

# THE Word is Out

Issue 16: Summer 2016

## Welcome to issue 16 of the Word is Out! We've missed you!

Welcome new subscribers and old friends! We have lots of things for you in this (earlier than usual) newsletter.

On page 7, we've got Ryan's thoughts on the Prison Rape Elimination Act, which has been legislated since 2003. Widow is back with a bio about herself and her inspiring work on page 5. On page 6, she answers some questions about long distance love and mature men. She also responds to one member's cry for help. Just a word of caution that the topic of suicide is addressed here. Suicide is also mentioned in a news article about deaths in a detention facility in Canada on page 3. PCP sends all our love to those who are affected by this.

For the first time ever, we're writing to you as the people behind the scenes, and we've got a picture for you. Go ahead and skip to us on page 2.

As you'll notice, we didn't include our full resource list in the newsletter. This is so that we could fit more content onto 20 pages, the maximum number of sheets that some prisons will allow us to send. We're listing the newly added resources on page 19, and you can write to us for the updated resource list that includes our entire library.

This issue's topic is POWER. We asked you: what forms does power take inside prison? How do you get it? How do you lose it? When do you use it? How do you build individual power into collective power? Hope the issue helps you understand what's happening around you!

And a special thanks to the contributors of #16! Sara, Tracey, Maison, Gina, Auntie Em, Ryan, Amber, Fayefox, Nick, Shawn, Todd, Jiordi, Pieface, Pen of Passion, Cherrie Bomb, Jodi, Krysta, Benito, Ramiro. You are the greatest people to work with. Thank you for sharing.

Enjoy those Homoscopes,  
Prisoner Correspondence Project

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# Since We've Been Gone

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2016 is turning out to be quite the year for PCP! We are seeing demand from the inside grow while the community support on the outside continues to increase. We've also had the opportunity to host some really great events, make interesting additions to the resource library, and lay the groundwork for the project to build more connections between the PCP family—including having a group of increasingly dedicated volunteers in Ottawa who gather new pen pals and organize events.

In the beginning of 2016, we participated in a Radical Research Night, put on by one of our parent organizations, QPIRG-McGill. Students from Concordia and McGill universities spent the evening responding to some of the more complicated questions from you that we don't always get to answer quickly.

We've also had a number of organizational changes at the project. We hosted three interns from a class on HIV/AIDS issues at Concordia university, who volunteered with the project for 22 weeks. We also implemented a second

“boxchecking” day each week, so that collective members and volunteers can better organize and respond to the letters that we receive on a weekly basis. We also re-organized our filing system, as well as updated our resource offerings. Finally, we had the opportunity to network and build connections with Philadelphia-based Hearts on a Wire and New Zealand-based No Pride in Prisons.

Soon, we'll finish our brand spanning new website which, among other slick improvements, will allow your pen pal to access the resource library. This way, they can directly send you the resources you want, without having to go through the collective. Speaking of the collective, we've had some changes in membership - sadly saying goodbye to Estelle but saying hello to Audrée!

In Solidarity,  
*Audrée, Bruiser, Caitlin, Ek, Josh,  
Kristin, Olivia, Parker, and Sanjeevan*

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## A Note on Our Capacity

Hey Cuties!

Since our last newsletter, we've been hearing a lot from you about waiting times for pen pals and resources. We thought we'd set the record straight—as straight as homos can be! We wanted to take this chance to give you an inside view of where we're coming from, who we are, and what our capacity is, so that you know what to expect as a new or long-time member of the PCP family.

The project started 9 years ago, with a small pile of letters gathered by one of the project's founders, Liam. He and some friends began matching queers on the inside with like-minded friends on the outside. From there, the project expanded, often doubling in membership from year to year. Today, we send out our newsletter to nearly 2,000 inmates! The difficulty for us is that, while the project has consistently grown, we have continued to operate with a small collective of volunteers, ranging between 4-10 people, and a budget that only just covers our mailing costs.

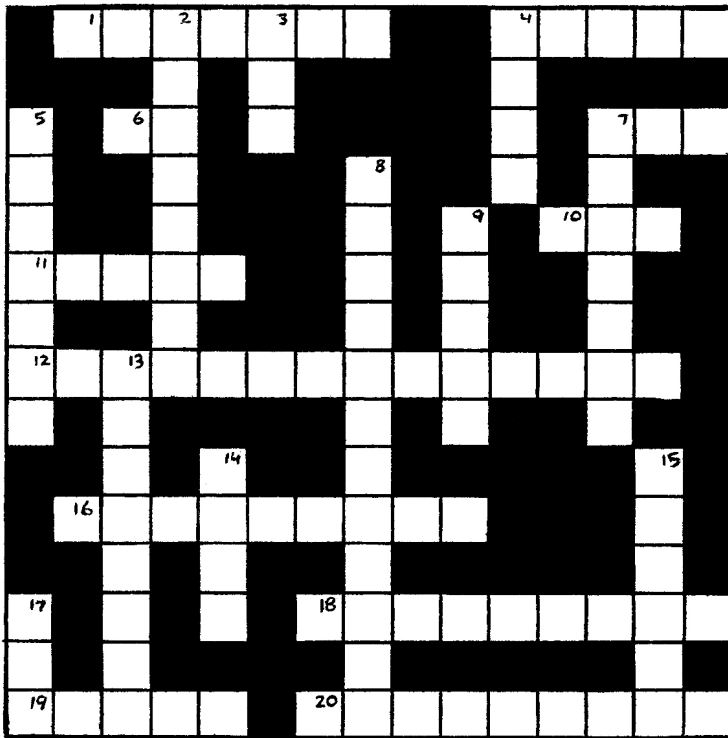
What this looks like on any given week is 2-4 collective members, with a few outside volunteers, reading through 90-120 letters, sorting, and beginning to answer them. Hearing from you is such a pleasure, but in order to give each of you the time and energy you deserve, we often fall behind every week and create a backlog of letters. Some letters are easy to answer and don't take much time, but we are currently up to 2 months behind in resource requests!

We are doing our best to catch up. To help us along, we've had to get more stringent on resources, only sending 5-6 at a time. This backlog also means that we have less time to promote the project on the outside in order to help find you a pen pal. The wait time for a pen pal is currently around 2 years, and we have over 1,000 of you still waiting.

However, don't despair, dear friends! We're only sharing this so you know that if we're not getting back to you as quickly as we used to, it's not because we don't care. We're working hard to grow our numbers and have a few outreach/fundraising events planned over the next month. All in all, we're happy to see the project evolve so much since the early days of answering a handful of letters. We're excited to continue developing with your help and patience.



# The Word is Out Crossword



## ACROSS

1. To carry the weight of; to encourage, help
4. "The community," in letters
6. Joining or involving two
7. All, comprising or uniting all
- 10 Laverne, of OITNB
11. Over, across, beyond
12. Communication by letters
16. Any group living together in the same area
18. Chart of the zodiac, with a twist
19. Fabulously different, unusual
20. Site of 1969 rebellion

## DOWN

2. Held captive
3. The first cardinal number; a single unit
4. Passionate affection
5. Fairness, no peace without it
7. An organized undertaking
8. The voice of PCP
9. A high opinion of oneself; satisfaction in something done
13. Available for use, to be drawn upon for aid
14. Erotic literature
15. A person with whom one exchanges letters
17. Common inquiries, abbreviated

SUPPORT, LGRTQ, BI, PAN, COX, TRANS, CORRESPONDENCE,  
 COMMUNITY, HOMOSCOPE, QUEER, STONEWALL, PRISONER,  
 ONE, LOVE, JUSTICE, PROJECT, THE WORD IS OUT, PRIDE,  
 RESOURCE, SMUT, PENPAL, FAQ

## Two Deaths in Canadian Immigration Detention in One week

On March 8, Melkioro Gahungu, a 64-year old Burundian refugee, committed suicide in the custody of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), in the Toronto East Detention Centre. Gahungu had been in jail without charges for at least a year at the time of his death and had been awaiting deportation to Burundi. On March 13, Francisco Javier Romero Astorga, a 39-year old Chilean immigrant died, also in CBSA custody, in Maplehurst Correctional Complex in Milton, Ontario. The circumstances of his death remain unknown despite public demands by his family for information about his death.

Gahungu and Astorga were the 13th and 14th people to die in Canadian detention since 2000, the 6th and 7th deaths in just three years. In Canada, immigration detention is indefinite.

The End Immigration Detention Network calls for an end to immigration detention, and in the shorter term, for the release of all migrants who have been in detention for more than 90 days, an end to indefinite imprisonment, an end to maximum security imprisonment, and an overhaul of the judicial review process. Actions responding to the

deaths of Gahungu and Astorga have included a vigil on March 15, a phone campaign demanding information about Astorga's death on March 24, and a demonstration on April 22 at the Liberal Party headquarters in Toronto. The fight for information about Astorga's death, for preventing more deaths in the hands of CBSA, and for an end to immigration detention will continue!

