

Hearts on a Wire

Issue # 21— Summer 2017

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♥ support incarcerated and detained trans and gender variant people ♥
♥ build community through bars ♥
♥ organize for justice ♥

We are trans and gender variant people, and our allies, building a movement for gender self-determination, racial and economic justice, and an end to the policing and imprisoning of our communities.

We meet in Philly at
William Way Center
1315 Spruce Street

Mondays at 5:30pm

tokens provided

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

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LETTER FROM

THE OUTSIDE COLLECTIVE

Dear beloved queer & trans family:

This is our 21st newsletter and we're hoping it reaches you with peacefulness, love, and light.

This summer has been busy for us. We marched in the Philly Pride Parade. We represented at the Prison Health Summit where we presented workshops, tabled, and many of our inside collective members' artwork was displayed. Several of us went to Washington DC and participated in a mass civil disobedience as part of the ongoing struggle to save healthcare. This summer we have also welcomed many formerly incarcerated collective members. Be sure to come and see us if you are released!

We have begun planning a major retreat for outside collective members to review our mission as the Hearts On A Wire Collective. Let us know if you have thoughts on how we can do better.

In solidarity,

Hearts on a Wire Outside Collective



Jossy & Tyra on the Prison Health Summit panel

PRISON HEALTH SUMMIT 2017 SUCCESS

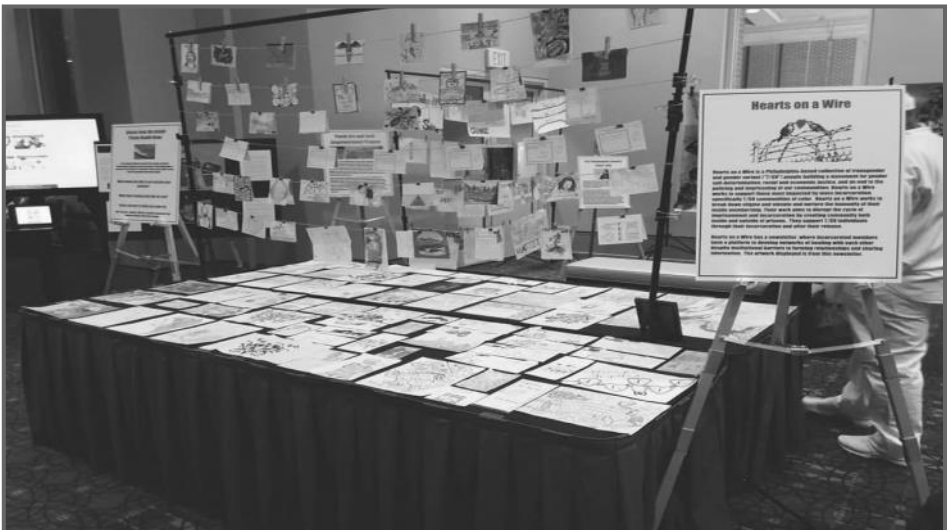
UNAPOLOGETICALLY, KAT DELANCEY

For yet another year, the Hearts On A Wire Outside Collective members participated in the Beyond the Walls: Prison Health Care and Reentry Summit. We were very busy this year. We held our own workshop, had a table, and also participated in the Art as Resistance gallery.

Hearts on a Wire's collection of inside collective member's artwork was the centerpiece of the Art as Resistance Gallery. The Gallery seeks to highlight the creative contributions of individuals and organizations fighting to end all intersecting systems of oppression that perpetuate mass incarceration and all forms of state violence.

Our workshop, Trans* Justice: Creating Community Through Wires was another success this year. Four outside collective members, all Trans persons of color, were panelists and delivered information about Hearts On A Wire. A highlight! We spoke about Mrs. GeGe and L.I.G.H.T and how inside collective members have been creating tools for communication, disrupting isolation, and solidarity between Trans and gender-variant people in different prisons across the state.

The Hearts On A Wire Table, was not only an informative table about Hearts On A Wire, but also acted as a safety net for many Trans and gender-variant folks attending the summit to gather and network.



Hearts' collection on display at the Prison Health Summit

I LOVE ME

MISS PRISS @ HOUTZDALE

To All my Kings and Queens my heart is shattered and hurt seeing the lengths we go to for a small 4 letter word that carries the greatest pain.

Never allow your self-worth to be defined by someone else. You should look in the mirror and see someone who deserves the absolute best, and refuse to settle for anything less. Sometimes we hold on to things that may not be holding on to us. If it's miserable, let it go. If you are lied and cheated on let it go. Because how can we find Mr. or Ms. Right if Mr. or Ms. Wrong is still around. It's time to love who we are, flaws and all. Stop thinking we need love to solidify who we are.

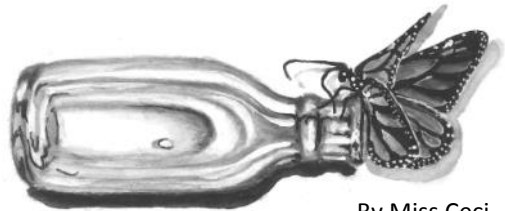
Some of us think being single is some sort of curse, and we're wrong. Being single is an absolute blessing, because it's when we learn to love ourselves and value who we are. In better terms if defined as "me time" while we wait for love to knock 'cause it will.

