

# ***THE MOVEMENT***

Human Rights Coalition  
Dedicated to Protecting the

Summer  
Issue #38

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

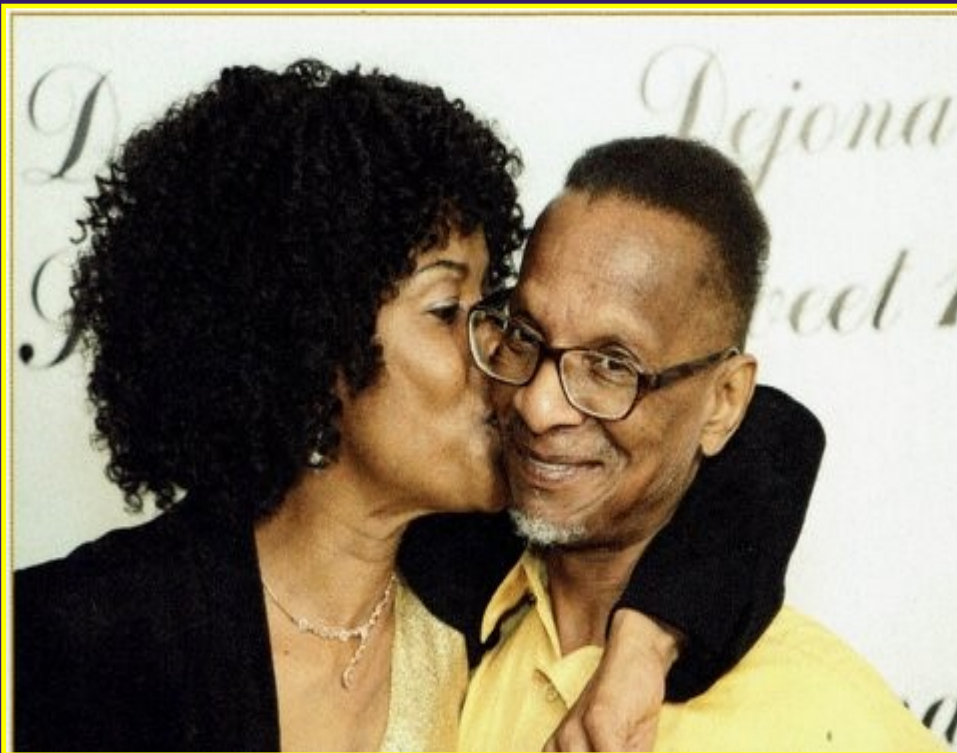
**Inside**

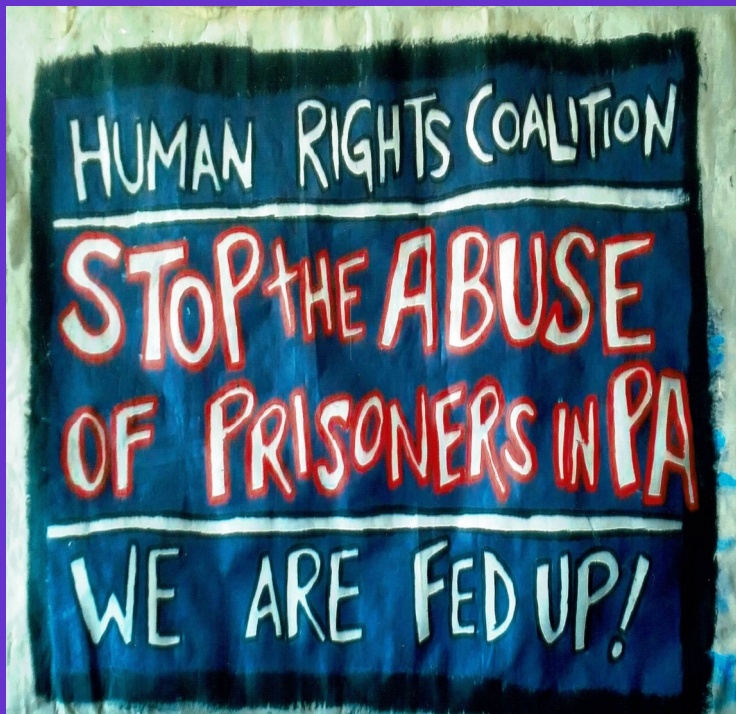
**Tribute to**

**Richard 'Tut Carter**

**11/8/1948 –04/05/2019**

**Page 21**





Above banner created and donated to HRC by Etta from Pittsburgh, an original member of HRC-FedUp!



Above three HRC Members went on hunger strike to end torture and abuse of prisoners and to show solidarity with the men who were also on hunger strike across PA Prisons during Black August. Left to right: Wesley stayed on hunger strike for 2 days, Ms. Karen, 15 days, and Jackson, 5 days!

## In This Issue

### Guest Editor Speaks !

By: *Jerome Coffey* . . 3

### Knowledge Is Power: All Power To The People

\* The Prison Old Timers Who Gave Me Life

By: Darnell Epps . . . 4

\* Solitary Confinement Bills Update . . . 5

\* From Wispy . . . 6

### The HomeFront: Serving Our Community

\* Prison Group Calls for an End to Solitary Confinement . . . 7

\* Report on Legislative Visit to SCI-Chester

By: Sergio Hyland. . 9

\* CADBI-Delco Anniversary,

By: Dana Lomax-Williams. . . 11

\* Ending Perpetual Punishment,

By: Mama Patt . . . 12

\* Historical Moment, By: Sarita Miller . . . 15

### 2nd Chances

By: Mama Patt. . . 18

### Human Rights Report

\* Tribute to Richar 'Tut' Carter,

By: *Jerome 'Hoagie' Coffey* . . 21

### Human Rights Matter,

They Survived Solitary Confinement,  
Now They're Fighting to End It,

By: Victoria Law . . 28

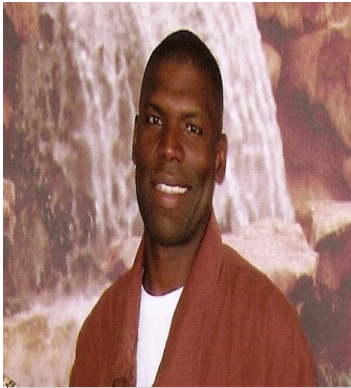
### Legal Corner

NOI Wins Preliminary Injunction . . 34

Writings of Multiplicity . . 35-38

### The Babylon System

\* The Company Store: A Deeper Look at Prison Commissaries, By: Stephen Rahe. . . 39-42



## *A Word From This Issue's Guest Editor ...*

Revolutionary greetings of love, peace, and humanity!

Welcome to this special edition of The Movement, Issue #38.

In this special edition of The Movement the Human Rights Coalition (HRC) members, family, and friends are paying great respect to our WARRIOR/AMBASSADOR/HISTORIAN/STATESMAN/INTELLECTUAL and Human Rights Activist, Richard Carter a/k/a "Mwalimu Tut", our humble servant to the poor, weak, and oppress people globally.

His unforeseen death sent shock waves to all of us behind enemy lines and other areas of the world. At any rate, HRC members want to dedicate and remember the legacy of Mwalimu Tut and how he ameliorate our lives by means of empowerment, by using unconventional techniques to challenge ourselves through critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical ability.

Mwalimu Tut went home in 2005 after serving three decades behind enemy lines for trumped-up state charges; nonetheless, certain obstacles didn't stagnate him one bit from being involved in community activities. By way of example, Mwalimu Tut started organizing his abeloved community Chester, Pennsylvania on top of exposing inequality of treatment for mentally ill prisoners in Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and abroad, teaching youth at-risk. He, also, enrolled in law school and wrote for the local newspaper among other notable things.

In conclusion, Mwalimu Tut was a decent human being, a dedicated family man, servant of the people, and freedom fighter. His writings and achievements should be donated and displayed in the African-American Museum in Philadelphia. He contributed to humanity unselfishly and unconditionally. He was a long distance runner for the weak, poor, and oppress. And he going to be sadly miss.

In the struggle, In solidarity, and Stiff resistance,  
Jerome 'Hoagie' Coffey, Guest Editor

Smart Communications/PADOC  
Jerome Coffey/#AS-1558/ SCI-Albion  
PO Box 33028  
St Petersburg, FL 33733

## 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.

## CADBI Chapters

### **CADBI Philly:** CADBI

c/o Decarcerate PA  
PO Box 40764  
Philadelphia PA 19107

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CADBIphilly/>

### **CADBI West:** CADBI West

c/o Abolitionist Law Center  
P. O. Box 8654  
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cadbiwest/>

Email :is [CADBIWEST@gmail.com](mailto:CADBIWEST@gmail.com)  
Community organizer, Carol Speaks

### **CADBI Delco :**

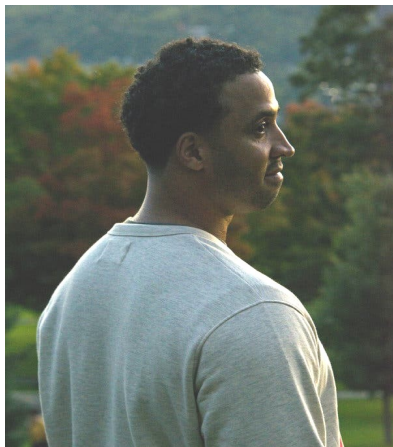
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cadbidelawarecty/>

For information on **CADBI-Lancaster, CADBI-Reading, CADBI-Allentown, CADBI-York and CADBI-**

**Coatesville** write to:

John Rowland  
CADBI Statewide  
PO Box 24062  
Philadelphia, PA 19139

## The Prison 'Old-Timers' Who Gave Me Life: Aging inmates, some serving life sentences, helped me turn my life around. They could do even more good on the outside.



By Darnell Epps, a student at Cornell University, served 17 years in prison.

Oct. 6, 2018, from The New York Times

I can speak for both myself and my older brother, Darryl, when I say that March 8, 2000, was the most regrettable day of our lives. On that day, I accompanied Darryl to an encounter with a gang member who, days earlier, had sexually assaulted Darryl's wife. We were both armed. Rather than report the assault, we set out for a confrontation. Within seconds, the situation escalated and Darryl fired several shots in

a struggle for the gun, wounding the gang member and himself. Darryl and I survived. The gang member did not.

Months later, we stood shackled and handcuffed inside a muggy Brooklyn courtroom. I was 20 and Darryl was 21. We had every reason to think we'd spend the rest of our lives in jail. But Justice Gustin L. Reichbach did something unexpected, something that probably saved both our lives: He did not impose the maximum prison sentence of 40 years to life — the equivalent of life without parole — and instead sentenced each of us to serve 17½ years to life.

We were taken to Five Points Correctional Facility, a maximum-security prison in upstate New York, to serve our time. That Darryl and I were in the same prison gave us both real advantages. Friends and family could visit us in one place, helping us maintain a connection with the outside world. We were able to reflect together on where we had gone wrong and to commit ourselves to turning our lives around. Seeing each other every day provided a constant reminder of the worst choice we'd ever made.

We made a pact not to ever do anything that would separate us. We became partners in accountability, supported each other during difficult times and deepened our faith with the help of wonderful chaplains there. We also had the guidance and wisdom of several "old-timers" — prisoners decades older than us, some serving life sentences, who committed themselves to keeping us out of trouble. It worked. After seven years of good behavior, Darryl and I were granted permission to become cellmates and spent the next 10 years sharing a bunk.

Soon enough, we followed the lead of those old-timers. We

mentored younger inmates. We were co-chairmen of the Youth Assistance Program, where we re-enacted our crime and relayed our life experiences to young men, many on probation or taking part in diversion programs, which offer young offenders alternatives to criminal prosecution. With the help of other inmates, we also created the Prison Community Awareness Program, mentoring inmates aged 16 to 21, some of whom were serving life sentences. The institutional example we set simply paid forward the wisdom and guidance those older men extended to us.

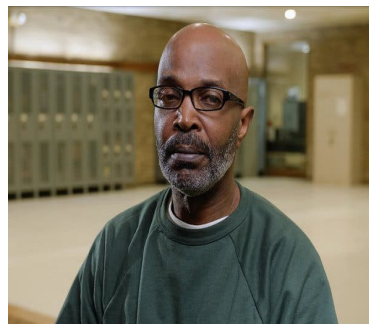
In 2017 Darryl and I were paroled just after serving our minimum sentence. This was rare. When we entered the system in 2000, only a very small percentage of violent offenders — by some estimates, roughly 3 percent — serving life sentences in New York had been paroled after serving their minimum sentence. That aversion to parole, together with tougher sentencing laws, has contributed to what is now an aging prisoner population, with New York housing more than 10,000 inmates age 50 or older.

Today, I'm a full-time student at Cornell, majoring in government, while Darryl is making his mark in the Justice-in-Education program at Columbia. The most frequent question Darryl and I get is: "Exactly how did you guys do it?"

Evidently, the notion that convicted felons can ascend from the lowest depths of maximum security to the Ivy League is counterintuitive. But I'm quick to deny that Darryl and I are some-

how exceptional. In prison, we shined because of, not despite, our circumstances, especially the presence of the "old-timers" who helped guide us to our coming-of-age. We owe them tremendous credit.

Recently, I had the privilege of reuniting with one of those men, 62-year-old Mark Thompson, at a performance by the Phoenix Players Theater Group at the Auburn



Mark Thompson, 62, has served 38 years at the Auburn Correctional Facility.

Correctional Facility. Mark was locked up in his 20s and has served 38 years of his minimum sentence (66 years to life), with 28 more to go. Darryl and I sought advice from Mark while we were at Five Points.

In his time as a prisoner, he has earned a bachelor of science degree, led alcohol and substance abuse training for other prisoners, and served as a peer and youth counselor. Today Mark is losing his vision and battling hypertension, and has several other physical ailments. This reunion was certainly bittersweet, with me as a visitor and Mark still wearing the green prison garb I so eagerly left behind.

Mark did a monologue at the performance, and referred to his role as a guide and a caretaker. "As a youth I was often neglected and overlooked," he said, "often left to look after my younger siblings. It's 2018 and life is still the same."

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)

Leaving Auburn that night, I was deeply saddened knowing that so many of the old-timers, like Mark, whose volunteerism and institutional accomplishments surpass my own, will probably die in prison. Their 50-, 75- and 100-year minimum sentences are the result of America's "tough on crime" era — when the War on Crime pushed aside the War on Poverty, substituting mandatory minimums and three-strikes laws for antipoverty programs.

For these men, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel is the prospect of finding a seat in what Rayford Gibson, in the movie "Life," jokingly called "the upper room" — the place where they'll rest eternally free from the bone-crushing reality of lifelong imprisonment. It's clear that our prison population is aging, but we cannot die ourselves out of mass incarceration.

The Justice Department has reported that in 2016 roughly 160,000 prisoners held in state and federal prison were older than 55. New York's own numbers are appalling, leading some lawmakers to support geriatric parole legislation and broader use of the governor's clemency power.

Thomas DiNapoli, the New York State comptroller, recently reported that although the state's prison population declined by 17.3 percent over the past decade, the number of prisoners aged 50 or older increased by 46 percent. Warning that this problem "is not unique to New York State," Mr. DiNapoli faults the extraordinarily high "number of prisoners sentenced to and serving long periods in prison."

And while his criticisms are undoubtedly motivated by fiscal concerns — namely, the \$381 million in annual health care costs for inmates housed in state prisons — there is no avoiding the moral question.

We must seriously consider whether society would benefit by letting reformed offenders re-enter their community, and whether it's economical and humane to punish solely for the sake of retribution. When I hear of all the gun violence on Chicago's South Side, for instance, I can't help wondering what would happen if Illinois's many reformed old-timers, who hail from those neighborhoods, were granted parole with a mission of working to reduce the violence. It's not unreasonable to think they'd have a better chance of reaching the younger generation than the local police or federal law enforcement.

"We have so much to offer," Mark told me, referring to the many reformed old-timers behind the wall. "It makes more sense helping younger guys understand their anger and addiction out there," he said, "than dealing with it in here."

I know that among the nation's enormous prison population are untold numbers of incarcerated men and women who are remorseful and have proven over many years that they are ready to enrich any community they live in. They are truly remarkable and would have plenty to give on the outside. We need to begin working toward more-just alternatives to long-term incarceration, so that there can be more stories like mine and Darryl's, and fewer young people making the mistakes that get them sent to prison in the first place.

## HRC Update on Solitary Confinement Bill

### House Bill 497

Representative Tina Davis introduced legislation (HB 497) this year to the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives. HRC met with Rep. Tina Davis, previously, and amended the bill to what is crucial to the safety and well-being of ALL prisoners. The bill has nine co-sponsors in the House. They are: Schlossberg, Donatucci, McNeil, Daley, Hill-Evans, Caltagirone, Frankel, Kenyatta and McClinton. Several other Representatives have expressed interest in supporting the bill, including House Judiciary Committee Minority Chair Tim Briggs who we asking to push for a "HEARING" on our solitary confinement bill.

### Senate Bill 832

On the Senate side, we are currently pushing for the same bill to be introduced in the Senate as the Senate's Judiciary Committee. HRC met with Senator Larry Farnese, Judiciary Committee Minority Chair, and he agreed to sponsor the bill, which will be SB832. As of August 26, 2019 it was introduced and maybe found on the Senator's website at: <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?syearch=2019&slnd=0&body=S&type=B&bn=832>.

So far, we have six co-sponsors of the bill. They are: Kearney, Costa, Brewster, Collett, Haywood, and Muth. That leaves two Democrat senators on the Judiciary Committee remaining that HRC should talk to -- Senators Santarsiero and Sabatina.

We continue to strategize around the Judiciary Committee Majority Chair, Senator Lisa Baker. As the chair, she is the one who ultimately allows the bill to be brought for a vote within the Judiciary Committee so that it will move on to the Senate Floor for a vote.

HRC is also working with Senator Farnese's office pushing for a legislative "HEARING" on the effects of solitary confinement. They have sent the request for the hearing to Senator Baker, who, as the Majority Chair, is the only one who can make the hearing mandatory for all other members of the Committee to attend. We are hoping for a date in the near future.

In the meantime, call your legislators, ask them to support our fight against solitary confinement and the torture and abuse that goes along with it. Tell them to support HB 942 and SB 832. Tell them that no Human Being should be held in solitary confinement over 15 days; we want this as an absolute law (not a policy change).

To find your legislator based on any address, got to: <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

**From the Editor:** Jennifer Storm labeled “Victims Rights Expert” was nominated by Gov. Tom Corbett as Commonwealth Victim Advocate in 2013. As Victim Advocate, she is responsible for representing the rights and interests of crime victims within the Commonwealth. She is often the first call the media makes when stories break.

