

# Hearts On A Wire

Issue 4 Fall 2011



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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

21 South 12th Street,  
10th Floor

Thursdays at 4pm

tokens provided  
heartsonawire@gmail.com

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# Letter from the Hearts on a Wire collective

Dear Friends,

Since our last newsletter, Hearts on a Wire has been humbled by the support that incarcerated members are offering us, the outside collective. People on the inside generously shared writing, connections, and ideas for organizing that they are interested in. Thank you to everyone who has been in touch with us.

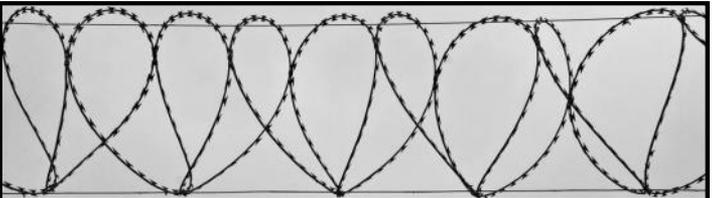
We want to let everyone know that we are excited about the new material and are doing our best to publish the things that we receive. We thought it made sense to publish at least one of the pieces we got from someone when we received their writing. For those who sent us more than one piece of writing, we plan to publish more of those in our upcoming issues. If you think there is a better way to organize the material we receive, please write to us and tell us what you think makes sense for the issues.

The group is really excited about some of the ideas for community organizing on the inside that we have received. Please keep sending us your thoughts and goals for Hearts on a Wire! We want to support your ideas for change in any way we can.

We look forward to hearing from you.

In solidarity,

*Hearts on a Wire*



# Commissary Campaign

by Miley S.G. @ SCI Fayette

I would like to put it out there to all us transgenders in the PA state prisons to ask the PA D.O.C. to allow us to purchase women's cosmetics in the male institutions commissary. I am hoping to successfully do this without a grievance procedure process. So all of us girls out there in PA State Prisons, ask your institutions if it is possible to ask the commissary vendors to receive such items in our commissary order sheets for us to have.

If you all out there are interested in helping for this cause, please write to:

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections  
Commissary Manager Department  
P.O. Box 598  
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0598

Thank you for supporting one another in this situation.



## Follow up:

Follow up: Miley wrote a letter to the Commissary Manager Department about this issue. She shared their response:

 **pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

**MEMO**

**TO:** [REDACTED]  
SCI-Fayette

**FROM:** Steven R. Glunt, Superintendent

**DATE:** September 27, 2011

**RE:** Commissary Items

You recently submitted correspondence addressed to DOC Commissary Dept./Manager(s) regarding permission to purchase female bath powder, women's deodorant, and a woman's razor. The request has been referred to me, as Chairman of the DOC Commissary Committee, for response.

I have reviewed your request. Your request is not permitted per policy. There are security concerns providing such items to a male population.

SRG:mlb

c: Superintendent Coleman  
Correspondence #2011-C09-000000153  
DC-15  
File

**Dee Dee**  
*Black Diamond*  
*SCI Greene*

They took me out the jungle, no longer in the (SCI) forest.  
Got me walking around here feeling like a tourist.

These pastures ain't (SCI) Greene.  
This place is a nightmare just a horrible scene,  
I'm missing my Queen!

She was my air when I can't breathe, my eyes when I can't see  
She was that pole I needed to keep me strong standing on my damn feet!

Now we're miles apart, I feel in love with this boy, now missing him is breaking my heart  
But I hold on to our memories, those sweet juicy lips and those feelings that she's given me.

Love trust honesty, my 3 will never leave.  
I was a lonely soul before you came to me, now it's so clear you were meant for me!

The sacrifices I made, made me lots of enemies, but f\*ck them dudes, you're the only friend I need! Black Diamond is forever and all our haters can rest in peace!

You are the first for me, you opened my mind, heart and eyes and now I see. The heart don't discriminate, we'll be together soon baby... Trust and believe

# all about testosterone



## what is testosterone?

testosterone is the hormone responsible for the development of male secondary sex characteristics. In transmale communities, testosterone is sometimes called T, and taking it is sometimes called Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), or medical transition. Testosterone comes in patch, injection (shot), gel, and cream forms.

oral testosterone is not effective for masculinizing and brings risk of side effects to dangerous levels. Do not use T pills.

