

# GRATER FRIENDS

A Publication of The Pennsylvania Prison Society

Promoting a humane, just and constructive correctional system and a rational approach to criminal justice since 1787

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July 2013

## Poetry in Motion

by Torrey Real, EL-1916, SCI Mahanoy

"I don't know how to type!" "I don't have the ability to put words together like you!" "Everything doesn't come as easy to others!" These are some of the excuses that you may have encountered while attempting to further another along in their travels. They are used to stay within what my cellmate, Willis E. Garvin, likes to call "a paralysis of analysis" — that is, a state of confusion where one rebels against the institution of education.

Well, I'm here to tell ya: if you have the use of both index fingers (the ones you point with), then you can type — just not as fast as others. If you don't feel your vocabulary is that great, then get a thesaurus or read more to learn new words. If your trouble is comprehension, use a dictionary to better understand concepts or proper application of words and terminology. I know, because I am one who is self-educated in a lot of areas where I was also once illiterate: politics, typing, the formatting of business letters, filing grievances, filing, reading and drafting legal petitions, reading and writing novels, short stories, screenplays, poetry, etc.

How did I get it? One day at a time! Was it easy? Some of it. How was I exposed to my various choices of study? The library, dialogue with others (older, and outside of my comfort zone), correspondence (not just with family), etc. Never underestimate the power of communication!

People who have written books and novels are communicating. Is reading boring? Sometimes. I'm not going to lie. But, it's definitely necessary — absolutely required of everyone, more often than not. You, as an individual, have to develop study habits, then refine them. Interest comes with time. For me, it started with short magazine articles, then I moved on to fiction novels. I've always been interested in money, so I branched out to Suze Orman's self-help financial series, a little real estate, some banking. I got bold and curious, started wondering why anyone would possibly want to read those three-inch-thick books you see on the shelves in the li-

brary — and discovered reference books containing dynamite information that we inmates need to expand our resources. You don't have to read these books from cover to cover, just gather the material that pertains to you, and apply it. Application is the card that trumps most failures. Drive and determination will take you a long way.

My motto: "Learn at least one new thing a day! And at the end of 365 calendar days, you should have a deadly arsenal." You can learn something as small as a new vocabulary word — Etymology — or something as unique as a full concept or skill, like typing. Just try to make sure it's a trade that is practical for your future. Most importantly, make sure it can help you in your current state of reality.

When you master the art of applying your learned abilities and newly gained insight, things will come much easier to you. You will no longer struggle from a limited capacity or form of expression. You will be able to set your own "poetry in motion."

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## From the Editors

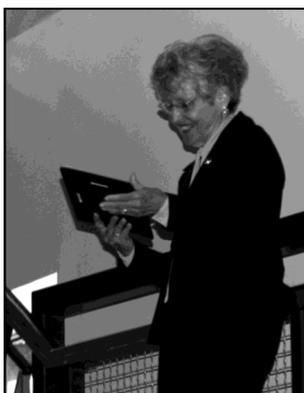
The Pennsylvania Prison Society celebrated its 226th anniversary on June 4, 2013, in Philadelphia.

At the business meeting, former Treasurer Anita Colon was named Vice President, and Gretchen Wiseman was voted in as Treasurer.

Also, August 31 will be Bill DiMascio's 15th anniversary as Executive Director of the Prison Society. He has decided to resign effective on that date: "I'm saying resign, not retire, because I'm in denial about retirement!"

DiMascio went on to say: "I suppose this is the time to say how wonderful it has been to be a part of the Prison Society. I don't think I can do that well enough to do it justice. This truly has been the experience of a lifetime."

After the meeting we presented several awards to very deserving individuals. Our first award was given to our Official Visitor of the Year, known as "Ms. Freddi." We then awarded SCI Dallas Superintendent Jerry Walsh our Corrections Official of the Year Award. Finally, we honored William Payne (AJ-0386, SCI Huntingdon) with the Prisoner of the Year Award. The award was accepted on his behalf by Convenor Harriet Kaylor.



**Harriet Kaylor accepting William Payne's Prisoner of the Year award on his behalf.**



## News

### SCI CRESSON'S TREATMENT OF MENTALLY ILL PRISONERS DEEMED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

by Mindy Bogue, Managing Editor

On May 31, the [U.S. Department of Justice \(DOJ\)](#) issued a report regarding the federal civil rights investigation into SCI Cresson's treatment of mentally ill prisoners in solitary confinement. Due to their findings, the investigation has expanded to include all Pennsylvania state prisons.

The investigation found that SCI Cresson violated the [Eighth Amendment](#) of the U.S. Constitution by treating mentally ill and intellectually disabled prisoners with cruel and unusual punishment: keeping them in their cells for excessive amounts of time, and warehousing them due to problems with the prison's mental health program.

The report went on to say that these prisoners were routinely locked in their cells for 22 to 23 hours a day, for months or even years at a time. Often, the prisoners were denied basic necessities and were subject to harsh and punitive conditions, including use of excessive force. Often, the prison relied on solitary confinement to warehouse mentally ill and intellectually disabled prisoners, due to problems with its own mental health program. The DOJ concluded that Cresson's misuses of solitary confinement for seriously mentally ill prisoners leads to clinical depression, psychosis, self-mutilation, and suicide.

"We found that Cresson often permitted its prisoners with serious mental illness or intellectual disabilities to

[\(See Cresson, continued on page 9\)](#)

# GRATERFRIENDS

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** William M. DiMascio

**MANAGING EDITOR:** Mindy Bogue

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS:**

Emily Cashell, Bridget Fifer, Zahara Hill, and Deven Rogoshewski

**FOUNDER:** Joan Gauker

The Pennsylvania **PRISON SOCIETY**  
SINCE 1787

245 North Broad Street · Suite 300  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Telephone: 215.564.6005 · Fax: 215.564.7926

[www.prisonsociety.org](http://www.prisonsociety.org)  
[www.facebook.com/PrisonSociety](http://www.facebook.com/PrisonSociety)

*Graterfriends* is a monthly publication from the Pennsylvania Prison Society. The organization was founded in 1787 and works toward enhancing public safety by providing initiatives that promote a just and humane criminal justice system.

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Original submissions **will not** be returned. We **will not** print anonymous letters. Allegations of misconduct **must** be documented and statistics should be supported by sources.

Letters more than a page in length (200 words) **will not** be published in their entirety in Mailroom or Legal Chat Room, and may be considered for another column. All columns should be no more than 500 words, or two double-spaced pages.

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## AN INTERVIEW WITH LORENZO "CAT" JOHNSON

by Zahara Hill, Editorial Assistant

Many people inside and outside of the prison community are familiar with the story of Lorenzo "Cat" Johnson. For those of you who are not, Johnson was convicted of a 1996 murder. [After the Third Circuit Court of Appeals overturned his conviction, he became a free man in 2012. However, the U.S. Supreme Court later reinstated his conviction without allowing him or his legal team to present any arguments on his behalf.](#) Johnson then had to return to prison on June 14, 2013. Through mail correspondence, I interviewed Johnson about his case and his life shortly before the reinstatement.

### Why do you think you were wrongfully convicted?

**LJ:** The court system (police, attorney general, and judges all the way up to the Middle District Federal Court) allowed proven false testimony, from a witness placing me at the scene of the crime, to stand. This same witness' original statement was that she didn't know anything and she was not there. Without this false witness, I would've never been targeted, let alone arrested.

