



American Friends Service Committee

Newark Area Office

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“FROM THE INSIDE-OUT”

Highlighting Voices from Those Most Affected by Covid-19 In The New Jersey State Prisons

A report by the
Prison Watch Community Oversight Initiative
Issue #11 - July 2020

This is a community effort created by the voices inside. Edited by Prison Watch Program Director Bonnie Kerness bkerness@afsc.org).

Associate Editors

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Jean Ross, Esq., People’s Organization for Progress
Artwork: Ojore Lutalo

Our mighty coalition partners who contribute to the work include: *New Jersey Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (NJ-CAIC) Salvation and Social Justice, Latino Action Network, The NJ Institute for Social Justice, North Jersey Coalition of Religious Leaders, All of Us or None, Unitarian Universalist Faith Action NJ, People’s Organization for Progress, the Campaign to End the New Jim Crow* and so many more.

UNDERSTAND.....If you are confined in a state prison, you live in a cage or a tiny cell – usually with another person or in a dormitory. You cannot choose your placement or your cellmate. If you get sick from the coronavirus or if you have symptoms or have been exposed to the virus, you may be moved to a unit that was used for solitary confinement or was condemned.

All your property is thrown in a bag, and you hope nothing leaks on your papers, or is stolen by someone before it is packed up
You are in a cell that has not been cleaned or sanitized with bleach before you are thrown in
You are in a cell that likely has mold that has been there for years
You may get bedding that has not been cleaned or disinfected or had been used by a person with the virus
You get a tray delivered, but you do not know how it was prepared or if proper precautions were taken
You might get a shower 3x a week
Your sink **MIGHT** work well, you might have hot water, sometimes
You have to ask, then beg, for soap
You have to ask, then beg for your laundry to be done (once a week at best)
You hope that your medication needs have been conveyed over to whoever brings them to this location
You are alone and you don't know when you will be able to communicate with anyone
You have not been tested, or if you have, you cannot believe what they tell you the results are.
You have no phone access
and you **PRAY** that you have envelopes, pen, paper, and stamps so that you can let someone outside know **how** you are, **where** you are, and see **if** they can help.

Or... worse:

In some locations, you are put with 10-15 other people who have symptoms - whose test results are not back
You don't feel well or have scary symptoms and you can't get anyone's attention to get help –
or you contact custody, but no medical or clinical person comes to see you
You try to ask for help, you cry out for help, but no one from the staff responds
Without any clothes but what you wore coming in, on a bunk near someone who is coughing, without soap, sharing a shower and sink with 10 others with no way to disinfect the handles, or buttons between uses.
You could be in there for 10-12 days- or 14 – or more – who knows
You may get some of your things at some point
You may watch people get sicker
You may watch the crew come to take someone out to the infirmary, and when they don't come back, you don't know if they have gone back to their unit, out to the hospital, or have passed away
You may watch or hear someone pass away and not be able to help
You will be released without ever being given your results - either because you somehow don't seem to have symptoms anymore, or for reasons you don't know.
You **MIGHT** go back to where you were housed before, you might not.
All your property might be there still, or it might not
The people you were used to living with might still be there, they might not.

You might hear rumors of a furlough program. the rumors are flying, you might qualify but unless you have a place guaranteed to live, that **YOU** know the address to, you will be denied
You then hear that this program is only good to be out for 30-60 days - and you ask yourself - why would I do that and come back to more of the same here?
You **WILL** live in fear.
When you finally hear from your loved ones outside, they are living in fear and don't know what they can do to help you – or more usually, they have found out that they can't do anything

Lydia Thornton

AFSC Statement

As people are coming together across the globe to keep each other healthy and safe, it's critical that we extend that care to members of our community who are in prisons, jails, and detention centers as well as their families and communities.

Join AFSC in calling on governors in every state and the leadership of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to respect the human rights and dignity of every person and take steps that help create healthier and safer communities for us all.

Introduction

This issue of *From the Inside Out* has been assembled for the purpose of educating the community about the impact of the coronavirus **inside** NJ state prisons. Covid-19 is bad on the outside. Everyone has been touched in some way by this pandemic, from reduced movement, to job loss, to wearing a mask everywhere, to having loved ones pass away. Our overriding emotions are frustration and fear. This is understandable, universal and international. We have all heard people say "I feel isolated", "I am confined to my house," "I cannot go/do what I want in the way I am used to". What we would like to challenge you to do is imagine what you, in your home, apartment, condominium have experienced over the past 100 days; hold that image in your mind. Add to that image that you are NOT alone and are involuntarily surrounded by many other people. Some are young, some old. Some you are alright with, others you cannot tolerate. On the outside you can watch TV, Google for information, even call your doctor. Behind our prison walls, none of that is possible. We have spent 100 days being told to wear masks, to wash out hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap, to socially distance from others by at least 6 feet. To not go anywhere if we do not have to. To stay away from all crowds, and especially to get tested if you have symptoms, and self-isolate for 14 days.

