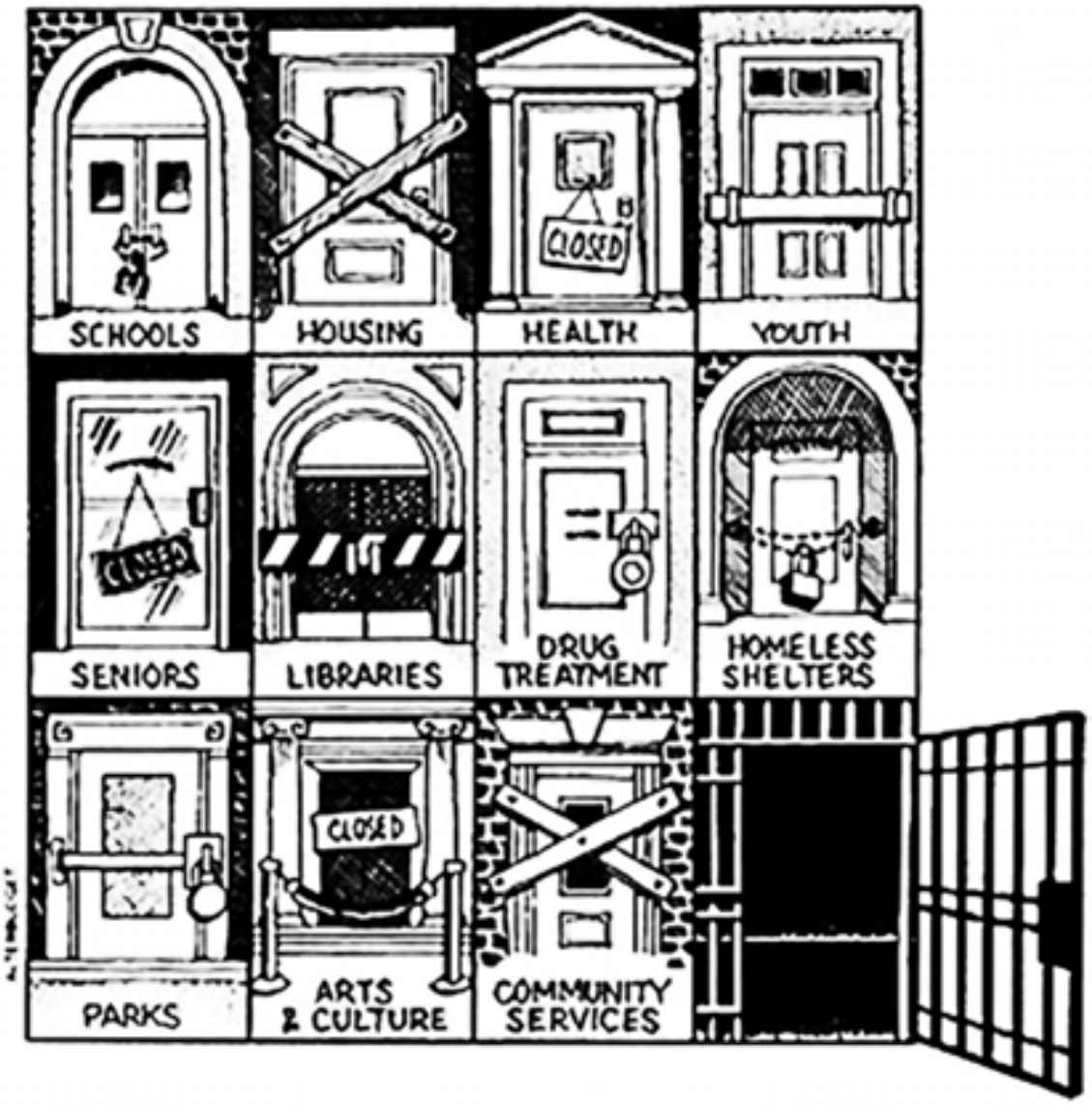
THE Round Table

Fall
2008

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin

Barred From Life:



The Criminal "Justice" System

Why This Issue?

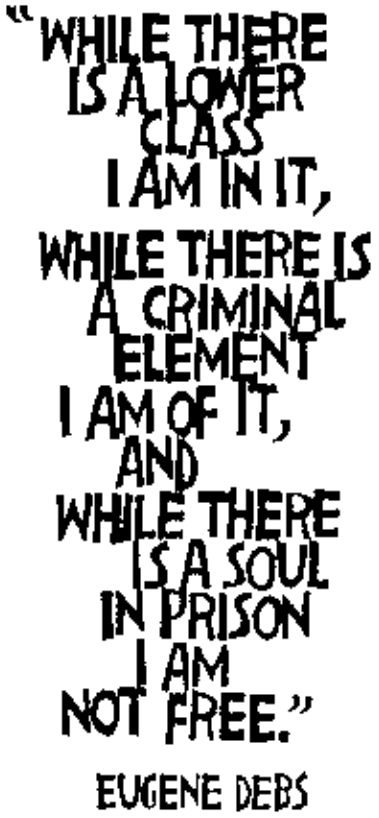
We walk together towards a large gate. On either side of the gate are imposing walls and even larger towers. At the top of each wall are rows of nasty looking razor wire, and masked guards stand at attention with very big guns. We try to see beyond the barrier in front of us to catch a glimpse of life on the other side, but the gate blocks all vision. On the door is a sign that says...

Stop where you are. Do not go any further. Going beyond this point will not be tolerated; beyond here is a world of deprivation, violence and filth. Turn back now!

Our guide though knows another way, and whispers to us, "This is not the only way. Have hope there is another way. Now that we have seen this hell let us go together to a different place, a place where there is still hope."

Please forgive my dramatic literary musing but as I think about our issue, and look at the prison-industrial complex, I can't help but think in such stark visions of hope and despair. We are looking and talking about prisons, and the why is very simple. We wrote this issue, because when we stopped and honestly looked at prisons and ourselves we couldn't take the despair and pain anymore and needed to try and spread hope and a different way. We wrote this issue to say that there is another way, through all the bars, rules, pain and despair there is another way of hope and compassion. We wrote this issue because we saw the statistics of how many people were in the prison-industrial system, and we couldn't ignore it anymore. We wrote this issue because even after putting aside the philosophical reasoning and the unjust statistics we couldn't ignore the glaring reality of the prison system and its affect on our guests, neighbors, and friends. The prison-industrial complex and criminal justice system that it supports are broken, flawed to its core. We wrote this issue to show that there is another way other than "locking them up." We wrote this issue because we still believe that people can improve.

Front cover: alternatives2prison.ik.com
Centerfold by Beth Buchek & Megan Heeney



In this issue, Jenny Truax takes a good hard look at the state of the prison-industrial system. While Mary Ann McGivern opens us up to what it is like trying to adjust after prison time. Jamala Roger shows us a different way in an article on alternatives to prison and restorative justice. In addition, Teka Childress and Tina Busch Nema offer personal stories to remind us that these really are our brothers and sisters behind bars. Colleen Cunningham talks to us about the harsh reality of the final judgment of our criminal system, the death penalty. In our Karen House tradition, we also want to talk about things closer to home, and to that point Megan Heeney shows us resistance in the Catholic Worker movement. While Annjie Schiefelbein and Sarah Sunseri tell us how Karen House and Kabat House are doing.

As I said before, the reason for this issue was simple, but the reality of the situation is not. The reality of the prison industrial system puts on a nice front as a "necessity for society" but the truth of the system is hidden away, not talked about, and discounted. Please read this issue to learn more about the reality, and consider joining us in working to change it. ✚

The St. Louis Catholic Worker Community

Karen House
1840 Hogan
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-621-4052

Ella Dixon "Little" House
1538 A. N. 17th St.
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-974-7432

Carl Kabat House
1450 Monroe
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-621-7099

Teka Childress House
1875 Madison
St. Louis, MO. 63106
314-588-9901

www.KarenHouseCW.org

Search For Meaning in a Federal Prison

by Tina Busch-Nema

It is with trepidation that I write this article. To remember and put words to my experience in Federal prison is to peel back the scab on a wound that has not yet healed and perhaps never will. Never in my life have I witnessed such deep and profound suffering and despair. To be caged like an animal behind two 16-foot fences which could randomly be electrified and topped with four rolls of deadly razor wire is soul crushing. To never be sure of the constantly changing rules, to have the threat of solitary confinement always held over you and then having, for all practical purposes, no recourse to defend yourself is terrifying. The ultimate sorrow is that here, many women will die a slow gut-rotting kind of death while serving life sentences or, if elderly, spending their last ten to twenty years of their lives incarcerated. It is hard to describe such a hell.

While in prison someone sent me a copy of Viktor Frankl's book, Man's Search for Meaning. Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist, survived the Holocaust. His book documents what happens to the human mind when imprisoned under deplorable, inhumane conditions. While inmates at Carswell are not starving or living in fear of being gassed, I was completely astounded by the similarity of the psychological, spiritual and emotional dynamics between what I experienced being imprisoned in federal prison in this country and the concentration camps of World War II. So much of what Frankl observed and experienced in Auschwitz: the despair and horror, as well as the courage, the ability to find meaning in suffering, and the capacity to experience new spiritual heights, I myself witnessed while imprisoned at Carswell.

I self-surrendered to FMC Carswell, a prison medical center, located on Carswell Naval Reserve Base in Fort Worth, TX on April 15, 2006. While waiting for the prison van, Sister Cynthia Brinkman, my friend and spiritual mentor who also had spent time in prison, told me, "Tina it's very important while you are imprisoned to keep your heart soft." Truer words could not have been spoken. Perhaps it is only when your heart is soft

Rita Corbin

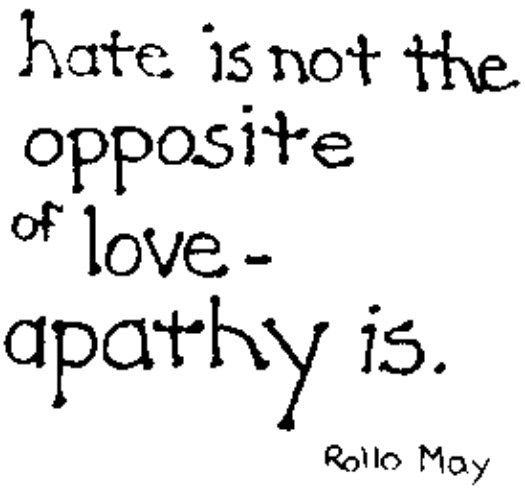
that you can remain human in the midst of such merciless conditions.

As I entered the main gate, a man at the front desk, which was encased in tinted, bullet-proof glass, gruffly asked my name and prison number, my new identity while in prison. I responded as asked. When he told me I was correct, jokingly I wiped my brow and smiled saying "I passed the first test." He replied with deadly seriousness, "Inmate, this is not a joke." and as the two enormous sliding steel bar doors slammed shut behind me, I knew I was entering an unforgiving place. I was led to the low

Tina Busch-Nema was arrested at Fort Benning, Georgia, home to WHINSEC, better known as the School of the Americas. She was charged with a class B misdemeanor of Criminal Trespassing and sentenced to a two month prison sentence. She is married with three kids, two of whom are home-schooled.

cinder block building marked A and D (admitting and departing). I tightly clutched my Bible, the only possession I had besides the clothes on my back. There I would be told to strip, experience the indignity of having every bodily cavity searched, would be given a stretched out bra, a pair of underwear, a thin khaki shirt three sizes too big, khaki pants I had to roll up at the waist, thin white socks and a pair of blue slip-on tennis shoes with holes in the soles.