### How were you implicated in the case?

**LJ:** There is no eyewitness in my case. The police showed two mug shot photos, one of me and one of my codefendant, to the witness I mentioned above. There was no photo array or line up. Keep in mind, at the time there were NO other witnesses, so how did these two photos come about? This witness suffered from drug abuse and that was heavily played upon. I went from being the lookout, to just being present at the scene. Pennsylvania law clearly states, "Mere presence is not enough to convict." Since I rejected their plea deal of 5 to 10 years, and refused to lie against my codefendant, the police and prosecutor started going at anybody who was helping me.

### What evidence did the prosecutor have to connect you to the murder?

**LJ:** The prosecution changed their motive two times, and at trial went with a theory that my codefendant and the deceased got in an argument (over a debt) in a bar, leading the bar owner to ask all of us to leave. The witness I mentioned stated she left behind us and walked past the three of us. She stated my codefendant and the deceased went into an alley and that I was standing on the sidewalk. She said that when she was halfway up the block, she heard a boom (gunshot) and ran to a friend's house, and that the friend already knew what had happened. At trial, I had the bar owner and bouncer that worked the

bar that night testify for me. They both said I wasn't there that night. Since the police couldn't place me in the bar or at the scene, they used a witness — who never implicated me or my codefendant in his statement — at trial, saying he saw me after the murder. This same witness later contacted my appeal attorney and recanted his trial testimony and said he was forced to put me at the scene.

### Could you walk readers through all that occurred within 24 hours after you received that phone call from your attorney that you'd be going back to prison?

**LJ:** I was at work when I got a call from my lead attorney. I couldn't understand what he was saying because he was literally crying. But, I heard that the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated my conviction *per curiam*, without the usual procedure of full legal briefing and oral argument. Mind you, the Attorney General filed their Certiorari Petition late. I instantly got numb, and my biggest nightmare — going back to prison — was once again a reality for me. I can't explain the raw pain I felt and am still feeling. I left work, got in my car and drove straight to the office of the [Jeffrey Deskovic Foundation for Justice](#) in Manhattan. Once I got there and explained what just took place, they signed on officially as co-counsel and started calling my Pennsylvania legal team to discuss my legal options. I called my wife and told her to meet me and explained to her what had just taken place. It crushed her. I called an emergency family meeting. I didn't sleep that night because I had to attend a press conference in the capital of New York (Albany) entitled "Stop Wrongful Convictions Now," hosted by attorney [Barry Scheck for the Innocence Project](#) and [Vincent Doyle, president of the New York State Bar Association](#).

### What were your plans upon being released?

**LJ:** As for my plans, I pretty much hit the ground running and all my plans turned into action. Being the glue that holds my family together, I immediately took charge and reestablished myself, tightening my family bond. Within a month I was working. For my first two speaking engagements, I traveled from New York to Pennsylvania to speak at two law classes at Widener University, where one of my lawyers and his wife teach law. I spoke to troubled youth at community centers in New York. I pretty much reestablished myself and was finally moving on and enjoying life with my wife and family.

### How long had you been released before discovering the appeal was overturned?

**LJ:** Four and a half months, and I was allowed a couple of weeks to wrap up some personal things, bringing the total to a little over five months.

### How did your family react to the news?

**LJ:** My family thought I was joking at first, then they quickly realized that I would never joke about a situation like this. Their screams and cries were similar to the ones you see and hear at funerals.

*(See Lorenzo Johnson, continued on page 13)*



## **RACISM IS NOT GONE, JUST STANDING IN THE SHADOWS**

*by LaFaye Gaskins, BF-8329, SCI Mahanoy*

As a kid in the 1970s, I was curious about what was beyond my North Philadelphia neighborhood. Feeling the first stirrings of manhood, I persuaded my mom to let me travel outside of our neighborhood to buy some school clothes. Before leaving my mom said, “Be careful.” Of what, I was not sure.

I boarded a SEPTA bus to travel to the American Jeans Company in Fishtown. As the bus ambled along, the faces on the street changed from black and brown to white. By the time the bus reached my stop, there was only one other black person on the bus. We both got off.

I started walking around, window shopping. Unbeknownst to me, I was being watched. All of a sudden, I was struck by a sense of dread. I looked up and heard profanities and racial slurs.

At that point, someone grabbed my arm and said to me, “start walking and don’t look back.” I looked up and it was the other black guy that was on the bus. He was about six or seven years older than me. The voices got louder and our pace quickened. Against the brother’s advice, I looked back and there it was, a mob of white people pursuing us. I would be forever changed.

We began to run and they chased us. But what had we done? At that point it didn’t matter, we just ran until the white faces gave way to black and brown ones. Now walking, the brother and I slapped hands. We didn’t talk about what had just happened, we just went our separate ways.

As soon as I made it home, I went straight to one of my elders — back then I called him “Old-head” — and told him about my little adventure. I was feeling angry and bitter toward white people and needed some clarification about what had just happened. He listened carefully, waited until I was finished, and then gave me a crash course on racism, American style: slavery, Jim Crow, lynching, sharecropping, red-lining, etc. I listened and processed as much as my little mind could handle. That was my first experience with racism, but it would not be the last. It would rear its ugly head over and over until, at some point, it seemed to disappear.

Today, there are many people who say that America is now in a post-racial era because it has elected its first black president, Barack Obama. They keep asking the question: “does racism still exist?” “Of course it does!” I often say, as if spitting out the biggest globule of phlegm you ever saw.

***(See Racism, continued on page 13)***

## **ON MRS. SHARON MARGARET WIGGINS**

*by George Rahsaan Brooks-Bey, AP-4884, SCI Frackville*

I always look forward to receiving my *Graterfriends*. However, this time, I was saddened. I read about the passing of someone I truly loved and respected. Sharon Margaret Wiggins, born February 15, 1951, went to be with the ancestors.

She was a mere child, 17 years old, when she was caught up in substance abuse and confusion, when she committed her homicide. We now know that the frontal lobe of her young brain was undeveloped, causing a lack of maturity. There are volumes of studies noting that adolescents are overrepresented statistically in virtually every category of reckless behavior. Yet, Sharon was able to go to college, rehabilitate herself, then help others who were illiterate and in need of counseling. She was much better than the crime she committed, and should have been given a second chance. But, in this so-called Christian nation, second chances are rarely given in Pennsylvania for people serving life sentences without the possibility of parole.

When I say that I was saddened by reading of Sharon’s passing, it’s because she could have been given parole and been able to help young females who are going down the wrong path. I am intelligent enough to know that every living thing has a beginning and an ending. I am also fully aware that we exist in a constant state of change. Old friends and past loves move on, along with missed opportunities and false starts. Nothing stays the same. As prisoners, we are moved from joint to joint, and people are moved in and out of our lives. Sometimes, we feel very alone and uprooted, far away from the life and friends that we knew before. Now, another person who I deeply loved has moved out of my existence, but not out of my heart.

People serving life sentences in Pennsylvania are dying all around me. Some have died from illness, some have committed suicide, while others are waiting to die. Many lifers have died both spiritually and emotionally, and a lot of lifers have given up hope. Sharon was not one of them!

