

THE MOVEMENT

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The New and Official Newsletter of the Human Rights Coalition for the union of Prisoners' Families

Human Rights Coalition - Philly Chapter

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AAU Shutdown Casino Plans in Philly

Continued on page 4

*See How on
Page 4!*



*If families of China Town, in Philadelphia,
can stop a Casino from being built, families of
prisoners' CAN bring a prison down!*

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Editor's Note

Greetings Y'all!

Welcome to *THE MOVEMENT*. The official newsletter of the Human Rights Coalition (HRC). We are happy to bring you all another issue of this wonderful educational newsletter, in hopes that we may raise the political and social awareness of our readers to help them want to bring about positive change in our communities, public laws, and institutions.

In this issue, I encourage everyone to read our cover article 'AAU Shut Down Casino Plans', about how our friends Asian Americans United (AAU) and their allies prevented Foxwoods Casino from setting up shop in Philly's Center City section in downtown Philly. Its an amazing story of resistance to the powers that be, but a story none-the-less, that is quite common throughout the country yet whose stories are seldom publicized. This beautiful article written by Somekawa, Asian American activist, is a prime example to prisoners and their families that they too can organize, fight back and win against the politicians, Criminal InJustice System, and the Department of Corrections.



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As I write this editorial, we are passively witnessing 2,000 Pennsylvania state prisoners being shipped like SLAVES across state borders to be confined in Michigan and Virginia state prisons (which I believe are privately-owned prisons), for no other reason except that there is super-profits to be made from the imprisonment of human beings. Yes people, there is a market for your enslavement - Oops! - I mean "incarceration". Welcome to the evils of the capitalist system. Unfortunately, even if 'Human Beings' are the commodity, the economic theory still holds true—where there is demand, there must be supply. Meanwhile, the construction of 3 new state prisons in Pennsylvania have been halted! Not because of any of our doing, but because the workers' unions have filed a class action civil lawsuit to not be left out of the construction contracts! They're scrambling for a cut of that good ol' American apple pie. Its all about the Benjamins, right!

As these things are going on around us and about us, I'm wondering, where are the approximately 50 or more Prisoners' Rights Advocacy Organizations in this state at on these two issues? Why are they not visible? Why aren't they challenging and resisting these political and private-profiteering moves being made against the public's interests?

This is why the HRC and AAU, two community action groups, are a guiding light for us all in this movement to totally transform society. However, we cannot do it all on our own. We need the prisoners to reach out to their families—Moms, Grand Moms, sisters, baby Mamas, and girlfriends—as if their lives depended on it, and persuade them to call and join the HRC organization to help it advance your interest of Freedom!

Be sure to read Bro. Tut's article, 'Time to Get Involved in the Politics of Change', wherein he describes to everyone why it is so important that we need their membership and active support. He also gives the plain truth of the situation, and that is we don't have anything coming as far as changing these laws and societal conditions if we do not form a prisoners' families union under the HRC and then wage political action campaigns to politically influence the election process with our families' combined vote. There is approximately 50,000 State Prisoners, a 150,000 County and Federal Prisoners and 600,000 people on probation and parole in the state of Pennsylvania. If just 10% of families of these 800,00 people - that is 80,000 who are chained to the Prison Industrial Complex - were to form a families' union under the HRC organization, we will have created the largest political voters' bloc in this state that no politician could ignore or refuse to comply to our agenda.

To all prisoners' rights organizations, you must no longer visit the legislators at the State's Capitol with your hat in hand begging for political and social change, and call that "lobbying" for the prisoners' and community's interest. Such bended knee posturing has resulted in continuous failure. To be successful requires a change in the manner in which we seek political redress of our issues from the establishment. Therefore, we ask that all groups follow the example the HRC is setting, by establishing some form of 'Political Action Committee' that would seek to organize families and communities to vote, provide voter education, and voter registration and Get-Out-To-Vote drives during election seasons.

The HRC is in the process of establishing a HRC-Political Action Committee (HRC-PAC) to wage political campaigns against our political adversaries during election times, and we ask for prisoners to send their families and supporters to assist in this endeavor. We are also calling on prisoners to send their families to volunteer as workers to help out the HRC-Stop Prisoner Abuse Committee. Despite the hundreds of prisoner complaints we receive about guards beating prisoners, not one prisoners' family member has walked through our office doors or called, volunteering their assistance in this committee.

We have one person, Andy S., a Human Rights Activist, who's holding down that committee by himself. He has been running this committee, with infrequent volunteer help, for the past eight months. If he doesn't receive help in the form of committed volunteers soon, we will be forced to terminate this committee. The HRC-Stop Prisoner Abuse Committee deals with the abuse and torture of confining prisoners in Long Term Solitary Confinement under the SMU, LTSU, and RRL. So for prisoners to not send their families to volunteer in this committee would be criminal!

Lastly, to the Pennsylvania Lifers Associations (PLA) and the Residential Betterment Organizations (RBO) within the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, the HRC wishes to start a HRC-Prisoners' Organization Coordinating Committee (HRC-POCC) to coordinate the actions of the PLAs/RBOs within the state to better address our concerns and needs. We ask that prisoner heads of these groups contact us for further information on this at: Human Rights Coalition, c/o LAVA Space, Attention: Mama Patt, 4134 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Thank you all for reading this. We now ask for your help as volunteer activists for the HRC. Remember the lesson of the AAU as described by Human Rights Activist, Somekawa. The Power is in your hands.

ALL Power To All the People! Lets Fight Back!

Families of Prisoners Unite!

STRAIGHT AHEAD!

Bro. Kerry 'Shakaboona' Marshall, Co-Editor In Chief

We Shall Overcome: AAU Shutdown Casino Plans in Philly

Continued from Front Page

This **FRONT PAGE** story is an inspiration to us all. The speech below was made by Ellen Somekawa, Executive Director of Asian Americans United, demonstrating that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, that we can pull together and succeed in our struggle against the establishment. With the help of families of prisoners, the HRC could do the same as the AAU to stop the construction of 3 new prisons and the shipping of prisoners to Michigan and Virginia. Read Ellen Somekawa's testimony below and understand that if we families unite we can make the prison system as we know it crumble.



In September 2008 it was announced as a done deal. Foxwoods Casino would be built a block away from Chinatown. Everyone – the Governor, the Mayor, the District Councilman, the State Representative, and the well-connected casino owners – all agreed how great this would be for the city. The only question was how much did Chinatown want in exchange for accepting this casino on its borders.

Instead, Chinatown rose up along with our allies; and . . . many marches, petitions, hearings, meetings, press conferences, demonstrations, and speak outs later . . . in August 2009, the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board ordered Foxwoods Casino to give up on moving in next to Chinatown and retreat back down to the riverfront where their license was granted.

My organization, Asian Americans United, fought to stop Foxwoods from opening up next to Chinatown. Before I go on I want to honor the work those who have fought the casinos from starting up in Philadelphia from the beginning and especially Casino-Free Philadelphia who has acted with great principle and opposed the casinos' opening near any neighborhoods. Allies including the No Casino in the Heart of Our City Coalition and groups in Chinatown also share in the toil and in the victory.

Tonight I'm telling just a part of the story. It is AAU's story.

We have come to see this fight against Foxwoods as a fight against predatory gambling. Predatory because casinos' business model depends on creating addiction and impoverishing its clientele. The casinos even have a term for this; they say they want people to "play to extinction" that is play until they have no more money to lose. Predatory especially in the case of the Philadelphia casinos because these slots parlors target our people – poor folks and people of color; nobody's gonna hop on an airplane and fly out to a slots barn in Philadelphia. These things are being constructed to prey on Philadelphians, to extract the maximum dollars from our already thin pocketbooks. Predatory because the costs of gambling addiction – broken families, bankrupted businesses, foreclosures and homelessness, spousal abuse and child neglect – these costs will be borne by

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the people of Philadelphia – while the profits will go flying out of the City and into the banks of the rich investors who put profits above any sense of morality or civic responsibility.

For Chinatown, the fear of gambling addiction was the number one concern that people raised about the slots parlor. But the casino was also one more in a long string of unwanted large developments that have eaten away at and hemmed in Chinatown: the Vine Street Expressway, the Broad/Ridge Spur, the bus terminal, the Convention Center, and two that were successfully fought off – the Federal Prison and the baseball stadium.

Chinatowns across the country exist because of racism, because when they arose in the 1800s, Chinese people weren't allowed to live anywhere else but on the outskirts and unwanted parts of town. But over time these Chinatowns were no longer on the outskirts; they were now prime real estate. They also became safe havens where immigrants could build their lives and find, make, or buy what they need. They became cherished but under-served neighborhoods. Here is a neighborhood that doesn't have a public park or a playground, a recreation center, a community center, or so much as a public bench, and they want to tell us how good a casino will be for us?

It didn't take us twenty seconds to decide that we had to fight this casino, as unwinnable as this fight might appear to be. We organized a Chinatown community meeting of over 400 people, Students Against the Gallery Casino quickly had over 1500 Facebook members, we supported youth in organizing their own speak outs, went door-to-door surveying businesses in Chinatown, we held a march of almost a thousand to City Hall, packed City Council chambers for over six hours of testimony, delivered 25,000 petition signatures to the Mayor. Well, they might as well have hung a sign in City Hall saying, "we don't care about you Chinatown," because in less than two months after first introducing the idea, City Council had unanimously passed and the Mayor had signed a law legalizing casino gambling in the Gallery. They made this law without conducting a single traffic or parking study, not an economic or social impact study, not a design or a sketch much less a plan.

We then broadened the fight beyond Chinatown, because by sitting a casino in a family shopping mall and at Philadelphia's largest transit hub, they were clearly targeting Philadelphians. Philadelphia has the highest poverty rate of any of the ten largest cities in the country, and they are targeting Philadelphians with their predatory gambling. This is not just a neighborhood issue when every Philadelphian would be a SEPTA token away from the slots parlor. So we formed a multi-racial citywide coalition of over 50 organizations in the No Casino in the Heart of Our City Coalition and continued the campaign against Foxwoods.

After a year of intense struggle, the announcement came that Foxwoods would be forced to abandon its efforts to locate in Center City and go back to the riverfront. We take this as a victory.

It is a huge but only very partial victory. Partial because wherever these casinos are built, they will be predatory. Because the riverfront sites are also just blocks away from neighborhoods. Because they are already talking about building special trolley lines to connect the casinos and to run right down Market Street. And because we suspect that there will be more attempts to force this back onto Chinatown.

But it *is* a huge victory because we undid a done deal. And it is huge because, in the face of overwhelming power and money against us, the strategy of anti-casino activists has been to create as much delay, added expense, embarrassment, and obstruction as possible – in the hopes that the false promises of casinos and the casino economics they are based on will be exposed before these things have a chance to get up and ruin too many people's lives.

There may be the appearance that fighting the slots parlor was all about organizing protests, petitioning, making signs and giving speeches. But that is just the most surface stuff. I want instead to focus on a few ideas that guide AAU's work.



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1.) We need to build our fighting capacity – our ability to defend and strengthen our communities – and to do that we need to build new leadership . . . all the time, build new leadership.

AAU has dedicated itself to building leadership and especially youth leadership over our 25-year history. When we help people come to consciousness, this consciousness, this political awareness cannot be taken away from them, and it becomes the basis for making change over the long haul. At times like this casino struggle, our investment in growing our own leadership shows. Young people who had come up as high school students in our programs emerged as leaders. College students who initiated Students Against the Gallery Casino made it their business to help organize the high school students, our next generation of leaders. Prominent adult leaders in this struggle also got their political chops coming up through AAU.

2.) We need to take the time to help people to cherish their neighborhoods, their sense of belonging to a place, their sense of relationship to each other. Organizing is not just fighting against what's wrong, it is also building up what we want to see in our communities.

Building community strengthens our capacity to fight for justice. When we create a street festival, teach folk arts, grow a community garden, or build a school – we create connections among people, honor the knowledge of the elders in our communities, activate people, and value our own cultures. This work is fundamental to social justice work because if people don't care deeply about their neighbors, their fellow workers, or themselves, what will motivate them to stand up for each other? And if people are not up for caring about themselves or their neighbors, what happens when it comes time to stand up for those who are defined as "other"?

3.) If we are to sustain this work for justice over lifetimes and generations, we need to find joy and love in the struggle.

Despite our fury at the injustices hurled at us, part of what keeps us going is that we find joy in the struggle and in the relationships that we create through our work. When things get tough and the obstacles to winning just seem impossible to overcome, I like to take a moment and I look at who is beside me. And every time, I think, yup, these are the folks that I get to stand with. Gatherings like this one tonight give us a chance to look at who is beside us (yeah, go ahead, take a look!) and think, yup, these are the people that I get to stand with.

Thank you.

Ellen Somekawa Asian Americans United
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Asian Americans United exists so that people of Asian ancestry in Greater Philadelphia exercise leadership to build their communities and unite to challenge oppression.



2010! “Time to get involved in the Politics of Change”

Brother Richard “Tut” Carter, HRC-Interim Facilitator

“Give light and people will find their way.”

The above quote was offered by moderator Harold Jackson as he closed out the Pennsylvania Governor’s public candidate’s forum which was held at the Arch Street United Methodist Church on Thursday, February 17. I wouldn’t be giving details about that public event in this essay, but I will however tie it in later for reference purposes only. Where I want to focus for this perspective to highlight is why Prisoners families “must” get involved in the work of the Human Rights Coalition or, in the very least do more to support efforts to change laws respecting prison and re-entry social policies.

