

GRATER FRIENDS

Our Dr. Allen by Bradley Cordner of SCI Laurel Highlands

On the day I arrived at SCI Laurel Highlands, an inmate walked up, handing me brochures about the CPS Program and the Inmate Apology Bank saying, "Hi, I'm Dave Allen. Can we sit and talk for a few minutes?" And that was the day that I met the most unusual inmate that I have ever known.

You see "Dr. Allen," as he is affectionately and respectfully called, doesn't fit the mold of an inmate, much less the stereotyped version of a life sentenced one. Since his conviction in 1984, he has amassed numerous awards and has been a candidate for the Prison Society's Inmate Of The Year Award four times. He has earned at least four higher education degrees, including the doctorate; served multiple terms as the president of three inmate organizations; worked as an inmate instructor in ABE, GED, and Vocational Education, while at the same time volunteering as a literacy tutor and facilitating a long list of treatment programs.

Now at Laurel Highlands, he serves as the assigned Certified Peer Support Specialist on the TC & SDTP units where, in addition to his regular duties, he often presents seminars on a variety of topics and volunteers as a Peer Assistant. Just recently, he agreed to volunteer more of his time and experience as a facilitator in a new Recovery Unit Program and the new TPV and SSP groups. So, although I never knew the young David Allen who committed a horrible crime nearly forty years ago,

I can say that this much beloved, affable old man who spends his every waking hours giving of himself to redeem, restore, and improve the lives of so many others, is not the same person as the twenty year old boy that he once was in 1984.

You know, I once asked Dr. Allen why he spends so much of his time trying to help people, even those who are looked down upon by most others. With a look of sadness and empathy in his eyes he replied, "Everyone needs a little help sometimes. Don't judge. Just help." And then, just a few months ago, Dr. Allen received a special, joint-program award for his work with the RSO and TC/SDTP programs which read, "in recognition of your continuing efforts to enrich your peers and further their re-entry success." After the photos were taken, I asked him how it felt to have done so much and earned so many awards throughout his lengthy incarceration. Looking down at his award, in a grandfatherly tone, Dr. Allen answered, "The award is paper, but the reward is in the effort." In his usual fashion, he then shook my hand and went back to work.

In closing, I am sure that other institutions have some special person who is their own version of our Dr. Allen; men and women who have achieved so much yet are humbled in their service to others. It is my hope that they might be equally recognized through a tribute submission as well.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! We've heard from many of you that you have noticed some of the changes that our editing team has made over the last year—we love your feedback! Please keep letting us know what you like and don't like and what else you'd like to see.

A few updates you may not be aware of: Kailyn, our Editorial Designer, became a full time employee at the Prison Society early last summer, which has allowed her to devote more time to the publication's design. We had three long-term volunteer editors with us for the entire year – Jack Murphy, Sarina Sandwell, Kalene Skye, and Maddie Cerulli. And we made an attempt to add in more meaningful, useful outside resources that you are asking for.

Thank you to everyone for helping to make Graterfriends... Great! Your support does not go unrecognized.

In 2023, we plan to publish an additional creative issue that will be released around June. For those of you who submitted after our September 2022 deadline or did not see your work in our 2022 Creative issue, please be on the lookout for your name in the next.

For those whose submissions are denied, we aim to provide a better explanation as to why we

cannot publish particular submissions. In turn, this will provide feedback for our readers and give them the space to grow. In addition to brief feedback, we are also hoping to provide quicker communication about the status of your submission.

Turning to our first issue of 2023, you will see a strong sense of both readiness to fight and an aura of hope in our authors. These feelings are reflected in the two pieces selected for the Literary Corner which we are bringing back as a way to use more of the literary submissions we have received. In terms of advocacy, two large-scale issues set the stage for changes our readers want to see this year: commissary prices and the new religious meal policy. Juicy Queen Bee provides us with a positive mindset to begin the year with, writing:

"In closing, remember life is full of trials and obstacles. You will go through pain, and you'll have good days. You'll have bad days, but don't give up. Hold your head up high and be strong."

I leave you with her words to begin 2023.

Best Regards,
Noelle Gambale & the Graterfriends Team

GRATERFRIENDS

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as they appear

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

Being Part of the Solution

Featured Article

Kurt Danysh, Executive Director of Tomorrow's Neighbors

My name is Kurt Danysh. I am the Executive Director of Tomorrow's Neighbors, a nonprofit organization that serves the needs of those returning home from incarceration. But, for twenty-four years, I was known as DL-4879. I was incarcerated from the age of 18 to 42. I came home in 2020.

While incarcerated, I learned one especially important lesson (among many): There's no sense complaining about a problem unless you have first thought about a potential solution. For too long, we (in general) have complained about the need for prison and criminal justice reform only to expect those very systems to develop the proper solutions.

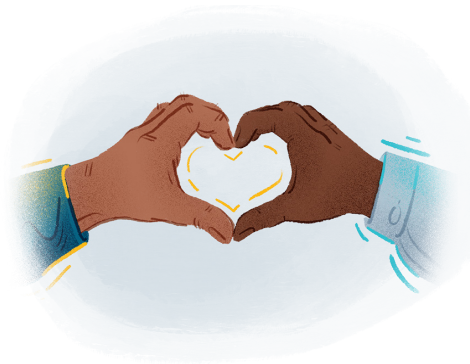
In an effort to change this mindset and develop our own solutions, I have been granted the unique honor and privilege to be appointed Chairman of a Reentrant Committee under the Pennsylvania Reentry Coalition (PARC). This Committee, consisting of only Reentrants (formerly incarcerated individuals), has two goals:

1. To develop ways reentrants can contribute to the improvement of the reentry process in Pennsylvania, and;
2. To define what "successful reentry" is.

Rather than rely exclusively on input from those who have already reentered, we have decided to also solicit input from those presently incarcerated within the PADOC.

Therefore, if you have any ideas about how Reentrants can specifically improve reentry in Pennsylvania, or how to define "successful reentry" as a term, we welcome your input. Letters may be mailed to me at the address below.

