

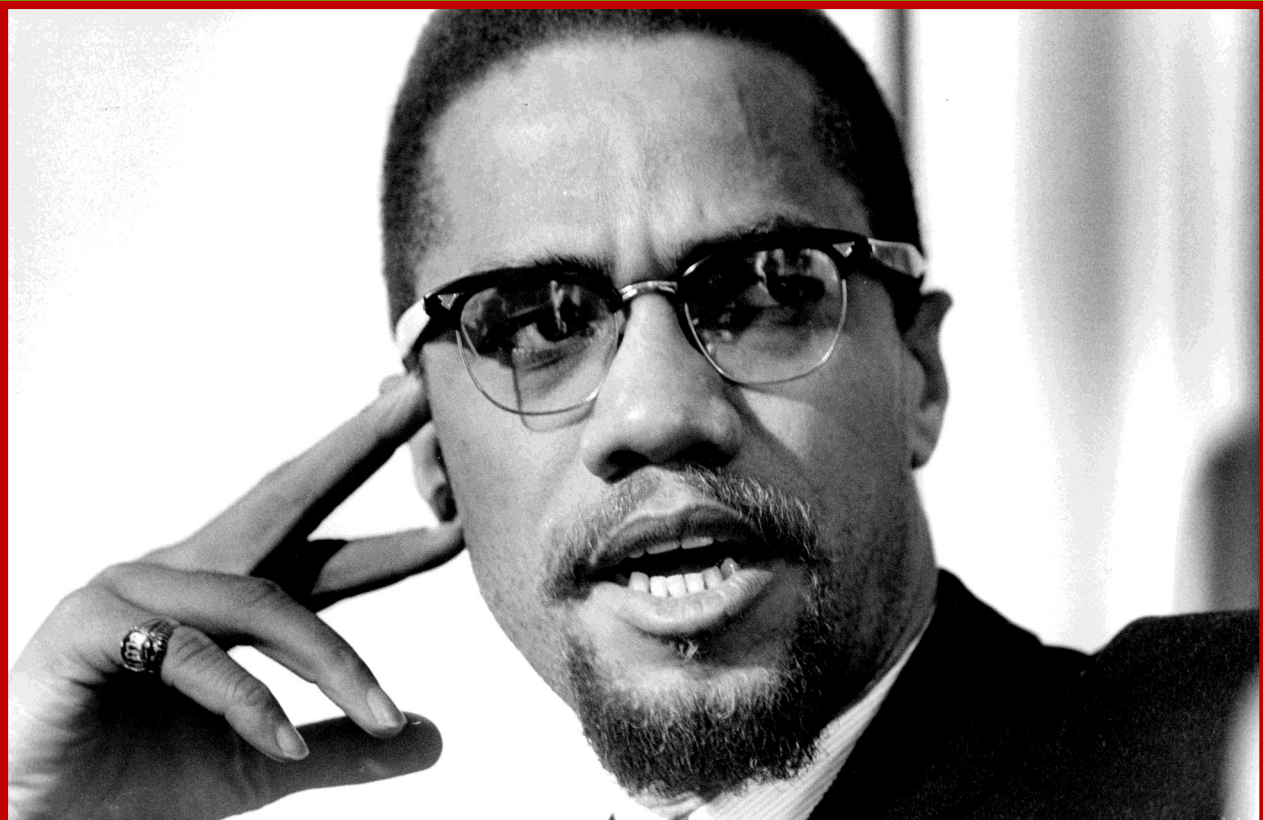
# THE MOVEMENT

Summer 2022

Issue #48

Human Rights Coalition  
Dedicated to Protecting the  
HUMAN RIGHTS of All!

The Official News Magazine of the  
Human Rights Coalition for the union of Prisoners'  
Families



“They put your mind right in a bag, and take it wherever they want.” —  
Malcolm X

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# Yes you can VOTE while in prison!

1. You can vote if you are in county jail and have not been convicted of a felony crime.
2. You can vote if you are in county jail and state prison, if you've been convicted of a misdemeanor.
3. You can vote if you are in state prison, but you are there because of a technical violation.
4. You can vote if you are in a halfway house or home, but are on parole or probation.
5. Everyone must be registered - the deadline is October 24th of this year.
6. You CAN vote by Mail-In Ballot.
7. You can still vote if you've been denied your voting rights. How? Simply guide your family and friends to vote for the politicians who will fight for your rights. General Elections are on November 8th, 2022.

## THE MOVEMENT FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS!

[www.hrcoalition.org](http://www.hrcoalition.org)

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Summer 2022 (Issue 48)

# The Editor Speaks

Hello, all!

First I want to begin by extending Revokutionary Greetings to everybody who chose to open THE MOVEMENT Magazine today!!! We truly appreciate you, and we hope that you enjoy this issue, which is definitely one full of insight, provocative thought, and meaningful dialogue.

You'll notice that this issue continues to build upon the last couple of issues, which focused on the importance of political education and action. The world of politics is moving fast, and incarcerated folks won't be left behind. Elected officials are starting to realize and acknowledge that, if they want to win at the polls, it's in their best interest to involve more formerly incarcerated people. But there's a residual impact that must be noted: when formerly incarcerated folks become more involved in the electoral processes, they make sure that the interests of those still incarcerated are addressed. And that's how people on the inside become critical elements to any progress being made out here in society.

See! It's all a process; step-by-step. And we all must maintain patience, consistency, and decorum as we struggle to advance our position in society.

Well, now that I got that out of the way, let's get into this issue.

It comes as no surprise that new PADOC Secretary George Little has reneged on his promise to rescind covid restrictions on the inside of PA state prisons. These restrictions are harsh and inhumane. When the Covid-19 pandemic first began, prison bureaucrats used it as an excuse to implement brutally repressive policies, which limited the ability of incarcerated folks to maintain bonds with their families and communities - and, quite honestly, maintain their own sanity. Movement was restricted. Showers, visits, phone calls, access to kiosks, hospital trips were all canceled. Programming came to an abrupt end. People on the inside of prison were relegated to the sad and deplorable status of property - objectified and ignored - while left to decay inside of human kennels.



I was in prison while all of this was taking place; I spoke out about it then, and I'll continue to speak out about it now, on the outside. Before I was released (on February 8th, 2022), Little was just assuming the Secretaryship from John Wetzel - another savvy oppressor, who had the media eating out of his hands. Unlike the media, however, we all knew Wetzel to be nothing but a fraud, whose sole purpose within the PADOC was to reduce operational costs. Well, he did. And people on the inside were - and still ARE - the ones who felt the results the most. It was Wetzel who put nearly all of the restrictions in place. It was Wetzel who took our visits. It was Wetzel who restricted our phone calls. And it was Wetzel who put a stop to vital hospital trips for prisoners who needed life-sustaining medical treatment.

Still, none of this should surprise you. After all, we've seen this before with John Wetzel. Back in 2018, when prison guards in Ohio claimed that they were becoming sick after handling mail coming into the prisons addressed to the prison population. Once PADOC guards saw that this was an opportunity to get over, they immediately began to claim that a "powdery substance" on incoming mail was also getting *them* sick. Right away, "*Genius Johnny Wetzel*" put the entire PADOC on an indefinite lockdown, shutting down visits, mail, attorney correspondence, phone calls, and any other kind of access to the outside community, while issuing statements to the media which claimed that friends and family

members of prisoners were attempting to smuggle drugs into the institution via mail. The drugs in the mail, according to "*Genius Johnny*", were the cause of this mysterious sickness plaguing these brave and heroic prison guards, who put their lives on the line daily to keep the public safe from vicious and violent thugs. While prisoners and their families were being punished for attempting to smuggle drugs into the prisons, guards were given paid time off. This situation created an interesting intersection: guards were rewarded for their bravery, while prisoners were placed in solitary-confinement like lockdown, stripped of every human and constitutional right and removed from any privilege which they'd earned.

But there was a huge problem when doctors gave the guards thorough examinations, which included blood and urine analyses. They quickly discovered that their blood and urine was clean! No traces of any drugs, especially the

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kind that would cause such a sickness just from touching mail.

Lo and behold, it was all a scam! The doctors proved it, the PADOC knew about it, and the media ignored it!!!

That was in 2018.

Those brutal and inhumane restrictions implemented as a result of the “phantom drug scare” remain in place. “Genius Johnny Wetzel” and his band of corrupt cronies used this situation to punish prisoners and their families and communities.

Clearly, “Little George Little” is a disciple of “Genius Johnny Wetzel”.

A group of “reformers” reached out to me, asking if I’d like to attend a meeting with “Little George”, asking him to rescind the Covid-19 restrictions. But when I informed this group that I would not be at the meeting as a simple prop; that if I were a part of this meeting, I wouldn’t hold back my ire - they quickly removed me from the guest list.

People, we need to understand that we aren’t merely up against a system of oppression; we’re also up against people who look like us, and who’ve been through many of the things that we’ve been through. We’re up against double-agents, who will sell out our movement for photo-ops.

Therefore, we need to become weapons of change. We need political education, and we need to become more active in our own struggle for liberation. We need to be progressive and creative. And we need to understand that all “skin-folk” ain’t kinfolk!!!

With that being said, I have an important announcement to make:

Since I’ve been your editor, I’ve had the privilege of keeping you informed. But the time has come for me to move on, and pass the torch to one of the most revolutionary women I know, Terri Harper. I’ll let her introduce herself in the next issue. But let me just say that you’re all in for a treat. I’m confident that she will bring something new to THE MOVEMENT, and I know that this publication will be taken to the next level.

Why am I leaving?

Well, I’m glad that you asked.

As many of you already know, I’m a political organizer for the Working Families Party - a progressive, multiracial, grassroots political party. And we’re doing great work. But as of October 1st, 2022, I’ll be the Assistant to the Execu-

tive Director of the Abolitionist Law Center. And while I’d love to continue being editor of THE MOVEMENT Magazine, I wouldn’t be able to give it the time and effort that it deserves. I’ll have more to say about my new position in the near future, but space is limited and I need to address another very important matter.

On September 20th, 2022, CADBI held its annual rally in Harrisburg, Pa. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend, not just the rally, but as a special lobbyist. I met with the staff of Senators Santarsiero and Corman, in order to urge them to support HB135 & HB835, both bills that would allow an end to LWOP/DBI sentences. The rally was spectacular! Former lifers and others impacted by mass incarceration all came together to share in the delight of community and liberation. I can’t name everybody who attended and spoke, but there’s plenty of pictures for you to enjoy. I can honestly say that I have never experienced an environment so full of energy, togetherness, and love. And I can’t wait until the next one!!! WOW, that was a lot!!! And I’m done. For now.

Revolutionary Love...

@uptownserg

A.k.a. the\_hood\_abolitionist

## THE MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

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Founded: 2007

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## Political Education

By Changa Asa Ramu

Political Education is a complex topic to cover with respect to the Human Rights Coalition politics and my personal political views. Well, it may only be complex for those of us who refuse to think outside of the political science box.

Many of us have been “straightjacketed” in our political views and are incapable of forming alliances with strategic partners. Personally, I see no difference in being a black nationalist, human rights activist or even an elected government official. Others may find it contradictory to their ideas and understanding of what a black nationalist is supposed to be.

A black nationalist is centered in nationhood and practicing self-determination as an objective for political, economic and social freedom. However, building a nation exclusively for black people isn't a practical approach to political freedom in this present moment in time. That doesn't mean we, as black people, should not aspire to be politically mature, sophisticated, and independent in our thinking or that we can't address our immediate concerns and ally with others who might just have a different agenda.

We must devise practical solutions that are in political season and reflective of the people's political consciousness. As a human rights activist, we have the right to exercise self determination and have the human decency to respect others' human rights and their political aspirations. In advocating for these rights, whether in government or out, we must realize that methods, strate-

gies, and tactics may change with time but objectives remain the same.

Meaning, we shouldn't be pigeonholed in one political party, organization or ideology to achieve our objective. This political insight and maturity has been best exhibited in the HRC's founding members who practice mosaic unity. Incarcerated people, ex- incarcerated, their families and friends and human rights activists from all walks of life unified for a common objective. Whether its stopping mass incarceration, police unlawful shooting of unarmed citizens, or abolishing long term solitary confinement.

Mosaic unity is also illustrated in Daniel Hunter's ‘Building a Movement to End The New Jim Crow’ an organizing guide which emphasizes four dynamic roles activists may play in social movements.

He points out, "To reach its goal, a movement must include different approaches to change and a great variety of people filling different roles". He goes on elaborating in depth on these specific roles, which he defined as the helper, advocate, rebel, and organizer. My initial comment, "I see no difference in being a black nationalist, human rights activist or an elected government official", speaks to the wisdom of synthesizing strategic ideas and approaches to gain practical results.

In the pass several years we have seen a progressive movement and individuals like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez pushing for policies that are viewed as socialistic by their political opponents. These conservative opponents tend to believe any policy that assists in the struggle of the poor is socialism. It's this kind of thinking which prevents activists, politicians and strategists from thinking outside of the political science box.

Another example, when ex-secretary of the Pa. Board of Pardon Brandon Flood recently stepped down from his democratic position to support the GOP candidate Jeff Coleman for Lieutenant Governor, many liberals were disappointed. They felt he betrayed his party's loyalty in spite of his objective for criminal justice reform. It's this kind of straightjacket thinking which restricts or limits practical resolutions to our political, economic, and social reality.

Now I don't claim to know Flood's real agenda behind his party switch, but what has the Democratic party done for criminal justice reform for him to stay loyal to the party? I'm just saying, politically we need to be thinking outside the box.

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## Voting Made Simple

Senator Street has made a valiant effort over the years to introduce legislation for both SB-135 (parole for second degree murder after 25 years and first degree after 35 years) and more recently SB-835 which is medical / geriatric parole for any person whether lifer or not who has attained the age of 55 and has served at least half of their sentence OR 25 years if a lifer. Regardless of his effort and the momentum we build in our community of those impacted, it is our votes that matter. Advocates who lobby are sometimes told “I would support this but there isn't enough people behind it.” Well, lets get them behind it! Raise up your voices through your family and friends!

Now more than ever, we need people to vote! Reach out to your families and

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# Politics & Prison

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friends (even ex-felons can vote in the State of Pennsylvania)!

People in society often say they don't want to vote because they don't trust any politician. The fact is people are going to vote and that mentality of refusing to vote is just allowing the other people to win. A sure way to lose is to not try, and the lack of voting is an absolute loss.

There are organizations such as Free the Ballot which helps vet candidates. There are organizations that will drive people to the polls, Mail-In Ballots are acceptable at this time and for non-English speakers they can take one person with them to assist at the voting booth.

How does your loved one register to vote? It is a simple and painless process and there are multiple ways!

1. When getting a drivers license of photo-ID they simply check they want to register to vote.
2. Go to the Internet and enter [vote.pa.gov](http://vote.pa.gov) there are instructions in English, Spanish and Chinese!
3. The Public Assistance Office, Armed Forces Recruitment Centers, Clerk of Court or Marriage License office, Office of Aging, Centers for Independent Living, County Mental Health and Intellectual Disability offices, Offices of Special Education, ANY agency which uses the Compass application all allow a person to register to vote!

Year after year bills are introduced and year after year we are setup for disappointment. This isn't a failure of the Representatives or Senators who stand by us fighting, it is a failure of us getting out there to raise our voice, to rock our vote and assert our constitutional right to get the right people in

office! It's time to get Northeast Pennsylvania Senate District 20 to say GOODBYE to Lisa Baker who is the Senate Chair Judiciary who refuses to move these bills

Polls open at 7 AM and close at 8 PM and if a person is in line by 8 PM they can still vote! Polling locations are assigned and they are assigned to the closest polling place to a person's residence. October 24 is the absolute deadline to register to vote, registering now at one's earliest convenience is crucial.

