New Unit for Women at SCI Phoenix

By Taylor Lawritson at Pennsylvania Prison Society

In July of 2018, the Pennsylvania DOC opened SCI Phoenix on the grounds of the now-closed SCI Graterford. While this new facility was anticipated for its state-of-the-art, $400 million dollar design, it also introduced an interesting first in the state of Pennsylvania: a separate 192-bed Female Transition Unit (FTU) on the property but not inside of the perimeter of SCI Phoenix. The FTU is slated to open this fall, two years after its initial construction.

The FTU is the result of an increasing focus on reentry services for women and on family reunification. The attention to the decarceration of women and the provision of additional services for women comes at a time when the social effects of the increase in incarceration are being felt by families all across the nation.

While the FTU aims to allow select women to engage in advanced reentry services, the main purpose of the program is to encourage people to reconnect with their families prior to release, a critical step in ensuring successful reentry. Aside from the new facility on the property of SCI Phoenix, there are only two state correctional institutions in Pennsylvania that serve women, out of a total of 24 state correctional institutions. Almost a third of incarcerated women in Pennsylvania are from Philadelphia and its surrounding counties, while prisons for women currently in operation lie significantly outside of the city’s limits. SCI Muncy is 160 miles from Philadelphia, roughly a three-hour drive one way, while SCI Cambridge Springs is 385 miles away, making it a whopping six-hour commute one way for families of the women incarcerated there. The FTU’s location at SCI Phoenix is a pragmatic adaptation to this geographic obstacle, laying just 35 miles or 45 minutes outside of Philadelphia.

The reunification of families is an important consideration when analyzing female incarceration. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, 80% of incarcerated women are mothers, and most of these women are the primary caregivers of their families. As a result, 2.3 million mothers are separated from their children each year. Tens of thousands of these children are placed in foster care, and many of those who remain with family members lose their parental relationship entirely. Only nine percent of mothers with children under the age of 18 will ever be visited by their children while incarcerated. This poses a significant negative impact on the emotional and behavioral development of these children through a process known as secondary prisonization, which allows the effects of incarceration to be extended to people outside of the justice system. The trauma of a parental loss through incarceration has been proven to increase depression and anxiety in children and even lower academic achievement, in part through a loss of support, but also due to social stigmas surrounding incarceration.

Research suggests that children who are able to keep in contact with their parents and form relationships even while their parent is incarcerated experience fewer behavioral and emotional issues than children who do not. Programs like the FTU at SCI Phoenix, which encourage parent-child relationships, are proven to help lower recidivism rates among women.

While these programs certainly cannot fully erase the trauma of incarceration, they do mitigate the impact. We encourage our subscribers, especially those who identify as women, to write to us and let us know your thoughts about the unit—good, bad, and otherwise. We will provide an update to our readers once the unit is fully operational.
Dear Friends of the Society,

During the first week of September, Pennsylvania had its biggest spike in new daily coronavirus cases since July 28th. This spike is being seen in state and county correctional facilities. Last week the state experienced four simultaneous outbreaks in correctional facilities—two in state prisons and two at county jails.

At York County Prison, nearly 200 people in custody have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past month. That’s about 15% of the jail population. And with 60 more test results outstanding, that number is likely to increase. Officials reported that most of the cases are asymptomatic, but at least one person has been hospitalized.

Northumberland County Jail announced its first coronavirus infections on August 29th. In its most recent update, the jail reported the virus had spread to a total of 33 people in custody and two corrections employees.

At State Correctional Institution (SCI) Camp Hill, 16 people in custody and 11 staff members have recently tested positive for COVID-19. Tests results are pending for 113 more people. SCI Mercer reported its first outbreak, which has infected 23 people in custody and 9 staff so far.

The DOC has placed the effected housing units at both SCIs under “enhanced quarantines” without access to phones or video visits. People in those units at Camp Hill are also unable to send emails. We know this is a difficult time for people in these facilities, and we are here to help in any way we can.

The coronavirus threat remains real, and prisons must do more to keep incarcerated people and staff safe. We applaud Northumberland County for beginning to reduce its jail population in response to the outbreak, which allows more space for quarantines and social distancing. But, anticipating outbreaks saves more lives than simply reacting once people have already gotten sick. Once again, we have called on all county and state officials to:

Expand and accelerate efforts to safely reduce the number of people in county and state facilities;
Require that every county publicly report prison testing results and virus-related deaths in custody;
Test and quarantine every new person entering custody;
Implement weekly, rapid testing of all staff that come into contact with people in custody; and
Eliminate the medical co-pay for accessing health care while in custody.

We are here for you, listening to you, and advocating for you.

Claire Shubik-Richards
Executive Director
Every year we honor people who have shown #LoveAboveBars — an unwavering commitment to humane prison conditions and exemplary leadership as a volunteer, correctional employee, or while being incarcerated. Thank you to those of you who submitted nominations over the last few months.

This year’s award winners are:

1. Kevin Bowman, SCI Chester, Incarcerated Person of the Year

Kevin was nominated because he “is one of their best mentors” and is “well respected” by staff and peers. Kevin is currently living in SCI Chester’s pilot Scandinavia Unit designed to explore alternative correctional approaches.

2. Kim Drum, DOC Central Office, Correctional Employee of the Year

Kim is the Health Care Advocate for the DOC. She was nominated because she is “always available to the Prison Society when we have serious concerns regarding the health care of incarcerated people.” She also plays a leading role in advocating for the compassionate release of terminally ill people.

3. Dave Moyer, Montgomery County, Prison Society Volunteer of the Year

Dave has been the convener of the Montgomery County chapter of the Prison Society for about a decade. He also frequently meets with the lifer’s group at SCI “to provide them with advice and perspective of someone not incarcerated.”

COVID-19 SURVEY

Thanks to your responses over the last few months, the Prison Society has now received over 300 responses to our COVID-19 survey. You have given us first hand accounts of what is going on inside, and we have recently released our report to the public. Provided is a summary of some of the findings:

Hygiene measures are largely implemented, but there is room for improvement.
Large majorities of respondents said prisons are facilitating daily hand washing and are regularly cleaning communal areas. But more than half (60.5%) reported receiving cleaning supplies just once a week.
Fewer than half of people surveyed reported feeling safe.

Although the survey did not ask specifically about masks, 121 respondents left comments about the issue. Of these, about 45 percent wrote that staff members wear masks rarely or only some of the time: “We are worried because the staff doesn’t wear their masks unless [a supervisor] comes onto the housing unit.” “Staff should keep their masks on while walking around in our population. Cause they are the only possibility that the prison could get infected.”

One in six say they can’t access medical care.
While 84 percent of respondents reported being able to access medical care, that still leaves about 1 in 6 people who say they haven’t been able to get health care during the pandemic. Comments written by survey participants suggest that prisons have restricted non-emergency medical visits, resulting in delays accessing services and, in some cases, people going without needed medical treatment altogether.

More than one out of every four respondents was unaware that the DOC has a policy of waiving medical co-pays for flu like symptoms.

Communication is an ongoing frustration.
A staggering two in three people indicated that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with how their prisons had communicated with them.

The pandemic continues to isolate those behind bars.
Although time outside the cell has increased since the start of lockdown—with close to one in three indicating that they got more than 120 minutes outside the cell each day. There are still many facilities that are facing harsher lockdowns. Nearly two in ten respondents reported getting fewer than 30 minutes outside the cell per day.

To our readers: know that we hear you. The Prison Society shared the survey results with the Department of Corrections. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections declined to comment on this survey and on the steps it was taking to improve. In addition, the Department declined to assist with further survey dissemination. This pandemic continues, and so does our work to advocate for those of you behind bars.

We will continue to use Graterfriends to survey our readers on the inside. This work is of vital importance: the pandemic makes it easier than ever for prisons to operate in the dark. If you are currently incarcerated in a PA facility, please fill out the attached survey on pages 21-23. We need your help to shine a light on what’s happening.

