

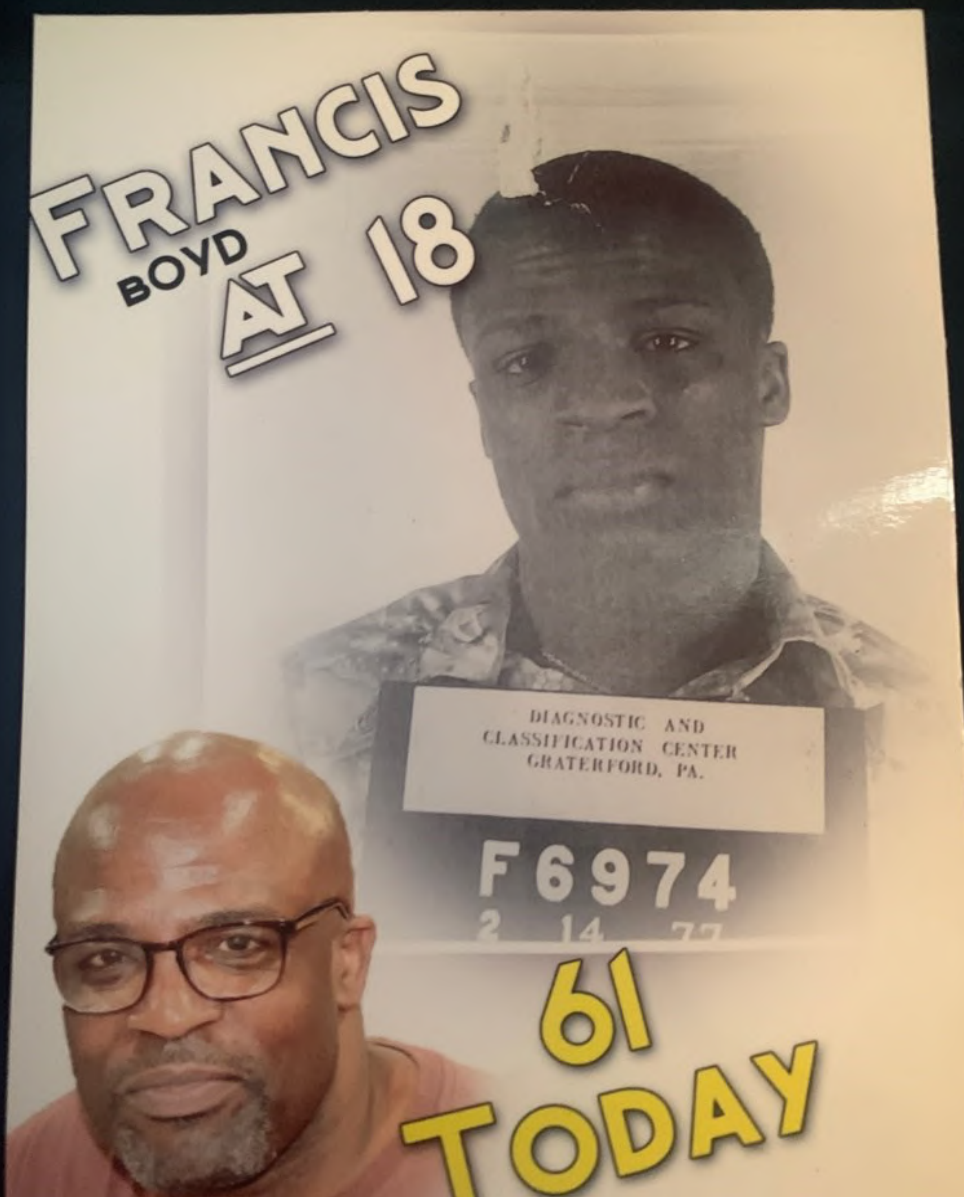
# THE MOVEMENT

Spring 2021  
Issue #44

Human Rights Coalition  
Dedicated to Protecting the

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

## Pennsylvania's abusive tradition



of favoring  
Punishment  
over  
Restoration

Francis  
Boyd  
40+ years

See more on  
page 4

## Must Read!

### *Transitioning From Boyhood 2 Manhood*

( Growing, Maturing And Evolving While In Prison)



Brother Hafazah

**Brother Hafazah's book (Transition from Boyhood 2 Manhood) serves as an illuminating example of a man who has done a thorough introspection of self and realized the need for change. And understood that change is birthed in the mental and born in the physical. Meaning thoughts produce actions and actions give life to thoughts. I**

**n 2019;**

*I have had the pleasure of reading this book and I think it is a good read and teaching tool for all generations of men. This brother spoke on and broke down some very real topics from a street perspective while sharing his trials and tribulations. I honestly believe many can benefit from this book and I do not just say that because the author is my brother, but because I know many men have been through this and have children going through things and you may not know how to reach them mentally. This book helps with that, so support the cause while sharpening your mind at the same time.*

*Peace, Big Hick*

**Purchase From: Amazon.com**

**Price: \$15.00**

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Sergio Hyland  
@uptownserg

# The Editor Speaks

Welcome to issue #44 of THE MOVEMENT! It feels good to be in the position that I'm in, playing as much of a role as possible in our common struggle to acquire freedom. But what does "freedom" actually mean to us? Since this magazine was started by prisoners and family members of prisoners, most people automatically assume that when we refer to freedom,

we're limiting its meaning to being free from prison. However, freedom is a complex and multidimensional concept, and can't be limited to issues that are only worked out through the so-called "criminal justice system".

The Human Rights Coalition's is dedicated to protecting the human rights of all! And the most basic human right is the right to be free; free to plan, and grow, and build, and create, and to not be targeted and harmed by any other person or group of people. Sadly, the vast majority of the world isn't free, and those who do have their freedom, have likely gotten it at the expense of other's freedom. So we fight and struggle, and we refuse to relent as long as freedom is denied to anybody. The prison industrial complex is but a mere spoke on the wheel of oppression and injustice. While we must continue to target the inhumanity of this system, we also must recognize that our main focus should be on defeating those who wield the power that has kept this system afloat for such a long time. I'm no huge fan of amerikan "democracy", but there are certain opportunities that will allow us to accomplish some of the goals that we set. Progressive campaigns have become more popular, giving rise to more progressive candidates. They talk our language and they claim to stand for what we believe. Still, it is up to US to hold them accountable and make sure that they are carrying out the will of the people - the people who placed them in their positions of power. And if the field refuses to produce a candidate who reflects our values, we must take matters into our hands and produce our own candidates!

If anybody is confused about what I'm getting at, let me be clear: we, as an organization, a community, a people, need to be better! We need to be better at organizing; we need to be better affiliated with the politics and politicians who govern our communities; and we need to be more active participants in the decision making processes, so we can ensure that our

needs are met at all times! We need to equip ourselves with the means to self-determine.

Shakaboona and the many others involved with THE MOVEMENT have put their trust and faith in me to be the new editor of this meaningful and invaluable publication. And I realize that each generation must be able to implement what they learned from the preceding generations and build on that foundation. THE MOVEMENT isn't like other publications, where folks simply complain about prison. THE MOVEMENT is a political tool. My aim is to use this tool to organize, agitate, interrupt, and ultimately upset the "politics as usual" mindset, upon which we have grown an eerily harmful tolerance and dependence. Nothing is normal about what's happening to us. NOTHING!!! Nothing is normal about spending decades inside of a cage, only to wither away and die, or be released at such an old age, we can't contribute to life or find any joy in living it. It amazes me how humankind is advanced enough to send drones to Mars, genetically engineer cucumbers, or make "designer babies", but we can't find a better way for human beings to pay their debt to society, other than to lock them away in dungeons, forcing them to serve sentences of the worst kinds of mental, emotional, and physical torture! The truth of the matter is that we can either focus all of our anger and energies on the prison system, or we can focus our energies on those who control the levers of power. Prisons are definitely worthy of our attention, but they're just another part of the overall system of oppression. By becoming more familiar with the system and how it works, we place ourselves in a better position to implement those necessary changes.

I'm honored to be your new coeditor; I'm honored to be in the position that I'm in, trusted and relied upon to voice your concerns. I will continue to do it with class, integrity, and absolute fire! And I will continue to apply everything I've had the privilege of learning from our elders, to educate, motivate, and inspire our movement to act!

In this issue, we're introducing a new column, **SOLITARY TALK!**, dedicated to exposing the torturous practice of solitary confinement. We all know that solitary confinement is merely a miniature version of prison, and is used in the very same manner - which is to punish those whom society has wronged. Surprisingly, many people on both sides of the aisle believe that solitary confinement should be abolished, because there are more effective ways to ensure accountability. I agree. But if that's the case, and solitary CAN be abolished, can't the very same argument be made for abolishing prisons as a whole?! Feel me? That's just one of the things we're working on. There's so much more to come! Stick with us.

*(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3)

Before I end this, let me send out some love to our elders, Russell "Maroon" Shoatz and Mumia Abu Jamal, as they are in the process of recovering from Covid-19 as well as other very serious medical conditions. We must do everything in our power to secure their release from prison - as well as the release of so many of our elders who deserve to be home. Haven't they all suffered enough? Maroon and Mumia, if you're reading this, please know that THE MOVEMENT family always has your back.

That's how it's supposed to be!

Your loyal Brother and Comrade,  
through every struggle...

**-Serg**  
**@uptownserg**

(Continued from page 11)

er. There was a global outpouring and people of all races, ethnic, and gender backgrounds demonstrated in the streets.

People must also march in the street for those facing death by incarceration in Pennsylvania prisons. It serves no penological purpose keeping sick people in prison until they die when they are no threat to public safety. Josh Shapiro and Harris Gubernick should stop voting NO to grant commutation to aged prisoners who pose no threat to the public and prisoners whose prison record clearly shows they have been reformed. Commutation does not provide a slot machine that cranks applicants into appropriate slots, like dimes and quarters in a parking meter. It does, however, make clear that consideration counts in a decision about whether or not clemency should be granted if a person's records shows he is an elder, is sickly and poses no threat to the public or if his record shows he has reformed and poses no threat to the public. When is punishment undeserved? How is it possible for one to correct a crime made decades ago? Does not remorse, growth, and change mean nothing?

By George Rahsaan Brooks #AP-4884

## THE MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

### Founders

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

### Editor-In-Chief

*Sergio "Serg" Hyland*

### Co-Editor-In-Chief

*Patricia "Mama Patt" Vickers*

### Owner

*Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall*

### Parent Organization:

*Human Rights Coalition (HRC)*

**Founded: 2007**

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## Call for Contributors

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

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

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

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

---

**THE MOVEMENT**

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## End LWOP! Free Francis "Shots" Boyd, NOW!!!

I've been around a lot of older guys during my two decades of incarceration, and if weren't for many of them, I'd still have the same diseased street mentality that landed me in prison, and I'd still be stuck in the black hole of solitary confinement, where I did years at a time. If I named every elder who helped me to mature and grow in here, I'd run out of space. So I just want to use this time to say a few words about one of my old-heads who I've learned invaluable lessons from over the years: Francis "Shots" Boyd. Shots is nearly 65 years old, and he's been in prison since the age of 18. Many decades ago, he accidentally shot and killed his own cousin during a robbery attempt. As if he and his family hasn't been through enough, he's still in prison. Why? When we look at the violence in our communities, we wonder where the leaders are. Too many are in prison! Coming through these state penitentiaries as a youngster, I had a lot to learn, and I realized that I had to learn it quickly if I wanted to survive. Sometimes, when I look back at those days, I wonder what those older prisoners saw in me that made them want to get involved in my life and help me move forward. I was taught to be distrustful of people. But these older guys taught me the kind of life lessons that you can't learn in school. They taught me how to keep my head low and focus on getting my education. They taught me how to search out and identify what my interests are, so that I could work to cultivate them. I lost my father not long after coming to prison, and these men took on important roles in my life. If I'm being honest, I have to admit that I didn't always listen to what they tried to teach me. Sometimes we have to learn lessons the hard way. But as I grow older and more mature, I find myself digging into the past and identifying those lessons, so that I can apply them to whatever situation I'm dealing with.

The leadership lacking in our communities is stuck behind these walls. Men and women who have been in prison for decades, and who pose no threat to society, languish as if they're a part of the décor. When Naomi Blount was finally set free, Shots and the others were rejoicing - as happy for her



as they would've been if it were them being released. But how much longer do these men and women have? How much longer must they suffer such a cruel and inhumane lot? Shots suffers from a serious heart condition. My cell was directly across from his, and when I would see the nurses pushing him off the unit in a wheelchair, late at night, I'd be worried sick. I remember numerous conversations between my celly and I, where both of us would be worried. If anything should happen to this man in prison, we would be devastated. But our communities would suffer even more. Sometimes it amazes me at how Shots is always so positive. Maybe it's his Christian faith; maybe it's just who he is. He works in the law library, sings in the choir, and is always there to help anybody who asks. And that's why I'm urging you all to get more involved in the struggle to end Life Without Parole sentences. Men like Shots have served their time; and so have women like Terri Harper, Tameka Flowers, Charmaine Pfender, and Sarita Miller. How's much is enough? When it comes to punishment and retribution, amerika shares the stage with some interesting characters: North Korea, "Saudi" Arabia, Somalia, and a few others. And as the prison population grows, so too does the number of elderly prisoners. How can dignity be central to a societal conscience if we regularly - and easily - discard a person's innate redemptive qualities? People over 65 years of age are 97% less likely to commit a crime after being released. Of the 45,000 prisoners in Pennsylvania, over 5,400 are serving Death By Incarceration sentences (either LWOP or outrageous sentences such as 50-100 years).

Pennsylvania accounts for 10% of ALL DBI sentences in amerika! In fact, out of 193 countries, DBI sentences are illegal in 155 of them. Moreover, other than amerika, the three jurisdictions with the highest rate of DBI sentences are Australia, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom - and their COMBINED total of prisoners serving DBI is LESS THAN 150. In contrast, amerika alone has nearly 55,000! Here's another fact: between 2003-2015, violent crime in Pennsylvania decreased by 21%, but DBI sentences increased by 40%. Nearly a quarter of those serving DBI sentences have already served at least 30 years\*. However, like I always say, moral arguments on this topic don't seem to take flight. In order to win this fight, we have to talk about the only statistic that matters to politicians: the bottom line! It costs about \$50,000

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per year to incarcerate one person\*\*. So, the state of Pennsylvania has spent over \$2.35 million on keeping Shots in prison. And there are many who've spent even more time in prison than him. With many citizens becoming fed-up with increasing instances of police brutality, there's been a widespread call to defund police across amerika - and rightfully so. But the call to defund police must be followed by a call to defund the prison system, since the prison system effectively functions as a tax-dollar sieve. Money goes in, but nothing positive comes out. What type of sadistic pleasure can justify keeping elderly men and women locked in a cage, even while they pose no legitimate threat to anybody in, or out, of prison? The dysfunction in our communities is the result of many things. And the solution is complex. Yet, we can't begin solving these issues if our leaders are rotting in some dungeon five hours away! Who better to stop the violence plaguing our communities than those of us who have perpetrated, learned, and grown from it?

Pennsylvania is far behind when it comes to fixing this issue. If you believe that human beings can be redeemed through thought and actions, and if you recognize that perpetrators of violence can also be victims of violence, I urge you to use your voice to speak out. Contact Pennsylvania legislators by phone or email and remind them that they were elected to build - not to destroy! You can contact Francis "Shots" Boyd by writing to him at:

Smart Communications/PADOC  
Francis Boyd, #AF- 6974, SCI-CHESTER  
PO BOX 33028  
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

In public, amerika prides itself on being the most advanced and developed nation this world has ever seen. But by heartlessly warehousing human beings, amerika continues to reveal itself as being no different than those nations who rule through fear, intimidation, and violence.

**STRAIGHT AHEAD . . .**

**SERGIO HYLAND #FX-1537**  
**FOLLOW ON IG @UPTOWNSERG**  
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\*DBI In Pennsylvania Fact Sheet, provided by the Abolitionist Law Center ([abolitionistlawcenter.org](http://abolitionistlawcenter.org)) \*\*"The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers ", The Vera Institute of Justice, in partnership with The Pew Center on the States.

## The Grand Wizard

watch me pull a  
rabbit out of my hat

watch me call a coup  
bring your tasers hockey  
sticks baseball bats

I'll spearhead the charge  
with distorted statistics  
and alternative facts

somebody with hammer  
and nail skills carried  
the gallows  
a top the capitol steps  
trial by combat will  
lasso a noose around  
the vice president's neck

my forecast...3/5 of  
my followers will  
end up in jail

at the same time  
my yacht lay in  
a Florida dock  
waiting for me to  
set sail

I'll never be  
convicted I'll  
always be  
acquitted let me  
tell you something  
I've vet my followers  
making sure their  
all numbskulls  
and nitwitted

By The Olympian 3/2021

**THE MOVEMENT**

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# The Pa. Corrections Department shouldn't renew its contract with Smart Communications. This is why

|Opinion By Capital-Star Op-Ed Contributor

Other than the COVID-19 restrictions, the Pennsylvania Department of Correction's (DOC) decision to contract with Smart Communications in Florida has been the most harmful policy change in recent times, in terms of its adverse impact on the everyday lives of incarcerated people.

In prison, mail plays a far more significant role than is the case in the outside world, and the fact that people incarcerated in Pennsylvania are no longer able to receive actual letters and cards from loved ones has been a game-changer for incarcerated people and their families.

The sterile uniform photocopies they receive now bear little resemblance to and are an unacceptable substitute for the meaningful sensory experience involved in handling an actual piece of mail. For people who are incarcerated, letters and cards are one of their primary lifelines to the outside world, and until recently, one of the few rights they were guaranteed.

The decision to enact this change was a rash response to the problem of drugs coming into prisons through the mail and more specifically, to a few vague and unsubstantiated claims that staff had become sick after coming in contact with K2 or fentanyl in the mail.

Even if people do send mail containing drugs into prisons, it has not been proven that this is what has caused the sort of adverse reactions described by DOC officials, and it is well-documented that staff are a frequent source of drugs in DOC facilities.

The DOC could institute less draconian measures that would prevent the introduction of drugs into prisons while allowing incarcerated people to receive their mail. Here, it is worth pointing out that the DOC recently revamped their procedures for books, magazines, and newspapers.

The new policy created a centralized reception center in State College, Centre County that processes these publications before their delivery to the prisons.

This facility is operated by the DOC, and the wages paid will stay in Pennsylvania; in contrast to the contract with Smart Communications that paid \$15 million in Pennsylvania taxpayer dollars to a corporation in Florida. It would seem that the DOC could develop a similar facility to process prisoner mail.

