

# THE MOVEMENT

Winter Issue #43

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

The Official News Magazine of the  
Human Rights Coalition for the union of Pris-  
oners' Families

SENIORS ARE LESS THAN 1% THREAT TO SOCIETY

Stage 4 Cancer

COVID-19

MAROON 77, HAS CANCER!

MUMIA 66, HAS COVID!

COMPASSIONATE RELEASE for  
Maroon, Mumia, & All Elders

BRING ELDERLY HOME

Medically Vulnerable

see more INSIDE !

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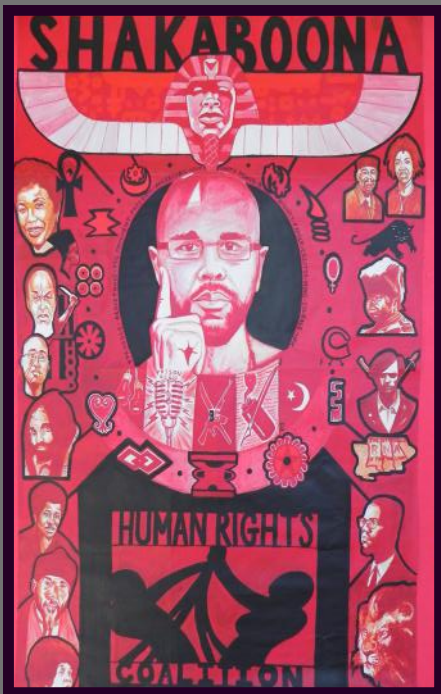
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# From the Desk of the Editor



## Greetings Everyone,

Welcome to THE MOVEMENT. Great news. In early December 2020, the PA Parole Board finally GRANTED me parole release on a Life sentence from the PADOC to a Federal detainer. After hearing the news on the wire, people were absolutely thrilled, to say the least. I, on the other hand, after serving a literal lifetime of imprisonment, can't even describe what it was like to hear that I was granted parole release. Basically, I was emotionally speechless. It is not over for me just yet, as I will be sent to a Federal penitentiary to serve some prison time. But the long walk to freedom draws ever near.

As I exit the PADOC, THE MOVEMENT magazine of the Human Rights Coalition (HRC) will be transitioning to a new Co-Editor as our magazine committee has selected longtime HRC member and organizer Sergio "Serg" Hyland as the magazine's new Editor-in-Chief to carry on being the tip of the spear by speaking truth to power. Serg is one of our comrades who is politically conscious, intelligent, principled, has good character, is an organizer, and has the fighting spirit to resist and withstand those who oppress the people. Serg appeared as Guest Editor on two occasions, and we think he will only enhance THE MOVEMENT magazine. That being said, congratulations

Serg, Welcome to THE MOVEMENT team.

I like to say to my Mother, "Mama Patt" of the HRC, you're the greatest mom and thank you for always believing in me and my potential. Were it not for Mama Patt, the co-founder/co-editor of THE MOVEMENT magazine, the world wouldn't have had THE MOVEMENT magazine at all, because though I had an idea, Mama Patt made it a reality. Nor would the HRC or the enormous political activism around criminal/social justice issues exist in Philly and Pittsburgh in the forms it is today, were it not for Mama Patt laying the foundation, showing the way, and inspiring upcoming activist, individuals/groups. She is "The Mother of the Struggle" in that regard, but that's another story. She and I are like the Eagles NFL team's Doug Pederson and Nick Foles; we're Philly's Superbowl Champions of the political activist league!

THE MOVEMENT magazine has come a long way from its beginnings in 2007-08, where then it was a local magazine. Today, people in homes and prisons across America - from New Jersey to California, from Illinois to Louisiana - receive copies of THE MOVEMENT magazine for FREE (although we do accept \$\$\$ donations), and they're loving it! THE MOVEMENT has covered the news of every major social movement, political prisoners, prison rebellions, interviewed activists, advanced human rights, exposed the racist Criminal Justice system, spotlighted incarcerated persons' innocence, and most importantly we gave incarcerated people a voice directly to the public, the likes that has never been seen before. We will continue to do those things and more as our struggles in America are being amplified and growing stronger by the year.

While the Human Rights Coalition and THE MOVEMENT magazine continues to do its part in the struggle, I want to encourage more of you to play your part in the struggle by doing what you can to sink this modern slave ship, so that it will no longer carry you, your generations to come, and other people into the bowels of hell that we call prison. I ask that incarcerated people start becoming involved with different forms of activism to help themselves better their conditions, treatment, get their freedom, and slay the beast. I ask incarcerated WOMEN to stand up more to make yourselves known in prison activist community groups, raise your political consciousness, organize, resist, and give your voices to the struggle for freedom and justice. There's no reason why incarcerated women's voices shouldn't dominate the pages of THE MOVEMENT magazine; and, honestly I hoped that an incarcerated woman

*(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3)

would step up and have a regular column or become Co-Editor. I ask that all political conscious prisoners, old and young, return to their post as educators, organizers, and agitators in these modern concentration camps to continue the fight, to give the young shining examples of leadership, and to save our future. Stop sitting idly by; get on your post! There is no such thing as retirement from the STRUGGLE until the war is won; hold your post until death overtakes you!

I wish to send a special shout out to Donetta at SCI-Muncy's death row. Thanks for writing, sorry they prevented my reply, and keep ya head up Sistah! A special shout out to the Elder and Political Prisoner Russell "Maroon" Shoatz, our Mwalimu (teacher) and Ndugu (comrade), for you are an inspiration to ALL. You truly are The Indomitable Maroon, a revolutionary par excellence! A special shout out to my big bro Dave Henry on RRL status in the bowels of the PADO's solitary confinement, for a lifetime you have been one of the realest; my upmost respect to you. A special shout out to my folks Sugar Bear and Ahmad (Tone Reid) on Pa.'s Death Row; y'all are always in my thoughts and actions. Much love to y'all. A special shout out to HRC member and dear friend whose always been there for me, Ms. Yvonne Newkirk, who lost her brother Eddie at SCI-Smithfield from COVID-19. My condolences to you Ms. Yvonne. A shout out to my first cousin Javeze "Vez" P. Washington from Uptown section of Philly; she's an avid reader of THE MOVEMENT and supports me wholeheartedly; so I gots to give my Cuz'n Vez her props! A special shout out to Mama Patt for all the fantastic (THE MOVEMENT) magazines you create and that I routinely, yet wrongly, get the credit for doing (lol; sorry), the accolades belong to you! And special shout outs to ALL the Mothers, Grandmothers, Aunts, Sisters, Wives, Baby Mamas, and Girlfriends of incarcerated men & women for holding up the sky for us incarcerated people! Y'all are the Truth! (Sorry fellas; you gotta step your game up.)

Well, its been fun being the "Prison CNN" while it lasted, but it's time for me to pass the baton of THE MOVEMENT onto my young protégé Serg. Though I may not be here with you now, look for me in the whirlwind. Peace and Blessings to you all. My raised clinched fist Salute to you all. A Luta Continua! (The Struggle Continues!)

From the Belly of the Beast,

I am Your Brother & Servant in Struggle, Shakaboona.

## 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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Dear Comrades,

I want to formally accept the position of Co-Editor of THE MOVEMENT Magazine, and thank everybody who played a role in supporting me - Shakaboona, Mama Patt, Saleem Holbrook, and the many elders who had patience with me throughout the years, as they have helped mold me into who I am and who I'm becoming. I'm humbled and honored to take on such a responsibility, and I promise to do all in my power to move us further towards our goal of real freedom and justice.

Because I'm new to many of you, there are some things that you should know about me: I believe in the absolute abolition of prisons. I believe that our communities can function successfully WITHOUT the presence of an occupying police force. I believe in the destruction of capitalism and patriarchy, as they have combined to set humanity on a collision course with annihilation. I believe in ALWAYS speaking truth to power, regardless of consequences. And last but not least, I believe in love; I believe that any fighting we do, and any step we take, should be done for one reason: love for the people.

I'm not perfect, but I love the people, and the best way for me to restore or repair any damage I've done, is to use my skill and ability to help those who've been struggling to survive under the heel of oppression for so long.

So, thank you for this opportunity, and for your trust and faith in me. I won't let you down.

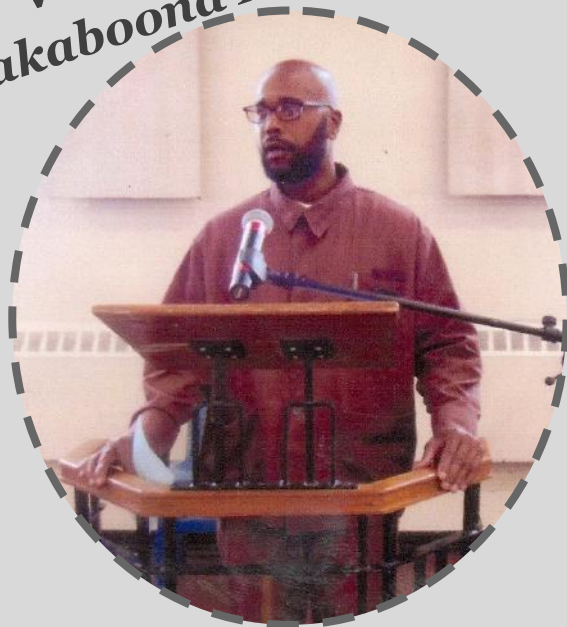
Your Comrade, Serg

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# Valedictions Shakaboona Marshall



**T**here's a stark irony that comes with the truth: in most cases, the people who know it, don't tell it. And the reason for that is the truth often offends, especially when you're speaking truth to power! I remember the very specific events that took place which ended up being the impetus for changing my life. I was kicked out of SCI Huntingdon, and shipped to SCI Greene, where I spent many years in solitary confinement. While back there, I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, for the first time. It motivated me to become a better speaker. Then, I met Robert Saleem Holbrook, who taught me about becoming active in the struggle for human rights. He also introduced me to the writings of Russell "Maroon" Shoatz.

Finally, Saleem handed me a copy of *THE MOVEMENT*, and explained how it was the official magazine of the Human Rights Coalition. I eagerly read it, and before long, I was a subscriber. *THE MOVEMENT* has always been filled with insightful articles and words of inspiration. But my favorite part was always the articles written by Shakaboona. His picture would be the first thing I saw as I read his opening letter. I always was amazed at how he used his words like a knife, cutting through the thicket of lies that some puppet spokesperson/prison official would feed to the masses.

When Saleem described Shakaboona as a comrade of his, I knew that I was in good company. That was nearly 15 years ago. Not long after that, Shakaboona and Saleem had began referring to me as their comrade, even though I'd never met Shakaboona personally. But even now, all these years later, I

still pick up *THE MOVEMENT* and go directly to Shakaboona's letter or article or interview. I love my comrade's writing style; the aggression in his words. I know that whatever he says, he means business! And that's how I want my impact to be as I take over *THE MOVEMENT*.

When I was in those mountains, stuck in solitary confinement, struggling to merely exist, I would read Shakaboona's words and know that somebody was finally telling the truth about what was happening on the inside. That was a really big deal, because there are plenty of folks who know the truth about prisons, but don't have the bravery to speak out. Retaliation is real in here, and people have literally been killed for expressing unpopular opinions and exposing unpopular harsh realities. Thus, as I said in the beginning of this article, the truth is indelibly attached to the weird irony of silence. For nearly two decades now, Shakaboona has held us all down and represented for every single prisoner being held captive in the PADOX - and beyond. And with him finally making parole, he is one step closer to returning to the community that so desperately misses - and needs - his leadership. I hope that these words land where they're supposed to, and that everybody understands the risk and sacrifice it takes to be a leader under these trying circumstances and conditions. We could call each other "friend"; we could call each other "brother"; but I prefer to call Shakaboona my comrade. Because, as Kevin "Rashid" Johnson once wrote, "Comrades stand united unconditionally and, if need be, to the death." That's what I know about my comrade, and I'm sure that he knows it about me as well.

Life is about struggle. All of us have been placed in situations where struggle - sometimes to the death - is necessary. Shakaboona, and the Human Rights Coalition have taken on some of our most difficult struggles, so that we don't have to bear that burden.

For those reasons - and many more - I want to extend my thanks and gratitude to Shakaboona, my comrade, regardless of conditions or circumstances. You have given us so much, and I will do my best to continue what you started, by implementing what I learned from you.

Stay safe and focused.

Your comrade, Serg . . . @uptownserg

**\*\*\*INMATE COFFEY, AS-1558, WAS PLACED ON INVESTIGATION ON OCTOBER 23 2001 FOR HIS POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT IN TWO ASSAULT ON STAFF ON D BLOCK. AN INVESTIGATION BY THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT HAS IMPLICATED INMATE COFFEY AS BEING A MAJOR INSTIGATOR IN THIS INCIDENT AND IT IS FELT THAT HIS CONTINUED PLACEMENT IN GENERAL POPULATION AT THIS TIME WOULD ENDANGER PERSONS THAT CANNOT BE PROTECTED BY ANY OTHER MEANS\*\*\*|-[DC-141#A281209]**

On October 23, 2001, forty-three days after 911 the surprise attacks on the WORLD TRADE CENTER in New York, SHANKSVILLE in Pennsylvania, and PENTAGON in Arlington, Virginia, I was placed in solitary confinement at State Correctional Institute Greene (SCI Greene) under a fraudulent investigation by Security Department Officials. I was thwarted after participating in countless self-help programs and misconduct free for years. While in solitary confinement under investigation, I was next door to Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall. After talking to Bro. Shakaboona he was a breathe of fresh air especially facing fraudulently charges without violating any institutional regulations. Bro. Shakaboona with his unique consciousness style encouraged me not to get thwarted but to understand the system of oppression by oppressors. For over 30-plus years, Bro. Shakaboona was in the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections fighting the good fight to improve prison conditions for the humanity of mentally ill prisoners. When we were in solitary confinement at SCI Greene we consumed all the knowledge from our respected elders Mwalimu Maroon and Mwalimu Shabaka both are master teachers and walking encyclopedias. Bro. Shakaboona is a brilliant HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST, AUTHOR, SCHOLAR, and PRO SE LITIGATOR. The pre stages of Human Rights Coalition our respected elders taught us young'uns proper etiquettes to become better activist. Bro. Shakaboona consumed all the knowledge from our respected elders and when I wasn't paying attention, he always informed me of what's going on. For over 20-years, Bro. Shakaboona has been educating me since that fateful so-called investigation by SCI-Greene Security Department Officials on October 23, 2001. We've been brothers ever since and I appreciate his authenticity towards me.

In the struggle,

Jerome Coffey

**G**oodbye to Shakaboona, Editor of THE MOVEMENT

My name is David Dawud Lee, and I want to take this time to first send my well wishes to my brother Shakaboona, and congratulations for making it out of this end of the monster. But I know my brother must go and deal with the Federal end of the monster know as incarceration, and I wish him well on that leg of the fight. Moreover, I want to thank Shakaboona for all the years of serious commitment to our struggles as (IHBs) incarcerated human beings, and our collective struggle for freedom. We have never met in person, but have been connected in struggle for about two decades. We connected around shared visions for freedom, and I know that without Shakaboona's political, cultural, and social knowledge that we could not have gotten this far! His insight has been an invaluable resource that we will miss. Also I want to say that the decision to allow my brother Serg to serve as editor of THE MOVEMENT has been rewarding! Peace and brotherly love to Shakaboona, and once again thank you for everything you have done for us all! Dawud

## **Big Brother Shakaboona Marshall**

The very same day of being transferred to SCI Mahanoy in 2009, I immediately took notice to my next door neighbor, whose head full of curly hair (at that time), and shinny throw back shoe-boots that he seemed to take pride in reminded me of a 90's R&B singer {smile}. But it wasn't his Johnny Gil swag that I was impressed by; but rather it was his humble and high spirit demeanor that attracted my attention. I recall him giving me a couple of issues of 'The Movement' to check out, which I didn't realize at that time was my introduction and orientation to raising my level of consciousness & education around community/grassroot organizing and networking. And even though he barely knew my name at the time, and had a lot on his plate, he still unselfishly shared his time in showing me how to be more conscientious in my writing and language and then use that reinvented skill to discover a sense of humanity, passion, truth, and trust within myself and my quest for freedom and justice. And still, to this very day our connection and growing relationship remain unwavering and consistent as it was when we first met. There are no words in the vocabulary of any language that can truly express my gratitude and appreciation for being, to me, everything he claim to be; and I have no doubt in my heart that the best has yet to be revealed. Continue to shine light on the world Bro, just like ya Umami said (Smile). Much Love & Respect . . . Your Brother Mustafa

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## SHAKABOONA! THE ANGELS HAVE ARRIVED

(By: Eric " Bro. General" Riddick)

*"EVEN IN A FULL ECLIPSE, THE STARS STILL SHINE"*

First, I would like to send the highest salute to my Brotha, Shakaboona, also known as Bro. Kerry X, not just for his latest victory (i.e., being granted parole) but also for his many victories over these long agonizing years inside of these concrete cotton fields (i.e. prisons). I salute my Brotha for his consistent example of integrity, strength, honor, morality, intelligence, tenacity, political insight, unwavering courage, refine Spirituality, determination and most importantly, Brotherly love. Exemplifying these noble qualities under good conditions is not always easy, but Brotha Shakaboona has remained loyal to the above attributes under the most predacious institutional oppression. You see, the above-mentioned attributes and maintaining them in your character while moving within the oppressive, dehumanizing gravity of prison is, and has always been viewed —by the agents of oppression—as a threat to the safe and secure operations of these neo plantations.

I have not been in Brotha Shakaboona's presence since 2008. Nevertheless, I never had to guess what he was doing wherever he may have landed. Shakaboona is fighting for freedom, justice and equality wherever he is at. He is further educating himself in all areas because he has learned the value of knowledge. Wherever Shakaboona is at, he is gonna organize in the best interest of the people. How do I know this? I know this because HE IS ME AND I AM HIM!

Incarceration can become one or two things. It can become a tomb where the dead reside, or it can become a womb where righteous Human transformations occurs. It can be a deadly furnace that burns up human potential or it can be a furnace where people are purified. Bro. Shakaboona chose the latter, and who he is today is a direct reflection of the struggles he has endured. He is one of those Angels that have earned his Mental wings and thus, he continues to humbly rise above the many fallacious mind traps that forever seek to incapacitate the people's ability to progress. Bro. Shakaboona's approaching liberation is in full season and when an idea is in season, every atom that exist propel that idea into full blossom! Let us remember, HRC was created by Shakaboona and the other unbreakables in the purgatory of RHU (the hole) at the notorious S.C.I. Green as well as our families and friends, where WE turned the RHU into a University! The Movement is the Brainchild of that operation! WOW!!!!!!!!!! See you on the other side My Brotha (God willing). I love You!

Forever on post, Eric "Bro. General" Riddick. Long live R."M" S. Aka The Elder.

### CONGRATULATORY SALUTES ~

To My Brother Shakaboona, I was elated to hear that you have (finally) been granted a sense of reprieve from the states. Although the fight is not over, getting one step closer is good for the morale of those awaiting your presence.

I have to admit however that I am deeply disappointed that as a result of the above mentioned relief you have decided to abdicate your post as Editor of the Movement. I know I am not alone when I say that your perspective (and leadership) will be missed a great deal. It is no secret that over the years you have set a new standard for us to follow as it relates to resisting the efforts of those who oppose our rights to life & liberty.

Brother you have truly come along way, and not many know that journey first hand the way I do. Coming up together on the same [crooked] set (although we are a couple years apart) we definitely had the same ambitions. Coincidentally, the very thing that distinguished us from the rest of our set, is the very thing that helped forge our bond & brotherhood. In the late 80's we were the only two from our set to be captured (different cases) and sentenced to Life Without Parole ("LWOP"). However despite coming from the same crooked circle our relationship on this side was not necessarily a given, fortunately for us our Pan Afrikan path solidified our comradeship.

Shakaboona you have definitely been a source of inspiration for me and I'm sure many others. I just wanted to express my appreciation (with a few lines) for your work & brotherhood over the years. I know we will stay in touch, but I certainly anticipate meeting back up with you personally on that set that started the process of our evolution.

My Salutes,

Brother Knab Asafo

# Y

**ou know when** you're having conversation with somebody or a couple of people and y'all are talking about different events or just simply kicking it . . .

Well I remember having a conversing with some comrades sometime ago and the name Shakaboona was mentioned a few times, I recognized the name, but for some reason I was picturing a completely different person. We were discussing radical, conscience brothers who passed through the Ford during our time right and many names came up. Now when Shakaboona's name came up a third time and they said he had life I was hold up . . . "Shabaka went home!" Everybody looked at me and busted out laughing and Yusef said, "Diq, we not talking about "Johnnie Cochran" Shabaka" - that's what we called him because he was always deep in the law books. We talking about Kerry "Shakaboona" he was on D-block when we was on E-block-FOI bull."

Now I remembered the name and the FOI reference, but I kept seeing Shabaka's face in my mind.

Fast forward to 2012, 2013 I was asked to be apart of the Silencing Act Lawsuit along with a several incarcerated individuals around the state and when I get the brief, who's name is on it along with mine...Shakaboona's! Still unable to put a face to the name, I figured it will come to me eventually. A year or so after that, when they started bringing the juveniles down for resentencing. I received an email from our partners in R2R and CADBI, that Shaka would be coming to Graterford soon. Sometime after that I was in the auditorium one morning and a tall slim brother baldhead, clean shaven, suited and booted meaning shirt buttoned right to the top - a dead giveaway for some one in the Nation of Islam - came strutting in and started talking to Suave. A few minutes went past and Suave called me over and as I approached the two of them, I then recognized him. Smiling, I shook Suave's hand as he motioned to Shakaboona, who cracked a smile and said As Salaamu Alaikum. Brother Saadiq we finally meet.

Both of us immediately remembered each other from his time at Graterford, but we walked in different circles at that time. Shaka, told me how he heard about R2R (Right 2 Redemption) and myself through our friends and partners in CADBI (The Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration). He told me he had met with Phil (R2R) and he wanted to come to one of our Monday night meetings. I got him on the call out, he showed up a little late because he met with another group at the same time, but once he sat down... He never left! Shaka-boona's experience, honesty, presence and voice made us stronger and helped us prepare for the ups and downs we would face as a committee. Kempis "Ghani" Songster, David "Wavy" Sheppard and Terrell "Rell" Carter all knew Shaka personally which made his addition to the group seamless.

Then came the infamous, as I call it, "the Graterford divide".

The Philly DA's race and who would represent the Democrats Larry Krasner or Tariq Shabazz. Yes, for those who didn't know Graterford, for a few months, was literally almost split in half ver who would be the next District Attorney in Philadelphia, not the Governor or a Senator or even the next Mayor, the D.A!

As lines we're drawn and alliances were formed Shakaboona stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Us as we supported Larry Krasner, who eventually won and is now one of the reasons why men and women who were sentenced to DBI (Death by Incarceration) as children are now free and productive members of society, because after Miller v. Alabama was deemed retroactive D.A. Krasner made sure that their resentencing wouldn't reflect their original sentencing and most got time served.

During this time I bonded with Shakaboona and we became Friends, Brothers, Comrades for Life! Now it's my Brother's turn to return to our communities. Through advocacy and activism his experience, honesty, presence and voice will help make our city s tronger... Philly has another Leader coming home.

Insha-Allah, Homie. We'll talk and see each other soon. My turn is right around the corner. . . As Salaamu Alaikum Brother!

Stay Safe and Healthy!

Donnell 'Saadiq' Palmer

R2R





## Shakaboona, Straight Ahead!

Just received word that my longtime friend and comrade Kerry 'Shakaboona' Marshall was finally granted state parole, almost three years after being resentenced as a Juvenile Lifer despite him having to be handed over into Federal custody to face down a Federal sentence incurred some two decades ago. Charges (largely fabricated) by the state as a virtual extrajudicial punishment for the cultural and political precepts he would come to expose, which has fueled his decades-long activism and resistance behind Pennsylvania's repressive walls and fences. It was at a time when a more refined and concentrated form of the systemic racism that's openly spoken out against today, was the (hidden) standard operating procedure in the prisons - even encoded in its policies.

