

**TO:** Professors Andrea Armstrong and Nishi Kumar

**FROM:** Simren Patel

**RE:** “Better Know a Jail” Memo

**DATE:** November 28, 2023

## **Richland Parish Detention Center**

### **Jail Characteristics**

The Richland Parish Detention Center is a county jail located in Richland Parish at 474 LA Highway 15, Rayville, LA 71269. It has a capacity of 800 beds and is currently holding 757 offenders as of Thursday, November 9 at 8:30pm CT.<sup>1</sup> Their official website is <http://www.richlandso.org/>. The demographic make-up of the jail consists of mostly Black and White males with a few Asian/Pacific Islanders.<sup>2</sup> Some inmates are local residents awaiting trial, but most are urban sentenced inmates. The sentenced inmates are typically sentenced for up to 24 months. Most inmates committed nonviolent crimes such as being a drug dealer or thief.<sup>3</sup> Richland Parish County accepts inmates from surrounding towns, municipalities, the US Marshal’s Service, and the Rayville Police Department who do not have their own long-term lockup.<sup>4</sup> Many of the inmates are between the ages of 40 and 50 years old, with the youngest inmates being in their early 20’s.<sup>5</sup>

In the facility, 36 inmates are from Jefferson Parish, 84 are from Livingston Parish, 59 are from the Shreveport area, and a handful are from New Orleans.<sup>6</sup> The detention center is 1 of 18 jails and prisons that are owned by LA-Salle Corrections.<sup>7</sup> LA-Salle Corrections is a private family run prison firm that own jails and prisons across Texas, Georgia, and Louisiana.<sup>8</sup> Not only did LA-Salle Corrections fund the prison, but also private investors foregoing the need for the sheriff to raise taxes from citizens.<sup>9</sup> The sheriff’s office is responsible for running and maintaining the day to day operations of the prison itself.

The current sheriff is Gary Gilly, and he has been in office since 2016. He has more than 20 years of experience in law enforcement.<sup>10</sup> Four years prior to being elected, the sheriff worked for the Ouachita Parish Sheriff’s Office.<sup>11</sup> Sheriff Gilly started out working at the Richland Parish Detention Center years ago at the juvenile office. From there he was promoted to patrol and then to investigator.<sup>12</sup> Sheriff Gilley had also run for sheriff four years prior to being elected

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.richland.lavns.org/roster.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/Louisiana\\_13may12.pdf](http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/Louisiana_13may12.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.inmateaid.com/prisons/richland-parish-detention-center#BasicFacility>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.richland.lavns.org/roster.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/Louisiana\\_13may12.pdf](http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/Louisiana_13may12.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://lasallicorrections.com/>

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.knoe.com/content/news/Richland-Parish-Sheriff-Gary-Gilley-takes-over-385113461.html>

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.knoe.com/content/news/Richland-Parish-Sheriff-Gary-Gilley-takes-over-385113461.html>

in 2016 but lost to former Sheriff Lee Harrell.<sup>13</sup> The warden of the detention center is Joel Weatherly. The approved budget/financing for the jail in the 2019-2020 fiscal year is a grand total of \$6,620,900.<sup>14</sup>

### **Number of Deaths since 2014 and Trends**

Since 2014, deaths in the Richland Parish Detention Center have remained stagnant until the Covid-19 pandemic which increased deaths in the years 2020-2022. Once I received the autopsy reports from the PRA request, I found there were about 20 deaths in custody for the years 2014 through August 2023. Most of the deaths were due to underlying medical issues, such as Diabetes, Asthma, and Pneumonia. However, there were some unexpected deaths due to drugs, suicide, and Covid-19. There was a death as a result of violence back in 2019. His name was William Richardson, and he died as a result of multiple stab wounds to the chest, back, head, face, and stomach area. I also noticed that there were deaths of people who were otherwise healthy and suddenly died with some reports having no explanation as to the manner in which they died.

For instance, there was one death of a man named Samuel Archibald, who was just 24 years old. The autopsy report said he was “essentially healthy” and not on any medication. However, the death was also labeled unexpected, which leads me to believe there could have been some foul play involved. It was also hard to tell if the deaths occurred early in their sentencing or later on because the autopsy reports only had their date of birth, date of death, and cause of death. The deaths that occurred were of inmates between the ages of 24 and 63 with the majority of inmates being in their 40’s and 50’s.

### **Evidence of Oversight**

The Richland Parish Detention Center was audited on November 8, 2020, by a LA Legislative Auditor.<sup>15</sup> The results of the audit as of the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2020, were that there were no audit findings reported in the audit.<sup>16</sup> With regards to accreditation, the center was funded by the private prison firm La-Salle Corrections which in turn has received national accreditation by the ACA.<sup>17</sup> However, the center itself has not been nationally accredited by any organization. There was not any information about the Richland Parish Police Jury, the parish council, having hearings about the jail. There have not been any consent decrees filed against the jail within the last five years or currently pending. Furthermore, inmates have tried, within the past five years, to get judicial injunctive orders on the jail with civil suits filed. However, none are in effect currently or have been previously, with most being dismissed by the court.

