Twitter Thread by Dr. Hadar Aviram



Dr. Hadar Aviram
@aviramh



While we'll be celebrating New Year's Eve, thousands of terrified people will languish in cages, locked up by institutional actors who are deliberately indifferent to the grave risks to their health and safety. Here's a brief summary of my 2020 professional activities.

Early 2020: With the indispensable help of @lindar, I migrate #CaliforniaCorrectionalCrisis to https://t.co/mk2kUVD1XB, which would become the one-stop-shop for the COVID crisis in CA prisons.

February 2020: My book #YesterdaysMonsters, about the hurdles in the path of aging, infirm people seeking parole, comes out. It becomes a frightening omen of things to come in ways I couldn't imagine at the time. https://t.co/Y62UYB6bLz

In March it became evident that the only way to prevent an impending catastrophe was to release people. I started collecting resources. https://t.co/yoJp3lcbBh

In early April, I linked between the atrocity of Susan Atkins' last hearing and the impending doom of thousands sentenced to death by COVID. It was obvious that the optics of releasing so-called "violent inmates" was going to sabotage relief efforts. https://t.co/eYu3L0ksNO

In April, the roots of the catastrophe became obvious. I gave a few talks about it, which ended up being this piece. https://t.co/iCurOtbfM4

As the catastrophe at San Quentin exploded, the #StopSanQuentinOutbreak coalition organized a press conference. A day later, @GavinNewsom articulated a release plan. I (sadly, correctly) predicted it wouldn't come anywhere near solving the problem. https://t.co/C4E2bUAr4b

Shortly after, I wrote this for @BoomCalifornia: https://t.co/TfZxsq1Eri

Representing @ACLU_NorCal and 17 of my colleagues, we joined litigation to grant relief to people at San Quentin. https://t.co/2VlrT4sgtB

As outbreaks emerged in other prisons, Leslie Van Houten was (again!) recommended for parole. The microcosm of #YesterdaysMonsters reflected the horror of the entire COVID crisis. https://t.co/OcSdQZTE7o

We won big in the San Quentin case, but prison authorities, determined not to do the right thing, exploited the breadth of discretion they got in the litigation and started frantically transferring people between prisons. https://t.co/OrU0vYX7AW

As the specter of vaccines appeared over the horizon, I urged the state to prioritize prisons (for the sake of everyone.) Thankfully, they heeded advice of experts--but they are facing a serious buy-in problem. https://t.co/hBcTUglOXN

Just a few days later, every single CDCR facility had an outbreak. https://t.co/mX4N4rtbUX

With a grant of review from the CA Supreme Court, relief for incarcerated people now hangs on the balance--and it becomes clear that we should pin our hopes on a holistic, systemwide solution. https://t.co/bIf3ULw7z6

We end 2020 with 40% (more than two fifths!!!) of the CA prison population infected and 127 dead, no relief or good will from CDCR, crickets and obstruction from the prison guard union, and a vaccination plan deeply compromised by a legacy of indifference and cruelty.

But we also end it with courageous friends who are formerly incarcerated themselves, like @akhan1437 and @jamesking0314 and many others, fighting for their friends and loved ones.

We end it with family members and friends fighting for their loved ones, like @SpeedyVeez and many others, receiving and providing precious knowledge of the horrors behind bars.

We end it with emails and texts I receive from smuggled cellphones, giving us a true measure of the horrors experienced in CA prisons.

We end it with terrific lawyers, like Michael Bien, Richard Braucher, Jessica Delgado, Danielle Harris, Brad O'Connell, Danica Rodarmel, and many, many, many others, fighting for their clients with all their hearts, minds, and skills.

We end it with conscientious and courageous physicians like @briewsf, @PCH_SF, @peoples_doc and many others, at @AmendatUCSF and in CA prisons, speaking out to save human lives.

We end it with amazing journalists like @jfagone @meganrcassidy @NMishanec @BobEgelko @SamTLevin Abené Clayton Hana Baba Joseph Pace @AngieCoiro and many others reminding everyone that the entire community's health hangs on the balance.

We end it with my amazing colleagues in academia like @SharonDolovich @aaronlittman @KerametR @ashleytrubin @JonathanSimon59 @rorylittle @mschlanger and many others speaking publicly tp the urgency of anything that can be done to get old, sick people out of harm's way.

Chad Goerzen and I end the year with a book proposal (and a partial draft) for our book in progress, Fester: Carceral Permeability and the California COVID-19 Prison Disaster, which will memorialize and bear witness to this human rights crime.

And on a personal note, we end a very difficult but joyous year of full time advocacy, while working our day jobs full time and raising our son full time, with no childcare or help until July (when the preschool opened.)

We met lots of incredible people, such as @nrjones8 and @darbyaono--upstanding people stepping up to collect data and make it accessible in the face of govt. failure to do this.

And I managed to teach two semesters of law school while all this was going on--the latter semester through a @flipclassroom method--and the superb exams I'm grading show that the students rose up to the occasion and successfully met the challenges they faced.

The price of much of this was a noticeable decline in my physical health and fitness, which I must prioritize next year--and am urging you all to do the same! We can help so much more when we are healthy and feel well.

May this year bring you and your loved ones hope, good health, financial relief, support for your grief and sorrow, a broad community of friends, and good news on the political/environmental/economic/medical side.