



From Her Mouth to Your Ears

A SURVIVOR'S MANUAL
by AND for WOMEN IN PRISON



**American Friends
Service Committee**

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The American Friends Service Committee Prison Watch Program is a human rights monitoring and advocacy program focusing on conditions of confinement in United States prisons.

The human rights abuses that occur in U.S. prisons, jails, and juvenile and immigration detention facilities are a violation of international laws, such as the United Nations Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination – two treaties that the U.S. has signed and ratified. These abuses serve to create a cycle of violence whereby United States society suffers.

AFSC has long opposed the use of isolated confinement by prison administrations and has challenged conditions of them. We continue to provide direct services on a limited basis, largely to those inside requesting “The Survivor’s Manual: Survival in Solitary Confinement.” Prison Watch first published this manual in 1998 in response to the “no touch” torture reported from isolation units inside U.S. prisons. That manual consists of extensive testimonies that people held in solitary confinement units wrote on surviving these illegal and cruel conditions of confinement. Not only is U.S. prisons use of isolated confinement inappropriate, it also violates international law in the United Nation Convention Against Torture.

Statement to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture

by Juan Mendez, NOVEMBER 7, 2014

"Segregation, isolation, separation, cellular, lockdown, Supermax, the hole, Secure Housing Unit...whatever the name, solitary confinement should be banned by States as a punishment or extortion technique," UN Special Rapporteur on torture Juan E. Méndez told the General Assembly's third committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural affairs, saying the practice could amount to torture.

"Solitary confinement is a harsh measure which is contrary to rehabilitation, the aim of the penitentiary system," he stressed in presenting his first interim report on the practice, calling it global in nature and subject to widespread abuse.

Indefinite and prolonged solitary confinement in excess of 15 days should also be subject to an absolute prohibition, he added, citing scientific studies that have established that some lasting mental damage is caused after a few days of social isolation.

"Considering the severe mental pain or suffering solitary confinement may cause, it can amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment when used as a punishment, during pre-trial detention, indefinitely or for a prolonged period, for persons with mental disabilities or juveniles," he warned.

The practice should be used only in very exceptional circumstances and for as short a time as possible, he stressed. “In the exceptional circumstances in which its use is legitimate, procedural safeguards must be followed. I urge States to apply a set of guiding principles when using solitary confinement,” he said.

There is no universal definition for solitary confinement since the degree of social isolation varies with different practices, but Mr. Méndez defined it as any regime where a prisoner is held in isolation from others, except guards, for at least 22 hours a day.

In our work producing other resources for prisoners, it became clear to us that a publication that directly addressed the specialized survival needs of women in prison was necessary. This Women’s Survivors Manual is a resource created by and for women in prison, which will facilitate support and well-being among women who are prisoners.

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) includes the following statement:

ARTICLE 2

(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation

(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women

As you read through the testimonials, and the survival skills that these amazing imprisoned women have developed, it becomes abundantly clear that misogyny exists at extreme measures in our prison systems. The fact that a separate manual is needed for women to be able to share these skills is a statement unto itself. Prison facilities were not designed for women. As far as we have come, there are still significant differences both physically and emotionally between men and women, as well as those who identify beyond the gender binary. Physically most women are smaller with different hormonal and physiological needs. The physical plant of jails and prisons is not designed to accommodate those needs; they were built for men. So as women, we adapt, we adjust, and we determine our own survival.

Dedication

This Manual is dedicated first to **Marilyn Buck** who would want us to remember to dedicate our continued survival to the thousands of women we have lost in the system. With tears, remembrance, honor, and love we commemorate these women. We dedicate this manual to the lessons that they taught each who came after them about love, loss, tenacity, wisdom, joy, patience, how to survive, and thrive, in an environment that is designed to destroy.

In addition, it is dedicated to **Andrea Harris**, who many were blessed to know, and few were allowed to share her last days. Her choice was not to fight death, as it released her from the bars. To clean her room and pack her belongings was a singular honor. To not be allowed to hold a memorial for her, inside, with her “sisters” was painful beyond description.

There are so many who have not survived their imprisonment. To these women, and those who come after us, we dedicate this manual, we take the lessons, blessings, and brilliance of each of them into each page, and into each of our souls.

May they never be forgotten.

**“ When a woman is incarcerated, she's expected to give up
her freedom, but not her soul. ”**

—Michelle Williams

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I. Introduction: A National Sisterhood Of Concern

The United States of America has been built upon the backs of women of color, as coined by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa in their anthology “This Bridge Called My Back” (1983). We need to alter the core of every system that slavery, racism, and poverty has given birth to, particularly the criminal legal system. There are many things that we can do to push for social change. We must stop violations of human rights, particularly those of girls and women. We must change the economic and racial profiling of arrest and sentencing practices. We need to decriminalize poverty, mental illness, and queer identity. We must eliminate solitary confinement, torture, and the use of devices of torture. We must support a vigorous monitoring of police, the court, and prison systems with a national review process. We need to ensure enhanced use of international law. We desperately need to redirect the dollars going into prisons that belong in communities and in schools. And finally, we must alter the 13th Amendment. The link between poverty, race, discrimination, sexual orientation, and imprisonment cannot be denied. We are in need of a national sisterhood of concern.

The U.S. criminal legal system executes structural violence that is especially brutal for women and girls. The population of incarcerated women is the fastest growing segment of the prison population (Fuentes, 2013). The number of incarcerated women has grown 700 percent since 1980, with 1.2 million women under surveillance in 2015 (The Sentencing Project). There is no way to look into any aspect of prison or the wider criminal legal system without being confronted with the racism and white supremacy that prisoners of color endure. If we dig deeper into these practices, the political function they serve is inescapable. Police, the courts, the prison system, and the death penalty all serve as control mechanisms. The economic function they serve is equally chilling. We believe that in the U.S. criminal legal system, politics of the police, courts, prison system, and death penalty are a manifestation of the racism and classism that governs so much of our lives. The criminal legal system encumbers the poor and people of color.

Many understand the 13th Amendment as the act that abolished slavery, but the reality is that the reverse is true; the 13th Amendment *guaranteed* slavery under the U.S. Constitution. Its text states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime* whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” This clearly gives the U.S. government the right to continue to enforce, develop, and deepen slave labor, especially given the fact that the U.S. government determines *what* qualifies as crime and *who* is guilty, in ways that are clearly demonstrated to discriminate against people of color, queer people, people experiencing poverty, people with disabilities, and other marginalized communities.

Over the years, people have said to me that the criminal justice system doesn’t work. I’ve come to believe exactly the opposite - that it works perfectly, just as slavery did, as a matter of economic and political policy. How is it that a young woman of color in Newark, or Detroit (for instance), who the country labels as worthless to the economy, suddenly is generating between \$45,000 and \$60,000 a year once trapped in the criminal legal system.

The required expansion of the control systems - police, bail, the court, prisons (including private prisons owned by corporations), parole, and probation - have resulted in an enormous bureaucracy of people (and money) all with one thing in common - many paychecks earned by keeping human beings in cages.

In comparison, a year in most state colleges averages \$35,000-40,000 - and at the end, students are tax-paying, productive, motivated members of that same 'society'. This is illustrative of how racial capitalism is a primary motivator of the U.S. government - investments, social, economic, or otherwise, are only made based on an individual's potential contribution to the economy. Therefore, people with race, gender, and class privilege are given access to education and higher-earning careers, while those without these privileges are relegated to cages, where free labor can be forcibly extracted from them to benefit the rest of the so-called "free world."

This increase of systems has been a boon to everyone from architects, plumbers, and electricians to food and medical vendors, whose salaries cannot be separated from their employment which centers on keeping human beings imprisoned in human warehouses. The criminalization of poverty is a lucrative business that has replaced the social safety net with a dragnet. I doubt this would be tolerated if we were talking about mostly white or rich folks. Not unlike the U.S. era of chattel slavery, there is a class of people dependent on mostly poor people and bodies of color as a source for income.

The AFSC has always recognized the existence and continued expansion of the penal system as a profound spiritual crises. It is a crises that allows children to be demonized, and which legitimizes torture, isolation and abuse of power. It is a crises which extends beyond prisons into school and judicial systems. I know that each time we send a child to bed hungry, that is violence. That wealth concentrated in the hands of a few at the expense of many is violence, that denial of dignity based on race, class, sexual preference and gender identity is violence. And that poverty and imprisonment are a form of state-manifested violence.

AFSC's Prison Watch has received numerous testimonies from women and girls in U.S. prisons that are in violation of dozens of International Treaties and Covenants. The conditions of confinement in US prisons violate the United Nations Convention Against Torture, the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the U.N. Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a dozen other international and regional laws and standards. The practices also fit the United Nation definition of genocide, with which this country has a long history. Oppression is a condition common to all of us who are without power to make the decisions that govern the political, economic, and social life of this country. We are victims of an ideology of inhumanity on which this country was built. The political and economic functions of imprisonment are inescapably slavery. Many people with whom I work believe that prisons are a form of neo-slavery and economic slavery.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

ARTICLE 2

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- b. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- c. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

ARTICLE 4

States should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination. States should pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating violence against women and, to this end, should:

- c. Exercise due diligence/ to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons.
 - i. Take measures to ensure that law enforcement officers and public officials responsible for implementing policies to prevent, investigate and punish violence against women receive training to sensitize them to the needs of women.

Women in prisons have unique needs that go unmet. Most women in prison are poor and working-class people who need jobs, education, and oftentimes drug treatment. Many women in prisons are trauma survivors. Some individuals in women's prisons are transgender and/or gender non-conforming but have been sorted into a facility based on their biological sex or genitalia, not their own personal identity; these individuals are often highly visible. They often become targets for transphobic violence, brutality, isolation, and poor medical care. Oftentimes, transgender prisoners are placed into involuntary protective custody units (solitary confinement), which places them at greater risk of violence at the hands of guards and higher mental health crises. Regardless of whether it provides some level of protection or safety, isolation should never be an alternative to general population.

The physical, emotional, and spiritual impacts of solitary confinement are tantamount to torture. At a time when the term "torture" has become part of the national conversation, we must think seriously about the violence in our systems of punishment and detention, and expose and acknowledge the disproportionately harsh treatment of transgender people in prison. Transgender people experience violence and are persecuted for their visibility within the criminal legal system, but remain a marginalized and misunderstood community to an indifferent world inside and outside.

The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

ARTICLE 1

1. For the purposes of this Convention, the term "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the

consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

2. This article is without prejudice to any international instrument or national legislation which does or may contain provisions of wider application.

ARTICLE 10

1. Each State Party shall ensure that education and information regarding the prohibition against torture are fully included in the training of law enforcement personnel, civil or military, medical personnel, public officials and other persons who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of any individual subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.
2. Each State Party shall include this prohibition in the rules or instructions issued in regard to the duties and functions of any such person.

ARTICLE 11

Each State Party shall keep under systematic review interrogation rules, instructions, methods and practices as well as arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment in any territory under its jurisdiction, with a view to preventing any cases of torture.

ARTICLE 12

Each State Party shall ensure that its competent authorities proceed to a prompt and impartial investigation, wherever there is reasonable ground to believe that an act of torture has been committed in any territory under its jurisdiction.

Prison issues are class issues, and until both prisoner activists and outside organizers begin opposition on a more concrete level, neither prison administrators nor the U.S. government have any impetus to respond to these complaints. We need to find ways to reach into women's prisons, just as we are going to have to find ways to further our own social and political consciousness and activism. The crippling of our poor, uneducated young men and women of color in our prisons is expanding in unconscionable ways that are unrelated to the rate of crime. It is about capitalism and racism.