Sharon faced all of her obstacles in her past, and overcame all of them. It is said that facing obstacles is the “real” test of strength and character. The gnat that flies around a light bulb until it dies is more noble than a mole that hides in a dark hole. Sharon never hid in a dark hole.

I read all of the articles in *Graterfriends* written by the women who knew and loved Sharon. And I have some words for them:

When a tree loses a strong branch, it does not die. It pours all of its vitality into the living branches so that the tree will continue to live and grow! So you must continue Sharon’s work and deeds. This is how you honor her. This is how you demonstrate how much you loved her. This is how you show your appreciation for her. You do so by mirroring her example. She left “residue” for you: her sharing, her helping others, and her overcoming obstacles, and “keeping on keeping on” until the end!

## CRIMINAL REGISTRATION

by David McGinley, CX-1921, SCI Waymart

The April issue of *Graterfriends* lists two bills calling for the registration of two classes of criminals: arsonists and domestic violence predators. I support these bills and would encourage the legislation to consider more classes of offenders to be registered. Drunk drivers is my favorite suggestion. They cause more harm than sex offenders, in terms of deaths and property damage. After all, if you're going to register one class of criminal, why not all of 'em?

The registration of only one class of offender is discriminatory. It's been excused by claims that the intent is to protect the public. Common sense tells us that that's what parole and probation are for. Registration is nothing more than the painting of targets on the backs of people who want to rehabilitate themselves by successfully rejoining society. Discrimination in any form is wrong. I'm sure the people who advocated that blacks sit in the back of the bus and use separate drinking fountains thought they were protecting the public, too!

Registration of criminals isn't free. The cost to state taxpayers is staggering. While part of the cost is made up by the federal government, guess who pays for that? That's right — the taxpayers! Shifting the burden to registrants won't supply enough funds. It would also impose a fiduciary burden on them that would make reintegration into society financially impossible. What to do with a registrant, then? Why, you'd have to put him back in prison! The criminal justice system can't sustain such numbers in its current form. You'd have to build many more prisons. Maybe every town would have a prison, and a source of employment, of its own?

Registration is pointless. Anyone who needs to know about a neighbor or a potential employee in this day and age need merely check Google. Companies have access to [Lexis/Nexis](#), which can tell them everything about an individual's employment, educational, credit, and criminal histories. Neither of those services are funded by taxpayers, at least not directly. Google is funded by taxpayers, through ads — a sustainable business model. Lexis is subscription-based — taxpayers rejoice!

Our country used to believe that a man who served his time paid for his crime. Now, the attitude is that no one can pay for a crime. It's a life-long sentence, regardless of the nature of the offense. Criminals don't deserve to be punished forever. They deserve a second chance, a chance to live in peace, to be gainfully employed, and to pursue happiness on terms that meet the strict standards of society. Pennsylvania could become the leader of the country in criminal punishment reform by:

- **Eliminating all criminal registration** and its drain on taxpayer's resources, and instead making it illegal to deny someone employment based on their criminal history, with clearly defined and reasonable

(See Registration, continued on page 15)



## Mrs. GE-6309 Time

by Reesy Floyd-Thompson

### HOMECOMING?

Over the years, I've seen a lot of reunions. Unfortunately, for many, after the initial excitement and good feelings, things change. Within a few weeks, happy messages turn to doubtful moans, and within months the relationship ends. This scenario is one of the greatest fears for those of us on the outside.

When a person goes to prison, everything goes with him or her, even the tenets of a healthy, functioning relationship. I am surprised by how many couples are not honest with themselves in the beginning. If a relationship is bad before incarceration, it will remain so if nothing more than geography changes. I am equally surprised by how many partners do not share their real feelings or even discuss what is happening in the home. This is a disservice to the union. How do you have a homecoming when you have no real connection to the house?

Relationships require energy. This life is too intrusive to go with the flow. Nurture the union with real discussions about finances, children, expectations, physical needs, and plans for when the sentence ends. Anything less is a waste of time.

When a partner is away, one thing is certain: time will pass. In that time, one of two things will happen: either couples grow together or apart. If the work is not done while living apart, it may be too late to fix it when living together. Couples who have not treated this time with the respect it demands often find the chasm between them is much wider after the partner comes home. After the excitement, when everyone has gone home and the "feel goods" do not work anymore, one or both realize this is not a homecoming, but a reunion. Reunions end.

*Reesy Floyd-Thompson is the founder of Prisoners' Wives, Girlfriends, & Partners (PWGP). For more information about this group, please write Reesy at:*

**PWGP**

P.O. Box 14241

Norfolk, VA 23518

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Page 14.



# Legislative Highlights

*Ann Schwartzman*

*Policy Director, The Pennsylvania Prison Society*

Below are some bills that have recently moved in the General Assembly. Please note that this list is accurate as of 6/14/13.

BILL No. PRINTER No.	DESCRIPTION	CHIEF SPONSOR	PPS POSITION
<a href="#">SB 128</a> <a href="#">PN 1205</a>	Establishes the Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee to advise the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Also creates a Mental Health and Justice Grant Program. <b>(On Senate Floor 6/11/13)</b>	<a href="#">Sen. S. Greenleaf</a> R-Bucks and Montgomery counties	Support
<a href="#">HB 492</a> <a href="#">PN 1424</a>	Gives a victim, or a victim's representative, the right to appear in front of the parole board or provide electronic testimony in the case of a petition to deny parole once the minimum sentence expires. Victim and representative's info remains confidential. <b>(Approved by Senate 3/19/13; Approved by House 6/10/13; to Governor Corbett for signature)</b>	<a href="#">Sen. M. Vereb</a> R-Montgomery Cty.	Oppose
<a href="#">HB 1201</a> <a href="#">PN 1792</a>	Amends Title 42 to protect minors (under 18 at the time of offense) from the criminal justice system by ensuring the identity of a victim of physical or sexual abuse is not released to the public. Updates current list of licensing board to which District Attorney must submit post-trial reports to. <b>(In Senate Judiciary 5/29/13)</b>	<a href="#">Rep. B. Barbin</a> D-Cambria County	Support
<a href="#">HB 1347</a> <a href="#">PN 1741</a>	Lottery Winnings and State Income Tax Refunds Attachment Act.: The Department of Revenue will search records of all PA State Lottery winners (at least \$2500). If it is found the winner has an outstanding court-ordered fees or restitution, the sum owed will automatically be deducted from the lottery winnings. If a taxpayer is entitled to a refund (at least \$2500) the Department of Revenue will conduct the same search and also deduct any court-ordered fees from the amount the taxpayer is owed. <b>(In House Judiciary 5/8/13)</b>	<a href="#">Rep. S. Harkins</a> D-Erie County	Oppose
<a href="#">HR 191</a> <a href="#">PN 1267</a>	Resolution that declares youth violence as a public health epidemic and calls for the establishment of statewide trauma-informed education. <b>(Adopted 4/22/13)</b>	<a href="#">Rep. R. Waters</a> D- Delaware and Philadelphia counties	Support
<a href="#">HR 226</a> <a href="#">PN 1396</a>	Resolution calling on the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study of all aspects of the state's mental health system. Should focus particularly on criminal defendants with mental illness. <b>(Adopted 5/13/13)</b>	<a href="#">Rep. T. Caltagirone</a> D-Berks County	Support



## Legal Chat

### DUE PROCESS = FAIR TRIAL + FAIR TRIBUNAL

I was recently reading a case at the law library where the opinion by the learned judge stated: “Due process at its core is the right to a fair trial and by a fair tribunal.”

