

# Upcoming Events

## 2nd Annual Criminal Justice Awareness Day

Saturday, September 17th 9 am - 4 pm

First Universalist Church (NE corner of Hampden/Colorado, Denver)

**Focus: Women in Prison.** 9 am: Registration. 10 am: Keynote by Former First Lady of Colorado, Dottie Lamm, "Women in Prison, Children in Crisis." Workshops and panel discussions throughout the day. Box lunches with drinks available at noon for \$6.

## Rally for Recovery

Saturday, September 24th, 12- 2 pm

Denver's Civic Center Park

Food, Music, Speakers (including Mayor Hickenlooper). Sponsored by Advocates for Recovery.

## Jam for Justice

Saturday, September 30th 6-11pm

Millenium Harvest House (1345 28th St., Boulder)

Sponsored by Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence. Musical & Cultural Performances, Dancing, Spoken Word Artists, Social Justice Organizing, Silent Auction, Dinner & Cash Bar.

**For more info on any of these events, contact CCJRC.**

## You Can and Do Make a Difference!

CCJRC is a membership organization. The 'coalition' component is organizations which share a common belief around halting state prison expansion, abolishing Colorado's private prison industry, rallying around the rights of the imprisoned and demanding that, as a society, we remain accountable for our treatment of those who are accused, those who have been found guilty, and those who have paid their debt and look forward to rejoining society as contributing members. These are groups spread across Colorado that have a collective interest in these and other core values.

But are all the members of CCJRC organizations? Certainly not! There are over 1,000 individuals, 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 us forward and helps us to achieve our mission and all our goals.

As CCJRC members, we look to each other to write the next letter to elected officials, to attend the next community meeting, to help organize the next action to bring about a realization of our mission ... and to make another donation of personal significance. All of these measures are vital to the continued success of CCJRC but your donation is very important. To achieve all of the activities listed above and more, to effectively coordinate the many dozens of groups and individuals, to plan, purchase and distribute the flyers, yard signs and posters, 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. A monthly donation, an annual tithe to help balance the inequities we fight, a gift whenever you can afford to share your financial resource - everything you can do adds to everything the rest of us can do. 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 with your contribution. **You can and do make a difference!**

**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: \$25     Low income/student/senior: \$12  
 Household: \$50     Prisoner: \$3 (or equivalent in postage stamps)  
 Sustainer: \$100+

My check is enclosed (made payable to CCJRC)

Please charge my credit card:

- Visa     Mastercard     Discover     American Express  
 once     monthly     quarterly

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Home Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ expires \_\_\_\_\_

How do you prefer to be contacted (check only one):

- email     U.S. Mail     Fax     Phone

Please return this form to:  
CCJRC, 1212 Mariposa St., #4, Denver, CO 80204

## Meet Our New Staff and Board of Directors!

While CCJRC is very excited about relocating to Denver, this move also involved saying good-bye to Amanda Udis-Kessler, CCJRC's administrative assistant, and former Board of Directors members Mary Frances Kerr, Heidi Gamer, Barbara Huber, and Barbara Elliott. It is impossible to adequately thank these dedicated folks for all their effort, commitment and leadership during this transition and over the years. Amanda deserves much of the credit for keeping things running in the Springs for the past year. She left CCJRC to work full-time at Colorado College and we send our love and deep appreciation to all of them.

### New Board of Directors:

**Catherine Guerrero** is a long-time community organizer and has served on the Board of Directors for the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sisters of Color United for Education.

**Richard Jackson, PhD** is the senior tenured professor in criminology at Metro State University (Denver) and has served on numerous criminal justice planning commissions over the past twenty years.

**Joe Mauro** is the current development officer for Project Angelheart that provides meals to people living with HIV/AIDS. Joe was previously the development director for the Colorado ACLU.

**Ellen Toomey-Hale** has over twenty years experience working in the criminal justice system as a district court magistrate judge, court facilitator, assistant district attorney, probation officer, and a lawyer in private practice. Ellen was one of the co-authors of CCJRC's publication, Parenting from Prison.

**Julia Yoo** is an attorney licensed to practice law in Colorado and California with extensive experience in prisoner civil rights litigation. Most recently, she has successfully filed four lawsuits against the Department of Corrections on behalf of women in prison that had been sexually assaulted by staff.

