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FROM: Joseph Sweet
RE: “Better Know a Jail” Memo
DATE: December 16, 2024

Jackson Parish Correctional Center – Transitional Work Program

Introduction to the Area

Located in the center-most portion of northern Louisiana, Jackson Parish has a rich history unto itself, with its citizens making numerous contributions to the history and culture of Louisiana since its founding in 1845.¹ Of note, Jackson Parish served as the birthplace and home of Jimmie H. Davis, a former governor of Louisiana and the writer of the popular ballad, “You Are My Sunshine”, which became the official state song of Louisiana in 2021.² Jackson Parish has earned its place in the history of the Civil Rights movement in Louisiana by being the home parish of the Deacons for Defense and Justice. Established by African-American combat veterans of the Second World War in 1964, the group predicated their existence on the right of African-Americans to use armed self-defense as a means of resisting Jim Crow policies and proponents such as the Ku Klux Klan.³ A separate paper could be written on the Deacons for Defense and Justice as they endeavored to fight back against institutionalized racism in Louisiana and would serve as the armed escorts of protestors who conducted marches throughout the 1960s.⁴ Today, Jackson Parish has a population of 15,031 people, of whom, 3,596 are African-American, 9,967 are White, 37 identify as Native American, 149 of whom are Asian and 468 of whom are Latino.⁵ The average household income in Jackson Parish spread across all of these ethnic groups in 2023 is \$43,345, with 24.3% of its inhabitants living at or below the poverty line.⁶

Two Campuses, Two Missions: Characteristics and Overview Information

The Jackson Parish Correctional Center serves as a medium security, parish level facility located in Jonesboro, Louisiana.⁷ Jackson Parish Correctional Center is located at 327 Industrial Drive, Jonesboro, LA 71251 while the Transitional Work Program is located at 287 Industrial Drive, Jonesboro, LA 71251.⁸ The facility has approximately 1,252 beds and employs roughly 250 personnel.⁹ The first building of the facility finished construction in 2007, with a second building added in 2010.¹⁰ LaSalle Corrections currently operates the prison under contract with the Jackson Parish Sheriff's Office.¹¹ Of note, the Jackson Parish Correctional Center has largely transitioned into two separate entities with their own goals. The Jackson Parish Correctional

¹ <https://visitjacksonparish.com/history>

² <https://statesymbolsusa.org/symbol-official-item/louisiana/state-song/you-are-my-sunshine>

³ <https://visitjacksonparish.com/history>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ https://data.census.gov/profile/Jackson_Paris...?g=050XX00US22049

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <https://jackson-parish-correctional-center.govbackgroundchecks.com/index.php>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ https://www.ice.gov/doclib/facilityInspections/jacksonParishCorrCtrLA_CL_11-07-2019.pdf

¹¹ <https://jackson-parish-correctional-center.govbackgroundchecks.com/index.php>

Center primarily houses ICE detainees as they await their trial dates under a contract awarded to them by U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.¹² The Jackson Parish Correctional Center – Transitional Work Program is located on a nearby campus and houses select convicts who opt into the Transitional Work Program and thereby become eligible to work for participating employers as they await their imminent release.¹³ Eligibility for such a program comes by way of a prisoner having six months to four years left on their sentence and prisoners who apply to this program will be filtered by the offense of which they were convicted.¹⁴ As of December 16, 2024, Timothy Ducote serves as the Warden for both campuses.¹⁵

Jackson Parish Correctional Center – TWP

Ran under the auspices of the larger Jackson Parish Correctional Center, the Transitional Work Program physically separates its inhabitants from the main facility and operates in a for-profit manner. A private enterprise, LaSalle Corrections, runs the day-to-day operations of the Transitional Work Program.¹⁶ The mission statement of LaSalle Correction's Transitional Work Program contends that the company benefits both the prisoners and businesses involved by providing the prisoners with skill sets, trainings, and potentially even job placements once they are freed and a source of labor for the businesses.¹⁷ As part of this scheme, businesses that hire recently freed individuals may also be eligible to apply for certain financial incentives from the state and federal governments, such as a \$2,400 tax credit which can be applied for every new hire that a company makes from recently incarcerated persons.¹⁸ This tax credit also applies to employers who work an incarcerated participant in the Transitional Work Program for at least 400 hours in a year, without requiring the participant to be formally hired.¹⁹ The program costs are self-funded and, while no data could be found specific to the cut taken by the Jackson Parish Correctional Center's Transitional Work Program, the Louisiana Department of Corrections has set forth a policy allowing for prisoners enrolled in such a program to have over 60% of their total wages or \$63.50 per day, whichever is less, taken to cover the costs of food, transportation, and lodging at the facilities which host Transitional Work Program participants.²⁰ For example,