So today I dare my Brothers and Sisters to refuse to be abused and hurt, lied to or cheated. You deserve true love and rid yourself of Mr. or Ms. Misery. Mr. or Ms. Right is Looking for you! I did,

(MY LIFE)

BRE'AIR

My life is not my own
Who am I without you?
I'm one half of this so-called
storybook of life
You are the air that I need to live
You are the food that makes me grow
The sun that shines down on my
You are the water that cleans my soul
I'm not whole without you
You are the moon that keeps me awake
You are the reason that makes me want
to be great
To love of my life
I always was not my life
But with me and you as one
I can really say it "My Life" after all



By Miss Ceci

Hearts on a Wire is on Instagram!

After seeing how beautiful all the artwork you have sent us over the years looked at the Prison Health Summit, we decided to share it more broadly.

Outside Collective Member Amber has volunteered to manage our Instagram account. So keep sending us your beautiful artwork!

INTERVIEW WITH LGBTQ+ YOUTH

MRS. GEGE

Mrs. GeGe was able to send interview questions to a youth group in Massachusetts. Without identifying the group for privacy reasons, here is their response:

We're so happy to know you want to hear our voices. You asked us what we (young folks) should be focusing on that we haven't been already. We came up with a few ideas. We think we should be raising awareness of the fetishization of the LGBTQ+ community by straight and/or cis folks as well as tokenism in the media. We also think that racism is a huge unaddressed issue, both with obsession of certain POC by white folks and the hatred of other POC from the LGBT community. Schools are another unaddressed issue, from inadequate sex ed for non penetrative sex to not being allowed to take same sex dates to prom. Lastly, the LGBTQ community needs to express more support for AFAB/feminine identifying LGBT people, since the typical gay narrative is too cis, white, and male.

cis: short for *cisgender*, meaning someone who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth.

AFAB: Assigned Female At Birth

You also asked us about issues facing LGBT youth and we're so glad you asked! We think the main issues facing LGBT youth today are under-education, discrimination, bullying, and mental illness. We think LGBT kids (and everyone!) should be taught more about LGBT history, and how hard our community had to fight for recognition and rights. We also need help quelling the still persistent issue of bullying and discrimination in our schools, both by our fellow students and by the school system itself. We need to teach bystanders that they can make a difference, even if they don't know the victim. All you need to do is go to a trusted adult after all.

Speaking of bullying, you also asked us our opinions on the impact of bullying and the results are rather grim. Suicide rates are way up for LGBT youth, way way higher than those of our cis-het counterparts. This also raises rates of mental illness, internalized homophobia, and drastically lowers LGBT youths/self esteem. However, all this makes us even more empowered to fight back.

Lastly, you asked us if we had any advice for LGBT prisoners. We need you to stay strong, because the younger generations are supporting and fighting for you! We are a strong community, and organizations like ours are always fighting for you despite all the negative press. We've made it this far, we can keep going!

INSIDE TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

MILEY SELENA

What rights do transgender women, men and transgender juveniles have to form relationships while incarcerated, in detention? We are told by DOC's administration, security offices and guards: None! But we as transgender people are often housed in the gender institutions that we were assigned at birth. I myself am a transgender woman. I am forced to be housed in an all-male institution.

What is illegal? Same sex marriage is legal, being in a relationship is legal. While incarcerated do we lose that right? No! So what do we do about it? See we don't know. Because we're told it's wrong to do. We can't have cellmates of our choice, like the straight men and women do.

We're told file a grievance that a good answer. We exhaust that of course we all know it will be denied. Then we file it to the courts. But guess what? In the meantime, you're threatened with a transfer, you get separated from the person you were with. And you're the only one doing it., because others see the tactics that have just been used against you. None of us are standing up as whole to exercise our rights.

I was told recently "You keep pushing that issue, we will lock you up on AC

status. Keep you in the hole for six months to a year then transfer you out!" This was by a security office. Do you know what I did? I pushed again the next day. Two days later I was on AC status. I was in the hole I was abused, mistreated, sprayed, beaten on. I was transferred. I was separated from my mate. I was forced to be transferred with a black belt with an electric device attached to it. I was told that it would shoot 50,000 volts of electricity in me if I acted up on my transfer to another institution. I am surprised they didn't kill me.

It was none of their business about my relationship of twenty one months with the same man. It's called being separated where the DOC document that you and that person must be kept away from each other. The state institutions in PA is so worried that I'll write to him that they're opening my mail, sending it to the security office and administration.

It's a bond between two people against the world. But we as incarcerated transgender people have to build rights because these kinds of acts will continue. They use what they can against you. They'll lie to your face.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 ...

But my quest for Justice does not stop. While we are incarcerated, transgender women, men or juveniles in detention, all across the United States have to stand up. Us sitting back watching or doing nothing is why these things are happening.

Fight for what you believe in. We're told that over and over. But guess what? None of us are doing it. Some are, some aren't. Policies rules, regulations and bylaws in these institutions have to change. And we're the ones who should stand strong to do this... I call this Inside transgender Rights because it's not just about me. It's about all of us. We are in this fight together. If you want to be or not. You are involved.

Miley Selena
AKA Eric Wolfgang BZ2211.
SCI Houtzdale



Miss Ceci

STAND AGAIN

MAXINE

Once again you will rise
Believing every word even with tears in
my eyes
'Cause my plan
Is to once again help you
Stand
And not fall
But to defiantly stand tall
Again and again
Being that I'm not just your love but
your friend
Once again you will rise
And it'll be so shocking others won't
believe their eyes
'Cause my plan
Is to stand by my man
Stand
With a plan

*dedicated to my babe

PEACE

BOOKIE

we can't have peace without love
without love we can't have respect
without respect we are broken
and broken we become upset.
upset we begin to cry
with crying, we become depressed
depression brings pain
and pain brings death
peace gives us strength
strength brings us hope
hope brings us respect
and respect brings us peace

EXCERPTS AND SHOUT-OUTS...