*Tomorrow's Neighbors
ATTN: Reentrant Committee
64 East North Street
Carlisle, PA 17013*



Commissary Prices Outpace Inflation

Pennsylvania Prison Society

Last fall, *Graterfriends* readers and incarcerated people statewide made one thing loud and clear – Commissary prices are too hard to afford. When the DOC announced the price increases in October, we began receiving a flurry of letters from incarcerated people who were now struggling to afford the bare necessities. “I have to work in the kitchen [for] 3 days to make enough to buy [toothpaste],” one man wrote. It now costs \$6.62 for a 6-ounce tube of Colgate Sensitive toothpaste, a nearly 70 percent increase over the old price.

Together, we’ve achieved an important, albeit small victory: In January 2023 the Department of Corrections raised wages for people in custody in Pennsylvania state prisons in response to skyrocketing inflation at the commissary.

The DOC increased wages 20% across the board, taking effect retroactively to December 1 of last year. This policy change is the direct result of the initiative of incarcerated people who wrote to us about surging prices and the Prison Society’s advocacy on the issue.

“The raises will relieve some of the burden of commissary price increases that far outpaced inflation in the outside world,” says our executive director, Claire Shubik-Richards. “It doesn’t quite keep up with the DOC’s massive markups, and DOC wage levels overall remain problematic,” she adds.

Under the new pay scale, hourly wages range from \$0.23 to \$0.50 an hour for most jobs—still a pittance by any standard. The DOC can and should do more to respond to runaway inflation. It can reopen prison dining halls to help ensure incarcerated people get enough decent, nutritious food, and don’t have to supplement their meals with snacks purchased at the commissary.

Besides raising wages, people in custody want the DOC to do more to make the cost of living

behind bars affordable. “Even an increase in portion size on the servings of the meals would help,” one incarcerated reader wrote. It can also explore ways to lower prices, including reviewing vendor contracts to ensure suppliers aren’t overcharging for goods.

The prices incarcerated people pay for toiletries, over-the-counter medication, food, and other essential goods not provided by the state have shot up by a staggering amount, even by the standards of soaring inflation in the outside world. The cost of products sold in Pennsylvania state prison commissaries increased 26.7 percent this year, a Prison Society analysis has found. By comparison, a report issued in December by the federal government found that prices have increased in the greater economy by 7.1 percent in the past year. The disparity is compounded by the fact that while wages have risen in the world outside, the paltry earnings incarcerated people receive for prison labor have historically remained flat.

The DOC says that the steep price hike is the unavoidable consequence of inflation, shortages of certain goods, and snags in the supply chain that have plagued the economy since the pandemic. A spokesperson noted that the DOC has not raised prices since 2018, and during the pandemic took “a loss on the sale of certain items” to keep the prices down.

But questions have been raised about how correctional systems and their corporate suppliers may profit from commissary sales and take advantage of the captive market behind bars. One of the DOC’s commissary suppliers, the Keefe Group, has been under scrutiny for its operations in Nevada prisons, where a state audit found that it marked up commissary products by up to 40 percent. The DOC contracts with multiple companies to supply its commissaries, which it says helps prevent such markups.

Nevertheless, prices in Pennsylvania prisons have shot sky-high, and incarcerated people have little choice but to pay them. Wrote one person in DOC custody, “The sad part is people will still buy

[commissary] because they have been down for years [and] they lost the will to fight.”

With your help, we will continue to advocate for more changes that reduce the financial hardships of incarceration for people in custody and their communities.

FAMM Welcomes Celeste Trusty as Pennsylvania State Director

WASHINGTON – FAMM President Kevin Ring announced in January that Celeste Trusty has been hired to serve as the Pennsylvania State Director and Maria Goellner has been promoted to the position of FAMM’s Deputy Director of Policy. Trusty returns to a position she held before serving as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons.

“We are thrilled to have Celeste back,” said Ring. “She already was an amazing advocate, and I’m certain her experience in government will only make her more effective and valuable for our Pennsylvania families.”

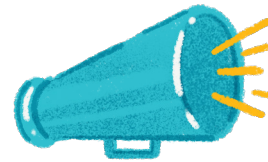
Trusty has long been dedicated to helping transform Pennsylvania’s criminal justice system. During her previous stint with FAMM, her focus was on coalition building to advance sentencing and prison reform and raising greater awareness about how families, communities and taxpayers are impacted by Pennsylvania’s legal system.

“I am excited to be returning as Pennsylvania State Director for FAMM and working with so many familiar and new people to advocate transforming Pennsylvania’s overly punitive legal system,” said Trusty. “I am eager to utilize my recent experience in campaign and government spaces to be a more effective and well-rounded advocate for our impacted community members.”

Trusty added, “A newly sworn-in administration and General Assembly will provide unique opportunities to help create and expand pathways for relief for people stuck serving excessive sentences here in Pennsylvania. As someone dedicated to the liberation of people impacted by the legal system, I am so grateful for the opportunity to work closely with so many incredible organizations, lawmakers,

and community members to transform our system into one that more closely resembles justice.”

Maria Goellner, who has served as FAMM’s Pennsylvania State Director, will be assuming a new position as Deputy Director of Policy, continuing to support Pennsylvania efforts while also leading advocacy efforts in several other states across the country.



Help Needed: In Search of Old Editions of *Graterfriends*

We are currently looking to fully archive all issues of *Graterfriends*, as well as drafting a master author list for all submissions.

If anyone has old editions of *Graterfriends* (pre-1998), we would love it if you could send them to us to scan into our archives. We will mail them back to you if you are able to send them in.

Additionally, if you don’t have any old issues but have been writing for us for a long time, send us a letter summarizing the work you’ve done for us over the years (when you first started writing, what things you’ve had published, etc).

Graterfriends history is your history. Help us preserve it!

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: January 2023

The 2021-2022 legislative session has officially ended. In January 2023, a new legislature with many new members (particularly in the House) was sworn in for a two-year term, 2023-2023. The House in particular has one of the largest classes of first-time lawmakers in Pennsylvania's history with nearly 50 new members. All bills that were introduced and not passed during that two-year session are now expired and moot. Lawmakers may or may not reintroduce bills from the last session. They must reintroduce a bill for it to become active again. If a lawmaker does introduce the same or similar bill, it may or may not have the same bill number that it had last session.

Currently, many lawmakers have signaled their intent to reintroduce bills from last session by introducing co-sponsor memos. However, legislation itself has not yet been introduced. More detailed information on legislation will be provided in the next update. 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.

