



Hearts on a Wire

♥ support incarcerated and detained trans and gender variant people ♥

♥ build community through bars ♥



Hi folks!

Y'all sent us so many wonderful things since our last newsletter! We read, look at and appreciate everything you send. This newsletter can only hold so much though, so even if you don't see your work in here we still loved it. Maybe it will make a surprise appearance in a later issue!

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dear HoaW community: letter from the outside collective

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

We meet in Philly at
William Way Center
1315 Spruce Street

Tuesdays at 5:30pm

tokens provided
heartsonawire@gmail.com

Dear Hearts on a Wire community,
Welcome to the summer 2015
newsletter! We hope you enjoy it.

We have been busy this spring! Hearts on a Wire was invited to speak at a number of events in the past few months, and we decided to experiment with a new way of presenting about our work. We worked with one of our longtime members who was recently locked up again to write a statement about her experiences and what she would like people to know about how trans people are treated in prison. Our outside collective members took that statement to a few different events and presented it, and we think it was a great success! We were able to share her important words and let more people know about the reality of what trans people face in prison.

Our first event was a forum at Temple Law School on trans legal issues, where we were invited to speak about issues affecting trans people in prison. We then took our presentation to a movie screening of the film "Out in the Night," about four lesbian women from New Jersey who were arrested after they

defended themselves from an assault. The women were accused of attacking the man who assaulted them, and they all served time in prison. One of the women who was arrested, Patreese Johnson, was also on the panel and spoke about her experience.

We also had the honor of hearing Cece McDonald speak at a local college, and several of our members were able to meet her and talk to her about Hearts on a Wire afterwards.

We are continuing to collect signatures for our campaign to change the DOC's commissary policy and allow access to all items for everyone in prison, regardless of gender identity. We are hoping to push the campaign forward this fall and we will let you know how it goes!

As always, we are sending love and gratitude for your contributions and reflections.

In solidarity,
Hearts on a Wire outside collective

This editions contributors!

Adrian
Allen Smith
Andre Lorenzano
Angel De Jesus
Caitlin
Corey Jackson
Country
Dan Brown
Fat Cat
Finn
Frenchy (a.k.a. Anthony McKim)
Indy (a.k.a. Antoine)
J. Quinn
J. Wilk Proud
J.E. Forbes
J-Lo
Josiah
Kai
Keisha
Leah
Love Always (a.k.a. Joshua L.A. Keziah)
Mal
Miley
Ms. Ceci
Najee Gibson
Nathaniel Griffin
Niara
Nu-Nu (a.k.a. Twanna)
Pablo
Reginald Hall
Seth
Snowden
Teirman

Cover art: J. Quinn & Najee Gibson
Layout: Toph (a.k.a. Lunapher a.k.a. Christopher)

Artwork by Corey Jackson

!!! homecoming grants !!!



If you are coming home soon,
write us and request an
application!

Hearts on a Wire
Homecoming Project
1315 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Hearts on a Wire's Homecoming Project is a small grant for transgender and gender variant people coming back from prisons and jails in Pennsylvania who have been away for longer than 6 months. You can receive this grant only one time.

Miss Ceci — interviewed by Adrian

Last issue we asked who we should interview, and Miss Ceci was suggested as a leader on the inside that deserves recognition.

Over the years, we've heard from so many girls who have passed through Graterford that Miss Ceci looked out for them and helped them get oriented. How did you come to be in the position to be a leader and mentor? Did you know you have had a big impact on many people?

I didn't know I'd had any impact on the girls, I love all the girls, even the judy ones. I understand, everyone has a different story if told. I hid for years, becoming a leader of a powerful organization, and a powerful leader as well. I was almost discovered and the pain was so intense, but I overcame that moment and outwitted my situation.

Please share anything you want people to know about how you came to be locked up and what your life in prison has been like.

I was locked up after being assaulted. Trying to project an image I felt that the image I projected will respond in the manner I chose, unfortunately it wasn't the right one. Substance was also an encouraging factor in my decision.

The word on the street is that you transitioned entirely in prison. Please share anything you want people to know about your gender. When and how did you come to understand your gender? How have you been able to transition? How do you maintain your sense of self in an institution that doesn't know how to see you?

I the 70s I clubbed all the time, in fact it became my life. Second Story, Fuel Pump, Paradise Garage, Studio 54, and so many others. When I arrived here I went into the closet, so to speak. I've seen some things that had to be improved, so I hid to accomplish the task at hand. Mission was accomplished. A guard here at the time seen my transitional moments and encouraged me for a few years to write a book about my life. The guard has now moved up the ranks and is now a Captain. I believe some of the respect comes from inmates as well as staff knowing my history. I was also on the Boxing team. Also I

carry myself the way I want to. Going back in time, way back, people were told on influenced what to think, how to look and act. There is so much confusion concerning gender, how a man or woman is supposed to look and act. When I'm speaking or writing the administration here, I mention gender Persuasion concerning myself, I am transgender, depending on what I need as well as who or what I'm dealing with, I may take it a step higher according to their understanding.

Understanding my gender, I'd tried to live an image. I always felt different, trying to fit in a place that just didn't feel right, in fact stressful. And when my 7th grade teacher took me to my first gay bar, Second Story, I felt like I was in Heaven. SO many people was acting out the way I was feeling. I went back there the following week by myself. Meeting others on my own terms, and that's how my club days began.

To someone who doesn't know how to see me, I say: Don't look. I am not conforming to your way of acceptance. My Body, My World. As is theirs.

What advice do you have for trans people facing long sentences?

Work on your case situation first. Prioritize. Get a job. Kitchen is a good choice, unless you clerk. Take time to get into yourself, find out some things that you wouldn't have is you didn't have confinement time to think. Don't show other inmates that you're interested, even if you are. Times changing, you have a lot of undercover so-called homothugs etc. Stay to yourself, the things you want will come to you.

