

TO: Professors Andrea Armstrong and Nishi Kumar

FROM: Lelund Marzell

RE: "Better Know a Jail" Memo

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LaSalle Parish Correctional Center

Introduction

LaSalle Parish is one of sixty-four (64) parishes in Louisiana. The land area is just shy of 625 square miles and has a population of over 14,725¹. The Parish is comprised of four towns, or cities: Jena, Olla, Tullos, and Urania². In the 2022 Census the population demographic was broken down to 79.4% white alone, not Hispanic or Latino, 14.0% Black or African American, 1.4% American Indian, 0.4% Asian, and 4.2% Hispanic or Latino³. LaSalle Parish also had 19.4% of its population living in poverty⁴. LaSalle Parish Correctional Center is one of 19 carceral facilities and headquarter locations owned by the for profit, family run, private prison firm, LaSalle Corrections⁵. Of the 19 facilities LaSalle Correction Parish Correctional is one of seven in Louisiana, with 10 others in Texas, one in Arizona and the last in Georgia⁶. As of 2007 LaSalle Parish Sheriff's office was paying a \$120,000 yearly sponsors fee to LaSalle Corrections for its operation⁷. In 2000 LaSalle Parish was reported to house 470 incarcerated persons, or 3% of the Louisiana population at that time⁸.

Jail Characteristics

The LaSalle Parish Correctional Center was constructed in 1985 and has been operating since then. The facility is located at 15976 US Highway 165, Olla, LA, 71465. It was designed to house 755 people with a 71-person monthly average booking intake⁹. This facility is considered a medium security facility and houses individuals that have been arrested that are awaiting trial, sentencing, or bond. It also houses individuals that are serving short-term sentences that are typically under a year¹⁰. Most individuals that are held at the LaSalle Parish Correctional Center are brought in on lower-level offenses, such as possession charges, low level battery charges, DWIs, court violations, domestic disputes, and other minor violations and misdemeanors¹¹. Individuals that are arrested and convicted of more sever charges are transferred to state or federal facilities¹².

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lasalleparishlouisiana,la,US/PST045218>

² <https://www.louisiana.gov/local-louisiana/lasalle-parish>

³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lasalleparishlouisiana,la,US/PST045218>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ <https://lasallecorrections.com/locations/>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ PRR for Sponsor Fee between LaSalle Corrections and LaSalle Parish Correctional Center for operations.

⁸ <https://www.prisonersofthecensus.org/toobig/countydetail/05000US22059/>

⁹ <https://townofhaughton.org/louisiana/county-jail/lasalle-corrections-center>

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ <https://www.lasalleso.com/2023-arrests>

¹² <https://townofhaughton.org/louisiana/county-jail/lasalle-corrections-center>

LaSalle Parish Correctional Center is a private for-profit facility, which means that the more beds it fills the more money it brings in. For several years this facility transported and housed individuals from the Harris County Jail in Houston Texas¹³. During a period where the Harris County jail was under orders to reduce their population because of overcrowding and being well beyond their maximum capacity, they shared a codependent relationship with the LaSalle Correctional Center and sent hundreds of individuals to be housed there¹⁴. This relationship lasted over 5 years, until the end of 2011, when Harris County elected a new Sheriff that focused on reducing the jail population, the district attorney's office stopped prosecuting drug paraphernalia charges, and by creating a crisis intervention team for those dealing with mental health problems, which all worked together to reduce the jail population by over 30%¹⁵.

Accessing an official LaSalle Parish Correctional Center website has not been very easy. A person is able to access www.louisiana.gov and navigate to the LaSalle Parish profile (<https://www.louisiana.gov/local-louisiana/lasalle-parish>). A person is not able to get to the jail website from here. To access the LaSalle Parish Correctional Center website, you must visit the main website for LaSalle Corrections, <https://lasallecorrections.com/>. This website does not give very much specific information on the facility but does a very broad cover of all 19 facilities. Once you choose the LaSalle Parish location it does not offer very much information at all. The main website references services that LaSalle Corrections offers across all 19 of their facilities but it does not specify which programs are offered within each facility specifically. The drop-down menu under "programs/trainings" gives options on learning more about: Reentry, Work Release, and Substance Abuse programs¹⁶.

