

BRIDGE OF VOICES Late Fall 2019
Newsletter of FFUP, a 501 3c non profit
printed on 100% tree free paper (sugar cane waste)
approved by DOC Sec Director Larry W Fuchs

update on advocacy work by FFUP Volunteer Outreach coordinator Ben Turk ...

Hello friends, Here's an update on information I've been able to gather, and advocacy work I've been doing.

On parole and the old law situation.

Bad news first, Chairman Tate has not yet been confirmed by the Senate Judiciary committee. Senator Wanggaard told me to expect that to happen this session. He said that he knows Tate and approves of the work he's doing. Kevin Carr was confirmed as the new DOC Secretary. I've seen Carr speak a few times, and confronted him with questions about conditions in the DOC. He said the right things, but didn't follow up and we've seen little sign of effective oversight coming from his leadership. For Tate's confirmation, we might be waiting a while, the senate has only confirmed 5 out of 19 Evers appointments.

Good news is we now know and are able to attend the parole commission hearings. At the October hearing, much was learned. My notes can be sent upon request, but the summary is that there's clear evidence that DOC officials both in institution and in community supervision are obstructing and slowing down releases. Also, there have been potentially promising personnel changes. Steve Landremann who was a commissioner for 18 years and a very frequent denier of release has moved to a new job with the DOC. His departure seems abrupt, and will likely slow down the work of the commission. Danielle LaCoste also intends to leave. She's found a new job, but will stick around until at least Landremann's replacement can be hired, so workflow isn't too interrupted. Of course, Tate can reduce the PRC's workload most easily by releasing more eligible old law prisoners, instead of deferring them to another hearing and review in a few months.

Unfortunately, John Tate did not allow any public comment at the meeting, so it is not a space for individual advocacy, but for information gathering. I intend to go to the next meeting and will take notes again. Eight to ten people, mostly from the WISDOM old law group attended the hearing, and I hope that seeing advocates there, even though Tate didn't allow us to speak, made an impression. The next meeting is 9:30 am on Wednesday November 6 at DOC headquarters in Madison. It's hard to know whether this meeting will be worth the trouble of going to, especially for people taking off work or traveling distances, because there is no opportunity to talk to Tate, but if it's not too much trouble, I'd encourage people try and attend. Please give them advance notice so they can put the meeting in an appropriately sized room. \

The other unfortunate news is that Jacob Walters, the helpful staff member who I've been talking with is also moving to another job. I'm waiting on a few records requests from him, and possibly a phone conference with myself, Tate, and Peg to discuss parole criteria rules changes. There's an online petition at secondchancewi.blotspot.com and at change.org (search for "Unlocking Wisconsin"). Loved ones and outside supporters can sign this petition to encourage Tate to make changes. We will also be circulating this petition in person in the community in coming weeks and at some point re-delivering the signatures list to Chairman Tate while demanding these vital rules changes.

On revocations and crowding.

The most common source of new prison admissions is crimeless or rules-only revocations. The Division of Community Corrections (DCC) is exceptionally aggressive in this state. This is a source of injustice in itself, because people are being ripped away from their communities and lives on often very trivial rules violations or highly suspect accusations, but it is also a major contributor to over-crowding and thus poor conditions in the prisons. Many organizations have done a lot of great work researching this problem and demanding action from the governor to reform DCC policies. The process of change has been excruciatingly slow and the governor has signaled or made 180 degree reversals on his campaign promises. For years organizers in the CLOSEmsdf coalition have been promoting recommendations to rein in DCC from studies by Columbia University, the Badger Institute, Human Impact Partners, the Milwaukee Community Justice Council and others, yet the only move Evers has made is to request more research. He's got consultants from Washington DC studying DCC for months. He and Secretary Carr agreed to a 90 day task force with DCC officials, CLOSEmsdf organizers and other stakeholders. Our recommendations are likely to be the same as what's already in other reports, which the governor has been ignoring for years.

Rumors are that there will finally be some changes in early 2020, but these changes are unlikely to go far enough. I attended a luncheon where the governor spoke on Sept 24th. He discussed a variety of issues, from gun control, to dairy farming, to economic growth with a level of detail that shows he's been paying close attention. He also made a few very general comments about prison issues. When asked about revocations and DCC polices, he dodged the question by saying that he'd put the right person in charge of DCC: John Tate. Of course, John Tate is the parole chairman, which is separate from DCC. It was very disappointing to discover that the governor who promised to cut the prison population by 50% on the campaign trail hasn't bothered to learn the top-level structures of his prison system. Out work is cut out for us.

