



Hearts On A Wire



Issue 1, Summer 2010

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

Hearts On A Wire

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 Philadelphia at

**The Institute for
Community
Justice:**

21 South 12th
Street, 7th Floor
Tuesdays from 4-6

heartsonawire@gmail.com



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ID: My Hard-Earned Lessons

by Najee Gibson (with A. Lowe)



I was released from SCI Houtzdale April 9, 2009. I went home to Philly. All I had for ID was the DOC state ID. The information in this article was gained through a frustrating trial and error process.

Social Security Card

- I went to 1234 Market Street, to the 20th floor
- I filled out the paperwork for a replacement card
- I showed them my DOC state ID and release papers
- I got my card a few weeks later in the mail
- They gave me a receipt which I made the mistake of not keeping and had to go back and get another one. It turns out the receipt is quasi-ID for welfare and a non-driver's license.

DPW ACCESS Card

- You get an ACCESS card if you get benefits turned on. The DOC gave me an application on my way out the door.
- Miss DPW was the only place that accepted my DOC ID as real ID.
- They wanted to see the receipt I got from social security to show I was working on better ID.
- They turned on my benefits short term while I dealt with bureaucracy getting more ID. To keep them on I had to show them ID.



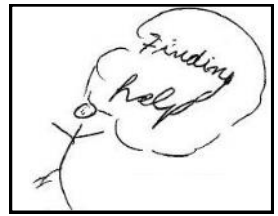
Voter registration card

- In PA formerly incarcerated people ARE allowed to Vote.
- To register you fill out a form and mail it.
- They have forms at the DPW office and the free library and lots of other places.
- Your official card comes in the mail a few weeks later.
- I registered as a democrat, 'cuz it beats the alternative.



Birth Certificate.

- On Mondays at 4PM a gentleman with bullpen sandwiches (a delicacy if you're hungry enough) in front of the Philadelphia Free Library on the Parkway gives you a check. He won't make out a check to you, but to the agency you need to get ID from.
- I got a check to "vital statistics" that I used to buy my Birth certificate.
- Birth Certificates are not in the State Building on Spring Garden anymore. I went in there and they looked at me like I was from Mars.
- Birth Certificates are now at 110 North 8th Street; Suite 108
- I filled out the form, handed over the check and the form
- I got a receipt to show to DPW
- My birth certificate came about a week later in the mail



DMV State ID

- I went to the same gentleman on the Parkway (he's pretty cute for a white boy - in an apple-pie kind of way) and he wrote me a check to the DMV.
- I had a PA non driver's license before so I was in their system so I applied for a replacement card.
- Because I was getting a replacement I didn't have to show as much. If you never had a state ID they will want more proof that you are who you are.
- I gave them my check and the form for a new card.
- I showed them my birth certificate, my receipt from social security, my ACCESS card.
- Also they wanted proof of address. I used a cell-phone bill, but you could use your voter registration card once you have one, or a lease, or any kind of official mail, or something from your housing that proves you live there.
- They took my picture and I left with my state ID in my hand.
- If you don't enough proof I've heard they sometimes issue a temporary state ID while you get your proof together.

Name Change

- I plan to legally change my name with Mazzoni Legal Services when I can.
- If you have a felony you can change your name two years after you complete your sentence (including parole if you don't max out). For certain felonies you have to get a pardon before you can legally change your name.

Philly Resources:

Community Legal Services

has been known to provide help getting ID. They can also help apply for a pardon. They have walk-in Hours Monday through Friday from 9am-12 noon at 1424 Chestnut St. 215.981.3800

Mazzoni Legal Services

does pro bono legal name change representation for low-income trans and gender variant Philadelphians. 21 S. 12th Street, 12th Fl. 215.563.0657

Legal News

An incarcerated woman in a PA State facility requested a column on trans/gender variant legal news. This article was written by Hearts on a Wire member Adrian Lowe (he is not a lawyer).

U.S. Tax Court recognizes hormonal and surgical transition as neither elective nor cosmetic

O'Donnabhain v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue

February 2, 2010.

Rhiannon O'Donnabhain claimed her gender reassignment surgery as a medical deduction in her 2001 federal income taxes. She was denied the deduction by the IRS, who said her surgery was an elective cosmetic surgery. She was represented by **Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders** (GLAD) in her appeal to the US Tax Court. The Court reasoned that gender identity disorder (GID) was a disease within the meaning of the tax code, and that treatment for GID qualifies as medical care under the Internal Revenue Code, and is therefore deductible. They allowed her to deduct her hormones and genital surgery, but not a breast augmentation. The IRS has not filed an appeal.

Importance: This is the first time a federal court has ruled that surgery and hormonal transition are the medically appropriate treatment for transgender people (and not elective or cosmetic). This decision could eventually impact state provided healthcare as well as health insurance requirements.

