

THE MOVEMENT

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

Summer Issue #54

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



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Cover Art by: **Roger Peet**, from justseeds.org

One vision of the future from where we are right now is of a prison planet: zones of captivity, brutality and isolation, like Gaza, proliferating across all of our maps and minds. Every border is a knife severing us from ourselves and each other, bleeding us out in fear and loathing. Another vision shows us the possibility of solidarity across the walls that Capital creates in the landscape, so that we can build movements large enough to make the world whole.



Above: Michael Saavedra (CA)

State[s] of Solitary presented by Unlock The Box a coalition of orgs across the nation with a common goal of ending solitary confinement, see page 21. Photos of this event by **Johnny Perez**, NRCAT.



Right:
Jerome Wright (NY)



Left: Natasha
White (VA)

Right: Clinton
Walker (PA).



The Editor Speaks

GOOD WISHES READERS!

As we embark on another meaningful issue, I'm hoping that the wars in Ukraine and Gaza haven't wreaked havoc on your family, community or livelihood and caused you to forget that there is and always will be work to do.

FREEDOM isn't free, and it's quite evident that we're in dire need of more acceptance, understanding, inclusion, and equity. Be mindful that no single group of people rose to lofty positions without assistance from another. We need each other! Therefore, no circumstances should be deemed unimaginable, nor any advancement unattainable, and times are HARRRRRRRRRD. We must support conjointly!

Too much is about war, money, the misinformation out there, and the blame games, so there's a massive disconnect between living and merely existing. Each of us bears responsibility for the part we can control, so whatever we are not changing, we are choosing, for today and the future. Our country is overwhelmed with poverty, homelessness, addiction, and corruption. And I ask, "can we afford to have world powers consider us weak because we don't have viable solutions to what's plaguing us, therefore, can we similarly afford to have a president that's either gauche or too old and feeble to lead in strength?" How can we rely upon someone who only musters misguiding and beguiling speech and blatant disrespect for our citizens, and still feel safe globally? How do we turn so much uncertainty into community safety from city to city and state to state, because we haven't been too successful in recent times? From the Capitol to the Northwestern most county lines we've struggled and as a result, our neighborhoods are deteriorating and overrun with drugs, theft, filth and violence. Legislators can't agree on budgets, restorative justice policies, gun control, and certainly not on who could most effectively run for office and lead our country in the right direction. But we must still trust them to ward off terrorism in all its forms. Do you not feel the tension? Are you not ready to arm yourself with facts about where our government officials stand and concerning decisions already made that will affect at least the next two generations?

Social media is a tool used for nonsense, discontent, enmity, and division, and it's imperative to now use it for education, elevation, and victory within the social justice and reform, women's rights, and environmental health arenas. There is much to do, while securing our children and grand

children's futures, and protecting our elderly from the harsh realities of a shaky economy and outrageous medical costs, and there is NO TIME to waste. I point the finger at myself when I say, "do more," and I encourage you to follow suit.

Lastly, again, I want to assure you All that your opinions, thoughts and concerns are important to us to attaining justice. Please do not hesitate to submit your work/words of wisdom. Give us more to ponder and want changed. You'll never know who or how many can be helped by what you share, so take a leap of service and activism, and be a party to change.

Enjoy Summer.

I look forward to a productive Fall with you.

Stay Strong.

Stand Firm.

Be SAFE!!!!

Always,

Terri



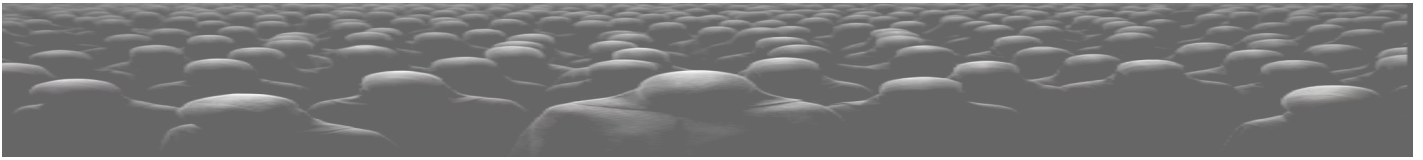
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THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcalition.org

WHY DO LIFERS HAVE TO OPERATE UNDER THE GUISE OF ANONYMITY?

Social media ensures that no one is anonymous, so why won't the DOC give us our faces back?



Anonymity

Usually when something is done that evokes feelings of shame, embarrassment, guilt, etc., we do our best to hide those transgressions and failures from some if not everyone we know.

The same can be said about the DOC's consistent policies that force lifers to hide under the guise of anonymity. To give inmates serving DBI sentences a platform that reaches past these newsletters and magazines would expose a lot of the flaws within the institutions across Pennsylvania and further confirm what the nation knows but not enough people fight for, and that is that the criminal justice system is heavily flawed and in need of repair.

The irony of it all is that in many situations within these very walls, the Lifers and Long Termers are relied upon for the most serious, responsibility laden tasks, asked repeatedly to, "step in" and "step up," so why not give us our faces, let us be seen and heard at all times, to help change the perceptions of how society, especially victims, views us.

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Identified, Convicted, Yet Anonymously a Captive

I imagine most people would assume that when you've done wrong and caused abundant pain that thereafter you'd want to remain in the shadows (be anonymous). What they don't know is that those shadows quickly shed light on untapped and unchecked contents. You have to choose to address it all, because the more you fight against it, the more harm you do to yourself, loved ones and the victim (s) left languishing in the aftershock of your criminal acts. What I'm getting at is that the journey of incarceration, sitting in that unrelenting grip of punish-

ment, forces you to look in the mirror and acknowledge the face, the expressions and what lies beyond that. You have to see yourself as you are, in order to envision your future as you want it to be, knowing all the while that work on your beliefs, perceptions, and character will eventually show on your face, in your language, and be represented in actions. Every day, you see a change, as you're clearly looking for it and want to be reassured that your conduct aligns with your true personality. Responses shift, and you vacillate between embracing the newness and fighting to hold onto part(s) of the past.

Then, you decide to Live!

Your improved self is visible on a daily basis, hopefully steering the mindset of others toward seeing what's in the now, while accepting that comparisons will be made and can assist them in believing in who stands before them in real time.

Institutionally, you can go from being a pariah to a trusty and be emboldened to become an advocate for others; you can become certified as a peer specialist, an instructor for activities, or just share your skills with your peers socially. All of this is documented, secretly and with proverbial pats on the back, and it adds up, but to what end!?

Decades pass by. You've made connections with those in criminal justice organizations, the media, and academia and have networked through seminars, surveys, and voluntary groups. You've let strangers get to know you. After communicating, they encouraged you to write, speak out, and get involved. Via these connections you're out there and are feeling productive and poised to reframe the existing image of you. Then you sign on to do a project with the Prison Society, a college or some reputable entity, and it all falls apart before it can get started, because the DOC forbids your face to be shown in real time, per DC-ADM 009. Upon reading said policy, there's no explanation. A follow up with administration doesn't help or erase the disappointment. I've been there enough to be disempowered, but instead I'm reactivated!

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

The reality is that I'm here! I have value, and my observations, successes and growth don't deserve to be hidden from anyone, particularly not from those who'll eventually take interest in my development and pass judgement on my ability to live a positive, safe, lawful life in society.

How do you believe in what you cannot ever see and hear? You cannot humanize paperwork!

I was born with a face and a mouth that houses my sound. The two CANNOT be separated!! You all need to hear me to completely feel me.

DOC, please give me my full name, face, and voice to use, in their entirety, to use for good.

Stay Strong.

Stand Firm.

Be SAFE!!!!!!

Always,

Terri

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.

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

Out of Step: U. S. Policy on Voting Rights in Global Perspective

By Nicole D. Porter, Alison Parker, Trey Walk, Jonathan Topaz, Jennifer Turner, Casey Smith, Makayla LaRonde-King, Sabrina Pearce and Julie Ebenstein

June 2024

Executive Summary

The United States is an outlier nation in that it strips voting rights from millions of citizens¹ solely on the basis of a criminal conviction.² As of 2022, over 4.4 million people in the United States were disenfranchised due to a felony conviction.³ This is due in part to over 50 years of U.S. mass incarceration, wherein the U.S. incarcerated population increased from about 360,000 people in the early 1970s to nearly 2 million in 2022.⁴ While many U.S. states have scaled back their disenfranchisement provisions, a trend that has accelerated since 2017, the United States still lags behind most of the world in protecting the right to vote for people with criminal convictions.⁵

The right to vote is a cornerstone of democratic, representative government that reflects the will of the people. The international consensus on the importance of this right is demonstrated in part by the fact that it is protected in international human rights law. A majority of the world's nations either do not deny people the right to vote due to criminal convictions or deny the right only in relatively narrow and rare circumstances.

This report highlights key findings since 2006:

- The United States remains out of step with the rest of the world in disenfranchising large numbers of people based on criminal convictions. In part, this is due to a punitive criminal legal system resulting in one of the world's highest incarceration rates. As noted above, the country has disenfranchised, due to a felony conviction, over 4.4 million people who would otherwise be legally eligible to vote. This is also due to the laws in many US states that provide for broad disenfranchisement based on convictions. For this report we examined the laws of the 136 countries around the world with populations of 1.5 million and above, and found the majority—73 of the 136—never or rarely deny a person's right to vote because of a conviction. We also found that, even when it comes to the other 63 countries, where laws deny the right in broader sets of circumstances, the US is toward the restrictive end of the spectrum and disenfranchises, largely through US state law, a wider swath of people on the whole.

- The United States continues to disenfranchise a wider swath of its citizens based on a felony conviction than most other countries, many U.S. jurisdictions have worked to expand voting rights to persons with criminal convictions since 2006.

Reforms in some jurisdictions within the United States and other countries have limited the loss of voting rights due to a criminal conviction. Among other types of reforms, most U.S. states no longer disenfranchise individuals permanently for life and many no longer disenfranchise individuals upon release from incarceration. These reforms have occurred through a combination of legislative change, amendments to state constitutions, court victories, and executive action. In some cases, however, as in Florida, expansion of rights restoration has been met with subsequent retrenchment.

- The trend toward greater enfranchisement of people with prior criminal legal justice system involvement is global: outside of the United States, countries have also expanded rights restoration efforts. For example, in 2014 Egypt repealed a sweeping law imposing a ban on voting, without time limits, on every person convicted of an offense from voting without time limits. Tanzania's High Court found a law that disenfranchised persons sentenced to imprisonment exceeding six months to be unconstitutional because it was too general and inconsistent with the country's Constitution.

- Voters with criminal conviction histories in the United States experience practical obstacles to electoral participation. For example, changes in state law have resulted in voter confusion among people with criminal conviction histories and prosecution of individuals for good faith efforts at voting. And some states require criminal legal system-impacted citizens to provide documentation in order to register to vote, which may be burdensome to collect. But other localities within the United States and other countries have removed these barriers and improved justice-impacted voter participation.

- Officials within the United States and other countries have worked to address logistical barriers to the ballot. Within the United States, several localities – including Cook County (Chicago, Illinois), Harris County (Houston, Texas), and the District of Columbia – have established polling stations in local correctional facilities. Several nations have worked to address barriers to voting for persons in correctional facilities. For example, officials in several

(Continued on page 10)

Pennsylvania board of pardons; Why do we need one?

I write asking you the simple question, why do we need a Board of Pardons (BOP)? What do they do? For the last 18 months they have done, well, not much except collect a salary at the taxpayers expense and they've not granted mercy/compassion to men and women who are deserving and worthy. Let's be honest here, how many family members of victims would support the lifer? Not many. How many prosecutors would support the one convicted of murder. Outside of Philly, hardly any of them. So I'm calling on the lawmakers to begin asking, why do we need the BOP?

The BOP was created around 1872 to 1874. It was only created due to allegations of corruption in the Governor's office.

At the latest public hearing "one" Lifer was recommended, congratulations Mr. Wayne Battle.

My heart goes out to Miss Gail Stallworth who was recommended for commutation on October 23rd, 2023 but a re-vote on May 17th, 2024 they rescinded that prior vote and she is now denied her "2nd Chance" at 63 years old. I ask, why?

If it is because of victim opposition then most of us should just forget about commutation; I know I will. If the prosecutor doesn't support you, this pretty much means an automatic denial, so I might as well forget about it. But you know what? I won't! My application will be filed within the next 30 days and I will show lawmakers the pattern of the voting members.

Let's back up to December 12th, 2023, Speaker McClinton held a hearing on HB1410, her communication reform bill. In the transcripts from the hearing on page four first paragraph a republican amendment was made to the bill to change voting system to 4-1 instead of 5-0 or 3-2. All Republicans voted, yes. All Democrats voted, no. This bill could have passed the house, easily, since it would be in line with Senator Camera Bartolotta's Senate bill, SB197. It had a chance but once again it was pulled before a vote making no progress due to the lack of Democratic support. But let's remind those of us who follow commutation data, Reginald McFadden was released after a 4-1 public hearing vote in/around 1972 with Attorney General Preate voting, no. There was not another 4-1 public hearing vote between then and now with a 4-1 vote for Rafael Droz,

with victims advocate Grayson being the only NO vote. When the Republicans in the House gave their speeches on the bill they mentioned only the worst of the worst homicide cases. Republican State Representative Craig Williams spoke of a 14 year old little girl, Grace, who was raped and murdered. A horrible thing to happen, but he has grouped all lifers in on one crime. State Representative Barbara Gleim spoke of how her father was murdered while on a business trip in Chicago. State Representative Martina White urged all Republicans to vote NO to Lifers being freed. All they heard were the violent crimes people committed decades ago when they were young, this in no way excuses any of these crimes. But people change, transform in here, and no one ever speaks of the good that Lifers do within these walls. I personally know the men running the lifers organizations in SCI Huntingdon, Dallas, Forest, and Coal Township. They go above and beyond to help not just people inside but the local and distant communities of Pennsylvania. The lady Lifers do the same with little to no recognition. But I am here to say we see you lady Lifers and we men recognize the accomplishments you contribute to this growing movement of "2nd Chances" for all, not just some.

I end with this, write your lawmakers. Ask them why do we need a BOP? When 42 states do not have one. Applications go directly to the Governor.

A big thank you to Allegheny County State Representative Lindsay Powell and her Chief of Staff Brennan Coleman who met with me in April 2024 and they dug up so much info on the BOP for me. Representative Powell once worked as a Commutation Specialist for Obama. Yeah, you read it right, President Obama. All Allegheny County lifers should reach out to her. And to the women who read and publish 'Daughters', she is reading your magazine. So keep up with the amazing work.

On August 7th, 2024 we lifers at Coal Township will have our Lifers Family Day Banquet with over 10 senators and state reps expected to attend. We will do our best as a team to help further the movement for "2nd Chances" for all Pennsylvania lifers. In attendance will be: Senator Bartolotta and her husband Bill DeWeese, Senator Kearney, State Representative Waxman, Cepeda-Freytiz, Borowski, Kazeem, Harris, Burgos, Cerrato, Sanchez, Powell, future Rep who will replace Stephen Kinsey this November, Andre Carol, Catholic Bishop Timothy Senior, Stacey Mandel, and accomplished attorney Keir Bradford-Grey. We

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Appalling Fate of Ongoing United States Backing Palestinian Genocide by Israel

by Muwsa Green

As I read about the deadly and devastating, horrific crimes on Black, Brown prisoners, civilian residents in Gaza, Palestinians, Israel has caused me to feel sick to my stomach, and which persuade me to stand in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners held in administrative detention as I am held in solitary confinement, Pennsylvania Department of Correction of the United States. In 1943, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer of Jewish descent who coined the term genocide and campaigned to establish the genocide convention, defined genocide as follows:

Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all member of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.