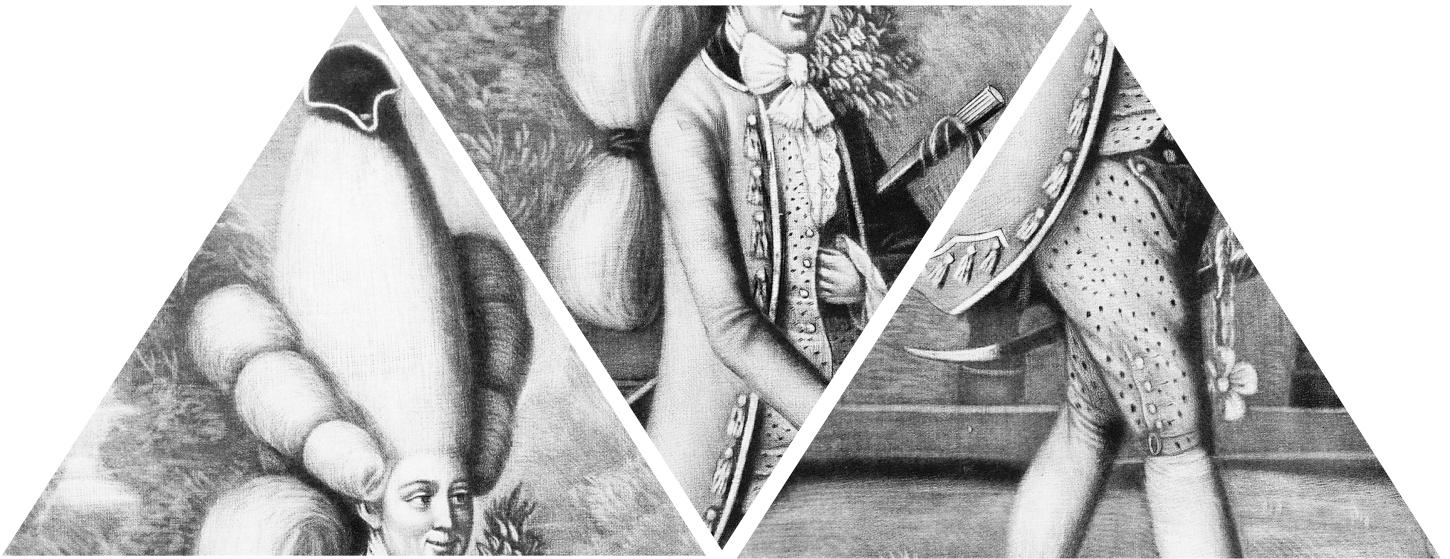
### Letter to the editor:

Do you have some feelings about what was in this latest issue of The Word is Out? Great, cuz we're now accepting your responses to publish in our next newsletter. Please keep your submissions in between 50-100 words and note that we may not fit in all you cuties!



# Eminent Homosexual Tittle-tattle

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I will retell a most telling tale that you have most certainly heard more than umpteen times 'round the royal table, as you were likely preparing to decently indulge in a feast assembled by the kitchen's most talented squire. I, myself, could never forget the first time the tragedy was relayed to me, ironic as it was, for the tale is quite a dirty one, I must profess, and the ewerer had just finished wiping the filth from my hands (soiled as they were by his very presence, an absurd conundrum indeed, as no solution exists, a Dutchess cannot wash her own hands: that would be frankly appalling).

As the rich scent of the roe-deer and pigeon pie down on the table before me began to tingle the inner hairs of my nostril, a shrill and wicked voice at the other end of the room (his majesty's no doubt) pierced my ear like a poorly crafted chime, a noise so horrid it made my kirtle jump as if lifted by the wind. It was Martes day, I remembered, and his Majesty used the Vicar's absence to gossip about our peers freely, a habit that I can't deny brought me wonderful pleasure.

"Everilda," he croaked, "have you ever heard of Prince Albert Victor, the Duke of Clarence and Avondale?" This was a very annoying and loaded question, for even the most provincial and uncultured of Barons knew who Prince Albert Victor was. Despite his majesty's insults, I had not been living down in the buttery eating frumentary for the last sixteen equinoxes, the fool. Yet, I was not unaware of his tricks, so I volunteered to play whatever sort of game he had in mind.

"Prince Albert of Victor, you say? While the name is quite splendid on my ears, I cannot say I am fully aware of this Prince, it's not in my interests to keep up with the comings and goings of whichever and whomever Royal Man you currently fancy my Lord."

"You are one to speak my dear Everilda," he mustered back at me, "everyday at Prime during Tea I cannot get but

two words in about important sovereign affairs before you begin idly speaking about Seville and Radella and ALO's and muffing and femme invisibility and this and that and who and what and all kinds of sordid blather."

"Oh, Arthur, you are such a belligerent bore and totalitarian, not to mention misogynist," I retorted, "you're lucky I even show up to tea at all these days, why must we continue to play this ongoing horrid heterosexual farce as if we were somehow together!"

Arthur tore a tasty morsel of cockett and dipped it in rabbit butter, musing for just a moment. "Everilda, this is quite serious I tell you, we have no time to bicker. Prince Albert Victor has been caught by the common folk and we must respond with rapidity."

*Caught*, I thought to myself, *caught*? I knew this could one day happen to any of us but not so soon! A cold wretched sweat began to drip down my forehead as I considered the meaning of these words.

"Yes, Everilda, Prince Albert Victor has been accused of visiting a homosexual brothel on Cleveland Street in London, and the papers suspect he is indeed queer."

"Well," I said, swallowing my fear and keeping my composure, "that is horrible news, but we all knew this type of personal scandal was bound to arise at some point. Tragic as this news is, it is one that Prince Albert Victor will have to face alone, bite his tongue, and bear the repercussions as we all swore to."

His Majesty became agitated, I could tell, and let out a deep sigh. "Everilda, this is more than just a personal scandal! You must listen closely."

"Arthur," I replied, "I know you were in love with Prince Albert Victor, but you cannot go chasing after him! It could put every single last one of us in peril and, while your heart may indeed be aching for your beloved, any rash valiant decision to save him from this scandal could ruin everything

that we have worked so hard for. Hundreds of years past, if you recall, when our ancestors ascended to power they made a scared pact to uphold the wills of Lornweld, or have you forgotten what we were born to do?"

Arthur slammed his hands down on the enormous table in fury. "I have not forgotten! Nor will I ever forget the sacred work we Royals were born to do, Everilda. My heart does indeed ache for my lover Prince Albert Victor, but I will not chase after him and risk putting any of us in danger."

"Then what is it, Arthur, what are you trying to say to me? Or are you just trying to ruin my dinner?"

"They are onto us, Everilda! They have figured it out. I read it in the journal just before the evening feast, and my I nearly fainted off my marble throne."

I gasped a gasp that cut across the room like a knife in warm sheep milk. "What do you mean, Arthur, that they have figured it out!?"

"What I mean, Everilda, is that the press is alleging that homosexuality is an aristocratic vice, and that we are attempting to convert the lower classes and the entire world into adopting our perverse sexuality and lifestyles. In other words, Everilda, they are onto us! We have been caught red-handed, and I am considering fleeing the country before my head is placed on a platter!"

I could hardly handle this news and, as tears began to stream down my face, I couldn't help but plead to our ancestors for forgiveness. The will of Lornweld, the sacred law etched in the stone of Grymathon after the battle of Hayfidge, was finally over. Queers were divinely chosen to ascend to power to propagate the queer agenda, and it was now over!! My life's work and, indeed, my will to live, came staunchly to a halt.

This story is actually almost kinda true. In July 1889, the Metropolitan Police uncovered a male brothel operated by Charles Hammond on London's Cleveland Street. Under police interrogation, the male sex workers revealed the names of their clients, who included Lord Arthur Somerset, an Extra Equerry to the Prince of Wales. At the time, all homosexual acts between men were illegal, and the clients faced social ostracism, prosecution, and, at worst, two years' imprisonment with hard labour.

The resultant Cleveland Street scandal implicated other high-ranking figures in British society, and rumours swept upper-class London about the involvement of a member of the royal family—namely Prince Albert Victor.

In December 1889 it was reported that the Prince and Princess of Wales were assailed daily with anonymous letters of the most outrageous character, bearing upon the scandal. The Prince of Wales intervened in the investigation; no client of the brothel was ever prosecuted and nothing against Albert Victor was proven.

The scandal fuelled the attitude that male homosexuality was an aristocratic vice that corrupted lower-class youths. Such perceptions were still prevalent in 1895, when the Marquess of Queensberry accused Oscar Wilde of being an active homosexual.

Little did the press know that queers have always been the lower class, and we were always, always corrupted!