Finally, we all often take various decisions personally. Over the past 4 years we have seen a great number of applications for commutation. Some of our friends and comrades have made it, some have not. In cases where our hearts ache, where we have not had the success we dreamed of, we may be bitter toward those who voted no. As a person who stands by you all inside, I have felt that pain, I have felt for those who have become family. Frustrated that more aren't coming home. There are no words for my friend Jo-Anne who wants her brother home, or Karen who wants her innocent husband home or my friend Stan who has had an impeccable record yet still saw defeat. This naturally makes us want to get even, to vote against one of those men who dared tell them no. Yet if you ask most of them, they will say PLEASE vote, vote for Shapiro for Governor, Vote for Fetterman for US Senator.

We don't always get what we want, we don't always get what is deserved but we have to remember that in the past 4 years our doors have opened far more than they ever opened before. Let's keep them opening little by little and maybe we can bust the door wide open. Let's remember that less than 3 decades ago the DOC made a deal

with the Devil and allowed a twisted man out of prison. A man they knew would kill and rape again. We cannot allow that to happen again, the Board won't allow it to happen again and this is resulting in many people needing to try again, to continue to show their merit. But you will try again! You are deserving and many who have tried again and again are now home!

Just as a lack of voting is helping to give away a win, so is voting with emotion. If voting took place the day of my first experience with commutation denial, I would have voted against those that we really need based on pure emotion. Our one vote to show them how angry we are or our lack of voting because we don't trust them does not impact them personally, it impacts US! Trust me, if they lose they will not come to our door asking why we didn't vote for them, it will be us crying at what we lost (gave away).

Encourage your people, remind your comrades as they leave those gates that one way they can help is to assert their constitutional right and vote! When they go to the DMV to get their driver's license or to any other place listed above, it is as simple as selecting yes.

While the party a person registers for is a personal decision, there are things to keep in mind:

1. While a person can register for any party, they can only vote for any party in the General Election in November. In plain English, Primaries are held in the Spring (this is what Fetterman just won). During the Primary election which just passed, a Democrat can only vote for a Democrat and a Re-

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## THE MOVEMENT

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## Abuse by Wellpath LLC healthcare in Pennsylvania prisons spurs lawsuits

By Dawn Heinbach

July 2022

Daniel Newberg arrived at the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution in Collegeville (SCI Phoenix) in January 2020. He informed the correctional officers and nurses processing his intake that he had a history of attempted suicide and would need his prescribed medications for bipolar disorder and depression.

Over the next several days, the staff ignored the obvious deterioration of Newberg's mental state. They failed to follow procedure as outlined by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections' (PADOC's) contract with healthcare provider Wellpath LLC. On his sixth day there, Newberg attempted suicide by jumping from the second tier of his cell block to the concrete floor below.

Wellpath LLC is a private company that provides healthcare for Pennsylvania's 24 state prisons. Its current contract was signed in July 2015 and will expire in August, but PADOC has the option to extend the contract. Wellpath's main concern appears to be not the well-being of the incarcerated men at SCI Phoenix, but rather saving money by withholding appropriate medication or delaying diagnostic procedures such as x-rays and MRIs that require an off-site visit.

In addition to Newberg, two other men incarcerated at SCI Phoenix filed lawsuits in 2020 detailing substandard medical care at the facility. According to the men, their grievances and appeals are usually dismissed for punitive reasons.

Private companies providing medical care emphasize cost savings, not patient care, said Su-Ming Yeh, the executive director of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP). Her nonprofit, a legal aid organization, seeks to advance the constitutional civil rights of people who are incarcerated and detained in Pennsylvania.

"If they could at least follow the standards of health care in the community, which they are supposed to do...that would be very helpful in terms of quality assurance and accountability," Yeh said. "What we get, especially in the

mental health context, is allegations or accusations that the people are malingering. They're just making it up. They're [viewed as] wanting to get attention rather than as a patient."

Newberg, 34, survived his suicide attempt but suffered serious injuries, including a shattered right elbow, shattered left tibia, broken left hand/wrist/elbow, broken right foot, broken right orbital bone in the face, a broken nose, and bruised ribs. He underwent surgery on his leg, elbow, and wrist and spent a month recovering at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center in Philadelphia. Newberg incurred \$657,471 in medical bills and will need additional surgeries in the future.

In January 2022, attorney Alan Denenberg filed a lawsuit in the Eastern District Court of Pennsylvania representing Newberg. He's suing PADOC, its medical director, superintendent, specific correctional officers, and Wellpath. Newberg is seeking a jury trial and compensatory and punitive damages.

Newberg's suit describes his arrival at SCI Phoenix when he informed the staff that he takes three different prescription medications daily—Lexapro, Wellbutrin, and Seroquel—to treat bipolar disorder and depression, and that he had a history of suicide. The person on duty told Newberg that he would have to wait at least seven days to see a psychiatrist.

The staff placed him in the general population, not on suicide watch. Despite daily requests for his medication and telling the correctional officers and nurses that his condition was worsening, Newberg still had not seen a doctor nor received any medication up until the day of his suicide attempt. On that day, he asked what he could do to expedite his medication and was told by a correctional officer that "there was nothing he could do; he would just have to wait until he saw a doctor."

Newberg's lawsuit claims that Wellpath and SCI Phoenix employees deliberately ignored his mental health and medical needs in violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Denenberg has represented plaintiffs in approximately a dozen other cases in Pennsylvania and New Jersey involving incarcerated people suing the prison where they were

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housed and/or the healthcare provider, not only in state prisons but also in county facilities. In 2012 and 2014, a man incarcerated in Montgomery County Correctional Facility and another in Lancaster County Prison succeeded in their suicide attempts because the respective staff ignored each man’s medical history and red flags that would indicate a potential suicide risk. The prisons in both of those cases settled.

“If the defendants were not deliberately indifferent to the mental health needs of inmates in state custody, there would be far fewer deaths and attempted suicides,” Denenberg said in an interview.

After his hospital stay, Newberg returned to SCI Phoenix to serve a 30-to-60-month sentence for possession and dissemination of child pornography.

Wellpath filed two motions to dismiss Newberg’s case, claiming that they do not provide mental health services to the prison. The case is ongoing.

### **A history of lawsuits**

Gerard “Jerry” Boyle founded Wellpath, then called Correct Care Solutions (CCS), in 2003. CCS merged with Correctional Medical Group in 2018 and the new company took the name Wellpath. Now owned by H.I.G. Capital, a multibillion-dollar private equity company, Wellpath operates in 485 adult and juvenile containment facilities across the United States, according to its website, and generates \$1.26 billion in revenue.

In February, Boyle was sentenced to three years in prison for his participation in a 13-year bribery scheme involving the sheriff of Norfolk, Va.

Wellpath, and Correct Care Solutions before it, have faced numerous lawsuits stemming from improper medical care. *Maine Public* reported last year that an inmate died at a state facility after not receiving care for what apparently started as a toothache. In 2020, a man being held in an Oregon county jail died of a brain hemorrhage. And the FBI is investigating one of six deaths that took place from November 2021 to February 2022 at a Kentucky jail that contracts Wellpath to provide health care for its incarcerated population.

The *Times Tribune* reported that, in 2020, a commissioner in Lackawanna County, Penn., tried to delay a pending

vote that would have awarded Wellpath the contract for the county’s local jail healthcare. The commissioner was concerned about reports on Wellpath’s substandard care. A 2019 report by the Private Equity Stakeholder Project found that CCS was sued 1,395 times in federal court from 2008 to 2018. Complaints included prison conditions, medical malpractice, and wrongful death.



*Cell block area at SCI Phoenix, Collegeville, Pa. Credit: Dan Gleiter, pennlive.com*

When incarcerated people file lawsuits against the institutions that house them, they most often claim that prison employees or contracted employees violated their civil rights under the Fourteenth Amendment, which guarantees equal protection. They also often cite the Eighth Amendment, which guarantees access to adequate medical care. However, the 1976 case of *Estelle v. Gamble* set the precedent of “deliberate indifference,” meaning that the plaintiffs must prove that the prison/medical staff deliberately ignored their medical needs.

### **John Gerholt**

John Gerholt, Sr., is serving a life sentence at SCI Phoenix. He is convicted of first-degree murder for fatally shooting his wife, an act that he claims was an accident. He has been fighting his conviction since his incarceration in 2008.

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Gerholt, 52, was returning to D-Block from his job as a certified peer support specialist in January 2020. As he opened the heavy metal door and entered the building, the wind swung it out of his grasp. When Gerholt grabbed for the door’s handle, it swung back the other way and violently slammed shut on his left index finger. Gerholt was taken to the medical department where the staff performed an x-ray that showed the finger was not broken.

Gerholt went back to the medical department four times because of pain and swelling in his finger.

“They said it wasn’t nothing but a scratch and I should be able to tend to it on my own. They gave me a few bandages and some tape and said to use soap and water to clean it out,” Gerholt said in an email interview.

Gerholt filed a grievance about this accident, which was denied because “grievances based upon different events must be submitted separately.” But the grievance was about only one incident: the door slamming closed on his finger. The grievance officer stated that Gerholt’s injury was the result of an unsafe act. She also said that he “should not have tried to grab a moving door by the door edge,” per case documents.

“They will try to manipulate your grievance so you’ll think it’s best to drop it altogether,” Gerholt said in an email. “Most inmates don’t have the knowledge or resources (money) to continue to fight the system, so most of them, when told their grievance is frivolous, they believe the system and discontinue their grievance.”

In August 2020, Gerholt filed a lawsuit against then-Secretary of Corrections John Wetzel, claiming deliberate medical indifference in violation of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. The lawsuit was dismissed in May 2021.

Gerholt does not consider his finger to be intact, as it was prior to the accident. He said that he will sometimes drop something as light as a cup without being aware of it. At times his finger will make jumping movements of its own accord.

### **The aging prison population**

Providing adequate health care to incarcerated individuals is a civil rights issue, but the aging prison population in Pennsylvania’s correctional institutions should also be

considered. Appropriate and compassionate care is needed to meet their increasing health needs.

According to statistics provided by the PADO, there were 37,303 people in the state’s prisons as of Dec. 31, 2021 (35,286 men, 2,017 women). Nearly a quarter are serving a maximum sentence of five to 10 years; 20% are serving 10 to 20 years; 19% have a maximum sentence of 20 to 50 years; and 6% will be imprisoned for more than 50 years. Fourteen percent are serving a life sentence.

The average age of the state’s prison population is 41.7 years. Using that as a baseline, this means that at least 14,436 people incarcerated in Pennsylvania’s SCIs will be between the ages of 51 to 91 while serving their sentence.

MAXIMUM SENTENCE (years)	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	APPROXIMATE AGE UPON RELEASE (Years)
5 to 10	8,766	46 to 51
10 to 20	7,386	51 to 61
20 to 50	7,050	61 to 91
Over 50	2,164	91+
Life	5,222	N/A

Alexandra Morgan-Kurtz, attorney at the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, highlighted the fact that as incarcerated people age, they need medical care for age-specific problems, like vision and hearing loss, arthritis, and dementia.

Many of these SCIs have a medical staff of five or six people for an incarcerated population of several thousand. Morgan-Kurtz explained that because of this, the staff is often handling triage patients nearly full-time, and preventative care falls to the wayside.

“You have thousands of elderly individuals who have all of the needs that you would see from someone in the outside community, on top of the fact that they’ve spent decades receiving inadequate medical care [while in prison], making those [conditions] worse,” Morgan-Kurtz said.

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In the long run, ignoring preventative or even the standard health care needs of incarcerated individuals will increase costs as these people age.

### **Carey Abney**

Carey Abney’s medical problems began in March 2016 while he was incarcerated at SCI Graterford. Abney, now 75, was experiencing pain in his abdomen and groin. While at SCI Graterford, Abney was examined by three different doctors—two of whom saw him twice.

In July 2018, all prisoners at SCI Graterford were transferred to the newly built SCI Phoenix. There, Abney was seen by one doctor and two nurses about his ongoing condition.

In total, Abney was seen by four doctors and two nurses, who prescribed 11 different medications and administered an injection of Toradol, none of which relieved his pain. The administration of this medication is called an “alternative treatment plan” in Wellpath’s protocols, and also included a hernia belt. During this time, the pain increased and expanded to his left hip, both legs, and lower back. Walking was difficult and painful.

The grievance Abney filed in November 2019 included documentation of his visits to the medical department from March 2016 to October 2019. The grievance requested an examination by an outside doctor. When the grievance was rejected, Abney then filed several appeals, first to the Superintendent of SCI Phoenix, in which prior determinations were upheld. He then appealed to the PADO Central Office. This appeal was dismissed, stating, “You have not provided this office with required and/or legible documentation for proper review” because Abney failed to provide a copy of the appeal to the facility manager.

In appeals to these grievance denials, Abney insisted that he did indeed follow proper procedures in submitting his complaints.

It took one year before Abney was finally able to see a urology specialist in March 2017. The doctor noted difficulty urinating and a swollen prostate gland. Abney would not see the urologist again until March 2019. The doctor could not give any medical advice because Abney was supposed to have had a CT scan prior to this visit. The

medical department had not yet complied with this order because it required approval from Wellpath. Abney had the scan two months after the urology visit. The next month, he was seen again by the urologist, who diagnosed a cyst on Abney’s right kidney.

In the lawsuit Abney filed in September 2020, he wrote that Mandy Sipple, the Deputy for Centralized Services, was then the acting Correctional Health Care Administrator (CHCA), a position for which she has no medical training. This position is located 100 miles away, not on-site at SCI Phoenix. Seven times in 2019, Sipple as the acting CHCA weighed in on Abney’s medical treatment.

The lawsuit cited civil rights violations of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. Abney requested compensatory damages of \$50,000 from each of the seven defendants. The defendants filed several motions to dismiss the case, followed by appeals and requests for extensions by Abney. The case was closed in May for failure to state a claim.

Today, Abney still has pain in both legs and his right flank.

### **DOC’s awareness of the problem**

All of Pennsylvania’s state prisons have contracts with Wellpath to provide health and medical care to the people incarcerated in their facilities, according to Morgan-Kurtz at PILP. Wellpath was not always the provider, but the state has been contracting out the institutional health services for decades.

Currently, all doctors and physician assistants working in the PADO are Wellpath employees. All nurses are employed by the state, except at two facilities where they are employed by Wellpath.

Before filing a lawsuit, an incarcerated person must first go through the DOC’s grievance process, filing grievances and appeals within their facility and, if necessary, up to the Central Administrative Office level. That process can take a while—months or even a year or more.

A representative for the PADO said the agency cannot comment on pending litigation.

*From: People’s World (peoplesworld.org)*

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!



FROM: *The Protect Your People Paper*. A monthly newsletter for the National Participatory Defense Network where stories and strategies are shared in *the fight to bring our loved ones home*.

JUNE 2022 ISSUE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**T**yquan was arrested back in 2019 when he was 19 yrs old. He was falsely accused of the murder of a chief police inspector's son. Tyquan sat in jail for 3 years waiting for his day in court, which came at the end of March 2022. Tyquan was acquitted of murder and all related charges on April 6, 2022. We were told he was to be released that night but he was not allowed to come home. We found out on March 15, 2022, 2 weeks before the actual murder trial, the DA's office decided to bring Tyquan to court and charge him with jail infractions that they stated occurred back in 2020. At that time, the judge and the prosecutor revoked bail but did not state why, being as though the charges were misdemeanors and it would be his first offense. The jail also imposed their own punishment for the infractions. Tyquan spent over 2 years in the hole for the those infractions while incarcerated.