Unfortunately, a legal challenge to this policy would likely be difficult. Around the same time that the contract with Smart Communications was signed and as the policy changed regarding publications, the DOC had also changed their procedures for legal mail, requiring that it be photocopied by staff at the facility; the incarcerated person received the copies and the originals were stored for an indeterminate time period.

This was such a clear violation of the right to confidentiality between attorney and client that after lawsuits were filed by numerous groups who advocate on behalf of incarcerated people, the DOC agreed to rescind the policy, but only after intense litigation.

On the issue of non-legal mail, the legal rights are less straightforward, and for the time being on this issue, due to the challenges in bringing a lawsuit on this issue, the fight will need to be waged by grassroots organizations in the political sphere.

The three-year contract with Smart Communications is up for renewal in September of this year.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections should not renew its contract with Smart Communications. To renew the contract would be to the detriment of incarcerated people in Pennsylvania and their loved ones. We urge the DOC to consider a different approach—one that respects the humanity of people incarcerated in Pennsylvania.

*By Michael Bailey, Intake Attorney for the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, an organization that advances the constitutional and civil rights of people incarcerated and detained in Pennsylvania. Mr. Bailey corresponds and provides legal advice to hundreds of incarcerated people every year.*





## **Ten-Point Plan to Reform/ Abolish the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP)**

As the rest of the nation has begun to pivot toward a more commonsense approach to "criminal justice reform", Pennsylvania has been reluctant to make any meaningful adjustments to the way it polices, imprisons, and addresses reentry, specifically as it relates to probation and parole. Since the beginning of the prison experiment in america, mechanisms such as probation and parole have been utilized to further control marginalized people and our communities, while simultaneously manipulating the system in a way that allows for the exploitation of black, brown and poor people. Under immense pressure from the people, led by numerous human rights/prisoner rights organizations, the current district attorney for Philadelphia has attempted to address some facets of this unfair and unequal system - for example, making some changes to the cash bail process, and assisting in the creation of the Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU), which has helped to liberate several innocent or overly-prosecuted women and men. But the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP) has been uniquely exempt from being forced to adopt any kind of real and necessary measures of reform. We aim to change that! I'm often extremely hesitant to use the word "reform" to garner support for any particular cause. However, in my experience - and through thorough analysis of past movements for liberation - I understand that reform can be a useful tool, providing the space and time needed to bring about the success of larger goals of the masses. So I'm delighted to announce that The Human Rights Coalition will be laying out an ambitious agenda to significantly alter the administration of probation and parole in Pennsylvania. It is our hope that other like-minded organizations in Pennsylvania either follow our lead or make their own efforts to assist the people's movement in fighting this unfair and

useless practice. It is in our collective interest to end the PBPP as it exists today.

HRC Cofounder and human rights activist, Kerry Shakaboona Marshall, once said that "You can't challenge discrimination if there is no means to record and measure it." Therefore, in order to establish a firm foundation for our challenge to these practices, we must first establish an effective means to document the clear and brutally subjective unfairness of this process. Currently, the only statistics made known to the public, are those which favor the side of the government. However, if a fair analysis is done, one would easily conclude that the PBPP continues to be nothing short of an utter failure, falsely representing itself as a success. Studies done by Human Rights Watch<sup>1</sup> reveal that in Pennsylvania, 41% of parole revocations were the result of simple rule violations, such as failing to report address changes or minor drug usage. As it relates to probation revocations, that number rises to a staggering 78%! The evidence is irrefutable: parole and probation in Pennsylvania are designed for people to fail, and land back in prison, leading to further deterioration of the family and community unit, while private capital continues to profit off of these warehoused human beings. And those most impacted by the unfairness of it all are black, brown, indigenous and poor people. This report went on to suggest that the very concept of "supervision" is what's behind the failure of the PBPP system. For example, PBPP uses what's called "Risk Assessment Tools" (RAT) which are utilized to determine the rules and restrictions for any person who is released on parole or probation. This process typically unfairly labels certain individuals as "high risk", causing the terms of the supervision to be significantly more harsh, making successful reentry nearly impossible. If a person comes to prison at the age of 19, they're clearly not the same person they are now at the age of 40.

These "assessments" are often being based upon the actions of a person when they were too young to even understand the resulting impact. This is the purpose of completing countless programs and educational courses while incarcerated. The PBPP is supposed to review a person's conduct during their period of incarceration, and make a decision based upon that person's growth. This process however, rarely functions in accordance with that principle, and a prisoner is essentially punished over and over again for something they did as a child. Why would any incarcerated person then, seek to make any real effort to participate within a system that is inherently opposed to any degree of fairness? While I understand calls for reform, the fact of the matter is that ANY form of probation or parole is categorically impractical.

*(Continued on page 10)*

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

*(Continued from page 9)*

Not one single government official, PADOE employee, or crime victim advocate can prove that probation or parole has ever prevented a crime from occurring. All these systems do is reincarcerate individuals for subjective rule violations such as not reporting that you were pulled over by the police for an incident that didn't even result in you receiving a ticket. Still, we must crawl before we walk, which is why the Human Rights Coalition is laying out a Ten-Point Plan to reform the PBPP as we have come to know it. They are: **1)** The Abolition of the PBPP; **2)** End Institutional Racism; **3)** Establish a System of Accountability within the PBPP; **4)** Establish a System of Transparency within the PBPP; **5)** Defund the PBPP, and PADOE; **6)** Fund the Community; **7)** Change the PBPP Review Criteria, Including Adding Presumptive Parole and Incentive-Based Credit; **8)** Universal Parole After 15 Years, and Geriatric Parole; **9)** Change Parole Revocation Policy, Including the Forfeiture of Street Time; **10)** Second-Look Sentencing.

Each of these points will be expounded upon significantly and in depth in following issues of THE MOVEMENT. And it is extremely important to note that, although these are measures of reform, they are being acted upon with the long-term intention of abolition. We all know that probation and parole are nothing more than extensions of state/government control, cleverly disguised as less intrusive methods of crime prevention and alternatives to incarceration. But I must warn you that any success that we achieve, won't come easily, due to the strength and power of certain unions - not to mention the uphill battle to change the hearts and minds of a citizenry that has been thoroughly manipulated into trusting whatever drivel that spews from the mouths of government/state/PADOE officials. Therefore, each of us play a critical role in advancing this agenda. At this moment in history, communities of all colors are rising up in protest over the countless acts of police brutality and misconduct taking place across the country - specifically, the instances of unarmed black men, women and children being gunned down in the streets by those charged with protecting and serving. One of the collective demands of the protestors is the immediate defunding of the police. Unfortunately, when people call to defund the police, they fail to make the same demand to defund prisons. This is because too many of our supporters and advocates have failed to make the connection between policing and prisons. In fact, one doesn't exist without the other. If police constantly abuse their power in public, surely abuse exists on an even higher level in prison, where things are kept conspicuously quiet. If demands to defund the police will lead to less abuse, it stands to reason that de-

mands to defund prisons would achieve that same goal. We must work harder to shine a light on what takes place on the inside of america's dirty little secret: the prison system.

Our agenda to abolish probation and parole fits ideally into our larger agenda of overall abolition of prisons, and our mutual vision of freedom. The copious amounts of money and resources used to segregate, discriminate against, criminalize, and incarcerate communities of color, must now be reappropriated and redirected into securing our liberation and right to self-determination. This issue is far greater than the mere abolition of parole, probation, or prison. We all have a human right to freedom, and we shouldn't be punished for falling into the traps laid before us by those who conspired to subjugate us even before we were born. It is a core precept of the HRC that justice begins and ends within the community. Consequently, the community should have access to funds and resources that would provide the same opportunities and social safety nets as those that are provided for whiter, more affluent communities. Every effect has a cause; most crimes originate in economic insecurity. By divesting in policing, prisons, and other forms of social control - especially those centered on punishment and retribution - and investing in good jobs, good housing, and good education, we greatly decrease the likelihood of criminal violations. But we all know that the reality of the situation is that the capitalist/accumulationist/patriarchal system has no desire, nor intent, to provide us with the tools necessary for acquiring our freedom, which is why we must take matters into our own hands by creating a formidable economic and political base of our own. As members of HRC, CADBI, DeCarceratePa, R2R or any other organization that is dedicated to protecting the human rights of all, it is vital that we do everything in our power to increase membership. For those who aren't a member of any of these organizations, I urge you to visit our website at [www.hrcoalition.org](http://www.hrcoalition.org) and see what we've been working on to make our communities safer and stronger.

Straight Ahead!!!

**-Serg**

Follow me on IG @uptownserg

Listen to commentary @prisonradio.org/commentary/sergiohyland

""How Probation and Parole Feed Mass Incarceration in the United States", July 2020., by Human Rights Watch, ACLU ([www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org))

**THE MOVEMENT**

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**B**ondage, imprisonment, involuntary servitude and solitary confinement, has always been a violation of the human spirit, free will or the will to be free. When we look at America’s racial past and present, we see slave controls not only looking for runaway slaves but free blacks to capture and put back into the slavery system. We also see police targeting, prosecutors maliciously prosecuting, judges and juries wrongly convicting and prisons unlawfully incarcerating black people. Black people witness their past representing their present each and every day while experiencing over and over again history’s invaluable lessons. Those lessons are that the grievous sins of the past are often repeated in the present. KKK and white supremacist types wore white sheets and covered the heads with hoods. Today they wear law enforcement uniforms, suits and ties and a judge’s robe. The system of institutionalized and structural racism preserved and protected them then and preserves and protects them now!

There was proof beyond a reasonable doubt of hatred and cruelty encased in Jim Crow then and there is conclusive evidence of it now. The conclusions are bolstered with proof of numerous and awful police work product records and district attorneys and a judiciary that is not transparent and accountable. Like in the past, blacks are targeted, falsely arrested and murdered by police and viewed suspiciously due to the color of their skin.

Too many black people are wrongfully imprisoned because police conspired with district attorneys to plant evidence, file false reports, willfully not disclose favorable evidence that is exculpatory, mitigating, and impeachable. In my particular case, the coroner’s office approved a probable cause affidavit, issued an arrest warrant, then held a preliminary hearing, held me for court and set my bail. The prosecutor encouraged police to commit perjury and proceed with manufactured fake indictments; the coroner’s pathologist gave bogus cause of death testimony, the judge denied my request without prejudice for a copy of the autopsy report which I was entitled to under the law to prevent me from rebutting the pathologist’s false cause of death testimony. There is more! The judge permitted the prosecutor to remove jurors with death penalty scruples even though my case was not a capital case and he denied my Motion to dismiss the case against me for insufficient evidence by lying and ruling that: “the victim named me to his two sisters and the victim’s mother gave a complete and accurate description of me to the police.” I was successful to have Asst. District Attorney Rebecca Good McBride removed from the Allegheny County District Attorney’s Office for putting those same lies in her Appellate Brief to the Pennsylvania Superior Court after I had warned her that they were false! What was done to me

and other men of color similarly situated clearly demonstrates that there is an unconscious level of human depravity on the part of law enforcement, prosecutors, and the judiciary; a stunning disregard for the Constitution and the Rule of Law and human rights as well as a callous disregard toward the Black family and communities of color!

Of course, this is nothing new. Black lives have never mattered in a police force infested with white supremacy and a criminal justice system that is structurally racist. Neither is this a new phenomenon that injustice, not justice, has overwhelmingly been the guiding principle when it comes to people of color.

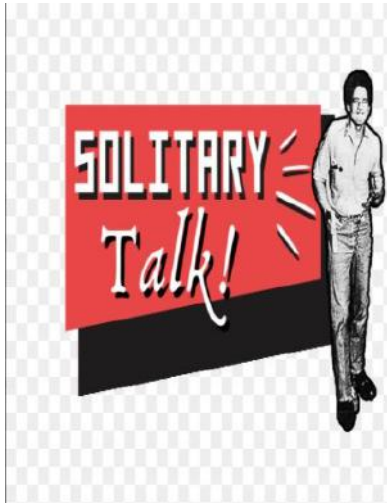
Six decades ago, this horrific hate and cruelty was called Jim Crow. Both down South and up North, white leaders and citizens commissioned and condoned all kinds of crimes against Black people. Many Blacks that existed in that time period would not have given a second thought to trusting the criminal justice system, their agents, or those working in concert with them. That this system existed to prey upon Black people was clear and evident, and evidence supports it is clear and evident now as poll after poll charting the gap between Black and white attitudes toward policing and the criminal justice system clearly demonstrates.

What is new is the exposure of how evil and rotten this system is. Thanks to video cameras and social media, we are now able to record and view on our computers or phones how innocent Black men are targeted and stopped. But for a young teenager and others videoing fired police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd’s neck for over 9 minutes slowly choking air from his heart, lungs, and brain, we would only have been presented with those false police reports and Derek Chauvin would not have been found guilty of a callous murder. Thanks to police wearing body cameras, people having access to video cameras and social media, we are able to view and understand the breadth of police targeting and their callous murders, misuse of authority, and brutality toward people of color. We have also seen our own power to bring about a measure of justice when the refusal of politicians and state lawmakers, cowed by police unions, put blinders on when it comes to stopping this manifest injustice.

We all know about the major flaws in policing and the criminal justice systems; residents of the inner cities have borne the brunt of this heavily race-driven oppression for years. What else is new is that white America was able to see George Floyd being deliberately murdered by a white police officer while begging for his life and calling out for his moth-

*(Continued on page 4)*





## The Human Rights Coalition

was founded by a small group of prisoners who were stuck in solitary confinement, experiencing the worst kinds of physical and psychological torture known to mankind, at the hands of prison guards who seemed to take extreme pleasure in watching other human beings

suffer. For years, those prisoners, along with a brave—albeit small—contingent of family and community members, continued to organize and challenge the usage of such a barbaric form of social control as solitary confinement, also known as "the hole." Their aim was—and remains to be—to end the use of solitary confinement.

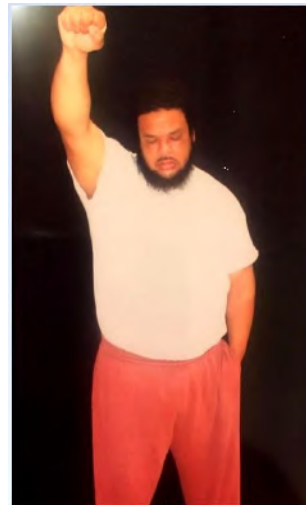
While we haven't yet been able to claim that victory, the war is far from over, and we have even more momentum towards achieving our goal than ever before. Solitary confinement has been abolished in the state of Colorado, and some other prominent cities across this country. Even here in Pennsylvania, the practice has come under scrutiny, which has forced the PADOC to make certain reforms as it applies to the way solitary confinement is meted out as punishment for an alleged rule violation. Unfortunately, old habits die hard, and Pennsylvania still relies on the inhumane practice of taking human beings out of small cages, and locking them down in even smaller cages.

If prison administrators and legislators alike, followed the science, they would admit that solitary confinement—much like the usage of prison—has no positive impact on the general population or society as a whole, nor does it serve to "rehabilitate" those subjected to its brutality. In fact, solitary confinement only makes people worse. The abhorrent conditions one must survive while in solitary, are in contradiction to what is allowable under international law, and have been classified as torture by a special investigator from the United Nations.

The United States, however, has a long history of ignoring international law when it suits their convenience, especially as it relates to issues involving human rights abuses. We see every day on the news how amerika sharply condemns nations such as North Korea, China, and Russia for their alleged human rights abuses, while maintaining a striking silence about its own flagrant transgressions. And in Pennsyl-

vania, we know that this commonwealth is reluctant to embrace any ideal that trends toward the progressive. If it isn't about building more prisons, creating more laws, and relying on the harshest forms of punishment to respond to crime, Pennsylvania doesn't want to hear it.

Solitary confinement destroys people daily, and we must continue to push against its usage. As I've stated repeatedly, I have a vision for THE MOVEMENT, and I have a team in place who believes in that vision wholeheartedly. Each issue of THE MOVEMENT, starting now, will have a column, SOLITARY TALK!, dedicated to the voices of prisoners who are either in solitary confinement, or who experienced it. Our stories—YOUR STORIES—of triumph and tragedy need to be heard and shared with those who don't know the real impact of this archaic, medieval practice. The point person for this column will be Valerie Kiebal, who is a brilliant mind and former journalist for Solitary Watch. She is at the forefront of the struggle to abolish solitary confinement, and she works tirelessly, helping men, women, and children in "the hole" to get their voices out there. I'm proud to have her on our team, and I know that she will help to get us exactly where we're trying to go. Stay tuned.



- Serg, Straight Ahead!!!

Sitting here in my home office in Philly, I think about my colleagues inside and their writing process. Each writer has their own process. I'm sitting at my old wooden desk looking at flowers, my sprouting plant, my cork boards flooded with post its, and cranking some J Dilla beats. My comrade is waiting to get moved to general population after 34 years in solitary in New York State. Finally he can buy a typewriter so he doesn't have to hand-write his 20 plus page stories. I can't wait for him to get it. And get out of there. He's serving life. He said his hand doesn't hurt or cramp up, though, even when he writes the 22 pages straight. He is used to it.

Solitary is torture. That's a fact. My first introduction to solitary confinement was when I was living in Birzeit, Palestine, and I learned of administrative detention in Israeli prisons. The Israeli occupation forces had conducted "a concerted campaign" of arresting "ex-detainees and individuals who

*(Continued on page 13)*

**THE MOVEMENT**

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(Continued from page 12)

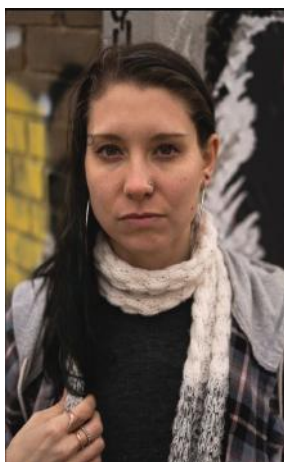
are considered leading figures in their communities,” the human rights group Addameer reported back then in 2017. One of those arrested was Khader Adnan, a 40-year-old man from Jenin. He was a leader of the reconciliation committee in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Israeli occupation forces detained and isolated him several times with no charge. That’s what they call administrative detention. Technically, the admin detention sentence expires after six months, but it can be renewed indefinitely. “Under such orders,” according to the Electronic Intifada, “detainees are held without charge or trial and unable to see evidence against them,” in clear violation of international law.

Adnan went on his third hunger strike in 2018. We marched in the streets demanding his release, as his health continued to sharply decline. Refusing to take supplements, undergo medical exams, or even drink water, Adnan ended up in a wheelchair having lost a dangerous amount of weight, vomiting blood, and barely able to speak. After 58 days of refusing food, Adnan was released from prison and returned to his family.