When trans come to prison, be yourself, no more than that, don't feed the attention seekers. A the same time don't appear too soft-gendered. Always you have to show a little edge, but be you. I was thinking in terms of myself. I see most of them [attention seekers] as stupid, controlled, influenced, peer-pressured, crazy. And some are just plain

nuts. SO I get what I need, some or should I say lots of them have different talents – I know what you may be thinking when I say talents – that too, but art skills, things I need to accomplish my goals, even though I know their desire for me is their motivating factor.

Is there anything else you'd like Hearts on a Wire readers to know?

I have a book coming out soon. Online as well as hard copy. Called Con-fine-ology: 31 years Lockdown – a true story. It's a trilogy. My encouragement for the book is the ignorance that surrounds me. Writing is my new way of coping with it. Right now I consider myself an undiscovered gem, a diamond that is being shaped into a priceless gem.

To someone who doesn't know how to see me, I say: Don't look. I am not conforming to your way of acceptance. My Body, My World. As is theirs.



to: My Real — Anthony “Frenchy” McKim @ SCI Coal Township

To: My Real

Love

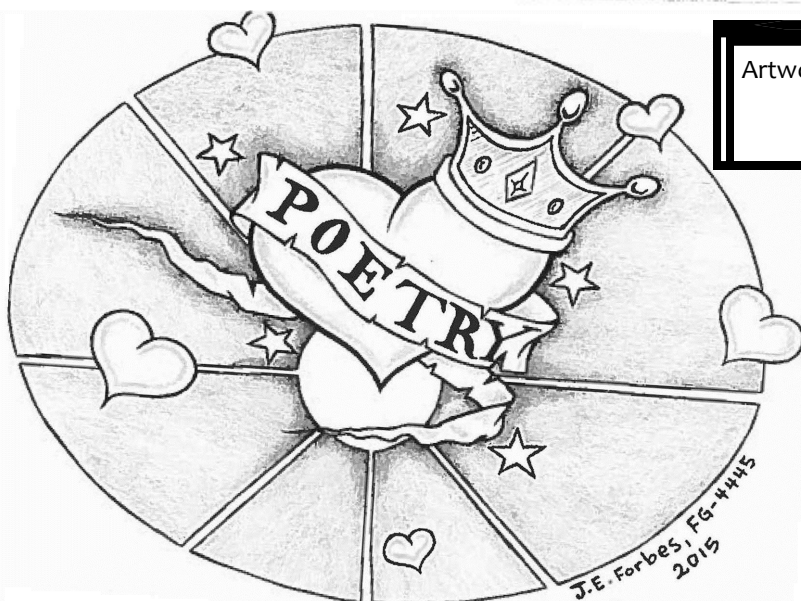
When we first met I was scared mostly
cause my skin was bare. You came to
my cell door and told me what I was.
Then we moved in and we told people
I was your cuz. Then I touched your
heart and made you care and then we
would just lay and stare. At each
other. You were the best lover. Now
I'm here and you're there. Waiting for
something rare? We will be together
again. 4ever your wifey.

Love,
Frenchy



Artwork by Najee Gibson

Artwork by J.E.Forbes



everlasting love — Nathaniel Griffin #LB4480

This poem is to my
love my turtle dove, I
have recently met. I
will never let her go I
don't care what
anyone thinks of me
I'm my own man I love
who I love. To my
Turtle Dove.

Everlasting Love

My love for you is everlasting. My love for you
will never fade. I don't care what people say and as long as I got you it's a good no a great day.
The look in your eyes its stuck in my heart, the way you blush sends butterflys to my heart.
I will always love you my Turtle Dove. Til I have no more breath in me.

To my Turtle Dove I love you.

one million — Twanna aka Nu-Nu @ SCI Fayette

In a million lifetimes, I'd never find adequate words to express how you lift me up.
One life of loving you, I know words are never enough.
But if I had a million tongues they'd say
its you that I adore.
If I had a million days to lie in your arms,
I'd need a million more.
a million lies have been told.
But in needy ears they are gold
You came in the nick of time to show
how true light shines
So thanks a million for giving me what I'd never known.
Spirit of joy and peace even true love I can own.
So given a million more days to show you a million more ways
Not sure all I'd do
But I'll start by saying simply,
I love you.

To my one True Love
Mr. and Mrs. Crack (smile)

Artwork by Najee Gibson



Reginald Hall — interview

Several of our inside members asked us to interview Reginald for our newsletter. Reginald Hall is an *Essence* bestselling author and an outspoken advocate of gay rights. He has appeared on popular television talk shows, including *The Ricki Lake Show*, and is renowned for his controversial book *Memoir: Delaware County Prison*. He lives with his family outside Philadelphia.

As an author and activist, how do you see your work related to the movement to end policing and imprisoning of transgender and gender variant people?

As a writer and advocate, I can bring those specific issues in my writing and support the movement at any speaking engagements. I do not have a voice only for myself, but for all gay and transgender variant people. A voice that's loud enough for people to listen.

