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Tracking the coronavirus in California state prisons

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Draft

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From: **Alesha Monteiro** <alesha.monteiro@justadvocate.net>
Date: Thu, Oct 29, 2020 at 8:16 AM
Subject: Tracking the coronavirus in California state prisons
To: sean.greene@latimes.com , iris.lee@latimes.com

Good Morning,

I just read your short article concerning tracking of the virus within CDCR and I just wanted to add a few things that you may not be aware of.

I'm sure you know that this deadly virus spreads much quicker, at over 3.5 times quicker actually, inside the prisons than it does out here. I'm sure that CDCR knows that as well. I'm sure they also read and have been following CDC guidelines for themselves and their families. So why is it that they are not following the same guidelines for the incarcerated? The families of the incarcerated were thrown into complete panic when we found out at the very beginning of this pandemic that the people inside were not allowed hand sanitizer with alcohol in it. Corrections Officers were using it freely but none was to be allowed by the incarcerated. Advocates on the outside have been able to garner thousands of donated kits (hand sanitizer and soap kits) for the people inside. All 35 prisons have been contacted multiple times. Hours upon hours have been spent reaching out, making phone calls, sending emails. And we have only been able to get 1 out of 35 facilities to accept the PPE. The prison that took it was CMF - go take a look at their numbers. They have been the one facility to stand out that seems to have a warden that isn't okay with people dying just because they're in prison and the numbers reflect his efforts.

You don't have to be a social justice activist or abolitionist to hear the percentages that are always thrown out there - The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. We make up less than 5% of the world's population, but 20% of the world's incarcerated people are right here in good ol' US of A. But it goes deeper than that.

America has BOTH the highest incarceration rate per capita in the world AND the highest **TOTAL** number of incarcerated people in the world - yes even higher than China. Literally - 1 in every 5 people that are in prison are in prison in America.

I want so badly to go into the race disparity hidden in all these percentages and why the complete indifference for lives in response to this virus is just one more extension of white supremacy, I'm sure you are pretty familiar so I digress. On a side note, there are very few people close to this situation that believe these numbers that CDCR is giving. There is literally no way for us to check them but based on the nightly updates we get, it would seem that someones counting abilities are a bit off. Again, no way to actually prove it but I would be extremely surprised if CDCR **wasn't** lying.

For the families and advocates out here fighting for the lives of those on the inside, this feels strategic; from the stacking of bodies at CIM in the beginning of the pandemic to the notorious transfer to San Quentin and the correctional officers refusal to wear masks for the past 8 months, it feels very strategic.

We haven't seen our loved ones in over 8 months now, they aren't allowed hand sanitizer, they were forced to work even when the virus was at its very worst. We have begged and pleaded, protested, written letters, sent emails. Absolutely nothing has softened the hearts of CDCR, they just don't care. They have had lawsuits brought against them from both incarcerated people. Judge Tigar scolds them, almost every case management conference and then ends it by saying "I hope you'll release some people " and that's the end of it. He hopes they will release some people?.....as if he really thinks that's a realistic probability. Everyone is very aware of what is happening, we have done everything possible to let them know; no one is doing a single thing to help these people just exercise their right to live. What I have shared is just the tip of the iceberg.

We keep giving the info and giving the info and it changes nothing.

It's frustrating as hell.

Thank you for listening to me rant,

Sincerely,
Alesha Monteiro