During Tyquan's time in the hole, he was visited by someone from the Abolitionist Law Center named Rupalee. Tyquan shared his experience about the inhumane conditions in the jail. At some point, Rupalee contacted me and she updated me on why she visited Tyquan and I shared with her why Tyquan was in jail and what he was accused of. I told her I did not feel Tyquan would get a fair trial and how my family was treated during prelims with all the intimidation I faced. Rupalee said she would connect me with Kris from participatory defense and they should be able to offer court support for Tyquan and myself. I spoke with Kris a few days before trial and met him over zoom. The first day of trial, Kris was the first one at court. He beat me and my mother there and was so wel-

coming. I honestly was just happy to have someone there with me and my mother because I felt alone during this 3 years Tyquan was incarcerated. I did not talk about his case or what he was facing. Being connected to participatory defense, not only did I gain support, I gained insight into court proceedings and the process of trial which I knew nothing about before I met them. There was always several hub members with me everyday for court support the whole trial. Hub members took notes. They explained what was going on and did a break down of court language so I could understand. They were the eyes and ears I needed this whole time.

Once Tyquan was acquitted and we were told he was not going to be released for jail infractions, I remember saying to Kris I just can't sit back and shut up! They are trying to railroad my son. We spoke about protest, rallying together to get heard and get Tyquan's story out there. Participatory Defense supported me every step of the way. We protested and organized at least 3 times! The hubs came up with slogans and informative poster boards for protest, we had an edutainment campaign in front of the DA's office where we passed out flyers about Tyquan's acquittal and spoken word/rap from Andre/YASP, provided water ice and pretzels to passer byers all in effort to bring awareness to Tyquan. From social media campaigning, continuously emailing and calling the District Attorney's office, the letters of support, social biography, creating press releases, making sure flyers were circulated, getting Tyquan's story out on podcasts, supporting me when getting interviewed, court support/bringing others to court to support, attending every protest, calling and following up on me daily just to be a listening ear when most days I didn't even want to get out of bed, the hubs were what I wish I had 3 years ago when all this first happened.

Tyquan was acquitted on April 6th and was held for

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over 2 months after his acquittal, he was never released. I felt like the system failed my son in every way. Tyquan was being treated as guilty even though he maintained his innocence and was found innocent by a jury of our peers. I felt that justice was not served. My son was being unjustly held and was now being threatened with a state sentence for jailhouse infractions he never would have gotten had he never been falsely accused of something he did not do in the first place. What was happening was unjust and not fair. Once I decided not to be quiet and knew that the hubs had my back offering all this support and resources, it was the push I needed to fight for my son. I know that all the advocacy from me and the hubs was the reason Tyquan was finally able to come home. All of our voices during those protests in front of the DA's office and packing the court was the reason for this outcome. I know God sent Participatory Defense in my direction, they were the support I did not have. Tyquan went from facing a state sentence to now being able to come home with a 1 year probation and I know that participatory defense is a huge reason that this was the outcome.

Tyquan is adjusting very well so far, he came home to love and support from not only me but the hubs. They have provided Tyquan with so many opportunities, from education, obtaining his LLC, and many job opportunities as well as mental health supports. My plan is just to continue being as supportive as I can to my son, making sure he is allowed to make decisions on his future with all that is being offered to him. I have to remember though he is still my baby, he is now 23 years old and not the 19 year old that went in 3 years ago. I want him to truly feel free in every way and allowing him space and time to make decisions for himself is a great start. He was denied that in the last 3 years. I plan on taking a vacation! I don't care where I go! I just want time to wind down mentally. I did not rest in the last 3 years. I did not feel I could while my child was not safe and secure.

What I learned from all of this is to never give up hope and that it is okay to ask for help. It is okay to speak up and not be quiet! This system can be unjust but laying down and just accepting defeat when you know something is horribly wrong is not an option. Freedom is worth fighting for.

~Stacy Atkinson



Stacy and Tyquan after Tyquan came home.

***You may contact HRC-Philly at  
this address:***

***Human Rights Coalition***

***P.O. Box 34580***

***Philadelphia, PA 19101***

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# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Welcome Home Shabaka, Felix and Rell!

By Juliette Rando

On August 17th, CADBI welcomed home three men who have been longtime partners in the movement from the inside - Andre 'Shabaka' Gay, Felix 'Phil' Rosado, and Terrell 'Rell' Carter.

Shabaka was a juvenile lifer, incarcerated for over 50 years until he got his life sentence vacated and got paroled in July. Felix and Rell had their life sentences commuted, after receiving unanimous yes's from the Board of Pardons and a sign-off from Governor Wolf in July. Gov Wolf also signed off on another 5 commutations that day: Ronald J. Connolly, James R. Jackson, Gary A. Kyles, Phoebe L. Tomasek, and Michael Lyons (he had his life sentence commuted, but remains incarcerated on another 5-10 year sentence).

I sat down with Shabaka, Felix, and Rell to catch up with them about their experiences coming home, as well as get their takes on how we have to approach the movement against the prison industrial complex.

### *Andre 'Shabaka' Gay*

**Could you describe what happened the day you were released?**

It's an experience that I can't actually describe 'cause I've never experienced it before. At the time, it was unreal. That's the best that I can say at this point. It felt unreal. I kept expecting all of them to come out, start chasing me or something. Until we got into the city, I was kind of worried about that. But once I did get out, we went to the store and what have you. And whatever anxiousness I was feeling, it started to dissipate.

It still took me a while to start acting as opposed to reacting. A lot of things that I was doing, I was just reacting to. I realize now that I was kind of overwhelmed with a lot of things. My thought process wasn't keeping up with all the things that I was being hit with. And that's kind of frustrating too.

**And what were some of the things that felt very challenging?**

Well one of things is this issue of technology, with this phone. And then there's the issue of transportation. Not knowing the city or the county, getting around. I'm not as bad as I used to be. It used to be I'd go out four blocks and get lost. But I'm starting to process information a lot better now, than I did the first month or so when I came home.

**What have been some of the most rewarding or joyful experiences you've had since being out?**

I think the rally yesterday [in Harrisburg] I could say was rewarding. Because for years I've always seen myself in the struggle, right? Well not this part of the struggle anyway. But yesterday, you know, I kind of felt that I was on the right path.

**I know you've been organizing on the inside for decades. Do you feel like your strategy and approach is changing now that you're on the outside?**

Oh definitely. There's so much more out here to work with, and people as well. The only problem is that we don't have enough people and that all the people that are involved are primarily involved in the same projects. From the two events that I attended, it's pretty much the same people. That's not different from where I just left because whenever you got involved with anything behind the wall or whatever, it was pretty much the same people as well.

**This is the political education issue of The Movement. I'm curious what you would recommend folks on the inside or outside learn about in order to further the mission of abolition?**

Two things. There's a lot that needs to be understood about the law and about politics because the frustration that most people feel in respect to the law and politics is that it just doesn't work for them. And for the most part they're actually right. It doesn't- it wasn't meant to. It was basically designed to allow the system to continue to flow without a bunch of hiccups, without disruption. It's not about justice. There's nothing about the system that's actually just.

**So people need to learn more about the truth behind how the system was built?**

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They need to know a little bit more about the law and how the law works. And then to understand the law, you do need to understand the politics because it's the politics where the law comes out of. Right now nothing in the system works. When you get to a point where nothing is working, then it's time to deconstruct and reconstruct the system. So, we got to start organizing ourselves to start taking care of our issues and stop trying to depend on the state or the county to assist us. When the people start using direct democracy and start addressing their own Issues, that alleviates a lot of the problems that people are suffering from today. Once we start thinking internally and using an internal locus of control as opposed to the external locus of control where we think that our control is located outside of ourselves and start thinking that we could do it ourselves, all we need to do is come together and organize ourselves to do so.

### **What are you envisioning for that?**

Basically, what it would come down to is, cooperatives and collectives. What I mean by that is that, let's say you've got a community in a 10-block radius. On a collective level, everybody in that area pools their money together to buy the things that they generally buy (food, clothes or cosmetics), and buy these things in bulk 'cause the more you buy, the less the price is. So from that perspective, the cooperative economic perspective, you start alleviating a lot of the economic problems or the economic stress that comes with being poor when you pool your resources together and work collectively. And then on the political side, once you start electing your own decision makers in the community, then you could have those issues addressed amongst ourselves and we ain't got to call the police in, who as we know every time we do, there's some crap. So if we leave protection in the hood, then we protect ourselves. We put together our own security firm. That's what the men, not just imprisoned, but out here, need to understand too. But if we are working together inside and out to bring that about then that makes all the difference.



One of the main underlying things to all of that is to understand that when there's politics or economics or any other social order, everything revolves around the ecosystem. Because if the ecosystem or the environmental issue aren't addressed and dealt with, then everything else is out-of-whack. But if you will have balance with the ecosystem, then everything else, everything social, political and economic will be in alignment to solve the needs of the people.

**I'm thinking about that extractive mindset, like the same way that we extract labor from incarcerated people and extract resources from our environment to serve capitalist ends. So much of our society is just infected by a capitalistic mindset. How do you think we can help people readjust and reframe their values away from capitalism?**

Yeah, that is more than just a process. Once you're able to show how you could solve your own problems, then you change the dynamics of how people are thinking. That's what we need to be in the Community doing, is changing the perception and the perspective of people. But you're only going to be able to do that by showing them how to solve their day-to-day problems. That's what people are interested in. How I'm gonna feed my children, get medication for my mother, my father, whoever? How I'm gonna get my kids proper education? These are the things that we need to come together and ask ourselves, independent of what the state is doing or what the county is doing. How can we do it better?

A lot of people don't really understand the influence that some prisoners still hold in their community, and we got to take advantage of that, while those individuals are in prison – that's the time that you begin to start transforming them to have a more advanced consciousness. Those individuals, in turn, can influence the people that surround them and the people that's in the streets that they still connected to.

**My last question is, Is there anything you wanna say to those still inside?**

Give me a minute. I'm trying to get things done and it will be done. And we're gonna need y'all's help to help us help y'all.

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## **Felix 'Phil' Rosado**

***It was incredible to meet both you and your mom at the CADBI rally in Harrisburg. Could you talk about what it was like to go through the commutation process, especially how you did that together with your mom?***

Yeah, we worked on everything together. My partner joined us, Andrea, and really took us over the finish line. Because Mom, mom has been working since day one, you know, she just needed some help.

So, in 2017, I had 22 years in, and I still knew that that was nowhere near enough for the Board of Pardons. But I started working on my application in January of that year. It took me eight months to put my application together, with no help. Still, people ask me today, like, what organization helped you with that? What school? Just me and my partner. Well, first me and Mom, and then my partner came later.

So, I have to get all these supporting documents because all the work I had done wasn't for recognition or anything, so I really didn't have a lot of paperwork to talk about what I had been doing. Ironically, I had signed certificates for hundreds of guys who completed my workshops but I didn't have any for myself. So, I went on a mission to get people to write me support letters. By the time I had like 50 or whatever, I filed my application. I ended up with like 150 when it was all said and done, from all kinds of people. People who I thought the board would respect. So I filed it, but it's a long process. So I filed it in 2017. 2019, I started the process inside the prison.

So finally, we ended up having the public hearings virtually in September 2020. And then I had a 3-2 vote. And that was so devastating for me and for Mom. Because we had gotten during that time, we got the District Attorney of my county, Berks County- not Philadelphia, this guy was no Larry Krasner - to support me. So he supported me, and we just kept getting more letters. The Pennsylvania Victim Advocate testified on my behalf. That's never been done before. So she testified on my behalf. We made my case stronger during that time. And then, to get denied, damn.

We were heartbroken and then we filed a reconsideration request in 2021 and we got denied. So we were like, oh my gosh, now what? We put together a strong reconsideration request with strong grounds. So I started working on a sec-

ond application. A state senator wrote me a letter, we got my District Attorney to write another letter, and then I submitted the letter that Sara [at YASP] had written me as a job offer, and I framed that in the context of the gun violence in the streets and how this job can give me an opportunity to help out with some of that. And it took me up in merit review in February. I got again, three out of five votes, but it was enough to get another public hearing, which I got in April. That's where I got all the votes. And Governor Wolf signed it on July 14th.

And on July 18th I walked out of SCI Phoenix a free man. Well, I like to call myself freeish. One because I'm still under the custody of the DOC. I'm staying at a Community Correction Center for the next year and then I'll be on parole for the rest of my life. So, in that sense, I'm not totally free. But two because my people are still in there. Until they're out, I won't ever see myself as free either. I'm just freeish. But happy to be out here, doing the things I dreamed of doing all those years. Being with my family, being with my loved ones. Having a place to call home, that I can open and close whenever I want. So, I'm incredibly blessed.

## **What's been one of your most joyful moments since coming home?**

I'm sorry, it sounds like I'm like ducking the question, but every moment, every second of every day is just like, surreal. I haven't had a bad day yet. I mean, it's just really hard to get upset about anything. The brothers I left behind would do anything to have these problems. I'm just always thinking about that. Always. So just going swimming, eating at different places, going to parks. I've been kayaking. Everything right now to me is a first. I went in when I was 18. I barely left my neighborhood, you know? So now I'm just game for whatever. When people are like, yo, what do you think about doing this? Yeah, I haven't said no anything yet.

## **What's been one of the biggest like challenges you've encountered since coming home?**

Technology. Even with my job like meeting people, being in meetings, facilitating, talking on the phone with folks- all of that is so natural. But technology... Having to sit at my desk and enter data. Figure out Google Calendar, and Google Docs, and Google Sheets, and Google Drive... Feeling like I'm like doing all the steps and then I mess one up and then I'm sitting there for the next half hour, trying to find my way back to where I was. I'm still trying to figure

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my phone out. The phones are computers now, so there's a lot going on. I'm probably tapping into like 2% of that thing right now.

**So this issue of the Movement is about political education. Is there any direction you would give to folks inside about what you think they should focus on for their political education? I'm also wondering if you have an answer for folks on the outside.**

I wasn't always politically conscious. I knew the system was racist and was fucked up and all that, but I couldn't really articulate what I meant by that or be able to prove it, right? And, that's probably the case for most people on the inside. But then like when I started to become educated and I started to like really understand what was going on, doing time became harder. I always say that like when you're aware of, like political, economic, and sociological forces that come together to feed incarceration, doing time becomes double the torture. There is the regular torture of just doing time, of being caged like an animal. But then there's like that extra sense of torture of like knowing what the fuck is really going on, and being stuck in it. And like making connections with everything.

Interestingly, there's very few abolitionists inside prisons. I used to get in debates all the time with people, and they'd hit me with the same questions as these people out here throw around. "So if there's no prisons, what are you gonna do with, you know, these people?" And you know, an incarcerated person saying this about someone else? It's like, damn, we're already not doing anything with these people. They're already out there, you know, and this isn't stopping it. We'd be the safest place in the world if incarcerating people equaled safety.

We've been conditioned to see cops, courtrooms, and prison cells as synonymous with justice. People can't get out of that mindset. But what else can we do? What would work? We know this doesn't work. And people just don't know. We're so used to someone else handling justice (i.e. the state) on our behalf. We become bystanders in the process. People are comfortable with that. What I'm trying to do is move us towards seeing ourselves

as active participants in the justice process. Outside of the system. In our everyday lives, in our families, in our schools, in our workplaces and our churches, our community centers. Doing that work, healing work. That involves everyone who has a stake in this situation to come together and come up with what needs to happen. Cops aren't doing that. DAs aren't doing that.

So anyway, there's so much good stuff to read now that I would encourage people on the inside to get into. Mariame Kaba is dope, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and Adrienne Maree Brown.

Everyone knows that this shit ain't working. But I'm trying to get people to see that to some people, this is working. This is working exactly the way it's supposed to work. And so that's what we have to push back against. I'm not even sure I answered your question?

**To me, it sounds like you're recommending a deep interrogation and reimagining of justice because we've all been indoctrinated to think this is what it is?**

Not just reimagining but imagining for the first time. That's what's lacking.