Outside you can call your doctor and get tested just because you requested it as you didn't feel well. Our New Jersey sisters and brothers inside prison cannot do that. They cannot socially distance, they could not get masks until 4-6 weeks after they were mandated in the rest of the state. They could not ask for a test and get one in March, or April. In May, finally universal testing began in our prisons with a test that did not have a proven record of accuracy. Prior to that, if a person in prison had a fever, or a cough, or just did not 'look right' as determined by an officer they would be rushed off to quarantine. Outside, quarantine may mean your bedroom, with TV, your phone and all the other things you may want or need which ensure human contact and personal comfort. A shower, your sheets and blankets. Inside that means you are handcuffed and escorted to a solitary confinement punishment cell which is serving as "medical quarantine" where you might get 2 sheets, a towel and a blanket. You have been separated from your legal papers, photographs, books and other personal possessions. You will stay there 14 days. If you look/sound better, you are returned to your unit which can be a dorm or two person cage. In many cases, this was a death sentence for you or someone else.

We know that the Department of Corrections staff was tested. We have also had reports that many who stated they did not feel well were still required to work anyway. This, of course, puts everyone at risk, staff, imprisoned people, and families at home.

Once testing on prisoners was finally initiated and completed, the results were not properly and efficiently communicated to those incarcerated. Because there is so much distrust, many of the test results were suspect. Conversely, because being sick was treated as a violation, or disciplinary action (put in Isolation) many would hide

symptoms, not tell medical, or an officer, or anyone that they were sick, until it was too late, thereby infecting many others. Pre-existing conditions that have been so much in the media contribute enormously inside prison walls because of the lack of proper medical care. When people complain about lack of appropriate medical care, they face retaliation by the officers.

In ideal conditions, without a pandemic, the quarantine units being used would be condemned. Many of the units now being used for “medial quarantine” have remained unused for years. They are closed off until they are needed, and then re-opened for use without cleaning or sanitizing in any way. These are rooms with mold, vermin, feces, and years if not decades of neglect and abandonment. Yet if “needed” there is no hesitation to place people who are already sick in such a place.

Media and the medical community report that prisons throughout the country are an incubation chamber for this virus. They are the perfect breeding ground because of insufficient space, a lack of medical resources, and physical infrastructure. The ONLY answer is to reduce the number of people housed in our facilities. There is public outcry everywhere for LIVES that matter. In New Jersey, we have the highest racial disparity in sentencing and imprisonment in the country. Do you believe that these LIVES matter? Then you must act.

On April 10, 2020, Governor Murphy signed **Executive Order No. 124**. In theory, this could have created some space in the facilities. He may even have believed this would be an answer, while preserving public safety. In writing, it created social distancing in prison populations by releasing non-violent offenders and those who were eligible for parole hearings within a short period. Initially there were over 1000 people deemed eligible. However, this effort has proven completely ineffective since at its high point, only 150 prisoners total of men and women combined have been furloughed from NJ state prisons. That is approximately 15% of those originally deemed eligible. We believe that this is due to the many levels of people who had to confirm release to the furlough program with a single person who held the final authorization. No one from the Department reached out to re-entry services or any of the other NJ groups which could have aided release. As a result: as of July 10, 2020, out of a total population of 17,818 inmates in NJ state prisons:

2721 prisoners have tested positive for the virus

50 have died

At **LEAST 4** staff have died.

At **LEAST 781** staff members have tested positive for the virus.

150 prisoners total of men and women combined have been furloughed from NJ state prisons.¹

There is no reason given for the lack of furloughs. Denial letters are being distributed without a reason. There are due process issues with this, but that is overlooked. The numbers of those sick and dying will only rise due to the failure to put any kind of process or proper structural procedures in place for a public health crisis. Willfully ignoring the lives of NJ state prisoners who are vulnerable to the virus endangers us all and we must take action.

Issue 11 of *From the Inside Out* serves to educate the public, and most especially the members of the state legislature, exactly how accountable they are for the almost 18,000 lives they oversee custody of. How they are responsible, when they fail to act to hold the Department of Corrections accountable for their failures, and fail to not only vote to change our system in the moment, but create longstanding systemic change that makes us a model for the nation. Prisons are the land of the forgotten in this state and this country. We as a community must not let the voices of those inside go unheard. Below are the voices of men and women in NJ prisons letting us

¹ As reported by the DOC COVID-19 website

know of their experience. Listen to them. Hear them. Then we are asking you to act. We will continue to provide this platform for their voices to be heard.