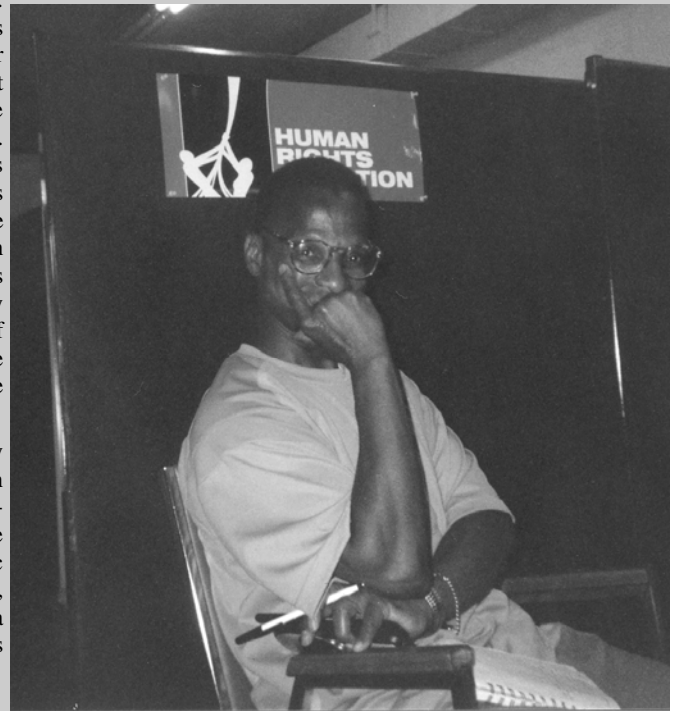
I am well aware that many who have been activists in the “old” radical movements growing out of Revolutionary days of the mid-Sixty’s categorically rejected the idea of encouraging poor citizens to get involved in the “corrupt” American-democratic system. I am also aware that those who once believed that a Black would never get elected president of these United States, after witnessing Barack Obama’s victory they’re still unmoved by the possibility poor Americans may somehow muster up enough political power to influence substantial change for their franchising (as first class American-citizens).

There are even those who are reading this perspective while gripping the edge of their bunks bracing themselves in anticipation of where this essay may “try” to drag them. But really there is nothing to worry about because, although I will get right in your face (so to speak!); I am really good heartedly and faithfully offering a new way to think in terms of changing abusive practices within the U.S. prison system.

Let me first share a little background information regarding why I changed my thinking relating to “using the democratic process” for bringing about social improvement for poor people in general and, prison inmates in particular. In 2007 I was invited to join a coalition of grass root organizations as a representative of the Human Rights Coalition. This was when Michael Nutter and others were engaged in a heated battle for the seat of Philadelphia’s next mayor. I’ll remind you that, as a political sub-division the City of Philadelphia represents about 9.5 percent of Pennsylvania population. Philadelphia citizens are approximately 60 percent of the Department of Corrections population, whereas, most juvenile lifers in the DOC are from Philadelphia. And, of the nearly nine thousand men and women incarcerated alone State Road in Philadelphia 87 about percent live in this city. ***LETS PAUSE HERE A MINUTE! I hear someone saying that this is all about Philadelphia – but its really not and I will assure you when you read on you’ll see why I saw fit to give this background information about what I learned in 2007 about the power of voters.***

Anyway, I was reluctant about “helping” politicians and the election process. For one thing I sternly did not believe in American democracy; after all of the injustice I witnessed first hand over the course of a lifetime. Yet, those who invited me to come see what is going on inside local politics guaranteed us that this was a fine opportunity to leverage power for whatever our concerns were. I personally interrupted most strategy meetings when I felt that HRC’s interests weren’t being respected and many argued with me some later agreed or continued to disagree with my various positions. Notwithstanding HRC became an integral part of a strong coalition of grass root activists which hosted the first and only historical “Mayoral Candidates forum” ever held inside a prison anywhere in the United States. It was inside Riverside Women’s Prison facility where I learned first hand what American politics is all about. Believe it or not, the American political system embraces difference of opinions and countering ideas as the means of insuring that every group gets to be heard under the First and Fourteen Amendment freedom of speech and equal protection laws. It’s really like sharing power to insure possible opponents can’t have more influence for their concerns than you have for your own concerns.

Candidate Nutter and others who were really pitching hard for those nearly 9,000 eligible voters in Philadelphia Prison System were as serious when addressing prisoner’s issues regarding improving prison rehabilitation and re-entry programs as they showed when speaking outside prison regarding the larger public concerns (i.e., the economy, jobs, affordable housing and public safety). Note, due to our efforts and collective influence as a voter’s coalition, within 30 days after he was elected as mayor of the City of Philadelphia Michael Nutter invested an unprecedented \$4.5 million into the “Mayor’s



“ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE”

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Office of Re-Entry” hiring experienced ex-offenders to operate it and built the M.O.R.E Center into a “One-Stop Shop” re-entry system. He also open the prison gate so grass root activists groups could aid in preparing prisoners for returning to their community as contributing members of their society. Yet, there is still a lot more to be done! I’ll admit.

On February 17, at the governor’s candidates forum sponsored by more than 90 grass root groups and direct services providers of the Southeastern Pennsylvania region every candidate, except Tom Corbett attended to address the questions presented voter representatives. Important to mention and not because I am suggesting we should ask our families to vote for any particular candidate but, an executive director of public resources from Allegheny County expressed how important prison and re-entry issues will in the upcoming governor’s race. In responding to direct questions put to the candidates by Wayne Jacobs, of the X-Offenders Organization for Community Empowerment and Theresa Sullivan, of Philadelphia Fight –IF ELECTED GOVERNOR OF OUR COMMONWEALTH WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO TO IMPROVE PRISON CONDITIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA? AND, HOW WILL YOU AID IN FUNDING MORE EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS WHEN PEOPLE COME OUT OF PRISON? The Allegheny speaker asked that we check his record of the past five years. He mentioned studies he made regarding what was found with relating to what happens inside prisons and what conditions people face after prison. And he talked about how he worked aid policies for those that want to do the right thing have resources and services after. He boasted of his record of helping reduce recidivism rates in Allegheny County by 40 percent (“within the past five years”).

Elsewhere, in Delaware County candidates running for State elections have made prison and re-entry issues a part of their platforms. They have been consulting HRC-Chester to aid them in forming their policy statements. Why? You may ask. Because approximately two out of every ten families, in Delco population of 500,000 have loved one who are either currently in prison or they are on parole or probation or considered an ex-offenders. Of the City of Chester’s 36,700 population, between 25-30 percent has a loved one in prison or their an ex-offenders or on parole or probation and, 50 percent of all ex-offenders in the City of Chester lack living wage employment and are also denied public housing because of their ex-felon status.

Nationally, each year 750,000 citizens are released from prison each year. Pa. Senator Shirley M. Kitchen (D-Phila) has pointed out that, “upwards of 60% ex-prisoners remain unemployed within one year after their release from prison,” and 70% recidivate within three years of their release from prison.

I think it’s time for prisoner’s families and ex-prisoners to get involved with the elective process simply because if they do they can have a profound impact of social policies regarding what’s going on within prisons and, what happens when people come home from prison. Another reason why I believe its time for prisoner’s families and prisoners who are eligible to vote (if you don’t have a felony conviction or if you’re in pre-trial and have not been tried yet been convicted YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN PA.) – believe it or not, many in politics are realizing the need to repeal and abolish all of those anti-felon laws which restrict jobs, public housing and other social services for ex-prisoners. I heard as much in the various responses coming from the governor candidates why spoke at the mentioned February 17 candidate’s forum.

Imagine what impact that prisoners families and loved ones will possess if they realize that, collectively, they have power to influence who the next governor of Pennsylvania will be? Imagine, if even 50 percent of the families of the nearly 50,000 prisoner’s of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and, the nearly 150,000 prisoners in county prisons that are eligible voters and their families and loved ones made their voices heard through their votes? Imagine also how much prisoner’s can enjoy changing social policies; better health care, effective rehabilitation services, timely parole and reasonable commutation programs for deserving prisoners – **IF THEIR FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES ALSO BECAME EDUCATED VOTERS TO WHERE, AFTER VOTING THEIR CANDIDATES INTO OFFICE THEY ALSO RECOGNIZE THEIR SOCIAL DUTY TO HOLD THEIR ELECTIVE OFFICES ACCOUNTABLE, AS WELL AS DEMAND TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT.**

In conclusion, as I promised this is mere an alternative perspective – sure it relies heavily on our learning how to trust the democratic process to resolve prison and re-entry abuse. It requires us to have faith not in the government but, instead, this relies on our putting our faith and trust in our loved ones and our families to get involved in the politics of change. Where their dedication and commitment to demand better government requires them to stand up and support organizations such as the Human Rights Coalition. And, come out when we ask them to support the cause to change laws and social policies governing prison conditions and that also improve re-entry services for ex-prisoners.

Harambee (“Lets Pull Together!”)

California Prisoner Exposes The Political Hustlers

Dear Human Rights Coalition,

I received your newsletter and was not surprised to hear you have the same problem with your prison system as we do. Lack of medical care and prisoner abuse is rampant. I would really love to receive your newsletter on a regular basis, but I have no funds to cover the fee. I would like to give your readers a bit of California's situation.

We have about 180,000 inmates in the State Prison (adult) System. As of January 2, 2008, less than 16% or 26,968 were incarcerated for homicide, and 14% or 24,413 for assault and battery. A little over 10% (17,459) were sex offenses and kidnapping. Only 40% of the population have very serious crimes that would cause a person to look twice before release. The tax payers of the State of California spend \$36,000.00 per inmate to feed, house clothe and supervise the inmate. That's per year! 68,840 times \$36,000.00 comes to 2,478,240,000 (2 trillion, 478 million, 240 thousand). Just for simple drug possession tax payers pay \$486,036,000. That's over 486 million dollars. And that doesn't include court, attorney fees, and medical bills.

We also have the 3-Strikes Law. A simple drug possession can land you 25 years to Life. We have everything from stealing a pack of cigarettes to 1 box of diapers, 25 years x 36,000.00 per year = that's \$900,000 for a box of diapers. Ok, say it's the "principal" of the theft. Anyone who would spend almost a million dollars for a "principal" is really stupid, don't you think.

This is what I would like your readers to understand. The prison system has a lot of employees who count on the public to be ignorant to prison operation so the public will continue to pay them to the point of loosing everything they (the public) has. Have you ever wondered why video cameras are not installed in the prisons. Especially in common areas. What is it you're not suppose to see? California leads the nation in debt. Well, spend a million dollars for a pack of cigarettes while you loose the roof over your family's head. "Gee! Can I be next?"

I'm so tired of the politicians who puts two roosters in the same cage and convinces the public he's "surprised" they fought. We have 36 prisons in the State of California and still the most violent in the nation. We put rival gangs together, people who are racist with other races and the most targeted inmates, homosexuals and sex offenders, with those who would target them the most. Why? So the public can see how "violent" the prisons are.

Ok, I have a news flash for you. A sex offender doesn't stab another sex offender because he's a sex offender, but a gang member or any one violent will. Ok, I understand, not much love for the sex offender, but last month (9/17/09) tax payers paid for a life flight helicopter for each of 2 inmates, medical care for 3 inmates who were attacked, and medical care for one inmate who received up to 30 stab wounds. Let me guess of a medical bill a half a million at least. Then you have the cost of investigation, transfers, and prosecution. Hey tax payers, how about saving the money and put the dogs in one cage, the cats in another and the birds in the 3rd one. Is it too difficult? You would rather spend billions and loose everything? "Gee, can I be next?"

Don't you understand, the abuses in prison cost you money! The poor medical care cost you money! Here in California we have 1,022 "other" property crimes and 11,006 thefts, 12,028 times 36,000 equals 433,008,000.00, 433 million dollars a year. Hey! Crazy idea! How about these thieves have to volunteer 5 hours for every \$1.00 in goods they steal and we can pay one person \$36,000.00 to watch 10 of them. We save \$324,000.00 a year for each 10 thief and get thousands of volunteers working with churches, the elderly, the disabled, cleaning our parks, etc. They could also pay back what they stole. Wow, 433 million back in your pocket. "Gee, can I be next?"

It's time we all got a little smarter. Inmates and tax payers alike. Inmates, learn about the legal system. I'm a "Jail House" lawyer as they are called. I have great success helping inmates file their own lawsuits. It's easy! And for inmates with no money, like me, it's free! We have a group of attorneys here in California that will provide information to California inmates. It's a legal document called "Habeas Corpus", does wonders for getting and protecting your rights. I'm not the smartest guy in the world, my spelling isn't too good, and I don't proclaim to know it all. But seriously, your judgment as tax payers is all messed up. You're loosing everything to "Get tough on crime" that's giving you a false sense of security. Really! A million dollars for a box of diapers or a piece of pizza or a pack of cigarettes or because someone had a bit of drugs? Are you crazy? And they say I have a criminal mind.

Ok to print my name and address. Thanks. (and my letter)

Paul Roberts

THE FUTURE OF PENNSYLVANIA'S CHILD LIFERS

Theresa 'Tiye' Shoats, Field Organizer of the HRC, interviews child lifer Kerry 'Shakaboona' Marshall concerning recent developments in the struggle to abolish sentencing CHILDREN to LIFE in prison.

Tiye: Hello Shakaboona. It's good to hear from you once again and to interview you about the Child Lifers issue.

Shakaboona: Hello. Yeah, I'm glad to hear from you too. The last time you interviewed me about this issue was back in October 2008, I believe, for the HRC's pamphlet on Child Lifers.*

Tiye: Well, since then, many events have come to pass on the child Lifer issue. There are bills in the state/federal congresses seeking to allow parole for child offenders serving Life Without Parole (LWOP), there are two Florida teens serving LWOP whose cases are currently before the U.S. Supreme Court, and two Pennsylvania teens who are Child Lifers whose cases are before the PA Supreme Court. What do you think of these new developments?

Shakaboona: I think they're all steps in the right direction, and its an indication that there will be some form of change made to the sentencing of child offenders to LWOP. What prisoners' rights groups, child lifers, families, and the general public should be concerned with is the type of change legislatures and Supreme Courts are seeking to pass into law. Is this sought after change of granting parole to child lifers really in the best interests of PA Child Lifers and the public? Should the change we pursue be to acquire parole for Child Lifers or seek to abolish sentencing child offenders to the Life sentencing scheme altogether? And would parole for Child Lifers really change their situation? These are the questions that are not being asked by Child Lifers and their supporters.

