

THE MOVEMENT

Spring 2022
Issue #47

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

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



Above illustration from FaceBook, artist unknown



'Shakaboona & Mama Patt' art by Robin Markle

Welcome Home Shakaboona!

At approximately 10:30 am, May 11th, Kerry 'Shakaboona' Marshall walked out of the Federal Detention Center in Philadelphia and into the free world.

Imprisoned in 1988 as a 17-year-old child and sentenced to death by incarceration in 1990, Shakaboona's hard fought freedom marks a huge victory for inside-outside family organizing in Pennsylvania that began with the Human Rights Coalition (HRC) in 2001.

Shakaboona and his mother, Patricia Vickers, co-founded HRC in 2001 alongside other incarcerated and impacted community members, including ALC's current Executive Director, Robert Saleem Holbrook, who was imprisoned at SCI-Huntingdon at the time. ALC Legal Director and Shakaboona's lawyer, Bret Grote, began volunteering with HRC in 2007 and six years later he co-founded ALC.

As a result of landmark Supreme Court cases *Miller* (2012) and *Montgomery* (2016) that deemed mandatory life sentences for juveniles to be unconstitutional, Shakaboona was resentenced in 2018 to 29-to-

life. Upon parole in 2021, he was transferred to federal custody to serve time on a federal sentence of 110 months imposed in 2001. That sentence was revised to time served in federal court last week after a successful petition under the federal First Step Act.

His freedom is a testament to a protracted struggle led by Shakaboona himself and his mother Patricia, collaborating with impacted families and allied abolitionist lawyers at ALC, Amistad Law Project, and All Rise Law, who've fought tirelessly against unconstitutional sentencing schemes such as "juvenile life without parole," and to protect loved ones against abuse, censorship, and medical neglect while centering the mission of bringing ALL lifers – like Shakaboona – home to their communities. In an uncom-

(Continued on page 39)

In This Issue



From The Desk of The Editor . . . 3

Knowledge Is Power: All Power To The People!!

2nd Chances Don't Diminish Justice, But Fulfill It, By Saleem Holbrook & Val Kiebala . . . **6**

PA Legislators Advance SB 913 in spite of opposition, By Dolly Prabhu . . . **8**

Open Letter to Meek Mills, By Reuben Jones . . . **9**

Commutation - Did You Know? By Elaine Selan . . . **11**

HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

Day of Appreciation . . . **12**

Senate Reform Bill Faces Push Back, By Cassie Miller . . . **13**

#Free Ant, By Ant Smith Defense Committee . . . **14**

Human Rights Report

Political Education Needed, By Kenjuan Congo . . . **15**

The Importance of Political Education & Voting, By Salem Holbrook . . . **16**

Politically Educated, By Sergio Hyland . . . **18**

Politics & Prison, By Val Kiebala . . . **19**

Solitary Talk!

Same Solitary Different Name, By Richard Wimbush . . . **20**

Butterfly, By Shawn Simms . . . **21**

Stay Strong, By Michael Simonson . . . **22**

Love Knows No Bars . . 24

Families & Community, Speak Out! . . . 25

What's The News? . . 24-29

Writings of Multiplicity . . . 30-34

CADBI Rally! . . . 35

The Babylon System

Over 40 Years Ago, By John "Alif Ahmed" Griffin . . . **36-38**

GREETINGS! Welcome to Issue #47 of THE MOVEMENT. As always, there's so much going on, and we hope to bring it to you the only way that we know how: in truth and authenticity. But first, I need to address the elephants in the room: me and Shaka-boona!!!

For those of you who don't already know, I was finally released from prison on February 8th, 2022, after serving over two decades straight. Shaka-boona was right on my heels, after finally being released on 5.13.22. His 34 years of incarceration put on display how cruel America is when it comes to its most vulnerable populations - as we all know, Shaka-boona was only a juvenile when a judge sentenced him to die in prison. But we're home now, and it feels great. The most common remark that people make is that they know we must feel happy to be home. Yes, we're happy to be home; but we're NOT satisfied! I've been a member of the *Human Rights Coalition* now for more than a decade, and during that time, I've grown significantly - politically, and otherwise. But one of the ways that I've grown most, is in my hatred for the carceral state, especially the state of Pennsylvania. Right now, as the world moves forward, America lags woefully behind. People on the inside of prison, who could be saved, are dying every day, and the PA legislature does nothing but watch.

It is the PA legislature that makes the laws and the policies that govern the DOC, and they could release people, *if* they wanted to. In the wake of International Women's Day, not many people are talking about the fact that women are now the fastest growing demographic of prisoners. I just left SCI Chester, where a number of men were awaiting commutation hearings - some of which have been in prison for 30, 40, or 50 years. What does anybody gain out of keeping a person behind bars for 5 decades? So, yes, I'm happy to be home. But I'm definitely not satisfied. And I plan on making my presence felt out here!

Recently, I received an email from a brother in prison, and he was letting me know that he was upset with me for what he perceived as me forgetting about him after I left the prison we were at together. When reading that email, I must admit that it hurt a little. But when I really sat down to think, I realized that this brother, who I consider my old head, was merely feeling what we all feel at some point in time during our incarceration. So let me answer that, for my old head, and anybody else who may share the same concerns and feelings. Each day of our time on the inside is a journey. Like slaves, the PADOC can pack us up and send us wherever they choose, at any time they choose. Every-

thing I know, I learned from my old heads, and I would never forget about - or abandon - them. Moving from one prison to the next was just a part of my journey, and I'm now in a REAL position to help! It isn't easy to communicate with each other when you must go through a third-party. And the reality of the matter is that family and friends on the outside, often fall off, leaving us on the inside to fend for ourselves.

The Editor Speaks



If you know me, then you know that I live to fight; I love to fight! I give it raw and uncut, and I don't hide. I put myself at great risk over the years,

all because I believed that it was the right thing to do. And I'm still that way. I'm not asking or looking for credit. I'm asking for understanding and support. I support you and I always will - even for those guys on the inside who stopped talking to me, for one reason or another; those guys who used to walk with me, but decided I wasn't "cool enough" anymore. I understand, and it won't stop me from fighting for all of you, and all of us.

Right now, I want to use this time to thank Mama Patt and everybody else at the Human Rights Coalition, CADBI, and Amistad Law Project and the Abolitionist Law Center, for the "welcome home" event that they organized for me. It was a lot of fun, and I got to meet a lot of different people for the first time.

We have big plans. For starters, we're about to revamp the Inside Advisory Committee, so that we can move on to our next goal of creating a Political Education series on the inside. Too many of us don't understand the politics behind our incarceration, and therefore, can't understand what it will take to throw off the shackles - mentally and physically. So, these classes will be for those of us who are serious about the liberation that will only come as a result of abolition.

Secondly, since I've been home, one of the things that I've taken advantage of is my right to communicate with legislators. And the very first thing that I noticed is that they respond differently when you're on the outside of prison.

My point is that I'm out here working for the people. I will always work for the people. And all of you are my people.

Be safe and keep your head up.

@uptownserg

Sergiohyland8@gmail.com

Disclaimer

Legal-Eagles, David Lusik, aka David Lusick

It has been brought to our attention that an individual by the name of David Lusick has been soliciting prisoners and their families for legal services and charging fees; and, has claimed affiliation with the Human Rights Coalition (HRC) and the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI).

David Lusick/Legal-Eagles is not affiliated with HRC nor CADBI. We [HRC,CADBI] are not affiliated or associated with this organization, neither do we authorize, endorse or are in any way officially connected with David Lusick/Legal-Eagles. This organization has never had permission to use HRC's or CADBI's names on its website or in any solicitation of services to prisoners and their families.

We provide the same advice that we would give for any organization: Do Due Diligence and Investigation.

Thank you from the Human Rights Coalition

THE MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

Founders

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Parent Organization:

Human Rights Coalition (HRC)

Founded: 2007

Call for Contributors

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

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

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

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

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“Second Chances Don’t Diminish Justice, But Fulfill It.”

By: Saleem Holbrook and Valerie Kiebala

April is Second Chances Month, and while the state paints “victims” in opposition to second chances for people in prison, a growing network of people identifying as “dual victims” are exposing the lie behind this narrative. Dual victims are people who have lost loved ones to interpersonal violence *and mass incarceration. Their lived experiences demonstrate how both generational harm and carceral violence weave through the families within our communities.*

On March 30, members of the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, Healing Communities, Abolitionist Law Center, and Straight Ahead led a dual victim cohort to meet with state legislators in Harrisburg and make their voices heard. The message they brought to the state capital was that survivors of violence want healing and restoration, not Death by Incarceration.

Dual victims Christina Reyes, Lisa Rodriguez-Villoch, Carol Speaks, Terri Minor Spencer, Desiree Cunningham, and Rev. Chris Kimmenez delivered passionate stories and pleas to the representatives. Two of the most impactful legislative visits were with Republican State Representatives Sheryl Delozier—the co-chair of the bipartisan Criminal Justice Reform Caucus—and Todd Stevens—a former prosecutor and tough-on-crime legislator. Both play a key role in achieving any parole for lifers legislation in the Republican-controlled General Assembly. After the cohort asked Delozier and Stevens to stop assuming that all survivors of violence want retribution and called them to stop sending people to die by incarceration in their name, the legislators were moved by the stories and said that in the future, they would take their words into consideration before speaking on behalf of survivors.

Two weeks later on April 11th, the cohort returned to Harrisburg to hold a press conference in the Capital Media Room to release the results of CADBI’s report, **“Second Chances Don’t Diminish Justice, But Fulfill It.”** The report interlaced data and stories from the 104 respondents who answered the CADBI survey between March and November of 2021, which asked survivors of violence questions about healing, justice, change, and Death by Incarceration. The report unraveled insights and perspectives that the 2019 Office of Victim Advocate survey whitewashed in its exclusion of dual victims. While 91 percent of the OVA survey respondents did not support parole eligibility of any kind, 94 percent of the CADBI survey respondents supported parole eligibility for the person who was convicted of killing their loved one.

This directly contradictory data demonstrates that the OVA has

been suppressing the multiplicity of dual victims’ voices to serve their agenda of mass incarceration. The CADBI report provided a deeper look into survivors’ nuanced experiences and shaped policy recommendations around the needs and desires that survivors expressed. The report recommended that: 1. The PA legislature passes legislation to end Death by Incarceration sentencing (such as SB135) and provide geriatric and medical parole (such as SB835) 2. PA divests resources from incarceration and invests them into restorative justice programs, reentry programs, and trauma healing programs for the communities most impacted by violence 3. The Office of Victim Advocate transforms its services to support individuals and communities most impacted by violence.

Martha Williams, Amy McAndrews, Lisa Rodriguez-Villoch and Rev. Chris Kimmenez, all of whom identify as dual victims, spoke at the press conference. CADBI member Pastor Jay Bergen facilitated it. In addition, Senator Shariff Street, the sponsor of SB135 and SB835, State Representatives Rick Krakewski, and State Representative Donna Bullock, the chairwoman of the Pennsylvania Congressional Black Caucus, all spoke at the press conference supporting restorative justice and parole eligibility for lifers and geriatric prisoners. Representatives from the Office of Victim Advocate, the Pennsylvania Prison Society, and the Capital Press attended as well.

When Senator Sharif Street took the podium, he shared: “This is the first time it’s dawned on me that I’m speaking as a dual victim.” For Street, it was his wife’s cousin, who he calls his nephew, that was murdered. “If you are a person from one of those communities [most impacted by violent crime], like I am from North Philadelphia,” Street said, “you recognize that the system of mass incarceration has not made us safer.”

In reference to the previous Victim’s Advocate Jennifer Storm, who blocked any reform around Death by Incarceration, Street said, “I was at the forefront of that debate...about dual victims with the previous Office of Victims Advocate, where she said they didn’t exist. Unfortunately, I now have a personal testimony that they do, and I’m one of them.”

Lisa Rodriguez-Villoch, the relative of two murder victims and the wife of a man serving Death by Incarceration, vehemently agreed that dual victims not only exist but have a voice. “To the state,” she said, “Stop weaponizing victims. Stop using us as weapons. You put us on the shelf. You take us off when somebody is up for parole or somebody is going to court. You take us down and you use us. You keep us in a circle of perpetual victimhood. Enough is enough. We exist. They acknowledge me as a dual victim in New Jersey. Pennsylvania needs to do that too. Not all of us feel the same way.”

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Amy McAndrews, a woman from Chester County, recalled the murder of three of her close friends—one of whom she considered her baby brother. McAndrews described the evolution of her healing process. Now she is devoted to ending Death by Incarceration in Pennsylvania. “Nearly every other state in the U.S. offers opportunities for redemption,” she said. “We’re not asking for everyone to go free. We’re asking that people who are deserving have an opportunity at parole. Incarcerating people to death does not do my heart justice. It does not make me safer or happier. It does not benefit me in any positive way mentally. And it is a detriment to me financially, using unnecessary tax dollars that could be used for mental health treatment, to fight poverty, or for the Victim’s Advocate Office to truly help survivors.”

At the conclusion of the press conference, members and supporters of the cohort flooded the State Capital with CADBI’s report and distributed it to legislators’ offices, compelling them to read the data and listen to survivors of violence. The cohort also set up a distribution station in the Capitol Rotunda, handing out copies of the report and speaking with passersby about the urgency of ending Death by Incarceration.

Throughout the next several months, Straight Ahead will be expanding the cohort to other regions of the state, alongside partners CADBI and Healing Communities. Survivors of violence who believe in second chances will continue to meet with legislators. These lobbying visits and future press events are a continuation of our Decarceration Movement’s battle to reform the Victim Advocate Office, a battle that started under the former state’s Victim Advocate Jennifer Storm. No longer will survivors of violence stay silent as politicians evoke their name to bolster mass incarceration and Death by Incarceration.

