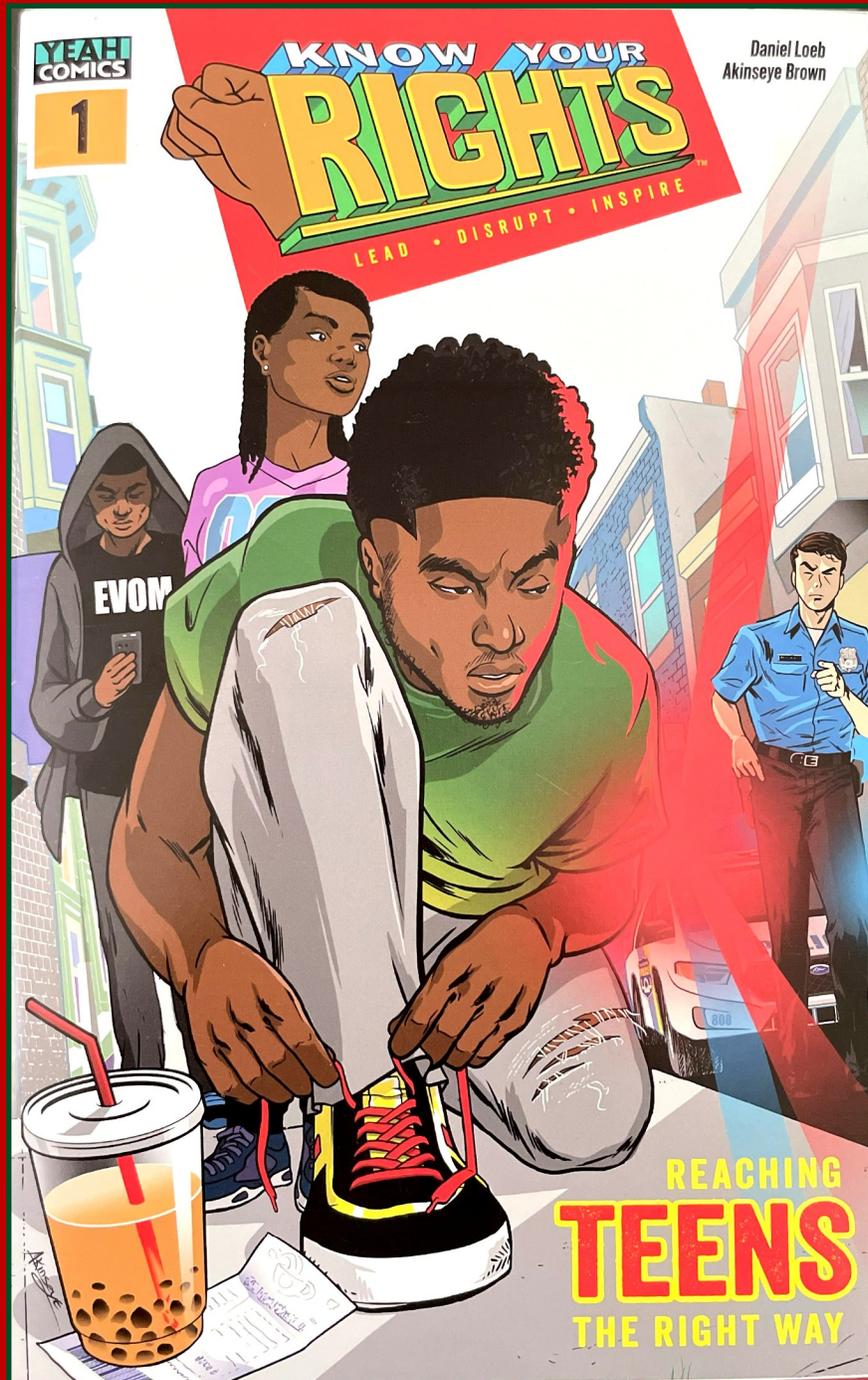


THE MOVEMENT

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

Summer Issue #57

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





YEAH Philly !

Youth Empowerment for Advancement Hangout (YEAH Philly) is a Black-led organization that embraces young people ages 15-24 in West and Southwest Philadelphia, especially those labeled as having violent histories, offering them safe, culturally relevant spaces to heal and grow. Through peer mediation, job training, court advocacy, and civic organizing, YEAH empowers teens and young adults to interrupt community violence and advocate for systemic change while utilizing direct service to advance research and policy associated with making society a better place for young people directly impacted by violence and the legal system.

The comics [see front cover] aren't available on their website yet, but can be pre ordered and shipped at the link below.

Link to pre-order comics:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSenOh8Vh2lfczkQ1RWFObzib-trhSDLXg3UzFLq1NU5SxA_hQ/viewform?pli=1

Link to shirts:

<https://yeahphilly.bigcartel.com>

Mailing address:

YEAH Philly
5257 Walton Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19143

In This Issue

Above photo L-R: DK (participant) Nafis (staff) Tu'Brina (intern) Presley (participant), Paris (staff), (Rodney in front-participant).

From The Desk of The Editor . . . 3

Voices on Re-entry. . . 4-5

Knowledge Is Power: All Power To The People!

*The Little Scandinavian Experience,
By Richie Marra . . . 6

*Court Temporarily Reverses Suspension of Solitary
Confinement, By Jeongyoon Han . . . 8

*Alabama Voters Banned Prison Slavery,
By Shaun Traywick . . . 9-11

Nan Says . . . 16

HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

*Solidarity Not Solitary, By John Rowland . . . 17

*Advocates, Lawmakers Push to Limit Solitary
Confinement in PA Prisons,
From: THE BRADFORD ERA . . . 18-20

*What could you do with \$872,000,000?

By Lily Xie . . . 21

*Update from the United Nations

By Saleem Holbrook . . . 22-23

Love Knows No Bars . . . 24

Solitary Talks

*Remembering Our Most Forgotten,
By Kwaneta Harris . . . 25-26

Your Legal Corner

*A Two-Tiered Justice System,
By Jerome "Hoagie" Coffey . . . 27

Writings of Multiplicity . . . 28-31

The Babylon System

*HOPE: A Life-Altering Necessity,
By Dirk Greineder . . . 33-34

The Editor Speaks



Smart Communications/PA DOC
Terri Harper, OB7637, SCI-Muncy
PO Box 33028
St Petersburg FL 33733

Hello Readers . . . Every day I'm at war with myself to get out of bed and get started, to carry strength in my actions, determination in my deeds, and to further educate myself on people, power and the world. Alas we meet again!

Let me know if you relate: all the discontent and the very real possibility that America find itself at war with Iran, Russian or another threatening country, there's no time like the present to be active in the system of change toward the necessity of fairness.

To say the least, our government is different. The view is more narrow, the ideation is dictatorial, and the struggle has made its presence felt on every level of society.

Still, we must keep looking forward. Legislators, voters, and the incarcerated all have the job of carving out space for returning citizens to fit in and become successful. It starts with a sound honest assessment of the criminal justice system right now, for both female and male prisoners. We (females) have a responsibility to show legislators the merits of equity in a way our male counterparts were able to with their Bipartisan Legislative Roundtable in April, so we are planning our Bipartisan Legislative Forum to take

place before 2025 ends. We need and deserve to have the same access and amount of acknowledgement of our voices and strengths as they did to validate the awareness, changes, progress and overall preparedness that we legitimately complain about not being able to showcase.

Every day brings difficulties and blessings, but here those difficulties are weighted with restrictions that sometimes decimate hope and cause unseen opportunities to pass by. We are clearly in need of relief, because just like the free world, we're battling rising costs for everything such as necessities like toiletries and food, or medical care, and schooling, to communicating with our loved ones and supporters.

In order to have something that keeps us connected to those people and what's happening in the world, many of us sacrifice to pay for cable TV. The local channels are accessible by the antennas sold for \$10 that don't work in most housing units across the prison. We all signed a contract for digital cable services with a more reliable signal, yet one drop of rain in the area shuts down your TV immediately. To make matters worst, the system is switched back to Analog, as soon as they started deducting our money to pay for service. Who is going to demand that SATCOM deliver what we have signed up to receive? Also, who's going to make sure they stick to the 6 month timeline for upgrading the fibers for a Digital signal?

We have the power of writing, giving voice to concerns and grievances, but most importantly shedding light on our ability to advocate for ourselves, proving that if you fight with and for us, it will become a collective success.

Please lend your voices and support us for what we need inside and what we can do if blessed with being outside and achieving then.

God Bless!

Be SAFE!!!

Peace,

Terri

Voices on Re-Entry from Women Inside

When asked my thoughts on re-entry, at first I wasn't sure I had the experience to give an opinion but after thinking about it more, I realized I had more insight than I thought. I've been in and out of recovery for over 10 years and have had many people who I am close to get released from prison. I will also be released one day and know there are many things that would help me, if available.

As a recovering addict, access to long term support is important. The four-month TC program available to inmates is in no way enough. It is proven that long-term treatment has the highest success rate. And reentry programs should be focusing on getting assistance for addicts well in advance of a person's release date with long term care in mind. Those of us with drug and alcohol issues stand little chance outside of prison if those addiction issues aren't addressed. There are very few options available to us outside these walls, especially without contact information of working programs, let alone money to pay for them.

Transitioning back into free society is another important piece. Having things in place for good support upon being released and having someone to help facilitate that transition is necessary. There needs to be counseling, mental health treatment, meetings and viable modes of transportation set up. If we haven't had sufficient time to work on and possibly correct the issues that got us here, how are we to keep bad things from happening again?

Another problem is the lack of resources for mothers returning to their children and community. In cases where children have been spared from going into the system, reentrants are expected to immediately take over their full-time care. For those whose children are in the system, having advocates to help navigate the system is desperately needed, especially for those who don't get a helpful case manager. Support in these situations is critical! The mothers need someone to counsel them on their rights and options. Additionally, family counseling could be paramount to a smoother transition back into motherhood and to avoid any more trauma for the children. Overall, there should be someone to teach mothers techniques for effectively dealing with different problems that will arise in real time, concerning housing and financials.

Job placement would absolutely give re-entrants a leg up. On paper it likely seems as if there are a lot of options, but they aren't great. With a criminal background, finding a job with substance is not easy. Though many places now hire felons, jobs with salaries that can support women with children are even more difficult to come by. A lot of the counseling services are also not very helpful. Outpatient programs are full of people who are court mandated, don't want to be there and are often still using drugs. Being in those situations while trying to stay clean aren't helpful. A lot of the mental health treatments available from the state are just for getting medicated and involve very little therapy of any kind.

Reentry services are one of the most important parts of the system. Setting people up for success when being released is the only way to support people to keep them from coming back; that should be the ultimate goal. Getting feedback and suggestions from the very people dealing within the system is the best way to ensure that a system works and is sustainable over time.

I believe women reentering free society should receive free health care in all states, along with therapy to manage their mental health and whatever PTSD issues they may have developed during their incarceration. The women should receive digital literacy classes and free job search sessions focusing on companies that hire those with criminal backgrounds; free or low-cost trade classes should also be offered. Parenting classes and support groups that take reintegration into the lives of their children are also needed. It would be great to have a resource list of organizations that offer care packages that include hygiene products, writing supplies, a bus pass, and a few donated clothing items.

Women reentering the community have a lot of fears and worries that many may not understand or relate to, and these resources are a critical part of their survival and success. Please Help!