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https://www.nola.com/news/in-north-louisiana-sheriff-and-private-prison-operator-trade-prisoner-s-for-ice-detainees/article_9927b374-f388-11e9-8eca-43ec3c782d9f.html

¹³

<https://doc.louisiana.gov/imprisoned-person-programs-resources/transition-reentry/#:~:text=Certain%20people%20in%20prison%20may,in%20the%20transitional%20work%20program.>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <https://lsa.org/directory/jackson-parish/>

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

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ <https://doc.louisiana.gov/public-programs-resources/return-for-good/>

¹⁹ <https://www.laworks.net/wotc/>

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<https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2017/apr/3/work-release-programs-reduce-recidivism-louisiana-cost/#:~:text=This%20program%20actually%20pays%20for,and%20contractors%20that%20administer%20it.>

over the fiscal year from 2011 to 2012, the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office generated around \$500,000 in revenue from their Transitional Work programs.²¹

The Louisiana legislature has mandated Parishes which run a Transitional Work Release Program to report and identify the deaths of any participants of such a program.²² As per the primary goal of the class, no Zero Death Letter has been received for the Jackson Parish Correctional Center – Transitional Work Program. However, on December 20, Betty Pullig, my point of contact at the facility, confirmed via email that a death occurred at one of the two campuses. She is waiting for the facility nurse to come back to work on December 23, 2024 to collect the paperwork. I told her that I will contact her after the New Year and will press for more information.

Jackson Parish Correctional Center – Issues and Controversies

Lawsuits

In 2016, Brendan Terral, then an inmate at the Jackson Parish Correctional Center, brought forward a lawsuit demanding the removal of all officers involved in his case along with \$600,000. Mr. Terral asserted that on April 26, 2015, a guard used excessive force on his person and caused him injury.²³ When Mr. Terral began to experience symptoms from this incident, the facility allegedly purposely ignored his pleas for medical attention.²⁴ Mr. Terral named numerous parties to the suit, including Warden Timothy Ducote. Mr. Terral sought relief by requesting that the Louisiana Western District Court compel the Jackson Parish Correctional Center to provide the footage from the security cameras which were covering the area within which the April 26 incident occurred and to provide Mr. Terral with the files of involved guards, including any complaints or disciplinary actions they may have received in connection with prior excessive force claims.²⁵ The Defendants responded to these requests by first stating that the cameras were designed to erase recorded footage every 30 days and that Mr. Terral's request was made after the routine erasure.²⁶ They then responded that the personnel records contained sensitive information, such as social security numbers, that could jeopardize the well-being of the guards.²⁷ The court ultimately found that the Defendants did not have a duty to preserve the security footage but did require the facility to hand over any personnel files, on the limitation that they pertained to prior uses of excessive force.²⁸ The case would be later dismissed for Mr. Terral's failure to prosecute his claim.²⁹

In the News

In recent months, the Jackson Parish Correctional Center has made headlines for taking seven juveniles into custody following the February Special Legislative Session led by Governor Landry which saw a law get amended to now allow for criminal defendants of 17 years or older to be categorized as adults and placed in facilities which normally do not hold minors. These seven inmates were previously held at the East Baton Rouge Juvenile Detention Center but

²¹ Ibid.

²² <https://legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1362402>

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Terral v. Ducote*, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 213088, at *3 (W.D. La. Dec. 22, 2017)

moved to the Jackson Parish Correctional Center after concerns arose regarding the application of the new laws in Louisiana as conflicted with federal guidelines.³⁰ Specifically, the Prison Rape Elimination Act contains specific rules for “youthful inmates” which mandate that, to prevent sexual abuse and sexual violence, minors being kept in a facility which also houses adults must have those minors placed in an area where they cannot be seen or heard.³¹ However, when the new laws took effect in February, the seven 17 years olds went from being classified as minors to adults overnight. Because these “adults” were now housed with minors, they needed to be moved to comply with the federal guidelines and the facilities of the East Baton Rouge Juvenile Detention Center could not make these accommodations.³² While the news story ends with the moving of the 17 year olds, one can only wonder how many more youths will be moved to the Jackson Parish Correctional Center to live with adult offenders while Louisiana facilities make changes to their physical spaces to accommodate Governor Landry’s new policies in 2024 and beyond.