“The DOC is more than a set of institutions. It is also a state of mind. That state of mind needs to immediately shift. Keeping people in cages during a pandemic makes all of us less safe. We need action from those in power to both significantly increase in the number of people eligible for release and address the dangerous conditions inside prisons. Anyone who is not released should be provided with sanitation supplies, testing, single cells, comprehensive medical care, and support staying in touch with loved ones.”

(Bonnie Kerness, at a June 2020 meeting of the Joint Law and Public Safety Committee Meeting)

<https://www.nj.com/opinion/2020/05/if-the-state-fails-to-act-prisons-will-become-death-camps.html>

NORTHERN STATE PRISON



May 28, 2020

“The cells have no electric, and the 8 guys there are positive for the virus, the others under them in the SU (which is a small unit) are not. They share the phones which is passed to them in the cell. The Lt. (2nd Shift) tried to get them moved because she knows it is not right to have them in the cells with no electric but she was told there is nowhere to put them so they are still there.”

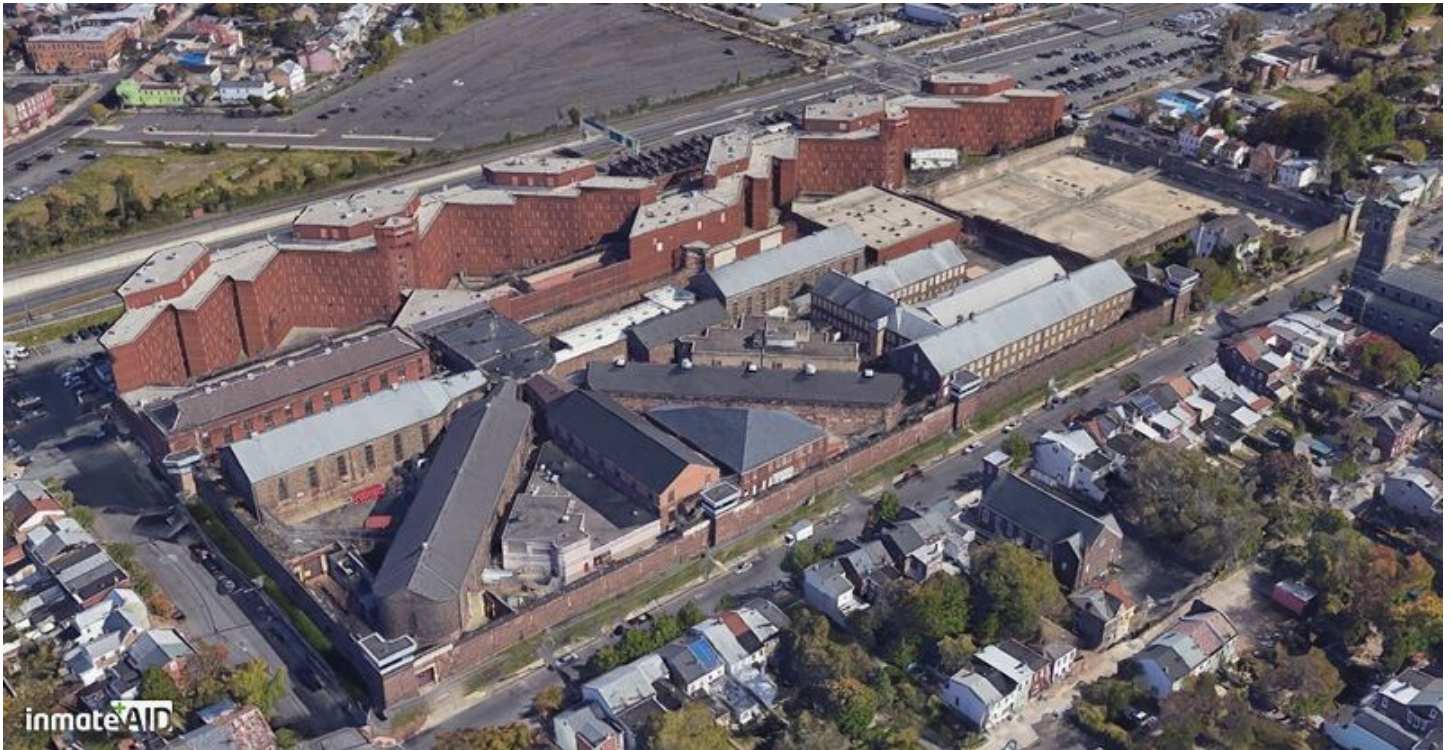
“They started testing in my unit today, they misplaced the bags with the tests for about 28 of us. I was one they could not get to today, so they have to come back tomorrow. The troubling thing is that they were going to the last unit when they left, however, one of the nurses doing the testing allegedly passed out so they called a medical code. Wouldn't it be just the luck if she had the virus, if so what then to all the inmates she tested?”