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Here at Muncy, there are a variety of reentry groups. The issue at hand is waiting. Once you are within 18 months of your minimum, you can sign up for the groups that are offered, but you still wait months to even get to the orientation process, and then more months before actually being in the groups. There needs to be a more efficient and more timely process.

They want us to be successful, but we can't get connected to start looking beyond prison. The information, like descriptions of centers and employment agencies, is limited. If we don't seek information from outside sources, then many needs go unresolved and/or are swept under the rug.

Why must we wait until 4 months before our reentry date to come up with an exit plan and get their help doing it. It would also be good to have resources specific to a re-entrant's drug, alcohol, and mental health needs. Not everyone has help outside the prison walls, so re-entrants should be allowed to search all information engines and be closer to choosing places that will suit their individual and familial needs.

If you feel like I do, please encourage the administration at your prison and ask someone who writes well to reach out to program coordinators at Central Office to request that some of this is done for us here and re-entrants there.

Peace.

To Whom It May Concern, I'm writing this on behalf of inmates who max out of state prisons. There's no help for us once we get back into society. There are no funds that I've found, that help us - simply because we've maxed out of prison and won't be on parole.

Who do we turn to? Who will help us with housing?

While incarcerated my husband died, my house is gone, and I don't have any clothes to wear, due to my weight gain, so how am I supposed to even get started getting on my feet? Reentry and other funded programs are closed off to me, as I'm not on state parole, and without that parole number, no program will help me pay my rent for the first 6 months to a year. Totally unfair!

With the questions: "Who do I turn to? What organization can afford to help me?" hanging over them, I feel that's how ex-offenders and parolees alike resort to crime, be it fraud, retail theft, drug dealing or even violence to get by.

Can anyone give us some insight? So we can effectively address this issue. People are looking for a little Hope and Help.

Latoya Lee

They say, "success is when preparation meets opportunity", however, nothing can prepare me for an employer refusing to hire me because of my criminal history or a landlord afraid to lease me an apartment simply because I have felonies. With less than ten years until my minimum date, I am doing all I can, with limited access to resources, to ensure that I will obtain employment, as well as housing when I get out of prison. Those are the two most important things I will need to secure to succeed following my release.

I feel the DOC can definitely do more to help reentrants with housing and employment opportunities. One way they can help is by working with companies/businesses to provide apprenticeship programs and/or job training while we are still incarcerated. Once we're released, we can immediately begin working for that company.

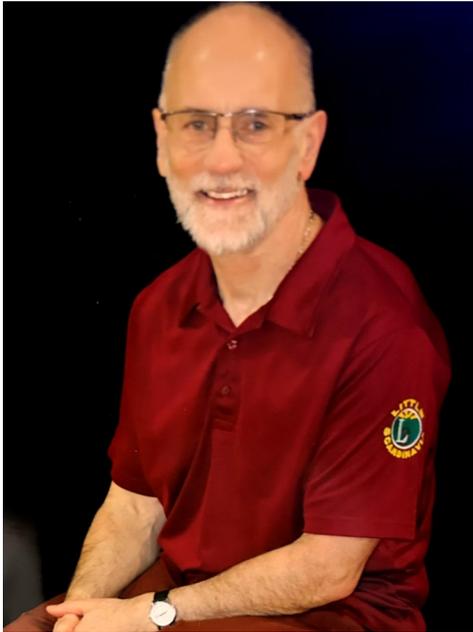
In 2004, prior to my incarceration, there were "For Rent" signs everywhere, and you could call the landlord, go see the apartment, and if you liked it, it was yours. Things have drastically changed since then. Now everything is online where you fill out an application costing up to \$75 and requires both a background and credit check. They make it almost impossible to have safe, suitable housing. Development companies are buying up everything; perhaps the DOC can partner with these companies to provide affordable housing for ex-offenders.

With or without the DOC's help, I am determined to be successful. If no one wants to give me an opportunity, I will create an opportunity for myself and others like me.

Sarah Bell #OJ1653

The Little Scandinavian Experience

By Richie Marra



I wake up most mornings around 5:30am; other mornings, I am awakened by the sun shining in through the window of my room. I live in an efficiency of sorts. I get out of bed, turn on the TV mounted on the wall, and begin to make breakfast. I open my cabinet and choose a cereal, pick out a banana sitting in a fruit bowl, and open up my refrigerator to get some cold milk. Then I sit down at my small table to watch the news and eat my breakfast. I'm already thinking about my day and making decisions about what I'm going to do. I have some laundry I need to do. I have to take some chicken out of the freezer for dinner. I have a busy day at work, but I have time every morning to make sure I get a run in and a shower before heading to work.

At 6:30 I leave my room and head to the laundry room to put my clothes in the washer. Then I head over to the treadmill or elliptical to get my run in for the next 50 minutes. At 8:00, I'm sitting at a computer in the audio/video room getting work done.

This might be a typical or "normal" morning for most citizens across the country. But I'm a resident of a state correctional institution in Chester, Pennsylvania. Yes, a prisoner. I reside on a specialized unit called The Little Scandinavian Unit, which is part of a study being conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and Drexel University on how the conditions of confinement

and normalized living improves success for residents when they are released, in addition to reducing stress & anxiety for residents & correctional staff while they are serving their time.

In Scandinavian countries, they developed prisons so its residents can live a more normalized life while serving their sentence. Instead of prisoners learning how to live and survive in the confines of prison that easily feeds anti-social behavior and habits, they created living environments that better mimic and encourage pro social attitudes and habits - thus having residents learn how to live in society while they are separated from it. After all, they believe the punishment is in the separation from society, and should not be in the environment or conditions of confinement.

The L.S. Unit at SCI Chester has 64 single cells/rooms. Each room has a flat screen mounted on the wall, a table, an unattached chair, a 6-foot tall locker/cabinet, a mini refrigerator, and finished floors. Residents are allowed to have a mural painted on their white walls.

The unit hosts a small kitchen with four stoves & ovens, three large refrigerators, appliances such as toasters, air fryers, microwaves, waffle makers, rice cooker, blender, mixer and more. The unit also has a large 75 gallon fish tank, two video game consoles & TVs, Ping-Pong & pool table, weight machine, treadmill, elliptical and a couple of stationary bikes. There are comfortable couches on each side of the unit (the "yellow section" & "blue section") with 75" Unit TVs, a chess table and small end tables. There is a laundry room with a washer & dryer, ironing board & iron, and an ice machine.

There are three officers on the unit depending on staff availability. That is 3 officers for 64 residents compared to 1 officer for 126 residents on other units. But the officers on the L.S. Unit are considered contact officers who act more as counselors and are allowed to engage more with the men. They can go online to help residents get information about post release or find information that helps residents with a program or project they are working on. They can cook with us and eat with us, which they often do.

Residents can shop for groceries at Shoprite every other week - Top tier one week, bottom tier the next. We will sit with one of the contact officers while they place our order online. We can spend up to \$125 for each order.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

This is valuable because we learn how to shop, budget our money and we get practice at making a lot of little decisions everyday about preparing our own meals.

Doors open at 6:30 in the morning and we only lock up during count times for about 30 minutes. Lockup for the night is at 11:00pm.

"Productive time" is the time of the day during the week when most people in society are working - between the hours of 8:00am and 3:00pm. During this time you can not just hang out and play games or watch TV. You must be doing something productive; for example, studying, doing laundry, cooking, cleaning, working out.

The LS Unit is not an honor block, so you can't earn your way onto the unit. Residents for the unit are chosen by lottery in order to get a sample of a regular general population unit for the study - and to test if the conditions of confinement matter. They also weigh for different tiers of sentences. A certain percentage of the unit will have residents with sentences of say less than 5 years, others may be 5 to 10 years, and others may be more than 10 years. Because lifers represent about 10% of the PA prison population, and they have some impact on the population, they've included six lifers on the unit which represents about 10% of the unit. Lifers also bring experience and mentorship skills to the unit. New residents are chosen several times a year as residents are released. Almost 100 residents have been released since the official opening in May of 2022. One lifer was released, and another lifer will be released very soon. Open lifer slots are filled with other lifers.

We conduct special events on the unit to promote community. For example, we do special meals on the unit for holidays & Superbowl parties, BINGO, Movie Night, and more. Wharton conducts business classes and workshops for residents several times a year. Nutritionists from Villanova conduct workshops to teach healthy eating & food preparation. Uplift Solutions, a reentry program, conducts classes. A professor from Drexel comes in weekly to help residents prepare for parole and commutation interviews. There are also workshops conducted by the residents from time to time.

The unit is fertile ground for growth. Over the last three years I've been interviewing new residents for our newsletter, and one of the biggest takeaways I got from these interviews is that some of the men realize how abnormally they have been living. They don't have to be on point all the time here, they are not overly stimulated with

the noise & other stressors that are common in prison. They can let down their guard and read, or think more positively about their future. There has only been one fight on the unit in three years, and there isn't any other unit in this prison that could even come close to that - even in the last three months. And most of the men coming onto the LS Unit are all capable of violence if they chose to be.

The PA DOC is opening three more units at SCI Smithfield, Fayette, and Cambridge Springs. I think that's great, only I'd like to see an entire SCI converted. In Scandinavian prisons, they don't have one unit that follows a certain philosophy while the rest of the prison follows a different one. And their recidivism rate is 20%. It is hard to do that well when only 5% of the prison follows this new way of "normalized" living. And the buy-in from all levels of correctional staff is paramount for its success. Remember, this isn't just about the residents; LS correctional staff experience improved wellness while on the job. However, different administrative personnel who don't agree with normalization can easily and quietly sabotage the program - even unintentionally. The easiest way is by killing staff moral, or allowing staff to work these units who don't buy-in.

*These thoughts are just my opinion, but I've been in several SCIs around the state over the last 38 years, so I have some experience and some reasons to be cautious about my optimism. I tend to see the glass half full, but I'm very pragmatic and don't discount my own life's experience when assessing why some people might still feel that prison should be hard. What scares me today is that many of us have been in prison for so long - longer than most prison personnel - that I realize many of them don't know the why's. Why things were done in the past, and/or why they are being done today. Most staff weren't even around during the Camp Hill riots in 1989. They didn't know that there was a time when inmates could not be celled up with other inmates, or that double celling was supposed to be a temporary situation. They don't know why the DOC allowed inmates to purchase personal TVs, or why inmates were allowed to form inmate organizations. As they say, when you don't know history, you are destined to repeat it. I hope my cautiousness is uncalled for because I love to see progress, not regression.

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Richie Marra, AS0160, SCI-Chester
PO Box 33028
St Petersburg FL 33733

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

COURT TEMPORARILY REVERSES SUSPENSION OF SOLITARY confinement law in NY prisons

By Jeongyoon Han
Published Jul 4, 2025

A New York judge has temporarily barred the Hochul administration from overriding state law and giving prisons blanket permission to keep incarcerated people in prolonged solitary confinement.

The state’s correctional system in February suspended implementation of the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement Act, or HALT Act, which limits the use of the practice. Prison officials said they did so to address safety concerns when corrections officers went on strike. But the unbridled use of solitary confinement continued well past the state’s self-imposed June 6 deadline to reinstitute the restrictions.

In a court order this week, Judge Daniel Lynch wrote that the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, or DOCCS, violated “the separation of powers” by temporarily suspending the law.

