

CURE-NY *Newsletter*

To Reduce Crime and Uplift Society

Spring, 2010

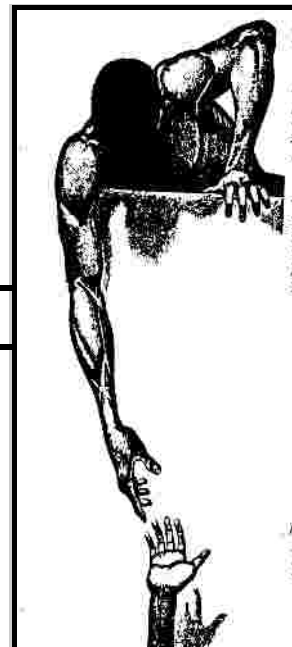
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NEW YORK STATE PRISONER JUSTICE CONFERENCE: Connecting Regions, Issues, and Strategies

On March 27th, 2010 from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Emerson Hall of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, 405 Washington Avenue, Albany, a coalition of New York State prisoner justice activist organizations and individuals is coming together to plan the conference. The purpose of the conference is to gather together, under one roof, a wide range of New York State organizations and individuals working on a diversity of prisoner justice issues to share ideas, information, energy, strategies, hope, and inspiration. There will be an overview of the issues that participating organizations are working on, time to strategize together to build a more effective movement for prisoner justice, and plans to continue collaborative work after the conference is over.

The mission of the New York State Prisoner Justice Conference is to bring together the varied and diverse organizations and individuals working for prisoner justice in New York State. There are approximately 90,000 people currently incarcerated in New York's prisons and jails – people of all ages, sexualities, genders, abilities, and documentation statuses. The overwhelming majority are people of color and of low income. Dozens of organizations address issues of concern in regard to prisoners, their families, and those impacted by the criminal justice system. The goal of the Prisoner Justice Conference is to bring these organizations together to share

information, energy, strategies, concerns, ideas, best practices, and hopes at the conference itself, and then through ongoing communication after the conference. In this way we hope to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts – a statewide movement for change, justice, compassion, and more human and humane solutions to social problems in place of reliance on incarceration.



“He Ain’t Heavy”
by Gilbert Young

Merit Time Status

Cure-NY supports efforts to increase and improve the availability of Merit Time. One of the efforts we have been following is that of CRJ, who has provided us with ongoing updates. Their current update follows. We welcome feedback on the Merit Time issue.

Greetings to all our supporters, CRJ is committed to legislation reforming Merit Time and to join other advocacy groups in a broader reform to include a modernization of 259i and other issues.

Any type of legislative reform is a process and a struggle to get it right. CRJ has taken a bold step in our efforts to bring focus on real Merit Time reform and we thank all of you for that. Our goals have been made a real possibility with the help of all our supporters and donations that we have received.

Our goal has always been reforming Merit Time and our work will continue throughout the coming year. The speculation that Merit Time reform is “dead” is not a word that CRJ

will ever use. Merit Time reform remains alive and well as long as CRJ has a voice.

In Peace, We Struggle *Deb Bozydaj, president, CRJ*

CRISIS IN THE JUVENILE PRISONS

Excerpts from Correctional Association Bulletin, Winter 2010

Just three months after a federal investigation by the Department of Justice (DOJ) found that excessive force was routinely used at four New York youth detention facilities, Governor Paterson's Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice has released its own report shining more light on the state's badly broken system.

According to the Task Force, the problems uncovered by DOJ at the four prisons are deeply pervasive and persist across the state's 28 juvenile facilities.

The two reports revealed a striking racial disparity: while children of color make up less than half of New York State's total youth population, black and Latino children account for over 95% of youth in city detention and over 86% of youth in state facilities.

The report's recommendations echo many proposals the JJC has advocated for, including diverting youth from jail and replacing many upstate facilities with a system of smaller closer-to-home placements and community-based alternatives to incarceration.

"Diverting youth to proven alternative programs that reduce recidivism and improve children's life outcomes not

only makes perfect sense from a child development perspective, it makes sounds fiscal sense for our state," says DeAvery Irons, Acting Director of the CA's Juvenile Justice Project. New York—currently facing a budget deficit of \$10 billion over the next two years—spends \$210,000 to incarcerate a child for one year; in comparison, alternative programs cost between \$5,000 and \$15,000 per year.