Correction to Article on Willie Stokes

Dear Mama Patt,

The Winter 2022 Issue#46, page 40, made a mistake concerning Willie Stokes article. He wrongly charged with killing a man name Leslie Campbell. Not a woman. I know why it was a misprint because of his first name, Leslie. I would be mad as hell if my mom named me Leslie.

Please give my close friend Shakaboona my greetings.

Take care Mama Patt.

"Dave"
(From Henry, David 2022)

Commutation Results for April 2022

Recommended

Gary Kyles
Michael Lyons
Felix Ocasio [Long Term Offender]
Terrell Carter
Ronald Connolly
James Jackson
Felix Rosado

As of this writing, Governor Wolf has not yet signed off on those recommended. [5/23/2022]

OP-ED: Pa. legislators advanced SB913 in spite of opposition from “virtually all of the major decarceral grassroots orgs in the state”

But policymakers can still deliver on meaningful probation reform

By Dolly Prabhu, April 6, 2022

At one time, probation was a progressive reform, but today, it is one of the primary drivers of mass incarceration. Nor is probation any longer the “privilege” that many judges condescendingly claim it to be. It is increasingly a default sentence, despite falling crime rates, as reported in the Philadelphia Inquirer. Rarely does it displace jail time; instead, it is often added on consecutively.

While probation may at one time have been an alternative to incarceration, it is now an alternative to freedom. Judges are reluctant to release people from jail or prison without first imposing a lengthy probation or parole sentence, despite research that shows that such sentences do not decrease the likelihood of recidivism or increase public safety, according to public policy organization, The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Probation expands the carceral state without a demonstrative increase in public safety, and yet its use is as widespread as ever. This current state of the probation system is demonstrative of the dangerousness of so-called criminal justice reform: even well-meaning advocates often advance “reforms” or “alternatives to incarceration” that ultimately only serve to entrench or further inflate mass incarceration. Pennsylvania’s Senate Bill 913 (SB 913) is the latest example of this harmful phenomenon.

At best, the bill’s proposed reforms appear superficial and conditional — they are subject to numerous restrictions and will not assist the vast majority of individuals on probation. Its primary reform proposes mandated probation review conferences for individuals with lengthy probation sentences.

Individuals are only eligible for these conferences after three years on probation for a misdemeanor or five years on probation for a felony. This is an exceptionally long period of time that, right off the bat, will exclude a large number of probationers. (Many people on probation for a long period of time are not serving a single lengthy probation sentence, but multiple short sentences as their probation is constantly revoked and reimposed.)

Additionally, eligibility for these probation review conferences

is also subject to many limitations and requires several seemingly simple, but practically burdensome steps, including that the judge overseeing probation also must not perceive the defendant to be a “threat to public safety” — a vague and highly subjective standard.

Most important to note is that judges already have the authority to terminate probation early. Early termination of probation is already permitted; the creation of probation review conferences may in fact reduce the amount of early termination as judges may rely on this mechanism rather than take action themselves. It may also further confuse what is now a relatively straightforward process of early termination.

Aside from these flawed and convoluted review conferences, SB 913 offers no other potentially positive changes.

As mentioned, even well-meaning policymakers can unknowingly advance harmful reforms. However, the groups that support SB 913 are far from progressive: one of its loudest supporters is the Pennsylvania Safety Coalition, a political advocacy group that partners with far-right organizations such as the American Conservative Union, Americans for Prosperity Pennsylvania, and the Faith and Freedom Coalition. The bill is also supported by the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association.

Conversely, the groups opposed to SB 913 include virtually all of the major progressive organizations in the state, including the ACLU of Pennsylvania, the Public Defender Association of PA, the Philadelphia Bail Fund, and dozens of other anti-carceral grassroots organizations across the state, including IHood and Casa San Jose. That alone should send a message to legislators about how they should approach this bill.

Probation is one of the primary drivers of mass incarceration; its scale and power must be reduced to move towards decarceration. Legislation such as SB 913, which offers limited, conditional benefits yet creates a high risk for future harm and entrenchment, is not the way towards this goal. It is a shame that this momentum is not used to advance effective decarceral initiatives.

“While probation may at one time have been an alternative to incarceration, it is now an alternative to freedom.”

Politicians assume that grassroots organizers are the uneducated ones who don’t understand the ins and outs of proposed legislation; in reality, they are the ones who clearly don’t understand the full context or potential impact of the bills that they advance. This bill’s unpopularity is blamed on “bad marketing,” when in reality it is just bad legislation.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

Legislation is risky — there is always the chance that it may be warped to do more harm than good. To be worth that risk, it must offer at least some guarantee of meaningful decarceration. Unfortunately, SB 913 does not meet even that low bar, and instead entrenches many of the harmful practices we should be seeking to end.

Dolly Prabhu is a Staff Attorney and Equal Justice Works Fellow at the Abolitionist Law Center, a Pennsylvania-based non-profit law firm and community organizing project working to build a world without police and prisons.

From: PITTSBURG City Paper

An Open Letter to Meek Mill: Pa. needs real probation reform | Opinion

We need real probation reform. The bill now before the General Assembly isn't it

Rapper Meek Mill joins Pennsylvania lawmakers to support probation and parole reform. (Capital-Star photo by Nick Field)

By Reuben Jones, April 2022



Dear Meek Mill,

I wanted to speak to you directly about probation reform and how disappointed I am with the efforts of your organization, REFORM. After all, you are the reason many of us rallied around reforming probation in the first place. Most people didn't even know that a person could go to jail without actually committing a crime, let alone spend 10 years on probation. Your arrest made national headlines.

People rallied around you and demanded justice. Celebrities. Preachers. Politicians. And most importantly, your formerly incarcerated brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors, including myself. Everybody was on your side. We made “Free Meek” our rally cry.

I believed that you deserved the right to be released, to be home with your family. I believed that the system was wrong and needed an overhaul. I believed we needed to fight not just for you, but for all Pennsylvanians that continue to suffer under the invisible shackles of probation.

And, as a result of our movement effort, you were finally released. Now, a little over a year later, I am disappointed in how your allies at REFORM have trampled over the voices of formerly incarcerated leaders like myself and sacrificed Black Philadelphians trapped in the same cycle of probation you were, in order to win passage of a probation reform bill (SB913) now before the House Judiciary Committee.

When REFORM was announced, it was met with both skepticism and hope. The skepticism came because billionaires are not usually reformers, but there was hope because you had lived experience and those of us who did as well hoped the organization would listen to formerly incarcerated experts and advocates.

After assembling their star power and a \$50 million budget, REFORM announced that they would be leading the charge for probation reform in Pennsylvania. Two probation bills were crafted. Both were immediately opposed by community organizers. Neither went far enough to create the kind of transformative reforms that could begin to right decades of harm visited on Black Pennsylvanians by the probation system. Neither bill passed.

We breathed a sigh of relief because we preferred no bill to a bill that contributed to expanding the carceral system. Then came SB913, introduced by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairperson Lisa Baker, a conservative Republican from Luzerne County.

Over 40 organizations across the state opposed the bill, but it moved through the Senate floor quickly. REFORM proudly endorsed the bill. Quickly, it has become clear that the organization was largely concerned only with getting “wins” at any cost. Let's be clear, Pennsylvania is in desperate need of substantive probation reform capable of transforming the current carceral system into one that is more humane and restorative.

Right now, probation violations amount to more than 50 percent of the jail population, disproportionately Black people, who are incarcerated not for new crimes, but for probation violations.

(Continued on page 10)

“Knowledge is Power, ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!!”

(Continued from page 9)

We deserve a system that allows people an opportunity to grow and earn their way back into society.

We hoped to create legislation that would prevent people from being on probation for years and years like you were and prevent judges from stacking sentences in ways that amounted to indefinite probation. We hoped to end the use of technical violations to incarcerate people when no new crime was committed. We wanted clear limits to the amount of time a person could be subject to probation.

We wanted real reform.

So, when your organization claims that the bill narrows incarceration for technicals and provides pathways to probation termination, I am appalled.

The bill’s language is so ambiguous that it could actually have the opposite impact. It allows any and all law enforcement to arrest and detain people on probation, raising the prospect that people will be violated in whole new ways is on the horizon. And it creates new barriers to extricating people from probation’s grip.

Is that your intent? If so, I am very disappointed.

It is especially curious because Baker’s proposal would not benefit you, even though you are the poster child for Pennsylvania’s whole probation reform movement? In fact, the Senate bill will not benefit the overwhelming majority of Black people on probation in Philadelphia who are trapped on probation.

In my heart, I want to believe that that’s not your intent. We had so much hope for you. We believed you would bring all those resources to the table in order to change the culture in this city. We still believe you can. That is why we continue to fight the bill: with the hope that one day, perhaps with your help, Pennsylvania will create transformative probation reform.

Reuben Jones is the executive director of Frontline Dads and the Pennsylvania policy lead for Dignity and Power Now! He writes from Philadelphia.

(Continued from page 19)

broken people. That’s what it looks like: healing people from the inside and taking it home and building a better community. Because when you’re mentally well, you fight differently. We need to get to the root of the problem.”

Now, Vaughn is running for Assemblywoman in the 70th Assembly District of New York to fight for her community and enact changes to foster healing. A main tenet of her platform is addressing the mental health crisis in the BIPOC community in the village of Harlem through culturally competent therapy and grassroots community work. Her plan includes working to end mass incarceration, providing treatment for people suffering from Post Traumatic Prison Disorder, addressing social economic disparities that fuel gun violence, and ensuring affordable and sustainable housing for everyone.

As long as our political offices are filled with profiteers and pawns, the fires in our communities will only continue to be fueled. Meaningful solutions must be led by people who have lived the everyday effects of the dire struggles facing our communities. People like Shawanna Vaughn—whose legislation and candidacy for office present a real potential for concrete change and an opportunity for people like Buck to heal and live thriving lives.

Donate today to support Shawanna Vaughn’s campaign for New York Assemblywoman.

Commutation – Did You Know?

Applied for commutation?

Working on your commutation application?

Thinking about applying for commutation?

Trying to figure out this commutation maze?

If you answered “**yes**” to any of these questions, read on!. A group of us have created the PA Commutation Work Group to share information and updates; to identify the often-unknown nooks and crannies of this process; to collaborate with other groups; share information with those inside [and their loved ones; and finally, to address concerns with the Board, legislators, and basically, whomever will listen!

So, with that in mind, we share with you...”***Did You Know?***”

Did you know...the application fee for commutation has been eliminated? John Fetterman instituted this change soon after he took office.

Did you know...you ***do not*** need to do the painful work to get your criminal records before applying? Now, Parole and Probation are charged with gathering this information after your application is received?

Did you know...those serving long-term sentences applying for commutation will get Board recommendation with a 3-2 [or better] vote?

Did you know...the application is scheduled to go “live” allowing you to apply electronically...sometime in 2023? Stay tuned for this!!!

Did you know...you can have more than one person listed on your application designated as your “representative”? Representatives are allowed to call the Board to get updates on your application.

Did you know...that you can change your representative during anytime in the process?

Did you know...that Acting DOC Secretary Little is continuing former DOC Secretary Wetzel’s commandeering the prison review process, interviewing each applicant as the final step of the prison review process? Acting Secretary is “training” leadership to conduct these interviews. His interviews are far shorter than his predecessor [Wetzel].

Did you know...the Board forecasts that processing your application will take 12-24 months [and longer] due to the number of people who have applied and because of limited DOC and BOP capacity.

Did you know...even ***IF*** your prison ***does not*** support your application, you will still receive a Merit Review?

Did you know...over the past eight years, Dr. John Williams, a child psychiatrist and the Boards’ mental health expert, has voted “***NO***” to more commutation applications than any other Board Member? His term does not end until November, 2025!

Did you know...since Governor Wolf has been in office, there has NEVER been a 4-1 vote for commutation.

Did you know...there are two State Bills calling to change the Commutation Board voting. Representative Joanne McClinton’s Bill calls for a return to a Board 3-2 vote. Senator Camera Bartolotta also has a Bill calling to change the vote to 4-1. How much sense does that make since in the 8 years there has never been a 4-1 vote for commutation? Both Bills are sitting in their representative Judiciary Committee, so far going nowhere. Josh Shapiro has stated publicly that he supports a change in the Board vote to “3-2”.

Did you know...Pardon Statutes specifies that your application “will be available for public inspection”? We are just learning about this...Stay tuned as to what this means!

Did you know...it appears victim family input has a tremendous impact on the Board, both those who speak to support the applicant and others who speak in opposition.

Did you know...a number of applicants submitted to the commutation process more than once before their sentence was finally commuted? Just ask Naomi Blount, George Trudel, the Horton brothers, Irvin Moore and just recently recommended, Michael Lyons[waiting for Gov. Wolf’s sign-off]!

There are far more “***Did you knows***”. The process takes a long time, is very confusing with its many moving parts, requiring patience [like you don’t know about that!] and resolve!

Do you have a Commutation “***Did you know***...”? Or, perhaps, a question about commutation? Send to us so we can share with others!!!

Elaine Selan
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The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

Day of Appreciation

Saturday, May 14, 2022



On behalf of the organizations at SCI Phoenix and incarcerated citizens, we would like to thank everyone of you for your endless love and support.

To our family and friends, without your altruistic dedication our lives behind bars would be even more miserable. Your tenacity and willingness to go beyond all boundaries has been a ray of hope in our time of despair. The separation from you is more bearable, especially when knowing you have someone who really cares.

We can never forget all of the sacrifices you have made, in spite of the poor deci-

sions we have made, that has altered ours, yours, and others lives. In retrospect, if many of us had known the burden that our actions would have caused so many families, friends and communities, we would have made different choices.