There's good news on revocations in the legislature though. Apparently GOP leaders plan to introduce 3 bills later this month. The exact language isn't available yet, so I'm not sure what the exact details will be. The first bill deals with crimeless revocations, and should significantly reduce their frequency. The second bill will restore a very limited form of earned release. The third law will be about supervision, limiting ES sentence lengths and restoring street time. All three bills will require the DCC to track and report on their practices more than they do currently, and will invest savings in treatment programs and alternatives to prison, so their benefits will accrue overtime. The devil is in the details, and there's likely to be problems and disappointments with each of these bills, but they certainly seem to be steps in the right direction and have a better chance to pass, if not this session, then next spring. I've heard that some democrat law-makers also intend to introduce more aggressive legislation that is less likely to get through the legislature. We'll include summaries of any of these bills in the next newsletter, and can send people the full text available on request.

There is a lot of momentum and energy behind these changes in the community. I and other organizers have been doing monthly pickets, organizing frequent community forums, staging protests, and getting news articles in multiple papers. In recent weeks it's become increasingly clear that pressure on the governor must be increased to get him to take change more seriously. Left to his own timeline, I suspect he'd wait until all the studies are done next spring and then make a few minor reforms, but the needed changes are known and he can make them now. I hope we can increase the pressure and see results before the end of the year.

On solitary, medical neglect, and conditions.

I visited the offices of 15 lawmakers on Oct 2nd, leaving copies of the Staffing, Crowding and Death report and requesting a meeting with the law-maker to follow up and discuss strategies to address the humanitarian crisis in Wisconsin's prisons. Thus far I've only been able to meet with one, Evan Goyke, but have meetings with a few others. For these meetings I'm bringing a list of recent stories from RHU units, showing the conditions people continue to suffer under and encouraging the politicians to exercise whatever oversight authority they can to address these issues. I've also researched prison-related legislation that is in process this session, and drafted a call to action encouraging the lawmakers to oppose bills that will increase incarceration or DOC powers, and support bills and projects that will reduce incarceration rates.

I have also set up quarterly meetings with Makda Fessehaye, the head of DAI to address all variety of issues. The first of these meetings will be Oct 29th, and the agenda I've sent her includes: solitary confinement, mental health treatment (especially at CCI, WCI and GBCI), modified lockdowns, transparency around deaths / COIYD policy recommendations, failure to protect and PREA, the money scam, staff turnover and training, increased access to books and reading materials, increased visitation and family contact, evacuation policies for natural disasters (flooding is increasingly common with climate change). It's a lot, but I'm hoping Makda has some answers and look forward to sharing notes with Peg and interested contacts. Whatever we don't cover then, we'll keep pushing in the future.

ACTION REQUESTED-Attend Parole Commission meeting?

AS noted in Ben's summary above, he plans to attend the parole commission meetings monthly even though no public comment is allowed. We would like to see a group there to monitor, learn and push for meetings with Tate- If you have a family member who is interested in attending any of these meetings, please send me their emails or give them my contact information so we can keep them updated on changes in the schedule. At present they are held every 1st Wednesday of each month at 9:30 AM. at the central OC office, 3099 E. Washington Ave. Madison..

next meeting : 9:30am Wednesday November 6 /3099 E. Washington Ave, Madison, WI

contact FFUP is you plan to attend- pgswan @aol.com ; 608-536-3993; so we can inform you of any changes..

FFUP founder Peg Swan's Addenda

Thrilled is a mild word for how it feels about working with Ben Turk. I am still the bottle neck but this will pass- there are people now who want your information and stories and ideas and Ben knows how to make the tonnage you and I do palatable. We are gaining a true division of labor and a few others are joining with their particular passions and skill to help us grow in a healthy way. At this stage we are crafting reports and recommendations and taking them to all who have power to make changes. If you write me with a complaint, you need to know I will use it as I deem fit UNLESS you tell me otherwise or that you prefer to remain anonymous. Your letters to me are the basis of what we do, yours is the information we need to counteract the wholesale denials and whitewashing that is taken by the general public and most media as reality. While I still do individual advocacy, writing warden and other authorities etc , it is with less commitment and frequency as all ears seem deaf. We need to show ourselves as a political force in order to get the new administration to change the policies and structures that corrupt all..