However, genocide can occur in solitary confinement due to its planned disintegration of the political and social institutions of culture, language, memory, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, equality, mental, physical health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals captivated inside of the United States. Solitary confinement, Islamic Republic of Iran solitary confinement, and the number of administrative detainees. Human beings in solitary confinement without charge or trial in Palestinian prison. I received an email on my Gmail account linked to my Facebook page "Let's talk about it" from the International Emergency Campaign to Free Iran's Political Prisoners. In early December of 2023, (IEC) published three reports together painting a horrific picture of the methods used by the Islamic republic of Iran to punish and break Iran prisoners, especially political prisoners as a key to control their thinking where they don't have to worry about their action. Human rights organizations with close ties inside Iran reported that as of December 2, the IRI had executed 707 people in the first 11 months of 2023. They note that almost 200 of these took place in October and November, while the world's attention was focused on the U.S.-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza. Among those executed suddenly and in secret

were at least two young protesters from the unprecedented Woman Life Freedom uprising.

Other political prisoners who had already spent long years in prison were lynched in gruesome group executions, including an activist who had been acquitted for lack of evidence in the murder of a government official in 1981 who has rearrested on his return to Iran and executed with the exact same lack of evidence, and two Kurdish Sunni religious activist in prison since 2010. Iran executed prisoners Milad Zohrevand and a 21 year old black man. Most of the executions were for nonviolent crimes such as drugs in the year of September 2022- August 2023. In December, Amnesty International and Human Rights Coalition, the Movement Magazine Issues 52 published reports of sexual violence against Iran's Women, Life, Freedom uprising. Amnesty International published a 120 page report, based on their interviews with 45 victims, including 26 men, 12 women, and 7 children. While the HRC base their report on the meeting with the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland. I myself have been following these diabolical stories since November 2023, and I've published an article that I wrong about an activist, Toomaj Salegi who was released from solitary confinement, I posted on my Facebook page, "The Harrowing testimonies we collected point to a wider pattern in the use of sexual violence as a key weapon in the Iranian authorities' armory of repression of the protests and suppression of dissent to cling to power at all costs."

Amnesty International's secretary-General said: "Iran's prosecutors and judges were not only complicit by ignoring or covering up survivors' complaints of rape, but also used torture-tainted confessions to bring spurious charges against survivors and sentence them to imprisonment or death." In November, the UK-based campaign to free political prisoners in Iran, published a well-documented study of this. It summarizes:

"Recently released prisoners have reported to the CFPPI that it has now become standard practice for prison guards to forcibly administer drugs to the prisoners as part of psychological and physical torture to extract a confession. It is reported that drugs have been added to the prisoners' food and drinking waters. Many prisoners have reportedly developed additions in prison which continue even after their release." Pharmacological torture is the use of psychoactive psychotropic drugs or other types of drugs to punish and extract information, or to subdue prisoners into compliance by causing distress in the form of pain, anxiety

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IF DRUMPH DOES NOT GO TO JAIL EVERY CONVICT IN AMERIKLA MUST BE RELEASED FROM BONDAGE

First Drumph don't even count. He is simply a lightning rod for illiberal forces that have long maintained the elite should run things [government, military, religion, economy and education]. Remember the country was founded [stolen] for land owning white men. [who were **subordinate** laboring colonial subjects of England].

Democracy is under attack across the planet, here at home it shows up in the form of a return to the Settler Frontier Call to 'Manifest Destiny'. (The world belongs to White Supremacy) A patriarchal male domination paradigm 'might makes right'. The personification of which can be seen in the Gaza and Ukraine wars. Accept 'our' theft of the land or we'll kill everybody and rewrite 'our story'. Netanyahu and Putin are WAR criminals killing thousands of women and children! Putin is trying to survive human progress, people seeking freedom from patriarchy. He wants to eliminate any consideration of democracy. Netanyahu on the other hand wants to steal Palestine the same way Amerikla stole Native lands.

The MAGA push to dismantle Ameriklan democracy from the inside are fronts of the same global conflict. Hitler, Erdogan, Putin and Viktor Orban – all democratically elected when the people [did not turn out to vote] and once in office disassembled the institutions guaranteeing Self-governance [People's Freedoms.] This is outlined in the radical oligarch's 'Conservative Promise of 2025.'

There have been several mutinies by this radical fraction of the ruling oligarchs. They are on the attack because there has never been accountability for their treachery. The civil war is but one instance, none of the traitors were prosecuted. More recently, it is Drumph, Steve Bannon, Roger Stone and all the representators [co-conspirators] who the liberal oligarchs refuse to prosecute. Sedition is the charge they are guilty of – period!

Be that as it may, this is an internecine struggle. The 'useful idiots' for the radical oligarchs are poor and privileged humans whose self-definition is 'white folk'. President Lyndon Baines Johnson remarked of them, "If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pock-

et. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you." When these humans learned Obama won . . . they went ape, 'da N's are taking over' [browning of Amerika]. They started the Tea Party and claimed Obama was not born in Amerika.

These radical oligarchs see Drumph as an opportunity to seize direct control. Currently surrogates run the government for them; bought politicians and judges. The corrupt capitalist supreme court routinely passes laws favoring both groups of oligarchs.

Follow the law; first the Reagan Administration gutted the 'Fairness Doctrine' which required the **public airwaves** air both sides of public issues. This gave birth to lying one sided Fox News, and right wing talk radio. They could just lie. Then the Supreme Court ruled corporations were people and had first amendment rights, they could contribute to candidates running for office. Last week the Supreme Court ruled public officials could take gratuities [bribes – hint, hint, a justice or two, on the supreme court].

Today they have crowned Drumph king, all official acts are immune from criminal prosecution: bribery, killing your political opponent, planning and executing a coup! Drumph's appearance, my dear misled Christians friends – is your **ANTI-CHRIST!**

So to be straight, the radical oligarchs can buy the public airwaves and lie, [the election was stolen - 'N ers is taking over], buy politicians/judges, to rule they have the power to do as they will. Pollute/murder the planet; Power does its own Will.

What exactly is this fuss all about? In short **you**; you the poor working stiff, be you any definition, white/blk, or whatever. All wealth is created by you – the worker. But after you create it, it is distributed by the economic and political system in power. Capitalism cheats the worker out of their fair share of the value they created. Capitalism is pawned off as the 'free market'; it is not. Nor is it the last statement of economic organization of the human race. Army/police employees don't create wealth they maintain the status quo!

We could let both oligarch camps keep their stolen wealth and still win the war for our economic and political freedom. If every oligarch simply had to cook his/their own food, raise their own children, clean and maintain their own properties, in a democracy we would all catch up, to

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countries including Chile, Croatia, Greece, and the Netherlands allow or have plans to install polling stations in prisons to guarantee ballot access.

In sum: US laws denying the vote to persons with criminal convictions are extreme when compared with the laws of other countries.

Readers are encouraged to remain mindful of the overtly racist historical context for disenfranchisement laws in the United States, including chattel slavery and its legacies, as we imagine a path towards greater civic participation for all.

(See FULL report : Out of Step: U.S. Policy on Voting Rights in Global Perspective – The Sentencing Project)

From the Editor:

FYI! Joining Maine and Vermont, Washington DC residents have had the right to vote since 2020. In fact, 44 year old Joel Caston (a child LIFER) confirmed prisoner voting rights by winning the 2021 election from inside prison. He was elected for Commissioner on the city's southeast side; the victim's family fully endorsed Mr. Caston.

Beautiful

By Rasheed Farrelle

They will **YELL**
And dis**RESPECT**
And call her **UGLY**
Or out her **NAME**
Or SHAME her **BODY**
And call her **FAT**
Because her **FRAME**
Is not the **SAME**
As one they've **SEEN**
In some maga**ZINE**
(someone that **PAID** just to be **FIXED**)...
And it is **SAD**...
It makes me **SICK**...
That such **BEAUTY** can be **IGNORED**
By **IGNORANCE**...

This Woman's **BEAUTIFUL**

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hope to have Lt. Governor Davis here as he was invited and considering. We will sit with them and our loved ones and discuss second chances for all men and women sentenced to death by the incarceration.

If you are an inmate organization and you do not have a banquet, request one in Your Yearly Plan of Action to sit down with your family, eat state food, and speak to lawmakers. It is an unforgettable experience for all who participate. A big thank you to Cole Township Superintendent Tom McGinley for supporting this.

RIP to Mr. Ezra Bozeman who fought tirelessly for his release and was released on compassionate release on May 20th, 2024, He died very shortly after. My prayers are with you Miss Christine Roess and Mr. Ezra Bozeman, friend to my old head Yusef Jones. God bless.

By: Rob Pezzeca, # DX1148, SCI Coal Township
Email: Robertpezzeca@gmail.com

P.S. Congratulations to my friend Tyree Wallace another innocent lifer who will be freed.

(Continued from page 33)

prisons, found that after the law was implemented, the state had reduced the use of solitary confinement and had instituted other changes. According to the findings, there were 351 people in solitary confinement in February 2023, compared with roughly 1,800 in February 2022 and about 2,486 people in July 2019.

However, the report also found "documented numerous departures from basic adherence to the HALT Solitary Law," including people being held alone for as much as six times the legal limit.

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ty, panic, psychological disturbances, immobilization, hallucination, paranoia, disorientation, and addition which is cruel and unusual punishment.

Toomaj Salehi is a rapper, activist of Iran who was arrested for his support of the Women Life Freedom uprising in Fall 2022. He spent 252 days in solitary confinement under horrific conditions of torture. Salehi was released on bail from Isfahan Prison November 18 2023 after spending 386 days in prison. Palestinian prisoners that are held in these detention campuses without trial, bail charges filed on them are involuntary slavery and Palestinian. Iran and Israel have violated the universal declaration of human rights: Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person. Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In America, history is parallel to the treatment of Palestinian, Iran, and Israeli prisons, but I will begin with America, who kidnapped Africans' mothers and fathers and children, and brought them to America from Africa on slave ships. And Africans of today are descendants who have been here for over 400 years in a continued state of servitude to the slave masters' children. America caused a genocide, plundering of the ancient indigenous American (so called Indian). Much of America's claims to fame are nothing short of the outright theft of the intellectual and artistic property of Black and Brown people. It is quite interesting that popular political rhetoric espouses the virtues of the "work ethic" and yet describes much of what institutional slavery did. American imperialist fascist built the "new world" for themselves and to keep white fascists from having to do much of the work themselves. It was also because the Black man had a far superior knowledge of how to build than the white race did. After craftily stealing the land, resources from the ancient indigenous Americans, the white fascist used the Black man, Brown man as a "beast of burden" to develop the land that they were either too lazy to develop or simply incapable of handling without the industriousness of the Black man. As a Black man, prisoner in American state prison here in Pennsylvania DOC solitary confinement, I stand in solidarity with all of my Black and Brown brothers and sisters that are confined in isolation in Palestinian, Iran, Israel and all across the world. The fight for liberation isn't over until we all have true liberation.

Peace be upon you all.

Sudoku Master Puzzle—Answers on page 39

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

House

All the words are hidden vertically, horizontally or diagonally—in both directions. The letters that remain unused form a sentence from left to right.

S T U D I O L B A T H R O O M
C A N H O L L O W W A L L A T
P O T I E C L D A E T S D E B
E A L W I N D O W S I L L B C
T S N O I T A D N U O F D E H
S D E R N G U T T E R I I D I
R R O H C N A L L A W R S R M
O F F I C E A R C A D E A O N
O C R E T T I D A R A E S O E
D O C T A E B L E G L S T M Y
E R L A D R D E I R E C O T H
A R T I S R I N S N T A V A K
O I T A P U L L E D G P E C I
N D S I T T I N G A R E A T O
T O W O D N I W R E M R O D H
D R A I N P I P E E T F L O O
N E H C T I K R O A F A N A T
T R O O L F I S H U T T E R C

ARCADE
BATHROOM
BEDROOM

BEDSTEAD
CEILING
CHIMNEY

COLONNADE
CORRIDOR
DOORSTEP

DORMER WINDOW
DRAINPIPE
FIRE ESCAPE
FLOOR
FOUNDATIONS
GARAGE
GUTTER
HAT RACK
HOLLOW WALL
KITCHEN
OFFICE
PATIO
SHUTTER
SITTING AREA
STOVE
STUDIO
TURRET
WALL ANCHOR
WELL
WINDOWSELL

TRIANAGRAM

Three-word groups of anagrams are called triplets or trianagrams. Complete the group:

ASLEEP _ _ _ _ _



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THE MOVEMENT

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(Continued from page 9)

their standard of living, and be materially and politically free.

The Slave has led this fight for human emancipation from the day they got off the boat. Black Women still hold it down! White Supremist supporting Neo-negroes are backing Drumph. Now is not the time to abandon our leadership role in the fight to free the people – all the people from the greedy! Django ‘where is you at’ when we need you.

Finally, Drumph da criminal, has broken every law on the books – but arson. He’s an accomplice in the deaths of the capitol police, not to mention every unnecessary Covid death due to his lying and criminally negligent policy decisions; use bleach, light bulbs inside your body and hydroxychloroquine!!! His charges includes rape, robbery and fraud!

If he is not someone’s cellie – every single prisoner [serial killers, rapists and molesters excepted] held captive by these rogue state systems, claiming the right of the rule of law, MUST be granted amnesty/pardon!

POWER DOES ITS OWN WILL

VOTING IS THE PEOPLES POWER

POWER TO THE PEOPLE!!!

By Yusef Jones

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

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

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HRC, PO Box 34580, Phila., PA 19101, ATTENTION: Charitable Donations.

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Philadelphia, PA 19101
or***

Email: Info@hrcoalition.org

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Simply send your contact info to:

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P.O. Box 34580
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Attention: Newsletter!*

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



Happy Birthday/Happy Earth day!
CADBI, HRC, and other organiza-
tions are wishing you the very best as
 you celebrate another day. We care for
 you and we will continue to fight for
 you. Stay strong, stand tall, stay healthy,
 and apply for commutation. Fill out a
 medical release form and stay united and informed.



A TRIBUTE TO MR. BOZEMAN

Ezra Bozeman was a friend, a brother, and a mentor to me and everyone else who was fortunate enough to cross paths with him.

His humbleness and smarts were the perfect mix to achieve the success he's had being that positive influence.

I worked side by side with Mr. Bozeman for most of the last 22 years. I saw his heart close up. No matter what was going on with himself personally, he would always take time to sit with you and listen. And, he'd always have you walking away encouraged.

Mr. Bozeman was a lifelong educator. Bedside working in the A/V room, he was a tutor for Mr. Hurst in the Business Education Class. He facilitated the End of Violence program for 20 years, and he was a dedicated Certified Peer Specialist –And that's just scratching the surface of all that he's done to give back.