## a note about steroids:

Some trans guys take steroids (sometimes called estrogen blockers, pro-hormones, HGH, or winnies) to alter their bodies, with mixed results. These products do not all have masculinizing effects and many come with serious side effects. If you use steroids, do your research carefully. Do not rely solely on information from the seller.

## smart decisions about black/grey market hormones:

- whether its from the internet or an underground provider, go to a source whose reputation is known among your friends
- sharing needles puts you at risk for HIV and Hep C transmission/infection
- if you are sharing a vial and “double dipping,” there is a risk of HIV and Hep C transmission/infection
- if you go to someone for an injection, if you don't SEE the needle come out of the package there is risk
- unlike estrogen, testosterone is a Class C substance, like cocaine: the purchase, possession, and distribution of T carries stiff sentences



## hormones from a doctor

There are **no regulations** or laws about whether a doctor can prescribe hormones; it's up to the doctor – a free market. You may have heard about doctors requiring patients to have years of psychotherapy before they will provide hormones. **They do not have to do this!**

The current standard of care in LGBT health centers and progressive doctors is **informed consent** which means people are prescribed hormones as long as they fully understand what the hormones will do.

## advantages of going to a doctor:

- you know for sure what you are getting
- hormones by prescription are cheaper than those available on the black/grey market even if you have to pay cash.
- rarely, insurance will pay for prescribed hormones. Ask your doctor (or your employer if insurance is through employer).
- if a doctor is overseeing your medical transition, they will periodically run blood tests:
  - testosterone levels: to see if your dose is right
  - liver function: to check for side effects
- if you take any prescribed medication it may interact with T. You should talk to your doctor about this.
- if you get locked up, prisons are more likely to maintain you on hormones if they are prescribed by a doctor.

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

**How much is too much?** Everyone's body and genetic makeup is different. The right dose for someone else might not be right for you. It might be tempting to take more

than recommended. Taking more testosterone than your body can process increases the risk of side effects & is a waste of money: it will not speed up transition; in fact excess testosterone may be converted into estrogen & actually slow medical transition.

## what you can expect if you start T

### hair

- beard & mustache growth
- loss at temples & crown, possibly becoming completely bald
- increased hair growth on arms, legs, back, abdomen, butt
- hair changes may take several years, & genetics are the best indicator of both hair loss & hair growth



### voice

- vocal chords thicken, usually with a deepening of vocal range

### body

- gradual redistribution of body fat; fat moves from thighs, buttocks & chest to stomach
  - loss of layer of fat right under the skin makes muscles more visible
  - muscle development (especially in upper body)
  - changes in fat & muscle will reverse if T is stopped
- some guys experience changes in metabolism & the way hunger is experienced



### skin

- acne (especially in the first few years on T)
- increased sweat & changes in body odor
- prominence of veins & coarser skin
- some guys go through a “puffy” or “baby fat” phase
- skin changes will reverse if testosterone is stopped

drinking plenty of water can help reduce acne

### emotion

- some trans men report emotional effects such as increased aggression & inability to cry
- many trans men report a feeling of well-being, & increased energy
- emotional changes will reverse if T is stopped



### sex & genitals

- menstruation ceases for most guys on T. menses will return if T is stopped.
- a permanent enlargement of the clitoris occurs
- most trans men report an increase in sex drive upon starting T & a change in the way orgasm feels
- some trans men experience shifts in their sexual orientation (it is unclear if this is related to hormones or other factors)

note: it may still be possible to get pregnant. T is not reliable birth control

### side effects

- increased risk of polycystic ovary syndrome from long term testosterone use
- high blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease may be increased by T
- liver function is affected
- possible increased risk of bone density loss (osteoporosis)

risks associated with testosterone are greatly reduced by quitting smoking

take a daily calcium supplement to reduce bone loss risk

## what T won't do

- T will not make you taller
- T will not make your breasts disappear
- T will not grow you a typical penis or testicles

this information is reprinted from a pamphlet created by Adrian Lowe for the Trans-health Information Project.