So as intake worker in this organization here are my submissions and requests for your help:

SOLITARY ISSUES

email newsletter:

Solitary confinement continues to be a big item for FFUP but seems an issue now off the table for many organizations- FFUP continues to advocate and shout into the wind but it is clear we need a broader base of support- SO one clear path ahead is this email newsletter I have been writing and talking about- First edition went out to a few and since has been redone to make it more palatable- These are submission from prisoners in solitary with lots of info scattered in and a request for penpals. In two weeks we will send out part two with more submissions and a little more depth on what is happening and issue three will have a templates of letters to write to Madison asking for

- 1) a review of all people on AC and the process that sent them there and a joining with other states in banning long term solitary confinement more than 15 DAYS.
- 2) Building a mental health treatment center like the one court mandated at TCI and implementing the overhaul of rules and procedure used in today's solitary gulags to those in that suit while looking closely at inhumane and unwise practices that are unique to the male prisons.

We plan on emailing a new edition every two weeks and invite everyone who is in solitary or who spent extended time in solitary to contribute. As this newsletter needs to be relatively light and short- prisoners who submit introductions and essays and poems art etc will be also given a blog post where your whole submissions will be posted and linked to the newsletter. We would like a general introduction also to put in the newsletter and on your blog post. There will be 5 of us sending it out to friends and people concerned people we know as well as advocacy organizations and email mailing list will grow. Its goal is two-fold- to give you a voice and to build a powerbase for real change.

If you wish to be part of this, first introduce yourself , as if you are talking to a person who knows nothing about prison or solitary except what is on the news. Then in future submissions, you can write as often as you want; go into your concerns, the conditions and anything you need. There will be links to whole submissions while we put summations in the newsletter.

actions planned :We learned a lot with our class action attempt back last year. WE will ride again only this time simpler. There are two successful lawsuits we will be using as templates- Both lawsuits began as prose suits and we are researching the best way forward. We also are bombarding legislators on corrections committees and new Madison people with information on the horrendous conditions in solitary and wholesale illegal and corrupt attempts to deny access to court and law library etc. in hopes that rules and procedures will be changed if not the laws.

If you are able please PRESS HARD WHEN YOU WRITE IN PENCIL- VERY HARD TO READ! Also know that I read all but in no way can answer all- I get anywhere between 8 and 20 letters a day. Corrlinks I am slowly integrating but have dropped the phone- we have very poor cell phone coverage so most calls get cut off and the new phone system is toxic for FFUP's purposes.

Stamp Program and legal Project: LIMITS and FFUP

Requests for stamps continue to rise and overtop capacity. Lately we have been getting many requests for 20 to thirty stamps for discovery and other court case related matters. Also coming in are requests for impossible stuff like clothes and TVs. Over the years we have been able to some of that occasionally but those requests now come in more frequently and funds are dwindling, it is time to get clarity.

- 1) In order to be considered for one pack stamps and pad of paper monthly, I need to see an account statement every 6 months or be given reason why that is impossible.. I am hoping that being stricter about account statement may cut down on requests to be filled while still providing to those in real need. THOSE OF YOU WHOSE

SITUATION I AM WELL AWARE OF AND I KNOW HAVE NO MONEY, ARE "GRANDFATHERED IN"(don't have to send accounts etc- I will do my best).

- 2) The legal project- I will help with extra stamps when I can but you need to apply for legal loan and be going that route as far as you can. In order to send more than the usual pack of stamps and paper a month, one of our litigator guides needs to vet your case and approve it as having a good chance of winning .
- 3) If you want guidance with conditions of confinement cases or health problems, make sure you exhaust your remedies! You can write me for a 10 page guidebook by an inmate for inmates on how to start a lawsuit. As most you know we send out many free for the printing online guides also.
- 4) If you are writing for guidance, write your case summary as if you were writing a seasoned litigator-/not me/ be thorough and focused with no fluff. Make it so I can send it right on to the litigator and do not have to write you twice. He then sends his suggestions to me and I to you, you decided if you want to connect, if you want the handbooks etc. That is the plan.

