

Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC)

iwoc.milwaukee@gmail.com

+1 414 630 7507



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Following a public suicide by one incarcerated individual on January 15, 2020 and the death of another, a hunger strike is announced at Columbia Correctional Institution (CCI, Portage, WI) to demand medical attention to people who need it most badly.

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – January 23, 2020 – IWOC-Milwaukee received from CCI and verified information about a public suicide committed in front of 30 people last week and a death due to drug overdose. These deaths follow the loss of another incarcerated person in December 2019. After a long lockdown, Columbia Correctional has never returned to “normal” operation. People are not receiving medical attention that they badly need.

Having been denied medical care and in response to the suffering inflicted on all people incarcerated in CCI, Damani Nantambu (#594586) has begun a hunger strike demanding urgent attention to the medical needs of CCI population. Mr. Nantambu suffers from several documented medical conditions, including a kidney cyst, a prostate infection, eye problems and irregular heartbeat. Due to his urethra condition, he has been prescribed medical showers, which he has not received since September. Gluten-intolerant, he has no access to gluten-free food.

A recent report from Northeastern University School of Law entitled “Treating Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders in Correctional Settings” underscores the role of correctional institutions as “de-facto national substance use and mental health safety net” (Source: SSRN). This is also true of medical attention to physical ailments, which many incarcerated individuals fail to receive. Correctional facilities thus only inflict further suffering, failing to provide medical care and merely adopting punishment measures when it becomes too late to prevent suicide and death.

Columbia Correctional Institution is a case in point. After a long lockdown in November, restriction on recreational activities and movement continue, as medical attention staff has been cut. This has severe physical and mental health consequences on people, who respond using the only means that they have.

To learn more about the situation at CCI, contact iwoc.milwaukee@gmail.com or call 4146307507. To do a wellness check on Damani Nantambu (#594586), call Lucas Weber, Columbia’s security director, call (608) 742-9100 extension 9145 and write to

Lucas.Weber@wisconsin.gov, Susan.Novak@wisconsin.gov, Cathy.Jess@wisconsin.gov,
Kalen.Ruck@wisconsin.gov, Tristan.Cook@wisconsin.gov, steven.wierenga@wisconsin.gov,
StevenR.Johnson@wisconsin.gov, ScottA.MacLauchlin@wisconsin.gov, Sara.Fry@wisconsin.gov,
iwoc.milwaukee@gmail.com, Randall.Hepp@wisconsin.gov, Marlana.larson@wisconsin.gov,
Lisa.Reible@wisconsin.gov, Lisa.Avila@wisconsin.gov, Joy.Merbach@wisconsin.gov

**Help IWOC to end prison slavery in Wisconsin
An injury to one is an injury to all**