

Mass Dissent

Massachusetts Chapter

National Lawyers Guild

14 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108

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BOARD MEETING

October 15, 6:00 pm

14 Beacon St., 1st Fl.
Boston

Life in Prison

For almost 20 years, the October issue of *Mass Dissent* has been dedicated to issues affecting prisoners. We present art, articles, and poems written by prisoners or others who work for prisoners rights.

Since 2002, the U.S. has had the highest incarceration rate in the world. For countries comparable the U.S., the rate tends to stay round 100 prisoners per 100,000 population. However, in the U.S., the current rate is over 700 prisoners per 100,000. As in its beginnings, incarceration continues to be the state's method to punish the poor and the most disadvantaged. While less than 2% of white 25-34 years old men are incarcerated, a stunning 12% of black men in this age range are behind bars, almost half of them with education level of less than high school diploma. Among women, black women are incarcerated at nearly 3 times the rate of white women (in 2010, 133 versus 47 per 100,000.)

High levels of incarceration have a severe impact not only on the prisoners but on their families and communities. As **Andrea James** writes in her article, over 2 million children in this country

are raised while one or both of their parents are imprisoned. As statistics show, over 60% of mothers in state prisons had lived with and taken care of their children before being sent to prison.

More and more prisons are run by private corporations for profit, which means that the prisons, on one hand, need to be filled with inmates who, as **Mark Brown** writes, are forced to work for corporate profit, and on the other, their costs need to be lower; as a consequence, services and programs provided to prisoners are being underfunded or eliminated completely. **Alex Reis** tells us about one of these programs, for substance abusers, that is set to fail, despite a high need for it. **Dirceu Semedo** discusses the ongoing racism in the justice system and the differential treatment of racial minorities and the poor by courts, and **Sal Ali** gives us his view on why the today's youth turns to violence.

We also present two very moving poems by **Omar Abdullah** and **Teria Newson**.

We thank all contributors. Unfortunately, space restrictions prevented us from publishing many worthwhile submissions.

- Editors -

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Massachusetts Chapter, Inc.**

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Join a Guild Committee

Street Law Clinic Project: The Street Law Clinic project provides workshops for Massachusetts organizations that address legal needs of various communities. Legal education workshops on 4th Amendment Rights (Stop & Search), Landlord/Tenant Disputes, Workers' Rights, Civil Disobedience Defense, Bankruptcy Law, Foreclosure Prevention Law, and Immigration Law are held at community organizations, youth centers, labor unions, shelters, and pre-release centers. If you are a Guild attorney, law student, or legal worker interested in leading a workshop, please contact the project at 617-723-4330 or nlgmass-slc@igc.org.

Lawyer Referral Service Panel (LRS): Members of the panel provide legal services at reasonable rates. Referral Service Committee members: Makis Antzoulatos, Benjamin Dowling, Sebastian Korth, Douglas Lovenberg, and Jonathan Messinger. For more information, contact the LRS Coordinator at 617-227-7008 or nlgmass@igc.org.

Foreclosure Prevention Task Force: Created in June 2008, the Task Force's goal is threefold: (1) advocate for policies that address issues that homeowners and tenants of foreclosed houses face, (2) to provide legal assistance to these homeowners and tenants, *and* (3) to conduct legal clinics for them. If you are interested in working with the Task Force, please call the office at 617-227-7335.

Mass Defense Committee: Consists of two sub-committees: (1) "Legal Observers" (students, lawyers, activists) who are trained to serve as legal observers at political demonstrations *and* (2) "Mass Defense Team" (criminal defense attorneys) who represent activists arrested for political activism. To get involved, please contact the office at 617-227-7335.

Litigation Committee: Established in 2010, the Committee brings civil lawsuits against large institutions (such as government agencies, law enforcement, banks, financial institutions, and/or large corporations) that engage in repressive or predatory actions that affect large numbers of people and that serve to perpetuate social, racial and/or economic injustice or inequality. To get involved, please contact the Guild office.

NLG National Immigration Project: Works to defend and extend the human and civil rights of all immigrants, both documented and undocumented. The Committee works in coalitions with community groups to organize support for immigrant rights in the face of right-wing political attacks. For more information contact the NLG National Immigration Project at 617-227-9727.