Critical view: The Court relied on psychiatric standards for deciding this case; some of us are not thrilled about doctors getting to decide who we are and what we need.

Join the Debate!

*Write an **article** or **letter** to the editor telling us **your** opinion about psychiatric standards. Do they help or hurt our communities?*

3rd Circuit Court of Appeals overturns precedent in Employment Discrimination law.

Prowel v. Wise Business Forms, Inc.

August 28, 2009

Brian Prowel is an effeminate gay man who was routinely harassed at his factory job at Wise Business Forms. His claims were dismissed at the District Court because Under Federal Law (Title VII), sexual orientation is not a protected category for discrimination claims. Prowel appealed, represented by **Equality Advocates PA**, arguing that he was harassed because he was effeminate, and not because he was gay, and that sex stereotypes ARE covered by Title VII. The 3rd Circuit reversed and remanded the case, holding that sexual orientation and gender expression should be

considered separately.

Importance: Gender non-conforming people who are also gay or lesbian are no longer barred from bringing federal discrimination suits in the 3rd Circuit (where PA is). Court acknowledges that sexual orientation and gender expression are not the same thing.

PA Superior Court overturns presumption of unfitness for LGBT families in child custody cases

M.A.T. v. G.S.T.

January 21, 2010

Prior to this ruling, when an LGBT parent was in a custody dispute against a straight parent, the case law has for decades been overtly hostile to the LGBT parent. A unanimous Court overruled both the holding and the reasoning of these precedents, stating that “prejudices have no proper place in child custody cases, where the decision should be based exclusively upon a determination of the best interests of the child given the evidence presented to the trial court.”

Importance: LGBT families theoretically get equal treatment under the law.

Resources mentioned in this article:

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
30 Winter Street, Suite 800
Boston, MA 02108

Equality Advocates PA
is now:

Mazzoni Legal Services
21 S. 12th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Sylvia Rivera Law Project
147 W 24th St, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10011

Federal Legislation includes Gender Identity as protected category

President Barack Obama signed the **Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act** into law on October 28, 2009. This law expands on existing federal hate crimes law to add the categories of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability to the existing categories of race, color, religion and national origin.

Importance: The first time gender identity has been included as a vulnerable group in any federal legislation.

Critical view: The **Sylvia Rivera Law Project**, a New York based transgender legal services provider, wrote a statement which nicely sums up the major criticism of this and other hate crimes legislation:

The recent expansion of the federal hates identities for the first time ever on a crimes legislation has received extensive federal level. The Sylvia Rivera Law praise and celebration by mainstream Project does not see this as a victory. As lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender an organization that centers racial and organizations because it purports to economic justice in our work and that “protect” LGBT people from attacks on the understands mass imprisonment as a basis of their expressed and/or perceived primary vector of violence in the lives of

our constituents, we believe that hate crimes legislation is a counterproductive response to the violence faced by LGBT people.

“this monstrous system of laws and enforcement specifically targets marginalized communities, particularly people of color”

Already, the U.S. incarcerates more people per capita than any other nation in the world. One out of every thirty-two people in the U.S. live under criminal punishment system supervision. African-American people are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white people; Latin@ people are twice as likely to be incarcerated as white people. LGBTs and queer people, transgender people, and poor people are also at greatly increased risk for interaction with the criminal justice system. It is clear that this monstrous system of laws and enforcement specifically targets marginalized communities, particularly people of color.

What hate crimes laws do is expand and increase the power of the same unjust and corrupt criminal punishment system. Evidence demonstrates that hate crimes legislation, like other criminal punishment legislation, is used unequally and improperly against communities that are already marginalized in our society. These laws increase the already staggering incarceration rates of people of color, poor people, queer people and transgender people based on a system that is inherently and deeply corrupt.

The evidence also shows that hate crime laws and other “get tough on crime” measures do not deter or prevent violence. Increased incarceration does not deter others from committing violent acts motivated by hate, does not it rehabilitate

those who have committed past acts of hate, and does not make anyone safer. As we see trans people profiled by police, disproportionately arrested and detained, caught in systems of poverty and detention, and facing extreme violence in prisons, jails and detention centers, we believe that this system itself is a main perpetrator of violence against our communities.

We are also dismayed by the joining of a law that is supposedly about “preventing” violence with the funding for continued extreme violence and colonialism abroad. This particular bill was attached to a \$680-billion measure for the Pentagon’s budget, which includes \$130 billion for ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Killing people in Iraq and Afghanistan protects no one, inside or outside of U.S. borders.

We continue to work in solidarity with many organizations and individuals to support people in prison, to reduce incarceration, to end the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, and to create systems of accountability that do not rely on prisons or policing and that meaningfully improve the health and safety of our communities--especially redistribution of wealth, health care, and housing. [. . .]