Mr. Bozeman walked the walk. He knew how to make you feel his love. And, his embrace was always warming. We are all better off for having known him and will miss him dearly.

We love you, Boz.

Richie Marra



July

7/14	Paula Johnson	Muncy
7/15	Donald Johnson	Dallas
7/25	Anthony Deloatch	Dallas
7/26	Justin Stevenson	Houtzdale
7/27	Niegra Egerton	Muncy
7/31	William Robinson	Frackville

August

8/1	Mike Cook	Phoenix
8/5	Gaye Morley	Muncy
8/12	Bray Murray	Phoenix
8/15	Jacqueline White	Muncy
8/17	Antonio Bundy	Phoenix
8/21	Derel Britton	Pine Grove
8/22	Celeste Coles	Muncy *
8/25	Darrell McKelvie	Benner*
8/25	Mariam White	Muncy

September

9/3	Yusef Warrick	Chester*
9/5	Samuel Major	Phoenix*
9/11	Tracey Shaw	Muncy*
9/18	Howard Miller	Houtzdale
9/20	Tran Loc	Smithfield *
9/24	Melanie Vicheck	Muncy

October

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

Belated Birthday to
 Josh Bacon* 6/24 Chester

(*) indicate, people I have met in person



By Ms. Yvonne Newkirk,
 Portrait by Mark Loughney

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Remember When . .

The neighborhood where everybody on the block “you said” was your *cousin*.

Where enemies became *friends*, you shared, kept secrets, *stole* from the corner store, *hooky* school, was scared on the last day of school because Rosetta wanted to *fight* you.

You got teased if you had short hair, too fat, too skinny, picked on because they would say “she think she’s cute”.

Never did your homework, changed the *E* written in red and covered it to a blue B on your report card.

Got *backhanded slap* in the mouth for telling a lie, when you was told to always tell the truth - if you did you won’t get a beating.

Wasn’t allowed to say “they *lying*”, had to say they *storying*.

You and your home boy *fought*, *shook hands*, then had a cold one together.

The guys *harmonized*, singing Do Wop on the corner.

We knew everybody on the block that ran a *speakeasy*, and that Mr. Bill was the *number runner*.

You had better hold a hand to cross the street.

When you got slapped if you licked your plate, if you fixed your plate you better eat every drop, you was only allowed to eat one apple and you was greedy if you asked for another one.

Your eyes are bigger than you stomach.

You had to wash your hands before you ate. Don’t go in my pot if you didn’t wash your hands.

Had to say your grace, and don’t forget to say your prayers before bed.

Had 5 *store front churches* in the neighborhood.

Had the neighbor that went to church, prayed for you because she cared. And another newsy one that knew every body business and told it.

Had school clothes, church clothes, play clothes and shoes, and had to change your clothes when you got out of school.

Lit your mothers cigarette on the stove, that’s how you learn to smoke.

Was that really your uncle or your mother’s boyfriend.

You couldn’t ask a grownup for money, they would ask you “where you get that money from.”

You learned kids had to be *seen and not heard*, and you better not *talk under your breath*.

You couldn’t tell nobody what you got for Xmas.

You couldn’t ask *Why*? If your mother called you, you couldn’t answer, *What!*

What goes on in my house stays in this house rule.

You had to knock if a door was closed, you didn’t bust in.

It was no summer camp, the water plug was where you cooled off.

Girls played jacks, jumped rope, polished fingernails on the front steps, and plaited each others hair.

Boys played stick ball or tops or was talking to the girls, Ole Heads played checkers, dominos, shot crap, played pool.

Selling parties was weekends celebrated, playing cards, pinochle, poker, spades, 500, Tunk, music playing on the *record* machine, main players was always drunk, but you had somebody who *looked out for you*.

Remember When . . .

. . . Well, That isn’t Now

From the Editor: Welcome to our new column titled “Nan Says” by Nan Hill, who is a member of HRC and CADBI. Nan is well respected for her ability to see pass the exterior and into the depth of a person’s humanity. She shares her life’s wisdom in a way that we all love, appreciate, and respect. Enjoy.

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

Mama Patt Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award

By Juliette Rando



L-R: Casey Cook, Saleem Holbrook, Mama Patt, Nikki Grant, and Patrice Green

Affectionately termed “the Mother of the Movement,” Mama Patt often appears more-than-human. Her grace, her intelligence, her limitless skillset, her endless dedication to and compassion for others all seem to elevate her beyond humanity and into something like saintly status. But how did Mama Patt come to be Mama Patt?

In describing her journey, Mama Patt reveals that she wasn’t always like this. In 1988, when her son Shakaboona (co-founder and former longtime editor of the Movement) was incarcerated at age 17, Mama Patt closed in on herself. Filled with guilt, she blamed herself for Shakaboona’s incarceration. She found it difficult to make eye contact with others because she feared the judgment they would bestow if they knew. This feeling was only further exacerbated when she was deceived by a reporter who gained access to her and Shakaboona only to publish a dehumanizing front-page article about children serving life sentences (“*A new generation of killers, feeling no blame and no shame...*”), as well as an undercover federal agent who attempted to wrap her up in a conspiracy case. After those experiences, Mama Patt became fearful of others. Now trusting only her mother and her two oldest children, her circle became very small.

Yet all of that shifted when she joined the Human Rights Coalition, at the urging of Shakaboona, in 2001. Con-

ceived by Russell Maroon Shoatz, Shakaboona and others in solitary at SCI Greene, HRC was founded on the principle that each prisoner has at least one family member who loves them—a mother, a father, a spouse, a child, a sister or a brother. Those early meetings were a group of women, mothers and friends of people on the inside, meeting in one of their homes.

Within the safety of HRC, Mama Patt could finally breathe. She could share details about Shakaboona - her fears for him, and also moments of pride - and know that they would be received and understood by the other women. This feeling of safety empowered her to advocate for her son. But she didn’t stop there - Mama Patt began advocating for other mothers’ children as well. As Mama Patt explained, “even though I started out for selfish reasons, just because I wanted to help my son, as I grew to know the other people in prison, I saw them as intelligent, kind, loving human beings, and started helping them too.” Because of this, she was gifted the name “Mama Patt,” by the men inside. At first she resisted the name, but then came to understand it as symbolic for the way she fights for them like their own mother would.

Now 23 years later, it feels only fitting that Mama Patt’s exceptional work be recognized with an award named after Paul Robeson: the Paul Robeson Lifetime Achievement Award. Set in the beautiful Fairmount Water Works building overlooking the Schuylkill River, the ceremony was hosted by Bread & Roses to honor movement leaders who fight to build a world free from state violence. Bread & Roses Community Fund has existed since 1977, when it began as a project to move money towards efforts for “real change” in Philadelphia. Since then it’s distributed over \$20 million to local grassroots groups fighting for collective liberation.

Both Nikki Grant, Policy Director at Amistad Law Project, and Saleem Holbrook, Executive Director of the Abolitionist Law Center and co-founder of HRC, presented Mama Patt’s award. In her speech, Nikki termed Mama Patt the “backbone” of the movement, citing how Mama Patt holds everything together: “She is the one sending out the reminders, facilitating meetings, calling, texting, emailing, showing up for court support. She does the admin work that is the glue of our liberation movements.” Not only that, but Mama Patt serves as publisher and co-

(Continued on page 17)

THE MOVEMENT

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(Continued from page 16)

editor of the Movement Magazine (and has for the past 16 years), writes grants to get HRC funded, serves as HRC's accountant, runs HRC's Emergency Response Network which responds to individuals in crisis, consults on and crafts policy, gives speeches at rallies and even legislative hearings, regularly meets with Senators and Representatives to discuss proposed policy changes, and more. It's not an exaggeration to say that because of Mama Patt, HRC has survived and *thrived* for the last 23 years, becoming a trusted figure both within prisons and within the halls of the legislature, serving as a voice for the voiceless in statewide campaigns for multiple issues that impact incarcerated people.

Saleem's tribute to Mama Patt was emotional. He was afforded only two minutes to introduce her and remarked, "I don't know if 20 hours can capture the importance of Mama Patt to our movement in Pennsylvania." He spoke from the heart, recounting how deeply Mama Patt has impacted his life and the lives of thousands of other incarcerated people in Pennsylvania.

When his mother passed away in 2004, Mama Patt was one of the first to send Saleem a condolence card. Saleem said that within that card, Mama Patt described his mother, Rose: "she had some incredibly moving comments and observations about my mother coming to meetings and being like a wallflower in the back of

the meetings, but when she spoke, she spoke with authority and conviction." Reading that made Saleem break down right there in his cell. He was so appreciative that Mama Patt gave him this "glimpse of my mother that I was deprived of for 27 years." He said that since his mother passed, Mama Patt has been like a mother to him.



R-L: Mama Patt & Chenell (her daughter)



At Podium: Shakaboona and Mama Patt



Top L-R: Juliette Rando, Yvonne Newkirk, John Rowland, Annie Re, Sarah Morris. Front Center L-R: Mama Patt, Sandra Hill, Roxanne Harrell.

Saleem described how, over the years, Mama Patt has mentored so many family members who come into the movement feeling marginalized and ostracized for their loved one's incarceration. He explained how she would dispel any feelings of shame they brought with them by explaining that there are thousands of families going through the same thing in Philadelphia and beyond. She would show them that they are now a part of a powerful movement working to transform society, to liberate not only their child, but so many others' children.

Mama Patt empowers others to stand up against an unjust system and fight for their loved ones. Her warmth is at once comforting and

galvanizing; she helps others believe that hope is possible and inspires them to take action for their loved ones. As Saleem concluded, "That is who Mama Patt is to our movement. She's a rock."

THE MOVEMENT

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The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!



Paulette Carrington, Speaker.

Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI): *We are more... so much more!*

Not even the blazing heat of the hottest day in April (90F) could silence the voices of over 150 CADBI members gathered at the back entrance of the state capitol building.

We are more... so much more!

In three buses from Philadelphia, a van from Pittsburgh, and cars from Lancaster, Reading, Wilkes Barre, Lewisburg, Williamsport, and North Carolina, CADBI members poured onto the capitol patio, shared a lunch, and lifted up signs with the photos of loved ones in prison, chanting:

We are more... so much more!

MC'd by CADBI co-founder Felix Rosado, the rally also featured Richie Marra from SCI-Chester, CADBI co-founders and returning citizens Ghani Songster and Saleem Holbrook, long-time organizers Ms. Sandra Hill and Etta Cetera, Roxanne Horrell from Straight Ahead, and returning citizens Paulette Carrington, Ricky Olds, Eddie Ramirez, and Jess Lopez.

Prior to the rally, two dozen CADBI members met with twenty different legislators to push them to support geriatric/medical parole and an end to death by incarceration, and dropped off information about the bills to many more legislative offices.

The rally was joyful, with powerful speakers and beautiful art. It was also so powerful to have a number of former inside members join a rally for the first time on the outside and get to witness the results of all their organizing.

We have realized that we need to find a way to convince the capitol security to let us hold our rally inside—the weather is just too unpredictable and it puts many of our members at risk. In the future, we also hope to do more broad and deep outreach to people serving DBI on the inside, and to clarify the goals of our rallies: Are we building community and supporting each other? Providing a platform for supportive legislators and community leaders? Focusing on changing the media narrative? Disrupting business as usual? Prioritizing some of these goals over others changes how we plan and take action.

We are more... so much more!

By Jay Bergen, CADBI Member



Ghani Songster, Speaker

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Left: Die-Hard Supporters braving the heat after the CADBI Rally. **Below:** Bus #2 on the way back home to Philly!



Below: Picture of the picture taker: Marci Marra



Above: Celeste and Serge!



Launch of CADBI Chester

June 2024

Had a great time attending CADBI-Chester grand opening with the awesome **Dana Lomax-Ayler**. Looking forward to seeing her build an amazing chapter to serve the community in Chester. Always here to support her. Ancestor Richard Tut Carter is proud of her continuing the legacy he built in Chester. In his words, "We are stronger when we pull together and not apart."

Robert Saleem Holbrook



Above: Dana Lomax-Ayler and Saleem Holbrook



Above from L-R: Tom (Mike Jr's son), Dana, Mike Jr. with parents, Mike and Debbie Davis.



Left: Dana and Dana Jones

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The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

Judiciary Hearing in Harrisburg, House Bill 2296

Proud of the work that went into this moment and thrilled to have a bill introduced that seeks to abolish death by incarceration for those convicted under the felony murder rule.

Today the movement for second chances participated in a hearing for a bill, HB 2296, that would end the wildly disproportionate punishment of life without parole for felony murder. A punishment so unusual that only two states - Pennsylvania and Louisiana- sentence people to die in prison if they participate in a crime where someone is unintentionally killed. Grateful to my movement family, Chairman Briggs, and the other legislators who are supporting this bill. Onward!

Sean Damon



L-R: Sean Damon, Saleem Holbrook, Ms. Dee Dee, Rep. Tim Briggs (Democratic Judiciary Chairman), Roxanne Horrell, and Celeste Trusty

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

‘WeRise’ Summit 2024



L-T: Team B. Preston, Lynn Robinson, Tricka Parasimo

On May 24 the Toxic Prisons Campaign had the honor of presenting at UC Berkeley for the WeRise Summit. B. Preston, Lynn Robinson, and Tricka Parasimo were invited to join students, faculty, researchers and practitioners of the environmental and civil engineering field by one of our collaborative partners and a doctoral student at UC Berkeley, J’Anna-Mare, to share important information and make important connections. The conference was centered around racism, as well as other social injustices within the engineering field. Community leaders, teachers, and scholars from across the country gathered to speak of their experiences with racism and what they are doing to fight for the rights of their community members. “The summit is dedicated to showcasing the most recent research and curricula at the nexus of engineering, social justice, and community engagement.”

The Toxic Prisons Campaign of HRC has been working to address the toxic environment of SCI-Fayette for over 10 years. We have worked with senators, representatives, researchers, and lawyers to bring attention to the toxic water and air that people on the inside are forced to drink and breathe. This is not only an issue at SCI-Fayette but across the state and the country. Prisons have been built on toxic land because the land is cheap and the government clearly does not care about the well-being of those

on the inside. Last year, Toxic Prisons filmed a documentary detailing what our loved ones are going through and the negative health effects that this toxic water and air has on an individual.

We were honored to present this documentary as part of this conference and give a presentation on what engineers can do to prevent future prisons from being built on these toxic sites. We encouraged these students to think of the communities they are building with and their needs. We shed light on the poor practices of the Department of Corrections and how it is our responsibility to believe that everyone deserves clean water and air, despite how society works to hide and silence those on the inside. The connection between the prison population and low income populations being stripped of resources and representation must also be made. It is important that the people who are



in power start to work with our communities, asking questions such as “How can we serve you?” And not the other way around.

We hope to collaborate with this incredibly passionate and intelligent group of people again in our fight for the rights of our loved ones on the inside and out.