The opinions expressed are of the authors and not necessarily those of Graterfriends or The Pennsylvania Prison Society.
Hearsay Alone Cannot Establish Prima Facie at Preliminary Hearing
By Nicole Sloane, Criminal Defense Attorney

In Commonwealth v. McClelland, 2020 Pa. LEXIS 3807 (Pa. 2020), the Pennsylvania Supreme Court held that the Rules of Criminal Procedure do not permit hearsay evidence alone to establish prima facie at preliminary hearings. For years, prosecutors throughout Pennsylvania presented only hearsay testimony to bind over charges to the court of common pleas during preliminary hearings. Hearsay is an out of court statement used in court to prove the truth of the matter asserted. There are obvious problems with relying on hearsay at any court proceeding including the preliminary hearing. One such problem is the inability of the accused or his counsel to confront or cross-examine the original person that made the statement. Using hearsay during the preliminary hearing was so widespread throughout Pennsylvania that there is a nickname for the practice. When a case is “Rickered” it is held for court based on hearsay testimony as allowed by the Pennsylvania Superior Court decision in Commonwealth v. Ricker, 120 A.3d 349 (Pa. Super. Ct. 2015). Because of the Ricker decision, criminal defendants throughout Pennsylvania were deprived of their Constitutional rights of confrontation and due process for years.

In McClelland, the facts of the case involve an allegation that the defendant was alleged to have committed various sex offenses involving an eight-year-old child. A recorded interview with the alleged victim led to charges in Erie County. During McClelland’s preliminary hearing, the prosecutor did not call the victim to testify but rather, presented the testimony of a trooper who had witnessed the victim’s interview. The trooper testified about the statements the victim made during the interview. Obviously, this prevented defense counsel from cross-examining the victim. The magisterial district judge bound the charges over for trial. McClelland’s defense counsel, Peter Sala, filed a motion seeking a writ of habeas corpus based upon the Commonwealth’s use of hearsay to establish a prima facie case at the preliminary hearing. The trial court denied the defense motion. Attorney Sala filed an interlocutory appeal which the trial court permitted.

On appeal, the Superior Court decided in favor of the Commonwealth. Attorney Sala sought review with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court reversed the Superior Court expressly disapproving of Ricker and discharged McClelland without prejudice. In other words, the Commonwealth can still prosecute McClelland but the preliminary hearing evidence cannot be based solely upon hearsay.

In its decision, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court reminds us that the reason for the preliminary hearing is to protect an individual’s right against unlawful arrest and detention. The preliminary hearing is recognized by the court to include the right to due process as a “critical stage” of the proceedings, not a mere formality. Therefore, a case should not be bound over to the court of common pleas based only on hearsay. If hearsay is going to be presented, there must be other non-hearsay evidence presented to establish prima facie during a preliminary hearing for the charge or charges to be bound to the court of common pleas by the magisterial district court.
ADVICE FOR STRESS RELIEF DURING LOCKDOWN

From both our survey and letters written directly to our correspondence program, the Prison Society has received numerous concerns from our readers about managing the stress that has resulted from the continuous lockdown since the beginning of the pandemic. Below are some techniques that we hope you will find helpful as the lockdown and pandemic continue to impact our daily lives.

Why controlled breathing?
Controlled breathing exercises can help keep your mind and body in shape, by helping to lower blood pressure, promote relaxing feelings, and relieve stress.

Here are six expert-approved ways to relax using controlled breathing exercises borrowed from centuries-old yoga and meditation traditions.

1. Sama Vritti or “equal breathing” - Sleep Aid
Begin by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position with eyes open or closed. Through your nose, slowly inhale and exhale for 4 counts.

2. Abdominal breathing technique- Impending Stressful Situation Aid
With one hand on your chest and the other on your belly, inhale deeply through your nose so your diaphragm, not your chest, inflates. Slowly exhale.

3. Progressive muscle relaxation - Nix Excess Tension from Head to Toe
Sit down and close your eyes. Starting with your feet and toes, slowly inhale, tense each body part and slowly exhale to release. Continue moving through muscle groups up the body, moving next to knees, thighs, glutes, arms.

4. Nadi Shodhana or “alternate nostril breathing” - Waking Up
Sit in a comfortable meditative pose. With your dominant hand, press the tips of your pointer and middle fingers into your palm, leaving your ring finger, pinky finger, and thumb extended. Press your thumb on the outside of one nostril and inhale through the opposite. Release your thumb and press your ring finger on the opposite nostril to exhale. Continue this pattern for 1–2 minutes before switching sides.

5. 4-7-8 Breathing or “relaxing breath” - Sleep Aid
While sitting or laying comfortably, press the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth. Close your mouth and inhale through your nose for 4 counts. Then hold your breath for 7 counts. Finally, exhale very slowly so that it takes a total of 8 counts to return to the bottom of your breath. Repeat for at least 4 breaths.

6. Kapalabhati or “Skull-Shining Breath” - Waking Up
Begin sitting in an upright position with your hands on your knees. Slowly inhale and then powerfully exhale, both through your nose. Focus mainly on your forceful exhales as you continue this fiery breathing technique.

Your breath is one of your best defenses against daily stress, frustration, and existential angst. Once you learn the art of expert inhaling and exhaling, you’ll likely start to feel better. You might notice that you’ve developed a little extra resilience and grace.
Q & A: Advice from the Outside

Prison Society staff recently interviewed a participant in our mentoring program, Mu Pinner. Mr. Pinner joined our program virtually at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and communicated with us weekly until his release to Philadelphia this summer. Mr. Pinner spoke to Joe Robinson and Kirstin Cornnell, Prison Society Staff, about his experiences since coming home.

Prison Society: Were you incarcerated anywhere else before SCI Phoenix? If so, how did the SCIs vary?

Pinner: I spent a few years at SCI Forrest, which was tough because it was 8 hours from home. It was a culture shock for me dealing with staff from a rural community. When I was transferred to SCI Phoenix, it felt more about rehabilitation. I was able to accomplish things and I felt like I was more around my peers.

Prison Society: What has been the biggest challenge since coming home?

Pinner: It has been difficult to get all of the right documents in order. I lost my wallet, and just got a new Social security card today. It has been frustrating since I needed that to move forward with a lot of other things, but I keep reminding myself that it’s all about growth and moving forward. I took tomorrow off of work so I can take care of some business. I’m going to the DMV and hopefully getting a driver’s license. (*Note-- Mu passed and got his license!)

Prison Society: What has been the best part about coming home?

Pinner: Definitely being able to talk to and see my family without restriction. I am grateful to live with my wife.

Prison Society: What has surprised you the most about life at home?

Pinner: My Neighborhood has completely changed. When I went home to where I grew up, there was something in my heart that made me feel like I didn’t belong. I didn’t feel nostalgic, the only joy I got from it was walking to my mother’s house. I had to let go of my old environment. I’m glad I am where I am mentally, and I want what’s the best for me and my family.

Prison Society: You found a job pretty quickly upon release. How has that been going?

Pinner: I got a job 16 days after going home, which is a blessing. I love to be able to provide for my family and contribute. That said, I was venting to Joe a bit about it because I feel like I was introduced to it under false pretenses. They told me everything I wanted to hear, and it was the total opposite once I started working and got my first check. As a man, I know this is a stepping stone. I’m practicing patience. I have so many opportunities and people who want to help to get me a job. And now today I got my social security card and I’m studying all night so I can pass my driver’s test tomorrow.

I’m working on my resume and have a job opportunity in New Jersey for a personal training job. I already have personal training and nutrition specialist certification.

Prison Society: We may take you up on some personal training classes once you get started! Is there anything else you’d like to add or to say to people who are still incarcerated?

Pinner: I want to thank the Prison Society for reaching out and giving me a different platform; it’s not about extracting things from people. Instead it’s about building reciprocal relationships. Now I’m a resource for you as well.

I just want to tell people to keep your faith in God, and if you don’t allow your mind to travel past your present, your future is shot.

By Greg Corbin, Restorative Justice Program Director, Mural Arts Philadelphia

A Dark and Stormy Night

When Mural Arts Philadelphia started working with inmates at Graterford, neither group was sure what to expect. Having seen so many programs come and go, there was little incentive, on the part of the inmates, to become invested enough to trust that this local arts program would stick around. As it turns out, the hesitation was mutual. “It was a dark and stormy night,” Jane began when asked about her first visit to Graterford, sounding like she was about to break into a tall tale. She laughed, hearing it herself and said, “It was raining so hard, we got lost going there. By the time we found it I was so frustrated and I was thinking to myself, ‘Why are we doing this again?’ There were so many people, it was overwhelming—I had never been to a maximum security prison.”