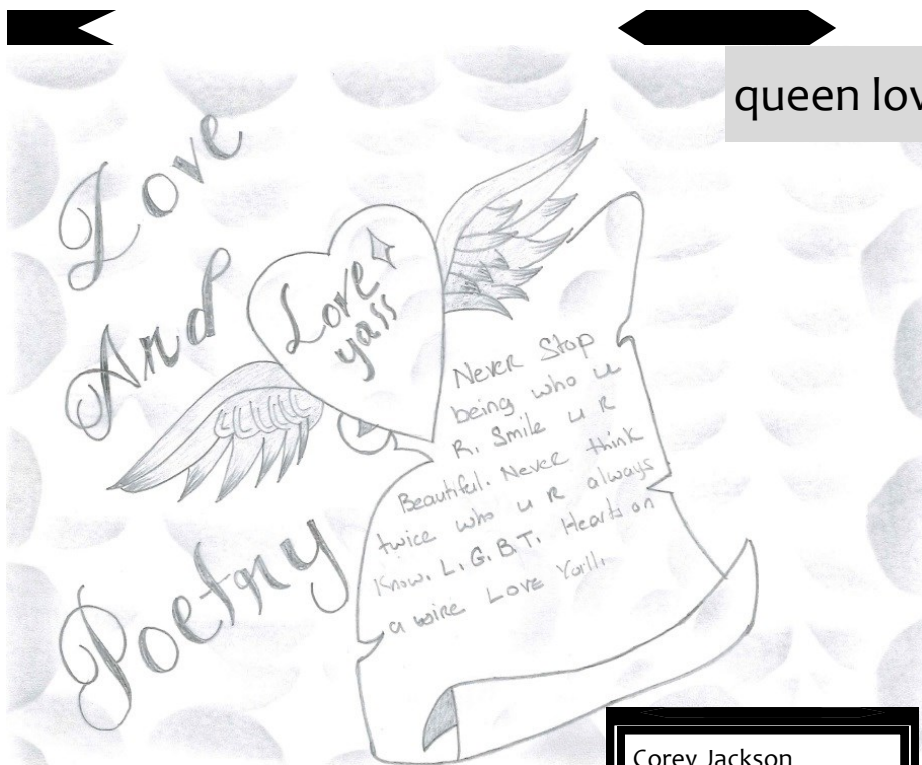
Where do you find inspiration for your writing?

My inspiration comes from real life. All of my books are Fiction based on reality. It's time to bring any and all issues regarding the LGBTQ community to the forefront. What I see and experience in my daily life, shows in my writing.

Are you working on anything new?

Yes I have a few upcoming projects in the works with Bestselling Author Zane. Zane published my last novel "In Love with a Thug." The next book that will be released is titled "Jury Duty." That novel will be based on similar events as the Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis case, but told from a juror's point of view. Sterling Davis. Which Sterling happens to be gay. Also I penned my first Gay Erotica titled "Fetish," and I'll be introducing my very first transgender character in "Ghetto Queen," which will be a 6 book series.

queen love — Country



Corey Jackson
— artwork —
Country

I'm enclosing a very special piece of artwork for a very special Queen. You know who you are! My love runs deep as always, especially for you. So never think twice that what I've done was done out of hatred, something you done wrong, or because I didn't love you. It was me and my emotional compulsive which I'm quite sure you understand. So worry and cry no more my Angel. I've learned to love again because of you. So I only hope and pray by the time this reaches your beautiful eyes and soft hands it finds you in the very best of health and in the brightest of spirits with your head held high.

Undying love,
Country

Dear Hearts on a Wire

I greet you in PEACE, because Positive Education Always Corrects Errors... Thank you for sending me another wonderful issue of your newsletter, along with a belated birthday shout out. It was definitely needed in order to keep the spirit and struggle strong and moving forward. Salute! And love to you ALL...



U/R knot a loan — J.E. Forbes

Owner of a tormented central processing unit, you are not alone, and nothing of each and every event in your life is extremely unique but, yours is no less important than those of anyone else. Above all, what matters is what you do with the data once you've stored it.

What we don't do affects us too, while sorrows harvested day and night we occasionally store in the pantry, to remain seated tightly within its jar. Shall it stay in its recess, hidden from sight? Or, soon don wings and take flight?

No, we are not so different, sibling CPU. In fact, we're genetically tethered, me and you; though, we tend to register differently all that we've been through. And did not we bend deeply when hardest the wind blew? Minor fractures here and there, frayed ends flapping in the blustery air, but break never, my dear, do not ever you dare.

when being enough is enough — Pablo @ SCI Smithfield

If you are living to change who you "were," you will always be living to alter who you are!
If you are living to alter who you "are", you will never become who you are meant to be. **You are enough...**

Without your faults and shortcomings, I would have no depth to measure true and complete acceptance. Being who you are has mentored me in what it means to be totally committed. **You are enough...**

You allowing me to know who you "were," has tutored me in understanding that **your** yesterday has undeniably matured me today...**You are enough...**

sweetness — Fat Cat

It started with a glance
Which led to a stare
Which led to a dance
That got us right here

And now that we're here
The music still plays
Two hearts – one beat
In so many ways

Only with you
I'd share all that I am
The things that we do
That never was planned

It's you that I love
Those eyes and that smile
Yes you Babygirl
You make me so proud

The dance floor is packed
And although they approach
There's only one Sweetness
And she means the most

J. Quinn

— Artwork —

J.E. Forbes



Hail to the Queen

Artwork by: Andre Lorenzano

QUEENS OF THE WORLD:
 DILLI POUND SLT HUNTINGDON
 MAMI MO BET HUNTINGDON
 BABY WILSON PART 2 ITS ME
 AUNTIE NEPHEW 101
 BEE MILEY BABY
 SHAYLANNE TOPHAT
 JOE'S MIX NIGRA MRS.
 JANEY FOR VICT THE BOO
 TAY PEACHES SUEZIE
 YOU KNOW WHEN THE SUN GOES
 DOWN THAT MOON BUTT COMES
 UP THIS: KATRINA DELANCEY
 TWANNA MISS EBONY.

FALLIN QUEENS BUT

NOT FORGOTTEN! MISS
 MISS DIAMOND
 LAMIA BEARD TV U-
 NDERWOOD GODDESS
 EDWARDS LACELAN AL-
 CORN: YALL IS TWEET
 MISS, BUT NOT FOR-
 GOTTEN. R I P!



To Hearts on a wire, what up Dee!
 I wanted to give a shout out
 to the mother QUEENS OF
 the world. I let yall
 know that yall is terey
 SPECIAL and always
 thought of, and
 love. I always keep
 yall in my prayers
 always, i might not
 know yall, or never -
 dot to meet any of you,
 that never dot in the
 way of me understanding what
 all of yall do tho, trust and
 believe, i care. i always keep
 all of yall in my hearts thoughts
 & prayers. Always those that's
 alive, those that was lost to
 a world that's suppose to be
 so living. So i wanted to
 say, i love yall, and please
 take real good care of yall
 selves, & to let yall know that
 yall is not alone & never will
 be. Amen!