## Letter from Widow:

Dear P.C.P. family,

I wanted to take the time to sit down and fully introduce myself, as many of you may be wondering who exactly 'Widow' is. You may, or may not be, familiar with my quarterly advice column "Crush and Blush"; if not, I encourage you to check it out by flipping to it in this edition.

So, my name is Sara and I am a transgender woman incarcerated in the USA in a maximum security prison for men. I am twenty-six years old and a 'mother' to two beautiful children. I am college educated, and have a passion for helping others and activism. I'm unfortunately facing a life bid, with my parole date more than 20 years away. My days are spent largely with programs, reading, and writing for my column and a collection of poetry that I am composing. I'm also currently entrenched in a legal battle with my DOCCS administration to make gender reassignment surgeries a reality for all of the inmates in my state.

I feel blessed to have been accepted so readily by the P.C.P. family, and to have the opportunity to provide advice to all of you in my column. Each and everyone of you is in the forefront of my mind when I sit down to write the column. It is your anticipation and expectant hearts that keeps me writing and meeting my deadlines.

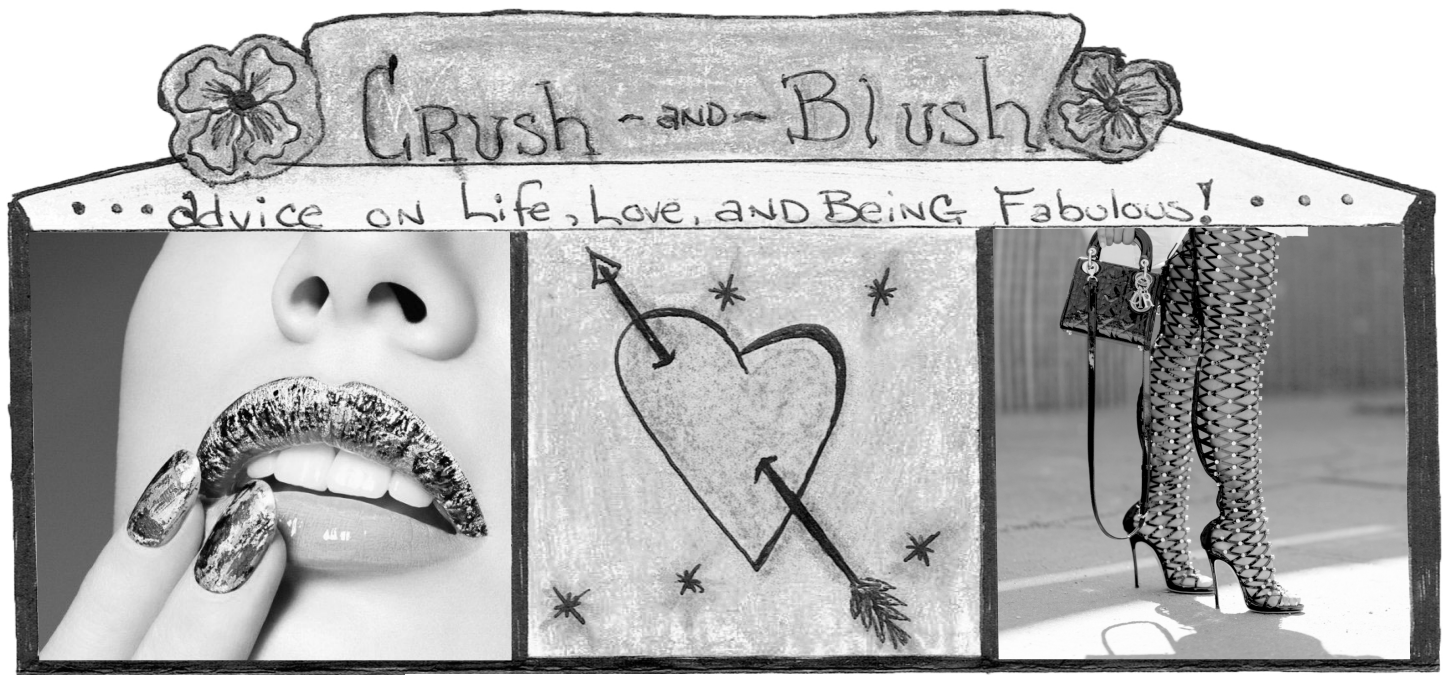
So know that piece of you in the column as you read it, and that you gave inspiration to it. Please do not hesitate to write in and ask any questions that may be on your beautiful minds.

If you have a private question or would simply like to vent, please don't hesitate to write to me as well; the P.C.P. staff will make sure that I get your letters as long as your name or nickname is in the P.C.P. database with your address. I will do my best to write you back. You're welcome to send photos and drawings as well.



WIDOW





Dear Readers,

I recently received a letter from a middle aged man in New Mexico, USA, and he expressed some very powerful emotions. There is no words for me to express how much I hurt in my head as I read his letter.

Let me make this perfectly clear. I will always be here for *all* of you, you are my brothers and sisters. Suicide is *not* the answer to your temporary problems. The person's letter is a cry for help. He does *not* want to die, and I want everyone to understand that neither he, nor you, "have" to die. If there is one thing to know is that you are *never* alone, as I am *always* here for you. All you have to do is reach out and ask for help and a shoulder to lean on.

You may easily contact me via PCP. Just address your letter to "Widow" and it'll get to me :) Please never feel like you are worthless or not worth living. All you have to do is live for one more day, and that will get you through.

I love all of you.

Love you my hatchlings,  
Widow

Dear Widow,

I've got a question. How can you deal with a long distance relationship, with your spouse not writing back. Especially when they know you love them due to your writing them with lots of love.

Charley

Dear Cheer Up Charley,

Long distance relationships are unforgiving, and hell on the heart; and that's even when both parties are committed to making it work.

It breaks my heart to hear the desperation in this question, but I have to be honest. It's probably time to move on. Distance relationships depend upon three simple tiers: love, trust, and respect. If even one of these is missing, on either side, it's going to crumble under your feet. The problem here, Charley, is that your spouse doesn't respect you enough to write back and show you the same love you show them.

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I know it's not easy to move on. Trust me, I've been in your shoes, but you need to love and respect *yourself* enough to know when enough is enough. You're chasing a ghost of your past, and until you find a way to let go, you won't be able to know how sweet real love can be from someone new.

Put *yourself* first,  
Widow

Dear Widow,

Where is the love for the mature man who is attracted to transwomen?

Divine

Dear Divine,

You truly are a divine creature, an amazingly aged "fine wine," and never let any woman (trans or not) tell you otherwise. My many kudos for you for knowing what you want and seeking it out.

As a transwoman I know this issue very well. I myself typically am attracted more to the mature man than the youngish/younger man. This is because for me I am looking (at 26 years old) for a man who is ready for a committed relationship, to settle down, and to be 100% drama/game free. My husband is 43, and is an amazing man who diligently takes care of me in every way.

The problem is that most transwomen in prison are relatively young and are still actively in the "game". They're like a kid in a candy shop, and want the best of every kind of candy available. Many see mature men as being a "stale candy bar."

What you need to remember is that if it's what you want, you have to go after it, rather than waiting for it to come to you. Also it's all in how you carry yourself my dear Divine, confidence and drama free actions will win you an admirer. So don't be frustrated or lonely, and get out on the field, and find your piece of candy!

Love,  
Widow

# Thoughts on PREA

I'd like to share some of my thoughts on PREA, since it's been talked about lately.

In some ways, PREA has given LGBT inmates a tool for legitimate protection. In my state of Florida, prison staff takes anything PREA-related super seriously, almost to a paranoid level. If you make a rape allegation, you're going straight into administrative confinement and you *will* be transferred. No longer does it all depend on how well you're able to prove anything.

On the other hand, the above is exactly why people fail to report PREA violations. The victim is treated like an offender. Because even if you don't want or need to be put in confinement, it happens anyway. And let's face it, confinement is punishment regardless of why you're in there. Since you have no job, you lose gain time. You lose lots of privileges, like phone, TV, visitation, full canteen, recreation, religious service attendance, full library access, most of your property (what they didn't confiscate or throw away), and so much more. As the victim, *you* are put in "the box" and shipped out. Meanwhile, the actual offender may or may not go to confinement and may or may not also get transferred once you're gone.

Can you imagine if things were handled like this by the police on the outside?

And of great concern is that guards seem to be attempting to apply the idea of PREA to consensual sex among inmates, in a sense using it as a weapon against us. They fail to comprehend that PREA is the Prison Rape Elimination Act, not the Prison Sex Elimination Act.

Some inmates are capitalizing on the guaranteed transfer part in cases such as having borrowed too much money or just not liking the prison they're at. A false PREA allegation meets their needs, although sadly the allegation often targets some other random inmate.