“But as soon as I got into the room with the artists, it all changed. Everyone had their art up on the walls. Everyone was
really engaged and asking question after question.” That first meeting totally changed the trajectory of Mural Arts. “The men were pretty skeptical of us. They called us tourists—they thought we would just put it on our resume and leave. It was really our ability to stick with it that mattered.”

Since 2002, the Mural Arts program at Graterford, now SCI Phoenix, has not had any major interruptions—until COVID-19. Starting with two teaching artists, the original mural took ages to finish, but not because of any systematic restrictions. “The guys just wouldn’t finish the mural,” project manager Brian Campbell said. “They kept painting over work they’d already done.”

“We went to them and said ‘we have to finish this mural. We have a deadline. We have to file a report to the state arts council,’” Jane said. “They told me they were convinced that if they finished the mural we wouldn’t come back. So I said, Oh! We can come back! And since then, we have.”

James “Yaya” Hough, Philadelphia’s first District Attorney Artist-in-Residence and former program participant at Graterford, remembers the early days, too. “The enthusiasm of the guys, who numbered about between 10-12 incarcerated artists, had all been practicing and honing their skills and talents in various ways for over 10 years each. And I think the enthusiasm from all of us is what sort of drove us to literally beg Jane not only to come back but to help us establish some sort of mural making program within the institution. And I think that, well, reluctantly and graciously she accepted the challenge. Every one of us who has participated in the program hasn’t looked back.”

Graterford artists aren’t the only ones who are eager to keep the program running. Families are strong advocates that are looking for people to connect and be a voice for them. They are celebratory that someone is checking in on their family member and keeping them alive in more ways than just physically.

An Anthill of Activity

The program is unorthodox in both its inception and daily workings. “You might expect a classroom but I never took roll or anything like that,” said former lead teaching artist Eric Okdeh. “Some of the guys would have commissary on certain days or some days there’d be lockdowns. So you can’t really count on having the whole group there. On any given day, there are multiple groups working on different sections of the mural, some are even on a different floor entirely, doing projection work.”

“The everyday projects are a few panels that are brought in by the teaching artist and we would paint those,” said Akeil Robertson, a teaching assistant with Mural Arts’ Guild program and former program participant at Phoenix. “Special projects were opportunities where we got to meet the muralists, work with the muralists or artists in conceiving of and painting the design.”

“In a way, I went to the toughest, underground art school in the country,” remembers James. “We had to convert the space that we worked in, which was a big auditorium that we had about quarter of, into a studio. I learned how to have a working studio space that is functional—that assists you as an artist in the practice of bringing your creative vision to life. There is this whole process of artistic, things that happen to create a work of art. Beyond having raw ability and talent as an artist, it’s about how to clean brushes, how to clean up after yourself, how to mix colors, all those little things.”

Set up like an open studio, the classroom can feel like a busy ant hill with artists doing their own work, coming back together to see their progress, and scattering again to work on their portion of the larger whole. “It’s a lot of activity,” Eric confirmed. “Some of our busiest years we’d have four or five projects going in and out of there.”

Even though murals are the product, it’s not the only focus for the artists. Fine art, digital art, graffiti, poetry and spoken word, each topic gets its due with a prompt, a conversation around it, and then a deep dive into the practice of art. Throughout the process, the artists have the opportunity to get mentorship from the teaching artists or special guests. It can be an intimate experience of change and transformation.

As part of the funding from The Ford Foundation, the program brings guests into the prison. As Eric Okdeh recalls, “the thing that would always shock me was that no matter who we brought up, there were people in that group that could hold court with them, conversationally. We brought in artists from the West Coast and there were people who would talk about some of their contemporaries and then bring up Black Panther literature. There was always something that made the visit feel right. More often than not, the speakers came out of those experiences with completely changed perspectives and a different appreciation for the group and what we do.”

“The James Anderson Mural at 13th and Callowhill was a highlight for me because Shepard Fairey actually came to visit us and sat down with us,” remembers Akeil. “I had read about him in Juxtapoz, and then there he is sitting in front of me. It was a dope experience, just to be a part of that mural. And it was done differently than any mural I’d painted previously. It was the first mural I remember working on that the mural was printed onto the canvas, and then we just rolled the canvas out like forty feet sheets on the table and we just painted it right on down the line over like a week and a half. It was a different scale from the usual 5 foot by 5 foot panels—this was 5 foot by 40!”
Art is Transformative and Equalizing

The work with artists at Phoenix hasn’t just changed Mural Arts the organization, the people involved in the work have been transformed by it as well.

“Everyone identified as an artist, maybe not in a fine art sense but in a more communal art sense, in the idea that an artist is a member of the community or an artist is a member of a group,” said James. “What we didn’t see were the possibilities of scaling that up to a larger social engagement. Working with Mural Arts, we were moved out of the purely individual and became part of something social. That power, that idea of why you should transform, or why you need to transform as an individual from an individual-thinking person to a more social- or communal-thinking person played a really heavy role in the beginning of the transformation process.”

“I had a way of showing my family what I was doing. It’s one thing to say what you’re doing and tell them about it on the phone, but this is on a different scale. When you can point them to a mural that you painted and invite them to events,” said Akeil. “It was tangible in a way that prison tries to obscure. For me, in prison, it’s very much this disembodied voice without a visual representation of who I am, outside of maybe a mugshot. When we work in a visual medium, we give voice to the people that contribute to that making process. It totally recast my image. I became a different person in the eyes of those I love and in my own eyes as well. Throughout my interaction with the Mural Arts Program, I’ve just been privy to a master class in what it takes to develop oneself. This organization is very much one of overachievers, and I just appreciate that and being a part of that, being in that environment. It’s very helpful.”

Eric recalls one transformative project in particular: “In the Forgiveness Project, I designed a mural about the young kid named Kevin Johnson who was robbed, shot, and paralyzed for a jersey he was wearing. He subsequently died due to a problem with his breathing tube. We brought his mother in to talk to the guys in the program. She had a message of how she had to forgive the attackers,” remembers Eric Okdeh. “I personally drove her up to the prison on multiple occasions, but I remember the first time, everybody was on edge. She was worried about how her message would be received. And little did she know that everyone in my group was silently freaking out because they didn’t know how she was going to react to them. But both sides were really surprised. One of the people she forgave had been working with mural arts for years after that. The whole situation of being in there opened her eyes. It was a powerful experience.”

The message of sameness among difference resonates with my personal experiences with this work. In just over a year as the Restorative Justice Director with Mural Arts, I’ve seen how my work with these guys has made me more reflective. This person isn’t a finished product, and neither am I. This person isn’t perfect, and neither am I. This person needs love, and so do I.

This person is trying to redefine themselves, and so am I. There is no difference between us—except our environment and our experiences.

Greg Carbin, Restorative Justice Program Director, Mural Arts Philadelphia

Mural Arts Philadelphia

For over 35 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative process, rooted in the traditions of mural-making, to create art that transforms public spaces and individual lives. Through our Restorative Justice program, current inmates, probationers, and parolees are given the opportunity to learn new skills and make a positive contribution to their communities, to repair harm to communities impacted by crime through neighborhood projects. They receive art instruction, work on new murals, and perform other community service work, helping to shift community perceptions through these constructive contributions.