Producers By Hearts on a wire
 CEO SPIDEE + DEE

the potential — J.E. Forbes

So far fallen, the true depth of low found;
though, never will I claim to have been an
angel. Are they not made of purest light?
Do not they ever go astray? And here am
I, Earth's material; analog, varied
between this and that, inclined to weak
and strong will. This point of vantage;
from this self-imposed time of night.

My heart and mind's eye hold fast the still
tremendous potential for triumph and
happiness, the being (in waiting) lays
active and somewhat inconspicuous, as
do so very many starts whom twinkle
beyond densely overcast a sky. Indeed,
significant truth herein soon shall rise.

spirituality and our true selves

In our last issue we asked y'all to write
in to us about your relationship
between your gender and your faith or
spiritual self and communities. Here are
what some of you shared with us!

Greetings friends,

You ask how my gender nonconforming
effects my spirituality. All through-
out my life I've been hated on by the
masses when I show my true self. So I
suffer in silence. Every religious text
I've encountered that is centered in
Jesus tells me that if I continue to be
true to myself I will go to hell, that I
am non-redeemable etc., so I sought
out Universal Life Church, 601 Third St,
Modesto, CA 95351. Their motto is "we
are one." Thanks for listening.

— Union Correctional Institute

Dear family,

My mother and I's relation-
ship has ended because of her reli-
gious beliefs. What I wrote is the last
answering machine message I ever
left for my mother.

— Joshua L.A. Keziah

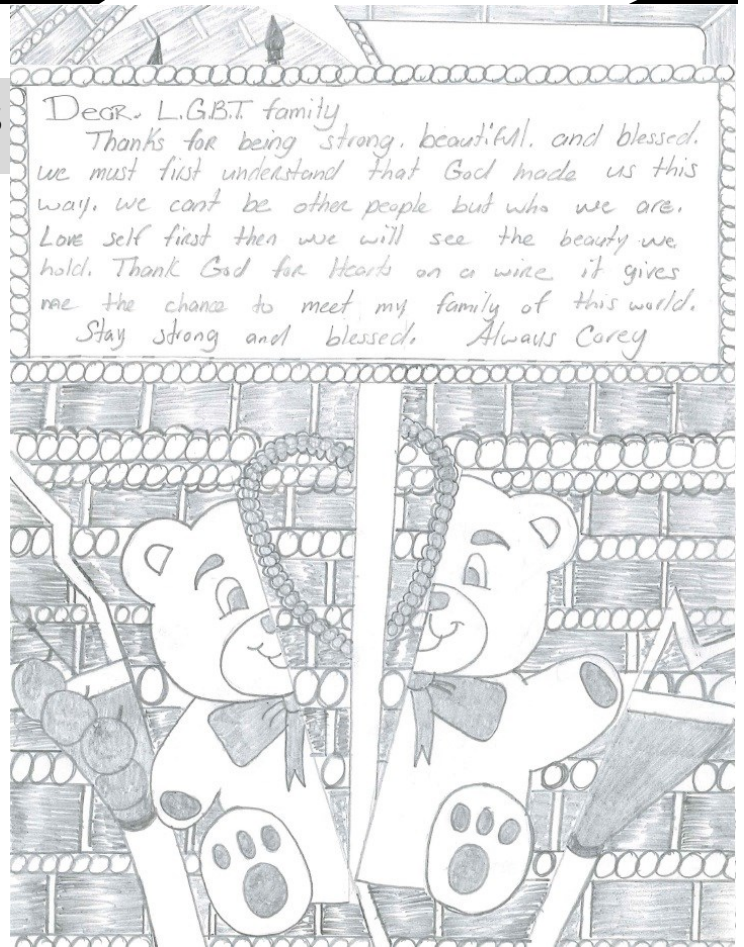
"Hey Mom it's your eldest son again,

Hello, is anyone listening?

Guess not. I understand your faith and
belief, but because I'm a proud gay
man married to my queen, you can't
say that's what's caused your grief.
You've taken my sons from me, the
damage is done. I'm an outcast to the
only woman I truly loved, the woman
I'd defend to the death of me, now
I'm just one less in your family, I hope
the angels watch over you, and know
that my every prayer starts,

Dear Mom...

click



Artwork by Corey Jackson

Artwork by Najee Gibson



Dear folks at Hearts on a Wire,

Thank you so much for the recent issue - #14 – you sent to me. As always, I enjoyed it a great deal. I have never sent anything to you before but have two reasons to write to you today.

I am involved in a creative writing program through “Prisoners Express” a great place, outlet, and supporter of incarcerated people at Cornell University. [...] I had a great deal of fun writing it and hope it brings a smile to others.

The second reason for my letter is that after 3yrs 9mo and 29days of incarceration, I have been granted parole. I have applied for acceptance into a re-entry program with the veterans administration and am awaiting a response from them. [...]

Happy Easter.

Yours,
Dan Brown

p.s. thank you for the hand written greeting. Funny how such a small gesture can feel so good.

Prisoners Express
127 anabel taylor hall
Ithica ny 14853

Life while incarcerated as a young black trans woman is a true hardship!

[...] I try to remain optimistic and be strong but these white people disrespect me daily calling me Mr. and sir and I cringe every time they degrade me. I never felt so insecure about myself until confinement in prison. So please tell all the ladies who will enter the penal system to hold their heads up, cause this is a road of horror! I just wish for an end to incarceration in itself.

XO In love and Solidarity,
Niara

p.s. fight the power and never let up 'til the fight is over!

R-E-S-P-E-C-T! Thanks Aretha

Hey H.O.W. family. This is Twanna here at Fayette. Sending all a quick note of encouragement.