To all external supporters, volunteers, advocates, event coordinators and staff members, we appreciate all of the time, days and years you have spent helping us through our transformational process. The services and resources that you and/or your organization provide has been very important to every incarcerated citizen who wanted to better his/her life.

Because of your selflessness and dedication to the betterment of incarcerated citizens, our community here and abroad is a much better place to live. Thank you all for your support.

Internal Organizations

- *United Community Action Network
- *Gray Panthers
- *Real Street Talk
- *Long Incarcerated Fraternity Engaging In Release Strategies
- *Latin American Cultural Exchange Organization
- *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- *Community Forgiveness and Restoration
- *Right 2 Redemption
- *People Against Recidivism
- *Veteran 466
- *Man Up



Editor's Note:
We apologize for not being able to identify all of the award recipients. However we join in celebrating their achievements.

Congratulations!

Above Awardees from L-R: Elaine Selan, Etta Cetera, Ricky Olds, and Sean Damon

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!



Senate probation reform bill faces pushback from advocates who say they prefer the status quo

‘This bill is so bad, [that] the status quo is better than this bill,’ Robert Saleem Holbrook, executive director for Straight Ahead, the Abolition Law Center’s legislative wing, told the Capital-Star

BY: [CASSIE MILLER](#) - APRIL 27, 2022

Advocates and lawmakers opposed to a Senate probation reform bill gathered on the Capitol steps on Wednesday to call on lawmakers to “vote no” on the proposed legislation, which they say will cause more harm than good.

The bill, [SB 913](#), which is currently before the House Judiciary Committee after passing the Senate in December, is based on several other pieces of previously introduced legislation.

According to an October 2021 [memorandum](#) from the bill’s prime sponsor, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairperson Lisa Baker, R-Luzerne, the bill was designed to address Pennsylvania’s “probation-to-prison revolving door” problem.

The bill, Baker wrote then, “establishes a mandatory probation review conference for probationers, providing criteria for when they occur, and a presumption that probation will be terminated unless the individual does not qualify. Additionally, the bill will allow for the review conference to occur earlier based on the good conduct of defendants by achieving certain educational, employment, or other goals.”

The bill also creates an entirely new type of probation in Pennsylvania called “administrative probation,” which would allow judges to keep those who owe restitution potentially indefinitely until the restitution is paid in full.

It would also continue to allow judges to “stack” additional probation sentences and does not allow for automatic probation termination after a probation period ends.

While the bill may have good intentions, its critics say it does more harm than good to those it was meant to help.

“This bill is so bad, [that] the status quo is better than this bill,” Robert Saleem Holbrook, executive director for [Straight Ahead](#), the Abolition Law Center’s legislative wing, told the Capital-Star. “There’s a couple of provisions that would be helpful, but unfortunately, the harm in it outweighs that.”

Holbrook said that he thinks efforts by lawmakers to appease too many other groups irreparably damaged the bill.

“This bill started out in 2019, with some very good common sense and practical provisions to actually reform probation,” Holbrook said. “What happened is a case of trying to appease everyone and making something worse; because they needed to appease the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, they needed to appease significant segments within the Republican leadership that wanted to see more punitive measures within probation, and then they had these criminal justice reform activists, so they tried to take pieces that appease all of these groups and put them in one bill.”

Elizabeth Randol, legislative director for the ACLU of Pennsylvania, told the Capital-Star that the ACLU cannot support the bill despite its efforts to advocate for probation reform in the commonwealth.

“We do not oppose bills unless we believe that the bill will cause more damage than the current system,” Randol said. “The problem is, the way that the bill was gutted, how it included a lot of language from the DA’s [Pennsylvania District Attorneys] Association, and other stakeholders – turned it into something that we not only don’t think would be providing real reform, but could really risk making material changes to the system that would make it worse than what we are currently dealing with.”

Pennsylvania currently has the second highest percentage of its citizens in probation and parole in the country, [according to the ACLU](#).

In Philadelphia, 1 in 14 Black people are under supervision, and in Allegheny County, where Black people make up just 13 percent of the population, 42 percent are under supervision, according to the same data.

Calling the bill “inhumane, cruel, and vicious,” state Rep. Chris Rabb, who sits on the House Judiciary Committee, said at Wednesday’s rally that he will not support the bill, despite bipartisan support for the measure.

“I want to be on the record as a ‘hell no,’” Rabb, D-Philadelphia, said of his “no” vote.

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The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

#FreeAnt: On the

2nd Anniversary of the Murder of
George Floyd, Activists are Still Being
Targeted with Federal Prosecution
Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Today marks the two year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. The video showing Derek Chauvin with his knee on Floyd's neck was shared around the world and helped launch a series of global uprisings and a moral reckoning regarding how this country deals with race and police violence. Two years later, hundreds of activists who participated in demonstrations during the summer of 2020 have been arrested and charged

Federally. In Philadelphia, the rallying cry of "Free Ant!" has been a call to action to support Ant Smith, an educator at Youth-Build High School who is being federally prosecuted for participating in demonstrations in May of 2020. Ant Smith's case is set to begin this summer, after nearly 2 years of court supervision. In October of 2020, his home was raided by federal authorities in the wee hours of the morning, only one day after an officer with the Philadelphia Police Department murdered Walter Wallace in West Philadelphia. Smith was arrested and held for weeks in the Lehigh County Jail before being released under court supervision. Since then, the Ant Smith Defense Committee and dedicated community members have worked to support his legal defense and raise awareness about his case.

"Federal prosecution of individuals who were participating in protests during the summer of 2020 is an attempt to deliberately disrupt the momentum of the movement for Black Lives," says Gabriel Bryant of the Ant Smith Defense Committee, "Federal prosecutors under both the Trump and Biden administrations have continued to pursue political prosecutions of activists, especially Black and Brown organizers, like our friend Ant Smith. These charges carry mandatory minimum Federal prison sentences for offenses that would normally be considered misdemeanors under the purview of local District Attorneys. This is straight up political repression."

A report from the Movement from Black Lives shows how the Justice Department "deliberately targeted" supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement with harsh prosecutions at the "express direction" of former President Donald Trump and former Attorney General Bill Barr. Many protestors - especially Smith - were arrested and given charges that many are still deal-

ing with to this day. These defendants and their families and supporters have had to figure out ways to raise funds in order to fight for their freedom. Although some cases have been dropped in the last year, the Biden Administration's Justice Department has continued to pursue many of these Federal prosecutions, even going as far as attempting to label protestors as "terrorists". In many cases across the country, people have received years-long federal prison sentences for their right to have their voice heard.

"For organizers who understand how the courts, prisons and police operate in this country, this is nothing new," says Deandra Jefferson of the Ant Smith Defense Committee "We knew that the police murders of 2020 were not the start, but the continuation of how white supremacy manifests itself in the institutions and very fabric of how this country runs. Now, as the Justice Department unleashes Federal prosecutors on our community leaders, we have to respond and defend our communities from political repression."



The Ant Smith Defense Committee has been fundraising for Ant Smith's legal defense and growing a social media and online campaign. The Ant Smith Defense Committee has held press conferences, community events, and multiple IG Live conversations, featuring a number of expert panelists sharing insightful information on topics ranging from intersectionality to mutual aid and liberatory education. This campaign

looks forward to the inevitability of Ant beating all of his Federal charges and will continue to defend the rights of people to express their political opinions and stand up for what they believe in.

"Anthony Smith is a dear friend and beloved community activist and teacher," says Alyssa King from the Ant Smith Defense Committee. "It's ridiculous that he is still being prosecuted Federally on politically motivated charges. For nearly 2 years, he has been on court supervised release, held under a curfew, and he's scheduled to stand trial this June. These political prosecutions only serve to intimidate people and organizations who dare to stand up to racialized police violence in this country."

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Human Rights Coalition Report



Political Education Needed

By Kenjuan Congo

Political Education is fluid, as it relates to time and place. For the purpose of this article, the context is the relationship between the United States government and its oppressed so-called citizens. As it relates to this set of circumstances, political education is the process of training and developing knowledge, skill, mind, etc., in relationship to the American government.

A major issue with institutionalized education is that the State does not - and will not - politically educate marginalized communities (women, poor, people of hue, etc.), in the methods and strategies of liberation.

Organizations of the establishment teach conservatism and even liberalism, when pushed, but not political radicalism. The three ideologies are paramount, as it pertains to the political education of the masses.

* Conservatism - Key characteristics of conservatism are: 1) Opposition to government intervention and regulation 2) Emphasis on individual achievement and personal reliance and 3) Belief that social problems are self induced.

* Liberalism - Key Characteristics of liberalism are: 1) A belief that the system is flawed but salvageable 2) The ideal of integration 3) The rejection of violence and 4) The support for government intervention and regulation.

* Radicalism - Core characteristics of radicalism are: 1) Belief that the system is flawed and can not be salvaged 2) Confrontation with the established order 3) The seeking of power rather than influence 4) Desire to reorder social forces with preference to the masses and 5) Usually work outside the system rather than within it (organization, mobilization, education, etc.,).

As we can see, political education is more than knowing who's your mayor or state representative. It is also the comprehension and organization around core political ideologies. This process of awareness also provides insight to the distribution of wealth and power, in addition to larger philosophical and cultural beliefs. The knowledge and skill being taught to the masses needs to be founded on common values and beliefs, as related to our specific condition.

Ultimately, what is our condition? What do we want it to be?

And how do we achieve it? For this, it is essential to have an ideology around our distinct social political reality. As it stands, political power is concentrated among the rich, who we refer to as the power-elite. This class holds the bulk of society's wealth, prestige, and power; they turn political agendas (national and local) toward their own interests at the expense of the masses. Not only is the power concentrated, but the power elite control the political arena as well.

Alexander Haig - who held top positions in private business - served as the White House Chief of staff under Nixon, and was Secretary of State under Reagan. He retired as an Army General. In Clinton's cabinet, ten of his thirteen members were reputed millionaires. Evidence shows that the upper class moving in and out of politics is common practice in the United States government. The power elite position themselves at the top as they move through sectors, industries, and government, consolidating wealth and power as they go. The masses should be trained and developed in knowledge, skill, mind, etc., in relation to how America governs. We must understand the differences between conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism, with insight to power inequities as well. This all needs to be built around common philosophical and cultural beliefs; justice without distinction of race, gender, class, culture, or any other social or biological characteristic.

The ultimate aim of this political education is to create and sustain a just world for all of humanity.

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Kenjuan Congo



The Importance of Political Education and Voting

By Saleem Holbrook

Politics covers a wide range, but elections influence everything - from the amount of calories

that an incarcerated person is entitled to each a day, all the way down to whether a person will live or die; whether a death warrant will be served, or if a person in prison will be granted commutation. In Philadelphia, we've seen how elections have ushered in a "progressive" District Attorney in Larry Krasner, who supports Senate Bill 135, which, if passed, would provide parole eligibility to Lifers. Also, Larry Krasner has joined a lawsuit seeking to abolish the death sentence in Pennsylvania, because it is applied in a racially discriminatory manner that cannot be remedied. In addition, his Conviction Integrity Unit has exonerated 24 people in the last four years, who were wrongfully convicted, which is more than his previous four predecessors combined. His office has not objected to compassionate release petitions for incarcerated people who are suffering terminal illness. And his office has given out 15,000 years less of incarceration to offenders than his predecessor, Seth Williams.

The District Attorney's office in Philadelphia was once one of the most corrupt and vicious offices in the entire country. The office was run by Lynn Abraham, who was called America's deadliest DA because in her 17 years in office, she sent more people to death row than any other prosecutor in the United States. During her tenure, Philadelphia became the city with the most people serving life without parole in the entire country. Now, look at where the office is, under the leadership of Krasner. It's a complete turnaround; it's also the reason why the police, former prosecutors, and conservatives hate Larry Krasner; it's because prisoners, their families and formerly incarcerated people hit the cell blocks and streets and contributed to his election. Don't get me wrong, Krasner is not perfect and we have a lot of work left ahead of us to continue the reforms and decarceration taking place under his office's leadership, but as a movement, to decarcerate and free our loved ones and comrades in prison, we're much better off with a Larry Krasner in that office, as opposed to a Carlos Vega or other tough on crime prosecutors.

Another example is the commutation process under Lt. Governor John Fetterman. We supported Fetterman's election in 2019 because he said that he believed in second chances and was willing to go further than any other candidate to grant commutations to prisoners sentenced to Life. I met with Fetterman in 2019 in Pittsburgh at a candidate forum where he pledged that to a room full of families of the incarcerated and community activists.

The fact of the matter is that everything is political, even the law. We're not going to be able to exonerate all 6,000 lifers in Pennsylvania, nor will we be able to overturn their sentences through litigation, or get commutation for everyone. Parole for Lifers, across the board, is the only option, and that can only be accomplished by building a statewide decarceration network that can influence, participate in, or disrupt elections and legislation across the state.

In order to accomplish this, we need the right candidates in office, ones who believe in Second Chances and Decarceration. Then we need to make sure that they are listening to us as a movement and including us in the process of legislation. We need candidates that agree to support not only ending life without parole but the death sentence as well. We need geriatric parole for elderly prisoners; we need presumptive parole so that when incarcerated people reach their minimum release date, they will be paroled, provided that they've completed all their programs and don't have any recent misconducts; we need an end to long term solitary confinement, and we need an end to charging and sentencing juveniles as adults. We need **Decarceration Candidates**. With that said, however, all of the candidates or politicians we support, are not going to support all of our demands. So, we have to be strategic. Republican Senator Camera Bartolotta, who supports Geriatric Parole and Parole Eligibility for Lifers, is not a Decarceration politician; she is a very conservative politician. We are not going to ask for people's families to vote for her, but we are going to work closely with her because our interests align when it comes to winning parole eligibility for lifers.