LETTERS AND LOVE XXXXO

I received newsletter 20. OOOH look at the pictures! I see you Jossy! Everyone is so beautiful. Wow. I love it. Everything in it was fabulous! GR8 Job!! ~Miley Selena

Hi brothers and sisters

I must send respect peace and prayers to my fellow sisters, brothers, and comrades currently in lock down from when they took Delaware's Toughest Prison SCI Smyana because of serious prison problems like deliberate indifference, inadequate health care, due process, and not releasing people who have been discharged. So my question is why did it take for inmates to take the jail hostage and kill one CO? The jail was in standoff around 18 hours the DOC placed all prisons in Delaware on lockdown. Now the new governor and prison administration want to know why and claim staff is professional. I have a different point of view in 2007 I was incarcerated in Delaware DOC for 2 weeks. And I'm surprised it took this long for Delaware to act. I'm saying that's what unity is about, inmates joining together for a good cause. And my question is when is PA going to take a stand and join together?

I send love to all my family especially Foxy, Pearl, Rosie, Precious, Miley, Jay, Ms. ChiChi, Ms. Brown and all the fighters fighting for a good cause.

~Juicy

Dear Hearts:

First I'd like to say I love all my LGBTQ community makin' a positive footprint on the world. I'm KeKe, I just recently got a newsletter and it's so amazing to see our community come together as one and form such unity. Keep it up everyone! I'd like to give a shout out to a few brothers and sisters. Smook, thanks for showing me there's more to life than pain and suffering, true love and what it means to actually be noticed. A shout out to Reginald Hall on his progress as an inspirational author. To Jeffery congrats on your relationship. To my godmom Ms. Penny, keep it real girl, 'cause that's all we know. And to the entire community, a shout out for making a stand against the oppressor.

Let peace be with each and every one of you wonderful and unique kings and queens!

Love you All,

~Kalieshia

@ SCI Coal Township

I send all my love to my brothers and sisters out there in state prisons. I wanna give a shout out to my husband whom I love dearly with all my heart, to my homegirl Chrissy whom I love dearly and don't worry haters are everywhere sis but we shine everyday, nothing can stop me I'm all the way up!

~Princess at SCI Somerset

...FROM THE MAIL

OXXOX LETTERS AND LOVE

Hey Fam!! It's Bookie. I got to give my shout outs to my sisters Frenchy, Penny and friends Shadow, Slim, Mercedes, Shawn, Nate, love y'all always. To Mrs. GeGe, you helped me a lot with finally telling my mother, and now we are great. To everyone in our LGBTQ community, Stay true to yourselves! Don't worry what people say!

Now to our community here at Coal Township, we need to come together. We are falling apart. This is what people want to see. We're broken and arguing with each other. We have to be strong together as a family. We may be looked down upon and talked about but who are they? This is our community. Please Talk and move on. We need to be strong together. I love all of you. We can't let no one take our happiness period. Forget what people say. Who are we to please others but hurt ourselves. Live for you and the ones you love.

Now to BLM and to our fellow black community stay strong we fight with truth and peace never pain and anger because we do not think when we act on impulse. We have to strategize positive ways to stay strong no matter what happens to all those families and friends who lost their sons, daughters and family. I give my love and prayer to all of you. I know how it feels to lose family to violence and anger. I'm thankful I am going home June 2017 and can participate in Hearts on a Wire and BLM meetings and give support and insight on what I think and to participate in our LGBTQ community. I love all of y'all forever you will have a place in my hearts.

I'm out. Be you! Be Cool!

~Bookie

Dear Family:

Hi all you beautiful people. I care deeply for each and every one of you. Every trans woman's blood spilled is a waste of a beautiful person. Whether it's murder or suicide. There's no reason to live in fear. I will stand up for you. I have nothing but love for each and everyone of you.

Your girl,

~Erin @ Coal Township

I would like to give a shout out to Mariah Lee Smith & SJ up here at SCI Forest. ~Collis H

I want to send my love to my niece Niara (Peaches). Rosie, keep your head up. Juicy, be strong and write that paperwork. I'm so happy that Candy is home! To the rest of the family, know that each day you are worthy of love, honor and respect.

~Uncle Steven

EXCERPTS AND SHOUT-OUTS...

LETTERS AND LOVE XXXXO

Hearts on a Wire:

Thanks to everyone for their prayers and concern regarding Bambi. Life is short, regardless of anyone's flaws, respect is due. For all the Fallen LGBTQ whose lives were lost, I ask all of you to put one finger in the air tonight and say to all the fallen stars: "I love you and you're truly missed."

To finger-licking good Miley Selena, Muah! Good to the last drop Mariah, Got damn! Got Damn! Mouthwatering Alicia, Love you lil sis always. What up doe, to Auntie CeCe and the Real J. Lo. Cake-Ass Fly, what's good? Breath-taking Bre-Aire, stay looking gorgeous love. Everyone else, Love always.

~André

Quick shoutout to my lil sis Frenchy! Wherever you are: I love you! Please keep ya nose clean. And you done left the prison in an uproar about...LOL! A lot of closets were open. Love you!

