

THE MOVEMENT

Summer Issue #41

Human Rights Coalition
Dedicated to Protecting the

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



Above: Russell Shoatz III

Above: Mike Africa Jr.



Center: Saleem
Holbrook

Left: Fred Burton Jr.
(political prisoner son)

Right: Ms. Yvonne

During this time of George Floyd uprisings, orgs draw focus on freeing **Mumia Abu-Jamal, Russell 'Maroon' Shoatz, Joseph Bowen and Fred 'Muhammad' Burton** who are "Political Prisoners"; **OUTSPOKEN LEADERS** of the Black community, victims of the misjustice of our criminal justice system—from police cars to prison bars —during the Rizzo era., PAGE 2

End Death By Incarceration Art Contest Deadline Extended

Details page 5

End Death by Incarceration



lifecyclestowardfreedom.org



ABOVE: "Second Chances are first choices for Redemption"- Kristin Edmunsden. This bright water color features a one woman painted from a combination of photos of women looking up to signify hope. Green leaves to represent turning a new leaf, and breaking the jail bars to represent freedom.

LEFT: The quote, "We are not what we have done, We are who we have become" penned by Sheena' King encircles a photo from women at SCI - Muncy surrounded by a ring of pink cosmos flowers. Artist: etta cetera

Back Cover: At SCI-Chester, Stephanie Keene, Sergio Hyland, Marc Lamont Hill, and Justino Griggs.

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From the Desk of the Editor

Greetings! Welcome to Issue #41 of THE MOVEMENT!



My name is Serg, and I'm your Guest Editor for this issue. I want to thank Mama Patt, my Brother & Comrade, Shaka-boona, and everybody at HRC who supported the decision to allow me such an honor. Issue #40 was powerful and inspiring. Before I even opened the cover, I knew we were in for a treat. Seeing the men of Mann-Up! doing their thing at SCI Phoenix was really something. Especially because of who is in-

involved. I can't remember the last time I've seen my friend & Brother, Big Hick. It seems as if every time I'm transferred to a new spot, he was just transferred out. But I don't expect the people who run these prisons to put too many like-minded individuals in the same place. Still, it was good to see him. I wasn't surprised to see him leading in a positive way. If you know him, then you know that his leadership qualities are without question. It was also good to see Benny Doo. I spent many, many years in SCI Greene's control unit with his brother, and learned so much from him. With me being from Haines Street, I take pride in seeing our original elders helping us to move forward, instead of finding reasons to be critical of us for certain minor cultural differences. It's nice knowing that those who came before us are comfortable with passing the torch. It shows the level of confidence they have in us.

So I just want to salute everybody down there at SCI Phoenix for doing the real work, and for making a real difference while many others are busy talking and criticizing. I'm glad that Shakaboona had the opportunity to kick it with you for a while.

We have a lot to discuss in this jam-packed issue #41. Let's get to it!

Recently a rally was held in Philly's Malcolm X Park (page 2) on behalf of countless political prisoners in the PADO, who were victims of Rizzo-era police oppression. Hundreds of supporters came together to demand that the government release these freedom fighters from their decades-long confinement. Among those attending the rally was Saleem Holbrook, who is a former juvenile lifer, and one of the many who've benefitted from the leadership and guidance of our fallen heroes.

With this Covid-19 pandemic literally shutting the world down, the plight of prisoners has been at best, marginalized, and at worst, met with indifference. Unfortunately, many people regard prisoners as a disposable population.

And if prisoners are continuously judged by our past actions, that same standard of judgement should be applied to those who run prisons. The fact of the matter is Secretary of Corrections, John Wetzel, had an opportunity to minimize the spread of this

deadly virus throughout the PADO, but refused. Critical junctures had arisen when he could have put preventative measures into place. Instead, numerous instances of presumptive positive cases were suppressed from not only the public, but prison staff as well. In fact, Wetzel went so far as to deny a court order to have a prisoner tested for the virus, though that prisoner had a temperature of 106° and exhibited all other symptoms of Covid-19 (Philadelphia Inquirer, March 24, 2020)! As I write this, an outbreak is threatening the lives of thousands of men at SCI Huntingdon - a prison which should've been shut down a long time ago! No matter the outcome of this pandemic, prisoners, our families and communities, and our supporters, have an uphill battle to wage. So far, we've weathered the storm, and we continue to make progress. But it isn't enough. We must continue to focus our efforts on organizing and uniting through our common goal of being free of oppression and domination. Dismantling the prison industrial complex is an important phase of our struggle. But as times change so, too, must our methods of struggle. Today's battles, more than ever, are being waged in voting booths across the nation. While voting isn't the answer to all our problems, it can provide the time and space necessary to accomplish long-term goals. So I have to give a salute to CADBI DelCo, especially Dana Lomax, who was at the forefront of the struggle in getting a new District Attorney elected in DelCo. CADBI Philly, HRC, Amistad Law Project, and Abolitionist Law Center have also been vital to the latest pendulum shift on Pennsylvania's political scene. Now is the time for us to push even harder. Tom Wolf will soon be out as governor.

Mayor Jim Kenny is expected to run for the governorship of Pennsylvania. That leaves the mayoral race in Philadelphia wide open. Our attention should be focused on this unique opportunity to influence any upcoming election. Recent victories in this regard should remind us that it is possible!

In this issue, I speak about the importance of Inmate Organizations. Though Inmate Organizations will likely never be in a position to do any official political organizing, all members of any organization (but Inmate Organizations, especially) possess the ability to work as decentralized, autonomous agents for change. And I urge you to do so as well. But even as we work autonomously, it is critically integral that we coordinate, communicate, and cooperate with each other as we labor to establish oneness, ideologically.

Countless organizations are on the front lines in society, fighting for the rights of all people, particularly prisoners. We are all allies, and we are all struggling against the same enemy, for the same purposes. And while the pessimists among us attempt to derail our train to freedom, by (falsely) claiming that our efforts are futile, I have filled Issue #41 with just SOME of the successes that our movement has had thus far, so to encourage all of you that this fight is having an impact.

And we must continue to move ..ONWARD!!! Enjoy this issue.

Your Brother In Struggle, **Serg!**

Follow me on IG @uptownserg
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Sergio Hyland /FX-1537/SCI-Chester

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The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

Protesters in West Philly call for release of radical Black activists who ‘fought’ Rizzo

By Ximena Conde

June 28, 2020



Yvonne Platts says the threat of COVID-19 remains high for incarcerated people. She demands inmates 65 and older be released from prison. (Ximena Conde/WHYY)

Roughly 200 protesters at West Philadelphia’s Malcolm X Park kicked off the first of 13 public actions Sunday afternoon, each demonstration representing a demand made by the Black Philly Radical Collective.

The demands from the coalition of Black liberation groups include calls to decrease the Philadelphia Police Department’s budget over the next five years, as well as ending cash bail and probation and parole systems that “target” community members.

Organizers Sunday focused on freeing Mumia Abu-Jamal, Russell “Maroon” Shoatz, Joseph Bowen and Fred “Muhammad” Burton, whom they call “political prisoners,” all serving time for the killing of white police officers.

The convictions of Shoatz, Burton and Bowen all occurred while Frank Rizzo was Philadelphia’s police commissioner, infamous for his record on police brutality, especially against communities of color. Organizers said releasing these men would take recent efforts to remove a statue and mural of Rizzo a step farther in undoing that legacy.

“These men fought him when he was alive, when he was the police commissioner and when he was the mayor of Philadelphia ...,” said Robert Saleem Holbrook, with the Black Philly Radical Collective and Abolitionist Law Center, “when he boasted that same police force could invade Cuba and win. That same police force was unleashed on our neighborhoods.”

Abu-Jamal has been in prison since 1982 for killing Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner during a traffic stop.

Abu-Jamal was sentenced to death, but prosecutors dropped the penalty for a life sentence in 2011. The former Black Panther has long maintained his innocence and a judge in 2018 granted him permission to once again appeal his case. Maureen Faulker, the wife of the slain officer, has consistently advocated for Abu-Jamal to serve his full sentence with the backing of the city’s police union.

Another former Black Panther, Russell “Maroon” Shoatz, is also serving life without parole. Shoatz was one of six people convicted for the murder of Police Sgt. Frank Von Colln during an attack on a Cobbs Creek police station in 1970, and was held in solitary confinement for 22 years. Fred Muhammad Burton is also incarcerated for the killing of Van Colln.

Joseph Bowen was convicted of the 1971 killing of Police Officer Joseph Kelly. In 1973, Bowen and Burton fatally stabbed a warden and deputy in the now-shuttered Holmesburg Prison, after they were denied a room to meet with their Muslim group.

“We’re not really here to go over whether they are innocent or guilty,” said Saleem. “Our position is clear: They have done enough time. They’re seniors.”

The collective’s calls extend to all those behind bars who are vulnerable to COVID-19, particularly incarcerated people who are 65 and older.

Yvonne Platts, with the Free People Strike, pointed to the fact that Gov. Tom Wolf’s administration identified more than 1,200 people eligible for release to prevent the spread of the virus, but only 159 of them have been released as of mid-June. Advocates have complained the release process moves too slowly, especially for a virus that can spread quickly in confined spaces — something the governor has acknowledged.

The West Philly rally drew a mostly young and white crowd of about 200 people. (Ximena Conde/WHYY)

“What’s dragging their feet? We don’t know,” said Platte. “We’ve been fasting, hoping to get attention, compassion from Gov. Wolf, but nothing has happened.”

Speakers at the rally, which drew a mostly young and white crowd of about 200 people, discussed how Black activists have been calling attention to flaws in the criminal justice system for decades and welcomed newcomers who have been moved to action after seeing the police killing of George Floyd on video.

Gabriel Bryant, a member of the collective, said rallies like these are just the beginning.

“The goal is to plug people into a variety of organizations, the groups that do the work,” said Bryant. “The participant drives, the calls, going to offices of elected officials — that’s the real work that happens. This is the rally point that allows us to engage the community in a real way.”

FROM: <https://whyy.org/articles/protesters-in-west-philly-call-for-release-of-incarcerated-radical-black-activists/>

The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

End Death By Incarceration Art Contest Deadline Extended

Theme: Death by Incarceration, particularly uplifting the experiences of women and trans people sentenced to life without parole in Pennsylvania.

When: Contest submissions due by September 30th. Deadline Extended for people in prison!! The show will be on line opening August and visible at <https://lifecyclestowardfreedom.org> The sooner we get it the more people can vote for your piece.

Mail artwork to: Let's Get Free – 460 Melwood Ave. #300 Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Artists incarcerated in PA can be reimbursed for postage cost to mail art - but let us know if you want that.

There will be two categories, one for artists in prison and one for artists in solidarity. You can enter more than one piece. All mediums and sizes welcome.

Because of the pandemic the Art show and contest will all be online and opens Friday August 7th, 2020. We will upload the submissions as they come in and we can display them in person once we can interact in public. All participants will receive documentation from the show. Potential prize money. With your consent, your image may end up in a newspaper ad, as a poster or on a city bus. We are not planning to sell the art at this time.

August 2020 Life Cycles Toward Freedom Calendar of Events

- **August 7: Friday - 7 - 8:30pm** End Death By Incarceration Art Show and Contest Launch, Special Guest: James Yaya Hough - confirmed
- **August 11: Tuesday - 7 - 8:30 pm** Virtual Film Screening Premier Western Pa , Special Guest BL Shirelle - confirmed
- **August 18: Tuesday - 7 - 8:30pm** Virtual Film Screening Premier Central PA , Special Guests: (Naomi Blount and John Fetterman Invited)
- **August 25: Tuesday - 7 - 8:30pm** Virtual Film Screening Premiere Eastern PA , Special Guests: (People freed from the Ungers ruling in MD - invited)

People's Choice Cash Prize: There will be two categories: *Artists in Prison* and *Artists in Solidarity*. 6 prizes in each category.

1st Place:\$500 2nd Place: \$250 3rd Place: \$100 Honorable Mention: \$50 (3 recipients for each category)

Judging: The contest will be judged by the public the entire month of the show online. All participants will be notified within a month. <https://lifecyclestowardfreedom.org>

Let's Get Free will draw from all the entries to pick out designs for the public graphic campaign. This campaign could take the form of posters, bus or newspaper advertisements. In other words, you don't have to be a Public Choice winner for your art to get turned into a PSA for the cause.

Toxic Prisons and Environmental Justice Committee

The Toxic Prisons and Environmental Justice Committee of HRC is currently engaged in several ongoing efforts to bring immediate awareness to the toxic environment on which SCI-Fayette is currently situated, and to demand that action be taken immediately to address the grave health problems endemic to SCI-Fayette. In the midst of a global pandemic, health and environmental justice need to reach carceral institutions more than ever, and SCI-Fayette represents one of the most glaring threats to public health, as it has been left to incubate illness unabated long before the pandemic. Prisons built on industrial toxic waste dumps imperil the health of all people incarcerated there, and it is an ethical and moral imperative that prisons such as Fayette be shut down.

We are seeking to increase our correspondence with people, both with those who we are already in dialogue with and others who might be interested in shutting down SCI Fayette. As an effort to provide support, we are in contact with those on the inside and their families. It is important that the PADOCC knows we are watching their every move and will not allow our friends and loved ones to be denied basic human rights. We also want to thank everyone who has already reached out to us with their specific demands; they will go a long way to support the creation of a comprehensive list of demands that will come directly from you, and will be issued directly to the people that need to begin to actively redress this glaring public health catastrophe.

Additionally, we are seeking to collect testimonies from people regarding their wellness since coming to Fayette. This could include health problems that people are experiencing/have been experiencing since being at SCI-Fayette, worsening health conditions, negligence or denial on the part of medical staff towards your medical concerns, etc. The following symptoms/ symptomatic clusters are consistent with exposure to toxic coal waste: respiratory, throat and sinus conditions; skin irritation and rashes; gastrointestinal tract problems; pre-cancerous growths and cancer; thyroid disorders; other symptoms such as eye irritation, blurred vision, headaches, dizziness, hair loss, weight loss, fatigue, and loss of mental focus and concentration. If you know someone who wants to provide their individual testimony regard-

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ing health problems they have experienced since coming to Fayette, let us know and we will get connected with them.

Medical staff and healthcare institutions charged with your medical treatment need to be held legally and ethically accountable along with DOC officials that create these conditions of vulnerability in the first place.

We are also beginning to create a community garden that is located at the new HRC & CADBI office in West Philly. Our vision is for those coming home from prison to have access to fresh produce and a green space that welcomes all those searching for a sense of community. One step towards building a world without prisons is building a community that can support itself. Environmental justice starts with abolishing systemic racism and creating a sustainable system that works for all people.

We are committed to helping you return home, healthy and whole.

In Solidarity,

Trika Parasimo
Human Rights Coalition

West Philadelphia Participatory Defense Hub Marking Two Year Anniversary

The West Philly Participatory Defense Hub is approaching our two year anniversary in August 2020. The Hub is part of a national community organizing model to empower those with an open criminal case to participate in their own defense and change the imbalance of power in court. We believe families and community members have the knowledge to impact the criminal injustice system, advocate for each other, and build power through sharing their knowledge.

West Philly Hub meets every Thursday evening from 6-8pm and we haven't let COVID-19 stop us. Typically we have three to five people at the hub each week seeking support for their own case or for a loved one's case. There are over 30 participatory defense hubs across the country and eight in Philly alone. A few months ago we became fiscally sponsored by HRC. We appreciate their support and aim to support their work more moving forward!

Despite so many current challenges, we have not missed a single meeting since the pandemic began. Instead we have had participants join us from as far as Connecticut and Maryland, as well as some elder participants who may not have been able to attend the hub in person.

Recently we've partnered closely with the two community bail funds in Philadelphia by advising family members supporting a loved one inside to contact the bail funds, hosting an info session by Malik Neal of the Philadelphia Bail Fund, and receiving referrals. We have also partnered with the Center for Carceral Communities, offering free therapy for anyone impacted by the criminal injustice system. At the hub we have found that mental health is key when advocating for oneself and others.

Prior to COVID-19 we aimed to provide court support for all hub participants whenever possible. We have consistent hub community members who show up in court each week. This year court support grew. Participants navigating their own cases chose to support other hub members by showing up to their court dates too. We have also begun keeping track of hub member experiences with particular court actors such as judges. This data tracking enables us to build community knowledge. We can advise new hub members what past experiences have been with a particular judge or attorney so that they are better prepared for their own hearing. This is the foundation of participatory defense: community members supporting each other inside court and out to counteract the isolation and abuse of the court system, and to show judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys that the community is watching them.



We welcome any and all to join our hub meetings on Thursdays from 6-8pm by calling 1-929-436-2866. We do not have a mailing address right now but can be contacted any other time at westphillydefensehub@gmail.com or 267-766-0097.

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The HomeFront: Serving Our Community!

Philly lifts curfew; marchers advocate for incarcerated people amid COVID-19

By [Ximena Conde](#)
[Maria Pulcinella](#)

Weekend, June 7, 2020



Protesters march from Eastern State Penitentiary to police headquarters demanding the release of incarcerated people who are vulnerable to COVID-19. (Emma Lee/WHYY)



Dana Lomax-Williams with the Delco chapter of the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration urges the release of incarcerated people who are vulnerable to COVID-19. (Emma Lee/WHYY)

Hundreds urge Wolf to release more people from prisons during COVID-19

Roughly 200 people are gathered at Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia's Fairmount neighborhood for an "incarcerated lives matter" demonstration. The group wanted to raise awareness about the disproportionate number of incarcerated Black people due to over-policing, and to demand that low-risk offenders be released as COVID-19 remains a threat in state prisons

and county jails.

So far, Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections has released 159 of the roughly 1,200 incarcerated people eligible under an emergency program created to help mitigate the spread of the new coronavirus behind bars. Advocates say the state is moving too slowly.

"We're crying out and demanding the governor do what he needs to do," said Dana Lomax-Williams with the Delaware County chapter of the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration.

Organizers said they'd received letters from people incarcerated at several state prisons who described a lack of medical attention and unsanitary conditions.

A handful of local organizers have taken part in a rolling hunger strike since May 28 in an effort to stand in solidarity with those incarcerated.

Martha Williams, with the Philadelphia chapter of the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration, started Sunday at 3 p.m. and hopes to continue the strike if she can't visit her son in prison Monday. Williams said she's been denied visits in recent weeks and it's unclear why.

"They don't only have George Floyd in the street, they have George Floyd inside the system," she said.

Jackson Kusiak, with Free People Strike, is on his ninth day drinking only water and electrolytes, and plans to continue his hunger strike until the most vulnerable to COVID-19 are released. Kusiak said it's his duty to put his body on the line and help families like Williams'.

"As a white person, the police were built to protect me and my property and my claim to stolen land," said Kusiak. "The police were originally here as a military force to push the indigenous people out and then they existed to police the Black people who were in slavery."

Speakers, such as Mike Africa, Jr., also talked about the need to abolish police departments, a demand that's also been made by several local and national organizations, including the Philly chapter of Black Lives Matter.

"If these police believe in equality, then why are they only kneeling now?" Africa asked the crowd. "Why did it take then all these years to get down on that knee?"

Africa said one of the largest instances of police brutality in Philadelphia was the 1985 MOVE bombing, when the city dropped an explosive on the West Philly home of the radical Black liberation group. The 35th anniversary of the MOVE bombing, which killed 11 members of the radical Black liberation group, has prompted some current and former leaders to call on the city of Philadelphia to formally apologize*. As he spoke

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to the crowd of the need to start anew, Africa, a member of MOVE, carried a poster of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was convicted in the 1981 shooting death of police officer Daniel Faulkner and maintains his innocence. Africa said Abu-Jamal should be freed because he had been targeted by police for his connections to the MOVE organization.

Africa and the crowd brought their demands to police headquarters in Center City, where they spent several minutes chanting in the direction of officers and members of the National Guard who stood behind metal barricades.

Ximena Conde@RadioXimena

*Correction made to sentence by Editor.



Protests continued Saturday in Philadelphia, with protesters calling for justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and police reform across the country. (Kimberly Paynter/WHYY)



Hundreds of protesters gather at Eastern State Penitentiary for a rally against police brutality and mass incarceration. (Emma Lee/WHYY)



Former Philadelphia Eagles Safety Malcolm Jenkins called for reform outside the African American Museum of Philadelphia. (Kimberly Paynter/WHYY)



A'Brianna Morgan, lead mass liberation organizer for Reclaim Philadelphia, called for fair housing, child care, health care, education and housing for all at Saturday's protest at the Philadelphia Art Museum.



West Chester U - This afternoon, the WCU Community, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and administration, gathered on WCU's campus in protest for #blacklivesmatter. The event consisted of moments of silence, taking a knee,

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A vacant cell with only me in it, these white brick walls echo, can you hear that?

Frigid nights with only a sheet and thin blanket to manage, this can't be life no way no how, the sound of keys drive me crazy while the sound of slamming doors solidify reality, my reality and millions of others.

WHY?! Why must we enslave the underdog?

First mentally and then physically, no justice is being served in this thing called the "judicial system".

I thought our sentence was the punishment, but still we're punished by staff.

This can't be life, no way no how, my stomach growls at the thought of food that's edible, they serve us "food" that's edible but isn't meant for human consumption in my opinion,

I could drop a tear at the thought of dying in here.

I've dropped tears at the sight of friends dying in here.

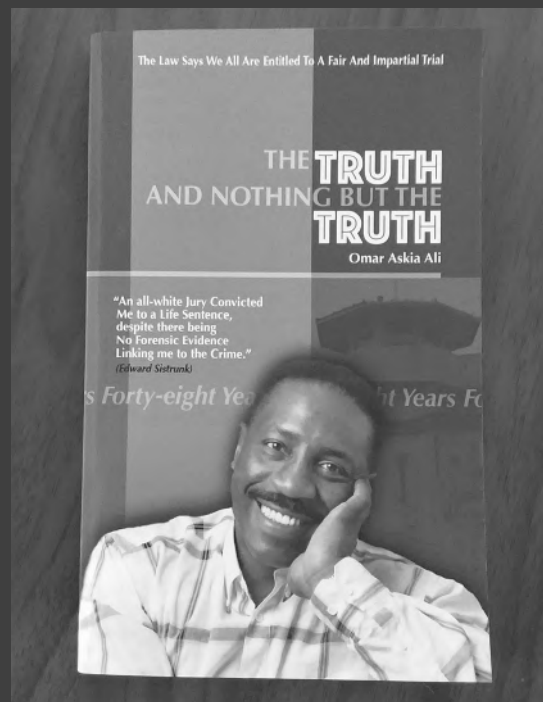
Should I care, about the next man's situation?

