



The Friends Group Public Event

Wednesday, March 17, 2010 (St. Patrick's Day)
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Donald R. Wright Auditorium
Pasadena Public Library, Central Branch
285 East Walnut Street, Pasadena, CA 91101

I. Panel Discussion: "Custodial Night Time Release Procedures"

Persons in the custody of local law enforcement agencies are frequently released late at night from jail without money, transportation or a way to call someone to pick them up. This practice fails to honor such persons' right, on a "consistent and humane basis," to have someone pick them up. This puts the released person at potential risk of harm as in the recent case of Mitrice Richardson who has been missing since September 17, 2009, from the Malibu/Lost Hills Sheriff's substation after she was released at 12:35 a.m. without a cell phone, money, or transportation, and while experiencing a mental breakdown. Refer to reverse side of this flyer for Los Angeles Times editorial from 11/23/2009.



Mitrice Richardson, age 24

Moderator

Dr. Gerda Govine-Ituarte, Chair, The Friends Group
Expert Witness, Discrimination in the Workplace (Gender & Race), G. Govine Consulting

Panel Participants

Dr. Ronda Hampton, Clinical Psychologist
Neal B. Tyler, Chief, Field Operations Region I, County of L.A. Sheriff's Department
Mary Ann Shemdin, Family Group Share-and-Care Coordinator, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, San Gabriel Valley (NAMI-SGV)
Benjamin Jones, Deputy Chief Attorney, County of L.A. Office of Independent Review

II. Rollout of "Your Bill of Rights for Custodial Night Time Release"

"You Have No Rights Unless You Know What They Are."

For further information or to tell The Friends Group about an experience of custodial night time release, email: info@thefriendsgroup.org

This Event is Free and Open to the Public — Please Park at 333 E. Walnut (Parole Office Lot), \$3.00

Los Angeles Times
Editorial
November 23, 2009

A MISSING WOMAN AND THE LAW'S LOST COMPASSION

The disappearance of Mitrice Richardson after being released from a sheriff's substation underscores the need for better procedures to ensure suspects' safety.

Twenty-four-year-old Mitrice Richardson of South Los Angeles walked out of the Malibu/Lost Hills sheriff's station in the wee hours of Sept. 17 and has been missing ever since. Sheriff Lee Baca insists that deputies followed procedures to the letter: Richardson, who was accused of refusing to pay her bill at a high-end Malibu restaurant and possessing a small amount of marijuana, insisted on leaving after being booked and released, despite invitations to spend the night in an empty cell or in the station's lobby. Deputies at the station had declared her safe to go because she didn't appear to be a threat to herself or anyone else. Nevertheless, the fact remains that she was 40 miles from home in the dead of night with no purse, cash or cellphone, no buses available for hours, and her car locked in a garage she couldn't pay.

If that's following procedures to the letter, something's wrong with the procedures. Even if deputies acted as reasonably as Baca asserts, the implication is that the department's responsibility to "safely" release people it takes into custody ends the moment they leave its property.

That's certainly a pragmatic stance. As Baca's report to the Board of Supervisors notes, deputies process 180,000 prisoners a year for release -- that's nearly 500 a day -- and detaining someone for too long carries "tremendous liability." Special steps are taken only for those "deemed to have medical or mental disabilities." But as Richardson's disappearance demonstrates, the department's blithe lack of concern about people after they walk out the door may be creating new and unnecessary dangers.

The Orange County sheriff's approach may not be a model for L.A. County, given the differences in size, but it's still instructive. Rather than taking people to the closest station to be booked and released, Orange County deputies bring everyone to a jail with easy access to public transportation. And unlike their counterparts in L.A., they have health department workers on hand around the clock to look people over before release. That might have been useful in Malibu, considering reports that Richardson had sounded "crazy" and was acting erratically.

The Sheriff's Department can't be a taxi service, and the people it arrests have to be responsible for their own welfare once they're released. Yet the department shouldn't ignore the difficulties imposed on those it hauls off for booking. Policymakers should explore ways to ensure that people booked after hours with no way to get home, like Richardson, have options -- for example, a shuttle to a public transportation hub or easy access to their car. In limited cases, such as when witnesses see signs of mental illness, it may even be wise to hold suspects until morning. A few extra hours of inconvenience is a reasonable trade-off for avoiding tragedy.

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<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/editorials/la-ed-sheriff23-2009nov23,0,7693170.story>