To all my sisters please, please, please, love yourselves enough to not fall for the BS many dudes try to fill our hearts and heads with. Unfortunately many will use kind words and false affection in their attempts to get at one thing, our goodies. Whoever said "love yourself or nobody else will" never lied. Love yourselves enough to not allow anyone to use you. For anything! But to be used for your bod only leaves you feeling empty and wounded inside. I should know. I allowed this many times. Hoping desperately to actually be loved. I assure you the love I needed was self-love. Once I realized that, true love from another came just for me. If someone can love me with all my mistakes and flaws, there's hope for everyone. So remember you got to love you first. Well second to God of course but you get the pic. So keep your head up and them legs closed til you know he's worthy.

Twanna aka Nu-Nu SCI Fayette

Hello Family,

My name is Joshua AKA L.A. I filed a grievance here at SCI Mahanoy on January 2nd 2015 because they denied my fiancé and I's marriage due to it being a “SAME – SEX” marriage ... On April 7th, 2015 the chief Grievance Coordinator of the D.O.C. remanded the grievance back to SCI Mahanoy to review and make a new decision. It's been a slow process made hard by people that just won't accept the LGBT...

sent with love,
your brother,
Joshua AKA love always

Dear Hearts on a Wire family,

Well it's your brother (Love Always) LA. Well I'm writing to let everyone know that ... we were informed that the institution we're in was wrong and that the Pennsylvania DOC does enjoin same ex marriages with inmate marriage policy DC-ADM821. Our wedding will be held by early 2016. Once we're wedded we'll send photos. Keep your heads up everyone. Don't let the "system" bring you down.

Your brother,
Love Always "LA"
SCI Mahanoy

Y'all sent us so many wonderful things, but this newsletter can only hold so much. We want to share as much as possible, so some letters have been shortened. Any [...] means there was more written than we had space for.

...more mail from you ♥♥♥

HOAW community,

I'd like to say hello to all my brothers and sisters out there. This is your Big-Lil Bro, Indy. I'm 23 yrs old, from Indianapolis, IN. Currently serving 8 to 20 years. I'll be at my 8 in 2018. Hopefully, I'll get paroled. But PA is crooked. So, who knows.

I just wanted to send my love out to y'all. And to my fiance who is in the hole with me as well. Maya, I love you baby. Stay strong. You are still my miel oro! Siempre! Brothers and sisters, I'm only 23, but I want to say something: Please, stop with all of the drama amongst each other. We already deal with so much hate and bs from people who don't understand us. If we take the time to reflect, we'll see how much of our drama is centered on "he say, she say" or other very little things.

Don't let little things cause disruption in our family. It hurts to see that. Let's love each other. And stay by each other's side. We have more to fight for than just who did or said what. Come on y'all! I'm an old soul in a young man. Let's stand for more than count!

Let's stand for our loved ones who couldn't take the pressure and ended their lives. Let's stand for the brothers and sisters in solitary whose voices and cries go unheard. Let's stand for our family who gets bullied, sexually assaulted, harassed, etc. No more standing because "so and so said". I love all my LGBT family. Stand together in love. Love conquers all! I love y'all.

Again, Maya, I love you baby. I'm looking for a lawyer to bring the violation of our constitutional rights to light. Don't give up my amore. Te amo tu mucho.

Love,
Antoine aka Indy at SCI Coal Township

I first want to start off by saying this. To all the brothers that is lock up I want to wish you all the best in everything you do.

Besides that, I must tell all the brothers that is in this gay lifestyle one thing. If you have that one you feel like is the best for you then stick with that one and leave the rest of them alone because let me say this. My wife who everyone knows who goes by the name Lady Mariah Lee Smith she is all that and more. I could not ask for nothing better than her sexy ass. Females was not for me at all. Females did nothing but break my heart and it took me to find my wife Mariah to show me what love really is. With that being said Mariah I hope you hear me when I say this to you. I love you so much baby girl.

Love,
Allen M. Smith
SCI Forest

Trapped

I find myself questioning myself. Am I living a lie or just not being honest with myself? I became confused with who I am as a person because of the thoughts of what others may think of me. This feeling I've been holding inside of me has been causing me dis-stress. How do I become free from the fear of the unknown? Can I come out and still be the same person? If so, why am I ashamed of who I am and what I represent? To accept oneself is to be real with oneself. Correct! So I could no longer be afraid of the opinions, dirty looks or frivolous comments. I'm not living for the acceptance of me, not for others.

Hearts on a wire,

I recently have read of yet another transgender who has taken her life! It not only hurts me, it makes me so sad!!! But I want all my transgender brothers and sisters to know. We are not perfect!!!! But God did make us in his own image. So just like a puzzle we have to be able to see that pictures and put those pieces together to become (transgender) into that outstanding man or woman you feel you are inside. Nobody can ever say the journey was easy, but those who've worked hard and reached their goals will always say "it was worth it". So please stay focused on your goals and don't ever hurt yourself! Fruit for thought!

Angel De Jesus—Smithfield

My Loving brothers and sisters that are incarcerated... You are not alone!

We have suffered so much in prison for our cause, but it's only the beginning of what we... want: to be accepted and understood. Don't get weary, we will prevail in the end. My journey is ending after 20 years of fighting for who we are as people in this world. Don't ever give up no matter how much time you have because we all need each other to make progress in our fight for the rights we all deserve. Be Happy! Be Free! Be who god made you to be! Just because I'm walking out these prison doors... my fight is only beginning. Remember to show everyone who you really are, because if you just lay down and take the pain people want to give you, you will never be who you really are in life. Be strong my brothers and sisters, never give up!

J. Wilk Proud @ SCI Forest

The Mr. Adrian Lowe — interviewed by Miley

>>>How did Hearts on a Wire start?

A few of us working in HIV nonprofits--Jaci Adams, John Bell, Waheedah, Hannah, Pascal-- were talking about how bad things were for trans people in prison and how we wished there were more options for support, so we decided to start something. John Bell really pushed me to take leadership and get something off the ground.

I met with Miss Major in 2007 and asked her how they had started Trans in Prison in California, and she said you start with mail. You develop relationships with people in prison and they will spread the word and the network will form.