“we believe that a law that links our community's experiences of violence and death to a demand for increased criminal punishment ... is a strategic mistake of significant proportion”

For these reasons, we believe that a law that links our community's experiences of violence and death to a demand for increased criminal punishment, as well as further funding for imperialist war, is a strategic mistake of significant proportion.

<http://srlp.org/fedhatecrimelaw>

Join the Discussion: Write an article or letter to the editor telling us your opinion about ways to stop hate violence.

Standing at the Intersections: the Legacy of Inside/Outside QTGNC Activism by People of Color

by Hearts on a Wire Member Che Gossett

"The white middle-class outlook of the earlier [homophile] groups, which thought that everything in America would be fine if people only treated homosexuals better, wasn't what we were all about...We wanted to stand with the poor, with women, with people of color, with the antiwar people, to bring the whole corrupt thing down."

-Kiyoshi Kuromiya

This article is written in response to Bro. Sandol, a straight and non-trans ally, who kindly sent a copy of Huey P. Newton's "Letter to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women's and Gay Liberation Movement," published in 1970. I recently had the honor of speaking at an event organized by Philadelphia FIGHT in memory of AIDS activist Kiyoshi Kuromiya and I'm excited to share much of the talk in this article and I hope that we can open up a dialogue about the history and future of inside/outside prison activism by queer and trans people of color in PA in particular. Thanks to Bro. Sandol, I'd like to talk in this article about Huey Newton's letter and its implications for the history of radical organizing by queer and transgender people of color, especially as it relates to the struggle against the prison industrial complex. One of the most symbolic moments of intersectional activism that occurred in Philadelphia during the 1960s-70s time period was the Peoples



Huey P. Newton

Revolutionary Convention that convened at Temple University in September of 1970. A week before the convention, Philadelphia police led by commissioner Frank Rizzo raided the offices of the Black Panther Party and publicly forced several Panthers to strip naked at gunpoint as a form of public humiliation and sexual violence, to be photographed by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. "Imagine the big Black Panthers with their pants down" Rizzo was quoted as saying.

Despite the police repression, over 10,000 people attended. Radical queer liberation organizations from across the nation, inspired by Huey P. Newton's August 21st "Letter to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women's and Gay Liberation Movement," published in the *Black Panther* newspaper, met on the Temple University campus.



Kiyoshi Kuromiya

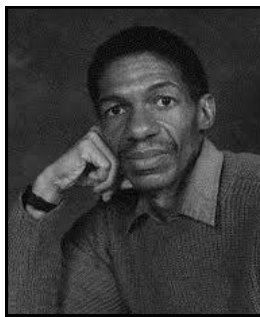
Ortez Alderson, a gay black man and leader in the Chicago Gay Liberation Front and Third World Gay Revolutionaries drafted the “Working Paper for the Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention,” which outlined a radical anti-racist and anti-homophobic philosophy. Radical activist Kiyoshi Kuromiya spoke at the “Male Homosexual Workshop.” Afeni Shakur, also in attendance, spoke at workshop run by the Radical Lesbians. Trans justice activist Sylvia Rivera participated and met with Huey P. Newton. Out of the convergence of radical leftist organizations came new political formations.



Marsha P. Johnson (left) and Sylvia Rivera (right)

Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson formed the Street Transsexual Revolutionaries (STAR), a group that would parallel the Panthers in their combination of solidarity and service. STAR provided shelter for poor and homeless LGBTQNC (lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer/questioning and gender non-conforming), communities of color, youth in particular, living in New York City. Radical organizing for queer liberation on the outside was mirrored by activism inside prisons. Following the People’s Convention Ortez Alderson was arrested on July 29th, 1970 for breaking into an Illinois draft board and was incarcerated for a year, first at Peoria County Jail for three months and then he was transferred to a prison in Ashland County, Kentucky. While imprisoned in Kentucky, Alderson and three other queer men of color attempted to form a gay liberation chapter. In a 1972

interview with *Motive Magazine*, titled “On Being Black, Gay and In Prison: There is No Humanity,” Alderson recounted his experience and activism inside:



Ortiz Alderson

“What I’m trying to relate is the experience of how it was for me as a black and as a gay man to be within the jail system of America...The confrontation came on Gay Pride Day, June 28th, because we wanted to have a Gay Day celebration in prison. The prison officials said we could not have this celebration. At this point, we got up a petition attacking the institution’s discrimination against homosexuals. Craig, Green, Davis and myself were immediately arrested by the goon squad and put in the hole.”