Tiye: You're right about that. Those questions aren't being asked in society by prisoners' rights groups. They seem to be simply going along with the politicians' faulty solutions on how to solve the problem of sentencing children to Life in prison. What do you think should be done about this?

Shakaboona: I think we should really constructively critique these bills that's being introduced in the state/federal legislatures, revise those bills to truly benefit child lifers, and re-submit the bills to politicians for changing and re-submission. The legislative bill H.R. 2289 (federal) and legislative bills H.B. 1994/1999 all have major flaws, none of the bills seek to abolish the uncivilized practice of sentencing child offenders to Life in prison, and none deals with the problem of child lifers sentenced to consecutive sentences imposed in felony-murder convictions, which would require child lifers to begin serving a new prison sentence of for example, 20 to 40 years if paroled on a life sentence.

Tiye: Yeah, I thought we were struggling to abolish the practice of sentencing children to Life in prison entirely, but it seems our struggle is being hijacked to just seeking parole for child lifers now. It doesn't even make sense to pursue parole for child Lifers, when adult lifers with parole eligibility in this state don't even get paroled and when the Governor himself is passing more laws to prevent violent offenders from getting paroled. So granting Child Lifers parole wouldn't really change nothing, except taking the heat off of politicians' asses to do something about the Child Lifers issue!

Shakaboona: I agree; it changes nothing substantially. But what it will do is cause us to miss our proverbial once in a lifetime chance at completely abolishing the practice of sentencing child offenders to Life in Pennsylvania. All the stars are aligned for us to abolish this thing, and we won't see this opportunity for another 30 years. The politicians half-baked solutions are only band-aids on a mortal wound. Parole for child Lifers only leaves the barbarous practice of sentencing children to life intact, and thousands more children will continue to be sentenced to Life imprisonment in the near future. The granting of Child Lifers parole eligibility will not work, because its all smoke and mirrors—an illusion of change. The PA Parole Board itself is a bankrupt and corrupt state agency who are subjected to the political whims of politicians and social events. After recent cop killings in Philly, Gov. Rendell suspended all paroles, changed parole policy to make it even more tougher for violent offenders to be paroled, and threatened to even abolish parole altogether. So how would Child Lifers parole fare under such a hostile political climate. Would Child Lifers actually be released on parole? On top of that, those three Child Lifer bills require Child Lifers to have a parole review every 3 years! When the average time span for parole reviews is 1 year. And what is there to stop the Parole Board from continuously denying a Child Lifer parole at every three year parole review until he dies in prison?

Tiye: So what must be changed brother?

Shakaboona: We must first reconsider the position we have taken on the Child Lifers issue. Should we seek parole or abolition of the practice of sentencing children to Life imprisonment. For the sake of generations of youth, we mustn't leave sentencing children to Life with or without a parole intact. It's time to throw it in the trash bin where it belongs.

Continued on page 12

Human Rights Matters

Continued from page 11

Tiye: *Let's talk about what the Supreme Courts are doing in regards to the Child Lifer issue. Can we expect the Supreme Courts to make some favorable rulings concerning Child Lifers?*

Shakaboona: Yes, we can expect a favorable ruling in the two Florida teen cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, but how favorable we'll find out shortly. PA Child Lifers must keep their eyes on the rulings of the Florida teens' cases because the PA Supreme Court has indicated that it will consider the Child Lifer cases of Batts and Cunningham before them after the U.S. Supreme Court decides on the Florida Teen cases. So the Florida teens' cases are going to have a great impact on how the PA Supreme Court will decide on the Batts and Cunningham cases of child offenders serving Life for homicide.

Tiye: *Is there anything else before we close?*

Shakaboona: Yes. Just that everyone who supports change of the sentencing of children to Life to become more proactive and begin pushing the envelope on this issue by conducting public forums, rallies, economic boycotts, and other forms of civil protests to pressure the judges and politicians to abolish the practice.

Tiye: *Well, take care brother and stay safe.*

Shakaboona: You too. Stay safe. A'se!

Families of Prisoners, it is important that we support those who will support us in our efforts to stop prison abuse. Citizens of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection (Philadelphia) Vote on May 18th, 2010.

NOTICE OF GENERAL PRIMARY ELECTION TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2010

THE FOLLOWING POLITICAL PARTIES ARE ELIGIBLE
TO NOMINATE THEIR CANDIDATES
DEMOCRATIC PARTY • REPUBLICAN PARTY

Between the hours of 7:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M. in the election districts and divisions in the City and County of Philadelphia Pennsylvania there will be nominated by the voters of the City and County of Philadelphia persons to fill the following offices, as certified by the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

- SENATOR IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
 - GOVERNOR OF PENNSYLVANIA
 - LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF PENNSYLVANIA
 - REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
 - SENATOR IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
 - REPRESENTATIVE IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
 - MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE
 - MEMBERS OF THE REPUBLICAN STATE COMMITTEE
 - MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC WARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
 - MEMBERS OF THE REPUBLICAN WARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
- PHILADELPHIA COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

MARGARET M. TARTAGLIONE, Chairwoman

ANTHONY CLARK
JOSEPH J. DUDA
City Commissioners

BILL RUBIN
Supervisor of Elections

AVISO DE ELECCION GENERAL PRIMARIA

MARTES, 18 DE MAYO DE 2010

LOS SIGUIENTES PARTIDOS POLITICOS SON ELEGIBLES
PARA NOMINAR SUS CANDIDATOS
PARTIDO DEMOCRATA • PARTIDO REPUBLICANO

Entre las horas de 7:00 A.M. hasta las 8:00 P.M. en todos los distritos y divisiones en la Ciudad y el Condado de Philadelphia, Pennsylvania los votantes de la Ciudad del Condado de Philadelphia nominaran a persons para llenar los siguientes puestos, como esta certificado por el Secretario del Estado

- UN SENADOR AL CONGRESS DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS
 - GOBERNADOR DE PENNSYLVANIA
 - TIENIENTE AL GOBERNADOR DE PENNSYLVANIA
 - REPRESENTATE AL CONGRESO
 - SENADOR DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL
 - REPRESENTATE DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL
 - MEMBROS DEL COMITE ESTATAL DEMOCRATA
 - MEMBROS DEL COMITE ESTATAL REPUBLICANO
 - MEMBROS DEL COMITE EJECUTIVO DEMOCRATA
 - MEMBROS DEL COMITE EJECUTIVO REPUBLICANO
- JUNTA DE ELECCIONES DEL CONDADO DE PHILADELPHIA

MARGARET M. TARTAGLIONE, Presidente

ANTHONY CLARK
JOSEPH J. DUDA
Comisionados De La Ciudad

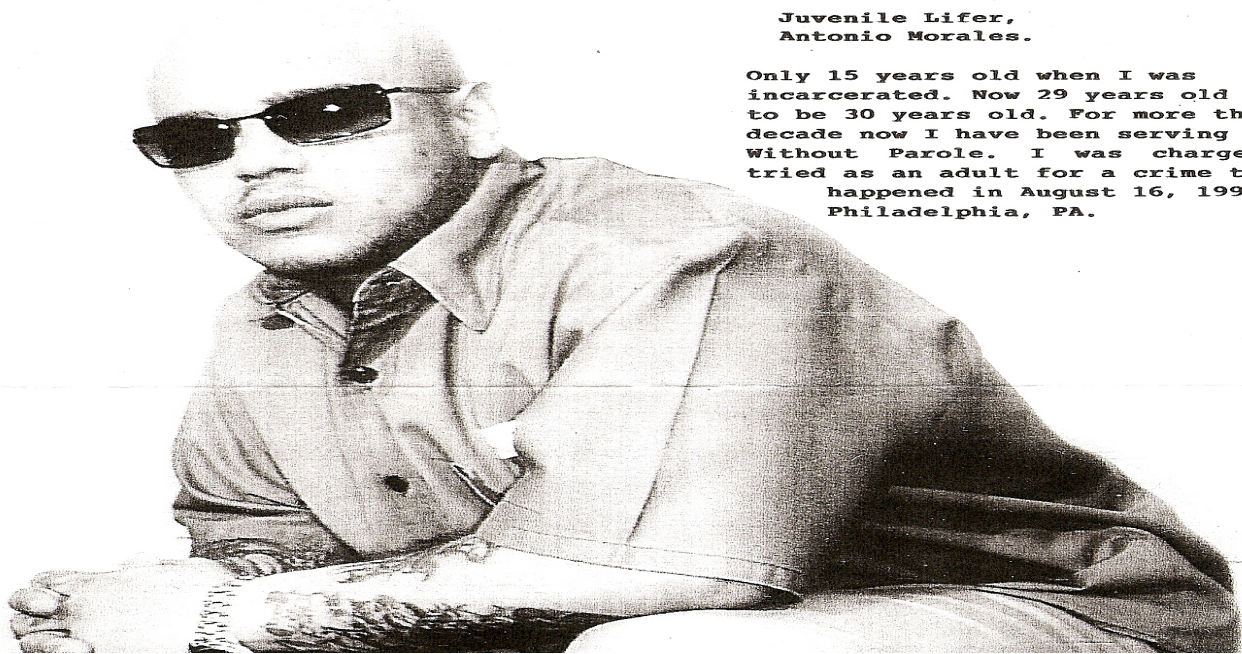
BILL RUBIN
Supervisor De Elecciones

THE MOVEMENT

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Human Rights Matters

Child Lifer In Pennsylvania



**Juvenile Lifer,
Antonio Morales.**

Only 15 years old when I was incarcerated. Now 29 years old soon to be 30 years old. For more than a decade now I have been serving Life Without Parole. I was charged and tried as an adult for a crime that happened in August 16, 1996 in Philadelphia, PA.

2/22/10

My name is Antonio Morales. Sad to always say this, but unfortunately I am one of the so many Juvenile Lifers in this state. In the so-called Land of the Free (America) I have been incarcerated since the young age of 15. I was arrested in August of 1996 and now I'm 29 years old soon to be 30. At first I didn't know what life without parole meant when I was sentenced, I thought I was going to be released when I became an adult, but then reality came to me, LIFE, LIFE, LIFE! Growing up in prison, growing my first facial, chest and underarm hairs in prison, becoming a man on the exterior, while in the interior still being that 15 year old kid who made a mistake. And now at the age of 29 I have gone bald, lost my hair and I'm starting to see my shadow beard turning gray, yet inside I am still that child, that child that never really had a childhood, that never got to experience of what is like to own a car, have a driver's license, vote, etc., not even knowing how to make love to a woman, not knowing what it's like to go on a date. I thought that prisons were built to rehabilitate us and prepare us for our return to society. My brain wasn't fully developed yet, but look what I'm going through in the so called Land of the Free! The only thing these prisons are built for is for torture, mind-control, experiments. They are not preparing us for society, they are preparing us for our graves! Yes, death. This is what us (Juvenile Lifers) are going through, just a slow death. Each second that passes I die in here, each, minute that passes I slowly die, each day that passes I fade away, and each year that passes brings me closer to my final resting place (death). I see this whole ordeal getting out of hand. Name how many Juvenile Lifers have been pardoned by the governor? None! How many Juvenile Lifer's cases been overturned? Not so many! We need the support from the outside world, we need to be heard. Pennsylvania doesn't allow the media in these prisons much, because they say that they don't want that kind of attention or publicity! But yet, we lead the Nation in Juvenile Lifers! Why aren't we being heard? We need people to stand in front of the White House with signs, with the written words of "Free All Juvenile Lifers." We need to start being interviewed by the media, reporters, and organizations here in Pennsylvania. We need the whole world to hear us, to hear our pleas, to hear our changes, to hear our stories, to look into our eyes and see the emptiness and pain that this has brought about. Does the President of the United States even know that we lead the Nation in Juvenile Lifers? Here I am, in the so-called Land of the Free, slowly dying, dying to live, dying to experience, dying to be FREE!!!

Antonio Morales #DM-4816

1111 Altamont Blvd. Frackville, PA 17931

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Facts about Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP) in Pennsylvania

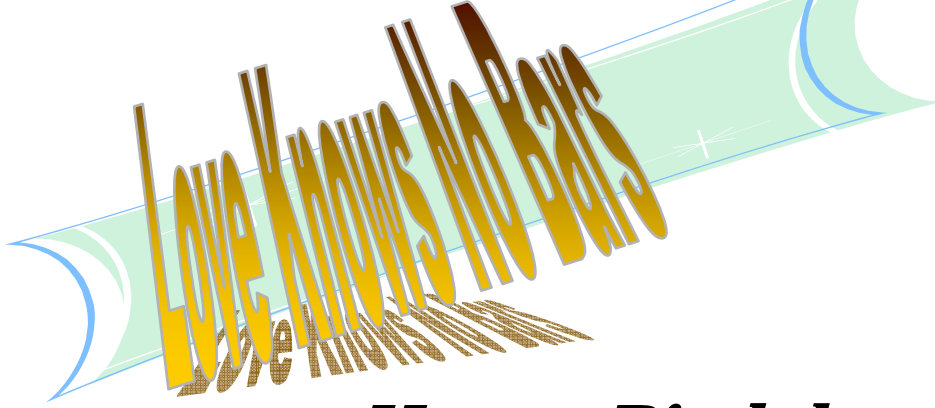
- *The United States is the only country in the world known to sentence youth under the age of 18 to life in prison without any possibility of parole, and Pennsylvania has the distinction of being the State with the most juvenile lifers.*
- *Pennsylvania has 452 juvenile lifers, almost 20% of the 2,442 juvenile lifers in the country.*
- *In Pennsylvania, there is no minimum age at which a child can be charged as an adult and sentenced to life in prison without any possibility of parole. The youngest juvenile lifer in Pennsylvania was sentenced to JLWOP for a crime committed when he was 12 years old.*
- *Almost 60% of the juvenile lifers in Pennsylvania were first time offenders*
- *Approximately 26% of the juvenile lifers in Pennsylvania did not themselves commit a homicide, but were convicted of JLWOP under the State's mandatory sentencing for felony murder convictions.*
- *African American youth in Pennsylvania represent less than 15% of the State's youth population, yet they represent over 65% of the youth serving JLWOP sentences in the State. The rate is almost 20-1 that an African American youth receives LWOP sentences as compared to a white youth.*

WHY IS THIS WRONG?