### Board Advisor

**Dorothy Rupert** - Dorothy is a former state legislator from Boulder with too many passions and accomplishments to list. Dorothy was instrumental in the founding of CCJRC when she introduced a prison moratorium bill to suspend prison expansion in 1999.

### New staff

**Pam Clifton** has joined the staff as our new Membership & Outreach Coordinator. Pam brings her talents and passion to CCJRC because of her desire to see drug laws changed, parole laws reformed, and the warehousing of people in Colorado stopped. We feel very blessed and welcome Pam.

## Parolee Re-entry Guide in Development

CCJRC is researching and writing a re-entry resource guide to people with the difficult transition from prison to community. **If you have ideas about what you think we should include or have a success story to share, please contact Carol Peebles at CCJRC.** We plan on having the re-entry guide completed by the end of the year.

## Update: Concerned Citizens of Lamar Challenge Private Prison at the Polls

Since 2003, Cornell, a private prison company, has been trying to build a 500-750 bed prison in Lamar. Despite the support of local government officials and business leaders who are promoting the prison as a form of economic development, Cornell has been stopped in its tracks by Concerned Citizens of Lamar (CCL). CCL was formed because city leaders were being less than forthcoming with information about Cornell's track record and the impact a prison would have on the community. CCL wanted full disclosure and public participation before the City leaders moved forward with the prison project. In the spirit of true grassroots democracy, last summer CCL started a campaign to change the City Charter to require voter approval before the prison project could proceed. Last summer, CCL filed its petition with the City Clerk and was gearing up to gather signatures to get on the local ballot when the City Attorney filed a lawsuit to challenge the constitutionality of the petition.

CCL won the lawsuit and gathered almost three times the number of signatures necessary to get on the ballot. On July 25, 2005, the City Council approved the ballot language that will come before voters in Lamar on November 1st. If passed, the amendment to the Charter would require voter approval before any private prison could operate a prison in Lamar and before any city-owned utility could provide water or wastewater services to a private prison regardless of where the prison was located. CCL's effort and leadership is an inspiration to all of us trying to end the use of private prisons in Colorado. We'd also like to thank attorneys Steve Harris and Sunny Maynard for helping CCL in this campaign.

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

# COLORADO JUSTICE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2005

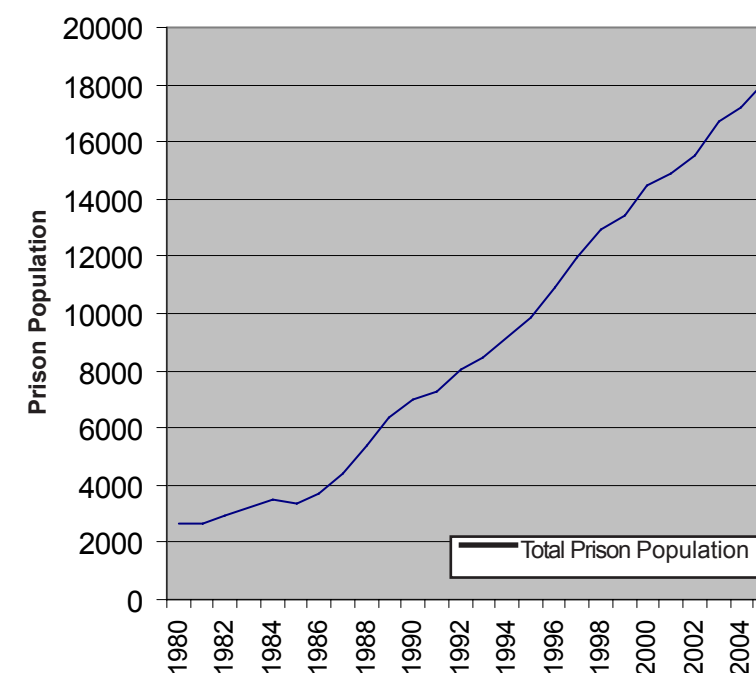
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COLORADO CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM COALITION

