

#### Private Prisons continued from Page 1

qualifications, experience, and management personnel necessary to carry out the terms of the contract; (2) the ability to expedite the location, design, and construction of a private correctional facility; and (3) the ability to comply with applicable laws, court orders, and national correctional standards. See 17-1-202 CRS (emphasis added). Given the GEO group's failure to perform on a prior contract to build a private prison in Pueblo, CCJRC doesn't believe that the GEO group could have met the statutory requirements for receiving another contract to build and operate a private prison.

Since being awarded the contract in Ault, the GEO Group is now demanding a bed guarantee and public financing, just like they did in Pueblo. This is an attempt to change the material terms of the contract which is, in and of itself, grounds to terminate the contract. Neither a bed guarantee nor public financing are in the best interests of Colorado taxpayers and must be rejected. Many thanks to Rep. McAdams for her ongoing support and leadership and to CCEG for standing with us on this issue. You can find CCJRC's letter to Director Zavarsky on the website.

On March 6, 2007, CCJRC also made a presentation before the House Judiciary Committee on our concerns about private prisons. We were joined by the moving testimony of Tracy Masuga whose son had been moved to Oklahoma, Ryan Sherman from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association and Cheryl Trine, whose law firm is currently suing CCA for the treatment of prisoners following the riot at Crowley in 2004. We want to thank them for their testimony. Last year, Cornell Companies was awarded a contract to build an 832-bed private prison for women in Hudson. Before the prison can be built, the town of Hudson would need to approve annexation of approximately 320 acres northwest of town. Last week, the Hudson town board members decided to postpone the decision on annexation and Mayor Pontius said he would like to leave it up to the residents to vote on whether the area should be zoned for the use of the prison. Pontius said the vote is tentatively set for May. There is community opposition to having a private prison in their town. If you want to get involved, contact CCJRC. Between the prison in Ault and the prison in Hudson, that would bring two private prisons to Weld County.

#### How to Work Your Way to Prison in Colorado

There are often legislators who say that it isn't easy to get to prison in Colorado. They say that you have to actually, "work your way to prison." We wanted to share the story of a CCJRC member who went to prison, no matter how hard she worked to stay out. This is the second installment of a three-part series. In the first installment, we followed our girl as she tries to navigate through the system, only to continue to find road blocks at every turn.

The next few months were a blur. I spent hours on the phone trying to find treatment facilities in Colorado that would accept me. Finally, I found the Arapahoe House in Denver and they said that they had a two-week program that I

could attend. At the time I had no idea whether two weeks would be enough but I signed up and went down to Denver to make an effort to get my life back.

It was a bad case of mismanagement on my part. After I had been there for nine days I had to go back to Ft. Collins and go to court. I had a tax refund coming in the mail. I needed to get my heat and water turned back on and pay the rent. I was worried that I was going to lose my house. Social Services had cut off visits with the kids until I finished treatment, I just wanted them to have a home to come home to. I was desperate not to lose the few things that I had left and everything felt like it was sliding through my fingers.

I went to Ft. Collins that day, attended court, cashed the check and got my services turned back on. I left town about three in the afternoon and tried taking the old highway to Denver in an attempt to beat traffic. I was already late and I didn't want to get into trouble. Then my tire blew out. I was out in the middle of nowhere Colorado, in pre-cellphone world and no spare tire in the trunk. I walked to a farmhouse and used a phone to call a tow truck who was willing to take me to a tire dealership. We pulled up right at about 6:30 and there was a line in front of me. Long story short, I didn't back to the facility until after 10:00. I went in to drop a UA, turned around and accidentally knocked over the container. They discharged me from the program the next day. (Treatment Failure Number 2)

This is when I lost hope. I needed my mom, but she was drinking a lot those days and I didn't like spending a lot of time with her. She lived in Greeley which was the home of all my worst memories and personal degradations. I did not want to go and run into the past. That's what happened though. It was waiting for me with open arms and I fell right in. I started seeing someone whom I had dated in the past and he was kney deep in all the stuff that I had been avoiding for all these years. Misery loves company and we were miserable together for about three weeks. I woke up one morning and realized I had hit my bottom and wasn't going back there again.