**Do you want to send a message to the folks inside?**

There are people out here fighting for you. It's not easy to see on the inside. But there are people out here who love you, who wanna see you home, who are working tirelessly, fighting, to bring you home. And we're gonna keep kicking and punching and screaming until that happens. I really want you to know that. And as we're fighting here, we need you to be fighting, equally hard, if not harder, inside. That's the only way it's going to happen. Power doesn't relinquish easily. It has to be taken - that's what we're trying to do.



Felix and his mom Iris at the rally for second chances for lifers at the State Capitol in Harrisburg .

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## **Terrell 'Rell' Carter**

### **Could you talk about the day you came home?**

The first day and that whole first few weeks, kinda went by like a dream. Before I was released, I wouldn't allow myself to celebrate any successes. I couldn't become optimistic, I had to be *cautiously* optimistic because you know my experience in the criminal legal system was one that taught me to always expect the other shoe to drop. So the day that they let me out, it was a feeling that is kind of like indescribable, like you walking out those prison gates for the first time in 30 years and seeing all these people standing outside, waiting for you, that love you. I can't really find the words to like give my feelings justice, and I'm a writer. Even looking back on it two months out, it's like trying to remember a dream, you know what I mean? It was an experience or a feeling that I don't think I will ever feel again. The best way that I can describe it is, is this movie that I saw two years ago- a Will Smith movie called the Pursuit of Happiness. And at the end of the movie his character finally got the job that he wanted and he just broke down crying, so filled with joy. And he broke down and cried. And I remember at the time, sitting in that cell I was like, yo, what kind of happiness is that? I've never experienced that kind of joy, you know, I was fortunate enough to have like, you know, years later when I walked outside of the penitentiary. So that's the best way that I describe it. I experienced that kind of joy that makes you cry even though I ain't cry, but you know. Super intense.

### **Since coming home, like, what have been some of your most joyful moments or moments where you felt most connected?**

So I think my joyful moments is just like being with my family, my daughter and my granddaughter. Just seeing the space of joy that my mother exists in, comparing that to the absolute pain that she felt when they sentenced me to die in prison. I feel relieved that she's so happy. Another incident, it was kind of a memorable, was when I was walking down the street and there's a guy that I knew. He didn't know that I was going home. I ran across the street and he seen me and his eyes just got real big. When he ran up on me and he hugged me, and then he started hyperventilating like he literally couldn't breathe. He was so happy and I'm just, like, you're more happy than I am and I just got out of jail! And another situation was when I was walking down the street and this guy was looking at me, but I could tell the way he was looking, it was like I looked familiar to him. So

he says, "you know man, you look just like my homie Rell". I said, "Well, that's probably 'cause I am". He said, "I thought you had life!" I said, "Well, I did. I don't have it no more though." So you know besides being with my family and being around all that joy, just those two things that kind of stick out in my mind.

### **What has been the most difficult or challenging part of being on the outside now?**

Difficult, challenging? I don't have those problems. No, that doesn't exist for me. Because I can remember, you know, sitting in those cells thinking, man, I would die for problems like that. So like, yeah, you know it's all good. I don't have problems, I don't have difficulties. I'm just living life.

### **What is your day-to-day like now? Are you working?**

So right now I'm working two part-time jobs. I'm working with the mural arts and I'm also working down at Drexel, helping with the law clinic. So I'm down there like literally helping students prepare guys for their commutations. I'm currently pursuing my Masters degree, an MFA in creative writing. I write mostly prose, personal essays, and novels.

### **So this issue of the movement is a political education issue. I was wondering if you have any thoughts about what you think people inside should be focused on learning to further the movement for abolition? And I'm also wondering if you have other advice for people on the outside or if that would be the same?**

For me, I think the men and women on the inside, and on the outside as well, really need to rethink our political approach. Because the way things stand right now is we live in a state where the legislature is controlled by Republicans. And it seems as if they're not moving on anything concerning Prison Reform. I believe one of the things that may change that is if instead of registering as Democrats, we get a bunch of people to register as Independents because you can form an effective voting bloc that way. If you register as an Independent, your issue is the fuel, the driving force. It's what you rally around as opposed to the party. 'Cause right now, in a lot of situations, we always kind of register as Democrats. Democrats take your vote for granted. Not in every case, but most of them. And the same thing will happen if all these marginalized groups switch and start voting Republican. So I'm under the impression that in order to like really put pressure on these political groups to do what you need, you've gotta make them feel that they desperately need you. So what happens

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is you have both parties pandering to whatever it is your issue is. And then you can effectively hold them accountable.

**Are you envisioning a voting bloc of currently and formerly incarcerated people?**

Listen, I'm envisioning a voting bloc of marginalized people. Period. People who are formerly incarcerated, their families, people getting their families to vote. I'm thinking about the LGBTQ community. I'm thinking about any and every marginalized group that you could think of because the systems that are in place that creates marginalization, affects all these different groups differently, but affects them nonetheless. So, like, the issues may be different, but it's the same system that's creating the issues. We need to be better at intersectionality- supporting one another so that we can get more things done. I'm envisioning a voting bloc consisting of all these different groups.

**Yes, it's interesting. Sometimes you meet people who are so politicized about an issue that affects their marginalized identity, but they don't support the struggles of other marginalized identities. Really this structure is working the same way on all of these groups, as you're saying, and we have to really understand that we have a shared goal of disrupting and overthrowing the system.**

One of the things that I think is part of Western culture, is that it's highly competitive. That's a symptom of capitalism. It affects every aspect of life- this competitiveness. We compete when we talk to each other, right? All these different groups who are marginalized are kind of competing with each other to shake these shackles of oppression off. It's just weird. But I think that's cultural, and I think one of the ways that you overcome that is by naming it and becoming aware of it so that we can stop competing with each other.

**Wow, yeah. I just have one more question for you. Is there a message you'd like to send to those still inside?**

I never believed that I would die in prison. I always believed that I would one day be home. Because I believed that, whenever I spoke about going home, it was never "if", it was always "when". And I kept that mindset for 30 years. So, when I look back on it, I realize that what I accomplished, I spoke into existence, because I believed it with every fiber of my being. Because of that, I was preparing myself, not even knowing that I was preparing myself. So, what I will say is prepare, prepare, prepare, because you never know when the opportunity may arise. And if you're prepared, when an opportunity arrives, you can handle it. An opportunity arose for me, and because I was so prepared, I handled it, you know. I nearly talked my way out of prison. No exaggeration. Because when I sat in front of that board, doing that interview, they were asking me questions that were highly skeptical of me. So I made them believe. I was able to make them believe because I was prepared. I was prepared because I always believed that I would go home. I always believed that I was coming home. So believe you're going home. Prepare yourself for the opportunity when it pops, and you'll come home too.



L-R: Sean Damon, Terell Carter, Chelsea Martin, Nikki Grant, Lily Rorick



# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Former ‘lifers’ call on lawmakers to end ‘death by incarceration’

‘Second chances doesn’t mean everybody comes home, it means everybody has a chance to come home if they do the right thing,’ state Sen. Sharif Street said.

BY: PETER HALL - SEPTEMBER 20, 2022



Advocates for ending life sentences rallied on the state Capitol steps Tuesday as the Coalition Against Death By Incarceration called on lawmakers that would make those sentenced to life in prison eligible for parole.

Avis Lee served 40 years, six months, and 12 days in prison before she was granted parole last year for a murder in which she wasn’t the shooter.

Lee, who spoke Tuesday at a Capitol rally to end life sentences without parole, is one of just eight women serving such sentences to be released from prison in the last 42 years, she said.

“During my over 40-and-a-half years of incarceration, I saw this day. I always said when I get out I’m going to Harrisburg and I want to speak to the General Assembly and I want to let them know the plight of women as well as men,” Lee said.

Lee was one of about 150 people who gathered on the Capitol steps to call on lawmakers to pass two bills that would give people serving life sentences second chances, and avenues for release for people in prison who are elderly or chronically ill.

“Women are dying in prison and [in] record numbers. Many of them have not killed anyone themselves – like I didn’t,” Lee said. “At a certain point, punishment becomes retribution. And it becomes vengeance. And that is where we step in and say enough, no more. This has to change.”

The Coalition Against Death By Incarceration, the group that organized the event, said that more than 5,300 people are serving life sentences without parole eligibility in Pennsylvania.

The coalition asserts that no one should be judged by their worst act, and that death by incarceration sentences cost taxpayers millions of dollars, while imprisoning people who are highly unlikely to reoffend, and could contribute to their communities.

The rally happened on the same day that the Pennsylvania Superior Court was set to hear oral arguments in the case of Derek Lee, who was sentenced to mandatory life in prison for second-

degree murder.

Lawyers for the Abolitionist Law Center argued on Lee’s behalf that Pennsylvania’s ban on parole for those serving life sentences despite not taking a life, or intending to take a life, is unconstitutional.

“There are too many people with too many talents that are wasting inside of a prison cell that should be home, said Sen. Sharif Street, D-Philadelphia, who introduced the legislation creating the possibility of release for those sentenced to life in prison. “Sending people away with no possibility of returning home isn’t what redemption looks like.”

Street’s bill (SB135) would make anyone serving a second-degree sentence eligible for parole after 25 years in prison.

*(Continued on page 20)*

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(Continued from page 19)

Anyone serving a first-degree sentence would become eligible for parole after 35 years.

Juveniles sentenced for crimes committed before they turned 15 would be eligible for parole after 20 years for a second-degree sentence and 25 years for a first-degree sentence.

Anyone serving a first-degree sentence for killing a police officer would not be eligible for parole. People with second-degree convictions for killing an officer cannot be sentenced to life without parole.

Another Street-backed bill, (SB835) would allow the parole board to grant parole to people in prison with a terminal illness, chronic physical or mental condition or disease, serious cognitive or functional impairment or deteriorating health due to age. It would also allow parole for people in prison who are older than 55 and have served 25 years or half their sentence.

Among the speakers at the rally was Eddie McCreary, who was sentenced to life in prison when he was 17.

He was released after serving 36 years, but during his time in prison, untreated high blood pressure led to chronic kidney failure. Despite his condition, McCreary started a cleaning business and advocates for fellow lifers.

“There’s a group of men and women 30, 40, 50, 60 years in and their health is failing. And they’re getting poor treatment. I was one of them,” McCreary said.

Street said when a person has spent twice as much time behind bars than they did on the outside, they change.

“All folks are asking is that the government take a chance and look at each and every person,” Street said..

“Second chances doesn’t mean everybody comes home, it means everybody has a chance to come home if they do the right thing,” Street said. “We’re asking for parole eligibility. We’re asking that the parole board look at folks so when there are people who have lived extraordinary lives behind the wall, that that can be recognized.”



Everything happens for a reason. We just don't understand the Creator's purpose. I'm still learning to trust the process! Donna Foster, below, in neon shirt.

**7AM, Sept 20th on our way to the CADBI Harrisburg Rally for 2nd Chances! This rally was like no other. The energy of hope, love, comradery and inspiration flowed like water.**



Brother & Sister, Ernest and Alma White, ready to board buses from Philly to Harrisburg for 2nd Chance.

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## The Epidemic of Coercive Persuasion Against Prisoners

By: Muwsa Green

Those who profess outrage at the treatment of prisoners in solitary confinement here at State Correctional Institution Albion seem to be able to ignore the fact that Albion contin-

ually uses coercive persuasion techniques to reconstruct the image of the prisoners they illegally hold captive and humiliate.

The prisoner shall be conditioned to speak, act, and respond automatically without thinking which would evolve into a complete submission, making it much more difficult to rise up for anything better.

The reform strategies came into existence by Dr. Edgar Schein, who adopted Roman, European, German, Chinese, and British military war strategy. Schein demonstrates a series of techniques that can be used to catalyze change in human behavior. He notes that people's emotions can be triggered by sleep deprivation and by physically exhausting circumstances. Schein says under such circumstances, a person will submit to an order to decrease exhaustion.

Welcome to SCI Albion Coercive Persuasion strategy here in solitary:

SCI Albion administration indulges in clandestine activities with psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, deputy superintendents, CCPM, and COs to perform Schein science on all prisoners, whether or not they are conscious or aware of the science they are enacting.

Psychiatrist Review Team reveals confidential information about prisoner's mental health history so that the COs can use it for their stress assessment techniques to trigger prisoner's emotion.

COs use confidential information and propaganda to consistently play prisoners against prisoners to divide and conquer. SCI Albion obtains "intelligence" through (prisoners), acting as sort of "secret agents" in general population or solitary confinement, and COs use this coerced "intelligence" to carry out disinformation activities. COs

stage "special operations" in solitary confinement, involving sabotage, demolition, and subversion of any type of resistance.

The DC141 misconduct forms are used to disseminate disinformation and propaganda on all prisoners and used as a fear technique. The grievance officers use disinformation as a loophole to deny the prisoner's grievance.

COs provoke and encourage prisoners to bang on their bed, table, and walls to cause sleep deprivation and induce physical exhaustion on all those in ear shot.

The Restricted Housing Unit pod television is used as a pacifying tool to subdue behavior and to make a stressful condition more "comfortable."

CO's enter the pod, turn the television off in the middle of a movie, TV show, etc. to provoke an emotional reaction. They'll wait until the prisoner is "comfortable" in the cell before turning the "television" off. This technique is used to psychologically deteriorate the mind.

CO's play manipulative, "psychological" mind games on prisoners by giving their incoming mail to other prisoners. The food trays are served with small portions of fiber and vitamins but a large amount of carbs which can trigger colon cancer and decrease exhaustion and dysfunctional thinking.

COs place prisoners in a cell with an inadequate mattress, clothing, and bedding material, while cold air comes out of the ventilation system, freezing the prisoner and causing him to be awake for two or three days. Lack of sleep can actually hurt us and cause disorientation and intellectual or emotional damage. It can cause our biochemistry to become unbalanced and hurt our bodies.

COs place the bedding material on the table outside the cell so the prisoner can look at it. This technique might cause the prisoner to act impulsively, giving the COs justification to prolong the psychological torment.

The only way coercive persuasion strategies can work is for prisoners to allow the COs to control their words, actions, behaviors, and reactions. While the prison administration and puppets hold very real physical control over the body of a prisoner, they only have access to a captive human's

*(Continued on page 22)*

mind to the extent that the incarcerated person allows them access.

SCI Albion capitalized off the COVID-19 pandemic when enforcing social distance (isolation) in general population which gives Albion the complete “population control” they always wanted in order to wield greater power. The DOC uses the pandemic to get around the implementation of reforms limiting the use of solitary confinement, such as future House Bill HB1037 and Senate Bill SB685.

General population is a new modern day solitary confinement machine. Prisoner’s have no in-cell stimulation and have been deteriorating rapidly; Because block time is only one hour a day and prisoners are provided fifty minutes of yard time. Prisoners eat their meal trays inside the cell. Education service and religious service come to the cell door.

George Orwell’s 1984 book said: He who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.

The same way the prison administration has rewritten the history of “general population” and prisoner resistance, America has rewritten the history of the Lenni Lenape and erased dozens of ancient documents. The true image of Lenape has nearly disappeared. The children were torn from their families and sent to school that forced them to adopt the English language and European American culture. Americans must learn the true Lenni Lenape history and language.

The Department of Correction here in Pennsylvania carefully constructed and canceled out the past history of “general population.” While our elders of the past like Russell Maroon Shoatz and Mumia Abu Jamal are dying off, I think it’s time we prisoners keep Maroon Shoatz’s words alive by teaching the youth that are coming into these prisons. Elijah Muhammad said we nearly have to be 100% dissatisfied with the present ruling powers. Those 100% percent dissatisfied will bring about a 100% change.

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## Imagine

By: Tashon Burke

Imagine to yourself that you just maxed out a ten year sentence from a prison facility. Imagine that for those ten

years, you weren’t just doing time but you were doing hard time. Time so hard that you realized that you didn’t have to die to go to hell when you did bad things because prison is truly a hell on Earth.

