

Life and Death are one, as the river and sea are one. So, death is no enemy; it is a friend who, when the work of life is done, cuts the cord that binds the human boat to earth so that it can sail on to smoother shores.

No language can describe a loved one's worth, but Bub's was tried and true. He was not called to be with our ancestors until the task he sought was done. When one has completed his mission on this planet, nature demands they move on. It is necessary for those born, and at that very instance, Bub joined the ancestors. Those who love him will follow his example and continue his fight for human rights. I know that this is the pattern for my life. His example and his dedication will be mirrored by my example and told by myself. I will honor Bub by carrying on our struggle and letting his strength be an inspiration to me.

Bub is now one with the creative force. Who can doubt the power of creative force? In the depths of the Earth, it presses coal into diamonds. In the soft belly of the Oyster, it changes a grain of sand into a pearl. In the darkness of the Cocoon, it turns a caterpillar into a butterfly. Death, too, is but one of nature's moments of change. As the snake shakes off its old skin, we too shake off this life to find something new and beautiful. As the winter landscapes hide springtime flowers just beneath the soil and winter trees hide the promise of new leaves, our grief and deathbed agonies hide the promises of nature's eternal love.

Life has taught me to trust in nature's divine plan. The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of light. Wisdom has shown me to be patient with the mysteries that I cannot comprehend. Energy and force is the ground of all being – an awesome and mysterious reality in which all things live and move and have their being, in and out of which all things emerge and into which all things return. Rest in power, our friend – Bub!

"Please free the lost souls of lifers who died in prison due to violence, suicide, or natural causes. Their souls still linger within the prison walls and prison gates. Please do not forget these men who should still have the opportunity for parole or clemency. As we live and breathe ... the imprisonment of the souls of our brothers and sisters continues. Although they no longer live and breathe on the Earth, I do believe that the imprisoned souls deserve a chance for eternal freedom." Bradford Gamble, 2020

Eulogy for Brad Gamble by George Rashaan Brooks-Bey

GRATER FRIENDS

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

Happy Holidays to our dear readers. Allow me first to acknowledge the passing of Mr. Bradford Gamble, a Lifer and long time contributor of Graterfriends. Mr. Gamble has often focused his submissions on the issues surrounding Death by Incarceration, and, in spirit of Mr. Gamble, our November/December issue will feature two articles that serve as a reminder of Death by Incarceration's impact. Reading the tributes to Mr. Gamble and other Lifers has been a humbling reminder of the very small part Graterfriends has played in the Pennsylvania Lifers community.

With the year coming to a close, I want to highlight some of what we've published in 2022. This year opened with a dedication to Russell Maroon Shoatz – and now, it has closed with our final tribute to Bradford Gamble. Our second issue focused on mental health concerns during the COVID-19 era, with a special thanks to Candace Bradshaw and Curtis Jones for their pieces. Our May/June issue raised problems with the exploitative forces in the Department of Corrections; the following issue continued the theme of DOC Concerns, writing of the need for new equipment in facilities statewide. And, most recently, we featured a historical article

in our September/October issue, thanks to Patrick Middleton. Overall, this year has been informative and courageous in its content. I look forward to you all seeing our coming creative issue, which is scheduled to be released soon.

I want to thank the organizations who have taken time out of their busy schedules to contribute helpful knowledge and resources to our readers. Thank you Jill McCorkel and her students with the Philly Justice Project at Villanova University who have helped diversify our newsletter by writing issues specific to women. One of our main goals with Graterfriends this year was to diversify which voices are being published, and including these articles has been a big step in that direction. I want to also especially thank Maria Goellner at FAMM, a Graterfriends superstar. Maria always goes above and beyond in what she is submitting – giving us more information beyond the Legislative Highlights that we have asked of her. She is an irreplaceable part of our team.

Thank you for your continued kind words of support, and I can't wait to see what 2023 brings.

Best Regards,
Noelle Gambale & The Graterfriends Team

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY

Founded in 1787, The Pennsylvania Prison Society is the nation's oldest human rights organization. Our mission for 235 years has been to promote the health, safety, and dignity of people impacted by mass incarceration. In 1828, the Prison Society was granted access to all people in state or county custody in PA – we remain the only non-governmental organization in the United States with our level of statutory access to people in prison. Although some of our specific programs have evolved over time, we remain committed to responding to the needs of incarcerated people and their loved ones. Today, we use that access to monitor prison conditions, assist people in prison with individual issues they raise, build connections to family and community, and educate the public about the largely hidden world of prisons.

WHO ARE WE?

You may write to us at 230 South Broad Street, Suite 605 Philadelphia, PA 19102. You can also have your loved ones call our family support helpline at anytime: 215-564-4775. Our team can assist to answer questions about specific facilities, policies, general issues, and concerns. Our team is small and we are not able to provide legal assistance, but we will do our best to help you get the information and resources you need. Unfortunately, at this time as an organization we are generally not able to use ConnectNetwork to correspond with people confined in SCIs.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE TO YOU?

We will always do our best to assist you. You can write to us to request resources, report conditions at a state or local facility, or request a prison monitor. The Prison Society is not a legal organization and can not provide specific legal advice or representation. However, our correspondence volunteers thoroughly respond to each and every letter we receive with information about other resources and organizations. We can also help you navigate different issues related to education, free books and other creative programs, reentry services, mental health resources, pen pal programs, and more.

We are grateful to the countless people in custody and their families who help promote prison transparency across the Commonwealth. Beyond working to address concerns on an individual and/or facility level, the information you provide drives our vital conversations with Pennsylvania legislators, allied organizations, and the public. As we work to educate others and engage in systemic advocacy, it is vital that this is led by the experiences and opinions of the people closest to the problem- you! Your voices directly informed our current advocacy to end the \$5 medical copay for incarcerated people, as well as our work to remove barriers to family visits.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE PRISON SOCIETY?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SHARE WHAT'S GOING ON IN PRISON?

WHAT IS PRISON MONITORING?

The Prison Society is the only non-governmental organization in the country with a legal right to meet privately with any person incarcerated in their state. Each month, we receive hundreds of reports concerning access to healthcare, abuse, property, conditions of confinement, treatment, and other issues. Our trained volunteer Prison Monitors can meet with anyone incarcerated in Pennsylvania state or county prison to hear their concern in detail and engage in follow-up advocacy.

Out of respect for one's privacy and safety, we will never send a Prison Monitor without an explicit request for a visit from an incarcerated person or their loved one. During a visit, a prison monitor will meet with the person in custody one-on-one to discuss and document their situation. Following the visit, volunteers are empowered to speak with prison administration on their behalf to try to improve the situation. It is important to note that we are not lawyers and cannot assist with legal issues or casework.

