

### Let's Shine a Light on All of America's Prisons

By Brigette Sarabi

The recent military trial of Pfc. Lynndie England for prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad has once again called attention to the treatment of prisoners by U.S. military personnel. *The Christian Science Monitor* noted in an editorial that “Thanks to probing by the Pentagon and others, the public knows that Abu Ghraib did not represent a few isolated cases. The abuse has stretched in an arc from the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to Afghanistan. The cases of abuse number in the hundreds and include at least two dozen suspicious deaths.” On the same subject, a Boston Globe editorial said that “If the United States wants to be a leader in defending human rights, Congress must appoint an independent commission that will spell out the full extent of the abuse and name names in the chain of command who encouraged it or turned a blind eye.”

This recognition of the systemic nature of the prisoner abuse in U.S. controlled foreign prisons and detention centers is critical; and we support the call for an independent investigation. But this is not enough. Interviews with military personnel serving at both Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib make clear that many of these soldiers, not to mention FBI personnel, believed that a broad range of abusive treatment was acceptable **based on their understanding of operating procedures in U.S. prisons**. As a Human Rights Watch Report on the U.S. made clear: “...serious human rights violations were most apparent in the criminal justice system.” The report went on to say that the initial report submitted by the U.S. government to the United Nations Committee Against Torture “acknowledged areas of concern...with regard to police

abuse, excessive use of force in prison...[and] physical and mental abuse of inmates.”

It is time that we institute independent monitoring of all American prisons, including our prisons and detention centers here in the U.S. This is not a radical concept. In fact, the United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the

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Treatment of Offenders includes, in its “Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners,” that “There shall be a regular inspection of penal institutions and services by qualified and experienced inspectors appointed by a competent authority.” Many countries have independent monitoring of prisons. In the United Kingdom, there are Independent Monitoring Boards for prisons and “immigration removal centres” that perform a vital watchdog role. The members of these boards can access the prisons at any time in order to talk to staff, prisoners or detainees, hear their concerns and check on the conditions they are living and working in.

Here in the U.S., two states mandate similar independent monitoring. The Pennsylvania Prison Society, a private, non-profit organization, has the authority (granted by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1787) to monitor and report on prison conditions through their **Official Visitors** program. Over 450 volun-

teer “Official Visitors” make approximately 5,000 visits to jails and prisons in Pennsylvania each year. The Correctional Association of New York, another private, non-profit organization, was granted authority by the New York State Legislature in 1846 to visit prisons throughout the state and issue reports on their findings to policy makers. Each month, the Correctional Association visits one of New York’s prisons, going to cellblocks, dormitories, classrooms, prison industries, psychiatric units, medical units and disciplinary housing units. They interview prisoners, corrections officers, teachers, medical staff and counselors.

It is time that we institute this type of independent monitoring in each state prison system and within the federal prison system. Basic standards of human decency, as well as international law, compel us to do this as soon as possible. As Human Rights Watch noted just last year: “In recent years, U.S. prison inmates have been beaten with fists and batons, stomped on, kicked, shot, stunned with electronic devices, doused with chemical sprays, choked, and slammed face first onto concrete floors by officers whose job is to guard them. Inmates have ended up with broken jaws, smashed ribs, perforated eardrums, missing teeth, burn scars – not to mention psychological scars and emotional pain. Some have died.” It is the secretive and closed nature of prisons and jails that allows this type of abuse to exist. Only by shining a light on the operations and management of these institutions can we begin to have some confidence that we are meeting our moral and legal obligations for the humane treatment of people who have been incarcerated.

### Which Will Legislators Choose: Prison Construction or Treatment?

By David Rogers

For the past several years, budget shortfalls have challenged lawmakers to make difficult decisions on how to spend increasingly limited taxpayer dollars. Common sense suggests that in a tough fiscal environment legislators should feel even more pressure to find the most cost-effective means of addressing issues such as public safety. But the current debate in the Oregon legislature is an interesting case study on how good economic sense may or may not be the deciding factor.

Despite being faced with dwindling state dollars, Oregon's Governor, Ted Kulongoski, has proposed a 34 % increase in the Department of Corrections budget. His budget includes a proposal to build a new 2,100 bed prison in Madras, Oregon. Let's call this the "bricks and mortar" approach to public safety, an approach defined by an over-reliance on prison construction and incarceration as the primary means to addressing crime. And let's compare it with the substance abuse treatment approach based on costs to the state.