~Indy

aka Antoine Walker

Dear Hearts on a Wire,

I'd like to give a shout out to the Love Of My Life Sandman. I'd also like to give a shout out to Miley, Alex, Chi Chi, Marv, Slim, Bre, Precious, Erica, E. and all my brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ fam. Love you all,

~Michelle Sanders

To My HOAW Family:

I hope my letter finds everyone across the rainbow spectrum doing OK. My hair is getting longer and I love that. I plan to let it grow until I go home in December... I truly love the poems and art work. A couple shout-outs:

First to Miley Selena. Miley I hope you are doing well. Thank you for writing about how to get hormones (Issue 18 Summer 2016). It was a big help to me. I am waiting for a decision from the board now to see if I get hormones. I loved your artwork in Issue 20! Keep up the good work!

My second shout out goes to Shirlin at SCI Graterford. At least I hope I have the right person. Shirlin you were on the Trans Central PA videoconference with Kea-Kea. Anyways my heart went out to you. Stay strong sister girl don't give up. You're so special if you know it or not Shirlin... I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers.

To those of you who lost a love one this year: I know how you feel and my hearts and prayers goes out to you.

Brad in Virginia: Welcome to the family. Smile sweetie, you deserve to.

All of you take it easy wherever you are at. Stay strong and remember you're beautiful in lots of ways.

In peace and solidarity always,

~Queen Jessa

...FROM THE MAIL

OXXOX LETTERS AND LOVE

Dear Hearts on a Wire family:

I love the stories I read in the recent HOAW newsletter. I can relate to a couple of them. Erin, I know we've had our differences, and I'm sorry. I can relate to what you went through, and about not feeling comfortable in your body. I'm not either.

I'm restarting my hormone therapy, and whoever doesn't like it can kick rocks.

I'd like to shout out to my man; Babe, I love you and thanks for having faith in me. Through thick and thin I will ride with you, whatever comes our way.

To all my LGBTQ family in prison and in the streets keep your head up. When people pick on you let it go in one ear and out the other. When you feel like nobody out there is being picked on like you trust and believe that I've been picked on more times than I can count. I almost took my own life because I couldn't deal it. But I felt that if I did then they would win. So I grew a thicker skin and learned to give it right back.

Stay Gay y'all

~Love your Lil' Sis Rachael

Dear Hearts on a Wire Outside Collective members:

From the inception of "Hearts On a Wire" Issues 1-20 (which I have in chronological order) clearly indicate that Outside Collective members firmly believe that building stronger alliances with other organizations that are also committed to ending violence, including institutional violence, is crucial to our future--not to mention a life-saver in countless situations.

Thank you for your die-hard support for ensuring that queer and trans people in prison have a voice in our local movements. The stance you've taken on mandating inter-generational dialogue around trans issues for black history month, vigils against violence directed at trans women of color, the women's march in Philadelphia in the face of Trump's inauguration, resistance against the Muslim travel ban, and marches in support of trans youth to access public facilities, such as restrooms is admirable, and I extend to you my support.

Despite the fact that 'our' battles are never-ending and continue to be challenged through perseverance, hopefully hundreds even thousands of Queer and Trans Americans like me will continue to stand up for what is right.

~Ms. Cocoa

EXCERPTS AND SHOUT-OUTS...

LETTERS AND LOVE XOXOXO

Dear HOAW,

My name is Steve and I'm at 31 year old transgender Male. I have been fighting for a good brand of men's deodorant. Ever since I started taking hormones I sweat terribly! My outside doctor approved a stronger brand. Despite the paperwork, the prison is telling me I have to have it approved by doctor here. All this to stop me from getting some Old Spice. Just getting approved for boxers was a hassle! Any suggestions would be appreciated. I love you all!

~Steve

Stephanie Meador #1417657
V.C.C.W.
P.O. Box 1
Goochland, VA 23063

Dear Hearts on a Wire,

I really appreciate all the love and support you guys show me, and I'm so happy that I have you guys to lean on. I'm very new to the HOAW family, but the welcome is full of warmth. It's such a blessing to actually be heard while in prison. It feels good to know that other LGBTI people get the chance to hear what it's like from the inside.

This has been rough OMG! Really rough. But I am very happy to be alive, living well, and still shining bright (like a diamond). I'm at a good place in my life. Yeah I know, how could that be ... bitch you in prison! That's true, but there's light at the end of the tunnel.

Advice to those in institutions: never mind what they say, keep doing you, cause if they hate you it's 'cause they hate that you know how to do you.

Much love to LGBTI fam reading this newsletter. I wanna say to my husband, I love you, we've been going strong and nothing will stop us from expressing our love. You go to the twist, I'm in the twist with you, ride or die.

~(PYT) Tara

Hello Family

I am glad to see you all standing strong and sticking together through tough times. Remember we are all beautiful in our own ways. I don't know what I would without all of you.

XO ♥Ms. Unique DA Queen

Brandon Rutherford MQZ839
SCI Albion

Dear Hearts on a Wire,

It took me years to finally not care what people say about me. I'm gonna stand tall with my head high towards the sky with my king by my side, and proudly say that "My name is Becca Marie, and I am a transgender woman."

~Ms. Becca

...FROM THE MAIL

OXXOX LETTERS AND LOVE

Dear LGBT Family:

I read some of the poems by many of you sisters and brothers of the LGBT family. I was truly embraced, in a delicate way, spiritually, by others' talents, and how some go through changes in jail.

I was diagnosed with gender dysphoria by doctors on the streets but I didn't start my transition until I came to SCI Benner. Now I'm content with myself and the changes in my body. I have some other good things going for me. My criminal case was opened back up, I am looking forward to Justice and getting my life back.

~Foxy Drake.