Shakaboona's pushback against these unjust policies not only in defense of his own human rights but those of other vulnerable confined citizens, have subjected him to being locked down in some of the state's most treacherous holes - even bounced from one oppressive prison to the next for the purpose of inflicting torture upon his mind, body, and spirit. This was also the core reason for the several parole denials.

So, to learn that the *state* phase of his captivity has run its course is refreshing; albeit bitter-sweet. Bitter for the obvious reasons of it being more time spent away from his family, both biological and communal; as well as the community having to be deprived a bit longer of his genius and commitment to its restoration. But, sweet because the first daunting hurdle has been cleared - a hurdle that has broken many men similarly situated. A tragic fate Shakaboona has quite deftly defied like strong weeds that crack through concrete in order to grow. Being a student of the NOI early on in his development, he adhered to our progressive motto; "We Don't Do Time, We Use It." And given the man, son, father, friend, uncle, brother, etc., he is today, he has certainly used the time wisely.

I first met Shakaboona (then Kerry) over 30 years ago through a mutual friend and comrade, Knab A. Asafo (formerly BR) at Holmesburg Prison when we were just a group of wild-eyed teenagers oblivious to the full weight of what we were facing in terms of the crimes we were accused of; and, even more so, the politics that shaped the very Urban centers which ultimately directed our misguided behaviors.

When I was introduced to Shakaboona, in the summer of 1989, I was told that he was the younger brother of Keith Marshall who I knew from running the streets and serving a juvenile stint, so we bonded immediately and seamlessly - a bond that would span over three decades, and expand beyond the parameters of our confinement even transcending the fact that the state kept us in different prisons, as is its custom, to keep those of us of a particular political consciousness separated. But being links in a larger and more extensive chain of

many mutual comrades and family members (on both sides of the wall) we remain connected throughout the years nonetheless.

Over the years I would come in contact with some of the powerful writings of Shakaboona's (within this very publication and elsewhere) and even the opportunity to listen to a wide range of his insightful commentaries recorded by Prisonradio.org which chronicles his ever-developing political and ideological worldview which has been both inspiring and informative to myself and many others on the same road to redemption and social transformation; and, for that I am forever grateful to my brother and comrade. And so I meditate with the spirit of our honorable ancestors that not only is he given safe passage through the final leg of the of his journey within the unholy dregs of his continued captivity, but that his wisdom be increased and his armor strengthened in the process! Kebuka! - Remembrance!

Robert Asafo Williams, #BH-8660, SCI-Phoenix

**S**hakaboona...Honorable, thoughtful, thought provoking, intellectual, intellect, teacher, brother, comrade, Man of Respect, Man of Honor, Integrity, Character and above all an inspirational example of "The Black Man". I've done my homework, and these are just a few of the accolades that have been attributed to your name by some of the most solid old heads in the Pennsylvania State Penitentiary, that I have been fortunate enough to encounter throughout my journey...although I have not had the opportunity to meet you personally I would be remiss not to take this opportunity to let you know of the impact that you have had on me, and so many other young brothers that you may not even know...as with anything great, your works was not for a season, but for an eternity, so they will continue to live on even after you're gone...that's greatness!...while you make your transition to the next chapter...take solace in knowing that you have touched, enlighten, motivated, educated and lit the flames in so many including myself, and because of the way that you carried it, I will continue to carry it...and even thought its just begun...allow me to salute you on a job well done...on behalf of the PLA, SIO @SCI-Smithfield, and the Men here @SCI-Huntingdon, Delco CADBI.org, The West Philly Commission.org, Heart of The City.com, BLACK Brothers Inc. and all of the solid ole timers and solid young soldiers across the state...we all salute you comrade...In Honor, Respect, & Solidarity...Salute!!!.. -Special Honorable shout outs from Cetewayo and Spanish Mikey here @Huntingdon...

Daniel (Bliz) Vincent, #KH7761

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

## Abolitionist Reform

### Abolitionist Visions

20 years ago, the Human Rights Coalition was founded by prisoners locked down in solitary confinement at SCI Greene and their family members on the outside in Philadelphia. For those prisoners and their families, it was clear as day that the prison system was not about justice, rehabilitation or corrections. Look inside any modern prison and you will not find JUSTICE - what you will find is JUST US - confined and caged, tortured and abused, separated from our loved ones and community and forced into modern day slavery. Those founding members of the Human Rights Coalition wrote their analysis of the problem and pointed to a possible solution - ABOLITION. Read HRC's Vision below:

*“The prison system is based on a foundation of exploitation, punishment and corruption. It reflects all the other social inequalities in our system, and it does not work in its current incarnation. HRC’s ultimate goal is to dismantle and abolish the prison system and replace it with accountability, safety, fairness, and resilience, while focusing on healing instead of punishing.”*

If the prison system is a modern form of slavery, where the slave master is the State, then how do we get free? If the laws and law-enforcement only “Protect and Serve” the wealthy white power elite, then how can there ever be justice? To this we say, in the words of HRC co-founder Omar Askia Ali, “Justice Is Freedom.” The laws of this country, its Constitution, and its legislatures are the creations of slave-holders and they serve to reinforce their power. The prison system was designed to control, punish and re-enslave people who dared to exist outside of the bounds of those laws. We, just like the Abolitionists of old, are ready to fight until everyone is free, until every plantation/prison is empty. But until that glorious day comes, what can we do? And when that day comes, what comes after?

### Reform or Revolution?

There is an age-old question that has been debated throughout time, “Reform or Revolution?” It is often stated as if they are opposites - that revolution is some event where the old powers are toppled, and a new regime takes over, whereas reform is an incremental change to the existing system. But talk to any true revolutionary and they will tell you that revolution is a process, not just an event. We revolutionize ourselves and free our minds, we organize the people and fight together for freedom, we take back power - and then...what do we do with it? After every successful revolution or coup, where one government is deposed and another instated, the

new leaders inevitably begin instituting...reforms. These can be sweeping reforms that alter or rewrite the constitution, they can fundamentally change power relations by reallocating lands or wealth, or even re-defining property relations. Before the Haitian Revolution, Africans were legally property of Europeans until unruly bands of rebel Maroons engaged in revolutionary struggle and eventually founded and governed an independent nation. This struggle led to the abolition of slavery not only in Haiti, but in every French colony all over the world. These are types of reforms that revolutionaries and Abolitionists are looking for. However, many times throughout history so-called “revolutionary” parties gain power, and then quickly institute laws to benefit themselves, strengthen their armed forces, and cement their power as the new elite. These too are reforms, aren't they?

Perhaps the question should not be framed as, “Reform or Revolution?” Anyone with their eyes open can clearly see that the current system is fatally flawed, and a total revolution is necessary. The true question becomes, “If the people had the power, what kind of world would we build? What form would any new government or law or free society take?”

### The Types of Reform

There are many types of reform, but for the sake of simplicity, I will break down reforms into 3 basic categories:

#### **1. Fascist Reform**

The world over, we have seen fascist reforms lead to war and genocide, borders and concentration camps, racial caste systems and planetary destruction. We are all quite familiar with these reforms. They play out on the news almost every day and they remind us of how little corporations or the nation-state care about human life. The fascists like to remind us how weak and powerless we are, and how much we need the Strong Man/State to protect us. They beat the drums of patriotism, stoke the flames of racial hatred, and conjure up images of the patriarchal savior in a uniform. We are given a choice. Join the chorus of the National Anthem and give our power over to the state, or resist and risk being annihilated. Sound familiar? If we have learned anything from the past few years, it is that fascism is alive and well in AmeriKKKa.

#### **2. Neoliberal Reform**

Neoliberal reform is a sweeter pill to swallow, but never doubt that it too is a poison. Neoliberals speak of American Dreams and Free Trade, they make promises to The Middle Class, believe in regulation and swear they will bring integrity back to The White House. The goal of Neoliberalism is to incorporate more and more people into the project of global

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capitalism, white supremacy, and Western civilization. Neoliberals sweet talk to people who they just stabbed in the back and swear that they care that they are bleeding. Neoliberals hear the cries of mothers who lost their children to another police murder and proclaim, “We are encouraging all officers to engage in racial sensitivity trainings!” Neoliberals use the images of children in cages at the border as campaign props to get elected, and then turn around and deport their mothers, all while championing “Comprehensive Immigration Reform.” These hollow reforms are aimed at strengthening state power while serving to placate the angry masses and incorporate them into a voting bloc for the next election. These reforms often masquerade as radical change, while allowing creeping fascism through the back door. Neoliberalism has put so many of our people to sleep. It’s our job to wake them up!

### **3. Abolitionist Reform**

Abolitionist reforms are the un-shackling of our collective hands. These reforms free our people, they end wars, they decriminalize, they provide our communities with the essentials for survival. Abolitionist reforms are the things we do today, to make possible tomorrow, what was impossible yesterday. They do this by taking power away from the State. The modern day AmeriKKKan state has the power to kill, to kidnap, to enslave, to torture, to rape, to steal, to demolish, to contaminate. We give them that power. And the capital and labor power to do it too! If we want to put an end to our collective misery, we need to go about dismantling state power and capitalism, all while building up our communities’ capacity to provide for ourselves, to protect ourselves, to govern ourselves, and to liberate ourselves! This will be an incremental process over time that will include advocating for and implementing specific reforms. This will also be a revolutionary process that completely transforms the world as we know it. If this sounds like a paradox, perhaps it is...but aren’t all of life’s greatest truths?

### **Abolition in Our Time**

Much of what I have written may sound nice, or a bit confusing, but is impossible to judge as a viable theory of change as long as it is purely hypothetical. With the world as it is, in 2021, what can we do to bring about the liberation of the land and the people? I would like to point to the work that the Human Rights Coalition is currently doing, as real-world examples of what I mean by Abolitionist Reform.

**Ending Death By Incarceration** - HRC was founded by people serving life without parole, multiple life sentences,

and people on death row. Since the beginning, we have always advocated for the Abolition of any law that condemns someone to die in a prison cell. We believe in human beings’ fundamental rights to freedom, life, and dignity - even in death. We have fought in court rooms, in State Houses, in the streets, and behind prison walls to bring about the end of death by incarceration. And we have won some Abolitionist Reforms! We have welcomed home juvenile lifers resentenced under *Miller vs. Alabama*. We have gotten lifers’ commutation applications signed by elected officials. We have authored laws and built coalitions to end life without parole. We have secured the freedom of people who have gone on to lead campaigns for the freedom of the ones they left behind! These are reforms that free our people, strip the state of the power of life and death, and lead to Decarceration - the release of currently imprisoned/enslaved people.

**Abolishing Solitary Confinement** - HRC was founded by people in the Hole at a Supermax prison who called out to each other, passed notes, read and studied together, and galvanized their families on the outside. The purpose of long-term isolation, to the prison warden, is to prevent collective organizing. The affect, on the prisoner, is a brutal form of mental torture, followed by physical, sexual, and psychological abuse at the hands of State officials with far too much power. HRC is currently supporting campaigns at the local, state, national, and international level to abolish solitary confinement. This Spring, we are putting up ballot initiatives in Pittsburgh to abolish solitary confinement at the Allegheny County Jail and enact Breonna Taylor’s Law, outlawing no-knock warrants. We also have bills in the PA Senate and House - laws that were authored by survivors of solitary, that outlaw the barbaric treatment they received. This Abolitionist Reform strips the power of the state to torture people, while empowering incarcerated people to socialize and collectivize. This law, if enacted, would liberate thousands from Living Hell, the agony of indefinite solitude that many describe as being “Buried Alive.” Humans are social animals. Permanent isolation strips us of our humanity. Building community allows us to become more fully human, which is why the Human Rights Coalition says, “Solidarity Not Solitary!”

**Closing Prisons** - When HRC co-founder Russell ‘Maroon’ Shoatz first was captured and sent to prison in 1972, there were less than 5,000 people in the prison system in Pennsylvania. In the 50 years that followed, the state of Pennsylvania waged a fascist campaign of criminalization and prison construction, leading us to a situation where there are almost 50,000 people held in 28 state prisons, and another 50,000 in county and local jails. Any prison abolitionist struggle must include the plans to systematically close every existing prison

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## SolidarityNotSolitary

The coronavirus sparked an unprecedented public health crisis in the U.S., hitting prisons and jails especially hard. In the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections alone, 112 incarcerated people have reportedly died from the virus, though advocates believe the number may be even higher. But the response of the PADO and prison administrators across the country to lock down the incarcerated population in solitary confinement created another national pandemic: a mental health crisis.

In 2011, Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture at the time, declared, “Any imposition of solitary confinement beyond 15 days constitutes torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Yet, during the past year, departments of corrections across the country inflicted this torturous practice on upwards of 300,000 people often for months at a time, in the name of curbing the pandemic.

Public health experts condemned the use of solitary not only because of its harrowing psychological effects but also because the threat of isolation has proven to deter people from reporting symptoms, ultimately exacerbating the spread of sickness.

Tyree Little, who spent eight or nine years in solitary confinement in Pennsylvania prisons, said, “Being in solitary can be even more depressing because of what’s going on. You really don’t get access to news media and all that or the TV to watch the news or contact your family, so you’re going to be even more depressed not knowing if your loved ones are catching COVID.”

One of the most harmful aspects of the department’s mismanagement of the pandemic, according to Little, is the lack of access to visitation and phone calls. The last in-person visit was on March 11. And while of course, physical contact must be limited with the outside world to contain the virus, Little says that pervasive technical difficulties prevent incarcerated people from communicating with their loved ones.

While the PADO originally used the Zoom application for video visitation, they switched to a telecommunications company called Polycom a few months ago. “It’s bad,” Little said. “Sometimes you can’t even hear them. You can see your folks but you can’t hear them. So y’all trying to do sign language or write on a piece of paper. The quality is bad on this new system they’re using.”

JT, who spent a total of 14 years in solitary during his time in prison, said, “I know quite a few people who have been on [video visits through Polycom] and most people say the same thing: that they sit there and waited and waited and waited

and nothing happened. They called the prison to try to find out what happened and couldn’t get no answers, so they never got their visit...I don’t know why they would switch it from Zoom to [Polycom].”

Contact with family and loved ones on the outside has been proven to significantly reduce the likelihood of someone returning to prison. And depriving someone of the right to communicate with loved ones has deeply damaging effects. A study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Corrections found that even just one visit reduced the likelihood of recidivism by 13 percent for new crimes and 25 percent for technical violations.

“All in all,” JT said, “I think that the lockdown that the DOC is under means the whole state prison system is in solitary for real because they’re not getting out of their cells. They say sometimes they don’t even get out for their phone calls and stuff...If they say they don’t have enough guards, then you’re not coming out. It’s a really bad situation.”

Even long before the pandemic, solitary confinement has been at the crux of mass incarceration, warehousing several tens of thousands of people in squalid conditions. Depriving people of human contact and sensory stimulation has been destroying the minds and bodies of incarcerated people ever since the Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia first used the practice in 1790. Since then, the practice has inflicted violence on Black, Brown, indigenous, and poor communities across the country.

Tyree Little and JT are both lead organizers of the Solidarity Not Solitary (SNS) campaign, which aims to eliminate the use of solitary for longer than fifteen consecutive days across the state of Pennsylvania. The SNS campaign has developed legislation that would implement this ban on solitary in alignment with international human rights standards.

Abundant amounts of research has proven solitary confinement to be an ineffective penological tool that causes lasting psychological damage to anyone subjected to it.

People held in solitary confinement are already more likely to harm themselves or even kill themselves. In January 2020, the PADO reported holding 2,500 people in solitary confinement in state prisons. And people in solitary are nearly seven times more likely to self-harm than people held in general population. Half of youth suicides in custody occurred in solitary confinement.

Additionally, 95 percent of people in prison are eventually released back to society. And between 2008 and 2014, the

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

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PADOC released over 400 people directly from solitary back into the community.

“Even with myself, being in solitary so long,” Little said, “when they released me back to population, I couldn’t walk too close to people. I didn’t want people walking too close to me. I ain’t used to no human contact...So imagine, I seen people in the RHU released straight home after 20 years of being in solitary confinement. How can you release someone like that straight back to society? It’s like they’re doomed to fail. No counseling. No nothing. It’s like taking a wild lion out the zoo and just releasing him into the woods.”

In addition to making communities more dangerous, holding someone in solitary confinement for a year costs significantly more than holding someone in general population. Eliminating the use of solitary confinement would save the state \$75 million a year. JT says that money should be used for “programs that are open to everybody. Programs that actually get you ready for society, as opposed to some of those BS programs they run now. Programs that would actually help people’s skills. Giving people training for different occupations. Preparing people for when they’re released.”

Ultimately, the goal of the SNS campaign is to eliminate solitary confinement across the state of Pennsylvania and replace it with humane, effective practices that keep incarcerated people, correctional officers, and our communities safe and healthy. Anyone interested in becoming involved with the Solidarity Not Solitary campaign through the Inside Advocacy Project, please write to the Human Rights Coalition, attn.: Solitary; PO Box 34580, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

By Val Kiebala

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and prevent the construction of any new ones. HRC is currently spearheading the campaign to close SCI Fayette, a prison that was deliberately built on a toxic coal waste dump. This cancerous concentration camp cannot be allowed to remain open. We must do everything in our power to close these prison/plantations, all while advocating for the release of the people inside, and supporting their healing, growth and transformation when they return home.

**Free The Vulnerable** - HRC has always advocated for the release of long-held elders and for compassionate release for those with serious illnesses. When Covid-19 arrived in Pennsylvania, we feared the worst for our loved ones behind bars. So we built a campaign to push the Governor to use his extraordinary powers of reprieve to release thousands of medically vulnerable people before they served a death-by-Covid sentence. We marched, we went on weeks-long hunger strikes, we organized our people. The Covid-19 crisis poses a deadly threat to our people on the inside, but like any crisis, it presents an opportunity for a radical rupture with the existing order. Tomorrow, Governor Wolf could release tens of thousands of people from prison with the stroke of his pen. What is stopping him? What is stopping us from making him?

These are the questions that Abolitionists ask. The Governor, being a Neoliberal, smiles and assures us that, “Our administration is taking this crisis very seriously” and proceeds to do absolutely nothing while his prisons turn into Fascist death camps. We are living in a pivotal moment in history. Our ancestors watch us as we choose our next move, as we rise and dust off the bloodstained banners of Abolition, and unite to throw off our chains! Straight Ahead!

*By The Ghost of John Brown*

**Sudoku #771 (Hard)**

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

## What Is QAnon, the Viral Pro-Trump Conspiracy Theory?

*Explaining the “big tent conspiracy theory” that falsely claims that President Trump is facing down a shadowy cabal of Democratic pedophiles.*

By Kevin Roose

Jan. 29, 2021

If you’re spending a lot of time online these days — and thanks to the pandemic, many of us are — you’ve probably heard of QAnon, the sprawling internet conspiracy theory that has taken hold among some of President Trump’s supporters.

But unless you’re *very* online, you likely still have questions about what exactly is going on.

QAnon was once a fringe phenomenon — the kind most people could safely ignore. But in recent months, it’s gone mainstream. For months, QAnon supporters have been flooding social media with false information about Covid-19, the Black Lives Matter protests and the 2020 election. QAnon supporters have also been trying to attach themselves to other activist causes, such as the anti-vaccine and anti-child-trafficking movements, in an effort to expand their ranks.

QAnon has also seeped into the offline world, with some believers charged with violent crimes, including one QAnon follower accused of murdering a mafia boss in New York last year and another who was arrested in April and accused of threatening to kill Joseph R. Biden Jr., the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has warned that QAnon poses a potential domestic terror threat.

QAnon has also made inroads in politics. Marjorie Taylor Greene, an avowed QAnon supporter from Georgia, is a heavy favorite to win election to Congress in November. And President Trump has not disavowed QAnon despite being asked about it multiple times, giving more fuel to the theory’s false claims.

QAnon is an incredibly convoluted theory, and you could fill an entire book explaining its various tributaries and sub-theories. But here are some basic things you should know.

### What is QAnon?

QAnon is the umbrella term for a sprawling set of internet conspiracy theories that allege, falsely, that the world is run by a cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles who are plotting

against Mr. Trump while operating a global child sex-trafficking ring.

QAnon followers believe that this clique includes top Democrats including Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and George Soros, as well as a number of entertainers and Hollywood celebrities like Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks, Ellen DeGeneres and religious figures including Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama. Many of them also believe that, in addition to molesting children, members of this group kill and eat their victims in order to extract a life-extending chemical from their blood.

According to QAnon lore, Mr. Trump was recruited by top military generals to run for president in 2016 in order to break up this criminal conspiracy, end its control of politics and the media, and bring its members to justice.

### Is that all?

Not by a long shot. Since it began, QAnon has incorporated elements of many other conspiracy theory communities, including claims about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the existence of U.F.O.s, and the 9/11 “truther” movement.

QAnon Anonymous, a podcast about the QAnon movement, [calls QAnon](#) a “big tent conspiracy theory” because it is constantly evolving and adding new features and claims. But the existence of a global pedophile cabal is the core tenet of QAnon, and the one that most, if not all, of its followers believe.

### How did this all start?

In October 2017, a post appeared on 4chan, the notoriously toxic message board, from an anonymous account calling itself “Q Clearance Patriot.” This poster, who became known simply as “Q,” claimed to be a high-ranking intelligence officer with access to classified information about Mr. Trump’s war against the global cabal.

Q predicted that this war would soon culminate in “The Storm” — an appointed time when Mr. Trump would finally unmask the cabal, punish its members for their crimes and restore America to greatness.

In Her Words: Where women rule the headlines.

### Why is it called ‘The Storm’?

It’s a reference to a cryptic remark Mr. Trump made during an October 2017 photo op. Posing alongside military generals, Mr. Trump said, “You guys know what this represents? Maybe it’s the calm before the storm.”

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

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QAnon believers pointed to this moment as proof that Mr. Trump was sending coded messages about his plans to break up the global cabal, with the help of the military.

### **Who is Q, and what are ‘Q Drops’?**

Q’s identity is still unknown, although there have been hints and speculation about it for years. Some speculate that a single internet troll has been posting as Q the entire time; others say that multiple people are involved in posting as Q, or that Q’s identity has changed over time.

Making things more complicated is that Q’s online home base has changed several times. Q’s posts originally appeared on 4chan. Then they moved to 8chan, where they stayed until that site was taken offline last year after the El Paso mass shooting. They now live on 8kun, a site run by the former owner of 8chan. Each of these sites uses a system of identity verification known as a “tripcode” — essentially, a username that proves that a series of anonymous posts were written by the same person or people.

“Drops” are what QAnon followers call Q’s posts. There have been nearly 5,000 of them so far, and most take the form of a cryptic coded message.

### **Like what?**

Here’s an example of a Q drop from September 2018:

PANIC IN DC

[LL] talking = TRUTH reveal TARMAC [BC]?

[LL] talking = TRUTH reveal COMEY HRC EMAIL CASE?

[LL] talking = TRUTH reveal HUSSEIN instructions re: HRC EMAIL CASE?

[LL] talking = TRUTH reveal BRENNAN NO NAME COORD TO FRAME POTUS?.....FISA = START

FISA BRINGS DOWN THE HOUSE.WHEN DO BIRDS SING?

Q

In this post, you can see coded references to “LL” (Loretta Lynch, President Obama’s former attorney general), “BC” (Bill Clinton), “HRC” (Hillary Rodham Clinton), and “HUSSEIN” (President Obama), along with references to John Brennan, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and “POTUS” — President Trump.

Many QAnon followers use “Q Drop” apps that collect all of Q’s posts in one place, and alert them every time a new post arrives. (One of these apps hit the top 10 paid apps in Apple’s App Store before it was pulled down for violating the company’s guidelines.) They then post these drops in Facebook groups, chat rooms for the Discord chat app and Twitter threads, and begin discussing and debating what it all means.

### **Is QAnon the same thing as Pizzagate?**

Yes and no. QAnon has been described as a “big-budget sequel” to Pizzagate, because it takes the original [Pizzagate conspiracy theory](#) — which alleged, falsely, that Mrs. Clinton and her cronies were operating a child sex-trafficking ring out of the basement of a Washington, D.C., pizza restaurant — and adds many more layers of narrative on top of it. But many people believe in both theories, and for many QAnon believers, Pizzagate represented a kind of conspiracy theory on-ramp.