Mural Arts Philadelphia
1727-29 Mt. Vernon Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130
215-685-0750
www.muralarts.org

*The Prison Society is currently compiling a creative issue of Graterfriends, which will be released in late 2020. Please send us your art, your poetry, and your stories if you would like to be considered for inclusion.*
BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended by John Adams at Morgan County Jail and Clifford Karolski at SCI Camp Hill

Ithaca College Books Thru Bars
Ithaca College Library
P.O. Box 113
Brooktondale, NY 14817

Prison Book Program
Lucy Parsons Bookstore
1306 Hancock Street, Suite 100
Quincy, MA 02169

Providence Books Through Bars
42 Lenox Avenue
Providence, RI 02907-1910

Books Behind Bars
Prison Mindfulness Institute
P.O. Box 206
South Deerfield, MA 01373

Book 'Em
The Big Idea bookstore
5129 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Books to Prisoners Left Bank Books
92 Pike Street, Box Seattle, WA 98101

The Country Bookshop
Vermont Books to Prisoners
P.O. Box 234
Plainfield, VT 05667

Antioch College Books to Prisoners Project
One Morgan Place
Yellow Springs, OHIO 45387

Appalachian Prison Book Project
PO Box 601

Morgantown WV 26507

Ashville Prison Books Project
Downtown Books and News
67 N. Lexington Ave.
Ashville, NC 28801

Helpful Tips for Requesting Books

For Faster Delivery:
- You should limit your category/genre selection list to no more than six.
- Always specify if your facility allows used and hardcover books.
- Do not request books from the same donor for a minimum of 90 days (three months).
- Avoid messy hand-writing.
- Always include your address at the bottom of your letter.
- Always allow at least 90 days for delivery.

Sample Letter:

Wednesday, March 27 2019
Hello,

I am writing to respectfully request any softback books you can provide on the following True Crime, Fantasy, Poetry, Westerns, and Self-Help.

Thank you so much for your time and efforts.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Adams #123456
Po Box 2000
Wartburg, TN 37887

Reminder: Donations like books are expensive, and often not tax write offs. If it’s within your ability to send a donation please do! Even if it’s only one stamp. Anything helps.

Proverbs 3:27 - Do not withhold good from those whom it is due when it is in your power to do it.

The opinions expressed are of the authors and not necessarily those of Graterfriends or The Pennsylvania Prison Society.
In 1865, after the end of the American Civil War, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were passed. The 13th Amendment asserted the abolishment of slavery, but instituted a clause which allowed slavery as a form of punishment. The 14th Amendment granted citizenship; however, Black people have never been afforded equal rights or protections under the law to those of their European counterparts. The 15th Amendment afforded Black people the right to vote. However, the Black vote has been systematically suppressed, time and time again, since its inception. The Civil Rights Movement of the 60’s was an indictment against America’s inability to adhere to the standards they set in the 14th and 15th Amendments. The promises made by white elected officials to undo a history of oppression were broken, unable to overcome the white supremacist identity that has long been core to America. At some points, Black people have been legally identified as a subhuman species, reduced to being just three-fifths of a man. While the U.S. Constitution was drafted and ratified in 1787, Blacks were in slavery. The crafters of that charter, white men who advocated for slavery and the slave trade, methodically precluded Blacks. Many of them were slave and plantation owners, men who could only envision living in a country dominated by caucasian men.

Modern day physical and judicial lynchings, false arrests legitimized through malicious prosecutions, prosecutorial misconduct, police oppression, sustained violations of due process, and disproportionate sentencing driven by racial oppression, have not suppressed the voice or the will of Black America. Despite the sheer lack of checks and balances on racial inequality within the inherently racist infrastructure of America, the strength of Black America has persisted. The policing and judicial systems have been weaponized against the Black nation. Implicit bias, (the social sentence), has demonized Black skin in the social arena. Inferior living conditions, prejudice in the healthcare system, and deliberate academic deprivation have all contributed significantly to America’s racial caste system. Blacks in this nation have continuously been plagued by the gross injustices of institutional racism, and today, the descendants of those African people who were forced into the slave system must now face the harsh realities of those same heinous values that attempted to destroy the dignity and humanity of prior generations of African ancestry. In America, incarceration is, in essence, reformed chattel slavery, dominated by persecuted Black prisoners through structured police oppression. Police who maintain the position of the overseer while assuming the identity of the slave catcher. Black blood is on the hands of the American dream, and Black blood is on the hands of all 3 branches of the American government because this nation was built on African slave labor. So continue to fight for your Freedoms, and Fight for “Improvements,” because change can be good or bad, but Improvement is positive progress.

***Inspired by the killing of George Floyd***

George Floyd’s death will be the straw that breaks the racist beam of systemic racial injustice that has permeated America.

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 struggle for our freedom continues. 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.

Dear Mr. Flood, I know you are a busy man. I personally appreciate you and your staff and the work you are doing concerning clemency. Your staff has been spectacular in helping us in our fight for freedom.

I pray that you may feel as I feel concerning this matter. When the House Bill 135 and/or Senate Bill 942 comes to pass, I pray that we can revisit this matter in the future.

The act of forgiving is harder than holding onto resentment. Would you forgive a person that did you wrong or harmed you? If you answer yes, then ask yourself this: is it truly forgiveness or just a momentary letting go?

Holding in hatred gives the perpetrator power and control over you. This leads you to become dependent on the perpetrator. Thus, moving on and helping the perpetrator helps them to become a better person, too. The sad part is that our resentments are more poisonous to us than to the person whom we are resenting. When we resent, we carry the hate!

But, the person we often have the hardest time forgiving is ourselves. It’s said “no one can drive you crazy unless you give em the keys.” In closing 1 Corinthians 13, self-love is a must, but that love is described as “never [failing].” Never Lose Faith! Neither Should We! Let Go!
In the early '60s, the late great Sam Cooke sang “It's been a long time coming, but I know a change is gonna come.” The message that he sang about in “A Change Is Gonna Come” is one that our society is all about right at this moment in time; addressing systemic racism. I, a white man, a Brother, have been on this earth for 68 years, and in all of my 68 years, I have witnessed systemic racism in every corner of our society. It seems that a majority of black, brown, and white people have, in one accord, grown tired of this systemic racism; more than that, they have grown tired of being complacent about it. “Wake up Everybody!” “Lift Every Voice!” “Silence is not golden!” “United We Stand!” “Either you’re with us, or you’re against us!” “Say It Loud!”

The silent majority is no longer silent. We must all be held accountable. Either you are part of the solution, or you are part of the problem.

A few days ago, a close friend of mine asked me if racism is systemic in PA’s DOC. Apparently, he did not know that prisons are a microcosm of society. “Do you really not know?” I asked. He did not, he said. So I gave it to him: Systemic racism, friend, is, indeed, very much a part of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. It is as systemic as corruption in the thin-blue-line; as systemic as a lack of accountability at all levels; as in the good-old-boys-network; as systemic as the warehousing of prisoners is systemic; as the denial of meaningful vocational and educational opportunities for prisoners is systemic; the denial of humane medical and dental treatment for prisoners is systemic; as the lack of a healthy, nutritional diet is systemic; as the indifference, cowardice and barbarism of the prison system's status quo, from good-old Commissioner Johnny right on down to his wardens, is systemic. These people wouldn't recognize vision if God gave them one. And make no mistake about it, the prisoners are just as guilty of lacking any vision of their own. Instead of talking about how to bring about change in these joints, the prisoners continue to ask for Xbox and other games, for ice cream and sodas, for more yard time.

“Well, where are the conscientious objectors among you?” my friend asked. “Why no protests, why no peaceful resistance to all this injustice?”

Now he had me frustrated. Now I wanted to say, “What's with the twenty questions?” I didn't, though. I was speechless. I paused, dropped my head, and sighed. Silence was the only answer I had.

Pennsylvania has a high assault rate on both staff and prisoners, which is a problem that can and should be addressed. Pennsylvania’s prisons could be made far safer for everyone involved with the passage of a ‘Good Time’ bill. A ‘Good Time’ bill would allow prisoners to reduce their time by participating in educational programs, working, and staying misconduct free. Through adherence to the standards set forth by the ‘Good Time’ bill, prisoners could earn 10 to 12 days off their sentence each month. The passage of a ‘Good Time’ bill would be a prison reform that is beneficial to all who live and work inside Pennsylvania’s prisons.

Pennsylvania’s criminal justice system has no empathy or compassion for prisoners sentenced to life. The mental, physical and spiritual tolls of a life sentence go unacknowledged. The only relief to look forward to is death.

Now is the time to reform the grinding tortures of all sentences, but especially sentences that doom inmates to life without parole. With no chance of freedom from incarceration, there is no hope.