The Pennsylvania legislature is currently in a historically unique and scattered posture. Republicans and Democrats are almost virtually tied for control of the House, and several special elections in the next 1-2 months will decide who has the tie breaking vote(s). It appears that Democrats will have the majority but the special elections must occur first. Given the partisan gridlock, the parties agreed to elect Representative Mark Rozzi (D-Reading) as the Speaker of the House. Rozzi has promised to be independent and not join the internal deliberations of either party. He has publicly flirted with switching his political affiliation to Independent, hired staff from both parties, and is embarking on a statewide listening tour.

The Senate, which remains Republican-majority as it was in the last session, is scheduled for 8, 2, 4, and 3 active session days per month in January, February, March, and April, respectively. The House has thus far scheduled only 3 active session days in January and 1 in February. February and March are budget months.

Governor Tom Wolf (D) left office due to term limits, and Governor Josh Shapiro (D) has been sworn in, with Austin Davis (D) replacing John Fetterman (D) as Lieutenant Governor. This makes Davis automatic Chair of the Board of Pardons and a voting member of the 5-person Board. There have also been many changes in appointed positions within the government relating to criminal justice, including:

• **New Secretary of the Department of Corrections** – Laurel Harry (replacing George Little). The announcement indicates that Secretary Harry is “a 24-year veteran of the DOC [and] began her career in 1999 as a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist II at SCI Waynesburg. She worked her way through the ranks as a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist Supervisor, Unit Manager, Corrections Classification and Program Manager, Staff Assistant to the Central Region Deputy Secretary, Deputy Superintendent, and Superintendent of SCI Camp Hill for ten years. Most recently, she served as Acting Western Region Deputy Secretary. In addition to serving at six state correctional institutions across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dr. Harry was a member of the Western Region Hostage Negotiation Team for six years and graduated from the Criminal Justice Executive Leadership Program in 2008 and the Leadership Development Institute in 2010. She was also recognized by the PA Prison Wardens Association as the 2019 Warden of the Year. Dr. Harry earned her doctorate in criminal justice at California University of Pennsylvania, and her master's degree in counseling and bachelor's degree in psychology at West Virginia University.”

• **New Board of Pardons Secretary** – Shelley Watson (replacing Celeste Trusty). The announcement indicates that Secretary Watson has over 25 years of experience in state government, and is “an experienced professional with a deep understanding of the Commonwealth’s clemency process. For the past decade, Shelly has worked in the state’s Department of Corrections, most recently as an administrative officer managing the department’s communications process. Along with her extensive work history, Shelly is also an alumna of the Commonwealth’s Emerging Leaders Program.”

• **New Acting Attorney General** – Michelle Henry (replacing Josh Shapiro). In addition to acting as Attorney General, Henry will have an automatic voting board seat on the Board of Pardons, overseeing clemency. The announcement indicates that Henry is “a lifelong public servant and 26-year veteran prosecutor... Widely recognized for her work ethic and singular dedication to public service, Michelle rose from intern in the Westmoreland County District Attorney’s Office to now serve as the chief law enforcement officer for the Commonwealth. Michelle was raised in Westmoreland County, graduated from Greensburg-Salem public schools and remains a proud Golden Lion. Her life and career have crisscrossed and impacted all of Pennsylvania. She is a graduate of Allegheny College and the Widener University School of Law, worked for the Westmoreland County Legal Aid Office, and clerked for now retired Lancaster County President Judge Michael Georgelis. Before serving as First Deputy Attorney General, Michelle dedicated over 20 years of her career to the Bucks County District Attorney’s Office – taking on critical jobs including Chief of Major Crimes, Chief of Child Abuse, and First Assistant. She was appointed Bucks County District Attorney with a bipartisan vote in 2008. In Bucks County, colleagues credited her for leading by example and being first in line for the toughest cases. Michelle was admired as an excellent attorney who also pushed major initiatives – she was instrumental in helping start the county’s children’s advocacy center and took a leading role in educating junior prosecutors from across the Commonwealth. As First Deputy Attorney General under former Attorney General Josh Shapiro, Henry was responsible for overseeing all of the Office’s legal matters, including criminal cases to seek justice for victims, civil suits representing the Commonwealth and public protection cases fighting for the rights of Pennsylvania consumers. During her tenure as First Deputy, Henry was recognized for her tireless work safeguarding the Office’s mission to protect and serve Pennsylvanians as the legal advocate for the Commonwealth. Chief among those honors was Henry’s admittance to the American College of Trial Lawyers, one of the premier legal associations in North America; and the receipt of Widener University Commonwealth Law School’s 2017 Excellence in Public Service Alumni Award for her “extraordinary contributions” to public service.”

Letter Regarding Fellowship Meals

Hugh Williams of SCI Phoenix

This letter is written asking the DOC to rescind and or reconsider your February 24, 2022 memo concerning Fellowship Meals and limiting the Islamic faith's Eids to one, instead of two as has been the practice for 40 years. In your memo you cite the growing number of congregants, which you say burdens the system. In counter and persuasive argument, I offer the following for your consideration.

It is not necessary to explain to you what you already know, that the 1st Amendment protects freedom of religion. However, your plan to limit to just one of two of Islam's holy practices violates the practice and is a halfway compliance of the religion. For your information, The Pew Research Center as early as 2017, published a report and its findings that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States, and gaining similar status world-wide. Prisons are a microcosm of society in general, therefore prison populations are expected to follow suit. This being the case, administrators such as yourself have already recognized this fact and it is necessary to prepare for the inevitable and make requisite adjustments. Curtailing religious practices under the rubric of logistics runs afoul of religious freedom.

The enclosed court order demonstrates several things, i.e. it recognizes Islam's validity, but also its customs, names and practices; the Eid in particular. As stated in the order, the federal court accepted plaintiff's (I was one of 60 or so at that time) decision to withdraw the complaint after the Department of Corrections assured the court that it could comply with our wishes in good faith. A special emphasis was placed on Eids, not just one. Eliminating the practice to just one instead of two as has been the practice, violates the good faith pledge. You can easily agree that neither of the so-called mainstream religions, i.e. Judaism and Christianity are celebrated half-way, but are observed in their entirety. What this letter encourages is that Islam be permitted the same.