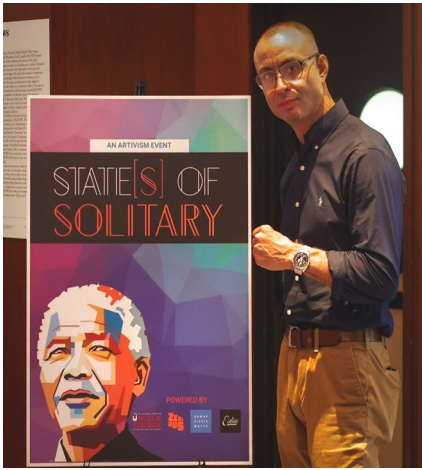
By: Tricka Parasimo

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The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

State [s] of Solitary Confinement an Artivism Event powered by Unlock the Box, kicked off on Nelson Mandela's birthday, July 18th.



Above: Saleem Holbrook (PA)

and we are so thankful to all of our partners, attendees, staff, and supporters who made all of this possible.

The energy was palpable on the day of the event — people were lining up at 8 am to get in the doors! We had to expand our capacity to make room for more than 150 attendees and we were so inspired by everyone who showed up.

If you were not a part of this day, I want to share some of the most impactful moments with you.

State[s] of Solitary was a chance to recommit to the mission and strategize to end solitary confinement while connecting through art, storytelling, and community. Our visual scribe, Mary Jo Neil from Drawn Dialogue, created this beautiful work of art by watching what was going on and portraying the experiences of our participants on her canvas. It's really beautiful!

We broke into several impactful artivism (art + activism) workshops throughout the day and we ended our day with our Transformation Not Torture panel. Our panelists discussed solitary confinement through the lens of their art and sensory experience —emphasizing how we can employ the arts to facilitate healing, connection, and advocacy.

[The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also known as the Mandela Rules, were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015](#)

Nelson Mandela — “It always seem impossible until it’s done.”

Greetings Everyone, our State[s] of Solitary was a successful event

We kicked off this event by really cementing the vision we see for this country — cage-free and torture-free. It was amazing to see everyone come together, share their personal stories, and recommit to ending solitary.

After the event, we held a private screening of *The Strike*, a documentary on the Pelican Bay Hunger Strike. The co-directors, JoeBill Muñoz and Lucas Guilkey were in at-

I just wanted to thank you for an AMAZING event. Yesterday's screening was truly our best yet. Between the energy in the room and the testimonies from the audience members, I was blown away and re-inspired to keep bringing this film to audiences across the country.

— JoeBill Muñoz

tendance and loved the energy of the crowd. This event was everything we had hoped it would be and we can't wait to see how our partners and fellow activists move forward in the fight to end solitary.

Thanks for making this possible.

Jessica Sandoval
National Campaign Director
Unlock the Box Campaign

The **Unlock the Box** Campaign is a coalition of organizations and movement leaders who partner with state and local campaigns across the United States with the common goal of ending the use of solitary confinement for all people. Website: unlocktheboxcampaign.org – [End Torture Now](http://endtorturenow.org)

Unlock The Box, PO Box 91820 Washington, DC 20090

Editor's Note: *As one of the orgs invited to Washington, DC for States of Solitary Confinement, HRC came away with a rich and rewarding experience. We were all able to freely share our ideas, experiences, and knowledge that I'm sure landed where needed. We enjoyed three days of empowering comradery that pushes us to be relentless in our pursuit of ending solitary confinement. We addressed the importance of the “mental health” for survivors of solitary confinement which included family who've suffered along with their loved ones. And lastly our ties with each other were strengthened and contact information across the states were shared.*

Solitary Survivors, we still, however, need commitment from you and /or your family members to win the war. Give your loved ones HRC's contact information and ask them to help by emailing: Info@hrcoalition.org Website: www.hrcoalition.org

Article by Jessica Sandoval; edited by Mama Patt



Clinton Walker (PA)

THE MOVEMENT

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Love Knows No Bars

*Ivory Luv
&
Kurtis Graves
Congratulations on your
Wedding Day at SCI-
Mahanoy!!!*



SEF'S BALLAD TO A FALLEN FRIEND, SOLDIER, AND COMRADE EZRA BOZEMAN

I love him still. He was an every man's bestie. Look closely at us, see and feel our loss. It is palatable. Evident right about the eyes. Not tears but a crying sorrow that reverberates throughout the soul – hanging heavy upon the heart: suffocating anguish indistinguishable anger! Yeah – we all loved him – STILL.

We gather in his honor, in his strength, in his courage, in his unselfish love. Love for each of us, expressed in every greeting, whether hello or adios.

He used to wrap his smile around you and in that moment banish ill-framed preoccupation, freeing your spirit to soar into measured enlightenment. I was always good at forgiving, he challenged me to forget.

My friend was plain spoken and direct. He would say he loved me, but he loved Gracie more!

With a **torturous** death¹ at his door, he greeted fate with the dignity of a saint, 'come on in and rest, you must be weary, I will be with you in a second'. He turned to us present, en route and awaiting (for his release).

"I know I am in love [situated in all of our hearts], I am not accepting anymore medical interventions, I'm gonna let it do what it do. Nobody gets outta here alive."

With tears streaming down Gracie's face, our hearts collided with goodbye and we kissed 'so long' – for goodbye signified permanence and 'so long' meant 'til we meet again – where ever/what ever on the other side'!

By Yusef Jones

¹ Ezra died as a result of prison medical negligence, while made quadriplegic by their hand, staff denied him – a dying man a simple glass of water multiple times prior to his release to the hospital for compassionate release.



VOICES FROM SOLITARY: AT ATTICA, HARD HEARTS AND A SLIVER OF HOPE

Prison Officials Are Violating Both the Spirit and the Letter of the HALT Solitary Confinement Law, By Voices from Solitary

This article was originally published on Solitary Watch. In 2021, after 34 years of living in solitary confinement in New York state prisons, William Blake was released into general population. Solitary Watch first encountered Blake, now 60, back in 2013, when we published his essay "A Sentence Worse Than Death." The essay received more than half a million hits on this site alone, and has been widely reprinted and translated into several languages. Since that first publication, Blake has continued to write about his experience in solitary confinement.

Blake says he was never provided any mental health treatment for the three decades of torture he endured in solitary confinement. Six months ago, what Blake describes as a psychotic break from the untreated effects of solitary landed him back in isolation at Attica Correctional Facility. Blake found himself in the same unit where he had done "box time" back in the 1980s, previously labeled the Special Housing Unit (SHU) and now called the Residential Rehabilitation Unit (RRU). In this piece, Blake writes about New York prison officials' failure to adhere to the civil protections promised by the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act.. —Kilhah St. Fort

I am a New York State prisoner presently housed in the Residential Rehabilitation Unit (RRU) in Attica Correctional Facility, and I am serving a disciplinary sentence that up until the passage of the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement law—called the HALT law for short—would have found me in a solitary confinement cell. The HALT law was enacted by New York's legislature to all but end the use of prolonged solitary confinement units in the state's prisons, limiting the time that a person can now spend there to 15 days.

From 1987 to 2021, I spent 34 consecutive years in various Special Housing Units (SHUs), the solitary confinement blocks in New York's prisons. The HALT law didn't come along in time to spare me the torture that those years were, but it's here now and it's supposed to keep anyone from ever again getting put through an experience like what I endured.

For the most part, RRUs have replaced SHUs. This is a good thing, certainly. It would be much better, though, if prison authorities at Attica and other prisons followed the HALT law, and let go of all remnants of the old SHUs. This would let the hope of the new RRUs shine through to reach the people it was intended to touch.

Not an hour ago, I returned to my cell after spending three full hours outside at "recreation," in single digit temperatures. My feet were numb, my entire body colder than it had to be, and I was angry. In my cell I had all my personal clothing and footwear, none of which I was allowed to possess during the decades I spent in SHU.

The provisions of the HALT law, which are outlined in New York Correction Law Section 137, allow inmates to "have access to all of their personal property" while in RRU. The administration of Attica has decided, however, to give the men held in its RRU only some of their property. In an insane twist of the state legislature's clear intent, Attica's rule for the RRU is that we can have all our personal clothing and footwear in our cells, but we can wear only state issued clothing and footwear outside of our cells.

I have very good insulated winter boots, but to go outside, I had to wear uninsulated boots given to me by the state. I have nice flannel shirts, and sweatshirts, too. But I could not wear any of these items at recreation. On visits with our friends and family, at the programs we can attend every day, and outside, even if the temperature is a few degrees above zero, it is only the state stuff that is allowed. When I complained about the stupidity of this rule, I was told by one officer: "The law says we have to give you your clothes, it doesn't say we have to let you wear them."

For the life of me, I do not believe that this is what our lawmakers had in mind when they wrote the HALT law, and directed prison officials to let individuals have their personal property while in RRU, including their own clothes.

So I wore prison greens and state boots today, and froze like I never had to.

I also spent all of my three hours at rec in an 8' x 15' cage by myself, in a row of eight cages filled with other prisoners, with another row of eight across from the row I was in. We could see each other and talk, but we were all in single-man cages, separated despite our close proximity.

The HALT law directs prison officials to allow RRU inmates "congregate recreation." Again, I do not believe New York legislators had cages in mind when they were

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envisioning congregate rec. Attica's administrators have simply added their own twist to the mix.

I could have chosen to attend program this morning, and thereby avoided the biting cold on the outdoors. Trouble is, I am made to wear handcuffs going to program, hands behind the back. I have bad shoulders, and had surgery on one of them less than a year ago. It is painful for me to put my hands behind my back and keep them there for very long. So I have avoided programming in part to avoid the pain of cuffing.

At program, we are also chained to a desk-and-chair combo that has the strange name of a "RESTART chair." Shackles are put on our ankles and the chain is locked into the RESTART chair, and there we sit for three hours of group sessions, if we choose to attend the entire program. The HALT law, however, tells us that "restraints shall not be used when incarcerated individuals are participating in out-of-cell activities within an RRU," not unless an "individual assessment" has been made for a particular individual and it is determined that a "significant and unreasonable" safety risk exists to justify their use. Attica's blanket policy of using mechanical restraints on everyone in the RRU is a violation of the HALT law—another among a long list of other violations.

When I returned from the rec cages this morning, I noticed two cups sitting on the window ledge situated directly across the middle gallery from my cell gate. They were the paper cups we are given at mealtime for milk and coffee in the morning, and that we are prohibited from keeping. We have to turn them in when trays are collected after meals.

As soon as I saw them, I knew the two cups had been taken from my cell while I was at rec, and I became slightly upset over the loss I had just taken. In one of the cups were two hard-boiled eggs, and in the other, milk. I had saved the food and drink from the breakfast meal to eat that evening. It would be my snack for the night—or would have been had a CO not taken them out of my cell. Now the eggs and milk would go in the garbage, for no good reason at all.

New York Correction Law 137 tells us what RRUs should look like: "All segregated confinement and residential rehabilitation units shall create the least restrictive environment necessary for the safety of incarcerated persons, staff, and the security of the facility." This is what the law envisions, yet Attica's RRU is so restrictive, so petty in its application of system's rules that restrict and debase the

lives of the people on the unit, that we are not allowed to keep even a paper cup to drink from in our cells.

Administrators who run Attica would tell us that cups are not allowed to prevent prisoners from throwing feces and urine on officers. The trouble with this logic is that at the same time, we are allowed to keep a small bucket in our cells to receive hot water twice daily, because the cells have no hot water coming from the sink faucets. We are also allowed to keep shampoo bottles, mouthwash bottles, and jars of face cream and lotion. Any of these items can be used to fling nasty things, so why deny us the cups? There is no legitimate reason.

Perhaps craziest of all is how people in the RRUs are allowed to buy Kool Aid, cereal, various meats in pouches—all that—but they are not allowed to keep a cup to make the Kool Aid in, or a bowl to eat their cereal from, or anything of the like to mix some tuna fish with mayo for sandwiches. We have to break the rules to keep an innocuous paper cup, and getting a whole other bowl is out of the question. We are not allowed to keep any bowls, cups or eating utensils with our personal property.

Yes, it's true. We cannot keep even a plastic spork in our cells, except at meal times. So you break the rule, if you're able, to eat the cereal you brought in commissary with a spoon, or drink your Kool Aid from a cup.

No radios or personal headphones, no electronic devices of any kind, are allowed in RRU, and Attica's administrators will tell you that it's because there are no electrical outlets in the cells. But that's not true. On one of the four companies that make up the Attica RRU, the cells do have electrical outlets. Also, my radio runs on batteries, which the RRU "Orientation Manual" says are to be sold in commissary. Yet we are not allowed to possess any device that takes batteries, so batteries are not sold in commissary despite the rules. For certain, Attica officials not only violate New York State law as they fancy, they break their own rules regularly also.

Headphones require no electricity, so I don't know the reason for withholding them. I am sure that Attica has an excuse. Instead of being given our personal headphones, we are provided with a cheap set of earbuds that have a three-foot-long cord to them. If they short out or otherwise break, we are charged \$1.80 to get a new pair.

We are not allowed our TVs in RRU. No electricity, again. But on one of the RRU companies there is a TV in every cell, mounted on the wall and encased in a steel box with a thick Plexiglas window. The TVs are never turned

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on for the residents to watch. Instead, they sit on the wall like some sort of torture device, taunting and teasing, regularly reminding the prisoner about all the TV that he can't see while he's wishing that he could.

We are not allowed to keep our own nail clippers in Attica's RRU. Instead, we are provided with a community pair to use, but only at shower time. Recently, though, we had no fingernail or toenail clippers on the unit for more than two months. I bit and peeled my fingernails, and my toenails grew to look like claws. Attica cannot find it in its haunted halls or hard heart to let people in the RRU have a simple set of nail clippers, or even to be sure that men have a set to use when they are in the shower.

But Correction Law 137 mandates we be given *all* of our personal property, and that the least restrictive environment necessary for the safety of all will be created. Let there be no doubt, officials at Attica are writing their own laws as they please—the laws of New York State be damned.

“An incarcerated person in a residential rehabilitation unit shall have access to programs and work assignments comparable to core programs and types of work assignments in general population,” Correction Law 137 says. Sounds good, but Attica's RRU reality is a world away from what the law looks to achieve here.

The only “program” available in the RRU is what I call a group therapy session that lasts about two hours in the morning, where the participants are chained to the RE-START chair throughout. After a couple of hours, the counselor conducting the session leaves and participants can choose to return to their cells or stay and color. I am not joking. If I stay, I will be given crayons or colored pencils and pages copied from coloring books, and my 60-year-old self can color like I last did more than 50 years ago as a young child.

As for work assignments, there are none. There is but one porter who covers the entire RRU, and he does very little. The correctional officers usually sweep and mop the floors, pass out the meals, collect empty trays and garbage after meals, and take care of most of the tasks that in general population, porters normally handle.

I have been in RRU for nearly six months now, and as far as I know, not one periodic review of my status has been prepared, although Correctional Law requires that one be done at least every 60 days if I am not released to general population. To my knowledge, no reviews are being done on anyone in the RRU at Attica. The reviews of our status

that the law requires are critically important because they can determine how long a person is confined to the RRU, whether he successfully completes the program or not, and whether he can get back good time credit that he has lost.

In November of last year, Daniel S. Martuscello III, the commissioner of New York's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), ordered the **complete lockdown of Attica**, and directed that it be searched from top to bottom, including every individual's person and cell. Commissioner Martuscello became concerned, he said, due to a series of violent incidents between prisoners and among prisoners and staff. The lockdown lasted a total of nine days, and 58 weapons were reportedly discovered, none in the RRU.