So we had a Valentines party where we invited people to send cards to trans people in prison, and Pascal made a drawing with hearts on a wire so that's the name we used for the party. We used "Hearts on a Wire" as a return address at FIGHT, and the name just stuck.

Once the pen pal program was up and running, we realized pretty quickly that we did not have the capacity to respond to all the requests. So we talked about how we could address the conditions that people were facing in a responsible way and came up with the idea for a needs assessment. We developed a survey that we sent to people inside and we also interviewed people when they were released. The survey was a way for us to gather information and also let people know about Hearts. In 2011, we published the results in our report, This Is a Prison: Glitter is Not Allowed.

We also decided to do a newsletter instead of mail as a way of still supporting people to communicate with each other and have their voices heard.

>>>What is your active role in Heart on a Wire?

I am the last founding member still involved, sort of the group's "OG." I

struggle with it sometimes, about how to step back and support new leadership while still sharing our institutional memory. I feel like I am an anchor for the group, where I can provide stability for this project. If I ever needed to step away, I would, but I don't need to. I want to keep mentoring the young trans activists who get involved. Most of my mentors are gone, passed away or dropped out, and I know how important it is to have someone who has been there.

One of my favorite parts of Hearts on a Wire is how we develop leadership. We give people a platform to learn some basic organizing skills, and then they might leave and go use those skills somewhere else, which is great. We share facilitation at our meetings and split up tasks so everyone is involved. We don't push people out who are new or who are having a hard time engaging--we want them to stay involved and grow.

>>>How has Hearts affected your life?

This is why I went to law school. As a social worker, the more I worked with folks in issues related to policing, the more I realized that I wanted more skills to be able to address those issues. I also realized that my brain worked that way--I'm good at problem solving and helping people navigate systems. Hearts also allowed me to remember who I am and who I am accountable to during law school. It reminded me every day to reject the idea that the law is neutral. That Dean Spade quote, "law school makes you a bad person," is so real. Hearts was my only connection to community while I was in that environment, and it kept me sane. Hearts is the project in my life that I am the most proud of, by far.

>>>What are your future goals for Hearts on a Wire?

My ultimate goal, always, is to end prisons. We need to find new ways to address harm in our communities. In the mean time, we need to support

people facing these impossible decisions inside, between privacy and safety, identity and survival. If we can improve the quality of people's lives at all, I think we're doing important work. I also want the group to be able to survive on its own and withstand transitions in membership, and I think we're working towards that.

>>>Do you believe that the Hearts on a Wire newsletter should focus more on political, gender self determination, racial and economic justice, and an end to policing and imprisoning our communities? If so how would you address to the incarcerated inmates to be more involved in placing articles in the HOAW newsletter of those aspects or topics?

Part of what we're trying to do with the newsletter is make sure that people's voices from the inside are included in the conversations about prisons and policing, so writing on these issues is so crucial. At the same time, we also want to support people finding ways to love each other and find solidarity through writing. Sometimes the newsletter makes me think about that Rihanna song, "We found love in a hopeless place." We get a lot of love letters, and that feels so important! It's a beautiful model of possibility. For people to see love poems written to them in their real name--not their government name, their real name--this is an act of seeing and believing that you are who you say you are. I love publishing love poems.

>>>Being an active voice in the community, what is your advice to the inmates of how to get involved after their release?

Everyone is always welcome to come to our meetings and get involved. We also understand that some people realize after they are released that working with Hearts is not for them, and that's ok too. We do our best to make it a supportive place for people who have been released, but it's challenging.

>>>Do you know if there is an interest to expand HOAW to another PA city such as Erie, Pittsburgh or Harrisburg in the future?

We would love to hear from people in other parts of the state, but so far it's not a conversation that has happened.

>>>Knowledge is power. Is there anything you would like to say to the readers of HOaW in this interview that we may have skipped?

Just as a public service announcement, I am not a lady! I know people are trying to be respectful and I get beautiful mail addressed to me as a woman, but just FYI, it's *Mr. Lowe*.

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...

Part of what we're trying to do with the newsletter is make sure that people's voices from the inside are included in the conversations about prisons and policing ... At the same time, we also want to support people finding ways to love each other and find solidarity through writing.

an obituary for Charlene Arcila — Finn

It's telling that in our community, one only has to live to 50 or so to be considered an elder. Since the vast majority of trans folks in my life are around the same age as me, I often wonder what the fuck happens to us when we get older. Since I left Philadelphia, I've picked up the morbid habit of checking the obituaries every few months to see if anyone I know from my queer and trans communities back home is dead. There's always someone.

I can count the trans elders I've known on one hand, and Charlene was one of them. I met her shortly after the 2011 Philadelphia Trans Health

Conference, when she recruited me to serve in her AmeriCorps program at the Philly AIDS Consortium. I shyly mentioned being on the volunteer staff at the conference, and she was all offhandedly, "Oh that conference, I was one of the founders."

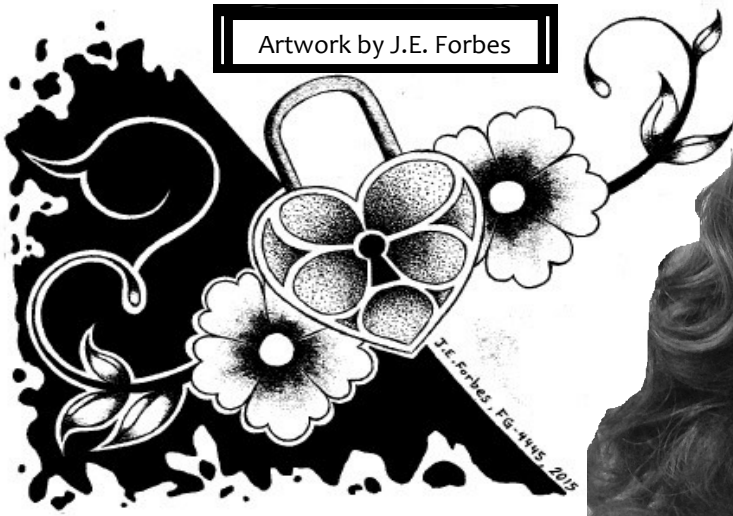
Charlene had the kind of unflappable, blunt style that one only gains from years of being a total badass. In public health trainings that were largely straight and cis, it was rad to have a trainer who was not only up-front about who she was, but up-front in a calm "This is how it is and you're going

to respect it" kind of way that I have still not quite managed to pull off. She was also totally hilarious.