The LaSalle Parish Sheriff's Department website is easier to navigate and offers more information about individuals that are currently in custody. You are able to view the jail roster at <http://www.lasalle.lavns.org/roster.aspx>. As of November 26, 2023, at 11:47 AM (CST), LaSalle Parish Correctional Center has 96 people in custody¹⁷. Of the 96 individuals in custody nine are female and of those nine females, 7 were entered in as white and 2 were entered in as Black¹⁸. 87 of those in custody are male, with 57 entered as white, 27 as Black, and 3 entered as "unknown"¹⁹. Five of those in custody are 25 years of age or younger, seven have unreported arrest dates, and although it is a facility that typically doesn't house people over a year, 23 individuals have an arrest date over one year ago²⁰. The oldest person in custody is 74 and was arrested on 11/02/2023 and two individuals are still shown on the website as being in custody since 2015, over 8 years²¹.

¹³ https://www.nola.com/news/crime_police/houston-stops-helping-louisiana-fill-beds-in-its-for-profit-prisons/article_34ce798a-4f87-5025-9016-ba3aece49d74.html

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ <https://lasallecorrections.com/work-release/>

¹⁷ <http://www.lasalle.lavns.org/roster.aspx>

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

In 2020 the LaSalle Parish Sheriff's Office arrested 307 people, 187 white men, 54 Black men, 57 white women, and 9 Black women²². In 2021 there was a large increase with 458 people being arrested, 267 white men, 75 Black men, 106 white women, and 10 Black women²³. 2022 saw a huge decrease with 309 people arrested, 174 white men, 61 Black men, 67 white women, and 7 Black women²⁴. As of November 26th, 2023, 310 people have been arrested, 195 white men, 48 Black men, 63 white women, and 4 Black women²⁵. Visitation is allowed Monday through Friday from 7:30AM to 9:00PM and Saturdays and Sundays from 7:30AM to 2:30PM²⁶.

Public Records Request and Inmate Mortality

The LaSalle Parish Sheriff's Office website provides an email where to send all public records requests at the very bottom of the homepage of the website. I have been unable to find and forms or documents for the requests, it only provides a contact email and does not give a name of the person you are contacting. During my initial request attempt I reached out to multiple contacts that were provided by students from previous years. I received an email response days later from the Senior Corporate Counsel for all of LaSalle Corrections center, Leah D. Sumrall. Although I requested for an official "No Death Recorded" response on letterhead, she simply responded in an email that there were "no records responsive to your request." I responded requesting that response be placed on official letterhead, which she refused to provide. I eventually downloaded the entire email communication and accepted it as their "no deaths recorded" response. It has also been reported that Sheriff Scott Franklin will only respond by stating, "I do not own, nor do I operate a prison facility."

Based on recorded CJ9 responses received from students from previous years, LaSalle Parish Correctional Center has recorded three deaths while in custody from 2014 to 2022:

On January 8th, 2015, Arthur Upshaw was found dead in a general facility location at an unknown time inside of the LaSalle Parish Correctional Center. He was born June 27th, 1960, making him 54 years old at the time of his death. He had been incarcerated for 55 days after being convicted for a possession charge. He was admitted into the facility on November 14th, 2014²⁷. He was found to have liver disease, but the documentation is unsure if that was directly related to his passing²⁸.

Christopher Yates passed away on his 41st birthday while incarcerated in the LaSalle Parish Correctional Center. He was born July 3, 1977, and passed away July 3, 2018, from what is reported as a heart attack. Mr. Yates had been incarcerated for 147 days after being convicted and taken into custody February 6th, 2018. He was found at a general location on the facility grounds at an undisclosed unknown time. It is unknown if his death resulted from a pre-existing condition.