For individuals returning to the Philadelphia area, The Prison Society does have a mentoring program available designed to help ease the transition from incarceration back to communities by providing a strong social support network. We hope to expand this to other regions in the state in the future.

WHAT ABOUT REENTRY SERVICES?

Launched in 1981 by Joan Gauker and adopted by The Prison Society in 2002, Graterfriends is a critical outlet for incarcerated people to share their opinions and experiences. We are proud to have built a powerful community with you over these past two decades and encourage you to continue submitting to Graterfriends.

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Original submissions will not be returned. Allegations of misconduct must be documented and statistics should be supported by sources. All submissions should be no more than 500 words, or two double-spaced pages. Letters more than 200 words, or one double-spaced page, will not be published in their entirety and may be shortened for clarity and space. To protect Graterfriends from copyright infringement, please attach a note, on your submission, stating that you are the original author of the work and that you give us permission to edit and print; date and sign the declaration

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE TO YOU?



PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY

IN MEMORIAM

A Salute to Bradford Gamble and Bryant Arroyo

Robert Pezzeca

A Salute to Mr. Bradford Gamble and Bryant Arroyo. For those of you who do not know who these men are, let me tell you. Bradford “Bubs” Gamble was a Lifer who spent decades in prison until he recently passed away from cancer. Bryant Arroyo is the Lifer who fought for his friend’s release so that he could die at home. I didn’t know Bubs, but between the dozens of stories Bryant and George Brooks have told me, I feel like I knew him.

Bryant put his heart into fighting for Bub’s freedom so that he could live the last few months of his life at home. Bubs went home, and his mission was to fight for Lifers still on the inside. He didn’t go do his own thing; he stayed involved upon being pushed out the front door. He held his own event called “Bubs Fish Fry,” in order to raise money for CADBI (The Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration). He was in constant contact with Bryant and George Brooks. These 3 men spent many hours at a table in the dayroom fighting for freedom. Thanks to the fight that Bryant has in him, Bubs was freed and able to die at home with his loved ones. So many lifers die alone in a horrible room in the prison’s medical department.

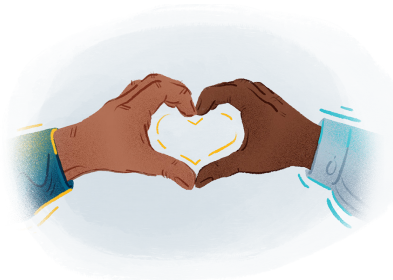
Bubs, though I never met you, as a Lifer, you are my brother. Riposa in Pace (rest in peace).

He is finally freed of this nightmare of a life sentence. We lost a valued soldier in this fight for freedom, but now the rest of us must pick up where he left off.

I also need to relay information to ALL Prisoners. There is a doctor named Zane Kaleem. He is a part of an organization that is speaking up for prisoners and asking that the \$5 medical co-pay be eliminated. He wishes to use our words in the fight to end medical co-pays. I wrote to him and told him things such as, if a prisoner who has little money goes to medical, there’s a chance that their cable could be shut off for not having the funds or he could go hungry because let’s face it, we are paid slave wages.

On a final note, I hear a lot of bickering between Lifers: “I’m better than you,” “I’m more intelligent than you,” and, “I’m a better speaker than you,” etc. I hear this everywhere I go, and now I hear it here in Coal Township. The Lifers committee in the HFC at SCI Forest were an exceptional group of men who worked extremely well together. It was an honor to be a part of that committee under the leadership of Anthony “Manny Strong” Harrell and Gerald “Big G” Simmons. And the organization was guided by leader Rob Dickey. I thank the men for all of the positive events we were able to host together, and I thank Rob Dickey and Manny Strong for allowing me to freestyle and put things together in my vision. You men did a phenomenal job, and I hope you will continue to be leaders in this movement.

I shall end this with this, a quote by FDR: “People acting together as a group can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring about.” Let that sink in. Look at the Lifers in PA now. We are so much more than just a group. We are a diverse army of people ever assembled for a single goal: Second Chances for All. We are every race; we are every color; we are every ethnicity; we are every religion. This is our STRENGTH. All human beings, stand with us. We will not succeed until we all work together as a team, unit, army, all fighting for the same goal. We are all human beings worthy of redemption. We are all equal. I stand with you; will you stand with me?



The DOC's New IMU Unit: What We Know

Noah Barth, Prison Monitoring Director

As many of you know, in January of this year, the DOC announced a new "Intensive Management Unit" (IMU) at SCIs Greene, Camp Hill, and Phoenix. This was to be a new six stage, three year "therapeutic unit" to step down from the "Restricted Release List" (RRL). The new unit policies took effect in May of this year, and we immediately heard concerns from many of you. A number of these were related to a hunger strike at SCI Greene that involved 20+ men in the IMU there.

We received calls and letters stating that the new IMU policies and expectations started without communication of when they would start or how they would be enforced. People reported that privileges were revoked upon being moved into the IMU, lights were kept on 24 hours a day in IMU cells, and excessive copays were billed for hunger strikers (one man told our Prison Monitor that he was being charged \$267 for nurse visits he did not request). We also heard about excessive handcuffing, strip searches, and rough handling by IMU staff.

Our Prison Monitors met multiple times with men in the IMUs at all three prisons to hear their concerns and to follow-up with prison administration, while staff addressed critical issues with DOC's central office.

We can appreciate that there will always be some level of miscommunication and/or misunderstanding when rolling out a new program. We are pleased that a number of the issues have been addressed, and we have received positive feedback about the changes from some of the men in the IMU.

That being said, the issues being reported are very serious so we plan to keep a close eye on the IMU and how it develops. This issue and the previous one contained several submissions from

Graterfriends contributors about the IMU. We feel it is important for you to hear directly from the men in these units and not just from a Prison Society staff person. If you are in the IMU and have concerns with conditions or treatment, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. The information you provide us directly informs our actions with corrections leadership and other stakeholders.

Stay safe,
Noah Barth
Pennsylvania Prison Society

Featured Book Review

John Hargreaves, Volunteer Director

This novel, *Didn't Nobody Give a Shit What Happened to Carlotta*, by Brooklyn writer James Hannaham gives us a brief slice of life of a Trans woman's prison experience and her release and transition back to New York City. The author spent twenty years in a men's prison, during which time they transitioned from Dustin Chambers into Carlotta Mercedes.

We know that life in prison is remarkably tough for trans people, and Carlotta's time illustrates this. Her life is characterized by violence, sexual assaults, and long stretches in solitary. Eventually granted parole, she compares the challenges of "reentry" to that of a rocket ship reentering the atmosphere. She meets her parole officer, Lou, who lays out the conditions of parole which include the ridiculous stipulation that she can not consume or be in the presence of alcoholic beverages because she was convicted of robbing a liquor store.