As I slipped on the shoes, something did not feel right. I took them off and tried them on the other feet. It was then I realized I had been issued two left shoes. Biting my lip to keep from laughing, I knew I should keep my mouth shut. There would come other situations where I would need to open my mouth and challenge the system; this was not one of those times. My own clothes, underwear, and shoes were boxed up and sent home. I wondered what it would be like for my family to receive this package. Would it be like receiving my last remains? I knew it would be a sad package to receive and wished I could ease the pain, send a message in the box that I was OK.



After a hurried medical questionnaire in which the woman quickly marked each question "NO" even when I answered "YES", I was led across the "yard" to a huge four story high rise, my home for the next two months. Here the guard left me saying, "I'm not climbing up all those steps. Walk up the stairs and open the door." I walked up the four flights with a feeling of dread. When I pulled open the heavy metal door, I found the noise deafening. Women of every size, color and shape were chattering, yelling, laughing, screaming. I stood there frozen, wanting to run but having no place to go.

A small group of women noticed me and pointed to the guard station where I was to report. Here, a large Hispanic man, Mr. C, looked up from his desk, angrily slammed the drawer shut with his foot, and said, "Follow me." I followed, clutching my pillow case turned suitcase, containing a thin, fraying blanket, a sheet and some toiletries. I could feel what seemed like a thousand eyes staring at me. The once deafening noise turned eerily silent. Forcing myself to look straight ahead, I focused on the thick rolls of skin on the guard's neck. It was the only way I could keep from melting into a pool of tears. From the balcony women were hanging over making a clicking sound trying to get me to look up at them. I continued to focus straight ahead. I was shown to my top bunk. Here I felt safe for the first time since I was admitted to "Hotel Carswell."

Climbing into my tiny bunk with its miserably lumpy, thin mattress, I was greeted by angels dressed just like me. It would be these women, my "bunkies" Griffin, Gracie and Marisa, who would lend me a sweat shirt, scare up another blanket and sheet so I wouldn't freeze that first night, and would go from "house" to "house" (the name for the eight by six foot door-less cell that four women called home) to find me a pillow. They also quickly coached me on the unwritten rules of survival such as standing in absolute silence by my locker for 4:00 o'clock count and that getting caught visiting someone in their "house" would quickly get you a one way ticket to the SHU (Special Housing Unit aka: the Hole).

There also came a time very early in my incarceration when my world would shrink to life "behind the fence." I vividly remember the day when I looked out my barred window and, to my horror, could not remember what my house and flower gardens in St. Louis looked like, or visualize what driving a car was like. Sheer panic welled up inside me. When our phones were turned on I tried to call a friend, one of the few numbers my "counselor" had approved. Her grown daughter answered telling me her mom was not home, asking me to try back later. I shoved down the terror that was building in my chest and then later in the afternoon again tried only to find she still was not home.

Tearfully and with great humility, I asked her daughter, a complete stranger, if she would talk with me. I explained how desperate I was to talk with someone "outside." She graciously and gently listened for my allotted 15 minutes even though every five minutes a recording would break in our conversation reminding us that this call was from a federal prison. I doubt she ever realized how life-giving that conversation was for me.

When I was finally released and safely in the company of my Quaker friends in Fort Worth, I remember that first night looking up at the stars and sobbing for I realized I had forgotten how beautiful they were. Then it dawned on me how many of my friends would never see the stars again in this lifetime. It is these simple but profound needs that make us human — petting an animal, or hugging someone or gazing up at the stars — that are taken from people when they are incarcerated.

Toward the end of my time at Carswell, a small group of us prayed together each evening before we were herded in and locked down. It was here that Linda, a dear friend, told me, "I still find I have the capacity to love, Tina. If someday I wake up and find I can not love anymore, then they will have won. But this is something they can't take from me. I'm the only one who can choose to give this up." Linda's words will always have a profound effect on me. They remind me of what Frankl wrote when, at one of his darkest points of despair, he discovered his own spiritual awakening. "The truth," he writes, "(is) that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man (women) can aspire…The salvation of man is through love and in love."

The United States incarcerates more people than any country in recorded history. The amount of misery and anguish produced by such madness is beyond imagination. But I found many women at Carswell, like Linda, who refuse to give up that which makes them the magnificent human beings they are: their loving soft hearts. ✚

The U.S. Punishment System: A Snowballing of Fear, Racism and Greed

by Jenny Truax

A few years ago at a Karen House community meeting, Tony Hilkin brought a reading for discussion. He had just finished the book: *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Davis and read some quotes, asking us to consider the question: are prisons, in fact, obsolete?

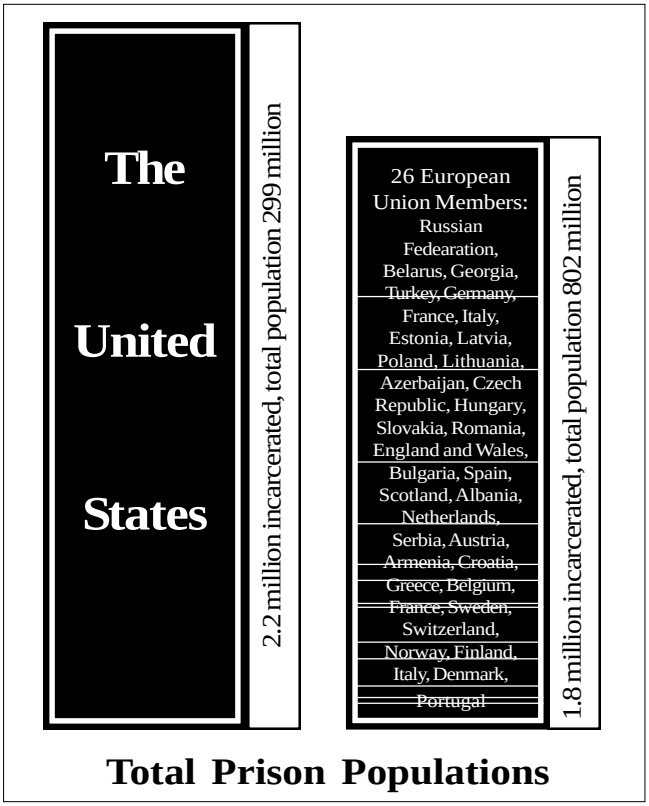
To be honest, I was shocked by the question. I considered prisons, while probably unjust, to be as ingrained an institution as churches, schools, and apple pie. I understood the Catholic Worker Aims and Means, but had never applied them to the U.S. system of punishment. As anarchists and pacifists, we in the Catholic Worker try to reflect on the root causes of violence, where resources are allocated, and how systems (like the prison system) affect the poor. We believe that a decentralized society might better serve people's needs. At Karen House, we see that the majority of the women who stay with us have either been in jail before, or have a family member who has been in jail. Many of their offenses are drug-related, and many of their lives have been uprooted by long incarcerations. At Karen House, we read in the papers about white-collar criminals (who may have stolen millions.) Even our peers receive very light penalties while we live with women who have received years-long sentences for drug and property-related offenses.

Most of us have a general sense that laws in the U.S. overly-penalize both people who happen to be poor, and people who are not white. But we also have a deeply-held belief that the system, though flawed, is basically just, and that wrong-doers deserve the punishment they receive. We like the neat package of "three strikes, you're out" and automatic sentencing. In the words of Angela Davis: "Prison frees us from considering the complex problems of racism and poverty (and increasingly, global capitalism) by creating a place in which to put evil-doers."[1]

Beginnings..

Around the time of the American Revolution, new forms of punishment for criminals were adopted in the United States. Before this time, criminals awaited death or physical punishment while in a prison. Later, the penitentiary itself became the consequence. Inmates would become rehabilitated, or penitent, with manual labor and solitude to reflect upon wrong-doings. This change was seen as a progressive, more humane method of dealing with criminals.

The prison system in the United States remained generally unaltered until the Civil War ended. Following the Civil War, slavery was abolished as a private institution, but the cleverly worded 13th Amendment provided a very large exception, stating: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, ***except as a punishment for crime***. . .shall exist within the United States." In the ensuing months and years, states revised the Slave Codes



Jenny Truax, along with Annjie Schiefelbein, is running the Northside's most dynamic tutoring program out of their kitchen Not only do they teach the kids, they also cook delicious nutricious meals for them.

into new "Black Codes," imprisoning former slaves for acts such as missing work, handling money carelessly, and performing "insulting gestures." A massive influx of former slaves into the penitentiary resulted, a new form of slavery was born, and the racialization of the U.S. punishment system took root. The unpaid labor of the newly created, mostly black, convict lease system helped the South achieve industrialization.

Fast Forward 100 years...

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the prison population was actually decreasing, and prisons across the nation were closing down. In January of 1973, the newly-elected New York Governor, Nelson Rockefeller, gave a stunning State of the State address demanding: 1) that every convicted drug dealer should be given a mandatory sentence of life without parole, 2) that plea-bargaining should be forbidden in these cases, and 3) that juvenile offenders should also receive life sentences. This touched off a nation-wide trend of incarceration, rather than medical rehabilitation, for illegal drug users. Within nine years, the prison population of New York State doubled. State legislatures across the U.S. passed hundreds of bills requiring tough sentences for drug users and dealers, but these bills mostly failed to provide the corresponding funding. In 1976, the new liberal Democrat governor of California, Jerry Brown, signed into law a bill that amended the state's penal code, changing the goals of imprisonment in California: the word "rehabilitation" was replaced with "punishment."

Who is in Prison?

Over the past four decades, nonviolent offenders have continued to pour into prisons, while violent crime (which includes rape, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, and homicide) has consistently dropped.[2] Policy changes that increased the use of prison sentences and length of time served (through mandatory minimum sentencing, "three strikes" laws, and reductions in parole or early release) have catapulted the U.S. into first place for the dubious award of "most citizens imprisoned." Crimes that in other countries would usually lead to community service, fines, or drug treatment (or would not be considered crimes at all) lead to significant prison time here. The extraordinary demand for new prisons, which are expensive, diverts funds from other less expensive and more effective strategies such as drug treatment and probation. For many Americans, the result is a lifetime-long cycle of drug use and imprisonment.

An analysis of the prison system would not be complete without acknowledging the pervasive factor of racism. It's important for whites to spell this out for ourselves, so that we may fight our own racism. We often understand that racial minorities are disproportionately represented in prisons, but rather than name the system itself as racist, we subconsciously believe that African Americans are more violent, more prone to drug addiction, and overall, less civilized. It has been well-documented that people of color are watched, arrested, imprisoned, and sentenced more often and for longer times than whites.[3] For example, Caucasian and African American men speed, steal, deal and use drugs in proportionally equal numbers, but black men are five times as likely to be arrested for a drug offense. One in fifteen black men is in prison while one in 106 white men is in prison.[4]

The system's racism manifests itself further in the mandatory sentencing for the crimes related to dealing different types of cocaine. For dealing fifty grams of crack cocaine, the federal sentence is to eight to ten years, and for the same amount of powder cocaine, it is twenty one to twenty seven months. The two types of cocaine are pharmacologically identical substances. Most people who use cocaine powder are white, middle-class or wealthy, while most that use crack cocaine are Black or Latino.[5]

". . . nonviolent offenders have continued to pour into prisons."