Imagine being in solitary confinement twenty-four hours a day for years and years in a locked cell the size of a small closet. You start to feel the walls closing in around you and you become trapped, breathless, and claustrophobic.

Imagine that your mental state starts to deteriorate. You’re becoming depressed, angry, and suicidal, and its bringing out of you aggressive behaviors that become too much and too hard for you to control.

Imagine that these behaviors are inflicted on yourself. Cutting your wrists, arms, and face, or banging your face and head on the walls or metal door until the blood from your mouth and nose, the bumps on your head, and the headache satisfies you enough to finally stop.

Imagine that the correctional officers pay you no attention at all, don’t show you any sympathy, or offer you any kind of medical or psychiatric care, or any kind of help at all, but instead laugh at you and encourage you to keep hurting yourself.

Imagine that your screams and cries to talk to someone like a psychologist or psychiatrist fall on deaf ears. Your aggressive behaviors change to breaking things inside your cell, such as the metal bed, desk, and toilet. The correctional officers can’t have you destroying the cells.

Now imagine ten to fifteen correctional officers are present in front of your cell door, and they just discharged a long metal can filled with pepper spray under your door and into your cell. Imagine your skin on fire, your eyes burning to where you can’t open them, so you can’t see. But most importantly, imagine that you literally can’t breathe. You’re choking and banging on the door to surrender, but they won’t get you out of the cell until they’re ready to.

Imagine thinking you’re going to die. They’re going to kill you. When the correctional officers feel like you suffered enough, they then handcuff you through the food slot on the door and pull you out of your cell filled with pepper spray. After the nurse comes to see you to pour milk into your eyes to halt the burning and to clean, stitch up, and bandage your self-inflicted wounds, you’re then stripped naked and thrown into a cold cell for days with no blanket

(Continued on page 23)

(Continued from page 22)

or bed. Literally a freezing cold cell. Imagine the torture and the lack of sleep.

Imagine that for “making” the correctional officers work, you’re now being refused food and showers. You’re also having your incoming mail held and your outgoing mail never sent out. Once this happens, imagine being beaten in and tasered by the correctional officers for fighting for what’s your right and not a privilege.

Imagine constantly witnessing the dead bodies of fellow prisoners, who committed suicide sometime during the day or night, roll pass your cell door on a stretcher.

Most of these suicides told the correctional officers that if they didn’t receive their medication that they would kill themselves. The correctional officers ignored them so they killed themselves. Imagine going through all this, but you made it out. Ten years is here, your max date is today, and it’s time for you to go home.

Imagine now, that you’re home and very excited to be free and reunited with your friends and family. You’re trying to move past what you witnessed and been through in prison, but you can’t. You’re traumatized. PTSD at its best. You’re traumatized but free.

Imagine you have plans to get counseling and to find a church that could help you exorcise the demons that possessed you during your time in hell. You now have plans to do right and find a legal strategy that would lead you on the road to success.

Imagine that you never got to do any of this. Imagine that after maxing out ten years of hard time in prison, and only being home for eight days, you’re arrested and sent back to jail for something you didn’t do or have any knowledge of. You had the bad luck of being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Imagine that you’re now in the county jail, awaiting court for charges that could easily get you sent back to prison for another ten to twenty years. Imagine you’re again in solitary confinement for no reason at all, locked down in your cell twenty four hours a day.

The reasons from the correctional officers is that the cameras are not working. The panel they use to open up the cells are broken, the elevators are down, etc. You think to yourself, “You mean this shit is fuckin up every day?” The food is so nasty that if somebody tried to feed it to their pets, they would probably run away thinking their owner doesn’t love them anymore.

Now of course if you never really witnessed or been through any of this, then of course you’re only imagining. It’s fake, made up from your wildest imagination. Well, I don’t have to imagine any of it. I lived it. I am living it. I witnessed it. And you bet your ass, it’s happening to me.

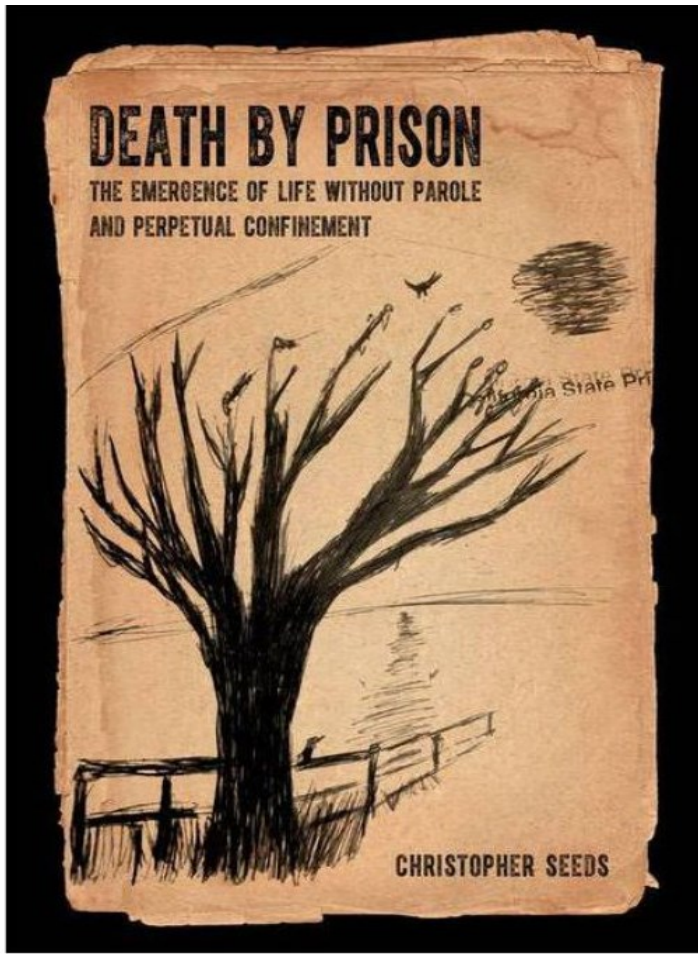
So I hope while you were imagining this, you felt the pain, sadness and fear I felt and feel, because I may have to go through this horror again for something I didn’t do or have any knowledge of. Thank you, all who read this, for imagining that you were ME.

*This piece was published in collaboration with Solitary Watch’s Voices from Solitary series.*



Solitary Talk! By Valerie Kiebala





In recent decades, life imprisonment without the possibility of parole (LWOP) has developed into a distinctive penal form in the United States, one firmly entrenched in US policy-making, judicial and prosecutorial decision-making, correctional practice, and public discourse. LWOP is now a routine practice, but how it came to be so remains in question. Fifty years ago, imprisonment of a person until death was an extraordinary punishment; today, it accounts for the sentences of an increasing number of prisoners in the United States. . . .

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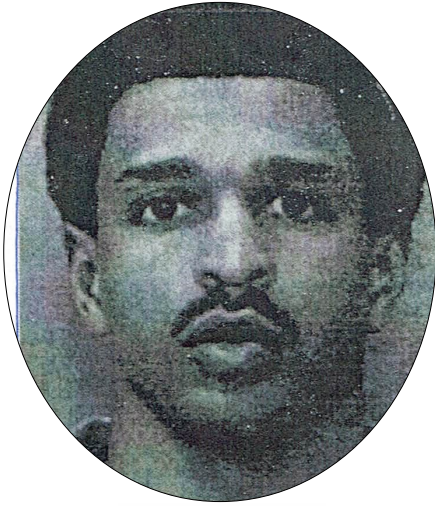


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## ***"Is Innocence Irrelevant?"***

*The following state cases represent the "faces of HRC". As you read, ask yourself if justice is being served by the judicial system when it criminally tries and convicts individuals knowing of their innocence, and intentionally deny fair trials to others.*



### **Troy Coulston**

By Nathaniel Grimes

Troy Coulston's parole date has been a long time coming. In a *Philadelphia Daily News* article titled "JUSTICE...THREE DECADES LATE" (12/2/21, A5 and A8), reporter Samantha Melamed examined the case brought by the state

against Coulston, "one of a web of cases prosecutors now say were all tainted by the same informant's testimony." Christopher Williams, who had been decades before described by prosecutors as the leader of a group responsible for the 1989 killing of Michael Haynesworth, was recently exonerated, having been represented by the prominent civil rights lawyer Ben Crump. Williams' lawsuit "alleges a campaign of coercion by police and prosecutors" in the case, and he says the legal action was "about accountability" and "about the full restoration of his freedom."

The National Registry of Exonerations now features a story by Maurice Possley on Coulston's ordeal, highlighting the many discrepancies between the accusations and the evidence of his initial case, quoting a Philadelphia judge who vacated Williams's convictions and called the case "mind-boggling."

Even after exoneration, Coulston's path to freedom is complicated, in large part due to a Pennsylvania law establishing a special crime, "Assault by life prisoner." Here's how the statute reads:

Every person who has been sentenced to death or life imprisonment in any penal institution located in this Commonwealth, and whose sentence has not been commuted, who commits an aggravated assault with a deadly weapon or instrument upon another, or by any means of force likely to produce serious bodily injury, is guilty of a crime, the penalty for which shall be the same as the penalty for murder of the second degree.

Coulston was accused of fighting with a fellow prisoner about 25 years ago at SCI Graterford, a prison complex which in recent years has been shut down and replaced by SCI Phoenix. After having been wrongfully convicted by the state and sentenced to life without parole, for this incident Coulston received escalated charges and punishments. Finally in 2022, months after his exoneration in the initial case, the "Assault by life prisoner" charge against Coulston was vacated, exchanged for a charge of "aggravated assault" carrying a sentence of ten to twenty years.

By the time this issue of *The Movement* reaches readers, after decades of punishment for a crime he did not do, Coulston will be eligible for parole. He still faces a great deal of uncertainty. Prior to being granted parole release, he needs to secure housing and employment. Readers who can help with either of these urgent requests should contact Bret Grote and the Abolitionist Law Center team.

[info@alcenter.org](mailto:info@alcenter.org)

Abolitionist Law Center

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# Love Knows No Bars



Here we are from Haiifax, PA on the steps at the capital in Harrisburg in support of our loved ones on the inside. Linda with husband and daughter sending love to our daughter Chanel. Keep the faith. WE LOVE YOU!



Shakaboona and Avis Lee meet for the first time.



Marcia Marra & Sergio Hyland make a toast - water bottles with pic of Richie are compliments of Yvonne Newkirk.



L-R: Riddick, Shabaka, Shakaboona, Pastor Chris, Tanisha Long (ALC), and JT take time out for quick photo and comradery.



# Love Knows No Bars



**Thinking of you on your birthday.** Sometimes life gets so hectic that it's hard to find time for the really important things. That's why CADBI, HRC, and other organizations are glad to have a chance to let you know how often you're in our thoughts and how special you are to us today and every day.



## AUGUST

8/1	Mike Cook	Camp Hill
8/5	Gaye Morley	Muncy
8/12	Bray Murray	Dallas
8/15	Jacqueline White	Muncy
8/17	Antonio Bundy	Forest
8/21	Derel Britton	Camp Hill
8/22	Celeste Coles	Muncy
8/25	Darrell McKelvie	Benner
8/25	Mariam White	Muncy

## SEPTEMBER

9/2	Dierdre Owens	Muncy
9/5	Samuel Major	Phoenix
9/11	Tracey Shaw	Muncy
9/18	Howard Miller	Houtzdale
9/20	Tran Loc	Smithfield
9/23	Javon Everett	Green
9/24	Melanie Vicheck	Muncy

## OCTOBER

10/2	James Lloyd	Benner
10/2	Brandon Moody	Dallas
10/3	Robert Williams	Phoenix
10/4	Jennifer Vinsek	Muncy
10/4	Jerome Palmer	Somerset
10/8	Kevin Cannady	Dallas
10/8	Shakour Brown	Fayette
10/10	Eric Cox	Forest
10/29	Christopher Adams	Albion
10/30	Heather Lavell	Muncy

Oct /7 In loving memory, Edward Sakim Ball  
**\*\*HAPPY BELATED BIRTHDAY\*\***

Yes! Your family member can join CADBI and or HRC!

**Special shout out** to our brothers, sisters, family in the struggle, I stand with you. Just a special message for my brothers "B" Arroyo, Derrick Hassan Brodnax, John Brookins, Abi Casiano-fernandez, Kevin Coleman, Rein-aldo Correa, Earl Anwar, Cotton, Robert Muhammad Felts, Jeffrey Jihad Ford, Aaron Harun Fox, Rodney Sunni Griffin, Jeffrey Abdur Rahman Hughes, Kevin Qua Johnson, Aaron Jalil Major, Rob Pezzecca, David Richardson, Fernando Nandin Rivera, Stan Rosenthal, Doug Hakim Sanders, Wilfredo Cito Santiago, Tom Schilk, Melvin Aleem, Thompson, Kenyatta Hasan Williams, Melvin White and my sisters Cynthia Gonzalez, Nicole Newell, Kara KeKe Young.

In Solidarity and Peace

~Amy, Pam & Diesel (the freedom dog)

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# What's The News!

## ICE Overusing Solitary Confinement in California, Lawmakers Worry

By Farida Jhabvala Romero

Aug 26

FROM: <https://www.kqed.org/news/>

hole,” he told KQED, for 22 hours or longer per day.

The space has a sink and a toilet, but no windows to view the ample sunshine outside the immigration detention building in Bakersfield.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention is legally classified as civil, rather than criminal, and is not intended to be a punishment. But

days can amount to torture and should be banned in most cases. But the practice, which experts agree is so punitive that it can spark or exacerbate severe mental illness and depression, continues to exist in California, though it faces rising opposition.

The state Senate is expected to vote by August 31 on a bill that would restrict segregated confinement for all incarcerated people, including immigrant detainees. Meanwhile, both California U.S. senators questioned ICE’s use of solitary confinement as “excessive and seemingly indiscriminate” earlier this month, and have pressed the agency for answers on how it plans to fix the problem.

Four detainees at the Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center, including Mousa, allege staffers kept them in solitary confinement for several days or longer for supporting a peaceful labor strike, according to KQED interviews and a recent lawsuit.

Dozens of detainees who were paid \$1 a day to clean dormitories and bathrooms at the facility and the nearby Golden State Annex are calling for California’s minimum wage of \$15 an hour.

A spokesperson with The GEO Group, which owns and operates both detention centers, vehemently denied the men’s allegations of retaliation, and referred other questions to ICE.

The spokesperson also repeatedly denied that a labor strike is taking place at the facilities, arguing that the work program is voluntary and in compliance with ICE’s guidelines that detainees be compensated “at least” \$1 per workday. Congress can change the rate, but hasn’t done so since 1978.

*(Continued on page 29)*



Protesters hold signs outside the Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center in Bakersfield on June 4, 2020. California lawmakers have questioned ICE’s use of solitary confinement as ‘excessive and seemingly indiscriminate’ earlier this month, and have pressed the agency for answers on how it plans to fix the problem. *(Tania Bernal/California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance)*

A 41-year-old man woke up in a tiny cell day after day, on a bed that sits just a few feet away from olive-colored walls. He was locked up alone in what detainees refer to as “the

that’s one of many incongruities for Mohamed Mousa, who said he was held in a restricted housing unit, or RHU, in solitary confinement for more than 40 days, beginning in late June.

“It’s devastating. This right here shouldn’t be happening. That’s what I think about all day,” said Mousa, an Egyptian immigrant who was once hopeful about the individual freedoms this country promises. “This right here is un-American.”

The United Nations has argued that solitary confinement — also known as segregation or isolation — beyond 15

# What's The News!

(Continued from page 28)

U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla declined a request for comment. But Padilla is “actively engaged on the issues being raised” at Mesa Verde and Golden State Annex, according to a spokesperson for the senator.

“He is working to increase transparency on how these concerns are being addressed in order to ensure proper oversight,” the spokesperson said in an email.