I can't help it, behind this tough exterior is a kind heart, a mind of contemplation and a soul that's been gone for quite some time now. I can't seem to find it, what's a man without a soul? Is he a man at all? --

JyAire Smith ND7319, SCI-Chester



Must Read Book !



In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

In his book, "The Truth and Nothing but the Truth" Omar Askia Ali gives you just that the "TRUTH" from every direction—he even talks about a boxing club in prison.

During the 60's & 70's Omar Askia Ali, a.k.a., Edward Sistrunk was active in the Nation of Islam (N.O.I.); he and others endeavored to curb the drug trade in Philadelphia. William O'Brien, the head of the Narcotics [under indictment for drugs] . . . , informed others and Omar that the N.O.I. was a pain in the ass. Omar maintains his innocence and gives it all, from his work with the N.O.I., corrupt police, all white jury, and FBI cover up.

Books may be purchase for \$20, checks or money orders should be made payable to: Mrs. Karen Ali.

Mail to :

Boxing Assoc. of America Inc.
PO Box 42702
Philadelphia, PA 19101-2702

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ALEC Corporations are Leaders in Workplace Discrimination and Harassment



Submitted by Don Wiener on February 7, 2019 - 1:47pm

Since 2000, corporate members of ALEC piled up almost \$150 million in fines, penalties, and court settlements in cases involving racial and age discrimination and harassment.

ALEC is the American Legislative Exchange Council, the secretive body that brings together state politicians and corporations to write bills behind closed doors that undermine worker rights, and rollback consumer and environmental protections.

The findings come from a new report by the Corporate Research Project of Good Jobs First that looked at "private lawsuits brought in federal or state court as well as cases brought with the involvement of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the U.S. Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP)."

The Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) has reported in the past on the federal regulatory violations of ALEC, but this new study looked for the first time at court settlements for workplace discrimination and harassment where the settlements were made public, a subset of all lawsuits.

Even though most court settlements are sealed the study still found "that since the

beginning of 2000, large corporations are known to have paid \$2.7 billion in penalties, including \$2 billion in 234 private lawsuits," and \$669 million in federal regulatory agency fines and penalties, for a total of almost \$3.4 billion.

ALEC Funders Paid \$150 Million in Penalties

Just 11 ALEC companies accounted for almost \$150 million of this total.

ALEC Corporate Members That Have Paid Fines, Penalties, and Court Settlements for Workplace Discrimination and Harassment	
ALEC Corporate Member	Fines, Penalties, and Court Settlements
Abbott Laboratories	\$8,130,000
Charter Communications	\$1,350,000
Chevron	\$5,570,000
Comcast	\$7,410,000
CSX	\$5,310,000
Energy Transfer	\$5,800,000
FedEx	\$80,000,000
Koch Industries	\$1,020,000
Lockheed Martin	\$3,270,000
Norfolk Southern	\$29,060,000
Pfizer	\$1,770,000
Total	\$149,230,000

Source: Good Jobs First, "Big Business Bias," January 2019

Federal Express settled a \$53.5 million class-action lawsuit in 2007 in California for discrimination "against its African American and Latino workers by passing them over for promotion, paying them less than white workers and treating them unfairly in evaluation and disciplinary proceedings."

The settlement, covering 20,000 FedEx employees working in western states since 1999, was among the largest class-actions in the Corporate Research Project study.

In 2000, Norfolk Southern settled a race discrimination class-action lawsuit for \$28 million, accused of discriminating against its African-American workers for promotion and training opportunities.

Apparently ignoring the lesson, Norfolk Southern paid \$492,000 in federal regulatory fines in 2016, and the EEOC has alleged in a 2017 case that the company was engaging "in a practice of medically disqualifying workers without proper consideration of whether, or to what extent, their conditions may or may not affect the workers' ability to safely perform the jobs they sought or already held."

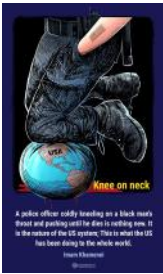
Not all large court settlements result from class-actions. In 2016, "A former national sales manager with Abbott Laboratories in Puerto Rico was awarded \$4.25 million for age discrimination, including being demoted without cause at age 50."

In 2016, Comcast settled a class-action lawsuit for \$7.2 million because African-American technicians "claimed Comcast fostered an environment of unfair performance evaluations, shoddy work conditions and tolerance for racist comments."

"Comcast said it will also make it easier for employees to complain about racial discrimination in the workplace" and eliminated disciplinary actions that workers said held them back.

ALEC has policies that look out for corporations' "rights," but not policies that discourage workplace discrimination.

Note: Lockheed Martin is not a paying member of ALEC but is included because it provided "scholarships" to legislators, picking up some of the cost of their attendance at the group's Spring 2018 Policy Summit.



THE INVISIBLE KNEE BEHIND PRISON WALLS

Here we go again. I CAN'T BREATHE. It

was six years ago when we first heard those same words, “I can’t breathe” uttered by Eric Garner, who later died as a result of being placed in a chokehold by a police officer. On May 25, 2020 George Floyd uttered the same exact words while Derek Chauvin had his knee on his neck and back. This officer put his hand in his pocket which concealed the fact that by holding his hand there, he was allowed to apply more pressure to Mr. Floyd’s neck. He looked directly into the lens of the video camera with absolutely no expression. What I saw was a man grimacing with the satisfaction of a slow kill, oblivious of the sounds or sights around him, even as his fellow officers pleaded, “roll him over”. If you pay close attention, you will notice that Officer Chauvin did not acknowledge or respond to their voices. That’s the satisfaction of a slow kill; he had to finish it.

This is the same knee they have in the prison system. I call it the hidden invisible knee that guards and elected officials use. They can and will intentionally apply the same pressure knowing you can’t breathe. Even as Mr. Floyd called out, the police officers stood idly by just as the guards in prisons. Why? They do not fear repercussions even when someone dies irresponsibly at their hands. We have watched our loved ones suffer under the hidden and the invisible knee, their cries ignored; and no video recording allowed. Watch for that same stoic look on the face of guards and some elected officials showing no emotion as they apply the hidden knee, one that is concealed to us in the free world but felt by ALL behind the walls .

If these atrocities were being videotaped behind the walls, I wonder how swift justice would be carried out for all those who grimace with the satisfaction of a slow

kill. That’s how serving time in prison is experienced, especially for those serving life sentences. That hidden invisible knee results in many men and women succumbing to death, or will soon, if we don’t continue to fight for justice.

There were protests all over the world because we watched an agonizing slow death at the hands of police. What took three minutes to kill George Floyd is the same as the amount of time it takes for a judge to bang the gavel to render a guilty verdict or give a life sentence. A life sentence IS a slow kill. Life sentences are handed down in every courtroom in United States of America; we watch helplessly as those that had to stand by and view countless videos of those dying on camera with no empathy, just another black life.

Did it take this most recent tragedy or will it take another to make people see that there have always been many hidden and invisible knees in our prison system, with those who rest their knee on the neck and the backs of incarcerated men and women, until they die. Those who are responsible, know who they are !!!

By Nan Hill, HRC Member

Gasping For Air On The Inside Of Prison

I can't breathe! Most of America was first introduced to those three words after footage surfaced of the police murdering Eric Garner in NY city, but those words became a part of my life much earlier.

I spent five straight years in solitary confinement while housed at SCI Greene, in western Pennsylvania. At the time, it was Pennsylvania's only supermax prison. For 61 months, I was confined to a small cell, alone, 23 hours per day, not allowed to interact with any other human being, except for prison guards, who hated me as if I were responsible for every hardship they'd ever suffered.

✱ *Solitary confinement is designed to break the hearts, minds, and spirits of those forced to endure it. The silence is*

deafening, and even the strong don't always survive. ✱

The hole (as most of us know it) is exactly that. A living graveyard. It’s where prison administrators send prisoners like myself to die. And the only way for many prisoners to survive, is to constantly resist. I can’t breathe! They may be just words to you, but when I hear them, I can’t help but to think about my friend John J-Rock Carter, who was murdered in his cell by prison guards in 2012 at SCI Rockview. He suffered his entire life from asthma. But that did not stop those guards from pumping his cell full of pepper spray. As he was dying, many prisoners recall hearing him utter those three words which have recently become a part of the American vernacular: I can't breathe. I remember the conversations that took place among prisoners after his brutal murder. In the hole, all we could think was that these guards can kill us with impunity. Every time a door opened, every time we heard the jingle of the guard's keys, we all wondered if we were next.

And that's just how they wanted us to feel. As in society, where police satisfy their egos by striking fear into the hearts of poor black communities, prison guards do everything to make prisoners live in fear. Prisons are America's dirty little secret. That's why they're typically built in rural areas, kept hidden from public view. And most people only begin to care, after they become one of its countless victims.

Many of these prison guards were once soldiers in the military; many of them were once police officers. And because the police and military cultures of brutality, intimidation, and control are so similar, the transition from one to the other is seamless. As it stands, when police officers are accused of misconduct, they're simply transferred to other districts. There is no accountability. It’s the same for prison guards. And wherever they go, their abuse continues. That's why police and prison guards act with impunity. But I always remind anybody who cares, that if the police can openly abuse citizens, with-

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out fear of accountability, imagine what prison guards get away with on the inside.

Keep that in mind when the next prisoner is murdered, and guards claim that s/he committed suicide, or that the deceased prison was "found dead" in their cell.

George Floyd's murder was no more heinous than the murder of John J-Rock Carter. The sooner we make that connection, the faster we'll reach our goal.

Sergio Hyland

IG @uptownserg

Their sons died behind bars. They hope the public outcry for police reform reaches prisons.

By Helen Ubiñas

June 19, 2020

The mothers, a thousand miles apart, watched the nationwide calls for justice grow louder. Karen Brady, at home in Florida, watched the swarms of impassioned demonstrators on her television not far from the urn where she keeps her son's ashes. Diane Davis watched from the Philadelphia neighborhood where she raised her firstborn.

Thousands were taking to the streets across the country to demand police accountability following the killing of George Floyd by a police officer — the spark, many hope, for long overdue police reform.

But for these mothers reliving agonizing memories of being told their sons died behind bars, the movement is something else: a desperate hope that the public outcry on the streets will find its way to the steel and cement fortresses where abuses often go unreported.

Brady can't talk about what happened to her son in 2011; family lawyers signed a confidentiality agreement as part of a \$300,000 wrongful-death lawsuit they won against the city. But multiple published accounts chronicle her son's last moments: Mike Brady, sick from detoxing after his latest drug arrest, went to the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility's infirmary. Returning to his cell, he felt sick again and asked the correctional officers to escort him back to the infirmary. They refused. When he collapsed, unable to walk, he was pepper-sprayed and dragged barely conscious back to the infirmary. The city Medical Examiner's Office declared he died from hypertensive heart disease. There was no mention of the guards' role.



JOSE F. MORENO / Staff Photographer

Diane Davis holds a photo of her late son Mike Davis at her home in Philadelphia, Pa. Thursday, June 11, 2020. Diane's son died while in prison in 2014, allegedly at the hands of correctional officers. The recent uprising over police killing black people has brought back horrible memories and a hope that one day there will be a movement to protect inmates from the cops behind bars.

Davis' son, Michael, was incarcerated at the city's Detention Center facility when he died March 3, 2014, four days after he

was jailed for his involvement in a shooting outside a North Philadelphia nightclub. Even before an official autopsy, his family was told he died of natural causes, but Davis' relatives suspected something else when they went to identify him at the morgue and saw he had swollen black eyes, a split lip, and bruises on his head and body. Prison sources told the Daily News at the time that Davis was dragged face down to the mental-health unit. A civil lawsuit against the city was settled for \$300,000 in 2016. The Medical Examiner's Office eventually ruled that Davis died of hypertensive heart disease and declared his death natural. Their report did not explain several cuts to his face.

Prison officials initially found that inmate Mike Davis died of 'natural causes.' Sources say he died after guards dragged him facedown to the infirmary.

The mothers got to know each other over the years, bonded by grief compounded by nagging doubts. As the police killing of Floyd galvanized a nation, they turned to each other again, commiserating over fresh despair that the deaths of their sons barely registered outside of their families.

"The reason why the whole world is about George Floyd is because it was televised and the whole world saw it," Brady said. "Our sons, it was shoved under the rug and nothing was said."

"Nobody cared about my son," said Davis. "It bothers you when you see all the people coming together for one but not others. I have to admit, it bothers me a little bit."

Criminal justice reform advocates understand their agony. There is a direct line between the systemic racism and police brutality captured on the streets and the abuses often hidden away inside prisons.

"When I saw the news reports about what happened to George Floyd, I immediately thought of our clients," said Su Ming Yeh, executive director of the Pennsylvania

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Institutional Law Project. “Accountability can be extremely difficult, but they’re the same parallels in terms of systemic over-use of power over individuals who really should be in their care.”

Dying at the hands of an officer demands attention wherever it happens, said Robert Saleem Holbrook, director of community organizing at the Abolitionist Law Center.

“Whenever someone is murdered at the hands of law enforcement, that is state-sanctioned violence — whether it is in prison or on the streets.”

Except, he and other advocates concede, that’s not necessarily how the public sees it, especially when people who are incarcerated are so often reduced to their offenses.

“I think it’s easy to see in a case like George Floyd — did he deserve to die over \$20, or Eric Garner, over loose cigarettes,” said Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve, an associate professor of sociology at Brown University who has written extensively on these issues.

Absent horrific videos of police brutality, that same humanity isn’t often extended to people behind bars.

Advocates are hopeful that renewed momentum over police reform will push long overdue measures through, including increased transparency in prisons, reducing solitary confinement, and creating independent ombudsman offices with the power to investigate and discipline correctional officers.

At the very least, the rest of us can start here:

Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd. ... They were all someone’s child.

So were Mike Brady and Michael Davis and so many others who died behind bars,

leaving only their loved ones to mourn their deaths and cry out for justice.



Karen Brady, seen with sons Jeremy (left) and Mike, held a vigil outside Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility while Pope Francis visited there in 2015. Mike Brady died in 2011 when he was incarcerated there.

Isn't it Ironic

By Michael ‘Scientific’ Rivera

Universal greetings! Peace!

While irony has many different meanings to many different people, the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines irony as, “the use of words to express something other than, and especially the opposite, of the literally meaning”. With that in mind, isn’t it ironic that over these past few months since the Coronavirus pandemic began, there has been countless politicians, celebrities, and mental health professionals appearing on various media outlets advocating for the mental health concerns of the general public, many of whom have been self-quarantined in the comfort of their own homes with their families and loved ones, while Pennsylvania prisoners on Restricted Release List (RRL) have endured quarantine style solitary confinement for YEARS, with very little to no mental health advocacy, whatsoever?

The tragic irony of this unfortunate reality is that even among those of us who have been forced to be “socially distant” for years because of long, racially-insensitive,

and socioeconomically biased prison sentences, RRL status prisoners are subjected to the psychological torture of long term sensory deprivation, in the harshest conditions the Department of Corrections (DOC) has to offer, while the DOC's so called mental health professionals intentionally and maliciously show little concern for those of us who have been ostracized from general population for an indeterminate period of time. Outside of sporadic doorway check-ins that are usually superficial, psychology staff seemed to be deliberately indifferent to the mental health concerns of most RRL prisoners (in order to maintain the status quo) by ignoring their professional responsibilities. So again I ask isn't it ironic that DOC mental health professionals are less concerned with the mental health of RRL prisoners than Oprah Winfrey, Doctor Oz, and Kelly Clarkson are?

A ridiculous irony that infuriated me recently was the buffoons I saw on the network news complaining about being quarantined on a five-star luxury cruise ship for 14 days, foolishly comparing their posh living conditions to being in prison, calling themselves “inmates”, an referring to the ship's Captain as their “warden”. WTF?! Now, isn't it's ironic that after only two weeks of being isolated in plush, comfortable ship cabins, eating restaurant-quality cuisine, with the technological capabilities to electronically communicate with the world at large, these people experienced such high levels of stress and anxiety that they are losing sleep and contemplating suicidal ideations?

Also isn't it ironic that mainstream news platforms are compelled to advocate for the mental health of cruise ship passengers after only two weeks of being quarantined, presenting them as “human interest” stories, while there is so little media coverage an interest in the humanity of RRL prisoners in the RHU for years? Ironically, Kim Kardashian West has said and done more for prisoners’ rights media exposure than all mainstream news outlets combined which Governor Wolf and his

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"liberal" administration should be ashamed of, in my humble opinion.

Lastly isn't it ironic that the DOC Secretary Wetzel recently issued a reprieve for 159 violent low level prisoners who were already on their way out? Moreover isn't it ironic that I've been on RRL longer than a majority of those reprieved prisoners have been imprisoned? Where's the reprieve for those of us languishing on RRL endlessly, stuck in what I call "RHU Purgatory" with no purpose, no finish-line? What's cynically ironic to me is that RL prisoners are probably the least likely to come into contact and contract COVID-19, because of that Draconian conditions of our confinement. The irony is not lost on me — unfortunately .

In closing, I again state the fact that irony has many different meanings to many different people, which is the result of personal perception and individual understanding. Thus I find it extremely ironic that I posed these questions to you in a news magazine titled 'The Movement', having been stuck in RHU on RRL over five years now, with nowhere to go except back to the drawing board to write anyone who may be willing to help. True story.

Food for thought; as I conclude with the ever righteous PEACE!

What we know, but don't say.

We grow up idolizing people.. our hero's.. zeros, chasing dreams that can't be caught/
the streets become our classrooms.. but the instincts we pickup in the process can't be taught/

those instincts.. are burdened with trauma.. trauma that change the way we live/

trauma that play a part in the way we give.. but that's the way it is/

from it often produces actions that are considered savage.. bad habits that become tragic/

them same habits.. turn into static in our minds/

they become the chains that shackle us from trying/

trying.. something different, dying in the process of living life that was giving with an umbilical cord, not a ribbon/

am I tripping? well pick me up so I can know I'm slipping back into the system/

where they lynch them.. another victim.. another meeting with judge.. another numerical death sentence/

no confessions needed.. guilty or not.. they want us defeated.. dressed in prison costumes tricked and treated/

to a prison cell where they give us hell.. oppress us, make us feel like Jesus Christ without the nails/

it never fails.. life is like a coin toss either you heading or you fall behind/

in this game its clip-tag-toe so.. you can get yourself ex'ed out when you cross a line/

we grew up young minded, intertwined with.. the things we seen and took to, bondage/

shackled to a past life, dim future like a dying flashlight/

its hard to see what the grass like when you blinded by the fast life/

then you run into a wall minivan full of coroner's showing up at the crash sight/

its sad right? when society make you feel like you have to carry guns/

but its even sadder.. when parents get them calls hearing they gotta bury sons/

daughters.. sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, cousins innocent/

slugs penetrating flesh of many.. taking lives from people that wasn't into shit/

***Follow me on IG@KGituwa1 and Facebook under Kwaha Junior

by Joseph Kwaha #KW-1517

Smart Commucations/PA DOC
Joseph Kwaha/KW-1517/Chester
PO Box 33028
St Petersburg, FL 33733

LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

Father, Comrade, Teacher, and now.. Ancestor



By: Angeline Etienne,
Prison Radio

"Oh my god--Heartbreaking. Heartbreaking... Like the brotha from Angola--released days before death. A strong soul; a great soul..." - Mumia Abu-Jamal

One of the hardest hardest things to do is tell a person who has been down for decades, that someone they are close to has died. It is heartbreaking. You just have to be so raw and open and honest, and just be with the pain, and the wave of sadness. There is no ok way to say it. Delbert Africa has passed..

Delbert Africa (c) Joe Piette Philly Inquirer

Father. Comrade. Teacher. Elder. And now, Ancestor. We come together to mourn the passing of our beloved Delbert Africa. Surrounded by love and family, Delbert Africa passed in the comfort of his home on Monday, June 15th, 2020.

Africa is just one of the many victims of the continuous domestic war on Black revolutionaries fighting for safety and liberation. Africa was a member of MOVE, the group of Black revolutionaries who were arrested 40 years ago. In 1978, the police sieged MOVE's headquarters in Powelton Village, Philadelphia and in 1985 they dropped a bomb on MOVE'S house, killing five children and six adults. Delbert Africa became an icon of the siege on MOVE for his moving conviction in the face of State violence. He was officially released on January 18th of 2020.

At the MOVE organization's press conference to address Delbert Africa's passing, Janine Africa detailed the calculated targeting and violence Mr. Africa experienced from prison officials. "They wanted to kill Delbert. They didn't want Delbert to come out here and be strong. And we're saying that what happened to Delbert is no different than what is doing done by the police to Black men and women all across America today."

"Had my father received the treatment he needed," Yvonne Orr-El said, "the healthy, strong, smiling, humorous, sarcastic man that I call my father would still be here today."

Delbert Africa has been an inspiration to revolutionaries fighting police terror, animal exploitation, and anti-Black racism. His audio channel on Prison Radio imparts us all with words of wisdom, apt analyses of our political realities, and determination to see this through.

There is nothing more terrifying to this State than a Black revolutionary daring to actively put notions of freedom into practice. Delbert Africa stared this terror right in the eye for decades, refusing to perish through the hands of the murderous State. May we continue to honor his legacy, strength, and desire that all Black people are free from their chains.

Travel well, Delbert Africa.

When We Fight, We Win!

Angeline Etienne
Staff Member Prison Radio

Angeline Etienne



Photo: Delbert Africa (c) Joe Piette

THE MOVEMENT

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LOVE KNOWS NO BARS



When I go home

Some years ago I attended a banquet at SCI Huntingdon given by the LIFERS for family, friends and supporting organizations.