Dear Hearts,

I see that we all want to be loved by somebody but we need to love ourselves before anything else. I found somebody I love with all of me but we are two different people and I do some wrong things to him and he does them to me. So that's why I said we have to love ourselves first before anything else because you will find yourself doing the same things we have done to us in our lives and our past with other men because I didn't love Bre'Air first and now I do. We have to respect ourselves and the people that we are with no matter what. Keep what you have close to your heart because you never know when it's gone. So brothers and sisters we might think we have it hard but when the right person that comes into your life and calls you on your bullshit you got a winner.

Love you all

~Bre'Air

Dear Ms. Jossy:

Even though we never met you showed me how to be who I am, no matter how people judged me or pushed me away. I was scared of being rejected until I saw how you walked with confidence, always with your head held high, had a smile on your face & a heart full of love. Even when people talked about you, you still stood strong & I respected that. So I took a stand myself & let myself be known. I was rejected by many but loved by our community. Because of you Jossy I stand with confidence & am glad to call you my family.

Sincerely, an admirer and friend,

~Jazeal @ SCI Benner.

Dear Hearts on a Wire:

I was transferred to another block and can't see my babe no more. I'm hurt being away from her.

~Mark Taylor

EVEN MORE MAIL...

LETTERS AND LOVE

Dear Hearts on a Wire:

I would like to give a couple of shouts starting with HOAW for holding me down the last few months. Double M hold y'all head up. BR stay in that law work. Face I'ma get with you soon. Indy keep everybody cool cuz you're level-headed.

~Antonio

Dear Hearts on a Wire Family,

My maximum date is going to be happy and sad at the same time. I am excited to go home to be with my family, but my husbear can't come with me who I love with every inch of my body. One day we will be united again!! xoxoxoxox

I love you Hearts on a Wire and the rest of the LGBTQ family!

~Joe



artwork by Miss Juicy

PRETTY ROSES IN THE FIRE

TWANNA @ SCI FAYETTE

God made the purest thing—what Joy Their beauty can bring. Virgin hearts and a wedding ring—Is that alright?

With light to brighten up a home, a promise to never leave you alone—
Now smoking ashes in the Night—That ain't right.

It's gotten down to the wire and the flames are getting higher cause you've thrown those pretty Roses in the fire

Like the broke vase in the cold without a chance at being whole. No loving care can mend the mold—That ain't right

(Cherish Beauty and Life. Don't throw Love into the Fire)

PREA POLICY NEEDS TO CHANGE

MISS JUICY QUEEN BEE

What I think needs to be changed:

When you go to the shower you're only allowed to have a towel, I say transgender people should be allowed to wear shorts and a shirt.

We should be allowed our make-up that they can see.

I'd rather have a female pat me down and strip search me.

They make female staff announce themselves when they come on the block but mainly it's the men who talk out of pocket and cop feels.

The federal PREA standard state a transgender person's safety is priority but staff still abuse and harass us without a serious investigation. How many PREA violations ended up going to the District Attorney's office? How many PREA investigations ended with staff being fired? Nothing happens. Then staff write you up, there's no investigation.

Except when we consent, then they try to slap US with PREA.



FORBIDDEN LOVE

ANGEL DOVE

My love for you
Is greater than I
Would kiss loud & proud ...

Yet the love for You
Is frowned upon ...

Still I will love from afar
In tears...

And still my family is
Heated by the thought

Though My love
is more than you can tell ...

Why is this feeling
Forbidden love so
Heard of
But nothing is done?

I APOLOGIZE TO YOU

MISS JUICY

I apologize to you
for treating you wrong
making you cry
hurting you causing you pain

I apologize to you
for Lying to you
not keeping it real
for Doing you wrong

I apologize to you
for All I done to you

I apologize to you
for not being by your side
when you needed me
just keeping it real

I apologize to you

I AM

KALIESHIA

The day I was born, I saw life...
24 years later, I'm searching for
love,
and become a wedded wife...
the world labeled me as a
criminal,
I'm so much more, an angel
internal, and external...
They say I'll die, before I can fly,
I say I'm a black dove soarin' to
the sky...
People say the way I live ain't
right,
I say the way I live, my future is
bright...
Haters gonna hate, cheaters
gonna cheat,
But when I rise above all, All
they feel is defeat.
My heart is of pure gold
But in people's eyes, I'm a
disgrace
and should be stoned...
Society says no, I say yes.
Proud to shine and confront the
oppressed...
So stand with me and say
I AM proud to be LGBTQ
Let peace be with you...

SOUP FOR THE SOUL

MISS PRISS

Never settle for less, stop accepting scraps
when you deserve a full course meal (in a
relationship that is). If he or she isn't willing
to treat you right then make them take flight.

We seldom wonder why we can't find true
love, I'm going to drop a gem , how can you
ever expect to find Mr. or Mrs. right when
you waste time with Mr. or Mrs wrong?

Stop thinking being single is a curse chile, it is
a blessing because you can focus on oneself,
and learning how to love yourself is key.
You'll never be able to love someone else if
you can't first love and value yourself. Last
but not least never assume sex is going to
hook the fish. Sex is last to be offered, an
emotional connection for two souls and if
you don't value such an event neither will he
or she. Make them work for your diamond,
nothing good comes easy.

WHY MUST I LOVE?

BRE'AIR



As I contemplate love and what it has offered thus far, I
often try to evaluate the proper way to address my emotional
imperfection. As a heart-broken individual sometimes the
hurt and enmity of the world brings the memories that
remind me of that cruel feeling of remaining alone because it
seems that I am not capable of being loved in its full capacity.

But as time has passed second by second I love the fact that I must love you
because you are my everything and I hope our love will remain strong.