A few of the stories I read after Charlene's death were written in a way that said, "Well, there's another black trans woman who died, but at least she wasn't murdered." I don't think it's possible for someone who is black and a woman and trans to die young and not call it murder - her death wasn't directly a homicide, but it was still part of a larger systematic killing of black and brown trans women.

I wasn't lucky enough to be close to Charlene, but she managed to have a serious impact on me as a mentor - she gave me my first job out of school, trained me in HIV counseling, and basically brought me into a field that's been shaping and directing the rest of my life.

Artwork by J.E. Forbes



Charlene had the kind of unflappable, blunt style that one only gains from years of being a total badass.

In the last several months, massive demonstrations against racist police violence have been erupting across the country. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, three black women, some of whom identify as queer, coined the phrase Black Lives Matter and spearheaded the larger movement. This movement criticizes the excessive use of force and violence against Black people by police officers, security guards, and vigilantes claiming self-defense. While law-enforcement officials target and harshly punish Black people, many white people and police who have murdered Black people have walked free. According to Mapping Police Violence, 304 Black people were killed by the police in 2014 alone, 100 of whom were unarmed. This uneven distribution of justice sends a clear message that Black lives are disposable and that anti-Black racism is an inevitable feature of United States culture and society.

Black Lives Matter goes beyond demanding Black survival and promotes access to quality education, health care, affordable housing, and other resources that influence health, safety, and self-determination. People within the Black Lives Matter movement have also repeatedly called for the inclusion of Black queer women and transgender women names and experiences, in addition to leadership by Black women. As movement co-founder Alicia Garcia has stated, “When Black people get free, everybody gets free.” The Black Lives Matter movement has begun to change the way mainstream United States understands justice, creating a new language for justice that foregrounds a true investment in life.

Black Lives Matter started officially after self-appointed vigilante George Zimmerman shot and killed Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida on February 26, 2012. Zimmerman plead self-defense and was acquitted of all charges for murdering an unarmed Black teen. As the Black Lives Matter movement has continued to develop, the number of Black people killed by law enforcement has continued to grow. Black Lives Matter has spread across the nation and organized unmistakably substantial protests against anti-Black violence.

February 26, 2012:

Trayvon Martin,

16 years old, while walking home from the store carrying only iced tea and skittles, was shot and killed in Sanford, Florida by an armed vigilante. After an online petition gathered over 2.2 million signatures, Martin’s murderer, George Zimmerman, was charged with second degree murder and manslaughter. He was later acquitted of all charges.

March 21, 2012:

Rekia Boyd,

22 years old, while standing in an alleyway with several friends, was shot in the back of the head by an off-duty police officer. She died the next day. The officer was charged with involuntary manslaughter and reckless conduct, but was acquitted of all charges.

July 20, 2013:

Demonstration

Thousands of demonstrators in more than 100 U.S. cities gathered at federal court buildings and police headquarters to call on the Department of Justice to file a civil rights case against George Zimmerman after he was acquitted on all charges connected to his murder of Trayvon Martin.

April 30, 2014:

Eric Garner,

43 years old, father of 6, died after Officer Daniel Pantaleo placed him in a chokehold for allegedly selling loosies in New York City. The entire incident was captured on video. Garner’s last words were “I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe.”

August 5, 2014:

John Crawford,

22 years old, was shot and killed by police in a Walmart while holding a BB gun sold by the store itself in Dayton, Ohio. A grand jury declines to indict any of the officers involved.

August 5, 2014:

Mike Brown,

18 years old, while walking with a friend to his grandmother’s house, was shot and killed by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. Multiple eye-witnesses report that Brown had his hands up in a surrender position when Officer Wilson shot him multiple times in the chest, hands, and head. This murder sparked weeks of protests in the town and around the country in solidarity. Ferguson police responded to the peaceful protests by shooting rubber bullets and tear gas at protestors and journalists.

BLM timeline — Mal

August 19, 2014:

Kajieme Powell,

an unarmed man with mental health issues, was shot and killed by police in St. Louis. Video was released of the police shooting him on site and then handcuffing him after he laid dead on the ground.

August 29, 2014:

Demonstration

A Black Lives Matter Freedom Ride gathered over 500 activists from around the country in Ferguson to join thousands of other protestors in the town for Labor Day actions and protests. Protestors stopped traffic on a St. Louis highway for 4 and a half minutes to symbolize the four and a half hours Mike Brown's body was left lying on the sun after his murder.

November 22, 2014:

Tamir Rice,

12 years old, was shot and killed police while he played with a toy pistol in a city park in Cleveland, Ohio.

November 24, 2014:

Demonstration

The Grand Jury in Ferguson announced that Officer Wilson would not be indicted. Officer Wilson retired from police duty with a full pension and faced no legal repercussions for his murder of Mike Brown. Rallies protesting the decision erupted in more than 170 U.S. cities.

November 28, 2014:

Demonstration

Thousands of activists participated in #BlackOutBlackFriday, shutting down malls and highways across the country.

December 3, 2014:

Demonstration

A New York Grand Jury announced that it would not indict Officer Pantaleo for the chokehold death of Eric Garner. The nation broke out in protests, with protestors chanting "I can't breathe" and "Hands Up, Don't Shoot," in honor of Eric Garner's and Mike Brown's last words.