Allegations against guards are rarely ever made. In Florida, any time a prison staff member has sex, even consensual, with an inmate, it's treated like a rape and is a felony for the staff member. An inmate who alleges having had any sexual activity with a guard and demands to press charges with the state attorney's office can very well land the (former) guard in the county jail. Followed through all the way, that can put the guard in DOC themselves. So don't forget that PREA applies to prison staff as well.

Knowledge is *power*. Understand what you're dealing with in these types of situations. LGBT inmates will likely end up in some situations where PREA comes into consideration. How you handle it, and whether you report it or not, is up to you. I've personally let things go simply because I didn't want to be transferred. Prison administrators know this happens, and they are happy because it reduces their statistics. Sexual violations that aren't reported never happened.

Hope this helps someone. Let us know what's going on in YOUR prison system!

Ryan in Florida



## Fierce & Femme

For the next issue of The Word is Out, we invite the PCP family to share your experiences, stories, and feelings about being femme or feminine. Send us your art, poetry, and written thoughts. Here are some questions to get you started:

- 1) How are gender roles established in prison? How does this compare with your experience on the outside?
- 2) What are your thoughts and experiences of being femme or feminine? How did being in prison change this?
- 3) Does being feminine help you get through your day or sentence? What challenges do you face? What changes need to happen to address these issues?
- 4) What are some of your "DIY" or "do-it-yourself" tricks and tips to expressing femininity in prison?
- 5) Who are some of your femme-inspirations?

# Power

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O.M.G., when I stuff my foot in my mouth, I don't fool around, do I? I just go clear to the hip.

Hey everyone, Jordi here. First, let me express gratitude to CHRis Riley (The Word Is Out, Issue #15, Winter 2015: "The Housing Issue"), for taking me to task about what, apparently, was too harsh an article from me (The Word Is Out, Issue #14, Summer 2015: "Safety In Numbers"). Generally, I'm not so brittle. As I remember when I wrote that article, that day had been anything but stellar for me. No excuses. Just sayin'.

To you especially, "Joey" (The Word Is Out, Issue #13, Winter 2014: The "Queer Safety" Issue [I think]), to all the other "Joey's" who read that article (Issue #14) and, I hope, are reading this one: If my words hurt you, "Joey," or any of you anywhere who finds him- or herself in that place of relative warmth and comfort, cheering all of us from the sidelines, I truly apologize. Hopefully you'll forgive one really foolish mistake made by one: me; who actually came out of that same comfortable, warm place not so long ago. When I close with "All my love to you, and all my love to all of you" I really mean it.

I've also got to shout out to Michael Desmarais (The Word Is Out, Issue #15, Winter 2015: "The Housing Issue") who, despite my admittedly harsher-than-was-necessary article, nevertheless treated it as a positive nudge in his regard. To you, dearest Michael, there are many good reasons for using a pseudonym, not least of which is your own personal safety. My intent never was that you, Michael, nor anyone in our community, would feel ashamed, or hypocritical, or negated in any way due to my words. To you Michael, I also truly apologize. And yet, I am applauding you for the tack you've taken because of my article.

It might interest us all, though, that use of a proper pseudonym in the right circumstances, whether preexisting in and of themselves or springing from decisions we make on our own, can be used in ways to intercede on behalf of others in our community.

An interesting thing has happened, though, because of the harshness I displayed: it created dialogue. That dialogue brought us together: CHRis, Michael, and myself. Harshness notwithstanding, how my words are perceived by each of you makes all the difference in whether they create substantive participation, and that our discourse be more than the homogenized, fortified, regurgitation of the special-interest shows shot for mass consumption.

Since I happen to be writing for "The Power Issue," it behooves me to reiterate a truism of power: "The Pen is Mightier than the Sword." If you will just ask "Why?" you'll get some very interesting answers. How this article came about is one example.

Debt is another. Not only does the pen have power to create debt, the same pen that created the debt can discharge it. Debt is even connected to war. For example, when a country signs a treaty by which it binds itself, a commercial

interest is created. Where a country violates a treaty, a breach of contract occurs. That breach is an act of war under certain circumstances because what was once a mutual agreement is now a debt, owed by the breaching country. (One finds it ironic how the U.S. avoids this. Congress simply declares U.S. national sovereignty would be infringed by the treaty, or parts thereof, and it is, therefore not self-executing, read: the treaty issuing from the United Nations Convention On Human Rights isn't worth the paper it's printed on.)

All the forms power may take can't be summed up in a word, nor even in pithy sayings. Power is neither the hanging sword of Damocles, nor the finger hovering just above the button. It is not the cocked hammer, or the rule book and power given is just as easily taken away, as it is lost by using it when you shouldn't, or to hurt when you could just as easily have healed. And if able to build individual power into collective power, you have reach what is "consensus." Consensus is reached by knowing what to speak, when, and when you've said enough (T.M.I—too much information—can sandbag the most common consensus).

Finally, power just comes. We bid power's gracious presence by knowing what outcomes that decisions we make will have at particular points in our lives. From the time we're taught that one station in life is better than another, we begin courting that station. We begin courting power. It is our participation—he who is willing to participate. Power comes to he who is willing to sacrifice his all, for the good of all, not just himself.

All my love to you, and all my love to all of you,

Jordi,

Standing in the gap...

To me, the word "power" at first seems to belong only to the system. It has the power to investigate you, the power to charge you, the power to convict and imprison you. It is abuse of that power that sometimes puts innocent people in prison like myself, CHRis and many other readers. Maybe even *you*.

But, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that we, too, have our own power. Something that they cannot touch. Ours is the sense of community and solidarity, both with those in our own institutions who are also gay and also with other LGBTQ inmates in other prisons. What you are holding and reading is power. The power to communicate with each other is a vital way for us to lift each other's spirits and make all of us feel like we matter. Giving someone a reason to keep going and not let the legal system drag him or her down to the depths of despair is a power beyond anything those who imprisoned us can comprehend. It's love in its truest form.

We give this love just by taking the time to write what we are going through. Letting someone know they are not alone is a powerful means to help them cope. Having



people who have the same feelings for others close by makes you feel less alienated. Even if you are different from them in whether you are masculine or feminine, top or submissive, just having another who loves their own gender and is proud of it makes you feel less lonely. And the ability to put down in pen how much I care about my fellow LGBTQ inmates around the world is very empowering. I feel like I am giving you all a piece of my love, and inviting you into the safety of my heart, to give you the strength to carry on.

That is power. And I hope that sharing with you gives you a sense of the word you've not experienced before!

With much love,  
Todd in FL

Power while in prison, to me, was it being taken from me or having given up, but realizing that I can regain it as an individual. I hold it by respecting myself first, then others. By gaining understanding of myself and others, I grow in power. I do not do drugs or alcohol, which gives me power, my control over it. My sexuality inside and out is one way I share my power with others. I gain knowledge and wisdom, and educate myself, giving me greater power. Sometimes, by pouring myself out, I gain power. So I've found to gain and then to give it away, as much as possible, brings me joy, happiness, and more power, Freedom.

"Sincere"  
Nick E Lythe

Power is the theme for this issue, as we all know. I have never wrote a submission before, so please bare with me.

When I was younger, I thought money was power. If you didn't have it, nobody would respect you or truly love you. So I strived to make money anyway I could, from stealing to robbery. I didn't care how. I got it and, as long as I was getting it, nothing else mattered to me. I ended up destroying connections with anyone who was close to me—some in violent ways that I still regret to this day. But, at the time, I didn't care. I thought, with all the power I had, I could just get new friends and family, and I did. The problem was, they weren't really loving me. They were loving the money. When that ran out, they were gone too.

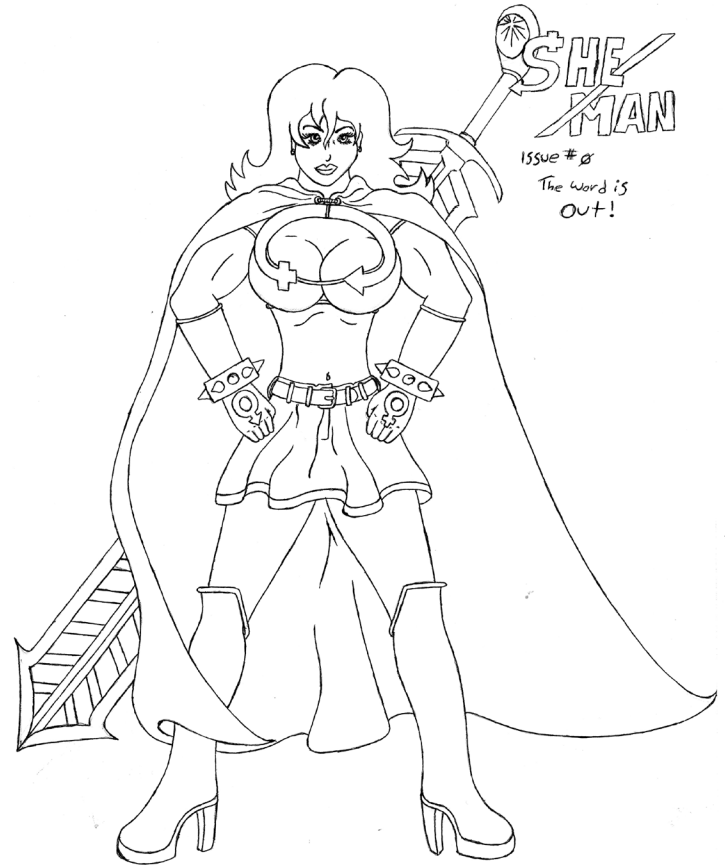
Even when I found myself broke and alone, trying to beg family to forgive me, I still held in my heart that money equaled power. With the money I got from my family, I bought myself the tools that led me to the prison cell I sit now writing this. I've noticed now that I'm able to slow down, and think that money ain't power, not for real anyway.