I sadly thought about a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article where the staff reporter quoted a statistic that said if you go to trial in Philadelphia and are found guilty, you will likely receive three times the sentence than if you give up your rights and plead guilty.

I refer to my own case: In 1994, I was offered 5-10 years in exchange for pleading guilty to a crime that was dismissed three times at a preliminary trial. I elected to go to trial, and took the stand professing my innocence. After a two-day trial, I was convicted and sentenced to 12 to 35 years.

Judge Pamela Dembe justified the sentence based on her opinion that I was guilty of other offenses for which I was never even charged nor convicted. I later found this is illegal. However, the court says I am time barred.

In 2008, my case was heard by the Third Circuit Court on two issues. One issue was dismissed as a state law issue and not cognizable in Federal Court. The Court refused to hear my Brady Violation that was acknowledged by the District Court as a constitutional violation (the prosecution concealed evidence of a personal clandestine relationship with three of its witnesses). However, it would not likely have changed the jury's verdict.

I have since been denied parole five times for refusing to admit guilt. This brings me to a book I read, written by Mumia Abu Jamal, *Live from Death Row*. In the book, Mumia quoted a Philadelphia attorney, who said “the law is just politics by other means.” Mumia stated how he naively believed he would get a fair trial, and by a fair tribunal. (By the way, my case was denied in the Third Circuit the same day Mumia's death sentence was overturned.)

Readers need only follow cases like *Commonwealth v. Lorenzo Johnson*, and others in Philadelphia to know that due process does not always equal a fair trial by a fair tribunal.

David Lusik  
CQ-3760, SCI Albion

### RE: WOMEN CAN BE INNOCENT, TOO!

Please see Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 15 (b) (e) (2) - (H) (G) (F). Subsection (F) provides that part or all of the deposition can be used at trial as evidence if the

witness is unavailable. Subsection (H) provides that if you and the assistant district attorney agree to take and use the deposition along with the court's approval, i.e. the court order, then (G) applies, which states the prosecution had the opportunity to object to the ruling, but in not doing so, they knowingly waived their right to object. Keep in mind, the sole reason for a deposition is to save an individual's testimony in case of death.

To win your case, you must combine rules and statutes. Combine the above statutes with Fed. R. Crim. P. 26.2 (a) (b), Fed. R. Crim. P 15 (f), and Fed. R. Crim.P 26.2 [C]. Doing so will end your argument with the rule consistent with the reasoning in *United States v. Nobles* 422 U.S. 225 (1975). The rule is designed to place the disclosure of prior relevant statements of a witness in the possession of the party holding it, on the same legal footing as the disclosure of prior statements of prosecution witnesses in the hand of the government under the Jenks Act 18 U.S.C § 3500 (see *United States v Pulvirenti* 408 F. Supp. 12 (E.D. Mich 1976)). This evidence should have been disclosed to you in order to promote the concept of the trial as a search for the truth see *People v Sanders* 110 Ill. App 2d 85.249 N.E. 2d 124 (1969, *State v Montague* 55 N.J. 371.262 Add 398 (1970). In *People v Damon* 24 N.Y. 2d 256.299 N.Y.S. 2d 830 247 N.E. 2d 651 (1959), this rule, with minor exceptions, makes the procedure identical for witnesses of both the prosecution and defense, including the provision directing the court. Also, look up the word “Fiction law” or “Fiction of Law” and legal fiction (see *Ryan v. Motor Credit Co.* 30 N.J. E.Q. 531.23 A.2d 607 621) see also Pa R.E. 804 statements under belief of death.

Jean Saxon  
OK-3139, SCI Muncy

### RE: MY PLEA FOR HELP

You gave very little information after “discovered evidence.” Discovered evidence after completion of the direct appeal process should be raised in the context of the PCRA (see 42 PA C.S § 9545 (b) (i)(ii) and (b) (2)). A PCRA petition raising evidence must be filed within 60 days of the date the claim could have been presented (*Com v. Kohan* 825 A. 2d 702 (PA Super 2003)) and Fed Rule C.P. 33.

In federal courts, newly discovered evidence must be filed within three years of the original guilty verdict. Different standards are sometimes applied when the new or after-discovered evidence reveals that a witness committed perjury at trial. Compare your case to *Larrison v. United States* 24 F. 2d 82 (7<sup>th</sup> cir 1928); the question is whether without the perjured testimony “the jury might have reached a different conclusion”. Also see *United States v. Stofsky* 527 F.2d 237 (2<sup>nd</sup> cir 1975).

Gerald Drummond  
JW-3732, SCI Camp Hill

(See Legal Chat, continued on page 8)

Legal Chat, continued from page 7

**“TRUTH AND JUSTICE”**

I'm one of many wrongfully convicted people. Since 2004, I've been fighting for "truth and justice." It's over nine years now. I was released on April 30, 2004 due to a lack of evidence. A *habeas corpus* motion was filed because there was no evidence. The judge in my county (Fayette) gave the DA the option to re-file charges on me if they had new evidence. I was convicted because inmates and people inside these walls are trying to get deals, pleas, and shorter time at the cost of my life and freedom.

The Court continues to give me the runaround, from Superior Court back to Supreme. I did PCRA one and two, I even filed a reconsideration (by myself) *en banc* back to the Superior Court, which was denied in February 2013.

Here we go again: I'm in the Supreme Court, for a second time. If I'd had \$50k for a paid lawyer, maybe this wouldn't have happened. I now have a court-appointed attorney, whom I've neither met nor spoken to.

Then the Innocence Project had my case at Point Park University, but it has closed due to lack of funds. I even wrote President Obama and others, trying to get funds because the people who are truly innocent shouldn't have to be in prison and experience the madness that goes on. I've truly been traumatized and been asking and begging for the truth — no mess, no plea deal, just how a police officer went totally out of his way for this conviction on one single innocent mother of three little girls who have been without their mother for no reason.

While I'm innocent in prison, the real person or people are out there, free to do it again. Any help, advice, or answers on how to get my freedom and life back are greatly appreciated.

Crystal Weimer  
OK-7021, SCI Cambridge Springs

**QUESTIONS ABOUT PETITION FOR REVIEW**

I recently filed a Petition for Review in the Commonwealth Court regarding monies being deducted from my prison account for Act 84. There were no fines, costs, or restitution ordered in my case. After investigation I found that no oral order exists, and a written order has never been filed. One of the two orders was needed to

When submitting a letter or column to *Graterfriends* for publication, please attach a letter (or write on your submission) that it is for publication and that you are the original author; date and sign the declaration. Please remember that we receive many more letters than we can publish. Thank you.

collect monies at the time of my conviction. A summary from the clerk's office is not and was not sufficient to collect either, per the law at the time.

Hands down, I should prevail. However, I have some questions. If everything is derived from a sentencing order and one must exist to commit per statute, is my sentence also null and void? What would be my recourse? I ask that anyone with information about this please contact me.