The Sentencing Project provides an interesting international comparison: South Africa under Apartheid was internationally condemned as racist, and in 1993 imprisoned its black male population at the rate of 851 per 100,000. In 2006, the U.S. imprisoned the same population at the rate of 4,789 per 100,000. Phrases describing the U.S. as the "land of opportunity," with "equality for all" seem disingenuous in the face of this structural racism: we imprison black males 5.8 times more than South Africa did at the height of Apartheid.

Additional information about the prison population makes obvious some of the causes of incarceration. The great majority of the U.S. inmate population has a history of substance abuse. Meanwhile, drug treatment slots in our prisons are scarce at best. In 1998, drug treatment was available to one in ten of the inmates who qualified for it.[6] At Karen House, we are finding it more difficult each year to find inpatient spaces for uninsured women seeking treatment for drug and alcohol abuse.

About one in six of the country's inmates has a serious mental illness. The massive de-institutionalization of mentally ill persons in the 1970s contributed significantly to this trend. Folks with severe mental illness without resources now find themselves within the criminal justice, rather than mental health care system. The de-funding of Medicaid and budget-cutting at state-supported hospitals like the St. Louis Metropolitan Psychiatric Center ensures that untreated mental illness will continue to be a significant contributor to our soaring prison population. (For more info on this, please see Teka Childress' article in the Fall 2007 issue of the *Round Table*, "From Asylums to Homelessness" karenhousecw.org/RTMentalIllness.htm) At Karen House, we often find it maddening to try to get help for uninsured women with untreated mental illness, and many of them end up in jail.

Follow the Money...

In his powerful 1998 article for the *Atlantic*, Eric Schlosser describes what he calls the Prison Industrial Complex: "...a set of bureaucratic, political, and economic interests that encourage increased spending on imprisonment, regardless of the actual need. ... [It] is not a conspiracy, guiding the nation's criminal-justice policy behind closed doors. It is a confluence of special interests that has given prison construction in the United States a seemingly unstoppable momentum. It is composed of: 1) politicians, both liberal and conservative, who have used the fear of crime to gain votes, 2) impoverished rural areas where prisons have become a cornerstone of economic development, 3) private companies that regard the roughly $35 billion spent

each year on corrections not as a burden on American taxpayers but as a lucrative market, and 4) government officials whose fiefdoms have expanded along with the inmate population."[7]

In California, this "confluence of special interests" resulted in the construction of over twenty new prisons in two decades (doubling the number of prisons built in the entire century previous.) In New York, it resulted in a concentration of twelve prisons within one congressional district, with prisons as the largest employer. These special interests (most often well-off, white, constituents and corporations) benefit lavishly while others (most often people of color and the poor) are incarcerated with punishments not appropriate to the crimes or offenses committed.

The prison industrial complex is a multifaceted set of relationships, between and within the State and big business. The multibillion-dollar industry built around imprisonment now has its own trade shows, conventions, web sites, and mail-order catalogs. A wide variety of companies now benefit from our exorbitant prison population: architecture firms, banks that handle prison bond issues and invest in private prisons, plumbing supply, food service, and health care companies. The personalist ideal, naming the dignity of each person as the "basis, focus and goal of all metaphysics and morals" (Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker), drowns in the bureaucracy, power and money involved in this corrupt and capitalist-driven system.

A massive and almost free workforce resides in the prisons nationwide, and big business has capitalized. The modern chain gang of prison labor built a distribution center for Wal-Mart in 2005, sewed lingerie for Victoria's Secret in the 1990s, and cut airplane components for Boeing during 1997.[8] A few of the dozens of corporations utilizing prison labor include IBM, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T, Dell, Compaq, Honeywell, Hewlett-Packard, Lucent Technologies, Intel, Nordstrom's, Revlon, Macy's, and Target Stores.[9] Inmates are typically paid around fifty cents an hour. If the true purpose of the prison is to rehabilitate an offender – so that he or she will not come back to jail – we would all benefit if inmates received adequate literacy or GED classes, counseling, alcohol and drug treatment, or job training.

For-profit corporations now run over 100 prisons in the U.S. The thinking is that a business model trims the fat of state bureaucracy. Private prisons charge a fee per day to the government for housing inmates, and even rent cells in one state, for prisoners from another. The problems with privatization are similar whether one is considering prisons, health care, or debt reduction for developing countries. The bottom line trumps all, and these multi-billion dollar corporations have created all kinds of ways to cut costs while maximizing profit. For example, individual private prisons are well-known to extend prison sentences for arbitrarily designated "bad behavior," which in turn extends their profit margin.

Conclusions...

In 1970, U.S. prisons held fewer than 200,000 people; now that number is 2.3 million, or about 1 in 100 American adults. The inmate population has grown so large that it's hard to comprehend: imagine the combined populations of St. Louis, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Des Moines, and Miami behind bars. We imprison more people than any other country, comprising about 5% of the world's total population, and holding 25% of the entire world's prison population.

This is not the reality that most people want. A 2006 national opinion poll showed that the majority of U.S. voting public (by an almost an 8 to 1 margin,) prefer rehabilitative services for prisoners as opposed to our current punishment-only system. A large majority want to offer help to prisoners with job training, drug treatment, mental health services, family support, mentoring, and housing.[10]

By dealing with our social problems in more appropriate ways, we could, as a country, improve the way we deal with crime, poverty and addictions. Look at the folks in the prison population: most are nonviolent offenders, a large percentage of them are addicted to drugs, a significant percentage has untreated mental illness, and many are illiterate. By providing resources for a new revitalized public education, mental health care, and drug treatment, we could shrink the prison population by a huge percentage. Right now, we can also work to end prison-building and expansion. Many groups are also working on building alternatives, in order to reduce reliance on prisons and policing. Please see Jamala Rogers' article in this issue for more on resisting our current system and building alternatives, and our "Further Reading" section for information, resources, groups and actions.

Many people consider prison to be an inevitable and permanent structure within society. Years ago, slavery and segregation were also thought to be permanent societal fixtures. We have the power and ability re-create the prison industrial system into a system based on reconciliation, transformation, and preparation, rather than on retribution and profit-making. All that's missing is the will to make it happen.

1. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Davis
2. Bureau of Justice Statistics: ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/viort.htm
3. Great fact sheet on racial disparities in the justice system: drugpolicy.org/docUploads fact_sheet_crime_punishment.pdf
4. Pew Center for the States: *One in 100-Behind Bars in America 2008*
5. The Sentencing Project: sentencingproject.org
6. "The Prison Industrial Complex" by Eric Schlosser for *The Atlantic*, December, 1998
7. "The Prison Industrial Complex" by Eric Schlosser for *The Atlantic*, December, 1998
8. *Mother Jones*, July/August 2008, motherjones.com/news/feature/2008/07/slammed-lingerie-and-bullwhip.html
9. Center for Research on Globalization, globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=8289
10. National Council on Crime and Delinquency: Attitudes of US Voters toward Prisoner Rehabilitation and Reentry Policies

Throwing Away the Prison Keys and Opening Doors to Alternatives

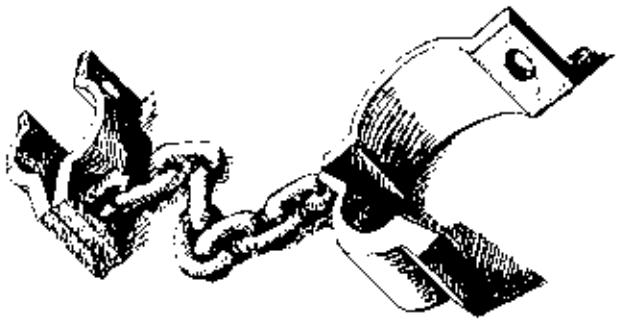
by Jamala Rogers

It is impossible to have a discussion on alternatives to the prison industrial complex without underscoring the number of human beings who are directly impacted. Earlier this year, the Pew Center announced that the US prison population has exceeded two million. Their comprehensive report, entitled *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*, should have easily led to a national time-out to discuss new and effective policies and laws. Many of us who toil in this particular field considered it a national emergency—much like the current economic meltdown that has dominated the news and that received the immediate attention of the Congress. However, the news came and went, much like the report of the first one million mark and the report that 1 in 4 African American males is in prison, jail, on probation or parole on any given day.

Repetition of the findings in the Pew report is worth doing whenever one gets air time or ink time. It is the way that most of us learn and certainly the rule of thumb that marketers use when promoting a product. The prison numbers may be too incredulous and are often too overwhelming for the average citizen. The analysis of the numbers and necessary remedies may be too daunting to wrap our heads and hearts around. It is the responsibility of those with insight and experience to frame (or in many cases re-frame) the issues of crime and punishment. Laura Murphy, of the American Civil Liberties Union, declared the criminal justice system the "new frontier" for civil rights. I believe she is absolutely correct.

According to the Pew Center, the 50 states collectively spent more than $49 billion last year on corrections, quadrupling over the last twenty years in spite of declining crime rates. Disproportionately impacted have been African-Americans males whose incarceration numbers stand out as one-in-nine for the ages between 20 and 34 years.[1] The US prison population easily exceeds other industrialized nations including China, the largest country in the world.

To see what our challenges are, let's use California as an actual worst case scenario. California's bulging prison population is almost double its capacity, a situation that threatens to provoke a federal takeover. Inching towards 200,000 inmates in 33 facilities, the cost of their correctional system eats up a sizeable chunk of the state budget. The state's 70% recidivism rate is the highest in the nation. In 1996, The Justice Policy Institute reported the state had built 21 prisons and only one state university between 1984 and 1994. The State Legislature's solution? Last year, they passed a $6 billion package to add 53,000 new beds. Just recently in the midst of the national economic crises, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger asked for a $7 billion loan for the state's basic operational costs. These few facts reveal many structural and systemic problems. And troubling as they are, there are few serious discussions that are



exploring comprehensive and innovative changes that can actually address the root problems. Far too many of us are looking at this picture as normal, or just as bad, as an irreversible phenomenon.

Have we become a country that cannot figure out real problems anymore? If we see that doing the same thing does not impact a problem, are we so dense as to think doing more of the same is the answer? Why have we allowed those whose primary interest is making money to dominate the public discourse on the issue of crime and the prison industrial complex?

The optimist in me says we can handle this! However, we have to convince our family members, our co-workers, our church members and so on that there is no silver bullet, no miracles—just the hard work that focuses on positive, humane

Jamala Rogers is a long time human rights activist and a freelance writer on issues of peace and justice.

outcomes. It is important to get these folks on board because they represent the critical mass needed to push legislators and policymakers on key issues. The progressive movement of community organizers, crime victims and their families, prisoners and their families, lawmakers, attorneys, clergy, labor, law enforcement, and civic leaders must work for the kind of cohesion that produces a unified strategy and action. We must be proactive in our efforts, and definitely, more aggressive. Our kids are on the losing end and when we talk about alternatives to the prison system; starting the conversation with the adult already in jail is a counter-productive strategy.