²² <https://www.lasalleso.com/2020>

²³ <https://www.lasalleso.com/2021-arrests>

²⁴ <https://www.lasalleso.com/2022-arrests>

²⁵ <https://www.lasalleso.com/2023-arrests>

²⁶ <https://townofhaughton.org/louisiana/county-jail/lasalle-corrections-center>

²⁷ <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/la-prison-deaths/la-salle/>

²⁸ <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Upshaw-Arthur-LaSalle-2015-DOC-CJ9.pdf>

Billie Davis was a transfer from the Harris County Jail. He was arrested in Harris County on February 11, 2022, and transferred to LaSalle Parish Correctional Center February 25, 2022²⁹. Mr. Davis had been placed in segregation while still in pretrial. He was found unresponsive at 10:02AM after being placed in an “administrative cell” after exhibiting “disruptive behavior around 9:25AM³⁰. The facility attempted “lifesaving efforts” but was pronounced dead around 10:47AM. Cause of death unknown³¹.

The National Police Accountability Project (NPAP) has estimated that 51 deaths have occurred in LaSalle Parish carceral facilities between 2014 and 2022³².

Jail Leadership

LaSalle Parish Correctional Center is currently under the supervision of Warden John Stuckey. He was recently placed into this position in 2022. He was an assistant warden before that for a short period but has been with LaSalle Corrections since 2019. Allen Gram was the warden before Warden Stuckey took over in July. Warden Allen Gram began working in that position August of 2021³³. Jeff Windham was also warden for a long period of time prior to Stuckey and Gram.

Sheriff Scott Franklin is the LaSalle Parish Sheriff and has been serving in this capacity for just over 16 years. In October 2019 Scott Franklin was in a runoff against Charles Turnage where he eventually secured the position for another 4-year term³⁴. The election results for the 2023 and will end with a runoff between Scott McLendon and Lane Windham, so LaSalle Parish will have a new Sheriff next year³⁵. As of November 18th, 2023, Lane Windham was projected to be the next sheriff of LaSalle Parish³⁶. I was unable to find how much it costs to operate the LaSalle Correctional Center, but I was able to find in a LaSalle Parish Sheriff Statement of Net Position report that as of June 30, 2021, Sheriff Scott Franklin had an annual salary of \$160,161.00³⁷. Sheriff Franklin received a lot of backlash from community members for his “war on drug” mission and “crackdown on crime” which in a community of 80% white residents focused mostly on Black and African American citizens³⁸. Members of the community stated that his war on drugs was purely racially driven. Sheriff Franklin also saw civil rights actions against him and LaSalle Parish for how he handled the Jena 6, who were the 6 Black youth that were arrested and charged with attempted murder of a white student³⁹. Many community members

²⁹ <https://www.incarcerationtransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Billie-Davis-2022-LaSalle-.pdf>

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² <https://www.nlg-npap.org/bartie-v-lasalle/#:~:text=Moreover%2C%20NPAP%20estimates%20that%2051,were%20related%20to%20medical%20neglect.>

³³ Phone conversation with current Warden, John Stuckey.

³⁴ <https://www.myarklamiss.com/ylehq/results-lasalle-parish-local-races/>

³⁵ <https://www.myarklamiss.com/ylehq/sheriff-for-lasalle-parish-ends-in-runoff/>

³⁶ <https://www.knoe.com/2023/11/18/2023-general-elections-lasalle-parish-sheriff/>

³⁷ [https://app.la.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/6b881ca2203f27c786258795006bf673/\\$file/000251cb.pdf](https://app.la.la.gov/publicreports.nsf/0/6b881ca2203f27c786258795006bf673/$file/000251cb.pdf)

³⁸ <https://truthout.org/articles/drug-bust-or-racist-revenge/>

³⁹ <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/jena-six-2006/>

believe that the “war on drugs” is in response to the protests and civil rights actions against him during the Jena 6 proceedings.

Jail News Coverage and Transparency

LaSalle Parish Correctional saw themselves in the news in March 2014 after three individuals that were in custody escaped from the facility⁴⁰. Jeffrey Wayne, William Mitchell, and Gregory Saviy were all missing during a 5:30AM headcount. Personnel was told later that morning that one of the work trucks was missing from the yard. Cruz and Mitchell were taken back into custody the following morning after being found on Bourbon St.; it was not reported where or when Saviy was found⁴¹. All three men received additional charges of simple escape and theft of a motor vehicle, they also attempted charging them with habitual offender charges⁴².