Our movement is primarily invested in supporting radical and progressive candidates, as well as similar kinds of politicians in Pennsylvania and outside the state. In Philadelphia, we supported the election of Kendra Brooks to the city council, as a third-party candidate from the Working Families Party, which is separate from the Democratic and Republican parties. The first time in over 170 years that a third party candidate won a seat on the City Council. We supported Summer Lee, Sara Innamorotto, Nikil Saval, Rick Krajewski, Elizabeth Fielder, Chris Rabb, Shariff Street, Isaiah Thomas, and Helen Gym - just to name a few. And we are supporting a whole crop of new candidates like Paul Prescott, Nickolas O'Rourke and Andre D. Carroll all of whom support decarceration and working-class and poor families. At the same time, we cannot afford to have politicians like State Rep. Amen Brown, from West Philadelphia, who supports reimposing mandatory minimums and works with Republicans to promote pro-mass incarceration legislation in Harrisburg, which doesn't make our communities safer.

In the Allegheny County 2020 judicial elections, we formed a coalition between *StraightAhead! (c4 arm of ALC)*, *IHood Power*, *Alliance For Police Accountability* and *UNITE*, to form the *Slate of Eight progressive judicial candidates*. Five of our

(Continued on page 17)

THE MOVEMENT

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(Continued from page 16)

eight candidates won; ALL of them committed to decarceration. In Philly, through Free The Ballot Incarcerated Voter Network, we participated in the 2020 judicial elections and managed to help elect progressive judges in Philadelphia. And in Allegheny County, the Abolitionist Law Center partnered with the Alliance for Police Accountability to initiate a referendum where voters in 2020 banned police no-knock warrants and solitary confinement in Allegheny County. These are electoral victories. Of course, we haven't won, but we are winning battles and we recognize that we have a lot more work to do. Still, there are people out here working everyday to free people.

At the end of the day, we are committed to building collective power to dismantle the system. Our movement is not about freeing one person; it's not about individual power. This is also not about any one politician. We don't embrace or condone identity politics when it comes to making our decisions, because for those of us that have been imprisoned, we understand that oppressors come in all colors and genders, even when it comes to serving a system established on white supremacy. We have learned that all skinfolk ain't kinfolk. We are looking at your values and actions first.

I like that people call this system the "so-called criminal justice system" because I think we all can agree that there is no justice in this system. We are at a crucial time right now in this moment of criminal justice reform - or what we prefer to call Decarceration. That's what we're seeking: decarceration. We had Mass Incarceration, and it didn't work. We now want decarceration and mass liberation. We've seen substantial changes in the past 10 years, from the state ending mandatory minimum sentencing schemes, to the release of hundreds of juvenile lifers, to dozens of Lifers having their sentences commuted, and we need to build off of those victories and push harder. Reform in America is like a pendulum - it swings back and forth, from reform to repression. Right now, the pendulum has swung in the direction of reform; however, in Pennsylvania, we are still behind the times. Pennsylvania is still the only state where there is no parole eligibility for 1st and 2nd degree murder, and where mandatory life without parole sentences are the only option for 2nd degree murder. Pennsylvania is ranked in the top three worst states when it comes to probation and parole. It has the harshest sentencing schemes. We need to dismantle all of this, together.

Another thing we need to do is push for and advocate for incarcerated people to have the right to vote. Incarceration for a felony conviction should not be a civil death, nor should it disenfranchise a person. That, however, is a long term project which must be waged methodically. We successfully waged a battle to partially end prison gerrymandering because it siphoned political power to rural conservative white communities in Pennsylvania by counting incarcerated people from urban areas in the district they were incarcerated in, as opposed to the communities they came from. Because a majority of prisoners in Penn-

sylvania are from Philadelphia, Allegheny County and other predominantly Black and Brown communities, this deprived our communities of political power. The general assembly reached a compromise, which we opposed, that allowed for prisoners serving under 10 years to be counted as residents of the districts they came from. We wanted all prisoners to be counted in the districts they came from, and not the districts in which the prisons where they are housed exist. Unfortunately, we didn't have the political power to prevent the Republicans and Democrats from compromising our interests. The only way we can prevent that from happening to us again in the future is by building our political power and mobilizing our people. In the words of Malcolm X, "we have to use our ballots like bullets," to target those in power who do not work in our interests.

To accomplish this, we need to work together, both on the inside and outside. It's no coincidence that the organizations fighting the hardest to free people from prison were founded - and are lead by - formerly incarcerated people: *The Abolitionist Law Center, Amistad Law Project, Straight Ahead, Free The Ballot, Let's Get Free, DecarceratePa, Human Rights Coalition, and Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration*. You all need to join this movement. One of the saddest things to see is prisoners and their families attempting to reinvent the wheel, over and over, by starting new and competing organizations. We already have a strong movement network that prisoners and their families can plug into. We only ask that as with all things, we enter spaces correctly and with respect for the work people have put in to build these organizations, and most importantly, understand that these organizations exist not to be in the service of your individual freedom, but in the interest of our collective power and ability to free as many people as possible. You can join our movement by filling out the Decarceration Network contact list in this issue or having your family go online and register at: bit.ly/join-straight-ahead

In closing, at the end of the day, we have to recognize that we are in a marathon and not a sprint. There is no quick fix for parole for lifers in the state legislature, and there is not a magic bullet to end life without parole in the courts. We are going to have to build up a statewide movement led by families of the incarcerated, impacted formerly incarcerated and currently incarcerated leaders, and our allies, in order to win freedom for our people, and most importantly, safety for our communities. In the words of former political prisoner Jalil Muntaquin: "We are our own Liberators!"

By Saleem Holbrook

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Politically Educated

By Sergio Hyland

When most people think of “political education”, they conjure ideas of a college setting, with professors giving detailed lectures on complicated concepts

that only the most educated students can understand. However, political education is something that we all experience on a daily basis - we just don't always realize it. It's for the layman and the expert, alike; it applies to workers, bosses, parents, students, and even those who don't think that they have a place in the political arena. All of our lives are governed by politics. The only real question is: who will you allow to govern yours?

Every decision that one makes in this world is political. The problem is that we don't always understand our actions within that context, because when we think of politics, we think of voting; we think of elected officials; we think of people in suits, traveling throughout the country, kissing babies and making promises that, most-likely, won't be kept. But when you get out of bed each morning, you make decisions that have long lasting implications on the way that your day goes. It could be choosing an outfit or deciding against getting gas from a certain station. Our decisions are guided by our beliefs and principles. For that reason, we are, by nature, political creatures. Unfortunately, we don't always see it that way.

Right now, incarcerated people are in a position unique to others - and especially unique to the incarcerated men and women who came before them. For example, in today's political climate, folks on the inside of prison have more of a voice than they did in the past. That doesn't mean that their voices are responded to more, or that the prisons facilitate a prisoner's efforts to be heard from beyond the walls. Instead, what it means is that, due to an amalgam of circumstances, prisoners now have the ability to be heard. Not just that, but as a result of society's addiction to punishment and prisons, there are far more people locked away in prisons than there was at any other point in human history. What that means, is that more families, more communities, and more classes of people are impacted by incarceration, making mass incarceration a topic of discussion at more dinner tables.

Consequently, a brighter light is being shone on this industry - and wherever there's increased attention, there's increased scrutiny and criticism. In essence, now is the time to take advantage of the attention being paid to the plight of prisoners. This is the moment where politicization is a must, and we all must take it as seriously as possible, before the forces of reaction put measures in place to eliminate any progress that we fought for - and gained.

With that being said, one of the things that we need to focus on, is acquiring our right to vote as incarcerated citizens. It can be done, but we need the political backing to do so. For example, at this moment in history, the Pennsylvania legislature is being run by extreme right-wingers, whose policies are hurting our communities and quality of life. The Human Rights Coalition - and its allies and partners - are fighting to change that dynamic. In order for that to happen, we need you to encourage your family members to become more active in this struggle.

What does it look like to become more involved in this struggle? That's an important question. First, it doesn't mean that you have to be in the rain and snow, protesting. In fact, as members of this struggle, you would have to do very little - and most of it can be done by merely touching your phone. What we need, is voters; we need folks who can send emails. We need people who can answer the phone and make phone calls as well. Folks on the inside of prison may not be able to do everything that must be done, but we can push our families and friends to become involved.

If you want your voices to be heard, if you want to be able to make the decisions which govern your lives, and if you want political protection from the retaliation and criminal conduct that takes place on the inside of prison, at the hands of corrupt guards, you MUST do all in your power to get your family involved in this struggle.

In this issue of THE MOVEMENT, we have a list of all of the different organizations that are heavily involved in the struggle to end mass incarceration and the factors which lead people to engage in the activities that landed them in prison. Be a part of the solution, because if you aren't, you're a part of the problem.

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Politics & Prison

On November 8, 2021, John L. Bucklew, or Buck, was released from SCI Frackville after serving about ten years in prison. Five months later, on April 13, 2022, two women walking their dog

reported to the police that they found a man “sleeping in his car.” When the police arrived, they found 34-year-old Buck dead in his truck, according to Buck’s family. As of the publication of this article, the police are still investigating the cause of his death.

Buck spent his last 100 days of incarceration locked down in solitary confinement, after a situation in which he was forced to defend himself, according to an advocate who had become close with him. Buck already struggled with his mental health when he was sent to the hole, and the isolation only deepened that struggle. “I would have to say the RHU [solitary confinement] will exacerbate anyone’s mental health issues,” said an incarcerated Certified Peer Specialist at SCI Frackville, who shared a cell with Buck.

Of course, no one will ever know what was going through Buck’s head in his last moments. But Shawanna Vaughn, the formerly incarcerated founder of the organization Silent Cry, Inc., has written a piece of legislation aimed at preventing people from dying like Buck did, or from spiraling deeper into the cycle of trauma and recidivism. And Silent Cry, Inc. provides holistic aftercare for mass incarceration, gun violence, and trauma.

The piece of legislation, which has so far been introduced in Michigan and New York, is called: Post Traumatic Prison Disorder Act Shawanna W76337. The number is Vaughn’s prison number and Vaughn herself coined the term “Post Traumatic Prison Disorder” to describe the specific trauma inflicted on people in prison, and especially solitary confinement.

Vaughn spent five years in Michigan prisons, including 32 days in solitary confinement. She personally experienced the specific effects from the trauma of prison, and she witnessed the effect it had on others. “When I left prison, I went in with people that were functional, that I knew from the street,” she said. “And by the time I left, they didn’t know their name. They were just in a haze. That’s unacceptable. So now, you come out and you’re a drug addict that prison made you.”

Vaughn said that she developed the language and ideas for the legislation based on the responses to 300 surveys that she sent to people in prison. “Legislation has to be for us, by us,” Vaughn said. “It can’t look like one person. It has to be collective.”

The proposed New York SB1598 acknowledges Post Traumatic Prison Disorder as “the negative psychological effects on people in prison...includ[ing] a dependence on institutional structure and contingencies, hypervigilance, interpersonal distrust, suspicion, alienation, social withdrawal and isolation.” The bill man-

dates the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to develop an individualized ‘transitional accountability plan’ that would provide clinical intervention for Post Traumatic Prison Disorder for people in prison.

If Buck would have received such an individualized transition plan to treat his Post Traumatic Prison Disorder, he may have still been alive today. Buck’s former cellmate watched helplessly as Buck was released from solitary to the streets with “no preparation for mental health services or anything else for that matter.” Buck’s family said, “It is our opinion that prison destroyed John, his sense of self, and provided no assistance for his mental health problems which he struggled with since he was 17.”

Buck cycled in and out of prison since he was 18 years old, and his family believes that he never received the mental health help that he needed for his addiction and suicidal ideation. Instead, he sat in concrete cells in prisons around the state of PA—from Chester County Prison to SCI Dallas, SCI Mahanoy to SCI Frackville—for mostly nonviolent offenses and parole violations.

Prisons remain vastly unequipped to evaluate and treat mental illness, and they were never designed to do so. Not only have prisons become warehouses for people with psychiatric disabilities, but the environment, culture, and torture of prisons create and exacerbate the uniquely traumatic type of mental illness that Vaughn calls the Post Traumatic Prison Disorder.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, 37 percent of people incarcerated in state and federal prisons have been diagnosed with mental illness. On top of that, many people struggling with their mental health remain undiagnosed. Solitary Watch recently reported that incarcerated people of color are less likely to receive a proper mental health diagnosis, less likely to receive mental health services, and more likely to be punished and placed in solitary confinement.

Included in Vaughn’s legislation is trauma-informed therapy for incarcerated people and mental health evaluations 14 days into their incarceration. In some prisons, asking for therapy can be fruitless. Too often, therapists just come to the door, ask one or two questions, and keep it moving. In Vaughn’s case, when she asked to see a therapist, she was thrown into a suicide watch cell. “They came and got me and put me in paper clothes,” she said. “I didn’t say I want to kill myself or anything. I just said I’m depressed and I need to talk to somebody. They literally came and put me in paper clothes and sat me in a room by myself. And then the man came and he says, ‘Are you better now?’”

Vaughn hopes to combat this cycle of trauma and heal communities through her legislation. “If we heal people, we heal communities,” Vaughn said. “We could stop gun violence if we heal

(Continued on page 10)



Same Solitary, Different Name: Report on Units at SCI Greene

By: Richard Wimbush

Heartfelt Greetings to all of you from the struggle. For all of you who do not already

know me, my name is Richard M. Wimbush, otherwise known as Brother Khalil, a 45-year-old Philadelphia native from Germantown and a comrade of The Movement Magazine's Editor-in-Chief, Sergio "Serg" Hyland. I am here at the State Correctional Institution, Greene.