REQUEST FROM TWO of our Litigator helpers: Gentlemen:

A)For those of you who would like to have advice and guidance regarding civil actions, please take notice that before anything you must first exhaust your so-called administrative remedies in the time and manner set forth in the DOC 310 (inmate complaint review system[ICRS]). Without exhaustion it would be absolutely fatal to you claims(s). In Addition, when writing and asking for help with your issues(s)/ claims(s)please try and send along the ICE report, CCE report, and secretary's decision. Doing so will save time, effort and scarce resources for all. William N Ledford

For application for guidance on innocence cases

Please include this information to save time and resources

- 1) written case summaries from arrest to conviction, including dates
- 2) Summary of issues you feel are present to support an innocence or wrongful incarceration claim
- 3) Very specific detailed criminal appeal history including court date, and if this was a direct or subsequent Appeal I.E. 974.06.
- 4) List all available documents you now have such as
 - a) discovery material
 - b) Court record
 - c) transcripts
 - d) appellate record (motions, briefs, decisions)
 - e) a copy of any letters you received attempting to obtain pro-bono counsel , AACL, Innocence project etc.
 - f) If any deadlines exist , list them.

this should provide us a record and details prior to any assistance.

Benjamin Biese

EXECUTIVE ORDER #31

After the nixing of pardons and clemencies for those in prison, we thought we still had an opening with the executive order 31- However Wardens in general are not honoring it and are denying executive order 31 petitions for release using it without submitting them to parole chairman Tate. We have related this to Tate through his aid Jacob but so far are getting no resolution. I have asked if we could apply directly to Tate also. **SO DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATIONS** yet unless you are ready to do it again later. We will get this done.

As some prisoners seem also confused about what this order is, I put it in the last newsletter but below are the salient parts:

1)"Extraordinary circumstances" means advanced age, infirmity or disability of the Inmate, need for treatment or services not available within the correctional Institution, a sentence to a term of Imprisonment that is substantially disparate from the sentence usually imposed for a particular offence, or other circumstances warranting an early release which are made known to the sentencing court pursuant to section PAC 105 (1) (a), Wis. Adm Code.

(note:we will be collating data that shows just how disparate time served is between pre 1994 and today's OL prisoners.)

3)B. All requests will be forwarded to the **Warden who will review the request to determine if the inmate is statutorily eligible for consideration** and forward the request to the Chairperson with a recommendation.

C. **The Chairperson shall consider all of the following eligibility for parole, sufficiency of time served. satisfactory adjustment to institution, satisfactory program participation, adequate release planning and risk to the public**

D. **The Department will provide the Chairperson with requested information, including release plans.**

E. The Chairperson will determine whether or not his appropriate to waive the 25 percent of service sentence requirement under s 304.06 (1) (b), Stats. In accordance with S PAC 1.05 (1) (a), notice of the determination to the court, district attorney and victim is required.

F. **The Chairperson will make a decision to approve, deny, or defer for continued monitoring of the extraordinary circumstances.** (note: the ward only determines if an inmate is statutorily eligible for parole)

Legal news and requests

Assistance Needed in Religious Liberty Suit message by Attorney Michael J. Modl

In 2011, Rufus West a/k/a Mansa Lutalo Iyapo, filed a federal court lawsuit claiming that his religious rights were violated when the prison cancelled religious services and study groups due to the unavailability of a prison chaplain or volunteer to lead the services or groups. Mr. West settled his claim with the Department of Corrections. The settlement included a provision that the DOC agreed to not cancel congregate religious activities, including religious services and study groups, due to a volunteer or chaplain being unavailable to lead the group or service. This provision applied to all DOC adult institutions.

After the settlement became final, Mr. West learned that there had been a large number of violations of this settlement term. When the parties were unable to resolve their dispute, Mr. West brought a lawsuit alleging a claim on his own behalf for breach of the settlement agreement and a second claim, on behalf of all similarly situated inmates (a class action claim) whose religious rights were violated, based upon cancellation of religious services and groups. The federal judge, to whom this case is assigned, recently determined that Mr. West could proceed on both claims.

At this time, Mr. West's legal team is attempting to locate and communicate with other current and former DOC inmates who have knowledge or information about cancellation of congregate religious activities between September 25, 2016 and the present based upon the unavailability of a prison chaplain or volunteer to lead the activity. If you or someone you know has such information, I would appreciate if you would provide as much detail as you can about the cancellation, including: the date or approximate date of the cancellation, the name of the institution where this occurred, the religion involved, the specific type of congregate religious activity that was cancelled, and the basis for your understanding as to the reason the congregate religious activity was cancelled. Thank you for your assistance on this very important matter. Please provide this information to:

Michael J. Modl; Axley Brynson, LLP
2 East Mifflin Street, Suite 200; P.O. Box 1767; Madison, WI 53701-1767
E-mail: mmodl@axley.com; Lyndsey M Niebuhr, Legal Assistant

Thank you for your assistance on this very important matter. Very truly yours, Michael J. Modl

WISCONSIN ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH JUSTICE NEWSLETTER
CASE UPDATE FROM THE LEGAL TEAM

King v. Landreman litigation is underway! The State of Wisconsin (Defendants) filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit on August 9, 2019. The ACLU of Wisconsin, Quarles & Brady LLP, Foley & Lardner, LLP, Dr. Issa Kohler-Hausmann, and Atty. Avery Gilbert are preparing a response that will be filed by September 23, 2019.