When I served as director of the Office of Youth Development for the City of St. Louis, our office received a Safefutures federal grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ). Along with the money came access to technical assistance and reports documenting promising approaches" and "best practices". These had been studied/observed/researched and were available to inform the programs and strategies advanced by child advocates, service providers, policy wonks and legislators. Universities and other policy institutes have also produced evaluations of programs that are useful in our re-thinking and rebuilding of a truly just and fair system.

What I found most interesting is that there was still resistance to implementing these programs and policies, despite their documented outcomes. The disbelief that such programs could work with a certain population is a result of particular views on race and class. There was—and is—a prevailing view that these programs and actions could not work on African-American children or with people of color or with poor folks. This attitude will always keep one coming back to a lock 'em-up-and-throw-away-the-key philosophy that emphasizes control and containment rather than justice and rehabilitation.

When the Safefutures grant period ended and there was about a half million dollars remaining, Mayor Frances Slay was asked by OJJ for a commitment to continue the promising approaches that had been started. The mayor couldn't or wouldn't make the commitment and so the feds took the money back. It was a very frustrating time for the partnering agencies who had worked on the Safefutures program to see five years of groundbreaking work stalled by lack of action or belief in the greater good of children. It was a difficult lesson that you cannot assume elected officials will do the best thing.

There now is an extensive body of research on crime and human behavior. The predictors are so strong that it is said New York State uses 4th grade test scores to project the number of future prison beds. While I can find no hard evidence of this claim, it is not a far-fetched idea.

What are the characteristics of a future inmate? Studies have verified that nearly 70% of inmates in state correctional facilities did not graduate from high school. Nearly 80% of inmates come from single-mother headed households. Forty percent of adults who suffer serious mental health issues will come in contact with the criminal justice system. Many youths going into the juvenile system have been diagnosed with emotional and psychological problems. Yes, we can predict a certain trajectory when we assess conditions and risk factors but we can also look at ways to intervene that will change the outcome.

We should all find it unconscionable that we allow the poor education that contributes to the numbers of youth in prison. Slogans such as "Education not incarceration!" and "Books not bars!" reflect the growing understanding that failed school systems are pipelines to the prison systems. The Children's Defense Fund's *Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Report* documents how the national crisis of race and poverty puts black and brown children at the doors of the US prison system. Their Campaign is a call to action to address the risk factors of child abuse and neglect, failing schools, violence, poor health care and other unsupported community institutions to stop, or at least slow down, the tens of thousands of youth being pushed into the prison pipeline as the only viable option. [2]

There's probably little disagreement with experts like Drs. T. Berry Braselton and Stanley I. Greenspan who detail what children must have to grown, learn and flourish in their book *The Irreducible Needs of Children*. They include common sense needs like ongoing, nurturing relationships; stable, supportive communities; protection, safety and regulation; and so on.[3] It is understandable that society may want to give up on adults who pose a safety risk or financial drain on society; it is disturbing that we have similar attitudes about children who through no fault of their own are placed into a set of circumstances, but who also have the greater capacity for change.

If we start to address these issues on the front end, we can have a significant impact on the back end. There are many intervention points in the continuum of child development that can minimize risk factors and propel children into healthy and productive adulthood. This is as much a crime fighter as putting additional cops on the street.

A redistribution of funds from war and corporate welfare could go a long way in funding human needs, especially for our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. A significant percentage of local, state and federal budgets must address the needs of children or else we face higher costs of law enforcement, courts and the housing of inmates that our society keeps producing. It is at this level that we must focus our resources and efforts when we talk about building alternatives to the current institutions and systems that create false notions of problem-solving and personal safety.

We must dispel the myth that being tough on crime means that society has to be mean-spirited and vengeful. This will take dedicated and laborious dismantling of the philosophical pillars of the criminal justice system. Being tough on crime should not include the dehumanization of people. Aside from the fact that even suspects and prisoners have civil rights, we all have inalienable human rights.

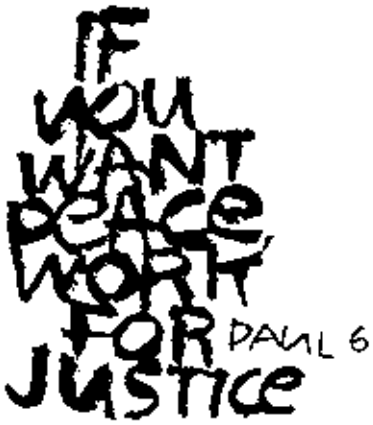
This leads me to restorative justice. Restorative justice is first and foremost a state of mind, not just a programmatic strategy. You do not have to have a program or structure to practice restorative justice. It calls for the belief that any human being is worthy of humane treatment despite their actions. If we truly believe this, it organically permeates our interactions with that person as well as the methods and institutions that we create for them. The minute we treat another human being in a dehumanizing manner, individually or institutionally, we have begun to compromise our own humanity. This I believe with all my heart and have seen the evidence of such all around.

There was a surge of restorative justice programs in the

1990s as a response by those who understood that doing more of the same was not a solution. Restorative programs create opportunities for victims, offenders and other community members to meet to discuss the crime and its impact. It allows the parties to have a stake in the resolution with the expectation that the offender will repair the harm done whether such harm is to the person or their property. Studies show the concrete benefits of restorative justice as greater victim satisfaction, reduced recidivism and crime rates, less money spent on prisons and safer communities.[4]

The concept of restorative justice goes back centuries and was practiced by indigenous people across the globe before westernized court systems began to replace them. At the core of these communal and cultural tribunals is the restoration of human dignity and justice.

Kenyan-born Doreen Jemutai Ruto writes about the long history of African communities maintaining models for dealing with conflict and ensuring peaceful co-existence between families, neighbors and tribes because a person is a member of all those groups. The goal was to safeguard the interests of all parties, and because of that the process was deeply respected and highly successful. From that standpoint, the community's norms and values were important to uphold — not just the individual's need to seek justice for their personal plight, but the community's.[5]



I have seen restorative justice practiced in the black community. In my generation, it was not unusual for parents to take you to Mr. Adams' store when you stole a piece of candy or to make you apologize to a neighbor for recklessly stepping on their flower garden while playing. I remember Rev. Bernice King telling the childhood story of how her famous father, Dr. Martin Luther King, took her back to the store to return an unpurchased item and apologize to the owner. She never stole again.

I have worked with offenders who were discouraged from reaching out to their victims. They were never given the chance to express their remorse. Likewise, I have worked with victims who had questions for their perpetrator that were never answered. Many are left wondering "Did I do something to provoke this terrible crime?" or "Why me?" These are the kinds of issues that get worked out in a safe, supervised, mediated session between an offender and a victim. When it happens, it can create powerful experiences and cement genuine relationships between two people where otherwise there would never, ever be a basis for such. An example that comes to mind is when a family member befriends the very person who murdered their loved one.

We have seen these traditional models become the basis of larger arenas for restorative justice such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This process was used in South African at the end of one of the most horrific systems of white supremacy and oppression in the world. Similar commissions have been created or attempted for conflicts in Liberia and between Palestine and Israel. The western court system is wholly adversarial and demands one victor of the spoils. This must occur whether it is a criminal or civil case. One side must be beaten down, dehumanized, dragged through the mud in order for the other side to emerge as the winner and feel good. It can be a demoralizing and humiliating experience all around.

As limited as they are, restorative justice programs that operate as an extension of the court and those that are community based have shown outcomes more favorable than our judicial system. Changing a dinosaur system may take longer than changing a person's mind. There are many examples of promising approaches and programs but foremost, attitudes about who is a criminal and why must change.

In closing, there are three suggestions that I think will greatly shift the debate around criminality and justice if we are consistent and bold:

1. Challenge the media on racist stereotypes that shape and perpetuate public attitudes around crime. Youth, people of color and poor people are not inherently criminal. Demand stories and images that give a balanced view of these groups who are often targeted for "if it bleeds, it leads" coverage.

2. Pick an issue on the battleground of criminal justice that you feel passionate about then start working on it. Take on a manageable piece—you may have to even break that piece into another piece. It could be juvenile justice, mental health, prosecutorial misconduct, adequate legal representation, prison conditions, etc. If you try to take on the whole system, you'll drown in its toxic waters.

3. Use a human rights framework as a way to look at solutions to crime and alternatives to incarceration. Most penal institutions have a dehumanizing affect on inmates so that even those who went in for minor, non-violent crimes come out in worse moral, emotional and physical shape than when they went in. Any preventive measures, along with appropriate resources, especially with young people, will bring us positive long-term dividends as a society.

Let the drum majors for social justice and peace step up and step out on humanizing the criminal justice system. This year is the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the spirit of that enduring document, let us remain vigilant and committed to protecting and upholding the human rights of all.

1 *One in 100: Behind Bars in American 2008*, the Pew Center
2 *Cradle to Prison Pipeline® Repor,t* Children's Defense Fund
3 *The Irreducible Needs of Children*, Drs T. Berry Braselton and Stanley I. Greenspan
4 Missouri Sentencing Advisory Commission, http://www.mosac.mo.gov
5 *The Concept of Restorative Justice in African Traditional Heritage* by Doreen Jemutai Ruto

A Path of Peril

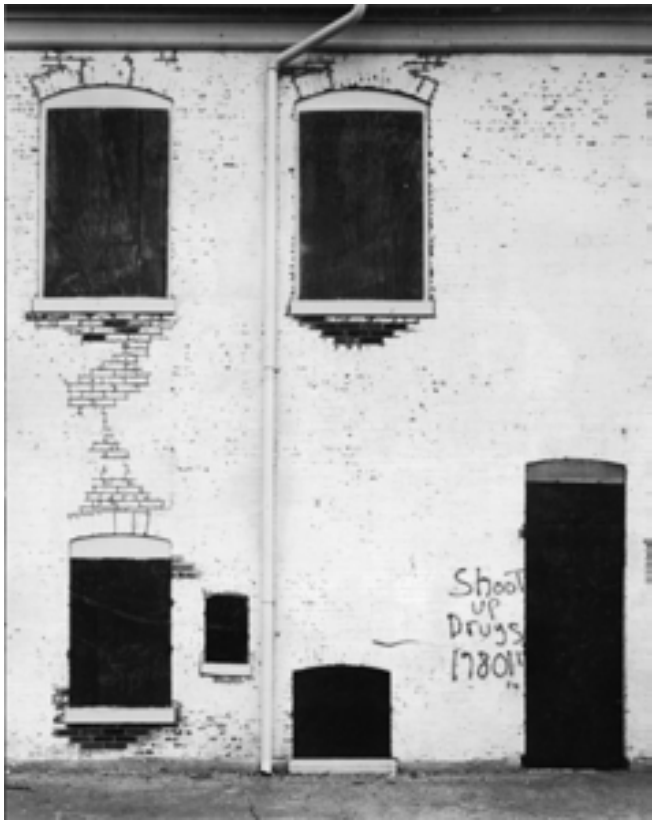
by Teka Childress

I recently got together with TJ, a young man who I've known since he was a boy. He used to help pick up furniture donations for Karen House. All I had to do was call and he would drop what he was doing and go along with me. When he was in his late teens and early twenties he spent time in prison and at the St. Louis County Justice Center in Clayton. Those who loved him had watched helplessly, or so it had seemed, while he followed a well-worn path that many young men like him have taken. Hanging out with his friends, he started selling drugs. When he was in his late teens the police chased him down, to his mother's horror, with their guns aimed and raised. Somewhere along the line TJ had started carrying a gun himself. I remember well his mother talking to me when she first saw the gun. She was terrified. She had seen this coming for years, and she and her family had been doing everything they could to stop it.