1212 Mariposa St., #4, Denver, CO 80204  
303-825-0122 phone, 303-825-0304 fax  
www.CCJRC.org info@ccjrc.org

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

## Colorado Prison Population

1980-2005



## Prison Bed Growth by Decade

- ▶ 1960s: saw the first "explosion" in prison building in Colorado, adding 2,578 new prison beds
- ▶ 1970s: 192 new prison beds
- ▶ 1980s: 1,842 new prison beds
- ▶ 1990s: 14 new prisons, including 4 private prisons, adding 11,334 new prison beds
- ▶ 2000s: so far, 1,734 new prison beds with possible new prisons in Lamar and Pueblo and expansions at the Colorado State Penitentiary and San Carlos Correctional Facility (2,200-2,700 new prison beds)

**Colorado added more prison beds in 1998 alone (6,230) than the total number of prison beds constructed in the first 113 years of Colorado's statehood.** In August, the newest private prison opens in Colorado Springs. The Cheyenne Mountain Pre-release and Revocation Center is owned by Corrections Education Center (CEC) and has a capacity of 750 people.

People that try and dismiss the explosion in the prison population often argue that this is simply a function of the tremendous growth in the population of Colorado as a whole. This is not true. Incarceration rates are designed to measure the number of people in prison per 100,000 residents, so it accounts for population growth. Between 1980 and 2005, the incarceration rate in Colorado climbed from 92 per 100,000 people to over 360 per 100,000. However, significant disparities exist when looking at incarceration rates by ethnicity. African Americans are incarcerated in Colorado at a rate of 1,935 per 100,000, Latinos/as at 688 per 100,000 and Anglos at 212 per 100,000.

Note: Graph does not include people on parole or community corrections.

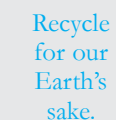
## The Not So Impossible Dream

Last night I rode my bike home in a summer rainstorm. After days of blistering heat it was a prayer that had been answered. The low spots in the road grew rather significant puddles and I purposely rode through them so the warm water would rise in waves from my tires and cascade over my sandaled feet. It was like being a child. I noticed people in their cars as they fought through rush hour, inconvenienced by the storm and its side effects. Some noticed me in my rain-drenched state. Some didn't. Of those that did, a few frowned, a few smiled with a look of slight pity, a few looked openly jealous as I grinned and splashed and made my way home. I doubt if one of them thought about the 20,000 people under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections who would have done anything to trade places with me. I know that I thought of them. I was once one of them.

In 1998 I was arrested for possession of a little over a gram of methamphetamine. The series of events that led up to that arrest were unfortunate and sad, but the fact remains that I made bad decisions and was held accountable for them. I was incarcerated for several years, and was then released to Community Corrections. I went to a halfway house in Denver and I began *Please See Dream on Page 3*

Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition  
1212 Mariposa St., #4  
Denver, CO 80204

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Change Services Requested

CCJRC HAS A NEW HOME!  
We've moved our office to Denver.  
Please update your records.

## Update: CSP II Litigation

In 2003, the Colorado legislature passed a bill (House Bill 03-1256) that authorized the state to enter into lease-purchase agreements to finance two state construction projects, namely a \$100 million, 948 bed expansion of the Colorado State Penitentiary (CSP II) and \$200 million for new academic buildings at the University of Colorado Health Science Center at Fitzsimons.

In October 2003, CCJRC and several of our members filed a lawsuit alleging that HB 1256 violates two separate provisions of the Colorado Constitution, namely, the single subject requirement and TABOR's requirement of voter approval prior to any multi-year debt by the state. In HB 1256, the legislature approved the use of "Certificates of Participation" and lease-purchase agreements to finance the construction. Here's how it works. Certificates of Participation are structured and marketed much like government bonds except a private institution issues them. Investors buy these "certificates" and earn a specific interest rate over a specific period of time. Investor money is then used to pay for the construction of the projects and then the state "leases" the buildings until the "certificates" and interest have been paid back to investors. In this case, that would be 15 years on the prison and 25 years on the medical school projects. Once the investors are paid back, the state would own the properties. Since the lease-purchase agreements would need to be renewed every year, the supporters argue that they aren't multi-year debt and therefore don't have to get voter approval under TABOR.

Both the Denver District Court and the Colorado Court of Appeals decided that HB 1256 is constitutional. CCJRC filed a Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the Colorado Supreme Court which is still pending. It could take as long as six months for the Colorado Supreme Court to decide whether to take the case. Due to the lawsuit, both the prison project and the medical school expansion are on hold. CCJRC thanks our attorney Paul Grant for all his effort.