The lawsuit was filed as a class action, which means that if the Court approves the class, it will include individuals within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections system that are parole eligible (not sentenced under Wisconsin's "Truth in Sentencing" law that went into effect on December 31, 1999) and currently serving life sentences, or a term of years that exceeds life expectancy, for crimes committed when they were under the age of eighteen.

We are not representing prisoners who are not serving life sentences, we are not representing prisoners who are not parole eligible, and we are not representing prisoners who are serving life sentences for crimes committed as adults. We are also not seeking money damages for individual prisoners, and we are not seeking any resentencing for our plaintiffs – we are asking that the State provide a parole process for juvenile lifers that satisfies the Constitution.

If you are parole eligible and serving a life sentence for crimes committed as a juvenile you will automatically be part of the class action. You do not need to do anything else at this time to be part of the class.

Being a part of the class action does not change who your lawyer is in any other case you might have pending, criminal or civil. It might not affect the outcome of your other cases. You do not need to attend court hearings about the class action lawsuit at this time, but you still must go to court hearings for your other cases.

The goal of the lawsuit is to change the way the parole system works as it applies to juvenile lifers in Wisconsin. If we win, the State will have to fix the Wisconsin parole system for juvenile lifers. The judge will decide how to make sure the State fixes the system.

Thank you for all of your support.

Sincerely,

The King v. Landreman Legal Team

Thanks, Wendy Sisavath/Youth Justice Advocate/[Wisconsin Alliance for Youth Justice](#)

ATTN: Any inmates in the Wisc. DOC who committed an act of self-harm/suicide attempt AFTER telling staff they were feeling this way OR requested an Observation Placement and were denied. Along with the following a Complaint through the ICRS please contact me so your name can be provided to the Attorneys involved with an ongoing Civil Claim. You may be called as a witness to testify if you're willing. Only those serious and those who have legit complaints please contact me: Derek M. Williams #196238 @ CCI. Possible Class Action if your situation fits the criteria. Appreciate all willing to seek Justice.

Johnny Gibson 385510 GBCI 819 19

On February 18, 2015, I was viciously attacked by another inmate while in the dayroom at the WSPF. Another inmate pressed the emergency intercom to inform the correctional officers to what was going on but no one responded. The other inmate stepped in while I pressed the emergency intercom. Still no one responded. When I pounded on the door the officers then responded. On April 3, 2018, I file a 42 USC 1983 in Grant County Circuit Court against the warden, two sergeants and two COs. The case was transferred to the Dane County Circuit Court because I requested a jury trial. On August 2, 2018, the defendants through their lawyers removed the case out of Dane County Circuit Court to the U S District Court of Western District of Wisconsin pursuant to 28 USC 1441, 1446. For seven(7) months my suit sat on Judge Williams M Conley's desk waiting to be screened, so I filed a motion for Writ of Mandamus with the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. When Judge Conley realized I did that, he ordered me to pay the full filing fee of \$400 to proceed with my suit. I did not pay it and he dismissed my suit. An attorney for Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center was following my case and offered to do my appeal probono. However the judge saw the error of his ways when the appeal process started and realized he did not have legal standing to dismiss my complaint and on May 31, 2019, the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals remanded my case back to the district court. Allow me to explain why he did not have legal standing to dismiss my case.

When my case went to the Grant County Circuit Court the filing fee was paid in full. So on August 2, 2018 when the defendant's lawyer removed the case to the US district Court, they were also obligated to pay the full filing fee. Congress has enacted a Federal scheme to govern the payment of filing fee in federal court. See 28 USC and 1914 and 1915.

