

CASE EXAMPLES

AMNESTY FOR PRISONERS OF KATRINA

PEDRO PARRA-SANCHEZ

Pedro Parra-Sanchez spent over a year in three different state prisons without speaking to a single attorney, prosecutor or judge. When he finally was taken to court, 400 days after his arrest, the DA apologized for his “prolonged incarceration” and the Judge called his time in jail “unacceptable”. After being booked into the Greyhound jail October 13, 2005, Mr. Parra-Sanchez got lost for 13 months in the collapse of the post-Katrina legal system.

ASHLEY GEORGE, 10 years old

Ashley George was one of the 300 children transferred from the city’s Youth Study Center to Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) shortly before the storm. She described the situation: “When the storm started, water broke through the gate and started rising. The day after the storm, water came into the place, and I was in water up to my neck for a couple of days. We got no food, no water. I felt like I was going to die. The guards didn’t do anything to help us.” “We weren’t going to get out, but the adult prisoners escaped and got help for us. Military people told us that if we had stayed in there another day we would have drowned.” Ashley’s grandmother, Ruby Ann George, said: “After the storm I was going crazy. I kept calling and calling and calling and calling. ... They ain’t nothing but children. I kept calling all over, but I didn’t find out where she was for about a month. ... It’s horrible. Nobody should have gone through that — adults or children. They should have gotten them out of there. I was mad. ... If it wasn’t for the prisoners, they would have drowned.”

DEACONESS MERLENE MATEN

Merlene Maten is a 73 year old church deaconess and grandmother. While charges were eventually dropped, she spent two weeks in prison for allegedly taking sausage from a deli the day after Katrina while caring for herself and her 80 year old disabled husband.

MALIK YOUNG

Malik Young, an employed father, was arrested September 1, 2005 and charged with looting a case of cold drinks, \$56 in change and a video game. Bail was set at \$60,000 and he spent six months in prison before finally being released to house arrest. He was recently offered a 3 year sentence.

RACHEL FRANCIOS

Even though her mother had paid her bond before Katrina Ms. Francois was kept in OPP and transferred to Angola post-storm. If Ms. Francois had still been at OPP, the misdemeanor hold that meant she could not be released from Angola would not have prevented her from being bonded out from OPP.

LEROY FOSTER

When Mayor Nagin told residents of zip code 70116 to come back to New Orleans, 60-year old LeRoy Foster returned to the apartment building his niece owned in Treme. One evening, Mr. Foster went downstairs to move his car to a more well lighted area. After hearing gun shots, Mr. Foster took his gun with him. He was stopped by the New Orleans Police Department, handcuffed and asked for a driver’s licenses. But, Mr. Foster had lost his license while wading through flood water for days. When asked if he had an arrest record, Mr. Foster stated that he had

a conviction from a fight 22 years ago. The police told him that was a felony and arrested him for being a felon in possession of a gun. Mr. Foster was taken to the makeshift jail erected at the Greyhound bus station. When his niece went to see him there, she was told she could not see him and was escorted at gunpoint. Mr. Foster spent four days in custody and was finally arraigned approximately seven months after his arrest. After two court appearances and after he had retained a private attorney, the charge against him was dropped. The arrest, however, remains on his record.

IRIS HARDEMAN

Iris Hardeman was a 53 year old African American woman arrested in March 2005 on minor charges. Her family was told that but for the storm, she would have been released, but due to Katrina she had been moved to Angola and did not have any paperwork. Ms. Hardeman, who had been ill, died while still in custody.

DAVID WILLIAMS

David Williams was arrested and put in OPP on a charge of public intoxication on August 27, 2005. He was abandoned by deputies, left in flooded dorms, with no water, sewage backed up, and no food. Eventually they used crow bars to pry the cells open.

PEARL CORNELIA BLAND

Pearl Cornelia Bland was arrested in August 2005 on a charge of possessing prohibited drug paraphernalia. After pleading guilty, she was ordered released on August 12 to an intensive drug rehabilitation program at Hope House. But, Ms. Bland was not released on August 12 and was held at OPP for unpaid fines and fees during Katrina.

VINCENT NORMAN

Vincent Norman was arrested on a warrant for failure to appear in court and a \$100 fine on August 24, 2005. He was scheduled for a court hearing and release August 31, after spending 7 days in prison and paying his fine. But, he was not released because on the Friday before Katrina, OPP stopped releasing people. He was finally released December 5, 2005.

94 WOMEN

94 women, most being held on minor misdemeanor charges, filed suit against Sheriff Gusman and DA Eddie Jordan, demanding their freedom after not being allowed to post bond or make initial appearances before a judge.

Sources include American Civil Liberties Union, Abandoned and Abused; Associated Press, New York Times, Louisiana Weekly, personal accounts given to Critical Resistance.

To get involved contact Critical Resistance at 504-304-3784. www.criticalresistance.org