This is the story of someone locked up half their life, about family and acceptance. It depicts a justice system that is immoral and the treatment of poor, Black and Trans people as indefensible. Carlotta tells her own truth in an angry and joyful way as a marginalized person.

IN THE WAKE OF DOBBS: REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE IN PRISON & JAILS

Featured Article

Jill McCorkel, Ph.D. of Villanova University and Philadelphia Justice Project for Women and Girls

Terra K. was nineteen years old when she gave birth in her prison cell by herself. No doctor. No nurse. No epidural. It was Terra's story that motivated Rachel Roth, a political scientist, to investigate incarcerated women's access to reproductive healthcare in American jails and prisons. It did not take long for her to discover that these are terrible places for reproductive health and pregnancy care. Terra K. is not the first pregnant woman to encounter inhumane conditions and substandard reproductive healthcare in prison and she will not be the last. Research shows that rates of miscarriage, labor and delivery complications, and infant mortality are much higher among incarcerated mothers than among the general population.

Terra K. was fortunate in that both she and her baby survived an excruciating labor and delivery on the floor of a prison cell. No one—regardless of their legal status or criminal conviction—should have to endure such conditions. Incarcerated mothers-to-be, like all pregnant people, need access to quality healthcare, nutrition, and medical expertise. Instead, Roth documents numerous instances of correctional facilities that failed to provide pregnant women access to vitamins, routine checkups, and ultrasounds. Incarcerated pregnant women reported to Roth that they were frequently physically uncomfortable—lacking pillows and chairs—and were unable to consume adequate amounts of food to stave off hunger pangs. Concern over fetal health became a significant stressor—adding to the already high stress levels associated with incarceration. Roth argues that jails and prisons need to do better—much better—for incarcerated women who are pregnant.

Roth also interviewed incarcerated women who were forced by jail and prison authorities to carry pregnancies. In some cases, these pregnancies posed significant, even fatal, health risks. In others, women desired to terminate the pregnancy. They were denied—often illegally—access to abortion and related medical services.

With the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, Roth and her peers worry that conditions for incarcerated pregnant women will only worsen. Dr. Carolyn Sufrin, a medical anthropologist and obstetrician-gynecologist, argues that *Dobbs* will erode what little reproductive healthcare currently exists in prisons and jails. In a recent research report, Dr. Sufrin followed 1,396 incarcerated women who were pregnant when they began their sentence. For those she was able to continuously track, 753 resulted in live births, 46 in miscarriage, 11 were terminated by abortions, and four ended in still births. There were three newborn deaths and two ectopic pregnancies. Dr. Sufrin concludes that incarceration often gives rise to and/or worsens pregnancy-related health problems that jails and prisons are ill-equipped to treat.

In the era before *Dobbs*, many prisons and jails did not consistently offer family planning services and reproductive healthcare. Even fewer offered counseling and educational programming related to family planning, menstrual hygiene, and reproductive healthcare. One consequence is that women who wanted or needed an abortion were not aware of their legal right to access abortion services. As a result, higher risk pregnancies—the very ones prisons and jails are ill-equipped to handle—are more frequent among incarcerated women and with far lower odds of positive outcomes for infant and maternal health.

The *Dobbs* decision makes accessing quality healthcare that much more difficult—especially for incarcerated women. *Dobbs* does not just restrict abortion—it restricts reproductive healthcare more broadly. Dr. Sufrin anticipates that the negative impact of *Dobbs* will be greatest in conservative states, particularly among incarcerated women and women on parole given that they cannot travel out of state to seek healthcare services. In Pennsylvania, abortion rights hang in the balance pending the outcome of the 2022 election.

MAIL ROOM

We edit the letters we publish. Originals will not be returned. All letters must be signed for consideration. Names will be withheld from letters only on rare occasions. All allegations of misconduct must be publicly documented before anything will be printed. Any statistics used in letters should be supported by sources

Inflation-Related Commissary Prices

Javier Medina

We as incarcerated citizens must agitate the DOC to increase our individual pay to match rising costs due to global inflation. I suggest we all write Secretary Little and our state representatives and senators to increase our pay. Here is a sample letter to mail Secretary Little:

"I am writing to you to inquire whether it is possible under DOC policy for you to issue a pay raise to all incarcerated citizens here in the Pennsylvania DOC in relation to the rising costs of consumer goods due to world wide inflation.

In the DOC's most recent memo regarding commissary, we were informed of the DOC's new commissary vendor, and price increases due to inflation. As is common knowledge, the prices of consumer goods/services are set by market forces and the private enterprises that govern them. Though inflation is beyond the control of the centralized closed market that exists in the DOC, you, Secretary Little are able to help incarcerated people by increasing the pay given to us as allowed by, DOC Policy, Pennsylvania Statue, and by expressing these issues on our behalf to the legislature of our Commonwealth during the next budgetary sessions.

Not all incarcerated people are able to rely on friends and family for additional funds to support them while they're incarcerated. Many rely fully on the pay that the DOC provides them. These jobs are critical to the function of the institutions around Pennsylvania. Failure to address this issue may cause a rise in violations of DOC policy by desperate individuals. Such as an increase in stealing from DOC work assignments, and borrowing/lending of commissary items. I ask you this, when was the last pay raise in the DOC and how much was given?

My peers and I are quite sure that there are more unforeseen problems that will arise. We wish to address this to you to prevent it further. We

will write to our legislatures, and NGOs across the state for more support and agitation of this issue as meaningful pay for our labor is key to our rehabilitation. I thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. I pray that you may help ease this burden across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania."

Struggles in Dauphin County Prison

Johnnie McCollum

They say an idle mind is the devil's work stop; so what type of work do you think he is capable of when you are in a facility 23 hours in and 1 hour out, with no programs, no religious services, nor the ability to read books of choice (or order them)?

When incarcerated, the primary goal in mind should be the front gate, not only reaching it, but reaching it with something to offer the world. The natural order of operation is opposed to growth and development in this facility. Even if the jail was to open up and 3 hours out of the cell was permitted, it doesn't mean nothing if programs of value and educational outlets aren't provided to the prison. You have people with all sorts of mental problems and chemical dependencies who aren't receiving the proper treatment while here; they are stuck in a cell, waiting anywhere from 8 months to 3 years to see a judge with no structured agenda that could help them evolve while here.

In Dauphin County Prison, you don't have the luxury of reading a newspaper, newsletter, magazine, or any legal information sent in from Prison Legal News, Human Rights Defense Center, etc. You are cut off from one of the most powerful tools that wield intellectual growth: books. We have access to the library on the tablet, but it's very limited and some of the waiting lists are up to 6 months long. I had a vicious battle with administration for about 18 months just so we can have air ventilation

on the housing unit.