I started the process again. I continued to look for somewhere that I could heal and try to get my family back together. I found a place called The Cenikor's Family Reunion Program. With separate wings for men and women, the program offered mothers with dependent children the opportunity to keep their kids with them while in treatment. These women who might not otherwise seek treatment for fear of losing their kids to the "system" or leaving them in a dysfunctional situation.

On paper it was perfect. A two year treatment program where I could heal and try to get my children and start a new life. It took several weeks before there was a bed ready and during that time I became pregnant with my third child.

I went to Cenikor and started their program. Towards the end of the first week, I started experiencing a lot of pain in my lower stomach. Fearing that there was something wrong with the pregnancy, I went to the staff and told them

my problem. They took me to University Hospital, I was x-rayed and questioned, and had blood drawn. The doctors couldn't find anything wrong but I was still in a great deal of pain. Twelve hours later they concluded that my appendix was bad and scheduled me for emergency surgery.

When I came out of surgery, I was told that my appendix was perfectly healthy, albeit gone, and that they couldn't find anything wrong. They put me on a regimen of very strong antibiotics and painkillers and released me to Cenikor.

When I returned to the facility I was informed that I would not be allowed to take the pain killers, because this was a treatment facility but I could have ibuprofen. I agreed to their terms and asked if they had picked up the prescription for antibiotics. They said that they hadn't but would.

Three days later, I was still asking and they still hadn't picked up the prescription. The following morning I woke up and the incision had turned black and was horribly infected. I asked them to take me to the doctor, but they "didn't have the staff available" and wouldn't be able to until the next day. When they finally took me to the emergency room the staff had me admitted immediately. The doctor who was in charge of my case, said that she wouldn't release me back to Cenikor's care.

The only way that they would release me was if I went home and had a nurse come in to check on me. I was in the hospital for about a week and they had me on Dilaudid, which is a powerful painkiller so events around this time are a little foggy. The doctors were worried because they thought there was a fungus growing in my heart, so they changed the antibiotics I was on, they still couldn't figure out what was wrong with me and sent me home.

I was completely defeated at this point and I started to spike fevers of 105 degrees, and I had to go sentencing in a matter of weeks. I finally checked myself into the hospital in Ft. Collins the day before I went to sentencing and was released to go to court the next day.

There was a treatment facility in Greeley that I had tried to get into before Cenikor accepted me but I was unable to secure a bed at the time. I did an interview with them over the phone when I was home and they agreed to let me come to their facility. I went to court on July 16. I was sick, worn out and three months pregnant. The judge sentenced me to six years in prison.

They transferred me to the Larimer County Jail and within 24 hours I was sent to Poudre Valley Hospital. They ran some more tests and within 12 hours diagnosed me with an intestinal infection, changed the regimen of medication that I was on and I was healthy within three days...and on my way to prison. The hospital had allowed me to call the Social Services worker, who arranged for me to talk to my children. That was the last time I ever spoke with my son.

The story continues in our June Issue...

#### CMRC... cont. from Page 1

that you are only allowed to access them for a couple of hours at night. This means that the entire prison population is crammed into that small space all just trying to get a breath of fresh air. It is standing room only, so if you are looking to exercise to relieve tension or preserve your health you are in for a rude awakening.

On top of not having a yard, a gym, a television, a hobby shop, or anywhere else to relieve the tension and stress; the facility is unsafe and under staffed. Blind spots are everywhere and some units did not have staff in them at all for hours. I saw more drugs and hooch (prison alcohol) in this place than any other joint I have been to. Fighting is an everyday thing at CMRC and some of those fights were serious.

My first three days there were filled with nothing but testing. These tests are designed to assess your needs. Drug & Alcohol, Anger Management, Mental Health, Employability, Social Skills & Needs, etc.... After the testing is done, it takes about one to two weeks for the results to be finalized and for you to be assigned to what the they think you should be in. Finally, my tests were graded and I was assigned to four staff led classes to begin. I was looking forward to getting started.

As I walk into my first class, there were about 100 inmates inside running around and yelling and talking loud. The teacher hadn't been there in two weeks, she was on a sick leave, but there was an inmate to look for or set out a sign-up sheet so daily attendance could be monitored, so any one could sign you in. A couple of times a week one of the higher-up staff members would come in to quiet things down and take roll to make sure people were actually coming to class or to play a movie which had nothing to do with class.