Lee A. Smith III  
DE-0663, SCI Camp Hill

**RE: CAN SOMEONE HELP ME OUT?**

Your juvenile records are confidential, subject to certain statutory exceptions under 42 Pa. C.S.A §§ 6308-6309, 18 Pa. C.S.A § 6105 (c) (7). Expunging of a juvenile delinquency record is governed by 18 Pa. C.S.A § 9123.

Even if your record is expunged it will not change your sentence. However, if you give the juvenile case back and get it overturned, then your current sentence will be affected. This will only occur if you are resentenced and the judge uses the juvenile case to sentence you. My advice is to let the juvenile case rest. What are the charges of your current sentence? The length of your sentence looks wrong, it should be 10-20, unless the additional three years is for another charge.

Jarvay Davis  
KQ-4882, SCI Albion

**IT'S NOT MY FAULT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND!**

In the [April 2013 Graterfriends](#) there was an article entitled "Analytical Skill." It was gobbledygook! That gobbledygook was due to the writer's over-the-top word selections. Even after the third read, I still didn't understand the point — unless the point was to promote his economic interest (via some poor, desperate, unsuspecting, and naïve prisoner.)

Readers read for different reasons. Some simply want information, while others may seek the opinion of someone more versed than they on a particular subject. You can probably name a few reasons yourself. Whatever the reasons, the point should be understandable.

As a reader, I enjoy a smooth read. One with words chosen carefully and points expressed clearly. I am a fan of the dictionary, but I shouldn't have to use it for every other word. It's distracting, and I don't want to finish. No big deal though, it certainly wasn't written for me.

John D. Bitting IV  
GS-5425, SCI Mahanoy



## WHERE ARE THE MODERN DAY ABOLITIONISTS?

by D. Ameen McKelvie, AF-5156, SCI Rockview

As a student of African-American History, I was amazed to learn how so many of our ancestors, who either escaped or bought their release from bondage did not forget about those they left behind. Many risked their lives by returning to help others escape, and they were also in jeopardy of being captured and returning to bondage.

Throughout this country, there were many fearless abolitionists, such as [Frederick Douglass](#), [William Lloyd Garrison](#), [David Walker](#), and [Sojourner Truth](#), who spoke out courageously against the inhumane practice of enslavement of Africans and their offspring.

Do you know that, in the 1770s, it was the [Quakers in Philadelphia](#) who established the first anti-slavery abolitionist movement in America? And there is another movement that has been around since 1787 doing humanitarian service in the City of Brotherly Love, and prisons throughout Pennsylvania. Who are these dedicated men and women, who have been striving for centuries to improve the conditions of those incarcerated, and those ex-prisoners in the community? They are our own: [The Pennsylvania Prison Society](#)!

Pennsylvania has an astonishing history of individuals who have made numerous sacrifices for the betterment of humanity abroad. What prompted me to write this article? I was reading, in the *Innocence Denied* newsletter, about a guy named [Darryl Hunt from Winston-Salem](#) who spent 18 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. While in prison he met a guy who also claimed to be innocent. So, after Darryl's release, he started working with this guy's attorneys. He personally spoke with some of the witnesses, and believed that they may have been coerced in giving false testimony. Darryl is an excellent example of one who did not forget about those he left behind. Where are the rest of the Darryls? Are there any in Pennsylvania? If our ancestors would have reneged on their word, imagine the thousands who would have remained in servitude.

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### [Cresson, continued from page 2](#)

simply languish, decompensate, and harm themselves in solitary confinement for months or years on end under harsh conditions in violation of the Constitution," said Roy L. Austin Jr., Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "These practices have serious public safety consequences because many of these individuals are returned to the community. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Department of Corrections during the expanded investigation to bring an end to these practices."

David DiGuglielmo, Prison Society Board Member and former Superintendent of SCI Graterford, believes that, while the DOC has created special needs units to address the needs of the mentally ill, they may have underestimated the space and staff needed in order to successfully treat such prisoners. "At Graterford, for instance, there are 500-600 men in a standard cell block. How many of them had a mental illness when they arrived? They often have been sentenced to serve decades of time in the very stressful environment of prison."

While Cresson is due to be closed this month, the DOJ fears that these problems extend beyond that prison, hence the expansion of the investigation. The expanded investigation will focus on allegations that prisons throughout the Pennsylvania DOC subject prisoners with serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities to the same treatment.

Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel and his staff are cooperating fully with the investigation and have been receptive to the DOJ's concerns.

Susan McNaughton, Department of Corrections Press Secretary, told the Associated Press that a new policy will place seriously mentally ill inmates in treatment when they first enter the system, staff has been trained in crisis intervention with these prisoners, and that there are other improvements in place: "Systemic improvements do not and cannot occur overnight, but we have a better system today than we did a year ago, and we are confident we will have a better system next year than we do today."

**"I talk to many sheriffs who are both angry and frustrated that their jails are filling up with the mentally ill. They do not have the trained staff or the facilities needed to care for the mentally ill. At the same time, access to mental hospitals is becoming increasingly difficult."**

**—Jonathan Turley, Law Professor,  
George Washington University**



## RE: THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN PRISON

To the brother who, in the [March Graterfriends](#), expressed true concern regarding decreasing education and other beneficial programs in some of the prisons: Mr. Jessie K. Blough, thank you. Your topic inspired me to let you know that I'm with you. You also mentioned being saddened when the system starts cutting back on the programs. I feel you on that, too, Mr. Blough.

On that note, allow me to give you some positive feedback on how adamant our program here at Smithfield is regarding education. I was chosen for the blessed mission to work with and teach the young and old heads, like myself, the vital importance of education, especially during these days of change, trials, and tribulations in the world.

I had a session about [the young girl over in Pakistan, Malala, who voiced her opinion against the Taliban](#), and about her right to go to school. She was willing to die for those rights. She showed, in my opinion, the epitome of courage, and she is only 14. It's ironic: here in America, a lot of education programs are mandated or free — even in some prisons. But some young people feel as though it's a death sentence to get involved in education. Nonetheless, we keep emphasizing the importance of education. It's about being passionate about teaching, and the students' willingness and determination to learn. That spirit is how our education programs at SCI Smithfield remain stable, Mr. Blough: each one, teach one.

Another thing we have in common, my brother — you stated, "We are never too old to learn." You are absolutely right. I am 65 years old. My theme is, what the mind can conceive — the heart can achieve. Stay strong and focused.

James Hinton  
AM-3070, SCI Smithfield.

## RE: CLOSING OF HUNTINGDON BY JEFFERY AUVE (MAY 2013 ARTICLE)

As a former inmate at Huntingdon, I could not agree more with [letter writer Jeffrey Auve \(May 2013 Graterfriends\)](#) about the fact that Huntingdon will not be closed because of politics. This facility is old, dirty, and dungeon like. Latex paint peels off the cell wells, toilets are leaky and birds fly around C-Block. The old-fashioned radiators that supply heating are ineffective. The past winter was relatively mild, giving us a break, as veteran inmates have said it gets much more uncomfortable.

About half of the employees live in Altoona, about 40 miles away. Huntingdon county is a financially poor county. When the mines dried up, there was nothing to replace them with but another prison next door in Smithfield. This is not unique to Pennsylvania, as the Federal Government does the same thing. Any area that is economically depressed is a perfect candidate for building a prison. It creates jobs and puts a feather in a politician's cap, which in turn means a return to elected office. People want jobs: the more people in Pennsylvania, the better the economy.