RESPONSES TO ISSUE 20 QUESTIONS

ANSWERS FROM YOU!

there was a question about DOC policies about towel placement

André

Administrative Custody Procedures DC-ADM 802 and Inmate Discipline DC-ADM 801 for the RHU has nothing about wearing a towel. There's no policy or procedure or memo. That's an RHU in-house rule, supposedly because there are female staff walking around.

Indy

I'm in the hole again. And they've been allowing trans women to wear their shirts to the shower and I never heard complaints about wearing your towel around your waist. I never read that in policy so 100% fight it! They're wrong.

We asked for trans folks' thoughts on the idea of separate transgender units

S.L.

i have more problems with the COs than with other inmates, so unless the "special trans unit" comes with a whole new breed of CO that's respectful, i'll take my chances in gen pop where some people have my back.

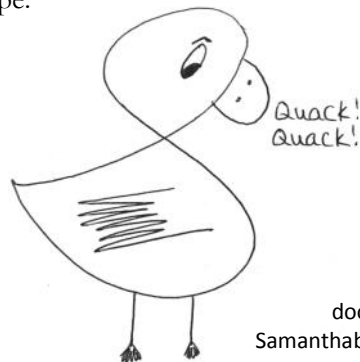
Anonymous

If an individual who is gay bisexual or transgender wants to be placed in a separate housing unit, then allow it! But it shouldn't be forced. We should have that right to chose!

Indy

I believe an LGBT block would be great! Not just a trans block, an LGBT block. As long as it's not away from general population. It's not segregation

if we're in pop. and everyone on the LGBT block wants to be there. I believe it would be better for us. We could hold group on our blocks, bid openly on LGBT topics etc. And it would be safer. Everyone can come out and be out without worrying. Less chance of rape. Better chance of peer mediation. Better chance of the LGBT community not having to go without because people don't deal with our type.



doodle by
Samanthabrianna

ALL ABOUT ESTROGEN AND ‘MONING

INFORMATION REPRINTED FROM NEWSLETTER 2

what is estrogen?

Estrogen is the hormone responsible for the development of female secondary sex characteristics. In trans women’s communities, taking estrogen is sometimes called ‘moning, Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), or medical transition. Estrogen comes in pill, patch, injection (shot), gel, and cream forms.

also sometimes part of medical transition:

Anti-androgens (testosterone/T-blockers) lower overall testosterone level. Used with estrogen to speed up effects. Sometimes used alone to delay puberty in MTF teens. **Progesterone** is a pregnancy hormone that may have some effect on breast development. Opinions are mixed on whether progesterone is necessary to transition, it may even work against feminization. Some folks take **Vitamin B** either with their hormone shot or in a pill. While there is no evidence that this is necessary for transition, it does no harm and contributes to feeling energized and happy. **Vitamin E** pills or cream soften skin.

estrogen works best if you are drinking lots of water

making smart decisions about black/grey market ‘mones

Whether its from the internet or an underground provider, go to a source whose reputation is known in your community. Sharing needles or vials puts you at risk for HIV and Hep C transmission/infection. If you go to someone for an injection, if you don’t **SEE** the needle come out of the package there is risk

hormones from a doctor

There are **no regulations** or laws about whether a doctor can prescribe hormones; it’s up to the doctor – a free market. You may have heard about doctors requiring patients to have years of psychotherapy before they will provide hormones. **They do not have to do this!** The current standard of care in LGBT health centers and progressive doctors is **informed consent** which means people are prescribed hormones as long as they fully understand what the hormones do.

advantages of going to a doctor

- you know for sure what you are getting
- hormones by prescription are cheaper, even if you have to pay cash.
- sometimes, insurance will pay for prescribed ‘mones.
- a doctor overseeing your medical transition will periodically run blood tests for estrogen levels and liver function
- if you take any prescribed medication it may interact with ‘mones. You should talk to your doctor about this.
- prisons are more likely to maintain you on hormones if they are prescribed by a doctor.

HIV meds affect estrogen: transition is slowed. However, estrogen does not impact the effectiveness of HIV meds.

what estrogen won't do

- estrogen will not raise voice pitch
- adam's apple will not shrink
- lost hair won't regrow
- 'mones will not grow a vagina, uterus or ovaries
- you will not get a cycle (menstruate)

how much is too much?

Everyone's body and genetic makeup is different. The right dose for someone else might not be right for you. Taking more estrogen than your body can process increases the risk of side effects and does not speed up transition.

what you can expect if you start 'moning

body

- breast buds develop 2-6 months after starting estrogen
 - nipples will grow more sensitive over time
 - breasts take several years to fully develop, generally to a similar size to non-trans female relatives
- body fat decreases in stomach, increases in thighs and butt
- overall decrease in muscle mass
- estrogen will give you body even if you've had silicone work done
- breasts are permanent, even if you stop 'moning
- fat and muscle changes are not permanent



"popping"
breast buds
does not help
them grow.
It just hurts.

everyone with breasts should screen routinely for breast cancer. Learn how to give yourself a monthly self-exam, and get an annual breast exam from your doctor.

softness

- thin layer of fat under the skin fills in the face
- skin will become softer
- facial hair may become lighter and thinner (but it will not go away)
- body hair growth will slow down, and hair may become finer and lighter
- if you stop 'moning these changes will reverse

emotion

- many trans women report a range of emotional effects from 'moning, like mood swings and crying easily
- some trans women experience "estrogen serenity" a feeling of well-being, calmness, and peace, while others experience depression
- emotional changes from 'mones are temporary



sex & genitals

- over time, estrogen can change sex drive and the way orgasm feels
- after years on estrogen, testicles, penis and prostate may decrease in size
- if you are over 50 you should still get an annual prostate exam
- eventually, erections may not be hard enough for penetrative sex
- estrogen lowers sperm count, but it may still be possible to make someone pregnant
- these effects may go away if estrogen is stopped

side effects

- for the first few months of estrogen therapy, many experience nausea similar to morning sickness in pregnancy
- risk of blot-clots
- high blood pressure may be increased by estrogen
- liver function is affected.