May 30, 2020

“They finally have begun testing the inmate population. Unfortunately they are still using inadequate quarantine housing for asymptomatic inmates as well as inmates who test positive, having officers work those inadequate quarantine units that have no proper training in infectious disease such as covid-19 and out of ignorance wears the same protective suits from the quarantined areas into the non quarantined areas which heightens the risk of spread of the virus and raising clear public safety issue for the inmates, staff and the public, i.e., officers families, etc. However, they still are moving at a snail's pace with releasing especially the vulnerable class members both the 'non violent' as well as the 'violent' offenders who are vulnerable class members.

In Solidarity...”

NEW JERSEY STATE PRISON



March 24 2020

"There is an inmate here who has been showing signs of having covid-19, but the staff refuses to test him. Instead, prison officials decided to keep him housed in the prison's infirmary. I witnessed correctional officers walking around the prison with no protective gear on their hands or faces. Inmates here do not have proper sanitation to protect ourselves, not cleaning or otherwise. Just to give you an update."

April 7 2020

"I am just one of I don't know how many prisoners housed in the New Jersey State Prison experiencing symptoms of the Coronavirus. It all started late Feb. the beginning was just flu like symptoms, but once that was gone, the shortness of breath began. The dry cough is manageable sometimes, and sometimes I can't control it. but it never disappears...I have nightmares that I'm suffocating and I wake up in a panic attack...everyone knows that the Coronavirus is in this building, but they won't test anyone in here in order to avoid a panic & have to acknowledge that it's in here. Meanwhile, the nights are the worse. Have you ever burned a piece of paper, and watched as the fire took hold to the last piece as the fire goes out & the smoke sizzles into the wind? Well that final piece is what my lungs feel like when I'm sleeping trying to hold to my last breath. Waking up is even worse because it feels like "near death", like playing a video game and your energy level has been knocked down to one last bar, then an energy coin falls out the sky to rejuvenate you. My energy coin in here is the air from the window in front of my cell when I wake up. They say we're supposed to be better in two weeks after social distancing? But there's no real social distancing in here no matter how much they try. I honestly believe that the only thing keeping me alive is this window."

April 8 2020

“Well so far (on record anyway), the first death from the Coronavirus in the building was this old man on the unit on the other side last night. they're saying he died from a “heart attack” but they tested him after he died and he tested positive. Then two old guys went to Intensive care this morning from COVID-19 symptoms. They still aren't testing anyone in here until near death and have to be hospitalized, or after death.”

May 26 2020

“As of yesterday 05/26/2020 I tested positive for COVID-19. They moved me to the old AD-SEG unit for quarantine for at least 10-14 days. The cell was super dirty. There was fecal matter in the sink and all around the toilet seat. The two shelves had layers of crud buildup on them, and the floor was filthy. They have not given any type of cleaning supplies to us in this wing (7up) to clean with at all yet. They only let us bring a few items from our old cell with us. This morning they did not feed us until ten min ago 9:40AM. We should have had breakfast around 7AM. When they did bring food it was not the meal we should of had, instead they brought cold cereal, one milk, and one juice cup. It seems like we are in trouble for getting the virus, which had to come from staff to begin with.”

June 2 2020

“Yeah, medical staff here started mass testing for coronavirus May 19, 2020. I was tested May 20, 2020. They've employed the Rutgers saliva test. I'm housed on 2-Left and so far 4 prisoners tested positive. Seven prisoners on 2-Right tested positive. On 1-Right, nine tests were positive, the very next day six more positive cases, then a couple of days later, thirty more positive cases all on 1-Right. The wing was quarantined. There were six positive on 6-Left and 4 positive on 6-Right. All positive cases are being housed on in 7-Wing. Basically the entire prison is on reduced mobility. They issued masks to all prisoners as well as prison staff. Masks have to be worn at all times when outside of our cages. We're being fed in our cages since early April. They did the mass testing on the prisoner population before they did mass testing on the guards and other staff, which was totally backward.”