To further highlight the above, there is a marked difference between what you describe as a Fellowship Mela and what is practiced by Muslims the world over. Webster's dictionary describes a feast as "an unusually delicious or abundant meal." Its synonym further elaborates, "the abundance, fitness and richness of food and drink, served to a large number in celebration of a special occasion." The Fellowship Meal you propose is choosing the best favored meal of the day's menu and served to the entire population. This is hardly what Webster describes. The Imams/Islamic Chaplains will verify that the Eid begins with a prayer, sermon and later the Eid or feast, which can and does last for up to three days. That latter, of course, is impracticable in a prison setting. However, the Eid Feast itself can be had as has been the 40 year practice. If this poses a problem, there are alternatives, which courts have held are not impracticable.

In closing this and not being redundant, I ask again that you reconsider your February 24, 2022 memo. It is my hope that this can be avoided and/or settled without court intervention by the submission of alternatives that accommodate what Islam requires as well as your concerns.

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this letter and I await your timely response. Do have a pleasant day.

What's the Point?

Jeffery Shockley of SCI Fayette

Dear friends,

I would like to ask the question of what is the point of prisons and jails?

Society may respond with: "To punish the people who have committed a crime or other offense against society." A smaller portion may even add, "To correct or rehabilitate."

I am currently serving a sentence of Life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) plus 2½ to 5 years in the state of Pennsylvania. As I sit here in my

24th year, my attitude, behavior, and institutional resume demonstrate that I am not the same character today as I was those 24 years ago. I mean that there have been great strides made in the correction of self within the environment I reside. In short, I am not a problem child who is still acting or behaving in a negative or destructive manner.

It is commendable that the Department of Corrections (DOC) has provided many opportunities that would and have greatly benefited a person desiring to better themselves. I have been able to participate in many programs and classes that expand the mind and give hope.

Let me explain the frustration: I am but one of thousands of similarly sentenced individuals who have changed their lives around for the better and yet, we are constantly scrutinized, criticized, and marginalized. An example would be comparable to someone outside getting a job to flip burgers or bag french-fries. You have been shown properly how to do the job, but the manager or supervisor does not trust or believe you are capable, no matter how well you continually demonstrate quality and efficiency of the task at hand. You may leave and go get a different job. A person serving a Life sentence does not have that luxury. So we sit here for decades, continuing to do well, but getting older and older.

So we ask, what's the point?

In recent years there's been a push for prison reform. Several lawmakers have introduced various senate bills to address 2nd chances including parole eligibility for persons serving life sentences and geriatrics parole bills. Even the commutation process has been worked on, making it more accessible and streamlining the application process. However, last year, there were individuals who met the criteria for what is called the Merit Review, and yet they were denied. Seven of them reside within the same institution as I. One, Mr. Sam Berkley, has never received a misconduct report in the 36 years of his confinement.

What's the point? The point is that part of the problem lies in the Commutation process. If you get denied, you are simply DENIED! No reason or explanation given so that you may change or correct whatever the reason for denial.

I see men like Mr. Donald Brown, who has been in prison over 50 years with deteriorating health

concerns; and Mr. Sam Berkley, who is 36 years in and suffers with Parkinson's-like symptoms, has been in prison for nearly as long as I have been alive. I am 59 years old.

Prison is for correction and rehabilitation and yet, men and women who demonstrate this very concept of change are kept locked up forever. What's the point? Who's not doing their job?

So much gets invested in an individual in prison by taxpayer dollars. And some of us utilize the opportunity to build the community we live in. Some share that knowledge of such an experience with family and friends beyond these walls to encourage the generations we've left behind. In these uncertain times I suppose that is the best we can do because otherwise, anymore...

What's the point?

Evolving Backwards at SCI Chester RHU

Hector Huertas of SCI Chester

Many believed victory was when the Department of Justice stepped into the DOC's Restricted Housing Units (RHU) and shook things up for the brutal treatment of inmates in segregation, particularly those who suffered with mental health issues.

When that occurred, I was finishing up a 12 year stay in segregation and can attest that conditions had begun to improve in the RHU. Stays in restricted housing were shortened, staff's treatment of inmates improved, privileges (tv's, tablets, food purchases) were randomly approved. Most importantly, inmates received, at the minimum, their most basic needs (soap, linens, clothing, legal/religious materials, address book).

Unfortunately, it's been over a decade since the settlement between the Department of Justice and the DOC dissolved, and from what it appears, SCI Chester is in a rush to return to those brutal, barbaric conditions.

For instance, per policy DC Admin 801 & 802.3.C, inmates are allowed the amount of property that fits into one box; per policy DC Admin 007, inmates are allowed 1 hour access to the RHU law library; PA Administrative Codes require inmates to

receive 1 hour of exercise 5 days per week; per policy 6.5.1, inmates are to receive hygiene items and adequate cleaning opportunity; per policy DC Admin 801 & 802, psychology is to make meaningful rounds in the RHU daily.

Hence, on 10/1/22, I was placed in the RHU under investigation. I was placed in the cell with a 24 hour monitoring camera, watching me 24 hours a day while it's freezing all day. I was given a mattress, 2 linen sheets, and the clothes on my back. That's it. I asked other inmates if they had their property, clothing, and hygiene and they all told me no: that if I wanted it, I was going to have to put up a fight. So I did, and then I received a change of clothes, a toothbrush (no toothpaste), soap and my misconduct. That's it!

First, I asked for a handbook because I know the rules and regulations on what I was entitled to have- and it was denied to me (and all inmates). I filed a grievance and it was rejected. I filed a grievance about access to the law library and it was manipulated into something else and denied. I even brought these conditions to the Program Review Committee (PRC) who also denied me a handbook, but approved my legal materials (which I never received), I wrote the superintendent and central office who forwarded my correspondence to the superintendent and nothing was done.

Right now, the only belongings inmates in the RHU at SCI Chester are permitted are the clothes on their back. We are not allowed our legal materials regardless of pending legal cases, are not allowed religious materials, are not permitted, books, magazines, cleaning supplies, linen/laundry exchange, law library access, address book to contact family, barely any exercise activities, and no real mental health treatment.