NLG Military Law Task Force: Provides legal advice and assistance to those in the military and to others, especially members of the GIRights Hotline, who are counseling military personnel on their rights. It also provides legal support and helps to find local legal referrals when needed. For advice and information, GI's can call 877-447-4487. To get involved, please contact Neil Berman (njberman2@juno.com) or Marguerite Helen (mugsm@mindspring.com).

GUILD NEWS

NLG HAPPY HOUR

You are invited to the “NLG Presents...” Happy Hour - an event held quarterly on the **2nd Wednesday of January, April, September, and November**. See below information about the next event and read a report from the last one on page 4. If you have ideas for a presentation or would like to be a speaker, please call the NLG office at 617-227-7335.

able: Old San Juan, Comunidades del Caño Martin Peña, Street Art and Museums, Vieques, Loiza, Casa Pueblo in Adjuntas. The hotel can be booked at <http://www.condadoplaza.com/>. The discount rate for Convention attendees is \$129 (the discount code is “ACRE”). To register and obtain all detailed information about the convention program, please visit <http://www.nlg.org/Convention-2013> or call the NLG National Office at 212-679-5100 ex. 12.

NLG CONVENTION

The 2013 NLG Convention will be in **San Juan, Puerto Rico**, at Condado Plaza Hotel, from **Wednesday, October 23 to Sunday, October 27**. In addition to a wide range of workshops and panels, conference attendees will have plenty of opportunities for intellectual engagement with Puerto Rican Scholars and activists who are involved in important political work on the island. There will also be several tours and trips avail-

NLG HOLIDAY PARTY

All NLG members are invited to the NLG Massachusetts Chapter annual Holiday Party. This year's party will be on **Friday, December 6, from 5:30pm to 9pm**. Once again, we'll be hosted by our good friends at **Stern Shapiro Weissberg & Garin** (90 Canal St. 5th Floor, Boston). Among the party attractions, we will offer great food, a lot of refreshing beverages, and many wonderful raffle prizes. Raffle tickets (\$10) are for sale now.

Street Law Clinic Report

The following clinics and trainings were conducted for members of Boston area community organizations and agencies:

August 7: *Legal Observing* at Northeastern University “Demonstration in Support of Free Speech at Northeastern, organized by Northeastern School of Law NLG chapter, by NUSL students **Hannah Adams** and **Stephanie Gharakhanian**.

August 23: *Legal Observing* at Eviction Blockade in Roslindale, organized by City Life/Vida Urbana, by **Jeff Feuer**, **Lee Goldstein**, and NUSL students **Charles Flewelling** and **Maddie Thomson**.

September 3: *Tenant/Landlord Dispute* clinic for staff members of Somerville Homeless Coalition, by **Mark Stern**.

NLG GALA COMMITTEE is looking for volunteers

Do you like to plan events? Do you have ideas how to make NLG annual Gala even more fun? Do you have a little free time? Do you want to be involved in planning the 2014 NLG Gala?

If you answered “yes” to at least to one of these questions, please contact the NLG office.

The NLG Gala Committee would like to involve more NLG members in the organizational aspects of the event. The committee meets only once a month for a dinner gathering and discussion.

We would love to have as many members involved with the committee as possible. **Please call the NLG office at 617-227-7335.**

ARTICLES FOR MASS DISSENT

The November issue of *Mass Dissent* will focus on the Middle East and Syria.

If you are interested in submitting an article, essay, analysis, or art work (cartoons, pictures) related to the topic, please e-mail your work to nlgmass-director@igc.org.

The deadline for articles is October 15.

“NLG Presents...” Happy Hour

Ironically falling on September 11, our September “NLG Presents” was a discussion led by criminal defense and civil litigator **Ben Falkner** about the citywide lockdown set up after the Marathon bombings and the subsequent house-to-house warrantless searches in Watertown. A good-sized crowd of old-timers and law students gathered at the Red Hat Café and had a lively discussion about why the events unfolded the way they did and what the Guild’s response should be. Possibilities of litigation, op-eds, and educational events were all discussed. Those who want to get involved in working on any of these should contact Urszula Masny-Latos in the Guild office.



(Top Right) Happy Hour participants enjoy great half-priced appetizers, refreshing beverages, and a lively conversation.