#### The "Bricks and Mortar" Approach

Prison construction is incredibly expensive. The proposed prison carries a price tag of \$190 million, but when you calculate the debt incurred by the state, the real cost becomes over \$300 million. We'll be paying this off over the next 25 years. This plan is a continuation of the path Oregon started down about 10 years ago. Thanks to years of new prisons, Oregon currently pays over \$100 million each budget cycle for past prison con-

struction. Yet some lawmakers still refuse to question the logic behind building more prisons. The long-term implications of the "bricks and mortar" approach to crime are becoming clear. As the Department of Corrections' budget sky-rockets, the state has less and less money for education and human services and also less money for crime prevention programs that are proven to be effective.

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#### A growing number of states are choosing to fund drug and alcohol treatment in prison, or as an alternative to prison.

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#### Another Approach: Substance Abuse Treatment Within Prisons

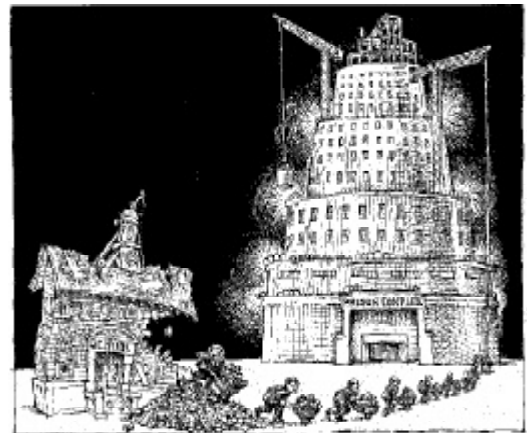
Nationally, 75% to 80% of all prisoners have some level of addiction problems and those problems, if untreated, make transition back into the community even more difficult. Over 31% of all Oregon's recently released prisoners are likely to recidivate (return to prison) within three years of release, and drug related crimes are a big reason why. **Prison based drug and alcohol treatment programs are proven to reduce recidivism.**

- In Texas, a recent 3 year study of prisoners who completed prison based treatment and aftercare were 75% more likely to stay out of prison than those who didn't receive treatment.

- In California, a five year study showed that prisoners who completed a continuum of prison based treatment and follow-up were more than 200% less likely to be re-incarcerated. That same study also showed that *prisoners completing treatment were 55% more likely to gain employment on the outside.*

- A recent study from Delaware showed that prisoners who **did not** receive drug or alcohol treatment were twice as likely to be re-arrested.

- By reducing recidivism, prison based treatment programs save money. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy reports that when programs can achieve even a small reduction in crime



they can be cost-beneficial. That report examined credible research around the country to assess what types of programs successfully reduce crime while saving money. They calculated the benefit to cost ratio based on both taxpayer dollars and cost benefits to crime victims.

The report estimated that prison-based day treatment programs offer a \$6.17 benefit to every dollar of cost.

- Recent research in Connecticut showed that for every dollar invested in prison treatment programs the state avoided \$6 in future corrections-related costs or a staggering \$37,000 savings per prisoner who participated.

### So Which Would You Choose?

A growing number of states are choosing to fund drug and alcohol treatment in prison, or *as an alternative to prison*. But over the last ten years, Oregon's prison programs have been trimmed and cut and trimmed some more. Drug and alcohol programs now make up 1/2 of 1 percent of the overall Department of Corrections budget, a measly \$7.2 million. *The current Oregon Governor's budget is promoting a costly new prison while also proposing to cut drug and alcohol treatment programs by one-third.* Oregon may make the baffling decision not to join the growing number of states around the country that are saving millions of dollars by maintaining and expanding prison based drug and alcohol

treatment.

Prison based treatment programs are a win/win situation for states. They protect public safety by reducing future crime and have the potential to save millions of dollars. As this article is being written, lawmakers in Oregon are trying to decide how to spend scarce taxpayer dollars. They can continue down an unsustainable and shortsighted path regarding the growth of the Oregon prison system, or begin to move towards a smarter and more cost-effective strategy. We're asking them to invest in a practical solution.

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*Solutions Cont. From Pg. 13*

what should be done instead. If not, people assume that we are proposing inaction. Faced with a media whipping people into a frenzy over the perception that crime is on the rise (even though in most cases it is not), we need to be inspiring people with compelling ideas.