His mother, a friend of ours who had stayed at Karen House, struggled with a crack addiction for about ten years and had finally gotten free of it. Unfortunately the years she was using crack were crucial ones for her son. Yet, he had other family who had cared for him as well, in fact an amazing array of strong women who had all tried to stop him from pursuing the path he took.

During those years, I told a friend of mine how worried I was about him and how helpless I felt. TJ was such a lovely young man and he was heading for nothing but trouble. My friend suggested I help TJ picture what he might want his life to look like so that he could understand the significance of the choices he was making. I tried this with TJ and much to my dismay I realized that he could not see a life very different from the one he was living in Wellston. He couldn't see the future or imagine himself working. He couldn't picture having a family or home of his own one day. This difficulty of seeing the future is probably a reality for all youth, but at the time, I realized just how much our imagination is made up of images from things we already know. He hadn't seen a lot of men or women in his family getting up daily to go to work or finding careers that they had found satisfying and that had provided them with a good living for their families. He had seen different things: family members who were unemployed or working at part-time or underpaid jobs. He had experienced life in shelters, going to food pantries, and living with a perpetual lack of money.

The end of this story is both happy and sad. The happy part is that after about four years of this cycle of illegal and heartbreaking activities, arrests and time in prison, TJ got sick of it. He realized one day while he was in the County jail that he had to get out on bond, no matter what it took, and hire a lawyer to help him; he wanted a different life. He managed to do this with a lot of help, and he was right. It made all the difference



Teka Childress watched in awe as Megan Heeney tried to teach her the art of layout. Two months ago Teka taught Megan the art of the stick shift.

Expressions beyo

Listen to the Wind

When you're quietly listening
Just listening to the wind
Tell me what you hear, do you hear
The trails of our tears
Or how we've conquered all we fear?
Can you tell me, where do we go from here?
Wherever the road may go
The world will always know
What we have can only grow stronger.
No matter the paths we take
'Til time is no longer
We'll be together forever.
What we see may make us sad
But what we know is what we have
Never can they say what we have
Can ever pass away.
With you in my life, no matter the day,
No matter the hour, no matter the struggle,
Together we will always have the power
To overcome it all.
No one knows where we are going,
No one knows where we've been.
There's no one to tell us the reasons why.
But always together, our love will live forever,
And never, ever die...

Dennis Skillicorn
Missouri Death Row
Mineral Point, MO
permission given by his wife

"Man with Universal Bird"
B. Pat (GA)
Mixed-media including toothpaste, Kool-Aid powder, colored pencil, marker, and pen on recycled brown paper bag.
Used by permission of Art Behind Bars
www.artbehindbars.org

ond Bars

Why

did the young mother
clad in a soft blue cotton skirt
with starched white summer blouse
sitting at the dark oak defense
table near the juror's box
reject the generous
plea bargain offer,
because white nodding blossoms
watching from branches outside
the courthouse window
winked at her,
because proclaiming guilt
for a horrendous crime that
she did not commit was
incomprehensible
because she still believed
blind Lady Justice was not
also deaf and dumb,
because white men in dark suits
exuded confidence that they
jurors would judge liars
for what they were,
because her innocent children
had lost their Daddy and
she couldn't bear leaving
them herself
as orphans,
because those
winking white blossoms
lied?

Patty Prewitt
April 11, 2008
Patty is currently imprisoned in Vandaila, MO serving a life sentence with no chance of parole for 50 years.

Why the Questions Sonnet

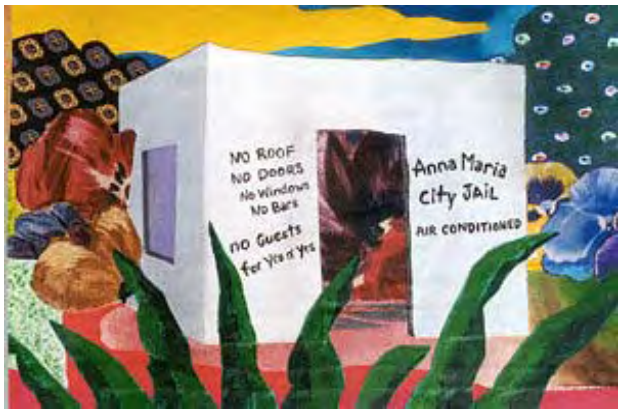
Why did I fear the jingling of the keys?
Or feel demeaned when they yelled "4 'clock count"?
Why did the look of some guards make me freeze?
Or some days the stairs were too hard to mount?

Why did the fences crush my spirit so?
Or when I read a letter I might cry?
Why did my prison sentence go so slow?
And why was it so hard to say goodbye?

Why did strip searches humiliate me?
And some days small things make my anger seethe?
And why was it painful not to walk free?
And why was it so hard at times to breathe?

Though I may search for answers all my life
These questions still slice through me like a knife

Tina Busch-Nema
March 14, 2008
Tina spent a 2 month sentence at FMC Carswell, a federal medical and mental health center for female offenders in Fort Worth, Texas after protesting at WHINSEC(SOA).



"Air Conditioned Jail"
Lynne Vantriglia
Mixed-media sewn and painted Clothwork
Used by permission of Art Behind Bars
www.artbehindbars.org

that he got out on bond and hired a lawyer.

When he got out on bond he contacted Youth Build, a great program that helps young men and women just like him, by teaching them construction skills while they work on their GED part of the day. Youth Build accepted him into their program, and when it was time for him to go before the judge they went with him. Instead of getting the possible sentence of ten or fifteen years in the penitentiary, TJ got a suspended imposition of sentence with several months of time in jail doing drug treatment. While he was in there he received letters from Youth Build and when he came out he joined them and graduated from their program.

He now has two young children that he is raising with his girlfriend. He is working, but still struggles to make ends meet. I am impressed that he has taken this more difficult path, but I wish it were easier for him. The saddest part of this story is that now his little brother is hanging out on the street, spending nights away from home and following a path too similar to the one that TJ left behind.

It was interesting speaking with TJ about this. He made no excuses for the choices he made. When I gave him outs, such as, "Did everyone from your school do the same things?" he replied that there had been some who had not.

It is not that everyone who has gone to prison has been innocent of wrong-doing, it is simply that so many who have gone have done little different than most of us would have done in similar circumstances. Among other things, it is essential to work for a just society, one where it is easier to be good, as Peter Maurin, Catholic Worker co-founder, insisted. It should not have to take a tremendous amount of luck and great virtue to avoid prison. TJ had some luck in meeting the people from Youth Build, and he has recently exhibited great virtue by leaving behind his street life to embrace the difficulties of working for lower wages. This should not have to be a hard choice for him and please God, let it not be too hard of one for his younger brother.

by Colleen Cunningham

When an August execution date was set for Dennis Skillicorn, Missourians from all walks of life were taken aback. While any execution date is not to be taken lightly, Dennis' had a particularly profound impact on many Missourians for two reasons.

First, this would be the first execution in nearly three years. Three years we've gone without the executioner's shadow looming over the lives of the condemned. Three years without creating new victims in the mothers, brothers, wives, and children the executed leave behind. Three years without wondering if we didn't possibly make a mistake somewhere along the way and put to death an innocent man. Three years without spending our tax dollars on life-stopping chemicals and executioners.

Dennis' execution date signaled the end of our three-year reprieve.

The August date was also shocking because not only were executions resuming, but they were resuming with *Dennis*. In 1994 Dennis and two friends were driving across Missouri to buy drugs. Dennis, known as a follower, had been caught up in drugs and bad crowds for most of his life. This instance was no exception. When their car broke down a man named Richard Drummond came by and offered them a ride. While driving with Mr. Drummond, Dennis and his two friends kidnapped Drummond to steal his car. When it was decided that they no longer needed Drummond, Allen Nicklasson, one of the other men in the car, had a plan. Nicklasson said that he was going to take Richard Drummond to the woods and tie him up, leaving the three men a head start before Drummond could contact authorities. According to both Allen Nicklasson and Dennis, Allen had every intention of leaving Drummond in the woods. But when Allen got into the woods with Richard Drummond he panicked, and shot and killed Mr. Drummond. At the time, Dennis was a quarter of a mile away unaware of any plans to kill Mr. Drummond.

Undoubtedly, Dennis Skillicorn committed a crime that

Colleen Cunninghamis the State Coordinator for Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty. She hopes you'll contact her to get involved with MADP's work!

evening, but that crime was not first-degree murder. That Dennis Skillicorn could be sentenced to death for being an unknowing accomplice a quarter of a mile away from the crime is evidence that there is no rhyme or reason to who receives a death sentence in Missouri.

Remorseful for his involvement in the crimes leading up to Mr. Drummond's murder, Dennis has devoted his life to making amends. For those who know of him, Dennis' name has become synonymous with reform and redemption.

For the past twelve years, as an inmate at Potosi Correctional Center Mr. Skillicorn has demonstrated his respect for life by working for the prison's hospice program. Through his book *Today's Choices Affect Tomorrow's Dreams*, he has reached out to young offenders, teaching them the skills needed to avoid a life of crime. His book is distributed free to juvenile corrections centers around the country and has received rave reviews. He has been commissioned to compile a second book, which he is currently working on. He is the editor of *Compassion Magazine*, a publication, written by death row inmates, that focuses on restorative justice and has raised $34,000 in scholarships for murder victims' family members. He has served as a minister, founded a family-strengthening program, and led an anti-smoking campaign aimed at local school children.

Dennis has actively worked to build bridges between the Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Moorish American, and Native American religious groups at the prison. He is a founder of the Charity Carnival - in its second year - that raises money inside the prison for charitable organizations. He is a positive spokesman and positive role model for other prisoners, as well as proof to everyone that reform and redemption are possible.

The execution date of Dennis Skillicorn signaled to Missourians not only was our period of peace from executions about to end, but that it was ending with the execution of an amazing man. Fortunately, we did not have to face this ugly reality. Dennis' execution was stayed so legal challenges could be pursued. But the likelihood that Dennis will be re-sentenced looms over us as a very real possibility.

Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty (MADP) worked actively with Dennis' attorneys to do everything possible to stop his impending execution. One tactic employed was writing to Governor Blunt to ask that he grant Dennis executive clemency. If there were ever a compelling case for clemency, Dennis has it. And although no execution date is currently set, we are preparing for anything. We ask that Missourians who oppose the execution of Dennis join us in asking Gov. Blunt to commute Dennis' sentence.