(Middle Right) Benjamin Falkner (c.) leads a discussion on the searches of Watertown houses, with (l.-r.) Judy Somberg, Carl Williams, and Hayne Barnwell.

(Right) The conversation was so engaging that it continued after the official end of the event.

(Above l.-r.) Carl Williams, Benjamin Falkner, Hayne Barnwell, NLG Litigation Committee Fellow Negar Mortazavi, and Northeastern law student Yohana Valdez.

(Photos by Ariel Oshinsky & Urszula Masny-Latos)



A Mother's Love

by Andrea James

*The pain is overflowing in
the women.
Ever brimming,
spilling over the edge.
At moments, in the classroom.
On our bunks.
Cleaning toilets. Mowing lawns.
Our heavy hearts overflow.
Sagging.
A child leaves the visiting room
pleading with his mother.
How much longer?
How much longer?
The love of a mother fills up
sagging like the magnolias
heavy, waiting for their love
to be carried further.*

Many incarcerated women have children. The women are in prison, but still are mothers who love their children deeply. They do their best to mother from prison. Standing at the crowded telephones trying myself to still be a wife and mother, I often heard many conversations about things going on with the children of the women in Danbury. While talking to your children from a telephone in prison, every conversation is a clipped verbal dance of concern, love, anger, discipline and inquisition. Missed weddings, anniversaries, graduations and funerals. A young boy's hamster died. A daughter's details of abuse in the hands of her caregivers. Requests for pictures for lockers full of childhood histories over the years, as they've grown while their mothers were warehoused in a prison.

For women in prison, every request made to the outside regarding the care of their children is a cause for caution and concern. Fear of signing the

wrong paper that could result in someone taking their children away. It often causes a paralysis in the women as to how to make decisions regarding requests for things such as the signing of power of attorneys and temporary guardianships. Fear of doing something that could be construed as giving away their parental rights.

The women were in prison for all kinds of things, mostly related to money or drugs. But none of what most did warranted the lengths of sentences and the effects on their families. When women are in prison their families suffer. A woman I met in Danbury had already been there for four of the eight years she was sentenced to for selling heroin. One day, just before Thanksgiving, she sat down next to me and picked up a conversation we had a few weeks earlier about her 15-year old daughter being sexually active.

"Can you believe it?" She said. "Now my other daughter is using drugs and they want me to sit here for another four years. I can't do nothing to help my kids and my son now thinks God is a liar because I keep telling him to have faith that I will be able to come home, but he doesn't believe it anymore. He says he doesn't believe in God anymore either. We got nothing to do here". She said. "We just sit around here doing nothing. I sat here for four years doing nothing and they want me to sit for another four. For what? I can't do nothing to help my kids. What's the good in that?"

Mother's Day 2010 in Danbury was a day heavy with the emotions of women missing their families. Among the women

that received a visit that day was a woman who came to prison when her son was only three years old. He was now sixteen years old and came to see her for Mother's Day, alone, for the first time. Another young mother who had just started serving a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence for selling drugs was visited by her four sons, ages 14, 10, 6, and 17 months. This was their first time seeing her since her incarceration. They were brought to the prison from Washington D.C. by an organization called Our Place that brings children to visit their mothers in prison. Later that day the woman sat on the stairs outside of the visiting room weeping because her 17 month old baby boy wouldn't come to her during the visit. He cried the entire time. A father came to visit his daughter but was turned away because he did not know that it wasn't her designated visiting day. It was Mother's Day, but you could only get a visit if it was your visiting day. Like all other weekends, some women got visits, most didn't.

There are currently more than two million children in this country with one or both parents incarcerated. Most of these incarcerated parents are first time, nonviolent offenders serving drug related sentences. A large number of them have not seen their children since they were incarcerated because many families are unable to visit due to the lack of resources to travel long distances to far away prisons. Sixty-two percent of parents in state prisons and 84 percent of parents in federal prison are held over 100 miles from their last residence. In federal prisons, about 43 percent of parents are held

Continued on page 11

To Help or to Hinder, or Maybe Just for Profit

by Marc E. Brown

I had believed that my time spent in the Department of Corrections would be to help me become a better person.