Lynch wrote that the department “wholly failed to demonstrate” that temporarily repealing the HALT Act “has a basis in rational fact.”

Riley Doyle Evans, a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society who represented the six inmates who filed the lawsuit, said his clients and others had been “subjected, unlawfully, to prolonged solitary confinement for months — with DOCCS not providing justification.” Evans said that as a result of the HALT Act suspension, incarcerated people were in solitary confinement for 22 to 24 hours a day — even if they did not have misconduct that merited temporary isolation.

“No agency in the executive has the authority to suspend a duly enacted law,” Evans said.

Lynch ordered the preliminary injunction to go into effect by July 11. He wrote that the corrections department would have to give an explanation to the court if the department needs exceptions in some facilities.

A spokesperson for the department said in a statement that officials are reviewing the decision.

Starting in February, DOCCS Commissioner Daniel Martuscello said the department would stop mandating that those in solitary confinement get four hours of time outside their cells for educational and health programs, as the law requires. All other individuals get seven hours of recreational and outside time. Martuscello extended the suspension in March for 90 days to last until June 6. Martuscello said the measure was in response to a statewide emergency triggered by corrections officers’ three-week-long wildcat strike. The officers, in part, were striking to protest HALT.

During a news conference in early March, Gov. Kathy Hochul supported the decision to temporarily pause the full implementation of the HALT Act. She specifically cited the requirement that those in solitary confinement get four hours for programs such as career services.

“That is the area that is temporarily suspended because I’m wildly acutely aware that the hours are just too long,” Hochul said at the time. “No one should have to work a 24-hour shift, but it’s been part of having to comply with that law that has created this tension here.” Hochul’s office did not respond to requests for comment.

But even after June 6, Evans and criminal justice advocates said, the corrections department never re-implemented the HALT Act. Evans said his clients were in cells for weeks on end. “They were being essentially locked in their cells and not afforded any sort of access to programs or rehabilitative activities,” he said. “These conditions are profoundly harmful to human beings.”

The HALT Act, which went into effect in 2022, limits the use of solitary confinement to 15 consecutive days and 20 days within a 60-day period. Corrections officers have protested the law since its inception, arguing that it stripped officers of an option for disciplining incarcerated people, and was leading to increased violence in state prisons.

Repealing the HALT Act was a core demand among striking officers during the strike, which began days after 10 officers were charged in connection to the beating death of 43-year-old Robert Brooks at Marcy Correctional Facility in December.

Alabama Voters Banned Prison Slavery—But Prisoners Say It Hasn’t Stopped

By: Shaun Traywick

In 2022, Alabama became one of the first states in the nation to ban slavery without exception. A constitutional amendment, passed overwhelmingly by voters, removed language that had long allowed involuntary servitude to continue in state prisons—a holdover from the 13th Amendment’s infamous “exception clause.” The 13th Amendment, though widely celebrated at the time for abolishing most forms of slavery, still allows for involuntary servitude as punishment for a crime, and has remained the legal backbone for the vast system of prison labor in the U.S., where incarcerated people can be compelled to work under threat of punishment.

In Alabama, that legal framework is now gone. The new constitution is clear: slavery and involuntary servitude are banned in all forms, period.

And yet, the practice continues.

Incarcerated people in Alabama are still being forced to work, in part through “work release” programs where refusal can mean being sent to solitary confinement, transferred to more dangerous prisons, or denied parole. Some are punished not for choosing not to work, but for being *unable* to work—because of disability, injury, or chronic illness. In some cases, people are removed from work release without explanation, and when they seek to be reassigned or evaluated medically, they are told they are “noncompliant” or “refusing.” The punishment is the same.

It’s against this backdrop that a group of incarcerated workers filed an ongoing federal lawsuit in December 2023, challenging Alabama’s continued use of forced prison labor. Their claims go far beyond the state’s constitutional ban on slavery. The lawsuit also invokes the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which prohibits labor obtained through coercion, and the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871—a Reconstruction-era statute designed to combat racially motivated abuses by government officials. The suit further alleges that Alabama’s overly harsh and racist parole policies trap Black people in prisons for years beyond when they have proven ready for release, as part of a plan to keep large numbers of workers enrolled in forced, off-site work release. Together, the claims argue that Ala-

bama’s prison labor system is not only unconstitutional, but part of a broader pattern of racial discrimination, corruption, and systemic violence.

The plaintiffs allege they are “entrapped in a system of ‘convict leasing’ in which incarcerated people are forced to work, subject to threats of physical violence, deprivation of bare necessities, and threat of extended imprisonment, for little or no money, to the significant benefit of the numerous government entities and private businesses that ‘employ’ them.”

The lead plaintiff, who goes by Kinetik Justice, has faced years of retaliation for creating the Free Alabama Movement, through which he encourages incarcerated people to strike and engage in other nonviolent refusal to work. In the complaint, Justice alleges that after helping organize a 2014 strike, he faced retaliation, including “years of solitary confinement, torture, taking away his personal and legal documents and records, beatings and transfers to prevent him from speaking about Alabama’s forced labor system.”

Another plaintiff, Lakiera Walker, who was incarcerated from 2007 to 2023, alleges that for years she was forced to work long, daily hours of unpaid physical labor in the prison, under threat of solitary confinement. She subsequently conducted road work for the county, for which she was paid \$2 per day. When a work supervisor demanded sex, Walker refused and reported him to the prison. In response, she alleges prison officials issued her a disciplinary offense for purportedly refusing to work and sent her back to unpaid work in the prison.

During the final years of her incarceration—including after the 2022 state constitutional amendment banned forced labor—Walker was sent on work release to off-site, private companies, including one where she regularly worked 12-hour shifts inside freezers without adequate work clothes. The Alabama prison system keeps 40 percent of people’s work release pay, and charges them additional fees like \$5 per day for van rides to work and \$15 per month for laundry. Once, when Walker was so ill she had to be carried to the healthcare unit, she says a prison job placement officer told her to “get up and go make us our 40%.”

Last year, the judge initially dismissed the case without prejudice, allowing the plaintiffs to amend their complaint.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

But the early ruling made something else clear: the court has yet to grasp the full extent of what is happening inside Alabama's prisons—the coercion masked as corrections, the public-private partnerships that treat incarcerated bodies as profit centers, and the near-constant threat of physical violence used to enforce compliance.

The defendants include the commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections, top officials in the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles, and several private corporations that profit from this labor. One of those companies is Bama Budweiser, a distributor operating under the Budweiser name.

In its March 2024 legal response to the allegations, Bama Budweiser does not meaningfully address the constitutional issue—whether Alabama's prison labor system violates the state's explicit ban on slavery. Instead, the company's brief resorts to a series of dehumanizing attacks and dangerous arguments that seek to delegitimize the plaintiffs themselves.

The brief opens by arguing that the plaintiffs “never worked for Bama Budweiser,” and therefore the claims should be dismissed. This, of course, ignores that the company has contracted with ADOC to knowingly obtain and benefit from the labor of incarcerated workers. But Bama Budweiser's response then quickly shifts into something much darker. In one of the most inflammatory passages, the company writes:

“What we have, then, are two murderers, an attempted murderer, multiple violent felons, robbers, burglars, and drug dealers. And they come into this Court complaining about having to work for a beer distributor.”

This is not a legal defense. It's a moral judgment—one that seeks to strip incarcerated people of constitutional protection by appealing to public fear and disgust. The clear implication is that some people do not deserve rights. That their labor can be taken. That their bodily autonomy is irrelevant.

Elsewhere in the brief, Bama Budweiser points back to the previous version of the Alabama Constitution that provided an exception legalizing slavery for people in prison, which seems to suggest that the amendment—passed in 2022 by 76 percent of Alabama voters—banning slavery and involuntary servitude for all, without exception, should never have passed. They dismiss media reports of inhumane pris-

on conditions as unreliable “hearsay,” and mock the idea that enforcing labor rules against incarcerated people might ever rise to the level of coercion.

All of this is done under the brand name of Budweiser—a company that, in recent years, has styled itself as a champion of inclusion and human dignity. Its parent company, Anheuser-Busch InBev, has released national advertisements promoting LGBTQ+ rights, immigrant narratives, and “American values.” They have called themselves proud allies of “marginalized communities.”

But in this brief, filed in a federal court in Alabama, a place where marginalized communities are plentiful, a distributor making use of the company's name is sending an unambiguous message: people in prison are not worthy of dignity. Not worthy of labor protections. Not worthy of constitutional enforcement.

The dissonance is staggering.

That's why I'm calling on Anheuser-Busch InBev to go on the record. If they believe, as they say, in human dignity and freedom, they must disavow this brief. They must state clearly whether they support the position their distributor has taken—that the constitutional ban on slavery does not apply to people behind bars.

Because silence here is not neutrality. It's complicity.

This isn't a theoretical debate. I've been incarcerated in Alabama since 2006, and I've spent years in solitary confinement—not for violence or escape, but for speaking out against forced labor. Since 2016, I've helped organize work strikes, exposed illegal retaliation, and insisted that every person behind these walls deserves the right to refuse labor without facing abuse.

That's not “insubordination.” That's autonomy. That's freedom. Those in prison have lost nearly everything, but under the U.S. Constitution we still have the right to say no to bodily abuse and exploitation. And the fact that such basic assertions of bodily integrity are met with punishment shows just how far this system has strayed from anything resembling rehabilitation.

People in prison are disciplined for refusing to work even when they are mentally or physically unable to perform the assigned task. There are men here with untreated injuries, degenerative conditions, serious mental illness—and still, refusal is met with sanctions. Write-ups. Lost parole dates. Transfers to higher-security prisons. Extended time in cages.

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

That is not a job. That is coercion. That is slavery—rebranded for the 21st century.

The question before the court is whether this system is legal under Alabama’s new constitution. But the question before the public is even more urgent: will we allow companies to profit from forced labor, while branding it “corrections”? Will we let corporate lawyers rewrite the meaning of abolition from inside federal courtrooms?

Alabama voters already made their decision. They banned slavery. Now it’s time for the courts—and the corporations—to honor that decision.

Anheuser-Busch can’t have it both ways. If they stand for justice, they must say so. If not, their name will remain attached to a defense that argues—in plain terms—that the right to be free from slavery does not belong to everyone.

The stakes could not be clearer. And neither could the line that’s been crossed.

From Truthout on June 19, 2025

					1	3		
7	6		4			1		
		5		7			6	
6							3	
					7		4	9
5				1				
				3	2			
	9							8
	8	4						

Expert Sudoku Puzzle—Answers on page 14



BIPARTISAN LEGISLATIVE FORUM

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT TERRI HARPER AT: SMART COMMUNICATIONS/PA DOC
TERRI HARPER, OB7637, SCI-MUNCY, PO Box 33028, ST PETERSBURG FL 33733

The women at SCI Muncy sends greetings and hope that this letter finds you well.

We are embarking on an initiative that seeks to shine light on the profound impact of redemption, rehabilitation and second chances for those sentenced to life without parole. SCI Muncy will be hosting a bipartisan legislative forum, on a date to be determined, by House Speaker, Joanna McClinton.

We aim to foster meaningful conversations on trauma, recidivism, commutation, second-look laws, and the transformative journey of reentry. Rooted in values of accountability, growth and compassion, our efforts align with the core beliefs of conservatives and all who advocate for justice that is both fair and forward in thinking. As we come together in the spirit of dialogue and transformation, we extend this invitation to join us in communicative discussion on the power of redemption and second chances. By engaging with the lived experiences of women serving life without parole, virtual life sentences (those serving extreme sentences tantamount to life), and formerly incarcerated individuals, we can collectively advocate for policies that honor rehabilitation and successful reentry efforts.