Under 1914, a district court “shall require the parties instituting any civil action , suit or proceeding in such court, whether by original process, removal or otherwise, to pay a filing fee of \$350” 28 USC 1914 (a). In other words a plaintiff who files an action in Federal court must prepay the Federal filing fee and in the case of an action that the defendants remove the Federal court, the defendants must prepay the Federal Filing. Section 1914 prevents a court from collecting any other fees unless “prescribed by the judicial conference of the United States.” 28 USC 1914(b) .See, Woodson V McCollum, 875 F 3d 1304 (2014)

When it comes to prisoners’ Eighth Amendment Rights to reasonable safety the US Supreme Court has said “when the state takes a person into its custody and holds him against his will, the Constitution imposes upon it a corresponding duty to assume some responsibility for his/her safety and general well being.”Deshaney V Winnebago County Department of Social Services, 489 US, 189,199-200(1989). In Deshaney, The Supreme Court articulated the principle that the constitution imposes an affirmative duty to provide reasonable safety to those confined by the state: the rationale for the principle is enough, when the state by the affirmative exercise of power so restrains an individual’s liberty that it renders him unable to care for himself, and at the same time fails to provide for his basic human needs, eg, Food, clothing, shelter, medical care and reasonable safety—it transgresses the substantive limits on state actions set by the Eighth Amendment and the due process clause..the affirmative duty to protect arises from the limitations which it has imposed on his freedom to act in his own behalf. See Estelle V Gamble, 429 US 97. 013 (1976).

Know your rights and if you are not getting protection that you are required to have under the constitution. Make them pay. If anyone have any question about this I can be reached at the address below, until October, 19, 1019. After that I will be discharged Johnny Gibson 385510, Green Bay Correctional Inst, PO Box 19033, Green Bay, WI 54307.

Introduction and executive summary from Staffing, Crowding and Death in the WI DOC, a Report by FFUP

Introduction:

Wisconsin’s prison system is in crisis. Department of Corrections (DOC) officials claim the problem is understaffing and propose solutions like raising guard wages and building new facilities. These solutions expand their own department and increase Wisconsin’s capacity for mass incarceration,all at great expense for Wisconsin taxpayers. More importantly, they will not address the real humanitarian crisis, and may make it worse. A closer look at guard levels and staffing dynamics in the DOC shows that the problems comes less from understaffing than from overcrowding, high turnover and mismanagement. Expanding the DOC only expands these problems.

Forum for Understanding Prisons (FFUP) is a volunteer-run non-profit that has done research on Wisconsin prisons and advocacy for people incarcerated in them for over fifteen years. For this report, we’ve combined our years of experience and amassed stories with publicly available data, government reports and open records requests to present a more complete picture of DOC staffing than what the DOC provides itself. Our research also includes information about deaths in the DOC, confirming testimonies from imprisoned people that conditions in the prisons are worsening. We will then examine the impact of staffing trends on conditions in Wisconsin prisons and on prison policy making itself.

This report is incomplete as our research has been hampered by the DOC’s lack of transparency and failure to promptly release complete and accurate records. Given the gravity of the subject matter, the DOC’s frequent repetition of a misleading “understaffing” narrative, and that narrative’s influence on policy, we provide this incomplete report. Our intention is to follow up with more research as information becomes available.

This report discusses violent abuse, torture, self-harm, and suicide.

Executive summary

Seeking a system-wide explanation for countless stories of increased instability and abuse in Wisconsin prisons, and a better understanding of the frequent claim that prisons are understaffed, we began research into Wisconsin DOC staffing levels and deaths of incarcerated people. We filed open records requests and pulled data from reports on the DOC website and other research. We focused on a five year research period, from August 2013 to August 2018.

Our primary finding is that the frequent assertion by DOC officials and policymakers that the DOC is woefully understaffed and must hire more guards is contradicted by actual numbers.

- The DOC had significantly more guards (1,094 more) at the end of the research period than the beginning.
- Wisconsin's prison population also increased during that time period, but at a slower rate, so guard staff levels increased relative to the population. In August of 2013, there were 7.36 incarcerated people per guard, in August 2018 the ratio dropped to 5.78.
- This ratio approximates the national average (5.1 to 1). Federal prisons operate with a ratio of 10.3 incarcerated people per guard.

The DOC and policy-makers are able to claim crisis-level understaffing despite these objective facts to the contrary because they base their position on vacancy rates, that is, the number of positions that are statutorily approved, but unfilled. Therefore, Wisconsin prisons are only understaffed insofar as they are unable to hire and retain as many workers as the legislature and department aspire to obtain.

Meanwhile, conditions endured by incarcerated people have reached the level of humanitarian crisis, and are worsening:

- ⑩ Overcrowding was high and increased over the research period, from 129% to 134% of design capacity in adult institutions.
- ⑩ Suicides among people who are imprisoned rose from an average of 2 per year to 12 in 2016.
- ⑩ This suicide rate remained elevated (6 per year) through 2017 and 2018.
- ⑩ Rates of death for imprisoned people from all causes increased significantly after adjusting for increasing prisoner populations over the research period.