- *Our laws do not allow juveniles to assume the same responsibilities as adults (such as driving, voting, drinking, etc.) because we know that they are not mature or mentally developed enough to make decisions about or control these actions. Why then, do our laws allow children to be punished as adults?*
- *Academic and medical associations have shown that the frontal lobes of the brain responsible for decision making and judgment are not fully developed in adolescents.*
- *We shouldn't throw away the lives of children forever for one terrible decision they made during adolescence..*
- *They should be given a second chance to prove that one extremely poor choice does not define who they can be as an adult within society.*

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Write letters, send emails, and make calls to your State Legislators expressing your support for parole opportunities for juvenile offenders sentenced to LWOP.



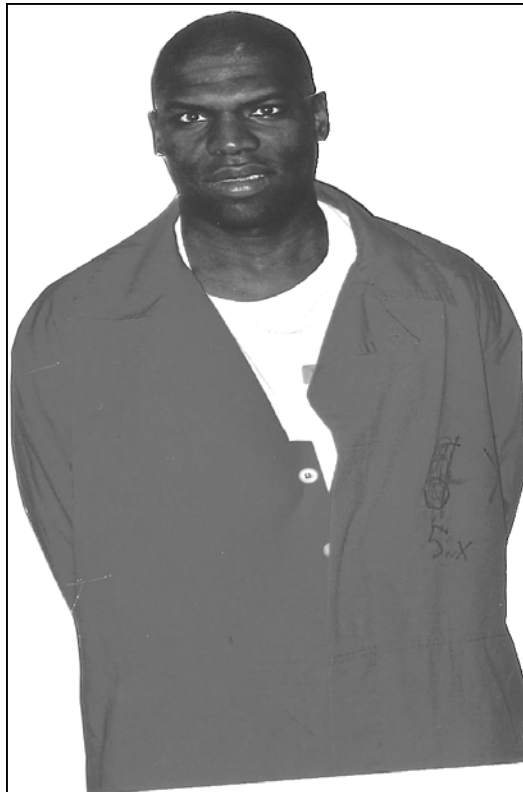
Happy Birthday Uncle Jerome

Thanks to everyone who participated in my Uncle Jerome and Aunt Jeanne 40th Birthday party.

A night that would not be forgotten—a night of positive energy—slammin poetry , slammin music, and slammin good food.

Unfortunately my uncle Jerome wasn't present due to his incarceration but the turn out was overwhelming with family, friends and supporters of my Uncle Jerome's innocence.

The keynote speaker was Philadelphia's own, author, poem and screenwriter Brittani Williams, in addition, Philadelphia native



Kimani Darden now reside in Egypt as a children advocate. Also, children advocate Jeannet Clark. All represented well.

Even though Mama Patt, Sista Theresa, and Bro. Tut wasn't able to attend we the family appreciate them so much and the wonderful fob they do at Philadelphia based Human Rights Coalition and the tireless campaigning they're doing for the poor and oppressed and most of all supporting my uncle Jerome innocence.

In Struggle,

In solidarity



LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

Happy Birthday, Hoagie, a.k.a. Jerome



Left to right: Kimani Darden, Jeannet Clark, Jeanne Bradley (Jerome's twin), and Claretta



Left to right: Frances Rice, Larry Johnson, Daisy Coffey (Jerome's Mother), Jeanne Bradley (Jerome's twin), and KiKi



Latoya, Neal Carter, and Jeanne Bradley (Jerome's twin sister)

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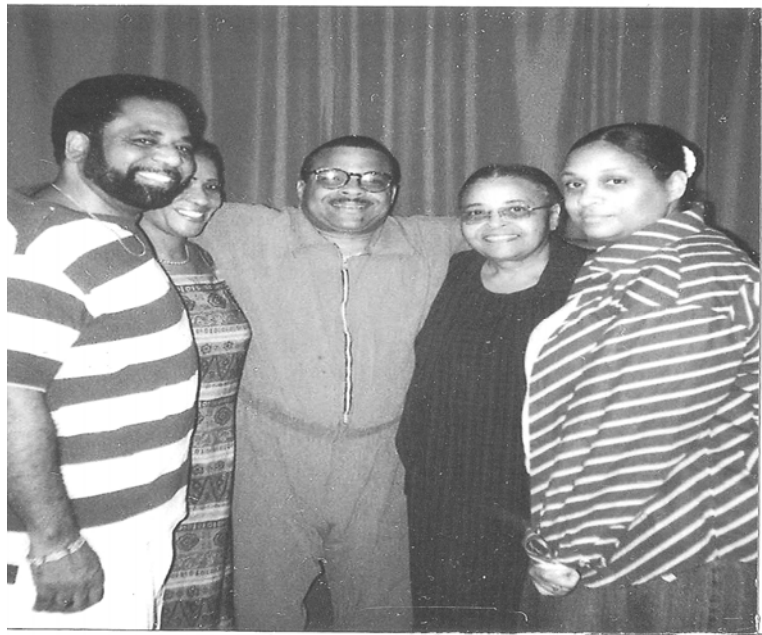
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LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

MY FAMILY AGAINST PRISON INJUSTICE



Bro. Gregory & Sister Denise (Husband and Wife 2010)



Left to right: Gary Moore (brother), Joceline (sister-in-law, Haitian native), Dorothy (My Mother) and Sonja (sister).

My Family has struggled at my side against prison injustice since 1978. My mother Dorothy Boone never turned down a phone call or left a letter unanswered. It is her faith in God that keeps her strong and to set an example for my brothers and sister to stand just as strong. She believes in my reformation from a "criminal mind and life-style." She has always been blessed to help others and continue at the age of 72 years old.

My Beautiful African Queen and Wife Denise carries an equal spirit of helping others by serving the elderly and performing duties of a Block Captain in North Philadelphia. She believes in me and demonstrates it as a community activist and prison advocate. She does not let the prison bars, walls or racism cripple her spirit or divide our family. She stands as our ancestors stood against the horrors of slavery. She remains at my side. I am very thankful to Almighty, God for bringing her into my life. Our True Love Conquers All Obstacles. We are One! Having known the sincerity of her Love I am more. It is her smile, warm embrace and the look of Love upon her face that has made me more.

My Queen, My Beautiful African Queen, I am more because your Love has made me more. I can never thank my Family enough for their undying support and unconditional Love.

Love Always For Life,

Your Husband

Gregory

GREGORY X MOORE IS SERVING A 30-60 YEARS SENTENCE. HE HAS ALREADY SERVED 31 YEARS. HE WILL HAVE TO SERVE 28 MORE YEARS ON PAROLE. HE IS CURRENTLY WAITING FOR A PAROLE BOARD DECISION WHILE INCARCERATED AT SCI-MAHANAY LOCATED IN FRACKVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA.

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LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

Another Victim of Circumstances

For the past 5 ½ years life has been difficult for me and others. Before my incarceration I had been traveling across the United States and some other countries trying to make an honest living with some close friends, while being away from my family for long periods of time, which I honestly in part.

One day everything came to a halt when I was falsely accused and ultimately convicted by a couple of incredible witnesses who had motive to fabricate testimony against me. Consequently, my life has been taken from society and is threatened that I will spend the rest of my life in jail.

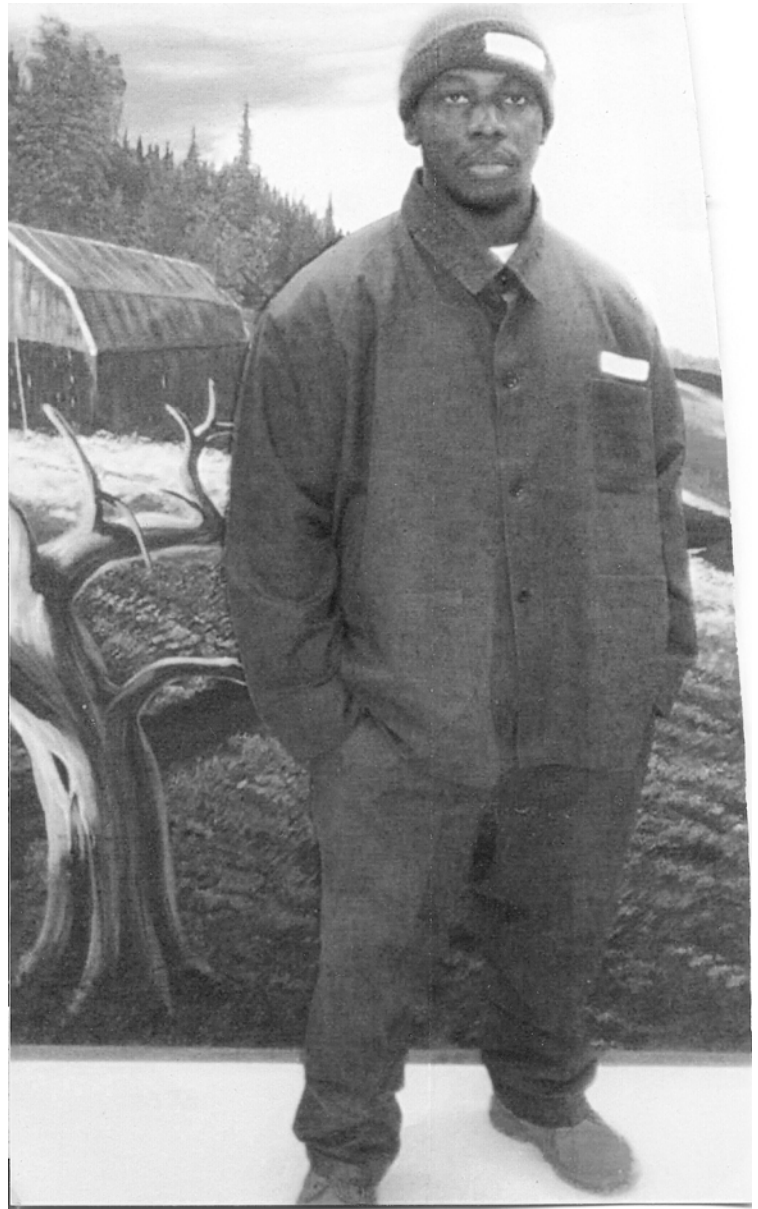
God, family, and loyal friends have helped me through these rough times by showing me support in anyway possible. You must maintain a relationship with God, your family, and loyal friends while you have a chance because you never know when you would be taken away from them.

Although I am innocent of any crime, and am not a criminal, I must raise my head high and stay strong for those who care and continue to strive for liberty, if God wills. My advice to the reader is don't get discouraged when life isn't going your way. Please maintain your patience, stability, wisdom, and faith that God has a plan for you. Just do what's right and avoid what's wrong, and remember to spend as much time as you can with God, family, and loyal friends because you never know if you'll become a victim of circumstances.

I'd like to give thanks to God, Michele Byrd (Mom), Joyce Warner (Nana) Beayuna Byrd (Sis), Zyeem Byrd (Papi), Samuel Sanders, Mr. Tim, Christopher Ries (young Chris), Bryant Ries (Wright), Kareem Barksdale (Peem), Hanif Mahammad (Buck), and Burton A. Rose, Esq.

Love You ALL,

Wali Byrd
SCI-Mahanoy



**Wali Byrd GW-1449
301 Morea Road
Frackville, PA 17932**

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Charmaine Pfender and her mom, HRC Member,
Donna Pfender

My daughter, Charmaine, was convicted of first degree murder and is serving life without parole in Pennsylvania. She has been incarcerated since she was 18 years old and has served 25 years of a "living death" sentence. When she (we) went to court, I still believed in the justice system. I truly believed that someone who acted in self-defense would be exonerated. I was naive enough to think that all people were given a fair and impartial trial and were considered equal under the law. I was unaware that the poor, the undereducated or persons of color don't receive the same degree of justice as those who can afford competent representation and are tried by an impartial judge and jury. I was also unaware that life means life in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Now, I know the truth!!

LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

“WE SET OUR LIMITS IN ALL WE DO”



Phil and Daughter

When you know you are thinking, saying or doing things that are unhealthy or unproductive, you must do more than know! There must be a genuine, loving support for “self” to make a change. Change doesn’t mean replacing one bad habit for another. It doesn’t mean beating up on yourself or feeling guilty or ashamed. Change means voluntarily removing yourself from the people and environment that supports you in remaining unhealthy. Change means identifying what you are doing, recognizing when you are doing it and gently guiding yourself to do something else. Change means not making excuses for yourself, but doing exactly what you say you will do. When you support yourself in making the needed changes, you are supporting your own growth. Growth in the commitment to being, doing and having the best. Growth is not fearing the unknown things that come out of change.

Us as men in this prison industry must know and remember we are the ones to shape tomorrow’s future. The children reach to us when needed, they look to us when needed,

and are one in the same with us. Our duties don’t stop when we are sentenced but are needed much more to prevent our youth from being the next one issued a number. We have to take our duties on and allow them to lead us. Time is only lost when utilized without accomplishment! First knowing who you are must be accomplished, then follow your wants, dreams and desires to bring about results. Keep the bond growing with the loved ones is a mutual duty we must hold our end up to. Never be a burden or show lack of understanding for those in support but instead be that shoulder or hand, when needed, to walk through the ills prison can place on a relationship. Through it all remember your duties!