My second class had a teacher but the whole class period had nothing to do with the subject. Instead we sat around and listened to the teacher tell us about her childhood in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. I was bored to death and started to worry about whether or not I'd be able to successfully complete.

My third class had a teacher who was very "efficient." When we entered the class she had a list of things already written on the board and told us to write them down, that was our lesson for the day. One of the other inmates told me that whatever this teacher wrote on the board was on the final exam word for word and we were allowed to use her notes.

My last class had a teacher who was young and inexperienced but she did her job as well as she could. She did have a hard time keeping control of such a large class with so many inmates that generally had an "I don't need this attitude" about the class.

After a couple of days of this I had thoughts of complaining to the staff because I was afraid that I wasn't going to successfully complete the program. I was still operating under the inmate mentality, so I brought it to my fellow inmates and they told me not to kick up any waves because I would get a certificate whether we had a teacher or not. I was reluctant to go along with this but because of my prison mentality, I chose to do as my peers recommended.

It was hard getting adjusted to this non-organized environment but I soon used my time in class to write letters to my girlfriend and son. Every once in a while the facility would have a tour from the outside and on those days the staff would pay us a bag of popcorn to sit in class, not speak to any one and play along while one of the staff would sit in and pretend to be teaching class as the tour came through. It was funny how on tour the staffs were so "professional" I guess one might call it. Deceitful another might call it.

Oh, remember my first class, the one with no teacher? About a week before it ended a staff member came in with a bunch of study books and had us sit in groups of five or six. She passed out the books and for the following week gave us open book tests on each of the books. There were five study books and on each day we completed a test for each book and were awarded certificates. In my other classes it was just as the inmates had told me, write down the notes on the board at the beginning of each class and lo and behold, the final test was in that order word for word.

I made it through my first set of classes with outstanding grades! My second semester I was assigned to three more classes. These classes were set up the same as the ones I had taken earlier: no teachers, movies, loud, unorganized, or a new teacher every other week. Tour day was still the same.

I started to challenge the staff on their motives and their response was, "we have the highest parole/community acceptance rate out of all other prisons in Colorado" as if that justified their deceit. Or, they'd say "DOC won't let us run the way we want to." I pursued that answer and what I found out was that DOC wanted them to spend less money on classes and more

money on security. By DOC telling them Once I got to the half way house, I was expected to get a job within 10 days. Pay restitution, pay child support, and pay rent starting from day one. All of that is to be expected, but after a decade in prison, I didn't have a dime to my name, no clothes to wear to an interview or to a job. I didn't know how to use a phone or a computer (which a lot of jobs expect you to apply on.) If that wasn't bad enough, to get a job now a days you have to have a valid ID and I didn't have one of those either. A prison ID won't work for employment and in order to get an ID one must have a birth certificate, social security card and some other form of ID.

I had nothing and it takes weeks if not months to get a birth certificate and social security card so how was I supposed to get a job in 10 days? If that wasn't bad enough you are expected to call the half way house from a land line (public phone) while on job search. I had no idea that you had to dial 10 digits to make a call; it was only 7 digits when I went to prison. On top of that there are no public pay phones to make calls on, everyone uses cell phone now a days.

If all this wasn't bad enough I'm told I'll be sent back to prison if I don't comply! I was still in shock from being out of prison. My first time in a store, I ran out the door and just wanted to go back to my cell to get away from all the visual stimulations. I had an anxiety attack from so many things and colors to look at. I was scared and wanted to call my case manager. I didn't think I could take it. I was overwhelmed with impossible expectations and from being in an environment that my mind and senses simply were not used to. I could see how easy it would be to give up on making it and how easy it would be to turn to drugs and alcohol to get a break from all the stress.

I don't expect any hand outs or to be coddled, but a couple of months grace from all the bills would have given me and others like me a chance to make it without failing and ending up costing society more. A real re-entry program that actually helps get you prepared for society like getting paper work in order and clothes and such would make all the difference in the world.

I'm ashamed of my past but I want to prove myself. To work and be able to take care of myself and my family is all I want from life. No handouts or free rides, I just ask for the opportunity to be a productive member of society.

## Calendar Items For Spring

!!!! Here come the Festivals !!!!!!!

Look for Coalition partners CCJRC and CPCat several events this spring and summer.

The Peoples Fair is the June 2 and 3.

