

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND SUPPORT RESISTANCE EFFORTS

As part of our social change movement and efforts to decarcerate Louisiana, at the appointed time, prisoners and their outside supporters will be asked to support and/or participate in nonviolent work stoppages, hunger strikes, boycotts, vigils, and civil litigation against intransigent prison officials, the prison rodeo, prison canteen and other profit-making schemes of the prison system.

During this time, all participants and supporters will be required to (1) prepare bills, write letters, and visit Louisiana public officials as part of lobbying efforts and to communicate concerns; (2) write letters to mass media to create publicity on the issues; (3) prepare press releases; (4) organize and participate in outside protests, marches, rallies, and demonstrations; (5) write newsletters to keep the public informed of the issues; (6) end hostilities, set differences aside and work together in a collective for change; (7) remain steadfast in recognizing our shared struggle; (8) continue to figure out and find ways how to support one another and be in the struggle together.

“Building a nation that fights against feudal ideas and pursues the spirit of liberty, science, equality, and fraternity is a task facing not only China but all humankind.”

– Shen Tong

Why and How to Decarcerate Louisiana and Support God-given Rights to Resist Systemic Oppression that Dehumanize and Degrade People Inside The American Penal System

DECARCERATE LOUISIANA

A Social Change Movement and Organization

www.decarceratelouisiana.com

Angela Davis, a social justice activist and writer once observed: *“Does not thinking about the prison system and how it grew so fast in a short period of time relieve us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism?”*

In our inner-cities we have high rates of unemployment, homelessness, domestic violence, state-sponsored criminalization of impoverished communities, and the militarization of the police—among other things—so that targeting these marginalized populations for incarceration becomes “justified.” The U.S. incarcerates 716 people per 100,000 every year and spends an estimated \$80 billion on the criminal justice system en masse every year (a demand that does not change no matter which party is in power). Decarcerate Louisiana presents an opportunity to oppose the growing reliance on prisons to solve social problems that are actually exacerbated by mass incarceration.

HOW DID WE EMBARK UPON MASS INCARCERATION?

In the 1950s, corporations ran from organized labor in this country in search of nations providing cheap labor pools

so that it wouldn't have to pay higher wages, benefits, and so on. Then, in the 1960s, and with huge numbers of Americans unemployed and living in poverty, domestic violence had erupted as people became desperate looking for ways to cope and survive.

LBJ instituted “The Great Society” and encouraged the States to implement social welfare programs as an anti-poverty and anti-crime fighting strategy. However, with the election of Richard Nixon, the Great Society program was abandoned and a law and order strategy commenced that called for longer prison sentences and increased funding to the police.

Reagan followed suit and even began cutting social safety-net funding for housing, food subsidies, and prenatal care. The Bush and Clinton administrations went right along with the backlash and saw even higher rates of poverty, crime, and imprisonment. The Obama administration sought to tackle a part of the problem by changing laws relative to the powder and crack-cocaine disparities in sentencing, but with 2.3 million citizens still behind bars, much work remains to be done.

HOW CAN WE BETTER FIGHT CRIME?

“It is important that we become aware of what kind of people and place we can and should become, and what it will take to shape our future and change our destiny.”

– Edmund W. Lewis

Assume the role of student(s) and imagine your ideal community. Draw a plan of this place. Create opportunities for this place (e.g. homes, affordable housing, trees, green spaces, public spaces, parks, schools, hospitals, streets, buildings, transportation networks, economic development zones, living wage jobs, shopping areas, vocational workshop areas, agricultural spaces, access to land and water ways, etc.)

Get your family, friends, and community to participate and play the role of developers, planners, environmentalists, city council members and other constituencies. And invest in your community! Invest in human welfare! Invest in rural and/or urban sustainable development!

It's been proven over and over again that when we invest in ourselves, plan and build for ourselves, people thrive with virtually no crime. When we fail to give all to the improvement of our persons and places, life becomes a grind as levels of stress and desperation and upheaval begin to rise.

WHY DECARCERATE?

“This I know. This I believe with all my heart: if we want a free and peaceful world, if we want to make the deserts bloom and man grow to greater dignity as a human being, we can do it.”

– Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt

Incarcerate means to segregate and lock people down. Decarcerate means to integrate and free people up. The incarcerate mentality is the equivalent of saying “if you do the crime, you should be caught, convicted, and punished.” The Decarcerate mentality says “you may have done wrong, as we all have to some extent or another, however, I believe there is some special talent in you waiting to be called out and that the world would appreciate. Come! Let us find a special place for your personal growth.” In short, our corrections facilities can and should function wholly as rehabilitative homes, educational schools, and learning centers for the development of skill sets that allow people to find their passion and success as well as reintegration with their communities.

If we are true champions of human rights and mean to fulfill our constitutional guarantees of a more perfect union, then we have a moral obligation to end prison slavery, overhaul our criminal justice system and decarcerate.

HOW CAN WE DECARCERATE LOUISIANA?

If we want all our people to come home working, helping, building family and community, please consider the following actions:

- (1) Commit to fighting crime by educating yourself about the root causes of crime;
- (2) Get as much support as possible for the “ideal community” and “place” you would really like to live in if you could, and that is sustainable in whatever way you want to define that term. The goal is to get enough people on board that should be sufficient to command and determine land-use policy and zoning decisions that incorporate the beloved community;
- (3) Draw up plans, petitions, and legislative bills requesting community reinvestment and an alternative criminal justice and penal system that focuses on social justice, equity, restorative justice, and human redemption. Then lobby the Louisiana legislature to pass those measures into law;
- (4) Dedicate a part of your life to making Decarcerate Louisiana actions successful

WHY RESIST?

“Work that is not free ceases to be a fulfilling pursuit and becomes an effective means of dehumanization.”

– Paulo Freire

It is clear that the 13th Amendment is a ploy that did not abolish slavery but turned out to be historic demand for capital based on free slave labor. It is clear that the modern American penal system is a continuation of slavery only this time by stealth—the Criminal Justice System.

It is clear that the Wars on Drugs and Poverty, the Nicaraguan Contras drugs-for-weapons program, and state-sponsored unsustainable urban development practices—among other things—constitute an orchestrated attack and plan to oppress, criminalize, and imprison black and poor people. Therefore, we have a moral obligation to resist the profit-making schemes of this new institution that exploits prisoners for profits as well as uses prisoners as a profit-center to exploit their outside family, friends, and community.