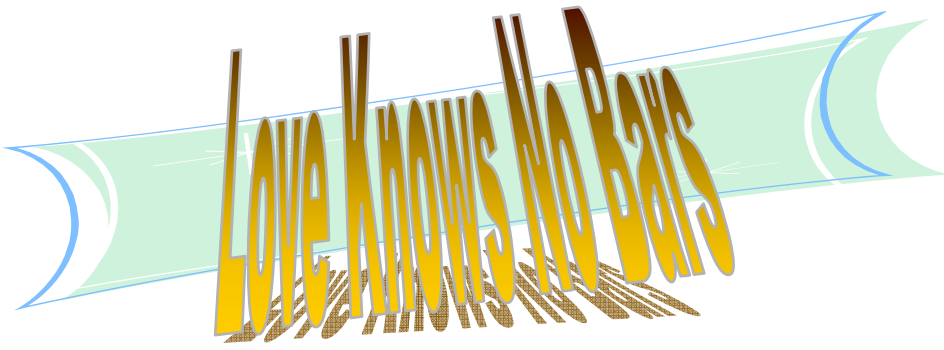
Submitted by:

Philmingo ‘Phil’ Jamison

SCI-Mahanoy

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Picture This:

Almost every family has its photo album. Now we want a HRC family album, too—one that will show the faces of HRC and send a message besides. And your family's picture may be just what we need.

In each of our issues of The Movement, we will publish several pages of pictures to illustrate the strengths of families and the insanity of the PA Department of Corrections hostile anti-family policies. We want pictures of prisoners and their families, preferably taken in prison. We'll run as many pictures as space permits.

If you and your loved ones want to participate here's what you'll need to send us:

- *A family picture made during a prison visit.*
- *Names and Relationships of those in the picture, listed left to right.*
- *Information on the prisoner's sentence (how much of sentence he/she has in and how much remains to do).*
- *The name and location of the prison.*
- *The name and address of the person sending the picture.*
- *A brief article by a loved one or prisoner expressing their personal feelings to the other (article no longer than three paragraphs).*
- *A stamped, self addressed envelope (or \$.50 institutional check) if you want the picture returned.*

Send your pictures and article to H.R.C., Attention: Newsletter Committee, c/o Lava Space, 4134 Lancaster Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19104.



Is Innocence Irrelevant?

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

Carmen Woods

Jurisdiction: Philadelphia County, PA

Offense Charge: Homicide

Date of Sentencing: 1983

Sentence: LIFE (ie., DEATH)

On May 16, 1982, Chester Laws Jr. was shot and killed and on May 19, 1982, Carmen Woods was wrongly arrested for allegedly murdering Chester Laws Jr.

Mr. Woods’ arrest, and later wrongful conviction, was based solely on an incredibly unbelievable witness by the name of Homer Lane. Homer Lane, whom had a criminal record for rape, auto theft, and for being a wanted fugitive from Florida authorities, was known to be a habitual liar. On May 18, 1982, Homer Lane would be arrested for auto theft and then provide detectives with a statement of allegedly witnessing Carmen Woods shoot and kill Chester Laws Jr.. Carmen Woods was soon arrested for the murder of Chester Laws Jr.

In November 1982, Mr. Woods was convicted of homicide at a trial that was immediately discovered to be extremely unfair and partial due to prosecutor’s illegal conduct, ineffective attorney, and a biased judge.

There was no physical evidence presented in the case that linked Carmen Woods to the murder of Chester Laws Jr. The criminal case, therefore, was based solely on the statements and testimony of Homer Lane. The alleged eye-witness Homer Lane made several contradictory statements to police concerning the murder of Chester Laws Jr. In one police statement Homer Lane made, he could not see who shot Chester Laws Jr. because it was too dark on the night of the matter, but weeks later he would make another police statement that he witnessed Mr. Woods walk up from behind Chester Laws Jr. and shoot him in the back of the head. However, forensic reports indicates that the deceased was shot in the face from the front. In 1986, Homer Lane recanted his police statements and trial testimony in a written legal affidavit to investigators, and 1991 he admitted in a video taped interview to Dan Cuellar, and investigative reporter, that he lied at trial about Carmen Woods murdering Chester Laws Jr..

The prosecutor illegally withheld vital information from Mr. Woods’ legal defense, that a deal had been made between the prosecution and Homer Lane prior to trial, an agreement to dismiss Lane’s criminal auto theft charge and to prevent his extradition to Florida authorities in exchange for his testimony. This important piece of information was illegally withheld from Mr. Woods’ attorney and the jury.

Unbeknownst to Mr. Woods, his attorney Ronald Morrison was an alcoholic and discovered to be drunk at times during legal proceedings. Years later, Attorney Morrison would admit before the PA Bar Disciplinary Board, that his drinking was out of control in 1982 during Mr. Woods’ trial! Attorney Morrison was finally disbarred from practicing law due to his alcohol addiction and indifference to his clients’ rights.

Judge Albert Sabo, infamously known for declaring in the Mumia Abu Jamal case that he would help prosecutors “fry the nigger”, would go on to display his bias in Mr. Woods’ trial by allowing the prosecutor to introduce inadmissible evidence of perjured testimony, while preventing the introduction of exonerating evidence by Mr. Woods.

Mr. Carmen Woods is factually and legally Innocent of the Murder of Chester Laws Jr. There was much evidence that was not heard, and in some instances plainly ignored, in Mr. Woods’ case. The Committee to Free Carmen Woods continues to work to obtain Mr. Woods freedom from prison. However, more help is needed to help free this Innocent man after 27 years of imprisonment.



Do you think that Carmen Woods received a fair and impartial trial? Do you think he was wrongly convicted?

Carmen Woods
SCI-Mahanoy/AM-8335
301 Morea Road
Frackville, PA 17932

To see more on this case go to: freecarmenwoods.com

WHY AMERICA NEEDS A GLOBAL KINDNESS REVOLUTION

By Judith Trustone, Director, Sagewriters and the Global Kindness Revolution

After advocating for human rights for more than 50 years, the last 18 for prisoners' rights, after publishing a dozen books with prisoners, victims, family members and advocates, and after creating two documentaries, I've concluded that America is a MEAN country and getting meaner every day, especially within the prison industrial complex. There's a thin veneer holding everything together as everyone feels at some level anxious and fearful of a world that seems to be verging on collapse. These fears feed a culture of cruelty, unleashed without restraint or even an attempt at civility with the emergence radio in the '80's of hate radio and the degradation of the culture epitomized by Jerry Springer and Howard Stern. Cheap to produce reality shows celebrated new depths of meanness and ignorance, making heroes of the crude and uneducated, scorning truth, rational thinking or civil discourse. America is in deep trouble.

The mainstream media, which minds, does all it can to cow the especially of those with dark skin. especially in communities of siege by a white supremacist crumbling in a dangerous way, masculinity. Prisoners (and their Thrownaway People.

A couple of years ago, I was Year" by the Delaware County, over 2,000 prisoners nationally. peace is that one day, maybe simultaneously, all over the earth, home and pick up their babies however many generations it will while we women attempt to clean

Which brings me to Kindness. A creative writing or what I call Philadelphia Prison, one class for successful JOBS re-entry stopped funding. One week I You" notes that I'd discovered in assignment was to observe fellow Kindness, then write on the card, and report back to the class what happened. The next week when I returned to the classes, the guards, all females, came up and hugged me, telling me what a difference those simple thank you for your Kindness notes had evoked. They were practically in tears, both the guards and the prisoners, as they described the change in the vibe of the prison, however short-lived.

Later, when I mentioned this to members of the Public Safety Initiative at Graterford PA Prison, they thought spreading Kindness on both sides of the walls as an antidote to violence was a terrific idea. Together we started the Global Kindness Revolution, and created Kindness Cards; more than 50,000, have been distributed globally. Some of the anti-violence prisoners of conscience gathered informally in small Kindness Circles, made posters about being kind, and did all they could to change the toxic vibe of prisons. Now we are redesigning the cards so we can get more of them into prisons, for there is a ban on postcards for some reason, and we are still awaiting a response from the DOC as to what would be acceptable (if anything.)



shapes and contaminates our citizenry into fear and mistrust. This has had tragic consequences, color already enduring centuries of patriarchal structure, a system now polluting the planet with toxic families) are demonized, our

awarded "Peacekeeper of the PA Peace Center for my work with Accepting, I said, "My vision for Martians will land, and men will put down their guns, go and learn to raise their children for take to breed the war out of them, up this mess."

couple of years ago, I taught "Healing with Words" at the men and one for women in a program that the city has since brought in two packs of Thank the wilds of my desk. Their prisoners and staff for acts of "Thank you for your Kindness"

(Continued on page 23)

The Home Front: Serving Our Community

(Continued from page 22)

Realizing that the response to the Kindness Revolution was so much more enthusiastic than responses to my attempts to give voice to prisoners' writing, I decided to shift my focus to the hearts and minds of voters by creating Kindness Circles, and they are growing each week. People are curious about the anti-violence prisoners who are part of the Circles. I'm even leading free Community Kindness Circles on the 2nd Saturday of every month in Swarthmore, PA's town hall, right above the library, administrative offices and the police station. Those who can't attend are invited to join our "Virtual Kindness Circle" at the same time, 4:00 pm on every Saturday for about half an hour. Those behind bars might find a group of friends to gather with quietly, or even just one other person. Or, join us by yourselves. We CAN change the vibe behind prison walls. Please join us, and spread the word. Step outside your comfort zone for just a little while.

HOW TO CREATE A KINDNESS CIRCLE, WITH OTHERS OR ALONE

Sit in silence either with a small group or by yourself. Imagine that deep within the center of the earth is a giant ball of light, the "Light of Kindness." Let this Light rise up through the many earth layers, into the building beneath you, into the room where you are, spreading slowly...up your legs...up past your knees...into your torso, flowing up your spine...surrounding each vertebra with Light...letting the Light flow up through your head...and out through the top like a whale spout...wrapping you in Light...then, if possible, connect hands around the circle...and let the Light flow from your right hand into the left hand of the person next to you until the whole Circle is humming with Light...then, one at a time, each participant sits (or stands) in the center and gets zapped with the energy of Kindness...for about a minute each...then bring into the Circle those who dwell in Spirit, acknowledging the ancestors...expressing our appreciation...asking them for assistance...do the same for family members or those with loved ones in prison...Then imagine the light of Kindness flowing from your tiny Circle to every jail and prison in the country...raining down the Light of Kindness...penetrating, however briefly, the culture of cruelty.

Next let the light roll out in every direction like unrolling a carpet of Light around the entire earth...see yourselves as Warriors of Light...Knights of Kindness...look down upon the earth as if you were an astronaut...seeing the earth glowing with the healing Light of Kindness everywhere...now draw the Light back, gently and slowly back into the circle...filling each with Light, healing what needs healing.. and, giving thanks...let your hands disengage and look at the others with Kindness and caring.

If you are alone, imagine yourself dangling by a thread of Light from a web of life surrounding the planet.

Do this as often as you can, and let me hear from you about how it went or what questions you might have. Kindness raises serotonin levels, the "Happy Hormone" in those who do a kind act, those who receive it, those who see it and those who hear about it or read about it. It reduces stress and promotes peace.

Years ago, scientists studied a mediation group that spent a few weeks meditating in circles in high crime areas; the crime rate dropped in each area that was carefully studied. Another group of scientists studied monkeys living on three islands not visible to each other. Each day, they dropped a load of bananas on the beach of each island and the monkeys scrambled to pick them up. One day, one of the monkeys on one of the islands washed his banana in the sea before eating it. The next day, another one did the same. Each day more and more monkeys washed their bananas before eating. On the day that the hundredth monkey washed his banana, simultaneously on the other two islands, every single monkey washed his fruit before eating it even though they'd never seen it done. Good vibes are contagious and as String Theory in physics has shown, there may be as many as eleven different levels of reality going on at the same time, so through the Kindness Circles we are tapping in to an energy level that is an antidote to violence.

That's why we need a Global Kindness Revolution. KINDNESS IS A STATE OF MIND. BE KIND ALL THE TIME! Won't you join us?

Judith Trustone is an award-winning author, activist and filmmaker whose *Celling America's Soul: torture and transformation in our prisons and why we should care* has been deemed the best book in print that describes prison from most every perspective, and the whimsical *The Cats' Secret Guide to Living with Humans*. Her double documentary DVD is soon to be released: *Healing Justice: a journey into Shadow America* highlights the art, music, interviews and families of those behind bars and those who once were behind bars; *Soothing and Nurturing the Human Spirit* was filmed at a workshop created by Trustone and lifer, Patrick Middleton, where she taught healing techniques to prisoners' families so they could use them with their loved ones in prison visiting rooms. These techniques can be used by anyone who feels stress regardless of where they are.

info@Sagewriters.org or see www.TrustOneKindness.com Box 215 Swarthmore, PA 19081 \$14.95 plus \$3 P&H

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TWO DOCUMENTARIES BY JUDITH TRUSTONE

Director, SageWriters & The Global Kindness Revolution

SOOTHING & NURTURING HUMAN SPIRITS

This is an experiential training film for families of prisoners and the formerly incarcerated. These self-healing techniques illustrated in the film can be used with loved ones in prison visiting rooms, and by ANYONE seeking stress reduction and healing. Instructions about how to create a Kindness Circle or to join our Virtual Kindness Circle are available online or sent free by anyone sending a self-addressed stamped envelope. More than 50,000 Kindness Cards have been distributed worldwide in prisons, schools, churches, and communities.



HEALING JUSTICE: A Journey into Shadow America

Journeys behind the walls of a maximum security prison, (Graterford, PA) Featuring the art of life-sentenced and formerly incarcerated prisoners, the documentary personalizes their lives and struggles, as well as those of their families and advocates. The musical talents of former prisoners and their supporters are also showcased. Interviews with those coming home and their families illustrate the failures of the criminal justice system to heal or rehabilitate and reveal the incredible resilience of the human spirit to be transformed even in the worst of circumstances. The film has been shown on PBS and in criminal justice programs at several universities.