Real power comes from love. With it, you can change the world, brighten someone's life or just someone you care about. It will just keep building up until it's not just you with power, but the ones you love also. Love is power, but the ones you love also. Love is what keeps people together for years. We all have felt love one way or another.

Sitting here writing this, I can remember the first guy I ever fell in love with, and how scared I was that my dad was gonna find out. However, after Dylan told me he loved me too, I didn't care if my dad did. Dylan's proclaim of love was a promise to me, no matter what my dad thought or did.

I told my dad, to his face, that I liked men just as much as I did girls. He ended up beating my ass while calling me a faggot. But Dylan was there at my side to play nurse, so it worked out sorta. So that's what I think power is: a four letter word called LOVE.

In love and solidarity,  
Forever yours,  
Maison



For the most part, prisoners lose all power, real or imagined, the moment the sally port gates close behind their transport. Guards run around screaming and shouting senseless orders, not because the tasks are necessary, but because protocol demands that we be broken as quickly as possible, while at the same time showing us that, regardless of what we may have been told, they're the ones running the show.

Our every move is dictated to us by an unfeeling collective dedicated to supporting even the dumbest decision made by one of their own, especially if it involves a need to respond violently. We're told what to wear and how to wear it, when we can eat and what we can eat, even when to use the bathroom and how much privacy we're afforded while using it.

For most of us, once the initial shock wears off, we respond by trying to acquire whatever power we possibly can, and in the process of doing so, our humanity. While some are able to acquire a measure of power during their time spent in processing, for the most part we exit the reception centers and head towards our final destination with little to no real power whatsoever.

Power is subjective, at best. The very thing which makes us appear powerful in one situation or set of circumstances may, in another, make us appear weak or vulnerable, powerless. For instance, if you lived miles away from the nearest body of water and your only mode of transportation was a canoe, then your neighbor, who has a driveway full of vehicles to choose from, would look pretty powerful indeed. But take that same situation and add a flood to the equation, and all of a sudden the balance of power shifts. With all of his vehicles submerged, you, and your canoe, are now perceived as powerful.

In prison, though, this subjectivity is even more intense, albeit incomprehensible. Knowing nothing more about each other beyond the committing offense(s), if that, a new power structure evolved, a hierarchy based on the heinousness of our offenses. Contrary to what Law and Order: Special Victims Unit would have you believe, sexually based offenses, while looked down upon, are not the most heinous offense in prison. That distinction goes to murderers, and the more violent the murder, the more power that person is perceived as having. As power is subjective, it becomes necessary to continually demonstrate both the willingness, and capability, to act in a manner consistent with how this position of power was achieved in the first place, which usually involves repeated acts of violence.

Fortunately, there's another more effective way of obtaining power that doesn't involve the use or threat to use violence. I refer to knowledge, because "knowledge is power." Even the weakest individual is perceived as having power when (s)he possesses important knowledge that others don't and need. "Knowledge is power," and nowhere is this more apparent than a courtroom, where even the most powerful criminal turns to his attorney for help avoiding punishment.

More often than not, power obtained through the use of violence dissipates exponentially as it's shared, but power obtained through the acquisition of knowledge has the reverse effect. For starters, sharing knowledge places you in a teaching position—which, by its very nature, places you in a position of power over your student, which is why even adult administrators are forbidden from engaging in relationships with their students. At the same time, there are many situations in which knowledge possessed and employed by numerous people operates more effectively than knowledge possessed and employed by an individual. This is why unions are so effective, why protests don't succeed if they don't involve large groups of people, and why class action lawsuits stand a better chance of success.

This concept is no less effective in prison, but sadly, the inmates who do have the knowledge usually don't like sharing it, for fear that doing so diminishes their perceived level of power. Because of this, there are fewer people with the knowledge required to challenge the system's ongoing elimination of prisoners' rights—hence the importance of sharing your knowledge, thereby increasing your power and, more importantly, the power of your position.

Some people argue that it doesn't matter one way or the other how you achieve power, especially in a prison setting, so long as you do. However, this argument fails to take into account the consequences, good and bad, of

the methods employed to obtain that power. For example, power obtained through the use of violence not only means restrictions against the offender; it also means increased restrictions directed towards people who weren't even involved, as officials strive to stop future acts of violence. Power obtained through the acquisition of knowledge also possesses the ability to employ it responsibly, in a manner that promotes achieving their goal without a loss of life, rights, or privileges.

They say that "hindsight is 20/20," but hindsight, by its very nature, means that damage has already been done. By the time we look back, we've already violated the rights of more people than we can count and, in the process of doing so, we've become a slave to the power we sought, instead of the other way around. Some of us are fortunate enough to learn this lesson before it's too late. For others, we die full of regrets, unable to control the monster we've become.

*Shawn L. Perrot*

People often speak of different kinds of power: Physical, Mental, Sexual, Financial. . .

I say they may be different in form and execution but, in fact, they are the same in essence. They are all just a means to an end for accomplishing our goals. Granted, some forms of are more suited to certain tasks.

Me? I'm 5'9, 120, girly-girl. Moving a 300lb weight does not play to my type of power. On the other hand, convincing a super muscled beefcake to move it for me, with nothing more than a joke and a smile, does. Either way, the goal of moving the weight is accomplished.

The illusionary distinction between different forms of power becomes more apparent when we consider the foundation of personal power:

- Awareness of a choice
- Ability to carry out a choice
- Will to act once a choice is made

Regardless of what form of power plays to your natural strengths, or what form of power you choose to develop, awareness, ability, and will are the tripod on which it rests.

Let's pretend, for a moment, that you want to become a top ranked M.M.A. fighter. First is awareness of choice. Do you know how to eat healthy and exercise? Have you found out how to sign up for a local fighting league? Are you aware of what your options are?

Second is the ability to carry out your choice. Are you naturally well muscled, or do you need to spend a lot of time at the gym? Have you studied kung-fu (or whatever)? Have you gathered the supplies and developed the skills needed to accomplish your goal?

Third, do you have the will to act once you've made your choice? Are you willing to spend 3-6 hours a day in the gym and do-jo training? Can you physically hurt someone you're not angry at? Can you take a hit and not freak out? Do you have the mental fortitude to make the necessary sacrifices?

We can always increase our own power by becoming aware of our choice, developing the skills to make those

choice into real options, and strengthening our will so we may carry out those choices.

From sex to high finance, the formula is the same. Once we understand the foundation of power and have decided how we wish to empower ourselves, the question becomes what are we willing to invest to do so. Time? Energy? Money? And for ye future Faust's immortal soul and first born child? Just like any other investment, you gotta have money to make money. Thankfully, with the smallest amount you can do great things.

With the power of good study habits, you can gain the power of an education. With an artistic eye you can gain great fashion sense and style. There is no counting the number of people who have become rich, famous, or, at the very least, awesome with nothing more than self confidence and stubbornness.

So how do we develop power individually or as a group? The first step is recognizing what power we already have.

Glitter-bombs, blessings, and sisterhood!  
*Amber Fayefox*

Many of us underestimate ourselves and the power we possess as members of the LGBT Community. As a transgender, I am often reminded that no matter what environment I find myself in, whether it be prison or any other kind, I will not allow it to force me to submit to their ways or structure. My power is full of solid strength and, with that, I clench my fist in the air with my head held high and face my daily struggles head on. I have been incarcerated for almost 13 years, with many more to come, and I have seen many bad days. I have also seen many good days, because of my refusal to allow any hostile negativity affect me. I am humble in my ways, yet I am cautious. When the situation calls for it, I can definitely become a diva and stand my own ground.

That power there is what has gotten me this far. Early on in my incarceration, I remember a time when I was tested, and doubted whether I could survive this prison experience.

Many years back, a few cowards had been concocting a plan to corner me in the back area of the run, where it was not only dark, but also very hard for any officer to see. The thing was, they were attempting to plot to rape me. My cellie, who was a good person and never had any intention to fool around with a girl like my kind, caught wind of what these cowards were planning at breakfast, and was able to get a hold of some protection. He told me, "Listen Gina, you are a good person and these cowards are planning to rape you, and because you bother no one and treat everyone with respect, I am going to help you stand up to those cowards."

