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Harmful Mass Incarceration

A new women's prison won't solve the problem

BY BOBBIN SINGH AND JULIA YOSHIMOTO

As we prepare to enter a new year, Oregon's prison system is facing up to the real-world impact of mass incarceration. The U.S. locks up more people per capita than anywhere else on the planet. While awareness of the deeply damaging impacts of trying to use prison to solve many of our social problems is thankfully growing, we aren't working fast enough to restrain prison growth in our state.

Oregon, for example, faces the prospect of opening a second prison for women due to overcrowding at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, south of Portland. Coffee Creek opened in 2001 and is currently the only prison for women in Oregon. It was designed to house 1,253 women, with a maximum capacity of 1,280 inmates. When those numbers are exceeded,



BY BOBBIN SINGH

ed, the additional prison capacity must be accommodated at the Oregon State Penitentiary Minimum Security Annex in Salem.

Unfortunately, for many months now there have been more than 1,280 women at Coffee Creek. Something must be done to address this overcrowding for the safety and well-being of the women housed there and the staff working there.

The Department of Corrections' proposal to open a second women's prison to solve overcrowding comes with a substantial price tag. It would cost nearly \$4 million to get OSP-Minimum ready to open to women and a further \$17.5 million to run it for two years. So far, legislators have been unwilling to support this huge cost and have in-

stead encouraged stakeholders in the criminal justice system to look for ways to reduce the women's prison population enough to remove the need to open OSP-Minimum.

It wouldn't take much. A reduction of just a few dozen women would be enough to avoid opening a second prison and it's about time that Oregon started tackling the over-incarceration of women.

Consider the facts of female incarceration in Oregon as recorded by the impartial Oregon Criminal Justice Commission: In the last 20 years, the women's prison population has tripled. While other states have woken up to the ineffectiveness of incarceration as a way of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

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Emmett Till Bill Signed

President Obama signed the Emmett Till Civil Rights Crimes Reauthorization Act Tuesday to allow the Department of Justice and the FBI to reopen civil rights crimes committed before 1980. The bill is named after the Chicago boy who was kidnapped and lynched in Mississippi in 1955 for whistling at a white woman.

Princess Leia Actress Dies

Carrie Fisher, the child of Hollywood royalty, author, screenwriter and actress who rose to fame with her role as the intergalactic heroine Princess Leia in the "Star Wars" film series, died Tuesday after suffering a heart attack aboard a plane a few days earlier. Fisher was 60 years old.



Driver Dies Hitting Bus

An elderly woman possibly hit the gas pedal instead of the brakes before colliding with the back of a TriMet bus Saturday afternoon.

The Week in Review

Portland Police said Jeanne Carroll Lincoln, 88, died after her Honda car rear-ended the bus on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard near Alberta Street.

Trooper Shot Investigating

An Oregon State trooper remained in critical condition Tuesday after he was shot multiple times by a murder suspect in Sherwood on Christmas night. Trooper Nic Cederberg was shot by Hames Tylka in a shootout after Tylka murdered his estranged wife, police said.

Woody Guthrie Song on Vanport Flood found

A lost folk song about one of Oregon's worst disasters, the Vanport Flood, was found by a music historian in Seattle. The song was written by famous American folk singer Woody Guthrie, well known for his "This Land is Your Land" and who inspired generations of musicians. Guthrie lived briefly in southeast

Portland's Lents neighborhood.

North Carolina Boycott

North Carolina's NAACP President called for an economic boycott of his state last week in protest of what he calls the state's "constitutional overreach." It comes after Republican lawmakers passed new laws to limit an incoming Democratic governor's power, and the state's prior HB2 bill which he has called "anti-worker, anti-civil rights, and anti-LGBT."

Funding for Gateway Green

Portland Parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz and Portland Parks & Recreation Director Mike Abbate announced last week \$2 million for the first phase of Gateway Green, a new park situated between I-84 and I-205. "Gateway Green will be a regional destination in park-deficient east Portland, and a working example of how active recreation can be balanced with natural restoration and preservation," Fritz said.



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