Your presence and participation will help shape a future where justice is balanced with compassion and where every individual is heard and recognized.

We would be honored to receive your response confirming your interest in attending. Please reply to this letter (address above) at your earliest convenience so that we can include you in the planning and share additional details about the forum.

Hospice Behind Bars

By Larry N. Stromberg, #DG6379, SCI-Phoenix

Hospice is one of my jobs behind bars
as I sit with the dying, those condemned by society,
riddled with cancer, AIDS, Hep C, heart disease, and Et cetera.

Each day the sickness slowly fades them away
into a shell of the person, they once were.
One by one, carried out in a body bag into the unknown.
A portrait of Death by Incarceration.

Their souls set free from governmental judgment, victim opposition,
and agonizing remorse by an Angel of Mercy.
The heavy burden of regret removed from their guilty hearts
by the gift of death.

I realize, that could be me one day, dying in prison.
Laying in the infirmary hospital bed motionless, defecating myself,
consumed by painful bed sores looking into the supernatural for relief.
That could be me. It could be any of us.

I journey on, helping the hurting, lost, innocent, and guilty ones at Death's doorstep.
Becoming a family member, Good Samaritan, a listening ear and praying for them all.
Hoping for another shot of daylight for myself seeing this eradication.
A second chance back into society with my remorseful heart.

Hospice behind bars, my four hour shift is tonight.

11:00 pm to 3:00 am

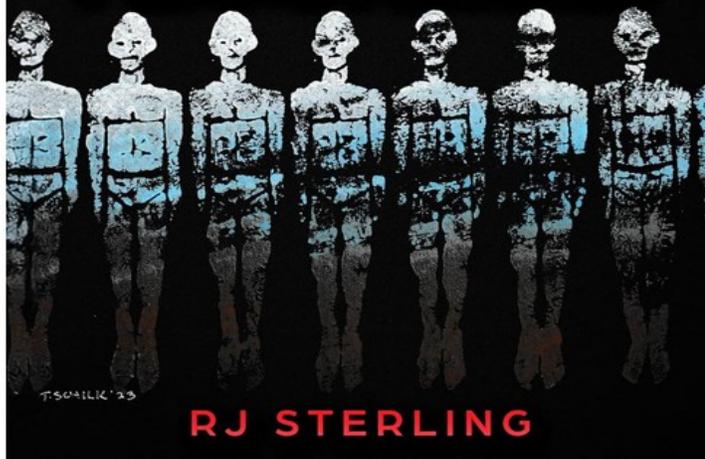
That's where I'll be.

© 2025

From the Publishers of *Get Free and Stay Free.com*

LOST VOICES OF PRISONERS SERVING

DEATH BY INCARCERATION IN PENNSYLVANIA



Lost Voices of Prisoners Serving Death by Incarceration in Pennsylvania

Written by a retired prison educator under the pseudonym R.J. Sterling, this powerful collection of firsthand accounts challenges the notion that justice should be solely about punishment. Through these voices, readers will meet individuals who were once trapped in cycles of violence, poverty, and survival but who, despite an unforgiving system, have become mentors, artisans, and peacemakers.

This book is not just a call for reform—it is a testament to the human capacity for change. It asks a fundamental question: Should our justice system recognize redemption?

Well known and respected Richie Marra as well as others deserving second chances are featured in this influential read.

May be purchased on Amazon for \$15.00 or Kindle for \$9.00.

Expert

9	2	8	5	6	1	3	7	4
7	6	3	4	2	9	1	8	5
4	1	5	3	7	8	9	6	2
6	7	2	9	8	4	5	3	1
8	3	1	2	5	7	6	4	9
5	4	9	6	1	3	8	2	7
1	5	7	8	3	2	4	9	6
3	9	6	7	4	5	2	1	8
2	8	4	1	9	6	7	5	3

THE MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

Founders

*Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall
Patricia "Mama Patt" Vickers*

Editor-In-Chief

Terri Harper

Co-Editor-In-Chief

Patricia "Mama Patt" Vickers

Owner

Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall

Parent Organization:

Human Rights Coalition (HRC)

Founded: 2007

I want to support the Human Rights Coalition by giving a Donation!

Name: _____

Institution/ID (if necessary): _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Donation Amount: _____ \$20.00 - \$40.00
 _____ \$50.00
 _____ \$100.00 or above

Families, we rely on member support, any gift you make above \$25.00 helps us a great deal.

Please make checks payable to the Human Rights Coalition and mail donations to:
HRC, PO Box 34580, Phila., PA 19101, ATTENTION: Charitable Donations.

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

***Human Rights Coalition
P.O. Box 34580
Philadelphia, PA 19101***

or

Email:

Info@hrcoalition.org

*How can I receive a copy of THE
MOVEMENT?*

Simply send your contact info to:

*Human Rights Coalition
P.O. Box 34580
Philadelphia, PA 19101
Attention: Newsletter!*

*Donations are always welcome, but
not required for your magazine.*



Home Remedies

... Remember When!

Hospitals or a Doctor wasn't an option.

You was never sick enough that these remedies couldn't cure what was ailing you . . .

They touched your forehead with their hand. If you was hot you had a fever. Who had a thermometer?

Put you in cool water to break that fever.

Put grease on a burn.

Iodine and Mercurochrome for cuts.

Aspirin if your head hurt.

Castor oil, Father John's, Cod Liver oil. You'd better swallow it, you better not gag or spit it out!

Rub Vicks Vapor Rub on the chest for colds.

Sweet oil for ear ache.

Turpentine and a drop of sugar . . .

or onion and garlic . . .

Sick on a school day, they would simply say, "Get out my face, you not staying home, you still going to school.

So many more. You name yours.

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 'Writings of Multiplicity' section of THE MOVEMENT. Please let us know if we have your permission to print your letter.

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!



June 4, 2025

Solidarity Not Solitary Harrisburg Rally

Thanks to everyone for a great day of action and rally last week in the capitol! Powerful and energetic way to kick off the new solitary bill and celebrate the movement to stop solitary in PA. Some of our long-time movement leaders were present, including torchbearers like Shabaka, Mama Patt, Saleem, and Shandre Delaney who kept the issue active inside and outside of prisons over the past 30 years, and there were also many new people too. This was the first speech about solitary in the capitol for all of the solitary survivors who spoke at the rally—Shout-outs to Remy, Shawn, Caine, Shariff, and Rodney—and at least 30 people lobbied for the first time against solitary too. Groups came from Philly, Pittsburgh, the Lehigh Valley, Centre County, Chester and Delaware counties, Lackawanna and Luzerne counties, and the Harrisburg-York area.

We also did 20+ lobbying visits on the day of action and we'll be doing more once this bill, sponsored by Emily Kinkead, is soon introduced.

Spread the Energy!

There are many ways to keep up the energy from the rally. If anyone wants to host an advocacy event for a group, church, etc., let us know and we can arrange speakers and the solitary simulation goggles. The same applies if you want to meet with your State Representative (summer is usually a good time since they're not in legislative session).

FYI, there are three court cases against long-term administrative solitary in PA that are in motion this year in the federal courts. And there are local groups that you can link with that are active in Allegheny County, the Lehigh Valley, Northeast PA, Dauphin County, and elsewhere trying to stop and limit solitary locally.

We can help you spread the energy, simply contact us via info@alcenter.org or info@hrcoalition.org. Or you may write to: HRC, PO Box 34580, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Cheers to all the work that got us to this point, and to what's to come!

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

Advocates, lawmakers push to limit solitary confinement in Pa. prisons

June 14, 2025 HARRISBURG (TNS) — Reform advocates are making another push to limit the use of solitary confinement in Pennsylvania prisons and jails, a long-running effort that has seen fits and starts of legislation and court cases over several years.

Advocates rallied in the Capitol last week in support of a bill that would, among other reforms, limit solitary confinement to no more than 15 days at a stretch.

That standard is consistent with United Nations treaties often called “Mandela Rules” in reference to the late South African civil rights leader, Nelson Mandela — standards to which the United States is nominally subject to under international law, but not in this country.

“Solitary confinement is torture on an international level.

Confining prisoners of war in solitary confinement is a violation of international treaties, and yet we do this here in Pennsylvania every single day,” said Rep. Emily Kinkead, D-Allegheny County, who has circulated a bill memo seeking support for the legislation.

In addition to the 15-day standard, Kinkead anticipates her bill would limit what offenses could be used to justify solitary confinement, require a certain amount of outside contact even when in solitary, and other reforms.

At a press conference last Wednesday, Pennsylvanians who had served time in prison related the well-known

negative effects of solitary confinement, being kept alone in small cells with virtually no amenities and allowed out only an hour a day – or sometimes not at all.

“You don’t realize how important human contact is until it’s taken from you,” said Remy Kayal, who said he was held in solitary at Northampton County Prison for a matter of weeks after getting into a confrontation with police at a traffic stop.

Kayal had undiagnosed bipolar disorder at the time, he said, but was denied substantive medical care – or even the opportunity to use the bathroom. He eventually began to hallucinate and believe he had super powers.

Solitary confinement is widely viewed as counter-productive, causing more public safety problems down the road than it fixes. A recently-released study of Pennsylvania inmates found



Rep. Emily Kinkead, D-Allegheny County, speaks at a rally in support of limits to solitary confinement in Pennsylvania prisons. Zack Hoopes.

that those who had spent 90 days or more in solitary confinement were 15% to 25% more likely to re-offend, even after controlling for variables such as the severity of the original offense and parole conditions.

A 2019 study of North Carolina inmates found that those who had spent time in solitary were far more likely to die within a year after release, with solitary inmates a whopping 127% more likely to die of opioid overdoses when they return to the community.

(Continued on page 19)

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

(Continued from page 18)

“They’re coming home mentally ill, not diagnosed, and we wonder why they’re going back to prison?” asks Shawn Bridges, a Berks County activist who spent 20 years in death-row solitary confinement before his murder conviction was overturned.

The prevalence of solitary confinement can be difficult to quantify, given that inmates in Pennsylvania are spread between county jails – used to hold people during adjudication and for sentences under two years – and the state prison system run by the state Department of Corrections (DOC), where inmates serve longer sentences.

The DOC refers to solitary confinement conditions as “restricted housing,” which can be imposed either by “administrative custody” or “disciplinary custody.” The former refers to inmates who have been deemed an inherent risk, whereas the latter is for inmates who have committed some sort of infraction.

Of the roughly 33,000 inmates the DOC is holding at any given time, approximately 5% are being held in restricted housing, according to the department’s most recent population reports.

The median length-of-stay in restricted housing was 27 days as of the first quarter of 2025, the department told PennLive. Statistics submitted to the House Judiciary Committee last year indicated that 75% of DOC inmates in solitary confinement had been there for 14 days or more, and 8% had been there for a year or longer.

Democratic state lawmakers have filed numerous bills over the years seeking similar goals to the bill that Kinkead plans to run, adding various checks and balances to the use of solitary confinement. None of these have made it very far in the legislative process.