Many of the inmates in RHU today are first timers, or don't know the rules, so they just go along. To make matters worse, ABSOLUTELY no administrative staff make no rounds in the RHU and because inmates don't receive a RHU handbook of the rules; there are no remedies taken.

We are housed one step above inmates who are housed in suicide prevention cells with no belongings. Inmates are already deteriorating going on hunger strikes, attempt suicide, hollering and lashing out trying to escape these tortuous conditions.

So, now I raise the question: how many suicides, suicide attempts will it take before anyone listens- just like it had gone on for years before the Department of Justice stepped in? It's no secret that extreme isolation like these act like rust on metal deteriorating the mind til it reaches insanity.

Challenge the System

Johnny Collins of Dauphin County Jail



The odds have been stacked against you since the U.S. abolished slavery in 1865, whereas the constitution was never honored unless you were of European ethnicity. "Meaning, to be aware is to be alive." The system has been designed right after the assassination of Lincoln to revamp the slave trade that would no longer exist with prisons. It's not to say that no one commits a crime, but the people who swore to uphold the law shouldn't be innovative with targeting minority groups to fill these condemned institutions with many bodies who are not conscious, so that they are labeled slaves by way of the 13th amendment. I, too, was trapped up in my own mind, institutionalized and wanting so desperately to break the cycle and help others do the same.

So, as my sisters and brothers read this: I challenge you to engage, to get involved with voting, to run for office(s), and, most importantly, to help change these laws created against us so that we can have a fair and equal opportunity in life compared to the privileged. We live by a system that oppresses us called "Anglo-American Law", which takes on a meaning that causes separation of the people. It keeps us compartmentalized, sectioned into groups of people defined as class instead of race, which creates a specific belief among the races that plants a seed of hate. We were not born to hate. It's a wasted energy that can be used to create a more positive environment where our own government is not targeting minorities and subjecting us to modern day slavery.

These prison institutions aren't built to rehabilitate the individual but to generate currency, which prevents equal access to the one thing promised in America which is an equal opportunity. I am request-

ing that “we” as the people put forth the effort and unite and start anew so that the next generations have an example to follow. No child should be incarcerated at the age of twelve, raped and transformed into an animal with no tools to adapt. But in America, the system is designed for you to fail. In European countries, they treat their inmates as civilized human beings and work with them to better themselves and rehabilitate. Yet here at home, we are treated as if we live in a third world country having to fight even harder to get ahead, and as stock, even in sports and entertainment.

We must focus on abolishing the institutional ways of thinking, our savage ways of living, our greedy appetites and nefarious intent. The Willie Lynch teachings are still alive to this very day, and so we are at war with ourselves, experiencing the crabs at the bottom of the barrel syndrome and hindering our growth to succeed. When you look at the news you see cops killing blacks, whites killing blacks, and worst of all, blacks killing blacks.

Somehow an illusion has been created where we glorify the switchy, the pipe, the pole, the brick, “slang” terminology for guns, but refuse to glorify the fruits of life, to be there for our children and teach them how to love every being that is a gift of God. I am only asking for the help of every being who is able, capable and concerned for the children to do the research, use whatever resources are available to you, reach out on social media, and whatever you have to do in your spare time, so we can restructure what this world has become.

Abolition Social Justice

Wayne Thomas of SCI Albion

It is the role of Abolition to redeem men and women in good faith of human rights and duties that attend to human sacredness of all people over the world. Abolition aims are for the elimination of the prison system as a long term goal, in favor of a reimagined society with more social support. Abolition ensures self-determination of the underrepresented ethnic nations locked within the prison system. Abolition promotes equal justice and social justice, cre-

ating conditions that allow for dignity, and respect for all of the 2.4 to 4.4 million individuals that are incarcerated and/or on probation or parole here in the United States. Abolition recognizes and demands a tangible life or freedom.

For the majority of such persons, Abolition argues this freedom is overdue, and that their human spirits must not be suppressed for exploitation. Abolition justice entails respect for the rights that flow from the dignity, beauty, and freedom of all people. These rights are prior to society; they attend to the sacredness of the human spirit. As for us--rights and duties are complementary. When one person has a right, others have a duty to respect that right.

Abolition solidarity represents bringing the ultimate end to the U.S. having five percent of the planet's population yet holding more than twenty percent of the world's prisoners. It reveals the reality of a social struggle. It reveals the unemployment, globalization of industry, and depressed wages in the service markets. This is why so many Americans are incarcerated for longer prison sentences; it is what tyranny, greed, and corruption will do to keep the underclass people down. The new Human Chattel Industrial Age uses law and order and their Fears to justify mass incarceration as a method of social control. Prison industrial complex (PIC) lobbyists, in partnership with the institutional U.S. criminal justice system (CJS), now rely on use of repression policies against U.S. citizenry, while money is taken from every taxpayer's incomes to carry out the exploitation of imprisoned citizens.

Political liberation from an unjust imprisonment situation is the greatest moment of Abolition solidarity; you find it in the beauty of the Global Kindness Revolution (GKR) that this cause is worth fighting for to end human oppression in all its forms.

What's My Beef?

Darrell Sharpe of MCI Norfolk

Dear Commissioner Carol A. Mici,

I'm sending you this letter today to request that you take a moment to read my correspondence because my concerns and intentions are honorable regarding this dilemma.

I am currently serving my time at MCI-Norfolk, and I am asking if you will reinstate the privilege of allowing us prisoners to view “R” rated movies. As I understand it, you have been made aware of what occurred here quite some years ago before I arrived, regarding the film Brokeback Mountain. However, all prisoners in the state of Massachusetts suffer the consequences caused by others. There are many great films that have the R rating, such as Braveheart, The Gladiator, Troy, Syriana, Munich, Dracula, and The Godfather to name but a few. There are also many great comedies that have the R rating due to language. We are adults and should be treated as such. It’s difficult for me to contemplate the fact that my teenager can watch any R rated movie, yet grown men within the Massachusetts DOC state prison system cannot. I find that this creates truly unnecessary tention and feels more like mental torture than anything else.

It is important that we view R rated films because they include a serious perspective of our culture, which, as prisoners, is needed if we are to grow intellectually. Most PG-13 films do not rise to this level of intelligence and lack the cultural depth needed for our personal growth. For some of us, viewing a well-made film with serious substance (that happens to have the “R” rating) is the only way to decompress from all of the negative energy that being inside of a penitentiary creates. As a man, I’m asking you, Commissioner Mici, to not let the egos of a handful of correctional guards be the only reason for banning these excellent films.