### Philadelphia Resources:

#### Trans-health Information Project (TIP)

21 South 12th Street, 10th floor  
offers free classes for trans and gender variant people on hormones and self-injection, as well as a Resource Specialist

#### Mazzoni Center Family and Community Medicine

809 Locust Street  
LGBT Health Center where providers prescribe hormones based on informed consent

#### Jonathan Lax Center

1233 Locust St  
HIV Care Clinic where providers prescribe hormones based on informed consent

# Partner Violence: My Experience

Anonymous @ SCI Dallas

Being at a State Prison for the first time with over 2000 men was quite overwhelming. State prison is no different than a bar, a meat market but more meat to choose from. I was naïve about the games inmates play on someone like me. My vulnerability opened me to a lot of sexual predators who preyed on me to get a piece of ass when I thought they genuinely wanted to know me. It also opened a lot of doors to verbal and physical abuse not to mention a few one night flings. I've had 3 unsuccessful relationships that were contaminated with manipulations, lies, betrayal and dishonesty. I didn't want to be alone because I would have to feel my feelings. I would stay in those relationships at all costs just to feel something other than pain but those toxic relationships brought me nothing but pain. I would cry over these parasites because I thought I needed them in order to be happy and survive in a place like this. The more I cried the more abuse and neglect I would receive from them.

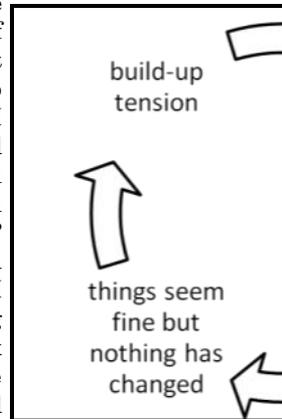
At the time I met J., he was with his partner who was maxing out. I had observed both of them and their relationship was no different than the ones I had been in. I remember saying to myself I would never be with J., he's immature and abusive. The more I observed J. and his partner the more disgusted I had felt toward him for he played a lot of head games and his partner would be seen crying. I had identified with the pain his lover was going through.

Fast forward 4 months and I was in the RHU and so was J. No one wanted to cell up with him because he was gay and no one really liked him and what drew me to him was feeling sorry for him because I too had inmates who didn't want to cell up with me. So I asked the LT to cell me up with him.

Cellmates now, we started to talk. We had so much in common as if we were twins. We would take showers in the cell and he would wash my back, I would wash his. He would massage me, wash my whites, clean the cell, give me some of his food rations, we would play games lie down together and stare into each other's eyes. He was the man of my dreams. I was finally happy and peaceful because I had found what I had been seeking someone to love me and me to love back. He was a good listener, compassionate and I loved him for that. I would watch him sleep and

see the innocence behind the veil of illusions. Next morning I'd wake up happy and content. I would hug him and kiss him all over and he would say "You love me don't you? You think we're in a relationship huh?" I said no fearing rejection. We had sex and during the course of it I had seen an evil spirit

come over him, real evil, and said to myself oh my God I have got to get away from him. Lord behold he was calling me a whore right after we got done. I didn't understand where that came from and why? Needless to say we ended up arguing and I felt worthless, full of shame, and deeply hurt by the person I had just slept with. I had gone against my better judgment and gut instincts when I should have kept my distance. Now I was feeling angry at myself because once again I had been used and abused. Then J. would be nice again and I'd give in and forgive and forget and have sex but this time he repeatedly called me a whore 'til I snapped and physically got into a fight



with him. I'd had enough and wouldn't tolerate being abused. I called the officer & requested to see the sgt to be moved out of the cell. They were pissed off because it was 20 minutes before the end of their shift. I received a fabricated misconduct.

