrete, windowless cell. They are denied telephone calls, contact visits, and vocational, recreational or educational programming. Food is often rotten and barely edible, and medical care is frequently withheld. More than 500 Pelican Bay SHU prisoners have been isolated under these devastating conditions for over 10 years, more than 200 of them for over 15 years; and 78 have been isolated in the SHU for more than 20 years. This suit asserts that prolonged confinement under these conditions has caused harmful and predictable psychological deterioration among SHU prisoners. Solitary confinement for as little as 15 days is now widely recognized to cause lasting psychological damage to human beings and is analyzed under international law as torture.

Additionally, the suit alleges that SHU prisoners are denied any meaningful review of their SHU placement, rendering their isolation effectively permanent. SHU assignment is an administrative act, condemning prisoners to a prison within a prison; it is not part of a person's court-ordered sentence. California, alone among all fifty states and most other jurisdictions in the world, imposes extremely prolonged solitary confinement based merely on a prisoner's alleged association with a prison gang. Gang affiliation is (page 9) assessed without considering whether a prisoner has ever undertaken an act on behalf of a gang or whether he is or ever was actually involved in gang activity. Moreover, SHU assignments disproportionately affect Latinos. The percentage of Latino prisoners at the Pelican Bay SHU was 85% in 2011. The only way out of SHU isolation is to debrief, to inform on other prisoners, placing those who do so and their families in significant danger of retaliation and providing those who are unable to debrief effectively no way out of SHU isolation.

(page 9) Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, California Prison Focus, Siegel & Yee, and the Law Offices of Charles Carbone are co-counsel on the case. The case is *Ruiz v. Brown*, and it seeks to amend an earlier pro se lawsuit filed by Pelican Bay SHU prisoners Todd Ashker and Danny Troxell. The case is before Judge Claudia Wilken in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California. The proposed Amended Complaint in the case appears in ccrjustice.org/pelican-bay

<http://www.9news.com/news/article/273097/188/Lawsuit-Supermax-Prison-is-monster-factory>

DENVER - The home of some of the nation's most notorious criminals is accused of heinous mistreatment and even torture of inmates, according to a lawsuit filed Monday. The Supermax Prison in southern Colorado has housed terrorists like Terry Nichols, Timothy McVeigh, and Ted Kaczynski. A new federal lawsuit alleges that medication is being kept from prisoners with severe mental illnesses, causing long-term damage. The lawsuit alleges that some prisoners who weren't given the proper medication mutilated themselves.

Attorney Ed Aro, with the law firm Arnold and Porter, is representing 11 inmates in a lawsuit against the Bureau of Prisons, alleging barbaric treatment. "It's a horror show on all sorts of different levels," Aro said. The inmates range from murderers to bank robbers. Aro says the inmates all have mental illnesses that aren't being properly treated. As a result, the lawsuit alleges, "prisoners wail, scream and bang on the walls of their cells. Some mutilate their bodies with razors and shards of glass." "It is brutal, rather than oriented towards treatment," Aro said.

Aro points to the case of 47-year-old David Shelby. He is serving a 24-year-sentence for threatening the President. Aro says he is bipolar and suffers from other disorders and is not getting enough medical treatment to resolve his symptoms. A few years ago Shelby claimed God told him to eat his finger. According to the lawsuit, Shelby cut off his pinky and ate it. "The things I've learned in the eight months of interviewing people down there are shameful, and they embarrass me as an American," Aro said. The lawsuit says John Jay Powers suffers from PTSD, among other disorders, and up until recently, hasn't been properly medicated. As a result, the lawsuit says Powers mutilated himself, caused permanent disfigurement, and thinks of suicide daily.

Law firm Arnold and Porter is handling the case pro bono, and Aro says they aren't suing for money. "We're asking for a court order directing that the Bureau of Prisons reform the way the mental health care is dealt with at this facility," Aro said. The lawsuit says the broader concern is that "some of these men will be released as walking time bombs who may at any time explode in rage and kill or maim innocent people."

A spokesperson for The Bureau of Prisons told 9NEWS Monday, they won't comment on pending litigation. The Bureau of Prisons has 60 days from when they receive the lawsuit to respond to it. After that happens, a number of legal proceedings will begin. Aro says it could be a few years before a trial begins.

Family members of inmate Jose Vega also filed a lawsuit Monday on his behalf. It claims the prison didn't give Vega the medication he needed and regularly disciplined him when he acted out as a result. Vega eventually hung himself. The lawsuit says his death was preventable, and the fault of the prison. (KUSA-TV © 2012 Multimedia Holdings Corporation)

Final bit of law news: Supreme Court June 2012 www.washingtontimes.com

Gerrymandering Lessened in Maryland: prison town cannot count prisoners as its residents. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld a ruling Monday that allows Maryland to count prison inmates at their last known addresses - rather than

their prison addresses - for redistricting purposes, and upholds the map approved by the General Assembly last year.

Activists had sued the state, saying that the newly drawn congressional districting map violated the U.S. Constitution. The map was developed by a committee appointed by Gov. Martin O'Malley and based on census data and statewide input. It was also drawn to reflect a 2010 Maryland law that counts prisoners at their last known addresses, which differs from the U.S. Census Bureau's policy of counting inmates at their prison addresses, used by most states.

Critics of the federal policy say it has artificially inflated the populations and voting power of the often-rural districts that contain prisons, while reducing the influence of urban areas where many inmates formerly lived. Maryland is one of just four states that counts prisoners at their former home addresses for congressional and legislative redistricting purposes, according to the Prison Policy Initiative. The others are California, Delaware and New York.

And More FFUP:

PENPALS ON BACK BURNER: you probably know that if you write in to ffup for web placement, you will have a long wait and may not even get our photo back. There is no staff for this. I am learning facebook but it is a long time before that will be effective as I must do internet at the library.

Note: Both MIT blogger and Reaching Beyond The Walls (RBTW) have let me know that they are swamped with applications and their wait time is astronomical. (MIT has wait list of 800) RBTW can put your right up on the web **IF you have someone type the application and scan it into a computer and email it to them** > I can send out application to those who can type their info in – send back to me and I can send to them..

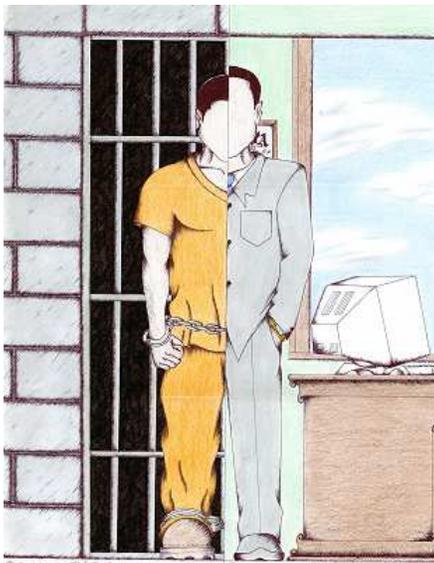
FFUP needs internet users for Internet searches and penpals. Again, a few hours a week would make all the difference. FFUP will pay expenses, perhaps a small hourly wage for good work. Prisoners: Please ask your friends and family.

As always, **DONATIONS NEEDED**- all go to prisoners /FFUP non profit fees / web fees and this newsletter. If you give, you can assign where your funds go. Fans are a big request right now, one that FFUP can not fill much. Prisoners stamps, hygiene, paper, copying and postage, glasses- the biggest items on the budget.

Send donations to FFUP, 29631 Wild Rose Drive, Blue river, WI 53518

Bridge of Voices, August 2012

Newsletter of Forum for Understanding Prisons (FFUP)



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