Now, it seems, the movie committee is even rejecting some PG-13 films from prisoner viewing for containing inappropriate material. Among these are classics like The Longest Yard, The Green Mile, and When a Stranger Calls. Until we somehow isolate the viewing of ‘appropriate’ R rated films, I don’t believe that we should be restricted from watching some of the most impactful movies ever made. It is my hope that you will agree with my position and finally lift this unnecessary restriction once and for all. I thank you for your time.

On Markie’s Law

Thomas Cook of SCI Waymart

UPDATE: Gov. Tom Wolf vetoed Markie’s Law on October 1, 2022.

First, I’d like to thank you all at Graterfriends for the effort you put into keeping the interests of the incarcerated population of PA represented. I’d hate to think where inmates would be if no one was looking out for us. The occasion for my letter is the recent house bill to be introduced by State Rep. Aaron Bernstine as per the New Castle News. He is proposing that an inmate be prevented from seeing the parole board for two years if that inmate has been convicted of a violent offense while in prison. The law is referred to as “Markie’s Law” after eight-year-old Markie Mason who was stabbed to death by a recently paroled offender who was serving his sentence for homicide charges.

This bill is disturbing; it punishes those who are already incarcerated for the acts of those who are on the street. Furthermore, postponing parole consideration essentially means a sentence of two additional years in prison without a trial, lawyer, testimony, or the ability to call witnesses that you would get at a courthouse because we will only receive a hearing. The article claims the bill would add two years to the minimum sentence of an inmate convicted of committing a violent offense while in prison and then, additionally, another twelve months if the inmate should attempt to escape, smuggle contraband, or retaliate against or intimidate witnesses while incarcerated. These additions are to a minimum sentence issued by the court.

With all the recent tightening of requirements for release on parole just in the last year you would think there would be some decrease in violent crime, but there has not been. Most violent offenders will be on the street again some day, and I think it’s time to give them some incentive to change their ways of thinking through positive reinforcement for good behaviors and opportunities to better themselves while in prison.

I’m a first-time offender who came to prison at 40. I have taken every program available to me (6) and even wrote a program for the prison I’m in. I’ve

obtained a PhD through correspondence school—over eight years of classes and over 1000 pages of written work submitted. In 16 years, I had one Class 2 write-up for contraband in 2009 which was held against me at a 2021 parole hearing. I had 15 letters of support, an empty house with a car in the garage all paid for as a home plan, and a job waiting for me. I've had the DOC's support both times, but this last time I was given a five year hit (one of the reasons was that I was "not motivated for success").

I can't figure out why I keep getting denied and neither can anyone I speak to in the DOC, but it's obvious that violent offenders are getting re-sentences through parole denials whether they behave well or not, whether they seek better behavior through better thinking or not, and whether they somehow manage to maintain supportive relationships over decades or not. What violent offenders do while incarcerated therefore has little impact on their chance at parole.

It's always been popular when holding or running for public office to be "hard on violent crime." But after over 15 years with 60% of people recidivating after 3 years, perhaps a new approach is needed to protect people from violent offenders. The election year tough-on-crime posturing may be good for getting elected, but it's bad for the victims of the crimes being committed by the men who left prison the same way they came in. I know men who are leaving even worse after being disillusioned by the promises of authorities from the time they were sentenced to the time they were released, long after they thought they would be. Don't worry—those who are still in prison will pay for those new crimes too.

PADOC Visiting Policy

Anonymous

The PA DOC visit scheduling system is complicated and difficult to navigate. The system is preventing a certain group of people from visiting their loved ones in the PA state prison system and discouraging others, resulting in a great reduction in the number of visits that inmates get from friends and family. Adding people to a group for visiting is especially difficult and many people simply give up.

Visitors must schedule their visits in advanced by going online.¹

There is no other way to visit. Friends and family with no computer, no smartphone, or who are not literate in technology have no way to schedule a visit. They have been eliminated from in-person and virtual visiting since the policy was instituted over a year ago. There needs to be a way for this group to visit. The DOC visiting website is even hard to navigate for those with computer knowledge. Additionally, the number for the help system has a wait time of days and sometimes a week to respond to calls for help.

Despite Secretary Little's memo eliminating social distancing, some prisons continue to enforce it in their visiting rooms. This also lowers the number of visitors allowed. There is unequal treatment for in-person visiting between prisons. Some prisons allow for three hour visits, and others only allow two. Visitors sometimes travel two to five hours one way for just a two hour visit. Many believe the PA DOC is secretly working towards eliminating in-person visiting.

¹ [Online Visiting](#)

RE: RE: Article in *Straight Ahead* Issue No. 2

Bruce Bainbridge of SCI Phoenix

I beg to differ. There are a lot of men and women in prison with life without parole sentences that have gone on to redeem themselves many times over for their families and their communities.

So, I say, instead of supporting legislation that prevents others, like those with 1st degree murder convictions, from being reviewed by the Parole Board, look at all who have shown their turnaround and are living a life of restorative redemption. Build your own profile and send it to your legislator, asking for a second chance based on your individual redemptive and restorative qualities. That just might be a more persuasive argument for taking a second look at the statute and removing the words "without parole" from the existing sentencing statute 6137. That doesn't mean everyone who took a life in the manner prescribed by 1st and 2nd degree homicides

is equally responsible. All that means is now you will be reviewed and judged a second time by a very conservative PA Parole Board to consider how worthy your redemptive and restorative values are. Instead of playing cut throat, try being socially proactive. That will give you reason to say maybe he, she, or they do deserve consideration of a second chance after so many years of incarceration.

Currently, there are over 5,000 people serving life without parole sentences in the PA prison system, and for these individuals over 50, about half have 30 plus years in prison already. Many of those people have gone on to better themselves educationally; many keep a good work history and habits; many have drafted and sent in apology letters; many maintain close relationships with family and community in spite of conditions of incarceration. Many of us are truly remorseful for our actions and work everyday living with the consequences of those actions. That it is true many are one time events with horrific results that will not be repeated again.