Mr. Auve closes his letter with the fact that the children of retired DOC employees are lazy, unprofessional, and unethical. They could do a better job, but have to show more compassion and respect for inmates. Today's corrections officers need to be more than public safety officers. They need to show more of an interest in the inmates' personal lives and the problems that put them in the legal system.

Michael Kaplan  
Parole #482AZ

## REST IN PEACE, SISTER SOLDIER

They tried to imprison your mind, but your mind remained free. A lot of us in prison knew of you and loved you. We stood by you when you filed your lawsuit to get a library for imprisoned women, and were shocked and appalled that — like us — women were without law libraries, too! We battled beside you for parole eligibility for lifers, equality, justice, and fairness.

We are inspired to resist injustice. We are inspired to speak and seek the truth. We are inspired to act. Sharon, the example you provided, your uncompromising allegiance to struggle gives us hope and belief in ourselves.

You played a major role in our being able to know the path to freedom, and the power of justice. Because of your actions, your sense of humor and your willingness to stand tall in the face of adversity, we are fighting for justice, speaking up and confronting those who imagine they have the power to discriminate against us and subject us to official oppression.

Thank you Sharon "Peachie" Wiggins, for standing up and not lying down. You will never be forgotten. Yes, you inspired others and you'll live in my heart and mind as long as I think and breathe! For as Eugene Debs stated, "While there is a lower class, I am in it, and while there is a criminal element, I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

Bro. Douglas Abdul-Hakim Sanders  
AM-7594, SCI Frackville

## “MANIPULATED STATISTICS?”

[Philadelphia Inquirer reporter Amy Worden’s March 5, 2013 article](#) on Pennsylvania’s recidivism rate contained a statistic we should all question. She wrote:

“Per capita arrest rates for violent crimes are 14 times higher among released inmates compared to the general public.” Very scary, indeed, but what is actually being measured here?

What is the ratio, when corrected for the fact that a huge portion of wrongful convictions are based on mistaken eyewitness identifications of the perpetrator? And, if only “one in 200 adults” are behind bars, what is the ratio of Pennsylvanians with photos in police mugshot books? If you show victims photos of ex-cons, and not photos of citizens without criminal records, how many victims will then misidentify an ex-con as the perpetrator, resulting in another “released inmate” being arrested for a violent crime?

I’m not going to pretend that all the cited arrests are invalid, but when statistics are based on such a one-sided data pool, it’s easy to come up with scary statistical quotes. I find it just as scary that professional reporters get away with such misleading tactics.

Paul Schlueter, III  
AY-8900, SCI Dallas

## SEAN PRESSLEY:

### 13 YEARS IN PUNITIVE SEGREGATION

Prison activist/jailhouse lawyer Sean Pressley, aka Abdullah, finally received a break. He won his release to general population after years of litigation in punitive segregation.

Abdullah was deemed by former Pennsylvania Secretary of Corrections Jeffrey Beard to be the worst of the worst of Pennsylvania’s state prisoners, and placed him on the restricted release list.

However, Abdullah endured a nightmare of 13 hard years of oppression in punitive segregation. Despite not having a GED or diploma, Abdullah managed to learn the law and become an advocate — not just for himself, but also for the mentally ill in punitive segregation, and other weak and oppressed prisoners. He has won numerous cases on their behalf.

Welcome back to general population. Now, it’s time to go home to help empower our women and at-risk youth, and save the environment from ecological destruction.

Jerome “Hoagie” Coffey  
AS-1558, SCI Mahanoy

## CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

Over the 19 years that I’ve been in prison, I’ve had to deal with many companies that do not treat us with the same respect they do “free” people. Even though we are incarcerated, my money is as green as anyone else’s, so I should not have to tolerate bad business practices. Everyone is protected by consumer protection laws. So, when I sent an order to “Halalco Books” in August 2012 for \$74.65 and received nothing, I decided to take action.

After three letters and several calls my people made to no avail, I filed a consumer complaint form with the office of the Attorney General of Virginia (the company’s home state) in November 2012. It included my account statement and copy of the check to verify that I paid for the merchandise, along with a copy of the letter I sent and verification from the mailroom that I didn’t receive said merchandise. I imagine things would have gone faster if it hadn’t been for the holidays. However, I received a full refund on May 7, 2013. I suggest everyone avoid doing business with Halalco Books.

This same action can be taken in any state against any company. Forms are available online or by writing the state attorney’s office of the state in which the company resides. I advise you to keep your resolution reasonable, as I did (only asking for a full refund). You’ll have more chance of success that way.

I’m currently taking action against Voice for Inmates for taking my money without providing the service for which I paid. Other prisoners have also had problems, so I caution everyone to avoid doing business with them.

Kevin J. Marinelli  
CT-9947, SCI Greene

## CHANGING LIVES

Many times in the media, the focus is on the negative: the repeat offenders, the extreme crimes, etc. However, I have not seen many stories of paroled or released prisoners who have been successful and grew beyond their past crimes to become new people.

People allow a few who do not change or do not want to change to impact all prisoners. Why not punish the few, when many prisoners do not want to repeat the same crimes or mistakes but want to change their lives and make a difference.

When we allow fears, prejudice, racism, hate, ignorance, and vengeance to rule our hearts, nothing will change. People who have demonstrated a change in heart, who are truly empathetic to what they have done, will be grouped with the few who go out and commit new crimes, perform stupid and disgusting acts, and who don’t care who they hurt.

Everyone deserves a second chance if they show true compassion, remorse, and willingness to change and

[\(See Mailroom, continued on page 12\)](#)

**Mailroom, continued from page 11**

grow. Even the victims of crime are re-victimized when the monies collected go to line other people's pockets, increasing the wealth of those who squander it on frivolous things.

In all things, compromise is a must: we are all human beings. Change is possible, but only if we work together to end hate, violence, and vengeful tactics to get rich off of people's crimes and the victims of those crimes.

When vengeful people rule politics, it only serves to increase despair, anger, and hate. It aggravates the problems: overcrowded prisons, and hopeless prisoners, who think that if there is no hope for a second chance, why bother to care or try to change?

Anyone can change. Hope can grow only if we come together. Not as a race, faith, ethnic background, prisoners, or victims of crime, but as human beings. We must come together to make laws that are fair, just, and give people who truly have changed a chance, hope... a second chance.

Jesse Keith Blough  
HQ-7572, SCI Albion

**PENNSYLVANIA LIFERS**

I've been around you jokers for 23 years. No one has yet talked about the bad actions lifers display toward us short-timers maxing out, and the many ways lifers mess up stuff for everyone else. Yes, I've witnessed it and have been affected by your actions, and I've helped many in the eight years I've been locked down at SCI Greene because lifers got me falsely written up. Lifers have verbally disrespected me many times. You lifers lost a chance to have a real person to look out for you — me.