Despite such repression, an array of anti-homophobic organizations emerged in prisons across the nation during the 1970s and 80s. The George Jackson Brigade, formed at Walla Walla in 1977, condemned hate violence against incarcerated gays, the “Gayworld Organization” at New Jersey’s Rahway State Prison and the “Self-Help Alliance Group” (SHAG) formed at Angola in 1984. The politics of intersectionality that queer and transgender people of color forged by standing at the intersections of cross cutting movements for liberation are still relevant in the struggle against the prison industrial complex today. As Audre Lorde once stated, “we do not lead single issue lives,” instead, as queer and transgender people of color we experience the orchestrated violence of what black feminists in the Combahee River Collective described as the “simultaneity of oppressions.” The synchronized nature of oppressions that we face, on account of interlocking forms of racism, sexism, transphobia and ableism as well as criminalization demands that we continue in this legacy of inside/outside activism, that we continue our fierce and fabulous organizing, that we continue our political imagining, that we continue dreaming and envisioning alternatives.



Audre Lorde

Sources and More Information:

- Teal, Donn. (1995). *Gay Militants: How Gay Liberation Began 1969-71*. St. Martin’s Press.
- Alderson, O. (1972). "On Being Black and Gay In Prison: There is No Humanity". *Motive Magazine*.
- Kunzel, R. (2008). *Criminal Intimacy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Sheftall-Beverly Guy. (1995) *Words of Fire: an Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*. New York City, NY: The New Press.

Tell us what you think!

Write an article or letter to the editor telling us your opinion.

Trans Justice and AIDS Activism Zine!

Call for Submissions:

As a gender-non-conforming person of color, I've found that there are very few published works by and for members of my community about AIDS activism and trans justice. **Whether we're struggling for trans justice and against the stigmatization and criminalization of HIV/AIDS in non-profits, prisons, community centers, shelters, unfunded collectives, immigrant detention centers, on the street or in the clinic, we all have stories that we can share and experiences we learn from and organize around.** Through this zine, I'd like to share our resources, experiences, activism, political analysis, ways of surviving and expressing ourselves, ways we care for one another, in hopes of **making our stories more visible and supporting one another.**

I'd greatly appreciate contributions!

What is a "zine"? A zine is a collaborative "do it yourself" magazine project that uses original work. Here is an example of a individual artists pages from a transformative justice zine (www.transformativejusticezine.org):



Submissions can be any type of print media! Feel free to decorate your writing (poetry, articles and stories) with fabulous expressions of your art (collage, painting, photography and drawing)! Your submission is all about your fabulously creative artistic vision!

**Submission Guideline:
5,000 word limit**

**Deadline:
November 1, 2010
taking submissions now!**

Topics can be any of the following, or any another topic that you feel is related:

- **Trans Justice**
- **AIDS Activism**
- **The Prison Industrial Complex**
- **Criminalization of HIV/AIDS**
- **Survival and Resiliency**
- **Resisting Invisibility**

Please send submissions to:

Che Gossett
Hearts on a Wire
PO Box 36831
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Also, **please let me know what feels safe for you** in terms of how you would like to be credited (by name, anonymous, initials, alternate name, etc). The zine will be published and copies will be sent out in December 2010!

We want to hear from you!

We welcome your:

- Letters responding to this edition
- Artwork (black and white)
- Articles
- Poetry
- Ideas
- Commissary recipes
- Contribuciones en español son muy muy bienvenidos!

Send to:
Contributions
Hearts on a Wire
PO Box 36831
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Next Issue:

We are looking for **short articles from you** answering these questions:

- What are the obstacles for parole that you see in front of you?
- Do you have a Z Code? What do you think of the Z code system? Why?
- For femqueens and transwomen: What do you do to feel feminine while you're locked up?
- For butches and transmen: What do you do to feel masculine while locked up?
- For gender queer and gender variant people: how do you express your gender when it doesn't fit neatly into masculine or feminine?

If you contribute something, make sure you tell us:

1. Exactly how you want to be credited [anonymous, your legal name & ID number, the name you use, your nickname]
2. Whether it's OK to say the facility you are/were in

subscribe!

If you would like **Hearts On a Wire** mailed to you, write to:

Hearts on a Wire
PO Box 36831
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Subscriptions are **FREE** for incarcerated and detained people in any PA facility.

The Cell

Katrina Delancey

Come in and take a seat, at long last we get to meet.

I know that you are here for committing a crime, so lets you and me do some time.

I've got some things I'd like to say, I will see you change from day to day.

The thoughts you will have, the things you will feel, I will be here for your every meal.

You will feel some sadness and you will feel alone at night, you will say "I wish that I were home", make the best of the time you've got, and let's hope that it's not a lot.

One day we will part, yes, you and me, that is the day they set you free.

I'm sure you want to know my name, it hasn't changed, it's still the same. We are both together in this man made hell.

Glad to meet you, I'm your prison cell.

Hearts on a Wire
PO Box 36831
Philadelphia, PA 19107