We invite you to submit ideas for solutions we can cover in upcoming issues of *Justice Matters*. For problems inside prison, but also for problems in the community that fall under the category of crime. What should be done? We want to hear your thoughts. We are particularly interested in:

- International comparisons --- what do other countries or cultures do?
- Ways to hold people accountable for violence or harm that don't focus on

criminal prosecution

- Solutions or strategies that can be implemented on the state or local level
- Solutions or strategies that take survivors/victims concerns into account as well as people serving time

You'll be seeing more solutions in upcoming issues of *Justice Matters*.

### Please Tell Us What You Think About *Justice Matters*

I also want to encourage you to complete the latest reader's survey we've included on page 21-22. We last surveyed readers in 2003, and that powered our last major re-design. This survey includes questions about what you count on reading in *Justice Matters*, and we are also exploring how to expand the readership of *Justice Matters* while keeping the print run

affordable. We are now printing over 6,000 copies of each newsletter. That's great news, because it means we're reaching more people than ever, but it also means printing costs are steadily rising.

We're exploring how to use email and the web to get our faithful readers the same information as you currently count on from the print version of *Justice Matters*. But don't worry, no matter what, we're *still committed to reaching all of our readers who do not have access to email or the Internet.*

We'll be including the results of the survey in either the summer or fall issue of *Justice Matters*.

I'm looking forward to your mail, and I hope you find this issue informative and inspiring.

Kathleen Pequeño  
Justice Matters Editor

### Just Facts

- Number of people in **U.S. Prisons and Jails** in June 2004:
- **Number people added** to prison and jails each week: **900**
- Country with the **highest incarceration rate in the world**: **USA**
- Percent of prison and jail inmates who are **racial or ethnic minorities**: **60%**
  
- Percent of all **African American men** age 25 to 29 in U.S. who are in prison: **12.4%**
- Percent of all **Hispanic men** age 25 to 29 in U.S. who are in prison: **3.6%**
- Percent of **White men** age 25 to 29 in U.S. who are in prison: **1.7%**
  
- Number of **youth** under the age of 18 in state adult prisons: **2,477**
- Number of **youth** under the age of 18 in local jails: **7,083**
  
- Percent increase in number of people in **private prisons** 12/31/03-6/1/04: **3.4%**
- Percent increase in number of **incarcerated women** 2003 to 2004: **2.9%**
- Percent increase in number of **incarcerated men** 2003 to 2004: **2%**
  
- Number of people in jail in the **five largest local jail jurisdictions**  
(Los Angeles County, CA; New York City, NY; Cook County, IL;  
Maricopa County, AZ; and Harris County, TX): **59,623**

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Mid-Year 2004  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/pjim04.htm>

## Justice Matters Survey

*Justice Matters* is one of our primary ways to reach our members and prospective members. Our goal is for the information to be timely, thoughtful, and relevant. By taking a few minutes to complete this survey, you can help us to improve *Justice Matters*.

- 1) How many issues of *Justice Matters* have you read?    **1-2**                      **3-4**                      **5 or more**
- 2) How many pages of *Justice Matters* do you typically read?    **Less than 6**                      **6-12**                      **12-20**                      **20-24**
- 3) On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate *Justice Matters* overall?
- |                      |          |                |          |                      |
|----------------------|----------|----------------|----------|----------------------|
| <b>Very Negative</b> |          | <b>Neutral</b> |          | <b>Very Positive</b> |
| <b>1</b>             | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b>       | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b>             |

4) We run “features” in most issues of *Justice Matters*. They’re identified at the top of the page (Regional News, for example). We want to you to compare the different features.

Please rate each of the following *Justice Matters* features on a scale of 1 –5 where 1 is **not very important** to you and 5 is **very important** to you.

The Good, Bad, and Ugly	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Regional News Briefs (for my state)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Regional News Briefs (for other states)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
National News Briefs	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Special Focus Articles	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Western Prison Project Update	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Just Facts (One page of statistics)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Legal Update (not in this issue)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Take Action	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Letter from the Director	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

5) Please tell us any features you wish we would add. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) What part of *Justice Matters* do you like to read the most? What do you like best about it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7) What’s the most memorable thing you’ve ever read in *Justice Matters*? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8) Where else do you get *information* about the current state of the prison system (policies, etc...)?

**Internet (please tell us the sites)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other newsletters (please name)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Newspapers** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

9) What other newsletters on this issue do you read/subscribe to? \_\_\_\_\_

10) Have you read the newsletter of Crime Survivors for Community Safety, *Survivors Speak*? **Yes** **No**

11) Do you have a preference to receive information via computer (email or the Internet) or via mail?