I continued on with the relationship despite what happened telling myself it was just small fights and justifying his actions to make myself feel better about the situation. The relationship continued over the course of 16 months and so did the problems. He would lie over petty things, call me horrendous names, and accuse me of cheating on him and deliberately making trouble. I was always the one to apologize, for my mistakes AND his. I thought he would change, I thought if I could be a little bit better he may change but that never happened. I was constantly in turmoil, always trying hard to make the relationship better. He would tell me he loves me and write me letters saying all the things I would want to hear but his actions didn't equate with his words. We argued, fought physically, and were constantly in the RHU. I kept telling myself that I was done with this toxic relationship only to be lying to myself for I didn't have the courage nor strength to leave, because he had convinced me that no one would want me, and I believed his lies.

I would cry and beg God to fix the relationship, I was constantly down on my knees praying for change only to hear the same answer over and over again" Leave him he isn't for you" I would make excuses not to leave because he needs me. Staff and associates would tell me to leave him, that I deserve to be treated with love and respect but how could I expect that when I don't respect myself?

One day in August 2011 was the straw that broke the camel's back. He choked me out in the yard with 400 some inmates watching. I'll never forget the look in his eyes or the names he called me. I had abrasions on my body; my shirt was practically ripped off. I did nothing but stand there in fear of my life. He wanted me to hit him back so I would be with him

in the RHU.

Now he's in the RHU for almost 2 months and I found the courage and strength to seek help from the prison chaplain.

I was called to his misconduct hearing and asked the examiner to give him a break. I left saying to myself "what am I doing trying to rescue him?" I felt guilty because he was in the RHU without me. I blamed myself for him choking me. It's been hard to stay strong. So many times I have almost given in to an impulse to send him letters in the RHU.

I'm using this time to heal and part of healing is grieving what was lost. I had lost my dream of being with him and it's OK to cry as much as I want to and when I want. I also realized forgiveness is part of the healing process, especially forgiveness of myself. Forgiveness doesn't mean I have to be friends with him but letting him go to be who he is and accept the path that he is on and mine as well.

My advice for incarcerated people would be to develop a relationship with yourself and find people who support your spiritual growth. I can't tell you to stay out of relationships for that's a judgment call but for me this isn't the place nor the time to find a soul mate. It's a time to regroup myself and figure out what I can do to better myself before I go back to the community. I would also say seek help wherever you can get it from. Don't agree to meet your perpetrator in private places nor even have any communication. Take responsibility for your own actions and don't give up or give in. You are worthy of being loved and respected. Being alone may be frightening to some people but it's imperative that you take time to reflect on yourself. In order to recover you must discover. Don't forget to pray if you believe in God.

# Abuse Checklist

Adapted from Anonymous @ SCI Dallas & Survivor Project

Here is a checklist you can use to help determine if you are in an abusive relationship. This list was adapted from a list developed by Anonymous at SCI Dallas, whose story appears on pages 6-7, and Survivor Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

## Does your partner...

- isolate you from your family and friends?
- grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- call you "it" or other pronouns not preferred by you?
- touch where you do not want to be touched?
- negate your personal decisions?
- force you to engage in sexual acts you don't want?
- intimidate or threaten you to gain compliance?
- sabotage your medical treatment, or coerce you into treatment you don't want?
- threaten to "out" you to others?
- demand detailed explanations of where you were and how you spent your money?
- ridicule how your body looks?
- tell you that nobody would love you?
- tell you that you are not a real man/woman?
- blame you for how they feel or act?
- tell you that nobody would believe you?
- break or hide things that are important to you?
- force you to engage in sex work, or force you not to?
- eroticize/fetishize your body against your will?

## I hurt so bad

*Juicy*

I hurt so bad  
You weren't there when  
I needed you the most  
Needed you to  
Love me

I hurt so bad  
I needed you to love me  
Needed you to be a  
Mother  
And you to be my  
Father  
You to be my Man

I hurt so bad  
You weren't there  
Weren't by my side  
Because of you  
I hurt so bad

## Do you...

- have a gut feeling that something is not right?
- feel like you are walking on eggshells, trying not to upset your partner?
- feel that you must change yourself in order to help your partner change?
- almost always do what your partner wants you to do rather than what you really want to do?
- stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you leave?
- feel like all these abuses are somehow your own fault?