One new element in QAnon is a number of clear and specific predictions about when and how “The Storm” would play out. For years, Q has predicted that mass arrests of cabal members would occur on certain days, that certain government reports would reveal the cabal’s misdeeds, and that Republicans would win numerous seats in the 2018 midterm elections.

None of those predictions came true. But most QAnon believers didn’t care. They simply found ways to reframe the narrative and ignore the discrepancies, and moved on.

### **How many people believe in QAnon?**

It’s hard to say, because there’s no official membership directory, but the number is not small. Even if you count only the hard-core QAnon believers — excluding “QAnon-lite” adherents who might believe in a deep state plot against Mr. Trump, but not a cabal of child-eating Satanists — the number may be at least in the hundreds of thousands.

Before Facebook moved to block QAnon content, some popular QAnon groups on the platform had hundreds of thousands of members, and NBC News reported this year on an internal Facebook study that found thousands of QAnon groups operating on the social network, with millions of members between them.

That number has probably grown during the pandemic, as people stuck indoors turn to the internet for entertainment and socializing and wind up being pulled into the QAnon community, and as QAnon itself morphs and recruits new members from adjacent conspiracy theory groups.

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## Why are some people attracted to the QAnon movement?

A common misconception is that QAnon is purely a political movement. But it functions, for people who believe in it, as both a social community and a source of entertainment.

Some people have compared QAnon to a massive multiplayer online game, because of the way it invites participants to cocreate a kind of shared reality filled with recurring characters, shifting story lines and intricate puzzle-solving quests. QAnon has also been compared to a church, in that it provides its followers with a social support structure as well as an organizing narrative for their everyday lives.

Adrian Hon, a game designer who has written about QAnon's similarity to alternate-reality games, says that believers "open a fascinating fantasy world of secret wars and cabals and Hillary Clinton controlling things, and it offers convenient explanations for things that feel inexplicable or wrong about the world."

## What role have social networks played in QAnon's popularity?

Even though Q's posts appear on fringe message boards, the QAnon phenomenon owes much of its popularity to Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, which have amplified QAnon messages and recommended QAnon groups and pages to new people through their algorithms.

In recent months, many leading social networks have taken steps to ban QAnon content from their services, citing the theory's potential for offline harm. In October, Facebook and YouTube both announced wide-ranging QAnon bans, and removed thousands of accounts, pages, and channels from their platforms. Twitter has banned thousands of QAnon accounts for engaging in coordinated harassment. And several smaller platforms, such as Etsy, Pinterest, and Discord, have also taken steps to limit QAnon's influence.

## Haven't there always been far-fetched conspiracy theories about powerful elites?

It's true that much of QAnon's subject matter is recycled from earlier conspiracy theories. But QAnon is fundamentally an internet-based movement that operates in a different way, and at a different scale, than anything we've seen before.

For starters, QAnon is deeply participatory, in a way that few other popular conspiracy theories have been. Followers congregate online to decode the latest Q posts, discuss their theories about the news of the day, and bond with their fellow believers. The Atlantic has called it "the birth of a new religion."

There's also the basic danger of what QAnon followers actually believe. It's one thing to have a polarized political discourse with heated disagreements; it's another to have a faction of Americans who think, with complete sincerity, that the leaders of the opposition party are kidnapping and cannibalizing innocent children.

Combine those violent, paranoid fantasies with the fact that QAnon followers have been charged with committing serious crimes in Q's name, and it's no wonder people are worried.

## How has President Trump responded to QAnon?

Mr. Trump is the central and heroic figure in QAnon's core narrative — the brave patriot who was chosen to save America from the global cabal. As a result, QAnon believers parse Mr. Trump's words and actions closely, looking for hidden meanings. When Mr. Trump says the number 17, they take it as a sign that he is sending secret messages to them. (Q is the 17th letter of the alphabet.) When he wears a pink tie, they interpret it as a sign that he is freeing trafficked children. (Some hospitals use "code pink" as a shorthand for a child abduction in progress.)

It's not clear whether Mr. Trump knows the esoteric details of the QAnon theory or not. But he has embraced the movement's supporters, saying in a White House press briefing that "I've heard these are people that love our country." He also refused to denounce QAnon when asked about it during a NBC town hall in October, saying that all he knew about the movement was that "they are very much against pedophilia." And he has shared posts from QAnon followers dozens of times on his social media accounts.

## I've seen a lot of people posting #SaveTheChildren on my Facebook and Instagram feeds recently. Is that related to QAnon?

QAnon followers have turned to the #SaveTheChildren campaign to attract new supporters. Credit...Stephanie Keith/Reuters

Yes. For months, QAnon followers have been hijacking #SaveTheChildren — which started out as a fund-raising campaign for a legitimate anti-child-trafficking organization — as a recruiting tactic.

What they're doing, basically, is using false and exaggerated claims about child trafficking to attract the attention of a new audience — in this case, worried parents. Then, they attempt to steer the conversation to QAnon talking points — saying that the reason children are being trafficked, for example, is because the global cabal wants to harvest a supposedly life-extending chemical from their blood.

This particular tactic has been especially problematic for legitimate anti-trafficking groups, who have had to deal with

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clogged hotlines and rampant misinformation as QAnon has latched on to their issue.

Merely posting #SaveTheChildren doesn't mean your friends are QAnon believers. They could have just stumbled on a post about child trafficking that resonated with them and decided to share it. But they, and you, should know that those posts are part of a concerted QAnon strategy.



A prominent QAnon supporter broke into the Senate chambers on January 6.

IMAGE: WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

**Right Bottom: Jake Angeli the QAnon Sharman at Jan 6th Capital insurrection.**

**THE MOVEMENT**

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## In The Interest of Justice

By Mr. James Archer, AF-9172, SCI Rockview

As the world watches the performance of the United States government concerning matters dealing both morally and legally of Black Lives Matters and the other organizations that are like minded, citizens of the United States who are being held hostage scream but are continually ignored. What we the poor, black and uneducated face within the courtroom is nothing less than judicial terrorism cloaked in false legal legitimacy. Individuals who under the constitution and the laws of these United States are entitled to the full rights of every American citizen are nevertheless being stripped of those rights that are guaranteed and are basic protections of the constitution.

Here’s part of our story: it concerns men and women in Pennsylvania’s institutions with life sentences; a life sentence in Pennsylvania is a death sentence; it is total confinement until death.

From what I’ve learned over the many years of my incarceration, 43 1/2 years, is that during the time periods of 1972-1978 in Pennsylvania there wasn’t a legal statute for the death penalty because the statue of death was held to be unconstitutional by both the Supreme Court of the United States and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. In *Furman v. Georgia*, 408 U.S. 238, 92 S. Ct. 2726, 33L.d 236 (1972) and *Com. v. Bradley*, 408 Pa. 295 A.2d 842 that court held that in light of the *Furman* decision PA’s statutes then in effect were held to be in violation of the 8th and 14th amendments of the US constitution. The *Bradley* court decision was virtually pre-ordained by the *Furman* court; that court vacated sentences under the 702 of the Act of 1939 supra. Thereafter, at least six decisions of the court made it abundantly clear that a statute which gave such discretion to the jurors as bestowed by the Act of 1939 could not hold constitutional muster.

To have a better understanding of the injustices that I’ve been going through since 1976 the Commonwealth of PA which was represented by the DA’s office of Philadelphia appealed an order that was rendered by a three judge panel of the Common Pleas court in *Com. v. Moody*. [Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Appellant v. Theodore Moody. Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Argued April 4, 1977. Decided Nov. 30, 1977] and [Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Appellant, v. Ralph William White, Appellee. Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Argued April 19, 1977. Decided Dec. 1, 1977]

In the decision concerning that the Honorable PA Supreme Court Justice Pomeroy stated: In response to the void left in Pennsylvania’s law regarding the imposition of a death penalty the General Assembly included Pa. C.S. §1311 in the

New Crimes Code, in which that section, stark in its brevity was distinguished by a complete lack of direction as to the circumstances of what would warrant an imposition of death. In contrast to the elaborate mechanism of the Act of 1939, supra., the legislators provided only that a person be convicted of first degree murder shall be sentenced to death or life imprisonment, it is manifest that in no way Pa.C.S. §1311 could have been enacted to assure the constitutional infirmities of the Act of 1939.

Also in the opinion, the Honorable Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Nix stated: as I perceive the issues, the controlling consideration is not the fact that the sentence is death, it is unquestionable that death is the most severe and irreversible action that our system possessed, however, I do not agree that this fact alone should be the catalyst for the results reached here today. In my judgment it would be repugnant to any fair system of judicial review to knowingly permit a court to impose a sanction (regardless of its nature) that exceeds that tribunal authority, this obligation does not raise from the kind of penalty but rather is mandated by our responsibilities to preserve the integrity of the judicial system. Whether the sanctions ought to be imposed are death, imprisonment or even fine, is immaterial; the gravement of evil is in the court’s actions in trying to impose penalties that excess its power. For this court to acquiesce in such an act would constitute a flagrant disregard to the supervisory powers invested in us by the commonwealth.

There has been study after study from leading universities concerning the death qualifications of jurors and their conviction proneness. See *McClesky v. Kemp*, 107 S.Ct. 1756, 481 U.S. 279 (U.S.Ga. 1987); *Witherspoon v. Illinois* El, Al, 391 U.S. 510, 88 S.Ct. 1770, 20 L.Ed.2d 7776 (1969). A statute may not entrust the determination of whether a person is innocent or guilty to a tribunal that is organized to convict.

The Honorable ex-Judge of the Philadelphia Common Pleas court’s system David Savitt is also concerned with this matter by stating: it has been the tendency for the DA’s office to death quality the jury even when they have no interest to seek the death penalty because they know that a death qualified jury is a guilt prone jury-Legalized Lynching by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, pp138-139.

The Honorable ex-Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States Sandra Day O’Conner stated: if the courts are permitted to try a non-capital defendant before a death qualified jury, neither the constitution nor logic would provide a non-arbitrary stopping point. I was tried, convicted and sentenced under the new statute Pa.C.S. §1311 and sentenced for sec-

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ond degree felony murder and given a mandatory life sentence under that was later ruled unconstitutional-this statute changed the sentences for all murders in Pennsylvania making first degree a death or life imprisonment sentence and making second degree a mandatory life sentence and creates a new degree and penalty for third degree (the third degree penalty is the same as the old penalty for second degree without the enactment of Pa. C.S. §1311.

I was sentenced to five to ten years for robbery and five to ten years for criminal conspiracy-these sentences were to run concurrent with the mandatory life sentence when clearly my maximum sentence date should have been 12/13/1996, thus the commonwealth did not have the authority to convict nor sentence me under the illegal and unconstitutional statute of Pa.C.S.§1311.

If you were to look at the case of Com.v. Muhammed [Com. v. Muhammed. PA Superior Court. 2010] that court held that an unconstitutional statute is ineffective for any purpose as it's unconstitutionality dates back to the time of its enactment, meaning that the commonwealth clearly and knowingly violated my rights which are guaranteed in the constitutions of both the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States: the right to a fair and impartial trial.

It has been many years that I have served over my rightful maximum sentencing date. Please help in my fight for my freedom! What is needed is any and all support by calling, writing, texting, emailing or any other resources found online. I've filed a state habeas corpus in the Philadelphia in the Civil Division in City Hall but was informed that my petition never reached the clerk's desk. I even had a friend hand deliver the writ and still the clerk never filed it! The major support that's needed is pro bono assistance from someone who knows of the pitfalls of filing a writ of habeas corpus in the court's Civil Division in Philadelphia County.

If there is anything that you may be able to help with please contact my son Raheem Bennette at 215-881-3260. Thank you very much in advance for your time and concern.

Sincerely,

James Archer, #AF-9172

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## How can I receive a copy of THE MOVEMENT?

*Simply send your contact info to:*

*Human Rights Coalition  
P.O. Box 34580  
Philadelphia, PA 19101  
Attention: Newsletter!*

*Donations are always welcome,  
but not required.*

*Make checks payable to: Human Rights Coalition*

## **Call for Contributors**

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

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

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

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

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**THE MOVEMENT**

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# LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!

Now is the time to come together with your thoughts, now is the time to stay in constant contact with your family and friends. Now is the time to say I am sorry, I love you, I miss you, and now is the time to say, "pray for me". We at H.R.C. and C.A.D.B.I. and other organizations are together, fighting, and pleading for your release during this pandemic (pandemic). We will never give up.

### January Birthdays

Daniel Smith	1-1	Benner
Amber Meidinger	1-12	Muncy
Reginald West	1-22	Fayette
Devon Stots	1-26	Benner

### February Birthdays

Terrell Carter	2-4	Phoenix
Stacey L. Newkirk	2/20	Muncy
Amy Muffley	2-28	Muncy
Desiree Hicks	2-29	Cambridge Springs

### March Birthday

Akiya Johnson	3-4	Waymart
Kevin Butler	3-5	Phoenix
Rebecca Olenchock	3-12	Muncy
Andre Vancliff	3/26	Smithfield

### April Birthdays

Jamal Ball	4-1	Forest
Randall Chumley	4-10	Huntingdon

(Copied from past Movement articles)

I would like to take this time to wish those who I've missed, a HAPPY, HAPPY, HAPPY Birthday along with the belated. Know that you are not forgotten.  
Sincerely, Ms. Yvonne Newkirk.



### Belated Merry Christmas

This letter is going out to many people. Please know you are appreciated. We have had a tough year. In & out of prison, we have all struggled. 2 things that have really helped get me through this year & helped me hold it together are my daughter Krista & you. On TV they keep saying we are in this together, so many of you's have made me feel that love & friendship. I want to focus on being an even better man than I ever imagined. Since coming to prison I have lost almost all of my family. They have either died or forgotten I exist, but this new family I have has made me feel strong, you's have given me so much Hope. On Christmas I want you to know that though I cannot be there to celebrate this day with you, you are loved & appreciated. I have so many friends in & out of prison, I want every one of you's to know how I couldn't do this without you. I wouldn't be the man I've grown to become without you. I have hope for change, I have hope for parole for lifers, I have hope that one day I will be free. That hope does not happen without you. I have hope I will walk my daughter down the aisle one day. You are loved, you are appreciated, and you are thanked. I hope you & your family have a wonderful Christmas together & let's all get this vaccine so we can end this pandemic. Celebrate life, family & maintain hope. We 5,400+ had NO hope until CADBI was formed. So I will continue to be a voice for the voiceless, I will continue to fight along side of many of you's and we will prevail. Merry Christmas, get ready for an amazing 2021. God bless.

With Love at Christmas,

Rob Pezzeca, Rehabilitated Lifer & my daughter

# LOVE KNOWS NO BARS



My brother, ***Sunni Sakim (Edward Ball)***, called Tony by the family members and old friends went Home to rest on December 11, 2020, after a brave, lengthy, lonely, and painful fight with the Covid-19 virus.

Sunni graduated from Olney high school in 1978, he served in the Marine Corp and in 2011 he started his own production company consisting of professional disc jockeys and photographers. Little known history—Sunni held the 3rd highest position of Bethel Lodge # 1284 where he served as a member of Council.

Sunni was sentenced to 60 to 120 months for "poss of a fire-arm (F2)" in Oct of 2013. He severed 7 1/2 years. Every time he went before the parole board (rejection board) he was given a hit.

On November 5, 2013, my brother gave me power of attorney over all and any affairs pertaining to him, his bank account, health, etc.

I started to prepare for my brothers release once he severed five years, buying his favorite soap, socks, bedroom slippers, tooth brushes, tooth paste and the list goes on and on. I even started saving five dollar bills so he could shop for the things I may have forgotten.

My brother is the reason why I am a CADBI member and a member of HRC. Sunni considered me to an advocate, for inmate rights . . . now I wonder! Here I am going to the Capital, going to Washington, and other places to speak about the

injustice of being incarcerated, and my only living sibling dies alone.

Sunni was a dedicated soldier of the Muslim faith, every letter stated and ended, 'Allah Most Gracious, Most Merciful'.

My brother was truly concerned about each and every person he came in contact with while in prison. He even had several men contact, CADBI, HRC or me when he felt their rights had been violated.

The prison never contacted me on my brothers illness. Department of CORRECTION - I called endlessly for two days before finding out anything.

Please, please keep in contact with your loved one.

Tearfully submitted,

Yvonne Newkirk

To a Comrade and Friend  
Robert "Robby B" Allen

No matter how hard it may seem,  
Trust me, just keep the faith and  
keep on fighting, and freedom will come.

Sincerely,

Your Brothers In The Struggle,

G-Ball and Shakaboona

December 2020

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



**Families & Community Speak Out!**

## **SOUND OFF!!**

Here we go again. We are in a pandemic and at such a time as this we need all the Unity we can muster via staff and kinfolks. We need compassion, empathy, and sympathy that are necessary tools essential in these chaotic times.

Who do or can we trust?

Definitely the Department of In Corrections has yet to assure us in ANYWAY that they can keep our kinfolks behind the walls from dying. Yes, I said that. I would like the Department of In Corrections (what's correct about them) to provide the necessary protective equipment to ensure that STAFF is safe and demand that staff to wear their masks. Please!!!! Are you serious?

How can our kinfolks protect themselves when the staff aren't being given the necessary PPE to protect themselves and their families? So how the hell can we expect our loved ones btw's to stay safe?

Now we had a Virtual Town Hall meeting on January 22, 2021 I believe with multiple Senators, Representatives and lying Wetzel - who didn't have enough couth to stay on and listen to the tragic testimonies of those who the Department of In Corrections failed to keep safe and died.

Who was in attendance? I am so glad you asked. Just to name a few Senator Sharif Street, Senator Katie Muth, Senator John Kane, Senator Anthony Williams, Senator Nikil Saval, Senator Amanda Cappelletti, Senator Jay Costa, Senator Tim Kearney, Senator Steve Santarsiero, Commissioner Blanche Carney, Representative Darisha Parker, Senator Maria Collett and many other participants. It was stated that they would go visit the prisons to check and see if the facilities were following protocol. Have ANY of them visited to speak with our kinfolks or did a pop-up visit? Probably NOT! So our loved ones continue to pass away and NONE is held accountable. REALLY!!! I think REALLY NOT!!! It is time to stop playing both sides and STAND UP!!! And stop being cowards and do your job. HOLD these Elected Officials Accountable. Enough is enough.

Countless loved ones have passed away and, dig this, families are the ones that are responsible for burying their loved ones without knowing the specific cause of their loved ones' deaths, let alone notified of their death, or possible death due to COVID. Many of us have been calling to the facilities, doing wellness checks, only to be told that they can't tell us how our loved ones are doing. What the what????? Are you kidding me. The Department of In Corrections cannot tell you if our loved ones are alive. Unbelievable. Then the nerve of the staff answering the phone being rude and disrespectful. Like calling SCI Phoenix about Earl Gale#CJ5015 and Sergeant Gilliam said she couldn't tell me or his mother and sister( who are CADBI DELCO members Ms. Claudia and Audrey) who's Earl counselor or Unit Manager are? Since when. Or calling SCI Greene about Demetrius White#NJ2215 and Karim Strickland#FH2802, who should not even be housed there anymore due to a riot in 2009/2010 when SCI Greene shipped their population to Michigan. Who is to be held accountable? Who dropped the ball AGAIN?

So many of my folks are passing away unnecessarily. Cool Pop aka Williams Abbott who was like a Big Brother to me and so many other senseless deaths. Edward Ball, Bruce Norris sooooo many others. WHY? Prison Society needs to have a liaison in every Prison so that staff will be on site to assist with resolving issues for our kinfolks. They have the funds to do it. I don't see much else they are doing but putting out emails. What foot work, labor or issues have truly been resolved by Prison Society. How many people have they contributed to having released since COVID? What issues have they resolved for those of you behind the walls? Exactly and probably won't until WE hold them accountable also. If you aren't part of the solution, then you are part of the problem.

Moving forward. I want to encourage you all to put in your commutation papers and stop playing. Stop looking around at everyone else leaving (the very ones that were mocked and told they would die in prison). Start advocating for YOURSELVES. There is power in the pen. I am still trying to figure out why, for almost a year, SCI Cambridge has me blocked from communicating with my family there. WHY? I

*(Continued on page 50)*

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



**Families & Community Speak Out!**

## The Big Bad Fraud Wolf

By Folami Irvine

The Big Bad Fraud Wolf

By Folami Irvine

An elder told me this story once. One day at an auto manufacturer in Detroit, a guy drove his car up and said “I just purchased this car and it’s not working!” All the top men came down to check it out, the engine, the wiring, the radiator, but they couldn’t figure out what was wrong. Finally, they turned to Mr. Willie, an African American man with little education who had a knack for cars. They said “Mr. Willie, something’s not right with this car but we checked everything! What’s the matter?” He got in the car, turned the ignition and the gas panel needle was on “E”. “This car ain’t got no gas in it!”

Sometimes it’s just common sense.

During this past year, we’ve lost a lot of lives. The root of this problem is the big bad fraud, Governor Wolf. He definitely doesn’t care about people. He is able to release over 1,000 incarcerated citizens through reprieve and commutation - people who are ill or vulnerable to illness considering our prisons are overcrowded, poorly cleaned, and lack proper quality healthcare.

Governor Wolf had commutation applications sitting on his desk, but because he didn’t move them fast enough. And Bruce Norris died from COVID in the meantime. He’s able to release them but he’s made the choice not to. I can only assume it’s because he does not care about our incarcerated family members or the families who are suffering from his lack of action.

We’ve lost a lot of loved ones. But to someone like Governor Wolf, our pain is probably insignificant. He doesn’t have family members in prison dying of COVID. But we do, our loved ones are dying. Not because of the crime they supposedly committed, but because of the lack of COVID precautions. Due to overcrowding and guards coming in out of the prisons getting them sick, everyone is at risk. It’s chemical warfare. Many guards come into these prisons without masks, yet families are told WE can’t come visit because we might carry the

virus.

Governor Wolf is blind to the struggles of real people. His wealth allows him to feel invincible and hide behind a veil of privilege. Which is ironic considering that a portion of the wealth he benefits from is directly sourced from private prisons and similar institutions that are actively endangering our families lives.

We get caught up in a lot of data and numbers. I want to deal with the basics of life for a minute. There’s so much emphasis on “evidence-based,” but at the end of the day, some things are beyond evidence. In the hood, we don’t just see what’s “evidence-based,” we see the real deal. We see our family members dying, we see that the GUARDS are bringing this virus into the prison. And we see that politicians like Wolf don’t seem to care.

We’re tired of “evidence-based.” We’re dealing with raw, with real “it is what it is” basic outcome. And the outcome is detrimental when dealing with COVID. The outcome is bad for the general population out here. But for those incarcerated, it’s an atrocity. There are so many family members at HRC, alone, that have lost someone.

Governor Wolf finally signed 13 commutations. That’s not enough. When there’s a possibility to get people out who are ill or vulnerable or have done 30, 40, 50 years, he should do it. Governor Wolf, take the opportunity to reform your past transgressions and do the right thing. Because while we continue to lose so many people like Bruce Norris, all you had to do was LIFT YOUR FINGER and empathize with the citizens who you are supposed to serve.

Governor Wolf, this is year 5. Your karma’s coming. Do the right thing – it’s common sense.

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# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## The Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration holds candlelight vigil

Samaria Bailey, TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT, Dec 2020



Organizer John Thompson with the Abolitionist Law Center speaks on the state inmates' situation. — TRIBUNE PHOTO/SAMARIA BAILEY

Relatives and allies of prison inmates demanded the release of special populations and further protection against COVID-19 at a candlelight vigil held in front of Gov. Tom Wolf's local office Tuesday.

About 20 demonstrators gathered at the effort, organized by The Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, holding candles and signs, including one that stated Wolf had "blood on his hands."

"We are going to continue to advocate for the governor to exercise his reprieve power for vulnerable populations which are seniors, people with autoimmune diseases, and specifically for him to release Russell Shoats, a 77-year-old who tested positive for COVID and is battling stage 4 cancer," said Robert Saleem Holbrook, Executive Director of the Abolitionist Law Center. "He is [preparing] for surgery. He's been in prison for 50 years. We are [demanding] Governor Wolf release this prisoner to go home and spend his last time with his family."

The Coalition wrote 23 demands, some of which are addressed to Wolf, the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Parole Board and the state legislature.