Of course, many of us who have written for clemency for Dennis or are active with Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty oppose the death penalty in all instances. Our members hold a plethora of reasons for abhorring the ultimate punishment.

Some oppose the death penalty because it is out of step with the rest of the world. China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United States are the countries that had the highest number of confirmed executions in 2007. Together, these five nations accounted for 88% of the world's known executions. Every western democracy has outlawed the death penalty, except the United States.

While the death penalty is still legal in the U.S. it is certainly not universally accepted. For many, the death penalty violates deeply held believes about personal liberty, rights of the State, the sanctity of life, or the importance of salvation and redemption. Concerns about the application, fairness, and feasibility of the death penalty cause another throng of Americans to oppose capital punishment on practical grounds.

Nearly everyone is concerned with the possibility of executing an innocent person. We've recently seen a wave of exonerations – people who were sentenced to death and later released once evidence of their innocence came to light. On September 18th Michael Blair was released from Texas' death row with all charges against him dropped. Mr. Blair became the 130th death row exoneree in the U.S. since 1973. At home in Missouri, three men have been sentenced to death for crimes they did not commit. The rash of exonerations has made it evident that we do not have a death penalty system that accurately condemns the guilty and acquits the innocent. When lives are at stake and mistakes are inevitable, death seems, at best, inappropriate.

It is possible that if the death penalty were a deterrent to crime some of its pitfalls could be forgiven. The utilitarian among us might forgive the occasional wrongful conviction in exchange for greater safety for all citizens. But this is not the exchange we're making. In exchange for a tremendously error-prone death penalty system, we make no gain in public safety. Hundreds of studies have been conducted on the deterrent effects of the death penalty, and the results don't bode well for the ultimate punishment. Death penalty proponents can produce studies showing the deterrent effect of the death penalty, but for every one of these studies exist multiple studies showing that the death penalty does not deter crime, and may lead to higher crime. In border-states, the state with the death penalty nearly always has a crime rate higher than its non-executing neighbor. The southern region of the United States, which accounts for the majority of executions, is also home to the most violent crime in the U.S. Black and white conclusions cannot be easily made about criminal psychology and the effects of various punishments. But at the very least, the data leaves us unable to claim that the death penalty is justified because of its deterrent effects.

Given that the death penalty is not an effective crime-prevention tool, many view its implementation as a tremendous waste of taxpayer money. While it may seem counterintuitive, it is true that ever major cost analysis of the death penalty has discovered it is far more expensive to execute someone than it is to imprison him for the rest of his natural life. Knowing that we sink a great deal of resources into the trying of capital cases, for no societal benefit by way of crime prevention, the death penalty system is an inexcusable waste of tax dollars. A saner approach would be to invest the millions of dollars we spend on death penalty prosecution in programs that are effective in reducing crime. It seems law enforcement officers might applaud this effort. In a 1995 poll of police chiefs, the death penalty was ranked last in helpful tools for reducing violent crime, behind reforms such as reducing drug abuse, improving the economy, having police officers on the streets, and reducing guns.

In addition to not preventing crime and being tremendously expensive, the death penalty often targets the least among us. In Missouri, over 80% of the men sentenced to death have been too poor to afford their own attorneys. The poor are being selected as easy targets for death penalty prosecution because they don't have the resources needed to adequately defend themselves. Racial bias is also present in Missouri's death penalty and across the nation.

And the death penalty harms more than the condemned, their families, and others who are marginalized in our society. Often times, murder victims' family members are harmed by the death penalty. Many victims argue that the death penalty system is harmful to victims. It can be harmful because it promises "closure" – even though many victims have said that after their loved one's murderer was executed, they didn't get the promised closure. Some victims argue the death penalty system is harmful to victims because it re-traumatizes them as they are forced to endure the repeated appeals of their loved one's murderer. When a life sentence is given, victims' families know the offender won't hurt anyone else and with no further appeals the victims' families won't be forced to encounter the offender in Court or in the media. Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty has begun outreach with murder victims' family members who have been traumatized by the death penalty system. It is essential that victims' voices are heard and respected.

Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty is working hard to identify and mobilize Missourians who already feel strongly about death penalty abolition. The many reasons to oppose the death penalty are becoming common knowledge and the abolition movement is gaining popularity and strength. In December of 2007, New Jersey became the first state to legislatively abolish the death penalty. It is believed that many states will follow, including Missouri. Death penalty opponents had their suspicians confirmed by a 2007 American Bar Association (ABA) study. After studying eight states' death penalty systems, the ABA concluded there were not accurate safeguards in place to ensure the death penalty could be carried out justly. The ABA has called for a nationwide execution moratorium.

For several years, Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty has been working toward a moratorium on executions. We have had the death penalty in Missouri for over thirty years but have never stopped to examine how the system works. While we have details about the death penalty in much of the U.S. we believe Missourians need answers to questions about how our death penalty system is working. MADP is advocating for a two year moratorium on executions while an official study of the death penalty can take place. This effort has been successful and is gaining momentum; last year our moratorium legislation had 58 co-sponsors.

Aiming for a moratorium has also enabled us to work with many Missourians who support the death penalty in theory, but would like to ensure our death penalty system is just and accurate. It is tremendously important that all Missourians, those opposed to and supportive of the death penalty, are able to begin discussing our death penalty, how it affects us, and if it is sound public policy. The moratorium allows us to begin this important conversation.

We really need to hear from you. Our strength comes from our numbers – it is essential that we are able to show Missouri leaders and politicians that the desire to reform our death penalty system is felt by many Missourians. We at MADP are also very interested in reaching out to groups who would like more information about the death penalty.

If you would like to join MADP in our moratorium efforts, bring a MADP speaker to talk with a group, or are able to pass a resolution supporting a moratorium on behalf of your congregation or organization, please stay in touch – I can be reached at (314) 256-9810, cunningham@moabolitioin.org or at 438 N. Skinker Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63130.

To join the clemency campaign on behalf of Denni Skillicorn send your full name and address to MADP, 438 N. Skinker Blvd. St. Louis 63130, call (314) 256-9810 or send an email to cunningham@moabolition.org. Hundreds of Missourians have joined us so far: we ask that you add your voice to our clemency chorus. The death penalty in Missouri is a serious issue, in need of immediate action. Dennis Skillicorn reminded us of that, and we cannot forget.

Barred from Life After Prison?

by Mary Ann McGivern

When men and women are released from prison, most of them go back. The statistics run between 65% and 75% recidivism. The rate may be even higher because county jail stays are much more difficult to count than state and federal sentences. So who manages to stay out and why do so many people return to prison?

What people need

Everybody needs family and community support, money, education, a job, health care. The people who manage not to be incarcerated again have these resources, or most of them.

I work at Project COPE, a small re-entry program. We partner people getting out with teams, mostly from faith congregations – Muslim, Jewish and the range of Christian churches. Our recidivism rate the past three years is less than 5%. Over our 23 year history it is 14 %. This is a terrific success rate. 85% of the people who go through COPE's program won't go back to jail or prison. And COPE is not unique. A lot of programs in St. Louis and across the country have success like ours.

Recently the criminal justice system has begun looking at what the non-profit sector does, which is essentially personalism. Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day were right! And criminal justice, also known as corrections, both terms fraught with irony, is also looking at what doesn't work. For example, a lot of people thought boot camp was a great idea. Make them get up at 6 AM, do calisthenics, run laps. Boot camp graduates have a 90% recidivism rate. It doesn't work.

Addiction

Another thing that doesn't work is incarcerating people for drug and alcohol addiction. Punishing addicts is the least effective recovery intervention. Failed drug tests are cause for parole revocation. ("Dirties" is what the inmates and parolees call them.) So is being picked up on a street corner along-side a dealer. Possession is a new charge. But when the going gets tough out in civil society, those drug and alcohol cravings grow; and the going gets tough quickly.

Treatment programs in the community so the person is not separated from family, work, church and friends have a success rate running from 20 to 60%, depending on lots of factors. But it's better than prison. Nonetheless, the biggest reason for being sent back to prison is addiction and related criminal activity such as possession, petty burglary and DWI. These crimes are expensive to the community, but re-incarceration costs more. There are better ways.

Employment issues and obstacles

It has always been tough for a felon to find a job. Today it's tougher for two reasons. The first is, of course, the economy; jobs are scarce. The second is that it is routine and easy for employers to inquire about and to check for felony convictions.

There's rarely a time limit on these checks. Job applications used to ask for recent convictions, say in the past seven years, if they asked at all. And it used to cost a fee and be difficult to find past felony convictions. Today the Missouri Department of Corrections has mug shots and convictions of everybody in prison and on probation and parole on its website. There is a new free site funded by advertising, criminalsearches.com, that has collected county and state criminal records across the nation, including many traffic and misdemeanor charges. So much for serving your time and deserving a fresh start.

Additionally, there are a bevy of regulations and restrictions. In the City of St. Louis, for example, no one with a felony conviction may be hired to work at any business with a liquor license – including grocery stores. So someone who received a suspended sentence for fighting or burglary at age 18 can't work twenty years later as a produce clerk in a city Shop 'N Save. They can work for Shop 'N Save in St. Louis County, but not in the city. The state licensing bureau decides case by case whether to allow felons to take licensing exams in fields like cosmetology and health care but one of the major regional hospitals won't hire felons, with or without licenses, even to do laundry.

Project COPE offers a year-long program of support especially suited for men and women who committed violent crimes as teenagers, served long sentences, and have diminished family relationships. They have almost no work experience and very little vocational training in prison. Two years ago, as a budget measure, the DOC ended GED (high school equiva-

Mary Ann McGivern is still gardening. At both COPE and home, the front yards have been blooming continuously all summer – bulbs, spirea, roses, daisies, lilies, hibiscus, asters, mums, and more.

lency) programs in all the maximum security prisons, on the grounds those inmates wouldn't need a high school diploma. But 98% of inmates will be released – and during their incarceration education can give meaning to their lives.

Two of the women I've accepted were arrested at ages 15 and 16, and received 18 and 20 year sentences. The women's prisons have a college program, but these two, who are both very bright (and both African American, which may or may not be pertinent), got their GEDs but were denied college on the grounds that their sentences were too long. So at 32 and 30, they were released on parole with a year working in the kitchen, two years working as grounds keeper, laundry work, canteen work, in short, not much to build a life on.

The first day out

When men and women come to COPE from prison, almost all of them tell me how afraid they are – of being outside of a closed system, of being identified by strangers as different, of having to look for a job, of having to meet their families. To us, the first day out sounds busy, but not frightening. But everything about these first days is alien to released prisoners.

The Missouri prison system does not tell inmates more than a few days in advance how their release will take place. Then they get clothes from the prison clothing room (Prison greys belong to the state, so if there is no family to send a dress-out box, prisoners rely on donations. A Farmington prison case worker called me once to ask if I would organize clothing donations for their men. Way more than I could do.) and are told whether they are traveling by bus or train and what time they will arrive. They are given no money but if they have a little in their account, they get a $5 or $10 DOC debit card – that is no use at all for a phone call from the bus station, for instance. Some may have saved fifty or a hundred dollars. The fare is deducted from those savings which are usually sent later by check.