It is about fighting the poison that drips from the American culture, which to me is a culture of greed, a culture of no values, and a culture that fears the joy of diversity. We are in need of a national sisterhood of concern between women inside and out.

Bonnie Kerness, AFSC Program Director
Prison Watch, 2018

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.”

—Audre Lorde



Art by Rachel Frome

NO ONE CAN STOP THE RAIN

Assata Shakur

Watch, the grass is growing.
Watch, but don't make it obvious.
Let your eyes roam casually, but watch!
In any prison yard, you can see it, growing.
In the cracks, in the crevices, between the steel and the
concrete,
Out of the dead gray dust,
The bravest blades of grass shoot up, bold and full of life.

Watch, the grass is growing.
It is growing through the cracks.
The guards say grass is against the Law.
Grass is contraband in prison.
The guards say that the grass is insolent.
It is uppity grass, radical grass, militant grass, terrorist grass,
They call it weeds.
Nasty weeds, nigga weeds, dirty, spic, savage indian,
wet-back, pinko,
Commie weeds - subversive!

And so the guards try to wipe out the grass.
They yank it from its roots.
They poison it with drugs.
They maul it.
They rake it.
Blades of grass have been found hanging in cells, covered with
Bruises, "Apparent suicides".
The guards say that the "GRASS is UNAUTHORIZED."
"DO NOT LET THE GRASS GROW."

You can spy on the grass. You can lock up the grass.
You can mow it down, temporarily,
But you will never keep it from growing.
Watch, the grass is beautiful.
The guards try to mow it down, but it keeps on growing.
The grass grows into a poem.
The grass grows into a song.

The grass paints itself across the canvas of life.
And the picture is clear and the lyrics are true,
And the haunting voices sing so sweet and strong
That the people hear the grass from far away.
And the people start to dance, and the people start to sing,
And the song is freedom.
Watch the grass is growing.
Thank you.

What Would Edna Do?

According to legend, Edna Mahan cared about the women housed in her facility. Often I would hear women say, “she would turn over in her grave if she saw what was happening to the women now.” Personally, I think she would get up out of her grave and raise hell at the conditions faced by the women housed at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility today.

When I first arrived at Edna Mahan 31 years ago, I never imagine that when judge Ronco said I was being sentenced to 30 years without parole, that meant I would be penalized to endure 30 years of physical, mental, emotional, verbal and spiritual abuse until the day I got out.

Like some folks who had never been in prison, all I had ever heard about prison was what I saw on TV or sometimes read in the newspapers. However, those articles or news clips - didn't reflect the reality of what prison is actually like. Therefore, I think that it is best that someone who has genuinely been in incarcerated for decades tell you the about prison life. Orange is not the new black - unless it's meant to symbolize that more Blacks than ever are wearing Orange uniforms in prisons throughout the U.S.

Would you kindly put down those newspapers and turn off your television? I would like your attention for a few. Let me share with you what I have found out about prison life. My experience is just that - my experience. If you have never lived inside a prison, then I suggest that you do your very best to never end up in one. Three hots and a cot isn't the only thing that awaits those who become incarcerated.

Life on the inside, is just that - life. You are alive but you are no longer allowed to live, at least not in the terms most would consider living life. You are alive but what kind of quality of life under oppressive circumstance can anyone have. The first stage is the transformation. It begins from the time you take your mugshot, get fingerprinted, have your name change to a number and get classified to a cell or a dorm that will be your environment for duration of most of your imprisonment. You will be identified by the number assigned to you. I see it as an agency taking away your sense of self in the dehumanizing process that comes with incarceration.

My first day I had to strip butt naked, bend forward and spread my butt cheeks. It felt humiliating having strange eyes inspect one's most personal body parts. It matters not what time of the month it is - it must be done whenever you make movement in prison from one place to another. At Edna Mahan, for example, if you are housed in minimum security and must be taken to the prison hospital for any kind of medical care - you are required to have a body search before you are transported and before you leave. It's amazing especially when you are either fully shackled or handcuffed. There is absolutely nothing fun or rehabilitative about the prison experience.

I believe that it is designed to destroy the human spirit. It is an oppressive place. Every aspect of your life is dictated by someone else. It makes you powerless and eventually voiceless. Once a person is sent to prison they become civilly dead. They forfeit pretty much all their rights and privileges. People no longer see you as a human being who made a mistake - for whatever reasons the mistake was made you should still have a right to your humanity.

It's a subculture in which only the strong can survive. No, I am not referring to physical survival I am talking about spiritual, mental survival; and even then, some damage has been done.

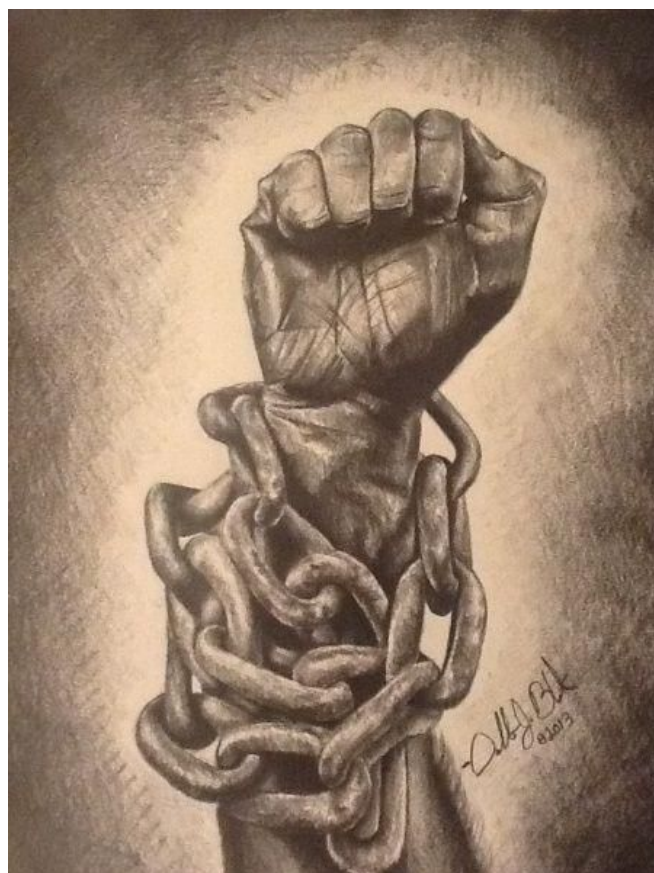
My first year was extremely traumatic. I never knew how cruel people could be to others and I was exposed to street knowledge because I had never been a street person. I did not go to clubs, hang out on street corners, I worked and went to school. I had passed several civil service tests and envisioned a future that did not include prison – not even in my worst nightmares. I was not raised to cheat, misuse, manipulate and harm others for amusement or selfish gain, no this convicted murderer found herself in a world that rose-colored glasses were smashed as soon as the prison door closed behind her.

My first seven years were spent in and out of solitary confinement. You name the season and holiday and I was there – locked in a cage like a wild animal. Why? All prisoners soon learn that they are at the mercy of their captives. If a guard don't like you for whatever reason they can write any type of disciplinary charge on you that they want. And with the collateral damage of being convicted, there's that stigma that all prisoners are liars. You will be found guilty and punished.

I received assault charges from guards that were never even in my housing unit. All the disciplinary officer had to do was to check the log book at the front desk to see if those two guards were ever in the building. Nope! It would have been too much work to take about twenty steps to check my statement at the front desk.

The discrimination, false charges, abuse of power, deprivations of necessities are some of the things that make prisoners bitter instead of better. Yet, the thing that saved me was that I come from a very spiritual family. I have Bishops, Evangelists, Preachers, Shamans, Ministers, and even some satanic worshiper in my family. So, spirituality in some form runs strong in my family and it was that spiritual connection that provided my strength to keep focus.

—Cynthia Cupe



II. Well-being

Total inactivity in the hole is inexcusable and detrimental to your health. It is true that lying in bed all day poses health risks like hypertension, muscle atrophy, depressed immune system and irregular heart beats. And not to mention back problems and hip problems. You need to keep your heart healthy and body geared for defense against illness, stress and even a possible attack. I recommend at least 45 minutes of exercise, 4 days a week, using a couple of progressive exercise routines to alternate with week to week. Your routines should target core, legs, back and arms, and include 10 minutes of cardio each day at least. For cardio I personally favor shadow boxing, high-knees, running in place and even dancing.

For strength I favor “burpies” crunches, mountain climbers, squats, wall sits, plank and old fashioned push ups. For free weights you’ll have to get creative filling a pillowcase or trash bag with heavy books and pockets is an idea. Even filling a trash bag or trash can with sheets and towels soaked in water to add weight. Otherwise bodyweight exercises with higher reps is sufficient. On “rest” days yoga and breathing exercises are good for meditation and stretching sore muscles. Exercise releases endorphins that give a natural high and helps fight off depression. It also opens the mind for creative energy. Bob Marley was known to write songs after a good workout. As far as diet, I prefer and recommend a vegetarian diet due to questionable meat products and even more questionable cooking methods. And last but not least, drink LOTS of water. Segregation here, and in a lot of prisons, is very dry and hard on the skin.

—Julia “J-Honey” Gregg

Develop several different forms of exercise for different days and conditions. One technique of control used in every unit I've been in is withholding or postponing rec time. Since exercise was a very important way I controlled my anger so that I didn't become upset or stressed, it was crucial for me to develop ways to avoid letting this necessity for exercise become one more tool for them to use against me. I learned yoga and did isometric weight-training in my cell, and I ran on the occasions I was able to go out to the rec yards.

—Laura Whitehorn

Prisons are designed for privation of many privileges afforded to free-world citizens perhaps arguably and rightfully so. However, a prisoner’s incarceration still must include those intangibles that allow us to endure the despondency and abjectness that can end will. These classes (college classes) remind us that we are human and capable. We thirst for knowledge, enlightenment and edification. Educating prisoners align with and promote the precise rehabilitative goals of the DOC, the betterment of communities and satisfies prisoner’s human needs. We can return to society as empowered citizens as a result of exposure to college academia! Now in my 11th successful completion of a college class in prison, I can truly say: “My body is confined by these walls, but when I am in class I know that my mind is free.”

—T.C.

I try to take care of myself physically and mentally. The saying is I came in alone I'm leaving alone. A lot of the commissary is so delicious but so unhealthy. So if you overindulged in commissary especially during our periods when we crave chocolate, it's fine, but be careful because commissary is loaded with sodium and sugar. You don't want to end up with high blood pressure and diabetes from all the starches. The food is sometimes undefinable because it is very low grade. I switched my preference to vegetarian because it is a little healthier tray. It contains peanut butter for protein, and a lot of different beans which is another good source of protein. Also then you don't have to buy beans on commissary.

We are able to order a food package twice a year if your infraction free for a year - it's an incentive program (sic). We are able to order 40 lbs of food it ranges from vegetables, granola bars, Kentucky Fried Chicken, etc. You can stock up on some healthier foods such as fiber cereals, granola bars, flax seeds etc. You can also order some spices such as garlic, curry and doctor up the state food. The spices/condiments are sold in large quantities but you can have a friend who you trust to buy one type and she buys another type and then you split it.

—Anonymous

Your body is yours, make sure you take care of it and protect it from getting sick, germs, watch the food you eat, prison food isn't always clean, nor fresh. Keep your mind clean, by checking yourself at all times, self-care is very important to survival. Get vegetables when you can. Fried food kills the germs, don't eat a lot of sugar, or starch, you have to watch your weight it'll slip up on you. Rinse the lettuce, eat a lot of salad, fruit. Drink lots of water. Juice when they have it.