The perception, from the prisoner's point of view, is that when the law-breaking going on is being perpetuated by the incarcerated people, action is usually swift and severe. This is not the case, however, when it is the authorities themselves who are violating the law. Complaints to the administration and grievances being filed fall on deaf ears, doing nothing to persuade officials to comply with the law and their own regulations.

There is an air to Attica that is toxic, and it seems to poison everyone who breathes it. The prison is a hate factory, and when you live here you feel it powerfully. When I call to a sergeant or a lieutenant or some other higher ranking official who is passing by my cell and am ignored like I don't exist, or I do but am not worthy of acknowledgement, I feel the feelings. When I write grievances, and send them to a grievance committee that is a joke, in no way funny, and that rarely resolves anything that's something, I feel the feelings that hypocrisy often engenders, especially when it is people in power telling me to obey their laws and follow their rules while I am helpless to get them to respect those self-made laws and rules at all.

I have read the words of prison authorities and officials of the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA), blaming the HALT law for most of the prison system's problems of late. Since the authorities are in large measure not even obeying the HALT law, it does not stand to reason that the law is the issue. More likely, it is the lack of compliance with the HALT law that is the bigger problem.

Prison officials claim to want to instill in prisons a respect for the law, but how can that happen when they are show-

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ing the same incarcerated people that the authorities themselves have no respect or regard for their own laws?

In September 1971, the men incarcerated at Attica rose up in protest of the conditions that they were being forced to live under, and for four days held the fort. When the authorities stormed the prison to regain control, 29 incarcerated men and ten of their hostages were shot dead by state police and correction officers. In the aftermath, prisoners were systematically tortured by those same law enforcement personnel. It took officials years to admit they had done any wrong.

I have heard about the memorial ceremony done in the front of the prison every year on September 13, in remembrance of the correctional officers who died in the uprising. I've also heard stories among the prisoners telling of guards who have adopted as their mantra, "Never again." Other stories from the prisoners tell us how we need another one, another riot—and back and forth it goes, hatred of a terrible type kept alive over the decades.

I am an optimist by nature, but I have serious doubts about Attica ever being fully fixed other than emptying it and blowing it from its foundations into tiny bits and planting flowers on the ground where it once stood. I don't like thinking so negatively, though. I prefer to keep hope alive, even if it's only a sliver. I know from experience that a sliver of light is sometimes all it takes to start to see windows thrown open wide for light to come pouring through.

The culture of hate and law-breaking that persists at Attica could be curtailed, but it has to start at the top so it can work its way down. From the superintendent and her deputies to the guards on the blocks, regulations and rules must be respected and followed. When the law says to give the RRU prisoner his property, give it to him. Where HALT requires programs and work assignments in RRU be comparable to those in general populations, create those jobs and programs.

When prison authorities are following the law and granting incarcerated people the privileges and programs that they are entitled to, there will be better men and women in the prisons—and better people being released back into society when their time has come, when their time is done.



Solitary Talk!
By Valerie Kiebala

Believe in Yourself

Rasheed Farrelle

Call it BELIEF
or Call it FAITH

or

whatEVER you wanna CALL it
(either way)

BeLIEVE in YourSELF your TONGUE is your
SWORD

don't DULL it

Ya MIND is ya SHINING armour and ya HEART is
ya

TANK of GAS...

once you PUMP it...

Let it FLOW...

there's NO one you can't get PASS,

take it SLOW...never FAST,

BeLIEF it will PUSH you THROUGH

ANY obstacle or CHALLENGE

have FAITH in whatEVER you DO

there will be UPS...there will be DOWNS,

cause NOTHING in this LIFE is EASY

but,

in ORDER to beLIEVE you must beLIEVE me...

DON'T give UP,

just hold it DOWN

grab ya CROWN,

dust it OFF,

You are a KING,

You are a QUEEN

you MUST beLIEVE in YOU yourSELF to KNOW

what I MEAN...

You are STRONG...

You are WORTHY...

You are REAL...

You are TRUE...

but,

You GOTTA beLIEVE in YourSELF beFORE

anyone ELSE will beLIEVE in YOU!

What's The News!

PA Supreme Court to weigh life sentences for felony murder

A case involving a 36-year-old from Allegheny County could open the door to eventual freedom for others convicted of felony murder — involvement in a crime in which a death occurs. Will Marie “Mechie” Scott, 70, see an end to half a century behind bars?

BY: PETER HALL AND MIRANDA JEYARETNAM - JUNE 4, 2024

Marie “Mechie” Scott is like most 70-year-olds. Her cheeks are dotted with age spots, her cornrows are graying and her forehead crinkles when she breaks into a laugh. She moves slowly, uses a wheelchair, and has chronic back pain that makes it excruciating to walk, cough or lie on her side. She paints, sings, and collects crocheted animals.

Unlike most 70-year-olds, though, Scott has spent her entire adulthood behind bars at the State Correctional Institution in Muncy, Lycoming County. Without some kind of intervention — a change in the law or a court ruling in a case she has no hand in — she will die in prison.

When Scott was 19, she was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole for felony murder. Under the felony murder doctrine, a person accused of committing a felony can be charged with murder for a death that occurs during the felony, even if the defendant was not the killer and had no intent to kill. In Pennsylvania, conviction comes with a mandatory sentence of life without parole, one of the most severe renderings of the felony murder rule in the country.

Scott’s fate could now hinge on a case that originated in Allegheny County. This fall, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court will hear a criminal appeal from Derek Lee, a Penn Hills man half Scott’s age, on the grounds

that mandatory life without parole for felony murder constitutes cruel punishment, violating the Pennsylvania constitution.

Lee, now 36, was convicted of felony murder in 2016. He participated in a robbery in 2014 when his accomplice fatally shot the homeowner. In February, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court agreed to hear Lee’s appeal. Bret Grote and Quinn Cozzens, the Abolitionist Law Center co-counsel on the case who also brought Scott’s lawsuit, expect that oral arguments will be heard in October.

Across Pennsylvania, 1,131 people are currently incarcerated for felony murder. A favorable decision for Lee won’t guarantee release for the rest of them, including Scott. It’s unlikely to lead to fulfillment of any of her longtime dreams, like running a taco truck. It might give her a chance to linger in her daughter’s arms, or at her son’s grave.

Saved, then ensnared, by the silver gun

On March 29, 1973, in Philadelphia, 19-year-old Scott, high on sedative pills, committed a string of robberies with her boyfriend, Leroy Saxton. While attempting to rob a gas station, Saxton shot the attendant, Michael Kerrigan.

Saxton, who was 16, was convicted of murder. Because he was a juvenile at the time of his crime, he was later resentenced and released on parole in 2020.

Scott’s reflections on her crime have remained consistent over several decades. In five interviews with PublicSource over 13 months, and in letters sent to friends and public writing over many years, she expressed remorse and regret over her role in killing Kerrigan. “I am guilty, guilty, guilty! ... GOD knows that today I would switch places with my victim in a heartbeat because I am so very, very sorry,” Scott wrote in a 2019 letter to the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons. Scott has also communicated with Kerrigan’s granddaughter.

Scott was raised by her aunt after her mother died and her father was incarcer-

ated. Abused during childhood, she had her first child when she was 15 and rough sleeping in New York. She became a “severe codependent,” she said, and was willing to do anything for anyone who showed her love.

She had just moved to Philadelphia and started working as a manager at a restaurant when two men attempted to rob her at her work. Saxton stepped in, pulling out a silver-colored gun — the same gun later used to shoot Kerrigan, she recalled. “I felt I owed him my life,” Scott wrote in a letter to Grote. “I did not just wake up one day and decide to go on a spree of robberies with another juvenile delinquent.”

Scott’s difficult background is typical of women serving life sentences, according to Celeste Trusty, the Pennsylvania director at Families Against Mandatory Minimums. Particularly during the tough-on-crime decades of the 1970s to 1990s, Trusty said, courts often did not recognize abuse, trafficking or trauma as conditions that led to criminal involvement.

Life without parole ‘a pointless act of cruelty’?

In most states, life-without-parole sentences were a late-20th century innovation, according to Bruce Ledewitz, a professor of constitutional law at Duquesne University; most states had parole eligibility for life sentences, then legislators decided that “certain categories of cases” would be ineligible for parole.

Pennsylvania courts must state minimum and maximum terms of imprisonment when issuing a sentence, with the minimum being half of the maximum. A person becomes eligible for parole upon completing the minimum sentence and must be released upon serving the maximum sentence, even if parole is not granted.

If, for example, a defendant is sentenced to serve 20 years in prison, they would be eligible for parole halfway through. Since life sentences do not follow a term of years, Pennsylvania “stumbled” onto what

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advocates call death by incarceration, Ledewitz said.

Pennsylvania's original parole law, passed in 1911, made no exception for life sentences. A 1939 governor's commission on overhauling the commonwealth's parole system was "the precipitating event that evolved into a 'life-means-life' millstone that continues to crush those serving terms of life imprisonment," wrote Jon Yount, a jailhouse lawyer serving a life sentence, in a 2004 history of the punishment.

Yount, who advocated for prisoners' rights until his death in 2012, noted that the commission's recommendations created ambiguity, establishing broad authority to parole *all* people sentenced to imprisonment and a contradictory exception for life imprisonment. The words "life in prison without parole" weren't included in state law until 1982, when it was added as the punishment for "arson murder."

Pennsylvania law treated felony murder as harshly as intentional murder, allowing for the death penalty, until 1974 when the state legislature rewrote parts of the Crimes Code in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1972 ruling in *Furman v. Georgia*. In that case, the justices ruled that the death penalty was unconstitutional when applied in a capricious manner.

Felony murder became second degree murder and capital punishment was no longer an option, but life imprisonment remained as the only, mandatory, sentence.

Pennsylvania has not executed a death row prisoner since 1999 and Gov. Josh Shapiro last year extended a moratorium on executions that Gov. Tom Wolf established in 2015.

That makes life without parole, effectively, the most severe sentence that Pennsylvania imposes, said Nazgol Ghandnoosh, co-director of research at The Sentencing Project, an anti-incarceration group. It also means that the penalty for first degree murder — a premeditated, intentional

killing — is the same as that for second degree murder, including felony murder.

"I think anyone who's familiar with the law would recognize that's a less serious offense than an intentional murder," Ghandnoosh said, noting that the intent of the felony murder rule is to punish a person more severely for a felony because they were involved in a crime that led to the death of another.

"The question that we have to ask society, that the Pennsylvania courts are being asked to answer is, how much more serious is it? Should that crime be treated as if it were an intentional killing?" Ghandnoosh said.

In 2020, Scott was the lead plaintiff, among six serving life sentences for felony murder, in an unprecedented constitutional challenge. The lawsuit, filed in Commonwealth Court by the Abolitionist Law Center, Amistad Law Project and the Center for Constitutional Rights, argued that mandatory life without parole for those who did not kill or intend to kill violates the state constitution.

But the case was dismissed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 2022 on grounds that it was improperly filed as a civil lawsuit and that Commonwealth Court lacked jurisdiction. The court found the plaintiffs could still challenge the legality of their sentences after exhausting the appeals process, but those claims must be filed through criminal court.

Lee's case, which was filed in May 2022 as a criminal appeal, addresses that issue.

Lee's lawsuit challenges mandatory life without parole based on the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits cruel and unusual punishment, and the state Constitution's bar on cruel punishment.

Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala's office, which prosecuted Lee, did not respond to requests for comment on the case.

Constitutional law scholars, along with other experts and elected leaders including Shapiro, support Lee's case, arguing

that life without parole for felony murder is excessive and does little to accomplish the goals of punishment.

Advocates have filed more than a dozen "friend of the court briefs," in support of the appeal. Their position hinges on the Supreme Court's long-standing recognition that the most severe punishments may be disproportionately harsh and violate the Eighth Amendment when imposed on people convicted of less serious crimes or who are less culpable for an offense.

Lee falls into the latter category because he did not kill or have the intent to kill, said Seton Hall Law School professor Jenny-Brooke Condon, who authored a brief in support of Lee's appeal signed by more than a dozen Eighth Amendment scholars.

In a 1982 death penalty case with parallels to the Lee and Scott cases, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of a Florida man, Earl Enmund, who was sentenced to death along with his co-defendants, who robbed and killed an elderly couple in their farmhouse.

Executing Enmund, who waited in a car while the murders happened, would violate the Eighth and Fourteenth amendments because his culpability was less than that of the killers, Justice Byron White wrote for the 5-4 majority.

Enmund's punishment must be "tailored to his personal responsibility and moral guilt," White wrote.

Expanding on that principle in *Miller v. Alabama*, the court ruled that mandatory life without parole sentences for juveniles are unconstitutional.

The decision centered on science showing teenagers and young adults are more susceptible to impulsivity, poor decision making and peer pressure. But crucially for Lee's appeal, Condon said, the court also recognized that mandatory life imprisonment without parole is one of the most extreme sentences available.

"When you put those two pieces together, it sort of demands that the Pennsylvania

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Supreme Court look carefully at whether or not this kind of sentence, which is so excessive and out of the norm in Pennsylvania, really is an outlier," Condon said.

While the Eighth Amendment prohibits cruel and unusual punishment, the corresponding section of Pennsylvania's Constitution requires only that a punishment be cruel to be impermissible.

"Even if the Eighth Amendment doesn't quite extend far enough," said Cozzens, "the Pennsylvania Constitution should be read independently to provide more protections than the federal Constitution would."

A number of states have revised their felony murder rules and moved away from automatic life without parole sentences, Condon said.

Ledewitz also pointed to a significant turn in public opinion. "If we were talking about 30 years ago at the height of the anti-crime public opinion, there'd be no chance that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is finding it unconstitutional," but public opinion has shifted to "questioning the wisdom of life without parole."

In its analysis, the state Supreme Court will consider how life without parole fits into the justice system's sentencing goals: deterrence, retribution for victims, public safety and rehabilitation, said Jill McCorkel, a professor of sociology and criminology at Villanova University.

"On all those criteria, it just doesn't make sense," McCorkel said.

In addition to the illogical notion that a harsh sentence will deter someone from committing a crime they don't intend, decades of research on people sentenced to life without parole shows that they age out of criminal behavior by their 30s and 40s, said Ghandnoosh, of the Sentencing Project.

Felony murder sentences raise questions of equity, advocates say. According to an analysis by the Felony Murder Reporting Project, a data project at Yale Univer-

sity, 71% of those incarcerated in Pennsylvania for felony murder are Black with even higher rates in Allegheny County and Philadelphia, despite Black people making up just 12% of the population. Both Scott and Lee are Black.

The project found that more than 3% of felony murder lifers are women.

"I think that there's a way in which women's poverty and women's vulnerability to street violence as well as to intimate partner violence really ensnares them in a way that I don't think anyone intended," McCorkel said, noting that women may be coerced into participating in a crime and be unwilling to testify against a partner.

Few get out alive

After half a century in prison, Scott has stopped celebrating her birthday, July 4. Most years, her friends try to throw her a surprise party or time it to coincide with the holiday celebrations. But Scott doesn't see a reason to celebrate another day behind bars.

You have to forgive in this life ... I don't believe that someone should be defined by the worst day of their life.