## **Mousa sent to solitary due to demonstration**

Mousa said he was kept in isolation until Thursday because he was “standing up for his rights and the rights of other detainees,” including by signing his name on a letter supporting the work stoppage on June 28.

“It’s retaliation, it’s cruel, it’s punishment,” said Mousa, adding that his depression and anxiety have soared. “They want to break me. They want me to stop advocating. I’m already in hell. Detention is hell.”

GEO documents show Mousa was ordered to “administrative segregation” on June 29, and later found guilty of “engaging in or inciting a group demonstration” and “conduct that disrupts or interferes with the security and orderly operation of the facility.” Both charges are labeled as high offenses by the ICE standards Mesa Verde.

The facility denied Mousa’s appeal on July 15.

‘They want to break me. They want me to stop advocating. I’m already in hell. Detention is hell.’ Mohamed Mousa, ICE detainee

“A records review indicates your di-

rect involvement in the misconduct incident,” wrote GEO staffers in a report addressing Mousa’s grievance. “Further, as you correctly asserted, ‘I’m known to stand up for my rights,’ you consistently have attempted to disrupt the orderly running of the facility, and it will not be tolerated.”

An ICE spokesperson said the agency will not disclose details of individual disciplinary actions, and would not comment on the claims by Mousa or the other detainees.

“ICE fully respects the rights of all people to voice their opinion without interference, including through peaceful assembly and protest,” the ICE spokesperson wrote in a statement, but declined to comment on why the agency considers a detainee inciting or engaging in a demonstration a high offense.

## **Isolation 'only when necessary,' but evidence suggests otherwise**

According to ICE, placing a detainee in segregation is a “serious step” that should follow the agency’s guidelines, and be used only when necessary after careful consideration of alternatives.

A detainee may be isolated from others for disciplinary reasons or a wide range of “administrative” ones, including medical issues, a detainee’s own safety and the orderly operation of the facility.

Disciplinary segregation is restricted to no more than 30 days. Yet, the agency’s guidelines fail to spell out any limits for the administrative kind, which leads to abuses, according to immigrant advocates.

ICE did not immediately respond to KQED’s requests for the number of detainees currently held in solitary confinement. Between 2013 and 2019, the agency recorded nearly 13,800

segregation placements nationwide that lasted longer than 14 consecutive days or involved vulnerable detainees, such as those with mental illness, identifying as gay or on a hunger strike.

The agency’s watchdog found the figure could be higher, because ICE ignores the full extent of segregation use at its more than 200 detention centers around the country. Facilities owned or operated by for-profit companies such as GEO hold most immigrant detainees in the U.S.

The lack of comprehensive isolation data hinders the agency’s “ability to ensure compliance with policy, and prevent and detect potential misuse of segregation,” according to a report by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General published last fall.

For example, inspectors found no evidence that detention centers considered any alternatives to isolating detainees in 72% of the incidents they studied. During an unannounced inspection of a privately run detention center in Calexico, east of San Diego, the OIG discovered two detainees isolated for more than 300 days.



# What's The News!

## Yes, Slavery Is on the Ballot in These States

FROM: STATELINE ARTICLE

By: Marsha Mercer

August 22, 2022

A supervised prison work crew in Florida prepares sandbags against the impending arrival of Hurricane Dorian in 2019. Lawmakers in several states have addressed whether to outlaw slavery in their state constitutions, in some cases except for voluntary work by incarcerated people. Paul Hennessy SOPA Images/Sipa USA via The Associated Press

More than 150 years after it was officially outlawed in the United States, slavery will be on the ballot in five states in November, as a new abolitionist movement seeks to reshape prison labor.

Voters in Alabama, Louisiana, Oregon, Tennessee and Vermont will decide on state constitutional amendments prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude, in some cases except for work by incarcerated people. Advocates say the amendments are needed to strip antiquated language from state constitutions and to potentially transform the criminal justice system by making all work in prisons voluntary.

Three states — Colorado, Nebraska and Utah — have approved similar ballot initiatives since 2018.

“This is the crown jewel of criminal justice reform,” said Curtis Ray Davis II, who served 25 years for second-degree murder in the Louisiana State Penitentiary known as Angola and is campaigning for the amendment in Louisiana following his experiences in incarceration.

“Most people believed it was impossible to get the amendment on the ballot in Louisiana, but Louisiana and

America should not be in the business of legalized slavery,” he said in an interview.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States — except as punishment for someone convicted of a crime. The “exception clause” loophole led to repressive 19th-century laws in the South known as Black Codes that allowed authorities to incarcerate Black people for petty crimes, such as vagrancy, and then force them to work. Black Codes were a precursor to the Jim Crow laws outlawed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

“We want to remove offensive language and provide protection for citizens from slavery and involuntary servitude,” Max Parthas, co-director of state operations of the Abolish Slavery National Network and co-host of a weekly online radio program, Abolition Today, said in an interview. Parthas and other proponents also want to remove the exception clause from the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. They hope the stalled effort in Congress will gain momentum once states amend their constitutions.

About 20 state constitutions have exception clauses that allow either slavery or involuntary servitude as punishment for crime. Vermont prides itself on being the first in the nation to ban slavery in 1777, but its constitution allows involuntary servitude in certain circumstances, such as to pay a debt, damage, fine or other cost.

There’s a debate over whether removing the exception clauses in the U.S. Constitution and state constitutions would be largely symbolic, or whether it could lead to significant change in the prison system. Advocates say the symbolism is important, given the

shameful historic context, but also that banning involuntary servitude could be a stepping stone to improving the pay and working conditions of incarcerated people.

So far, no state that has passed the amendment has changed its prison work rules, but lawsuits to force changes are likely.

“The [state constitutional] amendment is more than symbolic,” said the Rev. Mark Hughes of Burlington, Vermont, executive director of Abolish Slavery Vermont and Justice for All Vermont, organizations that seek to end systemic racism in the state. “Vermont has permitted slavery longer than any other state — for 245 years. What that means is no constitution allowed slavery in any state before Vermont,” he said.

In 2018, Colorado became the first state since Rhode Island in 1842 to ban slavery and involuntary servitude outright. Two years after a ballot initiative with confusing language failed, Coloradans voted 66% to 34% for an amendment reading: “There shall never be in this state either slavery or involuntary servitude.”

Ballot initiatives also have passed with wide margins elsewhere. In 2020, Amendment 1 passed in Nebraska by 68% to 32%, and Amendment C passed in Utah 80% to 20%. Since 2020, bills have been introduced to put slavery or involuntary servitude on the ballot in states including California, Florida, Ohio, New Jersey and Texas.

But after the amendment passed in Colorado, a lawsuit seeking higher wages for prison workers was dismissed. Another lawsuit, seeking to end compulsory prison work, is in state court. Inmates Richard Lilgerose and Harold Mortis in February sued

*(Continued on page 31)*

# What's The News!

*(Continued from page 30)*

Colorado Democratic Gov. Jared Polis, the executive director of the Colorado Department of Corrections and the agency itself, arguing that the state has continued to compel people in prison to work under conditions amounting to involuntary servitude. Under current rules, able-bodied inmates in Colorado are expected to work in the kitchen, the laundry, as janitors or other jobs.

The state does not comment on pending litigation, but in court papers, it said the lawsuit should be dismissed because Colorado does not force those who are incarcerated to work, but rather penalizes them for not doing so. Incarcerated people who refuse to work might forfeit time they have earned off their sentences, be forced to spend up to 21 hours a day in their cell, or face reductions in phone calls, visitors and time for meals.

If the incarcerated plaintiffs prevail in their class action suit, their attorneys say, Colorado might have to revamp that system.

“The state would have to create incentives for people to work — like wages,” David Seligman, executive director of Towards Justice, a nonprofit law firm in Denver that advocates and litigates on economic justice issues, said in an interview. “That’s how it is supposed to work in this country. Work has to be voluntary.”

To head off lawsuits, some states have added compromise language that suggests prison work is still authorized. In Utah, Amendment C states that “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist” in the state but adds that the provision “does not apply to the otherwise lawful administration of the criminal justice system.”

In Tennessee, state Sen. Raumes Akbari, a Democrat, introduced Amend-

ment 3 in 2019 as part of the national campaign to remove the exception clause from state constitutions.

“Someone from the organization brought it to me, and I thought it was a great idea,” she said in an interview. She later added a second sentence, so that the proposed amendment now reads: “Slavery and involuntary servitude are forever prohibited. Nothing in this section shall prohibit an inmate from working when the inmate has been duly convicted of a crime.”

“The Department of Corrections asked us to put in the exception. I don’t think it would have moved forward if we had not agreed to do it,” she said. “There’s a difference between working and being enslaved. This will allow people in prison to work if they want to.”

Kathy Chambers, who heads the Yes on 3 campaign to pass the amendment in Tennessee, said the amendment’s bipartisan support is a result of the wording of the amendment.

“This could easily be a partisan issue, but it’s not,” she said in an interview. Former U.S. Sen. Bob Corker, a Tennessee Republican, is on the campaign’s advisory board. “The strategy here is bipartisan all the way.”

In Louisiana last year, Republican lawmakers killed a Democratic proposed ballot question to remove the exception clause. On a second try this year, the Democratic sponsor agreed to compromise language requested by Republican lawmakers, and the Louisiana House and Senate passed it unanimously.

The ballot question in Louisiana reads: “Do you support an amendment to prohibit the use of involuntary servitude except as it applies to the otherwise lawful administration of criminal justice?”

What practical effect the amendment would have in Louisiana is a matter of dispute.

“If this amendment passes, then the incentive to incarcerate Black people will no longer exist,” said former inmate Davis, who never made more than 20 cents an hour working while incarcerated. After he was released in 2016, he published a book of essays, “Slave State: Evidence of Apartheid in America,” which has been made into a documentary, and founded Decarcerate Louisiana, a criminal justice reform organization based in Baton Rouge.

He lobbied state legislators last spring, arguing the constitutional change is a moral and religious issue, and plans to visit all 64 parishes in the state before Nov. 8 to encourage voters to turn out.

But Louisiana state Rep. Alan Seabaugh, a Republican who opposed the measure in committee, said the effect would be “absolutely none, whatsoever. It’s essentially just symbolic. It says what’s already on the books — although potentially worse.”

The state constitution currently prohibits slavery and involuntary servitude, except in the latter case for punishment of a crime. The new wording says slavery and involuntary servitude are prohibited, but the provision “does not apply to the otherwise lawful administration of criminal justice.”

In other words, “the new amendment technically allows slavery,” Seabaugh said. “I don’t think anybody thought of it that way, but that’s what it says.”

Asked to predict the practical effects of amendments on state ballots this year, some proponents prefer not to speculate.

“We don’t want this bill confused with a labor bill,” Parthas of the Abol-

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## Who helped me?

(An Inquiry Answered)

By: Shaheen Willis.

**Question:** How come you say that the prison system doesn't work but at the same time claim that you have transformed while in prison? Can you clarify this Shaheen?

**Answer:** Mentors. I could never speak to the full effect that the men I've met in prison has had on my life. The men who MEN-tored me when I was initially imprisoned helped me become a man. These men were usually from amongst the lifer population who had already been in prison for over a decade or two. These older brothers took me in when I was 19 years old and they taught me "How to do time in prison", but they also taught me how to be prepared for a fruitful return to the streets, to society.

A lot of these brothers who were/are serving a life sentence had a very bleak chance of returning home. So, I ask myself: Why did they even care? They were in a position where going home seemed unlikely. They weren't mentoring me because they were seeking something in return (as if teaching me would prove to the parole board that they deserve a second chance). No. They didn't receive any of that. They taught me what they learned, and they did it sincerely because they themselves had already made the transformation.

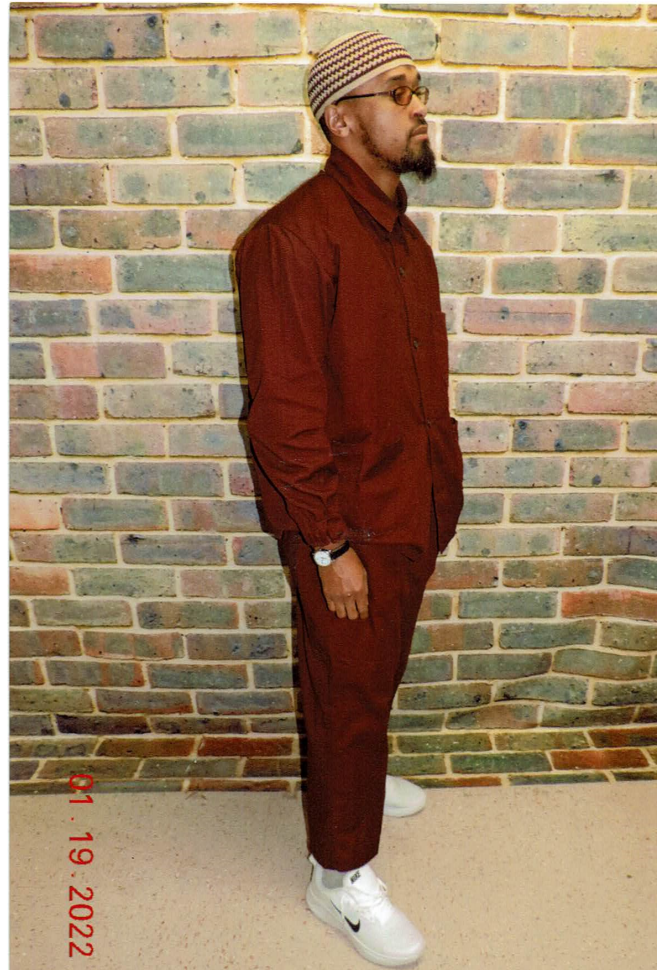
Shout out to Abdul-Lateef, a formerly incarcerated, juvenile lifer who made it home and has had the most profound impact on my life as a role model and a mentor.

Shout out to Abdur-Raqeeb (a.k.a. Bayman Traub) who is still in prison serving a life sentence after approximately 3 decades. He is the president of the SCI-Greene's Lifer's Organization (GLO) and if I could give anyone a Get-Out-Of-Jail-Free card, it would be him, because he has certainly paid his debt to society.

These brothers and many more are the ones who told me to go to school, to learn my religion, to learn the law, to produce positivity. They had personal knowledge and ex-

perience which gave them proper insight into who I was. It gave them the ability to effectively help me to change my way of life, a way of life that landed me in prison. Although they may never get the formal credit, I hope they are fine with the results.

THEY HELPED ME!



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## **I WILL NOT BE DETERRED!**

By Kenjuan Congo Jr .

Being incarcerated for over thirteen years has allowed me to study punishment for the purpose of deterrence in depth. Being a Delaware Prisoner that is temporarily housed in Pennsylvania has only added to my personal experience. This incapacitation has forced me to live how deterrence changes over time as with all social phenomena. In our time, ever expanding punishment does not respect geographical boundaries in its unrelenting pursuit to control human behavior. With the people as my witness I will address my contemporaries who hold Plato's view of punishment for the purpose of deterrence.

It is argued that punishment is needed in order to prevent other potential wrong doers from committing the same or similar act. With this position the consequence is entirely justified by preventing the repetition of the wrongful behavior. Thus, the penalty is designed to be administered in order to direct others. We are all in agreement that this is the foundation of punishment with the aim of deterrence.

Currently deterrence is systematically constructed and philosophically backed by the cost-benefit analysis. This model of "criminal" behavior assumes that the decision to commit crime is based on the gains outweighing the penalty for the given offense. With developments founded on this approach, the punishment is solely based on the cost being severe enough to outweigh any potential benefits.

A major problem with the cost/benefit model is that it must take into account probability. If punishment is the deterrent, then the likelihood of being penalized plays a consequential role. Basically, if I can get away with it then what is deterring me? For the punishment to be effective, the cost has to be weighed with both probability and benefit. As the certainty of getting caught decreases, the severity needs to increase. To achieve the desired level of deterrence the combination of low certainty/high severity is indispensable.