She made a recent public announcement (accompanied with a victims survey) that her victims group is against Parole for Lifer, a result of 39% of 800 surveyed.

Also in a recent Fact Sharing Hearing (as reported in the Altoona Mirror) concerning SB14 a bill about probation-parole-reforms. Jennifer Storm testified at that hearing. A testimony that left me thinking, *Thank God she's not God.*

I thought folks would be interested in reading (below) how some responded to Jennifer Storm's comments on Facebook. Big thanks to those who spoke out.

Also this is a “heads-up” to the LIFERS Jennifer spoke with at SCI-Graterford (now SCI-Phoenix) last year -

**Jennifer Storm is not your friend!**



July 23, 2019

From Wispy -

It's a repugnant thing to use people's (imagined) grief and pain as a prop for your political ends. When you are a public official and you do so you must be held accountable.

Below is a quote from an article in which so-called victim advocate Jennifer Storm goes after my dear

friend and comrade Kempis Songster (aka Ghani) in all but name. It's a thinly veiled attack and anyone who is aware of his story will know that she is speaking of him.

Not only was it wrong for Jennifer Storm to go after Ghani but she is completely unaware of the fact that the mother she is referencing passed away in 2016 and cannot speak for herself. How can this person be considered the head of victim advocacy in Pennsylvania when she's so desperate to fight against reform and score points for mass incarceration that she doesn't even bother to check in to see if the person whose pain she is referencing is still alive?

Furthermore for all those who were present at Ghani's resentencing we do know that Toshira Pryce, the sister of the victim in his case said that she believed Ghani's apology was sincere and said that she believed that when Ghani came home that “He'll do justice in the community.”

So who does Jennifer Storm represent exactly? The DA's association? Certainly not the people she claims to speak for.

Also what is her point here? That incarcerated people shouldn't try to better themselves by striving to take advantage of all

available educational opportunities? That the parole board should snatch Ghani up to enact more retribution? That formerly incarcerated people shouldn't engage in public life to try to do something positive to make up for the harm they caused?

I think she owes an apology to the Pryce family and Ghani for using their personal tragedies to score political points.

Jennifer Storm's remarks from the article:

*She presented a question for the committee to mull: “How do we balance the need for necessary reform with the inherent need for safety, justice and — yes — retribution?”*

*She urged the committee to put themselves in the shoes of a mother whose son has been brutally murdered, and who is never coming home, while “the person who committed this crime is receiving a bachelor's degree from Villanova, appearing on national television, attending Super Bowl parties and being celebrated upon release as a celebrity of sorts.”*



**Aine Ni Sionnaigh** She needs to look for a different job imo.

Like · Reply · 1w



**Jody Dodd** I would be interested in how she says she promotes healing. It should be her priority. People being encouraged to hold on to their pain or wield it like a weapon are not in service to what repairs the breach. I have observed too many mothers talk about their pain of loss as the way they hold on to their lost loved one. This is not healthy for them or our communities.

Like · Reply · 1w



**Jacob Russell** We address the need for retribution through restorative justice. Retribution makes everything worse. Inequality of power, breakdown of community, social and economic stress, all play a role this need for retribution--as though it would heal everything else gone wrong in our lives.

We need to change the world.

Like · Reply · 1w · Edited



**Elaine G. Selan** Sean...thank you for calling out this mean-spirited sucker punch...she is boxing to air.

Like · Reply · 1w



To read entire article on probation-parole-reforms go to: <http://www.altoonamirror.com/news/local-news/2019/07/probation-parole-reforms-considered/>

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Prison reform group calls for end to 'long-term' solitary confinement

Written by Brett Sholtis/WITF News | Aug 2, 2019



Members of the group Human Rights Coalition speak at a rally Friday, Aug. 2, 2019 at Department of Corrections headquarters in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County. (Brett Sholtis/WITF News)

Two-dozen prison reform activists rallied at Department of Corrections headquarters in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County Friday, pushing for changes to solitary confinement and calling for an inquiry into alleged "abuses" at one corrections facility.

Speaking into a bullhorn, many of the protesters said they're on hunger strike to support at least 11 prisoners who were on hunger strike in July at State Corrections Institute Fayette.

Those prisoners were on strike to protest alleged abuses they faced while in solitary confinement, according to Jackson Kusiak, a member of the group Human Rights Coalition, which organized the rally. Kusiak said he communicates with the inmates by mail.



Nia Young, 11, and Naomi Young, 4, at the rally outside of Department of Corrections headquarters Friday, Aug. 2, 2019.

Their mom, Whisper Young, said she brought them from Harrisburg to see the rally. "It's always been important to me that my daughters learn first hand about making changes in their community and fighting for others as we are all connected." (Brett Sholtis/WITF News)

Prisoners' rights advocate Patricia Vickers said people are being kept in solitary confinement for months or years, though the rules only allow them to be confined up to 90 days.

Vickers says that's happening through corrections officers taking advantage of a policy that allows them to extend solitary confinement for prisoners who don't follow the rules.

"It's been testified by doctors that if you stay in there over 15 days it's harmful to you," Vickers said.

Human Rights Coalition is pushing for the passage of a bill that would limit how long a person can be held in solitary confinement. That bill, HB497, hasn't seen movement since it was referred to the judiciary committee in February.

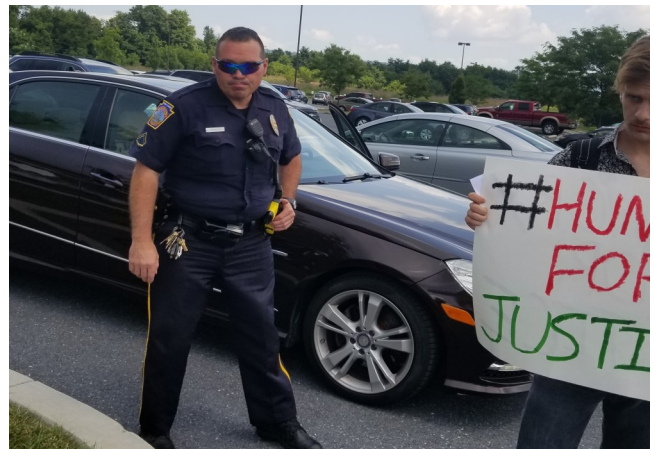
The group also has called for an inquiry into water quality at SCI Fayette. The prison was built on a former strip mine and has been plagued by bad drinking water, leading to lawsuits from corrections officers.

Last December, the prison was under a boil-water advisory. Inmates have said that, during that time, they were denied bottled water, according to documents provided by Kusiak.

Department of Corrections spokeswoman Maria Finn said water at SCI Fayette is tested every month.

"We contract with a local company, H and H water testing, and it is also tested quarterly by our county supplier, Tri-County," Finn said in an email. "We are not aware of any issues with the purity of the water, however we are happy to provide the test results upon request."

Finn said the DOC is also looking into complaints of abuse.



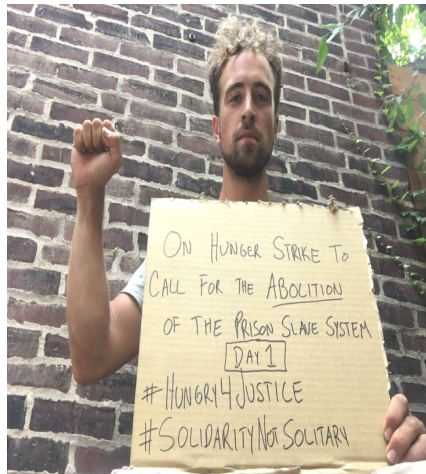
(Continued on page 8)

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

(Continued from page 7)

"All of the allegations received from the Human Rights Coalition are currently under investigation with the Bureau of Investigations and Intelligence," Finn said.

The action didn't stop at Mechanicsburg, PA. The very next Friday, August 9, 2019, HRC was in Philly, right-smack in front of Governor Wolf's office, and rallied again in support of the 16 men in



SCI-Fayette and others across the Pennsylvania area. Karen (pictured below), Jackson (above photo), and Wesley were brave enough to go on hunger strike in support of these men who are suffering from mental and physical abuse in solitary confinement. Wesley went on hunger strike in solidarity with the men from SCI-Fayette for two days as of the day of the rally; Karen (photo at bottom right), who has been on hunger strike for 15 days, loss energy and was forced to sit on the sidewalk during most of the rally; Jackson showed visible signs of weakness as he led the rally after being on hunger strike for 7 days. Clearly the men at SCI-Fayette are so desperate that they risked their lives in a cry for help. Guards that torture and abuse prisoners should be held accountable!

HRC will continue this fight and you, too, can help by calling your Pennsylvania legislator and telling them to support HB 497 and SB 832, two bills that will limit solitary confinement to 15 days and hold guards and administration accountable.

Here is a link to find your legislator based on any address:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>

1. Rep. Tina Davis introduced HB 497 which will reduce Long Term Solitary Confinement to not more than 15 days. Give her a call (267-580-2660 or 267-567-3930) and tell her that we, as citizens, are 100% in support of her bill.
2. Senator Larry Farnese also introduced the same type bill in the Senate, SB 832. This is a strategic move for HRC - having our bill in both the House of Representative and the Senate. To review SB 832 got to, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?year=2019&sInd=0&body=S&type=B&bn=832>.
3. For an update about HB 497 & SB 832 see page 3.
4. Call your legislators and tell them to support these bills. Below is a link to find your legislator based on any address:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>



## THE MOVEMENT

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

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Report on Legislators' Visit to SCI Chester, on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019

By Sergio Hyland

*Sergio Hyland is incarcerated at SCI Chester, in Chester, Pennsylvania. He is the Editor-In-Chief of SCI Chester's monthly Institutional Newsletter, The Low Down. He can be reached at: [sergiohyland8@gmail.com](mailto:sergiohyland8@gmail.com).*

*Follow him on: [Instagram@uptownserg](https://www.instagram.com/uptownserg); [Facebook@SergUptownScribe](https://www.facebook.com/SergUptownScribe).*

On July 11, 2019, a monumental event took place here in SCI Chester. Nearly three dozen politicians, public policy-makers, and activists came into the institution, and settled into our chapel, so that they could listen to the stories of prisoners who have been impacted by their lengthy sentences - some of whom have been incarcerated for 20, 30, 40, or more years.

There was an array of different ideologies and political beliefs represented in the room, but I think that we all agreed on the fact that crime, punishment, and particularly, incarceration, has a profound impact on our communities, and we all could be doing more to counter this dilemma.

It was an exciting event, and for some of us in attendance, there was a slight apprehensiveness and tension in the air, likely a result of the uncertainty. Many of us have never even met a senator or congressman/woman. Plus, if we're being honest, prisoners understand the stigma hoisted upon them by society. Whether that stigma is or isn't accurate (it isn't!), doesn't much matter. On this day, we had the unique opportunity to represent ourselves in the most positive manner and make a lasting impression upon those tasked with the awesome responsibility of creating public policy, which includes those policies that govern prisons.

The guests were ushered into the chapel, and we all sat in a semi-circle, making for a more comfortable and personal setting. Each of us went around the circle in order, introducing ourselves; outside guests stated their title, while inside guests state the kind of time they were serving. After that, Mike Rinaldi took center stage and explained what this day was about, and what we all hoped to get accomplished. He signaled to Richie Marra, who played a video for our guests to see. It was a video of aging lifers, all of whom had served at least thirty years of an LWOP sentence. What many people don't know is that in Pennsylvania, a life-sentence is actually a death-sentence; what I mean is that if a person is sentenced to serve life, there is no chance for that person to see the parole board; no hope of every being released, regardless of his/her earned merit or conduct while incarcerated. Many men and women in Pennsylvania have been without an

infraction for decades, but still have no chance for their prison records to be used as evidence to prove their rehabilitation.

But what exactly IS "rehabilitation"? What does it mean? And can it mean different things to different people?

I remember watching a movie called "Shawshank Redemption", where one of the main characters, Reds (played by Morgan Freeman), was routinely asked, during his parole hearings, if he'd felt that he was rehabilitated. The first couple of hearings went the same way, and Reds had always answered that he had, in fact, been rehabilitated. And in each case, the result was similar: PAROLE DENIED!

But the final hearing was different. In the final hearing, when Reds was asked if he felt that he'd been rehabilitated, he went into a diatribe about how nobody really knows what that word means. Ironically, it was after this discourse that his parole was granted.

My point is that rehabilitation means different things to different people-as it should. This is what made July 11<sup>th</sup> so meaningful. Very rarely do policy-makers take the time out to visit prisons. Knowing this, the inmates in attendance took special care in communicating the message that we respect and acknowledge the pain, hurt, and rights of victims and their families, while also making the case for certain offenders to get a second chance at life.

From the outside looking in, these two beliefs may seem to be mutually exclusive. But they aren't. We can hold both of these thoughts at the same time. In fact, numerous studies have proven that victims of crimes are more often than not, likely to want answers over punishment. Basically, victims of crimes, more than anything else, seek closure. When crimes are prosecuted, it is the state who takes over and, in the process, takes power away from the communities. Closure ends up being a casualty of the process of punishment.

When we entered this gathering, the objective wasn't to beg for mercy; it was to show these distinguished guests that many of us on the inside, recognize the harm and damage that we've caused to our communities and are doing the best we can to atone. To that end, Richie Marra showed a video of some of the positive activities that many of us have been involved in while here at SCI Chester, including numerous fundraisers, plays and other events. I've been here for a while, and even I didn't know the impact of the fundraisers held by the Inmate Improvement Organization, until Representative Bullock asked Chairman of the IIO, Hasan Porter, to go into further detail about how these initiative work. Speaking of Representative Bullock, we had a great conversation when I got the opportunity to pull her aside. She is extremely invested in people and the humanity of people. After speaking with her, I can honestly say that any apprehensiveness I felt before, was gone. I've never felt so comfortable speaking

*(Continued on page 10)*

(Continued from page 9)

to a politician. We spoke about the violence in our communities, and what can be done - and what she's doing - in an effort to eliminate it.

If you watch the local news, you won't have to stick around long to see a story about the violence in our communities. Often, those stories are followed by calls to action against violence. Citizens are left to wonder what can be done to decrease the violence which plagues our beleaguered communities. When I hear these questions being asked, I'm often reminded of when Eric Riddick asks the simple - but prudent - question: what happens when the virus becomes the cure?

We recognize that, at some point in time, we have been that virus, responsible for the ailments which have caused our communities to suffer. But through growth, which could only come from education, we have learned those very precious life lessons that now allow us to be the cure. For this reason, the men at SCI Chester, along with the invaluable assistance of Mrs. Quinn and other Administrative Staff, worked tirelessly to put this epic event together.

A person's perspective depends upon their position, and when this event started, Benjamin Bowman stood to introduce himself, and gave a brief statement. He let all in attendance know how valuable the older inmates have been to him, when it comes to leadership. He explained how he had come to prison at the age of 19, and if it weren't for the leadership and role of many of the older prisoners-some in that chapel-he would still be operating with the mentality of a 19-year-old. His perspective resonated with me, because most of the first half of my time had been spent going backwards. It wasn't until I really started listening to the older guys, when I realized that they had "been there and done that", and if I didn't soon get it together, I would be ruined. Because of those lessons from the older guys my entire life is different. And I know that if they can reach me, they can reach the younger guys out in the community, who are on the very same path that I was.

The best way to honor victims and respect their rights and struggle, is to do all in our power to prevent future victimization. When you hear the stories of the men and women inside of prison, they're replete with regret, remorse, accountability, and a prayer that they can one day be in a position to redeem themselves. Many of us have been at that crippling stage of guilt, but we find salvation in acts of remorse. Still, how can society know the remorse of offenders-and their good acts of redemption-if the stories of prisoners aren't being told beyond the walls of prison? The stigma of prison and prisoners cannot effectively be countered if prisoners can't reach out into society and share what they are doing to better themselves and society.

So, I commend these legislators for taking time out of their day to visit the men at SCI Chester, so that we could show them how we are working hard every single day to make ourselves better than we were yesterday. Our Facility Manager, Marirosa Lamas, always says that she never wants to be judged on her worst day. We feel the same. Yes, some of us participated in acts which al-

tered numerous lives, but that was on our worst day. And many of us are now equipped with the tools necessary to make better decisions, and impact lives in positive ways.

The idea of this gathering was conceived when Richie Marra and Mike Rinaldi's sisters visited with legislators and suggested that the best way to understand what prisoners do to show remorse, is to come into the prisons and meet the men and women doing time. The theme of the day was empathy and understanding. It was shown through videos made by our Activities Department and led many of the legislators to inquire about ways that our message could be infused into the community. At this point, I (Editor-In-Chief) shared with everybody the story of a prisoner in San Quentin State Prison, in California, who was allowed to run a podcast program. His podcast, called "Ear Hustle", became so popular that it received more than 100 million views worldwide, and eventually earned him a commutation from the Governor of California.

Many of our guests seemed to support this idea.

When the time came for us to mingle, I introduced myself to Celeste Trusty, who was representing Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM). She told me about a challenge they'd started, called #visitaprison. This challenge encourages all policy-makers to come into a prison and have conversations with the men and women who are being housed within, so that a prisoner's humanity can be seen. She encourages anybody with a social media presence to challenge policy-makers to visit a prison, by using the #visitaprison, and tagging policy-makers. As we know, mandatory-minimum sentences have been the driving force behind the prison-boom within the past 30 years, and policy-makers are-largely-working to address the disparities associated with this phenomenon.

In a forum such as this, the focus should be on sharing ideas, since nothing that exists, wasn't first imagined. So, when Richie Marra got up to voice his opinion on sentencing, I was intrigued. He urged legislators to adjust the process of sentencing, emphasizing that the courts should take time out to find out who a person is before imposing a sentence. The logic behind this didn't go unnoticed. After all, who really knows who they are at the age of 16, 17, or 20? Most of us don't start to discover who we are until well beyond this stage in our life. The men and women who are serving *Life Without Parole* (LWOP) aren't the same people they were when they were teenagers. None of us are. People evolve, not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Metaphysical transformation is a real thing, whether or not it can be measured.

And that was the essence of this epic gathering. The IDEA that people can-and do-change. No human being is inherently evil; nor are any human beings innately "bad". People make poor decisions, and sometimes those poor decisions have catastrophic consequences. But a person should be allowed to atone. Redemption should always be welcome. And as Mike Rinaldi continuously noted, this principle is not in opposition to the principles associated with the rights of victims.