While this is the very first time I am writing to all of you, I am committed to reporting on issues, not only affecting myself, but issues that confront other prisoners as well, thereby affecting our families in society.

The DOC has shut down prison housing units and incentive-based programs over the last year by removing prisoners from these units and forcing them aboard state transportation vehicles. These prisoners are hauled off in tinted-windowed, unmarked vans to three main DOC state facilities: SCI Phoenix, SCI Camp Hill, and SCI Greene. The decision to remove and transport state prisoners to each of the aforementioned DOC state facilities came just last year, beginning in or around October, as part of a covert operation under the direction of the former DOC Secretary John E. Wetzel, the details of which both the centralized officials in Mechanicsburg and the prison administration of these facilities are refusing to disclose.

Many of the men who have been targeted for transfer to these three facilities are men who are either on the DOC's Restricted Release List (RRL) or have an abundance of disciplinary hole time, and a few have mental health issues or have been deemed incorrigible. Yet, a select few, such as myself, have been removed off of the Restricted Release List. In my case, I have been misconduct-free for a period of seven years.

Prisoners are being mistreated here at SCI Greene. All of the prisoners who were transferred here are being housed on three of the four pods located on L-Block and were each quarantined for a period of 14 days and issued a DC-141, pt. 2, otherwise known as the "other report," in accordance with the Department of Corrections policy DC-ADM 802. The purpose of such a report is allegedly to provide each inmate with full disclosure as to the specific reason(s) for their housing placement. Yet, the issued reports are vague and ambiguous, only providing a one-line reason that states: "the facility has an operational need (e.g. appropriate bed

space) to assign inmate to AC [Administrative Custody] status and house in RHU setting."

The housing unit L-Block at Greene is the very same unit which formerly housed death row inmates. Those few of us who have been removed off of the Restricted Release List were told that we are no longer Custody Level 5 inmates, and are instead General Population inmates. Yet, we are being housed indefinitely on the newly-run Management Control Unit (MCU) on B-pod within L-Block, previously the death row block! Those of us housed on this unit have been granted some of the privileges and amenities that are typically given to general population inmates, such as general population commissary; SecurePak-goods that can be ordered by us inmates, families, and friends; and even a minimal amount of yard and dayroom time as our daily recreation. Still, we are stuck many hours and miles away from our families and friends located primarily in cities, such as Philadelphia, and we are also being denied contact visits under the circular reasoning that those housed in a Custody Level 5 housing unit cannot have contact visits.

When those of us non-Restricted Release inmates have asked to be housed in another unit of our own so that we could receive contact visits, all of our requests were denied. The very few privileges that we do have seem to be an attempt at some incentive for us to continue doing well in the MCU, and at the same time, these "privileges" are used to quell the high levels of our frustration that comes with being here, such a great distance away from family and friends.

Those of us men housed here on L-Block are being told nothing but lies by the hierarchies and the top brass officials of the DOC's administration over and over, in regards to when we will be released back into a real general population. The lack of knowing whether there is light at the end of the tunnel has left all of us scrambling for answers and hopeless.

Prison guards who are non-permanently assigned to work the Management Control Unit (MCU) operate under the same style as how they typically run and control Restricted Housing Units (RHU) and solitary units. This should not be the case, since MCU inmates are no longer Level 5 inmates and are no longer sentenced to time in the hole! Much of the officers' conduct while working shifts in the MCU is due to the habit of working around inmates in the hole, and not knowing how to be flexible. This, in fact, creates a problem for all of us who know that we are no longer supposed to be serving our time in the hole.

The remainder of inmates on other pods such as "C" and "D" pods, are placed on tiers in accordance with their vaccinated and unvaccinated status. However, inmates have still gotten sick with COVID-19, and the few men housed on the newly implemented Intensive Management Unit (IMU) in trying to get off of RRL, have gotten sick from attending groups at a stationed table with other men.

(Continued on page 21)

(Continued from page 20)

The situation for us here at SCI Greene calls for serious attention. Some form of an investigation needs to be conducted to shut the unit down and end the mistreatment! Only the power of the people can stop these prisoncrats, and so I call on all of you and the people at large to assist us.

United We Stand, Divided We Fall. Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win!!

Butterfly

Prison is meant to isolate someone from their family and friends as a form of punishment, placing them in a cell to think about what they did wrong, so they feel remorse.

Within solitary confinement, think of all the times you sat in front of the TV and just didn't feel like doing ANYTHING. Your brain is foggy and all you want to do is watch something to keep you entertained. So what happens when you remove the TV access? No phone? No electronics? No people? I'm sure your bathroom is WAY more plush than a prison cell—and bigger. Cover the mirror so you can't see yourself. Enjoy the fact that you have regular cosmetics and not the single use packets that are five-years expired. Stay there for 12 hours. It's not the room that eats at your consciousness. It's your very own mind.

In a very real way, this is the catalyst for mental fermentation, or going crazy. Deprivation of social normalities forces you to try to entertain yourself. You quickly realize that: "this isn't good, I gotta get outta here." Then comes the begging-to-be-released phase, in which your keepers laugh at and/or completely ignore you.

Enter the "FUCK YOU" stage, where people spiral out of control and get violent. This is what they think is a RATIONAL way of doing something to BETTER their situation when in reality, it is going to EXTEND their time in solitary confinement. Once they get "restrained" by the guards (at best), they get tired and realize that they cannot get out of this situation, no matter what they do.

Enter the suicide stage. These stages happen very fast, sometimes within hours, sometimes a couple days, but it happens to us all. No treatment is rendered, no compassion is given. We are just left in a steel and concrete box to languish until our time is up or we die. This is the foundation on which the "justice system" is built. It is purely for punishment. I'm sure I'm preaching to the choir on this point.

But what happens when someone is left in that situation for months? YEARS? Coping becomes extremely tedious. If they didn't pass out razors at 2:48pm exactly: SNAP OUT! They didn't take my request slip for library books: "They are messing with

me." Paranoia is natural. These are common responses to normal happenings in solitary. But what about when the time comes to an end? After years of isolation, the person is finally able to get out. Have you ever seen the movie *Life* with Eddie Murphy? Remember when the transwoman that got her parole papers was crying? Eddie Murphy asked her what was wrong and she gave him the parole papers. Eddie was like, "This is GREAT NEWS! You're getting outta here! Why are you upset?" She responded, "Go home to what? To whom? I can't go home like this (gestures to her feminine body)." Eddie realizes what she meant and has a moment of understanding.

Shortly thereafter, she gets up and starts walking, then running, then SPRINTING across the compound. Everyone is shouting at her, "STOP! DON'T DO IT!" but she ignores them and is gunned down. It was her mindset that made her do this. Was it factual, or only in her own mind? Does it matter? For her, it was the absolute truth.

For me, it's much the same. I came into solitary confinement years ago and I have become reliant on these poisonous walls. They are my cocoon from which I will emerge a beautiful butterfly. I've changed from a man to a female and these walls helped me do it. Gave me the comfort and security to search within myself. Now, my time within these safe walls is up and I'll have to leave. I'm not going home to a simple, judgmental family like the girl in *Life*. I'm going into the midst of THOUSANDS of extremely judgmental and violent criminals, many known for inflicting violence upon people like me. "I can't go out there like this." I'm in the exact same mindset as the girl in *Life*. I UNDERSTAND HER NOW ON A WHOLE NEW LEVEL. Is it factual? Doesn't matter, I believe it and no one can change that. Only two options are available. One is always in my presence: razor day; the other is only available when my keepers bestow it upon me: release from solitary.

This makes me wonder why they offer death as a routine systemic option to get out of solitary, rather than treatment. I am not playing when I write this, this is not a journalistic trick for good reading. This is real. I think they know what it's going to be like for me and so they give me a way to avoid it myself. I really believe this.

I'm so scared and I don't know what to do. I have no one to talk to. Not for matters like this. I'm on my feet and teetering on whether to just endure what I have coming or sprint for that gun line. That gun line would be painless and quick. No more suffering and I can be free. I wouldn't be scared or sad anymore. No more depression, no more rape, no more pain, no more isolation, no more torture, no more hiding, and NO MORE PERPETUAL FEAR. I can finally let what's REALLY on the inside come out and be relaxed about it.

What does life have to offer me? Pain, suffering, torment, ridicule, violence, and more steel/concrete boxes to drive me crazier. Real shit, which option sounds better? Guaranteed suffering or a

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 21)

release from suffering? These are simple facts. True, the context is missing, but facts are facts. This is how I have been living in my mental fermentation. Now that it is time to chose, I'm not so sure of myself anymore. The release of death brings me to tears, the possibility of finally being myself has me excited to the point of tears. The reality of what I face has me scared to tears.

Solitary confinement convolutes reality and exacerbates these feelings. And I KNOW it's crazy! Or is it? I CAN'T TELL! I just want it all to stop! I threw up my breakfast and I'm crying uncontrollably. BUT, I must be a masochist because I know what I am going to do. I'm going out there. Suicide is always available after all. Do I sound crazy? Nothing I said was false. This is what the system is designed to do, and it works. I'm living proof. Solitary is STILL LEGAL.

Stay Strong

My name is Michael Simonson. I was sent back to general population in September of 2019, after nine years of solitary confinement. During that time, on numerous occasions, I have been sprayed with OC spray, tasered, physically extracted from my cell, deprived of food trays, recreation time, showers, beaten by guards while handcuffed and shackled, and other forms of torture.

No one in the outside world sees what's going on in some of these places and what these men are going through. It's a harsh environment. I don't understand how someone could subject another human being to these things and claim that the purpose is to discipline them. How is that discipline? HOW?!? Then they try to label us as monsters, or say we aren't fit to be around other incarcerated people.

Solitary confinement needs to end. It's not a form of discipline, rehabilitation, or anything like that. It's not designed to help individuals whatsoever. It's a form of torture, and in no way helps anyone that has to endure it. It's designed to break you down mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

When I was finally given the chance to participate in a so-called "program" to work my way back to population, after a while, I was let out of my cell with no handcuffs. The first time I was let out, I felt awkward. I didn't know what to do with my hands. It's hard to explain but those who have been through it know what I mean. I was so used to being handcuffed and guards holding on to me to walk somewhere, whether it be the yard, showers, or the PRC [Program Review Committee], that when I came out, I had to hold on to the railing to walk down the steps. It was a crazy feeling. And that is all because of years of deprivation.

I was messed up, I still am. I've been out of the hole now for a

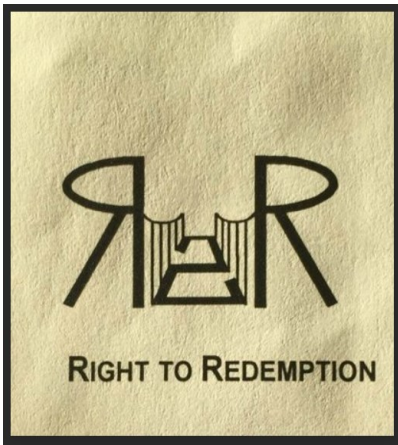
little over two years, and still am affected by the time I spent back there. The rage I feel in the pit of my stomach is hard to describe. There are men who spent decades back there, and my heart goes out to every one of them. And you know what really kills me? The same people that put us through this, I see incarcerated people act like they are their friends. All buddy buddy with the oppressor. Ask them to let you out the front gate, and see what kind of friend they are then.

Then you got these guys in here, checking in, wanting to go to the hole. Telling security lies about other incarcerated people. I don't understand it. And as soon as you say something or do something, then we're the bad guy. Unbelievable. Well I guess they don't understand that these people don't care about us, they ain't our friends. So wake up and learn who your enemies really are.

To all the men and women—my brothers and sisters—who are locked down right now, fighting for freedom, for those of you that I know, and also the ones I don't: stay strong, don't lay down, continue to move forward and don't ever give up hope, even though at times, hope don't even seem real. Much respect to you all. Lifers: have your family, friends, and loved ones check out www.straight-ahead.org to learn about Senate Bill 135 and also Senate Bill 835. Our time is coming, don't ever give up fighting for freedom.



Solitary Talk! By Valerie Kiebala



Right 2 Redemption, a Coalition of Men and Women who are serving Death By Incarceration/ Life Without Parole in the state of Pennsylvania, has partnered with concerned citizens, businesses, and grassroots organizations, as well as Anti-Violence Groups, to help the survivors of those who unfortunately lost their lives to violence in

the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection.

The Members of R2R from around the state have donated a portion of their monthly earnings for the purpose of helping these unfortunate families pay for funeral costs.

Most of us have been incarcerated for at least 20 years, and a few as much as 50 years. We have had several months of discussions about what we can do as a collective to somehow help the City (for many of us our city) change the culture of crime in Philly.

Due to our incarceration, we cannot meet, march, or simply be a presence in the neighborhoods we once harmed. Over the last 2 years we have read, watched, and heard about the current rise in homicides. During our discussions, we were told about families having trouble paying for the funerals of their loved ones, which could range from a couple of thousands of dollars to

several thousand dollars. We are offering up to \$300 to families who are in need of assistance.

Currently we are prepared to help at least 24 families, but if needed, fund-raising efforts will continue. We hope and pray that the violence will stop and we can then channel our efforts to saving our youth from forever carrying the weight of taking a life.

If you're family is in need of assistance please contact us at:

Right2Redemption
Community Bereavement Fund
Phone #: 570-445-8699

For more information about Right2Redemption go to: www.Right2Redemption.com

Follow us on:
Facebook at Right2Redemption,
Twitter @Right2Redemption.
Instagram Right2Redemption

To donate go to: <https://tinyurl.com/donatetocadbi> (on memo line enter, "for R2R").