To put this into perspective, we can use two scenarios of retail theft:

(1) People are caught stealing in a retail area a little over 50% of the time. When "perpetrators" are caught they are forced to return the items and pay a moderate fine. The

offenders are also suspended from returning for a period of three months.

(2) People are caught stealing in a retail area only 1% of the time. When "perpetrators" are caught they are imprisoned for two years, forced to pay a hefty fine, and are permanently expelled from returning.

Is it just for the severity of penalty to be higher, because the certainty of punishment is low? If so, many would go scot-free while others serve longer prison sentences than they would if more people were caught; would the inequality created among offenders be fair? Is the optimal certainty/severity combination 0.001/death penalty?

Punishment for the purpose of deterrence is based on the cost/benefit model, which must include probability in order to achieve the desired result. The cost/benefit model correlated with probability has yet to provide a reliable outcome, that is just with clearly understood principles. The public wielding of severe sanctions without clarity is problematic, to say the least.

Another major problem with punishment for the purpose of deterrence, is penalties set at these high levels actually increase the likelihood of more serious crime. When the consequence is already grave there is no reason not to commit further harm. In fact, it might actually be in the offender's best interest. From personal experience I hear/heard prisoners say, "I would have been better off if I killed him." Unfortunately, my constituents disregard such statements on face value, without any philosophical consideration.

Let's say, an individual is robbing someone. During the commission of the felony he decides to shoot the victim and potential witness. The shooter knows murder carries no additional penalty, and killing witnesses reduces the probability of being caught. Is it rational for the robber to shoot the victim, and potential witness?

Or perhaps, an elderly man commits a robbery. Since deterrence is the levying of time, how effective is the punishment? If convicted for robbery the man will already die in prison, so what is preventing him from engaging in even more serious offenses? Is it rational for the elderly man to

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commit more harm to decrease the probability of being caught?

By making consequences more severe it simultaneously raises the incentive to commit more serious infractions, in order to reduce the likelihood of being caught. Also, since deterrence is less effective as the offender's age increases, must be deemed ineffective with seniority. What is considered a deterrent can actually be considered an encouragement, and be ineffective with older members of the populace.

Another major issue with those who argue Plato's call for deterrence, is that the deterrent is based on the social contract. Plato was a Greek, living under Greek law, with Greek culture, and full social inclusion in his Greek society. By not engaging in certain activity Plato could get a good education, decent job, exercise rights, and live in peace as a Greek. Plato's call for deterrence was completely based on full social inclusion for following the law.

Hundreds of years later on an entirely different continent the social contract has been broken. People turn to crime, because they are prevented from reaching their goals through legal means. Every prison they sent me to was filled with people that had limited legal opportunities, and eventually turned to crime. Statistics show a relationship between crime and other variables for example: education, housing, income, and demographics such as age, gender, and race.

There is a stark contrast with the social contract between the Prison Industrial Complex and the ancient Greeks. In order to apply Plato's approach to our present reality, we would have to reevaluate how society is currently constructed. Before deterrence can even be considered, there must be a social contract that stands paramount.

Punishment as a means of deterrence has yet to provide a fair and accurate cost/benefit model in relation with probability. As the penalty is increased against potential offenders it entices further harm, and said penalty is less effective as the age of potential offenders increases. Also, deterrence is based on the social contract which has been breached multiple times over.

Plato's call for deterrence may have been sincere, but I wonder if my contemporaries comprehend that we are dealing with a totally different reality. In our era the marginalized and those who challenge the established order are severely punished into coercion or total suppression. These harsh consequences are justified behind the guise of what is referred to as deterrence. In reality, the deterrent is used as a means for social control.

Being from Wilmington, DE along with what my personal experience has taught me, steep penalty from the establishment does not respect artificial divisions. It does not matter if you are from Wilmington, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, or any other city; the heavy handed state is always waiting. Regardless of geography those who rule retain the right to coerce the oppressed and those who resist through extremely punitive measures. Therefore, it only makes sense for me to reject all artificial divisions, and made up differences; in the pursuit of righteousness, fairness, equability, and justice.

It does not matter if faced with fines, prison, or bodily harm. Nor does it matter if confronted with write ups, hole time, or transfers. Be it death itself. I am for the people. I am for ALL the people. I WILL NOT BE DETERRED!

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## SPIRITUALLY LINKED

By Sarita Miller, OJ-3158, SCI-Muncy

A love letter from our past leader and speaker Malcolm X so eloquently quotes to his people.

*"We ourselves have to lift the level of our community, take the standards of our community to a higher level, make our own society beautiful so that we will be satisfied... we've got to change our own minds about each*

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*other, we have to see each other with new eyes....we have to come together with warmth."*

Each day of my prison term, I have grown to love myself. Even when I thought that I was just trying to fit in and find a place among the masses. I was being groomed, rebirth to purpose and self acceptance. Embracing my heritage, admiring the struggle of my past predecessors, our encyclopedia. Where is the honor? Where is the homage? For the blood! For the tears! So many lives lost! A debt still not paid. It is what we owe, BLACK AMERICA, to one another.

From the first slave ship that touched the then foreign ground in 1619. Our enslaved ancestors knew the fate that awaited unborn generations of our people. Our past predecessors did not just risk their lives and limbs for their present, but for our future. Our children are the future. Does that exclude black people from loving and accepting other races of human beings? Absolutely not! For we are all made from the image of The Most High Creator of Heaven and Earth. However when will we cease the disdain towards one another?

When I received Issue No. 2 of Straight Ahead publication that highlighted republican candidate Bill McSwain's alarming threat, precisely directed at our communities, "Black communities," my blood ran cold. I pondered upon hard questions in my head after reading McSwain's public declaration of war. Is it our communities, that is giving our enemies probable cause to attack and dismantle? Is it because of the violence inflicted by the hands of our black youths that is the cause of chaos in our communities?

Young African American princes and princesses under attack. Given the tools presented in enticing packaging meant for self destruction. Falling victims to lies told, self hatred, ashamed to be who they are. Lack of their true value and worth, molded by corrupt images, damaging to their spirits.

Our city (Philadelphia) has come under the magnifying glass of our haters in Pennsylvania. With so many of our children finding themselves in adult criminal situations, it's terrifying to know that Philadelphia has sentenced more children (black children) to death by incarceration sentences, than any other country.

Although I sit in prison, it doesn't stop me from developing possible actions to reach out to our youths. Testimony is powerful. Transparency is appreciated when delivering one's narratives, and real always recognizes real. It's relatable. If my downfall can prevent just a handful of our youths from ending up in a white supremacist industrial complex for the rest of their lives, it's all worth it. I feel responsible for the children that may be strangers to me, but it is our genealogy that makes us spiritually linked.

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## **Roe V. Wade**

On June 24, 2022 the Supreme Court overturned Roe V. Wade, as a result abortion is no longer a federal Constitutional Right. Supporters of this decision maintain that the ruling is best for society on the basis of religion and murder, both grounds I understand and respect the sentiment of. With these two pivotal justifying considerations in mind I believe unbiased reason will conclude that her body, her choice, is both appropriate and befitting for a society that claims to be founded on inalienable human rights.

I recognize that some of us may be more religious than others. Some of us may not even be religious at all. The extent to which we choose to practice or not practice religion is also encompassed by human freedom.

Regardless of our personal devotion or lack thereof, we all agree that religion is principled around free will. Whether we approve or disapprove of an act, it is up to that one particular individual to make their choice freely. An abortion is a decision, thus it falls under the umbrella of free will. Therefore, to take a woman's right to an abortion is essentially taking away one's free will, which ultimately conflicts with the religious stance that is being taken. If the basis is religion, which is founded on free will, it is best to support that which facilitates the fullest expression of human freedom, unabated by personal feelings.

Still, feelings are humanly natural. Each one of us are members of this human family. As a member of our human family I, too, profess that murder is wrong. A crime against humanity itself. Murder is defined as the taking of

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human life maliciously, not merely the taking of life, but the ending of human life with malice. Perhaps this is why our civilization does not view euthanasia as murder. Maybe the intent behind euthanasia is what makes this difficult decision not only legal, but socially acceptable as well.

As members of the human family we are together that there is immense suffering on this Earth. In addition to themselves, women see this great agony for their yet to be born offspring. It is extremely unfortunate that mankind is so harsh and cruel that the termination of pregnancy can be considered a painless and merciful act.

This brings to mind the story of Stephanie. Stephanie could not find the condom her husband was wearing during intercourse. Stephanie searched for the condom by herself, all while Mark watched pervasively. Stephanie checked everywhere the sheet, mattress, floor, and finally herself. The condom had slipped off inside of her. Stephanie pulled it out of herself in the bathroom, as Mark laughed at her hysterically. The feeling of shame was overwhelming. Still, Stephanie convinced herself that she was in love. Even though Mark continued to sleep with other women. Stephanie remained, wanting to honor the oath they both made before God. Months go by and only one thing changes, a positive reading on a pregnancy test. Not wanting to get pregnant Stephanie normally took preventative measures. This must of happened one of the times in which she did not have a choice. Mark is passed out drunk on the couch. His drinking had picked up ever since he was laid off. Behind on rent, Mark still took the little amount of money Stephanie earned to buy beer. When things were worst, beer cans loitered the floor as if walking on egg shells. Stephanie tried to calm herself as she sat on the edge of the bathtub. She knows that the number one cause of death for pregnant women is murder. Mark's drunken snores crawl underneath the cracks of the door. All alone and by herself Stephanie cried as she hugged her stomach.

Now, I ask us all.... how many Stephanies are there? How many not only face violence domestically, but are attacked even further on a societal level? And, are we facilitators of this malicious torment?

Stephanie is human. I am human. We are all human. As humans I believe we all agree that a person has the natural right over their own body. Said rights over our physical self is what enables personal freedom and choice. To acknowledge a woman's body while divesting her personal freedom and choice is to oppose human freedom itself. Her body her choice is not merely a political statement, rather the expression of human liberty. Bipartisan reason will undoubtedly conclude that to void choice is ultimately voiding human freedom. And, to take control over one's body is to void both choice and freedom. Dominion over the physical self is fundamental to mankind.

I'm pretty sure many of us can recall the women's suffrage movement that was taught to us in school. Unfortunately, in this era we are dealing with more of the same. Its frustrating that women not only have to fight for their constitutional rights, but for the natural right to control their own physical body. A women's dominion over herself is not a privilege, rather an inalienable human right.

The overturning of Roe V. Wade put an end to abortion as a federal constitutional right. This decision takes away free will which conflicts with the religious stance being taken. When supporters of this ruling bombard the public with religious arguments, it is their behavior that turns people away from a doctrine that is suppose to help them. Abortion is not characterized by spite, hate, or any other fiendish motive. The insidious act of portraying these women as evil minded puts at question the moral compass of our civilization. With the grounds of religion and murder in mind unbiased reasoning will undoubtedly conclude that her body her choice is the best ruling for a society founded on inalienable human rights.

Even with all this being said, neither Pro-Choice nor Pro-Life alone is the optimum response. The fact that women even have to choose between an abortion or not is reflective of larger systematic and cultural challenges. Women should not be in this position to begin with.

We have a society that distributes food, water, healthcare, and even carcinogenic in a way that puts both pregnant woman and unborn child at risk. Gender, racial, religious in addition to all other forms of inequality raises the question of what kind of world we are giving to a yet to be born life. Regardless of a Pro-Life or Pro-Choice ruling

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these human run systems will perpetuate the same horrendous environments. Surely the rooting out of social inequities is what's best for us all. The cultures of racism, sexism, xenophobia, violence, and the like put us on a path toward the question of abortion. This infliction not only happens in personal life, but persists in larger society. Pervasive views, values, and beliefs, have ill effect on the way we treat each other as human beings. Neither a Pro-Life nor Pro-Choice decision will erase these existing cultures that threaten us all. Instead of focusing all our energy externally we should look inward as well, and examine the essence of our individual humanity.

Whether we are Pro-Life or Pro-Choice we agree that women should not be in a position in which they have to make such a difficult decision. Whichever side this ruling comes down on it will ultimately be a reactive response that leaves the underlining conditions and causes in place. The fact that we even have this controversy is reflective of larger human issues.

Bipartisanship will agree to the cultural and systematic challenges that face us all. The optimum answer is neither Pro-Life nor Pro-Choice alone. The prime solution is being united in a proactive response that transforms society in a way that eliminates the necessity to consider this difficult choice.

This is not a political issue, it is a human issue. Pro-Choice is the best ruling for human freedom. But, being proactive is the optimal response for humanity.

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### New Yard Procedure

By Stacey Newkirk

Good morning.

I don't know if you are aware but as of 7/11/22 the procedures for entering and exiting the recreation yard changed. It was a shock to the inmates because on Mondays, afternoon and night yard M.I.O. distributes the ice cream that we purchased for zone 1. Usually we just walk through the

stationary metal detector. After that, there were correctional officers lined up across from one another. As you walked through one would call you, then pat search you.

I always carry mints in my pocket. I had two, the CO told me that if I had three mints I would be denied yard. I thought she was joking. She was not.

Since, it was ice cream day just about everyone in zone 1 came outside. It took us about twenty minutes just to get into the yard. Once we exited, we went through the metal detector again, which is odd. We usually go through once to get in the yard. There was one CO outside the yard pat searching but she couldn't get everyone. Then further down the walkway the COs were again standing across from everyone, stopping, and pat searching everyone. I asked them what were they looking for. They said nothing, there is a new shift commander. If he worked at the border no one would get through. It is okay to change the rules for no good reason. On the institution channel there are about 4 slides of what is NOW not permitted in the yard.

You can not have more the two pieces of candy, only 2 e-cigs, 1 deck of playing cards, a walkman with earphones but no tablet, and a long list of restrictions. I did not find a hard copy on the unit. I only see it on the institution channel and it is too fast to list everything. Now, hardly anyone goes out to yard. I think that was the purpose. Yard was canceled last night for inclement weather but the weather was fine.

What is really going on in here?

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**THE MOVEMENT**

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# The Babylon System -

**Bab.y.lon** - noun, Etymology: Babylon, ancient city of Babylonia, 14th century, a city devoted to materialism and sensual pleasure, many liken Babylon to the United States, see Revelations 17-18.

***If any prisoner, family member, or community activist would like to submit an article that is critical of the state and county prison systems, courts, D.A. offices, police, capitalist corporate America, and the government, just forward your article to the HRC's Newsletter Department for possible printing.***

**M**y dear brothers and sisters in the struggle, I'm writing to you today with the new news that has come to light that we have all been very aware of. The direct and indirect method of how they systematically break the spirit of the humanity of all of us behind these walls and fences. As I sit here with a fellow victim of this tactic we are speaking the truth to each other due to the fact that the both of us have been on the same train but on different cars. We began to speak about how this system from the very start screwed us and countless others and I can bank that they have no clue as to how they were duped. From the very start of the situation you are first sought out by the "MAN" you're the target of of their agenda, the beast must be fed and kept full cause in order for this huge money machine to keep rolling the coals have to be thrown into the fire so the steam can keep the train going.

Now I want to speak on how I believe they cut your own GOD given rights along with the phoney ones you think you have.

**First**, they arrest you and charge you with whatever crime they say you did which may or may not be true, you have the idea that you have some kind of rights to handle or watched enough 'Law and Order' to believe that you can talk your way out of this. If you're in their arena they have the whole plan laid out even before you step one foot in the ring, you're just another face with an invoice number that starts your denial of your so-called rights. Your total annihilation of due process. Now for those of you that believe this is a farce you can turn this off and go back to sleep. I'm speaking from a very sincere place and I want you to be very, very, aware of the real truth that takes place. You're now in their grips and are confused as to what to do next. The very first thing you feel is duress which is a physical and economic duress that's the first step.