This was my very first banquet; therefore, I was nervous. Uneasy and not knowing exactly what to say or how to approach people **Clarence Sutton** took me under his wing and expressed to me, “relax”, then he encouraged me to “meet and greet”.

Afterwards Brother Sutton was appointed as a "Point Person", a person who received information from CADBI. His position consisted of distributing information and keeping inside members informed of the work being done on the outside. He would write back stating the information received was copied and posted for others to view.

Whenever I was able to bum a ride to SCI Huntingdon. I would visit Bro. Sutton. Our last meeting was March 2, 2020 and Bro. Sutton informed me that he had COPD. . . was receiving breathing treatments and per his words, “I’m still hopeful about getting out someday. Again I thank you for all that you’re doing for us.”

Bro. Sutton was a strong willed, concerned and loving Brother. He was also concerned about his siblings getting a ride share to visit, this of course took place before the pandemic.

Bro. Sutton was truly loved and respected by a number of people. . . two people who have connections with other outside members had people to contact me in the passing of a beautiful soldier, which took place late May.

When I Go Home

When I am gone, release me, let me go
I have so many things to see and do
You mustn't tie yourself to me with too many tears
But be thankful we had so many good years
I thank you for the love that you have shown
But now it is time I travel on alone
So grieve for a while if grieve you must
So treasure the memories within your heart
Though you can't see or touch me, I will be near
And then, when you come this way alone,
I'll greet you with a smile and a "Welcome Home"

Tearfully submitted,
Yvonne Newkirk
CADBI, HRC, and PPS



Just want to say, “I love YOU.” . . . from Mom

LOVE KNOWS NO BARS

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A FATHER IN PRISON

By Larry Stephenson, #AM-1449

There's a multitude of reasons why it's important to be a father while in prison. However, to me, the most important thing is to do all that's humanly possible to help your children avoid the many pitfalls that can cause them to lose one of the most precious privileges of life -- their freedom!

It must be constantly reinforced, over and over again, that one bad decision in life can cause generations of grief, regret, and heartache beyond repair. This reinforcement must be supported by practical examples and lessons from a personal as well as a historical perspective; examples like, instilling in your children the importance of listening to the good wisdom of their parents, teachers, and elders. These people have their best interest at heart, and they understand how life functions.

As fathers we must teach our children how to use proper discipline when temptations and negative urges try to overpower their good judgment. How to use the correct guidelines on morality and what that entails: virtuous conduct, self-respect, empathy, and respect for others.

Teaching our children, the art of resiliency, fortitude, humbleness, perseverance, and redemption when and if they face adversity or some form of crisis. Showing them how you have used those principles to reach your high level of self-actualization, in your times of challenge and controversy.

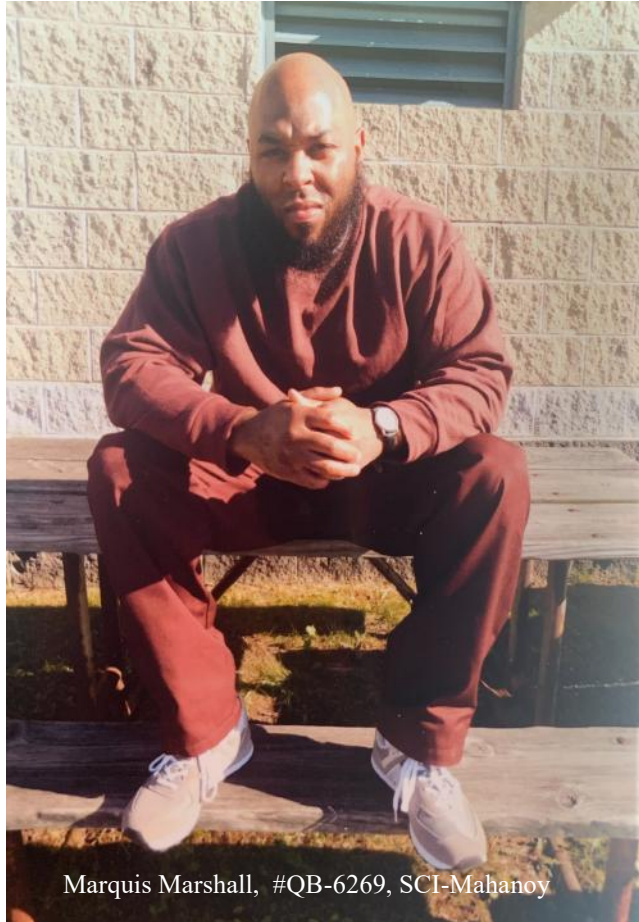
Teach them that, no matter what obstacles they may face in life, or where life places them: "Bloom where you are planted."

Instruct your children on the lessons of faith and the importance of having a sense of the "Divine Order". On how to reflect and meditate on life and their purpose for being alive. How to resolve conflicts in a tactful, diplomatic, and peaceful manner.

Show how petty emotions can blind their good reasoning, if they aren't mindful, during a volatile situation. Teach them that there's a difference between being trained as opposed to being educated. Because when you're "trained" you're taught to "what" to think; but, when you're "educated" you're taught "how" to think.

Educate your children on the significance of being self-reliant, on being producers instead of just consumers, and on the importance of having the wherewithal to secure their food clothing and shelter without depending on others, solely.

To protect and provide for themselves and their family. To be mindful of others less fortunate than themselves and to give charity where and when it's needed. And never forget to always be kind, humble and generous because as the old saying goes, "Chances go round; the same people you meet going up, you meet coming down."



Marquis Marshall, #QB-6269, SCI-Mahanoy

Happy Belated Father's Day to my 1st born Grandson, the first of ten Grands, who I love immensely. He strives to be the best dad that he can possible be. In fact when he calls the first thing he says after "Hi Grandmom, you okay?" is "Have you seen my kids?" or "Have you talked to my kids?" He tries to talk with them everyday and really listens, offers fatherly advice to his teen-age son, and sends toys to his 5 yr old daughter. I'm so prideful I feel like shouting to the world, "I LOVE YOU G-SON and HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!!"

From G-Mom :)

(Continued on page 18)

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Demonstrate the importance of having and maintaining good health. It will go a long way with your children. Remind your children that their good health is a blessing and it shouldn't be taken for granted. Many children and adults around the world are suffering from basic everyday curable health issues, but don't have the remedies available or at their disposal, as we do.

It must also be taught that to be a good father, our roles and good behavior toward the mother of our children is important, also. For our children to be compatible companions with their future soulmates they must see those good traits in their fathers as they develop.

As fathers we must teach our children not to be just followers, but leaders too. To be cooperative and work together with others with a common purpose.

To have a civic mindset and not to be apathetic about government and those chosen to make decisions on our everyday livelihood. To monitor our school systems. To ensure that our neighborhoods and communities are kept safe and clean for everyone. Not to wait on someone else to tell them when to move out on a project to get things done. To take the initiative and steps to complete a mission. To stay positively motivated ambitious industrious with a good work ethic.

To have a sense of remembrance for our ancestors and their sacrifices and struggles that allowed us to live a better life. To show reference to our four parents by keeping their burial grounds clean and tidy with proper markings for identification. To commemorate them as Memorial Day observances. To teach our children the inevitability of death and how to prepare themselves, emotionally, for that event. How family traditions are important, to keep cohesion, intact and sound.

It is important for fathers in prison to teach their children about the significance of being loyal and thorough. Not to allow peer pressure to force them to be sympathetic to the wrong -- blindly adhering to the asinine philosophy of: "to get along, by going along".

There is a serious need for fathers in prison to enlighten their children about the horrors of drug and alcohol abuse. To be mindful of being promiscuous. Sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and AIDS/HIV must be constantly in our conversations with our children. Also, violence -- that it's a learned behavior and it can be unlearned. That those who fail to study history, are bound to repeat its mistakes.

It's important for fathers in prison to put in practice whatever they preach to their children. If fathers make recommendations or suggestions for their children to pursue or accomplish -- such as a high school diploma or college degree, or a vocational certification -- and they do not have those documents themselves and the opportunity is/was available for them, while confined, that advice may not be taken seriously. Lead by example if you want and expect your children to listen to your advice.

It will take many years to instill the above lessons into our children, but the sooner we get started, the more confidence and wisdom we'll be able to dispense.

In essence, the importance of being a father in prison is a big responsibility that requires sincere and genuine efforts, sacrifices, and -- above all else -- big love for our children.

The writer is living proof on the topic. My two sons were just five and six years of age when I entered the penal system 46 years ago. They are 53 and 52 years old now with bachelor's and master's degrees in education, and raising their families to be model citizens, and wonderful human beings.

My sons epitomized the proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6.

Written by,

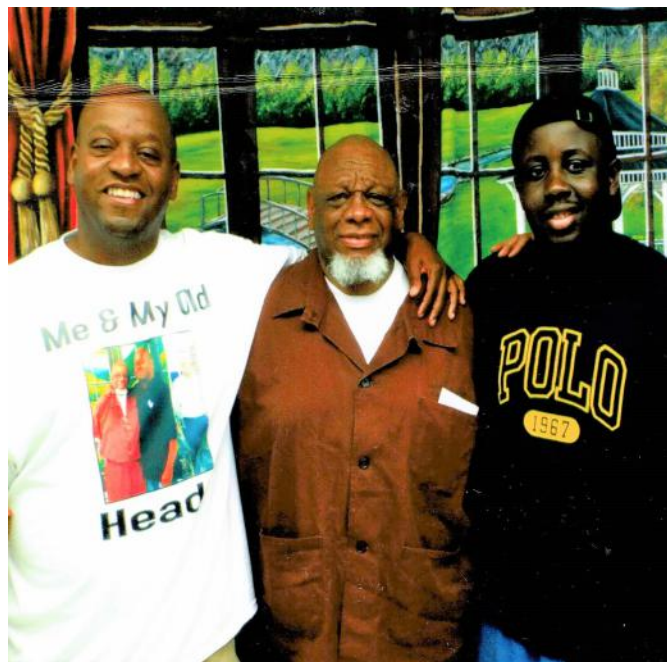
Larry Stephenson

The Stephenson Family 1975



Smart Communications/PA DOC
Larry Stephenson, AM-1449
SCI-Phoenix
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

1975



Left-Right: My son (Darren Stephenson ,Sr), Me (Larry Stephenson , Sr.), My grandson (Darren Stephenson, Jr).

THE MOVEMENT

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(Continued from page 39)

The Robbins family made the three-hour trip from Philadelphia to Muncy several times a month to see Shavonne during her prison term. “Just seeing her behind those walls was hard. I never looked back when we’d leave,” Sissy said.

One time about six months before Shavonne was released, Sissy and her family came to a family day event at SCI-Muncy. Sissy noticed another woman there who had just had surgery and was in a lot of pain the entire time. She could not stop focusing on this woman.

“It seemed like no one helped her there. The other women took care of each other,” Sissy said. Sissy prayed that Shavonne, who was already sick with cancer, would not pass away in the prison.

Sissy has often wondered if Shavonne’s extended time at SCI-Muncy was a factor in her cancer diagnosis. She had heard stories from other women there about lack of health care or food. She also heard stories about aging buildings and issues with the water.

“Was it something in the buildings? I don’t know,” Sissy said.

“I know it’s a prison and they are there for their wrongs that they did, but they’re still human beings,” Sissy said.

From: https://www.northcentralpa.com/life/health/sci-muncy-inmates-reveal-stories-of-medical-neglect-high-cancer-rates/article_c2b93002-6c58-11ea-9254-27edf96b37f1.html

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Birthday Greetings

You are survivors, you are strong, intelligent, bold ,and above all loved and thought about daily. We at C.A.D.B.I., H.R.C., and other organizations will not let you be forgotten nor ignored. Enjoy your day of birth and know that the fight goes on for your release/freedom.

JULY

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

AUGUST

8/5	Gaye Morley	Muncy
8/12	Bray Murray	Dallas
8/15	Jacqueline White	Muncy
8/17	Antonio Bundy	Forest
8/22	Celeste Coles	Muncy
8/25	Darrell McKelvie	Benner
8/25	Mariam White	Muncy

SEPTEMBER

9/2	Dierdre Owens	Muncy
9/11	Tracey Shaw	Cambridge Springs
9/18	Howard Miller	Houtzdale
9/20	Tran Loc	Smithfield
9/23	Javon Everett	Green
9/24	Melanie Vичeck	Muncy

Ms Yvonne Newkirk

P.O. Box 591

Lansdowne, PA 19050

P.S. I am about five months behind in responding to your mail.

Sudoku #608 (Hard) Answers on page 42

THE MOVEMENT

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Human Rights Coalition Report



At SCI Chester. Stephanie Keene, Sergio Hyland, Marc Lamont Hill, Justino Griggs, during a seminar on criminal justice policy in America. February, 2020. Serg and Justino are Editors of SCI Chester's institutional newsletter, 'The Ledger'. Marc and Stephanie have been a couple of our biggest, dedicated, and most vocal advocates. We appreciate their contribution and efforts!"

“Organizational Unity: The Importance of Coordination, Coalition & Cooperation”

By Sergio Hyland

Organizational Unity

It is better to know WHERE to go, while not knowing how, than to know HOW to go, while not knowing where. In our constant struggle for liberation, we all have some idea of where we need to go, but in many cases, we lack the knowledge needed to get us there. If history has taught us anything, it's that there is nothing new under the sun. Hence, while the struggle against mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex (PIC) may appear to be new, the method for defeating this beast has been laid out before us - all we need to do is look to the elders.

Revolutionary leaders of the past have taught us that, in order to succeed in any revolutionary effort, we must be keen enough to

analyze historical revolutionary movements, utilize what can realistically be applied, while leaving off what can't. Scientifically speaking, this process has often been referred to as "Dialectical Materialism". And since science can't be separated from mathematics, we must understand that, when it comes to solving any problem, the best place to start, is at the beginning.

The driving force behind mass incarceration, is economics. In fact, that's where we get the term "prison industrial complex" from. Prison is an industry, and big business. Therefore, in order to stop this industry from existing, the economic motivations which propel its existence must first be destroyed. That's the "where". Now, let's get to the "how".

Like slavery, the PIC can't function effectively without the strict obedience and cooperation of prisoners. Prison staff are the minority, and outside of a security role, they make very little contributions to the everyday operations of the institutions they work inside of. The vast majority of kitchen workers, maintenance workers, education workers, janitorial workers, and a host of other kinds of workers, are prisoners. .For that reason, I don't

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think anybody would disagree with the contention that prisons would be in a state of disarray if prisoners refused to willingly work.

I agree that Inmate Organizations are politically toothless, due to the amount of scrutiny and surveillance the prison administration has them under. But there are countless elements (men and women) within these organizations who play chess - not checkers - and are savvy and intelligent enough to see the larger picture, and use their positions on the inside, to make connections with organizers on the outside.

Like the many revolutionary organizations who came before us, however, we still have to worry about certain obstacles that come in the form of people and policies. This danger underscores the importance and value of our political organizations on the outside. The Human Rights Coalition, Amistad Law Project, Abolitionist Law Center, and Coalition Against Death By Incarceration (CADBI) are all working on our behalf to end mass incarceration, abolish prisons, and restore our fundamental human rights. But they can't do it alone. Any victories that are to be won, will only be a result of the coordinated efforts of inside and outside organizers. Knowing that our captors will never give us the tools needed for our liberation, I don't expect Inmate Organizations to be in any position to rise up in defiance of the status quo, but I do expect those with a conscious to challenge that status quo, and work with others to move aggressively against it. Nevertheless, our focus must be on organizing around - and galvanizing the necessary support for - things like: ending LWOP sentences; establishing presumptive parole; formalizing the Prisoner's Bill of Rights; and striking the punishment clause.

Striking the "punishment clause" would allow prisoners to legally withhold their labor, and demand higher wages. This is called a "strike". But it isn't simply about acquiring a higher wage. If the clause were stricken, a vast array of previously-restricted rights would become available to us. For example, prisoners would then be able to unionize - or at the very least, partner with larger outside unions who share our values. As a result of unionization, we would be in a position to influence political campaigns and elections, and even prop up our own candidates. Keep in mind that the largest unions in this country have been the deciding factor in most elections. Knowing the political power behind unions, policy makers cater to the desires of those unions. Through unionization, prisoners can acquire the right to vote, while still in prison. Most people may laugh at that assertion, but convicted felons, inside of prison, are allowed to vote in the states of Maine and Vermont. So there IS precedent for such an ambition. As we speak, the Republican Governor of Iowa - largely considered the most important state in determining any presidential election - is battling her own Republican colleagues, in an attempt to restore voting rights to convicted felons.

Voting is the key to many doors in the 21st century, and we have to take advantage of that. I have debated many of my comrades about this idea throughout the years; some still don't see it the way that I do. Some claim that it's too idealistic. But what's commonsense tomorrow, may not be so today. The first effort to outlaw lynching was presented to Congress in 1900. It finally passed in February of 2020. What seems impossible today, may be conventional wisdom, tomorrow. We must begin the dialectical process of developing these ideas. Voting and unionizing would create an economic catastrophe for the system.

This sounds simple enough. However, the "punishment clause" in the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution, has proven difficult to overcome. This clause gives an exception to the abolishment of slavery, and allows slavery to exist for those who are in prison. It is this clause which gives prison officials the legal backing to force prisoners to work, no matter the amount of labor or dangerous conditions associated with that work - and since we are legally slaves, we don't have any right to a living wage. From the perspective of industry, this makes complete sense. After all, if state prison systems were forced to pay a living wage to prisoners, those state's budgets would likely be depleted, quickly. Prisoners - like slaves - have no legal representation, and are reduced to being property, existing only to serve and produce at a capacity consistent enough to compete with market demand. We're fed enough to keep us alive, but not enough to make us stronger than our captors; we're educated enough to make us understand, but not enough to make us a threat. Besides prisoners, the only other group of people in American history who have been forced to work for free - threatened with violence and death, for refusing to do so - are slaves.

Politicians have displayed considerable indifference to the PAINFUL plight of prisoners and our families and communities. It's safe to assume that any change in their stance, won't be the result of a moral awakening. We must take this matter into our own hands, by forcing policy makers to see the economic benefits of striking the punishment clause. But how can we force politicians to see the benefit, if many of us can't see it ourselves?

Abolishing prisons is merely a part of our struggle for liberation. We all know that liberation is a multi-pronged effort, and the more angles we attack it from, the more likely we will win. For instance, an issue which has plagued prisoners and communities of color for at least our entire generation, is "prison gerrymandering", a process which allows prisoners to be counted as residents of the county in which they are confined. These smaller, white, rural counties use prisoners on the annual census to artificially increase the amount of people who reside in those counties. Subsequently, they receive more political representation and more government funding. On the flip side, the communities where most prisoners come from - mainly Philadelphia and Pittsburgh - are denied these critical resources. This political scam has been going on as long as any of us can remember,

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and nothing has been done about it, until now! The Philadelphia NAACP, on behalf of Saleem Holbrook and two other former prisoners, have brought a suit against the state of Pennsylvania, to stop prison gerrymandering, once and for all (see THE MOVEMENT, Issue #40). Again, this is another example of how organizing to challenge the prison industrial complex has shown to produce the results that we all claim to desire. Gerrymandering has been challenged and defeated in several other states, thus far - and we will be successful in Pennsylvania as well. After this victory, experts predict that Philadelphia will be able to add at least one more state congressional seat, and more funding. One seat may not sound like much, but if you look at the progress that our collective movement is having, we can all admit that we're going in the right direction.

Reading Issue #40 of THE MOVEMENT, I was proud to see the men of Mann-Up! at SCI Phoenix, in photos, standing side-by-side with judges, councilmen, and Chief Inspectors. Or Dana Lomax and other sisters from CADBI DelCo., in pictures with the new District Attorney for Delaware County, who THEY helped to put in office! Organizations like The Human Rights Coalition, Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, Abolitionist Law Center, Amistad Law Project, and others, played key roles in securing the elections of this latest crop of politicians, leaders, and allies. All of their movement is an example of what real, dedicated, grassroots organizational effort looks like. And we, prisoners, have consistently been counted upon to assist in these movements.

While these organizations can't take all the credit for the advancements in so-called "criminal justice reform", the state of this movement is in a far better place, since HRC, CADBI, ALC, and ALP formed and joined this struggle. So, before minimizing or downplaying the impact of these organizations, I urge the doubters to do their own research and evaluate the successes that these organizations have contributed to. Looking back on the state of affairs as it pertains to the struggle against mass incarceration, there have been far more advances than there have been setbacks. While it is definitely too soon to celebrate our achievements, taking some time to acknowledge them is good for morale; we need all the motivation that we can get. But more importantly, all of us need to realize that we're in this struggle together. No single person or single group of people has the answer - nor should any particular person or group be deemed the leader of our movement. We aren't in competition with each other. Our efforts, however, must be ideologically centered around destroying all forms of oppression and exploitation. Prisons are a form of oppression and exploitation. Communication and cooperation are key in accomplishing our goals.

Prisons and prisoners are vital pieces in an ongoing political game of chess, and up until now, we've had no control over which direction we're being pushed. The current lawsuit against prison gerrymandering has the potential to put that power back into our hands, and the hands of those who have undertaken the selflessly arduous task of advocating for the fundamental human rights of incarcerated people across this nation. Though powerful and strategic, however, this lawsuit alone is not nearly enough to strike the necessary fatal blow to the PIC. While our

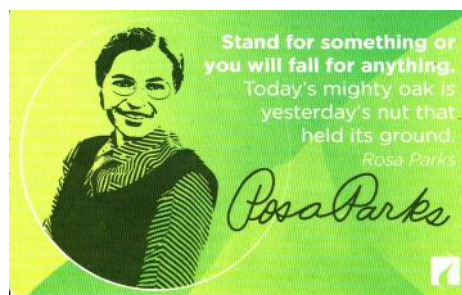
allies continue to work on the outside of prisons, we must do the same on the inside. I readily acknowledge the fact that prisoners face significant limitations from our current position. But those limitations aren't nearly as absolute as we sometimes make them out to be.

