

There have been 4 prisoner deaths in the span of 6 weeks at the Santa Rita Jail which is located in Dublin, California.

Every life lost at this gulag and death camp slowly eats away at my spirit. It hurts when we see human beings die unnecessarily.

Like many of you reading this piece, I am angry and frustrated.

The newly-elected Sheriff of Alameda County, Yesenia Sanchez, gave many the impression that things would be different at the jail during her tenure as Sheriff. Conditions are not only the same as they were under the regime of former Sheriff Gregory Ahern, in some respects things inside the jail have become significantly worse.

TOO MANY OF OUR PRECIOUS loved ones ARE BEING FOUND DEAD AT THIS JAIL!

Candice "Cody" Van Buren had served some time in prisons operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Cody did time in the women's prison at Chowchilla, CA. Cody identified as non-binary and used the pronouns he/him. A couple weeks before arriving at the "death camp" known as Santa Rita Jail ("SRJ"), Cody was summoned to a case manager's office at Chowchilla and told he had been approved for community supervision. In other words, Cody was going home!

His first stop in the journey home would be SRJ. I can personally imagine the excitement, anxiety, and happiness Cody experienced on the transfer bus headed toward Santa Rita. Such great expectations: hugging family members, and friends and eating that first "free world" meal. Destination: Freedom.

Those feelings of joy would be short lived for Cody. On the morning of February 28, 2023 (Tuesday) at approximately 5:20 A.M., Cody was found unresponsive inside a cell at SRJ.

Jail Guards at SRJ radioed the emergency response team. Medical personnel administered Narcan five times to Cody - to no avail. But why Narcan? Cody would not have been in possession of any contraband once boarding the transfer bus in Chowchilla.

If Cody had, in fact, overdosed, where did the drugs come from?

Cody was unceremoniously transported to Eden Medical Center where he was pronounced DEAD! Cody was 33 years old.

The spike in deaths at SRJ can be attributed to a few recurring problems at the jail:

1. A flawed intake process which includes an intake housing area known for unconstitutional conditions which cause trauma.
2. A broken withdrawal protocol procedure.
3. The presence of illicit drugs like Fentanyl inside SRJ.

Recently, I reached out to Brendan Woods, the Chief Public Defender of Alameda County. I left a heartfelt message with Andrea Brown, a supervisor at the Alameda County Public Defender's Office.

In the voicemail message I left for Brendan Woods, I pleaded with him to lead regarding the issue of lost lives at SRJ.

I've personally written to Kwixuan Maloof, the Senior Assistant District Attorney for the Public Accountability Unit and lead attorney of the Civil Rights Bureau.

I am in regular contact with the law firm Rosen, Bien, Galvan & Grunfeld LLP; they are class Counsel representing prisoners housed at the SRJ. In respect to the implementation of the Babu v. Ahern Consent Decree at the SRJ, the Alameda County Sheriff's Office has been persistently non-compliant.

There are times when I feel as if no one hears our cries for mutual aid and solidarity inside SRJ, but I know my voice is being heard. My colleague and friend, Gale Sanders, the President of Destination Freedom refuses to abandon those trapped inside SRJ.

Gale has joined forces with us and she has begun reaching out to local officials in Alameda County with the hope of promoting some semblance of accountability and transparency within the confines of SRJ. Without Gale, we would have no platform in order to tell the public about the lost lives within this Death Camp.

- 1.) Stephen Lofton- Died at Santa Rita Jail on January 17, 2023;
- 2.) Elizabeth Laurel died at Santa Rita Jail on February 13, 2023, a victim of the jail's horribly flawed withdrawal protocol;
- 3.) Charles Johnson experienced a medical emergency at the Santa Rita Jail on February 4, 20223 and later died; and
- 4.) Candice "Cody" Van Buren was found unresponsive in a cell at the Santa Rita Jail and later died at the Eden medical center on February 28, 2023.

How many lives must be lost before our sisters and brothers in the free-world decide to gather outside this Death Camp and scream in a collective voice "STOP Killing Our Loved Ones!"

"Let Our People Go!"
CARE FIRST! JAIL LAST!

It is important that all of you understand what the conditions are really like inside Santa Rita Jail.

Let us focus our attention on ITR also known as Intake, Transfer, and Reception. It is the location and department where newly arrested human beings are held pending classification and placement in an appropriate housing unit.

#1.) It is common to be stuck in ITR between 12 and 60 hours! NO BLANKETS, NO MATTRESS.

#2.) Walk throughs or visual welfare checks are rare. Although a new electronic scanning device has been introduced at the jail. Physical observation and actual interaction with deputies is a rare occurrence.

#3.) The holding cells in ITR are often extremely cold and dirty, feces, urine, spit, and garbage can accumulate inside these places.

#4.) Drugs are often present and shared among the occupants of these holding cells inside ITR.

Fentanyl kills – enough said

I have reached out to journalists and staff writers with the East

Bay Times with the hope they may engage in some investigative journalism.

The spike in deaths at Santa Rita Jail raises key questions:

- 1.) If jail is under a current consent decree (Babu settlement), then why is death still a common and routine occurrence??
- 2.) What has happened to the \$24 million awarded to the Alameda County Sheriff's Office for staffing at the jail??
- 3.) And when will Yesenia Sanchez the new Alameda County Sheriff hold a news conference in order to provide our community with some information and answers??

My final plea goes out to the people of faith. I'm calling on 'believers' of every race, creed, and ethnicity.

WE ARE IN NEED OF SINCERE, HEARTFELT
AND PASSIONATE PRAYER.

We the members of the Santa Rita Jail Freedom Collective ask that all of you lift up our sisters and brothers trapped inside this horrible place.

Pray that a hedge of protection is placed around us in order to keep us Safe and Alive!

We ask that our activist-minded friends and allies organize and protest en masse in front of SRJ soon!

Let us hear you chant loudly:

CARE FIRST - JAILS LAST!

The Sheriff Deputies at this Jail do not value our lives. To most of them – not all - but most consider us sub-human and unworthy of any compassion, care or love.

This is the culture inside SRJ.

I must end this piece by quoting Alameda County DA Pamela Price. This is what she said at a protest and rally for slain human being, Tyre Nichols. She said:

"I refuse to be silent. I refuse to be complicit in racialized justice, in a failed system that does not acknowledge people suffering a mental health crisis that does not provide support for the community."

DA Price continued...

"I understand that when police cross the line and murder and abuse and exploit people, that doesn't grant public safety." End of quote

Gross neglect and a profound lapse in protocols has become a form of outright murder inside SRJ.

Please Amplify our Voice and our struggle.

WE ARE THE SANTA RITA JAIL FREEDOM COLLECTIVE!