risks associated with estrogen are greatly reduced by quitting smoking



L.I.G.H.T
-Who Are We-

We are the Learning Initiative for Gay, Hetero & Transgender folk. We stand for all who are marginalized especially Trans folk inside the Prison Industrial Complex. We believe that in order to overcome discrimination and suffering, we have to all work together

We work on key issues of mass incarceration, directly from with the front lines of prison. Our goal is to continue enforcing our rights and to one day live in a world where real justice is not about the dollar bill. We know to do this we must stand up for all of our rights and we must begin now so that our future generations may live in a beautiful world free from hatred and greed.

We are proud to say that we work in partnership with Hearts On a Wire and we are a sister organization of the Black & Pink family. We are also glad to say that we are forming new chapters all over PA. Our newest chapter is called Rainbow Pride and is located at Benner Township. But be aware, we do not work in no way with the DOC.

To all our chapter leaders, I know I haven't been able to reach out to you lately. I just want y'all to know I'm safe strong and alive. Please continue to do what we all do. Keep on being a leader and make yourself be seen. Also, Please write to Monica James of Black & Pink and let her know who you are and that you are leaders of L.I.G.H.T She has asked that I have all our leaders reach out to her so she can learn how you are all involved. Well it seems I am running out of a page so let me say hello and good bye and I see all you soon.

With Love And Solidarity,
Mrs. Ge Ge Calix

Need Some Info?

So lets say you are trying to find some info about the DOC but you keep getting the run around. Well I am going to tell you all about two tools that will help you get just about any info you need. They are "The Freedom Of Information Act (5 USCS § 552)" and the other is, "The Pennsylvania Right-To-Know Law (65 P.S. §67.101 et seq.) & other states RTKL's (you will have to find out in the library).

So this is how I found out how this all works. But this story is based in PA so you will have to ask a law clerk how to do it in your state. I can show you the basics. In most states, if not all, they have a RTKL representative for each governmental agency, like the prison you are in. If you are in the Feds or want info regarding a federal agency than you will need to use the US Freedom of Information Act (5 USCS § 552). This statute governs access to information in federal agency's. Be warned that State prison's are not a federal agency and this statute does not apply to them. For that you will rely on the other one.

Each prison should have a representative called a right to know officer. If you plan on being an advocate for change and/or plan to file a lawsuit you will need to know this. I was looking for the C/O's code of ethics and couldn't gain access to it. So I began searching for ways to get it. One day I was looking something up in the handbook and I seen the paragraph's regarding these statutes. So I decided to give it a try.

Written Collaboratly with
Mrs. GeGe & Beette our
Research Director

Of course this did not work, but you should know that you do have a right to have this information and if you can't get it, you can get folks outside to print it up for you. I'd suggest asking the good people at Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, 718 Arch Street Suite 304 south, Philadelphia, PA 19106. But if you aren't in PA you will have to get in those resource guides to find a legal advocacy firm to get it for you.

So I sat there and started to wonder what kind of information I could get from them. I only now know that when you show them that you know the law and the doc's policies and if you tell them that this request is carbon copied, they are much more compelled to do the right thing. So as you may or may not know, I've been in the process of fighting for our rights by the use of lawsuits. I will not say specifically, but a lot of the info I needed, I got from the RTKL. Like for instances, do you want to know what kind of money goes to gtl because of our tablets? Or perhaps how that money gets to them and what kind of split the DOC gets? RTKL will compel the gulags to tell you. But it might cost you if there is a substantial amount of paper work, but they usually won't charge you for a few papers. Also, they will tell you how much it will cost and ask you if you are willing to pay before they charge you. So don't be afraid to ask.

They love to play word games too, so be careful how you word things. Try to be as direct and short as possible. You can ask them any question. But they will not give you any information about another incarcerated individual, and they will not give you any info that might jeopardize the safety of the prison or the public.

You should know that the RTKL & the FOIA applies to any agency but you might need special forms for agency's outside of prison so hit the library up. Also, if you want access to your criminal record you can request this to the Department of Justice. But you will need special forms too. Just ask the law clerk. Also, if your law clerk doesn't know, try writing legal advocacy firms for help.

Well thats all for now. I hope this info is useful for you all. Just remember that you are your greatest ally and your worst enemy. If you educate yourself and use the tools you gain along the way, you will go far. But if you remain stagnant and lazy you will only distract yourself from reality. And you will remain still while people take advantage. Get up and stand up. Go shine that light of yours before the light burns out, and always remember to smile because you are beautiful...

WHO IS MS. GE GE?

I started my life in Trenton NJ in 1987. My parents were addicts who abandon me & my sister Victoria in a park at nite. Then we were rescued and given to my grandmother who was an alcoholic and her husband a child molester. Me and my sister were raped many times and beaten by my grandma. One day We were taken from them and put into foster care. I was eventually adopted by someone who actually cared but I lost touch with my sister over the years.