Pridefest follows on June 16 and 17th

The Denver Black Arts Festival July 14 and 15th



## America's Failed War on Drugs: A war on families, health and our constitutional rights.

Our government has spent hundreds of billions of dollars at the federal, state and local levels trying to make America "drug free." This, despite the fact that a drug-free society has never been recorded as even once having existed in all of human history. Most of this effort has been extraordinarily ineffective and even counterproductive. America's zero-tolerance approach has actually made our drug problems worse, not better.

Nearly half a million people in the U.S. are sitting behind bars tonight for drug offenses. That's more people than Western Europe, with a bigger population, incarcerates for all offenses. Statistics show drug war prisoners are overwhelmingly black or Latino-subject to racial profiling, higher arrest rates and harsher treatment once inside the criminal justice system-even though rates of drug use are comparable across racial lines. The war on drugs has become a war on families, a war on health, and a war on our constitutional rights.

*The overtly racist nature of our nation's failed war on drugs is just one issue the Drug Policy Alliance is addressing in its daily work, and will be a major focus of our upcoming International Drug Policy Reform Conference to be held December 5-8 in New Orleans.*

One of the conference's main goals will be to empower those living and working in communities most affected by these damaging policies, and build ways of effectively speaking out in order to bring change. Successful strategies for achieving legislative and judicial reform, reaching media and education goals, and improving community and public health outreach will be explored.

This is the world's principal gathering of people who believe the war on drugs is doing more harm than good. No better opportunity exists to learn about drug policy and to strategize and mobilize for reform. Visit the DPA conference website in coming months for online registration, schedule updates, exhibitor information, maps, links and more: <http://conference.drugpolicy.org>.

**CCJRC is a member of Community Shares!  
Ask your employer about work-place giving!**

## July 6th and 7th is HipHopOsium ~ Art-a-Motion.

A 2-day Urban health fair and conference geared toward the Denver intergenerational communities. Included in this health fair is holistic healing, testing and screening (heart, STI, HIV, diabetes etc.) a Street-ball tournament/clinics, fashion show, HipHop performances, and an information sharing venue.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

It sure has been a whirlwind at the Capitol. The Governor announced that reducing recidivism is one of his major goals during his tenure and has already requested some amendments to the state budget to allocate \$8 million for substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment and additional community corrections beds. CCJRC has submitted our suggestions to the Governor on how to reduce recidivism and you can find that letter on the website. There has also been talk that there will be a bill introduced to form a criminal justice commission.

We will keep you posted.

We are currently involved with three bills. Our thanks to CCJRC coalition partners for their leadership: ACLU (SB 83), the Colorado Criminal Defense Bar (HB 1107), and the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (HB 1313). The three bills are:

**Senate Bill 83:** would, among other things, give people on parole the right to vote. This has turned into a very controversial bill and the Secretary of State and the Attorney General's office have come out in opposition. At this time, we are not sure whether the provision to allow people on parole to vote will be kept in SB 83.

**House Bill 07-1107:** would allow people to petition the court to seal a criminal conviction after 10 years following the completion of the sentence. HB 1107 was approved by the House Judiciary Committee in a very strong 9-2 vote. It is now waiting to be scheduled for a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee.

**House Bill 07-1313:** specifies what documents the Department of Revenue is to accept in issuing state identification cards. One of the documents that would be accepted would be a DOC inmate ID so long as it was accompanied by either a birth certificate or a social security card. HB 1313 passed out of the House and is now in the Senate awaiting a hearing before the State, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee.

YES! I want to join CCJRC and help stop perpetual prison expansion in Colorado. Enclosed is my tax-deductible annual membership or additional contribution.

**Annual membership dues:**

Individual: \$35       Low income/student/senior: \$12  
 Household: \$50       Prisoner: \$3 (or equivalent in postage stamps)  
 Sustainer: \$100+

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# COLORADO JUSTICE REPORT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COLORADO CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM COALITION

March 2007

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Founded in 1999, CCJRC is a network of organizations, faith communities and individuals working to reverse the trend of mass incarceration in Colorado.