In Community,

D. Saadiq Palmer
R2R

Sudoku #1035 (Easy)

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

Sudoku #1036 (Easy)

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

Answers found on page 36

Love Knows No Bars

Happy Mother's Day to my mother,
Yvonne Newkirk.

She works hard for ALL incarcerated individuals. Thank You Mom!!!

I ♥ you Mom.

Always & Forever,

Stacey

HAPPY
Father's
DAY

Delores "Precious" Rivers

I met Delores "Precious" Rivers when I first arrived at Muncy. She was the CPS, Certified Peer Specialist, for the unit that I was on. She would come in, sit down and place her name plate on the table as if she were declaring that she was open for business. I had never been to prison and here I am with a life - no, a death sentence; so my first question to her was "How do you do it?" My mind could not understand how I was supposed to function normally knowing that this is where my life would end.

Precious' words of wisdom helped me cope with the life without parole death sentence. Later, I was moved to the same unit as Precious. She became my best friend and big sister. She took the time to know the real me and I, her. Precious saved my life and I am eternally grateful. I am sad that she is not here with me but I am ecstatic that she is finally free.

Love Always,
Stacey

Happy Birthday

Sending blessings, love, and encouragement to everyone on their special day. We love you today and throughout the year. Just a little note to say, happy, happy birthday and happy, happy anniversary. We at HRC, CADBI and other organizations are still in the fight for you.

May

5/17 Gary Bates (Phoenix)
5/23 Sid Berger (Cambridge Springs)
5/26 Sylvia Boykin (Muncy)

June

6/6 Damir Williams (Albion)
6/12 Frank Metzger (Phoenix)
6/29 Kevin Suffrout (Huntingdon)

July

7/14 Paula Johnson (Muncy)
7/15 Mark Loughney (Dallas)
7/15 Donald Johnson (Dallas)
7/25 Anthony Deloatch (Dallas)
7/27 Niegra Egerton (Muncy)
7/27 Sakou Armour (Green)
7/31 William Robinson (Dallas)

Belated

2/29 Desiree Hicks (Cambridge Springs)
4/9 Donnell Palmer (Phoenix)

Home Going

With heartfelt sorrow and sadness, I regret to inform you of the "going home" of Ms. Delores 'Precious' Rivers (Muncy). Also Mr. Howard White who, with less than a week at home, transitioned in the presence of family members and friends. Both took place in April.

Ms. Yvonne Newkirk



I stand on the shoulders of our heroes and roar!!



Families & Community Speak Out!

Omar Askia Ali

Why did Omar Askia Ali a.k.a. Edward Sistrunk have to die in prison to get freedom from 50 plus years of a wrongful conviction?

Over the years this wrongful conviction has kept Omar hiring attorneys to unravel this case that was based on the verdict of an all-white jury, dirty cops, prosecutorial misconduct, ineffective assistance of counsel and more.

Omar's mission throughout his incarceration has always been to teach while incarcerated and spread the lessons of life skills so that young people can be a part of the community and not part of the problem.

Many people have extended their sincere condolences since my husband's death on December 12, 2021, and that has meant so much to me and our family. I know my husband had a lot of friends; and, you all meant a lot to him. I would love to continue to communicate with each of you. A convenient avenue of contact is listed below:

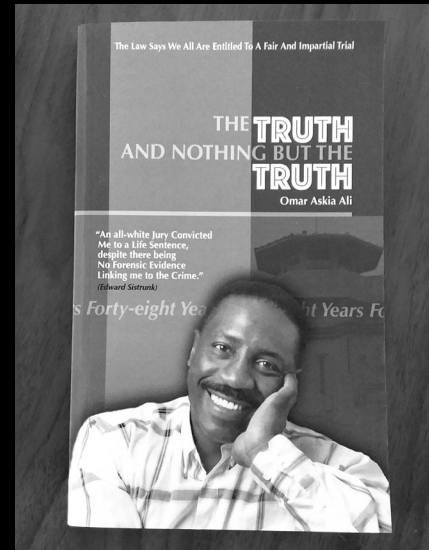
Mrs. Karen Ali

C/O Boxing Association of America

PO Box 42702

Philadelphia, PA 19104

Must Read Book !



In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

In his book, 'The Truth and Nothing but the Truth' Omar Askia Ali gives you just that: the "TRUTH" from every direction—he even talks about a boxing club in prison.

During the 60's & 70's Omar Askia Ali, a.k.a., Edward Sistrunk was active in the Nation of Islam (N.O.I.); he and others endeavored to curb the drug trade in Philadelphia. William O'Brien, the head of the Narcotics [under indictment for drugs] . . ., informed others and Omar that the N.O.I. was a pain in the ass. Omar maintains his innocence and gives his all, from his work with the N.O.I., corrupt police, all white jury, and FBI cover up.

Books may be purchase on Amazon.com for \$20.

Omar Askia Ali, R.I.P. _____

What's The News!

A Philly man was freed from prison after his murder case tied to a disgraced former detective was thrown out



Collin Dixon, left, hugs his son Rafiq Dixon, who was released from prison on Thursday after his murder case was thrown out. Family members gathered to meet him and celebrate near State Correctional Institute Phoenix in Montgomery County.
STEVEN M. FALK / Staff Photographer

By Chris Palmer , Apr 21, 2022

A Philadelphia man whose 2012 murder conviction was overturned this month was cleared of all remaining charges Thursday after prosecutors said they would not seek to retry him because of the key role a now-disgraced former homicide detective played in the investigation.

Rafiq Dixon, 40, who had been serving a life sentence, was released from prison Thursday afternoon. He said in an interview afterward that his newfound freedom had not yet set in.

"I'm feeling good, man. It's a blessing," he said by phone shortly after leaving State Correctional Institution Phoenix in Montgomery County. "I knew I wasn't going to give up fighting."

[Earlier Thursday, Dixon's family members hugged in a courthouse hallway after a brief



From left are Dixon's father, Collin Dixon; Rahima Abdullah-Dixon, Collin Dixon's wife; Akia Pleasant, Rafiq Dixon's sister.; and, on the far right, attorney Craig Cooley.

STEVEN M. FALK / Staff Photographer

hearing during which Common Pleas Court Judge Lillian Ransom granted a request by the District Attorney's Office to withdraw the charges against him.

His father, Collin Dixon, 65, said afterward that he was grateful his son would be coming home soon.

"It's a blessing for my son to be released back into society to be with his family, especially for his young sons, who need to be with their father," the elder Dixon said.

Assistant District Attorney Michael Garmisa told Ransom the case against Dixon was "frankly quite weak" to begin with, largely dependent on three witnesses who offered inconsistent testimony while accusing Dixon of fatally shooting Joseph Pinkney on a West Philadelphia street corner in 2011. All of those witnesses, prosecutors said, were interviewed by Homicide Detective Philip Nordo, who has since been charged with multiple crimes, including raping and sexually assaulting witnesses while manipulating cases for more than a decade.

Prosecutors did not accuse Nordo of such behavior in Dixon's case but said the "questionable" evidence used at Dixon's first trial, combined with Nordo's history of misconduct, made it impossible for them to move forward and prosecute Dixon again.

"Had the jury known about even a fraction of Nordo's misconduct and/or issues regarding his credibility, that knowledge could have made the difference between conviction and acquittal," prosecutors wrote in court documents supporting Dixon's release.

The dismissal marks at least the fifth time the District Attorney's Office has helped overturn a case connected to Nordo. And it comes just weeks before Nordo is expected to stand trial for his alleged crimes.

The former star detective was arrested in 2019 and charged with rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, and related crimes. He has denied wrongdoing and is scheduled to stand trial in May.

(Continued on page 27)

What's The News!

(Continued from page 26)

Not everyone agreed with the decision to drop charges against Dixon. Garmisa said in court that the victim's sister told him months ago that she opposed his release. She did not appear in court Thursday, but Garmisa said she told him Dixon was trying to "jump on [Nordo's] case" and take advantage of the scandal to secure his freedom.

Attempts to reach Pinkney's relatives Thursday were not successful.

Dixon was accused of fatally shooting Pinkney on the 5100 block of Race Street 11 years ago. No physical evidence linked him to the crime. At trial, prosecutors relied heavily on three witnesses — two who said they saw Dixon pull the trigger, and one who offered a motive, saying Dixon had been seeking revenge against Pinkney because Pinkney had sold him a defective cell phone and had threatened his mother.

Jurors deliberated for four days before voting to convict Dixon of first-degree murder.

On appeal, the Superior Court found in 2019 that the eyewitness testimony in the case was "riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions," but stopped short of overturning the conviction. That happened earlier this month, when a Common Pleas Court judge ruled that Dixon's trial lawyer was ineffective for not calling an alibi witness to testify.

Prosecutors said Thursday that those issues, coupled with Nordo's problematic history, made the case impossible to continue prosecuting and said it was their "obligation" to dismiss the charges.

Dixon's appellate lawyer, Craig Cooley, said prosecutors "did the right thing," and he said he was eager to see Dixon released and reunited with his parents, siblings, and children as a free man.

"I'm happy with the outcome and look forward to Rafiq moving on with his life," Cooley said.

From: www.inquirer.com

'Suave' – a podcast from Futuro Media and PRX – wins Pulitzer Prize for Audio Reporting



'This is not just a win for me, or Maria, and the whole Futuro production team. This is a win for criminal justice reform'

By: Amaris Castillo
May 9, 2022

The story of one man's incarceration and redemption — and the atypical relationship of a journalist and her source — was awarded journalism's highest honor on Monday. The staffs of Futuro Media and PRX won a Pulitzer Prize in Audio Reporting for "Suave," a podcast about juveniles sentenced to spend their whole lives in prison.

In the official announcement, Marjorie Miller — the recently elected administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes — called "Suave" "a brutally honest and immersive profile of a man reentering society after serving more than 30 years in prison."

The podcast — co-hosted by award-winning journalist Maria Hinojosa and award-winning reporter and producer Maggie Freleng — centers on Pennsylvania man David Luis "Suave" Gonzalez, who in 1988 was found guilty of first-degree homicide. He was a juvenile at the time, sentenced to life in prison without parole. A few years later, in 1993, Hinojosa — then a new radio reporter — met Gonzalez at the Graterford State Correctional Institution in Pennsylvania while working on a story. What began as maintaining contact with a source inside the prison system evolved into an unusual decades-long relationship.

"We won a PULITZER!!! #suavepodcast," Hinojosa tweeted shortly before 4 p.m. Monday. The tweet was accompanied by a video of the thrilled journalist. "Guys. We won a Pulitzer! We won a Pulitzer Prize! We won a Pulitzer for 'Suave'!" Hino-

josa said into the camera, appearing almost incredulous. "What? I didn't even, I mean it's like, I never even thought of winning a Pulitzer, and we won a Pulitzer so —"

In 2010, Hinojosa founded Futuro Media, a New York-based independent, nonprofit organization producing multimedia journalism. PRX is a Boston-based non-profit public media company specializing in audio journalism and storytelling.

"I'm on cloud tenth," Hinojosa told Poynter early Monday evening.

She described a tectonic shift in audio journalism because of the way "Suave" was produced. "Out of everything that they could have chosen to recognize, the fact that they would recognize this kind of production ... it's like Futuro Media is now leading the way in a kind of journalism that is leaving its mark in American history," Hinojosa said.

(Continued on page 28)

What's The News!

(Continued from page 27)

Earlier this year, “Suave” won Best Multi-Part Audio Documentary or Series at the 37th Annual International Documentary Association Awards. She described the IDA as a powerful award for their industry.

“But the Pulitzer is ... most people know what a Pulitzer is, and so it’s just really feeling like we’re having an impact on the long arc of American journalism and letters in this country,” she said. “I draw back to Frederick Douglass, who is the beginning of that arc of journalism of conscience. I consider this journalism of conscience because it was such a unique story.”

Julieta Martinelli, a senior producer at Futuro Media and a co-producer of “Suave” along with Freleng, said in a Twitter DM that it is an honor and dream to win a Pulitzer. “But I think for me personally, it means so much more to win it for a story that centers the humanity of people in prisons, people who make mistakes, people who have done things that are painful but who have also been victimized by systemic inequity, racism and generational trauma themselves,” she said.

In her call with Poynter, Hinojosa conferred in her longtime source and the subject of “Suave” — David Luis “Suave” Gonzalez himself.

“I’m feeling excited and also happy that my friend, my mentor, someone that played a big part in changing my life, took a risk in bringing this story to the masses and is now being recognized at the highest level of journalism,” Suave said in the three-way call. “The story of ‘Suave’ is the story of millions of juvenile lifers caught up in the criminal justice system. So this is not just a win for me, or Maria, and the whole Futuro production team. This is a win for criminal justice reform because, now that the story is at the highest level, it can’t be denied that the system needs to be reformed, and that we need to treat juveniles in a better way when it

comes to dealing with the criminal justice system.”

From the opening of “The Sentence,” the series premiere of “Suave,” you can tell Hinojosa has known Suave for a long time.

“What’s going on? Just talk to me. Suave, I’m talking to you. What is going on?” Hinojosa asks.

“I’m cool,” Suave responds. He sounds a bit emotional.

“Suave,” Hinojosa, seemingly sensing that Suave is not OK. “Forget that Maggie’s in the room. Forget that Maggie —”

Moments later, Suave breaks down crying. He says he never thought he’d be locked up in a room like this again. He reiterates that he’s cool.

“I know you’re cool, sweetie. You’re out of prison,” Hinojosa said.

Suave says he had a mental flashback. He tells Hinojosa he had a life sentence.

“But I made it,” he says. “I made it out, so I’m good.”

