

WNPJ member organizations are working for justice

Public Education and support for prisoners and their families:

Madison-area Urban Ministry (MUM) is working to educate the public about the challenges faced by returning prisoners in their **Returning Prisoner Simulation** workshops. Staffed by returned prisoners and their families, each simulation allows participants to “walk in the shoes” of a returning prisoner - to look for a job and a place to live and try to meet the demands of the parole system.

Circles of Support are groups of 4-5 volunteers who provide support and accountability for parolees. The program has been remarkably successful in reducing the rate of recidivism from 50% to 15% for returned prisoners.

Voices Beyond Bars is a speaker's bureau of former prisoners who can provide any group with insight into our criminal justice system from a point of view rarely heard.

Mentoring Connections provides mentoring services to children who have a parent incarcerated in prison. Seventy percent of incarcerated women are mothers of dependent children. By becoming a volunteer mentor, you can make a difference in the lives of these children.

To participate or volunteer for any of these programs, contact the **Madison-area Urban Ministry, Mary Kay Baum and Jackie Austin, 2300 S. Park St., Suite 5, Madison, WI 53713; phone: 608-256-0906; email: mum@emum.org**



Community Justice: an alternative to prisons

The **St. Benedict Center** in Milwaukee is building alternatives to our dysfunctional prison system through its **Community Justice Centers**. The centers practice restorative justice through victim-offender mediation to repair the harm done to the victim and community while insuring accountability by the offender.

Alternative sentencing plans bypass the prison system by sentencing offenders to work in the community. By working together with local churches, schools, community organizations and businesses, alternative sentencing programs can turn a community deficit into a community asset. **The Community Justice Day Reporting Center** (Milwaukee) serves up to 125 men and women a day with education, drug and alcohol treatment, cognitive and parenting skills, employment and community service. One year after completion, nearly 90% of the participants have not re-entered the criminal-justice system.

For more information about community justice programs and other alternatives to prison contact the **St. Benedict Center, Kit Murphy McNally, 229 E. Wisconsin Ave, Suite 1250, Milwaukee, WI 53202; phone: 414-347-1774; email: justice@benedictcenter.com**

Other WNPJ Organizations Working on Prison Issues:

ELCA Greater Milwaukee Synod - Peace and Justice Committee, **Buzz Althoen, 6919 N Milwaukee River Parkway, Glendale, WI 53209; phone: 414-228-9647; email: balthoen@aol.com**

Southwest Wisconsin Peace Fellowship, **Frank Van den Bosch, 1883 Cty Q, Montfort, WI 53569; phone: 608-822-4253; email: maryannucl@netscape.net**

Task Force on Money, Education, and Prisons (MEP), **Ed Steichen and Barbara Rowe, PO Box 5311, Madison, WI 53705; Office location at 1202 Williamson St, Lower Level; phone: 608-268-0482; email: tfmep@tds.net**

About the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice (WNPJ)

The purpose of WNPJ is to facilitate activities, cooperation, and communication among Wisconsin organizations and individuals working toward the creation of a world free from violence and injustice.

The Corporate Accountability Task Group (CATG) was created to better focus, educate, and organize our shared work for economic justice. The CATG also offers community workshops and produces other resource materials including a 100 page packet on Corporate Accountability available for \$13 from the WNPJ office.

For information about:

- Joining WNPJ
- working with the CATG
- purchasing an annual Directory of WNPJ Organizations
- attending the Annual Assembly in October
- attending the Steering Committee meeting of organizational representatives in April

Contact WNPJ at:

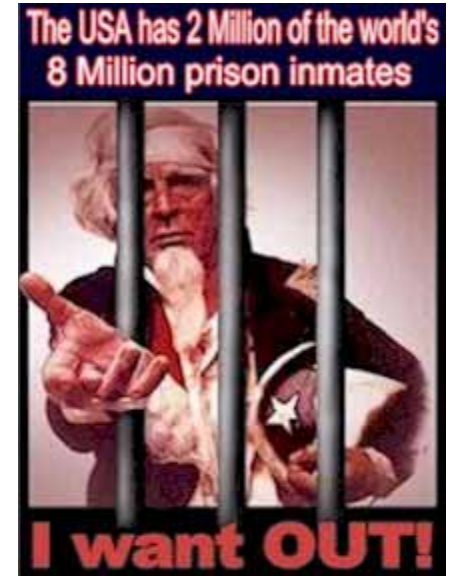
WNPJ
122 State Street, #402
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Web: www.wnpj.org



Corporatization of Criminal Justice



I am persuaded that the institution of prison probably must end. In many respects it is as intolerable within the United States as was the institution of slavery, equally brutalizing to all involved, equally toxic to the social system, equally subversive of the brotherhood of man, even, more costly by some standards, and probably less rational.

—Federal District Judge James Doyle of the Western District of Wisconsin (*Morales vs. Schmidt*), 1972



Brochure prepared by
WNPJ Corporate
Accountability Task
Group

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“There is no evidence of a relationship between the incarceration rate and violent crime. We’re in the business of tricking people into thinking that spending hundreds of millions for new prisons will make them safe.”

Minnesota Assistant Commissioner of Corrections, Dan O’Brien - 1996

Prisons: An American Growth Industry

In the U.S., prisons are a booming industry. The U.S. prison population increased from 315,000 in 1980 to 1,300,000 in 2000 — a more than 300% increase, and the number of women in U.S. prisons increased by more than 600% over the same period. Over the last thirty years, the number of prisons in Wisconsin has almost doubled, from 16 to 30. Wisconsin has tripled its prison population since 1990, and Wisconsin’s incarceration rate is now three times that of Minnesota, even though the two states have comparable crime rates.

- As multinational corporations have sent millions of manufacturing jobs overseas, many communities have come to see prisons as the only stable source of jobs available. More than 8,500 people work in the Wisconsin prison system, and the desperate need for jobs in our de-industrializing economy provides an important political impetus to continue expanding the prison system.

- Wisconsin taxpayers pay \$28,000 per year for each prisoner in the system. Our state’s \$2 billion a year prison budget — \$150 a year for each Wisconsin resident — is now roughly equal to the budget for our entire state university system. Only twelve years ago, Wisconsin spent three times as much on its university system as on its prisons.

-Although “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” may make for a good campaign slogan, ninety percent of all prisoners are eventually released from prison. They leave a prison system which has not provided them with job training or needed drug or alcohol treatment, but instead has often subjected them to brutality and abuse, to return to a society that shuns them. It should be no surprise that two-thirds of all prisoners released are re-arrested within three years.

Prisons for Profit

Nationwide, the for-profit Corrections Corporation of America, now the largest private prison operator in the world, has been a major contributor to the American Legislative Exchange Council, a group which claims credit for the widespread passage of “truth in sentencing” and “three strikes” laws in many state legislatures.

For-profit prison health care is now a \$2 billion a year industry. Forty percent of all medical care to prisoners is now provided by for-profit corporations. The largest of these is Prison Health Services, which accounts for more than 10% of all prisoners in the U.S., including inmates at three Wisconsin prisons until 2002. The New York State Commission of Corrections recently found PHS responsible for the deaths of 23 inmates in New York prisons and described PHS behavior as “reckless and unprincipled”.

Under our new corporate prison system, even prisoner’s families are seen as a source of profits. Dane County has contracted with the California-based corporation Inmate Calling Solutions under a contract that charges inmates families \$7.25 for a half-hour call.

A System Built on a Foundation of Racism

Wisconsin imprisons its African-American residents at a rate almost *twelve times* that of whites. More than 4% of all African-Americans in Wisconsin are in prison, compared with 0.35% for whites. No other state in the U.S. imprisons its African-American population at a similar rate. Although African-American men are only 3% of Wisconsin’s population, they make up 44% of our prison inmates. Based on these statistics, the publication Black Commentator recently ranked Wisconsin the “Worst Place to be Black” in the United States.