**Step 2** is pressure, which is the pressure you give yourself and the pressure of what you feel from your family. Then the pressure you feel from now having to defend yourself, your livelihood, your sanity and not to mention the pressure of being placed into a place that is cold, smelly, loud and uncertain. All you hear from now on is the steel doors opening and slamming shut and guards that in no way

have any emotional attachment to you or your situation. They are here to do a job that they were trained to do and, trust me when I tell you, that they are really trained in the academy to keep all emotions out of the picture.

You are now a manipulator and a scam artist and having nothing good to do, or say, they offer no relief, no comfort, then you're tagged and branded like cattle with a few other numbers that you have to keep track of like your case numbers or docket number. Then you have your prison number then your prison pin number which is the only way you will be identified. Now on course with the agenda, your pin number is the only number you're identified by, your phone to the outside, your commissary, your medical attention, your request to staff and anything you say or do is based around that number. If you try to write to anyone for anything without it you're not heard or seen, the programming has begun and you're not even aware of it yet but you're being systematically brainwashed into seeing the world through their eyes and how they function. Sure you may see some that are acting out and bucking the system. But from my experience they see those people as mental cases who need special attention. The fact is anyone who is NOT going bat shit crazy is the real crazy one because who in their right mind could be content with having these procedures happen to them and not feel violated, invaded, and made to look like you're going insane for not getting along with the system. And God forbid if they give you any help cause it won't be the help you think you need. It's all reprogramming help for you, nothing else.

**Step three** - Active Concealment. They begin to limit who you speak to, they scan everyone and without knowing who you are or who you have in your corner they screen everything from letters, phone lists, visit lists, contact information of who they consider your family and who is not. They limit the amount of people you can have on any of your lists. So, you can forget about all the thousands of people you have as followers on your Instagram or Facebook or Twitter accounts. They can't all be on your lists, it has to be immediate family members and some friends. Then you have to have everyone have their own information updated and correct cause you won't be getting any visits from anyone who doesn't have the proper ID's. Now with confidential information and this new system you're

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being forced to adapt to, if you fail to disclose information it will be regarded as fraudulent which is an oxymoron (confidential information that has to be disclosed) REAL-LY!!

On to **Step 4** - Watch out because a lot of people have the nerve! Yes, now that you're into your reprogramming everybody has their own way of dealing with the system and what they feel you should do as well. But since you're all foggy now you're not thinking straight cause, remember, you're just now having all this shoved down your throat and you haven't even figured out that you're being tricked and conned. So it's all a fraud which is "the making of a material misrepresentation of fact with (1) knowledge of its falsity or reckless indifference to its truth (2) that the listener rely on it, (3) the result that the listener does so rely, and (4) the consequence that the listener is harmed." Now you think that all this that I'm saying to you sounds crazy, but stop and think about it. All this is really happening to you and you're not even aware. And it goes without saying that your programming is going as planned and all is normal to them. But for you the ride is just beginning.

**Step 5** - Deception. Intentional misrepresentation by the courts, your lawyer, the prison counselor, the unit team, the Parole Board, the Psych Dept. and everyone who is profiting from your stay in this reprogramming center and money train. For them the fraud is a generic term embracing all multifarious means that the human ingenuity can devise and that are resorted to by one individual to get advantage over another. Now if you have been where I have been they don't really do so much to make you do anything. The rest of the men will show you the ropes as to what needs to be done and what's expected of you. They will tell you who is "cool" or "the best officer we could have." Now if given the chance and if all these men knew what was really going on or not turning a blind eye to the sadness or to their very own demise, then so much more can be done and less of "normal function," whatever that means!

As you begin to see that your situation is very real, you begin to listen to the men on the unit as to how you can fight. Now, I would tell someone to pick up a book and study what they are using against you. But time may not be on your side to do that. Or you're just too fucking lazy to learn. And when you go to someone who is just as eager to get out of prison as you, they don't spend enough time teaching you the real, but use this to fill their pockets and then you're pissed off because you put all that energy

and your hopes into this person. And now you're fucked. You don't know how to get out of this crazy situation and you're no closer to the front door than when you were you walked in.

**Step 6** - Ignorance to the Law. Is the perfect excuse they use against you. And they are okay with it cause everyday you sit there producing funds for someone and something greater than yourself. You have no clue as to how they are doing it right. And by now you're not even caring about that anymore cause you're so fucked up with what they have you believing, you could not care less about it now.

**Step 7** - Mutual Mistake. When you're arrested you're under the impression that you have some rights and you have some say in what goes on. But when you don't know the law as to how "they" see it and how "they" want it, you're put into a contract under a mutual mistaken understanding concerning a basic assumption of fact or law on which the contract is made. Don't believe me? Look at the signature you gave when you post bond and read the fine print, or the contract you signed when you agreed to have that public pretender defend you, or when you agreed to that lesser sentence cause you were intimidated into taking a plea bargain and the laws you consented to when you agreed to it. "They" knew that what they were doing to you was fraud and false. And even if you say something they will never listen cause they have the Green Light to do this for the system and the hungry beast.

That's why the deals are struck on a daily basis with the screwed up judge who gave up his honor for a buck. And a D.A. who wants nothing more than a notch on his belt. And the Public Pretender who wants to do good but is afraid to give you the best defense they can because this is where they will be spending the most part of their careers, in the same corrupt courtrooms. They will not dare go against the grain and besides they will only see you for a month if that, they will have you out of their hair in no time. And you're stuck doing the time they wanted you to do in the first place. Not knowing the entire truth behind what has happened to you will have you going down a long journey that is not even the right one cause "they" have that figured out too! Yes it's a crazy train ride and I'm sad to say it, but you're on it and everyone who loves you is too!

Now as you sit in these places you begin to wonder as to who, what, and how you can find some sense to all that has happened to you. The idea that maybe your family can now place their whole life on hold and fight for you but you fail to realize that they have a life out there as well.

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And all that you could have been doing when you were home, well they have to pick up the slack like figure out who is going to cover the rent or mortgage, then the car note has to be covered, the insurance, plus the gas which is crazy high now and all the bills that come with that. You're not seeing all of that cause you're in a dazed state of mind, you can't even see straight, you forget that with the bills, food, and lives you left that you also left them with all the responsibility to handle cause you're in the situation you're in. You have become another bill to be covered by your family. Just to keep your hygiene up you have to purchase items from the commissary that is so over priced and everyone knows it, but what can you do. Then of course you need to either set up an account that's going to cost your family money cause they have to pay for the collect calls to be received or have you purchase phone time that is in 10, 15, 25, 50 dollar amounts and the calls are .06¢ a minute and only last for 15 minutes. Not to mention that the call will be interrupted by a recording reminding you that its a monitored call which is coming out of your money that goes to a person who is also capitalizing on your train ride. If you think that is not a lot of money let's just think for a minute. That recording is about 3 seconds long and comes on about every 5 minutes. That adds up if you have about 50,000 plus inmates in State prison that use the phones on an average of 3 calls a day for 7 days a week for years on end. With these numbers, you can imagine the amount of money that is being pushed with just the phones. Then while you're dazed and confused in the cell the food is not something to write home about. But it's not enough and the variety is not what you would think. If I was to send out a copy of what the menu looks like you would think we eat like kings in this place. How dare we complain! But if you could see what it looks and tastes like, you would think twice about coming to prison.

Now you're thinking about the TV that they offer, which in some places you could have for free for just signing up for something on the streets. I can give you a perfect example, my \$197.00, 19 inch RCA flat screen, TV was broken by the search team ("they" would never admit that). I had called around to find out what it would cost because "they" discontinued the sale of my TV and replaced it with a smaller version TV, called Eden TV, at the cost of close to \$200.00 dollars. When I asked how much my TV was worth, they found it online at the cost of \$30.00 and the Eden was \$25. Well I paid close to \$100.00 to have it repaired and sent back to me. Not to mention that it was a

bill that had to be paid by my family cause it would have completely drained my account. Not much money in my account when I was making 29¢ an hour for 8 hours and they take money out for Act 84 which is 25% of everything that is coming in regardless of where it comes from. More money going into the money train. Now that's for those that have it coming out of their accounts and child support; yes, you will be charged for that as well because I pay for it \$15.00 a month.

Now back to your haze. You're now in a cell that's the size of your average home bathroom and it's 2 people in there. Of course "they" could not care less as to who you're in there with, but you're going to go in or go to the "hole" (solitary confinement), so you can lose your precious mind some more and conform to the agenda.

Everyone is trying to get out of prison and it costs a lot to get educated, either with good help or bad help, and if you're not trying to learn, you will get exactly what you pay for. In the meantime you're still trying to keep your wits about you while "they" are trying to get you to conform to "their" agenda and move you about like the cattle on the train and be a part of the "working system" that has been built by the very men you are doing time with and those that have been worked to death. You will begin to see and hear about the men that have 20, 30, 40 plus years in this place and have no idea as to how much the world has changed and they are so used to the way they have been reprogrammed. It's sad to say but if you made it this far into the train ride you're well adjusted into the reprogramming phase that either you're lost into the abyss or you're learning those are your only two options.

It's all about keeping yourself in the most positive mind frame and surrounding yourself with the most like minded people you can find and cherish them cause they are what's going to get you through the days and nights which can add up to many, many, moons on this train ride. And by the time you get the chance to look up you're almost at the door. Now you begin to think about what have you done this whole, entire, time. You ask yourself what did I do? Has the "system" given me all that they could have? Sorry to say, but hell no! This isn't something that they want you to do no matter how good or nice they may seem, cause it's the only way this train is going to be populated. If not, where else are all these men and women going to work? "They" count on you coming back or get ready for the next one to restart the process.

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As I sit here with all of these thoughts inside my head I can't help but to be grateful for what I do have and how much work it took to get here where I am today. I'm speaking from the best experience. I'm serving a lot of time that has to count for something right? I mean what is it for, if not for something that will prevent this from happening again. I turned to the "system" to see what can be done and do you think I got an answer from them? Hell no! It is considered to be an infraction of the rules to build something that goes against what "they" have in mind as if what they've been doing is working. You can see that by what comes in the door and what they are back for. You have to try to be the very best you can to help as much as you can and pray that something will stick with the very men you're suffering with. There is so much to this reprogramming agenda and all this is nothing compared to the treatment you receive from the very men and women who took an oath to work here. You have to deal with their (own) shit when they come into work. You may not believe this but in the daily life of a convict we go through 3 days in one. Let me explain it to you so that you may see why we look worn out and weathered when you do get to see us. The first day begins with the first shift 6 to 2. That's when all the big wigs are here and the administrative staff who sometimes walk around the train to see if all is going according to plan, that the men are acting right, that the security staff (CO's) are on their P's and Q's, that all the rules are being followed, and the cattle are being treated right and not damaged. You have the chance to speak your mind to them, sometimes. Hopefully you're not "spun", but hey they are here to speak to and they have the power to do something about your grievances and or requests. Nothing about their attitudes really affects you cause this shift is being watched closely by the big wigs, and your mental marathon isn't that hard to adjust to. And you can deal with their attitudes for the most part. Then as the shift is beginning to wind down you begin to ask: who is the next officer on shift and you have to get your mind adjusted to begin the second day. Day 2 begins for us and we have to readjust our minds to handle what attitude is walking in the door to watch us. How are they going to be? Who is it? Cause some officers think that punishment is what they are here to do. Nothing else matters cause maybe there is a Sergeant or Lieutenant that wants to stir up the masses and "weed" out the nonsense. Or give their jobs some purpose or maybe they just found out that their wives are cheating on them or leaving them. They may have had a very shitty morning and now they have to put their lives in jeopardy in these places cause that's what they are taught in the academy - to see us as animals and nothing else. So now as day 2 begins your

mental health is put on overdrive cause now you have to worry about if this officer is honing to find some nonsense to harass you about, and what can you do or say cause first shift is gone and anyone who can do something about it is gone. The reins are off. Your whole life that you worked hard at building up and all the work you may have put into your legal work or your phone time you paid for is possibly in jeopardy. Cause this officer may not want to open the door, let alone want to be here for some kind of help. What's nuts is in their own Code of Ethics it states "... Consistent with the responsibility of all correctional employees in the Commonwealth ..to perform their duties with integrity and impartiality and to avoid situations whereby bias, prejudice or personal gain could influence official decisions the following code is being promulgated. Section B Part 1. Each employee in the correctional system is expected to subscribe to the principle that positive action can be done for each inmate. This principle is to be applied without exception. This involves intelligent, humane, and impartial treatment. Profanity directed to inmates, or vengeful, brutal or discriminatory treatment of inmates will not be tolerated. Corporal punishment shall not be utilized under any circumstances."

Now all that is a crock of shit cause you are subjected to this behavior every day at least 5 times a day and forget the grievance system they have set up especially if you're in the right. The culture of this train ride is "defend our own" and I'm speaking from experience not some "he say she say" stuff. I have written up officers for assault, for theft, for damaging my property, for assaulting other inmates, for assaulting each other be it sexually and physically. Did that work out for me? Hell no! So as long as you're on this ride you're going to be put in situations that you may never have thought of in your life. Sure some of you may think that it's what we get for being here but stop and ask yourself how many people you know in your life that have been to prison or loved ones? Do you have someone in your family that's in prison today? If so then 99% of what I'm saying to you is happening to them and to you cause remember you're on this ride as well.

As you should know, this train ride always begins with the Courts. If you have never gone through it be blessed and stay the hell out of them cause again if you don't know shit how are you gonna know if your rights are being violated or if you're getting the best result of you being there in the first place. You have to remember how and why they have been created in the first place for you to know what the hell is going on. Educate yourself and your loved ones cause one day you may find yourself on the platform getting ready to get on this train ride that you will never get off.

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How much time is enough time? If your family member is sitting in here, is that enough time for them or do you believe they should serve more time and be that bill for you. Or do you just forget them and allow this train to swallow them up and act as if they are dead and gone? Or do you ask the question who is benefitting from this? How much money is enough money to be made from this while lives are being torn apart and generations are being lost to this train? When will help come instead of hurt? Those are questions asked by many and answered by few in these places. But still, light always outshines darkness. Right? So then the plan is to make a plan. Build up the ideas in the men to be self sufficient, believe they are not their crimes, and that good can still come out of this regardless of whatever crime they may or may not have committed.

By Yahyah at Frackville

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publican can only vote for a Republican because this is setting up the race for November.

2. November is the General election where a Democrat can vote for a Democrat, Republican or anyone else. A Republican can vote for a Republican, a Democrat or anyone else.

Josh Shapiro for Governor, Austin Davis for Lieutenant Governor and John Fetterman for US Senate are all Democrats running for office and are the most likely to favor us in our fight for freedom for the deserving.

By Amy Sortino (previously known as McAndrews)

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ish Slavery National Network said. "This is strictly about ending slavery. What comes after that is to be seen." And Hughes, in Vermont, said, "Who knows?" what the effects will be. "I just want to abolish slavery."

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## Call for Contributors

THE MOVEMENT magazine is looking for quality writing, especially from the families of prisoners, prisoners, and former prisoners that can contribute to critical thought and reflection in the various sections of this magazine. In particular we are interested in the following:

**Feature articles:** In-depth, analytical articles that critically examine the criminal justice system, poverty, racism, and that provide solutions to those issues.

**Book reviews/political satire art/poetry:** Is there a book you'd like to review for THE MOVEMENT magazine? Do you create political satire cartoons or other artwork? Do you write poetry? Let us know and send us copies of your work.

**Letters:** We love to hear from you. Families of prisoners and prisoners send us a shout-out letter and visiting room photo for our 'Love Knows No Bars' section, and send your letters to the Editor for our new 'Writings of Multiplicity' section of THE MOVEMENT. Please let us know if we have your permission to print your letter.

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TOGETHER AND

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HEALTHY SCHOOLS,

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