One demand addressed to Wolf states he needs to use "his reprieve power to immediately release elderly people, people

who are medically vulnerable and people nearing the end of their sentence." A demand addressed to the state legislature calls for the passage of "legislation making elderly people eligible for parole, as well as legislation allowing people to earn time off their sentences for every month served during the pandemic."

A demand addressed to the DOC stated it needs to "immediately implement and enforce basic public health measures, including proper mask use and mandatory testing for staff and increased access to masks, COVID-19 testing, and sanitation supplies for incarcerated people."

Maria A. Bivens, DOC Press Secretary, directed concerns about DOC's COVID-19 prevention protocols to their website, which outlines action steps the facilities are taking to prevent the spread of the virus.

"The Department issued a mandatory mask requirement early on in the pandemic. We continue to follow that mandate as well as the more restrictive DOH guidelines that were recently released," she said. "Also, inmates have been given cleaning supplies so they can clean their cells daily — this was also done early on."

The DOC site also details the Temporary Program to Re-trieve Sentences of Incarceration, established through order by Wolf on April 10. The order granted temporary release of vulnerable inmates, including the elderly, people with pre-existing conditions and auto-immune diseases to Community Corrections Centers, Community Corrections Facilities or home confinement, if they met a specific criteria.

But organizers pushed back on the idea that Wolf and the DOC have taken adequate steps to protect inmates from COVID-19.

Holbrook cited the "30 deaths" of prison inmates, which he said is double the number from the spring.

Patricia Vickers, a member of the Human Rights Coalition, said the temporary order Wolf signed in April made 1,800 inmates eligible for release but the DOC granted only about 150.

"[Wolf] gave that order to the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and put it in his hands. Out of the 1,800 that were eligible to be released, only approximately 150 were released. Even [of] the 1,800 who were eligible, it's only a drop in the bucket of people who are vulnerable or sick or [eligible] to come home," said Vickers. "Other states have released 2,000

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(Continued from page 24)

individuals from prison and here in our state, we only did 150 to 160.”

Bivens confirmed that 159 inmates were granted a reprieve, with some having already returned.

“We had 159 reprieves in total,” she said. “There are 107 that are still active, and one passed away ... [The] remainder have been returned to an SCI.”

Vickers added that although corrections officers are required to wear masks, she’s received reports of guards not wearing masks or wearing the masks under their chin.

“Then, they have these homemade masks with Trump propaganda. It’s not legitimate. There’s no type of mandate or consequence if you don’t wear them. We’re getting this report from dozens of prisoners. The prisoners can’t bring it in. The guards are bringing it in and they are bringing it in by not wearing masks or gloves. Prisoners have not been out. They have been in [confinement] 23 hours a day and we are getting this from different prisoners. We are getting this same story.”

Vickers added the guards should also be mandated to wear N95 masks, the same masks that first responders have to wear. Another issue raising red flags is that one prison is using a gym to house inmates who’ve tested positive for COVID-19.

“There are sick people in the gym, they’re all positive, all showing signs. There’s one toilet and two urinals that all the sick guys have to use. No one is cleaning up in that area,” Vickers said.

According to the DOC coronavirus guidance on their website, SCI’s have “increased” sanitation and “every SCI has plans in place for quarantine if an inmate tests positive.”

Describing the reports she’s received from inmates as a different scenario, Vickers said they’re being treated inhumanely.

“I get guys [calling] me and [writing] me. They all say the same thing. They’re treating those guys horrible in there. You might be sentenced to three years, five years [but] you’re not sentenced to death. If you’re due to come home in three months, why make you stay there and die? That’s why we’re asking the governor to give the reprieve. If you’re sick, have pre-existing conditions and elderly, why let you stay there and die?”

(Continued from page 26)

This bill contrasts the current compassionate release process, where individuals are only able to petition the court for release if they are near death and can only be released to a hospital, long-term care nursing facility, or hospice care provider. It also contrasts previous introduced bills with similar intent in that it does not use the parole process as the mechanism for release (but rather the courts), and it does not exclude people from eligibility based on offense type. This second point is quite significant, for this bill would finally provide a mechanism for release for individuals serving life sentences.

However, we know that this aspect of the bill in particular is likely to be the target of senate Republicans’ spiteful attacks, as they lack the imaginative capacity to understand that incarcerated people are just that – people. The question is, in what ways will they try to undermine bill? And who will be included in the end? Luckily this year we will have more capacity and staff to lobby these legislators more systematically than in the past to persuade them directly about the issue. We definitely want and need your folks outside involved with that!

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***You may contact HRC-Philly at  
this address:***

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

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

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# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Senator Street Plans to Introduce Legislation Providing a Mechanism of Release for Ill and Aging People

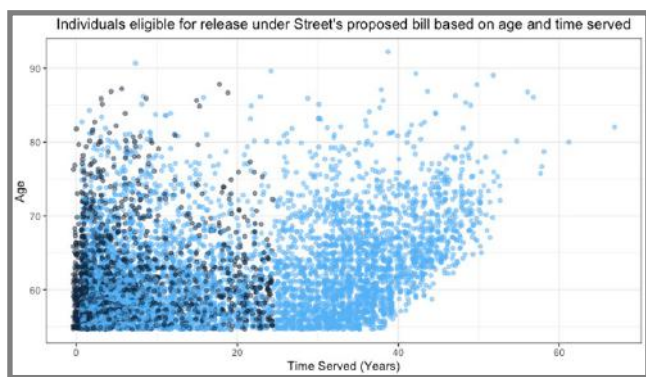
By Juliette Rando

In January, Senator Sharif Street announced his plan to introduce legislation that would provide a way out for aging individuals and individuals with serious health issues. We've now seen a first draft of the proposed legislation, but it is likely to evolve both before and after its introduction in the Senate. Here's an overview of what the bill looks like in its current state:

### All aging and ill people are included.

The bill permits individuals to petition the court to modify their sentence if *either* of the following apply:

- The individual demonstrates a “substantially diminished ability to function in a correctional institution” due to a terminal illness, a chronic and debilitating physical or medical condition or disease, a serious functional or cognitive impairment, or deteriorating physical or mental health due to the aging process
- The individual is at least 55 years old *and* has served at least 25 years in prison or at least half of their minimum term (whichever is less) *and* the court determines that the individual does not pose a threat to public safety (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** depicts the time served for all individuals over the age of 55 incarcerated on 6/10/20. In blue are individuals who would meet the eligibility criteria because they have served 25 years or at least half their minimum term. In total, 5,647 people would become eligible to petition the courts for release under Street's bill.

The bill directs the court to consider a holistic view of the individual petitioning for release.

Similar to the approach used for the resentencing of juvenile lifers, this bill directs the court to consider a multitude of factors when issuing a decision on an individual's petition for sentence modification. These factors include:

- The current age, physical and mental condition of the individual and their ability to function within a correctional environment
- The individual's disciplinary record, a full set of records of accomplishments and any records demonstrating rehabilitation while incarcerated
- The individuals' post-release care plan (if one exists)
- Any response to the petition submitted by the Office of the Victim Advocate and any registered victim of the offense
- Recommendations by the secretary
- The offense that resulted in the individual's conviction
- The incarcerated individual's sentence and time served for the conviction
- The likelihood that the incarcerated individual would pose a danger to others or the general public if released

### Other provisions

The bill also permits the individual's family members, partner, or attorney to submit a petition on their behalf and requires that the DOC assist with the petition preparation and submission process if requested by the individual or their family, partner or attorney.

The court must issue a decision on the petition within 15 days for individuals petitioning based on illness and 30 days for individuals petitioning based on age/ time served. If the courts decide to grant a sentence modification, they may impose the same conditions for release used in the probation process “and any other condition specifically tailored to the circumstances relating to the sentence that is the least restrictive of the incarcerated individual's individual liberty.”

*(Continued on page 25)*

# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

## Toxic Prisons

By Valerie Kiebala

Valerie Kiebala, the former editorial manager and writer for *Solitary Watch*, conducted the following interview with BP, a 45-year-old organizer with the Toxic Prisons campaign and Shut Down Fayette campaign. BP was born and raised in the city of Philadelphia and served ten years at SCI Fayette before he was released on parole in June 2020. Before his incarceration, BP taught as an adjunct professor at both Temple University and Eastern University. BP holds three degrees: a Bachelor of Religious Education in Pastoral Theology, a Master of Divinity, and a Master of Science in Higher Education Administration, Organizational Leadership.

According to Jackson Kusiak, an organizer with Toxic Prisons, "The campaign to close SCI Fayette and advocate for the health and rights of people incarcerated there, was started by people incarcerated at Fayette with support from Dustin McDaniel of the Abolitionist Law Center (ALC) in 2012. Dustin connected with Shandre Delaney of HRC Fed-Up in Pittsburgh, Ben Fiorello of Put People First and Veronica Coptis of the Center for Coalfield Justice. Together, they created and sent in a health survey to hundreds of people incarcerated at Fayette, and the Center for Coalfield Justice waged a campaign against Matt Canestrone Corporation (MCC) to force them to stop dumping toxic coal ash at the site next to SCI Fayette. In 2014, these groups came together to release the findings of the health survey in a report called, "No Escape: Exposure to Toxic Coal Waste at State Correctional Institution Fayette." The efforts to stop the active waste dumping at the MCC site were successful in 2015 and the dump site shut down, but much of the efforts around the larger campaign to close SCI Fayette had died down since all the organizations involved were spearheading other campaigns."

"In 2018, Richard Mosley, who was formerly incarcerated at Fayette and suffered serious health consequences, started speaking out about his experiences and formed a Fayette Health Justice chapter of Put People First. In addition, Shandre Delaney of HRC Fed-Up hosted and coordinated a national Convergence of the Fight Toxic Prisons campaign in Pittsburgh and SCI Fayette was a central issue addressed at the convergence. Members of Put People First, the Center for Coalfield Justice, ALC and HRC attended the convergence and started talking about reigniting the campaign to shut down Fayette. In January of 2019, 15 people incarcerated in the RHU at SCI Fayette, in the notorious L-Block, went on hunger strike for 2 weeks protesting brutal conditions in solitary confinement and the toxic water quality. This hunger

strike included several long-term HRC advisory council members, including Reggie "Country" West and Caine Pelzer."

"On July 4 of 2019, people in the RHU at SCI Fayette went on hunger strike again and this time, outside members of the Human Rights Coalition decided to join them. On August 1 of 2019, myself (Jackson Kusiak), Wesley Hackman, and Ms. Karen Ali initiated a hunger strike while dozens of HRC members protested outside of the head offices of the Department of Corrections in Mechanicsburg, PA. We demonstrated in order to call attention to the demands of the hunger strikers and to call on the PADOA to close SCI Fayette permanently. After the hunger strike and protests died down, several members of HRC-Philly wanted to start a committee to reinvigorate the campaign to #ShutDownFayette. In September of 2019, Trika Parasimo and Jackson Kusiak started the Toxic Prisons and Environmental Justice Committee of HRC to grow the campaign to close SCI Fayette and to fight for environmental justice for people incarcerated in toxic prisons everywhere. The Toxic Prisons Committee has grown greatly since then, has spread across Pennsylvania, and HRC was able to hire three paid #ShutDownFayette organizers in November of 2020."

**Val:** While you were incarcerated at Fayette, did you experience any of the health complications related to the toxins from the nearby plant?

**BP:** Over time, I experienced problems with my skin. I developed this problem where I would have hardness of my skin on my left leg. Some of the hardness was on my upper front thigh and part of it was on the back of my calf muscle. I would have this severe itching. Another thing that happened is that the skin on my face became discolored so I developed these lighter spots on my face.

**V:** Did they give you any treatment for that?

**B:** I didn't go to medical for that because the things I went to medical for, they never really treated.

**V:** Were there a lot of other people that you knew who experienced what seemed like health complications from the coal toxins?

**B:** Absolutely. There were a lot of people who developed different types of cancers: stomach cancers, skin cancers, lung cancers. There were a lot more people who had different

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kinds of skin problems: rashes, itching, irritation, that sort of thing.

**V:** How did the campaign to shut down Fayette come about?

**B:** The campaign to shut down Fayette was born out of Toxic Prisons and Put People First. The [Fayette Health Justice Chapter of] Put People First was started by a guy named Richard Mosley, who was also [incarcerated] at Fayette. He left Fayette in 2012. And so he got involved in the Human Rights Coalition, and he was supported in [his work with] Put People First, and he really [revived] the Toxic Prisons campaign and wanted it to focus on Fayette because of the damage and because of the illnesses that people suffered as a consequence of the water and overall environment there. So the Shut Down Fayette campaign was a sort of natural outgrowth of Toxic Prisons campaign.

**V:** Can you briefly describe the goal of the Toxic Prisons campaign?

**B:** The goal of the Toxic Prisons campaign is to eradicate dangerous toxins, so we're talking about the actual toxins in the physical environment of prisons. That occurs by helping the executives at the DOC, along with the legislators of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to become increasingly aware that other folks understand and know that several of these prisons are either built upon or are near places with high levels of toxicity. And that there is a public desire, a public cry, a public demand for these issues to be addressed [and] corrected. Part of how that happens is through phone calls to state senators, state congress people, national senators, by lobbying Harrisburg, lobbying the Governor's office, and also through writing bills that we hope will not only garner attention but hopefully will get passed in the Pennsylvania Commonwealth legislature.

**V:** Are there any updates with the situation at Fayette now?

**B:** Well one of the things that we're doing is building relationships with senators. We are hoping that through legislation, the Commonwealth will be persuaded to acknowledge that SCI Fayette specifically—having been built upon and near a very toxic site of coal ash—has added to the disproportionate number of cancers, health conditions, lung problems, and breathing problems that many of the inmates there have developed over the years. One of the things that we are hoping to have happen is that the water and soil be tested again. It has been tested in the past and the results have been kept from the public. We want these to be honestly docu-

mented and revealed to the public. And we want them to admit that this physical plant [in La Belle, Pennsylvania] is dangerous.

**V:** How has your time inside informed your work with the HRC?

**B:** It set the foundation for my desire to see change. Not only in seeing this particular prison shut down and many of its inmates released—as I desire to see all across the state and, even, the country—but also because I know personally the damage and the physical problems that many of us suffered and are still suffering there at Fayette. So it laid the foundation, and it built for me an intimate understanding and awareness of some of the problems that men have endured as a result of the toxic levels in the water and overall environment there.

**V:** How can incarcerated people or family members get involved, if they're interested?

**B:** The Human Rights Coalition has a very strong motivation to partner with and to be in direct communication with incarcerated persons. And although our base is Pennsylvania, we want our reach to become national. So we want inmates to be in touch, we want inmates to talk with us, to share their experiences with us. We want to have an understanding of what inmates need, specifically with the Toxic Prisons and Shut Down Fayette project, we want inmates at Fayette to help us understand the challenges and the problems and the pains that they suffer as a result of the levels of toxicity there. And we want them to understand that their families and their loved ones have an advocate in the Human Rights Coalition.

We want to galvanize the strength, the energy, the hope, and the resources of those whom are incarcerated along with their family and friends and loved ones so that our numbers increase. And we want the families to understand not only that they have an advocate but that we need them to help us advocate for change. With as much as we're able to do, we can only become more successful and achieve our goals if we have as many members of the communities at large getting involved with us. To that end, I want to put out the call not only to family members, loved ones, and friends of those who are incarcerated specifically and especially at Fayette, but to those who have a heart, who have a passion for justice reform, for prison reform, for restorative justice, for environmental justice, those who feel a passion for societal health, for community health, to get on board.

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## CADBI - D.E.L.C.O. Update

Good Great Day My Sisters and Brothers in and out the struggle.

CADBI-D.E.L.C.O. had their 2nd Anniversary on Saturday, January 16, 2021. The keynote speaker was B.L. Shirelle, a Philadelphia Native and songwriter, in addition there were heartfelt testimonies from members of CADBI-DELCO, (Members who had loved ones behind the walls).

Chris McEneaney #HB8088 who resides at SCI Mahanoy, Mother Shelly McEneaney spoke on how her son has grown up in the judicial system and how he has educated himself, accomplished and done great exploits while behind the wall. She expressed and prayed that the current D.A. Jack Stollsteimer of Delaware County would keep his word and give those behind the walls a second chance.

For many they never had a first chance, so this will be the first chance for many to do and get it right now that they are older, wiser, have invested, and cultivated skills in those who are in their community and mentoring them NOT to make mistakes that would not be in their best interest. Zahrah (Flora) Iyaas, has a son in Sussex County, Maryland. Curtis M. Lopez #414621 SID#3740432 North Branch Correctional Institution 14100 McMullen Hwy. SW Cumberland, MD 21502-5622.

The Public Defender from Media, Lee Awbrey, spoke on the duties that the Public Defenders Office holds and the slow process of the court - due to COVID.

Please enjoy the photos (to your right) of CADBI DELCO's 2nd Anniversary.

We are now working on fundraising and getting resources and strategies to bail out mother(s), caregiver(s) for Mother's Day. It's our M.D.B.O. so if anyone is willing to volunteer a few hours a month please give me a call at our CADBI-DELCO Headquarters, 484-561-7273. If you are interested in donating you can send a check or money order (payable to CADBI DELCO) to 1010 Sunset St., Trainer, PA 19061, or cash app \$Cadbidelco .

We have our meetings every First Saturday of the month from 10:30am to 12pm SHARP at 1010 Sunset St., Trainer, Pa 19061. Our email is: [delccadbi@gmail.com](mailto:delccadbi@gmail.com). If you are interested in becoming a member of CADBI-DELCO, we are located in Delaware County 113 at 9th and Sunset, walk up a block or call 610-485 6090, around the corner from Chester, Pa. You can write to us and we will send your registration

form and add you to our mailing and contact list. If you have family in the Delco area (Delaware County) please ask them to come out and help us help you. Please STAY UP!!!

Dana Lomax-Williams, CADBI DELCO President



# The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!



## End Death By Incarceration 2021 Billboard Campaign

Let's Get Free rolled out our 2021 Billboard Campaign and launched a Go Fund Me in which our total goal is \$40,000. The billboards are being placed on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and will amplify the message that Life Sentences are Death Sentences to people outside of our committed justice bubbles while boldly advocating for an End to Death by Incarceration (DBI) in Pennsylvania.

Billboards will include images of women serving DBI sentences in PA along with our website address where viewers can follow links to short films featuring the women on the billboards. Billboards will also include the statistic "5467 People in PA are Sentenced to Die in Prison." Thank you to Tameka Flowers, Charmaine Pfender and Sarita Miller for consenting to be on the billboard. We didn't have too many photos to choose from. This graphic was designed by the People's Paper Coop and the stills are from footage shot by Tusko films. When you go to the homepage of Let's Get Free's website, you can see videos of Tameka, Char and Sarita. (<https://letsgetfree.info>)

The billboards will be launched in conjunction with each of the four sessions of merit review and public hearings in 2021. These hearings are important stages in the commutation process - one of the only ways for people with life sentences to be released from prison.

**Our first billboard was installed on January 18!!!** More than 1,000,000 impressions are expected to be made upon drivers heading from Pittsburgh to Harrisburg and Philadelphia. Many of these people will be exposed to this issue for the first time.

With sponsorship from CADBI West and the Prison Radio Project we have secured rent for one billboard on the turnpike for this year. Each group donated \$3000 to cover a two month stint. That's one billboard up in different places during the merit reviews and public hearings for a total of 8 months throughout the year. (Just so you know, one billboard for the whole year costs \$18,000 and we just don't have it like that.)

In addition to rent, printing each billboard vinyl costs \$1300 and we decided to change the design. In highsides on the turnpike - depending on the placement of the billboard our original design we realized is a bit too wordy; "5647 People in PA are sentenced to die in prison" so we are simplifying it to "Life Sentences are Death Sentences" with End Death By Incarceration along the bottom. The vinyl's can be reused as long as the billboards are the same size and our first design would be great in a city, near a stop light for instance.

A note on the statistic: This number is as accurate as it can be with the reality that it fluctuates. As of Nov. 2020 the DOC listed 5191 people sentenced as adults serving and as of Sep. 2020- 276 people sentenced as under the age of 18 still serving. So 5,467 was true as of winter 2020. We know that number has already gone down slightly for joyous and heartbreaking reasons. 13 people were finally released on commutation and we have lost many to COVID.

**Community Supported Advertising HELP US KEEP OUR BILLBOARD GOING! \$25,000 to go.**

We are still trying to raise that \$40,000. We have raised collectively \$15,000, that leaves us with \$25,000.

With your contribution this messaging is truly a grassroots effort.

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## 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.

Greetings! I'm back with another amazing interview as I promised to keep delivering. With so much going on in the world today I refuse to forget about the men and women behind enemy lines who're still fighting for their freedom. These brothers and sisters need, and have, our support and love; know that you're not in this fight alone.

For this issue of 'THE MOVEMENT' I have the privilege to interview a woman who is very active in the fight for prisoners' rights. I'm sure you all will enjoy her story while it could make you shed a few tears.



**Tyree:** Hello Cynthia. First let me say I appreciate your willingness to do this interview and I'm sure our readers will enjoy hearing your story.

**Cynthia:** I appreciate the platform and I am extremely honored to share my story. This interview is my story but is also the story of many of my comrades I left behind. Thank you for the opportunity.

**Tyree:** You're very welcome. So, let's start by telling our readers who you are and what type of work you do.

**Cynthia:** My name is Cynthia Alvarado and I am an abolitionist, agitator, and advocate for the women I left behind. I am an ex-lifer who won my federal habeas petition on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, after serving 12 years in prison. I do my work via

Instagram. And it has proven to be very productive in getting these messages about corruption to many people, including celebrities who follow my page.

**Tyree:** Wow that's exciting! Congratulations on winning your freedom. So you had a life sentence, won your appeal and now fighting for the rights and freedom of others in prison. Why get involved with this sort of work since you are free?

**Cynthia:** First of all, thank you. This question is emotional especially because, yes, I am free. But my eyes have seen so many injustices and my heart is still tied to my friends who are still suffering. So physically I am free, but spiritually I am not. Many of my mentors who taught me to hold my head high under extreme circumstances are still suffering. I think about them every day and it's hard to not become emotional to do this work for them. The "likes" I receive on Instagram are cool but it's not about being popular for me. It is about humans who are thrown away by our system.

**Tyree:** Yes Sister I feel you. This is why I do the things I do, because my brothers and sisters need people like us to tell their stories to the world. So how have you been adjusting out here in this cruel world? How are you currently employed?

**Cynthia:** I am not currently employed; however, through Human Rights Coalition and Saleem I've been paid for talks and zooms. I have all also used my platform to do small promotions. I am a strong woman who knows how to survive with little, as I'm sure you can relate to. Coming home to the pandemic, Philadelphia did not help me at all with resources. I do receive food stamps which I'm extremely grateful for. And I was fortunate enough to have housing provided for me by Danny Garcia; I couldn't imagine not having a place to live. This new world does not communicate, people are living fast and losing the value of family. I believe this conditioning was intentional by our government to conquer and divide.

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**Tyree:** So as you know I served 21 years and in a men's prison we go through a lot. Some men are physically mentally and verbally abused. How is it for women?

**Cynthia:** I can say that I have a background of childhood trauma especially being from the Badlands. But I have never been so traumatized like I was in prison. As I have spoken about publicly, I was raped in the county jail in Philadelphia. I couldn't tell the prison officials about this crime committed against me, in fear of retaliation; I lived with that secret for years. I was always afraid when I went upstate that the same thing would occur. I contemplated suicide a lot; but, thoughts of my mother and daughters would stop me. I've known so many women who killed themselves upstate while in solitary confinement and in general population. All of these deaths could have been prevented, but they simply don't care about us. I've been called fat, threatened to be put over a wall simply for being Latina. I was called a bad mother; told I would never leave Muncy. The prison officials at Muncy were very racist and treated the white inmates better.

**Tyree:** Hearing your story is going to be motivation to a lot of men and women, in and out of prison. I followed you on Instagram and was pleased to work with you on the SolidarityNotSolitary campaign. I feel like our sisters don't get enough support while they're behind enemy lines. But I hope this will change once the people see our interview. Sister, you are amazing and doing great work. Continue to do what you're doing. Is there any last things you would like to add before the conclusion of this interview?