The Task Force's report urges the state to adopt measures to ensure the safety and well-being of children in its custody. The document calls for a system of oversight to prevent and deal with frequent reports of excessive use of physical force, and the expansion of psychological and drug abuse counseling. According to the task force, only 55 psychologists and clinical social workers are assigned to work at the prisons that house youth.

In the months ahead the Juvenile Justice Project will organize an Advocacy Day in Albany, complete a substantive policy report, and reach out to editorial boards, media outlets, state officials, and the general public to gain support for an array of critical juvenile justice reform measures

The findings of DOJ and the Task Force have already encouraged some state leaders to take immediate action to address blatant disparities in the system. Governor Paterson's 2010-2011 budget, released in late January, calls for the consolidation and downsizing of four juvenile facilities and also allocates \$18.2 million to increase staff-to-youth ratios in the facilities and improve medical and mental health services.

Policymakers must continue to take steps that rightfully put New York's children first. CA will work to keep the

pressure on and hold them accountable for their policy choices.

Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)

The question we at CURE-NY get most often in our mail is if we can help with employment for those being released. We can help by featuring some lesser known organizations in New York that do just that.

CEO is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. For more than 30 years, CEO's goal has been to provide immediate, comprehensive and effective employment services for men and women returning from incarceration.

CEO began as a demonstration project of the Vera Institute of Justice in the 1970s to address employment barriers facing the formerly incarcerated following release. In 1996, CEO became an independent nonprofit organization, providing comprehensive employment services to people newly released from New York State prisons and detention facilities. In its decade as an independent nonprofit CEO made 10,000 job placements for formerly incarcerated persons into full-time employment. CEO maintains the distinction of being the only organization in New York City to offer immediate employment during the critical first days after release from jail and prison.

One of CEO's major strengths is its ongoing relationships with other organizations in the criminal justice, workforce development, and social service fields.

CEO serves people with criminal convictions who are looking for work. CEO is open to anyone under Parole supervision, to qualify he or she must be able to do physical labor on transitional worksites (other restrictions include that the individual's most recent crime can not be a serious violent crime such as a

sex offense). We also accept people on Probation in Brooklyn and other people with criminal convictions on a case-by-case basis including individuals under the supervision of Federal or New York City Probation or those coming home from Riker's Island.

CEO addresses the relationship between work and crime. CEO offers comprehensive employment services exclusively for people with criminal records. CEO's model is based on a highly structured program of pre-employment training, short-term paid transitional employment and full-time job placement and retention services. Each year, CEO prepares more than 2,000 people to move into mainstream employment.

There are offices in NYC, Buffalo, Westchester and Albany.

Contact info for NYC main office. Phone: 212 422 4430 Fax: 212 422 4855
Center for Employment Opportunities
32 Broadway, 15th Floor
New York, NY, 10004

Advocacy Day

On Tues. March 16, 2010, hundreds of New Yorkers will unite in Albany calling for criminal justice reforms including prison closures, full repeal of the Rockefeller Drug Laws.

On this day hundreds of New Yorkers will unite in Albany to call for criminal justice reforms including prison closures, full repeal of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, and reinvestment in our communities.

CURE-NY
The New York Chapter of National CURE
Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants
PO Box 1314.
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

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Please fill in and mail this membership application to: CURE-NY, PO Box 1314, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590.

Yours Name _____
Address _____
City, State & Zip Code _____
Phone _____
E-mail _____
Fax _____

Please check type of membership and Annual Dues.

Incarcerated person	\$ 2.00	Sustaining	\$ 50.00
Basic	\$ 10.00	Life	\$ 100.00
Family	\$ 20.00	Benefactor	\$ 500.00

Buses to Albany will leave from locations in New York City including downtown Brooklyn and Harlem. Breakfast, lunch and snacks will be provided to all participants.

If you or your organization is interested in participating, contact Caitlin Dunklee, Drop the Rock Coordinator at 212-254-5700 or cdunklee@correctionalassociation.org.

We are pleased to announce that **The Family Orientation Program**, founded by CURE-NY as a collaborative pilot project with NYS Parole and the Family Partnership Center, continues to thrive. Having received a grant to provide re-entry services in Poughkeepsie, Osborne Association will be assuming the lead role held by CURE-NY up until this time. Osborne has the resources to carry this project forward and to expand it to meet the growing needs of the community.