The practice of administrative detention dates back to the British colonial rule. Indefinite solitary confinement is a tool of military occupation that dehumanizes, tortures, and aims to silence and break people. The U.S. continues to support

the Israeli occupation, as it continues to utilize the same military tactics in its own prisons and on its own streets. This human rights “stain” on the global image of the U.S. has been unraveling in the public eye, with more and more people becoming aware that solitary exists in our country and is a torture tactic.

As Khader Adnan resisted the war crime being committed against him, so do I see my comrades inside resisting and existing every day. The written and spoken word holds deep power to uncover the realities that the state tries its hardest to silence. Solitary Talk! provides a written space for people in solitary and solitary survivors to speak their truth and share their experiences, stories, and thoughts. I’m thrilled to work on this column with Sergio, a phenomenal journalist and solitary survivor himself, to bring your writings to light. Together we move onward in the fight to end solitary confinement.



By Valerie Kiebala

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## HEART CHECK / MORE THAN A NUMBER

Hello to all that are blessed with an opportunity to read this magazine. My name is Shantyl Hyland and I am the wife to an amazing man known to the system as just a number. As a woman who had no prior knowledge of the system and all of its many injustices and inhumane practices I just wanted to share my experience and how this is more than just a problem that incarcerated individuals face.

In 2019 I was able to reconnect with one of my best friends who is currently serving a 20 year sentence. I was so interested in how he was doing and how he was handling life and less concerned about the crime which landed him there. He had such a positive vibe. However still he spoke on some of the unfortunate things he had experienced during his time.

Me, I was just happy to hear his voice and catch up. I had no idea that 2 years later I would be married to this powerful man. In the beginning I would always downplay the things he would tell me because as I stated before I really only knew what I saw on TV. I just felt like he was always trying to stand up and protect others while blaming the system for the things that went on in the prison. We have had our share of ups and downs and I always felt alone with the issues we were having. Though my friends and family supported our relationship, they had no idea of the many issues that we faced daily.

Sometimes it was so hard to explain being so scared if he missed a day of calls and how I couldn't sleep because I didn't know if he was okay. I started to become public with our relationship knowing that I would get a lot of judgement and those trying to convince me that he was using me and that I deserved better. But here's the thing, some of the same people judged me for mistakes I have made and never wanted to help me just wanted to make me feel, less than. I believe in forgiveness and redemption as my faith game is completely strong knowing that God never gave up on me. I made it out of some of the wildest storms. I took to TikTok, a platform where no one knew who I was. I started making video clips of things I have experienced dating a man incarcerated. And suddenly there was this community of women who knew exactly what I was going through and helped me deal with many of the issues I was having. However the biggest thing I

realized was I was not alone and the things my now husband was experiencing were not being over exaggerated I had a complete heart check and my eyes ears and heart was open to a whole different perspective.

The system doesn't care about these men and women and they don't care about those who love and support them. On the TikTok platform my main objective was to bring awareness to the fact that these men and women are HUMAN. They deserve to be loved and cared for just like the humans in the free world that isn't really free if you ask me. Yes, these individuals have made mistakes or chosen paths that could end them in prison. But what is the system really doing to help them rehabilitate. No, I am not here to completely bash the system because I think that things can change if more people understood what these individuals need and what they actually go through. A lot of the people in prisons have had terrible traumatizing life changing childhoods. I strongly believe as a child and an adult you are a product of your environment.

Now if these men and women are expected to only be surrounded by negativity and all the reasons to give up, how can they actually do better or be better? Support and communication I heavily believe are the key to helping change their mindset and giving them hope.



*(Continued on page 15)*

# LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

*rhythm and cadence from the beating of the drums were a way for the ancestors of the past to discreetly and secretly communicate with each other.”*

(Continued from page 14)

What does support look like? It's not actually financial as many who are unaware of the realness of the situation believe. Emotional and mental support are the most important elements. This would be writing letters sending emails sending pictures of memories or things to look forward to. It is also answering a phone call when they have the opportunity to call. To know that someone cares about you or is fighting for you or is believing in you can change a mindset and offer hope. And once an individual no longer feels hopeless they behave differently, they respond different, they react different. With that being said this type of support can change the environment in which these individuals are being treated less than human. They begin to believe in themselves, they begin to want more, they begin to look at the light at the end of the tunnel. And even if you can't personally support an incarcerated individual, joining this movement is the next best thing. Be apart of the change and the Heart Check of those who believe incarcerated individuals are just a number.

By Shantyl Hyland

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## The Passing of an Elder Brings Upon Self-Reflection

It's February 10, 2021, 10:34am. My location is State Correctional Institution – Forest, Marienville, PA. The global COVID-19 Pandemic has been in full rage for over a year.

As I sit at my desk within my living quarters, watching the prison COVID-19 information channel, I was just made aware than an elder of mine, William Abbott, affectionately called “CoolPop”, passed away on January 19, 2021, presumably from COVID-19 related complications.

CoolPop was 67 years old with the indomitable spirit of a man half his age. CoolPop could always be counted on to extend either a helping hand, listening ear, or simply a few words of sound advice to anyone in need. Just last year, during a special Black History month presentation, CoolPop volunteered his talent and time to play his drums where he dropped on everyone in attendance the mental jewel, “The

CoolPop, you the person, along with your wisdom and wit, will definitely be missed by many.

Today, for the first time in a long time, and quite frankly, directly because of my having found out about CoolPop's unexpected passing away, I am actually taking time out for myself to sit still and reflect on three indisputable facts: 1. I have been sentenced to die in prison; 2. I have spent the past twenty-five (25) years of my life in prison for a crime that I did not commit; and 3. I have to implement tunnel vision with regards to placing a high priority on my own personal affairs.

Don't judge me, because if you knew me, you would completely understand the origin and spirit of my above words.

Very quickly, I would like to share with you an encounter involving myself and CoolPop. One day, while on my way to the chow hall for dinner, I saw CoolPop on the walkway and explained to him that I had just received some legal mail and had a ten day window to respond. About a week later, I am walking into the Law Library when I see CoolPop already in the place, sitting at a computer. I continue walking on, extending my regards to everyone I knew in passing. Eventually, I sit down, getting to work. About five minutes later, a young brother walks over to me and says, “Excuse me, I always see you over here, can I ask you a quick question?” On cue, this “question” turns into an impromptu, near-hour session of Q&A and legal research. CoolPop had, had enough. All I heard was CoolPop's voice, smoothly saying, “Fatty, let me get a minute with you. Don't you have a deadline. Listen, I know you got a big heart, and I know you like helping everybody else. But nobody's case in here should be more important to you than your own.” Needless to say, I politely excused the young brother and spent the last ten minutes getting some much-needed copies for myself. Coincidentally, I had just made the copy cut by two minutes. This encounter epitomizes the essence of CoolPop.

Writing this piece for strange eyes to read is the beginning of something brand new for me.

In closing, I end with hopes that while in quarantine isolation during this pandemic you take the time for yourself to actually sit still and reflect on the past, present, and future trajectory of your life.

CoolPop, I hear those drums loud and clear. I gladly accept your passing of the torch.

### Cool Pop, Rest In Peace.

From: Damien Mikell, SCI-Forest

(Continued on page 16)



# LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

## Hello!

With all the restrictions in regards to..... and dealing with the covid virus it has been insanely difficult to communicate with our loved ones via the inadequate video system.

I was however able to travel to Harrisburg in mid February with the Poor Peoples Campaign and speak on the steps of the capitol in regards to having Governor Wolf use his power to grant reprieves, commutations of sentences, and pardons.

In April and with the weather being a little warmer. I was able to travel to the capital with an organization, Unincarcerated Minds (Dignity and Power Now). The message was powerful.. There were 100 miniature coffins that lined the capitol steps each topped with a red rose representing at that time the amount of in-side members that died due to the virus. This of course brought some to tears. The message once again was for the govern to use his power of reprieve. Govern Wolf, how many people have to die while in State Correctional Institutions? At the closing of the event Pastor Collins (Church of the Overcomer) read all 100 names, my brother's name was among those read.

On April 27th I was able to visit with the guys at Camp Hill. What an experience, I was able to visit a unit block/ common area. I was able to interview a couple of guys. My questions had to do with how safe do you feel, how are you being treated, how are the food portions and how is medical? Answers: food portions are small, medical not available per the week end, and we all look out for one another.

I was surprised and thrilled to see one brother that had previously been at Huntingdon, transferred to Camp Hill and remembered me from about 4 years ago (I'm still smiling, thank you).

On May 17th I was able to visit with a couple of guys at Mahanoy (non-contact). The questions were the same as when I visited Camp Hill. The answers seemed to be the same throughout each prison. People felt somewhat satisfied to neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with the food portions and somewhat concerned with the weak cleaning products.

Question: How have conditions changed since COVID and how has treatment by prison officials changed since COVID? Most answers were, *they have nether improved nor worsened.*

We at CADBI, HRC, and other organization are still in the fight! A quote from Ella Baker states, "we who believe in

freedom cannot rest: I'm not afraid of tomorrow because I know God is already there!

*Sincerely, Ms. Yvonne Newkirk*

P.S. Due to unforeseen conditions I am about 3 months behind in responding to your letters, please note I will answer them as quickly as possible.



Birthday Affirmation, It may seem difficult to stay positive during this time, it may seem a little crazy, and it may seem the world has something against you. Please know and realize that there is a higher power, that sees and knows all. We at CADBI, HRC, and other organizations band to send our praises up, knowing one day our blessing will come down upon you like over flowing rain.

### May

5/17 Gary Bates (Phoenix)  
5/23 Sid Berger (Cambridge Springs)

### June

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

### July

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

### AUGUST

8/5 Gaye Morley (Muncy)  
8/12 Bray Murray (Dallas)  
8/15 Jacqueline White (Muncy)  
8/17 Antonio Bundy (Forest)  
8/21 Derel Britton (Camp Hill)  
8/22 Celeste Coles (Muncy)  
8/25 Darrell McKelvie (Benner)  
8/25 Mariam White (Muncy)



Happy Birthday!!!

**Ms. Yvonne Newkirk**

P.S. I would like to apologize if your birthday was not mentioned in this booklet, know that you are not forgotten. Don't forget to apply for commutation, stay strong, and follow your heart.

**THE MOVEMENT**

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



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



**Families & Community Speak Out!**

## Let's Be Truthful

By: Yassin Sin Raws Mohamad

We been bullshitting with the truth long enough...  
SO LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Is scared the same as afraid?  
How about is brave courage?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Is rich the same as wealthy?  
How about I'm fine and healthy?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

What would have happened if Black Lives Matter  
rushed the capitol?  
How about if Houdini became Nat Turner through  
the magical?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Is Black the same as white?  
How about is a funeral the same as unite?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Is changing physically the same as changing mental-  
ly?  
How about is changing mentally is changing  
physically?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Who are you? What do you really want to be?  
Is wanting to be who you want fair to yourself and  
people?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

We talk this positive shit when we have a misfortune  
happen to us.  
How about those that spoke for us before we even  
exist? Are we representing them now?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Are you gonna keep only speaking out when one of  
yours die or us?

How about we only talk when you are gunned  
down and hold a vigil or conference?

How would you feel?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Do you only love the publicity that we only get dur-  
ing bad times?

Or is this scripted to go into the history books  
that's not ours?

LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Is what's being said being heard or understood?

Are we going to change our own path, instead of  
knocking on some damn old wood?

LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Are you and yours and us and ours,  
the likes of them, Ya'll who have the power?  
LET'S BE TRUTHFUL.

Are you and ours ready for a major change? A real  
one?

Then let's be truthful to ourselves first and exe-  
cute.

NOW THAT'S BEING TRUTHFUL.

\*\*\*\*\*

Solutions :

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# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## They Are Their Own Monuments

In two North Philadelphia neighborhoods, many hands create homegrown art tributes to local heroes.



*"On the Day They Come Home," a sculpture by Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist in the exhibition "Staying Power," featuring five women who are fighting to end life sentences in Pennsylvania. The women are Tamika Bell, Paulette Carrington, Starr Granger, Ivy Johnson and Yvonne Newkirk. Credit...Kriston Jae Bethel for The New York Times*

By Tess Thackara, May 2021

PHILADELPHIA — In a section of North Philadelphia, near an underpass and up a soaring stoop painted sky blue, Ms. Nandi's home is decorated with pictures of civil rights heroes and political icons — Malcolm X, Queen Nefertiti, Lenin. Here, for some 20 years, Denise Muhammad, known by everyone as Ms. Nandi, and her husband, Khalid, ran an afternoon penny candy store for the neighborhood's children out of their front living room, but it did much more than sell Tootsie Rolls.

If the children couldn't count their change, the couple taught them. If they couldn't read a quotation from Marcus Garvey on the wall, they helped them learn to read. "Ask any child in the neighborhood where Ms Nandi's house is," she said on a recent afternoon. "They'll know."

Ms. Nandi is a pillar of the community many residents call Fairhill-Hartranft, and one of the inspirations behind a new exhibition there called "Staying Power." The show, which opened May 1 across several green spaces, features a series of homegrown monuments by artists to the residents who have helped to lift citizens in these communities, where the life expectancy is low, incarceration levels are high, and gentrification is now displacing people.

Not granite or bronze, these new monuments by Deborah Willis, Sadie Barnette, Ebony G. Patterson, Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist, and Black Quantum Futurism, consist of outdoor sculptures and photography, storefront activations and performances. When I visited before the opening, banners were being unfurled, lights strung up, and the parks swept of debris.

"This is a place to understand how residents over many generations sustained staying power despite systemic forces undermining them," says Paul Farber, director of Monument Lab, a Philadelphia-based public art and research studio dedicated to examining how history is told in the public landscape.

Monument Lab has conceived and organized the exhibition alongside residents and the Village of Arts and Humanities — an arts nonprofit that runs cultural programs and stewards several parks in the area.

The story of Ms. Nandi's candy store has informed at least three of the installations in "Staying Power." Barnette has created a fantastical living room in a storefront along Germantown Avenue, the neighborhood's commercial corridor. It is a homage to "the institution of family living rooms," as a place of solace and healing during times of crisis, Barnette said. Patterson has created a series of banners featuring headless women against richly patterned backgrounds, honoring those who nurtured community but who nonetheless suffered violence and trauma.



*Ms. Nandi and her husband, Khalid, from Deborah Willis's photograph series "Black Women and Work," in the exhibition "Staying Power." The couple is pictured in their living room, where for two decades they ran a penny candy store, gave children Black history lessons, and taught them to count and read. Credit...Deborah Willis.*



(Continued from page 18)

Willis, who grew up some 25 blocks from Fairhill-Hartranft, photographed female entrepreneurs and their homes, including a baker, Tamyra Tucker, an event organizer, Aisha Chambliss — and Ms. Nandi.

When the artists Bowles and Strandquist began considering the idea of staying power, they took a different approach, asking, “who is missing?” The pair collaborated with five women — four of them formerly incarcerated — to create a sculpture that celebrates their ongoing crusade to end life sentences in Pennsylvania. The women’s images appear in commanding portraits, displayed around a crownlike structure, while 200 lights hang above them — a memorial to the women still serving life sentences, 54 of whom are from Philadelphia.

If Bowles and Strandquist’s work represents dozens of Philadelphia women, Black Quantum Futurism, the Afro-futurist collective created by the social practice artists Rasheedah Phillips and Camae Ayewa, is hoping their monument will capture voices from the neighborhood and beyond. Taking the form of a 7-foot grandmother clock, the towering form houses an oral history booth where residents can record their stories and share their desires for the future. It is, in effect, a monument that listens.

“Staying Power” is giving a platform to local voices in other ways: It includes a whole gamut of programs, performances and research initiatives — including one led by Ms. Nandi, who as a paid curatorial fellow will be interviewing families about their experiences of home-schooling kids during the pandemic.

It is not unusual for community members to have this level of involvement in a project organized by the Village, which has its closest parallels in the nonprofits Project Row Houses in Houston, and the Heidelberg Project in Detroit. For Farber, of Monument Lab, that holistic approach to community development made the Village the ideal partner to think about “what stories, and therefore which people, get a say in the evolution of a city.”

A five-minute walk from Ms. Nandi’s home, a patchwork of green spaces with undulating, mosaic-encrusted walls and vivid murals across the walls — Yoruba, Christian, Islamic, Chinese — leads to the Village. It was here, more than 50 years ago, that Arthur Hall, a visionary teacher of West African dance and music, planted a seed with the Ile Ife Black Humanitarian Center, which became a hub for the Black Arts Movement in the late ’60s and ’70s.

Back then, the green spaces surrounding the building were vacant lots where houses had burned down. “This was all dust, rubble, no trees,” said the Village’s executive director, Aviva Kapust, pointing to the park that abuts the organization’s main building. In 1986, Hall invited the Chinese art-

ist Lily Yeh to the neighborhood to work with his friend, the local mason JoJo Williams, to transform the vacant lots. She began by engaging children in the area to discuss what was missing. “They said trees,” Kapust recounted, “so she drew a big circle in the dirt and they built the Tree of Life sculpture.”

Real trees followed, as did homegrown monuments — murals and sculptures made from pieces of furniture encased in concrete and decorated with mosaic patterns. When Hall left Ile Ife in 1988, he entrusted it to Yeh, who turned it into the Village of Arts and Humanities and expanded its mission to include the development of green spaces in the footprint of former homes.



From left, Tamika Bell, Courtney Bowles, Mark Strandquist and Ivy Johnson in front of their artwork “On the Day They Come Home.” Bowles and Strandquist collaborated with five women to create the installation. Credit...Kriston Jae Bethel for *The New York Times*

Today, the legacy of Hall and what grew out of it is still a source of strength, pride, and identity in Philadelphia. A metal plaque bearing his name and story is planted in the sidewalk next to the Village. “Every time I read it, I smile,” said Ivy Johnson, a home health aide and prison reform advocate — and one of the women who appears in (and collaborated on) Bowles and Strandquist’s monument.

Now Johnson’s image will also appear in one of the Village’s parks and include a recording of her voice, along with poetry written by incarcerated women. Johnson was imprisoned for 18 years, and writing poetry was her outlet in a particularly dark period. Making art from her experience is a form of healing, she said.

This is perhaps what undergirds “Staying Power”: the belief that giving people access to stories in the public landscape, to the legacies of those who have forged a path toward self-determination, can make a material difference in residents’ lives. As the exhibition’s co-curator Arielle Julia Brown put

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it, a key part of what it means to have staying power is having what she calls “choiceful histories” at hand.

With this exhibition, and its work at large, the Village hopes to make concrete change. A series of free newspapers published in tandem with the show will spotlight local advocacy efforts, like the fight to reopen a recreation center that was closed in the 1980s. The organization funds community-led research into alternatives to policing and runs expungement clinics to help people purge their criminal records. The exhibition is not about “profiting from people’s stories,” Kapust said, but “presenting a series of investments in people, in actual revitalization efforts.”