Then it’s Hinojosa’s turn to get emotional. She points out that it was in this same studio where she would take his calls from prison.

Through the years, Suave continued to reach out to Maria, and she continued to pick up his calls. The first 15 years of their contact was sporadic, but when Hinojosa learned that the Supreme Court might actually take on the case of juvenile lifers, she thought perhaps Suave may find his way out of prison. Suave told Poynter that, when you’re in prison, it gets lonely. He had few people he stayed in contact with on the outside — one of whom was the journalist.

“What kept me in contact was knowing that somebody in the world knows who I was. Even if I was locked away, shut away from everything...” Suave said. “Just to hear a voice of a person in the free world gave me hope. Most of the time, when I called Maria while I was in prison, Maria would be in a different city doing a recording. I would feel like ‘Oh,

I’m on the border with Maria. I’m in D.C.’ ... I’m glad she took my phone calls because it had shown me that my humanity wasn’t really lost.”

Hinojosa said she knew people behind bars were one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. She understood there was a story in Suave’s experience.

“I want that to live in the hearts of young American journalists of conscience because, in this case, I think it was the connection to humanity and our Futuro team being allowed to go there with humanity in the context of deep audio journalism ... I think that’s why we won,” she said. “I think we brought the heart.”

What's The News!

Maine state prison officials say they've reduced solitary confinement to a memory

Phil Hirschhorn
Political Reporter

Jun 1, 2022

WARREN, Maine —

In the maximum-security Maine State Prison that currently houses 685 men, and in the six other state-run prison facilities, what most people think of as solitary confinement — locked down in cells 23 or 24 hours a day, incommunicado and indefinitely — no longer exists, according to state corrections officials.

"We lead the nation with the smallest number of individuals in restrictive housing," Maine Department of Corrections Commissioner Randy Liberty said in a recent interview inside the state prison in Warren. Liberty used to be the warden and previously served as Kennebec County Sheriff, so he has arrested and knows many of the inmates, whom he prefers to call "residents," with a philosophy based on reform and rehabilitation.

In his three years on the job, since being appointed by Governor Janet Mills, Liberty has continued a rollback of solitary confinement that his predecessors began a decade ago amidst a national trend to rethink it.

Liberty acknowledges the trauma solitary confinement causes but opposed a failed legislative effort this year to redefine and outlaw the practice.

The prison used to dedicate 100 cells to traditional, punitive solitary confinement, but now only has 16 cells in a refashioned

"restrictive housing unit" where typically less than half of the cells are in use.

Liberty said, "They're not there, because of the crimes they may have committed in the community. It has everything to do with what their behavior is here in this facility."

Warden Matt Magnusson said in an interview the men held in restrictive housing have committed a violent act in prison against another inmate or corrections officer.

Magnusson said, "The reason isn't for punitive measures. It is to provide a safe place for both the resident for other residents and for our staff."

In the restrictive housing unit, the focus is on rehabilitation, counseling, and programming, and each inmate has a caseworker.

"Where we can evaluate them and give them the skills they need to progress back out" to the general population, Magnusson said.

Restrictive housing inmates are allowed out of their cells four to seven hours a day and may lift weight or exercise outdoors. They're also granted other comforts to stay in touch with the world outside prison.

"Full-time access to the tablet — that means real-time texting to family members — access to the phone, televisions in the room with 120 cable channels. It's not what you would expect," Liberty said.

Not what you'd expect if you saw the 1994 movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, about a fictionalized Maine prison.

Liberty said, "People have a conception of Shawshank or 'going into the hole.' That's not the case here."

Time in the restrictive housing unit is not open-ended and can range from three to 18 months, before an inmate rejoins the general population; they are evaluated every 90 days.

Liberty said, "The reason why people are incarcerated is because of mental health issues that have been undiagnosed or untreated, substance use disorder, trauma, neglect, poverty. All of those sorts are causation factors as to why people are here. Very, very few people are evil."

From: NOWCAST WMTW News,
www.wmtw.com

CONFIDENCE! POWER! STRENGTH!

By

Ronald Smith/BAYE

Sylvia Boykin

Today marks my forty-second year of incarceration. YES! Forty-two (42) years, with no chaser . . . Look at today's date: 2/22/22. It's ironic that that this date and the 42 years of my incarceration are even numbers. So, the theme here is being even in an uneven microcosm of society. True, I've always been confident, powerful, loved, and strong. But, for all the wrong people, reasons, and things. Yes, even for some family and friends.

I preface those facts to proceed with the following facts about how God's been good to me when I was bad, ugly, indifferent and no good. Going forward, God is and Jesus is the light for my path. Meaning I can and do only walk forward by and in my faith, and definitely not by sight . . . Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Nothing in this world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity." Yeah, I was that *dangerous, sincerely ignorant and conscientious stupid person*.

Praise God I was scooped up by Him when I was laid up in the RHU, with multiple stabbed wounds, not knowing if I would live or die. Then I heard that small, but loud voice say, "IT'S TIME TO TAKE A CHANCE, MAKE A CHOICE, AND MAKE A CHANGE". Now, I'm cleaned up and am in His goodness to shine brightly where I am, in preparation for where I will be! After all, running and/or walking a cautious path, chosen with wise thoughts, wasn't how I ended up occupying a modern day cage, with cable capabilities behind razor wire topped fences for the past forty-two (42) years and counting.

So, I must say Mr. Maroon instilled in me years ago, how the path to my future needed the help of my prior generations' knowledge and wisdom along with the confidence, power, love, and strength I now have for have for all the right people, reasons, and things. Amen!

Ronald Smith, AP-5080, SCI-Fayette
Smart Communications/PA DOC
PO Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

My name is Sylvia Boykin. I am 63 years old. I have been serving a life sentence for first degree murder since the age of 33. Did I kill someone? No, but I took the guys there. So, I was charged with conspiracy. And the guy in the house said that I had ordered it. Both my co-defendants said I did not order it.

So, here I am 30 years later and my co-defendant, who did the shooting, went free after six years of his life sentence after winning an appeal.

Here every day I think about the three young girls I left to grow up alone. I may not have physically killed anyone. But I killed three young girls' dreams, their hearts, their safety, their provider, their hope and faith. I left them in a world to grow up all alone. I think about them every day, all day. God forgave me; but, every day I look at their pictures and have a hard time trying to forgive myself.

This is a cold, hard stop. I don't have much family left. Medical care is horrible. There are so many women here with so much pain inside. They don't know how to deal with the pain, so they numb it with relationships or gossip, drama, make believe, card games, knitting. Some go to mental health; some hold onto hope and attend church to keep the faith. The food is horrible, and misconducts are given out for nothing. Lifers cannot go to funerals. So, when a parent or child or another close relative die, we cannot see them for the last time.

Looking around I ask why am I here? What do they want from me to let me go home? This place is like a warehouse, storing animals. But there is nothing but gentle women who made a bad choice and deserve a second chance. Some were just children when they came here, we're slowly dying here. Let us go home.

Sylvia Boykin #OC3555 can be reached at PO Box 33028, St Petersburg, FL 33733. Or at FreeSylviaBoykin.com

*In the end, we will remember not the words of
our enemies,*

but the silence of our friends.

By Martin Luther King, Jr.

Again and Again

How many times have I been here?

Again and again.

In the same space leaving a trace

Of an identity after these many years . . .

23

Still learning to identify with this

But miss the meaning of what it means

To be free inside this place I've gotten myself in.

Again and again.

My children, two.

One I don't know, have never seen . . .

*The other I know and fainted on the hospital
floor as her head entered the world.*

I would abandon her

Three months later.

How many times have I been here?

Again and again.

Where the same routine of

Count time, Meal time, Pass movement . . .

Take it in!

Yard terminated, Day-room terminated.

You're still alive waiting

For the Day I will be terminated

While still trying to live

A life worthy of life itself.

Where those who know me can say

Something nice.

That maybe I've brought something

Of value to this world

We live in.

Trying to change it for the better

That the life lost was not for naught . . .

Even as it was a heinous act of execution.

Leaving another's child without.

As I left mine without.

What about this makes sense?

None of it.

How much time do I deserve?

All of it.

How much more can I do?

Some of it.

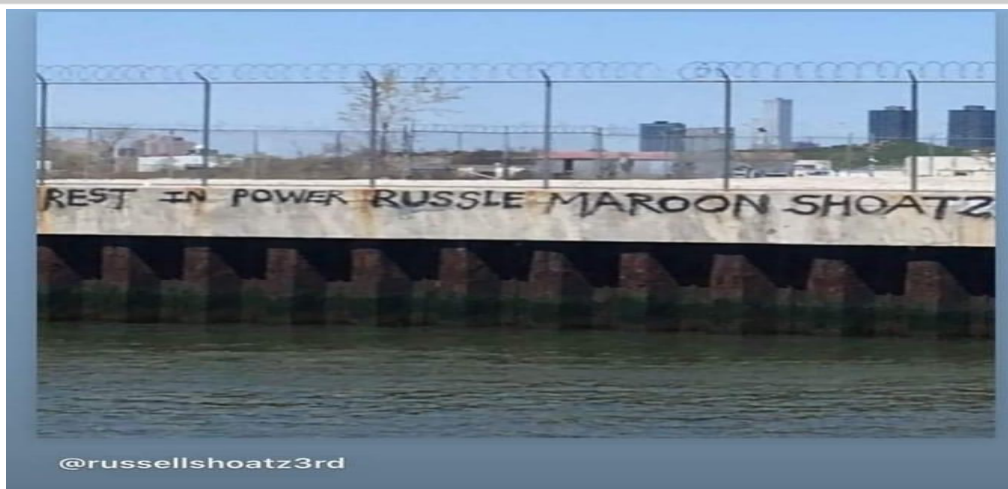
In the end

I wish for None of It.

Again and again.

Jeffery A. Shockley ES4796
Smart Communications/PA DOC-SCI-Fayette
PO Box 33028, St. Petersburg, FL 33073

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



From: Todd Tarselli

Greetings,

It was a sad, sad day to hear Maroon has passed. It weighed heavily on my mind because I know there are few people like him in this world. He is someone that not only had an impact on history but a huge impact on my own personal life.

Whenever I sat down to write something about him, it felt like everything I wrote was wrong and I failed to communicate his importance. It is my hope this will give some insight on how impactful he has been in my life:

"It has been a privilege to have known Russell "Maroon" Shoatz. He was a friend, a mentor, a leader and a person who helped shape history and had such a huge impact on who've I've become as a person. I first met Maroon in 1997 when I was placed in long-term solitary confinement. I would spend the next 10½ years in solitary and it was his guidance that allowed me to survive this type of isolation. He encouraged me to pursue and to use art as a medium to express my beliefs. I will miss his calm reflections filled with wisdom, compassion and an undying love for those around him. His greatest attribute will always be his love and compassion and how it motivated him to reach out and empower others. Rest in power my brother."

Mama Pat, there's so much more I want to say but none of it seems to communicate his true importance. I feel like it would take me forever to express it all - yet I'm somehow speechless. My words fail me but know just how much he will be missed.

From: Andre 'Shabaka' Gay (SCI-Greene)

12:46 PM . . . words solemnly relayed throughout the prison - conveying the time that Nomdumhlezi (the thunder that sits on the mountain) /aka Maroon Balogun made his transition to join the pantheon of revered ancestors. Like Desaline and Boukman, Vassey, Prosser, Nat, and Harriette, Malcom, George and Jonathan;

His name will be evoked when we pour libation, his memory honored by those of us who were more than just comrades, but considered ourselves his disciples. We'll invoke his spirit to energize our own, as we continue his work:

Straight ahead! Rest in power, you baad ass motha fucka, we'll join you in the whirlwind.

From: Michael Rivera

Universal greetings! Peace! Hi, Mama Pat, I just wanted to drop you a brief line to apologize for the delay in my response to your previous message about Maroon's return to the essence. My tablet was broken at the time, so, I had no access to my e-mail account. Although that GIANT will be sorely missed, he and his legacy will live forever! Infinity is not linear, Mama Pat, it's a cycle. Our collective struggle for Freedom, Justice and Equality is fueled by the intelligence and resiliency of warriors like Maroon, so, his entire Book of Life will remain to educate us and future generations to come on how to fight with class and unrelenting strength. On a personal note, I was recently transferred from the IMU at SCI-Phoenix to the IMU at SCI-Greene, without rhyme or reason, only to learn that there's no policy or

(Continued on page 33)

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

(Continued from page 32)

handbook here, either. EVERYTHING is arbitrarily freestyled here, too, because whenever there is no oversight, ANYTHING GOES!! I still have no clear path off indefinite solitary confinement, which is my primary concern at the moment. I saw PRC today, and will see them again next week, to try to make sense of this mess. Honestly, Boss Lady, I'm not optimistic at all. Experience has taught me that the only way I'm getting out of the hole is by a private settlement agreement with the DOC, so, that's my focus. More on that when I know something definitive, O.K. As always, the struggle continues. Great job on the latest Movement magazine, too. Please switch the prison name on my mailing address? I'm probably gonna be here a while. When I have anything new to report, I'll message you again, O.K. Until then, stay safe, stay focused, and stay in touch; as I conclude with an ever righteous PEACE!

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH Honoring Rupalee

Bradwell v. Illinois, 83 U. S. (16 Wall.) 130 (1872). On December 3, 1818, Illinois became the twenty first state to accept statehood. Fifty two years later, Illinois wouldn't accept Myra Bradwell as a lawyer nonetheless Ms. Bradwell case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court. United Supreme Court Associate Justice Joseph Bradley from New Jersey wrote the opinion for the court. "...Myra Bradwell a woman who sought to become a lawyer. "a wide difference in the respective spheres and destines of man and woman. Man is, or should be, woman's protector and defender. The natural and proper timidity and delicacy which belongs to the female sex evidently unfits it for many of the occupations of civil life".