**Email or Internet** **Mail**

12) If it were available, would you prefer an email or web version of *Justice Matters* that came out monthly (and was shorter than the print version)? **Yes** **No** **Maybe**

13) Do you recommend *Justice Matters* to others? **Yes** **No**

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

14) Is there anything in *Justice Matters* that you would change (examples: articles in Spanish, easier to read articles, more photos/less photos). \_\_\_\_\_

15) Other thoughts/suggestions \_\_\_\_\_

### **Demographics questions (help us understand who our readers are):**

Year you were born \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Are you in prison? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a family member in prison? \_\_\_\_\_ Are you a former prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a survivor of violence or crime? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have access to the Internet? \_\_\_\_\_ Do you use email regularly? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to share your opinion with us.

Please return your completed survey to WPP PO Box 40085 Portland, OR 97240

# WESTERN PRISON PROJECT

Join Us!

Director's Message cont. from Pg. 2

prisoners. A recent TV news story on the number of ex-offenders in Portland neighborhoods said "even here in this neighborhood full of families, there are hundreds of ex-cons." It went on to quote a community member who said: "and some of them look just like you and me!" No kid-



ding. Given these attitudes, it is clear that those of us who have been most directly affected by the criminal justice system need solidarity. We need it to continue to make a place for ourselves in the world, to say: "I'm here, you're here, and we are both human beings who deserve to be treated as such." We need it because we have knowledge and ideas to offer that can create safer communities without continuing to lock up more and more people—and if we don't get that message out there, who will? And we need solidarity because this is long, hard work, and none of us can do it alone, and all of us can't do it overnight.

creative and hard-working prisoners, crime survivors, and family members who have turned out for lobby days, written their legislators, written the media, sent in postcards, made calls, and testified at committee hearings in support of criminal justice reform. And you have done this even when success may not benefit you directly, because you know there are so many others in the same situation, and maybe our work will help some of them. Thank you.

In solidarity,  
Brigette Sarabi

So this issue is dedicated to the many

## YES, I WANT TO JOIN WESTERN PRISON PROJECT!

### WESTERN PRISON PROJECT

PO Box 40085  
Portland, OR 97240

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Institution /ID # (if nec) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ H or W? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Donation amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested membership donations: Prisoners, \$7.00, non-prisoners, \$15-\$25. WPP relies on member support --- any gift you make above \$25 helps us a great deal. If you are a prisoner or low-income in our region (**OR, WA, MT, ID, UT, NV, or WY only**), and cannot afford to make a donation, you can still become a member by checking here:

Sign me up for the Oregon Action Alert list

Checks/money orders can be made payable to Western Prison Project.

**NEW!** You can also give using a **Visa** or **Mastercard** by filling in the information below:

Name as it appears on card \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 Visa/Mastercard number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Contact me about making a monthly pledge using my credit/debit card or checking account!

## **OPPOSE THE FEDERAL GANG BILL**

On May 11, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1279, a “gang bill” that contained many new and increased federal mandatory minimum sentences for gang offenses that are already handled by the states, making this bill utterly unnecessary. However, it was way too tempting to vote for a bill that professes to crack down on “gangs,” so the bill passed the House by a vote of 279 to 144.

Families Against Mandatory Minimums is tracking this issue as a companion bill (but one that does not have mandatory minimum sentences) moves through the U.S. Senate.

For more information about how to oppose these bills, you can write to them at: FAMM 1612 K St., N.W. #700, Washington, D.C. 20006. Or visit them on the Internet at [www.famm.org](http://www.famm.org).

## **REPORT PRISON BRUTALITY**

The **Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons** will look at the hazards and problems facing people who live and work in U. S. prisons. According to its mission statement, “the Commission will examine the nature and extent of violence, sexual abuse, degradation, and other serious safety failures and abuses in American prisons and jails...the Commission will explore the consequences of unsafe and abusive correctional environments for prisoners, corrections officers, and the families and communities to which they return.”

Individuals and organizations are encouraged to submit written statements to the Commission. Submit your story on the web at [www.prisoncommission.org](http://www.prisoncommission.org) or by mail to the Commission on Safety and Abuse, 601 13 St. NW, #1150 South, Washington, D.C 20005.

**See our full story on the commission of page 8 of this issue.**

**Western Prison Project**  
PO Box 40085  
Portland, OR 97240-0085

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