\$14.95 for both plus \$4.00 p&h

FREE TO PRISONERS' FAMILIES with \$4.00 p&h

Sagewriters Box 215 Swarthmore, PA 19081 Or order online at TrustOneKindness.com

Contact us at info@TrustOneKindness.com: Tools for education, inspiration, transformation, healing and entertainment. Screenings available for your group.

Art by Suave Gonzales, Lifer

Videography by Jason Fifield; SLife Productions

An award-winning author, activist and filmmaker, Judith Trustone, has worked with over 2,000 imprisoned writers nationally through Sagewriters, which grew out of her creative writing classes in prisons. SageWriters has published 12 books of social and literary merit about the justice system. With a group of prisoners, led by Lifer Patrick Middleton, Ph.D., Sagewriters Inside Director, she started the Global Kindness Revolution as an antidote to violence. An innovative program consultant, she offers guidance in setting up Kindness Circles and workshops with area churches, prisons, corporations, community groups, workplaces, families, schools, colleges, shelters and

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Saturday, April 24, 2010

12:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.

Francis Myers Recreation Center

5803 Kingessing Avenue

Philadelphia, PA

**Please RSVP to (215) 921-3491 by
April 17th.**

**Or email: Info@hrcoalition.org
Refreshments will be provided!**

Sponsored by:

- Human Rights Coalition - Philly
- Human Rights Coalition - Chester
- Human Rights Coalition - FedUp!
- PA Institutional Law Project
- Moorish Unification Council of the World, Inc.

Just-Us Is In Your Hands!!

The Southwest Philadelphia area has one of the highest number of ex-offenders in Philly and we (HRC) believe that the way ex-offenders are treated while in prison has a huge impact on our community and society.

Everyone, including prisoners, is entitled to basic Human Rights such as the right to receive a fair trial, the right to proper medical treatment (physical & mental health), the right to education, and freedom from assault and discrimination.

The Human Rights Coalition also believes that no one (not judges, lawyers, politicians, or prison officials) is above the law; those with authority who break the law should be punished accordingly, just like the common man.

We are coming together to take a stand!

We welcome families of prisoners, community leaders, recovery leaders, advocates, and all faith leaders, to a Town Hall Meeting. Justice is in Your Hands!!

Human Rights Coalition
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Families Dare To Speak, Dare to Resist

How Can Loved Ones Get Involved With HRC?

After many instances of trying to help loved ones on the inside and hitting brick wall after brick wall, many families and friends wonder if their efforts are futile. Many give up. When they do, family structures get weakened and even worse - destroyed. Not only is inactivity harmful for the inmates, but for their family members as well, especially for the children, who sometimes never get to know their incarcerated family member. It usually leaves a permanent void in their lives and can even affect outcomes.

Yes, our individual efforts are often ineffective, because we need to do things as a group. As one person, we can write, call and protest, but it seems no one pays attention to a single individual. If we gather with other like-minded people who want the same things we do, we can share activities that have gotten results as well as learning from efforts that have been tried and failed. Putting our knowledge together and agreeing on plans of action are the only ways 'we' can combat a system that has money, power and public support.

We (as a unified group) must educate the general public because many people don't realize what goes on in the Prison Industrial Complex here in Pennsylvania and across the United States. We need to be prepared to speak to others by doing the research and asking our loved ones on the inside about what they would say, so we will be knowledgeable when we speak. *We need to be the voices for those who no longer have a voice.*

Once we educate others, we can get them involved with the struggle, even though they may not have loved ones on the inside. We can also enlist former inmates and sometimes even former, sympathetic DOC employees. Let's get some attorneys on board while we're at it. We need people from all walks of life. They are all important and we need as many of them as we can get. (see: "We are Everywhere")

We also need to get rid of the stigma of telling others that we have a loved one on the inside. Some people may be embarrassed to let others know that and they need to overcome that feeling of shame and possibly guilt. Will others be judgmental? Likely so, but the more people speak out, the more that will diminish. With the ever increasing incarceration rate, chances are that whomever you are speaking to has or knows someone on the inside. I received a letter from an inmate just recently and was told that a prominent PA Senator has a brother on the inside. Inmates' family members come from ALL walks of life. I firmly believe that "there, but for the Grace of God, go I." And, we all know that money talks and bull**** walks. But, how many of us has the type of money it takes to keep a loved one out of prison?

(Continued on page 27)

FAMILIES OF PRISONERS WE ARE EVERYWHERE

For those who forget that the incarcerated humans in this country are indeed just that - HUMAN - I would like you to think on this the next time you talk about "inmates, criminals, convicts, etc...". These humans have families and those who love them despite whatever they did. Look around you and wonder, because this is who we are....

We take care of your children and grandchildren in nursery schools, we give them shots in the doctor's office, we are dental assistants, we are school teachers and Sunday school teachers, we stand behind you in the grocery store, we prepare your medicine in the drug store, we work in banks, we approve your loans, we service your insurance claims, we work for newspapers, TV stations and radio stations, we read your electric meters and water meters, we are your landlords, your neighbors, we take care of your elderly parents in nursing homes, we are nurses, lab technicians, X-ray technicians, we own beauty shops, flower shops, printing shops, we are welders, plumbers, tree trimmers, we work for the IRS, the State Dept., in the courthouse, schools, churches, drug stores and toy stores, we are legal secretaries, lawyers, school board members, we are bus drivers, we prepare meals for your kids in school, we are city council members, bank tellers, we process your checking account, your saving account, we work at your Social Security office, your insurance company, we take care of your IRA, stocks, bonds, we sell your kids bikes, school supplies, clothes, shoes, eyeglasses, we repair your cars, we are real estate agents, car dealers, college professors, psychologists, administrative assistants, safety engineers and ranchers. We work at Ralphs, Albertsons, Trader Joe's, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Target, Macy's, Nordstrom and Saks 5th Avenue. We sell Avon and Tupperware. We are not all "on welfare", no matter what the government would like you to think.

(Continued on page 27)

(Continued from page 26)

And once someone gets into the system, even if later proven innocent, they can never erase the stigma of having been incarcerated.

UNITY! We need to be united in our efforts. We need to make plans together and carry them out together. Whether it be protests, letter writing campaigns, lobbying, phone calls, or whatever we decide to do as a team, we need to quit making excuses and just do what needs to be done. We need to make our advocacy work a priority in our lives just as we do other family obligations. If your mother, sister, child or brother or any other family member out here would need your assistance, would you give it?

Well, your loved one on the inside needs assistance from you, too. Do you love them as much? Would you help them regardless of having to expend your time and energy just as you would any other family member?

What if the shoe was on the other foot? What if it were you on the inside? Would you welcome any help or support that your loved ones could give you? *And please realize that the PA Department of Corrections wants to see you give up and go away.* They will have an easier time warehousing your loved ones if and when you do. Are you going to let them?

Are you going to be a party to this modern day form of slavery or are you going to act? They have been taking more and more from both inmates and their families because WE LET THEM!! Think about that....WE LET THEM! The question is, will we let them take even more. When will it end?

United we stand, divided we fall, has never been more true. The Human Rights Coalition is virtually the 'only' group who is still on the forefront of fighting for prisoners' rights in Pennsylvania. We need more active members. We need YOU!

Donna Pfender, Proud member of HRC, President of Fight For Lifers West

(Continued from page 26)

There are two million people in prison in America and twice that many on parole and probation. Add in mothers, fathers, children, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends and about sixteen million people are personally affected by the prison system in the United States.

We are tired of letting ourselves feel humiliated or embarrassed because our loved one is in prison. We did nothing wrong, and they are paying for their crime!

We are tired of fearing the loss of our jobs or evictions from our housing should anyone find out we have a loved one in prison.

We are tired of being made to feel inferior or unwelcome in churches, clubs, organizations or society in general simply because we refuse to abandon our loved ones.

We are ready to unite, to come out of hiding and openly support each other and our loved ones. It's a new day, America and we're here to prove it!

We are ready to speak out against the "they deserve what they get" attitude we hear you talk about in stores, theaters and restaurants.

We number in the millions, we are everywhere, every state, county, city and town. We may even live next door to you.

**Sixteen million & counting.
We are everywhere.
Think about it.**



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What's The News!

Pa. Justices Speak Out Against Mandatory Minimums

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justices J. Michael Eakin and Max Baer both criticized the state's mandatory sentencing laws before the House Appropriations Committee during a budget hearing on court funding Feb. 17.

Eakin said that at the very least the laws need to be tweaked. "We have too many people in jail who should not be in jail," Eakin said.

Baer added that mandatory sentencing and "three-strikes" laws are based on a fallacy. Research shows that these laws don't reduce crime," Baer told committee members.

Eakin also said mandatory minimums have been overdone and are discriminatory in some cases. But he added he wasn't advocating overturning all mandatory minimums, but thought some "wiggle room" for judges in some cases might be in order.

Attorney General Tom Corbett told the Senate Appropriation Committee the state spends far too little on drug prevention and treatment. Corbett said that it's often drug use that causes criminals to commit crimes. He added that some of the state's tobacco settlement funds could be directed to prevention and treatment programs. "There's plenty of supply, but there's even greater demand," Corbett said. "If you want to resolve that issue, and it's long-term problem, we've got to reduce the demand."

In other budget hearing:

Pennsylvania Budget Secretary Mary Soderberg told the Senate Appropriations Committee that new economic projections show that the state gross domestic product will be growing a 3 percent by the end of the fiscal year June 30.

Earlier predictions from Global insight, the econometrics firm used by the Rendell Administration, put the GDP growth rate at 2.6 percent.

Soderberg said the roster prediction from Global Insight is a further indication of increased stability in the state's economy. On the other hand, she told committee members that seeing month-to-month revenue numbers come in below estimate was "disheartening."

Soderberg appeared before the committee as part of month-long budget hearings held by the Senate and House appropriations committees. The committees are reviewing Rendell's proposed spending plan for FY 2010-2011 unveiled Feb. 9.

Kennedy for the Law Weekly

U.S. To Offer Suspicious Activity Report Training Nationwide

The federal program to standardize "suspicious activity reports" (SAR) is being taken nationwide. The Justice department announced last week in New Orleans at the National Fusion Center annual conference that the program would be expanded to all 72 fusion centers, involving federal, state, and local law enforcement, by the end of fiscal year 2012. Previously, the program had been tested at few locations. The programs' director will be Thomas O'Reilly of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, who has been overseeing the

test phase. A fusion center program office is being established in the Department of Homeland Security under Bart Johnson, Deputy Undersecretary for Intelligence and Analysis in DHS.

The decision means that training will be offered to all law enforcement agencies in the U.S. on how police officers should recognize the signs of possible terrorist activity and report them correctly to a national database. O'Reilly said that better reporting has been instrumental in responding to terror threats in New York, Florida, California, and Virginia. Details remain confidential. As previously reported by Crime & Justice News, current SAR test sites of Florida, New York, and Virginia and a few major cities, including Los Angeles, is due to expand soon to Alabama, Indiana, New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin, along with Dallas, Kansas City, and Savannah, Ga. O'Reilly called the program a low-cost one, involving \$35,000 at each site.

Washington Post

Justice O'Connor Leads National Effort Against Election of Judges

Former Supreme court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and several state Supreme Court justices are planning a nationwide push during next year's state legislative sessions to end the practice of electing judges, reports the Associated Press. Nevada already has such a proposal before voters on the 2010 ballot. Many judges and the American Bar Association argue the legal system is tainted by judges seeking campaign donations.

A judicial think tank at the University of Denver has assembled a group of prominent judges, including O'Connor, to push for the abolition of directly elected judges in the 33 states that have them. They want state commissions made up mostly of non-lawyers to pick judges. Governors would appoint judges the commissions select, and voters would decide in future elections whether the judges keep their jobs. Current judicial elections give a false impression that voters have much invested in court picks, O'Connor said.

USA Today

Editor's Note: Pennsylvania allows for the election of judges! The political establishment seeks to take away the power of citizens to elect judges for themselves.

HRC Supports Census Legislation

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Ronald G. Waters, Chairman Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

SUBJECT: Request for co-sponsorship

In the near future I will be introducing the following pieces of legislation.

1. A resolution memorializing the Congress of the United States to amend laws relating to the United States decennial census to change the manner in which incarcerated persons are counted. Prisoners are tabulated as residents of the counties of their incarceration rather than residents of the counties in which they resided prior to incarceration, the majority being urban areas. As a result of current practices, this deprives these urban areas of the benefits that accrue to a jurisdiction due to population size, such as voting and funding.

2. A concurrent resolution to establish a legislative task force and advisory committee to thoroughly study how the death penalty functions in Pennsylvania. The task force will include members appointed by leadership of both the House and Senate, from both the majority and minority caucuses. The advisory committee will include prosecutors, the judiciary, corrections, victims' families and advocates, a defense attorney, a civil rights advocate, and a criminologist.

The task force will be assigned to study all aspects of capital punishment in Pennsylvania, including the risk of executing an innocent person, how defendants are chosen to face the death penalty, what services exist for victims' families and loved ones, if racial or geographical biases exist, the costs of the death penalty, and if the commonwealth provides adequate protection from execution for persons with mental retardation and mental illness.

If you would like to co-sponsor either of these legislative proposals, please call 717-772-6955, or email Akeela Roland at aroland@pahouse.net.

Akeela L. Roland

Rep. Ronald G. Waters, Chairman

Pennsylvania Legislative

aroland@pahouse.net

Dear Mr. Roland:

On behalf of the Human Rights Coalition (HRC), I am requesting that you list HRC as a co-sponsor for the pending legislation calling for revisions in census taking and, respecting establishing a task force to review death penalty cases.

The HRC is a grass root, non-profit prisoner's rights advocate group. We are comprised of families of prisoners, former and current prisoners and concerned citizens who work together for prison and re-entry reforms. We have been around for almost ten years with chapters in the cities of Chester and Pittsburgh, PA.