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

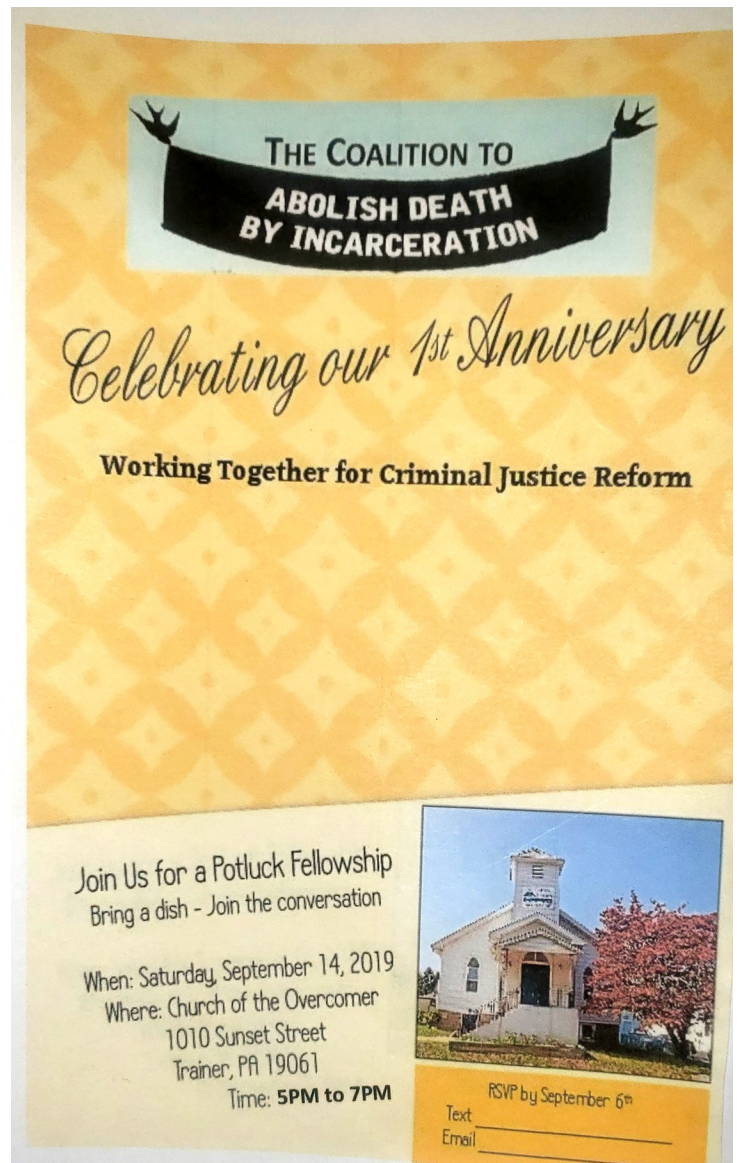
Prisons, no matter the adjustments or perceived amenities, are not an effective means to cure society's ills. All prisons are inhumane. Some just make for a less stressful existence. Prisoners sentenced to LWOP ultimately experience two deaths; first, their social death, ostracized and exiled from the only communities they have ever known; and finally, actual, physical death. Human beings have value and worth, and I truly believe that this gathering, which is unique to the values here at SCI Chester, successfully translated that message to the folks who needed to hear it the most. Now we must work to spread this message out into society.

State Senator Sharif Street gave an exclusive quote to *The Low Down*, which he wanted all of us to know.

"I was very pleased to talk with the Brothers here at SCI Chester. I want the men to know that they were well-represented. The presentation and dialogue went a long way in moving the hearts and minds of politicians, and I look forward to sharing more ideas as we work to seek solutions. I appreciate being invited. Thank you all."

Well said, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue as well.

## **CADBI-DELCo WILL BE CELEBRATING ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY ON SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2019**



CADBI-DelCo will be celebrating its 1st year Anniversary.

We are growing, and thank you for your support. I thank those of you who have reached out to us. We have not forgotten about you. Some of our letters have been returned to us. No worries at all. We have sent them back out. Please continue to write with any comments or suggestions.

I thank you for support and please tell your Delco family and friends to come and help us help you. Every first Saturday of the month. We are happy to know that Debbie, Janine, Janet, Jo Butler, Star (a.k.a. Joyce Granger), Paulette Carrington, Shavonne Robbins, Ms. Naomi Blount and Tamika Bell all are doing well. Our C.A.D.B.I. meetings are growing.

Thank you,

Dana Lomax-Williams

# **THE MOVEMENT**

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

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Ending Perpetual Punishment Convening in Detroit

Ending Perpetual Punishment, a notable convening, was held from July 12-13, 2019 at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan where strangers gathered from across the United States to dive deeper into the discussion around life and long-term sentences. We were invited, strangers to each other, because we all had one thing in common which was to end infinite incarceration and that the current U.S. “justice” and prison systems are mechanisms of perpetual punishment. Representatives came from grass roots organizations, large organizations, those directly affected and boots-on-the-ground advocates who possess powerful skills and a track record of advocacy. Even though flights were cancelled due to Hurricane Barry (that distressed the entire central part of the U.S. on July 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) causing a number of folks to not to make it, still, individuals from Michigan, Chicago, New York, Illinois, Washington, Pennsylvania, California, and Louisiana arrived.

Our first day began with folks telling who they were and what organization they represented and how they were affected by the U.S. “justice” system. The day ended with Keynote Speaker, Marc Mauer who is known for his writings about criminal justice which were published well before popular books of today (e.g. *The New Jim Crow*). Life Sentences removes any consideration of possible transformation was one comment that Marc made has stayed with me; as an example he told the story of Robert Stroud - “Bird man of Alcatraz” who studied canaries, became an expert, and was able to write two books on canaries and their diseases. He also pointed out that people dramatically age out the high crime age bracket (30, 40, 50, 60 years of age) and that looking at this economically the Department of Corrections (DOC) is spending much more money on prisoners as they get older but getting less on their return. Marc suggested establishing a sentence structure of a maximum of 20 years (which will get rid of the aging out problem), if a person has not shown transformation within 20 years that person will be held another 5 years; but, prior to this, the prison must do everything possible to make sure this person is ready to come home.

Marc Mauer was followed by a response panel discussion with formerly incarcerated people who served long prison sentences; they left us with food for thought while giving us a taste of reality.

Emile DeWeaver - Eight months home and member of Prison Renaissance. Emile spoke about carve-outs which is a bill that specifically excludes a population of prisoners; for example, the bill states that we’ll do this [parole for LIFE] but only if that [a police officer is not involved]. He recommends being of service to help someone else’s bill, even

though that bill does not directly affect you. Emile threw himself into getting California’s SB261 passed, a bill which had nothing to do with him. But because of the community and the connections he made, it resulted in him coming home on commutation.

Romarilyn Ralston - Twenty-three years in prison on a 17-LIFE sentence. Romarilyn witnessed that prison is traumatic - on the body, mind and soul! You come out and you don’t deserve a job, a home, or your kids back. The way that prison treats you is not conducive to anyone. Prison strips you of your identity and forces you to become something else. Once you’re free who are you and what do you do? You’re disassociated with your former self, your current self, and your future self. We, the audience, stood in applause when she ended with, “What we need to do is abolish prisons; it’s not good for anyone but those who are making money from it.”

Checo Yancy - Formerly incarcerated doing great work across Louisiana. Corrections is a growth industry; seven hundred fifty million dollars is spent on prisons in Louisiana. Checo declared, “The Criminal Justice System is NOT broken, it’s working perfectly for those making money!”

At the end of the day Romarilyn’s answer to a question from the audience stays on my mind. She asserted; “the representation [of offenders] that we see on TV is not us [offenders]. Those who are incarcerated are real people, real lives! TV is fake. It is misrepresentation - shows like *Orange is the New Black*. We [offenders] are not entertainment! If you want to know what prison is like, go visit someone in prison [for the truth].”

Day Two was small group work and we were able to talk and get to know each other. When we broke into groups we dis-



CADBI Team awaiting the presentation of Keynote Speaker, Marc Mauer. From Left to Right: Mama Patt, Yvonne, Layne, and Sarah

*(Continued on page 13)*

(Continued from page 12)

cussed the: Elderly and Sick, Life Without Parole/Long Indeterminate Sentences (LIDS), Mental Health Issues/the Hardest Cases, Front-end Sentencing, Re-entry, and Alternatives to Incarceration for Violent Harm/s in Community/ies.

Each group, made up of various backgrounds, ideals, education and experiences, discussed their topic.

After hours of dialog we presented our results. The small group presentations, that were all full of amazing ideals, ended with the main points being placed into resolutions and themes where we agreed, as a national platform, to serve as a focus for advocacy efforts. They will be:

- **a 20-year sentencing cap for all offenses**
- **no carve-outs**
- **well-supported leadership from directly impacted individuals and their families**

- **using direct language as much as possible, that includes calling a “life without the possibility of parole” sentencing what it is -- death by incarceration**
- **eliminating sentence enhancements and mandatory minimums**
- **centering the “hard” cases**
- **fighting for retroactivity in all legislation**

The convening ended the eve of the second day with us - no longer strangers - but comrades in this struggle, fighting in various ways; but, having the same goal.

See below the process of one small group.

### Small Group: ‘Alternatives to Incarceration for Violent Harm/s in Community/ies’

The small group that I participated in was “Alternatives to Incarceration for Violent Harm/s in Community/ies”.

We brought to the discussion a variety of perspectives (this was a good thing) and I saw immediately that this was not a topic



Group Members: Shondell, Pennsylvania; Nicole, Washington, DC; Rachel, Massachusetts; Patricia, Pennsylvania; Hakim, Michigan; Ruby, Michigan; Laura, Pennsylvania; Romarilyn, California; Emile, California; and Troy from Michigan (not in photo since he took photo).

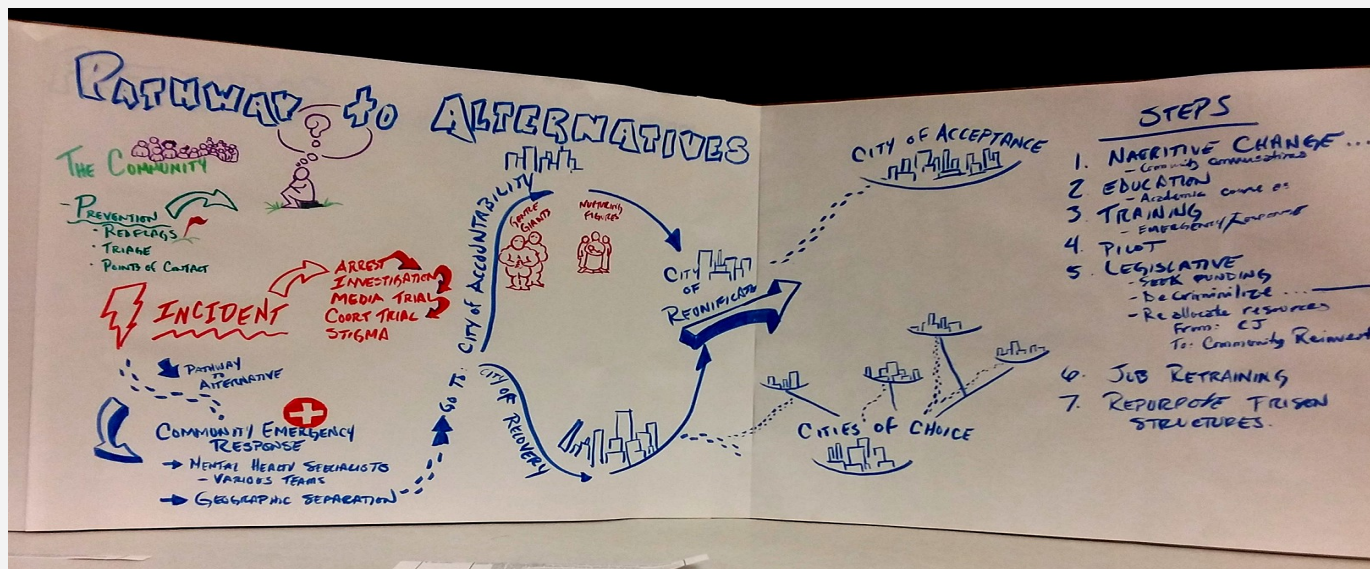
that could be handled in a few hours. Ideas were introduced, questioned, torn apart, abandoned and then we started all over again. We finally agreed that we should start from scratch; this was our chance to create a better world that is not a penal system with bars and cages, but instead based on justice, healing, and caring for the community. We wrestled over proper terminology and decided that instead of *victim*, we would use survivor, harmed party, crime survivor; instead of *crime*, we would use harm, which is a manifestation of trauma; and instead of *cages*, we want to use spaces of accountability.

We concurred that narratives are undermined by the worst of the worst – i.e. serial killer, child molester, etc. Therefore, we decided that the harm we were going to grapple with would be a four year old Black child raped and murdered by 29 year old Black stepfather. We felt that if we could create an alternative to prison for this type of harm; alternatives to other harms would be easier for society to build upon.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

At the conclusion of our work we presented a summary of our alternative to prison (along with an illustration created by team member Troy Rienstra) to the larger group.



Our Alternative to prisons would begin with preventive programs for (in this situation) Black men who have experienced sexual violence, holistic healthcare that informs kids and parents about healthy and unhealthy touching and bodily autonomy, etc. Neighborhood organizations, would exist, that have relationships with families and neighbors who could address red flags because people who harm people are usually harmed themselves.

Post-Harm Response: Emergency Response Teams (e.g. community Elders, person trusted by the individual, mediator, mental health provider\*) will have the full-time responsibility of building community relationships, so that those relationships are trustworthy when harm arises. There will be an Emergency Response Team for the person that caused the harm and the harmed parties. The person that caused the harm will be removed to a Space of Accountability (distance needs to be more than a city away from harmed party) that will not be a cell, cage, or prison; but, instead a space/city where he receives healing and is held accountable and they will be equipped with skills to prevent others from committing harm. Spaces of recovery for the harmed party will be provided if they would like to leave their home community (temporarily or permanently); and an Emergency Response Team will help the harmed party with their recovery.

Community: As communities are also affected by trauma, there will be another response team dedicated to schools and neighbors to help them cope and prepare the community for the returning citizen. Privacy (to avoid media sensationalism) needs to be balanced with community involvement. The grieving process will be recognized and there will be processes available to honor and remember. Space of reunification for the community with harmed/parties that harm and larger community can go to discuss transgressions of community values, etc.

I'm proud to say we accomplished a lot within a few hours. With space and time constraints I cannot go into detail, but we even discussed timelines, resources/funding, a pilot program, and shifting the punitive mindset. While we wanted to dig deeper and go into details of planning our ideal world, unfortunately our time was up. With all said and done, our presentation to the larger group was impressive. And at the very least, we've planted a seed of possibility. When they say alternatives to prison are impossible, we'll tell them about the convening on Ending Perpetual Punishment and how we re-imagined a world without prisons. And, yes, it's possible!

Thank you to those folks who coordinated this event and who were so hospitable (hopefully I haven't left anyone out): Natalie Holbrook, Demetrius Titus, Shakeb Ahmed, American Friends Service Committee, and Michigan Criminal Justice Program. For more information on this work visit: <https://www.afsc.org/resource/ending-perpetual-punishment>

By: Mama Patt

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Historical Moment

By Sarita Miller

On August 21, 2019 State Representatives from different areas of PA made a much needed, but unforeseen, visit at SCI Cambridge Springs. The campus was buzzing as this was the sole topic of many of the women here. We all anticipated that our voices, with concerns, would be heard and just maybe some changes could be implemented.

But with much disappointment but not to the surprise of most of us, we were dismayed by the Administration's decision to select only 7 women to meet and speak with the Representatives.

Enraged at this I began to write expressing myself respectfully to the Administration here because most of us, myself included, felt such a loss of not being involved in this rare opportunity.

But before I could finish my words on paper, one of my peers startled me out of my task informing me that the State Representatives were standing in our common room. Looking out of the narrow rectangle windows that frame the cell doors my spirit jumped with excitement as I pushed the call button to alert the guard to let me out of the cell so that I might have the privilege of speaking with the Representatives. However, I was met with a primitive and ignorant response from the officer informing me that I don't need to speak with them (referring to the State Representatives) and that I should speak with a prison staff member. Before I could answer him, I was clicked off the speaker. Becoming more frustrated because of the officer's nonsense, I proceeded to push the call button again and was clicked off immediately. Not letting that deter my efforts as one of my peers walked pass the cell door, I asked her to get the attention of one of the State Representatives who kindly made her way over to me. It was there that I was able to speak and have my voice heard.

So often women in prison are downgraded and exploited by the very same system that is supposed to be put in place to rehabilitate. In my 16 years I have seen women taken advantage of by the predatory instincts of this prison environment. Trauma, years of chronic drug abuse, sexual and physical abuse all make up for a recipe of low self-esteem, low self-value and low self-worth that the majority of the female population in prison suffer from. I, too, battle with these negative imageries that have framed most of my life.

However God has a way of making what started off for evil work out for his glory and the good of the people and that is just what the State Representatives did for us that day by coming here [SCI Cambridge] expressing concern and change for us.

We will always be grateful. It has given a lot of us women courage to stand up and believe in ourselves knowing that we have people in high positions who really give a damn!!

What women here at Cambridge Springs need are intense groups dealing with the raw issues of trauma and sexual and physical abuse. We need to be built up not torn down! The streets have done a good enough job concerning that! Instead of more prison (as I expressed to our Governor last year) money should be spent in long term rehabilitation centers for these specific traumas that women have experienced; and, what better people to train and employ than ex-offenders who lived it personally and have suffered the consequences. The drug epidemic is fierce out in the world, but what fuels a person to get high most likely is the burning pain of traumas. Incarcerated women need help, care and guidance to eradicate the pain; only people who have been there, and survived, can fully help in this mission. That is the true prison reform.

Smart Communications/PADOC  
Sarita Miller/#OJ-3158/ SCI-Cambridge  
PO Box 33028  
St Petersburg, FL 33733

## HRC

We envision prison officials and administration (i.e., guards, counselors, etc.) being held accountable for their actions or in-actions. We envision a "coalition" of families and organizations who seek to eliminate prison abuse and stand up for the human rights of prisoners by educating the public, advocating with prison officials, and lobbying state legislators. You may reach us at the address below.

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

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

## From Wispy -

Yesterday while I was speaking with my comrade Kempis Songster (aka Ghani) and another movement colleague I was reminded of this poem he wrote.