—Phyllis Hardy

Tips from a transgender woman in a men's facility on surviving in Ad Seg (higher levels)

1. Try to maintain a respectful stance with inmates and staff alike because staff control who stays and who leaves. Even though other inmates are in your situation, it's best to be respectful to them because you could very well create a situation with another inmate that will follow you for years unresolved.
2. Find things to do to spend your time productively such as writing songs, poems, reading. Idle hands are the devil's playground.
3. Remember that guys hate rejection. There are ways to tell someone you're not interested that doesn't hurt his pride so much. If you're too harsh in your tone, he may be concerned about how others think and will try to show off for their behalf.

4. It's best to remain single but if you must, be cautious of "getting with" more than one guy. You're playing a dangerous game when you toy with someone's emotions. There's no safe way to have sexual intercourse. Many guys have different health problems that they hide. Ask for paperwork ensuring his health is up to code (at that moment). Be watchful that he isn't messing around with more than one partner. Some choices don't end well.
5. Focus on a goal; build a timetable of when you'd like to be released or your custody reduced. Remain misconduct free.
6. Choose your friends closely. Remember you're locked up with prisoners who are locked up for being in some type of trouble so some people enjoy continuing that same behavior. Don't gossip or spread rumors as this will only keep you in constant conflict.
7. Some guys (predators) will do anything to get with you against your will, creating situations where you'd need his assistance! Remember it's only a ploy. He could very well be behind the situation. Don't go into debt. If someone wanted to squeeze you for money, they'd be able to continuously keep you owing them simply by taking you. Or your debt could be passed on from inmate to inmate. Guys look at transsexuals as being the weakest link and will play off of that. If you don't have it, consider going without it or if the risk is worth it!
8. Many transsexuals and homosexuals get with other inmates in a relationship for money. Remember if a guy feels used he may cause you harm. Many guys believe that they own you after they've bought you so much. Then think about that if you realize his money is gone, then what? Many guys are in prison because they felt betrayed by family, friends, wives, or girlfriends and once betrayed again, you could be in a situation that's hard if not impossible to get out of.

—Anonymous

I crocheted and knitted almost constantly. It is creative and made the time go by. I also read a lot of books and wrote a lot of letters.

I enjoyed walking the compound. Walking was good exercise as well as a good stress reliever. I also did not get involved in drama or conflict. That brings a lot of stress and it is one thing you want to avoid whenever possible. Yoga was something else that helped me cope.

You have to do all you can to be proactive about your own health, and really be careful what you eat, especially if you have high blood pressure or any other health issues. If you are hurt or sick go to Medical as soon as you can, not that they will always do something for you, but at least you will have documentation. Let someone know on the outside as soon as you can, just in case you need an advocate on the outside.

—Chrissa Matthews

T'ai Chi Ch'uan

This article is to let you know the benefits you can receive from the regular practice of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

T'ai Chi is a form of martial art that emphasizes achieving balance within yourself through slow movements and deep breathing. It originated in China and is referred to at times as "moving meditation." If you practice it regularly you will notice an increase in energy to face the day, you will be calmer, able to handle situations that would usually end in conflicts or arguments. T'ai Chi can be used for self defense and is designed to deal with an opponent in the least violent way.

The health benefits of T'ai Chi have been proven in tests conducted by medical experts. It has reduced blood pressure, aided people with asthma and heart trouble. It can be practiced by young, old, weak, and strong.

Since I have been practicing T'ai Chi each day, I have overcome depression. My outlook on life has changed from a negative one to a positive one, and that is saying something because of my long exposure to the prison system. The best thing about T'ai Chi is that with as little as 10–25 minutes each morning you can meet the day with a steady head, heart, and body. You will benefit physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. This isn't any snake oil salesman's "come on." IT WORKS, but you only get out of it what you put into it. T'ai Chi works for me; I know it can work for you.

—Anonymous

I took a lot of different correspondence courses. There are many free correspondence courses available for prisoners. I taught myself how to read and write Greek and Hebrew. I got a degree in Religious Education and others. Every time that a program was offered I signed up. It was important to take advantage of whatever opportunity the prison provided. If they offered a class on plumbing, forklifting or even art therapy, I went. I realized that if I didn't keep busy and didn't stimulate my mind by learning and doing new things, the time was going to get the best of me. It made no sense to just sit around playing cards and watching TV. Keeping yourself busy with positive things is very important in prison. The more a person opens up their mind to learning the better your life becomes. It's not so much that you won't have any problems but it will help you deal with them better. Why, because you have learned new things and can now look at a given situation in different ways.

I read self-help books about how to cope with different childhood traumas, from sexual abuse to domestic violence. And I made time to practice some of the techniques mentioned in those books. We know ourselves better than anyone else - so when some things didn't work or I instinctively knew certain things were not the right fit for me, I didn't try it. Surviving in prison meant that I had to take full responsibility for healing and changing me. Embracing the things that I could not change enabled me to move forward in life. I think it had to do with me making a conscious decision not to allow my past to determine my future.

—Cynthia Cupe

I eventually started dancing, working out and changed my eating habits. The one thing that I thought was the worst thing that had ever happened to me became the best thing that

had ever happened to me. You see as time went on as the years passed by I noticed that I was physically in a prison but my mind was free and clear like never before. I was free physically on the streets but my mind was imprisoned. I mean my thinking was cloudy and confused, it was times when I didn't know whether I was going or coming.

The first six months I let the time do me and one day something clicked. I realized that if I was going to be in prison for my ten year sentence, I'd better make the best of it. I started renewing my mind by reading my bible. My perception about myself, my life and things of life started changing. I kept myself busy by taking classes, doing programming and working. I chose to wake up everyday despite being incarcerated with a positive attitude. It wasn't easy but my faith in God was the one thing that kept me going. I had learned to put my total trust in him. I did have my family and friends and fortunate enough they were my support system but I left four children and until this point in their lives all they had was me.

—Deberal Rogers

Eight constructive activities for a prisoner in lockdown

1. Study an area of law or learning that would be of use to yourself and others (a language, art, history, etc.). Develop an expertise in an area that others do not have. Share your learning and information with others.
2. Organize a family member or friend to do prison support work on the outside. Persuade them of the importance of hooking up with a prison support group on the outside that is working to turn the prison/industrial complex around. Tell your loved ones not to mourn, but to organize.
3. Write about your feelings and emotions in a way that people on the outside can get a sense of your humanity and concerns. Break down the image of prisoners as selfish, brutal, uncaring monsters. Let others see the individual qualities of each person on the inside, and their potential for change.
4. Keep a chronicle of the oppressive conditions in prison. Make the chronicle available to others who can document the dehumanizing effect that cruelty has on people incarcerated. Be specific, and help break through the cynical suggestion that prison is a “country club” where people don’t have to work.
5. Engage in physical exercise to keep your body in shape. Refrain from physical activities and conduct that is detrimental to your health.
6. Write to newspapers, elected representatives, and others to describe conditions in prison. Don’t just complain about your own case, but educate the reader about how prisons destroy people, rather than improving them.
7. Take every chance you get to create solidarity among prisoners. Break down the issues that divide prisoners from one another—racism, homophobia, etc. Help prisoners to respect each other’s differences and space. Don’t allow the prison administration to divide you from other prisoners, through debriefing or bribery.

8. “Write poetry, short stories, novels, or any other kind of fiction that lets your mind free itself from the boundaries of the four walls. Expand the walls through your imagination and creativity.” (Quote from Luis Talamantez)

—Louis Hiken, Prison Law Project, National Lawyers Guild

Learn something—undertake to study something and use the mind so I left each unit having grown rather than been diminished by the experience. Write letters—get pen pals if needed; some active communication with the outside. For me, as a political creature, it was essential to get a subscription to a major newspaper. (I then managed to share it by smuggling it to another prisoner in the unit.) I was fortunate to have friends who chipped in to get me the paper. In women's prisons and most control units, no news media are provided.

—Laura Whitehorn

I kept a journal. It is very helpful if you can write your feelings down. It helps you to process your emotions. I suggest signing up for any program that you feel will help you to stay busy, grow as a person, as well as programs that are designed to help you stay out of prison once you are released. Some prisons offer drug and alcohol treatment, and if you have a substance abuse problem, I highly recommend participating.

—Chrissa Matthews

“When the prison gates slam behind an inmate, he does not lose his human quality; his mind does not become closed to ideas; his intellect does not cease to feed on a free and open interchange of opinions; his yearning for self respect does not end; nor is his quest for self-realization concluded. If anything, the need for identity and self-respect are more compelling in the dehumanizing prison environment. ”

—Thurgood Marshall,
U.S. Supreme Court Justice,
Procunier v. Martinez, 1974



Art by Julia “J-Honey” Gregg

I strongly believe in a universal God. Faith was the key that motivated me to keep going under such oppressive circumstances. I prayed constantly. I studied the Bible and the Quran. I became a Christian, a Muslim, Jehovah Witness, practice Hinduism, studied Zen and Buddhism and finally I started practicing Siddha Yoga. And this was when I started learning to meditate that I could see things more clearly. I was able to regain inner peace and not allow those in my environment to change who I am at my core. I stopped seeing the abuse I had to go through in prison as something personal. It was not a reflection of who I was - it revealed what was in their hearts. Learning yoga helped me to become more disciplined and feel more connect to the universal God. I felt that regardless to what I had to deal with that there was underlying purpose for it. What was the universe trying to teach me?

—Cynthia Cupe

My Mind is Contraband (for all of you who stay awake at night using their pens as light)

(VOICE) Are you authorized to birth that thought? Unlawful possession of any material which disrupts the security of the institution is considered CONTRABAND and treated as such. Any and every thought requires meticulous monitoring, inspecting, and if approved, an escort will safely edit any words upon being released from the frontal cortex to the vocal cords. Are we clear on the rules on HOW to think?

(ME) We all develop tactics to our degree of understanding and complacent minds need agitation, to be awakened, you can't put a tracking device on my words, just quote me. Stop and frisk tactics can't silence me, they never did. Don't expect me to swallow your abusive aversion with bitterness because I am past self-destruction. No gag laws can hush the alphabetized wounds of the frontline, you don't tell pain to be obedient 'cause it can turn deadly. I have seen the soul genocide over the years, complacency should come with warning signs: it will constrict your ability to act when needed, it will shut down your intuition, force you to stay in one corner, no space, nor choice. And that's exactly what I miss the most, there's always a fusion between my bones and my spirit, subversive, unbounded. I look in the mirror every morning and open my mouth to pass a full inspection of my tongue, just making sure the DOC hasn't put one of those censoring devices they usually offer to the population as "necessary programming", conspicuous tactics in a world where FEAR is used as a weapon. That's why I have to pass a full inspection of my tongue. Did I tell you I speak in tongues? Yeah, liberating ones.

(VOICE) Put your hands on your mouth so we cannot see it.

(ME) I WILL NOT!

(VOICE) The 10A Penal Code, sub-chapter 4.1 states in the Prohibited Acts Section that possession or introduction of an unauthorized weapon such as, but not limited to, a sharpened mind will be confiscated and deemed as contraband. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY ANYTHING AS LONG AS YOU SAY NOTHING AT ALL.