HRC believes that, by counting inmates for census purposes as citizens of the community they belong when arrested and return after prison we insure that more federal funds will be available for progressive crime preventive measures and, aid the transition back-to-society. Therefore, HRC co-sponsors legislation for new laws and social policies which counts inmates as residents of the community they belong before and after incarceration.

HRC also believes that because the death penalty has been operated in unfair and discriminatory manner in the past a special task force should be established to prevent poor innocent citizens, mentally ill convicts and disproportionate number of minority citizens from being executed by current death penalty practices. Therefore, HRC co-sponsors revision in the practice of carrying out death penalties.

Richard "Tut" Carter

Interim Facilitator Human Rights Coalition

LAVA Space

4134 Lancaster Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19104

visit website: www.hrcoalition.org

2009 JLWOP NEWS

By Anita Colon

2009 was an exciting and promising year for advocates looking to end the practice of sentencing juveniles to life without any possibility of parole. As many of you know, I serve on the steering committee for Fight for Lifers—East and I work very closely with the issue of JLWOP. I am also a member of the Pennsylvania Prison Society's JLWOP subcommittee and in March, 2009 I was appointed the Pennsylvania Coordinator for the National Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth. This national organization was funded by the Human Rights Watch with the explicit goal of working to eliminate JLWOP. A national coordinator was appointed in Washington, DC and there is a state coordinator in each state where JLWOP exists.

As you may be aware, the United States is the only country that sentences children to life without any possibility of parole and our home state of Pennsylvania has the distinction of having majority of the country's juvenile lifers. We currently have over 450, which amounts to almost 20% of all of the juvenile lifers in the country (and the world)! Disturbingly, 59% of the prisoners serving life without parole for crimes they committed as juveniles were first time offenders. In addition, there are a significant disproportionate number of minorities serving JLWOP throughout the United States. In Pennsylvania, a black youth is almost 20 times more likely to receive a sentence of life without the possibility of parole than a white youth even though African Americans make up less than 15% of the state's youth population.

As dismal as these facts are, I am pleased to report that the momentum surrounding the juvenile lifers issue is building tremendously, both on a local and national level. Last month, US Congressman Robert Scott (VA) reintroduced a Federal Bill that would eliminate JLWOP on a Federal level and require states to follow suit or face significant reductions in federal funding. The bill is named The Juvenile Justice Accountability and Improvement Act of 2009 (HR2289). The bill was co-sponsored by Rep. Jon Conyers and provides for parole review after 15 years of incarceration for anyone serving a life sentence for a crime they were convicted of committing prior to their 18th birthday.

I was chosen by Representative Bobby Scott to testify at the House Sub-Committee hearing in favor of the bill in Washington, DC on June 9th along with Marc Mauer (Executive Director of the Sentencing Project), Mark Osler (Former Prosecutor and current Professor of Law at Baylor University), and Linda White (a Board Member of the Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation). The hearing went well, and although there was strong opposition to the bill by the Minority subcommittee members, the primary objective to the bill was the issue of "federalism" (the federal government telling the states what to do). In fact, although the current Minority Leader, Louis Gohmert, continues to oppose the bill, he spoke out on record

against JLWOP and stated that he hoped his home state of Texas did not sentence children to life without any possibility of parole. Two weeks later the governor of Texas signed a bill granting parole opportunities to juvenile lifers.

In June, Reconstruction and FFL-East helped to make it possible for me to participate in a panel discussion surrounding the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the 4th Annual International CURE Human Rights and Prison Reform Convention at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. My presentation focused on the impact that ratification of the CRC would have on the current and future youth in our country, including the elimination of sentencing juveniles to life without parole. The conference was very informative and I made many international contacts. International support for the elimination of JLWOP in the U.S. is extremely valuable especially because the campaign for the ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) treaty is also receiving increased attention lately.

In addition, in September the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in two cases involving juvenile lifers (both in Florida, one 13 at the time of the crime – Joe Sullivan and one 17 - Terrence Graham) who were convicted of life without parole (LWOP) for non-homicide. Although the outcome of these cases will likely not affect the majority of the juvenile lifers in our state or throughout the country, the hearings resulted in countless articles being published throughout the country highlighting the general issues of JLWOP in the US and questioning whether the sentence is appropriate. Throughout the country, organizations are working to eliminate JLWOP and states are reexamining their laws as they relate to juveniles. Currently Michigan, California, Florida, and Louisiana all have bills being considered that would provide for parole opportunities for juveniles serving life sentences. Our state has been negatively featured in many of the recent articles related to JLWOP. Now is definitely the time for Pennsylvania legislators to address this issue and it seems that is finally happening.

I am very excited to report that there are currently three bills in Pennsylvania that address the JLWOP problem. HB402 is a bill that calls for an in-depth study to determine why Pennsylvania has the most juvenile lifers in the country/world. This bill was introduced by State Representative Ron Waters (D-Phila.) who also co-sponsored a Pennsylvania bill (HR1999) with State Representative Kenyatta Johnson (D-Phila) that mirrors the federal bill introduced by Bobby Scott. In addition, In September PA State Representative Robert Matzie (D-Beaver County) introduced HB 1994, which would give parole opportunity to anyone sentenced to at least ten years for a crime that occurred when the offender was under 18. I am working closely with representatives Johnson and Waters to determine the best strategy to push these bills around the state.

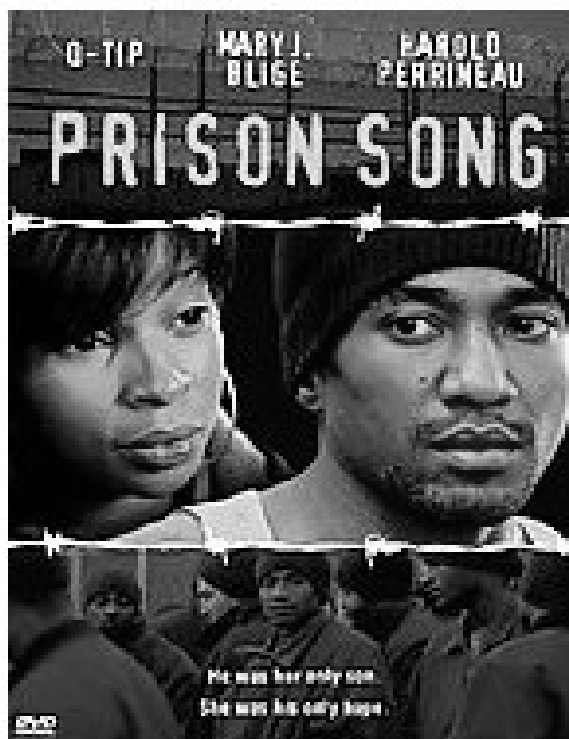
PA State Senator Greenleaf has also been quoted several times as being concerned over the number of juveniles serving life sentences in Pennsylvania. He

has publically questioned the appropriateness of the sentence and expressed interest in introducing legislation that would change some of our current laws. Most recently, a Statewide Coalition has been formed in Pennsylvania focused on eliminating JLWOP. The coalition includes approximately 25 members of various human rights organizations, advocates, and criminal justice professionals that have been working on this issue. Both Kristi Brian and I are members of this coalition and serve on committees within the coalition. I am confident that this newly formed coalition will be successful in bringing much needed attention to this issue around the state.

Hopefully 2010 will result in even more progress towards eliminating this cruel and unjust practice of JLWOP. I, along with the Fight for Lifers members, will definitely continue to monitor and attempt to drive changes. I encourage all of you to call, write, and email your State and local legislators and ask them to support any and all current efforts to eliminate juvenile life without parole.

Lastly, In November 2009, a Statewide Coalition was formed in Pennsylvania focused on eliminating JLWOP. The coalition was named the Pennsylvania Coalition for Fair Sentencing of Youth. It includes approximately 25 members of various human rights organizations, advocates, and criminal justice professionals that have been working on this issue. I serve on the Steering Committee of this coalition. Kristi Brian of FFL - East is also a member and serves on the outreach committee of the coalition. Currently most of the coalition members are located in the Philadelphia or Pittsburgh area, but we are hoping to branch out throughout the entire state soon. I am confident that this newly formed coalition will be successful in bringing much needed attention to the JLWOP issue and help to incite change.

In solidarity,
Anita Colon
Fight for Lifers – East
Philadelphia, Pa.



HRC Invites you to Scarred Dreams

Sometimes life don't turn out the way you imagined.

You have a loved one in prison and all isn't well. So you see sometimes our dreams trip up and get scars.

You have questions and don't know who to turn to. You need help to help your loved one; and no one cares. And most of all you need not be judged because you love someone in prison.

Mothers, wives, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters sometimes you just need someone to talk to. The Human Rights Coalition is made up of family members who have loved ones in prison; we understand cause we've been there and we're offering you a helping hand. We laugh and cry together. Vent and scream together. We share. And support each other and our loved ones. Please come join us.

**Contact person: Patricia M. Vickers
215-921-3491**

Please RSVP if you are interested.

**Date: First Friday of each Month,
Beginning May 7, 2010**

Time: 7:00 p.m., Refreshments at 6:30 p.m.

**Location:
LAVA Space
4134 Lancaster Ave.
Philadelphia, PA**

Human Rights Coalition

C/O LAVA Space
4134 Lancaster Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Phone: 215-921-3459
E-mail: Info@hrcoalition.org
www.hrcoalition.com



The Babylon System -

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

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

PA D.O.C. IN DISARRAY: A FAILING SYSTEM

BY SAFIR CHUMA ASAFO

Part II, Continued from January ‘The Movement’, Issue # 5

HATRED BEGETS HATRED

Within the prison environment, much like the (American) society (at large), events and behaviors are erroneously projected as being disconnected from their respective social settings; as if human behavior occurs in a vacuum or out of thin air, devoid of any reciprocal rendering. Yet, such a myopic view, although denoting not only an ignorance but an (acquired) arrogance as well, is the prevailing mindset; especially among those in authority (over others). That is to say - for example, if a person (in authority) spits in the face of another person (deemed under authority) and the latter returns the same, the latter is insidiously regarded as the “lone” aggressor, as the former’s actions are somehow absolved by virtue of his position (of power) within the dynamic, leaving the latter holding the full blame, thus the full brunt of the penalty.

In Pennsylvania’s prisons, this (ill) logic is pervasive. A mere cursory review of most of the misconduct reports that are responsible for a large majority of the men (and women) being locked down in the state’s super max dungeons for ad infinitum, could easily lead one to believe that these men (and women) just up and performed “senseless acts” minus any precipitation what so ever; that they are “naturally” inclined to the most vile behavior. However, what is almost always omitted is the often vile and despotic behavior that’s initiated by certain rogue prison officials which, more often than not, have racial implications. So, while it has become an unchallenged (and often unchallengeable) custom of prison officials to point to prisoners’ “aggression” or “hatred”, the initiating hatred and aggression (by prison officials) is invariably left out of the equation; thus creating a culture of “us-against-them”, whereby “rehabilitation”, “reform” or what have you, becomes the consequent casualty.

And it is within this contest that prisoners can be assaulted, starved, tortured and even outright murdered. This is what happened at Greene County, with the perpetrators merely being shifted to other prisons in the region, mainly SCI Forest, Fayette and Somerset, where, not surprisingly, the same violent abuses are on the rise. In fact, Greene County, Forest and Fayette are referred to, by prisoners, as the “triangle of terror”. It should also be pointed out that SCI Albion has recently joined the fray, with the recent appointment of Raymond Sobina as that prison’s warden, who came from Forest.

Of greater significance, however, is the fact that the entire Department of Corrections, headed by Secretary Beard, has become a climate of fear, hatred, abuses and the like. It is rumored that Beard is quite fond of his infamous “Restricted Release List”, a D.O.C. policy that gives him sole discretion (power) to keep prisoners locked on solitary confinement for as long as he deems “necessary” which, as it stands now, means forever—since he has had men (and women) locked down for many years—without any clear criteria or system by which prisoners can work their way back to general population. What is equally ambiguous is the fact that a fabricated story concocted by a prison guard (especially by a prison’s respective security department), can arbitrarily land a prisoner on said “list” (for the rest of his or her life) without any independent oversight committee; and consistent with the trend of racial inequality, “the list” is disproportionately laden with Black and other non-White prisoners.

The Babylon System -

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

Many of the officials within Secretary Beard's own administration have, admittedly, become disillusioned. And this disillusionment is spurred by many factors—ranging from the course the whole PA D.O.C. has taken, in terms of the mounting disorder, wrought by utter derelict of duty and, quite frankly, the open racial & religious discrimination within the prison system—to the increasing recidivism rate—the cycle of hatred that is perpetuated by the wanton unprofessionalism of prison officials (with no accountability), the implementation of draconian rules & regulations used solely for punitive purposes minus any rehabilitative functioning. One high ranking official who wishes to remain anonymous revealed that “race, politics and the bottom-line” which amounts to profits & power, “is the unspoken theme”.

The well being of the men and women warehoused in these new-age plantations, and the fact that many will (eventually) return to their communities just as—if not more—damaged than when they entered, has been pushed into the peripheral. Therefore, the PA D.O.C.'s professed mission statement of “Our mission is to protect the public by confining persons committed to our custody in safe, secured facilities, and to provide opportunities for inmates to acquire the skills and values necessary to become productive, law-abiding citizens; while respecting the rights of crime victims.” is merely an empty rhetorical proclamation, for public appearances only; far removed from the reality of the standing practices within the (invisible) sub-societies we call prisons.