I first read it while Ghani was incarcerated and a year before he and I ever corresponded. I was gripped by the poem and because of how it affected me I felt like I already knew him when he first reached out to me from behind prison walls. We would go on to organize forums for lifers families around the Philadelphia DA race, a mobilization called the Community Resentencing a day prior to his resentencing by the court and to work on visionary policy papers and proposals after Krasner won the election for District Attorney. And now of course he's home and hatching a bunch of brilliant schemes.

I share all of this to say: never underestimate the power of poetry, keep in mind that sometimes messages in a bottle don't just float out to sea but instead find someone, always remember that people are their own liberators and science fiction is real.

Also: That was not your destiny, my friend!



*Pitch-blackness. In the center, a twinkling dot, growing bigger, or coming closer; flickering wilder now; a flame, yes; a crackling campfire.*

*Glowing ashes rising up, swirling like fire flies, flying higher everywhere into the blackness, becoming countless twinkling stars.*

*I'm under a starlit sky, sitting Indian-style by a campfire. The silhouettes of endless pine trees surround me.*

*I hear sound: crickets, frogs, owls, wind, whispering tree leaves, ...howling wolves, ...my heartbeat ...pounding. And a familiar voice:*

*"Kempis, in five words, say something about your situation."*

*I spin around, turning my head in every direction, scanning the landscape. But my view is besieged by monstrous concrete walls and towers all around me. I swivel back around... on my metal desk stool to face the campfire... that is now my desk lamp. The stars are gone; the sounds are that of jingling, not like bells but more like... keys... and footsteps.*

*"Say something about your sentence to life without parole, in five words."*

*"Five words?"*

*"Yes, five words."*

*Jingling keys and footsteps getting louder. A full moon appears, unusually and disturbingly bright, blinding me. But hold up; that ain't no moon...*

*It streaks away as suddenly as it intruded. The afterglow fades with the jingling keys and footsteps.*

*"Your sentence in five words," the voice persisted.*

*"Okay, that's easy," I said.*

*"This..is..not..my..destiny."*

*-Kempis Songster, "Ghani"*

*SCI Graterford*



I woke up Sunday at 4am. Too excited to sleep, I haven't seen my daughter in 14 yrs & my friend Yusef is making it happen today. I finally get to see my little girl!

She arrived at 9am from Cleveland. I walked into the visiting room &

almost cried. I finally saw my grown child for the 1st time. She jumped up, I gave her the signal to just wait one minute while I spoke to the guard. I went to her, took her face in my hands and just looked at her, we hugged so tight, I kissed her beautiful little face so much. We sat. We talked. We laughed. We couldn't stop hugging and holding each other. We were goofy, serious, funny and silly. We had such a wonderful 6 hours, I wanted to cry when it was over. We shared dreams of the future, our hopes, we hugged, kissed, dozens of times. I swear if she had make up on, it would've been everywhere.

I got to see Yvonne Newkirk again, always a pleasure. I got to share lunch with my 21 year old child for the very first time. I got to stare into her beautiful big brown eyes, see her face light up with smiles. I had so many firsts today with my Krista.

This trip wouldn't have happened without Yusef. I love you and I thank you big bro. Family takes care of family & you are my family. I wanted today alone with my child. I have 5 pics of us together & when she comes up again tomorrow, I'll get 5 more with her.

It broke my heart, I wanted to cry when I had to watch her leave, stand in the parking lot waiting on an Uber to take her to her motel room. My only child comes to Pa & no one in my family came to see or meet her. Breaks my heart that she isn't thought of by them. Maybe one day, but she has me and tomorrow I plan on stuffing all kinds of junk food down her throat from the over priced vending machines. Today was the happiest day I have had since coming to prison. To all the great people in my life, know I am a happy father today. Thank you for caring about me

& my child. I'll be in touch. ♥ Rob

## Birthday greetings

When you simply focus on one thing at a time the journey doesn't seem so long. I know there are brighter days ahead.. Each time you have a birthday may you find that life is bringing you more blessings- more ways in which God shows how much He loves you.

### September

9/2 Dierdre Owens (Muncy)  
9/11 Tracey Shaw (Cambridge Springs)  
9/20 Loc Tran (Smithfield)  
9/24 Melanie Vicheck (Muncy)

### October

10/2 James Lloyd (Benner)  
10/4 Jennifer Vinsek (Muncy)  
10/7 Edward Ball (Dallas)  
10/8 Kevin Cannady (Dallas)

### November

11/4 Stratton Peay (Rockview)  
11/12 Cynthia Gonzalez (Muncy)  
11/26 Brittany Williams (Muncy)  
11/30 Tyree Wallace (Phoenix)

We who believe in freedom cannot rest.  
(Ella Baker)

Yvonne Newkirk  
P.O.Box 591  
Lansdowne PA. 19050

## Get well wishes for Stacey L. Newkirk (Muncy)



Life may be raining on your parade right now but I'm asking God to make the sun peek out from behind the clouds and to bring you a rainbow soon, very soon.

Much love,  
Mom  
Yvonne Newkirk

## 2nd Chances!

**T**HE MOVEMENT magazine would like folks to know what's happening with the men and women who were young teens sentenced to LIFE without parole. They were considered to be throw-away people without hope; at ages as young as 13 to 17 years old they were labeled corrupt adults who would never ever change. We've interview three (and plan to have more interview in our next issue) who have come home asking them to share their experiences. We don't expect to see that folks have won a Nobel Peace Prize, but (after decades behind bars) a job, marriage, self improvement, or new perspectives are things that we see as accomplishments. Thank you Darryl, Shavonne, Avery and Janine. In our next issue, look for more 2nd Chances and a deeper dive interview.

Here are the questions:

1. What was most challenging for you in getting back into society and how did you overcome it?
2. What worldly changes were most unsettling or impressive or startling when you came home?
3. How are you managing with your transition into society?
4. What advice would you give to a returning citizen?
5. How did your prison experience help (or not) you with re-entry into society?
6. What have you done that you've never done before and was it gratifying?
7. What is the reality of coming home?

### Darryl Ryan

First, I'd like to give thanks for this opportunity to share a few words, which I pray will somehow accomplish the intent and desire of my heart which is to encourage the downtrodden and declare hope for those who remain in the balance. Let it be known that, a way can be made out of no-way. This I know, because it already has.

1. What was most challenging for you in getting back into society and how did you overcome it?

For me, the initial euphoria of being physically free, was such a high, it produced in me a determination that rendered failure, as



not an option. If I had more time to think about it, the challenges of technology may have robbed me of my confidence to succeed. There is still much to learn about all this technology out here, and it's a battle at times. But what I've come to realize is that, my desire and ability to treat people well and decently holds a value that establishes my worth beyond technology. Because despite my limited knowledge of technology I was still afforded an opportunity to become a Goodwill Store Manager; I overcame my fears and, now, I open and close the

store by myself. To God, be the glory.

2. What worldly changes were most unsettling or impressive or startling when you came home?

I'm somewhat disappointed in how so many men have disqualified themselves as or to be, husbands, fathers, sons, leaders, just men of true integrity... Some seemingly voluntarily contributing to our decline and cycle of morbidity and dysfunction. Putting our women in a position where there the ones who've assumed the responsibility of championing our cause.

3. How are you managing with your transition into society?  
How am I managing my transition? Well, I'd like to express that everything is just great. And in retrospect of prison, it is great. It's a beautiful thing to wake up outside the reality of a prison cell, where you're waiting to be counted as state property. And although its a fact that the state still has a hand in/over our lives, its not as prevalent, and can even be forgotten driving down the street in your shinny new car, watching the movement of everyday life unfold as people are busying themselves going to and fro, sharing the same space in time with you.

4. What advice would you give to a returning citizen?  
For me, I happen to be a recipient of the scripture, which says, "He who finds a wife, finds a good thing and finds favor with the LORD." So I'm thankful to say, I have a help mate that's very supportive, which has been and remains a major plus. But I believe a big part of my successful transition was because, I didn't allow myself or others to place any unrealistic expectations on me, that might have inadvertently created too many options to fail.

5. How did your prison experience help (or not) you with re-entry into society?  
So, I would advise a returning citizen to take advantage of any programs that are available to improve their percentage to succeed. I think its wise to have an honest view of oneself, because prison robs the robber, steals from the thief, and kills something

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

in us that have murdered, so please be willing to receive any genuine help that's offered to you, which hopefully will help you to develop a broader perspective of yourselves, and in turn improve the quality of your life.

6. What have you done that you've never done before and was it gratifying?

While in prison, I learned how to effectively communicate with staff. And ultimately presented myself in a manner that caused them to challenge any preconceived notions or prejudices that they might have towards prisoners, or at least me. And that has proven to be an unintentional skill set accidentally acquired. Because if I can get someone to listen to me, they'll probably be willing to give me an opportunity.

Something I never done before...I took a five hour plane ride from Penn. to Arizona, which ended with me being greeted by a beautiful strong black woman, my wife, and yes, it was gratifying! And that's all I'm gonna say about that.

7. What is the reality of coming home?

Last but not least, what is the reality of coming home? "RESPONSIBILITY" For me, that meant/means being true Jesus, and my beliefs. Thus being a faithful husband, a loving family member, honoring my employer, and being an ambassador for those who remain captive, that they too may gain their freedom.

---

## Avery Talmadge

1. To be honest it really wasn't a challenge for me getting back to society. Because for one, I had a lot of family support so I didn't struggle. I've always lived my life in prison as if I was in society which if you look at it prison is nothing but a society within society. We have to pay for cable, phone time, commissary and medical; yes, we have a co-pay as well on a small level. Once you hit so-

cety everything is on a bigger scale so the transition for me to society wasn't a challenge but I only can speak for myself.

2. The worldly changes that was impressive to me was how far cellular phone's have come, we can control our whole life



through our phone's which to me is cool. The most unsettling thing for me was I kept leaving my change at the store; I didn't know that you change came out on the side of the cash register, but I quickly learned.

3. Well the way I manage my transition into society is I surround myself with family. I got married since I've been home so I'm learning how to become a good husband and father.

4. My advice to any returning citizen is take your time keep your mouth shut eyes open and stay in your own lane. And before you do all that I just said remember, verily along with every hardship is relief.

5. My prison experience helped me a lot. I've learned to appreciate life and family living life the right way and just having patience with everything; don't count the day's make the day's count.

6. For me marrying my childhood sweetheart was the most gratifying thing that I've done since I've been home. My wife, outside of my family, she's my biggest cheerleader.

7. The reality of coming home for me is it's not hard out here if you genuinely have changed what's in your heart and the way you think you'll be just fine. Whatever you do take time out of the day for yourself just to reflect on life; when I'm coming home from work at night I'm always reflecting on - how this time last year I was in a prison cell.

Sincerely

Avery Talmadge

---

## Shavonne Robbins

1. What was most challenging for you in getting back into society and how did you overcome it?



I have been home for two years and I am still adjusting. I left society as a kid and I returned as an adult. It is very important to have family and friends to help with adjusting. For me I

had to learn how to adapt to being in my family's life not the other way around. There is a sense of fear about if people are going to accept you or not and this includes fitting into family life.

2. What worldly changes were most unsettling or impressive or startling when you came home?

Food comes is different-everything seems to come in a thousand different flavors. Phones and computers, all the different ways you can take photos, social media-there are so many different

(Continued on page 20)

(Continued from page 19)

ways to communicate with someone.

3. How are you managing with your transition into society?

I am managing! I take one day at a time. I do the best I can by living and learning.

4. What advice would you give to a returning citizen?

Enjoy life! Be open minded. Take advantage of opportunities, don't move too fast. Live, don't just exist.

5. How did your prison experience help (or not) you with re-entry into society?

It taught me discipline. I learned how to think before I speak. for example, count to ten before I respond or react.

6. What have you done that you've never done before and was it gratifying?

I traveled on an airplane. I really liked it.

7. What is the reality of coming home?

You're free. You can go and be. You can go on a date and even start a family.

8. Helping women re-entry:

If I had the funds I would create more programs to help women reenter. Women need more emotional support, a good place to live-they have different needs to fill than what the men have and their support is waiting for them-like having a wife.

## Janine Africa

### ON THE MOVE!

This is Janine Africa from the MOVE Organization. I am one of the MOVE 9 that was sentenced to 30-100 years in prison for a crime we did not commit. Philadelphia officials know we didn't kill that police officer on August 8, 1978 when over 500 police and firemen attacked our home to "evict" us. Me and my sister Janet AFRI-CA were released from S.C.I. Cambridge Springs prison May 25, 2019 after spending 41 years in prison.



Phila. Tribune Photo/Abdul Sulayman

The most challenging thing for me has been learning how to use all of the technology! Before being locked up, there were no cell phones, I-Pads, Key cards for transportation. It is a culture shock! I'm learning but I've got a looming way to go!

What's unsettling to me, besides the condition the world is in, is how nobody talk face-to-face anymore. Everything is by text. People can be sitting in the same room and still won't talk to each other, they text! There is very little personal interaction.

My transition into society is really easy because I have a dynamite support system - my family! My MOVE family has been there for me and the rest of the MOVE 9 since day one for 41 years and still here for me, us, now. That makes everything I have to deal with easier.

My advice to others returning to society is to take it slow. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to do too much too soon. If you don't have family, connect with someone who can and are willing to help you get what you need. Don't be afraid to ask for help because it's too much to do by yourself. Especially if you have been in prison 10 years or more.

Being in prison helped me to interact with people because you come in contact with people from all walks of life with diverse backgrounds and experiences and you get to see what they have been through and not be judgmental. And you need that when coming back out here. Prison taught me patience.

I haven't done it yet, but I will be getting on an airplane for the first time in my life!

The reality of coming home is responsibilities. You're faced with a lot more responsibilities out here than in prison. First of all you have to pay for everything. In prison you got toilet paper, feminine products, food for free. You don't have to pay rent. Things aren't standing still, people are living their lives, dealing with situations and you have to be able to jump in and go with the flow.

It's wonderful to be home, be with family and friends, but it's not a party - it's real! I'm very fortunate because of my family and would want everybody coming out to get this kind of help.

### ON THE MOVE!

Janine Africa

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

# "A Tower of Strength United with The Ancestors"



**O**n April 8, 2019, approximately 10:30 a.m. I called Human Rights Activist Patricia Vickers a/k/a "Momma Pat" Outreach Coordinator for Philadelphia based Human Rights Coalition to remind her of my upcoming court date Friday, April 12, 2009. At the same time, Momma Pat asked me did I hear the sad-hearted news about the passing of **Richard "Tut" Carter**. For a few seconds, I was lost for words and tearfully told her no silently. After I hang up with Momma Pat, a half hour later, I had to regroup my composure and call Robert "Saleem" Holbrook another Human Rights Activist and dedicated member of the Human Rights Coalition.

For fifteen minutes, on the phone, we reminisced about our WARRIOR, AMBASSADOR, HISTORIAN, and STATESMAN Mwalimu Tut a tower of strength that united with our freedom fighter ancestors such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Queen mother Moore, Ida B. Wells, Harriet Tubman, Sojour Truth, and Ella Baker. However, these freedom fighter ancestors confronted the injustices of slavery, racism, and oppression that was once perpetrated by the United States Government, in addition to the eyes of the law that considered African Americans property not human beings. At any rate, Mwalimu Tut was a vigorous global Human Rights Activist that confronted injustice of any kind. After serving in the United States military learning all kinds of technical skills Mwalimu Tut returned back to his beloved hometown Chester Pennsylvania to empower his community but was short lived resulting from the Federal Bureau of Investigation infamous Counterintelligence Program a/k/a "COINTELPRO" headed by J. Edgar Hoover. Mwalimu Tut was arrested on trumped-up state charges like our brother Geronimo ji jaga Pratt. Mwalimu Tut spent three decades in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections fighting his injustice as well as the injustices of others. In fact, Mwalimu Tut become a Pro Se litigator winning numerous civil rights complaints in federal

court on behalf of military veterans that suffer from PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] and the mistreatment of mentally ill prisoners in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

After completing three decades in prison Mwalimu Tut went home in 2005 to his beloved Chester and unselfishly started doing what he does best - that's organizing the community on a grass roots level; helping the youth at-risk; writing a column for the local newspaper; and creating a Human Rights Coalition chapter in Chester Pennsylvania. Mwalimu Tut detested injustice so much that on April 4, 2008 he launched an international letter campaign to Philadelphia Common Pleas President Judge Darnell C. Jones (before he was appointed to the federal bench in the third circuit) requesting the Judge to investigate the improprieties in my case.

On March 11, 2011, I was finally release to general population at State Correctional Institution Forest after serving ten years in solitary confinement and a few days later, on March 16, 2011 I was returned back to solitary confinement facing new criminal charges for allegedly assaulting a Deputy Superintendent and was [finally] charge by Forest County Pennsylvania State Police with one count of aggravated assault and one count of simple assault. What people don't know in this bizarre horn of a dilemma is that Mwalimu Tut persuaded me to represent myself Pro Se, mailed me a copy of the Pennsylvania Rules of Court, and established me a legal defense (which was Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) that saved me from years of prolong isolation in solitary confinement. Forest County District Attorney Elizabeth Ziegler filed a MOTION TO NOLLE PROSEQUI for the aggravated assault and simple assault but Amended disorderly conduct. On September 17, 2013, I had a bench trial in front of Forest County Common Pleas Judge Maureen Skerda and she found me guilty of disorderly conduct. However, Forest County District Attorney Elizabeth Ziegler reduced the charges to a

*(Continued on page 22)*

(Continued from page 21)

summary offense [See, CP-27-CR-0000067-2011; OTN: T 05129600, (Forest County)]

What I didn't know at the time is Mwalimu Tut did some legal research and prepared to expose Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of prolong isolation from solitary confinement. District Attorney Elizabeth Ziegler circumvented Mwalimu Tut's strategy and reduced the charges so the jury would never hear this type of scientific evidence. So, we filed a Pro Se Civil Rights complaint against the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in the Western District of Pennsylvania [See, Coffey v. Burkha';/[]'rt, Civil Action No. 12-163, (Erie)] and settled out.

In closing, Mwalimu Tut was a renaissance man with multiple talents. He was definitely our WARRIOR, AMBASSADOR, HISTORIAN, STATESMAN and tower of strength. I know Mwalimu Tut is, right now, engaging in intellectual conversations with Malcolm X, Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, John Henrik Clarke, Howard Zinn, Robert Williams, and Nina Simone trying to promote peace, love, and humanity.

Mwalimu Tut you going to be sadly missed. Thank you for your positive energy and activism.