First was the big wake-up call of seeing my family and friend's lives go on without me and watching my children grow up through photos and visits. I would like to share a quote that my father gave me. It came with a photo of the man who said it and that quote changed my outlook on how I was going to do my time to make sure I will never come back to a place like prison again. "In the hectic pace of the world today, there is no time for meditation, or deep thought, "A prisoner has time that he can put to good use. I'd put prison, second to College as the best place for a man to go

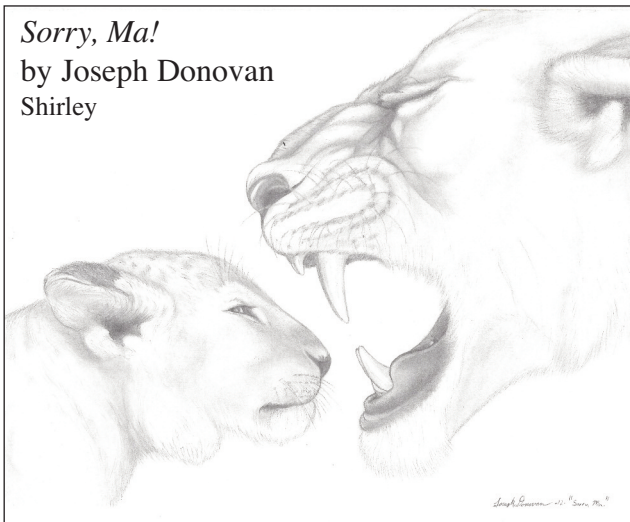
if he needs to do some thinking. If he's motivated, in prison, he can change his life." Malcolm X. My father died two years after giving me this quote, the quote was my motivation to better myself to have goals for the future.

Here's where there is no help. I'm dealing with an incompetent administration. I have no problem of point this fact out to them, as much as they help me do so. In reply to simple requests this administration gives us denials. It makes me wonder, should they be drug testing the administration? Or do they believe that the sentences we received from the court were not enough so they do everything they can to make life as hard as possible for inmate, other than those inmates that work

for the DOC Industries Silk Screen Division. Don't get me wrong. Any inmate that can make some real money before he goes home should be able to, but this administration has put inmate against inmate. Those in the Silk Screen Division gets a free pass on treatment, but still receive full Earned Good Time Credits. The DOC is being sued right now

Sorry, Ma!

by Joseph Donovan
Shirley



because they believe some inmates should get full good time and others don't—in the same TC Housing Unit Program.

My request was simple. I wanted to do the only program I have not done, the computer class. I wanted to be placed in a Therapy Group that would allow me to go to the computer program, be a Tutor in the GED program, to work and make all the required programming for where I'm at. But their most used incompetent statement is as follows: "In terms of the SOTP, it's a voluntary program that you opted to participate in to address your treatment needs to reduce the risk associated with you reoffending". So we're not going to put you in a Therapeutic Community Primary

Group, where you can do as much as you can before your release, unless you're making money for the DOC Industries Silk Screen Division, or quit the. The Mass. Treatment Center at any given time has 50 to 75 inmates sitting around for 3 to 6 months without engaging in treatment; at a cost to taxpayers that is three times what it costs to house any other prisoner in Massachusetts.

I know I can only speak for myself. I am taking responsible for my actions, but that does not mean I should be victimized by a Superintendent and his lackeys who are doing everything in their power to make sure most of us will come back because we're not educationally prepared for the community we will be returning to.

Shame for where I'm at is long gone. But I must respond to any DOC Administration's (or their Subcontractor's) maladaptive actions that are counterproductive to my rehabilitation and you all should do the same. Send copies of your Grievances to the Governor's Office and any other State Reps., in your area. If you don't fight for your own Rights, who else will. And to anyone in the free world reading this, 90% of us do want to walk out of prison better off than when we came in. Not just with a few dollars in our pockets, but really ready for the world we haven't been apart of.

Marc E. Brown is an inmate at Old Colony Correctional Center in Bridgewater.

Whitey's Rules

by Dirceu Semedo

John Martarono, a man who admitted to killing 20 people, is free after serving only 12 years in prison, yet you have men currently serving life without the possibility of parole for joint venture. How is it that men are serving these sentences for standing one foot in a doorway or driving a getaway car in an armed robbery gone wrong, but admitted killers go free? Consider the fact that most of these men serving these unfair joint venture sentences are poor, black and from the inner cities.