A tour through many of the state's prisons, on any given day, will undoubtedly reveal the despair and hopelessness among the real, living, breathing men and women who are often spoken of in stoic, statistical language which tends to depict them as a non-people, which in-turn makes these prisons the perfect playground for neo-nazi types, skin-heads and ilk, to come and unmask their hatred for Blacks and non-Whites, without any public notice. And, ironically, complaints of racially motivated abuses made by prisoners are pretty much always dismissed as absurd; even in the face of the discovery of the telling photographs of Greene County guards posing (in the prison's security office) with swastikas, confederate flags and other racist paraphernalia; or the racially motivated beatings of Black and Latino prisoners at Fayette's now defunct Long-Term Segregation Unit (LTSU); or Camp Hill's notorious Secured Management Unit (S.M.U.); or the “quiet as kept” sexual assault of a Black prisoner's wife by four White S.C.I. Somerset guards, while she was staying at a local motel during her visiting weekend; or Albion's racially slanted medical experimentations and general sham of a healthcare service, as applied to treating Black and non-White prisoners. The list goes on.

Many of the D.O.C. officials, not excluding some of high rank, are convicts themselves. In another twist of irony, it has become common to see homosexuality both promoted and facilitated, while prisoner's spouses, girlfriends, etc. are routinely harassed when visiting, to dissuade even the most rudiment modicum of civilized family interaction.

Moreover, in the sole interest of accommodating the influx of the already overcrowded state prisons; which has grown to almost thirty in under twenty years, prisoners are forced to live slave-ship-style in tiny little cells barely fit for one person, and other similar living quarters, with other prisoners; some who are HIV/AIDS and/or Hepatitis-C positive, mental patients, etc. jeopardizing the health and safety of the prison populations, thus the community at large. This, among other related factors, have compelled many prisoners to resort to desperate behavior just to qualify for one man cell status. Some even spend years in solitary confinement, just to be alone, as there isn't any viable recourse or system by which prisoners can resolve such matters.

In fact, prisoners have uniformly iterated that such matters are rarely dealt with (amicably), as the notion of simply covering things up has become the primary course of action taken; the apt preamble to the inevitable and eventual descent into full-on entropy! In a more broader view, though seldom (openly) acknowledged, the cultural polarities between Whites and non-Whites is the base of the age-old chasm, with white supremacy, in its many manifestations, being the most aggressive and prevalent social construct. And the laws, police, courts, media and prison opportunities, etc., though “categorically” and “unequivocally” denied, are the DNA of said (racist) construct. Therefore, cloaked, albeit in its many euphemisms, Blacks are - especially in the so-called “criminal” context, still the *bête noire*. This is the essence of the: “America, Black-White, separate & unequal” axiom which accurately denotes this sad reality - which is none more evident than in its prison system. White Supremacy isn't concerned with RIGHT & WRONG. It is primarily concerned with power; thus the ability to define RIGHT & WRONG at its own (biased) discretion.

The Babylon System -

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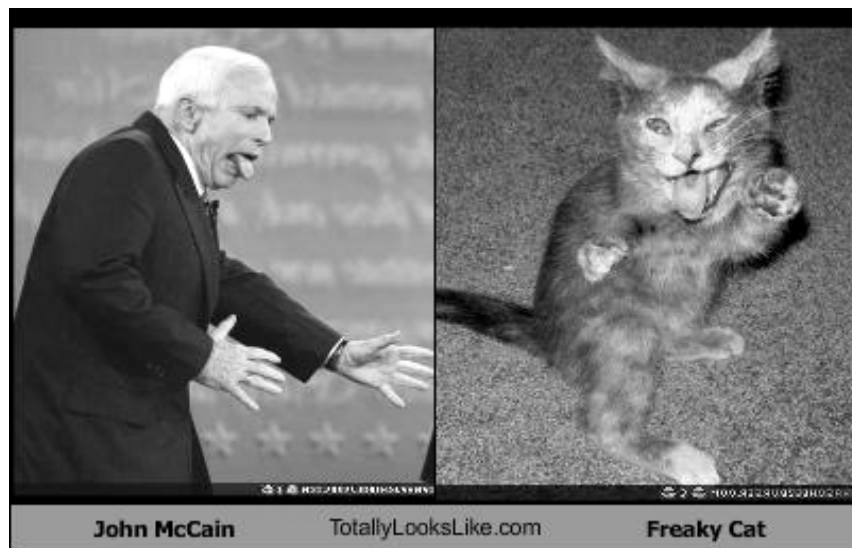
(HRC), NAACP, ACLU, National Black Legatee Assoc. (N-BLA), Red Heart Society, Prison Society, Amnesty International, American Friends Service committee (AFSC), and a throng of others, not excluding the aunts & uncles, wives & girlfriends, grandparents & parents, friends & comrades, etc., have been at the forefront of the burgeoning PA prison reform movement, it has been argued that the prisoners themselves haven't necessarily been on par or as committed as those fighting on their behalf. For, within the prison environment prisoners have, in significant measure, been sucked into the asinine prison politics, relegated to squabbling over jail-house trinkets, sport & play and the like; often getting involved in the struggle (for their own survival), and a more general humane existence, belatedly - after the most flagrant human rights violations have occurred - as opposed to taking a more productive posture. This has to change!

It has become obvious, even to the casual on-looker, that the system is content with its current course, at the ostensible peril of the (growing) prison population. Therefore, within the scope of plain ol' logic - it is up to the prisoners to create and ultimately usher in more viable alternatives. Because as it stands now - in Pennsylvania - a LIFE SENTENCE is tantamount to death, as more prisoners, over the last twenty years, have died while serving LIFE than those actually sentenced to DEATH. Moreover, at the rate post DNA testing is exonerating (falsely) convicted Death Row prisoners around the country, the People should demand a moratorium on capital punishment altogether!

And finally - it has to be said that, for all the men and women trapped in the wretched crime & punishment morass, especially in Pennsylvania's prison system, you have to determine your fate. The society (at large) is beginning to awaken from the slumber that the racist propaganda has put them in, in terms of the inhuman stigma and overall demonization of prisoners. The many progressive grassroots organizations are poised to further the agenda of not only prison reform but prisoner-reform, as applied to preparing them for re-entry into society, etc.

It is said that wherever you see slavery or any similitude of such, you're witnessing a conspiracy (of strange sorts), in that - in order for a master to be a holder of a slave the slave has to be complicit, by compliance. The moment the so-called slave decides to not comply with his /her enslavement, the master ceases to be such and the relationship is dissolved!

Also, in this vein, it is of paramount significance to realize that the CHANGE ticket President Obama rode in on extends to every level of society—even to its (estranged) sub-societies (prisons). However, and most important of all, the real question remains. What are the prisoners going to do? For therein is where the solution lies! The time is now!



THE MOVEMENT

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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 JUST FORWARD YOUR ARTICLE TO THE HRC'S NEWSLETTER DEPARTMENT FOR POSSIBLE PRINTING.

SUPREME COURT TAKES ANOTHER SLAP AT WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

BY: CAMARA OYE

In a recent decision, MELENDEZ-DIAZ V. MASSACHUSETTS, 129 S. CT. 257(2009), the United States Supreme Court has yet again extended the protection of the 6th Amendments' "Confrontation Clause". The court held that 'Testimonial Hearsay' as defined in CRAWFORD V. WASHINGTON, 124 S. CT. 1354(2004), also applied to Analysts or Scientific Experts" who prepared reports in the case. These reports are "Statement/Affidavits" for the purpose of the Confrontation Clause, and the Analysts or Scientific Expert are witnesses subject to cross examination under the 6th Amendment.

MELENDEZ-DIAZ involved a drug case in which Melendez was denied the opportunity to confront the analyst who tested the drugs in his case through cross examination. Melendez argued that introducing the reports of the analyst with him not being afforded an opportunity to cross examine the analyst was a Hearsay Violation. The Supreme Court agreed.

In delivering the Opinion of the Court, Justice Scalia broke from the facts of Melendez's case and went further to discuss how the courts decision would effect other criminal cases. Addressing the suggestions of the dissenting Justices Scalia quoted the findings of the Nation Academy of Science that said "a majority of the laboratories producing forensic evidence are administered by law enforcement agencies, such as police departments. These agency's often report to law enforcement officials and may feel pressure - or favorable to the prosecution." MELENDEZ-DIAZ, 129 S.CT. at 2536. Scalia went further to quote a study conducted by GARRETT & NEUFELD - Invalid Forensic Science Testimony and Wrongful Convictions, that found that "invalid forensic testimony contributed to 60% of the exonerated cases that resulted in the overturning of criminal convictions." 129 S.CT. at 2537. id

Scalia's shift to discussing invalid forensic testimony in wrongful convictions while deciding a drug case is another slap to the Criminal Justice Machine which already has a black eye due to the overwhelming number of exonerated Death Row Inmates. First it was 'DNA Evidence', HOUSE V. BELL, then recently 'Recantation Evidence', TROY DAVIS, now in MELENDEZ-DIAZ the court has added 'Forensic Testimony' to the equation.

Prior to MELENDEZ-DIAZ prosecutor's in Pennsylvania were able to present cases absent producing the Analyst/Expert. In drug cases the Commonwealth was allowed to simply produce the reports. COMMONWEALTH V. CARTER, 932 A.2d 1261(2007). In Homicide cases the Commonwealth was allowed to bring in anyone from the Medical Examiner's Office to testify to an autopsy report to determine the cause and manner of death. COMMONWEALTH V. MITCHELL, 5701 A.2d 532, 534(Pa. Super. 1990). In the wake of MELENDEZ-DIAZ Pennsylvania Courts will be Constitutional obligated to revisit these decisions.



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Your Legal Corner

Press of Atlantic City Assembly Votes to End Mandatory Sentencing

By DEREK HARPER, Statehouse Bureau | Posted: Saturday, January 9, 2010

TRENTON - When Gale Muhammad heard the state Assembly voted Thursday to rescind mandatory sentences for drug offenses near schools, she reacted emotionally.

Muhammad, of Washington Township, Gloucester County, was married to a man who had received a mandatory-minimum sentence and died of cancer in prison 13 years ago. She has since fought mandatory sentences with her group Women Who Never Give-Up, which has an Atlantic City branch.

"I actually looked at his wedding picture when the news came over the wire, and I just cried," Muhammad said. "I just cried because it's going to free up so many people."

Assembly members gave final approval to the bill Thursday, voting 46-30, largely along party lines, to allow sentencing judges the discretion of whether to impose penalties that are currently mandatory.

The bill awaits Gov. Jon S. Corzine's signature..

Under the current law, people convicted of selling drugs or possessing them with the intent to sell face mandatory jail sentences of three years and \$15,000 in fines if they are arrested within 1,000 feet of a school or 500 feet of parks, libraries, museums, or public housing projects.

In 2008, the latest figures available, court statistics show 3,622 defendants were convicted of distribution of a controlled substance within 1,000 of school property or a school bus.

Before issuing lesser sentences, the law requires judges to consider: The defendant's criminal record and the seriousness of the offense; The specific location of the offense and how likely it exposed children to drug-related activities; Whether school was in session; Whether children were present.

The court would have to consider all relevant circumstances, including whether the person took a plea bargain in exchange for the state dropping a charge that would lead to imprisonment upon conviction.

Furthermore, the law allows inmates serving similar mandatory-minimum sentences to have the court review his or her sentence.

The law also says judges shall not reduce penalties if the offense took place on school property or on a school bus, or if the defendant had a gun or used or threatened violence.

Supporters said the current drug-free school zone law, enacted in 1987, doesn't work, causing the state to have 35 percent of its inmates - the nation's highest percentage - serving time for nonviolent drug offenses.

Eight former state attorneys general sent Corzine and the Legislature a letter in December supporting this bill, and the Senate passed the bill 25-11 Dec. 10.

City residents have also complained that school zones overlap more in densely built areas, causing prison terms to be unequal and unfair.

"The mandatory-minimum sentencing the zones require has effectively created two different sentences for the same crime, depending on where an individual lives," Assembly Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-Mercer said on Thursday. "This is geographic discrimination at its most basic, and it is something to which I am adamantly opposed."

Steve Scheffler, a Northfield criminal defense attorney, said visiting high schools with someone from the county Prosecutor's Office, a criminal defense attorney and some younger defendants would be a better deterrent than mandatory minimums.

He said, "I've had some murder cases, and they were able to negotiate better deals with their cases than some of these one-time or two-time drug dealers, and it just doesn't make sense."

Locally, Assemblyman Vince Polistina, R-Atlantic, was one of a number of Republicans who voted against the bill. He opposed it, he said, because the bill relaxed the law too much. He said, "I think rehabilitation should be a key with any of those issues, but the bill just went too far in granting leniency."

Contact Derek Harper:

609-292-4935

DHarper@pressofac.com

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Official HRC Chapters

START A HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION (HRC) CHAPTER OR BRANCH IN YOUR AREA. Each Chapter or Branch must comply with eight requirements. These eight are:

- 1.) Respond to inquiries in a timely manner as resources permit.
- 2.) Update membership to HRC-Philly at least quarterly.
- 3.) Incorporate as a non-profit organization.
- 4.) Publish a newsletter at least semi annually as resources permit.
- 5.) Send minutes of chapter meetings to HRC-Philly.
- 6.) Establish internet video conferencing for statewide chapter meetings.
- 7.) Create a cooperative business to finance your chapter or branch to be financially independent.

The Human Rights Coalition (Disclaimer)

The Human Rights Coalition is an organization that focuses on the plight of prisoners in their struggle for human rights and humane conditions of prisons and challenging the prison industrial complex exploitation of inmates and the drastic ramification on the families of prisoners and society at large.

*We recognize that most prisoners are people of color and often are economically disfranchised working class people.
HRC serves as an educational and resource forum to the community.*

The Human Rights Coalition does not have the ability to represent individuals in the court of law nor has funding for such activities. The Human Rights Coalition does not have lawyers for personal counsel nor the ability to write legal briefs on behalf of any individual.

The Human Rights Coalition is about building a grassroots movement with the leadership of the families of prisoners and citizens who are concerned about the proliferation of prisons and the lack of social programs that could prevent crime and injustice.

"We can bomb the world into pieces but, you can't bomb it into peace"