So, I would urge individuals to stop trying to cannibalize one another sentenced to life without parole and instead promote one another. Insist on promoting all life without parole sentenced individuals by creating profiles that are worthy of a second chance consideration. Send them to your legislator. Maybe it is time to take a second look at the statute as being out of touch with this Commonwealth and its leadership in particular.

Important facts (reprinted from GF Jan/Feb 2022):

- 13.4 percent of people in Pennsylvania prisons are serving life without parole, compared to 3.6 percent nationally.
- Pennsylvania sentencing statute 6137 has created a large elderly prison population, which increased thirtyfold from 1979-2019.
- The average cost for incarcerated individuals in skilled or personal care units is \$500.00 per day, more than 3 times the cost for the general population.
- Studies find individuals naturally grow out of criminal behavior as they age and mature.
- Mandatory LWOP deprives Pennsylvania Parole Board the opportunity to make individualized parole considerations that take into account all important facts of a case.

Pending Lawsuit Against Dauphin County

Johnnie McCollum of SCI Laurel Highlands

After nearly two years of jumping through administrative hurdles, I finally exhausted all in-house remedies and therefore, am now able to put the courts on notice about what is taking place behind the walls at Dauphin County Prison. I am raising 3 issues that affect the lives of everyone housed in DCP:

1. **Continuous Lockdowns:** We are locked down at least 20 days out of a month, and no violence is taking place. DCP has severe staff shortages, and the members of the Dauphin County Prison Board are not doing enough to fix this problem. On days where we are locked down, there are no rec programs or religious services. I have been in this jail for 28 months, and I have yet to complete a program due to the lockdowns.
2. **Lack of Gym Time:** Due to DCP's staff shortages, we are not receiving our gym time on a daily basis. We should be entitled to at least 1 hour of exercise per day.
3. **Reading Materials:** We aren't allowed to order magazines, newspapers, or books.

I request that the Dauphin Prison Board incentivize or increase the pay to attract more guards; this is the only way to put an end to the staff shortage. I also request that they implement a "publisher's only rule," where books can be ordered directly from bookstores like Amazon or Barnes and Noble. Having the ability to order books will unlock the gates to our intellectual freedom and expand access to resources.

This prison is the embodiment of the Capitalistic principle: profit over people. Hiring guards is not a priority because it's not profitable. Dauphin County Prison Board drags their feet when it comes to increasing the pay like York, Lancaster, and Lebanon Counties did when they were faced with similar issues...

Speak truth to power.

Combating Parole Denials

Mark Rokita Jr. of SCI Houtzdale

A popular topic in the law library has been “what to do when parole denies me.” I have done some research for us; there is unfortunately no right to be paroled. Many of us are being denied parole for arbitrary reasons. We are doing an additional one to ten years in prison for receiving a misconduct for getting water after the allowed time or not standing for count right away. I received a ten year hit for an inconclusive urine test while requesting treatment.

Parole does not understand that we have families that miss and need us: our children need their fathers, and our mothers need their sons. Parole gives out years in prison as though it’s candy. We are humans and should be treated as such.

Show the court everything you have accomplished compared to the reasons that parole denied you. It costs taxpayers over \$40,000 a year to house each of us. That should be going to our schools. The court should at least understand that!

Trials and Tribulations

Juicy Queen Bee of Riverside Correctional Facility

In life, we all face trials and tribulations, but some might suffer worse than others. But, your life is only for you to live- no one else. So, when you face an obstacle, you have to be strong and hold your head up high. I say this with experience. There were times I thought I wouldn’t make it, but I held on, kept my faith, and stood tall, holding my head up high.

I also realize it was a test to see how strong I really am. I lost my mother January 21, 2021 and that was a heart attack to me, but I got through it. Though it hurt a lot, like a lot of other things, I got through it all.

In closing, remember life is full of trials and obstacles. You will go through pain, and you’ll have good days. You’ll have bad days, but don’t give up. Hold your head up high and be strong.

Every Opposition is an Opportunity

Anthony Mustafa Williams of SCI Somerset

As I mature in this plane of existence, I am more and more conscious of the simple truth that opposition is an opportunity—not just some opposition, but every opposition. You see, we have been programmed to see opposition as negative, and so, we act or react accordingly. In doing so, we miss out on many opportunities and often have to experience the same opposition again to learn the lesson. Just think about it. Time and time again, we fall into the same behaviors and end up with the same results. Why? Because that thinking is not in conformity with what is acceptable. There is opposition to our thinking, and so, we get the result of jail. Now, if we don’t take the opportunity, which is jail, to remake ourselves, what happens? Our behaviors and their results continue to be the same, and that’s because we haven’t learned.

Opposition provides a great many opportunities, not just to learn a lesson, but to test if we are ready for something, if previous lessons have truly become a part of our thinking. If we stop seeing opposition as a negative thing, we will be able to embrace the opportunities.

The Whole Story

Harry Newton of SCI Camp Hill

An inmate recently died at Camp Hill Prison.

The officer was doing her 5:30 count when the inmate would not wake up. The guard did not try to see if the inmate needed medical attention but instead asked his cellmate to check his pulse and perform CPR on him. It took medical about 20 minutes to get to the block. No one got the man out of his cell until right before medical got there. The correctional staff never did anything; they just waited for medical. Medical came with an empty oxygen bottle and said two of their defib machines were low on battery.

The Department of Corrections does not report the facts about these events. They do not want

any bad news coverage for their inactions. But I saw everything: I was up when they did their count and was looking the whole time. I want to let the public and the outside world know that the DOC is not telling the whole story about what went on, and I want to let all inmates and their families know that there is someone trying to let the public know when the DOC is not telling the truth, when mistakes are made, and when the DOC is trying to cover them up



#LoveAboveBars Nominations 2023

Our nation’s founders came together over 235 years ago to form the Pennsylvania Prison Society; a “society” or group of people dedicated to the proposition that all among us are entitled to a life of dignity and care. A community that believes the criminal justice system should restore hope and the possibility of a “life of virtue and happiness,” not dash hope and end lives. For over 235 years, we have advanced this mission amidst wars, pandemics, and political upheaval. But, our focus has not wavered. Every year, we have come together as a community to honor those among us who exemplify our mission. Nominate someone who has shown unwavering commitment to humane prison conditions and exemplary leadership as an incarcerated individual, volunteer, or correctional employee.