Many Pennsylvanians join the rest of our country in feeling the sting of lockdown in response to COVID-19. As an incarcerated individual who is now 24 years into loss of freedom, I hear on my television the voices of fellow Americans expressing their personal stories of financial, mental, emotional, and physical pain brought about by isolation and a loss of freedom. I empathize with them, and it is my hope that this new experience in isolation may bring about a newfound mindfulness towards what we incarcerated individuals experience on a daily basis. Instead of isolating for weeks in our homes, we spend decades in a box.

My intention is not to diminish the rights of victims or do away with incarceration as a consequence to crime, but to frame a debate on the lengthy sentences that have resulted from mass incarceration and their effects on the mental health of incarcerated individuals. Mental health is important to all human beings, and one does not surrender the human condition upon being incarcerated. In a speech in 2019, Secretary Wetzel spoke about how an individual's humanity is not diminished by incarceration. We need continued support to make sure this becomes a reality.
These are a few statements made by people experiencing just a few weeks of social distancing:

- WYOU News: “Honestly were all going a little crazy staying at home!”
- CBS Morning Show: “Day 1: I’ve got this. By day 30 of quarantine-everyones a complete mess!”
- DR.OZ Show, Mel Robbins: “Home for 6 weeks. The truth is the wheels came off...I had an emotional crisis! It’s about the rise of stress due to lack of independence. We’ve lost control over our lives; this triggers anxiety and the loss of human connection!”
- Former NJ Gov. Chris Christie: “We need to look at the real mental health effects the shut down is having on the American people!”

I am sure you can locate thousands of these statements on the internet. My point was not to downplay the fact that incarcerated individuals in the PADOC put ourselves here. It was to raise this question: If we [as a] society feel a negative effect on our mental health after several weeks in our homes then, what are lengthy sentences doing to the mental state of those incarcerated individuals?

Following the statewide quarantine, the SCI Benner Township community stepped up. The prison’s organizations held fundraiser sales and the Chaplaincy Department oversaw donations to aid those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through two hoagie sales, Inmates Helping Our Prison Environment, or IHOPE, raised and donated more than $2,600 to support two local worthy causes: the Centre County Anti-Hunger Program and the Centre County Homeless Shelter. The former collects food and prepares meals for the children of the county who typically rely on the meals they receive at school.

Benner Township Superintendent, Dr. Robert Marsh, spoke on the success of the sale, and expressed his appreciation for the inmates that participated. IHOPE would like to recognize those businesses that made the fundraisers successful: Troy’s Philadelphia Style Hoagies and Bonfatto’s Italian Market and Corner Café.

Additionally, the prison’s Chaplaincy Department raised more than $3,000 in donations to benefit three local organizations. While the Chapel had a goal of raising $2,000, the inmate population came through and exceeded that amount. The Protestant Chaplain, Henry Hansard, explained that he was hoping to raise $2,000 and split the pot between two organizations, but the donations exceeded the goal. Three organizations benefited from the fundraiser: the Salvation Army, the Food Bank of Johnstown and the Nehemiah Project in Altoona. The Nehemiah Project is a community based non-profit that helps those in a time of need. During the pandemic, it has been providing daily meals to local residents.

REPORTS FROM THE INSIDE

Peer Support
K. Kabasha Griffin, DB7067, SCI Somerset

Prior to my imprisonment, I had never been introduced to the concept of “Peer Support.” However, this being my first prison experience, there were several days where I found myself deep in crisis, and in need of the support of my peers. To my benefit, I had the good fortune of being shown compassionate care by a few prisoners that took time to listen and talk with me, sharing guidance on how I might best spend my time in ways that make my situation better and not worse. Much of it was simple: don’t borrow, don’t gamble, and mind your own business. Others gave more goal orientated advice such as, “young man, this is no joke. Get into that law library and study your case so that you can help yourself out of this mess.” Then there were those who encouraged me to continue my education and to do all that I am able to ensure I’m ready when the doors of freedom finally open for me. There were even those who have held my hands, prayed, and cried with me.

Each of the examples shared above are illustrations of a few of my personal experiences with “peer support.” My peers supported me through internal turmoil, which was stirred by the ongoing crisis of knowing that I had caused someone’s death and consequently faced the possibility of my own. They inspired hope by reminding me that I had the power to choose to make my situation better and not worse. By encouraging me to focus on preparing for a better future, they held hope for me when I wasn’t able to. I was empowered by their suggestions to continue my education and to seek various resources in the interests of self-advocacy. They gave my voice validation by listening, allowing me to share not only my pain, but my accomplishments, joys, and aspirations. When my faith diminished, my peers kept my spirituality alive by praying with me. They gave unconditional support, letting me know that I was not alone and that my life had purpose.

Pennsylvania prisons didn’t have a peer support program in 1995 (the year of my crimes and imprisonment). The men that took time to support me then were guided solely by their life experiences, and compassion. They got the job done with what they had available to them at the time. Intuitively, they saw my need, and unsolicitely did their best to set me on a pathway to recovery. For that I am grateful.
In 2013, during my imprisonment at SCI Greene, my counselor told me that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections had created an official peer support program known as the Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Initiative. He further shared that upon input from other staff members, and observing my interactions with other prisoners, he believed I'd be a good candidate for the program. Humbled by the offer, I accepted, received training, and have been providing Certified Peer Support to other imprisoned men since November of 2013.

**Update on Sweat Lodge Case**

*Marvin "Running River" Banks, ND5137, SCI Benner Township*

To all the Native American brothers and sisters incarcerated in these Pennsylvania iron houses:

I call all Native communities and warriors at heart; we are at the end of a long fight. My team of lawyers and I have successfully procured the Sweat Lodge Ceremony for us inside SCI-Benner, and this marks a very special time for our spiritual growth. In Banks v. Smith we have received, “Permission to...construct a Native American sweat lodge at the State Correctional Institution at Benner subject to the following conditions: No state money will be used to purchase, build, and/or maintain the sweat lodge.” I pray that all Native communities humble themselves and really build on this success, not only for themselves, but for the sake of supporting legal reforms for our community. I understand that The DOC policies are hard on us, but my case’s success proves that if you fight for what you believe in, you can bring forth change.

I remind everyone there is still much work to be done. I am looking forward to hearing about the issues you all face where you are. Please feel free to reach out. In addition, the American Indian Movement is awaiting your request for membership. Join the P.A. chapter, and let us fight against discrimination, racism, and the establishment. Let's fight for our rights together.

**PA's Vulnerable Elderly**

*James Brown, CQ3404, SCI Albion*

With the spread of the Coronavirus, the time for empathy and compassion for Pennsylvania’s elderly prison population has arrived. These prisoners are especially vulnerable due to underlying conditions such as compromised immune systems as well as chronic and mental illnesses.

The outbreak of the Coronavirus has revealed a lack of community standards and overall proper healthcare in prisons. There is no such thing as social distancing in prison. People are forced into close confinement, living in makeshift dormitories. Spaces that were built for four prisoners now hold eight or nine. A cell for one is now forced to hold two. The chow halls, library, classrooms, gyms, and yards are overcrowded. If COVID-19 comes into one of the prisons, these overcrowded conditions will make it impossible to contain an outbreak, just as other illnesses like Hepatitis-C have been so difficult to contain in prisons. To die in prison from this pandemic is the worst possible outcome for those who are already destined to die in prison.

It has long been known that the recidivism rate is less than 1% for lifers who have served long sentences and are released. Thus, the release of inmates who are 60 and over should be reconsidered. This issue must be addressed with any and all legal challenges—it’s an emergency!

**Restorative Justice Workshop**

*Daniel Cummings, AF4891, SCI Phoenix*

While on my way to my first Restorative Justice workshop earlier this year, I noticed the Department of Corrections policy hanging on the walls. Their policy principles caught my attention because the words are similar to the Restorative Justice principles: “The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections operates as one team, embraces diversity, and commits to enhancing safety. We are proud of our reputation as leaders in the correction field. Our mission is to reduce criminal behavior by providing individualized treatment and education through accountability and positive change.”

I was anxious to get into the room so that the facilitators could get the program started. “Let’s Circle Up” begins at 8:00 AM and ends at 3:45 PM.