Every time there is a case like Whitey Bulger's we are reminded that there are two sets of rules in our justice system, one for the poor and marginalized and another for those who are established and protected in our society. The sad thing is that the poor, who are predominantly black, are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and there is no mercy for the "scum bag criminals" as they so often refer to; the uneducated, drug addicted, and psychologically impaired poor in our justice system. Yet, look at the differences in prosecution of these cases. Even the media reports are drastically different. Poor suspects the inner cities are most often referred to as "animals and monsters" in the newspapers, while everybody else is referred to as kids or they say "what a tragedy". There is something grossly unfair when five men are serving life in prison for one murder that one of those men committed and a man who

admitted to killing 20 people is walking around free.

There are countless cases and examples of this unfairness and bias in our justice system. Just for the record, there are no black men walking around free after admitting to killing 20 people. Is it that black men are not involved in criminal enterprises or that these deals are not even an option for them? I am not for one

To Pray

by Omar 'Abdullah

(Bay State Correctional Center, Norfolk)

A few choice words
Whispered in the dark
At the door
Through the crack

A powerful answer from beyond
From the Silent of the Silence
Saying:
So much has been forgiven
How much will you receive?

second saying that these deals are a good thing, but they are a stark example of a different set of rules for those who have representation and have influence in our society and those who don't. Our justice system needs to be more progressive and there shouldn't be two sets of rules. To me it seems grossly unfair that you have in some cases four or five people serving life without the possibility of parole for one homicide while a man who admittedly killed 20 people (and that is just 'a low number') walks free. The thing that separates these people is their social, racial and econom-

ic place in our society.

The worst thing is to be in the grey area not innocent but unfairly over sentenced. There are no innocents in this argument but there is an issue of fairness. Each one of us at has to ask the question "is this right?" How do you make an argument in favor of a guilty man who has been over punished in a society that is bent on pay back? Ask your-self "what type of world do I want to live in" and "do I truly believe in justice?" When you have answered these questions take into consideration the grey area. It is easy to fight for those who are clearly innocent; the harder task is to help those who are outcast, those that society will not thank you for helping. But there is nothing greater in a person capable of embracing such a fight. Our history is filled with such men and women who at there time were ridiculed by the majority but were justified by history.

Society may never be fair to all people, but each generation has a duty to try to make the world a better place than what was left to them. We have to ask ourselves as a society "where does this visceral anger come from?" and "Is it rooted in something else besides justice?" Because cases like Martarono's illustrate just how differently defendants are treated based on where they come from and how much money they have.

Dirceu Semedo is an inmate at Old Colony Correctional Center in Bridgewater.

The Youth of Today, Not of Yesterday

Interview with Sal Ali, an inmate at North Central Correctional Institution in Gardner.

Q: Sal, please tell me what has taken place in society that has changed the thinking and actions of today's kids.

A: The changes are not just in our society, but all around the world. There are many more young people today than there were three decades ago. With the growth of the economy, new technology and new babies, there is new thinking, new ideas and new plans, both good and evil.

Q: The public is shocked to see so many young kids from well off upper-class families carry out shootings or plans to commit horrendous massacres against others.

A: Yes, I also struggle to understand this dangerous way of expression that some youth employ. Some believe that bullying or being rejected leads to the shootings and killings, but not all young people who are bullied or rejected turn into killers. Some researchers point to violent video games as the cause. But there are also drugs, alcohol, and a host of other vices that misguide the young and lead them to take the lives of others. Hip-hop and gangsta rap are another thing that some say directs the youth to kill or want to harm.

Each time when mass killing is committed by young people, at schools or in public, we panic and right away engage in a public debate with expert on the question "Why?" We analyze these kids' family history and look for any clues that might tell us what was missing during their growing up. We look at their diet—did they eat too much sugar? We ask questions if they received enough love and attention from their parents, family, and friends. We ask if, perhaps, their previous trauma was not healed, and now any situation that brought back painful memories triggered violent reaction. For exam-

ple, a kid's dog was hit and killed by an ice cream truck; since then, any time the kid sees an ice cream truck, he remembers his dog and gets upset; one day an ice cream truck appears at his school, and the kid snaps.