In the past, I've been critical of the way that many Inmate Organizations function on the inside of prison. I've pointed out how most of these organizations have become synonymous with nothing more than candy and donut sales. I still hold that position; I still recognize that these organizations are approved tools of the DOC. That means that none of us - including myself - can realistically expect Inmate Organizations to work as overt Political Action Committees. But for those of us who claim to be activists, we can use these organizations to make the connections that will put us in place to push our ultimate agenda. Obviously, the prisons which are closer to the larger metropolitan areas will garner the most attention from public policy makers. This leaves prisons in rural areas left feeling overlooked. I'm here to remind you that you aren't! Like revolutionaries across the world, ALL prisoners are intrinsically and universally linked through the common struggle for freedom, justice, and equality. Therefore, prisoners serving time in rural areas must use the tools at their disposal to unite with others in the same struggle.

As this paper comes to a conclusion, I want to quote our elder, Russell "Maroon" Shoatz: *"It's clear that today's center of gravity, the aspect on which all else is dependent and rests, is the shared (global) consciousness of the multitudes of the earth's workers and oppressed peoples, that their lives are daily becoming more and more intolerable, hence solidifying them ideologically around the necessity for revolutionary change, along with the ability of these multitudes to communicate with each other and share ideas and methods about the best ways to proceed toward that goal."*¹

Our lives are daily being destroyed, and so are the communities that we come from. Our existence is at stake, and so is the existence of the coming generation. Finally, our survival is dependent upon the destruction of capitalist patriarchy and the oppression and domination of poor, black, and brown people, by the ruling class and their proxies, which highlights the gravity of solidifying ourselves "ideologically around the necessity for revolutionary change". Move with focus, passion, and understanding. Move with purpose. Onward!

¹ Quoted from Maroon's essay, "The Dragon and the Hydra: A Historical Study of Organizational Methods (2006)



Importance of Coordination, Coalition & Cooperation!

A few of many cases completed successfully by Abolitionist Law Center (ALC), established by a long standing member of HRC.

Shoatz v. Wetzel—Russell Maroon Shoatz is 70-years-old and nearly 30 years in solitary confinement released from solitary confinement.

Johnson v. Wetzel—Arthur “Cetewayo” Johnson, a case of 36 years in the hole.

Bridges v. Wetzel—Shawnfatee Bridges spent over 19 years in solitary confinement on death row.

Abu-Jamal v. Kane—Politicians pushed prison censorship.

Holbrook v. Jellen— Prison confiscations of mail.



Russell Maroon Shoatz

Organizations fought together to making JLWOP sentences unconstitutional! A few of many, Shariff, Shavon (RIP), and Paulette.



Janet Africa

Organizations continuously fought for release of Move 9:

Debbie Africa, Released June 2018

Mike Africa Sr, Released October 2018

Janine Phillips Africa and Janet Holloway Africa, Released May 2019 (photo at right)

Eddie Goodman Africa, Released June 2019

Delbert Orr Africa (RIP), Released January 2020

Chuck Sims Africa, Released February 2020



Organizational Unity & Collaboration by inside and outside orgs

for the Election of DA Larry Krasner, Philadelphia & DA Jack Stollsteimer, Delaware County.



THE MOVEMENT

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I am Ready... "She" is ready. Pass the gavel. Pass the microphone.

By Terri Harper, SCI Muncy

At this time of great social, familial, economic, and political despair and want, we are all in need of liberation. The loosening of reigns and constraints on our lives can be manifested in many ways. Some will look to prayer and spiritual strengthening; others will trust the process. Since we all will not be saints and cannot afford to just wait for something to happen, we are seeking solidarity...we seek Freedom.

For true freedom to be achieved, we have to reach out to our comrades, supporters and those standing on the front lines in the national movement for liberation. We have to be the voices that encourage others to listen to the plight of women and recognize women's struggles to be successful within the rank and file of the freedom fighters of today, just as others fought to acknowledge the *strong* women comrades of yesterday.

Comrades communicate. From communication plans are made that are meant to lead us from one moment in history to the next. As inmates, we're hindered by the no jail to jail contact, when it's that sharing of information with our brothers in the struggle that could propel us into the forefront. I do not deny that communication could be used for personal gain, as it should be, but why does that automatically get flagged as a bad thing or something inappropriate? That roadblock is the basis for us being silent comrades and silent sufferers. Our male counterparts have all types of outreach programs and resources that cannot be directly attributed to their numbers, but rather it's because someone in a position of power allowed the bridges to be gapped between the incarcerated and the free. We do not have the exposure, and therefore many attempts to expand our exposure and lift our voices have failed.

Despite countless efforts by Prison Society, FFL, Decarcerate PA, and the documentaries we've been allowed to participate in, and even after the Town Hall with our esteemed legislators, little has changed... for women, for lifers, for the mentally ill and elderly, for a system where justice is meant to be served. A lot of females have lost hope and become accustomed to suffering in silence which weakens our place within the national liberation movement, but there is no denying that women are the backbone. There are no revolutions, no families, no legacies without us! We fulfill our roles as guides, nurturers, defenders and especially that soft place for others to land.

Well, that cannot continue to be downplayed, disregarded, nor somehow made to seem impossible without a masculine influence. We lift our voices and share our ideas only to be considered less, upheld less and rarely allowed to show the "more" that's asked of us and what we have ready to offer. We've been stuck in the background, but is it because we were physically made the weaker sex? If that's the case, we should really be front and center, because mentally we are *power, passion, and progress!* We organize, plan, direct, and conquer in

our daily roles. Our struggle is all inclusive and yet we still feel forced into begging for just that, as if society and, especially, the Criminal Justice System has and keeps standing behind the "they'll be fine" mindset, just because it's proven that a woman will always rise.

Women rise as we transform ourselves and our reformed behaviors and ideals make us wiser, better educated, more emotionally sound and stable human beings. The transformations are real to us yet unproven since we're not given platform from which to speak. Our voices are kept on lockdown, as if someone believes keeping us silent will keep us in line. Our silence, in fact, is problematic and counterproductive ... for healing, communication and connection with our families our peers, our communities and for the system that lords over us all. Denial of communication gives strength to those taking liberties against us and allow for abuses of authority to be the status quo. We need our inmate organizations to go back to having inmates LEAD, having them attain and sustain direct, frequent lines of communication with legislators, grassroots organizers and media sources that are in the fight to seek true change for all. Without these organizations and supporters as a safety net, we will continue to be ignored, uninformed and misinformed, and people will continue to believe that we are not fighting for ourselves, our sisters, the future...our Freedom. Recognition is real! Acknowledgement is power. Women need our due!

We need to be seen, heard, respected and encouraged, because we STAND....as Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, Doctors, Political Leaders and Lawyers. For that we need classes and groups offered to all, not just those with dates. How can our strength, determination, importance and success be denied? We serve in countless capacities, defending others, sometimes more fiercely than we do for ourselves, and come out stronger because of our selflessness. Why aren't our bodies and minds cherished or preserved? Why must we fight so much harder than our brothers, fathers, sons, and other counterparts? Why haven't we gone from "First Lady" to POTUS?

We've earned our spot. We've earned our respect as a gender, as soldiers, as heads of many tables. Society and the system cannot continue to force our silence or turn a deaf ear. I am Ready... "She" is ready. Pass the gavel. Pass the microphone.

Let me Speak - By Terri Harper, SCI Muncy

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THE MOVEMENT

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Organizational Unity!

Right to Redemption: The Beginning of a Movement

Sometime in the latter part of 2010, the then President of the Lifer's Organization (Lifer's Inc), Wayne Battle, approached several members mostly under the age of forty with an idea he had. He wanted to explore the possibility of looking at obtaining parole eligibility for lifers in Pennsylvania, beyond what was already being done within the organization. He felt like they were stuck in a repetitive cycle in search of parole eligibility for lifers.

We had our first of several meetings in the Graterford Gym; in the initial meetings there were about twenty of us, mostly under the age of forty. Earl, Wayne, Andre, Bernard, and Wavy were the elders at these early meetings.

In the beginning we had some serious spirited discussing about what was happening, what wasn't happening and what should or needs to be happening in the fight for parole for lifers. During this time many of the original attendees began to fall off for various reason. As we entered into the 2011 New Year, we began to function more like a committee, instead of a group of men meeting every week.

Guys started coming on the regular basis and before long we began to form a foundation we would follow--Empathy, Change, Second Chances, Labels, Redemption--and not forever being judged by one bad act. With this groundwork established, we started the process of coming up with a name, a name that represented who we were, what we were and what we stood for. After throwing out hundreds of names and phrases the word "redemption" kept coming up and eventually *Right to Redemption* [R2R] was born. Our very first task was to create a Mission Statement that was more than words. We brainstormed what redemption meant to each of us; and, how each of us wanted to pursue parole eligibility.

With twenty different views and positions the meetings were heated, because everybody had an opinion based on a core belief; and, whether it was right or wrong, each person had a right to their own thoughts and ideas on the subject.

Now this is where the genius of *R2R* began.

Through all the debates we created a Mission Statement built on our collective ideals compressed into one central understanding. Getting to this point wasn't an easy task; on a few occasions consulting with a dictionary for clarity. My Brother Ghani was able to put together all of our thoughts and created our Mission Statement; an assertion of feeling and purpose. We then created a Board and started to prioritize our undertaking to obtain parole eligibility for people condemned to a life without parole sentence in Pennsylvania.

One of my initial goals was to build relationships and partnerships with grassroots organizations on the street, with whom we could unite, because this was one of the things I didn't see being done with the Lifer's Inc. organization. That is, forging relation-

ships with politicians, organizations, and community leaders. All types of distinguished people were coming in and out of Graterford during this time, but I didn't see any real movement as a result of all these guest appearances. This isn't a knock to Lifers, Inc. This is just what I saw and as a member it was my duty to fill in the blanks.

Next, we tackled the use of the words; such as, "Wheel", "Elbow", "L", "Lifer". Words people used over the years to describe a life sentence. "Yo, they gave me a 'wheel'" or, "You see him over there, he got a 'L'". We used these phrases like it's cool to have a life sentence; it never was and never will be cool! We knew our way of thinking wasn't going to sit well with some of the members mainly because for decades they were accustomed to things being done a certain way. In 2013 some of us were given a book from another program/group we participated with, titled "*Too Cruel, Not Unusual Enough: An Anthology*", by The Other Death Penalty Project. The phrase, "Death By Incarceration" was used frequently throughout the book. Two meetings latter, we begin to use this phrase to describe our sentence, "Death By Incarceration," or "DBI." Yes, and just like we anticipated, most of the brothers weren't feeling this new way to describe being sentenced to life in prison.

Shortly after coming up with our "Right to Redemption" name, we were at a Lifer's Inc. meeting where fellow member, Terrell, and I were asked to introduce our special committee to the members of the organization. We started with our name and what our mission would be. We explained how we planned to pursue parole eligibility, in part, by highlighting the work being done from behind the walls, sharing with the communities we had harmed. The programs we created, facilitated inside and out.

We stated that one of our primary charges is to appeal to the people, reach out to folks from all walks of life throughout the entire state and hopefully the world, to abolish DBI! One member shouted out, "Ya'll presenting a moral argument, we need legislation passed". My response was, "What's the best way to get to these legislators? The people, their constituency, they may not listen to us, but they will listen to them... and how do we get our people to listen? With, morals, empathy, and humanity. Politicians were our target as they have been for decades."

The one difference is for the past 35+ years we approached legislators directly for meetings, attending events like banquets and such. They may show up if it's an election year, but for the most part, once they left, that was it. I witnessed this countless times in my first 15 years.... Another thing we wanted to change was the culture of lobbying for one person because he or she had 35-40 years of incarceration.

There wasn't a real movement during this time, life sentences were not even mentioned whenever anyone spoke about prison reform. We wanted to be included in the conversation.

One night while attending another meeting I had a conversation with a friend and comrade about Decarcerate PA, a group open-

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ly protesting the building of a new state prison on the grounds of Graterford.

They had an idea...I had a thought...we had a conversation... and the movement I envisioned was born, **The Coalition To Abolish Death By Incarceration** (CADBI). Our position initially was not accepted because people were not open to something new, something different. So instead of constantly defending ourselves and fighting our detractors, we became determined to show them better than we can tell them. While building relationships with grassroots organizations on the outside-- Decarcerate PA, Human Right Coalition [HRC], Fight for Lifers and Reconstruction, Inc--we learned from each other new creative ways to reach the masses to bring our collective vision to fruition. We had workshops, trainings, retreats, strategy meetings. No stone left unturned in our mission to end DBI in Pennsylvania.



Meetings, social gatherings, social media, rallies and protests...R2R's membership has spread into multiple camps throughout the state, we stand in solidarity for one cause, one mission. CADBI has had multiple events, four rallies at the State Capital, with each year increasing participation and more attention paid to the issue of DBI. Membership has expanded into several counties from Philly to Pittsburgh. We are in it for the long haul! I love the many men and women who stand with us through any weather. Many have no personal stake in this fight, but are dedicated agents of change for what is right! Every human being has the right to redeem themselves. **Right to Redemption** doesn't claim to have all the answers, we just want everyone to know that change is possible,

everyone deserves a second chance, and at least the opportunity to be judged on their own merits.

Thank you,

D. Saadiq Palmer

Co-Chair of Right 2 Redemption

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Look for us on Facebook · Right to Redemption

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On the Web · right2redemption.com



RIGHT TO REDEMPTION
LIFER'S INCORPORATED

MISSION STATEMENT

- CHAIRPERSON**
Terrell "Red" Carter
- Co-CHAIRPERSON**
D. Saadiq Palmer
- SECRETARY**
Vernon Robinson
- TREASURER**
Vacant
- AFFAIRS COORDINATOR**
Vacant
- SERGEANT AT ARMS**
Arthur "Art" Wyche
- MEMBERS**
Andre Austin
Dom Barber
Charles "Li'Charlie" Bassett
Rose Boyd-Toliver
Sylvia Boykin
Charles "Kareem" Diggs
Rose Dirkins
Rodney "Shaheed" Demickson
Darrick U. Hall
Scott "Slim" Harmon
Kerby Holmes
Robert "Saleem" Holbrook
Charles Kaim
Robert "Bobby" Lazair
Heather Lavelle
Joie Lopez
Kerry "Shakaboina" Marshall
Andre Martin
Sandra Miller
John "Yahya" Moore
Lawrence "Salif" Rhoads
Earl Rice
Patricia Roman
Felix "Phil" Rosado
Kareem Sampson
Thomas Schik
David "Wavy" Sheppard
Kempis "Ghar" Songster
George "Kidge" Trudell
Danytel "Ameenu" Vaughter
Clinton "Nkechi" Walker
Tyree Wallace
Mark Williams

RIGHT TO REDEMPTION (R2R) is a crusade to end the sentencing of human beings to life in prison without the possibility of parole—or death by incarceration—in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania particularly, and in American society at large. R2R aims to effect the passing of retroactive Parole-Eligibility-for-Lifers Bill to bring Pennsylvania's sentencing schemes and practices toward felony cases in harmony with the evolving standards of decency of the Global Community.

R2R believes, and appeals to the United Nations Human Rights Council to recognize, that the damnation of a human being of any age to spend the rest of his or her natural life in prison without even the possibility of a parole hearing review is a negation of the distinctly human capacity for redemption, a denial of the individual's core humanity, and a violation of an inalienable human right.

R2R will tout the unsung wonders of the many men and women sentenced to life without parole, who have convicted themselves to a life of sacrifice and service and have become agents of restoration in the communities they have wounded. To afford erred souls the opportunity to continue righting themselves through serving humanity instead of just serving time is a key step in humanity's march toward a more livable world.

Therefore, R2R calls on forces of goodwill everywhere to come together, consolidate, and champion the human right to redemption and dignity in any case or circumstance; to advance the idea of forgiveness for those deemed worthy; and, to help the criminal justice system and the public see the rightness of embracing the prospect of redemption over unceasing retribution.

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Sponsoring Organizational Member of CADBI – Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration

THE MOVEMENT

Life Cycles Toward Freedom Campaign Launches this August!

“We are not what we've done. We are who we have become.”
Sheena' King, serving a life sentence at SCI - Muncy

Let's Get Free and The Women Lifers Resume Project are releasing a multi-media campaign uplifting the stories of women and trans people serving death by incarceration called *Life Cycles Toward Freedom*.

Last summer we were selected by The Open Society Foundation to receive funding to raise awareness about this issue. We started by consulting with Sheena' King, Cyd Berger and Brittany Williams and we then interviewed all the women and trans prisoners that we knew of serving life. After all the meetings and planning we are thrilled to release these stories to the world.

This August, the campaign launch will include a series of virtual film screenings, and in collaboration with Boom Concepts, will host an online art contest. The End Death By Incarceration Art Contest virtually opens on August 7th and runs through the end of October where attendees can take a tour of the art and hear from formerly incarcerated artist James “YaYa” Hough. The deadline has been extended for incarcerated artists and there are cash prizes! Please send art by Sept. 30th - the earlier you send the better chance you have to win because more people will be able to vote for your piece :)

Each film screening will showcase the latest series of short films produced by Tusko Films which features currently incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and includes footage from inside the two women's prisons in PA - SCI Muncy and SCI Cambridge Springs. The film entitled *Pennsylvania's Commutation Process: Naomi Blount's Experience* takes you through one woman's journey of the lengthy and laborious steps of achieving her freedom from a life sentence. Naomi Blount was the 2nd woman to receive commutation in the last 30 years and has been home for one year. Lt. Governor John Fetterman, a leader in PA's commutation reform is also featured in this film.

We Are More Than Our Worst Day, a 12 minute short, radiates resilience and the power to change that which is widespread amongst people with death by incarceration sentences. This poignant vignette features the transformative journeys of Tequila Fields and Tameka Flowers who are both seeking commutation.

You Deserve Better Than Prison: Messages to Youth from Women Serving Life was the idea of Avis Lee who is currently awaiting a public hearing that will decide her freedom. The desire to protect young people from similar paths is echoed

throughout PA prisons and this piece showcases many voices, including family members and formerly incarcerated women who were sentenced to die as young people.

Note: The prison did not let us choose which people we were allowed to interview for the films. And some participants were only allowed to be silhouetted. We are continuing to work with the filmmakers to turn more of the footage into vignettes of individual stories. Every film costs money so we are raising funds.

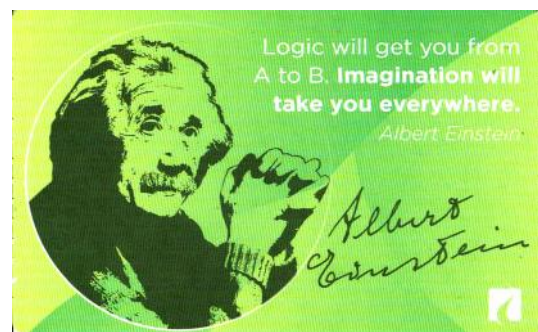
The films, schedule of events and art show can be accessed at lifecyclestowardfreedom.org

Tell your friends and family. Also, if you know anyone that wants to host a film screening connect us! The films will be accessible to everyone in September on the website too. We are working on getting the films screened inside Muncy and Cambridge and if you would like them shown in your prison please reach out with the name of a staff member who you think can assist us in achieving this goal.

The Life Cycles Toward Freedom campaign is made possible by financial support from The Open Society Foundation, The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Opportunity Fund.

Thank you to each and everyone who participated in the surveys, film interviews, correspondence, guidance etc. Our hope is to lift these stories high enough that they can shake the hearts and minds of those who vote and those in power and support freedom and liberation for all.

All our love and solidarity,
Darlene Williams, Ellen Melchiondo and etta cetera
Let's Get Free, 460 Melwood Ave #300, Pittsburgh, PA 15213
letsgetfree.info | Woman Lifer's Resume Project: www.wlrppa.org



THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

Collaboration!

EMERGENCY PRISONER RELIEF FUND FAMILY FUND

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the northeast of the United States, it quickly became clear that the state and federal governments were uninterested in sufficiently supporting marginalized working people through the economic shutdown. The majority of small businesses and nonprofits closed their doors across Pennsylvania – and the ones that have remained open have struggled to stay afloat. As parents and caregivers (of children, elders, people who are disabled, chronically ill and incarcerated) lost their jobs, new expenses multiplied.

The “relief” orchestrated by government elites has been insufficient to us – the precarious class – those of us already living at or below the poverty line, those of us already on brinks of eviction, foreclosure, bankruptcy, unemployment, and hunger.

Out of public view, the virus devastated (and is devastating) prisons across the country. Prisons, which are already sites of state terror, would be rendered incubation hosts for COVID-19 and ultimately death traps for elders and the immunocompromised. Units and entire prisons were put on lockdown for weeks, while prison administration failed to employ CDC guidelines and protocols.

Guards not wearing masks or gloves and coming into work sick. Officials lying about the number of COVID-19 cases, people’s symptoms and availability of testing. The blatant disregard of human rights expressed thru scarce provisions: meager food portions, little to no access to soap. How does one socially distance in prison? As a result of these events and practices, there are increased costs and decreased funds that are needed – and deserved.

While people on the outside struggle to pay their bills, make rent, purchase food and medication (and find available social services) – people on the inside struggle to have enough money for commissary, medical co-pays, phone calls and more.

In this vacancy, a byproduct of decades of neoliberal laissez-faire economics and dismantling of the welfare state, a range of “mutual-aid” funds popped up in response to COVID-19. However, many of these funds developed by corporate foundations and hip start-ups appropriated the terminology of “mutual aid” and ignored its radical origins.

Mutual-aid societies date back to the 1700s. They began as constellations of symbiotic support and care organized by Black

community members to provide for one another where historic racist capitalist structures had failed to do so.

In the wake of COVID-19, incarcerated people and many of their family members – who are already repeatedly harmed and robbed by the state thru debt economies – continue to be excluded or are simply ineligible from both outside aid funds and government “stimulus” payments.

Inspired by the radical legacies of mutual aid societies and driven to support those most affected by the structural violence of the pandemic, the Human Rights Coalition and the Abolitionist Law Center created the *Emergency Prisoner and Family Relief Fund*.

Using GoFundMe, an internet fundraising platform, the *Emergency Prisoner and Family Relief Fund* collected donations from over 200 people across numerous cities and movements, to support people currently and formerly held captive in Pennsylvania state prisons, along with their family members.