— Nancy Leichter

Scott has spent her time trying to make amends and make something of her life. Her resume spans two pages: she has written a play, earned a culinary degree and crafted legislative bills in support of children of crime victims and children of incarcerated parents. She signs off on some letters to friends and reporters with "In the struggle."

While incarcerated, she became pregnant with another child, a daughter whom she nicknamed Hope, and mourned the death of her son. When she got the call about the motorcycle accident that killed him, she couldn't stop screaming — or recalling her role in the Kerrigan family's loss.

Most people convicted of felony murder are young at the time of their crime. The median age in Pennsylvania at the time of admission for felony murder convictions is 25, eight years younger than the median age for all crimes.

The opposite is true of overall prison demographics: More than 27% of people incarcerated in Pennsylvania's prisons are over the age of 50. Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections pays a high price for their medical care — \$34 million annually for medications to treat chronic health conditions.

Families for victims urge mercy, not revenge

"There's got to be a place for mercy in our system," said Trusty, of Families Against Mandatory Minimums. "It can't just be about punishment."

Some victims and their loved ones agree. Thirteen people came together as family members and loved ones of murder victims to submit an amicus brief in support of Lee's appeal.

Laurie MacDonald, president and CEO of the Center for Victims, said that while victims' stances on extreme sentencing are not monolithic, many of the people the center works with recognize that life sentences impact more than just the incarcerated individual.

"I've been amazed at the number of victims who show an enormous amount of grace when it comes to punishment because they recognize human tragedy and frailty," said John Rago, a law professor at Duquesne University and the board president of the Center for Victims.

Nancy Leichter is one of those people. Leichter's father died in 1980 when he had a heart attack during an armed carjacking. Two out of the three perpetrators, brothers Reid, 19, and Wyatt Evans, 18, were sentenced to life without parole for felony murder. The third perpetrator, Marc Blackwell, was convicted of third-degree murder, and released in 2018 on

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parole. The Evans brothers were also plaintiffs in the 2020 lawsuit with Scott.

Blackwell held a gun to Leichter's father while the Evans brothers drove his car. Leichter's father pleaded: He was a heart patient, please let him out of the car, Leichter said. They dropped him off at a phone booth and drove off. He died three hours later.

Leichter recalled that her father's death devastated her family. At 68 years old, he had just retired. He played golf, he was an artist and a sculptor. "People say you get closure when [the perpetrators] get sentenced, but we were all in such shock," Leichter said. "For us, it was about our grief — I didn't care about them, I only cared about our loss."

When Blackwell was released in 2018, however, Leichter started thinking more about the Evans brothers' culpability. "I'm not the same as I was when I was 18," Leichter said, and she didn't believe they should spend the rest of their lives in prison when they hadn't intended or expected for anyone to die.

"You have to forgive in this life," said Leichter, echoing her mother's teachings. "I don't believe that someone should be defined by the worst day of their life."

When Leichter learned that the Evans brothers had been denied commutations, she began actively campaigning for their release. She wrote op-eds and letters to the Board of Pardons and testified at their next commutation hearing. She believes that her testimony as a relation of a victim led to their release in 2022 after 40 years in prison.

She hadn't met them face-to-face before — even during the hearing, which she attended via Zoom. After their release, they met, and the two men apologized to her. They went to a McDonald's and she watched one of them try a smoothie for the first time.

"My closure came when they were released, when I met them, and I knew that they were back with their family."

Dreams deferred

Lee's mother, Betty Lee, imagines the day she sees her son outside again, for the first time in around a decade. He would get to hold his niece, who just turned one. Betty Lee would have a big cookout, but she'd leave the grilling to her son, who always said he made the best hamburgers in town. She wants to go to a beach together. They used to go to pools and water parks because he loved to swim as a kid, but they had never been to a beach.

Even if Lee wins, Scott won't immediately be freed. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court would have to rule that mandatory life-without-parole for felony murder is unconstitutional and that the finding applies retroactively.

In a friend of the court brief on behalf of Shapiro's office, General Counsel Jennifer Selber urged the court to find mandatory life without parole for felony murder in violation of the state Constitution, but cautioned against making the new rule retroactive. Doing so would place too great a strain on the legal system, the brief says.

Instead, the decision of how to implement the ruling for those already serving felony murder sentences should be left to the executive and legislative branches of the state government, the brief says.

Several pieces of legislation that could shift the outlook for people serving life sentences are pending in the General Assembly. State Sen. Sharif Street (D-Philadelphia), introduced Senate Bill 135 last year but it has sat for more than a year in the Republican-controlled Senate Judiciary Committee.

The bill would establish parole eligibility after 25 years for those convicted of second-degree murder, including felony murder, and 35 years for those convicted of first-degree murder.

Street said he believes there is bipartisan support for measures to address parole for felony murder directly and to provide compassionate release for geriatric prisoners serving life sentences.

"I certainly think there's sufficient political will that if we get a vote, we can get this done," Street said.

When the concept was originally introduced in a 2016 bill by state Rep. Jason Dawkins (D-Philadelphia), it would have allowed those serving life sentences to apply for parole after 15 years.

Felix Rosado, an advocate for sentencing reform who was sentenced to life for first-degree murder in 1996 and received a pardon in 2022, said the minimum sentences in the current version of the bill track the minimum sentences for juveniles in a 2012 law passed after the *Miller* decision instead of relevant expertise, but have no basis in science.

"Legislators just pulled it out of the air. And now we're stuck with it," Rosado said.

State House Speaker Joanna McClinton is the prime sponsor of a bill to amend the state Constitution to make it easier to receive a pardon from the governor's office. House Bill 1410 would eliminate the requirement for a unanimous vote from the Board of Pardons to receive a recommendation for clemency.

The board recommended commutation for 460 people serving life sentences between 1971 and 1994. After 1995, when Republican Gov. Tom Ridge altered the composition of the board of pardons and instituted the unanimous vote requirement, the number of recommendations dropped to into the single digits (or zero in the case of Gov. Tom Corbett's administration) until Wolf took office.

Under now-U.S. Sen. John Fetterman's leadership as lieutenant governor, the board sent 56 recommendations to the governor's desk, of which Wolf granted 53. The proposed constitutional amendment would restore the requirement for a three-fifths vote to receive a recommendation of clemency that was in place before Ridge changed it.

The bill is awaiting final passage in the House, but the process of amending the

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state Constitution is arduous. The proposal must pass in the Senate before the end of 2024 and then pass both chambers again before the end of 2026. It would then go before voters in a ballot referendum.

Senate Majority Leader Joe Pittman (R-Indiana) said in a statement that legislative criminal justice reforms must prioritize safety and security. He noted that legislation to reform the state's probation system, spearheaded by Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne) and championed by rapper Meek Mill, was signed into law in December.

"We remain open to conversations about ways to also reform parole in Pennsylvania, while ensuring individuals who are convicted of murder charges are appropriately held accountable for their actions against their victims, families, and society," Pittman said in the statement.

If the state Supreme Court rules in Lee's favor and makes the ruling applicable to people already serving life sentences, or if any of the legislation passes that would put parole or pardons within reach of lifers like Scott, she still would face months of litigation.

Inside, Scott has helped friends get their sentences overturned or shortened through legal research. She's also watched several friends inside and outside of prison die.

She's hopeful she may still gain freedom, though she may be too old to live out some of her dreams: opening a taco truck or getting her advanced paralegal license.

On May 10, Scott wrote with an update: She would be entering chemotherapy for stage 2 cancer.

"Nothing," she added, "is gonna stop our plans, though."

This story was fact-checked by Laura Turbay. This story was produced in a partnership between the Pennsylvania Capital-Star and PublicSource.

N.Y. Prisons Have Ignored Limits on Solitary Confinement, Judge Finds

Legally, time in solitary confinement is limited to 15 days, and only if prison officials offer a detailed rationale. Lawyers say the requirements have been routinely disregarded.

By Hurubie Meko

June 20, 2024

New York State prisons have been illegally holding prisoners too long in solitary confinement, despite a law that limited the practice.

The decision this week from Justice Kevin R. Bryant came a year after the New York Civil Liberties Union filed the class-action case against the State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, charging that prison officials had an internal policy to circumvent limits on time that prisoners can be held alone.

State law sets a strict mandate for when extended solitary confinement can be ordered for a prisoner, said Antony Gemmell, director of detention litigation with the New York Civil Liberties Union. And if prison officials impose solitary for more than three days, to a maximum of 15 days that the law allows, "they had to provide a very good reason for doing so," he said.

The corrections department "is just basically not doing that in any situation that we could find," Mr. Gemmell said.

In the order, Justice Bryant ordered the state to comply with the law's requirement to provide findings to justify extended solitary confinement. He also found that solitary confinement rulings made according to the agency's internal policy rather than the law "are hereby declared as null and void."

The Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement Act, known as the HALT law, was signed by former Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo in 2021, restricting

prisons and jails from holding people in solitary confinement for more than 15 consecutive days. The policy, which went into effect in 2022, also bars the use of solitary confinement for several groups, including minors and people with certain disabilities.

Last month, the Legal Aid Society and others filed a class-action lawsuit accusing prisons of holding mentally ill and disabled people in isolation against the state law.

Thomas Mailey, a spokesman for the Corrections Department, said that Commissioner Daniel F. Martuscello III had made several changes since taking the post last June. He said the changes were made to "ensure all incarcerated individuals fully met the requirements for segregated confinement under the HALT law."

The HALT law was passed after a long fight by supporters of inmates, who raised concerns about the mental-health ramifications of solitary confinement and apparent racial disparity in how the punishment was meted out. Prolonged isolation has been called torture by officials at the United Nations and has been linked to brain damage, increased risk of self-harm and suicide.

According to the suit, one plaintiff, Luis Garcia, was disciplined after throwing foul liquid at two officers while being held in a Residential Mental Health Unit at Coxsackie Correctional Facility in Greene County. After a disciplinary hearing, where he was found guilty of two counts of assault on staff and two counts of committing an unhygienic act, he was sentenced to 730 days — two years — in solitary confinement.

"Some of the shenanigans of DOCCS to preserve this really torturous regime are documented in this litigation," said Donna Lieberman, head of the New York Civil Liberties Union. "And hopefully, this litigation will put an end to some of those really harmful shenanigans."

report from the Correctional Association of New York, a nonprofit that monitors

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THE MOVEMENT

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DAVID HENRY -VS- PA DOC MANIPULATIVE OPERATIONAL MANUALS

by Jerome "Hoagie" Coffey

David "D.H." Henry has been held in the Pennsylvania Department of Correction's (PADOC) infamous solitary confinement for 27 years under: six Pennsylvania Correctional Secretaries Martin Horn, Jeffrey Beard, Shirley Moore-Smeal, John Wetzel, George Little, and Laurel Harry; six Pennsylvania Governors Tom Ridge, Mark Schweiker, Edward Rendell, Tom Corbett, Tom Wolf, and Josh Shapiro; five U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton, George Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden. For 27 years, PADOC placed D.H. in multiple programs (i.e. Special Management Unit "SMU" at Camphill; Long Term Segregation Unit "LTSU" at Fayette; Positive Outcome Restructuring Through Assessment Learning "P.O.R.T.A.L." at Pine Grove; Intensive Management Unit "IMU" at Greene & Phoenix). By the same token, every time D.H. is near completion of these programs, the last phase facility administrators, security, and unit management team conspire to manipulate an infraction to place him back at the beginning phase.

In a nutshell, after the 1989 Camphill uprising, the PADOC Central Office policy makers drafted operational manuals that micromanaged every facet of prisoners' lives. For example, the instruments and policy statement numbers that govern PADOC operational manuals (i.e. 11.2.1,

Reception and Classification § (3) Pennsylvania Addictive Classification Tool | 6.3.1, Facility Security § (13) Escape Risk, § (17) Reporting of Extraordinary Occurrence, § (25) Security Threat Group § (32) Use of Force § (33) Restraints § (35) Cell Extractions | 6.5.1, Administration of Security Level 5 Housing Units | 11.1.1, Population Management § (4) Separations | 7.2.1, § (4) Correctional Plan. These operational manuals are very technical, sophisticated, and oppressive that teach correctional officials how to bend the truth. For 27 years, D.H. been in all these oppressive so-called programs ("SMU," "LTSU," "P.O.R.T.A.L." and "IMU") but facility administrators, security, and unit management team manipulate his status to continue indefinite solitary confinement.

Two years prior to D.H.'s placement in solitary confinement, in 1995, the U.S. Supreme Court Justice gave correctional administrators the green light to place prisoners in solitary confinement indefinitely [SANDIN -VS- CONNER, 515 U. S. 472 (1995)]. In 2001, 6 years later, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge appointed Jeffrey Beard as Secretary of Corrections and 3 years later, Secretary Beard in 2004 designed the Restricted Release List followed by the Long Term Segregation Unit. In 1972, Beard started his career at SCI-Rockview as a counselor and was behind the 1995 invasion at SCI GRATERFORD. Beard's leadership was too oppressive in the 1970's [WILLIAM EDWARDS -VS- B. WHITE, 501 F. Supp. 8; 1979 U. S. Dist. Lexis 9115 Civ. No. 79-450, October 17, 1979]. After 38 years employed by the PADOC in 2010, Beard resigned after having SCI GREENE Security Department copy Human

Rights Coalition members in solitary confinement mail to Pennsylvania Department of Homeland Security.

On December 27, 2012, California Governor Gerry Brown hired Beard as California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Secretary. When Secretary Beard designed the Long Term Segregation Unit Justice Stephen Breyer criticized him stating, "The prison regulation at issue applies to certain prisoners housed in Pennsylvania's Long Term Segregation Unit. The LTSU is the most restrictive of the three special units that Pennsylvania maintain for difficult prisoners." [BANKS -VS- BEARD, 126 S.Ct. 2572 (June 28, 2006)]. D. H. was housed in the "LTSU" during that time.

In 2015, 9-years later, in DAVIS -VS- AYALA [DAVIS -VS- AYALA, 135 S.Ct. 218 (June 18, 2015) Justice Kennedy criticized the inhumane conditions of solitary confinement citing [EX PARTE; IN THE MATTER OF JAMES J. MEDLEY, PETITIONER 33 Led 835 (March 3, 1890). In 2017, Pro Se Litigator Craig "Jasir" Williams exposed PADOC oppressive policies towards death sentence prisoners prolong isolation that create mental illness [CRAIG WILLIAMS -VS- SECRETARY OF PENNSYLVANIA, 848 F.3d 562 (3d. Cir.2017)].

In closing, it's time to get D.H. out of solitary confinement and expose that the so-called Intensive Management Unit (IMU) program that does not work and causes psychological harm to prisoners. It's time to stop the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections from manipulating those operational manuals on D.H. The IMU is no different than the Behavioral Adjust-

ment Unit that Richard Mayberry exposed back in the 1960's.

In struggle,

Jerome "Hoagie" Coffey

Voting While Incarcerated

by Jeffrey A. Shockley, SCI Mercer

Prior to being incarcerated and serving a life sentence I was not interested in politics. I cannot remember casting a vote for class secretary in high school, let alone a local public official, a congressman, or even the President of the United States, as responsible young adults do. In the household where I grew up in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia, PA, we did not speak much about civic responsibility. This is not to say my parents or grandparents did not vote. It was such a personal action in their lives, a private matter they simply did not talk about to avoid any argument surrounding politics.