We all know about the massacre at Columbine high school; in April, young men planted bombs at the Boston Marathon killing and wounding Marathon spectators. And, just a few days ago, in an upscale neighborhood, a young man was found with plans and explosive devices under the floorboard in the home of his parents, intending to carry out multiple homicides.

The thinking and actions of the Marathon bombers captured local, national, and world news. Shocking to many was that these young men grew up in a "good family," never experienced poverty and depravation, had no criminal records, and didn't have violent tendencies.

We used to look at this problem as something that resulted from poverty, large families and single mothers, and we often associated it with the inner city Blacks, Hispanics, and the poor whites on welfare. Now, we fear the privilege white upper and upper-middle class, computer-oriented youth, with access to deadly chemicals, who can shake up this country with multiple killings.

Q: What do you think should be a solution to this problem? How can we help these kids who explore and get attracted to crazy ideas and then carry out such terrible crimes?

A: All schools - from middle through college - should offer programs that address issues of violence, stress, frustration, inter-relations, conflict resolution, etc. School students should be brought to prisons to meet with young people who are behind bars and listen to their stories. We should all work together against violence and to look for ways to prevent it from happening. This will have an impact and may stop senseless killings.

Failing Correctional Substance Abuse Programming Climate Offers Little Against Recidivism

by Alex Reis

It is well established among criminal justice experts and scholars alike that most crime is substance abuse related, with the most effective combatants against recidivism being sobriety, continuing education and employment. However, a review of the Massachusetts Department of Correction's ("Department") latest approach towards offender substance abuse treatment reveals a shocking impenetrable maze of staff-consumed public funding, amidst a facade of grossly ineffective behavioral modification programming.

In excess of a five hundred million dollar budget for the fiscal year of 2011, the Department's own Annual Report show a mere 2.9 percent devotion in total offender programming. This is less than its cumulative food expenses. In further dismay, the Department outsources its substance abuse/behavior modification services to Spectrum Health Systems, Inc. ("Spectrum"), a private non-profit corporation that recently entered into a 3.5 million dollar Settlement with the Commonwealth, through former Attorney General Tom Reilly, to avoid litigation. This dispute is summarized by former State Auditor Joseph DeNucci's 2002 audit (Report No. 2002-4453-3C) finding Spectrum to have misappropriated an excess of 10 million dollars.

Despite further term conditions of the 2007 settlement agreement, "that Spectrum will continue to provide quality services to all of its clients in accor-

dance with the terms and conditions of its state contracts", its Correctional Recovery Academy ("CRA") continues to syphon precious limited public finances. In an experimental June, 2012 roll-out format, they drastically cut corners on staff oversight requirements at the expense of program end-quality and offender recovery. Specifically, Spectrum has appointed mere entry-level employees to function within institutional, discretionary and even clinical capacities, overseeing individual case management, without any professional licensure or qualifications.

Meanwhile, instructor-administered, curriculum-focused classroom time has been ominously replaced with inmate-run group meetings. Traditional staff responsibilities, task and authority have been delegated to the very inmate-subjects requiring treatment for a variety of cognitive behavior disorders. Moreover, new CRA format provisions prevent inmate participants from verbally interacting with available program staff attending any functions through a series of arbitrarily broad-sweeping communication restrictions aimed to trim staff obligation, leaving many low English proficient participants remain entirely unaccommodated.

Despite the obvious, common-sense stigmas attached to government informants within a secure correctional setting, the Department and Spectrum have implemented destructive peer accountability policies, requiring CRA participants to publicly inform on the misconduct of other General Population inmates as a condition for receiving increased-

opportunity earned good time. This is also necessary to maintain active enrollment status, to achieve program advancement and completion. Of course, these programs are typically dispositive of parole decisions and classification to lower security ultimately. This tension is resulting in a trend of shocking CRA violence, denied by prison superintendents and grievance office coordinators. All of this is occurring with the oversight of Spectrum's Vice President of Correctional Service, Christopher Petrozzi who is former employee of the Colorado Department of Correction, where he was previously subject to a protracted litigation involving the very same practices. *See Jenner V. McDaniels*, 123 Fed. Appx. 900, 904 (10th Cir. 2005).