James Curry  
BK-0205, SCI Greene

**MORTAL CHIMES**

There comes a time in our life when we find ourselves in those solitary moments when we can't avoid noting those signs of diminishing youth, power, and glory. For the life-prisoner who has dared to survive over 40 years in the wilderness of prison, this could mean getting news the last of your family's previous generation has ascended from this earthly plain. Suddenly, you're thrust into their arena — ready or not, you find yourself in the evening of life, where the gray hairs dominate your mane, everyone calls you Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ or Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. Your work-out program relies increasingly more on mental discipline than physical strength, friends don't visit or write as often, intimacy transcends passions, and love comes in measured, reserved portions.

Such realities play before you on the stage of life like chimes gently tingling in the distance amidst subtle winds announcing the arrival of your dreaded mortality. Time has been set to count-down for an unknown hour.

Some will shout, "But life, I haven't even lived you!" Oh, but you're so wrong — you've been living all along, but you allowed your time in the wilderness to distort the true meaning of living. You failed to let life count — you put time and life in a mental void of waiting — for when? Sorry my fellow soul suffers, but life is to live as the world turns — it shall not stop, nor can it wait, as that would not be life. For those who dare to "wake-up," there is one last minute reprieve... You get to make a choice how you live till death — you even get to make it perfect.

Charles Jordan  
B54540, Salinas Valley State Prison  
Soledad, CA

**SPONSOR NEEDED**

I recently embarked on a mission to further my education and receive formal knowledge of the law through Blackstone's accredited Legal Assistance/Paralegal Certification program (PO Box 3717, Allentown, PA 18106, 800.826.9228, [www.blackstone.edu](http://www.blackstone.edu)). This is something that I want and need in order to secure a stronger foundation for my future.

However, I can't do it alone. I know this. The remaining 21 payments of \$30 each, is more than 100 percent of my monthly income (approx. \$20); herein lies my dilemma. I require financial aid.

I have just submitted a suggestion to my administration that would allow Inmate General Welfare Funds (IGWF) to be used as help towards my educational training. Unfortunately, things move slowly, and these meetings (IGWF) are held monthly; I won't know the results of my request until the close of the next assembly.

The one thing I do know is the word of God: "Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). And this humble solicitation is but one act of my faith, for I have already submitted down payment for my enrollment.

If you find it in your heart to sponsor me, it will truly be a blessing. In return for your grace, you will be kept abreast of my steady advancement through progress and grading reports offered by this course, so that you may monitor the quality of the student you are investing in.

I'm reaching out. Please, somebody, reach back.

Robert Miller  
KS-7065, SCI Mahanoy

**Lorenzo Johnson, continued from page 3**

**Why do you think the state attorney general's office opposed your initial release?**

**LJ:** Simple: it would've shone light on how their office wronged me, failed society, and how an innocent man sat in prison for almost two decades until the Third Circuit Court of Appeals served justice on October 5, 2011. Instead of doing the right thing and acknowledging that I was innocent, the attorney general labeled me as a menace to society and tried to persuade the Middle District Court not to grant me bail — knowing that I didn't have a background of committing any violent crimes.

**In your interview with the *PA Prison Report*, you said you'd become close friends with Jeffrey Deskovic, another man that spent 16 years in prison for a crime for which he was wrongfully convicted. What was it like meeting someone who shared your story?**

**LJ:** As for Jeffrey Deskovic, he's a beautiful human being! Before my sentence was vacated, I opened a line of communication with Jeffrey. He was and still is an avid writer on wrongful convictions. When my conviction was overturned, he was ecstatic. One day, I had just left work for home when I got a call and an unfamiliar voice said: "Lorenzo, welcome home. This is Jeffrey Deskovic." I was in Yonkers, New York and he was next door in the Bronx, so it only took him 10 minutes to reach me. We hugged like long-lost brothers, a bond that only innocent prisoners can understand. I parked my car and got in his. He took me to his foundation headquarters, where I met the

legal team he had put together. Jeffrey took \$1.5 million out of his own money to open his Justice Foundation to help people such as us — people who were violated by the criminal justice system. Since that day Jeffrey and I have been inseparable. I joined him on speaking engagements, and he comes to see me once a month. We speak every week on the phone.

**Could you provide three words to describe your life in the past two years?**

**LJ:** BLESSED, EXCITED, and VIOLATED.

**Currently, where are you in the process of trying to regain your freedom?**

**LJ:** The U.S. Supreme Court remanded my case back to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. So, I have two issues in front of them: Insufficient Evidence, and a Brady Violation. As of this writing, I've been waiting on a decision for 11 months. I have a lot of other things going on, but due to legal restrictions I can't speak about them. To all of my comrades who suffer from this some injustice, RUMBLE, YOUNG MAN, RUMBLE. Never give up. Keep in mind that I got my education, college credits, and legal support from behind these walls. Never settle, no one will ever believe in you unless you believe in yourself.

**For more information, see**

[www.FreeLorenzoJohnson.org](http://www.FreeLorenzoJohnson.org)

[www.facebook.com/LorenzoJohnson](https://www.facebook.com/LorenzoJohnson)

email: [LorenzoJohnson17932@Gmail.com](mailto:LorenzoJohnson17932@Gmail.com)

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**Racism, continued from page 4**

Here's the reality: racism has not disappeared, it has just moved out of sight and into the shadows. It no longer manifests itself overtly like it did pre-1970s. Today's racism is far more sanitized, subtle, nuanced, and sophisticated. Instead of hiding behind overalls, a rotund belly, chewing tobacco, pork chops, and pick-up trucks, it now dons a Brooks Brothers suit, doesn't smoke, runs on a treadmill, eats healthy food, and drives foreign cars. The racism of today is charismatic and persuasive. It's a real enigma.

Since the 1970s, racism has surreptitiously pulled jobs from inner city black America, ignored the communities' employment hunger pangs, looked the other way when drugs from the United States' allies began to flow into the black community, and smiled when drug dealing and affiliated criminal activities filled the employment void. It then declared war on drugs — black men — and moved on to a campaign of mass incarceration. [Michelle Alexander](#) calls this the New Jim Crow.

Today's racism disguises itself as gentrification, or the police and community watch shooting down unarmed black people. It is police pulling an 85-year-old black woman off a bus because she was singing. It is the media getting up in arms because of a school shooting of white people but remaining silent in the face of the daily murders of black people.

Furthermore, the racism of today acts like a friend. It is Bill Clinton playing the saxophone on the *Arsenio Hall Show* at night, authorizing the execution of a mentally challenged little black boy in the morning, killing public assistance in the afternoon, and signing "three strikes and you're out!" legislation and the [Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act](#) at dusk. Its people calling President Obama simply "Obama." Its Donald Chump — I mean Trump — and his stupid accusations against President Obama. And the list goes on.

I am here to tell you that our fight is not over. We need to wake up and stop being complacent. Many of our people — [Malcolm X](#), [Dr. King](#), [Angela Davis](#), [Rosa Parks](#), [A. Phillip Randolph](#), [Ella Baker](#), [Stokely Carmichael](#) aka [Kwame Toure](#), and many more — dedicated themselves to, and in some cases died, fighting this monster. We must take up their fight. We can't now be fooled into believing the monster is dead, because it is not. It is like the old saying that the Devil's best trick was convincing the world that it did not exist. So let's not let this talk of a post-racial America lull us into a state of self-defeating complacency. Our struggle is not over, it is just a little more complicated.