Congressman Brendan Boyle, who represents Pennsylvania’s Second District — where the Village is located — said in an email: “I applaud those who are willing to dedicate their time to help reduce recidivism rates and provide support services that can help people turn their lives around. These organizations are a secondary safety net where, all too often, we find those falling through systemic tears in our existing social safety net.” But he added, “authentic reform can only be realized with the commitment and leadership of state and local governments, the federal government, and community organizations — all working in tandem.”

Marc Handelman, chair of the department of art and design at Rutgers University, agrees that art can’t be as impactful as

legislation. “But on the other hand, I’m convinced that society can’t be challenged and changed without art,” he said. “What the Village of Arts and Humanities do shouldn’t even be thought of as incremental. Its scale is local, and the intimacy through which its work is done is profound, direct and necessary.”

For Rasheedah Phillips, who works as a full-time housing equity lawyer while moonlighting as one-half of Black Quantum Futurism, art and advocacy work can converge. Phillips has been working alongside the People’s Paper Coop to get laws passed that would prevent criminal records being used in employment decisions, and eviction records being used by landlords to deny people housing.

Through their monument, Black Quantum Futurism hopes to give neighborhood visitors the opportunity to use their voices to share memories and dreams — thereby honoring African diasporic oral traditions. Submissions to the oral history booth will ultimately live in an online archive.

In a city where murals have been destroyed by luxury housing, the Village’s have remained. “Over all the years that they have been there,” Ms. Nandi said, “they have never been graffitied. They have not been torn up. They have not been spray-painted. Children helped to put them together. So they can say this is ours, literally. I had my hands in it. I painted, I cleaned, I helped build the trees.”

*Ivy Johnson near her portrait in the installation, “On the Day They Come Home.”*

*Credit...Kriston Jae Bethel for The New York Times*



*Tamika Bell in front of her portrait, which is part of the installation, “On the Day They Come Home.”*

*Credit...Kriston Jae Bethel for The New York Times*



Reprint, for full article see: They Are Their Own Monuments - The New York Times (nytimes.com)



From the Editor: Thanks to everyone in prison who told their families to vote for Krasner! Yes, we have the POWER!!

## PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT ATTORNEY LARRY KRASNER TROUNCES POLICE-BACKED PRIMARY CHALLENGER

*Krasner's victory gives momentum to the movement to elect reformist prosecutors, which has faced fierce backlash from law enforcement groups.*

By Akela Lacy and Alice Speri, May 18, 2021

**FOUR YEARS INTO** his experiment with reforming Philadelphia's criminal justice system, Larry Krasner overwhelmingly won his primary race for reelection to the office of district attorney on Tuesday.

With 74 percent of votes counted, Krasner led his Democratic primary challenger Carlos Vega 65 percent to 35 percent, according to the Associated Press. Vega conceded the race shortly before midnight on Tuesday, and Krasner is all but assured victory in the November general election.

"We in this movement for criminal justice reform just won a big one," Krasner said in a victory speech. "Four years ago, we promised reform, and a focus on serious crime. People believed what were, at that point, ideas. Promises. And they voted us into office with a mandate. We kept those promises. They saw what we did. And they put us back in office because of what we've done."

Vega, a former homicide prosecutor who was one of 31 staffers Krasner fired during his first week as district attorney, had run a campaign attacking Krasner's policies as soft on crime and was boosted by one of the largest expenditures from the city's police union in more than a decade.

Though he said his campaign was not pro-police, Vega campaigned with Philadelphia's FOP Lodge 5, a local chapter of the Fraternal Order of the Police, the largest police union in the country. The police union gave more than \$100,000 to Protect Our Police PAC, a political action committee that launched last year to push Krasner out of office. Vega and POP PAC tried to distance themselves from each other throughout the race: POP PAC claimed it wasn't supporting Vega but ran a video encouraging Republican voters to switch their registration to vote in the Democratic primary against Krasner. Vega renounced POP PAC after the group sent a fundraising email blaming George Floyd for his own death. The group spent \$45,000 on TV ads attacking Krasner in the final month of the race.

Since his election in 2017, Krasner has become a symbol of the burgeoning movement to elect reform-minded prosecutors. "Krasner has been kind of a model," said Scott Roberts, senior director of criminal justice campaigns at Color of Change, a racial justice group that supported several such prosecutors' bids and endorsed Krasner. "I can't tell you how many potential DA candidates I have talked to who lead with, 'I'm going to be the Larry Krasner of fill-in-the-blank city.'"

But Krasner's election and the reforms he enacted as soon as he took office also sparked a fierce backlash — making him a national target for law enforcement groups and prominent Republicans. Former President Donald Trump, for example, claimed in 2019 that prosecutors in Philadelphia and Chicago "have decided not prosecute many criminals" who pose a threat to public safety.

Krasner's reelection bid came as an increase in gun violence in many U.S. cities — including Philadelphia — and calls to reduce the scope of policing prompted a return to tough-on-crime rhetoric and rebuke of reformist efforts. But other reform-oriented DAs in cities with considerable gun violence — like Chicago's Kim Foxx and St. Louis's Kim Gardner — recently won reelection bids despite sometimes vicious attacks on them.

**"People want to see these prosecutors' offices being focused on bringing down incarceration rates, and holding police accountable."**

According to a recent poll by Data for Progress, many of the reforms Krasner enacted remain popular with voters in Pennsylvania. Sixty-four percent of people surveyed expressed support for limitations to the use of cash bail, 60 percent were in favor of the decriminalization of drug possession, 75 percent favored sentence reductions for good behavior, and 68 percent supported terminating probation when supervision is no longer needed. Just this week, a Philadelphia City Council committee advanced a measure outlining procedures for a new police oversight board that

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will go to a full council vote later this week — the result of years of organizing by local activists who have pushed to create a body with power and funding to hold police accountable for misconduct, with renewed energy after police met protests last summer with brute force.

“With all the noise that goes on, the attacks, what have you, we know that the agenda is still very popular,” said Roberts. “People want to see these prosecutors’ offices being focused on bringing down incarceration rates, and holding police accountable. And they’re actually looking for other solutions for violence, they’re not willing to buy into the narrative that they hear from police unions and conservative politicians.”

**KRASNER WAS ELECTED** in 2017 on a promise to end mass incarceration in the city and transform the way prosecutors approach crime. At the time, Philadelphia Inquirer columnist Will Bunch described Krasner’s win as “a revolution.” The win by a former criminal defense and civil rights attorney who had never worked as a prosecutor until his election ushered a new era into an office that had been run for two decades by one of the “deadliest prosecutors” in the country, Lynne Abraham, whose office sent 108 people to death row.

Krasner’s office pledged never to seek the death penalty, stopped requesting cash bail for low-level offenses, expanded diversion programs for some gun offenses, and stopped prosecuting marijuana use and sex work. He also took a hard line on police accountability, brought charges against more than 50 officers accused of misconduct, and instituted a “do not call” list of officers with a history of misconduct and dishonesty that his office deemed unreliable witnesses and would not call to testify in court. The district attorney revamped a conviction integrity unit that has helped to exonerate 20 people since he took office in 2018.

The DA’s decarceral approach drew criticism from city residents and police forces who claimed that Krasner’s policies drove a spike in gun violence in the city last year. Krasner has also faced pushback from the left, including some of his supporters and groups like the Philadelphia Bail Fund, which said he hasn’t lived up to his campaign promises to end cash bail. Krasner’s office has continued to request high-dollar figures for cash bail in certain cases, and it’s an issue the DA acknowledges he hasn’t solved.

“I think he’s tried to figure out how to split the difference between addressing a bail system that has people incarcerated, pre-trial, who really shouldn’t be, and the responsibility he has around addressing gun violence in the city,” said

Roberts, of Color of Change, adding that overall, Krasner earned a “passing grade as a reform prosecutor.”

The fight over Krasner’s handling of cash bail is just one that highlights the limitations facing prosecutors running on promises of reform, said Chenjerai Kumanyika, a scholar and journalist in Philadelphia, and assistant professor of journalism and media studies at Rutgers University. Even some of Krasner’s allies are clear-eyed about the impracticality of investing in progressive prosecutors as a long-term solution to the problem of mass incarceration, Kumanyika explained.

**“The progressive prosecutor still relies a little bit on the idea that transformative change relies on electing the right person.”**

“The insight I’ve seen from some movement actors and organizers is that the progressive prosecutor still relies a little bit on the idea that transformative change relies on electing the right person,” he said. “Krasner seemed like that person,” he added, but “the limitation of that is that, one: it still has that kind of, we’re still just trying to get the right person in, the sort of illusion that we indulge in that a DA can be the advocate for the movement.”

The other limitation, as Kumanyika described it, is that the model of a “progressive prosecutor” doesn’t work everywhere. “It leaves us sort of without a real plan in places where you’re not going to be able to elect a progressive prosecutor,” he said, proposing a shift toward a vision of electing “an accountable prosecutor” instead. “What that does, is it forces us to turn our attention to building our movement.”

**EVEN AS PEOPLE** who hoped the so-called progressive prosecutor movement would fundamentally overhaul the U.S. criminal justice system, including the lack of police accountability, were sometimes left disappointed, there is no question that Krasner’s 2017 election helped build momentum around district attorney races across the country. Until then, incumbent prosecutors were rarely challenged and even more rarely defeated. But Krasner’s win in Philadelphia, as well as Kim Foxx’s in Chicago a year earlier, contributed to fueling nationwide awareness and enthusiasm around previously low-turnout elections. Their elections also shaped public understanding that DA races could be competitive and a space for substantial policy debate — drawing even more candidates to enter such races.

While at the time of his first campaign Krasner was perhaps the most reform-oriented prosecutor to be elected, his win has also inspired many would-be prosecutors pushing for even greater change, said Roberts, citing San Francisco’s Chesa Boudin as an example. “Showing that someone with Krasner’s agenda can get elected I think encouraged tons

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more people, some with even more transformational politics than him, to get into these races.” After Krasner, reform-minded prosecutors were elected in other large cities, including Los Angeles, Dallas, Boston, and Atlanta.

As “progressive prosecutor” became a catchphrase and the movement gained steam and racked up wins, candidates with little genuine commitment to decarceration sometimes co-opted the language of true reformers. Still, the successes of the movement have transformed the way voters think of prosecutors and the unique power they yield within the justice system.

**“Communities want something different. They’re no longer embracing the failed tough-on-crime paradigms of the past.”**

Miriam Krinsky, a former federal prosecutor and executive director of the justice nonprofit Fair and Just Prosecution, credited early challengers to the system, including Krasner, with “forcing a dialogue,” in an interview with *The Intercept*. “The starting point has dramatically shifted over the last few years,” she said. “And I think it’s by virtue of the fact that communities want something different. They’re no longer embracing the failed tough-on-crime paradigms of the past.”

Krinsky noted that her group currently works with around 70 new DAs from across the political spectrum who have made a commitment to shrinking the carceral system and increasing transparency, accountability, and fairness. While that is a fraction of the roughly 2,000 elected prosecutors across the country, they represent more than 20 percent of the country’s population because many of them are from large urban areas — an indication of the broad impact of the movement around DA elections.

Related

**With a Crowded Progressive Field, Wall Street’s Candidate Gains Steam in Manhattan DA Race**

In Manhattan, which will hold a primary election for district attorney next month, several candidates are taking a reformist approach. “The conversation is a very different one than we might have expected in a large urban area three or four years ago,” said Krinsky. “It really is a sign of times that have changed.”

The effort to build widespread awareness and engagement around local elections was also replicated beyond DA races, with similar organizing taking aim at sheriff and controller races, for instance. “We definitely see people replicating the model,” said Roberts.

But as prosecutors seeking to transform the ways of their offices racked up wins across the country, they faced backlash and obstructionism, particularly from police and their unions, though sometimes from within their offices as well. In some states, politically appointed federal prosecutors stepped in to take over cases, including protest-related ones, that local DAs had declined to prosecute. “Change is never easy and certainly there are many interests that have a vested stake in preserving the status quo, whether that’s bail bond companies or correctional leaders or police unions,” said Krinsky. “They don’t want to necessarily shrink the size of the system, and they don’t necessarily embrace increased accountability.”

**IN PHILADELPHIA**, the strongest and earliest backlash to Krasner’s election came from the police union. The president of Philadelphia’s police union, John McNesby, made numerous appearances on Fox News and other outlets attacking Krasner’s policies, claiming that the DA disliked law enforcement and calling on voters to support Vega.

**Philadelphia’s FOP Lodge 5 spent more than it had in any of the city’s last seven electoral cycles.**

Philadelphia’s FOP Lodge 5, a chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police, spent \$140,000 to oust Krasner, more than it had in any of the city’s last seven electoral cycles, including \$25,200 from the union PAC directly to Vega’s campaign (the maximum contribution over two years) as well as \$113,000 to the Protect Our Police PAC. Throughout the campaign, POP PAC spent more than \$130,000 on TV ads attacking Krasner. The Pennsylvania chapter of the FOP also gave \$12,500 to Vega’s campaign.

Last month, the police union stationed a Mister Softee ice cream truck in front of the DA’s office giving out free ice cream, a gesture to highlight how, they claimed, Krasner was “soft on crime,” bringing the truck back in the weeks leading up to the race.

Police efforts to fight Krasner were no match for his campaign, which raised \$1.35 million, compared to Vega’s \$600,000. Krasner’s campaign was backed by outside groups including Shaun King’s Real Justice PAC. He was also backed by the political action committee for the Guardian Civic League of Philadelphia — a chapter of the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, which represents Black cops in the city — and by Club Valiants, a fraternal group representing Black and Latino firefighters in Philadelphia.

The animosity between Krasner and Vega was palpable throughout the race, and not just because Vega was in the process of suing the DA for age discrimination related to

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his firing. Vega launched his campaign by attacking Krasner, saying his office didn't care about victims and that it has made Philadelphia a more dangerous place.

The former homicide prosecutor also accused Krasner of "spreading lies" about his record in relation to a wrongful conviction case that Vega had helped to retry. The back and forth prompted the Innocence Project, which represented Anthony Wright during his retrial, to issue a statement denouncing Vega's portrayal of his role in the case in comments to The Intercept and to the Philadelphia Inquirer. Vega accused the Innocence Project of bringing up the case to boost Krasner's campaign. After a heated debate on May 5, Vega was recorded on a hot mic asking Krasner if the DA had security downstairs and if he wanted to give Vega a ride home.

Attempts by Vega and his backers in law enforcement to pin gun violence in the city on Krasner didn't resonate with Philadelphians who have interacted with the criminal legal system, said City Council Member Kendra Brooks. "We're talking about the same system that has disinvested into all the things that they needed to be successful, right?" she said. "And it's also the system that perpetuates this cycle of violence, and crime and trauma that also puts them in the ground. And in communities, you can't separate any of that."

**Update: May 19, 2021**

*This article has been updated to include election results from the Associated Press.*

Article From: The Intercept.com

## A Prayer for Kimmy

*For one so young life has been brutally hard on you,  
Trauma defiles the petals of a delicate rose like a harsh winter  
wind.*

*Cold injustice has withered your spirit, way, way down.*

*Cruel, ugly censors block the beauty of your words.*

*Weaponized neo-fascists and the black-robed Gestapos behind the  
iron curtain.*

*An unforgiving Parole Board that has no soul-*

*Robots programmed to twist the world upside down.*

*Look! Even your flaws are beautiful.*

*Amid the evil monstrosity of covid and death and all that dark-  
ness-*

*Dims the light of your beautiful smile-*

*The hope slowly fading in the diamonds of your tear-soaked eyes,*

*As you watch, helplessly, your imprisoned sisters perish.*

*And yes, we mourn, too, with you.*

*Para la Compañeras nosotros en la lucha!*

*But you must remember this:*

*There are Angels to guard you.*

*Far, far off, the church bells ring.*

*In the prison chapel, the broken hearted sing.*

*O, Bonita.*

*You will be free.*

*You will fly again, wings aflutter,*

*So fly,*

*fly...*

*fly away...*

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# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## New PA Solitary Bill, HB1037

By Val Kiebala, June 2021



Solitary Survivors L-R: John Thompson, Attilah, Alfonso Sally, Big Hick

On June 2, Pennsylvania legislators and advocates stood side by side within the walls of the historic Eastern State Penitentiary to announce the new House Bill 1037 that would ban the use of solitary confinement across state prisons for longer than fifteen days.

Eastern State, the birthplace of solitary confinement, symbolizes a failed penological experiment. The Quakers had constructed the prison believing that isolation would cause reflection and rehabilitation, but time proved that solitary caused the exact opposite: it drove people mad; it tortured people. Eastern State is no longer in use and now functions as a museum and historical site.

Saleem Holbrook, who spent 10 years in solitary and was sentenced to life in prison as a child, addressed the audience. He stated, “We could think of no place more fitting than to have this press conference at this prison because we hope to one day have solitary confinement cells across Pennsylvania and ultimately across the U.S. be old relics and museums that people go and visit as reminders of how we should never allow the state or the so-called justice system to drive people insane by placing them in cages for 23 hours, 24 hours in a cell.”

“We’re here as abolitionists,” Saleem continued. “We see this as harm reduction. Our position is that just one day in solitary is enough. Just one day.”

Two weeks prior, voters in Allegheny County passed a referendum banning the use of solitary in the county jail system. And in the past couple of years, both New Jersey and New York passed legislation capping the number of days someone

can be held in solitary at fifteen, in accordance with the United Nations’ Mandela Rules.

Saleem passed the mic to Ms. Patricia Vickers, one of the founding leaders of the Human Rights Coalition whose son faces a life sentence. “People around the world rallied and protested on behalf of George Floyd and against the lack of accountability for the police killing him,” said Ms. Patricia, as she scanned the audience with her eyes. “We

have police brutality not only on the streets in this country but also inside the prisons. The guards act the same way the police act out here. They act the same way in the prisons...Solitary confinement is inhumane treatment of a human being. It is a torture chamber.”



L-R: Mr. Kelley, Sen. Saval, Mama Patt, Rep. Bullock, Saleem, Rep. Madden, Rep. Davis, Rep. Herrin, Bro. Yusef, Sen. Kane .

State Representatives Tina Davis and Donna Bullock, the primary sponsors of HB1037, echoed the urgency and importance of ending solitary. One by one, senators and representatives passionately shared their reasons for supporting the bill and urging their colleagues to follow suit.