These facts support accounts from people held in Wisconsin prisons that describe worsening conditions. They describe instability and negligence from increasingly inept staff, as well as growing callousness from guards. Stories of harassment, willful disregard, and violent abuse proliferate, as well as increased reliance on lockdowns and solitary confinement.

Imprisoned people are not the only ones who complain about degrading conditions, they are just the ones who cannot escape. Our research into staff terminations showed the following trends:

- ⑩ Turnover for guards is high and grew over the research period (from 17.8% to 26.1% annually).
- ⑩ A large majority of terminations were guards quitting, frequently without notice.
- ⑩ While the number of guards rose, the number of other positions (such as social workers, medical technicians, psychiatric staff, and administration) fell by 1,584 people.
- ⑩ The DOC's contracts to private vendors increased dramatically during the research period (from 1 contract worth \$2.5 million to 2,798 contracts worth \$805 million). Many of these contracts were for temporary workers to replace non-guard staff, contributing to instability and insecurity.

The data we examined, combined with previously researched and widely available information about Wisconsin's incarceration rate, racial disparities, incredibly high costs, and overcrowding makes a strong argument for decarceration. Wisconsin must reduce both the number of people held in prisons and the number of people working in them, especially guards. A majority of Wisconsin voters support these changes, as demonstrated by the election of Governor Tony Evers, who made a promise to reduce the prison population by half on the campaign trail. Many Republican politicians agree with reducing Wisconsin's prison size, making decarceration a theoretically bipartisan issue.

Yet, scarce progress has been made, indeed Governor Evers has completely reversed direction in a number of ways: expanding beds, staff, and funding for the DOC as well as investment in MSDF, a facility he said he would close "as soon as possible". The Republican legislature supported spending even more taxpayer money on the prison system.

Our research suggests that the gap between stated policy objectives and actual policy proposals, let alone results, is caused by the embedded power of DOC staff themselves. We suspect that policy-makers fear

following the will of the voters because it will reduce morale and increase turnover, recklessness, and insubordination by guards. They are treading carefully to avoid a complete collapse of the prisons and meanwhile turning a blind eye to a humanitarian crisis underway behind the prison walls. To whatever degree this is true, Wisconsin's prison system is no longer under the control of the elected government.

To change course, the government must rapidly reduce its incarcerated population and dependence on prison economies. Some recommended steps:

- ⑩ Reform the parole commission to rapidly release thousands of people sentenced under the old law.
 - ⑩ Expand the criteria for pardons to include people who are currently incarcerated, and release many of them.
 - ⑩ Expand compassionate release, allowing aging people to rejoin their families and escape the DOC's substandard medical treatment which is causing premature death.
 - ⑩ Expand Treatment Alternative and Diversion (TAD) programs to reduce incarceration.
 - ⑩ Rein in the Division of Community Corrections (DCC) to reduce incarceration of people on supervision: cease crimeless revocations, investigation holds, and incarceration during treatment and alternative to revocation (ATR) programs.
 - ⑩ Rein in the police and District Attorneys especially in Milwaukee and Madison. Saturation policing and aggressive prosecution will continually overcrowd Wisconsin prisons.
 - ⑩ Close and demolish the ancient Green Bay and Waupun Correctional facilities, which are in disrepair and the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF) which is poorly designed and occupying valuable land in downtown Milwaukee.
 - ⑩ Convert 2-3 other prisons into mental health facilities under the control of the Department of Health Services following the model of the Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC).
- . Divest from prison and invest in supportive, wholesome, community-focused growth in both urban communities targeted by the prison system and the rural communities addicted to it.

Note: full report is available upon request.

**WE ARE
Victor R Brown 529809 GBCI**

TO THE SYSTEM WE ARE:
A dollar sign and a bed space
Violent, stupid and unworthy,
Just another animal in a cage

TO US WE ARE
Human!
Someone's friend or family member
someone determined to become smarter
someone determine to get treatment and rehabilitate
ourselves so that we can re-enter society.
A prisoner to this criminal UNjustice system who is still
determine to get through it all in one piece

TO YOU WE ARE:
A mixture of both the above.
Sometimes, whoever you're told we are.