(ME) Hmmm, so this is how oppressions survive, but I will scream like an amputee realizing the limb was removed. Can you still feel it, still moving, still a part of you, even when dismembered and dis-posed? THIS (the mind, the heart) poses a threat. Dare to be a contraband in a world menace. Think what you must, do what gets you blacklisted. I mean, you can't deny my community release forever. We are under surveillance anyways, pat-frisked at every podium for poetry that incites, pat-frisked at any street because of defective lights which were functioning as my spirit: UNBROKEN, pat-frisked at loosie-selling bodegas and prison yards, like Braille's touch deciphering every syllable. Touch my passion, the one which forces me to affirm my worth and smuggle my words to freedom so others can emerge and see THE EMERGENCY, the I.C.U., life-support monitored sound of my failing heart. I know your moves, your barbaric regulations, GO AHEAD, strip me like the auction block. Strip me until you can see the nerves, the muscles, the blood pulsing from this body. THIS IS WARRIORS BLOOD. Look at me, you can't annihilate the sound, is the open uni-verse, OMMMMMMMM, eternal rhythms that reach even though they were banned. I am walking contraband in a world of menace, stop me at the border, ask me if I have proper documentation to speak while calling

me a spic. Yeah, I AM SPICTA-CULAR at smelling your fear frontiers away. I AM A WALKING CONTRABAND in a world of menace. Let me be that virus spreading, go ahead, sneeze so I can bless you with the ability to seek WHAT THEY TOOK AWAY FROM YOU long ago before you realized it was yours to begin with.

Long ago before someone decided
to sell your voice
as a silent
truth
don't you at times ask yourself
how did the world get to where it is...
to where it is?

–Bibi Chehata

Learn a new language. In A Block there weren't any Spanish/English dictionaries, so instead I checked out an English Bible and a Spanish Bible in the same version and learned that way. Get familiar with policies and procedures, the grievance process and chain of command. It's an important thing to know your options. Read on a new subject. I like to read non-fiction essays, business books, biographies and self-empowerment books. Begin writing your autobiography, or a memoir about a particular time in your life. Record your dreams. Read the dictionary and begin learning and using new words. Anything to keep your mind stimulated!

As women we tend to process our emotions differently than men. I suggest keeping a journal, logging your moods and thoughts for the day. Write letters to your higher power. To find your center when feeling emotional, meditation and prayer helps. Also, listing positive affirmations and things you're grateful for and posting them where they're immediately visible helps fight the negativity bias of a wandering mind. When mental health personnel make their rounds, you don't have to talk with them, but you can request self-help packets and journaling paper so you can work on yourself.

–Julia “J-Honey” Gregg

To Stop ME from Being

I have surrendered. I am taking my heart
out of my chest to wear like a damnable piece of art
Maybe, ya maybe, if it is HERE you will see it, and see me
realize that you are killing destroying my spirit, I'll never be free

But I see now, I'm wrong, again it is not that much of a shock
letting everyone see this part of me only gives them the key to the lock
I am simply going to leave it here maybe someday someone will care
to see this dripping... destroyed.... part perhaps some kind soul will see there

I cannot continue to wear this, my heart has slowed to a crawl
the blood is basically all gone now-- my skin a deathly white pall
So, I will crawl away somewhere that nobody else can see
to keep myself away from those who would stop me from being free...

—L. Thornton



III. Social Life

Your mind is your greatest weapon, so keep it sharp! Correspond with resource centers, activist groups, churches, publications, newspapers, newsletters, etc. and offer insight; poetry, articles, artwork and whatever else. Expect that you might not always get a response, but you'd be surprised. This gives you a sense of purpose outside yourself and directs your focus beyond the prison culture. I find that I will lose a large part of the day writing and drawing.

—Julia “J-Honey” Gregg

I developed some creative activity that allowed me to admire my own human creativity— i.e., draw, write, make things from what is available, etc. Reminding myself that my place in the universe was as a sentient, loving, creative human being, not a caged animal, was helpful. (This is why so many prisoners turn out incredible drawings in ballpoint pen!)

—Laura Whitehorn

Rise

I have to rise up out of this institutionalized state that I am inraprured in, never bargaining for more, but settling for less. Afraid to speak when the time comes to be heard. I want to rise above my small mindedness, I must always think outside the box. Try many options, open doors that were slammed shut in my face. I must take what is given and leave the rest. Don't be afraid to ask for what I need. I must Rise above the design set for to institutionalize my mind and keep my body perpetually subjugated behind bars, I must stand apart from those who are blinded by ignorance and those who are tangled in a myre of their own hatred and contempt. My hatred has gotten the best of me, but it is not too late, for I have risen above my Karmic circumstances. I walk a higher ground, and although I'm confound, my mind is free like a roaring tundra. I want to write great words, capture and spark minds. I want to teach and be taught; love and be loved;and be held back by no self-proclaimed limitations. I want to rise above gender inequality, racial inequality, and the economic indifference that sets people apart.

I want to rise against prison rape, in the form of exchange for privilege from officer to inmate. Its RAPE when you are in the position of power and abuse that power against weak, broken, hurt, and desperate women.I want to rise above hating the next female when in fact, I am only hating myself. Today, I shout it all out from a blank piece of paper, about how I want to Rise tomorrow. I shout it from papers of formality how I have RISEN.

—Julie Walker

I took time to understand myself and not accept the labels that prison and others threw on me. I had to reclaim my own sense of self. People can call you anything – but you don't have to answer to what they call you. Sure, there were times when I was mad as hell and it was

my anger that motivated me. Then there were times when the desire for revenge motivated me.

Plus, there were moments when I saw other women being abused or denied medical treatment that led to their deaths and that motivated me. I felt like I had to be their voice and live so I could let others know what happened to them. There were a variety of things that enabled me to endure 30 years of prison. And it was in no way easy – but I am grateful that I am still standing. I guess that Malcom X words “by any means necessary,” was my mantra. Yet, that did not mean selling my soul to the devil by doing things that would harm others. It was faith that only God can judge me that helped me survive Edna Mahan and my desire to be my best me. Granted, not all prisons cultures function in the same way, but you can survive it if you set long term and short term goals for yourself and be realistic about it. Self-motivation, self-determination, eliminating negativity, and choosing your best option will take you a long way. The bottom-line is that you have to put in the work and do what needs to be done to get to the place where you want to be. Focus, one day at a time

– Cynthia Cupe

Our Time

Memories are all we have now,
for across the miles we are..
In mind and heart we're together,
physically the other is far...
The mailman is our best friend,
for he delivers our love each day...
Anxiously we wait for his return,
hoping he'll bring another letter our way...
Your letters make me laugh and cry,
they give me strength, courage, and hope...
Knowing that you love and miss me,
makes it easier for me to cope...
Our love will get us through life, becuz,
it is true and comes from the heart...
I know our love is special and unique,
becuz everyone said we'd part...
We'll be together through our letters,
while waiting for our time to end...
Only when we get our halos and wings,
is it our time to be together again...

–Dawn M. Frazier

ARTADVANTAGE
Every Story Has a Story.

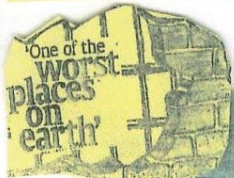
(MOTHERS IN PRISON) (GOT KIDS)



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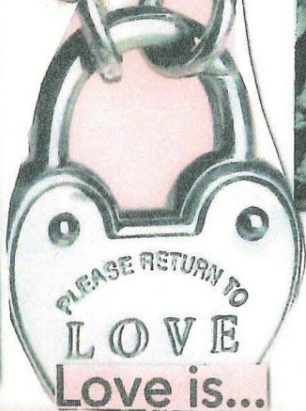
SHAKUR

GAVE BIRTH TO
HER BABY (IN)
PRISON..



TWINKLE,
TWINKLE
LITTLE STAR
HOW I WONDER
WHAT YOU ARE

PREGNANT
IN
(PRISON)



**We
See
You**

FEB.
2017

WHEN YOU FOLLOW
YOUR HEART

Collage by Ojore Lutalo

kerness.b@verizon.net

My Child's Hands
eyes of a child looking to you
small fingers grasping big
inhaling clean baby smell
or grubby, played all-day smell
tells me there is Wonder still

—LThornton

IV. Family

Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

ARTICLE 8

The different categories of prisoners shall be kept in separate institutions or parts of institutions taking account of their sex, age, criminal record, the legal reason for their detention and the necessities of their treatment.

- a) Men and women shall so far as possible be detained in separate institutions; in an institution which receives both men and women the whole of the premises allocated to women shall be entirely separate.

ARTICLE 23

1. In women's institutions there shall be special accommodation for all necessary prenatal and post-natal care and treatment. Arrangements shall be made wherever practicable for children to be born in a hospital outside the institution. If a child is born in prison, this fact shall not be mentioned in the birth certificate.
2. Where nursing infants are allowed to remain in the institution with their mothers, provision shall be made for a nursery staffed by qualified persons, where the infants shall be placed when they are not in the care of their mothers.

If you have children, you can continue to be a parent from prison. Just remember they love you and you love them, and make things to send home to them. Try to think of them as a motivating factor to keep improving yourself and striving to set a better example despite the circumstances. If you've lost custody or your rights, as the natural mother the bond you have with your kids is unique and irreplaceable, and the choices you make still affect them.

—Julia “J-Honey” Gregg

Stay connected with people involved in keeping the legal system available to inmates, family, and organizations that are working to help make changes in the judicial system/bop changes, helping inmates restore their lives when they go home, especially organizations that help on the outside to see about your children.

—Phyllis Hardy

Get your hometown newspaper, if you can afford it, or have someone get you a subscription. Any type of newsletters geared towards inmates and legislative news in your

state. Watch the news if you have access to television. Contact with family members and friends when at all possible is very helpful.

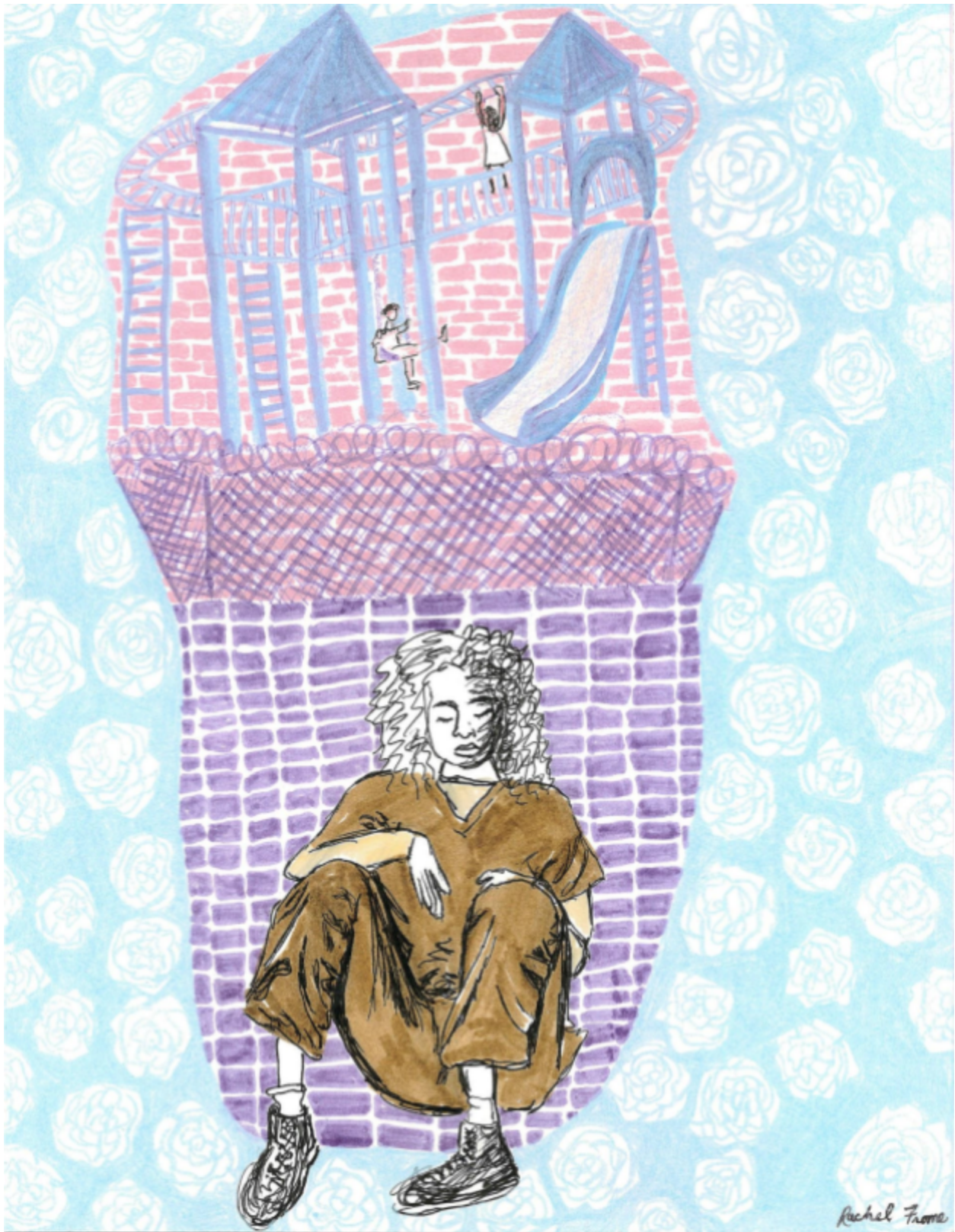
—Chrissa Matthews

The key is to stay in very regular contact with your child through letters, phone calls, cards, and presents to the child, and to keep your worker informed about parenting classes or other programs that you're doing.