On the other side of the towering stone walls of Eastern State prison, the day before the press conference, folks from all walks of life gathered holding signs condemning the use of

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**THE MOVEMENT**

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

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solitary confinement and calling for an end to abuse in prison. Raising their voices in unison, the crowd chanted, “Solitary is racist! Solitary is torture! Solitary has got to go!” Cars zoomed past on Fairmount Ave., some honking in support.

Men and women who spent time in solitary confinement stood resolutely on stage and spoke to the crowd about their experiences and visions for change.

LuQman Abdul went to prison 38 years ago, falsely accused of taking the life of the man who killed his younger brother. His life sentence was overturned, but not before he spent five years in solitary confinement, alongside political prisoners

Russell Maroon Shoatz, JoJo Bowen, Arthur Cete-wayo Johnson, and others. Abdul explained that one guard in particular had inflicted the abuse. This



guard had been to Iraq and abused Iraqi prisoners. “It wasn’t until he went to Iraq that he was charged with prison abuse,” Abdul said. “And you saw pictures all over nationally of him treating human beings like animals and dogs. But it was the same thing going on with us, here in Pennsylvania. Nobody believed us. We all have loved ones, and sometimes our loved ones may be victimized to the justice system but just because they go into the justice system don’t mean that they should be abused.”

Abdul described the brutal retaliation he faced for leading an educational study group for young men and for his political affiliations. “I was like a research animal in this cell. I remember [Russell] Maroon [Shoatz] telling me that I was like an animal on remote control because every time the guards would come by my cell, I would be barking, doing all kinds of stuff to be destructive because I had that much hatred and venom in me from those people who had those uniforms on,” said Abdul. “And when Russell said that you are like an animal on remote control, I had to think about it and I had to regain my consciousness.”

Ms. Dee Dee, the mother of a juvenile lifer, called up by name all of the people who had served time in Pennsylvania. “I wanna present them because every day that one of them comes home, one day my baby will be up here with them,” Ms. Dee Dee said, speaking emphatically into the mic. “I’m trying to let people know that this is real. This is really real. We don’t just come out here to make noise and look good.

We’re fighting for a right cause. Because we’re going to jail simply because of the color of our skin. Or because we’re poor. Or because we don’t fit into society. So I need ya’ll to realize that this is as real as the air that we breathe. And all these characters up here: the ones that are older, they are my brothers. The ones that are younger, they’re my sons. And all the women that been in there, they’re my sisters, my aunts, and my daughters.”

Dorothy Watson, a single mother of four who is out on bail, recalled facing retaliation for standing up for a woman who had been jumped by correctional officers. For that, Watson was sent to the hole, denied food, denied anything to drink, and, “They told me they were gonna tell my family that I died from natural causes,” she said. “Animals get treated better. Animals eat better than inmates.”

Another reason women get sent to the hole, Watson said, is for finding creative ways to elongate the use of the limited feminine products provided in jail. “As a female, how can they tell you how many pads you can have? You got females who leak heavy, you got females who don’t leak heavy.” If women take one pad and rip it into several usable feminine products, “it’s a write-up and you get sent to the hole,” she said.

Dorothy asked the crowd: “How is it that it took until 2021 for something to happen? And it still ain’t even happening. They get one phone call a day [in solitary] and probably not even the whole fifteen minutes sometimes... It’s not only about me, it’s not only about [my incarcerated loved one]. It’s about ALL incarcerated lives!”

Chris Kimmenez spent six months in solitary. He told the crowd that his time in solitary caused him more trauma than the four combat tours he served as a marine. Kimmenez’s voice rang out with the presence of a fiery pastor in church: “As tired as I am, we got some hope. Because we’re building a movement of returning citizens and their families to say we don’t want this to happen to anybody else again. We’re building a movement of people on the inside because we’re tired of people on the inside voices not being heard. We’re building a movement of even some folks who are conservative because they don’t understand why the DOC has got to use a method that costs twice as much as general population. We’re building a movement of allies who are actually saying, ‘This isn’t right, this isn’t fair, this isn’t just, this isn’t humane. And we’re tired of people’s human dignity being taken away.’”

“So we’ve got some hope today,” Kimmenez preached. “And I have faith that in the end of this, we’re going to win. We’re actually going to end solitary in Pennsylvania. But we can’t stop here. We’ve got to keep fighting.”

Sponsored By: HRC, ABL, & Solidarity Not Solitary Campaign

**THE MOVEMENT**

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# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

**Straight Ahead!** is the new lobbying arm of the Abolitionist Law Center, created with the goal of ending Life Without Parole (LWOP) sentences and freeing aging people in Pennsylvania prisons. Specifically, the campaign aims to support bills for medical and geriatric parole as well as pass Senate Bill 135, which would provide people serving life sentences in Pennsylvania the opportunity to be reviewed for parole. Pennsylvania law currently allows no chance for parole for people over the age of 18 convicted of first or 2nd Degree murder. Elderly people are one of the fastest-growing incarcerated populations in the U.S. Currently, 2,600 of the 5,447 incarcerated individuals serving a life sentence in Pennsylvania are 50 years and older.

As someone who was released from prison in 2018 after serving twenty seven years of a 1st Degree Death by Incarceration (Life Without Parole) sentence, I know first hand the trauma DBI sentences impose on people incarcerated, our families, communities and victims. In the end, no one wins when community members are permanently removed from our communities without an opportunity to demonstrate transformation and redemption. As a co-founder of the Human Rights Coalition and Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, as well as one of the first families to join Fight For Lifers Inc. when it was started in 1991, I also am aware of the enormous challenges that are ahead of us, and we are determined not to repeat the past mistakes made by movements to win parole eligibility for lifers in this state.

Honoring, supporting, and complementing the years of dedicated grassroots work by groups like the Human Rights Coalition (HRC), the Coalition to End Death by Incarceration (CADBI), Fight For Lifers Inc., and the countless family members who have fought for their loved ones behind bars, the mission of Straight Ahead! is to progressively dismantle DBI in Pennsylvania through garnering support for legislation that would decrease the number of people serving death by incarceration and return our mentors, families, and community members home.

Towards that end, Straight Ahead! will support the following initiatives to win parole or release for all prisoners serving DBI/LWOP sentences:

1.) We will support Senator Street's legislation in the State Legislature that will support Geriatric Parole for all prisoners over the age of 55. This would apply to all people, 1st and 2nd Degree as well as "virtual lifers" and people given very long sentences for other offenses. This bill would offer the same benefits as SB135 but change the narrative focus to aging people instead of a debate around a set number of years.

2.) We will support Senator Street's SB135 that would grant Parole for people serving 1st Degree Murder after 35 years served and for 2nd Degree after 25 years served. Although we have expressed deep reservations with Senator Street's office about the numbers of years a person would have to serve in order to be eligible for parole, a political/power analysis of the state legislature has forced us and our allies to realize these numbers are the only chance the bill has of even being considered in the state legislature.

3.) We will support legislation that would grant parole eligibility to people who were convicted as accomplices to 2nd Degree Felony Murder. This legislation would impact between 400 and 600 lifers in Pennsylvania, equivalent to the number of lifers who were re-sentenced as "Juvenile Lifers."

4.) We will continue to support our ally the Amistad Law Project's campaign to transform the commutation process and win more release for lifers applying for commutation.

To win these points of release, Straight Ahead! will work with any and all partners who are committed to fighting for lifers and their families. In addition, Straight Ahead! will not adopt an all or nothing approach to ending Death By Incarceration in Pennsylvania, a position that has unfortunately left lifers with nothing because of the makeup of Pennsylvania's legislature.

Straight Ahead! is not a legal organization nor do we provide individual assistance for people's cases, but we would love to hear your input on our campaign. If you are interested in learning more or getting involved, please write to us at: Straight Ahead, 701 Cathedral Rd., Suite 45 Box 1519, Philadelphia, PA 19128. Important Note: 1.) If you are from Philadelphia address your letter to *Tyree Little*, 2.) If you are from Central PA address your letter to *David Garlock*, 3.) If you are from Pittsburgh/Western PA address your letter to *Terri Minor Spencer*.

Straight Ahead!

Robert Saleem Holbrook

Executive Director

Abolitionist Law Center/Straight Ahead!

*Our name Straight Ahead! comes from the sign-off of political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz, who is currently serving multiple sentences in PA despite being 77 years old and having recently survived COVID on top of other serious medical issues. Russell Maroon is a great example of someone who is clearly not a danger to the community—in fact he has been a positive mentor for countless people in prison—and should be released. In his name, we fight for the freedom for our people who deserve a second chance.*

**THE MOVEMENT**

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



# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## The Human Rights Coalition's Toxic Prisons and Environmental Justice Campaign

By: Trik Parasimo

Our main focus for the last three years has been to shut down SCI-Fayette. While all prisons are toxic, this prison was knowingly built on a toxic coal ash dump site. With the help of Center for Coalfield Justice and The Abolitionist Law Center, we of HRC have conducted numerous studies to reveal that the air and water is contaminated because of fracking and fly coal ash.

Though the dumpsite is no longer active as of 2015, the prison walls are still covered in soot and the water is a brackish color. We have hundreds of incarcerated or previously incarcerated souls coming to us with serious health concerns. One HRC member writes:

*"I am one of the people that is diagnosed with (Multiple Myeloma) Bone Cancer, shortness of breath, chronic coughing, adverse skin conditions, painful rashes, and hives. I truly do believe that my cancer came from the FLY COAL ASH which has me in this predicament just as well as a lot of other inmates."*

Fracking contaminated the water and the PADOA does nothing to help those trapped inside. The guards of the DOC won a lawsuit which allows them to drink bottled water while inmates are forced to drink, bathe, and cook, with water that is proven to have cancer-causing contaminants such as **trihalomethanes**.

We are working together to fight Environmental Racism. It is not sheer coincidence that towns affected by environmental hazards are also towns in which the majority of community members are people of color.

**Environmental racism** refers to the institutional rules, regulations, policies or government and/or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for locally undesirable land uses and lax enforcement of zoning and environmental laws, resulting in communities being disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous waste based upon race.

**Environmental Justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our community.

Join us! We are currently filming a documentary with SCRIBE to expose the DOC for these injustices. We have weekly meetings to discuss how we can get the attention of our governor and state representatives to address this issue and END toxic prisons. If your loved one is interested in joining us, have them go to [hrcoalition.org](http://hrcoalition.org) and help us #SHUTDOWNFAYETTE



We want to replace prisons with rehabilitation and treatment centers. As environmentalists, we have started a garden in West Philly that is for those previously incarcerated to enjoy a green space and sense of community. We are working with the Coalition to End Death by Incarceration to bring fresh fruit and vegetables to those impacted most by the carceral system.

Our communities need healing and learning the skills to grow your own food is one way we can overcome our oppressors.

Reach out to us! We would love to hear how you have been impacted by toxic prisons and America's toxic INjustice system.

*Human Rights Coalition  
Attention: Toxic Prisons Committee  
PO Box 34580  
Philadelphia, PA 19101*

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Letter From Solitary Confinement At The Allegheny County Jail

By Brittany Hailer, May 19, 2021



*In Tuesday's election, nearly 70% of voters voted on a measure to end nearly all uses of solitary confinement at the Allegheny County Jail. More than 166,000 supported the ballot measure. Upon learning this news, James Byrd, who has been living in solitary confinement at the Allegheny County Jail for more than three years, wrote a letter thanking voters.*

Good morning.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the tireless efforts put forth by the citizens of Allegheny County Pennsylvania to make a difference by seeking the abolishment of solitary confinement at the ACJ.

Often times, our community is left in the dark as to the atrocities, physical, and psychological torture that is inflicted upon their sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, spouses, friends, and neighbors who unfortunately find themselves incarcerated in the ACJ. The public is misled or intentionally not informed about the lack of medical and mental healthcare, the violent physical abuse by corrections officers, and most importantly, the adverse effects caused to their mental health from being locked in and treated worse than wild animals are treated.

I know better than most, the ways and means in which long term solitary confinement can exacerbate current mental conditions, effectuate severe decompensation, and even create mental conditions where none previously existed.

I have been at the ACJ since June 9, 2015 and for the past three (3) years I have been locked away in solitary confinement on unit 8E. I have been denied basic human interaction, literally walked around on a dog leash (tether) when outside of the cell, beaten and strapped in restraint chairs for requesting mental health treatment, denied outside communications with attorneys, family, and friends.

Being subject to these types of conditions of confinement has caused me to experience feelings of hopelessness, severe anxiety, manic depression, PTSD and to attempt to commit suicide by overdose on more than 10 separate occasions. I have witnessed other inmates both attempt and succeed at taking their own lives as a result of the effects of long term solitary confinement at the ACJ.

Quite frankly, the ACJ Administration typically plays the word game when addressing solitary confinement within the facility.

The public relations office repeatedly states that the ACJ doesn't utilize solitary confinement. However, the ACJ utilizes something far worse. It uses the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) as a place to house various inmates who are classified to various statuses, most of whom suffer from acute or some other form of mental disease. These inmates are mistreated and denied access to the necessary treatment in accordance with their medical and mental health needs. Because RHU is used interchangeably with solitary confinement, the ACJ frequently disguises its conditions of confinement there as something other than solitary confinement, when in reality, it is the same and often worse.

Pretrial detainees who are incarcerated at the ACJ are human beings first and foremost. Many are incarcerated because of a manifestation of a mental condition which led to the circumstances for which they are incarcerated. Others are innocent victims of the system. While incarceration can be, and is sometimes, necessary to protect society from crime and violent criminals, it is NEVER NECESSARY to lock human beings in solitary confinement and treat them like animals. Especially when it has been outlawed in the society in which we live.

So on behalf of myself and the inmates at the Allegheny County Jail, THANK YOU CITIZENS WHO CARE! Thank you for giving us hope in an otherwise hopeless situation.

Sincerely,

James Byrd aka Lost In The ACJ

**THE MOVEMENT**

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



## 2nd Chances!

**T**HE MOVEMENT magazine would like folks to know what's happening with the men and women who were sentenced to LIFE without parole but were given a second chance. Lifers are considered to be throw-a-way people without hope; labeled incorrigible. We are asking those who have come home to share their experiences. We don't expect to see that folks have won a Nobel Peace Prize, but after decades behind bars, a job, marriage, self improvement, or new perspectives are things we see as accomplishments. Thank you Tyree Little (Big Hick, a returning citizen) for conducting these interviews. We look forward to seeing more from you.

Hello my Brothers and Sisters! I am pleased to bring you another interview from a formally incarcerated brother.

These interviews mean a lot to me, so I take pride in doing them because it lets everyone know the, everyday, struggle you will face when coming home from prison. I hope you enjoy reading these interviews just as much as I enjoy interviewing.

**Tyree:** First and foremost, welcome home brother. Tell the readers your name and how much time you did and when you came home.

**Chris:** My name is Mr. Christopher Williams. I appreciate the salutations from the brothers, especially the ones in the struggle. I personally did two months shy of 31 years, which I claim. Twenty-five of those 31 years were spent on death row. I was blessed to come home February 9th, 2021 after hidden evidence of my innocence came to light.



L-Rt: Chris and Tyree (Big Hick)

**Tyree:** Wow, that's amazing that you're home after so many years. How does it feel to be reunited with your family

after so many years?

**Chris:** The feelings, at times, are overwhelming, but in a good way to a world I know little about.

**Tyree:** I can relate. It took some time for me to adjust after doing twenty-one years. I still struggle. So, what has been your biggest obstacle and how did you overcome it?

**Chris:** I feel your struggles after 21 years away from what you once knew as normalcy. However, I will honestly say each day brings about his own challenges. It's had to say

what's the biggest obstacle, in a world one is attempting to reacquaint themselves with.

**Tyree:** Has there been any difficulty with finding employment?

**Chris:** There has, and may continue to be. But I've been blessed with some genuine loved ones in my corner.

**Tyree:** So, I take that as you have employment. Who would you contribute your success to thus far?

**Chris:** Not meaningful employment, considering I am a 61 years old ex-convict. I tribute my success to faith and family, who've gotten me through some heavy periods.

**Tyree:** That's good, I hope things progress for you in the near future.

Before we close, do you have any words for the men and women who are soon to be released from prison.

**Chris:** I'm prayerful that God will continue carrying me through these trials toward a brighter future. My parting words to the brothers and sisters about to release?

Trust in God, while humbling yourself, leaning not into your own limited understanding, and embracing the fact that we learn from the cradle to the grave!!

**Tyree:** Thank you, brother, for such a good interview and again, Welcome Home and continue to be blessed.



Chris and Fiancé



## Survey on Healing from Violence

*This survey is organized by the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI). CADBI is a grassroots campaign to end Life Without Parole / Death By Incarceration sentences in Pennsylvania. The purpose of this survey is to gather information from those directly impacted about responses to violence that make our communities happy, healthy and safe. We recognize the incredible pain and grief experienced when someone is killed. Whatever experiences bring you to this survey, we hope you will share them fully and honestly. This survey is a unique effort to collect the experiences and vision of Pennsylvanians impacted by homicide, including those often left out by other surveys. It is slightly less than 20 questions. In this survey, we use the language of "someone close to you," because we recognize that homicide hurts family, partners, friends, and loved ones. All your answers will be confidential.*

### Your Experience

1. Have you lost someone close to you to homicide in Pennsylvania?

Yes  No

Optional explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Optional: What are the names of the people you lost?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What year/s did this take place? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Was the person/were any of the people who did this incarcerated as a result of the homicide?

Yes  No  I don't know

If you answered "Yes" to Question 4, please answer Questions 5-8. If you answered "No," or "I don't know," please skip to Question 9.

5. This person's incarceration has contributed to my healing.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

6. This person's incarceration has contributed to my safety.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neither agree nor disagree  Agree  Strongly Agree

7. After serving what time period should the person who killed your loved one be considered for release?

10-15 years  15-25 years  25-35 years  More than 35 years  Never

8. If there was an accomplice (a lookout, a driver, or someone else involved) in the killing of your loved one, after serving what time period should that person be considered for release?

10-15 years  15-25 years  25-35 years  More than 35 years  Never  Not relevant

9. Since the time when the person close to you was killed, have you received any direct economic, medical, and/or emotional support from the following places? (select all that apply):

Family or friends  Hospital or health care  Religious or spiritual community

Community organization  Law enforcement  District attorney or prosecutor

Victim's advocate

### Your Vision

10. To me, "justice" in the situation of a person killing another person means:

- The person or people responsible being rehabilitated
- The person or people responsible going to prison
- Restitution or an apology to people close to the person who was killed
- Dialogue between the person/people responsible and people close to the person who was killed
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. What has healing looked like for you in the time since the person close to you was killed?

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12. What would it take to heal?

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13. What would you like to say to the person who killed the person or people close to you?