June 4 2020

“NJDOC's approach and actions, especially the medical and mental health departments, with regarding Coronavirus turned out to be an absolute debacle in every respect! For instance, by the end of March, I lost my sense of taste and smell, experiencing body ache, fever, coughing, etc., to be exact, I was having severe coronavirus symptoms. I was completely bed ridden. Therefore, I submitted a Medical request Form MR-007 electronically on April 04, 2020. Since I was not seen by a doctor within 24-hours per NJDOC 10A Rule and after waiting for several more days, I made another formal request with the medical, but to no avail. It took 15-days to be seen by a medical professional from my initial request for medical attention, though I repeatedly requested with the nurses every day, who administered my medications for other ailments, what is the status on my treatment request for coronavirus symptoms. During my visit with the doctor, no particular treatment was rendered for Covid-19, nor tested me for it. During my visit at the prison clinic, I inquired what was the reason for the 15-day delay for my requested medical treatment? I was advised to "file a grievance." On my Unit-2Right, a prisoner died from COVID-19. He was 76 or 79 years old. He begged for proper medical attention which fell on deaf ears. He lived several cells down from mine. I personally saw him suffering and dying slowly. He came to a point that he couldn't even get out of his own bed without others assistance. At this point, he was finally taken out of the unit; thereafter, a day or two later he died.”

EDNA MAHAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY



May 1 2020

“Last night another inmate died from the virus here. An older lady, older than myself. The other night another inmate died from supposedly a heart attack while in ad seg? This governor here is not at all concerned about the prisoner and I can bet that they will not test us at all. They are giving us two masks once a week of which are very cheap and fall apart while you wear them. I found a girl washing her mask under the faucet because she felt being used over and over was no good. They need to open this lock down and let us go and get fresh air! Once a day for an hour is not enough.”

“Apparently two EMCF inmates have died from the COVID-19 virus, if the information I received is correct. They were both evacuated to the Hunterdon hospital and pronounced dead at the hospital. According to what I was told, the infiltration of Covid-19 is much worse in the men’s prisons. I hear that all inmates and staff at EMCF will be tested for the virus soon. All inmates are issued masks to wear but many (that I witnessed) still do not wear them outside their cells and still do not distance themselves from each other. Instead they loiter in each other’s cells and sit together in laundry rooms, etc. I can see why the administration is frustrated at the failure to comply with distancing. There is a wing in South Hall dedicated to only Covid-19 inmates, who are locked in rooms for a 14-day period if they are "diagnosed" as positive for the virus. The "diagnosis" consists of taking one's temperature and, if the patient is febrile, they are presumed to be positive and quarantined. I would imagine convicted felons are a low priority. I am sure some have slipped through the cracks and I can imagine that the ACSU and Detention units (which house 2 prisoners to a cell) are potential problem areas. Disciplinary hearings are conducted as normal and some inmates in those units do not have masks.”

COVID-19 Spreads in Women's Prison Where Sexual Abuse Prompted Federal Probe, Say Inmates and Advocates

"In a women's prison where federal authorities said the state failed to protect prisoners from sexual abuse, COVID-19 is spreading because of low supplies of masks, poor enforcement of social distancing, and inadequate quarantining of infected prisoners, according to emails from inmates received by prisoner advocates. Two prisoners had died from COVID-19 at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women near Clinton as of Monday, while 114 inmates and 77 staff had been confirmed with the virus, according to the latest data from the Department of Corrections. The prisoners' accounts follow a report that New Jersey's prisons overall have the second-highest COVID-19 infection rate of any state, and come amid accusations that Gov. Phil Murphy's executive order to reduce the infection rate by furloughing some prisoners has not resulted in the temporary release of as many prisoners as advocates say would help to slow the spread of the coronavirus in prisons. In April, a federal investigation found five corrections officers and one civilian employee sexually abused more than 10 women at the prison between October 2016 and November 2019. The U.S. Department of Justice report concluded that the DOC failed to protect women from sexual abuse by members of staff."

www.njspotlight.com/2020/06/covid-19-spreads-in-womens-prison-where-sexual-abuse-prompted-federal-probe-say-inmates-and-advocates/

(OH, THE HORROR!) HER DEATH WAS (MURDER!)

'Torture chamber' (CULTURE OF EXTREME:)

AT NEW JERSEY'S EDNA MAHAN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY FOR WOMEN!

The Intercept CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK
'I CAN'T BREATHE'
A WOMAN DIED OF COVID-19 IN A NEW JERSEY PRISON AFTER BEGGING TO BE LET OUT OF A LOCKED SHOWER

ISOLATE

TIFFANY MOFIELD
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE (FAMILY)

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

STUDY: N.J. PRISONS HAVE HIGHEST DEATH RATE IN U.S.
MONDAY, MAY 4, 2020
BLAKE NELSON (FOR)
THE STAR-LEDGER

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS NJ

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS NJ

Michelle Hei-loki Angelina
MICHELLE ANGELINA
WITNESS TO MURDER

Ojore Nuru Lutalo
Former U.S. Political Prisoner

Marcus O. Hicks
DOC Commissioner

State Sen. Michael Testa

SERIAL KILLER
N.J. senator calls on DOC leader to resign for 'ineffective leadership' of prisons during coronavirus crisis