Because many prisons are in distant rural areas, it's an hour or more drive to the depot; then two or three hours to their destination. They start very early in the morning, feeling awkward about their ill-fitting clothes and belongings in a box, sure everyone is looking at them. They arrive in St. Louis at around noon, hungry, and must see their parole officer. A team partner or COPE staffer meets them at the bus station, takes them out to lunch and drives them to the parole office, and then generally to City Hall for a birth certificate and then a state ID and Social Security card.

In order to start their job search as soon as possible, everyone needs a state ID. The Department of Corrections has a plan to release inmates with state IDs, but most people still arrive at COPE needing their birth certificate ($15 from City Hall or $48 from an online service for other states) and Social Security card in order to get that state ID ($11). They need a bus pass ($60). They need clothes from the thrift store ($20) and shoes ($40). We want them to get a library card.

The person needs to come to COPE, get keys to their apartment, review and sign the housing contract, deposit their meager belongings, and purchase groceries, a mind-blowing excursion because of all the choices.

The first night alone in their own apartment, most don't sleep. If the sink leaks, they often won't tell us for fear they'll be blamed.

About 3000 released prisoners come to St. Louis each year. Most go to their families who don't have the resources to buy all these things. About a thousand go to the St. Louis Release Center, a custodial minimum security parolee site which provides bed and board and little else. Some of them find their way to programs like COPE.

The intervention fee

People released from prison often owe a lot of money: child support (can be in the tens of thousands), restitution, court fees, and unpaid bills. The Department of Justice released a white paper last year documenting the burden these debts place on men and women just out of confinement. But in 2006 the Missouri Legislature added the Intervention Fee, $30 a month to be paid by everyone on probation and parole. Missouri collects about $15.5 million each year, even though a third of the parolees are more than 4 months behind in payments.

The Intervention Fee was intended by law to pay for community programs – to provide community intervention services: drug and alcohol rehab; anger management; psychiatric beds. It does cover the costs of electronic monitoring and staying at the Release Center. (Parolees used to have to pay $10 a day and they couldn't get off monitoring or move out of the Release Center until the bill was paid.) It pays for some inpatient psychiatric and addiction treatment. But this year, $12 million of the unspent funds is purchasing a new computer system and laptop computers for the Department of Corrections, even though the law said specifically that the money was to be used to provide community services for probationers and parolees.

Thirty dollars a month is a lot of money if you have nothing.

Opportunity costs: self knowledge

Gradually I've come to understand the impact on the lives

of men and women who were incarcerated at a young age, and locked up for ten years or more. Most of those who come to COPE had very limited experiences at home, in school, and in their neighborhoods. Think of how you grew in your understanding of yourself in high school, college, your first job, your marriage, your first child – all of this before you turned 30.

When someone comes to COPE at 30 or 36 or 53, all incarcerated as teens, their growth has been stunted. (The 53 year old committed a murder at 18 and served 34 years; he was released this past July 2.) I've accepted a 34 year old man who was 14 when he killed his boss. They are eager to learn and to work. They want to do what's right. But they don't have any experience trusting anybody. They don't know how to ask for advice or to assess what advice is worth taking. They don't know how to make plans, much less make adjustments to what plans they have. They don't know what choices are open to them or how to test out careers or even test changes in their own personality.

Prison is a rigid social system. It's not a place to experiment with expressing feelings, being more enthusiastic or practicing generosity.

I suspect that one of our clients intimidated others in prison. He's big and that's how he got by. But he's actually timid and fearful of rejection. And he would like to discuss books – but he's never done that and he doesn't know how.

One of the women regressed from 32 back to 15 when she got out. She was impossible, refusing to participate in planned events, blaming and accusing everyone else of everything from lies and drug use to selfishness and lack of compassion. It took her four months to settle in and cooperate with us. And she was easier than most to work with because her opposition was so open and explicit. It is much more difficult to work with someone who is secretive and aloof or cooperative on the surface but unrevealing of self.

Making decisions and long-range plans

Prisons severely limit inmates' opportunities to make decisions. They don't have to decide when to go to bed or how to do a job or what to cook for dinner or whether to ask for a raise. One of the COPE graduates, James, was driving the car in a drive-by shooting where a person was killed. James was 17 and he served 14 years in prison. He got out on September 1 and went directly to Forest Park Community College to take the entry test (required for those with GED or high school equivalency certificates). He had a plan, to become a funeral director, a business where a felony conviction would not matter. He got a night shift job as a welder for minimum wage. Today, three years later, he's in the mortician program, doing well. But he says that first year at COPE was the hardest year of his life. I would have thought that first year in prison would be the hardest, or maybe the last year, with the anticipation of getting out, but I've come to understand that it's the decisions that first year out that wear folks down.

Community Organizing

One thing for sure people in prison don't get to do is community organizing. Just try to run a petition drive for better food or more playground access for your children during visits. It'll be solitary confinement for you.

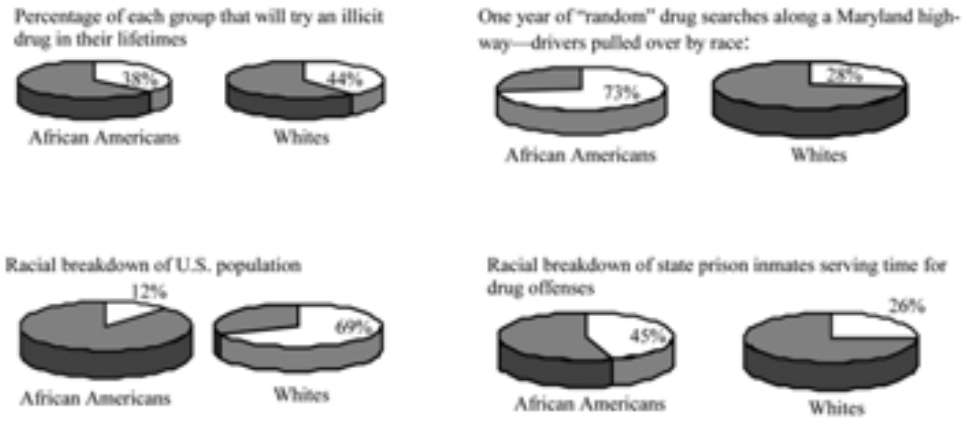
When they get out, they have a grasp of injustice, but no sense of how to go about changing small things, much less social systems.

Recently I've been looking for money to teach them some advocacy skills. I want to bring in local organizers on, say, a Saturday morning, and pay the ex-offenders a stipend to attend. Anybody who attends four sessions would be eligible to represent COPE at advocacy meetings around St. Louis and in Jefferson City, again for a small stipend.

That's one idea. Another is to buy a cheap Rally's franchise so we can guarantee jobs the day folks get out. And we could develop more housing. COPE owns ten apartment units available for up to eight months. Housing First is the concept that people need safe, secure housing first. Then the other things will follow.

COPE only serves about 50 people a year. I've helped put together the resource list in the Round Table. It's limited, meant to be useful in your research as well as your practice. ✚

African Americans: Disproportionately targeted, arrested, and incarcerated



Sources: csdp.org/publicservice/kids.htm, drugpolicy.org/docUploads/fact_sheet_crime_punishment.pdf, drugwarfacts.org/racepris.htm

From Kabat House

by Sarah Sunseri

I write this the day after returning from the Midwest Catholic Worker Gathering at Sugar Creek in Iowa. Kabat House and our extended community brought 18 people for the weekend. I know that many of us felt proud and excited to be so well represented. Perhaps it signals to us that our community is on the right track and that people feel energized.

Kabat House has become a gathering place of sorts. We have community dinners Sunday through Thursday, which have been going strong for some time now. Two people cook each night, not just people who live in the house. The regular crowd includes some neighbors, a few past guests, and the folks from New Roots Urban Farm. We have also had the pleasure of welcoming a new baby to our community. Emory was born to Trish and Joseph of New Roots at the end of May.

Right now, all of the guests at Kabat House are Spanish-speaking immigrants. It is common for us to have several Spanish-speaking immigrants, although in the past we have also had immigrants from Africa, Mongolia, and Finland, along with men and women who grew up down the block.

I, Sarah, have been living here for a little over two years. Enrique, our resident Cuban, has lived at Kabat House almost as long as I have. We have seen a lot of change. As you might imagine with such a small house, our lives change substantially if one person moves out or in. In the summer of 2007, we welcomed Heather to the community. This summer John and Dan moved in with the men on the third floor. John is a recent St. Louis University graduate, and Dan is a teacher and my partner. Yes, we pack them in.

Along with the McNamee-Griffeth family who live across the street (better known as Finn (3), Ghana (14), Carolyn and Tery), we try to live together as family and community and forge a life that is good and fulfilling.

In speaking about what draws people to community, we have realized that people seek a place where they can live their lives in a way that makes sense: a way that includes others, a way that resists greed and materialism, a way that grows food and rides bikes, a way that welcomes the foreigner.

These desires have drawn an eclectic group of people. The village that exists now on the City's north side is a funny one. It is actually hard to explain without calling it a village. There are a few small communities within the village, including a number of Catholic Worker houses, many current and past workers living in apartments and houses, the urban farmers, squatters, and a few other various radicals.

One of the biggest thrusts in our community is toward being sustainable. Environmental sustainability is finally being emphasized in the world. While this is important, it is not what I mean. The sustainability I am speaking of is working toward a life that people can live for the long haul. This suggests a few things.

One of those is making our living space comfortable. Kabat House installed all new windows this summer. We renovated the living room, the bathroom, and one of the bedrooms.

It also includes adjustments that are more people-oriented. One example is trying to develop better strategies to help our housemates find jobs, as that seems to be a common and difficult request. Another example is to no longer pack guests into the house as we formerly thought we should. Although we do have a full house, we have realized that if there is someone sleeping in the living room every night, we sacrifice community space, which is essential to making Kabat House feel like home.

We welcome all to join us for Sunday Soccer—meet at Kabat House (1450 Monroe St. 63106) at 3:30. Stay for dinner if you like.

In closing, it is now critical that we forge a shared life that includes those in need. We live in a climate of deportation and raids. We must stand in opposition to the idea that some people do not deserve to have their basic needs met because they were born on the wrong side of a fence. A time like this perhaps calls all of us with any guts to go out of our way to feed and aid those in need, regardless of status or documentation.

Sarah Sunseri has lived at Kabat House for two and a half years and endures merciless teasing from Carl Kabat daily.

From Karen House

by Annjie Schiefelbein

In my mind, I see Karen House as an independent spirit; a quiet and constant love and hospitality that has radiated around the structure for 31 years. That spirit is quite unmoved by the goings-on of everyday life. It is greater than the particular group of community living in it. It is not bothered by the changes in the neighborhood around it. It doesn't heed which type of illegal drug is bothersome this year or what the State structures are doing. Grace allows this spirit to permeate all that we are, as well as rise above us, including our tragedies.

As of this writing, it has been about thirteen months since Dan Horkheimer was shot and killed at his home two blocks from Karen House. Dan lived at Karen House for some years with his wife, Courtney. They were both part of the Dorothy Day Co-Housing Community. His loss is still being absorbed, bit by bit, by those who knew him.