**Survivor Project** does not share their postal address publically. Their website is [www.survivorproject.org](http://www.survivorproject.org)

*"It can take a long time to work out what you want.  
Even to find out who you are."*

*-Najee*

# For Anyone Going Though Something

by Ceci Ransome

(including her charming doodles)

**LOUD ANNOYING PEOPLE:** If you are surrounded by ignorance, so what? They make the world go round also--some people are on that path--you just keep your eyes on the road ahead. If you're going from New York to Florida, you don't pay attention to a map that's pointing to OHIO! You stay focused so you won't get lost. A lot of us do just that--get lost. So why are you looking sideways when you are going forward? Keep your eyes on the Road ahead, otherwise you might get lost, or crash. Someone once said, "Keep your eyes on the prize." True words spoken from someone who has arrived.



**MY WISH:** You are the product of your thoughts. You can have anything you want. Let your thoughts control your action and take you there. Some places take more time than others (that's simply the time of distance). So be patient, stay

focused--you'll get there. You don't get from New York to Rome in an hour, but your thoughts are there in a fraction of a second, your thoughts are simply your guide

**HATE:** Love them that Hate you. They are God's creation also, for they do not understand themselves, so don't let their negative energy interrupt your positive flow. Always stay positive. It pays well also--Health, wealthy, and wise. :)

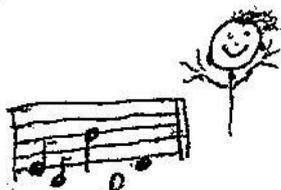
**HATEFUL PEOPLE:** If you hate them that Hate you or Act like they hate you, then you just allow them to control you, to influence your feelings. Stay in Control.

## Boyfriends

Miley S.G.

SCI Fayette

1. It is important to have a boyfriend who cooks and cleans
2. It is important to have a boyfriend with a job, who helps with the bills
3. It is important to have a boyfriend who makes you laugh
4. It is important to have a boyfriend whom you can trust and who doesn't lie to you
5. It is very important to have a boyfriend who is great in bed and who likes to be with you
6. It is very important that these five do not know each other



A True →



Full of Love for everyone...



Caring HUGS for ALL.

# Reentry Resources & Information

Compiled by Finn

Hearts on a Wire has been getting a lot of questions about reentry services for folks coming home to Philly. There's especially a lot of concern around finding trans friendly housing and accessing medical care. This isn't an exhaustive list of resources but should provide a good start for people coming home to Philly.

## Q: I'm maxing out and have nowhere to go. What's my first step?

The Institute for Community Justice has a reentry drop-in center during the week from 2-5pm Tuesday through Thursday. The drop-in can help out with immediate needs, like food, clothing, and referrals, and provide long term support for finding shelter and jobs.



ICJ  
21 S. 12th St. 7th Floor.  
215-525-0461

## Q: What if I'm HIV positive and didn't get treatment in prison, or need help continuing my care?

The Jonathan Lax Treatment Center at Philadelphia FIGHT provides HIV treatment for free. There is usually a long wait for an appointment, but if you explain that you are just getting out of prison, you can generally see someone within a week.



Lax Center  
1233 Locust St. 5th Floor.  
Phila, PA 19107  
215-985-4448

## Are there shelters in Philly that welcome gender variant individuals?

Philly's shelter situation is especially dismal for trans folks. According to the law, in Philadelphia, people have the right to be housed with "the gender they're presenting as." Since the shelter system is gender segregated, this doesn't help people who don't identify as male or female, and it doesn't keep shelters from being assholes about gender. People are still denied housing or end up in shelters that aren't safe. That's the situation right now, but by the end of this year, Philadelphia will have its first and only transitional housing for gender variant folks. The Morris Home is expected to open in November or December and will offer recovery programs, counseling, and hormone replacement therapy.