Jerome 'Hoagie' Coffey

---

## IN HONOR & REMEMBRANCE OF RICHARD 'TUT MUHAMMAD' CARTER

(Conversation between Aaron Harun Fox & Shawn Mustafa Saunders).

HARUN: I personally met Muhammad in the mid 80's in the Masjid at Graterford prison, and at the time he wasn't there as an outside guest, that was his address. Because me and Muhammad shared similar political & religious views our conversation was naturally rooted in ideas of community activism and the upliftment of our people.

MUSTAFA: Muhammad had a strong stride in his step, I can imagine what his two-step looked like back then (laughter)...

HARUN: Oh, Absolutely! Muhammad always moved like a man on a mission.

MUSTAFA: In '2009' I received an issue of the HRC newsletter 'THE MOVEMENT' and saw that Muhammad had established an HRC chapter in Chester which is where I'm from. So, I wrote the brother a letter in reference to the work that he was doing in our community (Chester), and he wrote back. Shortly thereafter I found out that one of my homies from my neighborhood, and who was unfortunately murdered in the streets of Chester was Muhammad's son which made our correspondence at that point that much more relevant. I finally had the opportunity to meet Muhammad face-to-face in '2012' during an event at Graterford prison where at that time he was an outside guest

-(laughter), and right off the bat, our conversation was about our community. Myself and others from Chester shared our ideas in relation to community service, and some months down the line Muhammad came back in as a guest speaker for 'The Day of Responsibility' (D.O.R) and brought with him Mr. John Linder who was the Mayor of Chester at the time. In fact, wasn't Muhammad the founder of D.O.R.?

HARUN: Absolutely, it's an event that takes place annually within the PA state prisons. Muhammad saw there can be no cognitive transformation without accepting responsibility for your thoughts and actions. Before D.O.R he did the necessary work that got the court to recognize PTSD among prisoners and compelled PA D.O.C. to provide therapy. He is the co-founder of the first Veterans Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America 446 in prison. He also helped get prison blocks just for veterans, halfway houses for veterans, training for homeless veterans; including assisting numerous prisoners with getting freedom. I can go on & on about Muhammad.

MUSTAFA: Like you said, moving like a man on a mission. Muhammad gave us a template for success and left a legacy for all humanity to admire and emulate.

HARUN: Muhammad was a giver. Whatever he gave himself to he gave his all. He had an exuberance for life and an insatiable love of people and touched everyone who met him. His first concern was: (How can I help you?)

MUSTAFA: And he didn't just ask you that as some sort of hip saying, he looked you in the eyes and waited for a response from you. In conclusion, On behalf of myself, the Community of Chester, grassroots, and the incarcerated- THANK YOU! You will always live as an example of our ideas of education and the good fight for Justice and Human Rights...

HARUN: May Allah forgive him his sins and grant him the Paradise, Amen.

---



Words will not wipe  
away your tears and hugs  
may not ease the pain  
but hold onto your  
memories because forever  
they will remain.

# LAMENTATIONS OF BROTHER TUT

By Shakaboona

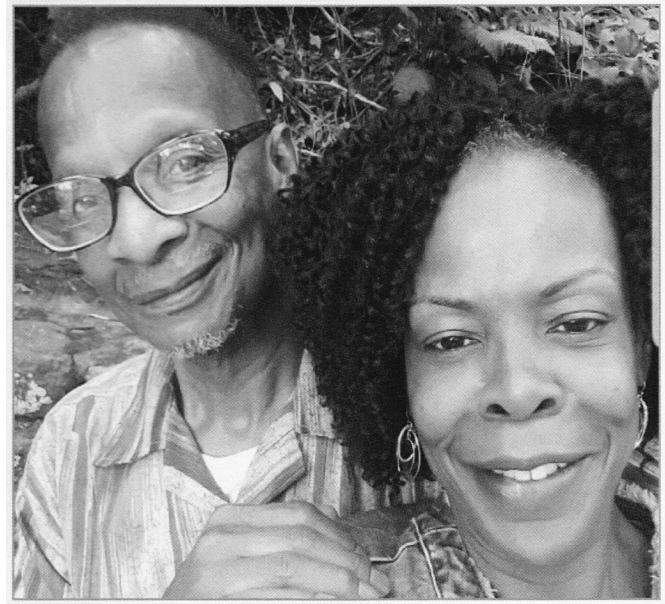
Brother Tut, so-called Richard Carter, is a black man and human rights activist well known among Pennsylvanian prisoners of conscious and social-political activists in the cities of Chester and Philadelphia, PA.

Brother Tut is such an important figure in the struggle for the human rights of prisoners and for racial justice of oppressed peoples in society, that I took for granted his mortality, and thought that he would live until a ripe old age. Sadly, I find myself lamenting the passing away of my brother, comrade, and my Elder in the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality for oppressed people in the world.

I knew of Brother Tut, a native of Chester, PA, as a freedom fighter, organizer, and teacher of liberation in the PA state penitentiary system before ever physically meeting him, and at that time he was a righteous Muslim by the name of brother Muhammad. Brother Tut's name travelled in the prison circles as being among the highly respected and effective revolutionary brothers on lock down that consistently taught other prisoners by his example of resistance against oppressive captors and by his organizing around the needs of prisoners.

Brother Tut spent 27 years in prison, and during his entire prison bid, not a day went by without Brother Tut trying to help prisoners better themselves as Men and to maintain their sanity while dealing with their conditions of confinement. Brother Tut was released from prison around 2005.

While in prison, Brother Tut was a founding member of the Human Rights Coalition (HRC) fighting for the human rights of prisoners, and as a former Vietnam War Veteran, he was one of the founders of the Veterans Groups in prison that organized to get Veteran's support groups/programs and special housing for veteran prisoners in the PADO. Once released, Brother Tut continued his activism with the HRC and Veteran's Group in the cities of Chester and Philly by doing the work of ten men -- speaking engagements, town hall meetings, conferences, investigative human rights reports, journalism, political organizing, voter registration & get-out-to vote campaigns, rallies, marches, radio interviews, and returning to prisons to help those he left behind. You name it, Brother Tut was in society doing it -- real activism work. Some of his crowning achievements are returning to college and acquiring an advanced degree, founding this state's first ever Veteran's Halfway House for veteran prisoners being released on parole, founding a HRC branch in Chester, and getting married to his dear Wife, Stephanie.



Bro. Tut & (wife) Stephanie

Brother Tut and I are close friends -- for I've known him for about 20 years -- , so I'm deeply saddened by his sudden death, and am terribly regretful that I was unable to sit down and talk with him the last time I saw him at a prison celebratory event for Veterans at SCI-Graterford in 2018. He very much wanted to talk with me and I with him, but my father had come to visit me that day from out of state and had been waiting in the visitor's lobby for hours already. I promised Brother Tut that we would get together the next time he came to prison as a guest speaker.

That would be the last time I would get to be with Brother Tut in person, for several months afterwards he would suffer from a near fatal fall leaving him paralyzed from the neck down, which subsequently resulted in his death months later. Brother Tut passed away on April 5, 2019.

Though physically Brother Tut has made his transition returning to the essence our Creator, and is among our beloved Ancestors, he remains with me and those whom dearly love him -- in our thoughts, prayers, remembrance, everlasting love for him, and through the legacy that he has left behind for generations to follow.

Libations to a Lion among us who roars no more.

We Love You Brother Tut.

Clenched fist salute.

A Luta Continua.

## LIFE AND LEGACY OF *Richard Carter*

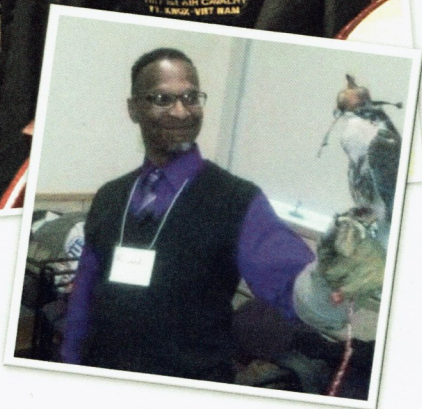
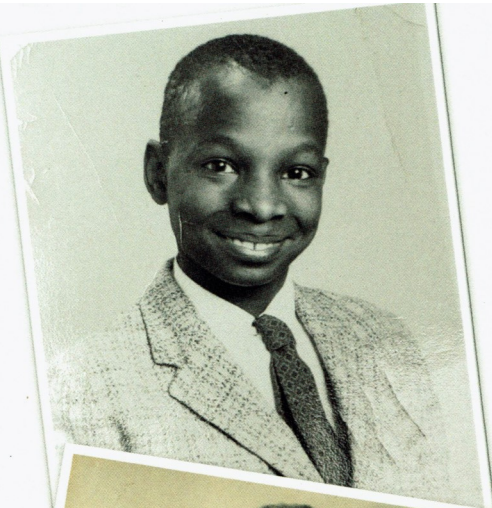
**R**ICHARD “TUT” CARTER’S journey in life began on November 8, 1948 in Chester, Pennsylvania, to the late Douglas Lee, Sr., and the late Beatrice-Irene Elzey Carter. On April 5, 2019, his journey came to a peaceful end.

Richard was raised in Chester during the height of the Civil Rights Movement and became active in his community at an early age as a member of the Chester Negro Children Society. He was given a choice to either join the United States Army or stay in a juvenile detention facility. He chose the United States Army and was eventually sent to Vietnam.

Upon his return, like many of his fellow Vietnam Veterans, Richard faced many physical and mental challenges trying to reenter mainstream society. That negative experience ultimately led him down a dark path that culminated in a lengthy prison stay. It was in prison that Richard made the decision to study law and help his fellow inmates by providing sound advice and filing legal papers on their behalf. As a result, he gained the respect of many inmates he met along the way. Upon his release from prison, Richard was determined to create a better life for himself and his family and knew that obtaining a proper education was the key to success. Although his legal debt to society was paid in full, he felt he had a moral obligation to help others.

Richard pursued his journey for positive change by enrolling into the University of Pennsylvania’s Veterans Upward Bound Program (VUB) in September 2006 and successfully completed the program in August 2007. Within two weeks of Richard’s completion from the VUB, he applied for acceptance to Widener University. He obtained a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master’s Degree in Juvenile Justice as a part of his strategy to offer alternative, preventative and remedial programs for at-risk youth and veterans reentering society.

Richard proudly served as President of the Human Rights Coalition Chester and Secretary of the Philadelphia Coalition of Ex-Offenders Support Group. He also served as residential director of Diversified Housing Solutions, an educational housing and residential program, he created to assist formerly incarcerated veterans during their integration back into society. Richard also served as a member of AHARI, Inc.’s Advisory Board, while bringing his legal expertise to the table. As a SUPERB example of a reformed prisoner, Richard served as a guest speaker for a multitude of organizations whose missions are to help further the cause of prison reform.



Although he was an accomplished activist, his greatest pleasures came from the memories created with family and friends. He beamed with joy at the opportunity to walk his daughter down the aisle at her wedding. He also spent quality time mending and solidifying relationships with his siblings and friends. His greatest thrill was in meeting the love of his life, Stephanie Booker, who would ultimately become his wife. Richard found a kindred spirit in Stephanie and was extremely attracted to her drive to provide supportive services to at-risk and homeless veterans. Richard and Stephanie were knit together in mutual admiration and respect for each other, making a powerful team in their shared mission to fight for veterans. The love, understanding, and support to a husband's well-being are the greatest attributes a woman can give a man and Stephanie unselfishly gave to Richard without hesitation and unconditionally.

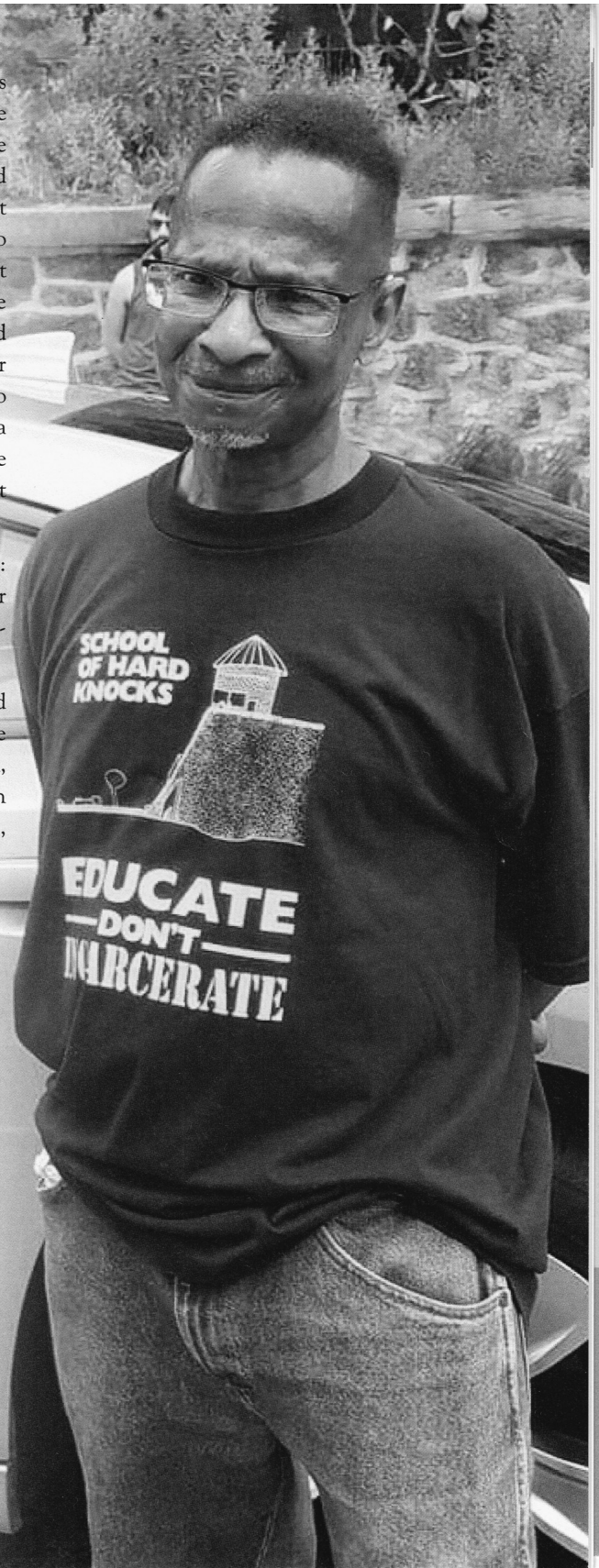
In addition to his parents, Richard was preceded in death by: siblings, Douglas Lee, Jr., Ruth Carter Beauford, Norman Carter and Sterling Carter; his loving son, Richard Brown; and son-in-law, Troy Merritt.

Richard's life will continue to be celebrated by: his loving and devoted wife, Stephanie; daughter, Malika; stepdaughters, Desiree and Dejana; grandsons, Eddy and Richard; great-grandchildren, Elijah, Raniaha and Richard; siblings Philip, John, Dave, Edith and Larry; sister-in-law, Catherine; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

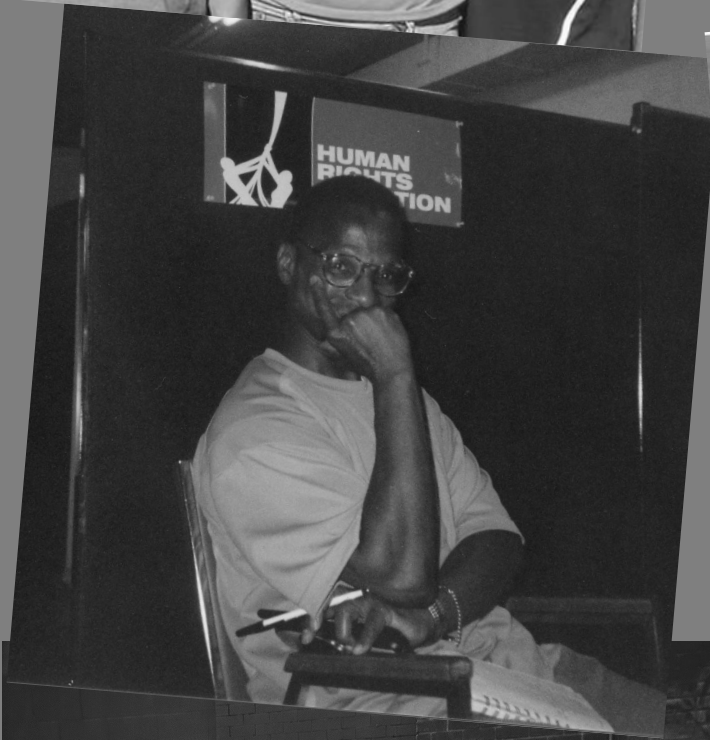
#### *Military Awards Decorations:*

- Purple Heart
- Silver Star
- Bronze Star
- South Vietnamese Medal of Honor (usually native recipients)
- Medal of Valor
- United States Medal of Honor
- Vietnam Service Medal
- National Defense Service Medal
- Sharpshooter Badge w/Rifle Bar
- Vietnam Combat Medal w/Device 1960
- Air Medal
- Aircraft Crewman Badge of Honor
- Vietnam Gallantry Cross w/Palm
- Phoenix Award from Chester Branch of NAACP
- Guiding Light Community Award, City of Philadelphia

*Peacefully submitted, The Family*



# Richard 'Tut' Carter RIP



**Sudoku Hard Puzzle 547**

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

Answers to Sudoku puzzle on page 20

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution/ID (if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation Amount:      \_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00 - \$25.00  
                                      \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00  
                                      \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 or above

Families, we rely on member support, any gift you make above \$25.00 helps us a great deal. You may simply log onto our website at [www.HRCcoalition.org](http://www.HRCcoalition.org), click on "MENU" and click the "DONATE" button.

If donating by check, please make checks payable to the Human Rights Coalition and mail donations to HRC, P.O. Box 34580, Phila., PA 19101, ATTENTION: Charitable Donations.

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

# Human Rights Matters



## They Survived Solitary Confinement. Now They're Fighting to End It.

By Victoria Law, Truthout  
August 12, 2019

### They Survived Solitary Confinement. Now They're Fighting to End It.

For nine and a half months, Lydia Thornton was locked into her cell nearly 24 hours a day. All of her meals were slid through a slot in the cell's steel door. She was allowed outside to shower three times each week. Through cinderblock walls, she could hear women in adjoining cells screaming for hours on end. Sometimes they threatened to kill themselves, a threat often followed by an eerie silence.