From April to July, the *Relief Fund* raised \$20,000 and redistributed micro-grants to over 180 people. Several of the incarcerated awardees are recovering from COVID-19, and some of the formerly incarcerated awardees are homeless. Many of the family members who have received awards have been laid off and are recovering from surgery, illness, or are disabled.

Recipients of *the Emergency Prisoner and Family Relief Fund* have asked us to share their deepest gratuities with you – “overjoyed for the support” now able to talk to their loved ones on the phone and purchase medication, food, hygiene supplies and more.

The reach and impact of *the Relief Fund* is a testament to the legacy of Black mutual aid societies – and our potential to visualize radical resource distribution, even in the face of shutdown and isolation.

William Lukas (Abolitionist Law Center)

Wesley Hackman (Human Rights Coalition)

July 2020

Coordination!
HRC & ALC raise \$\$
For Relief

Keystone Decarceration Bloc: Organizing throughout the state for Prison Justice

With people rising up all over Pennsylvania to resist violence at the hands of the state, many of us are seizing the moment to network, organize, and strategize together to break the hold mass incarceration and the prison complex has in Pennsylvania. Our state continues to lock up TEN times more humans--the vast majority of them poor, black, or brown--than it did in the 1970s, stemming from racist tough-on-crime policies that transformed police and prisons into a core part of the state power structure. While the narrative about the justice of mass incarceration has started to shift, the entities and powers that keep it in place still firmly hold power at the state level: prosecutors, police, politicians preaching fear and vengeance, and their allies still write all the bills, still oversee all the prisons, and still get to say what can and can't be done to police and sentence people. We are organizing to move our communities and officials against mass incarceration and prisons as we know them--and towards a more just and equitable society.

This group especially focuses those communities outside of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia in this fight, the smaller areas from Harrisburg to Allentown to all the rural spots that we need to win change and freedom for people inside prisons. This space is designed to help train and support people from smaller cities and counties to join in the larger struggles and campaigns going on. We are working with people from every corner of the state, from Scranton to Erie to Greene County to Coatesville, places that often don't have big groups or a long history of organizing against prisons and police.

We welcome anyone interested in making change, and this year the work is focused on three issues at the state level: ending solitary confinement and releasing people over age 50 (focus on lifers and virtual lifers), and we also hope to do more work around parole next year. We are sharing our work with CADBI at this state level too whenever we can, though we have a broader focus. The group also provides training for establishing groups at the local or county level so people can become local leaders: how to set up bail funds, how to decrease the amount of cops in schools and youth in county jail (school to prison pipeline), and how to end local police collaborations with business and state government.

Anyone can be involved, and we have specific training groups available for formerly incarcerated people and family members of currently or formerly incarcerated people. We can't win if we aren't organized! If you know someone interested, you can have them write to freethevulnerablePA@gmail.com or

Abolitionist Law Center
Attn: Keystone Decarceration
PO BOX 31857, Philadelphia PA 19104

(The group is hosted by the Abolitionist Law Center, and organized by people who are formerly and currently working with the ACLU, CADBI, the Reform Alliance, Decarcerate PA, and the Human Rights Coalition.)

PS: Our first event will be called Voices from the Inside: Solitary Confinement and COVID Lockdown. People from inside PA prisons will be sending written statements and some recorded ones about the damaging effects of solitary confinement, and how those have been coming back during the current lockdown. The event wants to tie together how solitary and isolated confinement is a core part of the prisons (not just something that happens to the 'worst of the worst') and that it can't be reformed but needs to be removed from prisons totally. If you're interested in participating in this or future events from behind the walls, you can write to the same address.

Free People Strike

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, people of conscience inside and outside of the walls knew that prisons would be hit hardest. The state has shown time and again how little it cares for the cherished people it so readily locks away, but we will not stand by and allow them to be ignored in the face of this new danger.

Strength at this time comes from people inside and outside of the walls uniting in our demand for dignity and care, for the release of the vulnerable, and for the protection of those who remain.

In Pennsylvania, the Free People Strike formed as a campaign of people who refused to be silent about Governor Tom Wolf's shameful lack of response to COVID-19 in prisons, despite his power to free anyone he chooses at any time. Using a rolling hunger strike, members of the Free People Strike across the state work to bring this unacceptable inaction to the public eye, raise concern for the precious lives of the over 40,000 people currently locked up in PA, and ultimately move Governor Wolf to meaningful action.

We know that incarcerated people have carried out hunger strikes extensively as a way of resistance, and our strike pays homage to that history of sacrifice and leadership. Since May 28, more than a hundred people have fasted for anywhere from one to 35 days at a time to demand MORE from the people in power.

Our demands for Governor Wolf are clear and simple: release the vulnerable NOW; ensure that they have resources, care, shelter and protection as they return to their lives; and provide testing, care and protection for all those who remain incarcerated. We are circulating a petition in support of these demands, we are calling and writing into Wolf's office daily, and we are making noise online and out loud until he follows through on

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THE MOVEMENT

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Organizational Unity!

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I stand on the shoulders of our heroes and roar



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his moral and legal duty to protect ALL people in Pennsylvania, especially those most at risk.

As Black August approaches, we will continue to lift up the history of resistance inside prison walls, as we pay tribute to this rich history through our sustained action. Some of our team members have been incarcerated, others have loved ones locked away, and the rest simply believe that no one should live or die in cages. We show unity and demand recognition of the fundamental dignity and interconnectedness that we all share as we move forward and build the world without cages that we all deserve. Know that, as you struggle inside the walls, you have a vast community of people on the outside who see you, who will lift up your resistance like with the recent hunger strike at SCI-Albion, and who will keep on fighting at your side.

Juneteenth!

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day & Cel-Liberation Day. I heard of this "holiday" but never knew what it was. I looked it up to see that it is supposed to be an American holiday celebrated on June 19th. On June 19, 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation which had been issued on January 1, 1863, was read to the enslaved African-Americans in Texas by Gordon Granger.

We are taught in history that Lincoln freed the slaves by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. However, slavery still exists. The 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution "provides that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Slavery does not exist? That's not true...don't be fooled. Every day that my husband spends in jail..for the last 26 years he is considered a slave. When will his servitude be over? The United States says when he dies.

We proudly boast to be American citizens. Aren't those born in the U.S. that are in prison still "American citizens?" Malcolm X said "don't be shocked when I say I was in prison, you're still in prison. That's what American means - prison." I stand with him and realize we are all "prisoners."

Submitted by Kariymah

Are We The Black Race & The White Race OR are We The Human Race

Hi everyone, I saw a very interesting segment on Entertainment tonight. An African American man who was peacefully protesting was carrying an injured white protestor to safety who was protesting against the black lives matter too.

I was extremely impressed by this. I would like to see these two men interviewed together. I have some amazing African American friends, friends I call my family. Great men with great hearts. And if you don't know me, I'm white. But when it comes to people, we need to see beyond race. Thomas Young, Stacey Wright, Yusef Jones, Senator Nikil Saval, Marbles, Bobby Harris - each one of these human beings matter to me. They've all earned my love & respect. I want the day to come where human beings stop referring to each other by color/race. These men are family to me. Doesn't matter that their complexion is darker than mine. They are great people who will never be defined by another's hatred and ignorance. The only way to end racism is to stop the hatred. Sadly, I don't see this happening in my lifetime. Though I don't condone the violence, looting & destruction of peoples businesses & property, I understand it. We do the same thing in here but since we're prisoners, we're not heard, we're not seen.

Can anyone find out how many prisoners, human beings, let's forget color, died at the hands of correctional staff in the last 10 years? I'd like to know that number. Remember Tyrone Briggs & Joseph Gacha. They were not black & white, they were men who died while being restrained by DOC staff. Senseless deaths in here, but in here, were not seen human.

I have friends of all races, religions, and ages. I want everyone reading this to know that if we stand aside and do nothing, we lose. We must be heard, we must air our issues. I support you and I appreciate everyone. I am not black, I am not white, I am a human being who cares about other people. Thank you for caring about us.

By Rob Pezzeca, Rehabilitated Lifer

#Prisoners Lives Matter Too

THE MOVEMENT

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I stand on the shoulders of our heroes and roar



Voices Unheard

I'm here fighting for the rights of an innocent "Black" woman that has been incarcerated since 2007 for a crime she did not commit.

For over 18 hours my friend was threatened, had her children threatened, was beaten, denied food, water, and even legal representation. She was scared, cold, and being bullied by a 300 pound man-of-the-law; to the point that his partner had to step in (this time) to stop him from attacking her again. This Black female (125 lb.) feeling hopeless finally broke and signed a statement that was the police officer's (Pitts) belief of the way the events went; a statement that put her in a cage by a detective who took an oath to serve and protect.

My friend also took an oath, on the stand, to tell the truth. But she was repeatedly called a liar when she told her version of the crime. And looked upon as even worse when she told what had happened between herself and Pitts. They both took oaths why was his more upholding? She was looked upon as a liar; he was not.

Finally, in 2017, at least 10 others accused Pitts of the same torturous interrogation process that my friend endured. Because of Pitts treatment there were two or more murder cases overturned and at least 7 lawsuits, costing the city millions, for fabricating evidence, using heavy-handed interrogation methods and coercing statements from suspects and witnesses. There was also prejudicial testimony in a trial from Pitts that should have caused a mistrial; but, later it did in fact result in another man being released after years in prison. Now 2020, three years after all that has happened my friend still remains in prison due to Pitts torturous, underhanded and unorthodox methods.

As with my friend, it is both Black and White people in an authoritative position who show prejudice and racism towards the African American race. The same "Justice System" that was so quick to lock her up and let her rot is so slow to see all the evidence that clearly shows she is not the liar they tried to make her out to be, but was in fact railroaded through this entire ordeal.

This is nothing new. It has been going on for hundreds of years. I guess it is supposed to be "better", but it's not. Now they use guns and prisons instead of ropes and trees, and hide behind their badge instead of hoods. When will it stop? When will it end? All this killing and incarceration of innocent Black women and men. Hands up! Please don't shoot! I can't breathe! Came from the senseless killing and imprisonments. Does a life have

to end because of the color of her skin? Voices go unheard and cries for help fall upon deaf ears. They just refuse to hear or see the pain they inflict with their malice intent to kill and incarcerate without getting all the facts. No apologies nor any amount of money can replace the children taken from their mothers or make up the lost time with loved ones.

I do not agree with violence, but with years of built up tension, there's sure to be a pissed off nation. Too many lives have been taken by death and incarceration by officers and other figures of authority who swore to "serve and protect". I appreciate the stand finally being taken for all the lives we've lost to these senseless killings. Now how about some help for the innocent lives that are still behind the walls due to them same kind of police, DA's and judges that don't see anything but color.

So as I said I am standing here on behalf of an innocent Black woman who is still on the insides of these walls being punished. A woman who admits to the mistakes she has made and acknowledges the wrongs she has done, but still doesn't deserve what she has been and continues to be put through. A woman who the "Justice System" only recognizes as a number, ON5923.

It wasn't all over the news and it did not turn into a headline story such as Floyd, Taylor, and Brooks but she has a lot in common with them and countless others. They've all had similar "injustices" done. While they lie in a grave, she is living in hell and slowly dying in a cell. Looking for help, looking to be heard, holding on to a glimmer of hope that somehow, someday, somebody will one day see her truth and hear her - Janet Weary.

She's currently at SCI Muncy.

Interested groups and/or comments may respond to:

Smart Communications/PADOC
Janet Weary / ON-5923 / SCI-Muncy
PO Box 33028
St Petersburg, FL 33733

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

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

Smart Communications/PA DOC

J. Mario Pridgen, #CD-7998, SCI-Mahanoy

PO Box 33028

St. Petersburg, PA 33733

Re: Jennifer Storm, PA's Victims Advocate book of her life:
'Black Out Girl: Drying Out in America, 2008

Dear HRC,

The book 'Black Out Girl', details a life of crime committed by Jennifer herself, her brother Jimmy, and a boy friend.

Jennifer Storm advocates the complete denial of parole to those convicted of a crime, and pushes for harsher sentences for offenses.

I am asking you and your organization for assist in getting the info of her book out to the public.

She plants fear in the public with her rational of how the victim has suffered, and how the public would be endangered upon a convicted individual's release. Yet, she has hurt people in many ways, which she tells about in her book, and has not done anything towards compensating her victims.

I appreciate your organization's assistance.

Sincerely,

J. Mario Pridgen

These are my notes from the 'Black Out Girl', by Jennifer Storm:

The DA of Dolphin County, PA did a background check of J. Storm and found only one citation for underage drinking. In her book, Black Out Girl, Storm had admitted to a life of crime including drug crimes and events where people actually got hurt (as in her drunk driving cases). This shows how she got hired using fraud and false pretenses.

#1 Assault against the police officer(page 76)

#2 Resisting arrest disorderly conduct underage drinking (page 92)

#3 By using cocaine, marijuana, acid, and crack while living with her drug dealer boyfriend for 10 years (page 88 of 108)

#4 Failing the drug test (page 116)

#5 Failing the drug test (page 116)

#6 Living off \$\$\$ from drug dealing and living with a drug dealer (page 107)

#7 She made \$\$\$, sold fake IDs for five years

#8 She sold the fake idea ID's for \$25 a pop

#9 Property damage during dozens of drunk driving trips in cars

#10 Cause at least two serious car accidents which left two women hurt/hospitalized; one was a 10 car pileup

#11 She swiped other cars, so many times she can't remember . . . (And that's just some of it . . .)

As Victims Advocate, Jennifer Storm would oppose parole for Jennifer Storm! She committed crimes for over a decade and then got a job with the Dauphin County DA only after falsifying her application and not telling the truth.

One observer reading her book described it as --

"Crime-ing while White"!

She who, now, calls her youth "juvenile antics" has opposed parole for other juveniles, who have lived harrowing lives under every adversity (rather than advantages) known by Man.

Marie Scott, 67 yrs old, in prison since she was 19. Why? — she didn't kill anyone. She has been in prison for 48 years for being the lookout during a petty robbery in 1974. Come on people, where is our sense of forgiveness, compassion?

When I came to prison in 1998, I read the story of Joan Gauker from Pa Prison Society. This woman had the strength and courage to forgive the person who killed her granddaughter. Back then I said no way. Impossible. I had just learned that the woman I loved more than life itself had been killed and the killer would face NO charges! The most precious human being I have ever known had her life taken at 21 years old. Justine had not 1 ounce of hate in her 5 foot tall body.

All these years later I have learned how to forgive. I read Joan's story and never thought it possible. But it is. So why does Jennifer Storm continue to make excuses saying she believes all lifers should die in prison because the victims families would have to relive the original crime every year. I don't remember reading about her going to juvenile lifers court hearings and asking every judge to give them life all over again. They were given a 2nd chance. Something all human beings deserve. People can earn forgiveness, redemption, a 2nd chance. November elections are coming fast, if you vote Republican, you are voting to let people like Marie Scott die in prison.

Everyone knows Bobby Harris. I love that man, he's family to me. He's a juvenile lifer who did 28 years in here, deemed worthless to society. But let me tell you, he has been anything but worthless to Philadelphians. Bobby has started a non profit to help not just former prisoners but people. Please Google Unincarcerated Minds and get involved! Bobby wasn't irredeemable or worthless, neither am I, neither is Marie Scott. Please vote Democratic in November and help change Pa Legislature and bring deserving lifers home. Give me one (1) good reason why someone who didn't take a life should die in here?

By Rob Pezzeca, SCI-Forest

#Prisoners Lives Matter Too!

THE MOVEMENT

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Hey, my name is Daniel Vincent-KH7761. I am the Secretary and former VP of an inmate organization here at SCI Smithfield. We do a lot of philanthropy work raising and donating thousands to various nonprofits that are doing their part in the communities.

Very briefly let me tell you a little bit about myself. I'm a wrongfully convicted prisoner who's been fighting for vindication for over a decade, because of my current circumstances I've been forced to study the law and have become a litigator, and must recently I find myself stepping into the roll of an activist.

A couple of years back I read a news letter that was sent out by CABDI in regards to the local elections, i.e. Judges, DA's etc. This immediately got my attention because it was something that I was always concerned with and wondered why there wasn't just as much attention put on local elections as on the White House. So I immediately contacted CADBI and after a very informative conversation I learned of some of the candidates that CADBI was endorsing. So after doing my own research I was satisfied and began to spread the word amongst our inmate organizations and the inmate population, here, and their families on the outside, even had my family and friends posting on their social media pages and spreading the word.

My sister Rev. Ruth Vincent-Washington is the minister and district overseer for the Church of God and several other churches under the Church of God umbrella. She is also a Director of the Board of Education, so I got her involved to secure some votes as well.

I never voted in my life, and this was the first time I ever even got involved. Although I couldn't vote, it was still very gratifying for myself (and other first time voters) that I got involved to see that our voices were heard and that their votes counted. To see that we were able to get Judges, DA's, Councilmen and Women elected was gratifying and now I have the bug..lol.

Now I need to be involved and contributed in any and every way possible. So I wanted to reach out to you guys because I read up a little bit on your organization and I like what you guys stand for and all that y'all are doing and trying to do. I want to get involved. So I want to know how can I, as an inmate, become a member and how can I get family and friends involved?

Another thing I wanted to run by you guys is that I'm going to be doing a couple podcast interviews and I want to shout out a couple organizations, including yours, to let the people know what it is that you guys are doing and give some contact information. Let me know if that's okay. And if you guys have any pressing information or events that you guys would like me to mention just say the word.

Brothers and Sister's I greatly appreciate all that you guys are doing, all of y'all sacrifice and contributions. I just wanted to let y'all know that I am with y'all; I am your ally. I don't know if y'all have the ConnectNetwork to direct message inmates if so my info is Daniel Vincent # KH7761.

Thank you again for your time Sisters and Brothers. PEACE!

Daniel Vincent #KH-7761

From Editor! We will forward you information about CADBI. Others feel free to **Email:** CADBIphilly@gmail.com **Visit FB:** CADBIphilly, **Website:** <https://decarceratepa.info/CADBI>, or send **Mail to :** CADBI c/o Decarcerate PA, PO Box 40764, Phila. PA 19107.

June 2020

To Whom it May Concern and Will Help Me!

I am an inmate at the Pennsylvania DOC in the Institute of SCI-Fayette. I am writing to you for your help or what I should do dealing with certain SCI-Fayette staff exhibiting harassment biasness, as well as, inmate abuse.

I'm currently in the hole on POC (Protective Custody) due to this staff misconduct behavior. I am suffering from emotional abuse on a daily basis. To try to elevate these problems and to resolve them I have been writing Pennsylvania DOC Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal and they turned over everything to the Security Investigators in SCI-Fayette. But here's the thing, I was still on the block where I was being abused! I came to the hole on POC status on May 29th, 2020. This investigation started or - I should say - should have started back in April 30th, 2020.

Even though I'm now on POC status, I'm still treated with biasness by the CEOs, Sergeants, and other staff Lieutenants and Managers. These problems have been going on since I came to SCI-Fayette back in October 2019. I have been assaulted and threatened to be killed. I've gone through emotional abuse where the guards and sarges prevent me going to meals and medication line, I take meds to prevent me from having seizures.

The Sergeant and COs, on the unit that I was on, put out my case and chimed in with inmates to come at me — I'm labeled as a sex offender. I'm called a weirdo, baby rapist, psycho, and a vicious sexual predator. In October I was threatened by a Sergeant where he said; If it was my kid, I'd killed you. You're lucky you only got a prison sentence, but I'll make your life hell.

When this happened in October, I put myself as being threatened through the DOC OSII hotline, but they never did nothing about it.

The day I was assaulted by a CEO, was when I finally tried to fight my oppressor from not letting me go to chow (meal). I would step back in my cell when this officer tried to block me from going; so, he took his hand and covered my face and basi-

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

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cally palm slammed me into my bunk bed where I hit my head off of.

Another issue is every time I took these issues to Security Staff they won't let me write my statement about what is happening. If I don't write what they tell me, they'll trash my copy and make me write it over. On May 29th ,2020, the day I was on POC, I was told to write, *I want to take self lock up*. When I did that, I was put into the hole. Another thing is, on that day I was about to be put into psych evaluation, under observation, because I was going to hurt myself and because I was tired of dealing with these issues, where I'm treated like I'm not human.

Is this right what's happening to me? Is there anyone who can help me? Is any of this illegal? Please write back with your opinion or advice. Please. I appreciate your time in reading my letter. Thank you.

From the Editor! We do not want to jeopardize the writer's life; therefore we've purposely omitted his name. If you are able to help, please email HRC at Info@Hrcoalition.org.
... THEN THEY CAME FOR ME AND THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT TO SPEAK FOR ME.

On Father's Day to Women of minority children! I want to THANK YOU for allowing incarcerated men to be a contribution even of the smallest magnitude toward the development of our communities.

You have many reasons to be at odds with this infrastructure. The Department of Justice takes from us the comfort of your arms in the interest of the public, makes us pay restitution that is obliged from the income of loved ones, and places us near bucolic surroundings only to employ people who are not our peers.

We become dependents of the state for tax purposes and are made to perform duties required of day laborers for wages less than .40¢ an hour. Yet still, you receive no stipend. Would not the company of a Father to explain his son's haircut be of some aid? Couldn't a small sum of \$60.00 potentially contribute to summer activities? Our communities have been gravely deprived and for what? So the prison industry could build a monopoly on our missteps? This is a reallocation of justice! Where is the recompense for the marginalized where most crimes are committed? What about the victims even? Once again reparations are left up to us while the profits behind cajolery are swiped and tucked away.

Even so, Mother's thrive and with a radiance only the sun permeates continues to light up our lives with encouragement.

Making the best of bad situations, a man in solitary confinement authored a book from a cell block segregated from general population, entitled 'Ain't No Place Safe' authored by Carlton Ewell's his literary skills is evidence that productivity is still plausible and that we should be afforded the opportunity to Pay It Forward.

Although we are locked in, We Are Not Shut Out ...

By: Issac B. Pearson

Smart Communications/PA DOC
Issac B. Pearson, #ML-2492, SCI-Somerset
PO Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

An Interview Question given to John Legend from People Magazine

Question by Jackie F.: How are you addressing what's going on in the world right now with your white friends? When people ask, "How are you?" what do you say?