.....
I made the choice to be who I am now instead of who the
system wants me to be.
I want YOU to make that same choice,
THIS IS MY VOICE:"Hear me, See me, Help me."
"My favorite choice of virtues is Freedom, because I am
always free to make that choice"-me
" I go on seeing the many faces of death and the despair in
their eyes"- me

Some contact numbers perhaps useful(full page next newsletter)

Governor Tony Evers
PO Box 7863; Madison, WI 53707
608-266-1212.

general phone number for DOC headquarters:
(608) 240-5000(good for all DOC powers below)

Makda Fessahaye Administrator, WIDOC
P.O. Box 7925
Madison, WI 53707-7925
Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes
PO Box 2043, Madison, WI 53702-2043

Kevin Carr ,WI DOC Secretary

PO Box 7925;Madison, WI 53707

John Tate Chairman; Parole Commission

PO Box 7960;Madison, WI 53707

You can reach your legislators by calling
the Legislative Hotline. Dial toll free:

1-800-362-9472

Legislative committees chairs

addresses for all: Senate: P.O. Box 7882

Madison WI 53707

Assembly: P.O. Box 8952

Madison WI 53708

2019 Joint Review Committee on

Criminal Penalties

Representative Hutton (Co-Chair)

Senator Wanggaard (Co-Chair) 2019

Assembly Committee on

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Representative Spiros (Chair)

Representative Sortwell (Vice-Chair)

2019 Assembly Committee on

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Representative Spiros (Chair)

Representative Sortwell (Vice-Chair)

Dear Bully,

Rufus West, #225213 a/k/a Muslim Mansa Lutalo Iyapo;

P.O. Box 925 (RGCI), Redgranite, WI 54970

Insha Allah this message will find you in a state where you can fully comprehend what I'm articulating, as I firmly believe that the best thing that two people can have between each other is an understanding.

Growing up I don't recall ever having to deal with any bullies. That doesn't mean, however, that I don't recognize when a person is being bullied.

It's imperative that you know that I refuse to be bullied by you. I REFUSE TO BE BULLIED BY YOU! If you haven't figured it out by now, the only thing I fear is Allah. So, your desire to somehow instill fear in me is NEVER going to happen. Consequently, the tactics that you use will not work. Whether that be in the form of cell searches, strip searches, being placed in the hole, stealing, destroying or disorganizing my property, arbitrarily firing me from jobs, arbitrarily denying me jobs, physical and verbal abuse, termination from prison activities, denial of visits, phone calls and food, frequently relocating me from cell to cell, overt and dog-whistle racist attacks, celling me up with "inmates" who ..., having females strip search me, denying me medical treatment for years under the guise that "he's faking," denying me psychological treatment, total isolation in a Supermax box car type cell for years, arbitrary imprisonment via mechanisms in place to prevent me from being paroled, etc.

It doesn't matter where you put me, I will grow. Even in the deepest part of your beast's belly, I won't cease to fight against oppression. To me, placement therein is just a minor setback for a major comeback. So, throw me to the wolves and I'll return leading the pack.

The worst pieces of advice I ever received were, "Go along just to get along" and "Fake it until you make it." I am not cut from that type of cloth. Whenever I am oppressed it becomes incumbent upon me as a Muslim to resist those who oppress me until they cease their oppression. So, I am unable to be "terminated." What you call "termination," I deem a resurrection. The dirt that you pile on me is akin to the Mexican Proverb, "They tried to bury us ... they did not know we were seeds." Incidentally, the more dirt that you pile on me, the deeper my roots become.

In closing, I want to share with you something that I've picked up along the way titled, "The Oak Tree."

THE OAK TREE

A mighty wind blew night and day, it stole the oak tree's leaves away.
Then snapped its boughs and pulled its bark, until the oak was tired and stark.

But still the oak tree held its ground, while other trees fell all around.
The weary wind gave up and spoke, "How can you still be standing, Oak?"
The oak tree said, "I know that you - can break each branch of mine in two.

"Carry every leaf away, shake my limbs and make me sway.

"But I have roots stretched in the earth, growing stronger since my birth.

"You'll never touch them - for you see, they are the deepest part of me.

"Until today I wasn't sure, of just how much I could endure.

"But now I've found - with thanks to you, I'm stronger than I ever knew."

Salaam!

final note: This is a stuffed newsletter and we were not able to include all submissions. We plan another soon as much is happening , There will be room in upcoming newsletter for submissions left out here.

FFUP ; 29631 Wild Rose Drive, Blue River, WI 53518, All donations welcome , needed and well used.
Make checks payable to prisonforum c/o above address, or go to our go- fund- me account at
<https://www.gofundme.com/prisonforum>. Email with questions at pgswan3@aol.com

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