Sure enough, when we came back from breakfast, there they were, idling by our cell. When we approached them, it seemed weird, but my cellie and I pulled out our protection and demanded that if they did not leave, we wouldn't hesitate to use them. Of course I was scared as hell, but it was important for me to stand my ground and show them no fear, despite how I was feeling inside. They

were totally not expecting such a reaction, and it left them dumbfounded. Because of this, they decided to leave like cowards, with their tails between their legs.

That day, I learned 2 very important things: #1 good people do exist, even if they do not agree with my lifestyle and #2 a girl has a tremendous amount of power and, sometimes, us beautiful beings underestimate the strength of the power we possess, especially when it matters most. Thanks to my first cellie, I was able to see that power manifest before my own eyes.

Sadly, our LGBT family in prison are easily targeted because of this misconception that, because we love dick or take dick up our ass, we are less than human and therefore deserve to be victimized by any coward with a hard dick looking to rape us. When we stand up with the same hostility that they attempt to use to make us submit to them, they become dumbfounded and scared and simply retreat.

There will always be a jack ass dumb enough to try that mess on a girl. I encourage my sisters to respond, if there are ways to take a stand for yourself. Do not allow yourself to become a victim because of who you are. Take a stand!!! If you have to do what Ms. Brittany did and threaten to scream PREA, do not be ashamed to do so. I rather my sisters be safe than to be victims of an ignorant idiot.

*Gina*

Well boys and girls, here where I am. Power is nothing more than Honor, Respect, and Loyalty. Power is gained by your words, "When you give it, you keep it." By doing this and showing honor, respect, and loyalty.

Give an ear when needed, give advice when asked for and, in doing so, you gain the "Power of Asked For." In doing so, you give the "Power of Respect and Honor." You have given an ear, a shoulder, and some advice, without using it for your own influence or sell it for favor.

Power comes in many forms, and is easily earned. If done right, it doesn't have to be used. Loyalty is a type of power gained by standing up for your beliefs and for your own (Brothers and Sisters), as well as for yourself. No matter if you have to stand alone or in a group, whether it be for religious beliefs or your rights and identity as GLBT, or for those things for others, whether they are the same as yours or not. Every person has the same rights as you.

Because of these simple things, you are a force to be reckoned with. People know that you have information, that was freely given and not asked for, about themselves. That gives you the "Power of Fear," which should only be used in extreme situations, as it may get you labeled as a sell-out or unconfidential.

*Auntie Em*



My cellie has a subscription to Harper's Magazine and recently I read an essay concerning the definition and joys of "frottage"—which, the author instructed, is pronounced like "cottage". My memory is usually a stew of subtle reflections rather than clear recollections but, as I read, the stew was stirred and suddenly there arose a steaming memory of him.

I remember him standing on the top floor staircase landing in the music building. We were college freshmen and he was beautiful. He had light brown skin, dark eyes, curly hair, and was the sexiest human being I had encountered in my eighteen years of alienation. I don't think I intentionally forgot him; he was too beautiful and it felt too good to be with him. Now that I am locked away behind razor wire, he is probably even more attractive, his touch more profoundly erotic, when seen from life's distance.

At first I did not remember where we met. In 1978 I was a band and choir geek, attending an agricultural college that happened to have a good music program, and I was still learning about cruising. Gays of a "certain generation" remember when cruising demanded commitment, because it required travel. Cruising was more than a swipe of a phone or the click of a mouse. You had to get up, leave where you were, travel physically to another place and make decisions. The front or back trail at the park, or maybe the bowling alley. There was an antique shop in town that had a magazine rack discreetly located in the back. Rural Arkansas didn't tolerate gay bars.

Up from my memory soup floated the campus library, where the artsy queers hooked up with the jocks. The aisles of philosophy and medieval studies across from the restroom were very popular at certain times of the day. We met at the library and, because I was a music student, we ended up in a practice room in the music building. Much of what life is all about was practiced in those small rooms on the top floor. Sometimes that even included music.

I remember the frottage with which we started, our bodies rubbing together, kissing, touching. I remember the weight of him, every inch of in in contact with every inch of me from our feet, to our cocks, to our lips pressed together. We groped, rubbed, and explored till we both came, and then held each other tighter as the warmth spread between us.

That memory crossed an ocean of indifferent touches and a desert of empty sex to make my heart race thirty seven year later. I am sure I did not know the word for the act. I was more experienced than he, but I still had much to learn about both words and life. Then, when the eighties and nineties came, I learned about death. But at the innocent end of the seventies, if you had asked me for a definition I am sure I would have said fun, wonderful, and right. Completely right. Soon, we had graduated from frottage to other words: fellatio, analingus, and intercourse.

Why did I continue through the years to remember superficial experiences and less relevant men, yet forget

him? Perhaps I elevate his importance because I am in prison and feel the press of time and bottomless solitude. A loneliness not unlike that of the closet I hid in for so long.

My wrong thinking and actions brought me to prison, where I have chosen to live my personal truth in a system that denies the legitimacy of my sexuality. I sit behind the wall and watch the positive changes that are happening for gay people. At a time when gays are encouraged by much of western society to live openly and freely, I live in an environment that actively encourages retreat into that closet from which I finally broke free.

As American society's view of sexuality matures, the correctional system regresses into disingenuous word games such as the Prison Rape Elimination Act, policies and "procedures" meant to paper over the marginalization, verbal and physical abuse of LGBTQ people. I am faced daily with this culture of ignorance, and have learned to carry myself in such a way as to assert my personal worth in the face of those who would deny my dignity. Prison is doubly frustrating: it encourages the deception I practiced for much of my life and, now, because I refuse to participate in that subterfuge, I am open to being ostracized and even criminalized further. It may have been fatigue from the daily fight against hopelessness, or simply the desire to remember some better time, that made me think of him.

He was standing on the stairwell landing. He had stopped there and I had stopped a few steps below him. We had just come from one of those sweet times together in a practice room. We had spent time talking, but not much else. We were both scared, and still searching. I was afraid of my parents, who had begun to suspect that something might be wrong with their son, and had made it clear that what I might be was completely unacceptable. We had talked enough that I knew his fears were similar to my own. We stood there looking at each other, and he suddenly asked me if I would go to Little Rock with him for the weekend. We could get a motel room and be together.

I had been with other men, but had never had a real boyfriend. It was, after all, not something done at that time in that place, at least as far as I knew. I was still trying to get accustomed to dating girls, which I had tried to do since I was a sophomore in high school, since I figured that was what I was supposed to do. That moment on the landing is the strongest memory I have of him.

I remember my hesitation and my answer. I said no. I am sure I made up some lame excuse. The rules I lived by said I couldn't be what I was, or do what he was asking me to do. I was the good son, the boy who followed the rules, the mamas boy, the boy who never got in trouble or did anything that could be embarrassing to my family. I knew my place. I liked pleasing people and being exactly what I thought everyone expected me to be. It was a disastrous way to live. That thinking led me to spend a great portion of a duplicit life trying to self destruct, and I finally succeeded.



At that time in other places, there were people my age who had the courage to live honestly, people who were stronger than I. In 1978 on the staircase landing, I was a coward.

Like many incarcerated people, prison life has driven me to self-examination. I have had to stir the memory stew. Remorse, regret, anger at myself, anger at the world and this system have come to the surface. I have run a gauntlet of emotions that has put a lock in a sock and beat the shit out of my mind. Now, finally, with my ego bruised and bleeding, I am getting closer to being able to embrace the two forces that comprise the universal law of love: faith and forgiveness. It has not been an easy journey and, after almost eight years, it is only a little more than half over. I have tried to understand not only my mistakes, but also my strengths and my fears.

In the Symposium, the philosopher Plato tells a story about soul mates. All the souls that will ever exist were created in the beginning: male, female, and a third sex which was both male and female. After creation, each soul was divided in two. The story goes that each of us, lifetime after lifetime, is trying to find that other half of ourselves. For those that are straight, the other half is the opposite sex. For

those of us lucky enough to be gay, our other half is someone who has the same kind of parts but, more importantly, the same kind of mind.

In my search for understanding, I have learned that I am no longer afraid of what other people think. I am not scared of myself, or life, or being locked up, or even death. Yet it seems I still search for something to be afraid of. It is as though I need to feel scared just to feel normal, because I was scared for so long. What if it was him? Was that moment our miss for this life? Maybe it was not him. After all, I forgot. But then I remembered.

The Roman philosopher Seneca said, "Certain moments are torn from us, some are gently removed, and other glide beyond our reach." Whatever caused that memory to slip away, I found him again waiting patiently to be rediscovered in my mind, and that gives me hope. I do not know what my future holds, but I know this: I have known the possibility of love, and I will find it again. I have seen that promise at the top of the stairs. I know I don't have to be afraid, because I remember him.