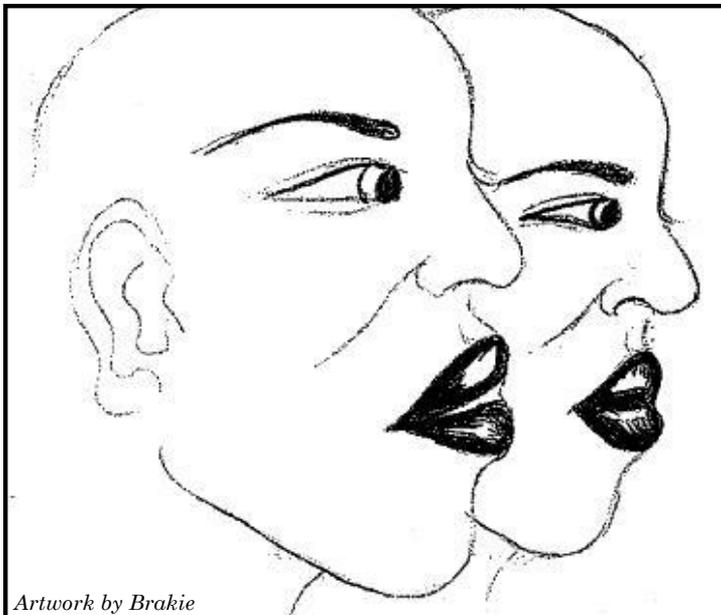
Morris Home  
215-951-0300 ext 3172  
morrishouse@rhd.org  
4700 Wissahickon Ave Suite 126  
Philadelphia, PA, 19144



As well, a lot of trans and gender variant people have gotten good services from Project H.O.M.E. Their street outreach team, which helps people find and access shelter, can be reached at 877-222-1984.

*Have a question about resources?*

*Write and ask. We'll try to get an answer for you!*



Artwork by Brakie

## trans/gender variant imprisonment in PA

Remember the survey some of us participated in a few years ago? Last summer we finally finished the report of the results!



Experiences of Trans and  
Gender Variant People in  
Pennsylvania's Prison Systems

A Report by the Hearts on a Wire  
Collective

### Mother

*Juicy*

when I was a child  
you taught me how to  
Love  
and to never give up on  
nothing  
even though some times  
it might seem hard  
you taught me how to be  
a woman  
you taught me how to  
become a man  
Mother  
you taught me how  
to go to God in prayer  
when I needed help or  
needed him  
you taught me how to  
love  
you taught me how to be  
independent  
and never want for  
nothing  
you gave me strength to  
move on  
you gave me peace to  
get by.  
you stood by my side  
when  
all my friends turned  
their back on me.  
you gave me the  
courage to keep moving  
you taught me how to  
just be myself  
no matter what people  
had to say  
Mother  
you're my everything  
you're my hope and  
strength  
Mother

We have **FREE** paper copies  
of the report available for  
people who are currently  
locked up in Pennsylvania.  
Please let us know if you  
want a **copy!!!**

The report is also available online at:  
[http://www.scribd.com/doc/56677078/  
This-is-a-Prison-Glitter-is-Not-Allowed](http://www.scribd.com/doc/56677078/This-is-a-Prison-Glitter-is-Not-Allowed)

# We want to hear from you!

This newsletter depends on your submissions for content.

## We welcome your:

- Responses to this edition
- Artwork (black and white)
- Articles
- Contribuciones en español son muy muy bienvenidos!
- We are looking for help translating articles into Spanish. If you are bilingual and would like to help with this project, please write to us!
- We are looking for a second legal correspondent on the inside. (We have one! Hi Ms. Miley!) We would send you research for you to write articles. Interested? Please write to us so we can get you started!
- Poetry
- Ideas
- Commissary recipes

## Next Issue:

- We are looking for short articles about spirituality and religion. You can respond to these questions or write anything else you think is important. Does your gender impact your experience of spirituality? Do you have a community of faith? Why or why not? Have you had positive experiences with religion? Negative?

## Thank you!!!

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, a nickname, etc.]
2. Whether it's OK to say the facility you are/were in

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

## subscribe!

If you would like **Hearts On a Wire** mailed to you, write to us and let us know. Subscriptions are **FREE** for incarcerated and detained people in any PA facility.