We are struggling against a structure that's predicated on profit and less concerned with the well-being of the people in their custody. You have to pretty much fight just to make your time spent here productive, otherwise you will succumb to the devices designed to suck as much money as possible out of you. If they can pose like they are concerned about Prison Reform and still financially exploit us at the same time then they would. Any time you are paying almost \$9.00 for a 10 pack of oatmeal on commissary, something is wrong. The struggles in Dauphin County Prison are small glimpses of our overall struggle for justice, so let's struggle in principled unity.

How Long Must This Go On?

Warner Batty Jr.

How long must this go on: the impact of not being able to meet the cost of living because of the system we are under, refusal to give us a pay increase to complement the rise of inflation in the country?

Here we are experiencing the 13th Amendment: "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." The United States PA prison system is modern day slavery and oppression.

We endure slave wages and the privilege of parole eligibility for most inmates, except for those sentenced to life without parole. Forcing two people to live in a cell together is detrimental to us. So where do our rights as human beings stand? Does our right to humane dignity exist?

It appears we've fallen way short of Justice and Mercy in how we treat one another- how we treat the least of these. The fact is, we hold animals in higher esteem than human beings. A quote I acknowledge: "Where there is animal worship, there is human sacrifice."

It's so wrong to have selective hearing: to not be seen, as if invisible with no value or purpose

in this life.

The problem is; we are somebody. We are better than bad choices, we are better than this prison cell we are forced to live in. (I AM A MAN) without question.

This Commonwealth has thousands of men and women serving life without parole in the Department of Corrections. Our legislators refuse to find common ground, especially as it pertains to Felony Murder, or 2nd Degree Homicide, many of these people have never actually killed anyone. What society believes is: a person innocent of the crime of murder should spend the rest of their life in prison. There are so many things that are a mess with how things are being done in the name of law and order. Myth of Normal- Decay of Morals, Principles, etc. When does it stop? Where does it begin? It appears like it's in the name of lawlessness and disorder.

There is a day of reckoning coming: God's Judgment. What about all the life-sentenced inmates? Do you begrudge them the right to hope for a better future? Or will you insist on denying them hope? Telling them no matter what change or improvement they've made over decades of imprisonment is of no importance. Life without parole is a denial of hope. Once again, especially for those who didn't actually kill anyone?

See us, hear us. It's not right to exclude us from God's love. Most lifers long for a first chance.

The easy thing is to dismiss us all. We all have to give account to God. We all matter to Jesus. When he hung on the Cross, we were all on His mind."We All Were." Men and Women. "We Live."

The Threat is Real

Shawn Younker

Everyone in the White House rested a little easier this week when President Biden received a clean bill of health. His recent brush with Covid left a lot of people nervous, and might have turned tragic if not for those whip-smart professionals at his disposal. Thank heavens for that blessed vaccine.

Today, reports indicate that he is feeling

much better, and will be back on top of his game in short order. No doubt, he will soon be regaling the nation about his terrifying ordeal, and be hoisting one giant middle finger to Putin and the Russian Menace along with the rest of his compatriots in Washington.

But nobody in the state pen was feeling much relief this month after the CDC announced that a new scourge called Monkeypox was on the rise. To men behind the razor wire, this translated: another lockdown. The news implied that prisoners could possibly be overcome with huge and hideous boils, festering lesions, and a virulent contagion that might rip through our institution like some modernized strain of leprosy. Great.

A lot of the men feel that Big House administrators could be getting ahead of this ugliness right now, gathering much-needed meds and whatnot. Prevention would only make sense, of course, and anybody boasting a modicum of foresight would logically hash out potential solutions at the earliest. Unfortunately, nobody in our correctional hierarchy seems to have a clue, much less any inclination. Welcome to the DOC.

Few sane minds would want to envision a state-sanctioned facility populated by horribly disfigured prisoners, desperately infected even, as if our prison system were instead some biological research center. We shudder to think, of course.

While all of that may sound a bit like science fiction, the skeptic would do well to remember that we are still recoiling from a vicious pandemic that decimated a fraction of the country. Besides, we need only scan a few textbooks to revisit the horrors of those who perished in a cage while suffering under the weight of plague and pestilence. In fact, The Middle Ages are rife with such accounts.

For now, however, all eyes look to the in-house medical staff for solace and solutions. What is being done to curb this outbreak, if anything? And will they thwart the blight in time? The smart money is on - probably not.

And if it comes down to those mind-bending extremes well, folks, you can count this guy out. There are some things in this rotten world that even formidable men must fear, and rampant contagions are one of them. When that fateful day comes, I will be seeking out new professions, for obvious reasons, boils and all. Amen.

Small Change in RHU Policy Makes a Big Difference

Michael Rivera

On July 18, 2022, prison officials at SCI Greene finally ended their abusive and unnecessary practice of handcuffing RHU prisoners to a restraint belt during our legal phone calls and legal video conferences. Prior to the change in local policy, we were required to hold a telephone receiver to our ear and attempt to write while handcuffed to a leather waist belt. It was simply unreasonable. Prison officials conceded by changing local policy here at SCI Greene.

Now, we are secured inside non-contact visitor booths and are uncuffed for both legal calls and video conferences. This way, we can hold the phone and write normally. This is a small change that makes a big difference. Even a little difference is still different.

If your RHU Captain requires you to remain handcuffed during your legal calls and video conferences, we must collectively counteract these outdated and unnecessary policies and practices.

Food for thought as I conclude with an ever righteous PEACE!

Don't Sweat It

Anthony Williams

Whether it's incarceration, sickness, or another situation that restrains our lives, these circumstances aren't in total control of us unless we mentally allow them to be so. We often allow life to freeze us into a total mental lockdown, but that's because we have accepted the hold that our circumstances have on us. If you accept this control, you live that reality. You incarcerate your own self, poisoning your mental self. Whatever imposition you are experiencing, you have to mentally reject it. So yes, you can be incarcerated, but your ability to smile isn't locked up. You may be sick, but your words don't have to be sick: say something nice.

Let us not dwell on the imposition, but on what we can still do. Let's do the things we can and not worry about the things that we have limited control over. It will work itself out, or it won't.

Greater than You Know

Darrell Sharpe

The world is watching, and I'm sure you've had your fair share of opportunities to reveal just who you really are. It is my own contention that the boldest thing you can do within your lifetime is reveal your true greatness. My question today: Are You Willing? Whether you realize it or not, opportunities are frozen moments in time. They are rarely embraced and definitely more commonly missed. Don't miss your opportunity to show this world just how great you truly are.

