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Recent Monitors' Report Confirms Continued Failure to Improve Conditions in Orleans Jail

NEW ORLEANS – In April 2012 the men, women, and youth in Orleans Parish Prison (O.P.P.) sued the Sheriff to improve conditions in the jail. That lawsuit was filed to stop rampant rapes, beatings and stabbings in the notorious lock-up. It resulted in a consent decree that was approved by the federal court in June 2013. As part of the consent decree a team of independent monitors is appointed to report on the Sheriff's compliance with the various consent decree provisions.

Today the team of monitors released the fifth periodic compliance report. That report finds that rather than making progress, the Sheriff's Office has actually fared worse in many areas of the consent decree. Despite having moved into a new jail building and having shipped hundreds of prisoners to other jurisdictions, areas of the consent decree that were previously seeing progress have moved out of compliance.

The Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center represents the men, women, and kids in OPP in the consent decree. Lead attorney Katie Schwartzmann said,

The monitors' report documents the fact that four years into this lawsuit OPP remains a disaster. Moving into a shiny, expensive new jail building didn't fix the fundamental lack of vision and leadership at the Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Gusman has been in office for over a decade, so he can't blame the problems on the previous Sheriff or Katrina. The City has almost fully funded his current budget requests, so the Sheriff can't blame lack of funding. There's just no excuse for OPP's continued failure of our community.

And yet another person, Cleveland Tumblin, died in the jail last week. The plaintiffs are deciding upon next steps, but obviously the current situation can't continue.

A copy of the monitors' report can be found here:
http://neworleans.macarthurjusticecenter.org/uploads/rsmjc-neworleans/documents/20160317_monitors_5th_report.pdf

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About the Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center

The Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center is a public interest law firm founded by the family of J. Roderick MacArthur to advocate for human rights and social justice through litigation. The MacArthur Justice Center became part of Northwestern University School of Law's Bluhm Legal Clinic in 2006. The MacArthur Justice Center opened an office in New Orleans in 2013 and an office at the University of Mississippi School of Law in 2014. It is opening an office in St. Louis in 2016. www.MacArthurJusticeCenter.org