With recent 3-year recidivism rates in the staggering 40 percentile range, the contractual relationship between Spectrum and the Department can only be described as "parasitic", given the severely-deficient current state of correctional substance abuse/behavioral modification services and the associated public cost. The instant climate is devoid of any measurable progress, insofar as decreasing recidivism, and when comparing it to the 70-plus percent gross budgetary security staffing costs, this is ill-deserving of the name "corrections".

Alex Reis is an inmate at Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Shirley.

The Truth within

by Teria Newson

(Old Colony Correctional Institution, Bridgewater)

When I close my eyes. I take a deep breath,
Trying to clear my thoughts of an emotional wreck,
Thoughts of my past I figured the best,
Just to find out that my past is a threat.

Not knowing what I am, I thought I knew me the best
Can't hide from the truth, the task of a test.
So much pain buried in my mind but feel it in my chest
Holding back tears that I know are not set, but they fall
Anyway.

Me thinking I'm a man I'm not suppose to cry
So many questions unanswered and they start with why.
There's no truth in reality there's nothing but lies.
But what seems like the truth to you are lies
Which people seem to believe what they don't know are lies.

But no one will ever know the concept of me.
What people see is what they speak
What they speak can't conquer me,
As long as I know that person is me.

Letter From a Prisoner

Dear Ms. Masny-Latos,

I received your letter dated June 17, 2013, inviting me to submit art and writings. I have done so in the past with other organizations. Unfortunately I do not have the time nor desire to do so.

Since my return to Massachusetts, I have experienced continued legal violations committed against me. My legal mail from the courts continues to be opened, tampered with, and read outside of my presence. Several mailings and motions to the court were never received by the court. The interference also includes preventing me telephone access to attorneys. This interference has resulted in the dismissal of a federal lawsuit in U.S.D.C. E.D. Pennsylvania, and interfered with any chance of post-conviction relief.

The S.B.C.C Medical staff has also denied me treatment prescribed by the nurse practitioner and my orthopedic doctor.

It has been my experience that the high-minded legal community within Massachusetts ignores prisoner rights violations while presenting a compassionate, benevolent charade to the public, in the form of *Mass Dissent*, and other facades.

I have written to dozens of organizations and attorneys, requesting assistance with these civil violations, and each response, if one is received at all, has always been, "we just don't have the time."

Unless you can find me an attorney that can assist me with these legal violations, "I just don't have the time".

Sincerely,
John Diaz, Shirley, W-62523

NLG Massachusetts Chapter Sustainers

In the spring of 2003, the Massachusetts Chapter of the NLG initiated the Chapter Sustainer Program. Since its inception, the Program has been very successful and has been enthusiastically joined by the following Guild members:

2 Anonymous • Michael Avery • Steven Buckley • Howard Cooper • Barb Dougan • Robert Doyle • Melinda Drew & Jeff Feuer • Carolyn Federoff • Roger Geller & Marjorie Suisman • Lee Goldstein & Shelley Kroll • Lisa Gordon • Benjie Hiller • Andrei Joseph • Myong Joun • Martin Kantrovitz • Nancy Kelly & John Willshire-Carrera • David Kelston • Jonathan Messinger • Petrucelly, Nadler & Norris • Hank Phillippi Ryan & Jonathan Shapiro • Allan Rodgers • Martin Rosenthal • Sharryn Ross & Mark Stern • Anne Sills & Howard Silverman • Judy Somberg • Stern, Shapiro, Weissberg & Garin

The Sustainer Program is one of the most important Chapter initiatives to secure its future existence. Please consider joining the Program.

YES, INCLUDE MY NAME AMONG NLG MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER SUSTAINERS!

I, _____, am making a commitment to support the Massachusetts Chapter of the Guild with an annual contribution of:

_____ \$500 (not including my membership dues)

\$ _____ (other above \$500)

As a sustainer I will receive:

- special listing in the Dinner Program;
- 1/8 page ad in the Dinner Program;
- acknowledgement in every issue of *Mass Dissent*;
- two (2) free raffle tickets for a Holiday Party raffle;
- invitation to special events.