In all the programming that I have participated in over the past 48 years of my incarceration, I can honestly tell you that Restorative Justice is one of the best programs that the Department of Corrections has to offer. If you are sincere about accountability, redemption, and healing for the communities that you will be returning to, I encourage you to get involved in Restorative Justice programs.

One of the things that surprised me was the number of young men participating in the program on a Saturday morning when there are so many other activities that these young brothers could have been involved in. But, they had turned off the TV, cancelled their weekend activities, and instead had chosen to discuss and share personal tragedies that have occurred in their lives with others who might be still grieving from the harm that they have caused others.

In listening to their stories, I became aware that many of them never had a childhood. They grew from boys to men physically, emotionally, and mentally in dysfunctional households with families that had no idea of what it means to be a man. Their understanding
of manhood was learned from the streets. Our communities need more long-term dedicated mentors.

For more information, visit: www.aCryForJustice.net and www.LetsCircleUp.org

Imaginary Accountability
Michael Donohue, KK3243, SCI Huntingdon

On May 17th, 2020, the first one died. The next day, the next one died. Before a makeshift vigil could even be held on the prison’s movie channel, another one died. The coronavirus ripped through SCI Huntingdon like an F5 tornado. 6 men were dead from COVID-19, and hundreds of us were infected. Hundreds of DOC staff were undoubtedly and unknowingly spreading the virus to their families and communities, starting a ripple effect with unknown but certain consequences.

It is difficult for me to articulate the anger that was surging inside me. I was angry that a couple of my friends had died. I was afraid the virus was damaging my body. I was bored by the monotony of 24 hour lockdown. But mostly, I was saddened by the pathetic attempts from the administration to control this virus.

At some point in May, with the temporary triage in the basketball gym filled to capacity, staff here decided to stop testing for COVID-19. Instead, the medical staff started daily monitoring of body temperature and blood pressure for every inmate over the age of 65. This was their way of saying “we know all of you could have the virus, but we can only look after the most at risk.”

My reliable source of information was the local news where I watched our numbers tick up as steadily as a clock. At that point, the news media had been camped out front of the prison for a week, and our plight got its 15 seconds of fame. At this point, the news media had been camped out front of the prison for a week, and our plight got its 15 seconds of fame. Now, it’s August. Those six men are still dead. We are still on 23 hour lockdowns, and my body is still reeling from the effects of Coronavirus, as I have not yet regained my sense of smell, and suffer from daily headaches. I write this article because the public needs to know what really happened here. The people of Pennsylvania need to see how deadly COVID-19 is in prisons. SCI Huntingdon had the perfect storm of no ventilation, the impossibility of social distancing, and an incompetent network of administrators that failed to protect the population here.

If you ask prison officials like Secretary Wetzel, they’ll tell you SCI Huntingdon had about 200 cases of covid, which was dangerous, but through quarantine it was eradicated. What reality will tell you is that every single last one of us was infected. This outdated prison built in 1885 has become a petri dish of Coronavirus. Our positive numbers are down now, not because of preventative measures implemented by staff, but because we’ve all already had the virus.

With accountability being imaginary, no one will ever have to answer for the horrors that unfolded here. But hey, we get free cable and snack bags! So, who cares?

Transfers from SCI Retreat
Patrick Horan, HF2541, SCI Camp Hill

With the closure of SCI Retreat, many of its inmates have been transferred across all corners of PA, without regard for either the locations of our families, or Incentive Based Transfers (IBTs), D-Roster Status, and programming needs. I am a guilty, but mentally ill prisoner who was sentenced to be housed in a secure mental health facility within a reasonable distance of my family who could visit me. While at SCI Retreat, I was on D-Roster. But I was transferred to Camp Hill, more than 100 miles away. And, when I arrived at Camp Hill, I was immediately removed from the Residential Treatment Unit and placed in general population, where I have received no mental health treatment. There are many others in similar circumstances—moved with no regard for their mental health status, treatment needs, or distance from their families. And, to add insult to injury, despite many years of good behavior, the jobs we held at our old facilities are not being honored in our new ones.

My family and friends were told that this is only temporary until the COVID-19 crisis is over, but I have since been informed that I will be at Camp Hill for two years before I can request another IBT. It feels like the concerns expressed by the DOC regarding our community ties and mental health concerns were a lie.

Were you recently transferred or assigned a new state ID number? Let us know!

The DOC does not alert us when you are transferred or assigned a new number.

Please write us so we can update our mailing list and ensure quick delivery of your Graterfriends!

Want to subscribe to Graterfriends?

See the order form on page 24.
PA State Officials

Governor Tom Wolf
Governor’s Correspondence Office
508 Main Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
P: 717-787-3391
F: 717-772-8284

Attorney General Josh Shapiro
PO Box 22653
Philadelphia, PA 19110
P: 215-886-7376

Senator __________
Senator PO Box 203 __  *  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Representative __________
PO Box 202 __ _ _ *
Harrisburg, PA 17120

*If you know the three-digit district number for your Senator or Representative, add it to the PO Box number. If you do not know, information for Senators is available at www.pasen.gov; information for Representatives is available at www.house.state.pa.us.

DOC Secretary John Wetzel
19020 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
P: 717-728-2573
W: www.cor.pa.gov
E: ra-crpadocsecretary@pa.gov

Prison Society Mentoring Program

Families and Individuals Reintegrating Successfully Together (F.I.R.S.T.), our mentoring program, is a voluntary program for men currently in the Transitional Housing Unit (THU) at SCI Chester and SCI Phoenix.

The program helps prepare incarcerated individuals for successful reentry mentally, emotionally, and logistically. After a series of workshops on relevant topics (such as social media, applying for medical benefits, securing housing, and obtaining education and jobs), mentees are assigned to mentors, to meet one-on-one for at least six months to develop and achieve a personalized goal plan. We are also working with soon-to-be-released Juvenile Lifers across the state to help them bridge into life outside in the community.

We are always seeking mentors and mentee participants. For more information, or for a mentor application, please contact:

Joseph Robinson, Mentoring Program Case Manager
P: 215-564-4775, ext. 1005

FAMM

FAMM, a DC-based sentencing reform organization, is working to fight mandatory minimums in Pennsylvania, but needs case examples to help convince lawmakers to support fair sentencing.

If you are serving a long mandatory sentence for a drug or gun offense, please send 1) your name, 2) you contact information, 3) contact information for an outside friend of family member, 4) a brief description of your offense, and 5) your sentence, to:

FAMM
Attn: Pennsylvania Stories
1100 H Street, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005

Note: FAMM does not offer direct legal assistance, but the organization will contact you by mail if they’d like to learn more about your case.

The Prison Society and Broad Street Ministry

The Prison Society at Broad Street Ministry is a collaboration providing reentry support for people returning to Philadelphia. At Broad Street Ministry, individuals can receive a P.O. Box, change of clothes and personal care items, as well as meet with a reentry associate. Broad Street partners with multiple non-profit organizations who offer on-site assistance with medical care, housing, employment, public benefits, and obtaining personal identification.

Broad Street Ministry
315 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
P: 215-735-4847
W: www.broadstreetministry.org

LAMBDA Resources for LGBTQ People in Custody

Lambda Legal's mission is to achieve full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and everyone living with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, we do not charge our clients for legal representation or advocacy, and we receive no government funding. We depend on contributions from supporters around the country.

National Headquarters
120 Wall Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10005-3919
P: 212-809-8585
W: www.LambdaLegal.org

The opinions expressed are of the authors and not necessarily those of Graterfriends or The Pennsylvania Prison Society.
Expungements

Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
P: 267-519-5323

Expunge Philadelphia
Juvenile Expungement Hotline
P: 267-765-6770

Community Legal Services
Center City Office
1424 Chestnut St.
Philadelphia, PA 19102-2505
P: 215-981-3700
North Philadelphia Law Center
1410 W. Erie Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19140
P: 215-227-2400

ACLU
Whether it’s achieving full equality for LGBT people, establishing new privacy protections for our digital age of widespread government surveillance, ending mass incarceration, or preserving the right to vote or the right to have an abortion, the ACLU takes up the toughest civil liberties cases and issues to defend all people from government abuse and overreach.