Active engagement in the Criminal Justice System is an all too common mistake for men, women, and children, and certainly one way for you to short-change yourself of being your own witness to the greatness that you produce in this life. I'm not the least bit interested in hearing prisoners sharing ghetto fabulous recounts of shallow moments, of glorified hustling. I want to hear about their greatness instead.

It's a stated fact that the most dangerous weapon at your immediate disposal is not the semi-automatic pistol that sits in a timberland box in the house or in the glove compartment of your car. The most dangerous weapon at your immediate disposal actually rests in a physical cavity on the highest point of your body—your mind. Again, whether you realize it or not, there's a reason your brain is in your head, and your head is at the highest point. The science of our physical anatomy is meant for your benefit. So, while you're spending time in the gym lifting all kinds of weights during rec-time, I'm asking you to spend equal time working out the greatest and strongest muscle within your human body, so the world can be an onsite witness to your true greatness.

Hustling is not a gift. When are you going to realize there's no celebration in shooting any-

one? Doing so is only meant for your demise. Your quest for street credibility not only strips the world of knowing and witnessing your greatness; it robs the world of knowing your victim's greatness as well. With ample time on your hands, begin the real process of sorting out who you really are, keeping in mind a few things: your family can't speak of your greatness, not even your name can define just how great you are. Know this because I said so. You're a designer original, uniquely created with a masterful purpose and destiny. Let this world know in no uncertain terms, that despite your present circumstances of incarceration in prison, "You Are Greater Than They Know."

His Story is Our Story

Taji Lee

Almost two years ago to the date, I wrote a piece in this historical publication, Graterfriends, titled "His Story is Our History." While the editors chose to place it under bold text, "In Memory of George Floyd," my article wasn't about him—it was about us! Littered with rhetorical questions still relevant today, I present to you a new one: If knowledge is power and power is to "the people," then why are "we the people" so stagnant and complacent with stupidity? Why do we relish in idiocracy? Boisterous of our flaws that reflect our true failures. Yet, here we go again! (DMX voice). Like déjà vu, another Black man murdered by the people sworn to protect his life and liberty (rest in peace Jayland Walker). But, in light of the past few months, a new question has evolved! How were three non-Black men who all committed mass murder (Buffalo, NY; Uvalde, TX; Parkland, IL) taken into custody, but a Black man who was unarmed when shot 30 times wasn't afforded that same due process or humanity?

When it was declared that "the revolution would be televised," do you think that visionary envisioned smartphones and body cams providing the content? I mean, I'm not a prophet, just a connoisseur of history: one fully aware of who "the hired hands" flexing their "lifetime appointments" were

before they overturned a 49 year old precedent removing the constitutional prerogative of an entire gender. These are the same people who approved racial segregation after the abolition of slavery! So, why are we surprised that they would issue a ruling that equates to telling a woman that a firearm has more rights than she, both literally and figuratively!

I mean, we did all come from a woman, right? I mean, this county did have two women governors—Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming and Miriam Ferguson of Texas—42 years before they had a Black supreme court justice. Please, don't be sold that "doing a little is enough," especially not by a bamboozler. We gotta do more. Do the most in a positive way for a change. After all, remember that Manhattan was purchased from Manhattan Indians for \$24. Stay woke.

Court's Decision Affects America's Progression

Khalil Hammond



I turned on the news one morning and saw the headline: "Supreme Court Overturns Roe v. Wade." This same news segment also asserted that the Supreme Court is reshaping the country, with same-sex marriage next on the agenda. I don't view myself as a conservative or a liberal because, like many, I have some ideas that I'm unwilling to bend on and others that I'm more open-minded about. But free choice is one of the principles that our American society is based on, right? The 1st Amendment gives us the right to freedom of expression, right? In other words, we have the right to take our own political stances and make our own choices. To be clear, I myself am neither a member of the LGBTQ+ community nor a believer in abortion. However, I do believe that having a choice is not only key in a maturing society but also an important thing that sets this country apart from so many others, where living is more of a task than an experience. (This said by a person who's been in prison for many years!).

A lot of those who particularly want to see Roe v. Wade or same-sex marriages overturned claim to be religious people. If that's the case, then (with all due respect), I'm perplexed because it's

said that God gave us all the choice to do the right or wrong thing. If the creator of all things trusted us with such a powerful decision, then who are we to take it away from each other?

The Supreme Court overstepped their judicial boundaries to make a decision indicative of their own collective selfishness and willingness to force their personal beliefs onto the entire population of this country. That's a form of oppression, authoritarianism, isn't it?

I find it even more outrageous that at a time like this, our government is focused on making decisions that will only divide the nation further rather than bring it together. That must not be on their agenda. In my opinion, these decisions are going to burden the court with endless litigation that will take time and attention away from other issues that are greatly important to us. They can take a woman's right to decide what to do with her body or the right of LGBTQ+ people to choose who to spend their lives with or to be happy with, but they won't make any effective decisions regarding military style assault weapons, which have only negatively impacted our country.

I respect the 2nd Amendment and the right to bear arms, but let's be honest: how many people with an AK-47 or an ARIS use them to protect themselves, property or others? On average, they are used as a threat of force or are a collector's item, but many have also used them to kill masses of people in a short amount of time. I thought that laws were supposed to be for the betterment of our society. Now that reproductive rights have been stripped by the Supreme Court, women are more than likely going to find illegal and more dangerous options to obtain abortions. The Supreme Court's decision set the stage for a potential public health and safety crisis for American women and those who will perform the procedure regardless, and without regulation, in order to make some quick money. I guess they will be locking people up soon for this, too, which will only cost taxpayers more and add to the current problem of mass incarceration.

Democrat? Republican? Which one actually has the best interest of the people in mind? What can "We the People" do?

ATTENTION:

Those serving Life/D.B.I. Sentences

Have you completed countless groups/programs/workshops?

Did you earn your G.E.D? Or further your education w/ an Associate's/Bachelor's or Master's Degree?

What about Trade Certification?

Have you litigated your case without a positive resolution? Or you didn't receive the 5-0 vote necessary to be commuted?

Let me introduce you to...

The Groves Notebook



 Find us on Facebook

Finally! A platform where all of your efforts can be viewed and will provide exposure/validation for your ongoing transformation!

**TO SUPPORT US,
THEY MUST KNOW US**

Mr. David "Suave" Gonzalez,
recent Pulitzer Prize
Winner, is sponsoring the
project

Submissions must include:

- Type a list of Certificates/Accomplishments
- Make copies of Certificates/Accomplishments
- Submit a BIO (NO MORE THAN 2 Pages).
- Make sure to also include name, state #, institution, age when arrested, year sentenced, and sentence in heading of BIO
- Don't forget a picture (the clearer, the better)
- Place contents in a manila envelope
- ALL SUBMISSIONS WILL BE SCREENED FOR CONTENT

MAIL TO: Mr. Gonzalez at 2231 N. BROAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19132

FAMM, a nonpartisan sentencing reform organization, is working to fight mandatory minimums, create medical and geriatric parole, expand clemency, and end life without parole sentences in Pennsylvania. Your family members can learn about and support FAMM's efforts by joining our email list. Families should write to famm@famm.org, and they can join FAMM's special Facebook group for impacted families at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/fammiliesinpa/about>.

