

Prisoners' rights cases 'a tedious process'

By Carol Azizian
staff writer

Attorneys who fight for inmates' rights often are just "banging their heads against the wall," according to a longtime champion of prisoners' rights, because Michigan's prison system resists change.

But advocates of inmates' rights are making progress in alleviating overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at state prisons, said Judith Magid. The 38-year-old Detroit attorney has litigated cases on behalf of inmates for the past eight years.

Magid was one of several speakers who addressed the issue of "Victims and Inmates Rights" at a recent conference sponsored by the American Jewish Committee at Mercy College, Detroit.

"THE ONLY real solution (to protecting prisoners' rights) is to use the courts," she said. "We have to rely on judges who are sympathetic to our plight."

"It's not difficult to show rights are being violated. The hardest part is making sure a remedy is brought about because most prisons resist change."

Attorneys need a lot of stamina to press prison officials to enforce court orders, said Magid, whose firm — with offices in Detroit and Southfield — is one of the few in the state defending inmates' rights.

'We're not litigating about the right to have luxuries such as Gucci shoes or Pierre Cardin shoes. We're talking about the basic necessities of life such as toilets that actually flush.'

— Attorney Judith Magid

rights. In many cases, it takes up to 12 years for a court order to be implemented, she said.

"It's a tedious process. Sometimes we feel as if we're banging our heads against the wall, but it has to be done."

CURRENTLY MAGID is litigating a case on behalf of inmates in Southern Michigan Prison at Jackson.

The class action suit filed against the Michigan Department of Corrections alleges that Jackson fails to provide adequate ventilation, food services, and security.

"We're not litigating about the right to have luxuries such as Gucci shoes or Pierre Cardin shoes. We're talking about the basic necessities of life such as toilets that actually flush."

At Jackson, for example, when one prisoner flushes a toilet, the debris floods into the next man's cell. Eventually, the debris backs up into the last cell in the block instead of going into a sewer system, Magid said.

THERE ARE MORE serious violations, Magid said. Prisoners charged with misconduct are confined to 6-by-8 foot "segregation units."

"They only get out of there to take a shower. They even eat in those detention cells."

"It's cruel and unusual punishment to keep them in there indefinitely. Even if an inmate is a model prisoner, he can't get out. He's never told what to do to get out."

Magid said the U.S. Justice Department is currently negotiating with the state in an attempt to solve some of the problems at Michigan prisons.

"The Justice Department, acting according to provisions in the Institutionalized Prisoners Act, has notified the state of the charges and is trying to negotiate an agreement to rectify the situation."

"We haven't seen the report, but we can only guess that it involves some of the same charges we've made in our lawsuit."

IT WAS A surprise to everyone that the Justice Department picked Michigan, Magid added. "They usually go after the worst prison systems in the country."

MAGID IS credited with initiating a "precedent-setting" case against the Michigan Department of Corrections during the late 1970s.

The case alleged that women at the Huron Valley Women's Facility were denied the same privileges awarded to men at other Michigan prisons.

For example, when the women's facility was constructed, there was no law library. While men have been able to participate in more than 20 vocational programs, women were allowed to take only those courses traditionally designed for women.

pet of the week



DAVID FRANK/staff photographer

Mitty, a friendly, long-haired tiger cat, likes to perch on shoulders and hug. The bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, nine-month old female is looking for a home where she can show lots of affection. You can meet her at the Michigan Humane Society shelter, 3600 Auburn Road, Avon Township. Telephone number is 852-7420.

More great Anniversary Specials from Wiggs...

Wedgwood, Royal Doulton and Wiggs bring you exceptional Dinnerware Values!



Save 30% on Wedgwood Dinnerware & Earthenware 5-Piece Place Settings

For over 200 years Wedgwood Dinnerware has graced the tables of fine homes with a host of patterns to suit your tastes. Now is your opportunity to select your favorite pattern of fine bone china or earthenware, or add those extra pieces to complete your service at MARVELOUS 30% SAVINGS! Plan your entertaining now...select a festive table AT 30% SAVINGS! Both sales end 5/15/83.

Save 30% on Open Stock and Accessory Pieces!



Save 25% to 33 1/4% on Royal Doulton Fine China, Lambethware & Minton Place Settings!

Take advantage of special savings on Royal Doulton's beautiful collections: All current patterns of Royal Doulton's English Fine China, Lambethware and Minton Bone China. Royal Doulton is designed for use in today's homes: Fine China will be replaced should any piece chip, crack or break during the first 2 years of home use...Lambethware goes from freezer, to oven, to table and dishwasher safely.

Save 20% to 25% on Open Stock and Accessory Pieces!

Telegraph at Long Lake Rd., (18 Mile), Bloomfield Hills • 644-7370
open Mon., Thurs. & Fri. 10-6

Beautiful arrangements from Wiggs:
12 Great Sofas and Loveseats
at 80th Anniversary Savings!

87" Sofa/65" Loveseat

63"

87"

87"

90"

Our new Harman House Collection:
Sofa and Loveseat...\$1299.
Sofa alone \$699...Loveseat alone \$649

Upholstery perfection plus! Our very own Harman House Collection of 12 distinctive designs gives you complete versatility. (Just 5 are shown here). Choose your own fabric...prices will vary depending upon your selection...and choose your own sizes! (Sofas from 63" to 90" long...Loveseats from 56" to 65" long). The quality details are unmistakable: extra deep, plump cushioning...stunning fabrics to suit every decor...arm covers...and all the built-in values that usually sell for much, much more! Come see them all in our galleries today!

M.C. Vsa. A.E. and Wiggs Charges
Telegraph at Long Lake Rd., (18 Mile), Bloomfield Hills, 644-7370
open Mon., Thurs. & Fri. 10-6

Long-stemmed
silk roses.

FREE

Biggest Bloomin' Solarian Sale Ever!

Armstrong

Designer Solarian

Designer Solarian II

The only no-wax floor with the richness of inlaid color.

Reg. \$18.95 sq. yd.

A remarkable floor, offers two distinctly different no-wax Mirabond surfaces.

Reg. \$21.95 sq. yd.

Stock material only

\$8.95
sq. yd.

Special order material

\$12.95
sq. yd.

Stock material only

\$9.95
sq. yd.

Special order material

\$16.95
sq. yd.

Bigelow

100% DuPont nylon face.

Super tightly twisted yarns provide the ultimate in wearing qualities and outstanding appearance retention.

selected colors

\$10.95
sq. yd.

SULTRY

100% Ultron® nylon face.

For long wear and easy care. Static shock protected and naturally mothproof.

selected colors

\$12.95
sq. yd.

Quality Carpet Remnants also available at 30-70% off

We accept Visa and Mastercard

A. R. KRAMER
COMPANY

15986 Middlebelt, between 5 and 6 Mile Roads, Livonia
Open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. Saturday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Phone 313-522-5300 We accept Visa and Mastercard

Material only
Installation extra