## Update: Wackenhut's Prison Project Still on Hold in Pueblo

As you may recall from previous newsletters, CCJRC and allies in Pueblo have been challenging Wackenhut's efforts to build a private prison in Pueblo for several years. CCJRC and several Pueblo residents brought lawsuits against both the Pueblo City Council and the Pueblo County Commissioners for violations of Open Meetings laws. Currently, the City is unable to complete the land sale to Wackenhut until the Environmental Protection Agency determines whether it will require the City to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement. The EPA has not yet made a decision and so Pueblo cannot complete the sale of the land to Wackenhut.

# The Screw is Loose

## CO Legislative Audit Released on Private Prisons

They are in charge of thousands of lives, and they simply don't take that responsibility very seriously, and are rarely held accountable. They are the worst of the worst in the prison industry. They are the private prison moguls, and their minions.

As of June 2005 there were over 3,275 of the state's 18,000 prisoners in private prisons. The state paid more than \$53 million to the private prison operators during the 2004-2005 fiscal year to house them. There are currently six private prisons operating in Colorado:

- ▶ **Bent County Correctional Facility** (opened in 1993, 724 bed capacity, operated by CCA)
- ▶ **Huerfano County Correctional Center** (opened in 1997, 778 bed capacity, operated by CCA)
- ▶ **Crowley County Correctional Facility** (opened in 1998, 1,200 bed capacity, operated by CCA)
- ▶ **Kit Carson Correctional Center** (opened in 1998, 820 bed capacity, operated by CCA)
- ▶ **Brush County Correctional Facility** (opened in 2003 has a 350 bed capacity, operated by GRW)
- ▶ **Cheyenne Mountain Pre-Release Center** (opening '05, 750 bed capacity, operated by CEC)

According to a state audit released in June, the Colorado Department of Corrections has been disgracefully lax in its oversight of private prisons, and has ignored known problems for years. The audit itself was prompted by a riot at the CCA run Crowley County Correctional Facility last year. The audit said DOC's inability to properly manage the five private facilities operating in the state led to numerous inmate problems, and could ignite many more. The audit said that the department knew about specific problems with how the private prisons were operated but did little to nothing to correct them. And when the DOC did point out violations to private facilities it failed to ensure that they were corrected. Which is why, out of all five private prisons, not a single one had a medical license. State law requires prison medical facilities to be licensed as community clinics. Worse, the Department of Corrections knew about it, and never did anything about it "None of the clinics in the five Colorado prisons are licensed," said auditor John Conley. "Since the clinics are not licensed, they are not monitoring them and are not aware of any deaths or problems at private prisons." Nine deaths at private prisons were not reported to the Colorado Department of Health so none of them were investigated. However, auditors said they should have been reported. The auditors said seven of the deaths were from natural causes, but two men died from medical complications after prison operators changed their prescription drugs without examining either of them.

Some lawmakers were outraged. And they should be. Quoted from a newspaper, Sen. Deanna Hanna, D-Lakewood stated that, "Obviously, they have been having a free-for-all in practicing medicine the way they wish for a long time. We are paying a lot of money to these private prisons for health care, and we need to get a better product than we are getting."

In another quote, Rep. Buffie McFadyen, D-Pueblo West stated that the audit supports what she had said all along about private prisons, that they have no place in Colorado. "These for profit prisons would have a hard time passing even the beginning of the Boy Scouts of America Oath: 'On my honor I will do my best,'" McFadyen said. "It's clear that the for-profit prisons industry have no desire to follow their contracts, and it is costing taxpayers money every day. This year the state could've spent \$1.1 million on health care, job creation or tourism.

Instead, we had to spend that money to watch over private prison facilities that aren't doing their jobs and putting the public safety at risk." McFadyen was referring to the additional money that the Legislature gave to the DOC this year for monitoring private prisons. (In 2005, Rep. McFadyen introduced HB 1212 which would have prevented the importation of prisoners from out-of-state to private prisons. HB 1212 was killed in committee)

The state's private prison monitoring unit has been plagued by job vacancies and only spends a fraction of the time it should inspecting the prisons evaluating conditions and problems, the audit found. For instance, the audit found that the private prison monitors filed reports that were actually copies of old documents and had merely changed the date. Additionally, not all the people assigned to monitor the prisons were doing that. They were often assigned other duties and many of the positions just remained unfilled. Fifteen employees were allocated to that unit, but four were assigned to other duties and the key unit manager job was left vacant for three years.