ICE Contracts

As discussed during the overview section of this memo, the Jackson Parish Correctional Center located at 327 Industrial Drive primarily houses ICE detainees. This began in 2019 when Jackson Parish Sheriff Andy Brown negotiated a deal with ICE and LaSalle Corrections to bus out most of the prisoners and replace them with ICE detainees.³³ Sherriff Brown cites the necessity of such a move through the economic benefits enjoyed by the employees of the facility.³⁴ Specifically, Sherriff Brown asserts that guards of the facility now enjoy an increased pay scale under the ICE contract than what they would have received if the facility only housed prisoners.³⁵ LaSalle Corrections owns numerous facilities across the state of Louisiana, and the amount of immigration detainees flooding into facilities such as the Jackson Parish Correctional Center is only increasing.³⁶

Annual ICE Inspection

As a contract detention center, the Jackson Parish Correctional Center now must comply with existing ICE policies on detention and living conditions. Each year, ICE conducts an evaluation of each facility that they use and list specific issues that these facilities must fix. In late 2023, ICE inspectors conducted a follow-up visit to the Jackson Parish Correctional Center

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<https://www.wbrz.com/news/seven-17-year-old-ebr-inmates-transferred-to-jackson-parish-correctional-center-following-new-law/>

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<https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/training-technical-assistance/prea-in-action/youthful-inmate-implementation>. PREA Standard Section 115.14

³²

<https://www.wbrz.com/news/seven-17-year-old-ebr-inmates-transferred-to-jackson-parish-correctional-center-following-new-law/>

³³

https://www.nola.com/news/in-north-louisiana-sheriff-and-private-prison-operator-trade-prisoners-for-ice-detainees/article_9927b374-f388-11e9-8eca-43ec3c782d9f.html

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

after one such inspection earlier in 2023 and found that violations still plagued the facility.³⁷ The inspectors found numerous walk-in coolers in the kitchens holding temperatures of 41-48 degrees Fahrenheit, well over the federally mandated maximum range of 35-40 degrees Fahrenheit.³⁸ A repeat deficiency, stocks of products designed to control and eradicate lice populations were found stored without proper inventory records, such that if said product was used, an inspector would not be able to ascertain how much was used, on whom, and when.³⁹ Of greater concern, some chemical products were stored in a non-fire safe closet in the maintenance building, a violation that had previously had been brought to the facility's attention.⁴⁰ The inspectors also found that some of the grievance forms filled out and submitted by detainees were not being placed in that detainee's specific file for future reference.⁴¹ Most concerning of all, however, were the findings made when reviewing the suicide and self-harm prevention policies. Inspectors noted that ICE requires that a detainee placed on suicide or self-harm watch be subjected to close observation in staggered intervals which should not exceed 15 minutes.⁴² However, logs indicated that detainees could become subject to close observation for as long as 60-minute intervals.⁴³

Summary and Moving Forward

While I have contacted staff members of both Jackson Parish Correctional Center and the Jackson parish Correctional Center – Transitional Work Program, I have not received any Zero Death Letters, but I have received information confirming that a death occurred on premises. My point of contact, Betty Pullig, confirmed via email that a death occurred but that the nurse of the facility would not be in until December 23, 2024. I told her that I would contact her after the New Year, on January 2, 2025, specifically. I do not recommend filing suit against either facility, but I am concerned with the increased use of the main campus to incarcerate persons who are 17 years old with a much older general population. Likewise, the deficiencies found by the ICE inspectors suggests that the facility practices bare minimum policy standards to keep the flow of money coming from the Federal Government.

³⁷

https://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/odo-compliance-inspections/jacksonParishCorrCntr_JonesboroLA_Jun13-15_2023.pdf

³⁸ Ibid. Page 10.

³⁹ Ibid. Page 8.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. Page 11.

⁴² Ibid. Page 10.

⁴³ Ibid.