December 14, 2014:

Demonstration

Tens of thousands of protestors marched across the country in protest of police brutality and the deaths of unarmed black women and men. In New York, a reported 25,000 people marched through midtown, demanding justice for Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and countless other victims of police violence.

December 20, 2014:

Demonstration

A Black Lives Matter protest filled and shut down the Mall of America.

April 12, 2015:

Freddie Gray,

25 years old, fell into a coma while being transported by police after they arrested him in Baltimore, Maryland. He died several days later of a severed spinal cord. Intense riots broke out in the city leading. A state of emergency and a curfew was declared. The six officers involved in Gray's death were later indicted, due in large part to the public protests.

June 17, 2015:

Mass church shooting

In Charleston, South Carolina, a white supremacist was responsible for a mass shooting at the Emanuel AME Church, the oldest Black church in the South. The shooting left nine people dead and one person injured. Over the next two weeks, at least 7 black churches in 4 different states were burned down in possible acts of arson.

“Black Lives Matter goes beyond demanding Black survival and promotes access to quality education, health care, affordable housing, and other resources that influence health, safety, and self-determination. People within the Black Lives Matter movement have also repeatedly called for the inclusion of Black queer women and transgender women names and experiences, in addition to leadership by Black women.”

<< The Black Lives Matter movement is a topic for our next newsletter. As Adrian said, a focus of HoawW is to make sure that people on the inside have a voice in movements on the outside, and to make sure that people on the outside are incorporating the ideas, needs and lives of people on the inside into the movements. >>

What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?

What does Trans Lives Matter mean to you?

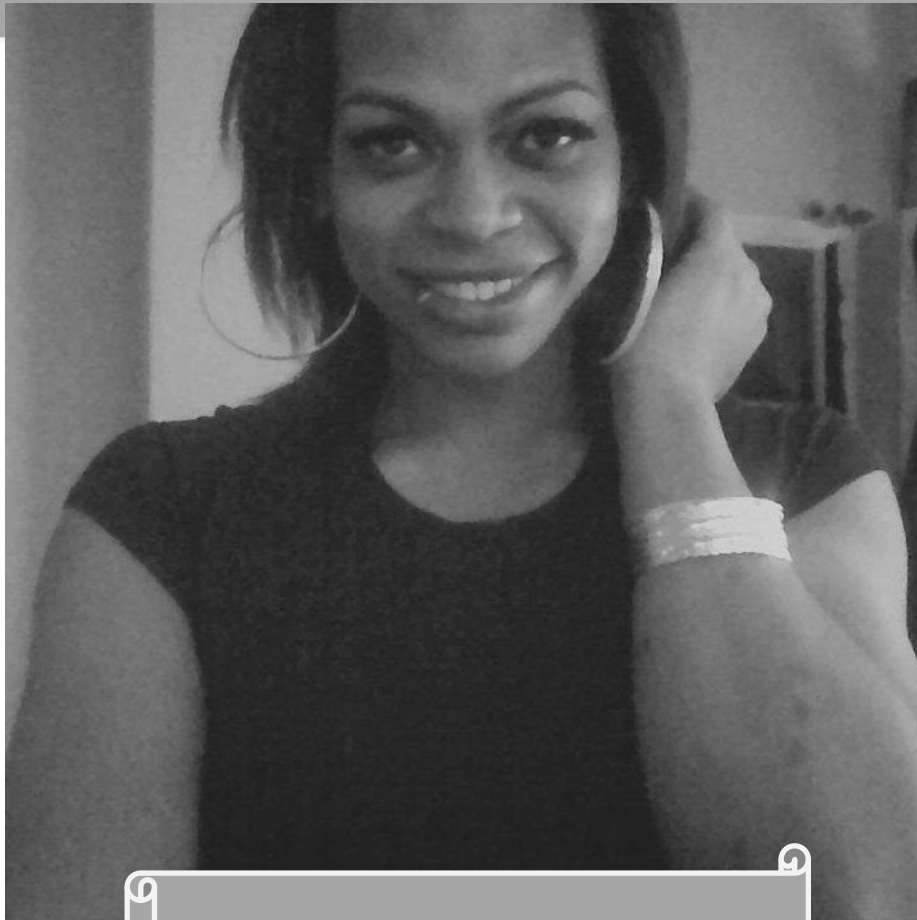
As an incarcerated person, how can you participate in these movements?

What are you doing to make sure that Trans Lives Matter?

What are you doing to make sure that Black Lives Matter?

What does a future where Black and Trans life is valued by everyone look like?

Londyn Nicole Ozuna-Banks



Rest in Power

<< It was so lovely getting to know people within our community more intimately and we would love to do that again! The interviews featured here in this issue were a wonderful way of building and learning about our own community. Who in our transgender and gender variant community would you like to see interviewed for the next issue? >>

Got someone in mind? Send us their name, their contact information if you have it, and any questions you want us to ask! If you don't know what you want to ask someone, but you definitely want them interviewed, that's fine too.



Artwork by Najee Gibson

KEEP US POSTED

We are hearing from a couple of you that it is getting easier to access hormones and the “female designated” commissary list!

If this is happening in your facility too let us know! It helps us strategize our push for a state-wide unisex commissary list. Plus it helps us keep tabs on how adequately or inadequately prisons are caring for their trans and gender non-conforming folks.

exciting announcements!!!

Miley and Winter are getting hormones!

They are also allowed bras and panties, and can wear make-up!

Joshua (Love Always) is getting married!

After a long paperwork battle with the prison he and his partner on the outside are finally going to be able to get married. Their wedding is in early 2016! Check out the “mail from you” section for more gushy details.

Iceson is coming home soon!

You are so close and may even be out by the time this newsletter gets put in the mail. We are excited for you!

You can send us...

- :: Letters responding to this edition
- :: Artwork (black and white)
- :: Commissary recipes
- :: Articles
- :: Poetry
- :: Ideas

If you contribute,
make sure you tell us...

1. Exactly how you want to be credited [anonymous? legal name & ID number? The name you use? Nickname?]
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.**

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