### Some key findings from the legislative audit include:

- ▶ None of the medical clinics at the private prison were licensed, in violation of state law.
- ▶ Inmates with serious mental illnesses were not seen by mental health staff in a timely manner
- ▶ Private prison were serving meals that did not meet state's dietary standards
- ▶ The DOC doesn't review staffing patterns at private prisons as part of their contracts
- ▶ Some private prison employees have questionable backgrounds, including some who have been convicted of violent crimes. In some instances, private prison employees began working before a background check was completed
- ▶ Private prisons were not properly deducting court-ordered inmate restitution and child support.
- ▶ The Department of Corrections office charged with monitoring private prisons was under staffed and didn't get the job done.
- ▶ Dangerous inmates were sent to some private prison even though state law stipulates private prison should only house medium security prisoners and lower.



Earlier this year, CCJRC was part of the grassroots "Fail the Jail" campaign that opposed the \$600 million expansion of the Denver jail and criminal courts. This initiative was known as Measure 1A and it was endorsed by almost every elected official in Denver and promoted by over \$700,000 in campaign contributions. We joined many organizations and individuals, including the Golden Triangle Arts District Neighborhood Association, Colorado Progressive Coalition, Charity's House Ministries, Padres Unidos/Jovenes Unidos, and Denver Inner City Parish. Our message was simple: prioritizing a massive expansion of the jail while closing schools and underfunding substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment and alternatives to incarceration was NOT our vision of a progressive Denver and NOT how we wanted our tax money spent. Unfortunately, Measure 1A was passed with 56% of the vote. CCJRC thanks the people who participated in the "Fail the Jail" campaign, particularly CCJRC members who participated in community debates, walked door-to-door in their neighborhoods to distribute information, and made contributions. We were able to raise considerable awareness and momentum for increasing alternatives to incarceration and we will continue to build on this momentum! (Photo by Guss Guarino)

### How does this all play out?

Gross negligence usually results in pain and suffering. It results in physical, mental, and emotional abuse. It results in chaos and endangerment. The Crowley Correctional Facility has been the site of two major riots, one in 1999 and the other in 2004. A follow-up investigation determined that the guards were not properly trained to detect possible problems, handle disturbances, or even properly use their radios.

Crowley isn't the only private prison where there have been problems. This is exactly what happens when corporations put profit before their responsibility to prisoners, prison staff, and the public. This is exactly why Colorado should abolish the use of private prisons altogether.

Governor Bill Owens is a staunch supporter of private prisons. He believes they are cheaper to run and provide local communities with property tax revenues not available from state prisons. Even legislators who voiced concern over the findings from the audit are resigned in their belief that Colorado is "dependent" on the private prison industry and just shrug their shoulders.

Let's reiterate. Riots, sexual assaults, physical assaults, incompetence that jeopardizes the safety of inmates, staff and the public, and the death of two prisoners because they were given improper medication. This is the hallmark of privatization. While some private prison staff may be held accountable and fired or prosecuted, the CEOs and Board members of these corporations are protected behind a corporate veil. Even worse is that the State of Colorado continues to re-sign the contracts with the private prison corporations. The private prison industry will continue to try and build more prisons. CCJRC and our allies will continue to try and stop them.

[You can read a copy of the auditor's report at:](http://www.leg.state.co.us/.../$FILE/1676%20Private%20Prisons%20Perf%20April%202005.pdf)  
[www.leg.state.co.us/.../\\$FILE/1676%20Private%20Prisons%20Perf%20April%202005.pdf](http://www.leg.state.co.us/.../$FILE/1676%20Private%20Prisons%20Perf%20April%202005.pdf)

## The Intolerable Reality - Sexual assault of women in prison

When stories come out about abuse, degradation and torture in prison, the mind collectively races to far-off exotic places. It doesn't generally scamper off to the plains of Colorado. Brush is a small town on the Eastern plains of Colorado that is home to a 250 bed private prison for women operated by a Tennessee based corporation called GRW. Opened in August 2003 as the first private prison for women in Colorado, GRW had contracts to house 80 inmates from Hawaii, 73 from Colorado and 45 from Wyoming. Colorado pays \$50 a day to GRW to house each Colorado prisoner. Most people don't even know that this prison exists.