Court cases have resulted in some change. In 2018, the Abolitionist Law Center and the American Civil Liberties Union led a lawsuit that resulted in the DOC agreeing to stop automatically placing death row prisoners on administrative solitary confinement. Legal challenges also resulted in an overhaul of how the prison system provides out-of-cell treatment to those with mental health issues.

The DOC has also recently reformed its procedures for administrative and disciplinary custody, including guaranteed hearings for inmates who are placed in restricted housing.

But many former inmates said this works better on paper than in practice. Long periods of disciplinary solitary can be imposed for offenses such as having unauthorized ketchup packets; vague assertions that an inmate is difficult can justify years of administrative solitary, former incarcerated people said.

“The minute they let me out, I asked them ‘what did I do?’ They still did not tell me what I did. This issue has pervaded for decades,” said Caine Pelzer, who said nearly all of his 15 years in state prisons were spent in solitary confinement.

DOC procedures still only mandate an hour of out-of-cell time five days per week for those in restricted housing. Only after 30 days straight in solitary confinement does out-of-cell time increase; only after 90 days are inmates allowed to use the phone for call that aren’t deemed emergency or legal in nature, according to published protocols.

“The mentality is to break you,” Pelzer said, and in many cases “put you in a situation where you’re going to kill yourself.”

The Abolitionist Law Center is pursuing a case seeking broad relief from the conditions of solitary confinement. The lawsuit, filed on behalf of several disabled inmates who have been in solitary for months or years, argues the DOC’s use of solitary confinement remains indiscriminate enough to constitute violation of disability laws as well as cruel and unusual punishment under the Eight Amendment and violation of due process under the Fourteenth Amendment.

Such efforts have seen some pushback, mostly from corrections officers’ groups who say solitary confinement is necessary for their safety when dealing with unpredictably violent inmates.

In an op-ed last year, John Eckenrode, the head of Pennsylvania’s corrections officers’ union, said the use of restricted housing was a crucial deterrent and that further limiting it “will be sending a clear signal to inmates that

(Continued on page 20)

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

(Continued from page 19)

it's open season on officers, prison employees and other inmates."

Eckenrode pointed to the experience of New York, which passed a law in 2022 that limited the use of solitary confinement, after which reported assaults on officers increased. Skeptics note, however, that assault reports in New York prisons were on the rise for years before the law was passed, and the new limitations on solitary didn't change the trajectory.

Further, Kinkead said, Pennsylvania already has a proven case where less-restrictive conditions for inmates has drastically reduced violence. The state's Little Scandinavia unit at SCI Chester — modeled after corrections programs in Norway and Sweden — has seen only one fight in its six-year existence.

"When you treat people with dignity in prison, you don't get the incidents, you don't get the fights, you don't get the kind of behavior that people are so afraid of if we limit solitary confinement," Kinkead said.

FROM: Advocates, lawmakers push to limit solitary confinement in Pa. prisons - **The Bradford Era**



Card Games



- | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|
| BACCARAT | HEARTS | ROOK |
| BLITZ | MAO | RUMMY |
| BRIDGE | NERTZ | SKAT |
| CANASTA | OH HELL | SLAP JACK |
| CASINO | OLD MAID | SNAP |
| CRIBBAGE | PATIENCE | SPADES |
| EUCHRE | PINOCHLE | SPIT |
| FAN TAN | PIQUET | WAR |
| FREE CELL | POKER | WATTEN |
| GO FISH | PYRAMID | WHIST |

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

**What could you
do with**

\$872,000,000?

In 2026 the Philadelphia Police Department's proposed operating budget was \$ 872,024,369. How many families could we house, feed, and employ with the money proposed for the Police?

Real police officers don't do what they are portrayed as doing on TV. Approximately 1% of police calls involve serious, violent crime across the U.S. They spend most of their time responding to noise complaints, issuing parking and traffic citations, and dealing with other non-criminal issues. We've been taught to think they "catch the bad guys; they chase bank robbers . . . The vast majority of police officers make one felony arrest a year."² In the best cases, police are reactive and respond to harm in communities; however, there are plenty of proactive methods of community safety that address the root cause of harm, that are widely achievable with only a fraction of the current Police budget.

*What do police tools say about our conception of safety?
What actually keeps our community safe?*

Why focus on Police uniforms? The budget cycle, I went down a rabbit hole researching what police officers wear and carry. The budget documents are fascinating. For instance, did you know that police officers are each allocated a yearly allowance of \$1,300 for clothing purchases and maintenance? In comparison, the average American individual spends \$530 on clothes each year.³

The tools that the Police Department spend money on also tell a story about what kind of safety they bring to our neighborhoods. Police plan to spend \$8.4 million on tasers, guns, batons, chemicals explosives, handcuffs, pepper spray, and body cameras. They do not plan to spend money feeding the community, providing housing, connecting those in need to health and wellness resources-essential things our communities need to stay safe.⁴

We have been taught to associate a police uniform with safety. But there are so many other people who make our

neighborhood safe, who do not wear the uniform. These include teachers, mental health workers, free food providers, community groups, harm reduction specialists, and more. Imagine how many of these individuals could be employed and resourced with \$872 million. Imagine the impact \$872 million could make if invested directly back into your community, your neighborhood, your block. What kinds of safety, dignity, and abundance could we create with this type of resourcing? Read more at: <https://www.peoplesbudgetoffice.org>

By Lily Xie



Sources:1. City of Philadelphia, Mayors Operating Budget in Brief for the Fiscal Year 2026" (March 2025). 2. Mariame Kaba, "Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police," New York Times, June 12th, 2020. 3. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Apparel data in fashion", 2025. 4. City of Philadelphia, "CITY OF PHILADELPHIA BUDGET OFFICE FISCAL 2026 OPERATING BUDGET", Section 44, pages 1-107

FROM: <https://muralarts.org/stories/the-peoples-budget-meet-our-resident-artists/>

Lily Xie

Artist and animator Lily Xie is reimagining the police budget at the Budget Office. Lily has been researching the budget for police uniforms and equipment and reimagining an abolitionist set of tools for public safety. During their residency, she will create an event for Philadelphians to design an alternative safety uniform and share how they think the police budget should be reallocated to turn Philly into "the safest big city in the nation."

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!



Bret Grote, Legal Director and Saleem Holbrook, Executive Director, Abolitionist Law Center at United Nations Human Rights Committee May 2025.

Update From the United Nations

In May of this year I returned to Geneva to attend the UN's Human Rights Committee Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement proceedings along with our legal director Bret Grote and the executive director of Prison Radio Noel Hanrahan.

Predictably, since our last trip in October of 2023, the United States has done nothing to comply with the UNHRC's Recommendations issued in November of 2023. Following our presentation to the UN's Human Rights Committee in October of 2023, and its review of the practice of sentencing people to life without parole in the United States, the Committee found the United States use of death by incarceration sentences raised fundamental human rights concerns and recommended it impose a moratorium on the use of Life without Parole aka Death By Incarceration sentences. More importantly, it recommended the United States offer avenues of release for people currently serving such sentences.

Our return this year was twofold, to remind the United Nations that the United States was not in compliance with its recommendations thus depriving hundreds of thousands of people serving LWOP an opportunity for release and also to specifically highlight political prisoners in the United States serving Death By Incarceration/Life without parole sentences, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, Fred Muhammad Burton and Joe Joe Bowers among many others.

Why political prisoners? Because political prisoners played a fundamental role in inspiring the Abolitionist Law Center, Human Rights Coalition, Amistad Law Project and Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration. Both myself, and Bret Grote were mentored by political prisoners such as Russell Maroon Shoatz and Mumia Abu-Jamal. Our movements have an obligation to prioritize their release, especially considering they were incarcerated for fighting against

(Continued on page 21)

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

(Continued from page 20)

injustice. At the same time we will center their plight within the plight and struggle of close to 6,000 prisoners serving death by incarceration sentences in Pennsylvania.

We are under no illusion about our International Work to end DBI sentences in the United States. The UN does not have enforcement powers, in short it does not have the teeth to back up its recommendations however we will continue to lift up and expose the injustice of the United States being the world's leader in sentencing people to death by incarceration and undermine its ability to present itself as a moral beacon of liberty and freedom to the world.

Robert Saleem Holbrook



Saleem Holbrook, Bret Grote and Noel Hanrahan meeting with the International Delegation to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

LOVE KNOWS NO BARS



Greetings to our Sisters and Brothers. Thank you for surviving another day, for lifting someone's spirit, for inspiring someone, for encouraging someone and most of all, for just being you. We at CADBI, HRC, and other organizations salute you on this Earth Day, Birthday, or Anniversary day.

August

8/1	Mike Cook	Phoenix
8/5	Gaye Morley	Muncy
8/12	Bray Murray	Phoenix
8/15	Jacqueline White	Muncy
8/17	Antonio Bundy	Frackville
8/21	Derel Britton	Pine Grove
8/25	Darrell McKelvie	Benner*
8/25	Mariam White	Muncy

September

9/3	Yusef Warrick	Houtzdale*
9/5	Samuel Major	Phoenix*
9/11	Tracey Shaw	Muncy*
9/18	Howard Miller	Houtzdale
9/20	Tran Loc	Smithfield *

October

10/2	James Lloyd	Benner*
10/2	Brandon Moody	Houtzdale*
10/3	Robert Willams	Phoenix*
10/4	Jennifer Vinsek	Muncy
10/8	Kevin Cannady	Dallas
10/8	Shakour Brown	Green
10/10	Eric Coxry	Forest
10/26	Christopher Adams	Pine Grove*
10/30	Heather Lavell	Muncy*

November

11/4	Stratton Peay	Mahanoy
11/11	Matthew Garci	Chester
11/12	Cynthia Gonzalez	Muncy*
11/12	Nicole Newell	Muncy*
11/21	Jerome Coffey	Pine Grove
11/26	Brittany Williams	Muncy*
11/28	Tequilla Fields	Muncy*

Dallas

It was a pleasure meeting and greeting with men at SCI Dallas during their 'Lifers Banquet' in June. The food, music, and conversations made it a special day for myself and others. Pictures were taken, announcements were made, and hopefully spirits were lifted knowing that the fight continues.

Bereavement

It is with a deep amount of sadness that I announce the Home Going of **Ms. Celeste Coles**". Ms. Coles served as a CPS (Certified Peer Specialists) at Muncy and will truly be missed. She was often referred to as "Doc" and once diagnosed me over the phone. When I explained my symptoms to my primary, Ms Coles (Doc) was right on point. Ms Coles would have been celebrating a birthday on August 22.



By Ms. Yvonne Newkirk,
Portrait by Mark Loughney

Sincerely, Ms. Yvonne Newark

Birthday Jokes

An Elephant Never Forgets

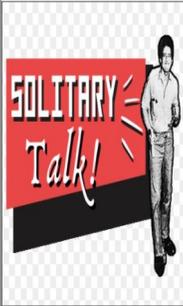
Q: What did the elephant want for his birthday?

A: A trunk full of gifts.

Goldfish Birthday

Q: What do you say to your goldfish on his birthday?

A: Have a fin-tastic day.



Beyond the Rainbow: Remembering Our Most Forgotten

By: Kwaneta Harris

This piece was originally published on June 26, 2025 on Solitary Watch.