## Call to Rescind Private Prison Contract in Ault

On March 5, 2007, Rep. Buffle McFadyen (D-Pueblo West), CCJRC, and Colorado Citizens for Ethics in Government held a joint press conference to ask Governor Ritter and DOC Director Ari Zavaras to terminate the contract that was signed between the State of Colorado and the GEO Group to build a 1500 bed private prison in Ault. Citing problems in the bidding process, GEO's failure to perform on an earlier contract to build a private prison in Pueblo, and GEO's demand for public financing for construction and a bed guarantee, Rep. McFadyen and CCJRC believe that rescinding the contract is the only way to bring integrity back into the state bidding process and protect taxpayers.

As you may remember, the contract that was awarded to GEO has been mired in controversy since a legislative audit proved that Nolin Renfrow, while still employed by the DOC as director of prisons, started a prison consulting business that helped GEO prepare their bid. If GEO won the bid, Nolin Renfrow stood to be paid \$1 million. The Auditor said that Nolin Renfrow's action "present a conflict of interest and result in a breach of his fiduciary duty and the public trust."

Nolin Renfrow has stated in the newspapers that he had no involvement in the decision making process. Whether that's true or not has yet to be determined. The Colorado Citizens for Ethics in Government has submitted a request for documents from the Department of Corrections to look into this matter more carefully.

Another important fact in all this is that GEO failed to perform on a contract they were awarded in 2003 to build a 500 bed prison in Pueblo. GEO never broke ground and negotiations stalled because GEO wanted a bed guarantee from the DOC that would ensure that they got paid for 90% occupancy at the prison regardless of whether the DOC used 90% of the beds. DOC has never given a bed guarantee to a private prison company. GEO also wanted public financing for the prison in Pueblo and was in negotiations with the city of Pueblo. Finally, after years of delays, the DOC terminated the contract with GEO in December 2006.

So, the lingering question remains: how did the GEO group get awarded another contract with this history? State law requires that, if the Department of Corrections issues a request for competitive proposals for the construction and operation of a private prison, the contract must be awarded to the contractor found to be the most qualified and the most competitive and that the contractor has demonstrated that it has (1) the

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## Cheyenne Mountain Re-Entry Center One Man's Experience

My name is ... well that is not important. I have been a number in the DOC for over ten years. About eight months ago, I was finally accepted by a halfway house on the condition that I successfully complete Cheyenne Mountain Re-Entry Center (CMRC). I was thankful for the opportunity and looking forward to going through CMRC because after more than a decade in DOC, or as I like to call it the "Department of Dehumanization", I was definitely in the need of a re-entry program.

One week after I was accepted, I was transferred to CMRC. I was hopeful that CMRC had answers to some of the thousands of questions that were running through my mind. I had heard that it was this great new Re-Entry program that had classes designed to help you readjust to society and prepare you with what you needs.

As I got off the bus with my property I was escorted to the intake area. I was stripped of all my property. Intake was fast. I was assigned to a room with 12 other inmates. Lights came on at 5:00AM, at that time you had to have your bed fully made, be dressed in full prison greens and stay that way until 11:00 PM. There was no television or anything else to do to relax the mind. The windows were so high up on the walls that you could not see out them.

The facility is designed to hold around 750 people and there isn't any recreation other than a so-called gym the size of a small classroom

## Become A Member of CCJRC

Join today... Get one of our new CCJRC bumper stickers!! 2007 has been a whirlwind already. It has been a very successful year for CCJRC as we continue the fight to stop the insanity and injustice in Colorado of thoughtlessly incarcerating more and more people.

CCJRC is a membership organization. There are over 4,700 individuals and organizations statewide, like you, who are truly the backbone of CCJRC. Volunteers, activists and donors - you are, WE are, the driving force behind CCJRC. It is our combined work and support alongside a small but dedicated staff that moves forward and helps to achieve our mission and all of our goals.

As members, we write letters to newspapers and elected officials, attend meetings, organize communities and groups to bring about the realization of our mission...and make a donation of personal significance. All of these measures are vital to our success, but your donation is very important. To achieve our goals, to coordinate activities and groups, to plan purchase and distribute flyers, posters and newsletters, to do the work big and small that will assure that we are heard and listened to requires all of our financial support.

Your gift of any amount, joined with those donations of all the rest of us, will further the efforts and outcomes of CCJRC. There is a donation form and envelope in this newsletter, waiting for you to help support the work and our collective obligation to pursue justice.

**Please join us now with your tax-deductible contribution.**