In the wake of a criminal probe Warden Soares has resigned and five correctional officers at the Brush Correctional Facility face sexual misconduct and contraband charges for running a cigarette smuggling ring. Two of the officers resigned and a third is on administrative leave pending the outcome of the criminal case. One of the officers involved was a drug and alcohol counselor who had been charged in 2003 by the state of Colorado of falsifying a bachelor's degree diploma from a university he had never attended. At that time he was placed on probation for a period of three years and then went to work at the Brush facility.

After an investigation, the Department of Corrections concluded that the sex was "consensual" - a too often and convenient conclusion when prisoners claim they were raped. The DOC stated that in several instances the sex was initiated by the inmates, particularly from Hawaiian and Wyoming because they believed they would be returned home, where they would be closer to relatives. However, the DOC stated that it's still a felony offense for correctional officers to have sex with inmates. The investigation also revealed that GRW hired five convicted felons to work at the prison because their background checks had not been completed.

Wyoming has removed its women inmates from Brush. Hawaii will have their women out by the end of September. The fate of the Colorado women is not even up in the air. The DOC doesn't have any plan to move them. A local attorney is filing a lawsuit on behalf of several of the women who have been raped.

Unfortunately, this isn't the first lawsuit she's had to file to challenge this barbaric and persistent reality. Successful lawsuits have also been filed against the Youth Offender System (YOS) and the Denver Women's Correctional Facility on behalf of women who had been raped by guards. At YOS, the victims were teenagers! A recent report by the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics found that the sexual assault of juveniles in detention occurs at ten times the rate of sexual assaults in adult prisons. In the YOS case, guards were prosecuted and allowed to plead guilty to misdemeanor charges but, here too, the DOC maintained that the sex was "consensual." The Warden at YOS was transferred to the Division of Parole. The guard that raped a woman at the Denver Women's

## Dream From Page 1

the process of rebuilding my life. I had lost everything when I went in. My children, understandably, were the most significant of the losses that I endured. During my incarceration my parental rights had been terminated and my son had been adopted by a family that I knew nothing about. My daughter was being shuffled between foster homes because she exhibited "behavior problems" based on her abandonment issues, since I had been unable to communicate with my children for over 3 years. Social Services told me that I would never see them again.

I landed in a halfway house with a pair of sweats and a bag of hygiene items, and that was it. It's inconceivable to believe that in this day and age the Dept. of Corrections will send you back to prison for being unable to succeed when they give you no tools with which to work. I was lucky. I had a friend who was at the same halfway house. She loaned me some clothes and some money so that I could at least get around town on public transportation and make it to job interviews. Don't get me wrong, I have pretty good survival skills, however, not everyone does. With no money or opportunity it isn't any wonder that the recidivism rate is so high in Colorado. Like I said, I was lucky. I found an employer who was willing to work with the crazy needs of the halfway house and later, parole.

It's hard enough to find a job out there as a when you are have a felony record. I was required to go to two or three life skills classes a week, often in the middle of the day. The difficulty is being that "high maintenance" employee that always needs special consideration. Sometimes I would be unable to work a normal work schedule because the class times were at

Correctional Facility was convicted of sexual assault and is currently serving 5 years to life in prison. He was also charged and convicted in separate criminal cases of stalking and burglary of women in Jefferson County, Lakewood, and Greenwood Village.

The question remains, is the public aware of any of these crimes or the risk to women in prison of being sexually assaulted? Not really. These women were locked in a cage, tortured and victimized by prison staff who held enormous power over them and the women are hidden behind bars and razor wire. This situation could be said to be Colorado's own version of Abu Gharib. The horrific part is that the rape of women in prison or other forms of detention is not isolated and is happening all over the country. The in-depth stories of what happened at Brush will all come out eventually through discovery and trial but that doesn't change the facts that the attacks happened and will continue to happen without profound change in the prison system.