Legislative Update: November 2022

The legislature has limited session days the rest of the year due to the November elections. The Senate is scheduled for 1 session day in November; the House for 3 days. Neither chamber is scheduled for session in December, when the current two-year legislative session ends. In January 2023, a new legislature will be sworn in for a two-year term. All bills from prior sessions must be reintroduced to remain active. Remember, it is a long road for a bill to become law: it must be approved by committees, the House, the Senate, and signed by the Governor. Note that many bills have multiple co-sponsors; only the prime or first-listed sponsor is included here.

Mandatory minimums – HB 1587 (Rep. Brown), HB 1590 (Rep. Stephens), SB 1295 (Sen. Mastriano)

HB 1587 would create two-, five-, or 10-year mandatory minimum sentences for people who possess guns and have a felony record, depending on prior convictions. HB 1590 would require courts to impose the lesser of 5 years or the minimum sentence under the sentencing guidelines if the person is convicted of a crime of violence, armed drug offense, or felon-in-gun-possession.

HB 1587 and HB 1590 are out of the House Rules Committee and actively on the House Voting Calendar. They could advance at any time during session.

SB 1295 would create a new first-degree felony charge of fentanyl delivery resulting in death, punishable by a mandatory minimum of 25 years. The bill was introduced by Senator Mastriano (who is also a candidate for Governor) and referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. FAMM opposes these bills and has asked Governor Wolf to veto any bill containing mandatory minimums.

Life Without Parole Reform – SB 135 (Sen. Street) and HB 135 (Rep. Dawkins)

SB 135 would, if passed, provide parole eligibility after 20, 25, 30, or 35 years in prison to adults and juveniles convicted of first- and second-degree murder, depending on age and victim status. HB 135 would, if passed, make people serving life sentences (except those convicted of murder of a law enforcement officer) eligible for parole by deleting the words “without parole” from existing laws. Neither bill has received votes or review by committees since referral in Feb. and Oct. 2021. FAMM wrote SB 135 and is actively advocating it.

HB 2634 would, if passed, allow people to petition the sentencing court for release due to medical necessity (such as terminal illness, chronic and debilitating condition, serious functional or cognitive impairment) or extraordinary and compelling family hardship (such as the death or incapacitation of the caretaker of the person's minor children). The bill has no exclusions or time served requirement; calling for a detailed case-by-case review of all relevant factors. FAMM wrote this bill and is actively advocating it.

HB 518 would, if passed, require “repeat violent offenders” to do 85% of their time before being eligible for parole.

None of these bills have received any votes or review by committees yet.

HB 146, called “Markie’s Law,” was vetoed by Governor Wolf on September 30 after passing the House of Representatives in March and the Senate in July. The bill would have prohibited the Parole Board from paroling people who were convicted of a new violent offense in prison (such as institutional assault) until 24

months after their minimum on their original sentence or the date of the new conviction, whichever is longer. It would have delayed parole 12 months for people convicted of obstruction of justice offenses while incarcerated. FAMM opposed this bill and asked Governor Wolf to veto it as it was akin to a mandatory minimum. An attempt to override the Governor's veto by a supermajority failed on October 25; the bill remains vetoed.

Earned time credits – HB 2030 (Rep. Mihalek)

HB 2030 would, if passed, create credits toward time off one's minimum prison sentence upon completion of educational programs (for example, there would be a 90-day credit for getting a GED, 120-day credit for a diploma, 180-day credit for an advanced degree, etc.). The bill excludes certain types of crimes, including murder, rape, etc. It would also create a pilot program to study how many people in prison and on probation have learning disabilities and need additional supports. This bill has not received any votes or review by committee yet.

Clemency reform – SB 694 (Sen. Bartolotta) and HB 1719 (Rep. McClinton)

SB 694 would, if passed, begin the process of changing the state Constitution so that the governor can grant clemency whenever the Board of Pardons recommends a person for clemency by a vote of 4-1 (currently there is a unanimous requirement). HB 1719 would do the same but with a 3-2 vote, enabling more people to be considered for clemency. The bills have not received any votes or review by committees. FAMM issued public letters to Governor Wolf and the Board of Pardons calling for clemency expansion and improvement (see reprint in March/April 2022 issue) and asking the Board to give reasons for denial (see famm.org).

Prison Conditions –HB 1283 (Rep. Bullock), SB 686 (Sen. Muth), HB 1037 (Rep. T. Davis), HB 1753 (Rep. Brown), SB 1296 (Sen. Bartolotta), HB 1419 (Rep. Jones)

HB 1283 would, if passed, provide incarcerated parents with one free phone call or email per month to each of their children. SB 686, if passed, would ban the use of solitary confinement and provide alternative disciplinary measures, such as limiting visitation, recreation, or work. It would allow confinement to a person's own cell. HB 1037 would ban the use of solitary on pregnant women, LGBTQ+ people, and people who are 21 or less, or 70 plus, with a 15-day cap on solitary use.

HB 1753 and SB 1296 would, if passed, end the \$5 medical copay in state prisons and prohibit the Dept. of Corrections from charging incarcerated people fees for medical services. These bills have not received committee votes yet. Note that FAMM, the Prison Society, CADBI, and Physicians for Criminal Justice Reform are working together on multiple avenues to reduce or eliminate the copay: Public letter asking Secretary Little to end the copays (available at <https://famm.org/our-work/states-where-we-are-working/pennsylvania/>); inside-prison call to action (see reprint in July/August issue); family call-in day to the Governor on August 30.

HB 1419 would, if passed, prohibit shackling and solitary confinement of pregnant women, require corrections officers interacting with pregnant women to have trauma-informed care training, prohibit full body searches of females by male guards, provide an appropriate amount of feminine hygiene products at no cost to women, and provide additional visitation between primary custodial parents and minor children. This bill was approved by the House Judiciary Committee and passed unanimously by the House of Representatives. It is now in the Senate Judiciary Committee with limited days left in the session for consideration.

Other items of interest – HB 706 (Rep. McClinton), SB 104 (Sen. Street), HB 1888 (Rep. Rabb), HB 2524 (Rep. Schmitt)

HB 706 and SB 104 would require that incarcerated people are counted in their home districts in the U.S. Census, instead of their prison district (a practice known as "prison gerrymandering"). HB 706 advanced out of committee in Sept. with a recommendation to also count college students and those in local jails. It is on the House tabled bill calendar, but could be called for a House vote at any time during session. SB 104 has

not gotten a committee vote yet.