This was administrative segregation, or "ad seg," in New Jersey's prison system. Ad seg is one of the many official terms for solitary confinement; other systems call it punitive segregation, special housing units and keep lock. Regardless of the name, the reality is that people spend nearly 24 hours locked in their cell each day with little to no human contact.

Thornton has been out of prison since 2015. Since then, she's been fighting to ensure that others don't go through that same experience.

In June 2019, six years after Thornton's experience in solitary confinement, New Jersey lawmakers passed the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, limiting solitary to 20 consecutive days or 30 days' total during a 60-day period. The law also prevents certain "vulnerable populations," such as people under age 21, those over age 65, pregnant people, people with mental or physical disabilities, and LGBTQ people, from being placed in isolation at all. In addition, under the law, prison staff can only place someone in solitary if they are determined to be a threat to themselves or others, not simply for violating prison rules. The New Jersey Department of Corrections will be required to provide documentation and data about its use of solitary.

More than 80,000 people are locked in solitary confinement in the U.S., and the practice is finally garnering more public attention and outrage. Meanwhile, activists, including formerly incarcerated people who have experienced isolation themselves, are pushing for laws that limit the amount of time in solitary both as a way to immediately stop ongoing torture and as a stepping stone to larger criminal legal reforms. Their efforts have also pushed the issue into becoming a talking point among (some) Democratic presidential candidates, with Elizabeth Warren, Joe Biden, Cory Booker, Pete Buttigieg, John Hickenloop-

er and Beto O'Rourke publicly denouncing it as torture and calling for limits to time spent in isolation.

Primarily, however, reforms are being advocated at the state level. Some clear victories have already emerged. For example, New Jersey's Isolated Confinement Restriction Act was originally introduced and passed by the legislature in 2016. Then-Gov. Chris Christie vetoed the bill, calling it an "ill-informed, politically motivated press release." The bill was reintroduced and signed into law after Gov. Phil Murray — who campaigned on criminal legal reforms including bail reform, marijuana legalization and a reexamination of mandatory minimum sentencing — took office.

### New York's "HALT Solitary" Legislation Quietly Dies

In New York, a similar bill did not fare as well. New York prisons currently have 2,540 people in dedicated solitary units (called Special Housing Units or SHUs) and an estimated 1,000 in keeplock, or 23-hour lockdown in their own cells.

After six years of organizing, advocates held high hopes for the passage of the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, which would limit stints in isolation to 15 consecutive days or 20 days in a given 60-day period. It would also create alternative units for people who, according to authorities, needed to be separated from others for a longer period of time. These alternative units, or Residential Rehabilitation Units (RRUs) would separate people from general population, but would allow them six hours each day for out-of-cell programming and another hour of recreation. HALT would have applied to state prisons as well as local jails. Jails that hold less than 500 people would be exempt from having to create RRUs.

By the last week of the state's legislative session, both the Assembly and Senate versions had enough votes to pass. In addition to rallies and press conferences, advocates with the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) launched an eight-day hunger strike to press legislative leaders to bring the bill to a vote. Meanwhile, Gov. Andrew Cuomo publicly voiced his opposition to the bill, stating that it would require spending \$300 million to build new prison cells. It was an assertion that advocates contested, noting that the governor's original budget proposal contained \$69 million in capital costs and \$10 million in operating expenses for his own solitary reform proposal.

Instead, legislative leaders Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Carl E. Heastie reached a compromise with Governor Cuomo. Under the compromise, Governor Cuomo will issue regulations prohibiting adolescents, pregnant people, and people with disabilities from being placed in solitary. In addition, placement in a specially designated solitary unit, such as the SHU, will be capped at 30 days.

*(Continued on page 29)*

(Continued from page 28)

The regulations only extend to state prisons, not local jails. This means that people like Layleen Polanco, who died nine days into a 20-day solitary sentence at Rikers Island, New York's island-jail complex, or Kalief Browder, who died by suicide after spending two of his three years at Rikers Island in solitary, would not be protected by the governor's regulations. In 2015, the Board of Correction, New York City's penal oversight board, passed a rule limiting solitary to 30 consecutive days or 60 days total during any six-month period. But people in other jails have no time limits on their stay in isolation.

Cuomo has not yet publicly released his solitary regulations. The state budget that ultimately passed contained \$14.2 million in operating costs, largely for 153 full-time staff of solitary units and another \$70 million for projects related to solitary confinement reform. But news of the legislative compromise has already spread throughout the state's prison system. The campaign has received letters from people currently in solitary confinement as well as calls from their outside family members. "Everybody is heartbroken and disappointed," Victor Pate, statewide organizer for the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement, told *Truthout*.

"We want people out of their cells the same way that the United Nations has said that more than 15 days in solitary is torture," said Roger Clark, a member of CAIC and advocacy group VO-CAL-NY, referencing the 2015 Mandela rules. Clark spent five years at the Southport Correctional Facility, a dedicated 23-hour lockdown prison. Both he and Pate see the fight to limit solitary confinement as one of the many ways to end mass incarceration.

But thanks to organizers' efforts, at least one electoral hopeful has also made solitary his talking point. Janos Marton, a former advocate with the #CloseRikers campaign and now campaign manager for the ACLU's Smart Justice Campaign, is running for Manhattan district attorney. Among his campaign pledges is a promise to drastically limit solitary for all people awaiting trial in Manhattan. (As of 2019, one-third of the people in New York City's jails are from Manhattan.)

"As Manhattan DA, I would have a policy that anytime a defendant is being held in non-compliance with the Mandela rules, or whatever version of HALT is passed, I would drop bail [requirements] against that defendant, so hopefully they could be removed from the jail system," Marton told *Truthout*. If dropping bail requirements is not possible, Marton says he would dismiss the criminal charges. "That might seem controversial to some people, but I feel that it's a moral imperative to not torture people in solitary," he said.

Marton recalls touring Rikers Island and seeing the segregation units for himself. "I wouldn't last two days in those cells."

### Speaking Out About Trauma

Pate noted that the devastation caused by solitary doesn't disappear once a person is released. "I've been home 23 years," he

pointed out. "I'm not completely healed yet." Speaking about his experiences and organizing to end these policies have been instrumental in his healing process. "if you don't talk about it, you don't get better," Pate counsels people who are currently incarcerated or nearing release.

But not every person is ready to do that. Many bury their trauma. Thornton recalls a woman in her mid-twenties confined two cells down from her in New Jersey's isolation unit. The woman, Thornton told *Truthout*, had mental health issues and had already been in ad seg for a year before Thornton arrived. The woman often punched or banged her head against the walls. One day, as she passed Thornton's door for her thrice-weekly shower, she put her hand through the food slot. It was swollen from continually hitting the cinderblock walls.

Instinctively, Thornton stroked her hand in sympathy. When she saw the woman's eyes well with tears, she apologized, assuming that her touch had caused more pain. When the woman returned from the shower, Thornton was waiting by her cell door to apologize again. As the woman slowly walked past Thornton's cell, she replied, "That's the first time anyone has touched me except in violence in two years." The woman was still in segregation nine and a half months later when Thornton was moved to general population.

The woman is now out of prison. Thornton has occasionally seen her on the streets, but says that the woman refuses to talk about her time in isolation.

That's not unusual, says Brian Nelson, prisoners' rights coordinator at Chicago's Uptown People's Law Center. Nelson spent 23 years in solitary; 12 were at the infamous (and now-closed) Tamms supermax prison. Now he shares his story to push Illinois lawmakers to pass the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act to limit isolation to no more than 10 consecutive days during any 180-day period continues.

In Illinois, people can be sent to segregation for a variety of reasons. In 2011, over 500 people were sent to segregation for damage or misuse of property. Another 300 were isolated for "intimidation or threats" and another 150 for drug or drug paraphernalia possession. But even pettier acts can result in extreme isolation: That same year, 1,500 segregation sentences were imposed for unauthorized movement, 1,300 for insolence and 800 for non-dangerous contraband.

Nelson knows dozens of people who have spent time in solitary. They all support the Illinois bill, he told *Truthout*, but virtually no one wants to relive the trauma by telling their stories publicly. He's one of the few who will, but every time he does, he spends the rest of the day wrestling with suicidal feelings. That's not the only after-effect of solitary. Nelson has a hard time being around other people, sequestering himself in an office upstairs at the 15-person Uptown People's Law Office. He hasn't gone to his family's house for holidays in over three years. He can't ride public transportation. And he remains devastated knowing that so many other people are still held under similar conditions.

(Continued on page 30)

(Continued from page 29)

Nelson and Gregory Koger, who spent six consecutive years in solitary starting at age 17, have started the Prison Liberation Collective to not only organize against solitary and mass incarceration, but to help survivors of solitary address the trauma of long-term isolation.

### Challenging Solitary in Court

In 2016, six people currently in solitary have filed a federal lawsuit challenging Illinois's use of solitary as a violation of the Eighth Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment and 14th Amendment right to due process.

The six men have spent between six months and 17 years in extreme isolation. (Since the suit has been filed, one person has been released from isolation, though he remains in prison.) Now, they are demanding that the Illinois Department of Corrections implement policies based on the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Standards, which restrict solitary only for reasons pertaining to discipline, security, ongoing investigation of misconduct or crime, and protection from harm, and then only for the briefest period of time.

In March 2017, a federal court ruled that the six Illinois prisoners had stated a claim for unconstitutional conditions of confinement and that the hearings held by the prison were violations of their constitutional right to due process. Since then, the Uptown People's Law Center has had experts tour six of the state's prisons; their reports will be submitted as part of their September motion to have the lawsuit certified as a class-action suit.

Alan Mills, director of the Uptown People's Law Center and co-counsel on the suit, says the fight to end solitary plays a dual role: It is both a chance to reduce harm for people behind bars and also part of a larger fight to rethink the criminal legal system. "Just like society hides many of its problems by putting people in prison, prisons hide many problems by putting people in solitary," he told *Truthout*.

For example, Mills noted that the criminalization of people with serious mental illness frequently results in their incarceration rather than genuine efforts at mental health treatment. Similarly, prisons often place people with serious mental illness in solitary confinement rather than offering them treatment. In challenging solitary confinement, Mills and other advocates say they are challenging the logic on which the larger system of punishment is built.

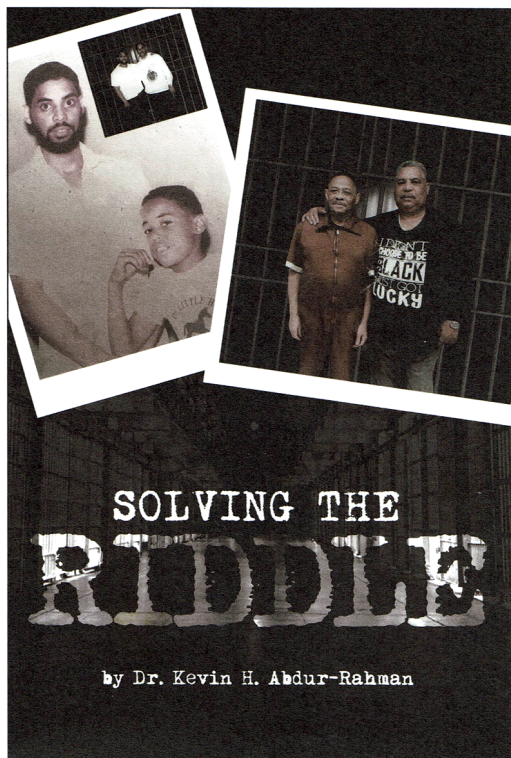
"What we're really doing is rethinking ways that we deal with prisons and punishment as a whole," Mills said.

**FROM:** <https://truthout.org/articles/they-survived-solitary-confinement-now-theyre-fighting-to-end-it/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=d4dab459-7ae9-4535-a1df-1e7a59d98281>

You Still Have	into my cell
A Lane	sympathetically
	telling me I vio-
	lated
Here I am I	
landed in jail	my parole my
	back
now i know	time will be rein-
what it feels	stated
like to lose	
Your head	The only silver
become a tail	lining my an-
a strange	gelic
whisper comes	mother came to
over me "you	visit me you
still have a lane"	just had a birth-
	day
only your body	happy belated
is incarcerated	
talk about your	why do i feel
pain	so misguided
	insignificant
I need to admit	underdog
there was a rob-	undermind
bery	underestimated
attempt my part-	I don't matter
ner	
didn't make it	
	By: The Olympian
Right now my	
lawyers leaning	

# Solving the Riddle

by Kevin Rahman



## Solving the Riddle

**Author:** Kevin Rahman

**Format:** 6x9 Paperback

**Pages:** 190

**Paperback Price:** \$16.95

**ISBN (pbk):** 978-1-64462-116-5

Anyone wanting an autographed copy  
of my book can go to my website  
[www.solvingtheriddlellc.com](http://www.solvingtheriddlellc.com) and pay through  
PayPal to get an autographed copy.

**Contact:** Call 866-315-2708 for more information

## Book Summary

Dr. Abdur-Rahman's life journey took on an unusual evolutionary process from delinquency to adult court, long-term incarceration, rehabilitation, and a progressive and productive life. From Pop Warner quarterback to one of the most recognized drug dealers in Philadelphia and one of the most influential people on the campus of one of America's most historic universities.

To solve the riddle of life's journey, there are questions that must be answered, mysteries that must be solved, and meaning applied to both.

In this book, Dr. Abdur-Rahman has presented a case study of an at-risk youth and ex-felon that demonstrated the example that, if given healthy information, one can avoid and even transcend the environmental influences and dysfunction that create negative outcomes. In addition, he has given working professionals in the field of delinquency prevention ideas that can help them develop their own successful methodologies and has proven a vital need for "Clean Slate" legislation to create a second-chance forum, so other successfully transitioned ex-felons do not have to hide their past and employers can feel comfortable hiring ex-felons. You will hear him tell stories about situations and individual relationships, each giving hints to the riddle that he had to solve for himself.

## Marketing & Distribution

The marketing and publicity campaign for "Solving the Riddle" is being undertaken by the Page Publishing marketing department. Promotion of the book includes the dissemination and delivery of a high volume of press releases, various Twitter and Facebook postings, and assorted online advertising campaigns.

"Solving the Riddle" is available for wholesale order through the Ingram Content Network.

## About the Author

Dr. Kevin Abdur-Rahman is a Philadelphia native who grew up in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. He attended Roosevelt Junior High and is a 1970 graduate of Germantown High School.

During his early development, Dr. Rahman excelled in sports especially basketball. However somehow, as a teen, he was attracted to the life that was the streets of Philadelphia. After sacrificing many of his young years to this lifestyle as well as spending ten of those years in prison, Dr. Rahman embraced the correct concept of the religion of Islam, which helped him transform his thoughts and ideas much in the same way of Malcolm X and many others.

page publishing

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

PAGE 31

Summer (ISSUE # 38)

## **HRC NEW MEMBER FORM**

**Who We Are:** The Human Rights Coalition (HRC) is a grass roots organization of prisoners' families, prisoners, returned citizens and supporters. HRC exists to advocate for prisoner's rights, to support families coping with the stress and hardships of having a loved one incarcerated, to challenge the punitive retributive nature of the penal system, and to work to transform that to a model of rehabilitation and successful reintegration to society. Our members and allies—both inside and outside the prison walls—share a common conviction in our hearts to fight injustice, and have no ulterior motive of personal profit to do so. We are truly motivated by the strength of our belief that we can build a movement for collective liberation and win!

**How We Started:** HRC was formed in 2001 by people held in solitary confinement at SCI-Greene, a SuperMax prison in Southwestern PA. The Human Rights Coalition had its first meeting outside of prison walls on June 4, 2001 at the house of the mother of one of the men who helped conceive the idea of HRC. The meeting was small and a mix of prisoners' family members and former prisoners. Many of those who attended felt powerless in the face of the prison administration and its institutional discrimination, abuse, and torture. Yet the lives and well being of their loved ones were at stake – something they could not turn their backs to. At the end of the meeting, however, there was a consensus that a great deal of powerful energy is lying untapped, in the constituency of former prisoners and prisoners' families in this country, and if mobilized this powerful energy could transform the prison system as we know it.

**Our Vision:** The prison system is based on a foundation of punishment, exploitation, corruption, and slavery. Most of the people in prison are poor, Black and Brown, urban, under-educated, and unemployed or under-employed before they were locked down. The modern prison reflects all the social inequalities in our society, and it does not work in its current incarnation. HRC's ultimate goal is to dismantle and abolish the prison system and replace it with a system based on accountability, safety, fairness, and resilience, while focusing on healing instead of punishing.

**Our Structure:** We are a community-based organization without paid staff. We are committed and dedicated organizers, but we are not lawyers or professional legal aid. We are comprised of prisoners, their family members and loved ones, returned citizens, and supporters. We have an Advisory Council (AC) of incarcerated people who are our inside members of HRC. Our AC guides our work by reporting on conditions inside the prison, connecting us with family members to build our base, strategizing for campaigns, and making important decisions about actions, events, coalitions and legislation to support.

The Human Rights Coalition has two chapters on the outside:

- HRC-Philly meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month, 6-8pm, Philadelphia, PA (simply send us an email for the location)

Email: [Info@hrcoalition.org](mailto:Info@hrcoalition.org); Facebook: Human Rights Coalition PA ; Website at: [www.hrcoalition.org](http://www.hrcoalition.org)

- HRC-Pittsburgh/FedUP!

Email: [sd4hrc@gmail.com](mailto:sd4hrc@gmail.com) Phone: [570-763-9504](tel:570-763-9504)

HRC is also a founding member of CADBI (Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration) a coalition building power to end LIFE without parole in PA.

- CADBI meets the third Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm, Mosaic Community Church, 51st & Sansom. Philadelphia PA

Email: [CADBIphilly@gmail.com](mailto:CADBIphilly@gmail.com) Phone: 267-606-0324

**Our Work:** HRC is currently working on two central campaigns: 1. to abolish long-term solitary confinement and 2. to abolish death by incarceration (life without parole). We are working to advance legislation to limit the use of solitary, and to get parole eligibility for lifers after 15 years. We collaborate on these campaigns with the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI), Decarcerate PA, Let's Get Free, Fight for Lifers, Global Women's Strike and several other organizations. HRC seeks to elevate the voices of prisoners and their families by publishing a quarterly newsletter, called 'The Movement', which is sent to 800+ prisoners throughout PA. HRC monitors and advocates against abuse inside the prisons through the maintenance of an Abuse Log and by corresponding with prisoners. HRC works to strengthen our movement, our organization's base, and our coalitions by taking collective action, organizing events for prisoner's families, doing political education, and fighting back against political repression for those struggling for their human rights.