At each step in the process — arrest, prosecution and sentencing — our criminal “justice” system treats African-Americans more harshly than whites. Although more than 70% of all illicit drug users are white (according to government surveys) African-Americans account for 37% of those arrested for drug crimes, 42% of those in federal prisons and, on average, 58% of those in state prisons. Nationwide, nearly 40% of African-American men are either in prison, in jail, on parole or on probation.

- The prison system also acts to siphon tax receipts from the poorest neighborhoods in our state. Because the U.S. census counts prisoners where they are incarcerated, and federal funds are disbursed according to these census figures, federal funds that could go to health care, education and job creation in poor neighborhoods in Milwaukee are redirected to predominantly white rural areas where prisons have been built.

Inside the Wisconsin Prison-Industrial Complex

In 1999, Wisconsin opened the “Supermax” prison in Boscobel, called the “most inhumane prison in the country” by Amnesty International. Supermax housed 260 prisoners, up to 30% of them mentally ill, under conditions that included restricting prisoners to their cells for all but five hours per week. Prisoners were denied face-to-face visits from family members, and could only speak to visitors over a closed-circuit TV setup. After a federal lawsuit, the state agreed to transfer some mentally ill prisoners to other facilities and to ease restrictions on some, but not all, inmates.

- The Wisconsin state Department of Corrections estimates that 70% of all inmates have drug or alcohol problems, but the state’s current prison drug treatment programs have space for less than 5% of the state’s prisoners. The state currently spends less than 1% of its prison budget on drug and alcohol treatment

Almost half of Wisconsin’s prison population works in full or part-time jobs in prison, including maintenance and food service, for as little as 12 cents an hour.

- The state of Wisconsin recently tripled the “co-pays” required from inmates before they can see a doctor. Wisconsin now has the highest co-pay level for prisoners in the nation. But higher fees don’t mean better care for Wisconsin prisoners. The state is now initiating a program to require hundreds of inmates to be examined by a “video conference hookup” rather than by a face-to-face meeting with a doctor.

- In many Wisconsin prisons, abuses by guards, including sexual abuse, goes unchecked. In 2002 one mentally ill prisoner in the state’s Tayceedah Correctional Institution was impregnated by a

guard and was held in solitary confinement for almost a year as punishment. Despite cases like this, the Department of Corrections still has no clear policy to enforce laws against sexual abuse by guards.

- In Wisconsin, children as young as 10 can be prosecuted as adults for homicide, and children as young as 14 can be prosecuted as adults for rape and drug dealing. Although thirteen states have passed laws requiring police to allow parents to be present when their children are interrogated by the police, Wisconsin has not done so.

-In January of 2000, the Wisconsin state legislature passed a “Truth in Sentencing” law abolishing the use of parole. After “Truth in Sentencing” was enacted, average prison terms increased from 5.5 years to 9.5 years. A recent study by the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel estimated the cost of “Truth in Sentencing” over the next 20 years at almost \$2 billion. Since the law was enacted, even many prison wardens and guards have come to oppose it, after seeing how it has deprived prisoners of any sense of hope and any incentive to cooperate with prison authorities. Unlike other states which have passed “Truth in Sentencing” laws, Wisconsin’s is unique in that it applies equally to both violent and nonviolent offenders.

Books and other resources:

Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*. 1995
Tom Berghardt, *Police State America*. 2002
Mark Dow, *American Gulag*. 2004
Joel Dyer, *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine: How America Profits from Crime*. 2001
Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America*. 1999

The Wisconsin Coalition Against the Death Penalty; www.wcadp.org

The Task Force on Money, Education, and Prisons; www.wiprison.org

Madison-area Urban Ministry; www.emum.org

The Benedict Center; www.benedictcenter.org