THIS IS DANGEROUS

For more information
Call 908-344-0887 or
Email @ kerness.lutalo@njs.net

Artwork by Ojore Lutalo

EAST JERSEY STATE PRISON



May 25 2020

“For the past two weeks COVID 19 testing has been underway here at the prison. They began with the elderly and chronic care patients; however, it's crazy because if you test positive, they force you to double lock in a cell with someone else who has tested positive. Meaning, you're forced to quarantine with a cellmate without knowing whether or not your cellmate has a mild or severe case of COVID 19. And because they're using such a rinky dink test it's a strong possibility that the test results will prove to be extremely inaccurate. If that is the case you'll be placed in a cell and exposed to the virus as a result of false positive. With respect to the test, first you have to spit into this plastic vial. After you meet the saliva requirement, you have to then screw on the top which contain a blue liquid that is released into the saliva once screwed on tightly. Also, you're not to eat or drink anything 30 minutes prior to testing, if so, the test will render a false positive. Interestingly enough you're not told this vital information until after you have taken the test, irresponsibility is at an all time high.”

June 3 2020

“They have been using 2-Down for guys that are sick. There are 54 cells I was told. At first, only one ill man was occupying a cell. A few weeks later the amount of people becoming ill past the 54 number, and they began putting two men in a cell. According to the information I got, not all cells are doubled up. They are not receiving any treatments for the virus. As far as the time it takes to get test results back on the virus, it's hard to say. Some people that came up positive got moved 4-5 days later. Others results of positive were told about 10-12 days later. If the test came back negative, they didn't tell you anything. As in my case, I wasn't told anything and my test was two weeks ago. The test we are taking is the sputum.”

Obscure New Jersey 'Treatment' Facility Has A Higher COVID-19 Death Rate Than Any Prison In The Country

The detainees already completed their criminal sentences—but they are prevented from leaving for years. And with the coronavirus spreading, their lives are at risk.

"With at least eight deaths per 441 prisoners, the STU has a higher death rate—by far—than any prison in America. Its death count is equal to that of all the prison complexes combined in California. Or all those in Arizona, Pennsylvania, or more than 14 other states, according to Bureau of Prison data."

www.theappeal.org/obscure-new-jersey-treatment-facility-has-a-higher-covid-19-death-rate-than-any-prison-in-the-country/

Artwork by Ojore Lutalo

THE CORONAVIRUS

N.J. prisons have highest death rate in U.S.

NATION WIDE, THE CORONAVIRUS IS CLASS WAR GENOCIDE!

GOVERNOR P. MURPHY: WE CHARGE YOU WITH CLASS WAR GENOCIDE!

COMMISSIONER HICKS: WE CHARGE YOU WITH CLASS WAR GENOCIDE!

ALL SYNTHETIC (MURDER (IS) MURDER) GENOCIDE

MURDER ONE OUTBREAK CASE?

New Jersey MURDER INCORPORATED

WE CHARGE GENOCIDE

WEIRD BUT true

STATE FLAG!

Death spiral!

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS NJ

APRIL (2020!)

LISTED BELOW: SOME OF NEW JERSEY'S C-19 CLASS WAR GENOCIDE VICTIMS!

Date Deceased	Name	Age	Race	Date of Commitment
4/3/2020	Ricky James	37	AA	10/7/2016
4/7/2020	Tonny Kock	58	Asian	8/13/2007
4/7/2020	Peter Shanley	69	White	2/27/2013
4/11/2020	Chart Chavalaporn	57	Asian	12/1/2017
4/13/2020	Frank Silvera	63	AA	2/28/2018
4/14/2020	Michael Wilson	64	AA	10/2/1992
4/15/2020	Abdul Aziz Farrakhan	64	AA	3/25/1975
4/16/2020	William Prell	72	White	7/10/2015
4/16/2020	James Trotman	56	AA	8/18/2014
4/17/2020	Carmelo Herrera	56	Hisp	8/7/2003
4/17/2020	Timothy Moorman	45	AA	2/16/2018
4/17/2020	Qahhar Saabir	64	AA	9/13/1976
4/18/2020	Vito Nigro	48	AA	9/9/2015
4/20/2020	Calvert Buchanan	63	AA	7/27/1993
4/20/2020	Elias Chalet	58	White	7/12/2018
4/20/2020	Thomas DeGroat	72	White	7/16/2019
4/21/2020	William Conway	53	AA	11/4/2019
4/22/2020	Roberto Rivera	68	White	2/22/2019
4/23/2020	Robert Livingston	64	AA	2/2/1998
4/24/2020	N'namdi Azikiwe	57	AA	8/4/1983
4/24/2020	David Brown	65	AA	9/28/1979
4/24/2020	Darrell Parks	63	AA	2/24/1995
4/24/2020	Morgan Youngblood	76	White	11/15/2019
4/25/2020	Candido Casarez	63	His	10/25/2019
4/26/2020	Michael Bright	62	AA	5/23/2003
4/29/2020	Calvert McKenzie	57	AA	8/15/1997
4/29/2020	Tiffany Mofield	44	AA	3/3/2017
4/30/2020	Anthony Brown	47	AA	9/19/2003
4/30/2020	Denise Nagrodski	58	White	10/16/2015

ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 2 OF THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION, GENOCIDE MEANS ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ACTS COMMITTED WITH INTENT TO DESTROY, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, A NATIONAL, ETHNICAL, RACIAL OR RELIGIOUS GROUP, AS SUCH:

(C) DELIBERATELY INFLECTING ON THE GROUP CONDITIONS OF LIFE CALCULATED TO BRING ABOUT ITS PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION (IN) WHOLE OR IN PART;

For more information Call 1-800-449-6628 or Email @ kerness.b@verizon.net

Ojore Nuru Lutalo Former U.S. Political Prisoner Political Art Collages

SOUTHWOODS PRISON



May 25 2020

“They have me, as well as 61 other men whose test results for the Covid-19 were negative, housed with 62 men whose results were positive. The unit that I am housed on holds exactly 124 men, on two levels; the flats, and the mezzanines. They simply moved all of those who tested positive to the mezzanines; and moved those with negative results to the flats. They are only letting out 12 men at a time for 20 minutes to use the phone, kiosks, and showers. And so far they've only started with the flats. But I am assuming that at some point, they will have to allow the men on the mezzanine to use the phones, kiosks and showers also. Which means that at that point, we will be sharing the same showers, phones and kiosks as those with the virus.

This prison does not have any windows we can open and we are simply sitting on this unit breathing recycled air that comes in through vents that we share with everyone (both positive and negative for the virus) on this unit. We have not been given any information by custody, administration, or medical, as to if they are planning on moving anyone; whether we are in danger of contracting the virus by being on this unit; or anything else for that matter. I attempted to ask the nurse about those of us with underlying health conditions this morning when she came around, but she told me that she "do[es] not work for medical."

“When New Jersey issued its stay at home order in response to the coronavirus pandemic, residents holed up in their homes and businesses shuttered. But for the thousands of residents whose home is behind bars, it was a different kind of “lockdown.”Meanwhile, the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) insists that its prisons are not actually under lockdown—which, in prison lingo, refers to locking people in cells as a security measure. Rather, NJDOC says it is taking “proactive measures to mitigate the spread of the virus” by restricting programming and promoting social distancing.”

<https://progressive.org/dispatches/prisons-using-pandemic-lockdowns-chen-200514/>

Below is a letter from a person being held in Southwoods Prison to Lt. Gov Sheila Oliver.

South Woods State Prison
#215 Burlington Rd.
South Bridgeton, NJ 08302

State of New Jersey
Office of the Governor
Executive Department
ATTN: Hon. Sheila Y. Oliver, Lt. Governor
225 W. State Street, 3rd Floor
Trenton, NJ 08625

RE: Coronavirus Prevention

March 12, 2020

Dear Gov. Oliver,

Greetings. Within the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC), the spread of the coronavirus is almost certain for one reason: Rutgers University Correctional Health Care (UCHC) and the NJDOC charge a \$5 co-pay for all requests for medical assistance. This amount represents 25% of an inmate's average monthly salary, so most prisoners are never going to request assistance. Technically, steps taken by the governor on Tuesday past should mandate the suspension of this co-pay, but the NJDOC has said no such thing; requests for clarification are answered with, "We will notify you of changes." My hope in writing is that they may provide you with a more appropriate answer.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,

South Woods State Prisoner

c. Margaret Reed, MA, UCHC Acting Statewide Medical Patient Advocate
Dan DiBenedetti, Corrections Ombudsman
Marcus Hicks, Commissioner, NJDOC

The general public was told that all incarcerated persons would receive free Medical care (the \$5 co-pay would be waived), that people inside would receive a certain number of credits for communication via email, and free calls to family during the pandemic. This MAY have been true, within certain limits. The tragedy is (though unsurprisingly) that the people it would help were in most cases never told and so assumed that the normal fees and charges applied. This is a definitive, bordering on intentional, lack of transparency.

What You Can Do

History does not judge us by our intentions in the good times but by our actions in the hard times.

Perhaps the most noble and essential duty of a **Representative of the People** is to represent the needs of its most vulnerable individuals; the true test of a community's welfare. As we have all recently learned, where there is sickness in one of us, there is sickness in all of us.