Include the Following in Your Nomination:

Your Name:

SCI and Inmate Number:

Who are you nominating:

What are you nominating them for:

Why are you nominating this person: **Incarcerated Person, Correctional Employee, Or Volunteer**

Please provide a specific example or story of how this nominee has demonstrated unwavering commitment to humane prison conditions and exemplary leadership:

What facility are they affiliated with:

Black Leaders Who Used the Law to Reform Prisons from Within

Featured Article

Excerpt Reprinted: Erica Bryant, Vera Institute of Justice, Feb 01 2023

As we celebrate Black History Month, it is worth also celebrating the stories of Black incarcerated people whose fight for human rights helped improve prison conditions for people of all races.

For much of U.S. history, incarcerated people were denied protection under the Constitution. In 1871, the Virginia Supreme Court declared that a person who had been convicted of crimes forfeited all rights: “He is for the time being the [slave of the state](#).”

As a result, courts dismissed [lawsuits](#) from incarcerated people who complained of degrading mistreatment, saying that they deserved no [protection](#) under the law. But the persistence of people who had experienced prison and were inspired by the successes of the Civil Rights Movement refused to accept this denial of basic rights, working to effect change during the 1960s and 1970s.

[Martin Sostre](#), for example, grew up in Harlem and was incarcerated after a 1952 arrest. While behind bars, Sostre undertook a course of self-education. “For the first time, I had a chance to think, and began reading everything I could—history, philosophy, and law,” he told writer [Arthur Dobrin](#). He began learning about Islam in “Little Siberia,” as the frigid prison yard at Clinton Correctional Facility in upstate New York was dubbed, and sought his own copy of the Koran. Sostre also requested visits from Black Muslim ministers, as incarcerated Christian people had been granted time with their faith leaders.

His requests were met with scorn, however, and he was placed in solitary confinement for causing trouble in the prison. This meant sleeping on a concrete floor with no bed, mattress, lights, running water, or toilet.

From these awful circumstances, he put his studies of the Constitution and constitutional law to use. Sostre filed [a lawsuit](#) against the warden of his prison for denying him the ability to obtain a copy of the Koran, claiming that this infringed on his right to practice his religion, as guaranteed by the First Amendment. The suit was successful, laying the groundwork for others, including the landmark 1964 [Cooper v. Pate](#) decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Thomas Cooper, a member of the Nation of Islam, brought a [lawsuit](#) against the warden of the Illinois prison where he was incarcerated because the warden would not allow him to purchase religious publications by Black Muslims or to obtain a copy of the Koran. [The U.S. Supreme Court](#) ruled in favor of Cooper, establishing the precedent that the Bill of Rights applied inside of prisons and that incarcerated people had the [right to protection](#) under the Civil Rights Act of 1871.

This ruling gave incarcerated people the right to challenge the conditions that they were forced to live in, and an ensuing [wave of lawsuits](#) pushed prisons around the country to change their operations. Sostre later sued to [protest](#) mail censorship, dehumanizing physical examinations, and solitary confinement. He inspired other “[jailhouse lawyers](#)” to fight for their rights and, in at least [one case](#), gain freedom from prison. One lawsuit Sostre filed, after being left in solitary confinement for over a year for practicing law behind bars, led the Honorable Constance Baker Motley of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York to [state](#) that “basic constitutional rights cannot be sacrificed, even in the case of prisoners.”

As we work to end mass incarceration, we need to support incarcerated people who continue to fight to [improve prison conditions](#) from the inside. As Martin Sostre told [the New York Times](#) in 1975, “People say prisoner’s rights, but human rights are human rights.”

Thank you to Richard Gross and Yassin Mo
lish all of their poems in the 2022 Creative
Feeling inspired? There is still time to s

The Fight Isn't Over

Yassin Mohamad of SCI Phoenix

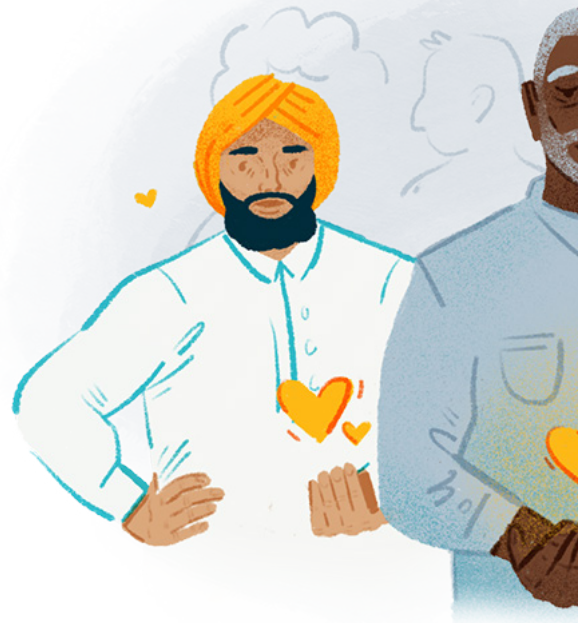
Keep the fight going,
hands up to protect your face—
chin tuck and eyes up to foresee the disgrace.

It's many rounds,
so stay on the ball of your feet—
tuck in your elbows to protect your body,
in case they think you're sweet.

Show you're the best pound for pound—
you beat death before,
and saved a life while listening to Cameo's "Hanging Down
Town."

You went that far; why stop here?
You're a Berry & Anderson—
You been around the Bruce, Kennedy's, and Charles Man-
sons.

The fight isn't over unless you stop breathing—
the crowd still is cheering for you,
because you give us hope in achievements.



phamad for their patience as we could not pub-
Issue. We are happy to share two of them here.
send us submissionf or the Summer issue!



That Sound I Like

Richard Gross of SCI Phoenix

There is a sound I like, but don't know how to spell,
The sound of snow underfoot, not slush, snow below 32.
As you crush it with a shoe, compact it in a footprint,
Sorta sounds like... budgee? But that's not really it.
Doesn't snow like it used to: too warm to lay or stay.
Many will never know that sound I like, but cannot write,
Today I walked on three inches at 22 degrees,
I had almost forgot about that sound I like.

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

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