The problem for incarcerated parents is that they're often invisible, so you want to try to be as visible as possible to your caseworker, judge, lawyer, and the agency. Make sure everyone involved in the case understands that your commitment to your child is very high.

Document everything you do. Keep a log with the dates of phone calls to your child and caseworker, keep copies of letters, keep certificates from programs. Showing a sustained interest in your child can keep a termination case from being filed or help you win.

—Anonymous



Art by Rachel Frome

V. Self-Preservation

“More people would learn from their mistakes if they weren’t so busy denying them.” I was thumbing through some random book and seen that quote. It has become a focal point of my rehabilitation. Was it a mistake I participated in that murder? No, that was intentional. Was it a mistake when I committed my first crime and went to prison? No, that was a result of me wanting fast money. Was it a mistake when I returned to prison three more times with new cases? No, those were choices. My mistakes were the constant finger pointing, denying, blaming, deflecting, blatant refusal of any responsibility for my actions. Was it a mistake I received a LWOP sentence? No, I can honestly say I earned that sentence. Fast forward 20 years later.

I’ve made peace with my life behind these concrete walls. Had I never come to prison, I would never have had the opportunity to learn new things such as small engine repair, landscaping or carpentry. My life would have continued down a destructive path of hate, pain and loss. Only when my life was interrupted and I got kicked out of the world, did I begin to see my gifts, talents, strengths and my true essence, along with my shortcomings, distorted thinking patterns and areas needing improvement.

I was lost coming from a dysfunctional home, neighborhood and community. I would never have acquired the skills of deductive reasoning or how to use judgment and reason when making critical choices. Now I can think ahead of my actions and play out the nature of their consequences. I can heighten my cognitive awareness and control my responses to everyday scenarios, even the unpleasant ones. I changed my world from behind these concrete walls. As a result, I’ve convinced myself I am a good person. I am worth of something better. I don’t have to exercise abuse, anger, violence or pain. I can strive for more.

For all the LWOP’s (Ed: Life Without Parole) and lifers struggling with the idea of their time, I know it’s difficult to be here when every molecule of your body wants to be somewhere else. Yet, you’re hurting yourself by not living in the now. You’re also hurting yourself if you do not begin the journey into self-reflection, improvement, growth and ultimately, change. As an LWOP I may never get out of prison. So the question I ask you is, “When shall I live if not now?”

—Laverne Dejohnette

I’m planning ahead for my future. According to the sentencing judge I have a lot of time. But every situation can change. I have taken a re-entry program called S.T.A.R.S. they recently opened it up to the women with time. They offered free birth certificates and social security cards. They hold onto the documents until you’re released. This is one thing now I have and one less thing to worry about when I’m released. I’ve taken every program and class that the prison offers. You should keep your mind active and open to new ideas. I recently took a flagging class, never in my life would I dream I would consider directing traffic but it pays well and they hire ex-convicts. You never know what you might learn from one of the groups or classes you take. I also enrolled in NJ STEP college classes; knowledge is power. No matter your age or situation take advantage of GED or college programs.

—Anonymous

You must know your rights and know all of their rules. That means the rules you are supposed to follow and all the rules the cops must follow. Then hold the cops and yourself to abide the rules 100% of the time. Trust me, the cops hate the rules more than the prisoners! When you follow all the real rules and then also hold them to the same standard you effectively take away a lot of the cops power over you the prisoner!

When you break a rule and get caught, DO NOT LIE! Admit your guilt and take full responsibility. Doing this will build you a powerful fortress of trustworthiness and credibility. When you admit when you're guilty and accept full responsibility, goodwill comes of it. Court time will be extremely lenient (after you have an established record of frank honesty). Administrators will take you more seriously and all staff, even some cops will learn to trust you. After you've established a reputation for yourself as a completely honest prisoner no cop will have the courage to write any false charges against you (unless they're a moron), and if such a moron does write a false charge on you then you have your fortress of perfect trustworthiness and credibility to fall back on to prompt a real investigation and have your word truly relied upon and with that you will almost always be proven innocent, as long as you are really being 100% honest!

Always ask questions! Are cops verbally disrespecting you or saying things that are intended to offend or upset you? If you want something that's currently not permitted don't be sneaky as your go-to method to get it! Petition the Administration, petition the DOC commissioner, write write write and make phone calls. Ask family to make phone calls all of it with the goal of getting the rule or restriction changed!

—Michelle Angelina

I call this my reality check: I utilize the grievance process at the prison but I pick and choose my battles. I write about issues I've seen that really trouble me and make me feel helpless and hopeless.

I do a lot of artwork from cards to paintings. I'm not trained in art nor do I have a lot of skills but artwork is therapy to me, as is writing prose and poetry. I read a lot in fact I read myself to sleep at night. I watch the news a lot. I like hearing about the outside world even if it's negative. I buy magazines to read about stuff outside as well.

The biggest survival skill for me is to never give up hope and to be prepared to go home every day. The best thing is I keep myself busy. I treat this time like I would in the outside world. I work full-time and I take a college class each year. I go to recovery groups, I work out at the gym, and I have socializing time with friends and family. I also write to people. I have many hobbies, and I plan for my future. Overall, I use my time productively.

—C.B.

People will take note of a dedicated person. Stay in your lane. Take responsibility for your behavior, decisions, and your own personal failures. Let integrity and uprightness preserve you. Good judgement is the power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action. Basically, pay attention to your surroundings.

Report your issues on paper. Time and date your complaints, this is very important. Be strong and stay in the fight, remember that a squeaky wheel gets heard! (meaning don't give up or allow anyone to intimidate you). Make a difference.

—D. Stout

Be aware of my surroundings, and who is around me, just like in the street, you don't walk the streets without watching around you. Always help another inmate, it's not their fault that you are there. Remember your business is your own, and so is the other person's. Never ask "why are you in prison." That's a no no, if they want to tell you, that's fine.. don't give family information out to another inmate.

—Phyllis Hardy

Making a schedule for my days, instead of allowing the cops to determine my days. Having several different schedules, and alternating them, to avoid having the days all melt into sameness, and to keep track of what day and date it was, etc. Using external signals, such as changes in light, shift changes, regular noises from outside my cell, to keep track of time. The first few weeks I'd note a sound or other objective occurrence, then yell for the cops to find out what time it was, etc.

Knowing what your enemy's goals are helps you a lot in resisting giving ground. In my case, on days when I felt (and was) particularly abused and mistreated, I could always find hope and strength in feeling it was an honor to be held in conditions of control—in the way Chairman Mao meant it in that old quote we used to love so much about it being a good thing to be hated by the enemy. For example, for some people, keeping busy is important; for others, maybe stillness and inward thought is important. What resources, internal and external, each prisoner has available make a big difference, too.

—Laura Whitehorn

I'm a transgender female prisoner currently incarcerated. I live in a culture that thinks it is okay to treat me differently or "less than." We all deserve a future that is better. I'm fighting for a different future than the one currently shoved down our throats. I believe that any human being should feel safe and secure to express who we are, wherever we are, without fear of government-sponsored terror forcing us back into our "assigned seats".

For me, this is war.

These are my non-negotiable demands for transgender prisoners:

1. Availability of all property items available to prisoners of their same gender identity and security level.
2. Mandatory enforcement for all ORDC staff to reference prisoners by the appropriate pronouns consistent with their gender identity.
3. Accommodation for the grooming and maintenance consistent with their gender identity.
4. Accommodation for cell assignments that eliminates the possibility of "discrimination by proxy", by forcing the prisoner to cell with someone who is

not a sexual predator, but has antithetical beliefs that will subject the prisoner to an intolerable living environment.

If there is anyone out there reading this who wants to add fuel to the fire, I am taking these demands to the federal courts for recognition of all transgender prisoner's rights. What I don't have currently is legal counsel or the funds to hire legal counsel, but I am hoping that there is a community out there beyond the fences that cares as much as I do about the next generation of children who otherwise will be murdered with scorn and condemnation.

That stops here. It stops now.

Who's down?

—K.B.

Women inside should make their voices heard by writing to their congressmen and women, senators, etc. when they are abused and keep documentation. Also to send those letters out to their families or a trusted friend to mail them to whoever they have written.

—Cynthia Cupe

Redemption

The enemy strikes again
The subjugation begin
The victim becomes
The Perpetrator
Because they are a complainer
Today, All Hope Ceases
As "I"
Fall to a million pieces
Questioning my motives
Am I truly devoted to my causes?
...And as my mental tape pauses
I remember how
The law is
And how it's Not
Designed for
Someone like me in mind
To be a beneficiary
Of its' officary
But the system can't break me
And since my family
Forsake me
Nothing else can shake me
These shackles can't even
Restrain me
Cause all my pain will
Make me free
The hands that should lift me up

Are pushing me back down
But somehow I know
I'm homeward bound

My poetry may be
Without sound
But redemption
Redemption WILL be found

So, as I lay on the ground
Beaten and bound
My head is bloody
But unbowed,
To my dead mother I vowed
To keep on pushing through
Cause you see
She just knew
I was destined to fail.... But...

I will prevail
I will rise from this jail
Set foot upon the shores of my birth
And my lessons will be worth
All the pain I've endured
And I will feel secured
Cause the cops
Won't be able to pick me up from the streets
And leave me tying sheets
Around my neck saying,
"What the heck, life is a bitch and then you die"

No, Not I
I will swim
Through the bowels
Of Hell
And survive to tell the tale
Of how the system fails its' people

Redemption
Redemption will not be for the many
Who never had any
Redemption
Will be our state of mind.
I will find

The Quickest path

to such a fate
Cause to that we can all relate
So I wait
And I debate
About what I'll do
With my new
Source of Power
Will I falter
At my darkest hour
Or will I remember
To Mosh on

Cause Redemption...
Is OURS.
—Poetic Assassin



TORMENTED

©Hyung-Rae, 2001
Todd (Hyung-Rae) Tarselli

Art by Todd Tarselli

Exhale...