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### About You

Home zip code: \_\_\_\_\_ Home county: \_\_\_\_\_ Prison: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe your race and/or ethnicity? (choose all you identify with):

- American Indian, Alaska Native, or indigenous
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Latino/Latina or Hispanic
- White
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

Are you registered with the Pennsylvania Office of Victim Advocate (OVA)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Are you registered with PASAVIN/VINELink? (A notification system to update victims on the status of an incarcerated person)

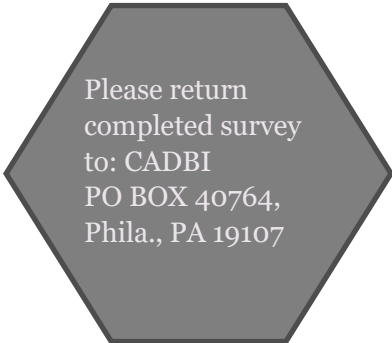
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Do you have a loved one who is incarcerated?

- Yes
- No
- I did in the past

Are you incarcerated?

- Yes
- No
- I have been in the past



Please return  
completed survey  
to: CADBI  
PO BOX 40764,  
Phila., PA 19107

### Resources for Healing, Recovery, and Support

We know that these questions can bring up painful feelings and memories. If you need someone to talk to after filling out this survey, please write to us at **CADBI, PO Box 40764, Philadelphia, PA 19107**. We recognize that while everyone is in lockdown, many resources for healing are not accessible. In each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, there are victim advocates and other local organizations who are there to assist you with various resources. At this address, you can find your local victim advocate and access many other resources:

[www.o.va.pa.gov/SafetyandSupport/Resources/LocateaVictimServiceAgency/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.o.va.pa.gov/SafetyandSupport/Resources/LocateaVictimServiceAgency/Pages/default.aspx)

**THE MOVEMENT**

# What's The News!

## Brett Kavanaugh's Opinion Restoring Juvenile Life Without Parole Is Dishonest and Barbaric

BY MARK JOSEPH STERN  
APRIL 2021



Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett

In an appalling 6–3 decision on Thursday, the Supreme Court effectively reinstated juvenile life without parole by shredding precedents that had sharply limited the sentence in every state. Justice Brett Kavanaugh's majority opinion in *Jones v. Mississippi* is one of the most dishonest and cynical decisions in recent memory: While pretending to follow precedent, Kavanaugh tore down judicial restrictions on JLWOP, ensuring that fully rehabilitated individuals who committed their crimes as children will die behind bars. Justice Sonia Sotomayor's dissent, joined by Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan, pulls no punches in its biting rebuke of Kavanaugh's duplicity and inhumani-

ty. It doubles as an ominous warning that the conservative majority is more than willing to destroy major precedents while falsely claiming to uphold them.

The Supreme Court strictly curtailed the imposition of juvenile life without parole in two landmark decisions:

2012's *Miller v. Alabama* and 2016's *Montgomery v. Louisiana*. In *Miller*, the court ruled that mandatory sentences of JLWOP—that is, sentences imposed automatically upon conviction—violate the 8th Amendment's bar on "cruel and unusual punishments." It explained that children's crimes often reflect "transient immaturity"; because their brains are not fully developed, young offenders are "less culpable" than adults and have greater potential for rehabilitation.

In *Montgomery*, the court clarified that discretionary sentences of JLWOP—that is, sentences imposed at the discretion of a judge—are generally unconstitutional, as well. It then applied these rules retroactively, allowing all incarcerated people who were condemned to life without parole as children to contest their sentences. Taken together, *Miller* and *Montgomery* held that JLWOP is unconstitutional for "all but the rarest of juvenile offenders, those whose crimes reflect permanent incorrigibility." And they forbade judges from imposing JLWOP unless they found that the defendant's crime reflected "irreparable corruption."

On Thursday, Kavanaugh overturned these decisions without admitting it. His majority opinion in *Jones v. Mississippi* claims fidelity to *Mil-*

*ler* and *Montgomery* while stripping them of all meaning. Kavanaugh wrote that these precedents do not require a judge to "make a separate factual finding of permanent incorrigibility" before imposing JLWOP. Nor, Kavanaugh wrote, do they compel a judge to "at least provide an on-the-record sentencing explanation with an implicit finding of permanent incorrigibility." Instead, a judge need only be granted "discretion" to sentence a child to less than life without parole. So long as that discretion exists, Kavanaugh held, the 8th Amendment is satisfied—even if the judge provides no indication that they actually considered the defendant's youth, gauged their potential for rehabilitation, and nonetheless decided their crime reflected "permanent incorrigibility."

As Sotomayor noted in her extraordinary dissent, "this conclusion would come as a shock to the Courts in *Miller* and *Montgomery*." Those decisions explicitly required the judge to "actually make the judgment" that the child is incorrigible. They also "expressly rejected the notion that sentencing discretion, alone, suffices." Kavanaugh claimed that he followed these precedents, Sotomayor wrote, but he "is fooling no one." (Justice Clarence Thomas, writing separately, was more honest than Kavanaugh: He acknowledged that the majority had subverted *Montgomery*, and supported openly killing it off instead of quietly overruling it while pretending to follow it.)

"The Court distorts *Miller* and *Montgomery* beyond recognition," Sotomayor continued. (Remember: When she writes about "the Court," Sotomayor means Kavanaugh and the conservative jurists

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# What's The News!

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who signed onto this opinion.) “The Court attempts to paper over its mischaracterization,” she explained; it “pretends” that these past decisions required only an individualized sentencing procedure. But that is simply false: *Miller* and *Montgomery* “set forth a substantive proportionality principle” that outlawed JLWOP for all but the “rarest of children” whose crimes “reflect irreparable corruption.” Kavanaugh ignored—and, by extension, abolished—this “substantive limit on the imposition of LWOP on juvenile offenders.” Instead, as Sotomayor put it, he reprised “Justice Scalia’s dissenting view” and turned it into the law. The upshot is that the substantive limit on JLWOP has been lifted; judges may resume doling out these sentences without any real constitutional constraint.

**The conservative justices have destroyed landmark precedents safeguarding the rights of children without owning up to their own handiwork.**

“The Court simply rewrites *Miller* and *Montgomery* to say what the Court now wishes they had said, and then denies that it has done any such thing,” Sotomayor declared. “The Court knows what it is doing.” Then she used Kavanaugh’s own words against him, quoting his past statements claiming to support *stare decisis*, or respect for precedent, to illustrate how he has abandoned his own purported principles. “How low this Court’s respect for *stare decisis* has sunk,” Sotomayor wrote. “The Court is willing to overrule precedent without even acknowledging it is doing so, much less providing any special justification. It is hard to see how that approach”—and here, she quot-

ed Kavanaugh himself—“is ‘founded in the law rather than in the proclivities of individuals.’ ”

## Penn Museum owes reparations for previously holding remains of a MOVE bombing victim

Penn has not publicly addressed Philadelphia’s Black communities for the holding of remains from someone who died in a state murder.

by Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, for the Inquirer, April 2021

This month, Penn Museum affirmed a commitment to repatriate the remains of Black Philadelphians warehoused in the Morton Cranial Collection — yet the museum has announced no plans for reparations around its past holding of the remains of someone killed in the 1985 MOVE bombing, which resulted in the death of 11 people and destroyed a city block.

Thirty-six years later, the scars of the West Philly bombing continue to devastate Philadelphia’s Black community. Just as Penn has apologized for its unethical collection of human skulls, the university must also apologize for holding these MOVE remains and agree to make restitution.

In 1985, under the custody of professor Alan Mann, Penn received the remains for examination through the city medical examiner’s office.\* The MOVE Commission, a group of independent members, was separately appointed by the mayor to investigate the event. Following a dispute over whether specific remains belonged to Tree Africa, who

was 14 when killed in the MOVE bombing, Penn kept those remains until 2001 when Mann transferred to Princeton University, taking them with him. In 2016, Penn brought back the remains for a temporary investigation that lasted until 2019, and they were later returned to Princeton, per the museum’s account.

In a 2019 Coursera video, presented on Princeton University’s online learning platform, curator-in-charge of the physical anthropology section at Penn Museum, Janet Monge, who, in 1985, worked under Mann as a doctoral student, explores “restoring personhood” in forensic anthropology while handling and examining the remains of a Philadelphian who died in the MOVE bombing — a femur and pelvic bone that were badly burned. This is included in a series entitled “REAL BONES: Adventures in Forensic Anthropology” that addresses MOVE as a case study.

Looking back on the history of the MOVE bombing brings a disturbing reality to the fore. On May 13, 1985, after days of prolonged issues and under instructions from Mayor W. Wilson Goode Sr., police shot water cannons and deployed tear gas and 10,000 rounds of ammunition, claiming they were responding to shots from MOVE members. Around 5 p.m., a police helicopter dropped a bomb onto the MOVE property, triggering the explosion and fire that killed 11 people and destroyed the block.

The state violence against Black Philadelphians represented by the MOVE bombing, which City Council apologized for last November, overlaps with the violence of academic institutions keeping the remains of Black people rather than relinquishing those remains for burial.

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Amy Sadao, former director of Penn's Institute of Contemporary Art, said that when she worked at Penn remains of a MOVE bombing victim being housed at the museum was like "an open secret" that troubled some staff. Arielle Julia Brown, the former public programs developer in the then-public programs department at Penn, worked as a cultural planning consultant for the Penn & Slavery Project. Upon hearing of the possession of the remains, Brown said it reflects to her that "Black people [are still] dispossessed of their own material future after death, after wrongful death, after violent death at the hands of white supremacy."

In the aftermath of the MOVE bombing, the city showed neglect in assuring proper handling of the remains of the people who were killed. Richard Kent Evans, visiting professor at Haverford, states in his book *MOVE: An American Religion* that "for six months the bodies of the MOVE people ... decomposed in a city morgue," instead of being returned to family members for proper burial. Evans also notes that "machine operators crushed bones and mangled skeletons."

Despite touting its work on the Morton Cranial Collection, Penn has not publicly addressed Philadelphia's Black communities for holding remains from a MOVE bombing victim — someone who died in a state murder.

The remains of murdered Black people were mishandled then, but as Penn continues their reckoning with past practices around human remains, there is an opportunity here for them to make amends to West Philadelphia. Although Princeton must also grapple with their handling of these remains, it's especially important for Penn to do

so since they are located just blocks away from where the MOVE bombing took place. People should not have to fight to discover that remains of Black people have been used as instruction when the family had no idea.

In response to learning how long the museum held the remains of a MOVE victim, Mike Africa Jr., the son of Debbie Sims Africa and Michael Africa Sr. of the MOVE 9 (who were incarcerated for the 1978 killing of Officer James Ramp, though Mayor Goode in the documentary *40 Years a Prisoner* stated he believed Ramp died of friendly fire) asked: How "would they feel if somebody got one of their babies and studied it? Think about that for a second — somebody just burned the baby up and now they put it in a drawer." Africa demands that the surviving family members be notified by Penn immediately, that Monge be fired, that Penn makes a public apology for this egregious act, and that there is "some kind of restitution."

If "[t]he Penn Museum and the University of Pennsylvania apologize for the unethical possession of human remains in the Morton Collection," as shared in an April 14 press release, the museum must make a public, specific apology with plans for restitution to the MOVE family for this egregious act.

Abdul-Aliy Muhammad is an organizer and writer born and raised in West Philadelphia. @MxAbdulAliy

*From: Penn Museum owes reparations for previously holding remains of a MOVE bombing victim | Opinion – On a Move*

## Prison Mail Surveillance Company Keeps Tabs On Those On the Outside, Too

**Prisons are increasingly copying mail to prevent contraband, but this means prisoners never get to hold letters and photos from loved ones. One company goes even further.**

By Aaron Gordon  
FROM: <https://flipboard.com/>

In March 2018, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VA DOC) was trying to gain more control over the mail its approximately 30,000 incarcerated people received. Mainly, it wanted to close a loophole in which people posed as businesses so they could include color photos. A contact at the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections recommended they talk to a Florida company called Smart Communications about its product, MailGuard.

Smart Communications offered to do a whole lot more than that. It offered VA DOC a suite of products that would make it possible for prison officials to monitor and search all inmate communications with the outside world. It would create a searchable database of everything each prisoner said and received, along with who said it. And, the company claimed, it would include postal mail in this dragnet through its MailGuard product, by scanning each mail item at a remote facility and uploading PDFs for incarcerated people to view from a tablet. The people in prisons would never receive the physical letter.

The MailGuard system works by having senders address their mail not to

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letter one time before delivering it, and every person who sends mail to an incarcerated person having their letters scanned, rendered digitally searchable, stored for seven years, and on top of that their personal information is also stored and meticulously tracked." He compared it to police agencies merely writing down a license plate when they pull someone over versus deploying license plate readers on a mass scale.

"This is just another step down that road," Mackey said, "where prisoners increasingly have diminished rights and privacy."

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## House Democrats seek to prevent prison gerrymandering

From: [Rep. Joanna E. McClinton | News Center \(pahouse.com\)](#)

**HARRISBURG, May 26** – House Democratic Leader Joanna McClinton is asking her four colleagues on the Legislative Reapportionment Commission to agree on a plan to count incarcerated Pennsylvanians in the communities they call home rather than the state facilities where they happened to be housed at the time they were counted.

"Most of the people currently in state facilities will, sooner or later, be released from custody and resume their lives on the outside," said McClinton. "It's better for the purposes of drawing our legislative districts, which are population-based, to count these individuals in the communities they call home. It will result in better, more even representation for all Pennsylvanians."

The people directly affected are those serving sentences in either a state cor-

rectional facility or a state facility for adjudicated delinquent youth. The proposal does not apply to federal or county prison facilities, which are not under the jurisdiction of the state Department of Corrections.

"We believe the method currently used is contrary to Pennsylvania law which states: 'no individual who is confined in a penal institution shall be deemed a resident of the election district where the institution is located. The individual shall be deemed to reside where the individual was last registered before being confined,'" McClinton said.

McClinton's plan, presented today at a meeting of the reapportionment commission, specifies that the last residential address before incarceration or placement in a facility would be the one used, with data furnished by both the state departments of Corrections and Human Services. Each person's record would include a unique identifier – but not that individual's name – along with the last known address and the census block of the facility where the person was held at the time of the 2020 census.

The information would then be used by the state's mapmakers to make granular adjustments to the detailed Census block data that will be received later this summer, known as PL-94-171 population data.

"This is not a radical idea," McClinton said. "In fact 10 other states have already chosen to count their residents in exactly this way, including four of the states that border Pennsylvania. Connecticut adopted the change just last week for this year's redistricting and we have sufficient time to do the same thing here.

"These other states recognized the value in using the true population of communities to produce more accurate, representative legislative districts and to preserve community interests," she said.

McClinton noted that incarcerated people lack strong, enduring ties to the communities where they are held and, despite geographic separation, they often seek out the services of legislators in their pre-incarceration district.

Pennsylvania has 23 state correctional institutions and one motivational boot camp facility located in 19 different counties. The combined population count for these facilities in April was 37,284 people. In one example, 31 percent of the total population of Forest County is incarcerated.

Currently the U.S. Census counts incarcerated individuals as residents of the prison location rather than their previous residential address. This unintentionally inflates the weight of a vote cast in districts that contain prisons at the expense of areas that don't have one.

McClinton presented her proposal today and asked the Legislative Reapportionment Commission to consider implementing it before this year's detailed Census data is in hand.

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## Philly man is released from prison after serving 29 years for murder

*Eric Riddick was sentenced to life in prison after being convicted of first-degree murder. Under a plea agreement with the DA's Office, he was ordered released from custody Friday.*

by Julie Shaw, May 28, 2021

A Philadelphia man who was serving a life sentence for murder was released from prison Friday after the District Attorney's Office said he didn't get a fair trial.

Eric Riddick, 51, had served more than 29 years behind bars in the 1991 shoot-

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# What's The News!

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Eric Riddick, 51, (center), with his mother, Christine Riddick (left), and his wife, Dana Baker-Riddick, after he was released from custody on Friday. They stood outside City Hall for a news conference held by his attorney. ALEJANDRO A. ALVAREZ / Staff Photographer

ing death of William Catlett in Southwest Philadelphia. He and others have said he is innocent and was not at the shooting scene.

Under an agreement with the District Attorney's Office, Riddick's first-degree murder conviction was vacated Friday, and he pleaded no contest to third-degree murder and was resentenced to 11 to 22 years in prison, time he has already served. That set the stage for his release.

Patricia Cummings, the supervisor of the District Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit, told Common Pleas Court Judge Lucretia Clemons that Riddick was deprived of his right to a fair trial because of evidence that was not fully disclosed to his then-defense attorney. However, she said that while prosecutors do not believe Riddick killed Catlett, there is credible evidence he was an accomplice to the crime.

Riddick and Catlett were members of rival drug gangs arguing over territory, prosecutors say, and on the evening of Nov. 6, 1991, Catlett was fatally shot at 58th and Belmar Streets.

The lone witness against Riddick at his 1992 trial was Shawn Stevenson, who testified that he saw Riddick on a fire escape shooting at Catlett with a rifle. (He has since recanted that testimony.)

Two types of bullets — .22-caliber and .32-caliber — were found in Catlett's body, making it likely that two people fired at him.

Three days after the slaying, a fully loaded .22-caliber rifle that prosecutors now say they believe was Riddick's was found near the scene. Cummings said ballistics testing determined that it was not the murder weapon.

Cummings said the agreement that led to Riddick's release was an appropriate outcome "to further the interests of justice in this case."

Riddick's attorney, Emeka Igwe, disputed prosecutors' contention that Riddick was an accomplice to the murder and said he was not involved with a gang. He said Riddick was an innocent man who was wrongfully imprisoned.

Riddick also told the judge: "I'm actually innocent of this crime." He said Catlett was his friend.

Riddick also noted that 29½ years is a long time to be behind bars, and said he was looking forward to going home.

Cummings told the judge that she has been in touch with Catlett's daughter, who declined to attend the hearing, but would be informed of the latest developments.

After the judge ordered Riddick's release, a deputy sheriff allowed his wife, Dana, who married him while he was in prison, his mother, Christine, and his uncle, Clifford Smith, to hug him in the courtroom.

It took two more hours for Riddick to leave the Stout Center for Criminal Justice after paperwork was completed.

Coming out of the courthouse, he said he felt "overwhelmed" and "grateful." He thanked his family and his supporters.

Igwe called on Gov. Tom Wolf to grant Riddick a full pardon, saying further evidence in the case shows that Riddick is "actually innocent."

Philadelphia City Councilmember David Oh, who has supported Riddick's case and petitioned for his pardon, called this a "fantastic day," but said Riddick was "forced" to plead no contest in the case so he could be freed.