The fluorescent lights in solitary confinement hummed overhead as I watched my friend Jack’s shoulders slump under the weight of another degrading lecture. The guard’s voice dropped with contempt as he told Jack, a transgender man, that he was “going to Hell” for his identity. This wasn’t the first time—or the last—that I witnessed staff members systematically strip away Jack’s dignity, calling him slurs, refusing to let him return to general population unless he stopped cutting his hair, let it grow out, and kept his face cleanly shaved. They demanded he erase himself to earn basic human treatment.

I’ve also seen my neighbor, Gates, slammed against walls while guards screamed, “You think you a man? Show me!” as they violated his body with invasive searches. I’ve overheard medical staff giggling about injecting Depo Provera, a contraceptive, or saline instead of hormone treatments into my friends’ bodies. These aren’t isolated incidents; they’re systematic erasures happening behind concrete walls while rainbow flags wave freely outside.

Every June, our nation celebrates PRIDE month, commemorating the brave activists who fought back at Stonewall in 1969 and honoring the ongoing struggle for LGBTQAI+ liberation. The original purpose of PRIDE was radical: to demand dignity for those whom society deemed unworthy, to lift up the most marginalized voices, and to declare that no one should be forced to hide who they are. Yet as corporations drape themselves in rainbow capitalism and politicians make calculated gestures of inclusion, we’ve forgotten the very people who need our solidarity most: incarcerated LGBTQAI+ individuals trapped in America’s carceral system.

When we exclude the most vulnerable members of our community from our celebrations, we betray everything PRIDE represents. The 2015 survey by Black and Pink of 1,118 incarcerated LGBTQAI+ individuals revealed that 85 percent had experienced sexual assault, while incarcerated transgender women of color face the highest rates of violence. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that LGBTQAI+ individuals were five times more likely to be sexually assaulted by prison staff than their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts. These aren’t just statistics—

they’re our siblings, our chosen family, our community members whose suffering remains invisible to the outside world.

Furthermore, the response to this violence often compounds the trauma rather than addressing it. The Bureau of Justice statistics show that nearly half of all sexual assaults in prison become the gateway to solitary confinement—supposedly for the victim’s “protection.” For LGBTQAI+ folks, this means being punished for their identities through isolation that can last months or years. The 2008-2009 National Transgender Discrimination Survey found that 16 percent of transgender individuals had been incarcerated, facing extreme isolation rates that far exceed those of the general population.

In solitary, they may be denied access to hormone therapy, mental health care, and human contact while being subjected to additional harassment from staff who view their confinement as an opportunity for further abuse.

Meanwhile, in red states like Texas, the situation has become more dire. Texas passed a record number of anti-LGBTQAI+ bills targeting everything from healthcare access to basic recognition of identity. For incarcerated LGBTQAI+ people in these states, these laws create additional barriers to receiving appropriate medical care, being housed safely, or even being recognized by their chosen names and pronouns. The intersection of transphobic legislation and carceral violence creates a perfect storm of dehumanization that strips away every protection our community has fought to secure.

Moreover, the medical neglect extends beyond hormone therapy to basic healthcare needs. Transgender individuals behind bars report being denied preventative care, having their mental health dismissed as “attention-seeking behavior,” and facing discrimination from medical staff who refuse to treat them with dignity. The Black and Pink survey revealed that 44 percent of respondents were denied medical care they requested, with transgender folks facing the highest rates of medical neglect. When Jack needed medical aid for injuries sustained during a beating, staff dismissed his pain as “dramatized behavior” and denied him treatment for days.

Additionally, the psychological warfare extends to every aspect of daily life. Commissary items, mail, phone calls, and visitation all are weaponized against LGBTQAI+ community inside as punishment for existing authentically. Guards routinely read private notes aloud, mocking same sex romantic relationships and chosen family connections. They deny access to religious services while

(Continued on page 26)

(Continued from page 25)

simultaneously forcing participation in “conversion therapy” programs disguised as rehabilitation. The isolation isn’t just physical—it’s a complete severance from every source of love, support, and affirmation that makes survival possible.

Nevertheless, we cannot discuss domestic prison conditions while turning a blind eye to the global context of LGBTQAI+ oppression behind bars. When we condemn the treatment of queer individuals in foreign prisons—the horrific conditions in Russian penal colonies, the systematic torture in Middle Eastern detention centers, or the denial of medical care in Central American facilities—we must apply the same moral standards to American prisons. The violence may wear different masks, but the intent remains identical: to break the spirits of those who dare to exist outside heteronormative expectations.

The moment we accept that some members of our community are expendable—that their suffering is the price of our mainstream acceptance—we abandon the revolutionary spirit that birthed PRIDE itself. Our liberation has always been interconnected; we cannot celebrate progress while our most vulnerable community members disappear into concrete tombs. This PRIDE month, as you march in parades and attend corporate-sponsored events, remember Jack’s forced submission, Gates’s violation, and the countless others whose struggle is inextricably linked to yours. Because as long as cages exist, none of us are free.

If we claim to stand against the brutal treatment of LGBTQAI+ people in foreign prisons while remaining silent about identical abuse happening in American facilities, we are hypocrites more invested in nationalism than

liberation. True solidarity demands that we extend our outrage beyond borders and recognize that oppression wearing an American flag is still oppression. Our PRIDE means nothing if it doesn’t include the most forgotten among us—those whose only crime was loving authentically in a world determined to punish them for it.



Solitary Talk!
By Valerie Kiebala

Just Tired

More and more each day
I feel disconnected
NEVER REJECTED
but I do suspect that
Time is making my heart grow weary,
daydreaming of the 1st day out,
without a doubt,
An event meant to be low key yet celebratory
For Me....
My family and the opportunity to finally show the “I” who
should've been
way back when "they" needed me to be Better
But then again, all this before
it turned ugly and I could count 3 decades and more
Gone
● Body worn
yet with renewed spirit, focus and effort carved in
● to Begin Again and again
● as many deserve consideration of their trust and well being
To go on living, feeling and seeing this life
I forgot to treasure until finding myself tethered
to a system of never ending disparities
for those who look like me
and yet.. There's Hope After 34, numbers adding up like
keeping score...during a Game, this is NOT
Instead it's a springboard for moving forward
with a solid plan to demand being heard,
understood and allowed to demonstrate
growth without restriction, living not just existing
To have time that means progress, not stagnation.
Accountability
nevertheless
Now I must confess...
I'm Just Tired!

- by Terri

Your Legal Corner

WE ACCEPT LEGAL ARTICLES THAT EDUCATE AND EMPOWER PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ON THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND LAWS, AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THE POLICE, LAWYERS, AND THE COURTS ON BEHALF OF THEIR LOVED ONES.

A Two-Tiered Justice System

In 1968, Otto Kerner commissioned a report titled, "National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder." Within this report, he found that the United States of America has been guilty of patent racial discrimination in the past is not a new one.¹

In 2025, fifty seven years later, we witnessed it through president Joseph Biden by commuting the federal sentence of former judge Michael T. Conahan from Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. As a matter of fact, between 2003 and 2008, Judges Michael T. Conahan and co-defendant Mark A. Ciavarella were intentionally human trafficking minor children for profit. In 2003, the Kids-for-cash scandal unraveled. In 2011, disgraced Judge Conahan plead guilty to racketeering and conspiracy charges and was sentenced to federal prison.² In 2012, a year later, the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office intentionally violated the constitutional rights of Shawn Hamilton.

In a nutshell, on February 26, 2012, African American minor Trayvon Martin was brutally murdered by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood town watcher and later acquitted through Florida's Stand Your Ground Law. On July 6, 2012, a hundred and thirty three days later, African American Shawn Hamilton was arrested in Luzerne County, a case that by the rule of law should have been ruled a self defense case through mitigating factors that should have been presented to substantiate the fact that Mr. Hamilton suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, after surviving a racist attack by a white supremacist as a teenager.

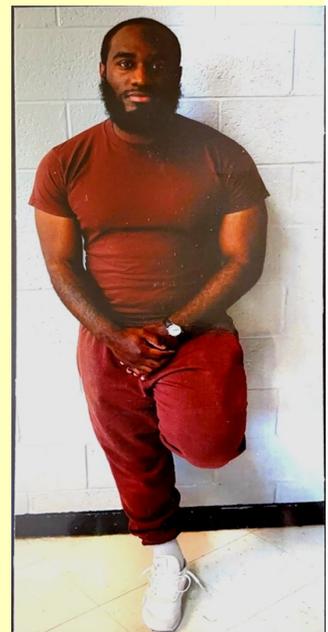
In 1993, Mr. Hamilton was born while Pennsylvania opened five state prisons: Albion, Coal Township, Greene, Mahanoy, and Somerset. In 1994, Mr. Hamilton was one year old when president Bill Clinton signed the Federal Violent Crime Control And Law Enforcement Act and his wife Hillary Clinton was promoting that African American minors was super predators.³ Mr. Hamilton and his young brother Sawud Davis were set up by a known white supremacist in Luzerne County.

Nevertheless, Mr. Hamilton's attorneys Allyson Kacmarski (trial), Mark Butner (trial), Mark Bufalino (penalty phase), and Louise Lock (mitigation specialist) ALL violated Mr. Hamilton's constitutional rights. The Luzerne County District Attorney's Office assigned to Mr. Hamilton's case (i.e. assistant district attorneys Rebecca Meimiller, Samuel Sanguedolce, and Mary Phillips) seeks the death penalty but there is no evidence warranting the death penalty. Mr. Hamilton is African American and the victims are white. Luzerne County District Attorney's Office went inside the Luzerne County Correctional Facility and solicited false testimony of prosecutor witness and self-styled white supremacist William Allabaugh. Mr. Hamilton's is the hallmark of racial discrimination because the victims are white and prove MCCLESKY -VS- KEMP analysis. Mr. Hamilton deserves a new trial or evidentiary hearing to present his pre-sentence investigation and full discovery.

By Jerome "Hoagie" Coffey

Photo: Shawn Hamilton

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Shawn Hamilton, LK3051
SCI-Pine Grove
PO Box 33028
St Petersburg FL 33733



¹https://belonging.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/kerner_commission_full_report.pdf

²UNITED STATES OF AMERICA-VS-MARK CIAVARELLA, JR., 716F.3d 705, No.11-3277, May 24, 2013

³<https://www.Phillipsblack.org/>

Gender Affirmation is Gender Identify

I'm sitting back wondering how we, as the transgender population at Muncy, let them get away with so much as if we aren't human beings with rights. A lot of times we have to blame ourselves for the lack of knowledge; not educating ourselves on the rights and laws that exist to protect transgender via the 8th Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause, etc.

I'm writing to be the voice for all of us, because I'm tired of being treated as an illness, when Gender Dysphoria is supposed to be looked upon as a serious mental health and medical problem. It takes transgenders at Muncy nine months or more to see a doctor; yet upon entering the facility they ask your identity. And still proceed to strip you and give you bras and panties when you identify as male violating both the 8th and 14th Amendments.

Why aren't we provided suitable and respective undergarments upon arrival? Doesn't that go against the Equal Protection Clause, since we identify as male and aren't given boxers, briefs or binders, while those identifying as female receive appropriate undergarments?

Our ability to present consistent with our gender identity, covered by the 8th Amendment, is being violated or ignored.

The law requires that there be no discrimination for sex, race, sexual preference, etc. but I guess the law doesn't apply to us transgenders!

In understanding the law and studying my rights as a transgender, I've

learned that Gender Affirmation is Gender Identify, and both are part of Gender Dysphoria. Every person has the right to identify as what they want. Transgender, however, require a mental health and medical evaluation to be the person they are. A diagnosis Dorset confirms who we are as a people. I am a 32-year-old straight, male residing at SCI Muncy.