John Legend: When people ask me how I'm doing, I say I'm doing well, and I *am* doing well in the sense that I'm happy with my career, I'm happy with my family, and most moments in my day are positive moments. But, that being said, it can be very frustrating watching the news. It can be very frustrating thinking about how we keep having the same conversations over and over again about abuse from the police, abuse from the criminal-justice system. We really do need change, and that's something I've been focused on for a long time in my philanthropic and political work. When moments like George Floyd's killing happen, it makes it even more urgent that change is needed. I'm doing fine, but too many people in our country aren't doing well, and for too long we've put up with a system that doesn't treat people of color equally, and that needs to change.

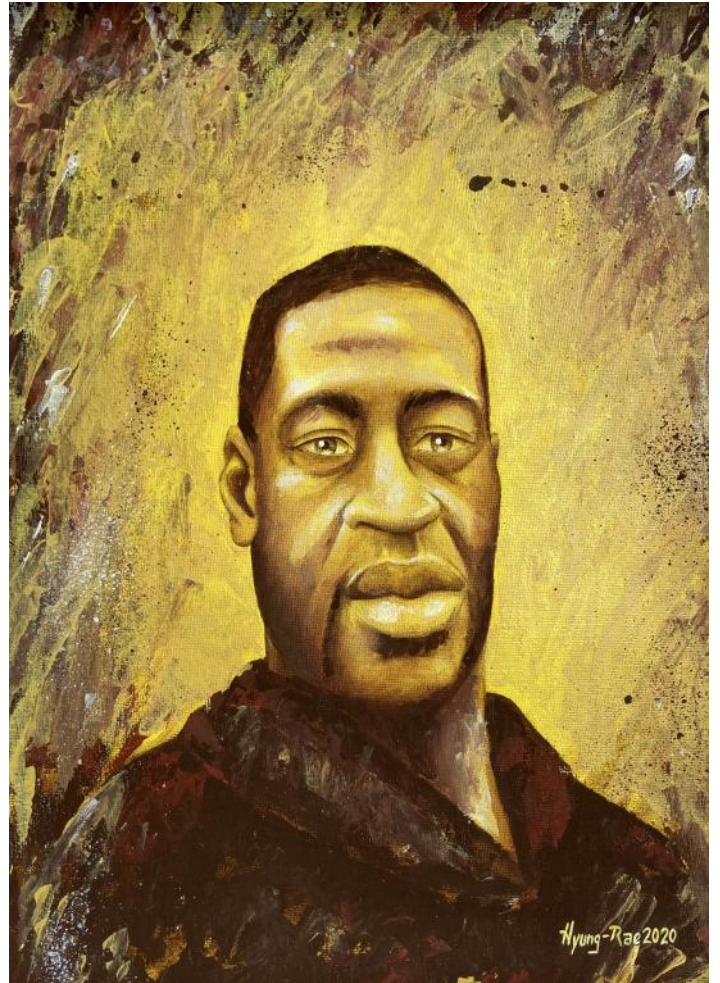


I love John!! Does anybody know how I can get in touch?

Beautiful Darkness

The lonely road of darkness succumbs us to its mercy,
as we twitter recklessly amid the streets in which have shadowed us . . . Blinding us of light ,
as we fight for our lives along with our rights...
for we will never be right in the eyes of those who stand superior.
even given all our might
for we are those of darkness because we cannot be WHITE
so the light in which shines bright,
strays around the shadows
a constant realm of night
although my skin is WHITE I'm conterminous in contrast to that in which is right
I'm tenacious and never tire
the race in which I adhere is not of those who maliciously conspire.
I'm a unique shade of urban unity,
translucent to annuity
And I refuse to shed the blood of those who have been true to me
and yes my skin is WHITE but the soul in which it's harbored is BLACKER THAN THE NIGHT
So I'll fight for the rest of my life to let my people live in peace and STAND UP FOR OUR RIGHTS.

Poem by Angela Hellman #OU-5979
SCI-Muncy



George Floyd Portrait by Hyung-Rae 2020

HRC-Philly address below:

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

HRC-FedUp! Address below:

Human Rights Coalition &
PJWSC Jailhouse Lawyer Support
P.O. Box 8561
Pittsburgh, PA 15220
PH: 412-628-3759

SCI-Muncy inmates reveal stories of medical neglect, high cancer rates

By Melissa Farenish

Muncy, Pa. -- “Shavonne had a great sense of humor. She really liked her friends. What you see is what you got with her. She was a straight shooter. She was well liked at Muncy,” said Ellen Melchiondo, a volunteer from the Pennsylvania Prison Society. She recently spoke about Shavonne Robbins, one of the many inmates she became acquainted with at the women’s State Correctional Institute – Muncy.

Robbins is one of the recent cancer deaths among women who served time at Muncy. She died on December 15, 2019 at the age of 43 after battling several years with a rare abdominal mucous cancer. Robbins, who was serving a life sentence, was at Muncy for 25 years before being released in 2017.

At the age of 16, she got “caught up with the wrong crowd,” according to her cousin, Sissy Robbins. She was involved in a robbery in Philadelphia in which a man tragically lost his life. Robbins was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Though Robbins knew she would probably never leave the prison as a free woman, she worked hard to earn her GED and became a mentor and tutor to other women incarcerated at SCI-Muncy. Known as one of Pennsylvania’s “juvenile lifers,” her circumstances changed after the Supreme Court banned automatic life-without-parole sentences for juveniles and ordered states to apply this ruling retroactively.

Unfortunately, Robbins was diagnosed with cancer prior to being released from prison.

“None of us realized she was so sick. She didn’t tell anyone how sick she was,” Melchiondo said. She died of a blood clot while she was in the hospital preparing for surgery in her hometown of Philadelphia.

“Muncy does have a higher rate of cancer, pulmonary issues, seizures, and psychotropic medications than any other prisons in Pennsylvania,” Melchiondo said. Early screenings for health issues often are not conducted, according to Melchiondo. “Some prefer not to get a diagnosis and never go to medical.”

Shortly before her death, Robbins wrote on her Facebook page that she wished she had asked for help when she needed it, but didn’t. “She didn’t want to be a burden when released. I think her death is directly connected with her prison experience,” Melchiondo said.

Robbins was laid to rest in Philadelphia on December 24, 2019.

“When someone like Shavonne Robbins dies, and she’s been there 25 years and was well liked, the prison allows the women to conduct a special Sunday service or memorial,” Melchiondo said. Shavonne’s service in December was filmed with the idea that it would be shown in the prison.

Sick calls not always taken seriously

Melchiondo said many women have told her that they feel their complaints to the health care workers in the prison are not taken seriously. There are often delays in care. “There really is negligence of care for all women,” said Naomi Blount, who served 37 years at Muncy before being released in October 2019. Blount is now a commutations specialist at the office of Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman.

When a woman at Muncy has any health issue and needs medication or medical attention, she is required to put in what the prison system calls a “sick call.” A sick call can be used for minor ailments such as headaches to more serious issues such pain or high fevers.

However, Blount, now 69 years of age, feels that many of these sick calls are not taken seriously by prison staff.

“I think we kind of messed it up a bit as well,” Blount said. “When someone didn’t want to go to school or work, they’d put in a sick call. They were skeptical about giving treatment because they thought we were all liars.”

Each sick call has a co-pay of \$5. Medications also have a \$5 copay. Blount said years ago, the prison didn’t charge for sick calls but that changed. “You can literally come from sick call having a bill of \$40 to \$45.”

Most women working in the prison only make \$.19 per hour. Many have trouble paying for sick calls and medications.

Several women at Muncy wrote to NorthcentralPa.com detailing concerns about their health needs not being addressed when they put in a sick call. Sick calls must be put in by 8 a.m. and the soonest a woman will be seen is the next day. However, several women said they usually wait at least two days to be seen and sometimes longer.

“I just had foot surgery, after a five-year battle with the revolving door of medical directors,” wrote Terri Harper, 51, who has been serving a life sentence since January 1993.

“I fell through cracks that exist because of CCS’s inability to embrace ‘continuity’ with the care they barely give. It truly comes as a money thing. Because we get charged \$5,\$5,\$5, get the same ineffective pills for everything, the same ineffective eyedrops no matter how many times you tell the practitioner that your eyes are still stuck together and itchy every morning, over any reasonable period of time, and constantly get reminded that ‘it’s the same way in the real world,’ Harper wrote.

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Officials at SCI-Muncy said sick calls are prioritized in order of medical importance. If a woman puts a sick call in for a medication refill that is due within seven days, she may not be seen right away.

“Sick calls are triaged in order of medical importance and seen next day,” officials said in a written request for answers. Officials said if a woman needs a medication refill within seven days, she may not be seen the next day. “SCI-Muncy does have medical coverage seven days per week and after normal business hours. A nurse is available 24/7 if an emergency arises,” officials said.

Jessie Alexander, 67, has chronic pulmonary obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and recently left SCI-Muncy on compassionate release. She said it often took at least two days for medical staff to see her after she put in a sick call for her COPD issues.

There were often delays in her receiving breathing treatments. Alexander was diagnosed with COPD in 2012, and she estimates she went to the hospital emergency department at least 40 times since then.

“I was in ICU at least five or six times,” Alexander said. “The last time, I was on a ventilator. One time I was considered DOA (dead on arrival).”

When Alexander returned from the hospital, she would stay a few days in the hospital infirmary where they kept up her breathing treatments. “But when I was back in general population, I was on my own again. Many times, I needed oxygen while in prison, but I stopped asking because I knew I wouldn’t get it. It was very scary because there were many times I thought I was going to die,” Alexander said.

Alexander, who served 35 years at SCI-Muncy, is now living in a hospice facility in her hometown of Philadelphia. Her family applied for compassionate release earlier this year.

“It means that with my diagnosis, I am within six months of dying,” Alexander said.

Alexander, who wears oxygen all the time, is receiving regular breathing treatments and round-the-clock care at the facility. “I’m doing better. I get my breathing treatments on time, I’m getting rest and I’m getting better. I still have my bad days and good days, but my good days are better.”

Continuity of care

Continuity of care is an issue, Melchiondo said. There is often turnover of staff at the prison’s infirmary. Women are sometimes referred out to Geisinger or UPMC Susquehanna for further care, but communication between the prison medical staff and outside medical is not always there, she said.

The officials at SCI-Muncy said the turnover in the medical department is “similar to what is occurring in the community. Lycoming County and the surrounding counties include several

hospitals as well as many additional venues for medical professionals to work where tuition reimbursement and sign-on bonuses are offered. A correctional setting is often seen as a negative environment in which it is difficult to recruit medical professionals.”

Blount feels obtaining adequate healthcare is especially tough for those serving life sentences. “I believe that when they know that we are serving life sentences, we are overlooked.”

Nicole Newell, another woman serving a life sentence, said she is hesitant to seek care. “I just learned that if I have cancer I won’t be told until Stage IV due to me being a lifer. I’ve been here at Muncy since 1997. I came to Muncy at the age of 20. I got lock (sic) up at the age of 18. I’m now 43 and scared. I’ve witnessed (sic) some lifers go through so much pain due to the lack of medical care, later dying from cancer,” Newell wrote. She recently started a grievance process regarding what she believes was a misdiagnosis of lupus.

Filing a grievance

The grievance process involves three levels to file, according to Su Ming Yeh, Interim Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project.

The woman must first file a grievance to a grievance coordinator, then appeal to the superintendent and the third level goes to a central office in Mechanicsburg.

If all three levels are denied, then an agency such as Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project may take on the case for a lawsuit in federal court, according to Yeh. She said they receive a large number of requests to take on cases, but due to limited staff cannot take them all.

“Even if we can’t take a case on in court, we try to provide legal help,” Yeh said.

Cancer rates are high

“It’s not a coincidence that women at Muncy get cancer,” Blount said. She worked a maintenance job when she was at Muncy and said she knows the older buildings, some which have been there since the 1920s, have asbestos and lead paint. “Of course, they’re just infested with lead in the pipes and asbestos.”

Blount said one time she was doing maintenance in the chapel and was told by a staff member that the old tiles needed to be lifted out but could not be removed due to the asbestos. Blount claims she and other workers in the prison were often not provided the correct protective gear when they were working with hazardous materials.

She also recounted a time in the 1990s that the water was so bad that inmates were given bottled water. “The blonde women’s hair would turn green in the shower,” Blount said. “So, who’s to say how long we were drinking that water that was bad.”

Several inmates who wrote to NorthcentralPa.com mentioned there are still concerns about the water today.

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“Many of my sisters at Muncy have been diagnosed with cancer,” Blount said. She named some of the women who died from cancer over the years – Joanne Butler, who got compassionate leave and died a short time later. There also was Theresa Battles, who was home for two months before succumbing to her cancer.

The high rates of cancer at Muncy has made Blount less inclined to visit a doctor. “Even today, I don’t want to go to the doctor because I don’t want them to tell me I have cancer,” Blount said.

Inmates have wondered if the higher rates of cancer are due to the buildings being old. Or maybe it’s in the water or the pipes. Some of these women have served more than 40 years there, Blount said.

More from this section

Officials at SCI-Muncy have said that the buildings are tested frequently. In the case that a material containing asbestos needs removed, the prison has asbestos abatement teams come in.

Some of the buildings at Muncy have been there since the complex first opened in 1913 as the Industrial Home for Women. The complex, situated in a rural area 18 miles east of Williamsport, Pa., became part of the Bureau of Corrections as the State Institute in 1953.

At one time, the 793-acre complex in Lycoming County was a fully functional farm. The grounds of SCI-Muncy currently houses 76 buildings. As of late February, there were close to 1,400 inmates at Muncy, according SCI-Muncy officials. 143 were serving life sentences.

“SCI-Muncy inmates have experienced several types of cancer including metastatic squamous cell carcinoma, hepatocellular carcinoma, malignant breast cancer, and lung cancer. All cases are closely monitored by medical staff at the prison and cancer treatment specialists. A team of medical staff, including physicians, establish an individual cancer treatment plan,” prison officials said.

Death records for the years 2010 to 2019 obtained through the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Law Project show a total of 17 cancer deaths at SCI-Muncy.

Types of cancer listed in the records range from lung, colon, kidney, endometrial, and anal. There are no statistics available for women who were formerly incarcerated at SCI-Muncy and died of cancer later. Officials at SCI-Muncy said from January 2018 to March 2020, there were 12 inmate cancer-related deaths at the prison.

Officials at SCI-Muncy noted the prison is the diagnostic and classification center for female inmates in Pennsylvania. At the time of admission, women are provided a physical examination. Housing also is provided for sentenced county inmates approved for state housing, when there are significant medical needs that cannot be met at the county level.

“At times, the cancer or other life-threatening diagnosis are determined as part of the initial medical clearance process or during subsequent annual examinations/presenting symptomology,” officials said.

“Unfortunately, female offenders entering the state correctional system have not often had regular medical care while in the community, and the Department of Corrections (DOC) ensures that upon admission a full workup is completed to determine current medical needs and development of a medical treatment plan. When reviewing the DOC percentages of cancer diagnosis with that of the general community, there is no substantial percentage difference noted,” officials said.

High rate of hysterectomies

Many women mentioned a high rate of hysterectomies at SCI-Muncy.

“I never knew so many women in one place would need a hysterectomy or partial hysterectomy,” Blount said. “It was like a common cold around there.”

Danielle Morales, whose mother is serving a 12 ½ to 25-year sentence, said her mother told her that there has been a number of women there who have had hysterectomies. “One woman in her unit had a hysterectomy and was diabetic. She ended up with an abscess and it burst while she was on the unit,” Morales said.

“Generally, it sounds like they don’t look at them as humans,” Morales said.

Blount is skeptical of the need for some of the treatment given at Muncy. She recalled a number of women with large breasts were taken for biopsies. Blount said there once was a doctor at Muncy who told her not to come to the infirmary unless she was really sick because “they treat you like guinea pigs.”

Robbins also had a hysterectomy while at Muncy, according to Melchiondo. Doctors originally thought she had uterine issues, even though it turned out later to be cancer.

Officials at SCI-Muncy said 11 women in 2019 had hysterectomies. “Women are treated by a board-certified OB-GYN in consultation with outside physicians/specialists.”

Inmate stories

There were other stories from Muncy. Blount recalled a 26-year-old inmate who weighed more than 200 pounds. She began to lose weight quickly and started telling people she was sick. She went to the infirmary numerous times, but she kept getting sent back since they believed she was “pretending to be sick,” Blount said.

The woman’s roommate noted she was thirsty all the time. One day when the woman was feeling particularly awful, her roommate told her to lie on the floor in hopes that the staff would see she direly needed medical attention.

The woman laid on the floor and was taken to the infirmary a short time later where it was determined she needed to go to

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Geisinger Medical Center in Danville. Her blood sugar was high and she was diagnosed with diabetes. But it was too late. The woman died in the hospital, Blount said.

Rose Dinkins, age 72, has been at Muncy for 50 years. According to an email Dinkins sent to NorthcentralPa.com, she was put in quarantine in February along with her cellmate who was sick with the flu.

Dinkins did not contract the flu, but she was stuck in a room with a cellmate who was coughing, vomiting, and crying from a splitting headache. “Last night, her fever broke, her bed was soaked, no clean linen was issue, she was forced to lay back on the same ones,” Dinkins wrote. “She was never given any flu medication, only Tylenol when the nurse brought it, there was a day she got nothing at all.”

Mental health treatment

SCI-Muncy also reports a high rate of women being treated for mental health issues. It is estimated between 70 and 80 percent of the women there have received some sort of mental health treatment.

When a woman first arrives at Muncy, she goes through a classification process. At this time, a member of the psychology staff conducts a clinical interview. The woman is screened and then is then assigned a mental health roster based on her current need, officials said.

Women who are assigned to general population are assigned a psychological services specialist (PSS) who meets with them to create individualized recovery plans. The PSS meets with the woman regularly to identify treatment goals. Sometimes the PSS refers the woman to psychological treatment groups, which can include subjects ranging from adjusting to prison to substance abuse treatment.

If a woman needs a higher level of care than can be provided in general population, there are several specialized units at SCI-Muncy which provide more structured psychological programming, officials said. One example is the Residential Treatment Unit which houses inmates with a serious mental illness, many who also have lower intellectual functioning.

“It is recognized that these inmates require more support and prompting to be successful in programming, and as such, there are incentives offered to these individuals when they are able to remain compliant with medications, maintain proper personal hygiene, follow the rules of the unit, and maintain a relatively clean cell.”

Those with more serious mental illness who have chronic disciplinary issues also have a special unit. “These individuals are offered structured psychological and psychiatric programming within a phase level system wherein they can eventually graduate to a less restrictive environment when their security needs permit,” officials said.

SCI-Muncy “takes a holistic approach to mental health,” officials said. There are 30 group sessions offered at Muncy per day. The House of Hope program is one that was developed for women who have experienced domestic violence. Muncy also has developed gender specific programming to address issues. The prison partnered with Marilyn Van Dieten, who has been a registered clinical psychologist for more than 30 years, to develop the programs.

About 80 percent of Muncy’s population are mothers. “Parenting is an important concern of the ladies when they get here,” officials said. Staff discusses the issues with the women when they arrive at Muncy and make sure that the children are being cared for. “If we can ease those concerns, we are better equipped to help.”

One area SCI-Muncy is focusing on is the link between physical and mental health. Women experience cardiovascular issues more often than men, which is most likely due to stress. “Women take care of everyone else before themselves,” officials said. “When women get here, we try to get them to focus on taking care of themselves.”

Harper acknowledged that SCI-Muncy has different units to address various mental health and trauma issues. “They run groups and have incentives and things like that. I think some of them are on the right track, while others are so heavily medicated that they seem off-planet, and that often leads to them being ostracized (sic) and/or made fun of.”

Blount is skeptical of the treatment of women with mental health issues. She recalled one time when a woman lit herself on fire. “She literally greased her body up and set herself on fire. I will never forget that incident,” Blount said.

Prison changes people, according to Blount. When you’re on the inside, you may find yourself doing things differently than you did when you were on the outside.

“A lot of times when people are good people in a bad situation, you end up doing things you wouldn’t do. For example, stealing food from prison or alcohol pads,” Blount said. Many women don’t have the money for medicines and supplies. “It’s not about rehabilitation or bettering your life,” Blount said.

The women at SCI-Muncy mostly look out for each other. Shavonne referred to her fellow women there as “family,” according to her cousin, Sissy.

When she was released in 2017, she did not forget about the women left behind. “When she got home, she would talk about we got to help the others,” Sissy said. “Shavonne was the kind of person if you didn’t have shoes, she’d give you hers.”

Sissy and Shavonne grew up in the same neighborhood and are one year apart. “I think of Shavonne as more of my sister than a cousin.

“She was a wonderful person. Coming home, she still remained the same person. Humble. Family-oriented.”

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Justice “and” Humanity? Not a tough question!

Dear HRC,

Peace and many blessings to you and yours.

Thank you for taking the time to reply to my previous letter. I understand how difficult it can be to respond to every letter -- especially when you're understaffed.

So, in response to your follow-up questions. Yes, I am being isolated and permanently confined in a cell 24/7. Now as far as my gurney is concerned, I have been utilizing my gurney for nearly eleven (11) years now -- since May 18th 2009 which is the day the SCI-Greene officers attacked/assaulted me while I was handcuffed behind my back. I sustained serious injuries to my back, spine, and legs. My injured prevent me from utilizing a wheelchair. I do not have a wheelchair, and I have never used one. I have been using my gurney since that incident occurred. I apologize for not being clearer in my previous letter. So, here's the issue:

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) acknowledges my handicap status and need for my gurney accommodations. However, they are selectively utilizing my gurney transports. For example, whenever I attend any legal proceeding, I traveled via gurney and ambulance, and I'm lying in the courtroom on my gurney. My gurney is also utilized for all medical or dental appointments and outside trips to a hospital. In addition, whenever I receive a legal visit my gurney is utilized. Again, I have never utilized a wheelchair. The DOC knows full well that I cannot use a wheelchair, hence, my gurney accommodation. If I was able to use a wheelchair, then my gurney obviously wouldn't be necessary/required. Nevertheless, despite the ongoing and constant need for my gurney accommodations, they selectively choose utilization by picking when to provide the gurney - as described above. So, although they will transport me via gurney to a legal visit, they refuse to provide the same gurney accommodations/transport so that I could receive a personal visit with my family and friends. So, whenever my family/friends attempt to visit, on their own, the DOC demands that I force myself into a wheelchair -- even though they know I cannot. They will then lie and say that I refused the visit. However, I did not refuse. The issue is that my injuries prevent me from utilizing a wheelchair. They pull this wheelchair stunt as a way to harass, retaliate, and flat out torture me, by keeping me isolated in a cell indefinitely, and denying me access to programs, services, and activities that I have a right to participate in.