**Cynthia:** Meeting you was a blessing by God and our great friend and mentor Saleem who introduced us. You are also doing great work; and I respect the man you chose to be. Together we will fight until those gates of hell are torn down. I believe that God open the doors for me, so that I can tell the world that prison is not about rehabilitation, but about perpetuating a false narrative to the public, that people in prison are not capable of change. The real monsters are the politicians and the corrupt guards and administrators who cover the abuse they impose on people in prison. Thank you again Brother. Ten toes down.

**Tyree:** You're welcome Sister and we will continue to fight because it is in us.



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# Human Rights Coalition Report

*Mumia Abu-Jamal and Russell 'Maroon' Shoatz - both ELDERS - respectively 66 and 77 years old. Both plagued with illnesses ignited by horrible prison conditions and inflamed by medical neglect. Two politically inspired ELDERS, the epitome of what happens when Black men are intelligent, outspoken, and stand their ground. Read below! Then tell governor Wolf to let our ELDERS go – he has the power to grant them reprieve. Governor Wolf, 110 N 8th St Ste 505, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Or call (717) 787-2500; Or Fax (717) 772-8284.*

RUSSELL  
'MAROON' SHOATZ



MUMIA  
ABU-JAMAL



## Russell 'Maroon' Shoatz

On January 6, 2021, 145 organizations signed a letter to Governor Tom Wolf, Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman, and Attorney General Josh Shapiro calling for the immediate release of Russell "Maroon" Shoatz. The next day, health experts wrote to the governor and declared, "We know that Mr. Shoatz is in imminent danger of death if he remains incarcerated."

In correspondence with a family member, Shoatz wrote, "I am a New Afrikan Political Prisoner of War, who at this moment is serving a prison sentence at Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, a state institution. I was originally locked up in January of 1972, and have since spent over 25 years in 15 different state, county, and federal prisons, jails and a maximum-security prison/mental institution. Over 20 of these years were spent in the 'holes' of these various facilities locked down for 23 hours daily. I became increasingly politically aware and active in the New Afrikan liberation movement."

Shoatz, who is now 77 years old, approaches 50 years of his death by incarceration sentence next year. In the spring of 2019, Shoatz was diagnosed with stage 4 rectal cancer and has since been diagnosed with COVID-19 as well. Sister Noah-Harmony, Shoatz's niece, said, "He's been in jail for some time and it's time to come home. It's really, really time for him to come home. He's no threat. He's been there for 49 years."

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## Mumia Abu-Jamal

In 1982, Mumia Abu-Jamal was a young journalist in Philadelphia falsely accused, convicted, and sentenced to death for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer. Prosecutorial misconduct pervaded his trial so much that Amnesty International called it, "a trial that failed to meet international standards." Evidence was concealed from the jury, racial biases were strong, testimony from tainted witnesses was used, and they failed to complete the forensic tests needed by investigators, just to name a few. Thirty-nine years later, Mumia is 64 years old, a political prisoner in the SCI Mahanoy facility sentenced to death by incarceration, and suffering from chronic and debilitating health issues.

In 2014, he began experiencing life-threatening complications from Hepatitis C (HCV), psoriasis, open wounds, and liver damage. In addition, he has high blood pressure and glaucoma. Chronic liver disease remains a leading cause of death among African Americans.

In 2014, Mumia was placed in the infirmary, where they treated him with a topical steroid that triggered a diabetic reaction. The reaction caused his sugar to go so low that he went into renal failure. Prison staff failed to check his blood sugar regularly, even though a doctor had ordered it to be monitored. As a result of their failure to monitor, Mumia was rushed to a local hospital where he stayed for three to four days. The contracted prison healthcare system again failed to test Mumia for HCV and his condition remained undiagnosed, untreated and again unmonitored.

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In the past 30 years, Shoatz has maintained an exemplary disciplinary record and has become known as an activist, educator, and elder. Noah-Harmony said, “He’s the oldest living male in my family... There’s so many generations that have been hurt by this. And we recognize the suffering with the other families that have been affected by this. I’m talking about the recognition of being associated with police officer Frank Von Colln being murdered. We recognize the trauma they’ve experienced with losing a loved one. So it’s clear, it’s a new day, and I’m interested in seeing newness and not suffering.”

Shoatz acquired the name “Maroon” after twice escaping from prison, first in 1977 and again in 1980. The word maroon describes Afrikans who escaped slavery in the Americas and formed their own semi-independent, self-governed communities. Following his escape, Shoatz was held in solitary confinement for 22 consecutive years (30 non-consecutive years) until the Abolitionist Law Center settled a civil rights lawsuit, challenging his isolation as cruel and unusual punishment. In 2016, after a campaign led by his family and supporters sparked international attention, Shoatz was released from solitary.

Recently, Shoatz reported that he was being held in a gymnasium with twenty other people and only one toilet. At that time, he was also diagnosed with COVID-19 and suffering from cancer. According to health experts, after testing positive for the virus, officials placed Shoatz in 24-hour solitary confinement, while he suffered severe gastrointestinal distress. Shoatz has since tested negative for the coronavirus and undergone a stem cell implant procedure, but Noah-Harmony said that, like many others, he is “still facing execution by medical neglect.”

Shoatz’s family and supporters are calling for his immediate release and demand: “FREE MAROON NOW.” In closing, Sister Noah-Harmony said, “He’s my mother’s older brother, my uncle. He was locked up before I was born. I haven’t been on this earth for more than four decades. These are things that I recognize and just seeing the trauma that it has caused my family—generations of it—just living this experience of having a U.S.-held political family member in captive. So, again, he’s dying. We’re asking for compassion and mercy, wherever they can find it. It’s tearing us apart, literally and figuratively.”

In preparation for his release, Shoatz’s family has partnered with his childhood neighborhood to begin constructing an eco-friendly domicile for him once he is liberated. Ultimately, the land will be used “to cultivate and harvest organic

produce, with the goal of reaching out to families in need,” according to the GoFundMe page for the project. To support the project, you can contact the Campaign to Free Russell Maroon Shoatz at maroonpartyforliberation@gmail.com.

By Valerie Kiebala

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## TO PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATURE, DOC, and GOVERNOR WOLF on behalf of Russell ‘Maroon’ Shoatz

When you grow up in the ghetto, poor and alone, you tend to dedicate your life to the pursuit of respect. And we’re taught that in order to earn this respect, we have to be violent, or misogynist, or materialistic. Our role models came to us directly out of films promoting gangsterism and criminality. Unfortunately, many of us become ensnared in this trap long before we realize that we’re a part of a big game. And in the process, countless lives are ruined, countless victims created, and countless communities destroyed.

Before I met Russell Shoatz, I had no direction and no vision. I hadn’t done one positive thing in my ten years of incarceration. Russell Shoatz taught me to channel my anger, and turn it into a thirst for knowledge. He taught me how to study and how to face the harsh truths about myself that I was so used to easily ignoring. He taught me that accountability and remorse were true virtues. And he taught me that I have the ability and potential to change the world. Russell Shoatz made me want to be a better speaker and a better writer. So I began to study his style. I emulated it as best I could - and still do - although I know I’ll never be as great as it as him. Quite honestly, Russell Shoatz is the first, and only, role model I’ve ever had after my own father - who died many years ago. And he didn’t judge me or shun me the way that many elders do. He was patient with me, and he understood what I was struggling with within myself. More importantly, he spoke a language that me and my generation could understand!

I remember his response when I told him that I was ready to learn: “Before you start learning, you have to accept the possibility that everything you thought you knew, was wrong.” I didn’t understand it then, but I do now. I - like so many in my generation - had been living a lie, chasing something that wasn’t real. Russell Shoatz taught me how to lead. And he never, ever encouraged me to do something that would harm

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myself or other people. Its not a coincidence that I haven't had a single misconduct report written against me since I met Russell Shoatz. To the contrary, I've been extremely active as a leader and role model. Before meeting Russell Shoatz, I hadn't acquired one single certificate for anything. However, since we met, I now have nearly 60 certificates and awards to my name. I even earned an award from a local radio station, for the work I've done on our institutional newsletter. Russell Shoatz is now in his seventies. Not only is he in the late stages of one of the most deadliest forms of cancer, but he also was infected by Covid-19. I think about him and his life every day of mine. I think about where I'd be if I'd never met this loving, caring, generous man, who owed me nothing, but treated me like a son. Words cannot express what Russell Shoatz means to me and my peers. So I can only imagine what he means to his family and community. When I watch the news and I see the violence plaguing the very communities that I grew up in, I'm saddened by the alarming amounts of young folks who are dying and doing the killing. I often find myself wondering what could I say to those youths who believe that the only way to feel valued is to devalue others? I wonder what could anybody have said to me, in order to convince me to change the way I thought and acted? Those questions consume me. And then I think of Russell Shoatz: what did he do to make me want to change? Easy: he reminded me that I was a human being, and I already had value.

Whatever crimes that Russell Shoatz is accused of committing, he's served his time - and then some! A human being of such value doesn't deserve to die in prison. What is the measure of remorse? How do we determine whether or not a person is committed to being a positive influence on society? And if the meaning of integrity is to do the right thing, even when nobody is watching, isn't Russell Shoatz the quintessential illustration of that standard? After all, he had nothing to gain by being a mentor and teacher to numerous young men who he'd never even met prior to doing time in solitary confinement - where he spent nearly three decades of his life! Russell Shoatz did what was right, even when nobody was looking. And because of that, I try to do the same. No matter the task I'm facing, I always ask myself: how would my elders think about the decision that I'm about to make? By himself, Russell Shoatz isn't the cure to those societal ills which we daily bemoan. But he surely is a part of the cure! How much longer can we claim to want to change what's taking place in our communities, while ignoring those who have the ability to make a difference? No amount of legislation, no amount of punishment, no amount

of extra police officers will be able to have the kind of impact that leaders such as Russell Shoatz can have. It would be such a waste of human potential to allow Russell Shoatz to die in prison. But let me be clear: when I say that it would be such a waste of human potential, I'm not merely speaking of RUSSELL'S human potential; I'm speaking about YOURS! You, sir or ma'am, are in a unique position to express forgiveness and grace in a way that others can only imagine. The voters (citizens) whom elected you, didn't do so simply because of your politics, but also because you represent those innate values which leaders wield with a subtle dignity, understanding that nothing on earth is as gentle as real strength, and nothing on earth is stronger than real gentleness.

So, for you to choose not to wield that gentle strength, by not doing the right thing, due to political correctness or any other reason, you are surely - and sadly - wasting your own human potential. At one point, many folks believed that I was irredeemable. Yet here I am, years later, with friends from all walks of life, counting on me, depending on me to come home and be a leader in my community. I didn't reach this point by myself. And neither did you. We've all made poor decisions; we've all had regrettable moments in life which shouldn't define us. I'm asking you, on behalf of countless young men on the inside of prison, to release Russell Maroon Shoatz, so that he can be in the comfort of his family and community as he fights two deadly diseases. Don't judge him at his worst moments, but remember the good. Remember his activism during the civil rights era; remember that he's a father and grandfather; remember that even to this day, he is a beloved and respected member of his community. And lastly, remember young men like me. To whom it may concern, grace is always greater than any other action or emotion. I urge you to dig deep and discover the grace that exists within you - because it exists within all of us. Russell Shoatz has suffered enough. Fifty years of incarceration is enough. Do the right thing, and free Russell Maroon Shoatz. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely, Sergio Hyland #FX - 1537

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"I met Russell "Maroon" Shoatz in 1998 at what was then Pennsylvania's only SuperMax prison, SCI Greene. While it is no longer a SuperMax now but back then it was a new facility designed to destroy men's minds and humanity. The treatment of prisoners by the guards and state was cruel,

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# Human Rights Coalition Report

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brutal and calculated. SCI Greene held prisoners in indefinite solitary confinement for years, often decades, and, in the case of Maroon over three decades, under conditions so extreme that human rights groups and even the United Nations call torture.

Long term solitary confinement, often times called Control Units, SHU, RHU...etc, is designed to confine a person in a tiny cell, under extreme sensory deprivation. Lights are kept on in the cell 24 hours a day, often with nothing in the cell other than a toilet and a bed. The design of the prison often includes preventing prisoners from even talking to each other. Personal property is not allowed.

The treatment by guards was often brutal. Assaults by staff occurred often and always kept out of any camera's view. SCI Greene was under both state and federal investigation for staff assaults; and, surveillance videos routinely came up missing or erased.

Control Units are an environment where the noise at times is a roar so loud you can barely even think, at other times so quiet you can hear your own heartbeat. Everything is treated as a "privilege" that must be earned including food and toiletries. Human contact is through a tiny slot in the gate. No visits, no phone calls and sometimes, even, no mail. Simply put, you are placed in an empty cell for year or decades starving the human spirit while slowly dying. Everything is designed to make the prisoner feel helpless and isolated. The staff controls everything from when you eat, sleep, shower and even when you use the toilet.

The DOC uses the control units to punish men and women who refuse to give up their own sense of self or refuses to adopt the prison culture of violence and apathy. Prisons cannot operate if the people within do not think themselves as anything other than prisoners. You are viewed as a threat if you are unbroken in spirit and mind, or too willful, or have the ability to lead or make people think. It's not an act of breaking a rule that puts you in the Control Units; rather, it's who you are as a person.

I watched many men break in the control units. Could see their will slipping away and watched guards in glee as they found another way to torture men's minds.

These were the conditions at SCI Greene when I met Maroon. Despite being surrounded by this madness, Maroon was at the center, calm and helping others. In a place designed to destroy men's will and their humanity Maroon taught others to raise their consciousness and to rise above the destructive prison culture.

Maroon helped men fill the ocean of emptiness with meaning and purpose. He taught history, organized group discussions, taught men not what to think, but how to think, and gave them the tools to cope with an environment designed to destroy them; most importantly he raised men's consciousness allowing them to better themselves. And at a time when I needed it the most, he helped me not only survive control units but also to better myself and rise above these prison walls.

The Pa. DOC and their control units have done everything they could to destroy this man, yet, somehow he not only survived but also helped others. And now as Maroon has aged, his health has deteriorated. He has faced cancer, multiple operations, and COVID within a system indifferent to medical needs.

We must demand the Pa. DOC give Maroon the life saving medical treatment he needs, and, demand the state give the reprieve a just society demands. Maroon is now 77 years old and not a threat to anyone. He is, in fact, an invaluable resource for the next generations. His knowledge and wisdom must not be allowed to become lost to indifference. If the measure of the justice system is to be just, then how can it justify keeping a " " year old man in prison when he has served most of his life behind walls and is now facing both cancer and COVID. Indifference cannot outweigh justice.

From Todd Tarselli

\*\*\*\*\*

***You may contact HRC-  
Pittsburg at this address:***

***Human Rights Coalition &  
PJWSC Jailhouse Lawyer  
Support***

***P.O. Box 8561  
Pittsburgh, PA 15220  
PH: 412-628-3759***

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Upon hospital discharge, Mumia was placed back in the infirmary with many open painful wounds. Prison Radio battled with the prison for a diagnosis and treatment for a year. Imagine being held in an infirmary, unable to walk, weak and sick for a full year without receiving the proper diagnoses and care. It's unimaginable. The Abolitionist Law Center stepped up and litigated on behalf of Mumia's 8th Amendment rights to proper medical care. Each year Mumia lived with HCV without the proper treatment increased his chances of contracting liver cancer by 10% per year, as a lasting effect of the medical neglect.

Around late 2013 or early 2014, the U.S. government approved a groundbreaking cure for Hep C, which was 95% effective. The prison refused to make this cure available to prisoners. Ultimately, the Abolitionist Law Center won a 3rd circuit injunction forcing the prison to treat Mumia for Hepatitis C.

Mumia's case set precedent as the first in the country to have court ordered care.

In addition to his medical problems related to HCV, Mumia has been suffering from cirrhosis and glaucoma due to lack of treatment. His glaucoma went untreated for 10 years. He has had surgery on both of his eyes. The PA DOC used to have a "one eye rule," which is a prison healthcare policy in some DOCs, intended to lower healthcare costs, that states, "One eye is good enough for prison inmates." This leads you to question: are there incentives in place for healthcare providers or facilities to under diagnose and provide less than the required care for medical conditions?

Mumia deserves in-person medical exams from his own medical team. Doctors he can trust. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, "The Supreme Court signaled in 2011 that failing to provide adequate medical and mental health care to incarcerated people could result in drastic consequences for states."

Prison Radio has been and will continue to advocate not only for Mumia, but also for our other correspondents who have health complications, including Dennis Solo McKeithan; who suffers from undiagnosed Parkinson's, high blood pressure and shingles; Sergio Hyland, who has a rare eye disease and will likely go blind in the next few years; and Jamil Pirant, who suffers from various health issues, some caused by a recent violent incident in his facility.

There is clearly no incentive for a state to deny care to an incarcerated person, other than saving money, and further extending inhumane, punitive-based care to people who are

experiencing compounded punishment to an unbelievable extent.

By Jennifer Szenay and Suzanna Strauss.

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## Mumia Abu Jamal Newspaper Admonishes DA to Stop Defending the Indefensible

Pam Africa  
24 Feb 2021

"If DA Krasner wants to embrace anti-racist principles... then he needs to take an honest look at the facts of Mumia's case."

**"DA Krasner can no longer ignore what we are saying, and he can no longer claim that he has not been presented with our evidence of police, prosecutorial, and judicial misconduct."**

*The International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu Jamal (ICFFMAJ) has relaunched their newspaper to better serve and inform the global movement in support of the nation's best known political prisoner. The first issue of 40-page Jamal Journal includes a petition to Philadelphia district attorney Larry Krasner and an article by ICFFMAJ coordinator Pam Africa, which appears below:*

### **Pam Africa's Message to the Movement: Please Sign Our Petition to DA Krasner! People Power Will Free Mumia**

*--Written by Pam Africa, the coordinator of the uncompromising International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFMAJ)*

Welcome to our first issue of the newly restarted Jamal Journal. We last published the Jamal Journal in the mid-1990s, and today we are excited to launch our newspaper and website ([www.JamalJournal.com](http://www.JamalJournal.com)) at this absolutely critical time.

Mumia's health has improved somewhat since he nearly died from a diabetic coma that was induced by untreated Hepatitis-C. After we won a lawsuit against the prison authorities, Mumia finally received treatment and fully recovered from Hepatitis C.

Unfortunately, the Hepatitis C also gave Mumia cirrhosis of the liver, and this is a very serious health problem that is made even worse by the conditions of his imprisonment.

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Just this month, Mumia reports that the severe itching, a symptom experienced previously, is returning and he does not know why. Mumia is 66 and it has now been 39 years since his arrest on December 9, 1981. This is an urgent situation, folks, and we need your help.

## The Petition to DA Krasner

The Jamal Journal's lead story is our petition to Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, demanding that he stop defending Mumia's conviction and that he secure Mumia's release as quickly as he possibly can.

Before he became District Attorney, he was known for defending protesters that had been arrested by police, and he now describes himself as a "progressive" prosecutor that is bringing principles of social justice into the District Attorney's office. He has implemented some positive reforms confronting police corruption, and he has helped to exonerate over a dozen people. We support that.

Furthermore, we are glad that DA Krasner gave the six previously undisclosed file boxes to Mumia's defense team. This is important evidence that should have been disclosed by previous DAs.

However, it is completely unacceptable that he continues to defend Mumia's 1982 conviction. If DA Krasner wants to embrace anti-racist principles, if he sincerely believes in confronting the ugly legacy of institutionalized white supremacy that continues to infest Philadelphia's 'criminal justice system,' then he needs to take an honest look at the facts of Mumia's case. With our petition, we are presenting DA Krasner with an opportunity to do the right thing.

With our petition and newspaper, we are presenting the facts of the case to DA Krasner in a clear and accessible way. The petition presents a short summary, while our 40-page newspaper provides even more documentation of the injustice in Mumia's case. Therefore, DA Krasner can no longer ignore what we are saying, and he can no longer claim that he has not been presented with our evidence of police, prosecutorial, and judicial misconduct.

## The Evidence in the Petition

The well-documented misconduct in Mumia's case is so bad and so extensive that it has forever destroyed the prosecutor's case. The facts speak for themselves, and we are confident that an honest investigation of Mumia's case will show this to be true.

Our petition summarizes key facts in regards to the Batson issue, about the use of peremptory strikes to remove other-

wise qualified black potential jurors. Judge Albert Sabo's despicable behavior at the 1982 trial and later at the 1995-97 PCRA Hearings is another focus of the petition. There is also the fact that the DA suppressed Pedro Polakoff's crime scene photos.

The conclusion of our petition cites the results of a test performed in 2010 by Philadelphia journalists Linn Washington and Dave Lindorff. They sent a crime scene photo by Pedro Polakoff to NASA photo analyst Robert Nelson, asking him to look for any markings from the bullets that Mumia was accused of shooting downwards at Officer Faulkner.

Washington and Lindorff also sent Robert Nelson a photo of a concrete slab that they shot a .38 revolver into, which displayed clear markings where the bullets made contact. After applying the same technology used to analyze photographs taken in outer space, the NASA analyst couldn't find anything in the crime scene photo that resembled the bullet marks visible on the concrete slab.

Washington and Lindorff concluded that "the whole prosecution story of an execution-style slaying of the officer by Abu-Jamal would appear to be a prosecution fabrication, complete with coached, perjured witnesses, undermining the integrity and fairness of the entire trial."

Let me repeat that: Here is physical evidence that completely disproves the prosecution theory used to convict Mumia. This also proves that prosecution eyewitnesses Robert Cho-bert and Cynthia White's testimony was a lie. We concluded our petition by citing Washington and Lindorff's test because this is such powerful evidence for exposing the frameup. DA Krasner must not ignore this!

## Our Demands

ICFFMAJ has always called for Mumia's immediate release because we believe he is innocent and that he should never have been imprisoned in the first place. At the same time, ICFFMAJ has always worked alongside anyone supporting a new trial, and we will continue to do this.

But after 39 years in prison, Mumia is now an elder in poor health, and every day counts. Therefore, if Mumia's conviction is overturned because of the well-documented police, prosecutorial, and judicial misconduct, Krasner should accept the overturned conviction and not retry him.

Maureen Faulkner and the FOP have seen the writing on the walls and they know that Mumia will eventually be released. In fact, Maureen Faulkner recently told journalist Noelle Hanrahan that she believes Mumia will be released if he can get a new trial. Of course, that is why they have been trying to drag out Mumia's appeal process however they can, with

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the King's Bench Appeal being the most recent example. Like all of the frivolous lawsuits Donald Trump filed during his last months as President, the Kings Bench Appeal was meant to delay Mumia's inevitable release from prison.

Like Mayor Frank Rizzo before him, Donald Trump's outrageous public advocacy of police violence has fueled grassroots movements like Black Lives Matter, creating a new generation of activists. This new generation will no longer accept overt displays of white supremacist values, like those represented by the Rizzo statue across from City Hall and the Rizzo mural in South Philadelphia's Italian Market. Thankfully, these have both been removed from the City.

Confronting Frank Rizzo's horrifying legacy is a good first step. Now the City of Philadelphia needs to deal with the legacy of Judge Albert Sabo, known as a "prosecutor in robes," a hardcore racist who was also notorious for his extreme judicial bias in cases other than Mumia's. We do not want the appeals process to continue dragging on when there is already so much public information about the injustice in Mumia's case. Delaying Mumia's release will only make the injustice worse.

DA Krasner now must decide which side of history he wants to be on. He has a choice.

## The New Krasner Brief

As you can see from our petition, we have been seeking to approach Larry Krasner diplomatically. In our effort to attract the widest possible range of supporters, we have written the petition with polite language. We are trying to give DA Krasner the benefit of the doubt, by considering the possibility that he is sincere in his stated desire to confront Philadelphia's ugly history of racial injustice.

For Mumia's sake, we truly hope that DA Krasner's defense of Mumia's conviction is because he has not actually researched the case himself, that his position on Mumia's case is simply a product of the Philadelphia corporate media's well-documented bias against Mumia. We are sincerely presenting him with an opportunity to rethink his position and to do the right thing. We hope that he listens.