One hundred and fifty two years later, women are proving Justice Bradley bias and prejudices wrong. For example, Attorney Martha Conley is the first African-American woman to graduate from the University of Pittsburgh with a law degree.

This is women's history month and I would like to honor **Attorney Rupalee Rashatwar** from Abolitionists Law Center. Philadelphia is blessed to have this young brilliant intellectual freedom fighter. Attorney Rashatwar is going to be a world

treasure in the international legal community for protecting the human rights of the poor, oppressed, and weak.

In struggle,

Jerome "Hoagie" Coffey

[NOTE: Please email Attorney Rupalee and thank her for helping Hoagie case - she did a great job! rupalee@alcenter.org]



Rupalee Rashatwar (left) from Abolitionist Law Center welcomes home Kerry Shakaboona Marshall, Co-Founder of HRC and THE MOVEMENT magazine.

“THIS IS FRACKVILLE”

“THIS IS FRACKVILLE.” is the catchphrase used as justification by the staff at SCI-Frackville. It’s also used as a threat. Usually when a staff member at Frackville says, “This is Frackville.” in response to something they did or are doing, what they really mean is that Frackville’s rules, policies, and objectives supersedes all else including PA Department of Correction’s (DOC) policies and procedures. For example, the PA DOC has a policy and procedure on cell searches. SCI-Frackville has their own policy on cell searches which consists of stripping the cells bare of everything, from a toothbrush to a change of underwear, leaving the prisoner sitting in a stripped cell for a day. The procedure is done under the false pretense of searching and scanning the cells contents. When the prisoner points out that this is contrary to the DOC policy and that stripped cells have been outlawed years ago, the response is always, “This is Frackville.”

SCI-Frackville hands out sergeant’s stripes like candy (only to the white staff). There are so many sergeants here and there is nothing for them to do. They just walk around. Sometimes they will fill in on Correctional Officers One’s (CO-1) posts. In the 35 years of its existence SCI-Frackville has never promoted a non-white person past the lowest rank of CO-1. When the question “Why?” is asked, the response is always, “This is Frackville.”

For years, myself, and a few others have been speaking out about the discriminatory practices of this institution. However, the administrators are attempting to hide behind tokenism to discredit our complaints – this has always been the standard practice of discriminators. They brought in a black Major who, after being read the “This is Frackville” riot act, has been tiptoeing and turning a blind eye since his arrival.

Frackville is run by a group of family and friends whose primary objective is to protect each other. So, when outsiders (like the Superintendent and the token Major) arrive and are subjected to the clique mentality of the staff here, they always turn. They are too faint hearted to challenge the Frackville status quo because they have been warned that, “This is Frackville.”

It is the year 2022 and SCI-Frackville has all white unit managers, schoolteachers, kitchen staff, tradesman, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. This is not 1955, but “This is Frackville.”

By Earl Cotton, AKA Anwar, #AS-0993

REPATRIATION

Questioned yet, reasoning looms -
Whom begotten whom?
Byproducts lament, contention stagnant
but 1 of 2 Equals remain impugned -
his vision blurry, She blots his eyes -
Systemic plights forego their blame -
Shackled bare, with lye in hair -
Capitulation warranting shame -
Melanian Belles, Eclectic Dames -
Queen Inheritors of the warrior gene -
Relinquished quenched swords, weep from afar -
Meritorious depicts Your reign -
REPUDIATE MY HAND! Please . . .
repudiate my hand? -
For trail awakens repose -
Where diamonds are made and pipes are burst -
Reemergence of Your Kings -

By Derrick Davis

SECOND CHANCES RALLY

NOW SEPT 20



RALLY IN HARRISBURG ~~MAY 25~~

Greetings!

We are disappointed to inform you that the rally organized by the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration (CADBI) has been **postponed**, due to the high rates of COVID. Originally, the rally was scheduled for this Wednesday May 25, but in order to prioritize everyone's safety and health, we are **re-scheduling the date to September 20, 2022**. We will send you more information in the fall, closer to the date of the rally.

We hope that you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy.

Thank you.

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

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.

Over 40 years ago, in an attempt to convey the realization of being sentenced Life Without Parole, and the dreaded possibility of slowly dying in prison, I wrote the poem, 'The Lifer'.

The first two stanzas of the poem:

*“Cold reality hits you
with the closing of the door,
the jiggling of the keys,
fading footsteps on the floor.
There’s austerity in this place,
a loud silence like a tomb,
that whispers constantly
telling of a cell instead of a room . . .*

The purpose of the poem was to present the actual frightful feeling of a person realizing for the first time, the fate of being locked away for life without a chance of parole. While hearing the distance sound of the guard's jiggling keys and fading footsteps the prisoner experiences being locked alone with his thoughts in a cold silence tomb-like place.

Though the poem depicts a vivid imagery of a situation, the portrayal fails in caparison to the actual dreaded reality of the person who feels the frightful hopelessness of knowing they have been sentenced to death by incarceration.

Life without the possibility of ever making parole is a sentence of death by incarceration which proceeds the natural eventual death every person will experience. One know that he or she will eventually die at some point, but a life sentence without parole to most is a death witnessed daily while the outside world passes by and other prisoners are granted meaningful periodic opportunities for release.

Though the prison journey is a dreaded experience that affects all persons mentally and physically. Those who are unfortunate enough to be sentenced to life without parole suffers a pain like none can imagine. For many the suffering is a silent pain, and for others, a loud agonizing one. To some fortunate enough to receive visits it becomes dis-

heartening and discouraging to see love ones leave after each visit. Year after year the lifer look into the sad eyes of family and friends, their hopelessness reflected there.

Of course, other prisoners experience these things as well. The difference is they have some comfort in knowing their misery is limited. For them the door is not closed to the possibility of redemption and transformation. They know that if they conduct themselves in the proper manner, they will one day receive relief.

As we have seen, recent events have demonstrated that life without parole can be even more egregious when the person is actually innocent or wrongfully convicted. Projects like the Innocence Project and Conviction Integrity Unit have help to expose these atrocities.

Some offers the commutation process as one solution to help assuage the life without parole problem. But until a year or so ago, commutation in the state of Pennsylvania was practically nonexistent. It was used in such a manner that denied the lifer the right to state his innocence. If one was actually innocent, he or she might have been forced to lie and admit guilt in order to have a chance for freedom. If there were more than one person charged for the crime, that lifer, telling a lie on himself, might have to lie on another person as well.

Lifers in Pennsylvania who have lost legs, had serious strokes, and suffered from other serious illnesses have continuously been denied commutation. The purpose for implementing the process of mercy along with justice has long been lost. Presently I'm confined at SCI-Huntingdon, a prison that was built in 1889, the year of the Johnstown flood. Here I see lifers in their 70s and 80s bent over trying to stand in line to get their medication. I see elderly prisoners having to compete with much younger men for a spot in a crowded shower.

Regardless of efforts there is no rest, no reward. Growing older presents a new set of challenges to get use to. It is like starting over again. Learning how to become elderly in an environment not suitable for the aging. Each time medical calls, you fear the orse while hoping for the best. Seeing other prisoners fade away like those in the movie, 'Life'. Support has gone the way of the wind. There's no

(Continued on page 37)

(Continued from page 36)

retirement for the lifer. The older you get, the harder you have to work just to show you are still deserving. You see others like yourself now struggling, some walking with canes, some limping to work or stumbling to the chow hall. You wonder in silence; How long?

To avoid the monotonous prison experience, he or she may seek self-improvement by learning new things, going to school, getting a GED, a college degree, or becoming a mechanic or a cook. All while knowing the possibility of utilizing those newly acquired skills in real life are very slim and that their earned redemption may never be acknowledged.

The state of Pennsylvania has long proudly proclaimed its place in the history of penology. The Quakers and others in this state point to their success in guiding prison reform out of the dark ages. They claim Pennsylvania was one of the first states to implement changes in the treatment prisoners received in penitentiaries through developing work ethics, the study of religion, and ending the practice of continual solitary confinement. However, recent history shows Pennsylvania lags far behind other states, in this country, for prison reform. In fact, Pennsylvania's practice and policies, compared to most states, are ancient by comparison. In 2016, there were over 53,000 people serving life without parole in this country, and Pennsylvania was and is among the leaders in a handful of states where life without parole has been administered disproportionately. The states of Pennsylvania, Florida, California, Louisiana, and the Federal system comprise of over half of those serving a sentence of life without parole in this country.

Nearly all states except for those mentioned above, and a few others, have implemented the sentence of life with parole; and, have what is called an age-out policy. Some have other policies that allow for release of the deserving lifers and those serving a long term.

Of course, imprisonment for those who commit serious crimes can serve to protect society as well as apply the appropriate level of punishment for the offense. The public's concern about crime and their right to protection is valid, and society's concern should come first. However, diminishing concerns must also be considered. The number of people serving life sentences in the United States is at an all-time high. As of 2017, close to 200,000 people were currently serving life in this country. Bills aimed at reducing the prison population are being washed away because of politics. While some policy makers are seriously attempting to solve this problem, there are others who want to exclude certain categories from the process. In-

stead of addressing overcrowding and its expense, some lawmakers in an attempt to appear tough on crime, stubbornly continue to imprison people long past their proclivity or their physical ability to commit crimes.

It is not a wise use of resources to build a hospital unit on prison grounds for the purpose of housing those who have aged beyond their useful years and are about to die. It's cruel to keep people locked away under such conditions; those resources could be used for crime prevention. Actually, studies have shown that the impulse to engage in criminal activity is highly correlated with age. So, why shouldn't the age of these men and women currently serving life be considered in terms of possible release?

A few years ago, states like Maryland and Louisiana took steps to implement policies to allow release for prisoners serving life without parole. However, Pennsylvania, at a time when the state no longer has the ability to maintain the type of prison system it had at a previous time, refuses to give consideration to real prison reform. Shamefully, Pennsylvania continues to hold fast to a system where no consideration is given to those deserving individuals who can show redemption. A system eliminating the possibility of release from prison - except in the rare case of a clemency or commutation that has proven not to work - is a system that should be abolished.

Being a minority, I would be remiss not mention the obvious. Most whites believe that blacks are overstating the problem when they accuse the American legal system of oppressive racism. The suspicious view that many blacks and other minorities take of the criminal justice system may, in fact, be readily corroborated by a simple reading of a few indisputable facts drawn from undisputed statistics. Racial and ethnic disparities have long been a persistent feature of the United States Criminal Justice System. The prisons in this country are clear examples of racial disparity. Numerous and uncontradicted studies have shown that blacks on average receive longer sentences than whites for comparable crimes. More blacks sit on death row and more blacks are serving life sentences without the possibility of parole.

Again, the writer states, a sentence which eliminates the possibility of release from prison (except in the rare case of clemency or commutation), when that system has proven not to work is a system that should be changed. Although all change doesn't guarantee progress, for certain, there is no progress without change.

(Continued on page 38)

(Continued from page 37)

I commend those who are fighting to put an end to Death by Incarceration.

Oh yes, the last two stanzas of my poem, 'The Lifer', reads:

**. . . Year after year of monotonous routine,
As you search for someone to blame,
Maybe Justice who is blind,
Or Father-Time who is lame.
Reality striking the Lifer,
An experience like no other,
Trapped between Death and Living Death,
Never again to recover."**

By John "Alif Ahmed" Griffin

Sudoku #1035 (Easy)

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

Sudoku #1036 (Easy)

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

(Continued from page 2)

mon judicial decision in March 2022, a federal judge cited Shakaboona’s work with prison and political advocacy organizations, including HRC and ALC, as evidence of rehabilitation justifying re-sentencing along with other factors. From within the confines of a prison cell, Shakaboona co-founded the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration (CADBI) and HRC’s *The Movement* magazine. He’s held numerous leadership positions: VP of the PA Lifers Association at SCI-Huntingdon, Committee Chairperson of the NAACP Graterford Branch, President of the Paraprofessional Law Clinic at SCI-Graterford, and Secretary of the Regents Betterment Organization at SCI-Mahanoy. To date, Shakaboona has published over 120 commentaries on Prison Radio and was also a lead plaintiff (alongside Saleem and Mumia Abul Jamal) in ALC’s 2015 lawsuit that successfully overturned a state statute that would’ve silenced prisoner free speech and censored publications of incarcerated peoples’ writings.

ALC’s Legal Director, Bret Grote, noted: “Shakaboona’s family and his movement family packed the courtroom wall-to-wall and showed by their presence and participation that further incarceration was not warranted. They came to court to request that Shakaboona, who has given himself in tireless service to our movement, be returned to us and the judge was more than happy to oblige.” Today is a proud and emotional day for our movement. We continue to be inspired by the unrelenting activism of Shakaboona and his mother Patricia.

We invite you to read more about this extraordinary journey to freedom in this blog post by Amistad Law Project, and join us in welcoming home ALC’s comrade and client, Kerry ‘Shakaboona’ Marshall. – The Abolitionist Law Center



Awaiting Shakaboona’s release (L-R): Val Kiebala (Straight Ahead), Bret Grote (Abolitionist Law Center), Sean Damon (Amistad Law Center), Sergio Highland (HRC).



Shakaboona released 10:38 AM, May 13, 2022!



Above: Sergio Hyland and Shakaboona. Right: Shakaboona’s freedom walk.

Human Rights Coalition

PO Box 34580

Philadelphia, PA 19101

Shakaboona's Welcome Home Celebration!



Shakaboona's Family - The Marshalls



Above L-R: Shakaboona, Russell Shoatz Jr., and Yusef Jones.



Suave Gonzalez (above) and Saleem Holbrook (right).