The Karen House Community has experience with the suffering of loss; Mark, Mev, Sade, Linda, Ann, and others who have died. I want to tell you what has happened with our community for the past year. It has been difficult at best, with some depth garnered that we wish hadn't cost so much.

In the spring of 2007, the Karen House community was not at its strongest. Four of us were in community, and only three of us lived in the house. While that made for easier decision making (we had all been in community together for seven years and knew generally how we all reacted to situations), it did not allow the shared labor of Karen House to spread very far. Fortunately, right before we closed for six weeks in the summer to rehab the house, a few new folks moved in. Even with these bright, energetic new community members, we knew we had some planning to do. The three of us who had been living in the house had plans to move out into different projects in the neighborhood. So there was much talk of postponing our moves and gradually initiating the new folks into the house.

June and early July helped part of that to happen. The house was closed down completely for the first time in years and years, while we (and dozens of volunteers) did various projects around the house. It made for nice community bonding, but was strange that for the first six weeks of the new community members' stay, we were not talking about guests, mental health, drug use, hospitality, resistance, or who was going to take the open house shift. Rather we discussed floor tile, where to put the new bathrooms, what color to paint the office, and if we should get rid of the huge desk that had been in the office forever (a hotly contested debate at the time but everyone loves the 'new' desk). We were not adept at those conversations, nor did we enjoy them even a little bit!

But by mid-July of 2007, we welcomed guests back and got back to the business of hospitality. We were still brainstorming ways to best prepare and acclimate our new community members, considering that soon there would be no one living in the house who had more than a few months' experience. This had not transpired at Karen House in our thirty one years, since that first year, and we wanted to do it in the best possible way. That "best" way became tarnished, shortly after, when Jenny and I had to move into the new house of hospitality (Teka Childress House) far earlier than anticipated, due to serial break-ins. While we were still part of the community, any hope of postponing our move or offering overnight support to Karen House vanished rather quickly.

On August 11, 2007, when Dan was killed, any hope of gradually transitioning the newer community members into the house disappeared. Some of the "older" community were

Annjie Schiefelbein continues her love of the Huskers and is hoping for a bowl game this year.

understandably not as present at the house, some for a couple of weeks, others indefinitely. As we planned Dan's funeral, our shock and grief was such that we could only hope our new community members were handling things at Karen House (to their credit, they lied and told us they were doing just fine). In the months following, I (and others) were not well enough to be the kind of community member that the new folks could consistently lean on, learn from, laugh with, or challenge.

The new community members dealt beautifully with being thrown in. It was, I imagine difficult on many fronts: the tragedy and shock of what had happened to Dan, the confusion of watching community members stumble in grief, not to mention trying to keep a house of thirteen women and fourteen kids going with little or no experience at such a thing.

A few of those community members are still around, and we are still dealing on many fronts with Dan's death and the effect it had on our community. I wish I could say we are stronger for it, and maybe we are. Mostly I think we all just got by and held on, and now deal with the consequences as they continue to come.

Currently we have eight community members. Four of us live outside the house, and four in. John Carroll moved on to an internship with Green Corps for a year. Bets are on whether he will return to our graces or not (call if you want to be part of the pool). Rob Boedeker left us to go to law school at St. Louis University (SLU). Forrest is taking a break from community right now, although fortunately we get to see him often at the house and his apartment in the neighborhood. Elizabeth, who was with us last Summer, returned to us upon her graduation from SLU this past Spring. Megan has been with us since the rehab (and summer before), and Timmy (who works at Campus Kitchen) and Beth (who teaches at Nerinx High School) came to us in early 2008. Tim, Teka, Jenny, and I live in the neighborhood and mostly don't mind feeling old when we're with the younger community members.

And Karen House, or at least her spirit, has moved along steadily and quietly, which is quite reassuring. The house in her 31 years has proven to be entirely dependent upon the community and volunteers, yet quite independent of any one of us at the same time. Seeing in the past year how much can change, how frail we are, how the best plans can change in a second, it is heartening to know that the hospitality, life, and spirit of the house can extend beyond and around us. ✝

The Works of Resistance

by Megan Heeney

Many communities practice resistance, but Catholic Workers have a unique style. We practice resistance utilizing the Catholic Worker Aims and Means:

The Works of Mercy- We work to resist oppression. Persons are oppressed when they are not given food, shelter, drink, clothing, health, freedom and life. As Christians we are supposed to resist oppression by seeing Christ in all we meet and we do this every time we give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, shelter to the homeless, clothes to the naked, visit those who are sick or in jail and bury the dead. Catholic Workers have a responsibility to cry out and act anytime persons are oppressed. We act by practicing the Works of Mercy as a community. This is the means through which we resist the societal norm of dehumanizing others.

Voluntary Poverty- We practice voluntary poverty as a day to-day resistance of consumerism. Voluntary poverty is a means to say, "no" to material goods, to say, "no" to selfishness of time, it is resistance to one's very self and one's own desires. The practice of voluntary poverty is a resistance cry for the end of poverty. As Peter put it in his Easy Essay *Better and Better Off,*

For when everybody tries to become better off,
nobody is better off.

Megan Heeney is enjoying her new stick shift driving skills- scooting around St. Louis picking up things in the truck!

But when everybody tries to become better,
everybody is better off.
Everybody would be rich if nobody tried to become richer.
And nobody would be poor,
If everybody tried to be the poorest.

Manual Labor- We cherish the work and the worker. We attempt to practice this means everyday, in this way we resist abuse, degradation, and humiliation as well as the systemic violence of poverty, hunger, war and oppression. We cannot make our world less violent until we resist the violence in our own hearts and in our own communities.

Green Revolution- We resist using God's earth for the benefit of ourselves. We initiate a vision of a world where not only do we take care of one another by practicing the works of mercy, voluntary poverty, manual labor and non-violence, but we take care of the earth and all its creatures. We acknowledge our interdependence. We cannot flourish without the earth. The earth allows us to care for one another and we can not let it be oppressed.

Decentralization- We claim responsibility for our own actions and for our community. We care for each other as we would care for our own family. This aim allows us to not "pass the buck" but to resist the easy way out and continue taking care of each other the way God meant us to.

Personalism- We attempt to give each person we meet the dignity they deserve. This is one way we live which allows us to give each other the dignity and love we would give to Christ, the dignity that stems from the divinity in each of us. Catholic Workers practice personalism. We affirm the value of a human person. We aim to resist de-personalization and we embrace personalism in response.

We resist:
-We resist making people the means and not treating people like an end.
-We resist degradation
-We resist violence
-We resist consumerism
-We resist war
-We resist poverty
-We resist unjust laws
-We resist nuclear weapons
-We resist white privilege
-We resist patriarchal domination
-We resist heterosexual privilege
-We resist empire
-We resist domination
-We resist the easy way out

These acts of resistance may not be effective. For example: Colleen refusing to buy new clothes as a practice of voluntary poverty does not mean that less clothes are made in sweatshops or that the world will become less consumeristic. Elizabeth rooting her life in non-violence does not stop the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. Tim growing a garden in his backyard does not stop 30,000 children from dying of malnutrition each day, nor does it stop the children in our neighborhood from ever having to go to bed hungry. The works of resistance are not always practical, they are not even efficient, in fact to many minds they are not rational. (If I use my car, I will be able to deliver twenty meals in one hour, if I ride my bike perhaps only five.) But, the works of resistance are faithful, they are rooted in love for one another and love for God. The works of resistance are based on a desire to build a world where oppression is challenged by love. These works may never be validated, but we have faith that in the end love will overcome and we will have to resist no more. ✚

Re-entry Resources

1. Prior to release the person in prison:

Project Reach Center for Women In Transition
St. Patrick's Center (314)771-5207
(314)802-0700
With a nonviolent conviction, should apply to Project Reach (men and women) or The Center for Women in Transition.

Society of St. Vincent DePaul (314)531-7837
Project COPE (314)389-4804
With a violent conviction and long sentence, apply to St. Vincent de Paul Criminal Justice Ministry's Release to Rent (men only) or ProjectCOPE (men and women).

Project Reconnect (314)771-5207
Project Reconnect serves those who have maxed out of prison, that is, they have served their entire sentence and are not on parole. (serves men and women)

2. The first days of release:

Society of St. Vincent DePaul (314) 531-7837
St. Vincent de Paul Criminal Justice Ministry's Sister Eugenio provides immediate help with toiletries, clothing vouchers, a bus pass and used cars.

St. Patrick's Center (314) 802-0700
St. Patrick's Center provides a variety of resources from employment, counseling, clothing, and housing assistance.

SLATE (314) 589-8000
Employment Connection (314) 333-5627
SLATE, Missouri Career Centers, and Employment Connection all offer a four-day job training. Missouri Fair Share which is sited in all the Missouri Career Centers helps parents with accumulated child support payments.

St. Louis Public Library (314) 241-2288
The main public library downtown also has employment resources.

The Parents Family Support Program teaches parenting and assists with child support issues. (314) 877-5611

St. Francis Xavier, the College Church, offers vouchers for birth certificates, backpacks, and a legal clinic. (314) 977-7300

The **Anheuser Busch Eye Institute** provides free vision care to women and menreleased from prison. (314) 256-3200

The MET Center (Metropolitan Education & Training) provides skilled, high tech manufacturing training for unemployed adults, dislocated workers and incumbent workers in Missouri and Illinois. (314) 746-0805

Family Care Center (314) 531-5444
Grace Hill (314)221-2200
Family Care Center and Grace Hill provide inexpensive health care.

Cyril Echele, early member of the St. Louis Catholic Worker Movement during the 1930's, died Oct.21, 2008 in Owensboro, Ky. Active on justice issues throughout his life, he was also a teacher, philosopher and life-time supporter of the Catholic Worker movement. He frequently wrote on a variety of topics. At age 96, he wrote

"After a lifetime--54 years in Catholic married life, with a now deceased wife, Margaret, and 70 years with close association with the Catholic Worker Movement, this writer-reporter lives hopefully, with life in Eternity! God IS LOVE says the Apostle, St. John, in his Gospel . . ."

We feel confident he was right.

TC House Needs:
Donations for School uniforms and
Kids' Outings

Little House Needs:
Refrigerator
Gas Stove

For more information on prison reform see www.november.org

See www.karenhousecw.org

Karen House Needs:
Blankets
Coats, Hats, Mittens
Socks
Fair Trade Coffee
Cereal
Diapers
Toilet Paper
Laundry Detergent
Gift Certificates to Laclede Gas
Fresh Produce

Kabat House Needs:
toilet paper
cooking oil
sugar
rice
beans
Taking donations toward a commercial grade refridgerator.

Karen House Adopt-a-Window Project:
(See insert)

Winter Outreach:
Blankets, coats, mittens, scarves, hats, etc.
People to go out on cold winter nights to distribute blankets, coats, food, etc.
Contact Teka or Megan at 621.4052

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Megan Heeney, Virginia Druhe, Teka Childress, Carolyn Griffeth, Sarah Sunseri, Mary Ann McGivern, Beth Buchek, Elizabeth Drisoll, Timmy Cosentino, John Nolan, Ellen Rehg, and Jenny Truax. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

The Round Table
Karen Catholic Worker House
1840 Hogan ■ St. Louis, MO. 63106
Address Service Requested

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit No. 495