Despite our optimism, on Feb. 3, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner filed a new brief in Mumia's case, where he continued to defend the legitimacy of Mumia's 1982 conviction. DA Krasner's several years of opposing Mumia's appeals has already been vile and disgusting. However, with this new brief, he somehow manages to stoop even lower.

There is much to criticize about DA Krasner's Feb. 3 brief, but one particular aspect really stood out for me. On page

five, in the section titled "Statement of Facts," the brief states:

*"Officer Faulkner was put in a police van and rushed to Jefferson University Hospital. When the police attempted to handcuff defendant and place him in a police wagon to transport him to the hospital, he violently resisted. He continued to struggle against the officers when they subsequently brought him inside the hospital, the same one in which doctors were attempting to save Officer Faulkner's life. The officers carrying defendant—he refused to walk—temporarily placed him on the floor of the lobby next to the entrance to the emergency room."*

## Does DA Krasner Oppose Lynchings?

Has DA Krasner actually read the trial transcripts? If so, does he realize the implications of him describing Mumia's arrest in such a despicable way?

What actually happened that morning when police arrived on the scene was an attempted lynching of Mumia, with the police acting as the white supremacist lynch mob.

Before even speaking with a single eyewitness, the mob of cops brutalized Mumia so viciously that when his sister Lydia arrived at the hospital she could not even recognize him. Make no mistake, the cops wanted him to die from the gunshot wound before receiving medical treatment, ultimately taking over 30 minutes to begin treatment at the hospital. This was an obvious attempt to execute him before even conducting an investigation, let alone a fair trial.

Has DA Krasner read the trial testimony of defense witness Dessie Hightower who reported seeing someone flee the crime scene immediately after the shooting? At trial, Hightower described Mumia's arrest as being "an attack" by the police. In his book "The Framing of Mumia Abu-Jamal," author J. Patrick O'Connor summarizes Hightower's trial testimony:

*"He said that shortly after the first police officer showed up, about eight or nine other officers arrived. He then observed three or four of them striking Abu-Jamal with nightsticks while one or two others were kicking him and pulling him by his dreadlocks. He also saw the police, in carrying Abu-Jamal to the police van, ram his head into a no-parking pole and drop him to the ground."*

Has DA Krasner read the trial testimony of Dr. Regina Cudemo, who was working at the hospital when Mumia arrived? If not, author J. Patrick O'Connor has also summarized her account:

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“She testified that she saw Abu-Jamal at about 4:20 AM on the floor, ‘on what I call the treadles of the emergency room’—the mats outside the emergency room doors. She said four to six police were around Abu-Jamal...she saw one of the police officers around Abu-Jamal raise his leg and then heard Abu-Jamal ‘moan.’ After observing this incident, she said she was directed by another police officer to leave the area.”

O’Connor also writes that after Mumia was dropped on the floor of the entryway to the emergency room, “instead of taking Abu-Jamal to an operating room, hospital security guard Priscilla Durham had the police drag him to the family room.” Only after this, “Abu-Jamal was brought handcuffed to the emergency room for surgery.”

Does DA Krasner think that an attempted police lynching of a prominent Black journalist, loving father, and respected community activist is some kind of joke?

If he has read the trial testimony of Dessie Hightower and Dr. Regina Cudemo, why is he not concerned about Mumia’s treatment by police that morning?

Lastly, how could he possibly write such an offensive description of Mumia’s treatment by police, like claiming that Mumia “refused to walk” into the hospital after he had been shot in the chest and nearly beaten to death?

We need answers from DA Krasner.

To sign our petition, go to: <https://campaigns.organizefor.org/petitions/to-da-krasner-stop-defending-mumia-abu-jamal-s-conviction>

Quando luchamos ganamos! *When we fight, we win!*

Prison Radio

Website: [prisonradio.org](http://prisonradio.org)

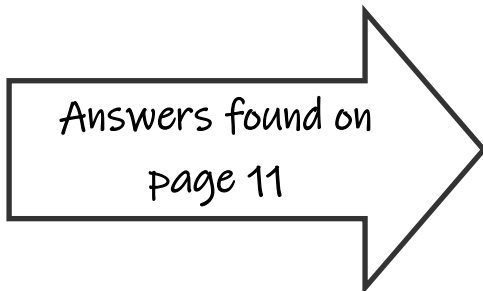
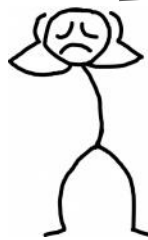
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**Alert!** Friday, 2/26/21, MUMIA called PAM AFRICA to say HE HAS COVID!!!!!! Difficulty breathing, chest pain!! Mass Actions scheduled 2/27/21, 3/1/21, 3/6/21. Free Mumia! Call DA Krasner (267)456-1000



## Sudoku #771 (Hard)

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

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# What's The News!

THE APPEAL, POLITICAL REPORT

## OHIO WILL NO LONGER SENTENCE KIDS TO LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE

[Daniel Nichanian](#) January 2021

**“We now have hope that our loved ones and family members will someday come home to us.”**

Ohio is expanding access to parole hearings for people who have been incarcerated ever since they were children. It will no longer sentence minors to life without the possibility of parole, and it will significantly curtail sentences that effectively amount to the same.

Youth justice advocates are celebrating Senate Bill 256, which was signed into law by Governor Mike DeWine on Saturday, as their latest win in nationwide efforts to keep kids from spending their life in prison.

The law is a “huge sea change” for the state, said Kevin Werner, policy director at the Ohio Justice & Policy Center, because “it recognizes that people change. ... The heart of the bill is that Ohio values redemption over excessive punishment.”

SB 256, which is retroactive, only affects parole eligibility; it does not guarantee that people actually get released, even after spending decades in prison. Under the new law, people who committed a crime as a minor will be eligible for parole after no more than 18 years of incarceration if the crime did not involve a homicide, or after no more than 25 to 30 years if it did. That's longer than in other states that have recently adopted similar laws.

Ohio's parole board, which has faced heavy criticism, will determine the fate of parole petitions and whether the reform offers genuinely “meaningful op-

portunities to obtain release,” as the U.S. Supreme Court [has put it](#).

Still, SB 256 will give many people serving life sentences at least some chance at leaving prison.

“The signing of SB 256 means everything to us,” said Stefanie Tengler, an advocate who championed the bill. Tengler's partner, Joshua Wade, is serving a life sentence after being convicted of murder as a minor. Wade will now be eligible for parole about three decades earlier than he would have without the law

“We now have hope that our loved ones and family members will someday come home to us,” Tengler said. “And for those who were told as teens that they would die in prison, this bill means absolutely everything, too.”

Ohio is the 24th state, plus D.C., that will stop imposing sentences of juvenile life without parole. A wave of states have adopted similar reforms since the Supreme Court ended mandatory life without parole sentences for minors in a series of early 2010s rulings. [Oregon](#), in 2019, and [Virginia](#), in 2020, did this most recently.

Brooke Burns, who heads the Ohio Public Defender's Juvenile Department, stresses that SB 256 will also help the state confront significant racial inequalities in its prison population. “When we think about lengthy sentences, it's overwhelmingly kids of color who are impacted by that,” said Burns.

These inequalities stem from disparate sentencing, but also the rate at which children of color are transferred to adult court in the first place, especially in counties such as Cuyahoga (Cleveland) that do so very aggressively.

The Appeal [reported in 2019](#) that the office of Prosecuting Attorney Michael O'Malley has been transferring minors to adult court far more than other Ohio jurisdictions. Ninety-four percent of

those who were transferred to adult court in 2018 were Black.

Ohio's Legislative Services Commission [estimates](#) that 50 to 60 people will immediately become eligible for parole when SB 256 becomes effective; this is approximately the number of people who have served at least 18 years, and in some cases much more, of the sentences they received when they were minors. Many more will become newly eligible for parole in subsequent years.

The law will apply to most people who are serving outright sentences of life without parole, but also to people whose sentences are functionally equivalent since their parole eligibility was set so far in the future.

“SB 256 acknowledges that science has been at odds with how judges have sentenced youth in the past,” said Claire Chevrier, policy counsel at the ACLU of Ohio, referring to [studies](#) that show that the brain develops well into one's 20s. “Science tells us that young people are not static. ... It doesn't make sense to punish forever something that a youth committed when they didn't have all the skills necessary to behave like an adult.”

But Werner says that waiting 18 to 30 years for parole eligibility is still harsh. “It would have been better if those time periods weren't quite so long,” he said. Although that is in keeping with [many states' reforms](#), recent laws adopted in [West Virginia](#) and [Oregon](#) make people convicted as minors eligible for parole after 15 years of imprisonment; Virginia last year [set](#) the threshold at 20 years.

In addition, states such as [California](#) have extended eligibility for reforms meant to treat youth differently [above age 18](#) since young adults are also still developing. In December,

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# What's The News!

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the D.C. Council [passed legislation](#) to enable people with very lengthy sentences to petition for early release for crimes committed up to age

25. Some [advocates are working](#) to abolish life without the possibility of parole sentences for anyone, with no age restriction.

The Ohio law also comes with carve-outs. Youth convicted of killing at least three people, or convicted of homicide tied with terrorism charges, will not be eligible for parole any earlier than their sentence permits, even though going forward minors can no longer be sentenced to outright life without parole. This means that T.J. Lane, who killed three people in a school shooting in 2012 and was sentenced to life without parole, will continue to not be eligible.

One day before DeWine signed SB 256, the Montana Supreme Court [ruled](#) that a man serving a sentence of life without parole for a triple homicide he committed at age 17 should be granted a resentencing hearing. Chief Justice Mike McGrath wrote an accompanying opinion that [urged the majority](#) to “go further” and to outright hold “that all life without parole sentences are per se unconstitutional for juvenile offenders” due to “the Montana Constitution’s explicit protections for juvenile offenders.”

In Ohio, even for those who will fall under its purview, the practical effect of SB 256 will largely depend on the state’s parole board.

The Legislative Services Commission has [already projected](#) that the board will reject most of the parole petitions it considers. (People denied release will get another hearing no less than five years later.)

“It’s an uphill battle for anyone going in front of the parole board,” warned Niki Clum, legislative liaison for the Office

of the Ohio Public Defender. She says she is “optimistic” that the people covered by SB 256 will “get a fair shot,” though, in part because the law spells out factors that the board must consider regarding people’s youth and growth.

The parole board has [been denounced](#) for its lack of transparency and its stringent standards toward even minor infractions that people accrue while in prison. Werner says that it is prone to “arbitrary” decisions.

Last year, a pair of Republican senators who also backed SB 256 [introduced separate legislation](#) that would make the Ohio Parole Board less secretive, but that bill did not move forward.

This is a “big piece of unfinished business,” said Werner.

Ohio advocates also hope to change the statutes that govern how children are transferred to adult courts in order to keep more minors in juvenile courts and avoid the very lengthy sentences that come with adult prosecutions. An [earlier version](#) of SB 256 targeted those issues, and would have reduced the sentences issued in the first place, but those provisions were dropped in the version that passed, which focused on parole eligibility.

Burns says that, given the emerging “realization that kids are different,” it is important to consider “those same factors... on the front end” of charging and sentencing as well.

In Oregon and Virginia, the two states that most recently adopted laws to end juvenile life without parole, the state government is run by Democrats. But SB 256 had to pass through Ohio’s GOP-run legislature—which it did with [wide bipartisan majorities](#)—and get support from the Republican governor.

Clum found that lawmakers from both parties responded to similar arguments.

“A lot of people believe in redemption and believe that people, especially children, are capable of change,” she said.

A broad array of other organizations, including the Juvenile Justice Coalition, the Ohio chapter of the conservative group Americans for Prosperity, and the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth, championed SB 256. (Some Republican lawmakers [have filed](#) similar proposals in Congress, as have Democratic lawmakers.)

But the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association opposed the bill; members repeatedly testified against it. That is in keeping with many [Ohio prosecutors’](#) staunch opposition to criminal justice reforms. (On Saturday, DeWine also signed a [separate bill](#) that many prosecutors fought. It restricts imposing the death penalty on some people with mental illness.)

Prosecutors and other law enforcement officials are also blocking the prospect of similar reform in Illinois, said Jobi Cates, executive director of Restore Justice, an [Illinois-based organization](#) that has championed ending juvenile life without parole sentences.

“It’s still a tough haul here,” she said, due to the law enforcement lobby’s influence over the legislature.

But Cates said she was heartened to see Ohio’s reform. Advocates in other states, such as [Maryland](#) and [New Mexico](#), are also pushing for similar changes to parole laws. “It helps to have the majority of states moving toward something,” Cates said.

From: <https://theappeal.org/politicalreport/ohio-ends-juvenile-life-without-parole/>

# What's The News!

## Life Without Parole For 'Felony Murder': Pa. Case Targets Sentencing Law

February 4, 2021

By CARRIE JOHNSON

*In Philadelphia, the concept of "felony murder" means someone can spend their life in prison if someone died during a felony act, even if that person did not intend to commit murder.*

A first-of-its-kind court case in Pennsylvania is asking a big question: How long do people need to stay in prison before they get a second chance?

More than 1,000 people are serving life without parole in Pennsylvania, even though they never intended to kill anyone. Seventy percent of those people are Black.

I met Tyreem Rivers on the phone in November, when his voice was a little muffled.

"Well, I have two or three masks on," Rivers said with a laugh. "I have at least two masks on, so I'm trying to stay safe."

Staying safe is hard when you're confined with hundreds of other men during a pandemic. Rivers, 43, has spent more than half his life in prison. He grew up in a rough part of Philadelphia. When he arrived behind bars in 1997, he says he was hooked on drugs and could barely read.

"So I never really understood the concept of 'life without parole,'" he said. "You know, I didn't shoot nobody, I didn't stab anybody, I didn't rape anybody."

Here's what he did do: snatch the purse of an 85-year-old woman. She died in the hospital, two weeks later, from injuries sustained when she fell. The evi-

dence presented at trial suggests he didn't mean to kill her. But that didn't matter under a concept called "felony murder."

### The effort to change the law

"The felony murder concept is, if a death occurs during the commission of another felony, that is considered a form of murder that's attributed to anybody who participated in the felony, regardless of whether they had any criminal intent in regard to the death of the other person," said Bret Grote, legal director at the Abolitionist Law Center.

Grote, alongside the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Amistad Law Project, is suing the state on behalf of Rivers and five other people convicted in their late teens. They've already served a combined 200 years in prison. Their case argues the punishment for felony murder in the state is cruel and unconstitutional under Pennsylvania law.

Grote said it means an effective life sentence.

"People in Pennsylvania who are serving life sentences do not have the possibility of parole," he said. "And the only way they are being removed from prison in the overwhelming majority of the cases is in a body bag."

Their lawsuit hopes to change that by forcing the state board to grant prisoners parole hearings — and to push the state Legislature to change the law.

Attorney General Josh Shapiro is on the other side of the case. His spokeswoman sent NPR a statement saying that he's duty-bound to defend the law.

But, she added that he supports efforts to remove the prohibition on parole in Pennsylvania's second-degree-murder statute. "He has previously called on the General Assembly to change the law so that second degree murder is not an automatic life sentence and provide addi-

tional sentencing options, which would best address the concerns raised in this case," she said.

Pennie Hockenberry, of the Pennsylvania Office of the Victim Advocate, said the office surveyed surviving families in 2019 about parole eligibility in these cases — and 91% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea.

But for experts who assert the U.S. prison population is already too large, especially in the middle of a pandemic, the movement to overhaul the criminal justice system won't get very far unless the country reckons with how and how harshly to punish people who engaged in violent crimes, sometimes decades earlier.

Another lawyer for the plaintiffs — Quinn Cozzens — pointed out another problem with the way the law operates now. Cozzens says 70% of the people serving life for felony murder in Pennsylvania are Black, even though only 11% of people who live in the state are Black.

"So that's obviously a huge disparity and something that's indicative of how this punishment is imposed and who it is imposed on and what purpose it serves," Cozzens said.

### Petitioning for clemency

There is one way for people like Tyreem Rivers to leave prison before they die. In Pennsylvania, a state pardon board considers those petitions and recommends clemency to the governor.

At a public meeting last fall, the board considered the case of the Evans brothers. They've spent 37 years in prison. In 1980, the brothers took part in a car jacking, with an antique gun. They dropped off the man whose car they stole at a payphone booth. Later, the man died of a heart attack.

**THE MOVEMENT**

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

# What's The News!

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The Evans brothers refused a plea deal. They've now served double the time they would have spent in prison if they had taken that deal. The man considered the ringleader in the car jacking is already free — has been for more than a year.

In a familiar dynamic, the Attorney General and the corrections expert at the board meeting said they didn't have enough information about the men's culpability or their turnaround in prison.

Another board member, Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, said the stakes were too high to punt.

"And that's been my point consistently is that we're going to err on the side of mercy because the stakes are so high, if he's denied, almost assuredly going to die in prison, despite serving four decades in prison," Fetterman said at the meeting.

Then, he called on Nancy Leichter. Her father Leonard died after that car jacking.

"They were 18- and 19-year-old teenagers when they went into prison, and they are now 58- and 59-year-old men," Leichter said. "They have accepted responsibility. We believe they have paid their price and now it's time for them to be released."

Ultimately, the board voted unanimously to pave the way for the Evans brothers to be released last September. But they're still in prison, because Pennsylvania's governor has not signed the paperwork. Another man who had been approved for clemency by the board died last weekend, still in prison, while he was awaiting the governor's action.

## "I'm a man of change"

Back at the state prison, I spoke with Tyreem Rivers again in early December.

"A little under the weather so to speak," he said. "Still optimistic."

Rivers told me his sense of taste and smell were off. He later tested positive for COVID-19. At least two men from his unit died. Others had to be hospitalized, he said.

I asked him what he wanted people to know about him.

"OK, so I would like for people to know that I am not a bad person," said Rivers. "I made bad decisions in the past. I have a sense of regret and remorse for my actions, and I'm a man of change."

Rivers said he had done a lot of thinking since he entered prison so long ago. He took classes, attended drug and alcohol treatment, worked with hospice patients and started mentoring new waves of young men who arrived in the facility. The student had become the teacher, he said.

This week, Rivers emailed me. He said he's got some lingering trouble from the coronavirus. But he's still optimistic that some day, he'll get out of prison, against the odds, and put his paralegal training to use in a case that doesn't involve himself.

From: Pennsylvania Sentencing Case Challenges 'Felony Murder' : NPR

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## New Massachusetts Rules Would Eliminate Handwritten Letters in Prison

By Ella Fassler, Truthout

February 2021

"Paper mail is precious," Black and Pink Massachusetts Communications and Outreach Coordinator Elijah Patterson testified on January 29 against rules proposed by the Massachusetts Depart-

ment of Correction (MADOC). The rules would, if approved, formally substitute physical mail for an electronic, scanned copy or photocopy through a third-party vendor.

"It means so much to me to touch the same paper as people suffering in prisons, and when I trace my hand and they place theirs over it, it means a lot for them, too. In that moment, we are together," Patterson said during the Zoom hearing.

Prison mail serves as a primary lifeline between the two worlds separated by barbed-wired walls and guard towers. Handwritten letters, oftentimes made special by imperfections or a doodle, are cherished and highly anticipated by many incarcerated people, particularly in the era of pandemic-inspired visitation bans.

Yet in May 2020, MADOC discreetly formalized an intent to set up a pilot program at Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center for one year that would eliminate physical mail. The notice outlined the agency's intention of expanding the program to include all MADOC facilities following the pilot. Smart Communications, a company founded by former prison guards, has been contracted to implement this new system.

Under the Smart Communications-patented "MailGuard" system, mail intended for incarcerated people is generally addressed directly to the Florida-based company for scanning into a searchable database. Smart Communications advertises that the process will open "a whole new field of intelligence" for authorities. Scanned letters, cards and photographs are then sent back to kiosks or tablets within prisons for viewing, or are mailed back to the prison as photocopies.

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# What's The News!

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MADOC had already been photocopying incarcerated peoples' mail at Souza and at least six other facilities, according to DigBoston. The practice came to light primarily because of a lawsuit filed by Edward G. Wright, a man incarcerated at Souza-Baranowski. He alleged that the department violated the Massachusetts Administrative Procedures Act when it changed mail policy without holding a public hearing. The court sided with Wright, which has effectively delayed the full implementation of paperless mail.

## Eliminating Paper Mail Could Increase Surveillance

The communications between incarcerated people and their loved ones are already subject to intrusive scrutiny, but Smart Communications' online database presents an increased risk, Patterson told Truthout. "Many of our members, who are LGBTQI2S+ and/or living with HIV, are not able to be out in prison," they said. "Scanning letters means creating an electronic copy that lives somewhere on the DOC servers. We do not have faith that the DOC will respect our members' privacy and not access these files, or even simply keep them safe.... Truly, these regulations establish an expansive surveillance system with really alarming implications."

*Prison mail serves as a primary lifeline between the two worlds separated by barbed-wired walls and guard towers.*

While the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) says it will not scan legal mail, MADOC's proposed rules allow for photocopying privileged correspondences in the presence of the incarcerated addressee.

Photocopying mail has already led to increased delays in some prisons, Lauren Bellis, co-founder of Massachusetts Incarcerated Individual Advocacy, told

Truthout. And tablets are not accessible for some people with disabilities, such as some types of traumatic brain injury and visual impairment. "It really creates a problem for reasonable accommodation or equal access for incarcerated individuals with disabilities to be able to have the same experience of connecting with their loved ones," Bellis said.

Bellis's partner, a formerly incarcerated man who preferred anonymity, said that communication with the outside world is especially imperative for people in solitary confinement. But, since tablets are forbidden or restricted in solitary confinement, the new policy would disproportionately impact the most isolated and marginalized people.

## Questionable Contraband Claims

Officials claim the elimination of paper mail, supported by mail privatization, will mitigate the introduction of drugs into the prison system. However, an analysis of the introduction of contraband in county jails in 2018 by the Prison Policy Initiative indicated staff are at least partially responsible for smuggling forbidden items. It found "20 jail staff members in 12 separate county jails were arrested, indicted, or convicted on charges of bringing in or planning to bring in contraband."

Fentanyl smuggled into the Orleans Justice Center by jail staffers killed an incarcerated man in December 2018, a lawsuit filed on behalf of his family alleges.

Meanwhile, during a 16-month period in Florida, search teams identified a greater number of correctional staff with contraband cell phones than visitors.

Furthermore, we should question whether eliminating "contraband" — including items like cell phones that make life slightly more bearable for incarcerated people — should be a pri-

mary objective that overrides the importance of physical mail.

If the proposed regulations are approved, Massachusetts will be the second statewide carceral system to adopt Smart Communications' MailGuard. In 2018, Smart Communications landed its first statewide contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections at a price tag of around \$4 million per year.

About two years later, the BOP began experimenting with photocopying mail. In response to a request for comment, the agency's press office told Truthout: "The Bureau has conducted a pilot project at two sites to have general correspondence scanned off-site by a vendor and transmitted as an electronic file to staff who print and distribute these documents to the inmate population." The BOP said it partnered with Smart Communications in March 2020 and "is considering the expansion of mail scanning pending funding." The agency noted that its regulations forbid the photocopying of legal mail (such as correspondence with lawyers).

According to the BOP, the mail scanning program "reduced the number of synthetic drug introductions via general postal mail to effectively zero over the pilot project period." When Truthout asked for underlying data to compare contraband introduction before and after the pilot programs, the press office did not send any statistics.

A 2016 Department of Justice report on "contraband interdiction efforts" highlighted BOP staff's role in smuggling contraband and did not reference mail as a site of drug introduction. The report recommended that the BOP "develop uniform guidelines and criteria for conducting random staff pat searches across all institutions..." and to "restrict the size and content of personal property that staff may bring into BOP institutions." The Federal Labor Relations

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# What's The News!

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Authority obstructed past attempts to implement more strict searches of staff.

*Smart Communications advertises that the process will open “a whole new field of intelligence” for authorities.*

Since the report was published, however, fentanyl, which can be sprayed on paper, has become increasingly trafficked. But there is not publicly available robust data suggesting mail is the primary culprit for introducing the drug into the prison-industrial complex.