Survival? I have survived many things over the course of my 31 years. Survival is a word that comes short to what I actually want to do. To survive means to continue to live or exist, especially in spite of danger or hardship and to manage to keep going in difficult circumstances. I am so forgetful these days. I have become so accustomed to simply surviving that. I think at times I forget to live and enjoy life, to enjoy my freedom. I forget that I no longer have to hold my breath in anticipation of the next downfall, the next blow, or the next disappointment.

I survived 9 years of sexual abuse at the hands of my step father and I have survived countless years of verbal, physical and mental abuse by my mother. So, I was well prepared to survive the 10 plus years I spent within the prison industrial complex. There are many publicly known stories of women being abused by correctional officers and the overall oppressive design of prison. They are all true. I used to hear while I was inside to “believe nothing you hear and half of what you see.” I laugh at that now and am here to tell you to believe everything you hear of the testimonies of what women not only saw but survived within the walls of confinement.

I went to lock over 20 during the course of my stay at EMCF. I will admit that at times I preferred solitary confinement over general population when I had my fair share of verbal abuse and sexual harassment by prison staff; may I add, that were sworn to protect the prison population. I barely witnessed them protect us from each other, let alone the staff themselves. There is an unshakeable camaraderie to prison guards that many women have felt that raft of retaliation for. Being in confinement, halfway shields one from those horrifying truths. I would simply use it as both a mental and literal escape. I remember all the ladies standing at our doors, yelling through the inch wide crack in the door, playing a game called *In The Mix*. The rules of the game were that one person sang a few seconds of a song and when they shouted “in the mix” the next person would immediately follow with a song of their choosing. No song could be repeated or you were disqualified and you never knew when the person singing would abruptly stop so you had to pay attention. It was a light hearted game that helped us escape from our current horror and to a place of reminiscence. Songs would trigger memories of happier times and places and of course we would all share those stories, with nothing but endless time on our hands. Hangman was another game we could yell through the crack of the doors to hold onto whatever sanity and humanity we could find within ourselves. Laughter is key to survival and through all our turmoil of the criminal legal system or verbal and physical fights amongst ourselves, in solitary confinement we were all the same. There was an unspoken time of healing and understanding of our current situation that we helped one another survive.

I wonder if any of those big tests out there include the exhaustion of one's soul that comes hand in hand with survival. Do we not deserve to be more than content? Can we be happy for more than a few spurts out of life? Why should our happiness always lie with making everyone around us happier than we ever are. There is an obvious connection between the extensive abuse women endure and the end result being a prison sentence. So, yes, with conviction, I can say I have survived but I'm not that forgetful that I don't know I deserve more than just that. When do I, how do I, do more than just survive? I no longer want to hold my breath, I want to exhale...

—Tia Ryans



Barbwire

Sun rays connecting with bladed curls of barbwire
Bright beams of fire
Light ricocheting back up to the heavens
Living in hell
Confined to a cell
Heart encased in pointy metal twine
Messing with the mind
Dark hues of gray
Deep darkness but not blind
Artificial light
Sucking out the living light
This solitaire sentence has nothing to do with the crime
What is the time?
Day and night they no longer have a beginning or an end

Reality and hallucinations pretend meshing together
One ball of tournament they blend
Fighting for survival
Mentality created friends
Some positive
Some condemn
Pushing through mental cold slaps of stone
The system casting stones
For it's not good for man to be alone
Concrete home
Pulsating palms pressing up against ears
Protecting eardrums from being blown
Seeking to silence screams
Soul wrenching moans
Mirages of home
Memories turn into tsunami of destroy symmetries
Flowing through trembling fingers
Unable to hold
Emotions switch
Control lost
Involuntary twitch

Inhumane hygiene destined
Skin itch
Overheated
Freezing
Immune system sick
Same small space
Eat, piss and take a shit
Nowhere in this does the spirit of humanity fit
The "bing" where life in the mental no longer sings
The "hole" was solely designed to destroy the human soul

Where Prison guards become control gods
No way to escape
Women are beat, belittled and raped
More than any other
Solitary confinement is hell's dungeon for people of color
Acceptance of this behavior is unacceptable
Those laws need to be tossed
Lives are being physically, spiritually and mentally lost
Money is the name of the game
Big boss
There is a high price to be paid for this treatment
And souls are forced to pay the cost
Stand up and call for immediate departure
Solitary confinement stop the torture
—**Ajeedapoet**

FINALLY...

To every woman who has ever served time - whether in prison, jail, or institution - and was brave enough to answer a request to share - that others may survive that tiny bit easier, better, or just be able to breathe and know that others survived - we not only acknowledge you - but we HONOR you - your strength, your courage, and your ability to put into words what is completely unspeakable. We acknowledge your pain, but it is not all you are - You are a Warrior of Spirit and will emerge as a Phoenix, if you choose to fly.

We salute those who did not make it, who passed alone, without family of their blood. They had the family of sisters that they had built around them - who LOVED them unquestionably - but also were rarely allowed to care for them as they deserved.

Those who have walked in our shoes know the little pains, the moments where you just can't believe that this is where you are - and the giant pains - the surrender of your child a day after birth, the call announcing the death of a family member, and not being able to go see them off to their next stop and so very many more.

We honor each who reads this. We honor YOU. We bless your spirit and your knowledge - your grace and your determination. You are NOT EVER just inmates or last names, or numbers. You are Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, Aunts, Cousins, Besties, Lovers, Wives and ever so much more - you each have in you an indomitable spirit that you must not let anything that has or will happen to you extinguish. You are the survivors, the Queens, and the Dreamers, you KNOW with certainty what must be better and through your words, your wisdom, your willingness to share; you have made a difference. Cherish that knowledge, and pass the lessons on, even with the hope that there will be far fewer coming after you, be a guide and teacher to the young; both yours and those you encounter. Simply by breathing, you make a difference - Choose to embrace each breath, Choose to be the change you wanted to see. Choose to Thrive, not just survive. Choose Life, because you have already experienced a piece of the other side.

You have Value. You have Talent. You have Love. Never let anyone steal these gifts.

—Lydia Thornton, Editor

Rhinoceros Woman

Rhinoceros woman
who nobody wants
and everybody used.
They say you're crazy
cause you not crazy enough
to kneel when told to kneel.

Hey, big woman -
with scars on the head
and scars on the heart
that never seem to heal -
I saw your light
and it was shining.

You gave them love.
They gave you shit.
You gave them you.
they gave you hollywood.
They purr at you
cause you know how to roar
and back it up with realness.

Rhinoceros woman,
big mamma in a little world.
You closed your eyes
and neon spun inside your head
cause it was dark outside.

You read your bible
but god never came.
Your daddy woulda loved you
but what would the neighbors say.

They hate you mamma
cause you expose their madness.
And their cruelty.
They can see in your eyes
a thousand nightmares
that they have made come true.

Black woman. Baad woman.

Wear your bigness on your chest like a badge
cause you done earned it.

Strong woman. Amazon.
Wear your scars like jewelry
cause they were bought with blood.

They call you mad.
And almost had you
believing that shit.
They called you ugly.
And you hid yourself
behind yourself
and wallowed in their shame.

Rhinoceros woman -
this world is blind
and slight of mind
and cannot see
how beautiful you are.

I saw your light.
And it was shinin
—Assata Shakur

VI. References

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VII. Resources: The Community Outside

The Abolitionist Law Center (ALC) is a public interest law firm inspired by the struggle of political and politicized prisoners, and organized for the purpose of abolishing class- and race-based mass incarceration in the United States. To accomplish this goal, the ALC engages in litigation on behalf of people whose human rights have been violated in prison, produces educational programs to inform the general public about the evils of mass incarceration, and works to develop a mass movement against the American penal system by building alliances and nurturing solidarity across social divisions.

Abolitionist Law Center
P.O. Box 8654
Pittsburgh, PA 15221
Phone: 412-654-9070
Email: info@abolitionistlawcenter.org

The AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania is a nonprofit public-interest law firm providing free legal assistance to people living with HIV and AIDS, including PA prisoners. English and Spanish spoken.

AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania
1211 Chestnut Street, Suite 600
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-587-9377

Alliance of Families for Justice supports, empowers, and mobilizes families of incarcerated people and people with criminal records to marshal their voting power and advocacy skills to bring about systemic change.

Alliance of Families for Justice
8 W. 126th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10027
Phone: 347-973-0580

American Job Centers offer job finding assistance to ex-offenders; American Job Centers in Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut also offer workshops for ex-offenders that are designed to assist them in their efforts to re-enter society and the workforce. Workshops focus on education and training, job search and networking techniques, resume preparation and job applications, effective job interviewing techniques, how to handle employer felony questions, and special employment programs for ex-offenders.

AMERICAN JOB CENTERS - BRIDGEPORT: Ex-Offender Re-Entry Workshop
2 Lafayette Square
Bridgeport, CT 06604
Phone: 203-455-2700

Black and Pink is a volunteer organization that connects LGBTQ pen-pals through their website, distributes a monthly newsletter of primarily queer/trans prisoner writing, and advocates specific prisoner needs when possible while also working to abolish the prison industrial complex as a whole.

Black and Pink
614 Columbia Road
Dorchester, MA 02125
Email: members@blackandpink.org

Book 'Em is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that sends free educational books and quality reading material to prisoners in Pennsylvania only. Prisoners may request books by subject.

Book 'Em
c/o Thomas Merton Center
5129 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15224
Phone: 412-361-3022 x4
Email: bookempgh@gmail.com

Books Through Bars is a volunteer-run organization that distributes free books and educational materials to incarcerated people in PA, NJ, NY, MD, DE, VA and WV. Books Through Bars believe education, not incarceration, is the answer to the devastating effects that social, educational, and economic inequality has on communities.

Books Through Bars
4722 Baltimore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19143
Phone: 215-727-8170
Email: info@booksthroughbars.org

California Prison Focus is a human rights and civil rights group that investigates conditions in the California SHUs (control/isolation units), organizes and advocates for prisoners' rights, and provides self-help legal materials. Write for publications list.

California Prison Focus
1904 Franklin Street, Suite 507
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-836-7222
Email: contact@prisons.org

The Center for Returning Citizens (TCRC) assists returning citizens in Pennsylvania in the transition from incarceration to society by providing job training, housing assistance, counseling services, legal aid, and referrals. TCRC helps individuals, families and communities with the adverse impacts of incarceration.

The Center for Returning Citizens
3850 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19140
Phone: 215-223-1680

Chicago Books to Women in Prison is an all-volunteer, donation-funded 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that distributes paperback books (including Spanish books) free of charge to incarcerated women nationwide, including trans women in men's prisons. They do not send books to jails outside of Cook County, IL. They send three books in a package. Please provide several options of genre or subject matter.

Chicago Books to Women in Prison c/o RFUMC
4511 N. Hermitage Avenue
Chicago, IL 60640

Critical Resistance seeks to build an international movement to end the prison industrial complex (PIC) by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. They believe that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure. As such, their work is part of global struggles against inequality and powerlessness. The success of the movement requires that it reflect communities most affected by the PIC. Because they seek to abolish the PIC, they cannot support any work that extends its life or scope.

Chuco's Justice Center
1137 E. Redondo Boulevard
Inglewood, CA 90302
Phone: 510-444-0484
Email: crla@criticalresistance.org

Culmer Center provides services to over 4,000 clients a year with supportive services and job training in Florida. Clients are primarily ex-offenders but we also work with others who have barriers to unemployment – including veterans, persons with disabilities, the homeless and those afflicted with addiction. Each year, of those 4,000 clients who walk through Transition's doors, approximately 400 are placed in permanent jobs.