# DEATH ROW

## July Birthdays

Anthony James Fiebiger  
DW-5907, GRN

Lewis Jordan  
JG-9949, GRN

Christopher Kennedy  
FQ-9268, GRN

Cam Ly  
AS-1690, GRN

Landon D. May  
FJ-4637, GRA

Brentt Sherwood  
GD-7549, GRN

Shonda Dee Walter  
OJ-8227, MUN

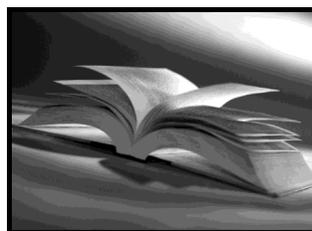
Ronald Lee Weiss  
BS-9390, GRN

**GRA = SCI Graterford**  
**PO Box 244**  
**Graterford, PA**  
**19426-0244**

**GRN = SCI Greene**  
**175 Progress Drive**  
**Waynesburg, PA**  
**15370-8090**

**MUN = SCI Muncy**  
**PO Box 180**  
**Muncy, PA 17756-0180**

*If you do not want your name published, send a letter to Graterfriends each year you do not want it to be included. Be sure to note your date of birth.*



## Literary Corner

### UNTITLED

*by Kimberley Ayala, OC-8223, SCI Muncy*

Beaten...Abused...Neglected...Misused!  
I welcome the pain as if it's just sane  
To be so destructive...I sabotage.  
What a game.  
I've played with my life  
Institution  
Incarceration  
What else is left but my deathbed?  
While I sit in this cell  
I reflect on myself  
And I see this cycle  
I'm Battling Hell!  
What is the battle?  
What war is the tale?  
Ancient history won't dictate my destiny  
Or how I enclose the story I sell.  
Beaten...abused...neglected...misused!  
Won't be the demons  
I'll let consume.  
No more of this pain  
I'm letting go...take it away  
I'm leaving my life the same way I came  
Peaceful...Innocent  
And no longer being ashamed!

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## Fight For Lifers West In

**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, has meetings every third Saturday at Crossroads U.M. Church, located at 325 N. Highland Ave. in the E. Liberty section of Pittsburgh, 15206 (across from Home Depot) at 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Contact FFLW at 412-361-3022 (leave a message) or at [fightforliferswest@yahoo.com](mailto:fightforliferswest@yahoo.com) for more information.

**If you are a prisoner who has written a book**, Prisons Foundation wants to publish it. There is no charge to publish or read your book. Your book will be scanned and published exactly as we receive it. Any language is acceptable. It may contain drawings and photos. For more information, contact:

Prisons Foundation  
PO Box 58043  
Washington, DC 20037

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## Registration, continued from page 5

exceptions. This would eliminate the existing employment barriers so that criminals would be able to get jobs, thereby helping with their rehabilitation and replacing, with payroll taxes, the federal funds lost through the elimination of registration.

- **Eliminating mandatory sentences**, which have no positive affect on rehabilitation, and instead making parole mandatory at a criminal's minimum sentence, subject to reasonable sanctions for violating or offending while on parole. This would relieve overcrowding in prisons and ensure public safety through controlled supervision. Criminals would get their second chance under fair conditions.
- **Restoring the one-shot, unlimited time to appeal** that used to exist under the PCHA, or setting the time limit to a more reasonable four-year period (after a study to determine how many inmates are still in prison because they missed a legislatively-decreed deadline). The majority of criminals who can't afford legal representation will then have the time to learn enough about the law to effectively represent themselves, thus assuring a fair chance at a hearing to address the issues and mistakes made at trial.

Criminal registration only rubs salt in wounds. It's time for the government to act responsibly instead of punitively, and give its citizens a chance to demonstrate their rehabilitation, before our great nation becomes a nation of criminals.

## Drive, continued from page 16

unable to attend the funeral, when the court delivers what seems like another injustice, you feel figuratively like the old man in Madurai. Your thinking focuses on yourself: life has dealt you a sandwich you'd rather not eat.

That is exactly the opposite of how our visitors feel: their thinking is not about themselves but about you, a fellow traveler on the road of life. Sometimes all they can do is lend a sympathetic ear; other times they can bring your problem to the attention of people in charge. Everyone should know, however, that we have no silver bullet; we can speak on behalf of those who cannot get a hearing, but we have no power to act. We do what we can do.

At a lifers picnic at SCI Dallas recently, a veteran inmate recalled that not too long ago the ventilation in the living quarters was bad. In the heat of the summer conditions became oppressive. At the request of the prisoners, the Prison Society took this issue to the warden. When all else failed, we asked if small hand-held fans could be permitted, but we were told that would have to be approved at central office. So we took the matter to the Secretary of Corrections, who said he would approve it if all the superintendents agreed. So we did a bit of lobbying before the superintendents' meeting and eventually got approval for the hand-held fans. Dallas eventually rectified the ventilation situation with more appropriate equipment.

I had almost forgotten about this incident until the veteran inmate brought it up as an example of some of the kinds of things the Prison Society does.

More recently a contingent of legal experts from Philadelphia wanted to visit juvenile lifers to provide counsel on filing PCRA's following the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Miller v. Alabama*. Problems arose when they were denied admission after traveling across the state. The Prison Society was called and we were able to vouch for the lawyers by phone and get them admitted.

The Prison Society does not crow about its work. We try our best to make conditions better, and when we get denied we don't get discouraged. In many respects we share motivation with the chef in India. Our thinking is about the problems of others and how we can be helpful.

What drives you?

Is it how to get over on a cellie or a volunteer?

Or, how to help your fellow traveler get over the miseries of the day?

The Indian chef speaks of the flame inside him that drives him to do for others. Great personal rewards accrue to those who are so inspired.

A good life, nah, a great existence can be had in the most dire of circumstances when one puts the concerns of others ahead of one's own.

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## **THE LAST WORD**

### **What Drives You?**

*by William M. DiMascio*  
Executive Director, The Pennsylvania Prison Society

**Madurai, India (CNN)** — *Narayanan Krishnan was a bright, young, award-winning chef with a five-star hotel group, short-listed for an elite job in Switzerland. But a quick family visit home before heading to Europe changed everything.*

*“I saw a very old man eating his own human waste for food,” Krishnan said. “It really hurt me so much. I was literally shocked for a second. After that, I started feeding that man and decided this is what I should do the rest of my lifetime.”*

*Krishnan was visiting a temple in the south Indian city of Madurai in 2002 when he saw the man under a bridge. Haunted by the image, Krishnan quit his job within the week and returned home for good, convinced of his new destiny.*

*“That spark and that inspiration is a driving force still inside me as a flame — to serve all the mentally ill destitutes and people who cannot take care of themselves,” Krishnan said.*

This sounds like such an unusual story but it’s the kind of thing that occurs every day – in India, to be sure, but in Fishtown and Manayunk, in the east side of Harrisburg and the Hill district in Pittsburgh, too. It is, of course, the story of a life-changing experience. Someone is touched to their core by a situation so compelling that he or she alters the way they look on life even when the change means making great sacrifices.

At the Prison Society we have some 300 official visitors and volunteers who at some point made a decision to spend time and money, not to mention emotional energy, to call on inmates. Their aim is to show that prisoners are cared for by people outside.

When a correctional officer gets a little too frisky and you wind up in the RHU, when a loved one passes and you are

**(see Drive, continued on page 15)**