Since I've had problems with staff and officers, I reached out to Muncy's CCPM (PREA and transgender administrator). He responded to me telling me I needed gender affirming accommodation, and I was confused. What for? My issues were directly linked to how I was being addressed and targeted, and my concerns were ignored. I understand that Muncy's policy dictates that transgenders must live with other transgenders, except when in a 4-man (quad) cell, but it seems that my affirmation only covers me for my cell assignments, not proper treatment and undergarments.

The more serious problem is that the culture here has created mindsets where transgenders are ill and have a disorder, which puts an automatic negative impact on us here and that spreads to free society. The words ill and disorder are used to sound professional, but they're another way of instituting denial and disaffirmation. The mental health aspect doesn't stem from us being ill but from non-acceptance, not able to be our true selves, and how we're looked down upon for embracing who we are internally. Anger, anguish, anxiety and depression aren't disorders, they're emotions that everyone has. So, what's the illness/disorder that we have, because we're not confused, but simply just born in the wrong body. Gender

Dysphoria is gender affirmation/identity, not an illness, nor a disorder. Medical and mental health professionals/experts describe it as a need, so let it be treated as such!

-Tyshane Presley #PE7906, SCI-Muncy

We are held down by apathy, deliberate indifference, and a collective cruelty . . .

I often playfully toot my own horn, when engaged in any conversation about strength, because throughout my incarceration I've soldiered through hardships I don't wish on anyone, while navigating around change. Its been decades, and I'm still going, but I gotta admit..."I'm scared!"

I'm aggrieved about the old heads dying around me.

I'm haunted with fear because of conversations highlighting how the DOC either doesn't have to or just doesn't inform us we have Cancer, until it is too late for our lives to be saved.

I have a feeling of foreboding with the quality of my life, based on the low grade, full-of-starch foods they serve, compounded by the salt-laden, highly processed foods they sell us.

I'm appalled by how many times we express our concerns and they go on a back burner or get purposely forgotten, because this new governance has us labelled as "entitled" and therefore disregard legitimate fears and dangers.

And now that the momentum has

(Continued on page 29)

say what ? . . . speak up! / writings of multiplicity

(Continued from page 28)

shifted away from mutual respect and a broader understanding of the realities of corrections, I'm outright vexed by the new guards' approach to penal policies and operations, Ethics and Humanity, especially with how they deal with the younger incarcerated people.

Most old school officers and staff have retired out, so much so that the need for officers is posted at county fairs and on site, just like any other job, when this ain't that! (Forgive my slang.) This is supposed to be a place of professionalism and care, meshed with security, so staff should have a full understanding of the variances in crime and punishment, and how the closing of most state run mental health hospitals have put a strain on prison populations and require never ending change that's paramount to everyone's safety. This is especially important to those of us serving long-term and DBI sentences.

We are surrounded by social maladjustment (based on mental health & behavioral issues).

We are held down by apathy, deliberate indifference, and a collective cruelty stemming from lack of transparency, prejudices, and the proud boy mentality that permeates this institution. Those that stand in their humanity are disrespected and disregarded just like offenders are.

So, what's THEIR real fear?

There will always be prisons full of individuals who've made poor choices, got caught up in the wrong decision, did something damnable, and who don't have the best skills, but no one working here should come in with

a God complex or old world ideation, thinking they can browbeat anyone into submission/compliance.

Those recourses are creating major problems within and are adding despair and inflicting trauma that affects people now and will certainly manifest after their incarceration ends.

Why not be a part of effecting change, and seeing people who were once at the bottom rise and become solid citizens in neighborhoods all over? Why not leave your personal thoughts and feelings outside the gates, so that you can be a part of bringing to reality the positive progress that's in your mind's eye, that you want to exist in this world for you, your children and future generations. The sad part is that crime is generational, but so are success and human kindness!

Get on board, because living in hatred and fear isn't living at all!

Peace.

Terri

Nothing About Us Without Us

I have been mailing to the criminal legal system to people inside federal and state prisons for over 2 years as part of my work at the Prison Policy Initiative. I have learned a great deal from imprisoned people on the intricacies and violence of prison systems, how they operate, the various tools at their disposal to punish people, and the myriad ways prisons and private companies exploit individuals and their families.

I have also been tapped to provide

research to support people who are doing political education inside, engaging in legislative advocacy, writing articles for outside and inside media outlets, and fighting repressive policies at the institutional level.

Through this work, it has become increasingly clear how important it is for organizations in this space, whether engaged in advocacy or community organizing, to collaborate with imprisoned people and not assume priorities on their behalf. People inside understand the carceral landscape in ways we don't and have clarity around the kinds of reforms that will and will not impact their lives. Unfortunately, a lot of organizations tend to set priorities and then look for imprisoned people to plug into their narrative work or provide testimony.

Imprisoned people want to meaningfully shape the reform landscape, and they have invaluable insights, not only regarding the types of policies that they want to see passed, but about why existing policies fail to change conditions on the ground. We see advocacy groups and policymakers support policies that provide benefits to specific groups of people inside, such as people with non-violent offenses, while leaving large swaths of imprisoned people to languish inside. Or worse, policymakers pass reforms that look progressive on paper but create so many hurdles for imprisoned people to navigate that the reform itself is meaningless. As the saying goes, "Nothing about us without us", meaning that people inside know what is beneficial to them and have the most at stake in this fight to end criminalization and mass incarceration. Although prisons make communication

(Continued on page 30)

say what ? . . . speak up! / writings of multiplicity

(Continued from page 29)

with people inside very difficult it is my personal belief that we will not win this fight if we aren't practicing solidarity with imprisoned people.

By Danielle Squillante - Development & Communications Associate at the Prison Policy Initiative. She's a co-founder & volunteer with Decarcerate Western MA Bailout Project and is a volunteer with Massachusetts Parole Prep Project.

Responding to the article, "RE: Pattern and Practice of Misconduct"

At the age of 18, when I turned myself in, I didn't know the laws or what was supposed to happen thereafter, and I do not recall what happened at trial. So as I was preparing to submit my commutation application, I received help via exposure to my case from Villanova University.

Here's a timeline: In 2021 I received an email from a student stating, "Hi Nicole. I just cross referenced the cops on your case with our database. Thomas Augustine, the officer who took one of your statements and allegedly informed you of your Miranda Rights, has been found to have coerced a few confessions."

Two weeks later an attorney for someone else filed a PCRA petition surrounding Thomas Augustine and his actions. Two years after that, in 2023, I received the H-File/DAO File from that same attorney, which uncovered 3

more dirty detectives, conflicted descriptions of me, and conflicting statements from the (2) guys that are my codefendants. They were never arrested. One of my two male codefendant's mother is a Philadelphia Police Officer who was in the interrogation room with him while he made one of his statements. I was never placed in a line up (google Nicole Newell commutation project@prezi.com), a fact I just learned.

Thomas Augustine:

- 1) Targeted me while I was under the influence of PCP
- 2) Threatened that I would never see my daughter again
- 3) Yelled in my face if I didn't write what he told me to write
- 4) Forced me to confess
- 5) Supplied false information: he made me write that it was earrings in my love seat, which there wasn't, and it wasn't on my evidence report.
- 6) Manipulated me by telling me I would see my daughter after I wrote his story
- 7) Kept me in a holding cell for excessive hours with no contact

On June 9, 2025, I had a court hearing, which got dismissed, because my paid attorney dropped the ball. I've subsequently put in a Notice of Appeal filed in forma pauperis. I do not now, nor have I ever received my transcripts or discovery from 1997, so I still cannot point out all the facts and mishaps of the trial lawyer and the prosecution. I used all I had, now what's next? My attorney was so ill-prepared that even the judge said, "We're trying to release her today, not lock her back up." I

can't and won't give up, so I'm asking for HELP!!!

Nicole Newell, #OD8092, SCI-Muncy

5/21/2025

Universal greetings! Peace!

I just learned about a new case that I think will be a GAME-CHANGER:

Richard Eugene Glossip v. Oklahoma, 145 S.Ct. 612, 221 L.Ed.2d 90 (Feb.25, 2025).

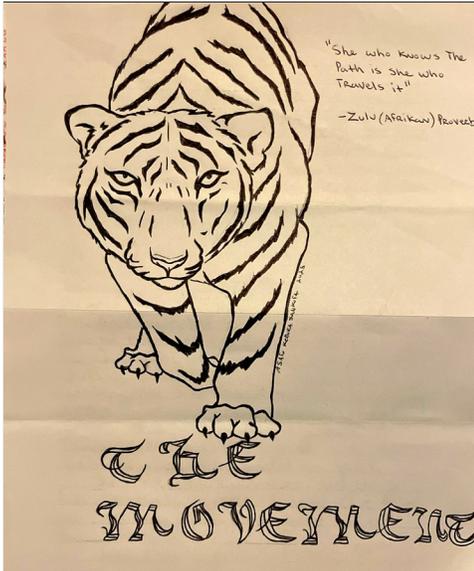
The holding states: "The prosecutor's failure to correct a witness's trial testimony violated the Due Process Clause, and defendant was entitled to a new trial because the prosecution knew the witness's statements were false and knowingly failed to correct them, and there was a reasonable likelihood that correcting the testimony would have affected the judgment."

That's gonna be a big deal for A LOT of people!! Please share this with the men, and post it on the HRC social media so that people's families will have access to it? As I conclude with an ever righteous PEACE!

By Michael Rivera,

THE MOVEMENT

say what ? . . . speak up! / writings of multiplicity



Dear HRC Members,

I drew this picture for y'all because I honor the warrior who, like y'all, stay dedicated. The simple fact that you are unafraid and you have the courage to battle the beast.

There was a point in time when I was not aware of my own ignorance, but the spirit of the redemption descended upon me. As Mbiti said in 1969, "I am because we are, and because we are I am"! Your day-to-day struggles, motivation to do better, and just knowing that y'all work unselfishly to bring peace and liberation to the incarcerated brothers and sisters behind enemy lines, inspires me!

I respect y'all for what y'all do and I just wanted to show my appreciation by letting the ink bleed from my pen. With every twist and every turn and every stroke that was made to create this drawing, I know it was done with love because we are bonded in spirit.

The struggle continues. And on this path we walk together leading our

people in revolution. There have been and will be skirmishes.

Just like Africa's fierce Maasai warriors we will not kowtow! Bring us liberty or bring us death. One forward march, on the move, can't stop won't stop!

You dig me!

You are the tigers that move with stealth and coordination through dense forests, prepared at the exact moment to leap for the kill of a lesser animal and then after feasting turning to flee the enemy's presence without a trace!

In that order!

In survival and struggle

Daquian Brown, #MP6397
 SCI-Rockview
 AKA
 Asafo Kebuka Sankofa

"Don't Let em bring you Down"
 "All Power to the People"

From the Editor: We were informed that there has been improvements since the article printed in The Babylon System, **Issue #56**, titled 'SCI-Muncy Inmates Reveal stories of Medical Neglect, High Cancer Rates' as the said article was originally published June 25, 2020. We are looking forward to an update to the issues mention. Once received, it will be published. Stay tuned.

DEATH BY INCARCERATION (DBI)

Nelson Mandela once said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands it goes to his head. If you talk to a man in his own language it goes to his heart."