Three ways to become a sustainer:

- contribute \$500 or more a year (in addition to dues)
- pair up with another person and pay \$250 each, or
- join the "Guild Circle" and pay \$50/month minimum.

Please mail to: NLG, Massachusetts Chapter
14 Beacon St., Suite 407, Boston, MA 02108

A Mother's Love

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over 500 miles from their homes.

Often multiple family members are incarcerated simultaneously for the same drug offense. My friend at Danbury, Dessera Wright, for example is the cousin and co-defendant of my friend, Monique Williams, who is also serving a 10-year mandatory minimum drug sentence. Like Des, Monique is a mother of two children and her husband is also incarcerated for the same drug case. There were many others with multiple members of the same family in prison. Their children are among the over two million children with one or both parents incarcerated.

Something I never thought about prior to going to prison in

relation to women and mandatory minimum sentences was that the very nature of mandatory minimums, their lengthy time spans, often takes from women their child bearing years. Mandatory minimum sentences do much more than just put individuals in prisons. When we link harsh, lengthy sentences to the waste of human potential it also encompasses the ability to start a family.

Prison allowed me to see the spirit of a woman in all women, through all the heavy labels, bad mother, inmate, convict, felon, junkie, crack whore and thief. The labels exact further external and internal punishment long after incarceration and created further disconnect from families and communities. Sisterhood in a prison broke through that for me,

allowing me to feel the real person. It's the one place where the simplest gesture can be a warm lifesaver just at the right time by a person you came to understand and appreciate. I learned the true profile of who is in this county's prisons and how wrong it is to put people in cages unnecessarily. Particularly women with children.

Andrea James is an author and Executive Director of Families for Justice as Healing (www.justiceashealing.org). Excerpt from her book "Upper Bunkies Unite: And Other Thoughts On the Politics of Mass Incarceration" (<http://amzn.to/165ZHxf>).

Mass Dissent

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The National Lawyers Guild is...



" ... an association dedicated to the need for basic change in the structure of our political and economic system. We seek to unite the lawyers, law students, legal workers and jailhouse lawyers of America in an organization which shall function as an effective political and social force in the service of people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests."

Preamble to the Constitution of the National Lawyers Guild

Donate to Support the Guild!

The Massachusetts Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild's **Mass Defense Committee** provides legal representation and assistance to activists from all progressive political movements.

We need your support.

Please help us by donating to the Mass Chapter. Mail this form and your check to **14 Beacon St., Suite 407, Boston, MA 02108** or visiting www.nlgmass.org/donate.

I, _____ (name), am donating \$ _____ to the NLG
Mass Chapter to help support the Mass Defense Committee and its work,

Fill out and send to:

National Lawyers Guild, Massachusetts Chapter
14 Beacon St., Suite 407, Boston, MA 02108

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

PHONE: (w) _____ (h) _____

E-MAIL: _____

FAX: _____

Circle one:

☐ Lawyer ☐ Legal Worker ☐ Law Student ☐ Jailhouse Lawyer

Alumna/Alumnus of _____ Year _____

Dues (from schedule): _____

I am interested in working on the following projects:

- ☐ Lawyer Referral Service
- ☐ Street Law Clinic
- ☐ Mass Defense Committee
- ☐ Litigation Committee
- ☐ Mass Dissent (monthly publication)
- ☐ National Immigration Project

Please Join Us!

Dues are calculated on a calendar year basis
(Jan.1-Dec.31) according to your income*:

Jailhouse Lawyers	Free
Law Students	\$25
up to \$15,000	\$40
over \$15,000 to \$20,000	\$50
over \$20,000 to \$25,000	\$75
over \$25,000 to \$30,000	\$100
over \$30,000 to \$40,000	\$150
over \$40,000 to \$50,000	\$200
over \$50,000 to \$60,000	\$250
over \$60,000 to \$70,000	\$300
over \$70,000 to \$80,000	\$350
over \$80,000 to \$90,000	\$400
over \$100,000	\$500

* Any **new** member who joins after September 1 will be carried over to the following year. Dues may be paid in full or in quarterly installments. Dues of \$80 cover the basic membership costs, which include publication and mailing of *Mass Dissent* (the Chapter's monthly newsletter), national and regional dues, and the office and staff.