As I grew up, I always knew I was different. I was also diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome which is a social disorder similar to autism. All my life I was told that I wouldn't amount to nothing. I was also a natural quitter. I gave up on a lot of things, even things that I was good at. It was hard growing up. Socially, I was awkward. Then to top this, I am Trans and always did things different then the other boys. This made life very lonely. I

was also the target of victimization because I was gullible and didn't know how to read others.

I was so far gone that I started doing drugs, and drinking. Mostly weed and pills. That was my life for the longest, and ultimately led to my incarceration. Now this is where it all started. I began to think differently. I was now able to see clearly. I learned not to focus on the negative past, and instead focus on my positive future.

While here in prison, I began changing my life. What made this hard was the constant struggles in prison and the lack of respect from guards and other staff. Also, I was fed up with the way our rights get violated and stripped from us as if we weren't even human. This led to the creation of light.

My best friend Bam & I were talking one day about the lack of programs for the LGBT+ in prison. That sparked my interest. It started as a way to live better. Then I went to the hole for a fight. While I was in the hole, I would talk to so many people that would take my letters. This is called networking. That is how I met Caitlyn from hearts and Lucy from PHN. Together we started the newsletter. Then we went further and further, and now we're here today. I did it because I wanted to help others in my shoes and I did it because I could and was able to accomplish my goals.

I learned 2 important things from this. 1 I/we can accomplish anything you put your mind to so long as you really try and never give up. 2 I learned that everyone is not your friend, but that does not have to stop you from working together. Just be careful and know that the wolves are always trying to get you. You just got to be strong and forgiving.

My heart goes out to all of you. Even to those who said we couldn't do this. Now you see, we can and so can you. All you got to do is never give up. The light is at the end of the tunnel.

Letter From The Editor

Greetings brothers and sisters, I hope this issue of L.I.G.H.T. finds you healthy and happy. I know it can be difficult to "be happy" when incarcerated, but it is possible. It is all about your mindset. If you stop and think about all of the horrible things that you are NOT experiencing, then it makes those things you ARE experiencing seem a bit more tolerable. I have found that I can be happy almost all of the time. I repeat the mantra "things could always be worse" every time I come across something which irritates, upsets, depresses, or saddens me. I realize that while my life may not be what I want it to be right now, it could always be worse. Helen Keller once opined that she was so busy being thankful for all she had been given, and had no time to lament that which she had been denied. If she could be happy, we can all be happy. It's just a matter of the attitude we choose to adopt for ourselves.

Now I owe y'all an apology. I have not been available for a while, and have not been able to take care of my editorial duties (which will be obvious when you read the rest of this issue.) I'm sorry about that, but now I'm back and the next issue will be on point. For those of you who don't know me, I'm PJ, the "Chief Editor" of the L.I.G.H.T. newsletter (well, the only editor and proofreader), so I'm responsible for correcting our contributors' typographical errors and lousy grammar (when Ms. GeGe remembers to give me the articles in time to be edited.) I also insert the random quotes which you will occasionally find in the little left-over spaces in the newsletter.

I think of them as words of wisdom. Speaking of which, I will end here with the two wisest quotes I know:

Be who you are, and say what you feel,
because those who mind don't matter,
and those who matter don't mind.

-- Dr Seuss

and

Conformity is the jailor of freedom and the enemy of growth.

-- John F. Kennedy, Jr.

Oh, and my favorite bumper sticker: No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

Merry Latha, Blessed be,
and With Love,

PJ

IN CLOSING

Hey yall. Just thought I'd say a few things. First, Thank you everyone who still has faith in what we are doing. You mean the world to me/ee. Also big thanks to our contributors and Sisters at Black & Pink and of course our family at Hearts On A Wire. They are our voices outside these walls and they have made all this possible. I would like to give a special shout out to Beekie who will be returning to the free world on the 11th. I am so happy for you. Be sure to keep in touch. I hope this newsletter reaches you in time, but if not I will send you one when you send me your address. I love each and every one of you so keep your heads up

-LIGHT Chapters-(PA)
♡Rain bow Pride - Miley (chapter leader)
♡Sci-Forest (unnamed)- DeDe (chapter leader)
♡Light (Mrs. BeGe)
We are trying to start 2 in California
and 1 in Nevada but communication lacks.
Love All Yall! ♡

I'M STILL ME

JUICY QUEEN BEE

Thought you had me
when you sold me out
Thought you had me
by picking me up
then locking me up
Thought you had me
when you sent me
back to hell
Guess you thought wrong
Guess you made another
mistake
Cause at the end
I'm still me
Thought you had me
when you separated me
from my boo
trying to slap prea on me
Thought you had me
by giving me z-code
thinking that will stop me
Thought you had me
by blocking me from others
with sleepless nights
Thought you had me
by blocking evidence
lying to me
Thought you had me
denying me female products
and my 'mones
Thought you had me
ready to cater to you
ratting on people
Telling you lies
Guess you had me mistaken
still on top
I'm still me
No matter what
you try to do to me
I'm still me

SUBMISSIONS

RULES & GUIDELINES

You can send us...

- Letters
- Artwork (black and white)
- Interviews
- Articles responding to current events, prison policies, and this newsletter
- How-to articles
- Poetry
- Ideas
- Contribuciones en español son muy bienvenidos!

If you contribute make sure you tell us...

1. Exactly how you want to be credited [anonymous? ID number? Chosen name?] *****we will only use your government name if you explicitly tell us to do so *****
2. Whether it's OK to say the facility you are/were in
3. Please respect other people's privacy; only make disclosures about yourself.
4. No shade

We get lots submissions and cannot possibly print everything we receive. We reserve the right to publish excerpts, as well as to make light edits.

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heartsonawire@gmail.com or find us on facebook