Culmer Center
1550 N.W. 3rd Avenue, Building C
Miami, FL 33136
Phone: 305-571-2001

Family Re-Entry This innovative demonstration project creates sustainable community-based opportunities for successful reentry in Connecticut. Success is achieved by combining entrepreneurial employment and training, supportive services, interagency collaboration, and a community driven to succeed. Enterprise House provides an environment with high expectations for success and standards of behavior peer-driven, professionally supported,

positive, prosocial environment that shifts the returning citizen from incarceration dependence to community integration and self-sufficiency.

Family Re-Entry | Enterprise House
Downtown West
75 Washington Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
Phone: 203-576-6924

Garden State Equality is New Jersey's statewide advocacy and education organization for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. GSE led efforts to ensure non-discrimination for transgender and gender nonconforming people in New Jersey, pass the most comprehensive anti-bullying law in the country, end sexual orientation and gender expression change efforts in New Jersey, and bring marriage equality to the Garden State.

Garden State Equality
40 South Fullerton Ave
Montclair, NJ 07042
Phone: 973-473-5428
Email: contact@gardenstateequality.org

GLAD works nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation through strategic litigation, public policy advocacy, and education. As part of this work, GLAD handles legal issues involving GLBTQ and HIV-positive prisoners.

GLAD
30 Winter Street, Suite 800
Boston, MA 02108
Email: gladlaw@glad.org

Hearts on a Wire is a group of trans and gender variant people building a movement for gender self-determination, racial and economic justice, and an end to policing and imprisoning our communities. Offers a free newsletter to incarcerated and detained people. Write to be added to their mailing list.

Hearts on a Wire
1315 Spruce Street
William Way Center
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Email: heartsonawire@gmail.com

His Healing Hand Ministries is a purpose-driven ministry working with those behind bars, those returning from a time away, those on probation or parole, or those who have a criminal past. The ministry is non-denominational and is located in the Orlando Metro area of Central Florida providing reentry, renewal, and recovery help for those in our community. We also

teach those preparing for reentry in State of Florida prisons, Federal Correctional Facilities and select County Jails. The ministry provides these resources to enable a person to have a better transition in our communities.

His Healing Hand Ministries
P.O. Box 1854
Goldenrod, FL 32733
Phone: 407-219-7625

The House of Hope, a faith-based organization in Florida, offers shelter and job placement to recently released people with criminal records. Substance abuse, anger management and spiritual counseling are also available. Participants apply through the correctional facility chaplains' department six months before their anticipated release date. Program capacity is five residents. House of Hope staff utilizes one stop centers and program contacts to obtain employment for its participants. Residency time ranges from three to six months.

House of Hope
P.O. Box 12113
Gainesville, FL 32604
Phone: 352-376-3964

InsideOUT LGBTQ Inmate & Formerly Incarcerated Support Program at Stonewall Columbus is a program created to act as a bridge to support, encourage and provide robust resources to LGBTQ inmates inside local correctional facilities in Ohio and LGBTQ formerly incarcerated individuals that are re-entering the mainstream population. The program facilitates group visits to correctional facilities by Stonewall Columbus staff and others, and organizes a variety of social programs, therapeutic and peer-driven support groups, counseling services and more. Stonewall Columbus does not, at this point, provide direct reentry support.

InsideOUT | Stonewall Columbus
1160 N. High Street
Columbus, OH 43201-2411
Phone: 614-930-2266
Email: rbrewer@stonewallcolumbus.org

Just Detention International is a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention.

Just Detention International
3325 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 340
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Phone: 213-384-1400
Email: info@justdetention.org

Lesbian and Gay Insurrection is a grassroots organization doing direct action and education for radical social change from a queer perspective. Produces the bimonthly newspaper “ULTRAVIOLET,” which is free to prisoners.

Lesbian and Gay Insurrection
3543 18th Street, #26
San Francisco, CA 94110
Phone: 510-434-1304
Email: info@lagai.org

Lambda Legal carries out its legal work principally through test cases selected for the likelihood of their success in establishing positive legal precedents that will affect LGBT people and those affected by HIV. Lambda Legal recently represented a trans prisoner successfully in a lawsuit against the Texas prison system.

Lambda Legal
120 Wall Street, 19th floor
New York, NY 1005-3919
Phone: 212-809-8585

LGBT Books to Prisoners is a volunteer-run organization that sends books and other educational materials, free of charge, to LGBT identified people in prison across the U.S.

LGBT Books to Prisoners
426 West Gilman Street
Rainbow Book Cooperative
Madison, WI 53703
Email: lgbtbookstoprisoners@gmail.com

The Lewisburg Prison Project (LPP) counsels and assists prisoners who write to LPP when prisoners encounter treatment perceived as illegal or unfair. Their geographic coverage area includes four federal institutions (Allenwood, Lewisburg, McKean, and Schuylkill), 11 PA state prisons, and 34 county jails in the middle district of PA. LPP also distributes publications to prisoners nationwide at a nominal fee. A partial list of their Legal Bulletins includes the following titles: Legal Research, Religious Rights, First Amendment, Access to Courts, Exhausting Administrative Remedies, Disciplinary Hearings, Racial/Religious Discrimination, Assaults, and Medical Rights. LPP also distributes the Prisoners' Rights Handbook (2009, 142 pages) as well as other legal information by mail. Send an SASE for full list of available publications.

Lewisburg Prison Project
P.O. Box 128
Lewisburg, PA 17837
Phone: 570-523-1104
Email: info@lewisburgprisonproject.org

McKinney Wrongful Conviction Clinic has students at the Robert H. McKinney School of Law at Indiana University represent indigent clients seeking relief from wrongful Indiana convictions in state post-conviction and/or federal habeas corpus proceedings. State cases are accepted in cooperation with the Office of the State Public Defender. Accepts cases of actual innocence; DNA and Non-DNA Cases; will consider arson, Shaken Baby Syndrome, and child abuse cases.

Indiana Univ McKinney School of Law
530 W. New York Street, Room 111
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3225
Phone: 317-274-5551

Midwest Pages to Prisoners provides free books to prisoners in these nine Midwest states only: IA, IN, KS, MN, MO, ND, NE, OK, & SD.

Midwest Pages to Prisoners
P.O. Box 1324
Bloomington, IN 47402
Phone: 812-727-0155
Email: mwpp@pagestoprisoners.org

The National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women assists defense teams on cases involving domestic violence survivors charged with crimes related to their abuse. They do not provide direct legal representation or advice or any social services, but rather provides information and resources to defense teams at any stage of the legal process in an effort to increase the likelihood of a better – and more just – outcome. A very small nonprofit organization, they do what they can to answer requests for assistance promptly, but responding to letters may take a long time, so it's best to call. They accept collect calls from incarcerated battered women, and have Spanish-speakers on staff (personas que hablan español en el personal).

National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women
125 S 9th Street, Suite 302
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-351-0010 (for collect calls), or 800-903-0111 x3

National Council For Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls (National Council) seeks to end the incarceration of women and girls by building a movement grounded in sisterhood, solidarity, and human rights.

National Council
42 Seaverns Avenue
Boston, MA 02130
Email: info@thecouncil.us

National Public Radio (usually shortened to NPR, stylized as npr) is an American privately and publicly funded nonprofit membership media organization that serves as a national syndicator to a network of 900 public radio stations in the United States. Write to Prison Watch to find out your local station.

The Newark Office of Reentry provides transitional jobs in landscaping and light construction through the Transitional Jobs Program in New Jersey. The Opportunity Reconnect Program also offers former offenders who are seeking employment. Housing, clothing, family services, and legal assistance are available through the Opportunity Reconnect Program. Gateway ID is another program provided for former offenders who need to obtain identification cards.

Newark Office of Reentry
NJRC at Greater Newark Conservancy
32 Prince Street
Newark, New Jersey 07103
Phone: 973-642-4646

The Northern Maine Regional Reentry Center (NMRRC) is designed to assist men and women who are from Maine and have been convicted of a federal offense with successful reintegration back into their community. Under close supervision and monitoring, our team provides residents with treatment (including mental health and drug and alcohol counseling), educational and vocational opportunities that are focused on reducing recidivism. Our programs are gender-responsive and evidence-based and provide men and women with opportunities to practice newly acquired living skills. Our goal is to reduce recidivism and prepare our clients to return to their communities with the skills they need to build a better life.

Volunteers of America Northern New England
14 Maine Street, Suite 100
Brunswick, ME 04011
Phone: 207-373-1140

Oakland City University Prison Ministries Projects offers educational opportunities to inmates in the following Indiana facilities: Branchville Correctional Facility, Madison Correctional Facility, Miami Correctional Facility, Rockville Correctional Facility, Newcastle Correctional Facility and Indiana Women's Prison. Degrees Offered: Associate and Bachelor's Degrees. Programs Offered: Associate in Applied Science in Culinary Arts, Food Service Mgt, Heating/Air Conditioning and Refrigeration, Welding, Horticulture, Computer Technology, Business Administration, Human Services.

Oakland City University Prison Ministries Projects
138 N. Lucretia Street
Oakland City, IN 47660
Phone: 812-749-1224

One-Stop Career Centers assist job seekers in finding employment. There are 23 locations in Maine. Information and services about job markets, skill assessment, resume writing, and interviewing techniques are available. Referrals for upgrading skills and job training is also available. The Career Center hotline number is 1-888-457-8883.

Bureau of Employment Services Maine Department of Labor
55 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333
Phone: 207-624-6390

Operation New Hope Community Development Corporation rebuilds low-income communities in Florida by offering training and employment to neighborhood residents, 60 percent of whom are people with criminal records. Operation New Hope works with area churches to provide building/construction skills as well as mentors for each participant. Participation in the program ranges from three months to one year, after which time graduates may be placed in private construction industry jobs. Operation New Hope evaluates applicants before release from incarceration and works closely with the Florida Department of Corrections.

Operation New Hope Community Development Corporation
1321 N. Main Street
Jacksonville, FL 32206
Phone: 904-354-4673
Email: kghope@fdn.com

Pacifica Foundation is an American non-profit organization that owns five independently operated, non-commercial, listener-supported radio stations known for their progressive/liberal political orientation. Write to them, or Prison Watch, to find out your local station.

Pacifica Foundation
1929 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way
Berkeley, CA 94704-1037
Phone: 510-848-6767

The Pennsylvania Innocence Project only takes on cases from factually innocent individuals who have been wrongfully convicted and exhausted their appeals. The Project takes on cases with or without DNA evidence, and will consider arson, shaken baby syndrome, and child abuse cases.

Pennsylvania Innocence Project
1515 Market St, 3rd Floor
Temple University Beasley School of Law
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Phone: 215-204-4255
Email: innocenceprojectpa@temple.edu

PFLAG Unites people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer with families, friends, and allies. PFLAG is committed to advancing equality through its mission of support, education, and advocacy.

PFLAG
1828 L Street NW, Suite 628
Washington D.C., 20036
Phone: 202-467-8180
Email: info@pflag.org

The Pride Center of New Jersey is a welcoming place where gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and questioning men, women, and teens can meet, socialize, share, bond, grow in self-awareness and thrive.

The Pride Center of New Jersey
85 Raritan Avenue, Suite 100
Highland Park, NJ 08904-2701
Phone: 732-846-2232
Email: host@pridecenter.org

Prison Activist Resource Center (PARC) is a prison abolitionist group committed to exposing and challenging all forms of institutionalized racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, and classism, specifically within the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). PARC believes in building strategies and tactics that build safety in our communities without reliance on the police or the PIC. We produce a directory that is free to prisoners upon request, and seek to work in solidarity with prisoners, ex-prisoners, their friends and families.