After I was incarcerated in 1999, at the age of 37, I did not imagine I would become interested in politics or voting. But, after more than 20 years inside, that has started to change. Perhaps more than anything it is my status as a "lifer" in the Pennsylvania prison system that most motivates me, birthing this desire to vote.

What has changed specifically is becoming cognizant that I do not have the right to do whatever pleases me at the expense of others. I had no right to take a life out of anger or for any reason. My mind is clear, I understand that there are laws rules and policies to follow; there are elected officials to

help keep individuals and communities safe from errant delinquents, as I was. However, the only thing the system sees is the person I was that one fateful day, not the person I am today. Letting go of the past can be challenging. Meanwhile every facet of my external life is controlled by an entity that I have no means of influencing, and raises the question "Are there some human beings incapable of redemption/rehabilitation?" I was sent to prison as punishment; however, my every day is to be punished for being in prison. There is a daunting bias that we are those lowly disgusting individuals. A broken commodity to sit on shelves, warehoused. Cattle that get put out to pasture, on occasion, for recreation purposes. The older you get the less usable you are, subject to various abuses by other inmates, and disregarded by correctional staff younger than the time you have served.

Some nights I lay awake crying for the life stolen, knowing things that family cannot experience, wishing I had died. However, I have opted to be that person who gives back otherwise the death would have been for nothing, and I cannot live with that.

The issue of voting while incarcerated is such an important issue to me because even though I failed society in the past, I can still help advocate for change having been through the justice system and experiencing the changes that could be made for a more universal system - not based on who can hire the better attorney.

I was asked to be a part of the dog training program. As a person serving a life sentence I did not think it was something I could do. Not for the dog, but because I was an absent father, self-centered, and an addict. Now a year in, several dog exchanges later,

and graduating from service dog training, I care about life, I care about others. My life is not about me or the looming fact of dying in prison. I live day-to-day making sure this animal is fed and loved. My hurts are nothing compared to what I have done to an innocent family, so I try not to complain too long. I am still human. This is why one of the most important political issues to me is ending what advocates commonly refer to as death by incarceration (DBI) or life without the possibility of parole (LWOP).

A general perception regarding persons in prison is that we have time to sit around and think. I think about how a significant part of my life, by the choices I have made, has been controlled by the government. The control is nearly total to where there is no thought about where and when I sleep, what to wear or how I should wear it; "Tuck your shirt in." the officer screams. No thought about where or what or when I shall eat, bathe, and, most disturbingly, where I might die. In other words, my life has become one directed by an entity I have no significant means of influencing. A vote could change that and would be beneficial for both inside and outside influences.

Voting while incarcerated would mean a great deal to myself and similarly situated individuals. Imprisoned citizens eat substandard food. They get treated inhumanely for the slightest infractions. Men and women are currently warehouse like old toys. Meanwhile their long-term geriatric care balloons the corrections' budget and cost taxpayers more and more. Second-chance opportunities are rare; after waiting five years for a decision in regard to my Commutation Application I was denied a merit review

My name is Alfred Hordison but most people call me Wakil and I am currently incarcerated at SCI Chester. Date January 13th, 2024, I was write up in claim that I tested positive for Buprenorphine. I write this after reading Krista Mader's article, I too asked the institution to retest me and which at that time staff advocated for me once they found out that I never had a positive urine result within my twenty years of incarceration.

I was transferred here from SCI Forest a year ago after being accepted as a candidate to participate in Eastern University. Not to mention, I am a resident of Little Scandinavian and which also dated January 29th, 2024. I was scheduled to participate in CPS training all of which I could have lost if no one had believed me that I never did drugs.

On January 29th, 2024, the facility requested that my urine be retested by the lab which tested the same urine. My urine results came back negative, and the original was considered to be a false positive. I was able to attend CPS training and I am now working as a CPS full time worker. I was told by multiple staff members that false positives were happening all over the state. So when I read Krista Mader's story it moved me to tell my story. My advice to you Krista, never give up in telling your truth, continue to advocate for yourself and stay positive.

This issue is definitely detrimental to inmates' wellbeing and freedom. Good luck!

Sincerely,

Alfred Hardison, FB-1508,SCI Chester

Published as a response to Krista Mader's article in The Movement Spring Issue #53, Solitary Talk.

Is Commutation Viable or is it an Enigmatic Option?

I'm not suggesting giving up! I'm not saying I'll ever max out on how many times I apply. I'm not team pessimist!! I am, however, really, really, really tired!

Since I'm being honest with myself and all those who support me, I gotta say that I see commutation fading away. Despite the few sisters I've watched leave, the changes to the Board, the positive attempts by small groups of legislators to move us closer to liberation, and our proven will to ride out this tumultuous wave, I feel the shift. On the flip side, I also feel there's a strengthened lack of belief in our individual efforts and successes at authentically standing in remorse, reformation, (re) education and preparation. In part, I attribute that to current violent crimes and the resulting societal fears, combined with policies that prevent Lifers from readiness programming, and then not enough examples of us out there doing well so as to dispel some fears and disbelief.

While hope catapults us into a waiting game that spans at least three years, with us strapped onto an emotional roller coaster serving as the criterion for our compliance and determination, with faith being the clear testament to our strengthened ability to live free.

Determined to show the Board what prison staff witnesses every day, we pour out our hearts and minds and be-

come more vulnerable than is imaginable. Every page of the book is opened at once, and the story that unfolds is raw and uncut. The consistency of our good behavior, positive adjustments, service and achievements is clearly weighed against our criminal history, institutional challenges, and the Board's seemingly impenetrable opinions of our worth to society.

What's still missing is our ability to know what they really want from us, so we operate on forwardness and seek forgiveness and mercy by way of redemptive actions, words and qualities. All the while, we rely heavily on family and the supporters that anchor us before, during, and long after the process is complete.

Is that enough? Apparently not, as was shown to us when our comrade received all 5 votes at her Public Hearing (where any and every one had an opportunity to oppose her application), and had her paperwork sit on the Governor's desk for 7 months, only to be rescinded when letters of opposition arrived and set an unprecedented move in motion. Her process was remanded, re-voted and her opportunity to be free, rescinded. Tell us how! Tell us, what is it going to take to break through the hidden barriers? If we're not told what definitively holds the Board members back from believing in our maturation and other reformatory qualities, how do we know where we fall short? How can we then double down on furtherance of our character, actions and social consciousness? How will we again realize liberation?

There's a new Board, and those of us fighting to salvage the rest of this life need answers that lead to tangible so-

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lutions. We need voters, advocates and welcoming communities to demand the answers we can't get. We need a transparentized process. We have everything to gain, and with forgiveness in real time, they do too!!

Terri Harper, SCI-Muncy

Covid, Covid, Covid...

How will we ever get away from the debacle that it was and the adversary it still is? The world was forced to "figure it out", while those of us inside the DOC suffered at the hands of the non-believers and the unvaccinated, for what seemed like an eternity. Truth be told, too many policy changes post-pandemic are reminiscent of when we were in the throes of a double strength lockdown that further divided us, without making anyone safer from abysmal meals and medical care, unprovoked incidents of disrespect, petty retaliatory acts after written forms of self-protection, nor from the powerful grip of institutional stagnation, which is the antithesis of the rehabilitation that's directly connected to any one of us receiving a second chance.

Some, not all, of us are back to eating in the dining hall, going to church, school and structured activities with our friends, mentors and peers that we'd been moved away and kept segregated from. Some feel as if they're back to normal, but for those forced to the stillness in-cell, the isolation must be unbearable, and that will never be conducive to building social skills and respect for authority, and that's necessary for optimism.

But for the barrier that is the remain-

ing segregation of yards and meal lines, some are suffering and struggling with no access to the very support system they built, nurtured and view as a lifeline. The Zoned yards are rarely full and OFTEN shut down early, when people exit for mandatory appointments, school and the like, leaving the small numbers out, that staff can't be bothered to oversee. Lately, they've been frequently shut down altogether, because of staff shortages or for normal occurrences in running the institution. Yard times once insured you a full hour rec, which is no more, especially if you rely on AM yard, because it's called between 8:15 am and 8:30 am, and you're back on your unit by 9:10 am. The other scheduled yard sessions are subject to these disruptions as well. With the mountains of starches, that the esteemed DOC dietician loads the meals with, residents need every second of yard out/exercise time they can get!

Guards have been rewarded with weekly food trucks, mini fridges and microwaves on every unit and a Sports Bar breakroom, yet when the inmate organization wanted to take on the responsibility of supplying microwaves for the food items sold to us by the DOC that need to be cooked, there wasn't enough sustainable power on the grid. What they do is sit on the computers, rack up absurd amounts of overtime and bitch and moan about administration, not knowing how to run a jail, and inmates being entitled when they need to look at what they're contributing to the problem(s).

Protocol for those having existing medical issues, with the highest susceptibility of Covid's harshest effects, have all been offered boosters, as they

became available, even being financially enticed - that's the good thing. Virtual Visits coming online, reconnecting us with our active supporters and many out-of-reach loved ones has been the BEST thing Covid did. But, and there's always a 'but'. Post-Covid policy changes have decimated in-person visits. Was the registration process thought to enhance security protocol or leave behind those who are elderly, not computer savvy and/or don't have the time it takes to get into and figure out the system, and/or call the CCPM repeatedly for help when all their efforts don't result with an approved date for them to come and physically embrace and love on one of us? Making matters worse, the DOC took a considerable amount of time directing free people on how not to dress, listing all the restricted clothing items, yet staff comes in each day with many of those items on, as if they're going to the market, not coming to their place of profession/business.

It's beyond time we find our way to compassion for the punished, respect for the advocates and families and revitalization of the lines originally drawn for fairness and justice with crime and the corresponding punishments. It won't be easy or quick, but it just WON'T BE if more of us and the system are being torn down. The goal is to repair and reform!!!!

Terri Harper

I Could Taste the Free Air

I've been doing a little time since 2016 when I was sentenced fifteen months

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to four years. I went home on that in 2018 and caught a new case in 2020 and was sentenced to two to six years. When I got to Muncy in 2021 I was considered a CPV (Convicted Parole Violator) then received a two year hit. My new max became May 5, 2024, and I ended up maxing my 2016 case and rolling over to a new number on May 6, 2024. After I rolled over, my counselor presented me with an offer for the SDTP (State Drug Treatment Program), a 2-year program. It consists of seven months on state grounds from the date of eligibility. Once that is done, you do the TC at Quehanna. Upon completion of the TC, you are transferred to a DOC selected rehab for two months, ending with six months of IOP (Intensive Outpatient), which can be done at an approved home plan or in an approved facility. After those parts are done successfully, there are nine months left to serve on parole. With ALL successful, the remainder of your tail is wiped off.

Given all the info, I had a lot to weigh out, sacrificing in-person visits, forfeiting my graduation (GED) ceremony, and groups I started and/or signed up for, and my job. The pros were that I'd gain more knowledge about healthy life skills and myself, and be able to plan more of a future, and then be with my family sooner. That really opened my mind and think harder toward the right decision. Considering that I've done the TC twice before, have a violent charge, wouldn't have to see Parole, and would be home early, the pros outweighed the cons.

I accepted and left Muncy on May 30th. After six days, two officers approached me and informed me that I

had to pack and return to Muncy. Confused, I asked, "what do you mean?" I was told that I was ineligible with no further explanation. Shock, anxiety and other emotions were added to my confusion. I could only get the answer that no one knew anything except that I had to return to Muncy. I couldn't believe what was going on. For once, I took a chance, made plans for a new and good life, a chance to finally be free, and now I had to figure out how to explain that I wouldn't be home early and that it wasn't my fault.

I got back to Muncy during the after hours, with no one available to put me in a GP (General Population) bed, so I was treated as an intake and put in the classification unit. I had no property and no allowables. I was embarrassed to be back. I felt anxious and just kept asking myself, "why" and "what now." I had sacrificed what I had achieved and established. Plans that were newly in motion were now put on hold, all in the blink of an eye.

I couldn't call home until I settled in and sorted out how to break the news. The next day I was put back in GP and given the vague explanation that I was deemed ineligible because of my charges. Still confused! The only thing on my new status sheet is the charge, min and max dates. A counselor informed me that higher up people determined eligibility, and that it was misrepresented to me when the previous counselor said all I had to do was say, 'yes' or 'no.'

Financial problems arose, because unbeknownst to me, Quehanna escrows funds for post-TC transportation, and when I left Muncy cable payment was due that day for both facilities, so I had money frozen the moment I set foot in Quehanna and

was short for the cable. For the first time in three years, my cable was off.

Since being back, I've repeatedly requested that the escrow be released and my cable reinstated, to no avail.

I even placed a commissary order that didn't go through because I was released to Muncy, but my account wasn't. It took phone calls and emails to get me close to where I was before I left. I now have my money, my cable and am back on the graduation roster and in groups. I'm fortunate to have people care about me as much as I do them. A lot of patience and understanding has been put into this situation.

What am I going to do now? Keep going. Keep planning. Keep thriving. Keep learning and growing as each day goes by. Pointing the blame finger won't do any justice, but who's to say this won't happen to someone else? How does such a life-altering moment slip through the cracks and be taken away in the blink of an eye?

--Ariana Kay #PE7396 (SCI Muncy)

Voting

The CIRCUS is coming to a town near YOU!

Make your ticket matter, and welcome to the show. So what that you got it on sale! Have you ever seen a bigger audience under the "Big Top"? The world is waiting to watch the tents unfold without collapsing and the vendors are preparing to peddle their products at reduced rates, with some selling at half price! It's amazing how

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much the main attractions are ready to promise YOU, the ticketholders, in exchange for you cheering them on. Whatever you do, don't look away for a minute or the main attractions may become nothing more than funny or sad clowns in their clown cars running all over the place, doing nothing but putting on a skit.

Please keep this in mind on Election Day! Take thought, take action, and tell your neighbors to do the same. EVERY VOTE COUNTS!

By Amy Gipe #OZ0117 (SCI Muncy)

Mother's Day Greeting

To All The Remarkable Women In My Life....

Mother's Day is a day that we honor our mothers. I was sitting in my room thinking about all the wonderful things a mother does. A mother sacrifices, protects, provides encouragement, inspires, dries tears, instills values, believes in you even when others don't, champions your causes, understands your pain and disappointments, fills your life with smiles and laughter, never lets you give up and above all and the most important gives you a love that is life changing and eternal. So with that being said, even though my birth mother has gone on to glory and I still continue to honor her, I realize that God has been gracious to me over the past 40+ years, because He has placed many women in my life who have been mothers to me. You don't have to birth someone to provide nourishment, love and care to them. So I honor all the remarkable women

in my life who have prayed, encouraged, believed, inspired, provided support, but most of all who have loved me in the hardest places of my life. Thank you my mothers, my sisters, and my friends. I thank my Heavenly Father for the blessing and the gift of you! For those of you, who still have your mother, honor her with the best gift - you.

Love always,

Cyd

Why this petition matters?

Started by **Matthew Garcia**

Matthew Garcia has been in jail for 26 years for second-degree felony murder. He didn't even have a gun, yet he has a life sentence. As an adopted child from North Philadelphia, Matthew has turned his life around in remarkable ways. He is a published author with a book called "Raw Reflections" and graduated with college courses from Villanova, St. Joseph's, Bryn Mawr, and Widener University.