ACLU Pennsylvania Central Office
P.O. Box 11761
Harrisburg, PA 17108
P: 717-238-2258
W: www.aclupa.org
E: hbginfo@aclupa.org

Prisoner’s Rights

Abolish Death by Incarceration
c/o Decarcerate PA
PO Box 40764
Philadelphia, PA 19107
P: 267-217-3372
W: www.decarceratepa.info
E: decarceratepa.pgh@gmail.com (Pittsburgh)
E: cadbiphilly@gmail.com (Philadelphia)
E: decarceratepa@gmail.com

PA Institutional Law Project: Philadelphia
The Cast Iron Building
718 Arch Street, Suite 304 South
Philadelphia, PA 19106
P: 215-925-2966 (Philadelphia)
F: 215-925-5337 (Philadelphia)
P: 570-523-1104 (Lewisburg)
P: 412-434-6004 (Pittsburgh)
W: www.pailp.org

Prison Activist Resource Center
PO Box 70447
Oakland, CA 94612
P: 510-893-4648
W: www.prisonactivists.org/resources
E: info@prisonactivists.org

Reentry Services

Philadelphia Reentry Coalition
P: 1-215-683-3379
E: philareentrycoalition@gmail.com

Franklin County Reentry Coalition (Franklin Together)
533 S. Main Street Chambersburg, PA 17201
P: 717-263-5060 ext. 314

Life Without Parole

Women Lifers Resume Project of PA
PO Box 324
New Hope, PA 18938
P: 814-393-5400 (Cambridge Springs)
P: 570-546-3171 (Muncy)
W: www.wlrpp.org

Pennsylvania Innocence Project
The Pennsylvania Innocence Project has a four-fold mission to: (1) secure the exoneration, release from imprisonment, and restoration to society of persons who are innocent and have been wrongly convicted; (2) provide clinical training and experience to students in the fields of law, journalism, criminal justice, and forensic science; (3) collaborate with law enforcement agencies and the courts to address systemic causes of wrongful convictions; and (4) strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Pennsylvania through public education and advocacy.

Philadelphia Office
1515 Market St
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Pittsburgh Office
914 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

W: www.InnocenceProjectPA.org
P: 215-204-4255
E: InnocenceProjectPA@temple.edu

The opinions expressed are of the authors and not necessarily those of Graterfriends or The Pennsylvania Prison Society.
PPS is partnering with FAMM, ACLU of PA, Americans for Prosperity, the Commonwealth Foundation and others to support positive reforms. In January, representatives from all five of these organizations spent a day at the State Capitol sharing their priorities with lawmakers and expressing their bipartisan support for criminal justice reform. The following are new legislative criminal justice initiatives introduced since August. For information on other currently pending criminal justice reform legislation, see previous issue. [Note: SJC = Senate Judiciary Committee, HJC = House Judiciary Committee.]

### EXECUTIVE ACTION

**2020 Act 63** (formerly HB 256) was approved by Governor Wolf on July 23, 2020. 2020 Act 63 amends the PA crimes code (Title 18) to provide for the offenses of assault by prisoner and institutional sexual assault, and adds institutional sexual assault to the tiered system of sexual offenses under Title 42.

*Enacted on July 23, 2020 by Governor Wolf.*

### SENATE BILLS

**SB 1275** would establish and increase reporting requirements when restricted housing is used, or when restraints are applied to incarcerated or detained pregnant, birthing, or postpartum individuals. SB 1275 would also prohibit the use of restrictive housing for incarcerated pregnant and postpartum individuals, except in cases where serious and immediate risk of physical harm is posed to the pregnant or postpartum individual or another incarcerated individual. SB 1275 also seeks to limit forms of discipline and cavity searches for pregnant or postpartum incarcerated individuals, and places restrictions on inspections. SB 1275 would provide for free feminine hygiene products, consideration of family location in the placement of incarcerated individuals, and staff training on mental and physical health for pregnant and postpartum incarcerated people.

SB 1275 was introduced on August 24, 2020 and is currently in Senate Judiciary Committee.

*Prime Sponsor: Senator Bartolotta (R).*

### HOUSE BILLS

**HB 2709** would amend the PA crimes code by providing for the offense of sexual assault by police officer, creating a third-degree felony provision if a peace officer engages in sexual intercourse with someone who is being investigated by the officer, under arrest, or detained. HB 2709 would also require termination of employment, and banning of future employment as a peace or correctional officer in PA if convicted of this offense.

HB 2709 was introduced on July 30, 2020 and is currently in the PA House Judiciary Committee.

*Prime Sponsor: Representative McClinton (D).*

### In Memoriam: Tributes to Those Lost During COVID-19

The Graterfriends team was greatly moved by Andrew O-Lock’s piece *Lifers Lost* found on page 11. The large-scale impact of this pandemic has led to many individual’s deaths becoming part of a statistic, especially inside our prisons and jails.

We would like to offer up the opportunity for others to write a tribute to someone on the inside that they have lost. We will feature these tributes in the next issue of Graterfriends.

Please write us a tribute with the following information:

- Individual’s name
- Facility they were incarcerated at
- A few sentences about their life and impact

The opinions expressed are of the authors and not necessarily those of Graterfriends or The Pennsylvania Prison Society.
# Demobilization Plan

*From Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 5: Most Restrictive</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1: Least Restrictive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohort Size</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 or Less</td>
<td>50 or Less</td>
<td>No Cohort Limitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Detail</strong></td>
<td>Not Permitted</td>
<td>Permitted to maintain critical operations</td>
<td>Permitted in Cohorts</td>
<td>Permitted in Cohorts with permission to leave cohort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment &amp; Educational Services</strong></td>
<td>Complied in Cell</td>
<td>Complied in-cell with unit leaving permitted</td>
<td>Treatment programs &amp; instructions must align with cohort and social distancing</td>
<td>Treated programs &amp; instructions must align with cohort and social distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meds</strong></td>
<td>Delivered to Medic Unit</td>
<td>Delivered to Medic Unit</td>
<td>Medication must be delivered to Medic Unit</td>
<td>Medication must be delivered to Medic Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical Services &amp; Medication</strong></td>
<td>Provided in Housing Unit</td>
<td>Provided in Housing Unit</td>
<td>Medical services must be delivered to Medic Unit</td>
<td>Medical services must be delivered to Medic Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Law &amp; Leisure Activity Services</strong></td>
<td>Delivered to Housing Unit</td>
<td>Law &amp; Leisure Activities must be delivered to Housing Unit</td>
<td>Open with cohort and social distancing limitations</td>
<td>Open with cohort and social distancing limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commissary</strong></td>
<td>Delivered to Housing Unit</td>
<td>Delivered to Housing Unit</td>
<td>May be received in commissary with cohort and social distancing</td>
<td>May be received in commissary with cohort and social distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barber Shop &amp; Cosmetology Services</strong></td>
<td>Not Permitted</td>
<td>Not Permitted</td>
<td>Not Permitted</td>
<td>Permitted with social distancing guidelines and enhanced PPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreation</strong></td>
<td>Not Permitted</td>
<td>Not Permitted</td>
<td>Not Permitted</td>
<td>Permitted with social distancing guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>In-cell</td>
<td>In-cell</td>
<td>In-cell</td>
<td>Normal Activities Resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visitor</strong></td>
<td>In-Person Limited to Visitors in Waiting Room Video Visitation Permitted</td>
<td>In-Person Limited to Visitors in Waiting Room Video Visitation Permitted</td>
<td>In-Person Limited to Visitors in Waiting Room Video Visitation Permitted</td>
<td>In-Person Limited to Visitors in Waiting Room Video Visitation Permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Activities</strong></td>
<td>Delivered to Housing Unit</td>
<td>Religious Services must be delivered to Housing Unit</td>
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The opinions expressed are of the authors and not necessarily those of Graterfriends or The Pennsylvania Prison Society.
The Department of Corrections is offering video visiting for ALL incarcerated individuals and their authorized visitors. While only recently implemented, video visits will be held seven days a week. The DOC conducted 5,174 video visits between March 19-April 2. There are more than 2,100 video visits scheduled to take place through April 25. This number will continue to increase due to daily scheduling happening at state prisons.