# **THE MOVEMENT**

FOR EVERY PERSON READING THIS:

## HRC Needs Your Help!

The Human Rights Coalition is currently looking to strengthen our work by expanding our base of active members. We need your help to expand our organization and build a movement strong enough to abolish prison slavery and end mass incarceration.

We want to reach out to and connect with family members of incarcerated people. If you are incarcerated and have any loved ones on the outside that you think might be interested in joining HRC...

**Send them this form!**



If you want to **JOIN THE HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION**,  
fill out this form and mail to: **ATTN: NEW MEMBERSHIP**  
**Human Rights Coalition, PO Box 34580, Philadelphia PA 19101**

**OR**

Email us at: [Info@hrcoalition.org](mailto:Info@hrcoalition.org)

**OR**

Visit our website at: [www.hrcoaliton.org](http://www.hrcoaliton.org)

**OR**

Facebook

**OR**

Attend our regular meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

**HELP US BUILD THE MOVEMENT FOR PRISONER'S HUMAN RIGHTS**

I want to be a Member of the Human Rights Coalition

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What aspect of our work do you think you can help with?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I am in agreement with HRC's vision and pledge to support their work to the best of my abilities.

Your Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

## Your Legal Corner

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

### NATION OF ISLAM WINS PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION AGAINST THE PADOX POLICY BANNING ISLAMIC FEZZES

On August 8, 2018, "in the case of Marshall v. Corbett", the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania recommended GRANTING a preliminary injunction against the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOX) that will require the PADOX defendants to allow prisoners to purchase and wear Nation Of Islam (NOI) Fezzes while incarcerated.

While incarcerated at the State Correctional Institution at Rockview (SCI-Rockview) at Bellefonte, PA in 2013, Kerry X Marshall ("Kerry X") filed a pro se civil rights complaint that challenged the PADOX's DC-ADM 819 policy on religious headgear, which states that "religious headgear must fit flush to the head". The plaintiff Kerry X claimed the PADOX and SCI-Rockview officials implemented and enforced a discriminatory religious policy that banned the purchase & wearing of NOI Islamic Fez prayer caps and banned the observance of NOI Holy Days throughout the PADOX system.

The defendants PADOX filed a motion to dismiss Kerry X's complaint on September 19, 2014. The court recommended that the defendants' motion to dismiss be granted in part and denied in part on August 11, 2015. On June 24, 2016, the defendants filed a motion for summary judgment. Five days later, Kerry X filed a motion for preliminary injunction. On November 28, 2016, the court referred the case to its Prison Litigation Settlement Program to facilitate settlement discussions between the parties. A settlement in the matter could not be reached.

On June 20, 2018, Kerry X filed a motion to "enforce the due process [clause]" and "end the inordinate delay of plaintiff's motion for preliminary injunction." On July 13, 2018, the court denied the defendants' motion for summary judgment as moot and declared the defendants were not entitled to "Qualified Immunity" as it was clearly established law that prisoners possessed a constitutional right of group religious observance. On July 26, 2018, the court granted Kerry X's request for counsel, appointing attorney Alexandra T. Morgan-Kurtz of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP) to represent him for the limited purpose of conducting an evidentiary hearing on Kerry X's motion for preliminary injunction.

On October 25, 2018, the court conducted an evidentiary hearing on Kerry X's motion for preliminary injunction. Following the evidentiary hearing, the court issued an order for the parties to file supplemental briefing in light of the fact that Kerry X had filed his motion for preliminary injunction pro se but had since obtained appointed counsel. The court then stayed the case on December 11, 2018 to facilitate further settlement discussions and appointed the ADR Coordinator for this court to act as a mediator. On April 17, 2019, the ADR Coordinator informed the court that settlement efforts had been unsuccessful.

In his motion for preliminary injunction, Kerry X sought a preliminary injunctive relief under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) requiring the defendants to allow him to purchase and wear NOI fezzes, observe NOI holidays, and have a NOI service separate from the Muslim service already offered at the prison.

The court found that Kerry X has established a reasonable likelihood of success on the merits to his fez claim that the PADOX's policy barring him from wearing a Nation Of Islam fez violates his rights under RLUIPA, and that the policy substantially burdens Kerry X's religious practice. The court further found that the defendants PADOX did not meet the burden of showing that the religious policy banning NOI fezzes were in the furtherance of a compelling governmental interest and that the policy is the least restrictive means of furthering that interest.

On August 8, 2019, Chief Magistrate Judge Susan E. Schwab, of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, specifically recommended that the court issue a preliminary injunction requiring the PADOX to allow Kerry X to purchase & wear a Nation Of Islam fez prayer cap while incarcerated, but that the motion be denied in all other respects.

The parties were further placed on notice that pursuant to Local Rule 72.3 any party may object to a magistrate judge's proposed findings, recommendations or report addressing a motion or matter described in 28 U.S.C. Sec. 636 (b)(1)(B)...within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy thereof.

Meanwhile, Kerry X is currently preparing for the summary judgment and trial phases of this civil matter and is expecting great success. See: Kerry X Marshall v. Tom Corbett, et al., Civil No.: 3:13-CV- 02961.

Submitted By: Human Rights Coalition

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

### **How does one choose to forgive?**

If an offender can't earn forgiveness how does forgiveness and healing begin? If you've been watching the Redemption Project show, like I am, you have to admit that you're learning about violent crimes and how victims, their families AND the offender ALL ache for forgiveness, understanding, and closure. We all have questions.

My fiancée Justine McDonald, was murdered Oct. 25, 2001. Almost 18 years later, I still don't know or understand why. I don't understand why her killer has never been charged. I ache inside every day knowing the most precious woman I have ever known was robbed of her life at 21 years old. But if given the chance, I would pay to sit with her killer to ask the questions I am aching to know.

I wonder, does the family of my victim feel this way? Can I offer them some sort of closure? Can I give them solace?

I want to focus on victims. When a victim becomes an offender, does anyone care that this person was once a victim? Does anyone care that I was once a victim? Many prisoners were once victims of crime. I am not trying to negate the debt we owe, or the things we are responsible for. What I'm trying to say is that when I was a child-victim, no one cared but me and my family. When a victim turns into an offender, does anyone ask WHY? Why did this happen? What could have been done to prevent it? There is so much good in prisoners who have been deemed irredeemable.

I was a child, a victim of sexual assault by an adult who was supposed to love me, protect me. I grew to become a very immature young man who killed a man who exposed himself to me and sexually propositioned me. But as I watch this show and see the family members of victims hug the person who killed their loved one, I can't help but to be inspired.

My name is Rob Pezzeca #DX1148 I am a victim, I am an offender, I've taken a life, but I am not my crime. I am so much more. We lifers are so much more.

Come meet us and see why. I welcome all comments.

Rob Pezzeca, Reformed Lifer

Smart Communications/PADOC  
Rob Pezzeca/#DX-1148/ SCI-Dallas  
PO Box 33028  
St Petersburg, FL 33733  
\*\*\*\*\*

### **My name is Derrick**

**(Buck) Davis** and I'm the Founder of YouthMindsMatter. YouthMindsMatter is a nonprofit operating under a 501(c)(3) articles of incorporation, and we work directly with at risk youth from impoverished communities in which most of us can relate to (see [www.youthmindsmatter.org](http://www.youthmindsmatter.org)).

I'm currently incarcerated at SCI Dallas. I was sentenced to life without parole for a homicide in which I committed when I was 17 years old, which makes me a juvenile lifer. On May 3rd, I was resentenced to a term of 21 years to life, and I'll be eligible to see parole in 2027.

My reasoning for writing this article is to express the dire need for the men and women behind these walls to become more active in their fight for freedom.

While going through my resentencing process I noticed how a vast number of prisoners would mention the fact that they want to give back to their communities, and help undo some of the destruction they once aided in. However, the majority of these individuals were waiting until they've received relief in order to do so.

My hopes are to encourage the men and women to become active *now*. Society needs to see who/what we consist of today opposed to who/what we were when we entered these hellholes. Not only will this serve as a contribution to our communities by providing a voice that's been muted for way too long, but this will also provide those on the other side of these walls fighting on OUR BEHALF a much-needed assist.

We can spew facts regarding an unjust system we are all being subjected to in some form for days on end, but we need to ask ourselves along with those around us; what "exactly" are we doing to change that. As Denzel Washington once said... "Don't confuse movement with progress, because you can run in place and not be going anywhere. So, are you moving? And if so, who are you taking with you"?



Smart Communications/PADOC  
Derrick Davis KF3839/SCI Dallas  
PO BOX 33028  
ST Petersburg, FL 33733  
\*\*\*\*\*

*(Continued on page 36)*

(Continued from page 35)

**I, Anthony Martin**, have had the worst kind of crime committed against me while in custody of PA Department of Correction Facilities. They tried to kill me, but instead they permanently, severely, damaged my brain. Worse, I was robbed of my desire to even want to do for myself for 33 years while in Restricted Housing Units (THE HOLE). Prisoners are locked in extremely small cells 23 hours a day, weekly, and 24 hours on weekends and holidays.

This is about continuous Cruel & Unusual Punishment while in the custody of PA Dept. of Correction. I was brutally beaten at SCI Dallas, November 1989, and hospitalized. My skull was cracked open where I received multiple-stitches all over my head. When returned to prison, I was placed back in their underground dungeon in complete darkness under horrific health conditions where I was brutally beaten. Other inmates filed complaints for me to the courts. SCI Dallas was ordered by a Judge to remove me from the dungeon. They kept my family from seeing me by fabricating that I didn't want to see them. Most important, after the beat down, the Pennsylvania prison system transferred me to out-of-state Federal Prisons, such as California.

I was arrested for a General Robbery that I didn't commit. I served 37 years and was released April 18, 2018; I was 18 [when I first went to prison] and now I'm 57 this year.

My sister took me for a general medical check up on April 30, 2018. Blood work was done and I was told I suffer from post-traumatic stress. I was sent to Scheie Eye Institute for eye glasses and examined, but they couldn't get a diagnosis. I was sent to Penn Medicine, the Department of Neurology & Ophthalmology for MRI of my Brain. On June 6, 2018 I was diagnosed with severe brain damage from blunt blows to the head which is causing me to be legally blind, August 8, 2018.

The Statue of Limitations may have run out, but not necessarily because I just found out about the injury. I never receive medical treatment while in prison. I also served over 7 years pass the maximum time [to be released]. I want people to know how the PA Prison System allowed CO's to break us as Black Men. They told my family, "We're Going to Kill Him or Break Him." This is when young men were being arrested and put away for money on whatever charges was created through DA's Office.

Every PA and out-of-state prison miss-treated me, but I walked out alive and can tell my story. My story is all I have, My Life living in PA Dept. of Corrections Facilities. Family is important.

Contact: martinmary1959@gmail.com

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Much thanks I-HOPE,,,,Benner**

I, along with Paulette Carrington had the opportunity to attend the yearly banquet at SCI Benner on Sunday, July 28, 2019.

I was able to read the three core demands of CADBI (Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration) which are as follows,

1. Parole eligibility after no more than 15 years.
2. Presumptive parole, that is, people are paroled at their date of eligibility, unless authorities can prove serious unresolved disciplinary infractions. AND,
3. A maximum sentencing law that will stop the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from incarceration people for indefinite periods of time.

It was amazing to see the men and finally put a face with a name. The food was off the hook, after the meal there was a limited amount of time to communicate. As I mentioned in my speech, we at CADBI are devoted in getting the laws changed.

Ms. Carrington "s speech was about, encouragement, hope and faith, it was enriching and powerful,,,, stating she had done 40 years behind the bars, released due to the 'Juvenal lifer bill' pertaining to 17 year old and younger.

Both, Ms Carrington and myself encouraged the 'lifers' to apply for commutation.

Hoping to see you next year,,,,,,out side!

Much thanks and appreciation to the President of I-HOPE along with Andrew Sarra (Corrections Activities Manager).

Yvonne Newkirk  
Paulette Carrington  
\*\*\*\*\*

From: Kimberly Joynes

Date: 08/08/2019

### **Subject: Violence Reduction Strategy**

The protocol for this policy, Violence Reduction Strategy, is dangerous to the residents [in prison] because *everyone* will be treated as a threat, instead of as a potential or possible threat. The risk factor equation for everyone is high, there is no low risk or no risk in this policy.

I've lived like this over twenty years ago and I can't handle life this way again. The trauma of living on alert all the time is like being in a war; or a war torn poverty area. A lot of the people here came from that [environment], but we had escape routes; there will be none once this protocol is implemented.

(Continued on page 37)

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

I write this emotionally hurt, angry, and fearful. This institution has the knowledge, awareness, and staff to avoid the situation we are in now; but, chooses to pass the buck at the expense of the prisoner's well being.

I pray, I pray, and I pray that I am released soon for we are going backwards in prison reform, we are back into prisoner control by any means the individual guard deems necessary, whether wrong or appropriate.

One prisoner was allowed to hold other prisoners hostage with her violent behaviors and she recruited another person by violence and sex, together they were allowed to cause chaos. Every officer, unit manager, and administrative staff knew; but, security opted for the prisoners to fight it out. And when that so called peer pressure solution didn't work and the chaos climaxed, now they want to implement whipping everyone as a possible behavioral threat. Here we go again. Where is the department of justice when we need them?

We were locked down for almost twenty four hours for a situation management chose to ignore and now this protocol is the end result.

I am crushed and saddened deeply.

Also, The security staff need to stop encouraging the resident's to fight as a solution instead of Staff intervention. Promoting violence amongst prisoners is not the solution for staff frustration and laziness. Some of us have been trained in Conflict Resolutions and Wellness Treatment Alternatives to assist the staff with the massive issues that we as prisoners have. Coping solutions work better than pepper spray and body slamming. We need more constructive resources inside of SCI-Cambridge. We can use the help of outside sources also. Hoping for the best.

Peace.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mr. Kerry Shakaboona Marshall  
SCI-Rockview/#BE-7826  
Box-A  
Bellefonte, PA 16823

August 6, 2019

### **RE: Violence Reduction Strategy Policy**

Secretary Wetzel:

Hello. I am writing you concerning a recent July 10, 2019 Memo signed by Superintendent M. Garman pertaining to a stated "Violence Reduction Strategy" instituted at SCI-Rockview.

The said memo on Violence Reduction does not reference the DC-ADM Policy that it is supposedly derived from nor does the memo have your signature on it.

My question to you is whether the Violence Reduction Strategy memo is valid? If the memo is valid, then when was the Violence Reduction Strategy promulgated under the DC-ADM Policy. If in fact the Violence Reduction Strategy is a PA Department of Corrections (PDOC) policy, then what is its policy number and what date was it made policy? And will you forward me a copy of the Violence Reduction Strategy PDOC policy?

If the Violence Reduction Strategy is a new PDOC policy, then I would like to state that it throws individual responsibility and accountability of incarcerated citizens out of the window to be replaced with collective responsibility and accountability for the imposition of unfair and arbitrary group punishment of the act(s) committed by an individual incarcerated citizen(s). This strategy of group punishment for collective control of people -- no matter the name you choose to call it today -- may have had a degree of success when it was employed by the Nazi and Japanese in its concentration prisons against American prisoners of war during the European World War II, where if a single American prisoner had taken some food to eat then the entire group of American prisoners hands were beaten with metal rods (or) if a single American prisoner should escape or have attempted to escape then the entire group of American prisoners are executed to death simply because they did not control (i.e., police) the action taken by one individual prisoner.

Such strategy now adopted and employed by the PA Department of Corrections against American incarcerated citizens under your charge is utterly repugnant, facially a violation of Due Process and Cruel & Unusual Punishment civil rights under the United States Constitution, a violation of international human rights treaties of the rights of prisoners promulgated by the United Nations, and will cause dire consequences to Correction Officers and prisoners alike before ultimately failing at achieving its duplicitous and monstrous plan to -- with the threat and imposition of group punishment -- maneuver prisoners as a group to violently control the behavior and actions of individual incarcerated persons.

I sincerely hope that you deeply reconsider imitating and aligning yourself with Nazi strategies by withdrawing the implementation of your PDOC agency's Violence Reduction Strategy against incarcerated citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

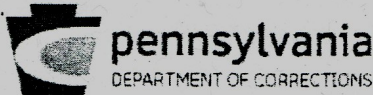
Mr. Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall

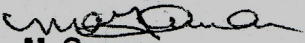
**See Attachment A:** Violence Reduction Strategy Memo, dated 7-10-2019, page 37.

*(Continued on page 38)*

**THE MOVEMENT**

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



**TO:** All Inmates  
**FROM:**   
M. Garman  
Superintendent  
**DATE:** July 10, 2019  
**RE:** Violence Reduction Strategy

SCI Rockview has a Violence Reduction Strategy to deter violent behavior in our facility. While these violent acts are the actions of a few, the inmates do so in most cases because of whom they associate. We are applying a response strategy for specific violent acts. We are calling these specific acts "prohibited violent acts" and are focusing on them because they pose the greatest risk to institutional safety. Prohibited violent acts include:

- Staff Assault – anytime a staff member is physically assaulted
- Fight/Assault with a Weapon – anytime a weapon is displayed or used in a fight/assault
- Multi-man Fight/Assault – anytime a fight/assault involves 3 or more inmates
- Fight/Assault with Serious Bodily Injury as determined by the Superintendent

The response strategy **does not** replace a sanction from a Hearing Examiner. All violations of policy, including those mentioned above, remain subject to DC-ADM 801, and remain subject to criminal prosecution when applicable. The enhanced response strategy applies consequences to include locking the unit(s) down for a 36-hour period where the perpetrator(s) of the act is/are housed.

Consequences of the enhanced response strategy will also include privilege restrictions. Privilege restrictions will be applied for a 30-day period and after an automatic cell search, include up to three of the following:

- Reduction of visits to one visit during the 30-day period – excludes attorney visits.
- Reduction of phone calls to one phone call during the 30-day period – excludes legal calls.
- Revocation of commissary – excludes hygiene and writing materials
- Revocation of main yard
- Revocation of activities privileges

Privilege restrictions will be applied to both the perpetrator of the prohibited violent act and the group with whom he associates. If it is determined that the perpetrator of a prohibited violent act has a group affiliation, and associates with individuals that have the potential to influence his behavior, then both the perpetrator and identified close associates could be subject to these privilege restrictions.

There are actions you can take to prevent yourself from being impacted by the Violence Reduction Strategy:

- Do not commit a prohibited violent act.
- Tell the offenders with whom you affiliate to not commit a prohibited violent act.