HB 1888 would allow lawmakers to request that the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing prepare a demographic impact statement for any law amending the crimes or judicial code, in recognition of racial disparities in imprisonment. The bill has not gotten a committee vote yet.

HB 2524 would make many amendments to Pennsylvania's Right to Know (RTKL), including a provision to bar RTKL requests from incarcerated people with limited exceptions (such as if the records pertain to the incarcerated person directly), and those deemed "vexatious requesters." This bill passed the House and is now actively under consideration on the Senate floor, where it could be voted on at any time during session.

FAMM's New Initiative: Free to Succeed



FAMM launched a new Storytelling series recently called Free to Succeed. Every day, it seems, we see a new story about someone who got out of prison and screwed up. Left unsaid is that for everyone who fails, there are thousands who are succeeding. We never hear about them. That changes with **Free to Succeed**, which showcases success stories of people released early from prison. These are people who were granted second chances -- through reform, compassionate release, clemency, or a second look law -- and are now helping their families, communities, and society.

Their lives are perfect examples of why second chances should be part of criminal justice. Every single person in **Free to Succeed** is proving wrong the headlines that say criminal justice reform makes our country less safe. Each month we feature at least two stories with a host of storytelling components: audio stories, video stories, written stories, photo montages, and more. There are also special monthly "Heart to Heart: Free to Succeed" edition broadcasts across FAMM's social media platforms, in which listeners can interact directly with the month's featured people.

Though the series is national in scope, FAMM is working on expanding it in Pennsylvania specifically to support our Second Chances Agenda here: End life imprisonment, create medical and geriatric release mechanisms, and expand clemency. Please check out the series online and in this newsletter, and use the stories in your own work. Also, please feel free to reach out with any questions, ideas, and suggestions of people to feature in future months.

Free to Succeed: Naomi Blount

"Over the years, I have written my obituary numerous times," says Naomi Blount. "I never thought I would ever be coming home." That's because in 1982, she was sentenced to life in Pennsylvania state prison. She was 32 years old. A drug addict and alcoholic, Naomi struggled every day of her adult life. One terrible day, a man stabbed her friend, Brenda Baker. The two women then found the man and wanted to hurt him, but it was Brenda who delivered the fatal injury, not Naomi. In Pennsylvania, you don't have to be the one who committed homicide to get charged with the crime; you just have to have been there in a certain capacity.

Behind bars with no release in sight, Naomi's tough situation was matched by grit and determination to improve herself. Her son, 10 years old when she went inside, meant everything to Naomi, and for his sake, she vowed that even though she was supposed to die in prison, she would be leaving the world a better person than when she'd entered it. She earned several degrees, stayed clean, and helped others. "I wanted my son to, at least when he picked up my body, I wanted him to know that his mother was more than an alcoholic and a drug addict." Naomi applied for and was denied commutation five times. About to give up, she handwrote a heartfelt plea to the Board of Pardons, begging them to reconsider. Then, in the equivalent of winning a lottery ticket, she was granted clemency -- almost unheard of in Pennsylvania. She'd been in prison 37 years.

Remarkably, now 72, Naomi is not bitter. In the three years since she's been released, it seems as though there's nothing she hasn't been able to accomplish. She is a vocal advocate for reform, and she also works as a commutation specialist for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. "My job allows me to encourage those that are on the inside," she says. She's very close to her son, now 50, and his family. "I'm getting ready to be a great-grandmother for the second time," Naomi says. "This will be the first baby that I am home for." And the passion for music that she has had her whole life has flourished. Recently, she released a single, called "Mello-D" by Simply Naomi. She also works as a program consultant for a group that helped her when she was inside, Shining Light. They provide support to people in prison.

Naomi is herself a "shining light," trying every day to express what she feels deeply: gratitude. "I'm always saying, 'Lord, thank you. Thank you, God. Thank you, God.'" Naomi's rich life is guided by her desire to help the world, not hurt it. FAMM is working to show how she and so many others are using their second chances for the good.

#VisitAPrison Campaign: An Inside Call to Action



FAMM launched a new campaign in July asking every state and federal lawmaker in the United States to #VisitAPrison. This is an ongoing campaign to increase awareness among policymakers, the media, and the public about who is incarcerated in America's prisons and jails and for how long; what the living and working conditions are like for incarcerated people and correctional officers; and what families experience as they seek to maintain strong ties with their incarcerated loved ones.

FAMM believes that "you can't know if you don't go" – that is, lawmakers should not create policy (sentencing, prison, re-entry) if they are not familiar with the people and conditions in our nation's prisons and jails. Equally important, we believe that policymakers who do take the time to visit prisons and jails will see that there are significant problems that need to be addressed. Specifically:

- **We lock up too many people for too long.** Our prison population is getting older with more sick and elderly people serving extreme sentences. Many of these people could be released safely back into the community if we had mechanisms for reviewing lengthy sentences.
- **Too many prisons and jails are unsafe for both incarcerated people and correctional officers.** Overcrowding, lack of programming, and other factors can make prisons extremely dangerous. Yet these facilities receive very little oversight, and when they do, inspections are announced far in advance so that problems can be hidden during the visits.
- **Families face enormous challenges while trying to maintain bonds with their incarcerated loved ones.** Visiting can require traveling long distances; prisons do not share basic information regarding the wellbeing and health of people in prison, even during emergencies; and regular communication between families and incarcerated loved ones is often limited and expensive.

FAMM needs help from incarcerated people! Your voice matters. Please read our Incarcerated FAMM Member Guide and start working on the campaign with your friends. Invite lawmakers from your home and prison districts to visit you and a small group in the prison. Let them know that they can reach out directly to Maria Goellner, FAMM Pennsylvania State Policy Director, to set up these visits. Additionally, ask your loved ones to visit www.visitaprisson.org to support the #VisitAPrison campaign.

#VISITAPRISON



INCARCERATED FAMM MEMBERS GUIDE:

Making The Most Out Of Your FAMM #VisitAPrison Challenge

Thank you for participating in FAMM's #VisitAPrison challenge! FAMM and our partners are working to get as many lawmakers to go inside and talk with people incarcerated in prisons, like you, across the country. Will you join us? Below is a guide you can use (with support from your loved ones) to reach out to your lawmaker and invite them to visit your facility.



Step 1: Find out who your lawmaker is or ask a loved one to find out for you.

Your family member or loved one can use [THIS TOOL](#) to find out who your lawmakers are as well as find out their contact information. Use your home address (not the address where you are incarcerated). Some facility libraries have a congressional directory with lawmakers' addresses in them.