This is the least glamorous part of the job. In fact, it requires downright courage and the deepest dedication to integrity and humanity. In unprecedented times, New Jersey's prison system, which ranks #1 in the country for racially disparate sentencing, also ranks #1 in the country for deaths per capita from COVID-19. The system gravely demands the human guidance of our Community Leaders. The only way to move towards justice and save lives is to release people, reduce overcrowding and improve conditions.



*Justice is not blind
All the more reason
she needs Your
guidance*

Support S2519 Today

Bill S2519/ A4235 provides a public health emergency 'credit' to incarcerated individuals in NJ during this extraordinary time of crisis. This credit, which cannot exceed one year, provides for the immediate release of anyone scheduled to be released within the next year, saving them months of agonizing trauma and perhaps their life and reducing the populations of overcrowded prisons so that it is possible to take protective measures for those left behind.

So... What can *You* do? Take Action!

Call, email and reach out to the individuals below, to your State Senator, your State Assemblyperson, your local representatives and anyone else you can think of who has influence. Every day we wait, people are getting sick and dying. These are our mothers, fathers, sons, sisters, friends and neighbors- human beings who were never sentenced to death and who don't deserve to die scared and alone in a deadly pandemic.

Urge your local and state representatives to vote YES for the S2519/ A4235 bill. New Jersey outlawed the Death Penalty decades ago. It is not within the power of the Department of Corrections, through a lack of planning and action, to reinstate it.

Find your local representative [here](#)

Governor Phil Murphy

Email/Phone <https://nj.gov/governor/contact/all/>

Phone: **609-292-6000**

Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver

Email <https://nj.gov/governor/contact/all/>

Phone: **609-292-6420**

Maurice Hicks, Commissioner, NJ Department of Corrections:

Phone # Phone **(609) 292-4036**

Email http://njdoc.gov/pages/email_Us.html

In Conclusion

We as advocates, have come together to support those inside to make their voices heard on this life and death issue. There have been 10 previous issues of From the Inside Out that have highlighted conditions, specific situations, and overall issues within the Department of Corrections in the State of New Jersey. This issue is different. It is not just about things that 'should' change, but rather things that MUST change. Tracking death, day by day, of those who cannot control their own situation to social distance as the Governor reminds us daily, is not something that anyone should have to do. However, in the State of New Jersey, unfortunately, there is not just a lack of transparency about those who are incarcerated but bold-faced lies being told about the incarcerated AND the staff numbers. There is a complete disregard for life on all sides that is simply unacceptable.

Many prisoners on the inside have recently reported that hundreds of denial letters have been distributed throughout the units to those who put in their furlough requests as soon as the executive order was announced. Prisoners up for parole this year have been denied. Many of them are older with pre-existing conditions and have served 10 to 30 plus years in prison. There is no possible justification as to why so few prisoners have received furlough, while thousands hopelessly suffer in this unconscionable captivity. Are prisoners not human beings that deserve the right to reasonable medical treatment and freedom after years of serving as property?

Those of us who work in this field, we have seen changes. There has been an Isolated Confinement bill passed, the right to vote has been restored, most of us never expected to be fighting a significant battle to simply keep people alive. It should not be a battle to keep people alive in a state that does not have the death penalty. There is nobody in the state of New Jersey that is sentenced to the death penalty, yet all 18,000 people currently serving sentences are under risk of just that. We cannot ignore the racism inherent in New Jersey has the highest racial inequality in the nation in our prison population. This is not something to be proud of - and that battle, for sentencing, mental health care and other alternatives to prison will continue long past the pandemic.

But this battle is the most time-sensitive one that has ever been waged. We are not talking about one or two people, we are speaking about thousands, who are needlessly challenged to survive in a situation that they were not sentenced to.

In her book, "Are Prisons Obsolete?", Angela Y. Davis states, "**[Prison] relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism.**" This issue of From The Inside Out serves to hold the state legislators responsible for the lives of the prisoners they put in jeopardy every second, every minute, every day that unjust procedures and policies continue to further expose the prisoners to this deadly virus. Prisons are the land of the forgotten in this state and this country. We, as a community of advocates will not let prisoners go unheard, and will continue to provide this outlet for their voices.

Will you reach out to Governor Murphy, and your Senators and Assembly people, and not ask... but DEMAND that they be on the right side of an issue that impacts thousands of lives, tens of thousands of family members, and the health and safety of every community that employees of the Department of Corrections go home to nightly?

Release those who are eligible.

Create Opportunity for a Pandemic Credit moving forward.

Provide proper PPE, and enable social distancing for those who are left, and who are employed.

It is the right thing to do.

In solidarity, with respect and in hope that you will reach out and make your voice heard.