PARC
P.O. Box 70447
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-893-4648
Email: prisonactivist@gmail.com

Prison Health News is a quarterly newsletter and health resource. Their newsletter is published four times a year for people in prison and strives to lift up the voices, experience and expertise of currently and formerly incarcerated people. They respond to all types of health questions from people in prisons and jails everywhere in the United States. Write to them for a free subscription or with health questions. Past issues are downloadable from the website at <https://fight.org/programs-and-services/prison-health-news/>.

Prison Health News
1207 Chestnut Street, 2nd Fl
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 215-525-0460 x 417

Prison Legal News (PLN), a project of the non-profit Human Rights Defense Center, is a 72-page monthly magazine that reports on criminal justice issues and prison and jail-related civil litigation, with an emphasis on prisoners' rights.

Prison Legal News
P.O. Box 1151
1013 Lucerene Ave.
Lake Worth, FL 33460
Phone: 561-360-2523
Email: info@prisonlegalnews.org

Prison Radio's mission is to challenge unjust police and prosecutorial practices which result in mass incarceration, racism, and gender discrimination. They do this by bringing the voices of men, women and kids into the public debate and dialogue on crime and punishment. Their radio broadcasts help spur the public to examine core issues that create crime and heighten disenfranchisement. Their educational materials serve as a catalyst for public activism, strengthening movements for social change. Prison Radio's productions illustrate the perspectives and the intrinsic human worth of the more than 7.1 million people under correctional control in the U.S and those not served by the justice system.

Prison Radio
P.O. Box 411074
San Francisco, CA 94141
Phone: 415-648-4505
Email: info@prisonradio.org

Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) is a nationwide visitation that has 300 volunteers across the U.S. who visit federal and military prisoners only. Their goal is to visit any federal or military prisoner who wishes to receive a visit with special priority paid to prisoners on death row, in solitary confinement, or those who are serving long sentences. The PVS volunteers visit once a month, with limited visiting services for Spanish speaking prisoners.

Prisoner Visitation and Support
1501 Cherry Sreet
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Phone: 215-241-7117

Project 180 seeks to break this cycle by providing workforce education and financial literacy classes for inmates plus an annual reentry lecture series for the general public. Our current goal is to open a long-term, 24/7 residential program in Florida for reentering men who wish to turn their lives around. Project 180 seeks to build community, not prisons.

Project 180
P.O. Box 25684
Sarasota, FL 34277-2684

Phone: 941-677-2281

Email: ceo@project180reentry.org

Ready4Work is a national program that is available to former offenders who want to make a fresh start. However, restrictions apply to former offenders who have committed violent and sexual crimes. Stipulations also apply regarding release status. You must be newly released, on probation, recently charged or arrested within the last year. For detailed information, contact Volunteers of America Delaware Valley.

Ready4Work

Volunteers of America Delaware Valley

531 Market Street

Camden, NJ 08102

Phone: 856-854-4660

The Resource Center is NJAC's oldest non-residential program, and serves as a walk-in center for ex-offenders. The goal of the Resource Center is to assist clients in becoming self-sufficient and productive within the community. Issues of major importance to recently released inmates are employment, housing and adjustment to community standards. Staff works with clients in order to remove these barriers and assist in their transition. Short-term case management services are provided that assist clients with emergency needs, community stabilization, and general assistance in becoming productive citizens in the community. The center provides a mailing address, phone usage, messaging service and information/referrals to community resources. Transitional Housing is provided on-site for approved individuals who are under supervision of the New Jersey State Parole Board, Intensive Supervision Program or Probation.

Middlesex County Resource Center & Transitional Housing Program

143 Remsen Avenue

New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Phone: 732-247-2770

Resettlement Program provides comprehensive reentry (pre/post) case management and basic needs support services to approximately 75 individuals from the state of Connecticut annually. The program is based on the premise that all women and men involved in the criminal justice system, coupled with meaningful support from role models, mentors, and the community. Enterprise House is a have strengths and resources that can be mobilized to address and overcome challenges. The program acts as a bridge connecting individuals to community based agencies that are instrumental in securing appropriate housing, treatment (substance abuse and mental health), reunifications, employment, education, food, clothing, and other life necessities.

Resettlement

110 Bartholomew Ave. Suite 4020

Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: 860-522-7400

Second Chance Tiny Homes Program has emerged as a program of the Pinellas Ex Offender Re Entry Coalition in Florida. Students receive Carpentry and OSHA Certification at Pinellas Technical College and are paid part-time for hands on training in the construction trades. This program is the ultimate win-win-win-win, where innovative training is combined with community partners and resources to solve multiple social issues. During your on-the-job training (OJT), you will gain the knowledge, skills, and competencies that are needed to perform basic carpentry and construction jobs on an actual worksite, building Tiny Homes, working with Habitat for Humanity and other various construction projects. Employees will learn in an environment in which they will need to practice the knowledge and skills taught in class. Employees will use hand and power tools, to learn to effectively perform their future job.

Second Chance Tiny Homes Program

South County Office

1601 16th Street S.

St. Petersburg, FL 33705

Phone: 727-954-3993 x207

Email: stars@exoffender.org

Set Free in Maine is a 10-year-old faith-based organization. Employment and life skills training are offered to former offenders upon release. Set Free in Maine has a working woodshop that employs former prisoners. Income generated from the sale of furniture is the funding mechanism for the program. Referrals to the program are made by religious organizations that operate within the prison system. Individual mentoring begins three to six months prior to release. Inmates are matched with a mentor in the area where the inmate is going to return. Set Free in Maine tries to meet individual needs such as housing and offering anger management groups.

Set Free in Maine

RR 1, 674 Riverside Road

Augusta, ME 04330

Phone: 207-622-4709

The Stages to Enhance Parole Success program provides housing placement, life skill development, substance abuse counseling, career training, education, job placement, financial management, and transitional support services for New Jersey. NOTE: This is a NJ STATE Parole Board sponsored program

Stages to Enhance Parole Success

New Jersey State Parole Board Division of Community Programs

P.O. Box 862 Trenton, NJ 08625

Phone: 609-292-4257 x5

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) works to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination or violence. SRLP provides legal services to and does organizing work by and for trans, gender non-conforming, and intersex folks who are people of color and low-income.

Sylvia Rivera Law Project
127 W. 24th St, 5th floor
New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212-337-8550
Email: info@srlp.org

Transgender Law Center's Detention Project works to end the abuses that transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) people experience in prisons, jails, immigration detention, state hospitals, and other forms of detention, as well as at the hands of law enforcement. Write to them concerning TGNC issues, or to obtain copies of their list of available reports and publications including Safety Inside: Problems Faced by Transgender Prisoners & Common Sense Solutions to Them, and Advocating for Yourself While in Custody in California.

Transgender Law Center
1629 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 400
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-380-8229

The Women's Project of the Ohio Justice & Policy Center offers a gender-responsive, trauma-informed lens to help women with criminal records, both in prison and in the community. The Women's Project works to remove criminal-records-based barriers to community reintegration and to secure release from prison.

Ohio Justice & Policy Center | The Women's Project
215 East 9th Street Suite #601
Cincinnati, OH 45202
Phone: 513-562-3200
Email: snaiman@ohiojpc.org or tsmith@ohiojpc.org

The Women's Re-Entry Network is a program within Community Reentry that focuses entirely on women with criminal records in Ohio. Services include assessment, intensive case management, individual and group counseling, and parenting classes. The Network also offers information and referrals for housing, employment and other needs. It has offices in the county jail and local women's prison offering support groups and case management. The Network acts as a bridge to services on the outside for women who are being released.

Women's Re-Entry Network
1468 West 25th Street
Cleveland, OH 44113
Phone: 216-696-7535

The Work Release Program emphasizes employment and relapse prevention support. Residents are prepared for the world of work with employment readiness, job search, and job retention assistance. The program offers residents an opportunity to learn new skills through individual and group case management. Other services include identification restoration, medical services assistance, random urinalysis, life skills training, money management/banking, and discharge/aftercare planning. Residents may also participate in area educational and vocational opportunities.

Work Release Program

Program Manager: Bob Rametta

121 Washington Street

Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: 860-543-8929

Email: dthompson@cpa-ct.org

VIII.

American Friends Service Committee Publications

The Fortress Economy (1990)

<https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/Fortress%20Economy.pdf>

Lessons of Marion: The Failure of a Maximum Security Prison - A History and Analysis, with Voices of Prisoners (1993)

<https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/LessonsofMarion1985.pdf>

Survivors Manual - Surviving in Solitary (Fifth Printing November 2015)

<http://www.afsc.org/image/survivors-manual>

The Prison Inside the Prison - Control Units, Supermax Prisons, and Devices of Torture (2003)

<https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/PrisonInsideThePrison.pdf>

Inalienable Rights - A Human Rights Perspective (2009)

<https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/IRights57025.pdf>

Our Children's House - a Pamphlet and a One Act Play of Testimonies of Imprisoned Children (2009)

<https://www.afsc.org/document/our-childrens-house-one-act-play>

Torture in United States Prisons (2011)

https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/torture_in_us_prisons.pdf

Survivors Speak: Prisoner Testimonies of Torture in United States Prisons and Jails (2014)

<https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/Survivors%20Speak%20-%20AFSC%20CAT%20Shadow%20Report%202014.pdf>

Torture in New Jersey Prisons (2015)

https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/TORTURE%20IN%20NEW%20JERSEY%20PRISONS_0.pdf

Aging in Prison: A Human Rights Problem We Must Fix (2017)

<https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/Aging%20in%20prison%20report%202017.pdf>

LGBTQ+ Prisoner Resource Guide (2017)

https://www.afsc.org/sites/afsc.civactions.net/files/documents/LGBTQ%20prisoner%20resource%20brochure%202017_WEB%20%281%29%20v.2.pdf

From the Inside Out: A Newsletter from Prisoners for Interested Allies (recurring)

Please write to us for free copies of our publications.

American Friends Service Committee | Prison Watch

89 Market Street, 6th Floor

Newark, NJ 08609

973-643-3192

IX.

Acknowledgments

There are hundreds of people (students, activists, advocates, family members and more) who in small and large ways have contributed their time, thoughts, energy, and talent to this publication. The primary acknowledgement goes to Bonnie Kerness, of AFSC's Prison Watch Program who first recognized the NEED for a separate manual for women, and then worked tirelessly to ensure that it was not only done, but done in a way that our sisters DESERVE. Her tireless advocacy and passion over 40 years of soul-numbing work don't get enough recognition, although she would prefer none at all.

But it **must** be said, because there are few left of the generation that would dedicate their lives to service of those unseen, unheard, and abandoned. Those individuals SEE the unseen, LISTEN to the unheard, and rescue, even in the smallest ways, the hopes of those who have been abandoned.

It has been said earlier, but bears repeating that our other acknowledgements go strongly to those individuals inside, and released who took the time, and energy to reach inside to give back to our sisters who are still trapped, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

—Lydia Thornton, Editor

My personal gratitude to Lydia Thornton, who has been our “ground floor”, our rock and guiding light in moving this Manual forward; to Rachel Frome who contributed so much of herself, her talent and her artist's eye and her patience, to Margeaux Biché whose thoughtful input and attention to detail was always so valuable and to Cynthia Cupe who examples the courage it takes to survive. We hope that this Manual helps to promote the concept of an internal sanctuary for survival and healing. Your body is imprisoned, not your spirit or your mind.

—Bonnie Kerness, Director

“If we are truly committed to ending oppression and violence, then we must be committed to each other. Then we must live out of the simple truth that we need each other. We need each other.”

- Mia Mingus,

Community organizer for disability justice and transformative justice



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