Riddick's case also got the attention of rapper Meek Mill, who was his former cellmate at the State Correctional Institution Chester. Mill was imprisoned there from November 2017 to April 2018 for probation violations related to a decade-old conviction on gun and drug charges. After his release, Mill spoke out in favor of Riddick to the media and on his social media.

From: MSN News

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the prison, but to a PO box rented by Smart Communications. For state DOCs, the company offers to set up a mail receiving facility in the state, and then ship the mail to its Florida facility for processing. There, the mail is opened, scanned, and uploaded. According to the proposal, inmates would then log into a kiosk to view the PDFs of their mail remotely. After 30 days, the mail is destroyed. There is no way for incarcerated people to ever physically hold or recover their mail.

And, the company said, it would not only track incarcerated people inside the walls, but their friends, family, and anyone who sent mail to them, too.

"Investigators will have access to the postal mail sender's Email address, physical address, IP Address, mobile cell number, GEO GPS location tracking, exact devices used when accessing system [sic], any related accounts the sender may also make or use," Smart Communications said in a proposal for VA DOC. The proposal and other documents were obtained through a public records request.

Motherboard is posting the proposal, which was created specifically for the VA DOC, because it shows how a private company proposed a complex surveillance system that would keep tabs not just on incarcerated people but also on the people who sent mail to them, even if they were not suspected of a crime.

This system, Smart Communications boasted, "eliminates anonymity of postal mail, now postal mail has a digital fingerprint with new intelligence." And this intelligence could be used to crack down on "gang members."

When Motherboard asked Smart Communications for comment on this arti-

cle, a lawyer for the company demanded that we not publish any of the documents, which were obtained using freedom of information laws that journalists regularly use to procure public documents about how taxpayer money is being spent and the general dealings of a democratic government.

"I understand you have obtained information relating to a confidential proposal that Smart Communications previously made to the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Corrections. Please be advised that this proposal and the information therein was provided pursuant to a confidentiality understanding / NDA and was clearly and prominently designated as CONFIDENTIAL, PROPRIETARY, and TRADE SECRET," David Gann, general counsel with Smart Communications wrote in an email. "It should never have been shared with you or anyone else by the recipient. We will deal with that issue separately, but regardless, Smart Communications demands that you, Vice Media, Motherboard, and any other affiliated companies or entities immediately cease and desist all efforts to further disseminate or distribute any information obtained in that confidential proposal. Smart Communications further demands that you immediately destroy all copies of its proposal."

In its FOI response, the VA DOC claimed that it did not have any non-disclosure agreement with Smart Communications. The documents obtained as part of this request were automatically made available through Muckrock, the nonprofit platform Motherboard used to file the request on. Motherboard has redacted some inmate personal information and personal contact information for Smart Communications executives.

"Smart Communications takes the protection of its intellectual property and confidential / trade secret information very seriously, and it will pursue all violations to the fullest extent of the law," Gann continued. "Please immediately confirm receipt of this email, that you will not further violate Smart Communications' intellectual property rights by publishing any aspect of its confidential proposal, and that you have destroyed all copies of Smart Communications' confidential material."

The proposal, which VA DOC did not ultimately pursue, does not explain in detail how Smart Communications' platform works, it generally lists its capabilities and prices. VA DOC opted to spend about \$7 million a year on an in-house solution of photocopying and shredding all mail before delivering the copied version to people in prison. But Pennsylvania did sign a contract with Smart Communications, through an emergency procurement process, due to a controversial and contested claim of a surge in mail being laced with synthetic marijuana.

The rollout was "a mess," according to Quinn Cozzens, staff attorney at the Pittsburgh-based Abolitionist Law Center, a public interest law firm.

"Mail was delayed for weeks or months and was regularly delivered to the wrong person. Color photos were scanned and delivered in black and white, often with portions of the picture cut off. They rejected mail and returned it to the sender without explanation for why it was rejected." Plus, the promised kiosks never materialized, as PA DOC staff printed out the PDFs on copy paper and handed them to incarcerated people just like VA DOC does.

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While Pennsylvania's deal with Smart Communications was widely reported at the time, the extent of the company's capability to track people not in prison has not been previously known.

"Smart Communications has been boasting of their dystopian surveillance system at least since they were awarded a contract by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in 2018," said Cozzens. "Smart Communications' total surveillance of every aspect of communications with incarcerated people is a chilling convergence of the expansion and privatization of the surveillance state on one hand, and a growing private industry that profits from holding human beings in cages on the other."

The extent of Smart Communications' reach across the U.S. mass incarceration landscape is not yet known. In communications with the Nebraska Department of Corrections in October 2018, which Motherboard also obtained via a public records request, a company representative boasted of its contract with Pennsylvania and claimed to be "under contract negotiations with Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, Utah, and Florida!"

At least in Virginia's case, this was a bit of an exaggeration, as Virginia received a proposal but never pursued it. The majority of the company's clients appear to be regional and county prisons.

"Written correspondence is one of the most, if not the most, important means for incarcerated people to maintain connections with family and loved ones outside of prison," Cozzens said. "Smart Communications prevents incarcerated people from ever holding a drawing sent to them by their child, or

an original photograph, or a handwritten letter from a loved one that hasn't been scanned and reprinted on a sheet of copier paper."

In the proposal, Smart Communications estimated it would pocket \$1.8 million in profits over a five-year period through payments from VA DOC for equipment and maintenance. At least in PA DOC's case, incarcerated people do not have to pay to access their mail, although Smart Communications told VA DOC that if it opted for its digital communications suite, people sending messages to people in prisons would have to pay 50 cents a message or \$1 a photo.

Smart Communications offered VA DOC a system to monitor, approve, and potentially reject mail using a "management console" giving them "instant access to the entire VADOC database of inmate mail." Investigators can receive real-time alerts via text or email when an inmate marked as a gang member or otherwise flagged receives an item of mail.

The company further offered VA DOC the "Smart Tracker" system, the one that tracks the people who send incarcerated people mail. The proposal doesn't detail how the system works, but it appears to use the data people input to create an account through the "Smart Jail Mail" portal to connect them to the letters they send. The company retains all digital copies of mail for seven years, meaning if the system is used in enough prison systems, over time it could generate a considerable database about who associates with whom.

This creates real privacy concerns for people whose only "crime" is trying to communicate with someone in prison, says Aaron Mackey, a staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation

who has worked on prisoner privacy issues.

"People who communicate with prisoners are now going to have reduced autonomy, privacy and expression and associational rights," Mackey said, "because now, wholly innocent individuals who are trying to just communicate with family and loved ones, members of their community and so on, are now going to be caught up in this surveillance." Even institutions like social service organizations and religious leaders will be caught up in the dragnet, Mackey warned, potentially getting flagged as troublesome figures because they communicate with people in prisons.

But the most significant issue, both Mackey and Cozzens say, is the emotional toll not receiving physical mail takes on incarcerated people. Even before the pandemic, many prisons have gradually shifted to encourage mostly digital interactions through video visitation and similar efforts. Physical mail was a key link between people in prison and their support networks. That link is being cut.

To be sure, people in prison do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy even for physical mail. Prior to the Smart Communications contract, all postal mail in Pennsylvania state prisons was opened and physically inspected for contraband by prison staff and skimmed for contents, Cozzens said. But it was rarely scanned and preserved. Once the initial inspection was complete, the mail was delivered to the person it was addressed to.

Cozzens sees a huge difference between that approach and what Smart Communications is doing. "There is quite a difference between a prison guard potentially skimming over a

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## The struggle lives

According to the weather channel it's 23° at 7:30AM here at Huntingdon. They just called yard. I'm sure the guards are hoping it's too cold for anyone to go outside so they don't have to stand outside. How do they get away with calling yard when it's below freezing? Why isn't anyone complaining?

I began my date with the undertaker in Nov 2016. Since then, things just keep getting worse. First it was the fentanyl epidemic, now it's COVID.

When I first arrived here, I saw there were no windows or heat in these cells. There are radiators out in the corridor, but half of the time they're off. When they are on, the windows (also in the corridor) are open and the heat goes out as the cold comes in.

Since I've been here I've had the flu twice, and spent a week in the hospital with pneumonia – all resulting from coming out of the shower with open windows. They say when the heat is on with windows closed it's too hot for guys on the top tier. With windows open it's too cold for those of us on the bottom tier, but I seem to be the only one complaining. At any rate, the unit manager has made it clear he's more concerned about the guys on the top tier. I asked a brother how the jail gets away with this bullshit. He told me point blank, this is the way it's been for the 20 years he's been here, for the 20 years before he got here, and it'll be that way 20 years after he's gone.

I've suggested they should put plexi-glass on the bars to keep the cold out and/or let us buy those small ceramic heaters to keep the cells warm. They look at me like I've got the COVID virus. Let's not forget this place was built in the late 1800s for juvenile delinquents. How cruel was it back then to keep juveniles in a cell with no windows, heat, or lights?

I'm told a lot of the old "soldiers" have been standing down because they don't want to mess up their chances for commutation. Of course I would never ask or expect anyone to jeopardize a chance to get out of here. I've heard a lot of juvenile lifers have been released, and a handful of lifers. But when I see all these older guys shuffling around, bent over and crippled—guys who couldn't commit a crime if they wanted to—it tells me they're really not trying to let anyone go home.

As for me, I'm knocking on 60s doors. I'm not a juvenile lifer, and I don't have 20-30 years or more to wait on commutation. So if my appeals go sideways, it's a wrap for me.

Quality of life issues then become my concerns, but they don't seem to be high on anyone's list of priorities.

One thing is for sure, Wetzel has got to go. I hear he's supposed to be some authority when it comes to corrections, but you can't prove it by me. To be honest, I thought Wetzel was white until I saw him on *60 Minutes*. He was walking through Graterford with Bill Whitaker. An inmate ran up to him and told Wetzel brown water was coming out of his faucet. Being on national TV you'd think Wetzel would have taken his name, told him he'd look into it, but no. He told him, "man, you're preaching to the choir." He's got to go.

A few weeks ago in Georgia, we saw how powerful the vote is. Wolf has 2 years left on his term as Governor. We need to start looking right now for a future Governor who will commit to replacing Wetzel. In the meantime, I believe we as inmates still have a few cards to play.

I'm a firm believer that if you want to get someone's attention, you've got to hit 'em in the wallet. Back when we had the so-called "fentanyl epidemic," when the lockdown was nearing the end, CI workers were the first ones back to work. It was the same with the COVID lockdown. CI workers were the first ones to go back to work. I hoped and prayed in both instances everyone would have stayed in their cell.

It was pointed out to me the CI workers did not want to lose the bonus money, and other workers needed that \$.19 to pay for cable, so it was highly unlikely anyone would sit out work. Okay, I get it. But this COVID situation has turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The blessing being those stimulus checks! Now, guys who haven't been able to make store, buy a TV, etc, can do so. As long as nobody gets the big head and buys 2 or 3 pairs of sneaks they can hold their own for a minute. But we've got to do this statewide! Brothers waiting on commutation, keep doing what you have to do. There are always going to be those who will break ranks to get on the good side of staff but again, the strength is in the numbers!

I see a lot of guys walking around seemingly happy with the way things are. But if you're like me, tired of the bullshit, we have the power to make some change. Am I the only one tired of this mail situation? You like sitting in your hut with sweats and long johns? Collectively we have the power to change and it doesn't require a whole lot of talk. Just have a seat.

But here's the thing: once the DOC sees that their profits are taking a hit, they're going to want to know what is the prob-

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lem. Or, maybe they DOC will just go out and hire people to do the CI work and pay them a regularly hourly wage.

You old-timers know how this thing works. If no one wants to stand, to sit, then I guess things will stay the same.

By Rudolph Churchill

Smart Communications/ PA DOC  
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## **The Misapplication of the General Term “Violent Offender” (MATTHEW 7:1, 2)**

A violent offender is someone who actively demonstrates, time in and time out, his/her personal acts of violence without change or cure. Which means that, when undefined the general term may specifically be mis-applied, thereby used against someone whom has committed a past violent act but is no longer violent or whom was wrongly convicted and now carries under such wrong usage and policy initiative that general, unjustified classification.

With respect to the manner of erroneously classifying into a law or policy, the general terms VIOLENT OFFENDER or CONVICTED FELON – “JUDGE NOT LEST YE BE JUDGED”. For these reasons, there is a commonly recognized maxim, in paraphrase form, that goes: A MAN OR WOMAN MAY NOT BE DEFINED BY THEIR WORST ACT/ACTION. This holds especially true when their lives continue; there always exist promise of redemption, hope for better days to come, and ways to go on in their lives.

To generally classify men and women in perpetuity as violent or as felons just for their worst actions and nothing more, appears in uncertain terms an offense to God, The Creator of men and women. Yet, this is what politicians assert in our names when constructing and adopting those terms with legislative statutes.

Note that the English language, unlike past primitive languages, does not distinguish past, present, and future tense

when expressing a general term or phrase. Moreover, when constructing a legislative bill or policy initiative to be passed into law, politicians will always garnish support from people who believe those policies are to be used to so-call make the citizenry safer.

Nevertheless, by simply supporting a bill just for “sound” sake and not “substance” sake, one may very well be making a grave mistake at the expense of endangering the citizenry. Case in point: Pennsylvania D.O.C. proposed to remedy prison over-crowdedness, due to the COVID-19 Virus, by initiating the early release of those who “they” considered under rule as, non-violent offenders.

Unfortunately, two (2) of their selected so-called non-violent offenders, upon being released, committed homicides. Such a mis-application of the term “violent offender” serves here, to prove just how a generalized application of that term turned out to be a danger to the citizenry. Like the two (2) so called “non-violent offenders” that were released may have been convicted of a non-violent crime and was fairly fresh in the justice system. Their crimes only served as a gateway to more serious crime due to being of a younger age, and a short criminal past causing them, more likely, to be eager to engage in more criminal activities.

They are more often than not of a mindset ascribing as bragging rights, that they can not wait to make up for what is considered time lost spent in a cell as their associates wait for them to bring home their criminal experiences.

On the other hand, the usage of the general term violent offender fashioned for anyone within a crime bill who otherwise committed or was convicted for a violent crime some 25 or 30 years earlier, (Accordingly, implemented in the bill to exclude them from presently receiving furloughs, for example, or early release) based on that prior act or conviction would in fact be punishing one twice without proper adjudication for that decades old act.

Such a bill or policy initiative would be ignoring the fact that most older past violent offenders fall under a classification known as the age out of crime class. Where they, after 25 or 30 years in lapse, aged while imprisoned where their associates on the outside either retired from the streets; some of them raising families; and some even passed away. Generally labeling anyone as a violent offender signifies another unjustified wrong that, furthermore, allows prisoners to be treated differently.

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

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This type of generally worded bill or policy initiative also ignores the fact that after 25 or 30 years, so-called violent offenders are conditioned by then into routine regimes strictly consisting of work, exercise, sleep, and more than likely dare not venture beyond a law abiding comfort zone. Check the Juvenile lifer's statistics for reoffending upon release after spending decades in prison.

So, to not voice opposition to such a bill may lead to more new laws put on the books such as, requiring violent offenders to receive only one meal per day, while non-violent offenders receive three meals per day which, likewise, violates the constitution's equal protection law. In appearance the policy may legally determine the amount of meals provided each day per prisoner, but such policy initiative is implemented unlawfully in violation of the law upon those similarly situated.

After receiving a clear understanding of the injustice imposed by such general language, can any rational person support a generalized policy as worded? After recognizing that we all, at some time in our lives, have wet our beds as infants and later grew out of the generalized title bed-wetters, can any rational person support such policy? Therefore, if one would accept these general terms i.e.: violent offender or let us say bed-wetters, without distinction to ones growth in time, we all would accordingly be deprived of the privilege of redemption classification safeguards or not having to wear diapers for maintaining dry mattresses based on our past acts.

Think about it in terms of the first law of nature, which proclaims:

WE ALL ARE BORN OF FRAILTY AND ERROR,  
LET US PARDON RECIPROCALLY EACH OTHERS  
FOLY.

Being classified or labeled a violent offender within a new adopted policy initiative does not, necessarily, deem one to be violent in the present tense (As Generally Being Worded) just as all adults can not be labeled bed-wetters presently in general, so as to not be deserving of some benefit or alternatively exclude one from a benefit for past bed-wetting. Without such distinction being drawn for acknowledgement of a past or present violent action and to treat similarly situated prisoners differently violates equal protection under the law.

As a cautionary tale: there was once a legislative bill passed into law in Pennsylvania mandating a general back-

ground check for employers to obtain knowledge of felony convictions on potential hires. Supposedly the idea was to make employers conscious of dangerous felons being given access to sensitive jobs and materials and not simply for them to begin indiscriminately firing employees who happened to have felony convictions from their past.

However, based on this new generalized bill, employers began checking their employees' criminal backgrounds, even those who maintained good work habits and work ethics over decades without incident. Unfortunately some employers began the process of firing long standing, excellent employees who happened to be labeled felons.

IMAGINE THAT !!!

You worked hard for a company's business, for two decades or more, and suddenly a bill passed by state legislators with the general word felon attached without being specific in purpose or time. The legislators were subsequently notified about the wording mishap in the bill, who then at the state capital made a public announcement cautioning employers not to misapply the word felon as to harm those employees who had felony criminal records from decades past.

Because of this legislative response, a complaining employee who was an ex-felon for almost 20 years, who was in fact wrongly fired, was asked to return back to work, but declined to do so, saying: "to prevent one from falling victim to those generally worded bills being unjustly passed into law, entrepreneurship is one employment option of an ex-felon". "JUDGE NOT LEST YE BE JUDGED" serves to caution men and women not to judge anyone harshly and WITHOUT LIMITATION in that we are all born of both frailty and folly and can only admit to one's past mistakes and seek forgiveness in kind so as to not be indicted for one's past acts without just cause.

By Mr. Mel

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### Dr. Pimple Popper,

My name is Tyreem Rivers. I am a forty-three year old rehabilitated inmate here in the state of Pennsylvania. I am reaching out to you due to my extreme concern regarding my health and wellness. Me and my family watch your show all the time and bear witness to all the amazing work you do for patients in need of your help. I am now reaching out to you with sincere hope and prayer that you'll be able to help me as well? For the last four years, I've been suffering from the on

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**THE MOVEMENT**

www.hrcalition.org



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going growth of, what they eye tested, and said was a lipoma located at the top of my spinal cord (cervical) between C1 and C5 of my spine. After being diagnosed with COVID-19 back in December of 2020, my (expected to be lypoma) has grown a few extra diameters and is now the size of a tennis ball; whereas, the new extreme pains in my neck now share a equal common bond with the extreme pains in my head. After recovering from covid, I developed some new breathing problems, severe dizziness, shortness of breath, memory lost, and now trouble swallowing. I also developed some problems with acid reflex which I never had before. Could this be EN-CEPHALITIS?