*Tracy Meadows*

# Homoscopes

## Aries

As the new moon moves into Taurus, you now have the power to make choices more clearly and have a stronger sense of what you want. Maybe you are truly just sick of your friends fawning over you. Maybe you really just hate all celebrities except for Beyoncé. Maybe you dislike cats. And that's ok! The astrological forces are entitling you to your opinion and supporting you in feeling okay with what you feel. So get out there and tell us what you like, because we like you and we want to know all about you. For serious.



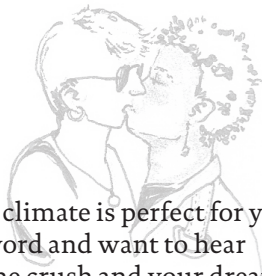
## Taurus

Taurus! This is your time. You are being urged to unglue your feet from your routine and mix it up a little bit. Maybe switch up your joke repertoire, your reading list, your playlist, your top 5 friends. Perhaps it would help to think about the things that never get the benefit of your interest and give those things a little tender love and care. Even if it doesn't make waves in your slow and steady path, it would benefit all of us who aren't presently on your radar to get to see a little more of your shining self.



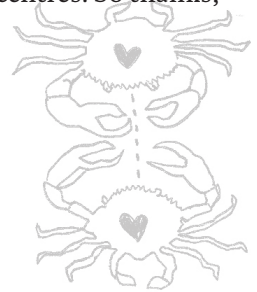
## Gemini

Gemini, this astrological climate is perfect for you. We already hang off your every word and want to hear everything about your number one crush and your dream job. Now is the time to put these stories out as far as they will spread. Tell us all the tales we love to hear, because seeing ourselves reflected back in your twin star fictions is just what we are all yearning for right now. The more you can share your experience—aloud, in writing, in all the ways you can spin them—the happier all us homos will be. More please.



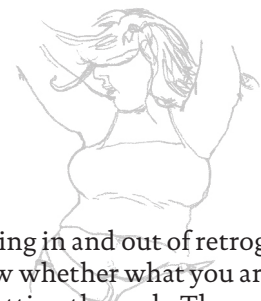
## Leo

Leo, your birthday is coming up and this year, I want you to stop thinking about all the projects you wish you could pull off and, instead, make a list of everything you have already managed to do. You are wonderful. You are luminous. You are a lucky charm in my pocket that I think about when I wish I had extra energy and a little more zip. While you may be hard on yourself for not setting loftier goals, you could be proud of yourself for being such a star to the rest of us. Also, you have wonderful hands. Yum.



## Cancer

Cancer, you are more solid than you even know. While you might feel a little out of sorts, like a stumbling show pony after too much whisky, or a melted pile of chocolate ice cream sandwiches on a picnic blanket that puppydog lovers are rolling around on instead of tending to, you are actually someone sturdy that a lot of people really rely on all the time. You are beautiful and winning and your face glows when you smile and, without you around, a lot of us would lose our centres. So thanks, Cancer. Keep it up.

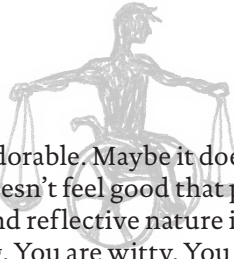


## Virgo

With Mercury spinning in and out of retrograde, as it tends to, it's hard to know whether what you are trying to communicate is actually getting through. The sweet nothings you whispered in a lover's earlobe; the direct statement of frustration you thought you made clearly; the subtle moan that should be a straightforward indication of just how you feel—all of this might be lost for a while, or at least misinterpreted. I would, in this astrological moment, advise repeating yourself: if not to make sure your sentiments are being acknowledged, then at least to double the pleasure of all those who are listening. Tell us again, Virgo, we really do want to know.

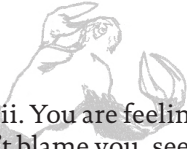


## Libra



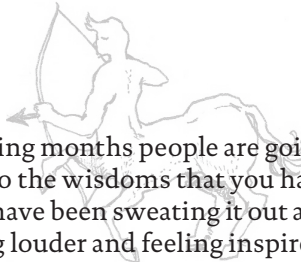
Libra, you are being adorable. Maybe it doesn't feel good to be teased. Maybe it doesn't feel good that people think that your seriousness and reflective nature is "cute." But you are. You are charming. You are witty. You are full of beans. Jupiter might be the cause of all your baby-in-a-flowerpot kittens-in-knit-sweaters attitude right now, but whatever it is, don't be surprised if your presence in a room these days is causing others to blush. If you can deal with everyone's syrupy reactions to what, for you, just feels mundane, then you might be able to channel some of this attention into happier endeavors than just a few extra fits of the giggles and non-consensually pinched cheeks.

## Scorpio



Scorpio, hiiiiii. You are feeling a little weepy these days, and I don't blame you, seeing as your watery nature is being hypercharged by Venus. Also seeing as you are a hypercharged babe...everyone is fighting over you. Everyone is weary of hurting you or alienating you and yet all they really want is to be with you. Actually, all they really want is to be you. I can see why this might become quite exhausting, but if you can somehow surround yourself with those from whom this level of attention feels positive, you may end up with some really glittery newfound connections.

## Sagittarius



Sagittarius, in the coming months people are going to really start to pay attention to the wisdoms that you have gained by being amazing. You have been sweating it out and pushing it further and laughing louder and feeling inspired and winning at B-I-N-G-O, and soon everyone else is going to want all that also. Why is a Sagittarius so genuinely funny? Why are they so lovely to slow dance with? When do we get to see your dimples again? If you put in the effort already, the payoff is coming hard. Enjoy!



## Capricorn

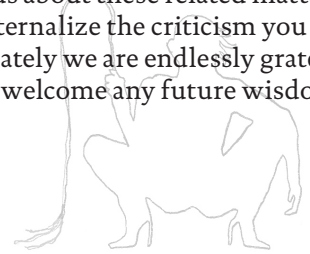
Capricorn, you have been so busy starting all your new dazzling projects that you forgot to let us praise you excessively but deservedly for the glistening jewels you put into the world last month. You are so eager to move onto the next big beautiful thing, you forgot to let us paint your nails while we kiss your neck and wonder why your hair smells like lavender flowers. You are delicious and, if you could just let us admire you for an extra tiny second, you might actually feel some of the energy that we are all gaining from what you've already put out into the world. Thanks.

## Aquarius

The recent verbal and intellectual challenges you have given us are urging us to wonder two things about you and your cosmic influences:

- 1) Are you a unicorn?
- 2) If you were a Beyoncé song, which Beyoncé song would you be and what dress would you wear in your music video?

It is difficult not to be curious about these related matters as we try to understand and internalize the criticism you have leveled against us, but ultimately we are endlessly grateful for your sage advice, and we welcome any future wisdom you wish to impart.



## Pisces

We have a crush on you. You are sweet. You listen well. You close your eyes for a very brief moment while you are thinking and this makes our hearts jump around a little bit, perhaps to the point of unease. If you are currently feeling unnoticed, it might be because our affections are silent and hidden and therefore easy to miss. If you are feeling overwhelmed, you might need to gently remind us to tone it down, as drooling this hard over you is difficult to avoid but, admittedly at times, inappropriate. Do not fear, tender fish, because soon one of these delightful crushes will finally be mutual.

## Distant Star

### Cherry Bomb

I feel my soul, the pain from the sword.  
Time had caught me, the web full of thorns...  
I can't keep a smile, my heart is in sorrow.  
Sleepless nights, I feel so alone  
In circles I roam, I'm losing control  
My mind is a storm, you can adore  
Your eyes are beautiful, my sight is so lost  
My love is so deep, my passion is so lost  
This cloud is hell, but in heaven I'll dwell  
Your beauty I will hold  
I'm in your powerful spell  
I can't never reach for you  
A distant star, so far apart  
But I'll always cherish  
Our beautiful people L.G.B.T.Q  
This powerful rainbow of pure love.

# Lavender and Red #38

## Mattachine: unmasking a 'masked people'

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*The series Lavender & Red was originally written by Leslie Feinberg for the newspaper of the Workers World Party. Leslie Feinberg, who identified as an anti-racist white, working-class, secular Jewish, transgender, lesbian, female revolutionary communist, was the first theorist to advance a Marxist concept of transgender liberation. Her work impacted popular culture, academic research, and political organizing. After her death in 2014, we began running the series in The Word is Out. You can request a full listing of the articles from our Resource Library.*

“We sat there, with fire in our eyes and far-away dreams, being Gays.” That’s how Harry Hay described the first meeting on Nov. 11, 1950, of what would become the Mattachine movement.