**How to Set up a Video Visit**

1. The visitor on the outside needs to download the Zoom Cloud Meeting application on a smartphone, tablet, or computer- AFTER DOWNLOADING, THE VISITOR WILL NOT USE ZOOM UNTIL THE DAY OF THE CALL.

2. Each facility has a different Zoom resource email that the visitor must contact to schedule the visit. The corresponding emails are below:

   - Albion - RA-CRALBZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Benner Township - RA-CRBENZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Camp Hill - RA-CRCAZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Cambridge Springs - RA-CRCSZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Chester - RA-CRCCHSIZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Coal Township - RA-CRCAZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Dallas - RA-CRDALZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Frackville - RA-CRFRAZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Forest - RA-CRFSSZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Fayette - RA-CRFYTSZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Greene - RA-CRGZNZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Houtzdale - RA-CRHOUZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Huntingdon - RA-CRHUNZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Laurel Highlands - RA-CRLAUZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Mahanoy - RA-CRMHIZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Mercer - RA-CRMERZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Muncy - RA-CRMUNZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Phoenix - RA-CRPHXZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Pine Grove - RA-CRPNGZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Quehanna Boot Camp - RA-CRQUEZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Retreat - RA-CRRETZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Rockview - RA-CRRCZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Smithfield - RA-CSRMSIZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Somerset - RA-CSRMSIZOOMSCHD@pa.gov
   - Waymart - RA-CRWAMZOOMSCHD@pa.gov

3. The visitor sends an email to the corresponding Zoom resource email with the following information:
   - Visitor Name(s)
   - Address(es)
   - Date(s) of Birth
   - Phone Number(s)
   - Schedulers E-mail address
   - Inmate Name
   - Inmate ID
   - Requested Visit Date
   - Requested time slot (provide a 4-hour time slot within the facility’s visiting hours)

4. The facility will send the visitor an email with an assigned date and time of the visit OR the facility will ask the visitor for additional times because the times they gave were filled. Unless the facility emails you back with a date and time, a visit has NOT been scheduled.

   *We recommend giving them a date a month in advance to avoid back and forth emails trying to schedule a visit- the facilities are receiving hundreds of requests*

5. The email with the scheduled date and time will contain a link and a meeting ID number. On the day of the visit, the visitor will click on the link to open the meeting in Zoom. They will then be prompted to type in the meeting ID number to begin the call.

**Guidelines for Visits**

- Up to 3 authorized visitors may participate in a video visit
- Each inmate is permitted 1 hour long visit a week and only 1 weekend day is permitted per month.
- The visiting rules for Video Visitation are generally the same as those for visiting in the facility.

Share these instructions with your loved ones if they are having difficulty with virtual visiting.

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**Were you recently transferred or assigned a new state ID number? Let us know!**

The DOC does not alert us when you are transferred or assigned a new number. Please write us so we can update our mailing list and ensure quick delivery of your Graterfriends!
We welcome comments and suggestions from all readers. Please complete this form and mail it to Pennsylvania Prison Society.

**Is there any information you would like to see in Graterfriends that is not already included?**

We are in the process of working to make our resource guide more helpful to our incarcerated readers. Are there any resources we have not included in past issues that you would like to see included in future issues, such as resources you have used in while incarcerated and have found useful? They can be related to books, legal help, reentry, etc.
COVID-19 SURVEY

As part of our continued efforts to monitor prison conditions, we are asking you for your help understanding what is happening on the inside. Since we have added some new questions, even if you have taken a version of this survey previously, it would help if you would fill it out again.

Please fill out this survey and mail it back to us at: 230 South Broad Street, Suite 605, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

1. Do you feel safe? Yes | No

2. How satisfied are you with the accessibility of medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic?  
   Very Dissatisfied  Dissatisfied  Neutral  Satisfied  Very Satisfied

3. How did you get information from the prison about COVID-19? (select all that apply)  
   Paper Bulletin on Unit  Facility Info Channel on TV  
   Verbal communication by staff  Town Halls run by prison administration  
   I did not get this information  Other, please specify: ______________________________

4. Do you have access to a TV?  
   Yes, block TV  Yes, personal TV  Yes, block TV & personal TV  No

5. How satisfied have you been with communication about prison policy from the prison staff?  
   Very Dissatisfied  Dissatisfied  Neutral  Satisfied  Very Satisfied

6. How frequently do staff members wear masks?  
   Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  Always

7. Did the incarcerated people around you follow good health practices in the last week by washing their hands often?  
   No  Yes  Unsure

8. Did the incarcerated people around you follow good health practices in the last week by cleaning shared items after use (example: phones)?  
   No  Yes  Unsure

9. Did the common areas you have access to get cleaned at least two times a day in the last week (examples: dayrooms, showers)?  
   No  Some areas, but not all  Yes, all areas  Unsure

10. How often did you get cleaning chemicals from the prison to clean your cell / sleeping area in the last week (examples: soap, bleach, or peroxide)?  
    Never  Once last week  2 or 3 times last week  Unsure

11. Did you get enough cleaning chemicals to thoroughly clean your cell / sleeping area in the last week?  
    No, I did not get any  No, did not get enough  Yes  Unsure

12. Did you have enough soap to regularly wash your hands in the last week?  
    No  Yes  Yes, but I had to purchase some from the commissary  Unsure
13. How many times in the last week did you shower?
   None, I was not able to shower   None, I chose not to shower
   1-2 times   3-4 times   More than 5 times

14. How satisfied are you with the size of the meals you were served this past week?
   Very Dissatisfied   Dissatisfied   Neutral   Satisfied   Very Satisfied

15. How satisfied are you with the quality of the meals you were served this past week?
   Very Dissatisfied   Dissatisfied   Neutral   Satisfied   Very Satisfied

16. What activities/services is the prison administration providing to people in custody? (select all that apply)
   Board Games   Puzzles   Bingo   Religious Services
   Library Book Delivery   Other, please specify: ______________________________

17. Last week, did you access the law library?
   No, did not try to   No, was not able to   Yes

18. How much time outside of the cell (not including yard time) do you get per day?
   Less than 30 minutes   30-60 minutes   60-90 minutes   90-120 minute   120+ minutes

19. How many times did you go to the yard last week?
   I did not go to the yard (did not want to)   I did not go to the yard (not allowed)
   1-2 times   3-4 times   5 or more times

20. How many free phone calls did you make in the past week?
   None   1-2   3-4   5   More than 5

21. In the past week, did you send at least one free email?
   No, did not try to   No, was not able to   Yes

22. Did you get a free video visit in the last week?
   No   Yes, but bad service   Yes, & it worked   Does not apply to me

23. Since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, have you spoken with anyone from psychological services?
   No, have not tried to   No, have not been able to   Yes

24. Are you aware of the DOC policy change that medical co-pays are waived for flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, chest tightness, etc.)?
   Yes | No

25. How satisfied are you with the way your facility has responded to COVID-19?
   Very Dissatisfied   Dissatisfied   Neutral   Satisfied   Very Satisfied
26. If you'd like to add to your answers above: What is the atmosphere of the prison like?

27. If you'd like to add to your answers above: What is the attitude of the staff like?

28. If you'd like to add to your answers above: What are your concerns about how the prison is managing the coronavirus outbreak?

29. What facility are you in? ______________________________________________________

30. Are you in the RHU?   Yes | No

31. What is your housing unit? ___________________________________________________

32. What date did you fill out this survey? _______________________________________

33. Have you taken a version of this survey earlier?  Yes | No

OPTIONAL (your name will not be used in reporting our results)
Name: ______________________________________________________________________
PPN number: __________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your feedback. We are here during these uncertain times.
PLEASE NOTE if you have other concerns, not related to the questions above, please write to us on a separate piece of paper. If you provide additional information on this survey, it may get lost.
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Starting January 1, 2020, all multi-year subscriptions must be exact; any overage will be counted as a donation to the Society (i.e. a $10 check will be processed as a 3-year subscription and a $1 donation).

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