Another example of this retaliation and torturous abuse is the fact that they refused to give me a shower or attend the yard/dayroom or any other program, service, and activity - such as church, school, or eating meals in a congregational setting with other prisoners. I haven't had a shower or attended the yard or anything else (as described above) since May 18, 2009. That's crazy, right!?! However, prior to the assault and injury I never missed a shower, and I attended yard/ worked out five times a

week. I was in exceptional shape which is why they plotted the assault and attacked me while I was handcuffed behind my back and defenseless.

So, as far as how I consume meals, I'm forced to eat all meals inside my cell. I'm permanently confined to my bed and I cannot get to the door, so they made a special food cart as an accommodation for my handicap. I'm also house in a handicap cell, so my bunk is on the back wall of the cell. Whenever the officers deliver food, commissary, or mail to my cell, I push the cart toward the door. I have a string attached to the cart, so I can simply pull it to retrieve whatever is placed on the cart.

The injuries to my lumbar/thoracic spine, nerve damage, back and leg injuries prevent me from utilizing the wheelchair. I have MRI reports of my injury. I need surgery on my spine. I was told by the doctors that my condition could be corrected with surgery, and I could possibly be able to walk again. I still have full use of my upper body so I can pull/drag myself. Whenever, I'm placed on my gurney two nurses enter my cell with the board/brace which they place under me, strap me onto the board and then transfer me to the gurney.

As far as the prison trying to help me, no they do not. I'm one of the most hated prisoners due to all of the back and forth fighting. I also filed several lawsuits, due to this retaliation and torturous abuses that I've been forced to endure. I currently have three pending lawsuits in Federal District courts (Eastern and Western Districts). I filed these lawsuits pro se. I am hoping to reach a universal settlement which would resolve all three lawsuits so that I can finally receive my surgery, and be compensated, and made whole again. Unfortunately, I do not have a lawyer to help me to negotiate a settlement. This retaliation, torture, abuse, and discrimination violates the Constitution and the ADA.

I do have several family members -- my mom, sisters, and girlfriend -- willing to help and assist. But they do not understand the law, or what to do, or who to contact. Perhaps, you can contact them to help/assist?

Hopefully, I answered all of your questions. Should you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thanks again for everything that you do on my behalf. Please take care and I'll try to do the same.

Peace. Be blessed,

Samuel B Randolph, IV

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THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

FOR THE “MOVEMENT”

By Abdul Hakim ‘Ali (Reconstruction Inc./FFL)

July 18th, 2020

Greetings to all the Real Soldiers:

I am Hakim ‘Ali, there are a lot of you reading this article from me, that know me and some of you profess “to know me” but you really don’t. The ones of you who “do” know me, understand why I am so disappointed and hurt by what is happening in our communities, neighborhood and City. We are suffering from a combination of COVID-19 and a LOSS OF MENTALITY by the people in our communities that believe EVERYTHING CAN BE RESOLVED WITH A GUN.

There have been more killings, shootings and just plain “disregard” for life in these past few Months, than I can remember. How in the world did this happen? Did some strange disease just take over our minds and hearts, that we don’t care about our neighbor any longer. Did we get invaded by some foreign nation/alien nation? JUST WHAT THE HECK HAPPENED?

So, I ask again, do you really know me? If you did then you understand that I am not going to just pose these questions, NO, I intend to GET ANSWERS. If you know me, then you know that I have a few friends, a few comrades and some REAL SOLDIERS that are just waiting for the call from me. If you know me, then you know that I don’t allow “labels” to prevent me from assembling all the people I know to combat this “disease” that has taken over our minds. I will call on the young, the old, the man, the woman, the child, the white man & woman, the latino man & woman, the police officers, the police commissioner, the mayor, the governor and the president-yeah-even trump.

We are living through a really difficult period. EVERYBODY has been affected by this COVID-19, and as a result people have responded to this crisis in many different manners. I believe that this spike in shootings and killings are directly connected to this virus. However, I don’t think the virus “itself” is creating this, but it has been THE REACTION OF THE VARIOUS AUTHORITIES, THE CITY GOVERNMENTS, THE STATE GOVERNMENTS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT that has let us down, and the people are frustrated. There are so many conflicting reasons being given as the “WHY” we are in this condition. You are witnessing the most egregious amount of errors and examples of “lack of unity” than I have ever seen in all my years on earth...I’ve been here for a while... LOL

When people are dying, getting terribly ill, hungry and tired, you find these “leaders” arguing over “who is right & who is wrong” as oppose to just HELPING THE PEOPLE; JUST

STOPPING THE PEOPLE FROM ENDURING NEEDLESS PAIN AND SUFFERING.

“This” is why I’m so disappointed and hurt. However, I/We must not let the pain, the suffering, the hurt or disappointment STOP us from doing what needs to be done.

We have options, you know! We can be sure to treat others as we would want to be treated, that means taking care of our neighborhood. That also means contacting the city authorities who can make things happen. That also means reaching out to your congressman/congresswoman. That also means VOTING on election days. Yeah, I know, not many of you believe that voting does anything for us. The “US” are black folks, poor white folks and any other disenfranchised person. But I’m here to tell you that you’re wrong on that front. You just have to be strategic on “voting”. Pick your battles, get someone in office who can actually “HELP YOU & DO SOMETHING ABOUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU, AND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD”. Do you really think Donald Trump is coming to North Philly and help clean up our streets? Come ON!!! No, but that congressman/woman whose office is right down the street will come out. They will help you establish clean street days, and check on children centers and traffic lights and dark bridges and trash collections, and all the other things that affect a neighborhood. WHY? because they LIVE in the same neighborhood. So, while I would love to have a more liberal person in the white house, I really need to focus on MY HOUSE, MY NEIGHBORHOOD, MY COMMUNITY & MY PEOPLE.

I know this can be done, and if you really know me, you know I will do everything in my power to make this happen. I won’t stop as long as there’s life in my body...

*“it ain’t over till it’s over, not while there’s life in your body
It ain’t over till it’s over, you gotta stand up & fight if you want
to be free*

*You gotta be strong if you want to help me
You gotta last past the third degree
And remember.....*

So, I want to close these few words to you with this last thought:

What if everybody you know “in your own family” was to come together and visit a congressman/woman or cast a vote for a specific individual? What do you think the outcome of that would be? Just think about it, okay? And Think about me, and the fact that you still might not realize that the ME . . . IS . . . REALLY . . . YOU!!!

Submitted by,

Abdul Hakim ‘Ali

Soldier for life & The voice of the voiceless

What's The News!

District Attorney Krasner Statement on Ruling Granting New Trial to Andrew Swainson, Wrongfully Convicted of Murder in 1989

CONTACT: Jane Roh, District Attorney's Office, Jane.Roh@phila.gov



Andrew Swainson was released after 31 years in prison on a murder conviction that was vacated in June. (Courtesy of Morgan Lewis)

PHILADELPHIA (June 12, 2020) — District Attorney Larry Krasner on Friday issued the following statement on **Common Pleas Judge Shelley Robins New's** ruling in agreement with the defense and District Attorney's Office (DAO) **Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU)** that **Andrew Swainson** was wrongly convicted and his rights were violated during the investigation and prosecution that led to his conviction for murder in 1989:

"For the criminal justice system to be truly fair, accountable, and effective, it must have the ability to learn and grow from

errors of the past. **For the second time in a week, the Court of Common Pleas,** after having reviewed information law enforcement has had for decades — yet never disclosed to the defense until recently and never heard by the jury who convicted Mr. Swainson — moved to correct the egregious errors committed by police and prosecutors by granting Mr. Swainson a new trial.

"In the 1980s and early 1990s, Philadelphia and cities across the country grappled with increases in homicides that shocked and frightened many Americans. And it appears, in at least some instances, law enforcement and the criminal justice system sought to alleviate those fears by locking up masses of people — largely from Black communities and communities of color — regardless of the Constitution, the law, or the facts. For instance, despite inadequate resources, somehow the Philadelphia Police homicide clearance rate at that time ranged from 83% to 96% — a rate 20% to 30% higher than the national average. Today's ruling, which is the 14th murder conviction to be overturned following an investigation by my Conviction Integrity Unit, suggests this very high clearance rate came at a great cost to people's lives, to our communities, and to justice.

"During today's hearing, my office apologized to Mr. Swainson, to the Commonwealth, and to **Antonia Opher**, the sister of **Stanley Opher**, who was shot and killed on **January 17, 1988**. The actions of the Philadelphia Police and prosecutors that led to the wrongful conviction of Mr. Swainson not only cost him more than three decades of his life, it also robbed Stanley Opher's family and those who mourn him of the closure they once believed the criminal justice system had brought them.

"I want to thank **Assistant District Attorney Andrew Wellbrock** and **CIU Supervisor Patricia Cummings** for taking great care to support Antonia Opher — who joined us in the office today for this hearing — throughout this incredibly painful process.

"Investigations and prosecutions that lack integrity carry a heavy cost — to both individuals and the community at large. In addition to the obvious loss of individual freedom, victims are often re-victimized, the correct perpetrator of the crime is left free to commit other crimes, and faith in the criminal legal system is diminished. As Philadelphia again grapples with a tragic increase in homicides, my office is committed to pursuing justice on behalf of the Commonwealth with fairness, without prejudice, and always guided by facts, evidence, and the law."

The DAO will file a nolle prosequi motion due to the lack of evidence to prosecute Swainson in a re-trial. Pending that action, Judge Robins New granted bail and Mr. Swainson is expected to be released later today.

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The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office is the largest prosecutor's office in Pennsylvania, and one of the largest in the nation. It serves the more than 1.5 million citizens of the City and County of Philadelphia, employing 600 lawyers, detectives, and support staff. The District Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecution of approximately 40,000 criminal cases annually.

Written by

Philadelphia DAO

The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office is committed to seeking fair and equal justice for 1.5 million residents, while upholding Constitutional rights.

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THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

What's The News!

Like Leaving a Funeral: Exoneree Feels Pain and Hope After \$6.25M Settlement

For 21 years, Terrance Lewis spent his life behind bars, incarcerated for a murder didn't commit

By Rudy Chinchilla Published July 1, 2020 Updated on July 2, 2020

For Terrance Lewis, the last year has been "breathtaking," yet part of him still feels like he's just left a funeral.

"It's similar to after leaving a loved one's funeral and getting into a car. Although that suffering and pain is put behind you, yet still you have that sense of loss that still lingers," Lewis said.

For 21 years, Lewis spent his life behind bars, incarcerated for a murder he didn't commit. But last year, at age 40, he finally walked out of a Chester County prison after a judge ruled that he had been denied due process during his original trial.

On Tuesday, he and the City of Philadelphia, where the murder occurred, reached a \$6.25 million settlement.

"I'm hopeful that this will result in there being less individuals who are wrongfully convicted and more reparation for those who have suffered the terrors of wrongful imprisonment," one of Lewis' lawyers, Kevin Harden, said.

Like other Pennsylvania exonerees, Lewis left prison in a state that offers no money or services for those wrongfully convicted.

"Right now for an exoneree in the state of Pennsylvania, there's nothing, no compensation, no immediate automatic help and assistance financially," he said. "There's no housing. You come from jail and you're straight to the streets, and if you don't have that family support, that friend support, then you're forced to rely on society assisting you with a GoFund me or something of that nature."

Lewis had to rely on crowdfunding campaigns to help him get back on his feet after initially being released, but he's made strides in the year since then.

Right now he works at a homeless shelter, and he's been enjoying the "gift" that is time spent with his family, including his son, who was born a month after Lewis went to prison.

"Just me having the opportunity to really enjoy this time freely with my family and not be behind a prison wall, not behind Plexiglas in a prison visiting room – that alone is breathtaking," Lewis said.

He hopes he can use some of the settlement money to provide a better life for his son and allow him to continue pursuing his education, but Lewis isn't planning to leave the fight for justice.

Instead of harboring anger and resentment toward those who wronged him, Lewis has set up the Terrance Lewis Liberation Foundation, which seeks to help those wrongfully convicted, as well as provide resources for those who have been released and advocate for prison reform.

For those still wrongfully locked up, Lewis has a message: "Don't lose hope. Keep the faith, keep the iron in the fire. Continue to pound on the doors. The doors are now open."

City and Terrance Lewis Announce Settlement of Wrongful Conviction Lawsuit

For immediate release: June 30, 2020

Published by: Law Department, Office of the Mayor

PHILADELPHIA – The City of Philadelphia and Terrance Lewis today announced the settlement of Mr. Lewis's federal wrongful conviction lawsuit against the City. Mr. Lewis will receive \$6.25 million from the City of Philadelphia.

Statement on behalf of exoneree Terrance Lewis by Robert Ross, Esq., and Kevin Harden, Jr., Esq. of Ross Feller Casey LLP:

"After being wrongfully imprisoned for more than 21 years, the City of Philadelphia made a serious effort to compensate Terrance Lewis. Although no amount of money will give Mr. Lewis his life back, this settlement will help Terrance re-

establish connections in his community and continue his work helping others who have been wrongfully convicted and remain imprisoned. We are hopeful that this resolution will serve as a starting point for future reforms and are grateful to conclude this chapter of Mr. Lewis' life."

Statement of Mayor Jim Kenney:

"I know that money alone cannot compensate Mr. Lewis and his family for the 21 years he spent incarcerated. And I know that much more must be done to reform our criminal justice system and to help the families and communities that have been torn apart by instances in which the system didn't work. This work is difficult and takes significant effort and time, but I remain fully committed to it so we can create a more equitable and just city for all Philadelphians."

Statement of City Solicitor Marcel Pratt:

"Mr. Lewis served 21 years of a life sentence before a court lawfully threw out his conviction and ordered his freedom. Mr. Lewis and the City agreed to resolve his pending civil suit without going through more court proceedings, which can be lengthy and difficult. I hope that this settlement helps Mr. Lewis as he plans a better future for himself and his family."



We were honored to have Terrance Lewis visit the DA's Office this week. Terrance was exonerated last month after spending 21 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. Terrance will never get the two decades stolen from him back, but he's resolved to devote himself to the cause of justice for everyone else. He's a living reminder that pursuing justice means righting past wrongs, not just pursuing convictions.

Pic From Facebook

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org

What's The News!

Lawsuit challenges constitutionality of life without parole sentences for second-degree murder

Paula Reed Ward, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
July 8, 2020

Six people serving life without parole sentences in Pennsylvania prisons for felony — or second-degree — murder filed a lawsuit Wednesday against the state Board of Probation and Parole asking that their punishment be declared unconstitutional.

The complaint, filed in the Commonwealth Court, alleges that such a penalty violates the prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment as provided by both the Pennsylvania and U.S. constitutions.

While there are approximately 5,200 people serving life without parole in Pennsylvania, the lawsuit could potentially impact about 1,100 of those who did not actually kill the victim in their case or who did not intend for the victim to die, the complaint said.

The life without parole sentencing scheme, the lawsuit said, “operates to deny these individuals the chance to seek redemption, by being allowed to return home and give back to their communities and families for the past harms they committed, and forces them all to live under the nightmarish specter of dying in prison no matter what they do, no matter decades of exemplary conduct, and without any individualized determination as to whether this harshest of sentences is warranted, or whether the remainder of their sentence can be served under conditions of parole.”

Further, the complaint said, the penalty of life without parole disproportionately impacts minority communities.

Of the 1,100 people in prison for felony murder, the lawsuit said, nearly 70% are Black.

“In the midst of a global pandemic and the eruption of a renewed and massive national movement for racial justice, now is the time for serious and urgent consideration of plaintiffs’ claim,” the lawsuit said.

“Rooted in sacrosanct, cross-cultural values of redemption and liberation, plaintiffs request the right to parole eligibility so that they may be assessed as the individuals they are, possessed of dignity and humanity, and may have an opportunity to live outside of prison walls again.”

The plaintiffs seek to have the court declare Pennsylvania’s statute prohibiting parole for life sentences for second-degree murder unconstitutional; to order the state parole board to develop a plan to review the cases, including the minimum number of years that must be served before parole consideration; and that the board review each individual plaintiff’s case for possible parole.

A spokeswoman for the Board of Parole said they don’t comment on pending litigation.

Kris Henderson, the executive director of Amistad Law Project, said the lawsuit is a step toward reducing Pennsylvania’s prison population, with the hope of redirecting funding there toward communities to make violence less likely.

“It’s our duty to chip away at the behemoth of mass incarceration at every front and push for things that actually keep our community safe, life violence interrupter programs, [programs] for people with mental illness and strong public schools,” they said.

The six named plaintiffs have served anywhere from 23 to 47 years in prison, have been largely misconduct free during their incarceration and have successfully completed many programs and educational courses. They hold jobs in their prisons and serve as mentors to other inmates.

The lead plaintiff, Marie Scott, is 67 years old and has been imprisoned for 47 years. According to the complaint, Scott survived repeated childhood sexual and physical abuse, began using alcohol at age 9 and marijuana at 14. She started using heroin at 16.

Scott was arrested at age 19 after participating as a lookout in a gas station robbery in Philadelphia County. Her co-defendant, a 16-year-old boy, killed the attendant, Michael Kerrigan.

“She did not commit or intend Mr. Kerrigan’s killing, and had no warning or knowledge of her co-defendant’s plan to kill Mr. Kerrigan,” the lawsuit said.

Scott’s co-defendant, Leroy Saxton, was convicted of first-degree murder and ordered to serve life in prison. However, because he was a juvenile at the time of his crime, under the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Miller v. Alabama*, which found that life without parole for juveniles was unconstitutional, Saxton was entitled to a new sentencing hearing.

In 2017, Saxton was resentenced to a prison term of 43 years to life. He has since been paroled.

Under *Miller*, a requirement of the resentencing process is completing an individualized assessment of the defendant. The lawsuit alleges that Pennsylvania law requires individualized sentences for everything except sentences of life without parole — including where the death penalty is in play.

The lawsuit, which refers to life without parole as “death by incarceration,” alleges that the punishment for second-degree murder does not serve any legitimate penological or public safety interest.

The complaint cites research that found that as prisoners age, they are less likely to commit new crimes, and therefore pose minimal risk to the community.

The average age of a person serving life without parole in Pennsylvania is 48, the complaint said, and the average age of that person at the time their crimes were committed was 25.

“Their relative youth at the time of their crime of conviction, the years they have already served, and their aging or elderly condition today — which there is ample evidence to show correlates to low recidivism — mean that hundreds upon hun-

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dreds could be released without risk to public safety, and could go on to provide social, economic and emotional benefits to their communities and families,” the lawsuit said.

Scott, who provided a recorded statement played during a news conference about the lawsuit on Wednesday, said there must be some kind of redemption offered to those who did not kill or intend to kill.

“I’m guilty of my crime, and nothing can punish me more than I’ve punished myself for what I’ve done,” she said. “The more I serve what feels like death by incarceration, the more I wonder, how could such a draconian penalty be handed down to those of us who’ve neither killed anyone nor intended to kill. Clearly, in my mind, there has to be some room for a chance at redemption.”

Robert Saleem Holbrook was sentenced to life without parole for second-degree murder for being a lookout in a drug-related killing. Because he was a juvenile, Holbrook was resentenced and released after serving 27 years in prison. He now serves as the director of community organizing for the Abolitionist Law Center.

Holbrook said mandatory life sentences for felony murder perpetuate harm in communities where gun violence is common, noting that families often are on both sides of the issue.

“There is no wall between victims and offenders in our community,” he said. “Urban areas are bearing the brunt of violence.”

Lorraine Haw, a member of the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration, has been on both sides of the debate. Her son is serving a life without parole sentence, but her brother was killed in a shooting.

“We have a tendency to say the system is broken,” she said. “It was built to be exactly how it is.

“What we need to do is break it.”

The other plaintiffs in the case include:

Reid Evans, 58, and his brother, Wyatt Evans, 57. The two have been incarcerated for 37 years after their conviction in Philadelphia County for an armed robbery in which the victim died hours later of a heart attack.

Marsha Scaggs, 56, who has been in prison for 32 years after her conviction in Lawrence County. Her co-defendant shot and killed a man they suspected of being a police informant on a drug deal.

Normita Jackson, 43, who has been in prison for 23 years after her conviction in Allegheny County. She invited a man into her home for her co-defendant to rob him, and instead he shot and killed the victim.

Tyreem Rivers, 42, who has been in prison for 23 years after his conviction in Philadelphia County. He robbed an elderly woman by grabbing her purse, and she fell as a result. She was hospitalized and died two weeks later from pneumonia.

From: <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/crime-courts/2020/07/08/Pennsylvania-Commonwealth-court-lawsuit-constitution-life-without-parole-sentences-murder-crime-stories/202007070097>

PA Supreme Court Strikes Down Lebanon County Ban on Medical Marijuana for People on Probation

June 18, 2020

HARRISBURG - The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled unanimously today that Lebanon County’s policy banning the use of medical marijuana by people who are on probation and who are registered medical marijuana patients violates state law. The policy was challenged by three county residents who were on probation and who used medical marijuana for debilitat-

ing medical conditions, including epilepsy, nausea, and chronic pain.

In a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, the court ruled that Lebanon County’s policy is “contrary to the immunity accorded by Pennsylvania’s Medical Marijuana Act.”

“This is a major victory for people who rely on medical marijuana to treat their medical conditions,” said Reggie Shuford, executive director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania. “We are grateful that the justices understood the legislature’s clear intent that people who lawfully use this treatment should not be punished for it.”