Death By Incarceration is a life sentence, is a death sentence. The difference is, more heart wrenching, no execution date is given, nor what means of which you will die or how you will die. It is by no other word that I could think of other than it is a slow kill. You see, because we do not understand the law nor the political language we are clueless about what is to take place.

Then we must come to grips with how we can only sit idly by as we watch, I call it a slow death which is no less painful than watching an execution that they deem to be quick and painless.

Each is inhumane the slow death, a DBI, is more agonizing. The deterioration of the mind and body slowly dying hour by hour, daily, you can't hasten it. It's excruciating, to die slowly, eyes wide open while still breathing .

By Nan, a voice felt by many.

THE TOLL PRISON TAKES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING

Separated from Loved Ones

We can no longer be with our friends and families. Missing our loved ones and not being a part of their daily lives increases feelings of isolation and loneliness. Additionally, we can't be there for our loved ones, so we may worry about those we can't support, such as an elderly family member. We may also experience a lot of grief over missing out on a child's activities or not being able to be there for a partner.

Physical Environment Adds to Stress

Concrete walls, little natural light, and a lack of overall stimulation can take a serious toll on mental health. People in prison have few ways to relieve stress, and their sterile environment is likely to fuel boredom, which can be quite stressful in itself. But others are likely to develop mental health issues as a result of the extreme isolation. Studies show solitary confinement for the elderly increases the risk of anxiety, insomnia, paranoia, aggression, and depression.

Lack of Treatment

Even when mental health concerns are known, disorders often go untreated. Additionally, services in prison may not be all that effective. A 2024 study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that 26% of inmates were diagnosed with mental health conditions at some point during their lives, only 18% of them were taking medications for their condition when they became incarcerated. Of those who were taking medication, less than 50% were prescribed medication during their admission, so incarcerated individuals' conditions often go unrecognized. Quite often inmates are given simple screening questionnaires to complete at intake. They aren't assessed by a mental health professional at all and likely never to come in contact with one throughout their time in prison.

Consequences of Inadequate Treatment

The consequences of inadequate mental health care contribute greatly to the suffering of the affected individuals and their families. Untreated psychiatric conditions may increase the risk of recidivism. Justice-involved people who have mental health issues are 70% more likely to return to prison at least once.

State Hospital Closures

Since the 1970s there has been a big push toward the deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental health issues. On the surface, closing "Asylums" and institutions that housed people with severe psychiatric conditions seems like a good idea. Many of the institutions were understaffed and unable to give patients the individual treatment they needed. Closing the doors to psychiatric hospitals and other long-term institutions, however, has had serious consequences. The community mental health centers intended to replace long-term institutions quickly lost their government funding, leaving a gap in the social safety net. The lack of long-term treatment options contributed to a major increase in incarcerations. Anyone who is facing incarceration should consider revealing any preexisting mental health conditions. Disclosing those issues may increase the likelihood of accessing treatment. But bigger changes are needed at the systemic and legal levels. Better access to mental health services overall may prevent crime. Treating people during incarceration and providing access to ongoing treatment after they are released may reduce recidivism rates.

By Mayo Clinic Staff, Health Life Style & Aging

From: GREY OWLS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER, May 2025, 7th Edition.

Non-members are welcome to sign up (must be 50 years or older). Send HFC request slip to Attention: Anthony Brown, HFC Treasurer or GREY OWLS.

GREY OWLS Est. 2020
located at SCI-Forest.

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.

HOPE: A LIFE-ALTERING NECESSITY

By Dirk Greineder, for Lifers Group Inc, May 2025
MCI-Norfolk, PO Box 43, Norfolk MA 02056
Available at www.realcostofprisons.org/writing

On January 11th, 2024, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) ruled, in Commonwealth V Mattis, 493.Mass. 216 (2024), that imposing Life Without Parole (LWOP) sentences on offenders aged 18 through 20 at the time of the crime was unconstitutional under Article 26 of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights and the Eighth Amendment. Surprisingly, this decision has become a life-altering event for most state prisoners throughout the Commonwealth, provoking a stunning transformation in attitudes. Almost overnight there has been an upheaval of energy and optimism, not only for the 18-20-year-old “emerging adults” that Mattis primarily addresses, but for most prisoners regardless of sentence. How is this possible?

To begin to understand this it is essential to recognize the structure of the Massachusetts (MA) state prisoner population. For many years MA has had the oldest prisoners and also the highest percentage of prisoners serving Life Without Parole (LWOP) sentences in the USA¹, in part because for 75 years MA has imposed mandatory LWOP sentences on all offenders convicted of first-degree murder, whether they personally have killed or even intended to kill². By January 2024, 19% or almost one in five of all MA state prisoners were serving that harsh and unrelenting sentence.

The consequences are most striking here at MCI-Norfolk, the largest state prison in MA, which, as of January 2024, houses 39% of all MA LWOP prisoners, making up 35% of the Norfolk population. Moreover, three quarters of Norfolk LWOP prisoners had already served 15+ years and a staggering 46% had served 25+ years. Even though only a bit more than 100 prisoners at Norfolk were “Mattis beneficiar-

ies” (i.e., aged between 18-20 at the time of their crime) amounting to only 10% of all prisoners and one quarter of the LWOP prisoners at Norfolk, the impact was profound.

A likely important factor was that the Mattis prisoners serving their long sentences together with all others inevitably became friends, close associates, and ingrained members of the Norfolk prisoner population. Facing endless incarceration with no hope of release, they had no choice but to seek an existence within the prison. And, in part because Norfolk was conceived and structured, 100 years ago, as a ‘community’ prison, meant to offer opportunities for education and self-help communal programs to promote rehabilitation (only vestiges of which persists today under present domineering administrative attitudes and regulations), it was natural for many of these once young “forever-lifers” to become integrally interwoven into Norfolk’s daily life. Many of these long-serving Mattis beneficiaries were well-known, often leaders, and important members of the virtual families formed by long-incarcerated Norfolk prisoners.

It was perhaps inevitable that the many left behind, having together shared the suffering of this harshest of sentences³ for 50, or 40, or 30 years of incarceration without any hope, now unexpectedly witnessing their former partners eagerly moving towards parole and likely release, would themselves feel a spark of hope. After all, the Mattis beneficiaries, incarcerated at the youngest ages, had faced the longest sentences of all and were now suddenly being reprieved. So, now, possibly . . . perhaps . . . maybe . . . should not anyone begin to imagine? The spark blossomed into a bright flame, invigorating all but the most depressed or repressed lifers. If after all this time unanticipated recourse could be found, was it not possible that anyone should be allowed to . . . well: HOPE.

What is hope? Hope is difficult to pin down, capture or define. The concept has been weighed and dissect-

(Continued on page 34)

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

ed by optimists, rejected by pessimists, contemplated by philosophers, studied by investigators, but yet remains difficult to know or trust or grasp. But all seem to acknowledge it as a powerful force and while difficult to articulate, it empowers, and once glimpsed, seems impossible to deny. Hard to rationally define, yet like love, impossible to resist.

Surging almost immediately after the Mattis decision, prisoners serving all sentences began to seek their own pathways to better futures. Even before the decision, during the more than four year period that the Mattis appeal was percolating through the courts, prisoners began to anticipate--and once the decision was rendered, the hoped became real and interest in participating in "rehabilitation" began to permeate the institution. Restorative Justice programs considered desirable by legislators and parole boards, are filled over capacity. Prisoners are seeking out and filling up programs on ending violence, emotional awareness, trauma-repair, self-evaluation, substance abuse, legal recourse, academic and vocational education, leadership, entrepreneurism, and more. Once staid Self-Improvement groups became both sought out (for guidance) but experienced serious competition for the time as prisoners flocked to more parole-acknowledged programs. And, as Lifers are invigorated, the younger, shorter-sentenced prisoners coming into the prison also have followed. All of a sudden, the rehabilitation that the Department of Correction had long needed to force upon prisoners is now in demand. Even not especially popular programs are sought out as long as it is perceived that outside evaluators consider them effective.

Remarkably, the Mattis decision has had a more profound effect on prisoners and prison life than decades of Departmental planning, demanding, insisting, for cajoling, offering strong proof that without hope rehabilitation will be slowed or ineffective. But with hope everything becomes possible and achievable.

ENDNOTES

1. See McKillop M & Boucher A. "Aging Prisoner Populations Drive Up Costs" (Pew Charitable Trusts, Washington, DC, Feb 2018); Nellis A & Barry C. "A Matter of Life: The Scope and Impact of Life and Long Term Imprisonment in the United States" (The Sentencing Project, Washington, DC, 2025).
2. In 1951, the MA legislature rewrote M.G.L.c. 265 §2 abolishing parole for first degree murder. Additionally, Felony Murder and Joint Venture statutes have convicted co-conspirators, even those without any intent or participation in a death occurring during another crime to be convicted of first degree murder and suffer the consequences of mandatory LWOP sentences (see M.G.L.c. 265 §1, c. 274 §1 & 2; Com v Brown, 477 Mass. 805 (2017)).
3. Many prisoners and criminologists are agreed that LWOP is an even harsher sentence than the death penalty because it is simply a delayed death penalty, which subjects the offender to a lifetime of deprivation, permeated with fear of a slow, lingering, often agonizing death in prisons ill-equipped to care for ailing and handicapped elderly prisoners. It also deprives LWOP prisoners of the robust legal safeguards and assistance afforded those facing the death penalty, none of which are available for LWOP prisoners.



The Lifer's Group acknowledges and thanks Lois Ahrens, Exec. Dir. of The Real Cost of Prisons Project for enduring support of prisoners and prison reform.

All Lifer's Group Inc. reports may be freely quoted or copied provided their source is appropriately cited and are available at www.realcostofprisons.org/writing

Dirk K. Greineder, age 84, was born in Berlin, Germany, raised in Lebanon & Egypt, immigrated to U.S. 1958; Yale College BS 1962; MD-PhD Case Western Reserve Univ 1970; followed by career in Molecular Biochemistry, Immunology & Clinical Medicine at NIH and Harvard Medical School. Chief of Allergy at Brigham & Women's Hospital, Boston 1998.

Falsely convicted of first-degree murder of May, wife of 31 years, in 2001; reversed by U.S. Supreme Court 2012; conviction reinstated by MA-Supreme Judicial Ct 2013. Fortunately steadfastly loved and supported by my three grown children for all these years which has sustained and kept me strong.

Active in Criminal Justice and legal analysis, writing, and reform as well as legislative activism with Lifer's Group Inc. at MCI-Norfolk in MA since 2008.

**Dirk E. Greineder, M.D., Ph.D., W69690, 4-2, MCI-Norfolk
P.O. Box 43
Norfolk, MA 02056**

Human Rights Coalition
P.O. Box 34580
Philadelphia, PA 19101



Cover and Above: Shout out to youth group, “YEAH”. Yes, this group of young people showed up and showed out at the June 4th, Harrisburg Rally against solitary confinement. YEAH’s above speaker, Rodney Gardner, spoke out about the effects of solitary confinement on young people. In addition YEAH sported their self-designed T-shirts and have an upcoming comic book series; 1st Edition on cover and on sale. Photo above: Kendra Van de Water (Co-founder and Co-CEO) is next to Rodney at the podium. See page 2 for more information about YEAH.

Visit: <https://yeahphilly.org/news/>