In the past five (5) years there have been several lawsuits brought against LaSalle Parish Correctional Center. In 2020 the facility saw four (4) petitions for a writ of Habeas Corpus under 28 U.S.C § 2241 (ECF No. 1), Motion for Temporary Restraining Order. Bipanjeet Singh, Amrit Sapkota, Mohit Sharma, and Singh Sant Kirpal all filed these motions *pro se* and asks that the court enjoin ICE from transferring them out of the LaSalle Correctional Center into another facility.

Amrit Sapkota’s petition was filed July 1, 2020. They fled their country fearing for their life crossing the Mexico border, originally from Nepal. They applied for asylum but unfortunately was denied. They were told they would be removed from the country within six months which eventually passed. Over the time of being detained Amrit started to experience health issues: issues with diabetes, skin rashes, high blood pressure, stomach issues, and back problems⁴³. Amrit filed the petition because they believed their rights had been violated by being kept beyond the statutory period, because of substantive and procedural due process violations, and for being detained more than 260 days past their removal order⁴⁴.

Singh Sant Kirpal’s petition was filed July 15, 2020. They were a native and citizen of India and had been in post removal since October 2019. They also asked the court to enjoin ICE from transferring them to another facility and that he not be deported during the adjudication of their claim. The court recommended that that his request be denied⁴⁵

Mohit Sharma’s petition was filed July 29, 2020. The court recommended that their petition be denied because they had not submitted an affidavit or a verified complaint nor did they allege that they were in any immediate or irreparable injury, loss, or damage would occur without a temporary restraining order against ICE or their deportation⁴⁶.

Nipanjeet Singh’s petition was filed September 25, 2020. They were also a native and citizen of India. Because Singh did not allege that they faced any immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage the court recommended that their petition to enjoin ICE from transferring them to another facility be denied⁴⁷.

⁴⁰ https://lasalle567.rssing.com/chan-68354414/all_p1.html

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ Sapkota v. LaSalle Corr. Ctr. 1:20-cv-00851-DDD-JPM

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ Kirpal v. LaSalle Corr. Ctr. Case 1:20-cv-00871-DDD-JPM

⁴⁶ Sharma v LaSalle Corr. Ctr. Case 1:20-cv-00923-DCJ-JPM

⁴⁷ Singh v. LaSalle Corr. Ctr. Case 1:20-cv-01172-DCJ-JPM

Henry Posey brought a pro se action against the LaSalle Parish Correctional Center stating that his constitutional rights were violated when money was taken from his “inmate account” at the facility right before being transferred to another facility. His motion was filed in October 2018 in Baton Rouge Louisiana upon his arrival. The judge recommended that the case be transferred back where all evidence resided⁴⁸.

Justin Messer filed an action against LaSalle County Correctional after they had been raped while under “protective custody.” This claim was filed 11/10/2021 against the facility and against all the correctional officers that should have been protecting him. Justin underwent a rape test, and the test was returned positive for fluids. Justin claims that the staff belittled him after the incident and that it occurred while they were in protective custody. He stated that he did not feel safe while in protective custody, that staff members retaliated against him, and that witnesses to their incident were afraid to come forward because they also feared retaliation⁴⁹.

The most recent case was brought earlier this year when a petition was filed (February 27th, 2023) against LaSalle Corrections under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and the Fourth, Eight, and Fourteenth Amendments for the death of Billie Davis while he was in custody at the LaSalle Parish Correctional Center⁵⁰. This action was brought by friends and family members of Mr. Davis for his wrongful death on February 25th, 2022, after they were transferred from the Harris County LaSalle Correction facility to the LaSalle Parish Correctional Center in Louisiana.

⁴⁸ Posey v. LaSalle Corr. Ctr. Case 1:18-cv-01502-DDD-JPM

⁴⁹ Messer v. LaSalle Corr. Ctr. Case 1:21-cv-03932-DCJ-JPM

⁵⁰ Representatives of the Estate of Billie Davis v. LaSalle Corr. Ctr. Case 4:23-cv-01115