Melissa Gass, Ashley Bennett, and Andrew Koch filed the lawsuit after they were forced to stop using medical marijuana because they were serving probation terms. Gass uses the treatment for severe epilepsy, which, without medical marijuana, causes her to suffer multiple seizures each day. Bennett registered as a patient with the state Department of Health to treat chronic nausea and post traumatic stress disorder. And Koch found that medical marijuana effectively treated chronic pain he suffers as a result of a motor vehicle accident.

“We fought so hard for this win,” Gass said. “Medical marijuana allows me to be a mom and a grandma. I had to fight for my life and for the lives of others who are helped by medical cannabis. I am incredibly grateful for this outcome.”

“For years, I’ve been living sick every day, and medical marijuana allows me to lead the kind of life I want,” Bennett said. “When probation banned medical marijuana, I was sick, couldn’t get out of bed, and lost 30 pounds. This ruling is exactly what we all hoped for.”

Lebanon County’s policy has been on hold since the state Supreme Court issued a temporary halt to its enforcement in October, in response to the ACLU’s lawsuit. Today’s ruling permanently overturns the policy and applies to every county in the state.

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“Although most county courts have allowed registered patients to use medical marijuana while on probation, there are still some that ban medical marijuana for people on community supervision,” said Sara Rose, senior staff attorney for the ACLU of Pennsylvania. “Any attempt to enforce those policies will be challenged.”

More information about this case, including a copy of today’s ruling, is available at aclupa.org/Gass.

Notorious Louisiana Prosecutor Fired for Misconduct Technicality

By Edward Lyon published in Criminal Legal News June, 2020, page 34

Filed under: Attorney Misconduct. Location: Louisiana.

Jason Brown was a ‘lock ‘em up tight and throw away the key’ type. One of the most disliked prosecutors in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, history, he was a hard-charging and inflexibly tough prosecutor who pushed for maximum punishments. Several of them were recounted by investigative journalist Jon Campbell in *The Appeal*.

Back in 2015, Brown left his Assistant District Attorney (“ADA”) job with 11 other DAs immediately after retired Court of Appeal Judge James Stewart became the parish’s first Black District Attorney (“DA”). Brown was fired.

In March 2020, Calcasieu Parish District Attorney’s Office fired Brown as a prosecutor for his handling of a continuance motion in the Joey Julian murder trial. In addition, the defense in that case accused him of withholding “a mountain” of exculpatory evidence.

In Caddo, Brown worked with death penalty champion Dale Cox, who appeared on

60 Minutes, saying the state should use capital punishment more often.

Among Brown’s many victories was winning a guilty verdict with a life without parole prison sentence for Fate Winslow. A homeless man, Winslow sold a \$20 baggie of marijuana to an undercover cop.

Brown secured a life sentence for Larry John Thompson over “five individually packaged rocks of cocaine” on a possession with intent to distribute rap. Brown prosecuted James Cass for possessing with intent to distribute 1.5 ounces of marijuana. The sentence: 40 years.

Former Caddo Parish Public Defender Ernest Gilliam, III, had Brown’s number saved in his phone as simply “The Devil.”

“There’s never been anyone quite like Jason Brown,” stated Gilliam.

Brown was also part of a joint police-prosecutor squad called the Zombie Response Team. The squad did “search and arrest operations,” sporting custom-embroidered patches and customized vehicle license plates. They disbanded in July 2012 after a state investigation found two of the squad’s ADAs had submitted falsified documents to a military-surplus weapons procurement program.

In 2013, Brown prosecuted a case where a cop forged another cop’s signature to a false DNA report. The objective was to use the report to convince the suspect to confess to a murder. Louisiana’s Second Circuit Court of Appeals addressed this matter in its November 30, 2016, opinion, holding it harmless because it was never entered into evidence at trial.

The Appeal found that Brown associate Rick Raster testified that the former prosecutor owns an art studio in downtown Shreveport. The building was erected in the 1930s and still sports Jim Crow-era signage over restroom doors, labeling them for use by “colored” and “whites only.”

Brown told *The Appeal* that the signs, revealed during renovations, have been covered up.

But Joey Julian’s lawyer Clemons sees this as speaking to Brown’s character. It’s yet another example, he told *The Appeal*, why Brown shouldn’t be “adjudicating someone’s justice—or lack of justice—in the courtroom.”

Supreme Court won't change Florida voting rules for felons

Floridians with prior felony convictions could be a significant voting bloc in a state where election results are often close.

July 16, 2020, 2:51 PM EDT

By Pete Williams

The U.S. Supreme Court declined on Thursday to make it easier for hundreds of thousands of convicted felons in Florida to vote if they haven’t paid all their court fines.

A majority of Florida’s more than three-quarters of a million residents with prior felony convictions who would otherwise be eligible to take part in elections are Black and more likely to vote Democratic, and they could be a significant voting bloc in a state where election results are often close. A 2019 state [law allows convicted felons to vote](#) if they have completed all the terms of their sentences, including [jail time, parole and fines](#).

But a coalition of civil rights groups said most of them likely could not afford to pay off the remainder of their fines, and what’s more, the state is unable to tell them what they owe. The ex-convicts would risk prosecution if they claim they are eligible to vote but actually aren’t, and yet they have no way of knowing their voting status because the state can’t tell them whether they owe fines or what the amounts are, the groups said.

“The state has not yet determined for even a single voter whether they must pay to vote and, if so, how much,” said Paul Smith of the Campaign Legal Center in

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Washington. Requiring a payment in order to vote amounts to an unconstitutional poll tax, he said.

A federal appeals court at first upheld a lower court ruling in favor of the challengers, but then reversed itself and ruled for the state in requiring convicted felons to pay off all fines in order to vote. The challengers urged the Supreme Court to put the lower court ruling back in effect.

But by a 6-3 vote, the high court declined to do so. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, joined in her dissent by Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Elena Kagan, said Thursday's action "prevents thousands of otherwise eligible voters from participating in Florida's primary election simply because they are poor. And it allows the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit to disrupt Florida's election process just days before the July 20 voter-registration deadline for the August primary."

Florida urged the Supreme Court to leave the rule in place. Because felons have no fundamental right to vote, the state said, it can require them to complete the terms of their sentences "even if the felon cannot afford to pay the financial term of his sentence." Ruling otherwise, the state said, would cause other Floridians "to fear that their votes will be debased or diluted by the votes of hundreds of thousands of persons who are ineligible to vote."

FROM: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/supreme-court-won-t-change-florida-voting-rules-felons-n1234071>

End of the road for SCI Retreat

By: Kevin Hayes
Jun 26, 2020

HUNLOCK TOWNSHIP, LUZERNE COUNTY (WBRE/WYOU) It's the end of the road for SCI Retreat. Final rides for most over this bridge off Route 11. A community can hold

their heads high having persevered in the fight to save this place.

"I've seen people determined to move forward. They were accepting although it's been a long process for this staff," said Robert Smith, Superintendent, SCI Retreat.

Those working the prison, on edge since 2017 — when SCI Retreat joined Frackville and Waymart on the chopping block of potential closures.

"Any community that a 60 or 70 million dollar business with 400 employees moves out of? There's an impact. But the question I think we really need to ask is there a dispaired impact?" said John Wetzel, Pennsylvania Secretary of Corrections.

Elected officials beginning the fight to try and save community jobs, tax dollars and livelihoods.

"We believe it should be vetted publicly, that the decision should not be made in secret," said Sen. Lisa Baker, (R) 20th District.

"They're talking about cost savings. I don't think we've seen any results of cost savings in this meeting and it's what the governor is actually pushing for," said Rep. Aaron Kaufer, (R) 120th District.

Years later, Newport Township forced to step to the plate again and again. Act 133 passed in 2019 required public comment and decision making in the closure process. It gained unexpected momentum thanks to a hot mic.

"I wish I didn't have to close this (expletive). It is what it is," said John Wetzel, Pennsylvania Secretary of Corrections.

Sparking outrage and a last ditch effort.

"This is very personal. This is about their families. Ripping their families apart, taking jobs out of our communities and making our community less safe. That's what I'm hearing tonight," said Sen. John Yudichak, (I) 14th District.

The axe, shortly thereafter, coming down.

"We're dismayed by this. This is going to have an extremely negative impact on our economy here as well as families and schools," said Rep. Tara Toohil, (R) 116th District.

An ironic reprieve with the COVID-19 pandemic seeing the facility reborn as a reception for new and parole offenders. That ended with the last inmate leaving Friday and heartfelt good-byes as staff relocates.

"The emotional level among the staff was high because they'll be moving on after today but

they were focused until the last inmates left," said Robert Smith, Superintendent, SCI Retreat.

A small maintenance staff will continue work here at SCI Retreat as the state and doc are keeping the facility viable for emergency reactivation. But many forced to move on, end of watch? Saturday at zero-six-hundred.

FROM: <https://www.pahomepage.com/top-stories/end-of-the-road-for-sci-retreat/>

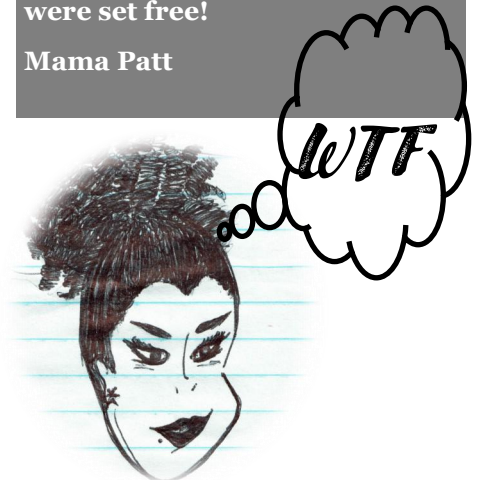
From the Editor -

The fact that you have a 70 million dollar business/industry built and operating on the backs and lives of human beings and a community (homes, schools, libraries, recreation centers, shopping centers, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, McDonalds, fire station, police department) that is also flourishing on the backs of human beings is atrocious. And to actually complain that this prison is closing, is pathetic.

These people have been imprisoned — over-sentenced, under-represented, victims of the "War on Crime", victims of the "War on Drugs", found guilty before they ever set one foot in front of a judge, NOT rehabilitated — all for your benefit, so that you could have a job and community.

Slave owners (who fought hard to keep slaves as slaves) had the same reaction when slaves were set free!

Mama Patt



The Babylon System -

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

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

WE CHARGE PA COURTS, PADOCA & PA PAROLE BOARD WITH RACISM & MURDER AGAINST BLACK LIVES

By: Shakaboona, © 2020

Before we proceed, let's first get the meaning of Racism correct. When we're discussing racism, we're discussing Caucasian's fanatical xenophobic idea of race based on white skin being superior and dark skin being inferior, a system of white supremacy where Caucasians collectively upholds the racial status quo, and a Caucasian culture that expresses itself in terms of building Whiteness and destroying Blackness. Racism is White Supremacy -- a Caucasian mindset, culture, and system of white people's dominance and rule over all non-white peoples. Racism is Anti-Blackness.

This Anti-Black racism has its full expression in the government institution of policing in America, that spawned from America's "Slave Patrols" during this country's unflattering history of enslaving African people as chattel property. This is not about "individual" racism, it's about racism as a "system" of government institutions and as a "lived reality" for African Americans under that system of racism. So just like the police murder of George Floyd was not only about an individual racist murderous cop but rather about the institutional racism of Police Departments that fosters racism and cultivate cops to carry out racial oppression against Black and Brown communities and about the everyday lived reality of Black people in the U.S. (and the World) under the government's institutional racism. Likewise, the D.A. Offices, Courts, Dept. of Corrections, and the Parole Board are institutionally racist government agencies that operates as purveyors of racism, legalized high tech lynchings, state violence, murder, & destabilization against Black and Brown people and communities in PA.

The Police, Prosecutors, Courts, Prisons, and Parole Boards, which make up the so-called Criminal Justice system, has a sordid history of both overt and covert racism against African Americans. The police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor has simply placed the U.S. government's institutional and structural racism against Black

people back on center stage and underneath the national and international spotlight. So, what does that spotlight expose when placed on Pennsylvania's D.A. Offices, Courts, Dept. of Corrections, and Parole Board?

The Department of Justice has investigated dozens of major Police Departments throughout the country for civil rights violations against African Americans in cities like Philly, New Orleans, and Chicago, and have found ALL practiced a system of institutional racism and the Police Departments agreed to implement remedial measures. The Police Departments are routinely exposed for having unleashed hell on the communities of Black and Latinx people - consisting of abuse, terror, drug dealing, extortion, prostitution, criminal frame ups, and murder. Why? Because police forces have their origins in slavery and racism, and in similar vein to America's culture of racism and racist beliefs, Black Lives *Never* Mattered to them. The mission of the police is to protect the 1% wealthy and social control the 99% rest of us through race, class, religion, and state violence by their right-wing militarized occupying police forces in America.

D.A. Offices' institutional racism is daily perpetrated against Black people with racially unjust and oppressive policies and practices that causes collective harm to Black communities, like the mass certification of Black children as adult offenders, disproportionately seeking the Death Penalty and DBI (LWOP) sentences against Black people, overcharging of criminal offenses against Black people, and a laundry list of other racial discriminatory policies and practices against Black people.

Philly and Pittsburgh Court system's institutional racism operates by systematically mass incarcerating Black children through the certification-as-adult offender process under the Juvenile Act law, by sentencing Black children to serve long prison terms as adult offenders in adult prison, and by disproportionately sentencing Black men, women, and juveniles to the Death Penalty, LWOP, and *extremely long prison terms* more than any nation in the world. In a recently released report of the First Judicial District - from a year ago - that it attempted to hide away, Philadelphia's Court system actually acknowledged its institutional racism against Black people, as reported in the July 10 issue of The Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper.

The PA Dept. of Corrections is rotten to the core with racism. For instance, from 1994-2001, top Officials at PADOCA

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Headquarters in Harrisburg, PA "ordered" prison officials and guards at the then newly opened SCI-Greene super-max prison in Greene County, PA, to abuse, torture, and terrorize Black and Latino incarcerated men just because of the color of their black skin. At SCI-Greene (and nearly ALL other SCIs within the PADOC), 99% of the prison staff were/are Caucasian males and females, there were four African American prison guards at SCI-Greene, and 2 of the 4 Black prison staff were complicit actors in carrying out racial abuse and terror against incarcerated Black and Latino men.

During that period, Black and Latino prisoners were routinely brutally beaten, abused, and tortured while in solitary confinement. One incarcerated man was beaten bloody in his prison cell by racist guards, who then wrote KKK on the wall in his blood. Another incarcerated man was viciously beaten and sodomized with a police baton stick by a gang of guards like what the cops did to Abner Louima in New York in the 1990s. Guards also murdered at least two incarcerated men by lynching them in their cells and falsely calling them suicides, though incarcerated men witnessed the murders. Criminal investigations by the State Attorney General Office, Greene County D.A. Office, and a phony PADOC internal investigation ensued, and over 40 prison officials/guards were lightly penalized, and no criminal charges were filed. The matter was swept under the rug by the State Attorney General and local District Attorney, and the PADOC sealed their internal investigation files as "Highly Confidential" to avoid public disclosure of those records from the Right-to-Know Act law. Recall that SCI-Greene was Abu Gharib prison in PA, before there was an U.S. operated Abu Gharib prison during America's war in Iraq.

The PA Parole Board is another thoroughly racist institution whose policies and practices adversely affect Black and Latinx communities throughout PA. Black and Brown people are subjected to racist parole policies that adds more time to what they were legally sentenced to by not crediting their county time to their state time, by forfeiture of street time done on parole while free in society whenever they're returned to prison, by technical parole infraction violations like mega-superstar rapper Meek Mill popping a wheely on a dirt bike in the city, and by unconstitutional parole reviews that disproportionately deny parole to incarcerated Black and Brown people.

The aforementioned examples of Police, D.A. Office, Courts, Prisons, and Parole Board's institutional racism is not exhaustive, and are really just the tip of the iceberg. What is most profound is that those government agencies are not only bastions of institutional racism but the Police, D.A. Office, Courts, Prisons, and Parole Board are connected and interconnected, working together as a super-structure, and bearing down on Black people's lives like

the weight of the earth - Six sextillion tons (a unit followed by 21 ciphers). This interconnection of institutional racism is referred to as "structural racism".

Therefore, if anyone want to talk about racism, Black-LivesMatter, and ending police murder of Black people or want to challenge government's racism, violence, and oppression against poor Black and Brown peoples, then people should begin with challenging the institutional and structural racism of the Criminal Justice system. Since historically the Criminal Justice system has been and continue to be the bane of African American people, as it IS the primary governmental instrument used as a weapon to perpetually keep Black people in their social place in the racial hierarchal structure of white supremacy by criminalizing Black bodies and nearly every aspect of Black life, including criminalizing the constitutional right of freedom to seek racial justice through peaceful protests and by mass incarcerating peaceful Black and Multi-Ethnic Protestors, then it is paramount that people challenge the CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM for its institutional/structural racism, state-sanctioned violence, and human rights abuse violations.

For wasn't it the Criminal Justice system that was used to end the Reconstruction period and re-enslave Black people into penal slavery to rebuild the American south after the Northern Union Whites betrayed freed Black people after the Civil War in the great 1876 Tilden-Hayes Betrayal. Wasn't it the Criminal Justice system that was used to destroy the Black Freedom Movement from 1955-75, that sent many Black civil rights and Black liberation leaders to prison on false charges and whom many still languish in prison today, say their names - Jalil Muntaqim, Russell "Maroon" Shoatz, and Sundiata Acoli. And wasn't it the Criminal Justice system that was unleashed against Black and Brown communities with Nixon/Reagan/Clinton's fake War On Drugs to neutralized African Americans growing political power and social advancement. Now today isn't it the Criminal Justice system that is attempting to crush the mostly peaceful Black/multi-ethnic nationwide protests in response to the police murders of George Floyd/Breonna Taylor and challenging the racial status quo over their pig police's institutional racism?

Just as the racist police murders of Black people in police custody like George Floyd must stop, likewise the racist D.A. practice of charging Black children as adults and mass incarcerating them in adult prisons must stop, the racist courts death penalty and DBI sentences of LWOP against Black peoples must stop, the racist guard murders of incarcerated Black people in prison custody must stop, the racist parole policies fueling mass incarceration of Black people through parole recidivism must stop, and the brutal acts of state violence inflicted against Black people must be condemned and stopped.

(Continued on page 50)

THE MOVEMENT

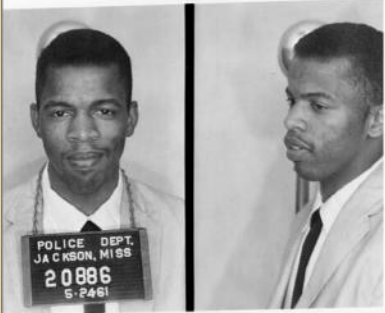
www.hrcoalition.org

(Continued from page 49)

As Abolitionists in the 1800s took their great leap forward and abolished chattel slavery in America, today, let us also take that Great Leap forward with the Human Rights Coalition (HRC) in Philly to hold accountable and forever ABOLISH the racist police, prosecutors, prisons, and Parole Boards in Pennsylvania.

From the Belly of the Beast, at THE MOVEMENT magazine, I am Shakaboona. Thank you.

A country's conscience John Lewis died on July 17th



John Robert Lewis was an American politician and civil-rights leader who served in the United States House of Representatives for Georgia's 5th congressional district from 1987 until his death in 2020. Lewis served as the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee from 1963 to 1966.

The congressman and civil-rights activist was 80 years old.

JOHN LEWIS had a ritual that saw him through the early 1960s. After being released from jail, he would head back to wherever he was staying—usually a local family's house—take a long shower, put on jeans and a fresh shirt, find a little restaurant where he could order a burger and a cold soda, drop a quarter in the jukebox and play Curtis Mayfield or Aretha. He would sit down and, as he wrote in his memoir, "let that music wash over me, just wash right through me. I don't know if I've ever felt anything so sweet."

If it seems like the ritual of a man at the end of a hard day's work, that is because it often was. Civil-rights activists across the south faced arrest, usually on flimsy charges such as disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace. It was all a part of what he called getting into "good trouble" for acting and speaking out against injustice. He never lost that habit. He was arrested for the 45th time in 2013, his 26th year in Congress, at a rally for immigration reform.

FROM: <https://www.economist.com/obituary/2020/07/20/john-lewis-died-on-july-17th>

THE MOVEMENT

www.hrcoalition.org



Portrait by Thomas Schilk, #AS0255, SCI-Phoenix

Las personas transgénero tienen diez veces más probabilidades de ser agredidos sexualmente por sus compañeros reclusos y cinco veces más probabilidades de ser agredidos sexualmente por el personal. Los prisioneros transgénero también enfrentan otros desafíos numerosos tras las rejas, incluso las denegaciones de cuidado médico y las estancias largas en el confinamiento solitario.



¿Cómo ha afectado su sexualidad o su género la manera en que Ud. está tratado en prisión? Comparta su experiencia con nosotros.

Hemos realizado una encuesta para ver cómo se trata a los que se identifican en el espectro LGBTQA durante su sentencia.

ESCRÍBANOS A:

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

Transgender people are ten times as likely to be sexually assaulted by their fellow inmates and five times as likely to be sexually assaulted by staff. Transgender prisoners also face numerous other challenges behind bars, including denials of medical care and lengthy stays in solitary confinement.



HOW HAS YOUR GENDER AND OR SEXUALITY AFFECTED HOW YOU'RE TREATED IN PRISON?

Would you like to give or receive support?

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH US!

WE HAVE CONDUCTED A SURVEY TO SEE HOW THOSE IDENTIFYING IN THE LGBTQA+ SPECTRUM ARE TREATED DURING THEIR SENTENCE. LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN FILLING IT OUT.

WRITE TO US AT:

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

Human Rights Coalition

P.O. Box 34580

Philadelphia, PA 19101



**Stephanie Keene, Sergio Hyland, Marc Lamont Hill, and Justino Griggs
— At SCI-Chester**

Inside Sergio Hyland reports on Organizational Unity

begins on page 20 (SUMMER ISSUE #41)