An ultra sound was conducted on front of my neck and noted: NEGATIVE THYROID PROBLEMS BUT A VERY PROMINENT LEFT LYMPH NODE. When I ask what does this mean, is this cancerous? A male physician employed by State Correctional Institute told me no? Is this true and what does it mean when a person has a prominent left Lymph Node? I was also told that the x-ray results around the back of my neck showed some arthritis. Regarding the huge tennis ball Lipoma on the back of my neck, prison officials REFUSE to make arrangements to have me scheduled for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and/or continue to fail to provide me with some computed tomography (CT) which would specifically detail the tumor like lipoma resting between C1 & C5. They say I've been approved for surgery; however, how can a meaningful safe surgery ever be conducted if a patient doesn't receive a MRI or a CT to properly detect the problem?

From: Tyreem Rivers

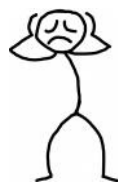
04/04/2021

Part 2

Mama Patt,

Good morning, and thanks for getting back to me. As for my intentions in

this regard. They serve two fold. One (God forbid) If something was to happen to me during a medical procedure, people/representatives like yourself will know the absolute truth concerning such a demise. My second reason for the share is to began an attempt to help raise public awareness of medical negligence for the incarcerated. I don't know how each and every Pennsylvania Prison is operating, medically, right now; however, I know that here at SCI-Dallas a person has to be damn near dead just to receive full and adequate medical



treatment or evaluation. Way too often places like this allow a person's medical complaint to go ignored and by the time the issue reaches its height, of being a serious problem, it's too late.

Proper medical diagnosis and evaluation is the best preventive measure that should be taken in order to help "US". However, a lot of times this is what "we're not getting". With respect to the grievance process, many grievances relating to serious prison medical issues aren't being adequately assigned filing numbers here at this prison. Whereas, lately many grievances are being filed by men like myself but they are not coming back as filed. Those grievances which bear future potential civil litigation simply get swept under the rug by Grievances Coordinators etc. This is one of the new problems here at SCI-Dallas.

Yes Momma Patt, I have family and they are aware of my situation. The new problem concerning that is whenever they try to call the institution they only get busy signals, etc. Ever since the jail struck over 1300+ cases of COVID out of a 2000 man population with at least 9 confirmed tragic deaths, our families have been having a lot of trouble getting through/connecting with prison administrators by way of phone. As a result we're starting to see a lot of new behind close doors scenarios being created here at SCI-Dallas. This is a huge concern of mine and many others.

Not to be selfish or anything, but my biggest of fears is to actually become one of those cases whereas the SCI-Dallas medical department fails to properly/definitively diagnose this tennis ball size tumor on the top of my spine, and it is way worst than what they are telling me, and having this issue of being denied proper medical treatment, and confined to the prison unbeknownst to the public.

Having a MRI or a CT Scan conducted upon me is ALL I EVER REQUESTED to properly/definitively have my problem diagnosed. If it is cancer (God Forbid) I like to know so I can began treatment as soon as possible, and if it's not cancer I'll be able to stop worrying and stressing about what they only eye tested and diagnosed as a Lipoma.

So yes Mama Patt, please post my initial email on the HRC websute, and feel free to publish it in THE MOVEMENT. Hopefully someone out there with a concerned mind or heart will feel the need to look into my situation, and/or in the situation (s) of many others who are being denied basic medical treatment to make proper diagnoses.

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

I really appreciate this Mama Patt. Not only in this regard, but also in regards to all of that you, the HRC (all involved), and the CADBI (all involved) do for the incarcerated here in Pennsylvania! Thanks for all your help, care, and concerns! It really means a lot to me and all us who are intelligent enough to know you all care!

5/18/2021

**Alhumdulillah! Surgery went fine** and full recovery is expected! Special Thanks to all the good people at Wilkes Barre General for the very caring and professional way in which they handled me and the removal of this gigantic Lipoma from behind my neck! Shout out to the very cute receptionist Ms. Robin, the very warm and caring RN Ms. Anett, the funny Dr. Jack, the amazing Dr. Gearheart, the extremely cool RN Ms. "H", and every single Doctor, or Nurse who assisted me through this procedure!

BIG THANKS! I REALLY RESPECT & APPRECIATE WHAT YOU DID FOR ME !!!

Also, special thanks goes out to each and every single person who supported me through out the preparation of this entire process. This was my first time, EVER, having surgery and going under anesthesia. And yes, I was really light weight stressed. Terrified all the way up until this day came. And when it did, all my worries and fears instantly went away. And for that, I found myself extremely grateful for all the mental support. Thanks!

Special Shout out to my beautiful Mother Andrea (I LOVE U MOM), my amazing sister Yasmin (I LOVE U TWO GIRL-FRIEND), Ms. Donna Hampton (I LOVE YOU THREE AND GET WELL SOON)!!!

Special, special, thanks goes out Ms. Carrie Johnson, Mama Patt, and the entire Human Rights Coalition, Ms. Elaine Selan and CADBI (who's always front line), my brother Siraj, my nephew Zakee, and each and every person who kept in touch, demonstrated a genuine concern in my regard, and continued to kept me in their prayers through out this entire process. My highest sense of respect and gratitude towards you all bears no boundaries . . . THANK YOU ☺ ☺ ☺

#GoodWorkonTyReeMRivers@SCIDallas!!

#ExcellentMedicalTreatment!!!

#GREAT APPLE JUICE!!!! ☺ ☺ ☺

Forever Thankful, TyReem!

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### **Changed Men: No More Body Bags - Parole for Lifers**

Jet lag, toe tag, no more body bags.

Tripping on life doing time, life without the possibility of parole, was that a crime?

**One year in-** fresh off the streets young, foolish and full of myself. Now dealing with jail, a man-made hell.

**Five years in-** this time in court I know I'll win.

**Ten years in -** Nineteen I was, 29 I am. The things I've seen this nightmare of a dream makes my head spin. I thought I was going home 10 years ago. Denial is my excuse; reality is my truth, still in. Life without the possibility of parole. Superior Court this time, I should win.

**Fifteen years in-** just yesterday it was my 10. My friend I knew from the last 10 they found hanging and dangling in his doorway, was that a sin? Life without the possibility of parole did him in.

**No more body bags -** Supreme Court is my next move, it has to work, I can't afford to lose.

**Twenty-five years in-** there was a smile on my face when I first came in, now not even a grin. Another friend of mine slit his wrist, life without the possibility of parole, man I was pissed.

**Please no more body bags.**

I remember when I was 19 before I came in. I shot a man, that was my sin.

**Thirty years in-** I am not feeling good about my life. My mother and sister cry for me, the man on my left shoulder lied to me. He told me I could lie, but he never told me the young man would die.

**Thirty-five years in-** understanding my sin. Another friend died from natural causes. It happened so sudden, they didn't know what caused it, but I know, life without the possibility of parole has taken another soul. **No more body bags.** Two more hanging just happened this year, two more friends in my mind I fear. I'm too strong to hang, too smart to cut, working out everyday, at night I pray.

**Forty years in-** death is my biggest fear, but I truly believe redemption is near. **No more body bags please, no more body bags! (We must continue to fight).**

Bradford Gamble AF-6787 & Jaquan Jordan LU-8302

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# 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.*

## The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Procedure Governing Long-Term Solitary Confinement Under the Restricted Release List (RRL) Policy

By Richard Grosso

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) maintains a policy entitled: "Restricted Release List" (RRL) which is designed to indefinitely house various inmates within their restricted housing unit (RHU - Segregation) who are deemed assaultive, belligerent, or an escape risk. How it works is essentially this way:

If A State Correctional Institution (SCI) within the PA. DOC finds an inmate who fits this criteria, the SCI will submit a petition with the central office of the PA. DOC which goes directly to John E. Wetzel (Secretary of the PA. DOC) who automatically approves of said petition. These petitions are NEVER denied. At that point, the RRL inmate is usually transferred to SCI-Greene of which has aside from its own general prison population 480 RHU cells- the largest RHU in the state. Once there, the inmate is then interviewed by the Program Review Committee (PRC) every 90 days. The PRC consists of a deputy warden, a major of the guard, and a unit manager. The standard textbook question the PRC asks RRL inmate is: "Do you have any concerns?" No matter what you say, you're held in custody for another 90 days. Once a year, the PRC can submit a petition to Secretary Wetzel concerning the RRL inmates so he (and only he) can decide to return the inmates to a general population or to continue him on RRL status for another full year. NOTE: a close associate of mine: Arthur Johnson attempted escape from SCI-Pittsburgh on

12-12-1979. He remained on RRL status within the RHU until Bret Grote, Esquire, filed a 42 U.S.C § 1983 civil rights action complaint in the U.S. Middle Court of PA. against Secretary Wetzel et al. in 2016 and secured Johnson's release from the RHU. Arthur Johnson spent 36 years in the RHU! Presently, Secretary Wetzel never releases any inmates within any reasonable amount of time from the RHU. Instead, he'll compel the RRL inmate to sit and rot in isolation within the RHU for years and continuously asserting the penological interest and need to continuously lockdown the RRL inmate citing the rote reiterated reasoning which the initial SCI who petitioned the RRL Mr. Wetzel for this RRL status as "justification" for said continued status. It's for this particular reason in and of itself which is "WHY" numerous RRL inmates remain in solitary confinement indefinitely for years.

## Life In the RHU

Inmates must have their meals in their 7x12 cells. They spend 23 hours a day 5 days a week in their cell and 24 hours a day 2 days a week in their cells and always alone with little or no interaction or external stimulation of any sort. This 7x12 feet cell is smaller than many cages used to hold animals at zoos. The cells are lighted 24 hours per day with no reprieve during the day or night. Each cell door is a solid steel door with 2 unbreakable windows which permit at most a highly constricted view of the cell block. The solid steel door is effective at preventing prisoners from speaking to one another on the cell block, increasing the isolation of those in solitary confinement. Prisoners in solitary confinement are prohibited from communicating with other inmates from behind the steel door. Inmates can only hear each other in solitary confinement when they yell, which is forbidden. If they violate this rule, prisoners can be issued a misconduct report and punished with additional time on discipline custody status in the RHU.

Prisoners are prohibited from participating in organizational, vocational, educational, and therapeutic programs. For one (1) hour, 5 days a week, prisoners, who must undergo a mandatory strip-search before exiting

*(Continued on page 46)*

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(Continued from page 45)

his cell for any reason and is handcuffed from behind thereafter, are escorted to the outside 10x12 dog kennel-type cages (weather permitting), without any recreational equipment inside alone. Showers are provided 3 times per week (alone) for 10 minutes. Visits involve no physical contact such as a handshake or a hug. All such visits occur through a plexiglass partition. Telephone calls are permitted only for administrative custody status inmates one time for 15 minutes each week and only if you are permitted your Global Tel\* Link tablet. You are allowed access of the kiosk to send e-mails and/or purchase overpriced songs of which Global Tel\*Link "pirates" and hawks to prisoners at \$1.91 a song.

At no time has Secretary Wetzel taken the liberty to devise any type of incentive-based program for RRL inmates in order to get released back into the inmate general prison population. Instead, only a "step-down" program was created for RRL inmates which doesn't take place for literally years until such time Secretary Wetzel feels the RRL inmate has both psychologically and physically endured enough isolation to the point where he may be returned back into the inmate prison population. Contrary to what most Quaker mentality minded prison authorities believe, this sort of hopeless long-term indefinite isolated confinement in segregation is only causing more psychological and physical harm than good.

I've Been here at SCI\_Greene's RHU 3 times sent from other SCI's. The first time I sat here 3 1/2 years under bogus circumstances to wit: SCI-Frackville circumvented two (2) DOC policies to get me here. The second time I sat here for 5 years. Now I'm here again and on all occasions, I'm deemed an escape risk. My reason for attempting to escape this time? I got sick of prison authorities housing me with pedophiles, drug addicts, and mentally handicapped inmates. Prison personnel don't "vet" inmates to determine whether they would be compatible with one another - they simply "warehouse" inmates. I attempted in good faith to reason with prison officials regarding my housing issues long before I attempted to escape all to no avail - common sense and logic doesn't apply to them when it comes from the very mouth of a prisoner \_\_\_\_ We lack a voice to be heard. Nevertheless the PA. DOC has various programs available to everyone except RRL inmates to wit:

- (1) Special Management Unit (SMU); a 9-month program for inmates who are incorrigible;
- (2) Special Needs Unit (SNU); for mental health inmates;

(3) Therapeutic Community (TC); for drug addicted inmates;

(4) Protective Custody (PC); for self-lock-up inmates;

(5) Violence Prevention (VP); for criminally assaultive inmates;

Recently, all death row inmates were court-ordered to be released from their RHU-like custody confinement. Now they're allowed to mingle freely amongst themselves on their block and in their own yard. They're "employed", some even within the RHU and have "contact visits" with unlimited access to both telephone and kiosks. Both the American Civil Liberties Union and The Abolitionist Law Center based in Pittsburgh, PA. had a hand in this feat. The Human Rights Coalition based both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh have been attempting thus far to no avail, to get a bill passed in the House of Representatives (HB - 497) , and in the Senate (SB - 832), putting an end to long-term solitary confinement in all Pennsylvania state prisons. Call it a work in progress\_\_\_\_ They need more support in order to get these very important and prudent bills passed!

The Continued RRL lock-down-confinement is designed not only to physically punish you by restricting you from the limited everyday liberties normally afforded to other general population inmates, but it's more so designed to drive you virtually crazy so that the RRL inmates gets to the point where he cannot logically think and/or normally concentrate with the psychological mentality he once had, thus robbing the RRL inmate of his sanity. A good example of his subject matter would be the character portrayed by Steve McQueen during the segregation scene in the movie "Papillion".

RRL inmates are not provided any incentive by the PA. DOC to be released from administrative custody of which according to the powers-that-be, is supposed to be a "non-punitive status". Instead, we are continuously and indefinitely confined within the RHU you until Secretary Wetzel elects to release us when the mood strikes him. Meanwhile, we have to endure with the psychological torture of existing like this day in, day out, year after year.

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From: BlackAmericaweb.com

# #GeorgeFloyd: Social Media Honors George Floyd On One-Year Anniversary Of His Passing

Posted May 25, 2021

D.L. Chandler

The tragic death of **George Floyd** at the hand of former police officer **Derek Chauvin** happened a year ago on this day (May 25), and galvanized a movement that was already growing in strength. Around all corners of social media, especially Twitter, many are remembering Floyd while continuing to champion his name and urge police reform as it relates to its response to Black citizens.

The world witnessed horrific Floyd's death by way of cell-phone video footage and the like, and his screams for help and apparent fear in his voice will ring in the heads of many forever. While Chauvin was served a form of justice, it does not remove the fact that a daughter is now without a father, and his entire family has to now pick up the pieces in the wake of his passing.

Floyd's death wasn't the only significant and jarring loss of 2020, as Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and far too many others to name were also tragically taken from their loved ones either by the hands of police or by white people who think they're allowed to enforce the law simply because someone doesn't look like them.

No matter the reason, Black lives seemingly have been in the crosshairs of police and trigger-happy racists in high number ever since the death of Trayvon Martin some years ago, which helped sparked the Black Lives Matter movement among other related groups and activism from the grassroots level and beyond.

Across Twitter, George Floyd's name is trending with many, such as the aforementioned Martin's mother Sybrina Fulton, offering their thoughts via the social media network. We've got those reactions below.

*#GeorgeFloyd: Social Media Honors George Floyd On One-Year Anniversary Of His Passing was originally published on hiphopwired.com*



# Human Rights Coalition

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George Floyd, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Jamar Clark, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Stephon Clark, Botham Jean, Breonna Taylor, Donnie Sanders, William Howard Green, Christopher Whitfeild, Atatiana Jefferson, Channara Tom Pheap, Ryan Twyman, Isaiah Lewis, Marcus McVae, Marzeus Scott, Kevin Bruce Mason, Gregory Griffin, Danny Washington, Jesse J. Quinton, Charles Roundtree, James Leatherwood, Cynthia Fields, Rashun Washington, Anthony Marcell Green, Antwon Rose, Marcus-David L. Peters, Juan Markee Jones, Danny Thomas, Stephon Clark, Cameron Hall, Shermicheal Ezeff, Mario Dantoni Bass, Ronnell Foster, Arther McAfee Jr., Jean Pedro Pierre, Keita O'Neil, Lawrence Hawkins, Calvin Toney, Dewboy Lister, Anthony Antonio Ford, Charles David Robinson, Isaiah Tucker, Brian Easley, Dejuan Guillory, Aaron Bailey, David Jones, Marc Brandon Davis, Ricco Devante Holden, Jordan Edwards, Alteria Woods, Raynard Burton, Chad Robertson, Nana Adomako, Darrion Barnhill, JR Williams, Andrew Depeiza, Christopher Sowell, Alfred Olango, Terrance Crutcher, Levonia Riggins, Donnell Thompson, Dalvin Hollins, Deravis Caine Rogers, Antwun Shumpert, Vernell Bing, Michael Eugene Wilson Jr., Jessica Nelson-Williams, Kevin Hicks, Peter Gaines, Christopher J. Davis, Dyzhawn L. Perkins, Calin Roquemore, David Joseph, Bettie Jones, Keith Childress, Devin Matthews, Michael Noel, Miguel Espinal, Nathaniel Harris, Bennie Lee Tignor, Anthony Ashford, Junior, Keith Harrison, McLeod, India Kager, Felix, Samuel Du, Spencer Davis, Darrius Stewart, Salvado Ellswood, Victor Em, Spencer McCain, Kris Jackson, Brendon Glenn, David Felix, William Chapman, Frank Shephard, Walter Scott, Eric Harris, Brandon Jones, Bobby Gross, Anthony Hill, Naeschylus Vinzant, Tony Robinson, Charly Lenudeu Kenuang, Thomas Allen, Lavall Hall, Jeremy Lett...

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we\_cope\_through\_art



we\_cope\_through\_art "I'm devastated that I was able to make this. Im devastated that I was able to paint this mans face with the names of his sisters, with the names of his brothers, with the names of his sisters, with the names of children. I was devastated typing out each letter, of every name, of every life that was taken by crooked officers. Innocent lives. Lives that ended prematurely. I'm devastated that I know George Floyds name. I shouldn't know him. He should be nothing to me but a random human being in another country, but I do know his name. I know it, my friends know it, my neighbours know it, my country knows it, the world knows it; And now that we know it, we will shout it until it rings in the ears of those who killed



42 likes

JUNE 4, 2020



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Post

## Social Media Honors George Floyd On One-Year Anniversary Of His Passing