Still, local jails across the country have been quietly contracting with Smart Communications since at least 2017. Virginia began photocopying mail in-house around the same time. Several jails — including Crawford County Justice Center in Arkansas and Roanoke City Jail in Virginia — had already switched to the MailGuard system by the time the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections changed its policy. And since then, at least four local jails have struck similar deals. While the company doesn't typically charge jails for MailGuard, it profits by installing kiosks that offer other costly services, such as video visitation.

Before MailGuard, mail was one of the few aspects of prison life that hadn't fallen into the clutches of the market. Worth Rises, a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to dismantling the prison industry, found that over 4,100 corporations profit off mass incarceration. “Private corporations helped build our punishment system and continue to support its expansion by donating to tough-on-crime political candidates, shifting costs onto those it targets, offering agencies lucrative partnerships, recruiting former government officials, and more,” it wrote in a report. However, the report notes, “Tackling the private industry will not alone end mass incarceration, but it is an essential step.”

As the Biden administration moves to sever contracts with some private prisons (notably not privately operated Immigration and Customs Enforcement confinement camps), activists rightly note that ending those contracts will not free a single person. Meanwhile, the growth of the prison mail industry serves as a reminder that the distinction between private and public prisons is increasingly trivial. The rise of in-house photocopying shows how public institutions can undermine prisoners' rights without relying on private companies, too.

## Advocates Speak Out Against Photocopied Mail

While many contracts between jails and Smart Communications have flown under the public's radar, incarcerated people, activists and people with loved ones behind bars in Massachusetts are pushing back against the new proposed mail policy. More people joined MADOC's January 29 hearing regarding the proposed regulations than the department's Zoom subscription could handle.

*Local jails across the country have been quietly contracting with Smart Communications since at least 2017.*

Cassandra Bensahih, a coordinator of Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement Coalition who was formerly incarcerated in Massachusetts, drew from her experiences to testify against the new proposed policy. “Mail makes us feel more normal and like we are a part of the world,” she said. “There is nothing like being able to touch a letter, reread it, go back over it. I still have a Christmas card from my daughter and I was incarcerated in 2007.... I cherish that card.”

Advocates in Massachusetts seem to have good reason for concern: In Pennsylvania, people with loved ones behind bars have reported unexplained mail

rejections, severe delays in processing time and mind-numbing bureaucratic runarounds in online discussion boards. A moderator of the forum Prison Talk wrote that a majority of the 10 letters he sent per week were sent back to him without explanation in 2018. “There is no pattern as to which ones were delivered and which ones were returned even though my PC addresses all the envelopes the same way,” he wrote.

Another user based in Pennsylvania reported two-week delays in mail processing time, complicating an already tragic circumstance for their family. Their incarcerated loved one did not have an approved phone list, they wrote, “so sadly they learn of a relative's death two weeks plus later, all alone, with no way to call home.” Many direct messages and emails sent to Smart Communications have gone unanswered, according to the user.

Claire Shubik-Richards, the executive director of Pennsylvania Prison Society, told Slate that her organization received complaints about mail not getting delivered, severe delays in delivery and misdeliveries. Scanned photocopies of photographs provided to Slate revealed blurry, low-quality images.

When asked for his thoughts on the department's motives, Bellis's formerly incarcerated partner said he thinks it's a function of maintaining a grip on the prison population. “That's where they hit somebody, with their mail, their communication. If something happens there, that's what they do. Boom. Shut down mail, shut down emails,” he said. “Because they know we are going to need to communicate with our loved ones and make phone calls to complain about what's going on, how we are being treated ... that's what I think is most important [to them]: control.”



November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## To Whom It May Concern:

Change is on the horizon; more power will be in the hands of the people.

I very recently read news magazine, **THE MOVEMENT**, about mass incarceration and death by incarceration and brothers who have been incarcerated for over 20 years or more. I must say that it is very disheartening seeing all these brothers, and I

personally know every one of them, reading that they were still incarcerated and trapped (still) within the belly of the monstrous beast, the Prison System.

However, I was also impressed and very pleased seeing that all of these brothers had and were given a format in which they could speak out. And their voices and cries of the injustices are now being heard by the people (All praises be to Allah.). It's been a long time coming. But our people are here and the movement for Prison Reform is on the move. Black folks in our communities have finally woken up and now see what's truly going on within this Prison System, especially in regards to "Death by Incarceration and how we prisoners are being warehoused". The wholesale housing of black men deep within the belly of the beast is nothing new. Brothers have been screaming, I can't breathe, I can't breathe, fever since the Prison Systems came into existence.

Death by Incarceration, this thing is very real within the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and today it's at its all-time high. Not only are young black men being murdered out there in the streets (killed for no other reason; but, for being black) those within position and authority are knocking brothers off in this Prison System as well. It's been a true blessing having the grassroots organizations such as CADBI, ACLU, and Prison Society keeping an open eye on what's been going on within these prisons. Social media is everywhere now, Praise be to Allah. These racist Socialists working within these prisons are no longer able to just get away with beating a prisoner down within the solitary confinement

of the prison's RHU; not the way they used to get away with beating a prisoner down.

I tip my hat to all the sisters out there who are the movement in the organizations out there advocating hard, strong, and very sincerely for us men in here. To the women in CADBI, Prison Society, ACLU and all the other groups out there, doing their thing, advocating for Prison Reform, you sisters are the backbones of the movement and seriously without y'all there would be no movement, because all of the men (we) are all in jail. Much love to you sisters and keep doing what you've been doing, because change is on the horizon; Sam Cooke said it best, "Change is gonna come."

The Philadelphia Daily News has never been a friend to the Blackman. They have exploited our communities for years with their lies and false propaganda. And we have bought and feed off of everything they say and print in their Socialist newspapers about our brothers, family members, friends, etc. I personally know how vicious this newspaper is. I have been incarcerated over #?/\$ of my life, from the cradle-to-the-state-pen. This has been the course of my life. And for the past 26 years my struggles and tireless efforts have been to unmask and undo the injustices done to me by those appointed within the Criminal Justice System to uphold the law, be fair & just, and give every man charged with a crime, their fair day in court.

I personally know, as do a whole lot of other brothers (especially those in the Philadelphia area) how corrupt our City's Judicial System truly is. It is the modern-day-railroad of innocent black men whose past criminal records may have made them prime candidates to be charged with unsolved crimes. This ultimately helps the police department's crime statistics and makes the City of Brotherly Love look good in the eyes of the outsiders; it also [at the time] made Lynn Abrahams bid for re-election look good. It is a known fact that the Philadelphia Police and the District Attorney office has a history of putting unsolved crimes on innocent individuals to make the city's (once again) crime stats look good. When in retrospect, our Judicial System, those officials within the Criminal Justice System are the true criminals. Willie Lynch would be proud of himself today to see what his vision has brought about today with the Death by Incarceration and the prison warehousing of the black man; how the former DA Lynn (Hang-em All) Abraham filled up the prisons in Pennsylvania with the crack cocaine laws; and how the black men in America were killing each other at an alarming rate only pairing in comparison to those Americans killed in the Iraq war.

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

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There has, indeed, been a lot of changes made within the Philadelphia DA office; and I personally tip my hat to the new DA Larry Krasner. This man has kept his word and has been true to the cause and plight of those who have been wrongfully convicted. All the corrupt and crooked and unethical District Attorneys (the old cronies from the Lynn Abraham era) are gone. Larry Krasner is a man true to his word. He said that he was going to get rid of all the crooked DAs and he did exactly that (Praise be to Allah). A man's word is everything; he either stands by it or falls by it. And Larry Krasner has, in fact, been a strong advocate for Prison Reform. But Mr. Krasner, you need to know that the beast still lies within the belly of the beast; and corruptions from the Lynn Abraham era runs wide and very deep. Because for one thing, a lot of those former DAs are now judges sitting in the Commonwealth Courts, sitting high and mighty in their criminal justice positions. From the top to the bottom, they still continue to further their hidden agenda. And all those brothers, myself included, who were victims of their corruption will continue to linger within these rotten prisons and continue to catch Hell. Yes, I was a victim of the wholesale prosecutorial misconduct and a victim of what's known as the "Modern Day Railroad".

As a litigant for the past 27 years I have been stopped, blocked, and continuously prevented from having any form of meaningful appeal on any appellate level. And so, on that note, with all due respect to the good and the righteous things that Larry Krasner has done since he's been in office (from the perspective of someone who has been railroaded in the Philadelphia courts and Criminal Justice System) until someone is able to go after those (the true criminals) within the Criminal Justice System who continue to further their agenda, justice cannot and will never truly be served. And all those men who were wrongfully convicted will continue to rot away in these prisons or pass away and die from prison medical neglect (Death by Incarceration). This is what killed murdered Delbert Africa. Judges like Anne Lazuras, Sheila Woods-Skipper, (President Judge) Charles Ehlich and PCRA Judge Brinkley - all former members of the infamous Lynn Abraham DA Office who are now judges. And the unethical and corruptions will continue to go on.

A notice worth noticing: the young rapper Meek Mills, had this young brother not had the resources and the social media exposure and the funds to hire a good attorney, Judge Brinkley and Sheila Woods-Skipper would have done the Thang

to Meek Mills, and in all likelihood he would be fighting to get out of prison still today.

Stay up Stay safe, Stay strong and know that the power is on The Move, and so too is The People.

Shadeed Abdallaah

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### **Prayer is our weapon!**

As I write this article my usually pumped up spirit and diesel fueled drive feels so depleted and washed out. I've been serving this life sentence since 2004 and I must honestly admit that these last past 12 months have been the most grueling challenging against my psyche and my very soul. No one seen 2020 coming, this pandemic appeared out of nowhere, shutting down not only our country, but the world! The lost of lives continue to be catastrophic, encased by epic narratives as the body count continue to rise each and every hour. Concern for loved ones takes precedence over my very thoughts of freedom. At times I dread the duration of the days that humble my nights, so grateful to God Almighty that I made it through yet another 24 hours. There may be some light at the end of the tunnel, if only a flicker, as vaccinations are being distributed across the states. Civilians wait anxiously behind our Front Line Warriors who have been putting their lives on the line since the beginning. Nevertheless where do we fit into this equation? Incarcerated men and women who are helpless, exposed to the dangers of having no control over our own well-being. The frightening truth of our reality is that we are dependent upon a system administered and functioning under a predominantly Caucasian provincial point of view. Not meaning to skip subjects but this past years series of events have left my mind still trying to put together all the pieces of logic and reasoning. First Covid -19 then the televised senseless slaughter of our brother George Floyd. No historical documentations nor recording of centuries of brutalization could have possibly prepared me for what I witnessed along with millions of others around the world. My heart was heavy and I could barely breathe as I sat on my bunk surrounded by mainly white inmates who openly and unsympathetically voiced their negative, racist and hateful comments purposely attacking all good sense and self control I had inside of me.

For months following the death of George Floyd I remained on this unit unable to get moved. Having to endure a hostile environment created by both officers and inmates. With my

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anger seething inside of me I wanted to stand up and give them the same inconsideration they were giving me throwing all caution to the wind! But instead I remained silent and I would find myself crying silently in the shower stall feeling like coward. No way am I naïve to the afflictions of hatred, now that I think about it I recall an incident between myself and my former defense attorney that took place during an attorney\client visitation. I'll never forget that out of no where my former defense attorney lunged across the table screaming in my face "THIS WAS A WHITE WOMAN THAT WAS KILLED!" Gripping the side of my chair I was ready to start swinging not knowing if I would have to defend myself in the small isolated room. Responding, I ask him "Would it have been better for you if she would have been Black? " Let me clarify that my circumstances have nothing whatsoever to do with racism, unfortunately it is the ugly result of drug addiction. Now I realize that I was being strategically prepared to be apart of the many stories that would make up for everything that Black Lives stand for! My favorite book in the Bible is Ecclesiastes 3. In this chapter our Sovereign God speaks of seasons, and in these seasons there will be many tragedies, defeats and triumphs. We must remember that God himself chooses the forgotten ones that secular society throws away he uses men and women like this to bring down the arrogance of self centered men to show his people the HE is in control. It takes God given super natural strength to have hope behind these prison walls and yet feel so hopeless on many occasions. I know this fight is not in vain! Every meeting, collaboration and rally is making a difference even if it may not have manifested yet. I believe wholeheartedly that there will be a time when prisons will only serve as relics for field trips for our youths as a reminder and warning pertaining to the fall of the confinements of systematic racism. This year weighed heavy on us all! The virus, racism at a all time high, SB 942 having to be reintroduced, the Jennifer Storm antics and the endless campaigning for mercy aka COMMUTATION. In Revelations 22:12 Our Lord commands for us to Wake Up What will win our fight? For every step forward it seems they try to push us 2 steps back. But yet we find the strength to carry on. Maybe we should take a lesson from our ancestors who risk their lives and limbs to flee from the captivity of their conditions, walking out on faith with only the stars in the night sky as their road map and the still guidance of Gods voice in their hearts. God inhabits the prayer and praises of his people. PRAYER IS A WEAPON!

by Sarita Miller/OJ3158 SCI Muncy \*\*\*\*\*

**RHU** 1/20/21

I am an inmate currently in solitary confinement due to a fabricated misconduct from a correctional officer at SCI Dallas state prison. I have proof that the officer violated and disregarded prison policy, but the corrupt hearing examiner as well as the corrupt administration and Superintendent ignored these violations during my appeal procedures and refused to acknowledge the obvious abuse of power. I was given seven months solitary confinement and subjected to 24 hours in cell lockdown everyday without the opportunity for recreation or out of cell exercise.

I've contracted the COVID-19 Coronavirus due to the lack of precaution and sanitation protocol from assigned RHU staff. My mental and physical health is deteriorating due to inactivity of my brain and body but my concerns are ignored or waved off by the Medical and Mental Health Department.

Instead of assisting the men that are peacefully protesting the conditions and the cruel and unusual punishment of an everyday, 24-hour, cell lockdown by hunger striking, the medical staff instead found a loophole in the language of a flimsy medical co-pay policy that they're using to steal and extort funds from prisoners' accounts in the attempt to stop them from striking. I have proof of them contradicting each other on that matter as well.

I as well as many others have been subjected to retaliation from staff after filing grievances or expressing our concerns. At times I've been forced to endure the painful cries of grown men who needed medical attention but couldn't get it because of the absence of an emergency call button in the cells we are forced to be in for 24 hours a day.

The blatant disregard for human life causes me to feel unsafe, because I have to witness and experience the careless inadequate treatment of the Medical and Mental Health departments as well as the corruption and hostility from the same officers and administrative staff that are supposed to protect me. PLEASE, do whatever you can to help this matter. The violations are so extreme to such an extent that they amount to Human Rights violations. For more information on this matter please write me at this address:

Robert Simon/ GS-6356/ SCI-Dallas

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(Continued on page 50)

December 2020

## Dear HRC,

My name is Justin Gilroy (aka JG). I've been incarcerated since 1-28-2011 and I have been "trapped" in SCI Albion since March 5th, 2012, all of my twenties behind bars. I do not have any photos at the moment, but in my next letter I'll try and put one in there. I just so happened to find a copy of THE MOVEMENT (Fall Issue #42). Not only did I read it cover to cover, but I also was relieved that I am not alone.

Before I get a piece off my chest, I want to give a shout out to William Daniels Jr, (aka Chill).

"No need to tell you to keep your head up, your head was always up. Whether you remember me or not, I remember you. Need to work on ya handball game young bull -ha! Seriously though you're in my prayers brotha. May the truth set you free. # Free Chill!!"

Also, a shout out to everyone that is (one way or another) involved with THE MOVEMENT. I respect and thank you for all that you are doing for and against the struggle, because this \*\*\*\* is real and I hope that I can be a part of what's to come; we are human beings!

I would like to become a subscriber of THE MOVEMENT, as well as a voice, not only for my own but for others who are either afraid to speak up or don't know how.

Also, the RHU is where I found your Fall Issue#42, ironically. And I know for a fact that the anonymous subscriber that wrote that article was 100% correct about everything.

Anyway, I was only back in the RHU "hole" for 10 days until my write up was dismissed (another story). I see Parole in April for the 3rd time (also another story). I took it as a sign when I found THE MOVEMENT. So, this is me acting on a hunch. You have my permission to print anything that I send. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. I am also looking for feedback and I look forward to the future. I do also write poems as well as draw. But I'll save these qualities for another time.

Happy Holidays and thank you for your time.

Justin W. Gilroy, #KF-3884, SCI-Albion

\*\*\*\*\*

was never a problem individual there and made several positive changes. Mrs. Boylan, who I have spoken with on numerous occasions has only given me the run around about everyone having to submit a form and a vote had to be taken. What the what???? If I am an APPROVED Prison Society Official Visitor/Monitor why does the institution have to vote, and vote on WHAT? It has been a year and I am still waiting on assistance from our wonderful Prison Society. Figure that!!!! Still waiting.

They block, destroy and do not give our kinfolks their mail. They block out my emails messages that aren't threatening or menacing in ANYWAY. Then their excuse is that it was something inappropriate. BULL. I provide informative information and facts that will assist my kinfolk with getting out. I am still waiting on Deputy McKee at SCI Muncy to respond to my email. I asked why was my email and others at SCI Muncy blocked out to me? She told me the officer told her that I was saying inappropriate things about staff and people who were there. What? If others, like me, are doing very well now that they are NOT in prison and are a Prison Society Official Visitor then what is the issue. What gives an officer the right or authority to toss your mail, because they may not have liked that individual who is writing to you. I have all the letters and documentation I sent you all. Why? Because you can't trust the Department of In Corrections. Many of them need a lesson behind the walls. I challenged Deputy McKee about the emails. I asked them to prove I sent inappropriate content because I can prove that I DID NOT!!!! See I have all my copies. Still waiting and its been two months, soooooooo it's unlikely that she will because she has NO validity to her unfindings. That's 100% Fact. Can anyone figure out how to strategically sue or file complaints at a higher level?

Can we get rid of Wetzel and Wolf, that would be a start? If the head is jacked up the entire body needs to be revamped. The head must be one of honesty, loyalty, commitment, and for the betterment of the people behind the walls. So, it's time to reelect and get the right people in office. Please my Good Great people, remember you are NOT alone. STAND UP!!! And STAY UP!!!

Much Love and Respect

Dana Lomax-Wiliams, CADBI DELCO President ya sista in and out the struggle

## The nation’s oldest juvenile lifer, Joe Ligon, left a Pa. prison after 68 years

by Samantha Melamed, Posted: February 11, 2021



Photo by Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer



Joe Ligon and John Pace in West Philadelphia on February 12, 2021. Photo credit: Johnny Myers.

Leaving the State Correctional Institution Phoenix in Montgomery County on Thursday morning, his white hair peeking out below a prison-issue hat, Joe Ligon was accompanied by a dozen large file boxes. That’s about 10 more boxes than regulations normally permit.

“I’m a special guy,” Ligon explained.

It’s a privilege earned over 68 years, as the oldest and longest-serving juvenile lifer in the country. He’s been imprisoned since 1953, when he was just 15 years old.

“I guess you accumulate a lot of stuff in 68 years,” said Bradley Bridge, a lawyer with the Defender Association of Philadelphia who’s represented Ligon since 2006. Having taken on the mission of getting Ligon home — first legally, then logistically — he had to scramble to fit the materials into his car, commandeering a reporter’s trunk for the overflow.

Joe Ligon brings boxes of legal documents to be stored at his lawyer’s office after his release from prison after 68 years.

Ligon, now 83, received his life term for taking part in a spree of robbery and assaults in which two people died. Ligon admits participating in the crime with a group of drunk teens but denies killing anyone.

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that automatic life terms for kids are cruel and unusual, he was one of more than 500 Pennsylvania prisoners all resentenced to terms contingent on lifetime parole.

But Ligon, resentenced to 35 years to life in 2017, rejected the very idea of parole after nearly seven decades in prison.

“I like to be free,” he said. “With parole, you got to see the parole people every so often. You can’t leave the city without permission from parole. That’s part of freedom for me.”

Other prisoners tried to coax him out into the free world. John Pace, a former juvenile lifer and now a reentry coordinator for the Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project (YSRP), recalled a fruitless visit to the prison with a group of other ex-lifers. “If you want to fight, fight it when you get out,” he counseled Ligon at the time.

But Ligon refused to apply for parole, let alone take any required programs.

So Bridge fought three more years to get him released with time served — and won a victory that has given hope to hundreds of other juvenile lifers still on parole.

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In federal court, he argued that Ligon's mandatory maximum sentence of life was unconstitutional.

"The constitution requires that the entire sentence, both the minimum and maximum terms imposed on a juvenile, be individualized — and a one size fits all cannot pass constitutional muster," he wrote. The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office agreed. And, on Nov. 13, 2020, Anita B. Brody, senior U.S. District judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, ordered Ligon resentenced or released within 90 days.

"That was no sad day for me," Ligon said. He only wished his mother, his father, and his brother could have been there to see it.

The 90-day clock expired Thursday. So, for the first time, Ligon left behind prison walls and visited the public defenders' Center City office, where files on his case take up an entire room. He seemed unfazed as he placed his face close to a high-tech temperature scanner, then cruised by elevator up to the eighth floor.

Peering out the window, he saw a city transformed.

"I'm looking at all the tall buildings," he said. "This is all new to me. This never existed."

He found it unsettling that Eastern State Penitentiary, where he was once imprisoned, is now a museum and Halloween attraction. "That don't suit my tastes," he said. He had declined to be included in an exhibit. He feared it would imply "that I'm such a dangerous man, which I'm not."

He grew up in a different world: a farm in Alabama, where he abandoned school in the third or fourth grade — he said he couldn't stand being in big groups — much as he would reject educational offerings in prison.

"I'm just a stubborn type of person," Ligon said. "I was born that way."

His parents enrolled him in school in Philadelphia when he was 13, but he couldn't keep up. He was still illiterate when he was arrested at age 15. He believes he was scapegoated as the new kid, the outsider.

A loner, he grew to pride himself on his janitorial skills. In Graterford prison, he learned to read and write. He trained as a boxer there, developing a military-style workout regimen he continues to this day, despite his arthritis.

He never applied for commutation, though he could have had a strong chance at clemency in the 1970s, when hundreds of Pennsylvania lifers were released. Instead, he put his faith in Bridge and waited for the day he'd be released. To prepare himself for modern society, he watched world news on a small TV in his cell.



The Inquirer and other newspapers called the crime spree a "wolf-pack" killing by a group of teens they called "head-hunters."

"I like my chances," he said Thursday. "I really like my chances in terms of surviving."

His road to release, though, was riddled with obstacles. After the U.S. Supreme Court banned mandatory life terms for minors in 2012, Pennsylvania refused to apply the ruling retroactively. Another ruling in 2016 ordered the state and others to do so.

Then, mitigation specialists had to prepare for his resentencing, tracking down school transcripts and prison records spanning more than half a century. "Every infraction, every transfer, that was the way to put his [biography] together," said Billi Charron, who was tasked with compiling his history and a home plan.

Ligon's aversion to parole kept him locked up for years after that, until the November ruling set the 90-day deadline for his release.

That left Ligon's supporters scrambling to line up everything he'd need to come home.

Charron, Pace, and Eleanor Myers, a senior advisor at YSRP, volunteered to assist — a process that ultimately included support from 10 city agencies, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, and various nonprofit organizations. Philadelphia's Reentry Coalition directed Myers to Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, which found Ligon a place in domiciliary care, a foster-care-like accommodation with a family in Philadelphia.

"Then we had to figure out how to pay for it," said Myers. The Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services agreed to cover the first year, while a benefits specialist is helping to get Social Security lined up after that. A modest crowdfunding campaign helped cover incidentals.

"We have this extraordinary community that has rallied to make this happen," Myers said.

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Pace, meanwhile, picked out sweaters and socks he thought Ligon would like. He found a phone with no data plan, figuring Ligon won't need it. He drove around the neighborhood where Ligon will be staying, checking out the parks and other attractions so he can show Ligon around. And, he solicited advice from other long-serving former lifers. "Just take it slow with Joe," they advised.

When Pace, 52, first came home nearly four years ago, he felt physically ill from the overstimulation — a sort of emotional equivalent of the bends. "Let's say mine was on a 2. His is going to be on a 10," Pace said. "He's been locked up so long, everything changed."

At the back of his mind, for now, is whether the legal victory in Ligon's case could be his own pathway off of lifetime parole.

