

PRESS RELEASE



Private Corrections Institute (www.privateci.org)

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Corrections Corporation of America Refuses Moment of Silence to Honor Employee Slain During Prison Riot

Natchez, MS – On May 16, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the nation’s largest for-profit prison company, held its annual shareholder meeting in Nashville.

The meeting was attended by CCA board members, executives and shareholders, with the latter including Alex Friedmann, a former prisoner who served six years at a CCA-operated prison. He now serves as president of the Private Corrections Institute, a non-profit citizen watchdog group that opposes prison privatization. “I own a small amount of stock which allows me to attend the company’s annual meetings and introduce shareholder resolutions,” he said.

Near the end of CCA’s shareholder meeting, during a question and comment period, Friedmann asked for a brief moment of silence in memory of Catlin Carithers, 24, a CCA employee who was beaten to death during a May 20, 2012 riot at the company’s Adams County Correctional Center in Natchez, Mississippi. A full-page color photo of the Adams County facility graced the cover of CCA’s 2012 annual report.

According to recent news reports, a prisoner at Adams County had provided advance warning of the impending riot to a CCA security official and informed him that Carithers’ name was on a “hit list” of guards who would be targeted if violence broke out. The warden at Adams County reportedly failed to act on that information, and Carithers, who was off-duty at the time of the riot and was called in to help quell the disturbance, wasn’t told he was on a hit list.

Friedmann’s request for a brief moment of silence to acknowledge Catlin Carithers’ death was flatly denied by CCA board chairman John D. Ferguson.

“CCA holds a shareholder meeting just once a year, and they couldn’t give 30 seconds to honor the memory of one of their own who died in the line of duty,” Friedmann noted. “That is callous and insensitive. It is also indicative of the value that CCA places on its employees. This is the one time, at the annual meeting, that shareholders could collectively recognize Mr. Carithers.”

Apparently, however, CCA felt it had honored Catlin Carithers “enough.”

A brief moment of silence was observed at CCA’s shareholder meeting in 2008, in memory of the passing of Harmon Wray – an anti-private prison activist who owned a single share of stock so he could attend CCA’s shareholder meetings and question corporate officials.

“CCA respectfully allowed a moment of silence for Harmon, even though he had opposed the company’s practice of incarcerating people for profit,” Friedmann said. “But they refused the same respect for Mr. Carithers – one of their own employees who was murdered during a riot at a CCA prison. And not a single one of CCA’s other board members or executives objected or spoke up after John Ferguson denied a moment of silence in Mr. Carithers’ memory.”

Catlin Carithers’ family filed suit against CCA earlier this month, claiming that the company was aware of the impending riot at Adams County and that Carithers’ name was on a hit-list, but failed to prevent the disturbance or safeguard him from harm. The lawsuit also claims that CCA “further created a dangerous atmosphere for the correction officers by depriving the inmates of basic needs and treating them inhumanely.”

According to an affidavit filed in federal court by an FBI agent, the riot at CCA’s Adams County facility that led to Carithers’ death resulted from prisoners’ complaints about inadequate medical care, poor food and disrespectful treatment by prison staff.

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The Private Corrections Institute (www.privateci.org) is a non-profit citizen watchdog organization that works to educate the public about the significant dangers and pitfalls associated with the privatization of correctional services. PCI maintains an online collection of news reports and other resources related to the private prison industry, and holds the position that for-profit prisons have no place in a free and democratic society.