### National Commission Formed to Study Prison Conditions

The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons has been formed to 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 also explore the consequences of unsafe and abusive correctional environments for prisoners, corrections officers, and the families and communities to which they return. This non-partisan Commission is co-chaired by former United States Attorney General Nicholas de B. Katzenbach and the Honorable John Gibbons, former Chief Judge of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The Commission is staffed by and funded through the Vera Institute of Justice. The Commission is expected to release a report and recommendations in early 2006 for change at the local, state and federal levels. Individuals and organizations are encouraged to submit written statements to the Commission via the internet at [www.prisoncommission.org](http://www.prisoncommission.org) or mailed to the **Commission on Safety and Abuse, 601 Thirteenth St. NW, Suite 1150 South, Washington, D.C. 20005.**

### Update: Colorado Voting Project

CCJRC and Colorado Voting Project are happy to announce that a bill passed by the Legislature and

signed by the Governor clarifies that only a "person while serving a sentence of detention or confinement in a correctional facility, jail, or other location for a felony conviction or while serving a sentence of parole" shall not be eligible to vote. This means that individuals incarcerated for a misdemeanor may vote. This means people who are in detention and awaiting trial are also permitted to register to vote by mail registration. If you are serving a probation sentence, you are eligible to vote. And remember, once a person has served his or her sentence for a felony conviction, including parole, that person is AUTOMATICALLY eligible to register to vote. All that's required is registering to vote with the county clerk and recorder office in the district of residence. If you have any questions, please contact Carol Peebles c/o CCJRC. We know it's confusing! **Know your rights. Make your voice heard. Vote!**

the end of a "normal" work day. This constant disruption in the workplace would try the patience of even the best employer, who was kind enough to give me a second chance in the first place. I, like most people involved with community corrections, was not allowed to drive, so I would have to make sure that I had someone that could get me around, or else depend on public transportation which was far more likely. The halfway house was 15 miles from my job, and if I was late I was penalized.

Then I started parole. While I was on parole I was required to go to the parole office once a week. I had to go to another office 3 or 4 miles from there to do urinalysis or breathalyzer tests, sometimes on a daily basis. They would throw in a required therapy class which was invariably on another side of town. It's hard. But, don't get me wrong, it can be done. I had to spend a lot of time planning my days, my time and my tasks. I had to be vigilant at all times.

The mistake is made when people who are in this situation believe that once they are in society, they are free. Nothing is further from the truth. It's harder to be out in the community and be successful than it is to be inside the walls. Why? Well, there was no one out here to tell me when to get up, when to eat, when to go to bed, or provide me with the transportation I needed to get to appointments. My entire life was no longer contained in one building. I became completely responsible for the decisions and commitments I made. It was a daily resolution to decide to be successful. And, I had to make that decision every single day. I had to choose to live the way that dictated my refusal to return to "behind the walls." It's pretty simple actually, I was given a set of guidelines by which to live. These were my rules, and if, at any point, I felt as if I were doing something

that might violate one of those rules, then I would stop doing it. I was never one of those people who tried to figure out how to buck the system - it wasn't worth the risk. Living like that is even harder than just doing what you need to regain your freedom.

My daily mantra included some version of "my freedom is the most important thing." I learned to work with the system, and when things weren't working the way they were supposed to, I would talk to my parole officer. That could be difficult sometimes, especially because I went through four parole officers in two years. Every officer had their own agenda for me. When things were difficult, I would explain what wasn't working and ask for their help. Sometimes they would help and sometimes they wouldn't. I know that they weren't used to parolees being proactive in asking for help and I found that it was best to never lie to them about anything. They almost always find out anyway and it's twice as bad when they find out and you haven't told them.

I continued to work with Social Services and kept them apprised of my successes, they monitored me carefully for a year and a half. They reinstated communication with my daughter and after 7 years I met her again.

I went to the halfway house in March of 2002, I made parole a year later, and I completed parole June 19, 2005. I have kept the same job the entire time. I have partial custody of my daughter at this time and look forward to a time when I may be involved with my son's life as well. As hard as it is to get through the system, the reward of completion and the feeling of success is unparalleled. Do not give up. This is a fight worth winning. There are summer rainstorms waiting for you.