### **Evidence of Transparency**

There were not any public briefings on jail operations by jail or city officials that I could find. However, there are many resources that show data on the people inside. Such resources include an “inmate locator” website where you can input your loved one’s name and find out their records in Richland Parish Jail. Furthermore, there is a jail roster on the official sheriff’s

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<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> [https://app.la.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/e0f0227ce8bbffb0862588fc0058e2f8/\\$file/0000012a.pdf](https://app.la.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/e0f0227ce8bbffb0862588fc0058e2f8/$file/0000012a.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> <https://lasallecorrections.com/>

website that has the name, race, date of birth, and date of incarceration which is updated daily. There is also a useful website called Jailexchange.com where family members and loved ones can get information on how to stay in contact with inmates in prison. Such information includes a mailing address, a website how to make calls and engage in remote video visitation, and a website to send a text message or email to an inmate. Moreover, there is a link to a website which allows people to send money to an inmate in Richland Parish.

Additionally, the same website has inmate demographics for everyone in the Richland Parish system. It shows the race and ethnicity, criminal charges, age, and the gender of all inmates who are in the Richland Parish system as of November 9, 2023. The website also updates the inmate demographics daily. For example, with ethnicity/race, 55 percent of inmates are Black, then about 30 percent are White, and finally about 5 percent are Hispanic.<sup>18</sup> Next, with gender, close to 90 percent of inmates are male while only 10 percent are females, which is a huge discrepancy.<sup>19</sup> Finally, with age the majority of inmates are between the ages of 25 and 45.<sup>20</sup>

Many advocacy groups have done research or reports on the Richland Parish Detention Center. One advocacy group called Human Rights Watch, did an article about how many inmates are paying the price because of a failure to deliver HIV services in Louisiana Parish Jails, including Richland Parish Detention Center.<sup>21</sup> One case manager at GO CARE AIDS, a service agency in Monroe, LA, talked about how they had a client call from Richland Parish Detention Center.<sup>22</sup> The inmate told them how the jail won't give [him] [his] meds" and went on to say that he "has a possible sentence of two years." He then asked, "am I going to have to wait two years for my meds?"<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, there is a newspaper article done by the Times Picayune, which highlights the conditions and the daily lives of inmates at many prisons across the state including Richland Parish Detention Center.<sup>24</sup> The article talks about how rural parishes, especially Richland Parish, need to keep their prisons full because their economy depends on it.<sup>25</sup> Each prisoner brings in about \$24.39 a day in state money to the local sheriff.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the parish no longer relies on cotton picking as their main source of income, since the farmers went bankrupt.<sup>27</sup> Instead, the battering and boarding of criminals boosts the economy, providing jobs to the majority of the residents.<sup>28</sup>

My experience filing and receiving initial PRAs from Richland Parish Detention Center was a positive one. I was able to email Kelly Liebert, who is the administrative coordinator for the LA Department of Public Safety and Corrections, and Kindra Vaughn, who works in the coroner's office, and they responded relatively quickly. I got the request in on August 30<sup>th</sup> and by September 5<sup>th</sup> I had all of the death in custody records I needed for the years 2014 through

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.jailexchange.com/city-and-county-jails/louisiana/richland-parish/richland-parish-detention-center-i#search-inmates>

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/03/29/paying-price/failure-deliver-hiv-services-louisiana-parish-jails>

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.antonioacasella.eu/nume/Louisiana\\_13may12.pdf](http://www.antonioacasella.eu/nume/Louisiana_13may12.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

2023. They all seemed super nice and understanding with what information I needed from them and were able to help me out. The process went by very smoothly and painlessly as I was able to complete the assignment.

### **Notable Cases or Complaints on Jail Conditions**

The conditions in Richland Parish Detention Center are unfavorable towards the inmates who are imprisoned there. As a result, there are numerous lawsuits against the jail from the inmates. One such case is *Perez v. Richland Par. Det. Ctr.* filed in 2019. This case is about an inmate named Randy Perez made numerous claims against the jail.<sup>29</sup> One such claim is about how he was almost stabbed to death in his dormitory and the defendants were aware of that general danger.<sup>30</sup> However, they did not search the area for weapons and as a result, failed “to provide for internal perimeter security.”<sup>31</sup> Another claim explained how Perez was placed in “lockdown” and then in a “holding tank” where he was intermittently deprived of showers, the use of a telephone, outgoing mail, “use of medical staff for heat rash”, time outside, clean water, clean clothes, and ice.<sup>32</sup>

The conditions that Perez was subject to resulted in him having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.<sup>33</sup> He then stated that he never received care for the injury at RPDC and lacked access to the iPad inmates use to request care.<sup>34</sup> Finally, he claims that RPDC did not “provide proper food for the inmates. On Sundays . . . the detention center gave the inmates . . . a brown bag which has a bag of chips, two sandwiches, and an oatmeal cookie.<sup>35</sup> For lunch the inmates get chips with cheese and chili and a teaspoon of vegetables which is very small.”<sup>36</sup>

The court ruled that because the inmate was no longer confined at RPDC and does not allege or suggest that there is “a reasonable, demonstrable probability” that he will be transferred back to RPDC, the claims are frivolous and moot.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the court mentions that Perez did not allege he suffered a “more than de minimis physical injury” with the claims about inadequate medical care, drinking water, and access to communication with his family.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the claims asserted against RPDC were dismissed and Perez was unsuccessful.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Perez v. Richland Par. Det. Ctr.*, CIVIL ACTION NO. 19-1124 SECTION P (W.D. La. Oct. 24, 2019)

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*