The ruling does not set binding precedent. Nonetheless, Bridge said he's already been contacted by numerous juvenile lifers hoping to challenge their lifetime parole terms as well. So far, he said, he's filed similar petitions for three juvenile lifers.

To Bridge, Ligon's case is a powerful example of punishment taken to senseless extremes.

"We waste people's lives by over-incarcerating and we waste money by over-incarcerating. His case graphically demonstrates the absurdity of wasting each," Bridge said Thursday, before dropping Ligon off at his new home. "Hopefully his release, and the release of the juvenile lifers in general, will cause a reevaluation of the way we incarcerate people."

From: <https://www.inquirer.com/news/joe-ligon-juvenile-lifer-philadelphia-incarceration-release-lifetime-parole-20210211.html>

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## **PA DOC & COVID-19; TALES FROM THE INSIDE!**

**Brandon Moody - SCI-Dallas**

... this all began on Mon. when at least 8 people on my housing unit, which is the Special Needs Unit (SNU) (a unit for those with both physical and mental disabilities) was told to pack up not shortly after I got off the ZOOM meeting with you all. When I was approached and stated I wouldn't move unless I knew where I was going I was issued a veiled threat that I better remember what happened with the Michigan and VA moves, meaning force was going to be used if I refused. So someone was sent to talk to me and it was explained that according to the info they received we were only supposed to be "temporarily" (2wks) transferred until they got the virus under control. Mind you that at that time the only ones they had pack was those of us who had already HAD the virus and "recovered." When we go to pack up they tell us that we may only be gone for about a month, but we are definitely going back. The next day I spoke with someone I have a little trust with who has some higher ranking and they said the topic never came up about anybody going back, which is why they prepared to have a communication on my behalf to ensure the next institution would meet my treatment needs. They also explained that it was conveyed to them that we were being sent to a spot where we would have more freedoms since we'd been on perpetual lockdowns with no end in sight. In any event, we didn't leave until Tues afternoon where there were 3-4 buses ready to ship us all over the state. On my bus were all those who had already had the virus, but the 1st red flag was when the guards transporting us didn't know our status. As soon as we get to Camp Hill it was obvious we were in for it. First, the LT says he didn't know we were coming until 15mins prior!?! Typical of Camp Hill.

We were spoken to in a hostile manner. We had gotten here about 7:30 pm and hadn't eaten since 10:30 am. When we asked a CO about being fed he snaps and says, "This ain't Burger King!" and slams the door in our faces. This same CO then takes us in 4-8 at a time for full NAKED strip searches in front of one another! Before we leave the LT who claimed to not know we were coming stated we would eat when we

got to our unit. When we get to the block the cells were horrid! They looked as if the previous occupants just left hours before and we rushed right in. When asked about cleaning supplies, food and our medication (both life sustaining and psychotropics) we were met with belligerence and hostility. One CO stood in the middle of the tier berating us while cursing and claiming he'd deny us from coming out the next day. At about 2am they brought 6 more prisoners from Dallas, who never tested positive! They then kept the "count" light on from 10pm -5am, did count at 5, turned the light off and did 2 more rounds with a flash light before turning the light back on at 6am. At this point most of us were on edge from being starved, sleep deprived and medication less. With my anxiety going through the roof I went to the POC (Psychiatric Observation Cell) where the conditions were even worse because it was cold, I was naked with a smock, and the light was on for 24hrs. I remained there until Fri afternoon after stabilizing from receiving my meds. When I came back, they were finally allowing us access to the shower after 4 long days! Later that night they brought in 25 more prisoners from Smithfield who are all negative! We are all now on some enhanced 14 day quarantine and only allowed out 1 cohort at a time, which means if you have a cellie they go out together. Last night guys got denied the opportunity to shower and use the communication outlets because the 2nd shift decided to shut down at 8, although most facilities don't do so until about 9. There's no word on what's next.

Until recently, we barely got on the phone and kiosk daily, and if they get everyone done early now instead of giving us another opportunity to use these communication outlets, they shut everything down and do nothing for the rest of the night!

**1/4/2021**

... although we acknowledge that the rhetoric may be to limit the spread of the virus, unfortunately the implementation strategies are too impractical and hypocritical, especially since lower level staff either blatantly disregard reasonable protocols but enforce the most unreasonable. For example they barely wear their mask (which are not N-95 regulated) and continuously congregate less than 6ft apart, especially when they're in the unit console (bubble), but won't allow us to use the phones and kiosk in more than one cohort at a time although these communication outlets are more than 20ft apart. Every restriction implemented limits our ability to

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communicate and exercise outside the cell and in turn reduces their need to work, where they do the bare minimum to nothing and brag about it. The other nonsense promulgated by staff, especially those at Dallas, was that they wanted the virus to spread so it could run its course claiming they wanted to contract it, especially to get paid time off! The scheme was so bad at Dallas that they forced CO's to work until their test came back!

**1/6/2021**

I come to you all now in a state of ambivalence because the treatment we are receiving here at SCI Camp Hill is becoming beyond bearable! Since we have arrived here less than one month ago we have been met with a callousness, indifference and disrespect unmatched in any of my experience, outside of being in the RHU. Staff speak to us with a hostility and indignation reminiscent of an antebellum slave film, in addition with creating living conditions that match their demeanor. We have been continuously deprived of using the communication outlets routinely, subjected to 24hr incessant illumination, cold cells, cold and miniscule food portions, verbal harassment and arbitrary abuses of discretion, while superior staff members show indifference to our pleas for change. Personally, I have reached my psychological limits because things have hit a tipping point. Yesterday (1/5/21) when I addressed a Sgt for the demeaning and threatening manner in which he was accosting another prisoner he responded by exclaiming, "Why don't you take your ass back to the street corners and suck some dick!" Emotionally I haven't been right since. Another prisoner was so appalled at this he reported it to Superintendent Harry who I assumed relayed it to PREA because today (1/6/21) unbeknownst to me I was approached and interviewed by Lt. Muhl from PREA. But prior to this interview during the unusual 5:30 am count this morning a Sgt. Tempe was doing count and opened up a prisoner's door unprovoked. When he came by my cell he looked at me and then blatantly flashed his flashlight in my face. When I asked him why he did this he said, "Because I can do what I want!" I responded by saying, "Like you did when you opened that man's door, which I'm going to make sure you get in trouble for!" and at 2:40pm I received a fabricated misconduct from this Sgt for Threats, etc. Before receiving this I had already decided to stop eating and communicating with these people until something changes! Day 1!

**Vincent, Daniel**

**10/10/2020**

. . . Currently the DOC is using COVID as a means of oppression...while disguised as precautionary COVID measures it's nothing short of arbitrary punishment...case in point; after the

Grand Jury decided not to indict the officer's who murdered Breonna Taylor there were stricter COVID measures put in place, even though there was no rise in COVID cases here at SCI-Smithfield and, in fact, there was a downward trend. This again was after the elections and most recently after the assault of a staff member. I personally questioned the Security Lt. about these tactics and while he was forthcoming admitting that those tactics had nothing to do with COVID; they were, never the less, disguised as precautionary COVID measures. Most of these tactics would be in direct contrast to federal and state laws, rules, and regulations and DOC policy. Currently if an inmate exhibits any symptoms he is isolated, quarantined, with very little medical attention, treatment or care. Quarantine is worse than solitary confinement. It's more like punishment than treatment. So who would want to put themselves through that. As a result of the harsh treatment inmates don't even report symptoms and CO's are making so much money in overtime that they're not reporting any symptoms either. It's simple, the only way the virus gets into the DOC is if Staff brings it in. So why not test instead of screen? Why not limit staff and inmate contact to only when completely necessary; and even then, staff should be in full hazardous suits—In 2018 the DOC took extreme expedite measures securing \$20 million for precautionary measures when staff claimed that they became ill due to an unknown substance, and that was a hoax. So where are those extreme expedite measures now during this very real world wide pandemic? Currently there are more than 100 staff members here that have contracted COVID-19 and 28 inmates; two inmate just died.

In addition, inmates undergoing medical procedures who have to see doctors outside of the facility, have to be quarantined for 14 days upon reentry into the facility; but, the officers who escort these inmates on these trips are not quarantined. When in fact the inmates who go out on these trips are shackled and hand-cuffed from head to toe with the inability to do anything for themselves, therefore the officers have to open doors, push buttons, etc.. The inmate never touches anything, but yet the inmates are quarantined and the officers are not. Also while the inmates are segregated from each other as a so called precautionary measure to prevent cross contamination, staff are not; staff move about freely throughout the facility, from contaminated areas in the prison to non-contaminated areas in the prison.

Cross Contaminating - ONE OF THE BIGGEST SIGNS OF THE DOC'S DISREGARD, AND EXTREME INDIFFERENCE TO THE WELL BEING OF THE INMATE POPULATION'S IS THE CURRENT MASS MOVE THE DOC IS PLANNING WITHIN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS. CURRENTLY THE DOC IS PLANNING, OR HAS PLANNED TO TURN SCI-SMITHFIELD INTO A TRANSPORTATION HUB. WITHIN THE NEXT COU-

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**THE MOVEMENT**

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

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PLE OF WEEKS THE DOC IS PLANNING ON MOVING 1400 (FOURTEEN HUNDRED) INMATES OUT OF SCI-SMITHFIELD AND SPREADING THEM THROUGHOUT THE DOC. THIS IS SURE TO BE A MASSIVE SUPER SPREADER EVENT AND CROSS CONTAMINATION OF EXTREME PROPORTIONS. WHY THE DOC WOULD ATTEMPT SUCH A MOVE IN A TIME LIKE THIS IS BEYOND ME, BUT THIS IS SURE TO PUT THOUSANDS OF INMATES LIVES AT GREAT RISK OF EXTREME ILLNESS AND DEATH.

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### **Rob Perez - SCI-Forest**

**1/10/2021**

As of Jan 10, in sci Forest, 137 inmates have tested positive for the virus. . . . We all know that people will come to work & unknowingly spread the virus but why isn't the DOC paroling people. I have a guy on my unit, Jacob Rodriquez #EX7202, from Philly. Puerto Rican. Hasn't has a misconduct in like 20 years, has been a model inmate in SCI Forest since it opened in 2004 (he was one of the 1st inmates here). He has the top job on the unit for over 15 years (block clerk). Has done every program you can do, plus some. Has done all he can, what does parole do? Gives him ANOTHER 2 year hit. He is in his 50's, tons of health problems, yet they don't want to let him go. He has jail/DOC support each time he see's parole. This is something I cannot understand. People are dying in here and they still don't want to let someone like him go home to his family. I am told we are in group 1B to be vaccinated. Many staff here have said they will not take it. The nurse actually told me she wasn't taking it. Ok I'll take your dose then. My transfer has been approved, but I cannot be moved until the virus numbers die down or we get vaccinated.

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### **Angela**

**12/21/2020**

Today is December 21, 2020. It is 11:15 PM, I was laying here reading like I do every night and after little while of feeling like a weight was on my chest I got up and took two puffs of my inhaler. Then I lay back down. It feels like I'm not getting enough air into my lungs. I'm scared. I got out of bed and tried to stop the panic by brushing my teeth. Still, I can't breathe properly. I'm in a room alone and the COs won't answer the intercom. You can tell by my writing that I'm shaking. I don't know what to do.

On Saturday they took my roommate because her COVID test came back positive. Both of mine were negative but they tested me and put me in a room with someone who ended up being positive for COVID. She was not a-symptomatic. She was very sick and this cell is 8 by 12 feet. She was coughing and sneezing all over, prior to her being moved we were locked in

this cell for 3 1/2 days together where we were unable to shower or use the phones or kiosk. The COVID tests are coming back in groups and they are taking people to a quarantine block, but they are leaving the roommates of the positive inmates on the housing units.

It's frightening being alone in a cell unable to breathe and not having anyone to help you through it. Or waiting for the COs to do rounds. What if I don't make it to their next round? Seventy-five percent or more of Muncy's population has tested positive for COVID-19. And we are being punished and locked behind cell doors unable to call our families or send messages. Up until today I had not been afforded the opportunity to shower for four days. Today alone they took 15 inmates to quarantine because of positive test results. Yesterday 4; on December 15<sup>th</sup>, five; and that is only one single side of a whole unit (J Unit). There are nine more smaller cottages and a whole other side of J.

We are being treated like animals because of their failure to contain the virus. The staff walk around with their masks below their nose or with no mask at all. Coughing, yelling, etc. and they are not getting tested. Some officers confided that they will walk off if they were being tested when they did the mass testing on December 16<sup>th</sup>.

How can they punish us for their failure and leave us to suffer alone in cells without any form of communication on the outside? I don't even have a cell mate. I have not spoken a single word in days. But the COs sit in the dayroom in groups of six or eight shooting the \*\*\*\* with their masks down.

They are the ones who gave it to us. We are suffering for their mistakes while they go around untested, not social distancing, not wearing mask, getting paid to shoot the \*\*\*\* for 8 hours a day while we're denied showers or contact with our loved ones.

This is bull\*\*\*\*.

This is worse than solitary.

This is solitary while in a pandemic amongst a COVID outbreak, scared for your life because no one cares! And they're keeping us from talking about it.

I hope I'm just panicking over my breathing. But if something happens to me at least you'll know why.

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### **Vernell W. Morris - SCI-Dallas**

**01/16/2021**

This letter is to inform readers of the inadequate safety precautions that have been taken here at SCI-Dallas. On December 9, 2020 SCI-Dallas finally administered institution wide Covid-19 testing. At the time of this testing I was housed on E-Block here at Dallas. Prior to the prison-wide testing, E-

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**THE MOVEMENT**

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Block was the only Housing Unit that had not had a individual test positive for COVID-19.

That all changed once the rapid test results came back and over 40 Prisoners tested positive for COVID-19 on E unit. That night the administration, here at Dallas, decided to separate those Prisoners that tested negative from those that tested positive. Massive relocation was done with those that tested negative. The administration started designating different Cell Blocks as Negative and Positive Cell Blocks. This was a departure from the prior way of dealing with Prisoners that tested positive for the virus; before this if one or more individuals tested positive for COVID-19 they were sent to different "totally quarantined" locations within this prison such as the prison Gym, and the Cell Block itself was placed on enhance quarantine for 14 days or as long as needed. But this new change in COVID-19 policy call for us prisoners to be dispersed throughout the prison. Many of us (like myself) were placed on Cell Blocks that were designated Negative Tested Units. However just weeks prior these same Housing Units were on enhance quarantine for Positive test cases. Once we were settle into our new housing arrangement, the result of the laboratory testing that were also taken the same day of Dec. 9th came back days later revealing that many Prisoners who initially tested negative on the Rapid Test were now positive for COVID-19, but by this time we were all mixed together, and the Cell Block that I was placed on, that was designated a Negative cell block had a high volume of positive test from the initial lab testing, causing C-Block to be re-designated a Positive Unit. I had a negative initial Lab test. So myself and others were sent to other negative Cell Blocks. But by this time I had contracted COVID due to being placed in a cell that the prior occupants had test positive for COVID-19. I was now placed on cell block B, a unit designated as a Negative Cell Block. Here I started to show symptoms of the COVID virus. A week later B-Block was re-tested and my re-test came back positive, and I was moved right away to a Positive designated Cell Block. This was done while I was sick as a Dog!

Most of the men who I was housed with on E-Block, that tested negative on both the Rapid and Laboratory test and were move throughout this prison, are now positive for the COVID virus and are housed on Positive Housing Units.

Since the beginning of the re-designating of the Housing Units the positive testing of those that were initially Negative has become very high. This is due in large part to the un-sanitizing or proper sanitizing of cell's and the quick reaction to the initial Rapid Testing result, that cause the Administration to have mass movements of individuals throughout the prison.

I cannot state with absolute certainty that those of us that contracted COVID here after initially testing Negative would not had contracted the virus had we not been relocated. But

it is clear that this Administration placed too much faith in the Rapid testing, causing the Virus to spread with in the institution exponentially, causing avoidable sickness, pain, and great anxiety among the Prisoners. I have heard from both Guard's and medical staff that SCI-Dallas now stands at over 1,600 prisoners and over 300 staff positive for COVID-19. This would mean that at least 74% of this prison population have tested positive for COVID. At least 15 people have die here from COVID-19, if these number are correct. This would have to be the worst rate of contraction of this virus anywhere State, Federal, or County Prisons in the country. It is my opinion that this out break here has been allowed to become an open form of Heard Immunity, because the administration lacked the ability to gain control of the virus once it hit this prison. By any case or reason, this administration so-call safety precautions have been a dismal failure.

### SCI-Mahanoy 12/30/2020

I wrote the ACLU about my concerns about our health and safety concerning COVID-19 in November of this year. I'm currently incarcerated at SCI Mahanoy. I am currently being housed in a Dorm block. We have mask made from what looks like bedsheets. From the information I received from the Fireside Chat on the TV, three inmates have died at minimum from COVID-19 complications. One hundred and fifty (150) or more inmates have tested positive for COVID-19. One hundred and fifty (150) to two hundred (200) or more staff members have tested positive. They are allowing Correctional Officers that take inmates on hospital trips and then to work on the blocks within hours after they return. They are allowing Correctional Officers who are working on the blocks used to house positive cases to work on other blocks. Correctional Officers do not wear their masks behind the desk.

One officer (CO Antony) who I mentioned in the letter to the ACLU contracted COVID-19 and was back within a month. Once again behind the desk without a mask. It was approximately 9:30 PM on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> this same officer was coughing and sick, left his shift and Staff never informed us he tested positive for COVID-19 and didn't re-test the unit he works (KA). Nobody started getting sick until Antony came to work, going on the infected side without a mask on, and returning to us. Correctional Officer Pauline December 29<sup>th</sup> between 11:30 to 12:00 AM, no mask behind the desk; we are in an open dorm, no social distancing, and no proper airflow on a block that has seven windows where only two can open.

Medical charged inmate [name withheld] five dollars after he woke up seriously sick and tested positive. Let me point out that over 35+ inmates out of 75, tested positive on KB, O, and KA. Every other day we have 45 minutes cohorts twice a day,

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and one thirty-minute cohort in between those days. All these people are infected, yet it was reported on the news that no Correctional Officers or Staff tested positive. Yet 150 or more inmates tested positive and there were 3 deaths at a minimum. We are not allowed to workout. Other prisons are giving inmates hoagies and other incentives while here, if I cube number is picked, we get a soda and a candy bar.

We have one visiting monitor on K- Block for 150 inmates ... We do one-for-one sheet exchange and we asked about this we were told policy only allows one-for-one. But it doesn't; two sheets and one towel a week is the policy. People have been waiting on dental surgery, like myself. I have an Abscess in my mouth for almost a year from a tooth, it took three sick calls to finally be seen in September. I was told I was getting scheduled for surgery for removal of two wisdom teeth and removal of the tooth causing the Abscess. But all I get is penicillin and I have been waiting another four (4) on surgery. Another inmate has been waiting for surgery of his ACL, LCL and meniscus for six (6) months; they placed him on K block which is an uphill and downhill walk with that much damage in his leg.

We have made mistakes in our lives, that doesn't mean we deserve to be mistreated. They get away with physically harming us, killing us, and medically mistreating us. An inmate was killed, staff lied about the circumstances, tried falsifying paperwork, and lost their jobs. All the News reported was, *what they were told*, and they couldn't leave out what he was charged with; like that excuses what was done to him.

Governor Wolf needs to take away Secretary Wetzel's hold on the prison system and do what he promised. SCI-Mahanoy won't pass out the proper paperwork for inmates to fill out to find out if they are eligible for release, that Harrisburg states they're supposed to have passed out.

Let the outside know we're dying in here and nothing is being done. We're nothing but a paycheck to these people. It's like we're in a storage facility for profit. If we die, we die. If we need medical attention, it's the bare minimum - it's enough so we can't sue; or enough until we are another person's problem.

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### **Bruce Cooper - SCI-Dallas**

**12/25/2020**

I am a prisoner at the state prison plantation Dallas in Pennsylvania, this prison and its officials waited nine (9) months to test us for the COVID virus, and that was only because of the hundreds of prisoners that contracted the virus which caused the death of numerous prisoners. The conditions of confinement is constitutionally unsafe when the measures implemented fails to protect us from exposure to this deadly airborne virus, a virus introduced into the prison population by staff. I

say that because prisoners have not had visits and or any physical contact with anyone other than staff since March 2020.

Because of Secretary Wetzel's incompetency, numerous prisoners died and/or were murdered at the hands of prison staff. First, guards must pass the temperature check to enter the prison, if their temperature is high, they take cough syrup, re-take the temperature check and this time they pass, knowing they may be infected with the void virus is of no concern. Guards wear a face covering mask when they have to, otherwise, that is out of the question.

When the conditions of confinement poses an imminent danger or risk of serious harm to our health and safety, the failure to protect us from such unreasonable harm constitutes liability for any injuries that occur, and even when death occurs as a direct result. Prisoners are now being murdered due to the conditions of confinement due to staff bringing the covid virus that they contracted into the prison, where as there is no other way the virus could have enter the prison. I was not given a death sentence, and yet that is what I face as long as I am restrained under these conditions of confinement where officials lack the means to protect us from exposure in contracting this unseen virus.

The bad part is, there are prisoners forced to wait for parole such as Brother Steven Ball, who cried for help earlier this month when he had problems breathing. We alerted the guard who called medical, medical staff took their time coming, discussed the breathing problems, told Mr. Ball to just lay down and he would be okay, but he refused and exited the cell demanding to go to medical. Some days later, we lost a good person, brother, and friend to the COVID virus, a prisoner who should not have been inside, other than the fact of parole hits after hits.

The staff of this plantation has never taken this virus seriously, claiming this to be Trump country and the virus is a fake, but now some nine months later we have been tested for covid three times. In December, a massive shipment occurred, transferring about two hundred prisoners across the state, but that was far too late, and only after hundreds of prisoners contracted a virus we should have been protected from, had staff been tested in the same manner they are now testing us. If they were tested in the same way, Mr. Ball and numerous other convicts would still be living!

I be, Bruce 17x. Cooper. In my opinion, the Department of Corrections, John Wetzel, and Kevin Ransom should be charged in the murder/wrongful death of each prisoner that died from the COVID virus, because they knew the risk if exposed to the virus, and failed to adequately protect us from their own staff bringing death into the prison.

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So many of our loved ones behind the walls died of COVID.

And we didn't get to say goodbye.

We mourn the collective loss of our friends, parents, siblings, children, cousins, mentors, and comrades. Every person on this list had a family who loved them. Every person on this list mattered.

Alonzo Mosteller  
Alvin Joyner  
Anthony Murray  
Augusto Gonzalez  
Bruce Norris  
Calvin Sharpe  
Carl Cooper  
Carl Munford  
Charles Diller

Christopher Young  
Clarence Sutton

Claudio Hernandez

Cornelius Scaine  
Daniel Fickenworth

Darnell Holland  
Darrell Carter  
David Davis  
David Profeto  
David Smucker  
David Sutton  
Dean Hall  
Edward Ball



We  
Remember  
Them

Ellis Young  
Eugene Shaffer  
Everett Griest  
Freddie Feliverty  
Gary Rowlette  
George Conard  
George Rogers  
Gregory Grant  
Harold Herr  
Henderson Lamont  
Henry Greer  
Henry Hall  
Howard Young  
James Bennett

James Dellavechia  
James Griff  
Jerome Beverly Tucker  
Jerry Payne  
Jody Cochrane  
John Matthews  
Johnnie Maddox  
Jose Valentin  
Kasine Thomas  
Keith Lentz

Kenneth Morris  
Kevin Pritts  
Mark Davenport  
Morris Parrish  
Pamela McNeal  
Ray Voekel  
Raymond Payne

Richard Young  
Robert Brown  
Robert Daniel  
Robert Hrusovsky  
Ronald Smith  
Rudolph Sutton  
Rusty Ross  
Stanley Perkins  
Than Phan  
Thomas Holliday

Thomas Wisniewski  
Timothy Hoffman  
Tyrone Brantley  
Vernon Shank  
Wayne Wheeler  
Will Armstead  
William 'Coolpop' Abbott  
Willie Hunter  
Yvonne Harris  
Zebbie Clifton

And so  
many others.

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



*When we Fight, we Win!*

Cuando luchamos ganamos! *When we fight, we win!*

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