Offenders need opportunities to reduce their idleness and be afforded meaningful programming. Reducing violence at SCI Rockview improves our ability to focus on positive programs and activities that will benefit everyone. I am committed to working with everyone to achieve that goal.

We never want to apply this response strategy, but we will in order to keep a prohibited violent act from occurring and to prevent anyone from getting hurt.

If you have any questions, you are encouraged to speak with staff about this strategy.

**Attachment A**

***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.***

## The Company Store: A Deeper Look at Prison Commissaries

By Stephen Raheer  
May 2018

Prison commissaries are an essential but unexamined part of prison life. Serving as the core of the prison retail market, commissaries present yet another opportunity for prisons to shift the costs of incarceration to incarcerated people and their families, often enriching private companies in the process. In some contexts, the financial exploitation of incarcerated people is obvious, evidenced by the outrageous prices charged for simple services like phone calls and email. When it comes to prison commissaries, however, the prices themselves are not the problem so much as forcing incarcerated people — and by extension, their families — to pay for basic necessities.

Understanding commissary systems can be daunting. Prisons are unusual retail settings, data are hard to find, and it's hard to say how commissaries "should" ideally operate. As the prison retail landscape expands to include digital services like messaging and games, it becomes even more difficult and more important for policymakers and advocates to evaluate the pricing, offerings, and management of prison commissary systems.

### The current study

To bring some clarity to this bread-and-butter issue for incarcerated people, we analyzed commissary sales reports from state prison systems in Illinois, Massachusetts, and Washington. We chose these states because we were able to easily obtain commissary data, but conveniently, these three states also represent a decent cross section of prison systems, encompassing a variety of sizes and different types of commissary management.

We found that incarcerated people in these states spent more on commissary than our previous research suggested, and most of that money goes to food and hygiene products. We also discovered that even in state-operated commissary systems, private commissary contractors are positioned to profit, blurring the line between state and private control.

Lastly, commissary prices represent a significant financial burden for people in prison, even when they are comparable to those found in the "free world." Yet despite charging seemingly "reasonable" prices, prison retailers are able to remain profitable, which raises serious concerns about new digital products sold at prices far in excess of market rates.

### How much do incarcerated people spend in the commissary?

In Illinois and Massachusetts, incarcerated people spent an average of over \$1,000 per person at the commissary during the course of a year. Annual per capita sales in Washington were about half as much.

Per-person commissary sales for the three sampled states amounted to \$947, well over the typical amount incarcerated people earn working regular prison jobs in these states (\$180 to \$660 per year). The per-person sales were also higher than a previous survey had suggested. In 2016, we estimated that prison and jail commissary sales amount to \$1.6 billion per year nationwide, based in part on data from a 34-state survey by the Association of State Correctional Administrators. But the more recent and more detailed data presented in this report suggest that commissary might be an even higher-grossing industry than we previously thought.

There were important state differences in commissary sales, however. Washington's per-person average was dramatically lower than the other two states'. The reason for this difference isn't entirely clear, but it seems that personal property policies issued by the Department of Corrections are at least partially responsible for this significant disparity.

### What are people buying?

Annual per-person sales averages only tell part of the story. We also wanted to look closely at what people were spending their money on. To do this, we obtained detailed inventory reports from the three commissary systems and categorized (when possible) each inventory item and its commensurate sales figures. Not surprisingly, *food* dominates the sales reports; prison and jail cafeterias are notorious for serving small portions of unappealing food. Another leading problem with prison food is inadequate nutritional content. While the commissary may help supplement a lack of calories in the cafeteria (for a price, of course), it does not compensate for poor quality. No fresh food is available, and most commissary food items are heavily processed. Snacks and ready-to-eat food are major sellers, which is unsurprising given that many people need more food than the prison provides, and the easiest — if not only — alternatives are ramen and candy bars.

*It's a myth that incarcerated people are buying luxuries; rather, most of the little money they have is spent on basic necessities.*

These data contradict the myth that incarcerated people are buying luxuries; rather, most of the little money they have is spent on **basic necessities**. Consider: If your only bathing option is a

*(Continued on page 40)*

(Continued from page 39)

shared shower area, aren't shower sandals a necessity? Is using more than one roll of toilet paper a week really a luxury (especially during periods of intestinal distress)? Or what if you have a chronic medical condition that requires ongoing use of over-the-counter remedies (e.g., antacid tablets, vitamins, hemorrhoid ointment, antihistamine, or eye drops)? All of these items are typically only available in the commissary, and only for those who can afford to pay.

Bringing this discussion into the realm of the concrete, consider the following examples from Massachusetts. In FY 2016, people in Massachusetts prisons purchased over 245,000 bars of soap, at a total cost of \$215,057. That means individuals paid an average of \$22 each for soap that year, even though DOC policy supposedly entitles them to one free bar of soap per week. Or to take a different example: the commissary sold 139 tubes of antifungal cream. Accounting for gross revenue of just \$556, the commissary contractor is obviously not getting rich selling antifungal cream, no matter the mark-up—instead, the point is that it's hard to imagine why anyone would purchase antifungal cream other than to treat a medical condition. Yet Massachusetts has forced individual commissary customers to pay for their own treatment, at \$4 per tube, which can represent four days' wages for an incarcerated worker.

#### **Policies drive consumption: property ownership and prison pay rates**

One thing that may encourage or suppress commissary sales are prison policies regarding property ownership. Washington, with its low per-capita sales, has a statewide personal property policy that strictly limits the types and number of items people can own. The intersection between the policy and the commissary is most clearly seen in the area of clothing: beyond the standard-issue wardrobe, males are allowed only four items (a hat, rain-gear, shoes, and sandals). Not surprisingly, given this parsimonious policy, clothing sales in the Washington DOC commissary are extremely low, at an average of \$1 per person per year. But in Illinois, where property ownership rules vary from prison to prison, there are apparently more opportunities for people to purchase their own clothes, since annual spending on apparel averages \$77 per person.

#### **How do incarcerated people afford commissary?**

Another factor that may influence commissary spending habits is the pay rate for incarcerated labor. To be clear, not all incarcerated people are lucky enough to have jobs, no state pays even close to minimum wage to incarcerated workers, and most money spent in commissaries is probably traceable to funds transferred in from family members.

*Policies drive consumption: property ownership and prison pay rates*

For many people in prison, their meager earnings go right back

to the prison commissary, not unlike the sharecroppers and coal miners who were forced to use the "company store." When their wages are not enough, they must rely on family members to transfer money to their accounts — meaning that families are effectively forced to subsidize the prison system. Others in prison who lack such support systems simply can't afford the commissary at all.

While the sales data allow us to calculate average commissary expenditures per person using the total prison population, this number does not tell the whole story: It flattens the spending gap between prisoners who can "afford" to buy from the commissary versus those who cannot.

The poorest people in prison, such as those considered "indigent" by the state, spend little to nothing at the commissary. This, in turn, means that the per capita spending for all others is actually *greater* than the average numbers reported above. We can get a very limited glimpse of this population by looking at Washington, where commissaries stock certain items that are available only to people who qualify as indigent. Based on annual sales of "indigent toothpaste" and "indigent soap," it appears that a significant portion of people in Washington's prisons (between about ten percent and one-third) are indigent.

#### **How "fair" are free-world prices in a prison?**

One rather surprising finding is that prices for some common items were lower than prices found at traditional free-world retailers. Other commissary prices were higher, but only by a little bit.

This isn't to say that prison commissaries are in the business of providing bargains. Rather, it is a natural result flowing from the fact that a regular retailer has substantial costs (such as operating a network of retail outlets and advertising) that don't arise in the prison context. In fact, a prison commissary is somewhat analogous to an online retailer like Amazon: goods move directly from a warehouse to the customer, without the expenses associated with maintaining a traditional retail presence. In addition, commissary operators have a legal monopoly, so they don't have to worry about price competition, and thus do not incur costs associated with special sales or discounts.

The other thing to keep in mind when comparing commissary prices to the free world is that people in prison have drastically less money to spend. So, while \$1.87 may sound like a fair price to pay for a month's worth of dental floss, the transaction feels very different from the perspective of someone in a Massachusetts prison who earns 14 cents per hour and has to work over 13 hours to pay off that floss. Or, to consider a different scenario: the average person in the Illinois prison system spends \$80 a year on toiletries and hygiene products — an amount that could easily represent almost half of their annual wages.

(Continued on page 41)

(Continued from page 40)

### Privatization can take different forms

When a prison system's commissary is run by a private company, it raises logical concerns about fairness and coercion. In 2016, when one of the largest prison food service/commissary companies (Trinity Services Group) merged with another dominant commissary company (Keefe Group), we expressed concerns about the concentration of power and diminished competition — and quality — that would result. The passage of time has confirmed these fears: by 2017, maggots, dirt, and mold were reported in meals served by Trinity; these quality problems along with small portions led to multiple prison protests and \$3.8 million in fines for contract violations in Michigan alone.

But exploitation can occur even if a system is not fully privatized. Of the three states we examined, only Massachusetts has a contractor-operated commissary system. It also has the highest per-person average commissary spending. It is tempting to conclude that the profit motive of commissary contractors leads to higher mark-ups and thus higher per capita spending, but we would need a larger sample size to test this hypothesis. What is notable in our three-state survey is that Illinois, with its state-run commissary, had per capita sales almost as high as Massachusetts' contractor-run system, so a state-run system is clearly not a panacea. In addition, per capita spending in Washington and Illinois are so dramatically different that there must be other significant factors beyond outsourcing.

Arguably the most important privatization-related information in this study comes from Illinois. The Illinois prison commissary system has also been subject to harsh criticism for poor purchasing policies. In a 2011 report on commissary shortcomings, the Illinois Procurement Policy Board noted that only nineteen vendors provided 91% of all the items (measured by dollar amount) sold in the commissary. Among this handful of dominant providers, the one with the largest share was none other than Keefe, which accounted for 30% of the commissary's spending. Thus, if Illinois is any indication, it appears that Keefe is positioned to make money even in states that have not privatized the operation of their prison commissaries.

### The future of commissary: digital sales

Incarceration is becoming increasingly expensive — especially for those behind bars and their families. While prisons find new ways to shift the costs of corrections to incarcerated people (think medical co-pays and pay-to-stay fees), vendors are aggressively pushing new digital products that will further monetize incarcerated people.

This new breed of digital sales can take different forms. Sometimes this consists of “free” computer tablets that offer subscription based music streaming or ebooks. Other times, people must buy tablets or MP3 players and then pay for digital content. Given monopoly contracts and a captive market, prison and jail telecommunications providers are able to generate revenues

far greater than similar companies in non-prison settings.

Some states appear to separate digital sales from the prison commissary, while others sell music downloads and other digital content through the commissary. Of the three states we looked at, Illinois was the only system that included digital sales in its commissary reports. The Illinois DOC contracts with GTL to provide electronic messaging and, apparently, digital music downloads. We say “apparently” because there is no reference to music downloads on the Illinois DOC website, but based on the sales figures, music sales seem to be a substantial money-maker: Table

### Price-gouging in commissaries is concentrated in the digital realm

The pricing information discussed earlier provides evidence of an important fact: commissaries can afford to sell goods at prices comparable to or lower than free-world stores even while absorbing extra security-related costs (such as secure warehouses) and reaping healthy corporate profits. It appears prisons are ignoring these advantages when evaluating the prices of new digital products. As a prime example, the Massachusetts DOC signed a new contract with Keefe about a year ago, which includes electronic messaging and MP3 downloads. In stark contrast to the generally reasonable prices found in the commissary, Keefe's digital music is priced at \$1.85 per song, which is far higher than prices found on services like iTunes, Amazon, or Google Music (and more than can be explained by 5¢ kickback the DOC pockets for each song).



Illustration by Elydah Joyce

### Emerging digital sales market lacks transparency

The price disparity for digital items is even more confusing when you consider that delivering an MP3 file raises fewer security concerns than delivering a box of cereal to a prison commissary. The cereal box can theoretically be used to hide contraband, while an MP3 cannot. Of course, operating a digital music platform requires a robust IT security plan, but this is true of any service, whether it operates in the free world or only in prison. Indeed, in some ways, Keefe has less exposure to IT-based threats because much of its system operates on a closed network of kiosks and MP3 players, over which it exercises complete control (as opposed to Apple, which makes its iTunes store available to pretty much anyone with a computer and an internet connection). Thus, it is both paradoxical and troubling that Keefe can manage to price junk food and toiletries at or below standard retail prices, but charges nearly double the typi-

(Continued on page 42)

cal price for a digital music download.

### Emerging digital sales market lacks transparency

Illinois was the only system of the three we studied that included digital sales in its commissary reports. Because of the limited public data available, it's difficult to know what digital goods and services, exactly, are being sold to incarcerated people. Illinois's prison inventory reports contain three GTL products: a "GTL MP3 Player," "GTL LU Message," and "GTL LU Music." The message and music items come in quantities of 1 or 20 — but what those units represent (individual messages, songs, albums, subscription services, etc.) is unspecified.

It appears that Illinois does not provide free hardware, since people spent over \$267,000 in one year buying MP3 players. The music sales are more ambiguous. The quantities (1 or 20) suggest that people are paying to download individual songs or albums; however, GTL's webpage (which is not specific to Illinois) states that the company sells music through a subscription-based streaming service (with subscription lengths of 7, 14, and 30 days). Regardless of how GTL has structured its music service, it appears to be big business in Illinois prisons where people spent \$839,000 on digital music in one year.

Illinois does publish information about its electronic messaging service: people in select pilot facilities can receive (but not send) messages that are sent electronically and then printed and distributed to the recipients. GTL charges 30¢ per message, or \$4 for a bundle of 20 messages. Sales reports show electronic message revenue of \$35,300 for the year, which equals an average cost of 20.2¢ per message.

The price disparity for digital items is even more confusing when you consider that delivering an MP3 file raises *fewer* security concerns than delivering a box of cereal to a prison commissary. The cereal box can theoretically be used to hide contraband, while an MP3 cannot. Of course, operating a digital music platform requires a robust IT security plan, but this is true of any service, whether it operates in the free world or only in prison. Indeed, in some ways, Keefe has less exposure to IT-based threats because much of its system operates on a closed network of kiosks and MP3 players, over which it exercises complete control (as opposed to Apple, which makes its iTunes store available to pretty much anyone with a computer and an internet connection). Thus, it is both paradoxical and troubling that Keefe can manage to price junk food and toiletries at or below standard retail prices, but charges nearly double the typical price for a digital music download.

### Conclusion

There are several important questions that we could not definitively answer, either because of the narrow scope of our inquiry, the small sample size of three states, or because additional data beyond inventory reports are needed. Among the questions that should be addressed in future research by journalists or advo-

cates:

- Are there significant differences in item prices or in per-capita spending based on whether a commissary is run by the state or a private contractor?
- Which states outsource operation of their commissaries? Of those that have not outsourced, what percentage of inventory is purchased from the dominant commissary companies?
- Are there feasible ways to sell healthier food options in a commissary setting?
- There is a big gap in data concerning people who simply cannot afford to make significant commissary purchases. How big is this population? What types of hardships do indigent people face in not being able to purchase basic hygiene items or supplement meager prison menus?
- Within any given prison system, is there a correlation between cuts to the food budget and increases in commissary spending?
- How common is it for prison healthcare providers to instruct patients to use a particular treatment or remedy, only to then direct them to buy it at the commissary with their own funds?

Although it's tricky to say how commissaries "should" ideally operate, their sales records ought to raise multiple concerns for justice reform advocates. If people in prison are resorting to the commissary to buy essential goods, like food and hygiene products, does it really make sense to charge a day's prison wages (or more) for one of these goods? Should states knowingly force the families of incarcerated people to pay for essential goods their loved ones can't afford, often racking up exorbitant money transfer fees in the process?

Conversely, when people in prison buy "nonessential" digital services, policymakers should compare the costs of those services to free-world prices. Marking up the cost of digital services for incarcerated people in order to make a quick profit — particularly in a time when these services are near-ubiquitous and generally cheap — is unquestionably exploitative.

In the long term, when incarcerated people can't afford goods and services vital to their well-being, society pays the price. In the short term, however, these costs are falling on families, who are overwhelmingly poor and disproportionately come from communities of color. If the cost of food and soap is too much for states to bear, they should find ways to reduce the number of people in prison, rather than nickel-and-dime incarcerated people and their families.

For *full* article go to: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/commissary.html>

**From the Editor:** How much money will PA DOC bring in with the new mail policies that push families of prisoners to correspond, more & more, by way of email and encourages prisoners to purchase computer tablets to access and send emails, to read books, and—in the future—received individual photos electronically? Even "old timers" who aren't computer friendly will be purchasing tablets because of the new mail policy. Think about it.

# ON BOTH SIDES: RALLY TO END DEATH BY INCARCERATION AND HEAL OUR COMMUNITIES



**OCTOBER 23, 2019, 12 PM**  
**STATE CAPITOL IN HARRISBURG**

**Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI)** and our allies will gather at the state capitol in Harrisburg on Wednesday, October 23 to advocate for parole eligibility for all and an end to life without parole sentencing. We will highlight the voices of those who have been impacted by both violence and incarceration.

**JOIN US:** Register at [bit.ly/cadbiaction](https://bit.ly/cadbiaction) or call 267-606-0324

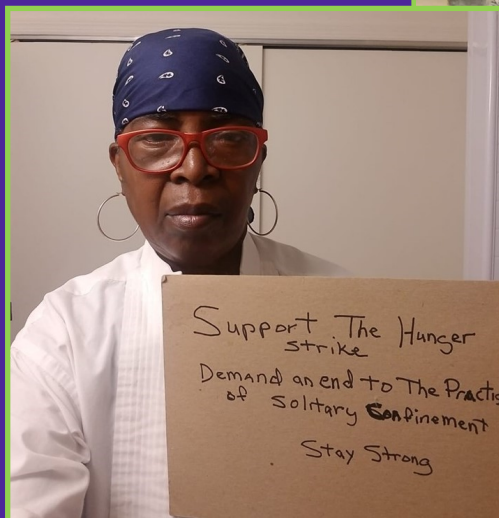
**Questions? [CADBIphilly@gmail.com](mailto:CADBIphilly@gmail.com) or 267-606-0324**

**Human Rights Coalition**

**P.O. Box 34580**

**Philadelphia, PA 19101**

**#Hungry4Justice**



Members of HRC began hunger striking along with hunger strikers in solitary confinement, beginning July 4th, against physical and psychological abuse. . .See page 5.