Matthew also created his own mentoring program called the Real Rap Program and has scholarships for at-risk youth with Councilman Kenyatta Johnson. Despite these achievements, he remains behind bars due to Pennsylvania's harsh felony murder law.

This petition seeks to change the felony murder law in Pennsylvania to make lifers like Matthew eligible for parole. His case shares similarities with Derek Lee's case that the PA Supreme Court is ready to rule on, including 17 amicus briefs filed on behalf of individuals like him.

Please support Matthew Garcia by signing this petition and advocating for fairer sentencing laws in Pennsylvania!

Simply open your camera app on your phone. Point your camera at the QR code. A link will appear at the top of your camera screen; just select it to go to the link in your browser. Follow the steps to sign the petition.



Sudoku Master Answer

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

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.

Money Well Spent?

The future of mail in the PADO

by K. Robert Schaeffer

The PADO has been scanning our mail for more than five years now. When the contract was first signed in early September 2018, Smart Communications, a no-name company then serving just a handful of county jails in the Southern U.S., didn't even have the necessary staff or equipment to handle the mail of over 47,000 Pennsylvania inmates. And most prison mail rooms lacked adequate color-printers to process the mail once it had been scanned. Many of us can remember the endless headache that resulted from this lack of preparation. Illegible scans and blurry photos, often printed in black and white. Missing pages. Mail delivered to the wrong person. Mail that was delayed for weeks, or months, or 'Returned to Sender' without explanation. Mail that was simply lost without a trace.

It takes a letter about three days to make its 1,200 mile journey down to Florida. In the initial, hectic months of the transition, then Secretary John Wetzel and Smart Communications CEO Jon Logan assured us all that they were working hard to reduce the weeks-long turnaround time to just 48 hours from when our mail was received to when it was scanned and delivered to us. Today, the department's official mail policy further states that "a reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that incoming inmate mail is delivered to the inmate on the same day that it is received" from Smart Communications in prison mail rooms. That means we should get our mail in about five days, from our family's mailbox to the block's mail bag. So why, all these years later, does it still seem to take so long for it to get here?

According to departmental policy, there are three basic steps by which our mail is processed: it's scanned by Smart Communications, a digital copy is sent to the appropriate prison, and mail room staff print it for distribution to housing units. But it turns

out that this process is far more convoluted than we were led to believe.

In early March 2020, the PADO entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of General Services' Bureau of Publications, which provides state agencies with print-to-mail services, for the purpose of printing and delivering scanned inmate mail. In other words, our mail isn't actually printed in prison mail rooms at all, and hasn't been for up to four years now. Instead, after it's scanned, the digital files are actually forwarded to the Bureau of Publications, which reprints them at its office in Harrisburg and then re-mails them to individual prison throughout the week. According to information obtained from a Right to Know request, each state prison spent anywhere from \$1,100 to \$17,000 a month on these printing and mailing services over the past year, depending on its volume of incoming mail. A single black-and-white printed page was rated at about 3¢, meaning that the PADO may actually be spending more to re-mail our letters than our loved ones had in the first place.

Not only is this process needlessly complicated, and an apparent violation of the steps outlined in policy, but it also created serious obstacles to our ability to communicate through the mail. If anyone's loved ones have ever used the SmartTracker application to monitor the status of their mail from Florida back to Pennsylvania, and wondered why it still hadn't turned up days after they've received notification that it's been printed for delivery, this is the reason. While the PADO's agreement with General Services ensures a turnaround time that "does not exceed 24 hours" from when the digital mail is received by them to when it's printed and re-mailed to us, these considerations fail to account for the additional postal delays baked into the process. In fact, it's not uncommon for these extra steps to add up to five additional days to delivery, meaning that, all these years later, and despite countless assurances to the contrary, it can still take us up to two weeks to receive a letter after it's been mailed from home.

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We all know just how much the PADOc's mail (and book) policies have cost us over these five long years and counting. That feeling of frustration and helplessness every time a letter goes missing, or fails to turn up again day after day. The increasingly commonplace confiscation slips. All the photos that are no longer sent, lest they be preserved in a Florida database for years to come. The Christmas cards that are just ink-drenched sheets of paper. The sight of the mail bag growing slimmer and slimmer, a sign of our eroding connections. But what have they cost taxpayers? Not surprisingly, the numbers are staggering.

FY 2018-2022

Mail Room staff	\$34,394,817
Smart Communications contract	\$21,808,000
Security Processing Center	\$9,949,097
Bureau of Publications printing and mailing fees*	\$1,889,968
Mail Room printer leases	\$427,465

Five-Year Total **\$68,469,347**

(*not including salaries of the Bureau staff who handle our mail)

At a budget hearing before the state's House Appropriations Committee last year, Secretary Laurel Harry defended the mail-scanning policy against scrutiny from lawmakers, confirming that the practice would continue under her new regime. "Drugs can't come into our system through the mail anymore because of this process," she said. "And anything that enhances the overall safety of our institutions, to me that money's well spent." Granted, \$68 million over five years is nothing compared to the nearly \$3 billion that the department spends every year on its staff and operations, but has all that money gone to disrupt and delay our mail really made any difference in reducing the levels of contraband in state prisons? Not according to its own interdiction data, which indicates that the PADOc has recently logged some of its highest rates of inmate drug use in decades. From the time Wetzels took office in 2011 until the September 2018 lockdown, the positivity rate for random monthly inmate drug tests had only reached a high of 1% on two separate occasions, in February 2017 and August 2018. And yet, from the

adoption of mail-scanning after the lockdown until the end of 2023, that rate has been at or well above 1% for twenty-seven separate months—including the entirety of 2023! In light of these sobering figures, it's unclear how Harry or anyone else could seriously claim that mail-scanning has "enhanced the overall safety" of our prisons in any sense of the word.

For better or worse, our mail might not be waylaid in Harrisburg much longer. Earlier this year, the department posted a "request for proposal" for a new tablet contract, with the current arrangement with ViaPath (formerly Global Tel*Link) set to expire in August. In the bid, the department expressed interest in a tablet that could provide "comprehensive combined services," to include phone calls, video visits, electronic fund transfers, electronic messages... and mail scanning services. The surveillance potential from having our mail scanned these past few years will be nothing compared to that of this new device, which will filter our every connection with the world through a single point of contact and be able to provide (per the PADOc's own request) "digital intelligence" from our communications, allowing it to "identify associations, trends, and nefarious activity."

Since late 2018, when Pennsylvania legitimized third-party mail-scanning, most prison-industrial telecommunications providers have included the feature among their suite of services. In fact, unlike the PADOc's confused process of reprinting (and remailing) scanned mail, sending digitized mail directly to a tablet or kiosk for viewing has typically been the standard model in other states and counties. Some vendors even charge inmates to view the mail that's been sent to them. But the forthcoming tablet contract could very well mean that a different company will soon be scanning our mail, which could mean yet another change in our mailing address, and even more disruptions to our strained connections. It could also likely mean that, should we ever need or desire hardcopies of any items sent to us through the mail, such as financial forms or a cherished photograph, the cost to print them will be shifted to us in a pay-to-print model. But, most importantly, it could very likely mean that the days of physical, paper mail as we know them are nearly at an end. Luckily, there's still time for us to change that.

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When Smart Communications was first awarded its no-bid contract, there was a lot of controversy around then Governor Wolf's use of a state of emergency to fund the extreme measure. But it's important to remember that, in every single year since the 2018 lockdown, the Pennsylvania legislature has approved the PADO's proposed budgets, including the millions within them allocated for scanning, reprinted, and re-mailing our mail. Lawmakers need to stop taking correctional leaders at their word that mail-scanning is at all effective and examine these issues for themselves. They need to look into how the majority of drugs are really getting into our prisons. Maybe they could ask Rick Davis (Houtzdale), Damien Robinson (Somerset) or Kevin Hoch (Benner), to name but a few, each of them former PADO employees who have pled guilty to smuggling entire sheets of drug-soaked paper into Pennsylvania state prisons in the years since mail-scanning went into effect. This election season, we need to urge our loved ones to contact their representatives and make it clear that they won't support a candidate who continues to fund such a senseless and wasteful policy. After all, that money well spent was theirs.

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with no reason or explanation given, which is standard procedure. I have been a "model inmate" for 25 years. These are things that make me wish I could vote.

There are at least two prominent pieces of legislation for lifers and long-termers currently tabled in Pennsylvania, in part on account of the lack of support necessary to be passed: parole for lifers and a geriatric and medical bill. Our vote, our voices, could support the right people getting into office to get these or similar bills passed. Incarcerated individuals are considered the dregs of society, the castaways, and the downtrodden that, few if any, of the people in power desire to see or otherwise communicate with because in their mind we contribute nothing to or for their cause. Try to imagine the buildup in our communities if lifers and long-termers were home to vote. That same impact can be realized in allowing us inside to vote, thereby contributing to the various causes that need to be represented. The ability to vote is not about making prison life easier, not by any means. The vote would apply to those who are for more stringent laws for the offender and true compensation for injuries

suffered by the victim/survivor. The vote would allow for the reinstatement of rehabilitative programming that would address traumas that compelled the criminal activity or mindset, so that the individual has a better chance not to reoffend. Learning, as I did, why it was done in the first place and we are no more merely warehouse until we die.

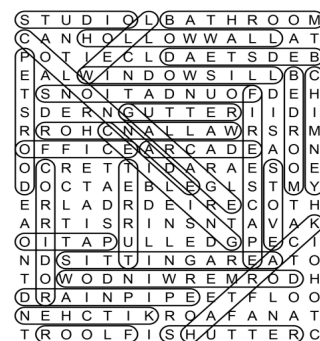
For most of my life I did not vote because I did not care. I did not care because I did not vote. It's like this, I saw no need to vote because those in office we're going to do whatever they wanted, to whomever they wanted to do it to, just like I was doing and I didn't care about anybody.

Today I have this little puppy who needs me, and I care enough to make sure I am there for her at whatever hour so she does not pee in the cell, goes hungry, or gets abused. I care enough about others, here, who have been wrongly convicted or abandoned by the system that I wish for the opportunity to vote, to make a difference. More than that, allowing lifers to vote would be a good start to becoming an active member of society. It would work to create vested interest in community leadership and government issues. Sadly, the opportunity to vote while incarcerated may not auto-

matically translate into higher civic engagement; laws have been made to lock up more people from the poorer communities.

I would argue that at first there may not be immediate buy in from either side of the of the proverbial coin, change takes time, and the wheels of justice do grind slow. Think where would be if everyone thought and believed nothing would change during civil rights demonstrations, and the like? It only takes a push to get the pebble rolling, I want to be that push as one is better than none. I could be the vote for the one who can't. Thank you.

Solution: House



TRIANGRAM
ELAPSE, PLEASE



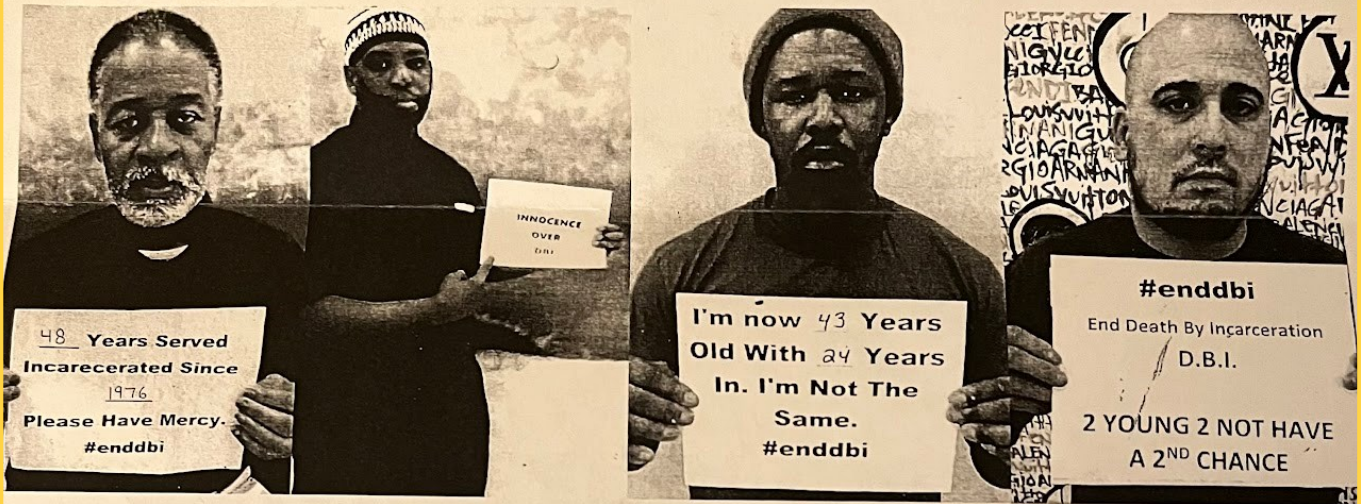
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THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcalition.org

END DBI PA

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN



A few of us at Phoenix created an Instagram page for us to share our experiences about serving DBI, parenting, getting old, losing loved ones, and more. We believe this will be a way to humanize us and educate those in society to see us for who we are and not what we have been convicted of.

The current project: Taking photos with a statement shaming DBI to be posted for the world to see.

Here are four ways photos can be taken:

- ♦ Take a photo on picture day while holding a statement shaming DBI written in marker or typed (bold, 72 pt font, centered, and landscape on page setup) on a white piece of paper with #enddbi under your statement. No more than 2 sentences, please.
- ♦ Take a photo on picture day. Write a statement shaming DBI on the back of the photo with how many years you served, the year arrested, current age, and age when arrested. Give photo to point person or mail home and have loved one email to enddbipa@gmail.com.
- ♦ Have loved one take a photo of you holding a white piece of paper with a statement shaming

DBI typed or written in marker with #enddbi under your statement while on a Zoom visit. Email picture to enddbipa@gmail.com

- ♦ Have loved one take a photo of you (holding nothing) while on a Zoom visit. Let loved one know to email your statement shaming DBI along with picture, how many years you served, year arrested, current age, and age when arrested to enddbipa@gmail.com.

Point People: Avron Holland and Brandon Charleston (Coal Township), Angel Vellon (Dallas), Curtis Spivey (Forrest), Neil Pal and Cornell Pointer (Greene), Shaheem Willis (Frackville), Jeremiah Bush (Chester), Larry Alexander (Mahanoy), Rasheed Harris (Fayette), Nigel Maitland (Huntington).

Name and Number are optional but recommended in case someone would like to reach out to you directly.

If you need help with statements for your picture(s), ask the point person at your location or we'll send them some ideas. Always remember, put #enddbi under every statement.

Find us on instagram: @enddbipa

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



Pics from Harrisburg rally earlier this year (April 2024). We were a force and had a huge impact as we chanted “WE ARE MORE” over and over reminding all in ear shot, watching on Facebook, or viewing the news, that people in prison can change, have changed, and are worthy of 2nd chances to prove that WE ARE MORE than a number, BETTER THAN the worst day of our lives.



Family and community stood in 100 degree weather, for hours, showing their support for the sick, the elderly, and those who are dying in prison to be given a 2nd chance by allowing them to atone for their past transgressions and seek parole.