Step 2: Write your letter (or email)

If you are handwriting your letter, use clear print as much as possible. We recommend typing your letter if that is an option for you. (See the sample letter below)

When writing your letter follow these tips:

Introduce yourself - share your name, where you live and what your sentence is

Make a clear ask - invite your lawmaker to come and tour your facility and to meet with you specifically.

Share why it is important to you to have them come and meet you.

Share your story - Share just a little bit about your story without going into too much detail. You want to share just enough to have them curious about you but not the whole story.



Step 3: Send your letter to your lawmaker's office.

You should be able to find the address to their office with the tool in step 1 or in your facility's library.



Step 4:

If you hear back, let FAMM know. Email visitaprison@famm.org to let us know your lawmaker is coming to visit you as part of the Visit A Prison Campaign. If you do not have access to email, mail your letter to the below address:

FAMM | 1100 H Street NW, Suite 1000, Washington, D.C. 20005 | ATTN: Visit A Prison

Sample Letter

Dear [Lawmaker's name],

My name is [your name], I am serving [# of months] months inside [name of your facility], in [city, state of your facility]. I am joining FAMM's Visit A Prison Campaign, and inviting you to tour my facility at your earliest convenience. My hope is that when you come and visit our facility you will see that we are people deserving of a second chance.

VISITING SURVEY UPDATE

The Prison Society, in collaboration with researchers at Temple University, sent out a survey in previous issues of *Graterfriends* about the experiences of virtual and in-person visiting since the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to thank you all for taking the time to share your experiences with us. We have done our best to communicate the results of these surveys to you in this issue so that you know your voices are heard and responses are being used to communicate your experiences to those on the outside. Your anonymized responses will be shared with both the Department of Corrections and the general public in upcoming reports and articles.

In this issue, we will provide some initial findings from the survey. The following results come from the 220 responses we received between June 22 and September 13.

Virtual Visits:

Survey takers were asked to rank how satisfied they were with video visits. Out of the 190 people who had received a video visit within the past year:

- 65 people (34%) reported not being satisfied with video visits, while 91 respondents (48%) were somewhat satisfied.
- The majority of people rated the video visiting area as poor or fair (59%).
- The video quality, sound quality, and wait time for video visits were rated by the majority of respondents as neutral.
- The rating of staff interactions varied with 37% of respondents rating these interactions as poor or fair, 28% rating them as neutral, and 36% rating them as good or best.
- Other commonly reported issues include bad service/connection (65%), scheduling (48%), inadequate/inconvenient times available (34%), and visitors' lack of necessary technology (29%). Percentages add up to over 100% because respondents could select more than one. Many written-in responses also emphasized the issue of not being connected at their scheduled time or their loved ones lacking the necessary technological literacy to navigate the sign-up/scheduling process.

Despite the low satisfaction with most aspects of the video visit, most people (61%) still rated the convenience of video visits as being good or best.

In-Person Visits:

Survey takers were also asked to rank how satisfied they were with in-person visits. Out of the 135 people who had received an in-person visit within the past year:

- The vast majority of respondents would like to receive more in-person visits (96%).
- Most people (60%) are dissatisfied with in-person visits (60%), with most respondents rating the convenience, scheduling, wait time, staff interactions, and overall experiences with in-person visits as poor.
- Scheduling and visiting policies were identified as the biggest barriers to receiving in-person visits by most survey takers, although other common barriers include their distance from loved ones and transportation.
- Some written-in responses also discussed the impact of arbitrary restrictions in response to COVID and loved ones' inability to schedule visits online.

Communication:

- Out of 206 responses, 137 people (67%) are not satisfied with communication from staff about visiting policy changes. The majority of people have learned about policy changes during COVID via word of mouth (69%) and posted bulletins (50%). Other commonly mentioned methods included a facility info channel and fireside chats.

These results, along with more detailed analyses, will be presented to the PA Department of Corrections. Once they have provided comments, the full report will be issued publicly and within *Graterfriends*.

The Graterfriends team extends warm wishes to all who submit poems to this issue. This issue will feature select poems in English and German. We will edit all submissions.

O, Tannenbaum

Andrew Spedden

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie treu sind deine Blätter!
Du grünst nicht nur zur Sommerzeit
Nein auch im Winter, wenn es schneit.
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie treu sind deine Blätter!

(Ernst Anschütz, 1824)

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
How loyal are your leaves/needles!
You're green not only in Summertime,
No, also in Winter, when it snows.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
How loyal are your leaves/needles!

Ancient people believed trees spoke
Oracles from the Divine.
A prophet, Ezekiel,
And centuries later,
A political-prisoner, John,
Were given visions of a great Tree-of-life,
Offered freely, constantly to all.

The one whose birth we celebrate with a tree,
Also died on a tree-
The dreaded Cross of Imperial Rome's capital punishment.
But they came back to life,
And remain alive –
The alive Tree-of-life:
Feeding, healing, giving Wisdom to all who
Seek with all our passion, prayer,
Intelligence, energy,
That we be an ever-green tree!

ness to everyone celebrating the holiday season.
the spirit of the season. We reserve the right to

Christomas Poem

Joseph Mander

Merry Christmas to you,
Hope your holiday is bright,
And I hope that these days for you
Will be very out of sight,
And I sure wish you the best,
For you and your family too,
And I hope you get to do,
All the things you plan to do,
And I wish you lots of presents,
Major gifts and lots of love,
And I hope that God protects you,
And your family from above,
And I hope that all your family and friends,
Receive everything they need,
And that these few days of joy,
Will be awesome, yes indeed.

Once in Our Lives

Paul Schlueter III

Once in our lives,
we need to be uplifted
by finding hope that our future will shine.
Once in our lives,
we need to be disheartened,
and recognize that there's not enough time.
Once in our lives,
we need to be rewarded
for all the times we've made a sacrifice.
Once in our lives,
we need to be forgiven
for all the things that we regret having done,
for all the times that we have done somebody wrong.

(Note: This is a secular, non-seasonal lyric, for use any time.)

REQUESTS FOR RESOURCES

In lieu of a list, please request resources directly with this form. Please allow one month for a response.
Complete and mail to the Pennsylvania Prison Society:

Pennsylvania Prison Society
ATTN: Resources
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605
Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Name, ID Number, Facility
If Applicable: Returning County for Re-entry Resources

Resource Description
Note: The Prison Society does not offer financial assistance

READER SURVEY

We welcome comments and suggestions from all readers. Please complete this form and mail it to the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

Pennsylvania Prison Society
ATTN: Graterfriends
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605
Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Name, ID Number, Facility

Comments and Suggestions

First Class postage is required to re-mail
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605
Philadelphia, PA 19102

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