The five founders—Harry Hay, Rudi Gernreich, Dale Jennings, Chuck Rowland and Bob Hull—formed a leadership core that met weekly. They took seriously the historic task of building what they hoped would become a homosexual emancipation movement.

Hay stressed that at the start of their organizing they “felt that if we made bad mistakes and ruined the thing it might be many, many years before the attempt to organize Gay people would be tried again. So we had to do it right, if possible. That’s why we operated by unanimity and were very slow moving.” (“Gay American History”)

Social oppression leveled against same-sex love and gender variance was so great, and political repression was becoming such an audible drumbeat, that the task appeared daunting.

One Mattachine founder explained to Stuart Timmons, Hay’s biographer, “It was dramatic because anyone in the early fifties who was gay had a strange feeling of fear. Everyone had experienced something. For instance, picture walking into a bar you’d been going to for some time, not a gay bar but one where gay people had been welcome to drink. Drinks were a quarter there, but one day the bartender says, ‘That’ll be a dollar to you.’ You’d realize with a shock that he didn’t want you there. That’s a minor example.”

Timmons added, “The laws and customs of the era were stringently anti-homosexual; in California, as in most states, any sexual act except the missionary position between a heterosexual couple was a crime punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Anyone caught doing anything else could be made to register as a sex offender. Repeat offenders and those whose partners were minors were oftensent to Atascadero state prison and given electroshock ‘therapy,’ or even subjected to castration. Since any public mention of homosexuality was equated with scandal, few workplaces would retain an employee whose involvement

with such an organization became public.” (“The Trouble with Harry Hay”)

As the Mattachine founders met to discuss organizing, the “Lavender Scare” was becoming a sensationalized propaganda component of the McCarthyite anti-communist witch hunt. The Senate was making public its report rooting out “sexual perverts” from government employment.

The deep-freeze Cold War climate was meant to have a chilling effect on all progressive and revolutionary organizing. And the Mattachine founders, as young revolutionaries, understood the powers of the state that the capitalist class could unleash. They were well-aware that the German Homosexual Emancipation Movement and communists were early targets of the Nazi state capitalist regime.

Gernreich had been forced to flee fascism in Vienna. Jennings had worked to defend Japanese-Americans detained in U.S. internment camps during World War II. Anti-communism had forced Rowland out of his job as an organizer with the American Veterans Committee.

“Above all, Hay was acutely conscious of the growing climate of repression. With much of his party work centered on cultural activities, he was aware of the targeting of leftists in Hollywood by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). California, moreover, had its own anti-communist investigating committee whose head, Jack Tenney, came from Lost Angeles, and which held highly publicized hearings throughout the postwar years. The two organizations in which Hay was most active, People’s Songs and the People’s Educational Center, had already come under its scrutiny.” (“Making Trouble,” John D’Emilio)

This inhospitable political environment shaped the organizational form of Mattachine—the first sustained gay liberation organization in the United States.

### *Clandestine organizing*

Hay revised his original 1948 plan for an above-ground “BachelorsforWallace” model of political organizing. Instead, he proposed an underground organization.

“The first thing we did was set up a semipublic-type discussion group,” Hay explained to interviewer Jonathan Katz, “so you didn’t have to reveal yourself if you didn’t want to. Only certain persons would be invited at first, but later they’d be invited to ask some friends.” (“Gay American History”)

Katz asked Hay where the idea of the underground organization came from. Hay replied, “In July 1950, I was still a well-sought-after teacher of Marxist principles, both

in the Communist party and the California Labor School. I was teaching a course in music history at the Labor School, and was dealing with the Guild System and the Freemasonry movement, particularly at the time of [Austrian Hapsburg Queen] Maria Teresa, when to be a member of the Freemasonry was to court the death sentence. Both Mozart and Haydn had been Freemasons, courting punishment.

“This is also the way the Communist party had moved as a political organization in 1930-37, when it had been truly underground. I thought of the Freemason movement and the type of Communist underground organization that had existed in the 1930s, which I had known and been part of.

“So I began to work up the structure specified in the prospectus from the old left and, interestingly, was not too different from that structure employed by Algeria in its successful liberation struggle with France in the sixties.”

Hay described how his thinking had changed in the two years since he’d written his original 1948 prospectus for homosexual organizing. “At first I had not been so concerned with planting the organization underground. The goals and ideology never changed particularly; I felt that what we had to do was to find out who we were, and that what we were for would follow. I realized that we had been very contributive in various ways over the millennia, and I felt we could return to being contributive again. Then we could be respected for our difference, not for our samenesses to heterosexuals. To a large extent that’s what the whole movement was about.

“The 1948 prospectus outlined the basic idea. The 1949 version described how we would set up the guilds, how we would keep them underground and separated so that no one group could ever know who all the other members were and their anonymity would be secured.”

The founding members created a centralized organization with five levels—known as “orders”—of leadership, “with increasing levels of responsibility as one ascended the structure and with each order having one or two representatives from a higher order of the organization,” wrote historian John D’Emilio.

“As the membership of the Mattachine Society grew, the orders were expected to subdivide into separate cells so that each layer of the pyramid could expand horizontally. As the number of cells increased, members of the same order but in different cells would be largely unknown to one another.” (“Sexual Politics”)

#### *‘A masked people’*

Hay described the first organizational attempts. “We talked about the prospectus of the foundation, made our contacts with a fighting lawyer, who had defended one of us in court on a Gay charge, applied for a preliminary charter for a nonprofit corporation, and began (as of late November 1950) to have our discussion groups.” (“Gay American History”)

In the spring of 1951, the leadership core—the “fifth order”—formally changed the interim name of the organization from “Society of Fools” to the Mattachine Society.

“One of the cultural developments I had discussed and illustrated in my Labor School class on ‘Historical Materialist Development of Music’ was the function of the medieval-Renaissance French Sociétés Joyeux,” Hay recalled. “One was known as the Société Mattachine. These societies, lifelong secret fraternities of unmarried townsmen who never performed in public unmasked, were dedicated to going out into the countryside and conducting dances and rituals during the Feast of Fools, at the Vernal Equinox.

“Sometimes these dance rituals, or masques, were peasant protests against oppression—with the maskers, in the people’s name, receiving the brunt of a given lord’s vicious retaliation.

“So we took the name Mattachine because we felt that we 1950s Gays were also a masked people, unknown and anonymous, who might become engaged in morale building and helping ourselves and others, through struggle, to move toward total redress and change.”

Fear of police raids, Timmons emphasized, required that the Mattachine founders meet in secret. “When the occasional guest was invited, it was a standard security process for him to meet a Mattachine member at some public landmark, then to be driven around for a few blocks before being taken to the meeting place.”

Rowland said, “We did not want to lead the police to our meetings, so we did not give guests the address.” They changed locations regularly and kept the shades and curtains drawn—men meeting together in one room would appear suspicious.

Timmons added, “Because they had read that telephones could be used to bug a room, Rowland always put the phone in a dresser drawer and put a pillow over it. When people left the meetings, they kept their voices down.”

#### *‘People were able to bloom’*

In April 1951, Konrade Stevens and James Gruber became the last new members of the fifth order—affectionately dubbed “Parsifal,” after the operatic knights on a quest to find the Holy Grail.

Neither Stevens nor Gruber had any experience with communism or knowledge of Marxism. After several months of meetings, Gruber related, “We would meet in various homes, and once, when we met at Chuck and Bob’s, I was sitting on the couch and innocently picked up a newspaper. It was the Daily Worker. I thought it was a gag and made some sort of funny reference to it. Bob just took the paper. He didn’t find it funny.”

When other founding members took the opportunity to talk about their communist beliefs and activism, they discovered that neither Stevens nor Gruber proved to be very anti-communist.

The fifth-order founder drafted the “Missions and Purposes” of Mattachine in April 1951 and ratified them on July 20. The stated goals were as follows:

“To unify” homosexuals who were “isolated from their own kind,” and to create a principle from which “all our people can . . . derive a feeling of belonging.”



“To educate” all of society—homosexual and heterosexual alike, by developing an “ethical homosexual culture . . . paralleling the emerging cultures of our fellow-minorities—[African American], Mexican, and Jewish Peoples.”

“To lead,” providing leadership of more “socially conscious homosexuals” to the whole mass of the homosexual population.

The goals included the “imperative” need for “political action” against “discriminatory and oppression legislation.” And they concluded with the need to assist “our people who are victimized daily as a result of our oppression,” terming this group “one of the largest minorities in [North] America today.” (“Gay American History”)

By summer of 1951, the number of discussion groups began to grow. The first participants were drawn from those courageous enough to sign the anti-Korean War petition Hay and Gernreich had circulated on southern California gay beaches. (“The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement”)

The fifth-order group drew up a questionnaire to facilitate the discussion about first-hand experience with discrimination or encounters with police and courts, meeting sexual partners and going to bars, and coming out to family and co-workers.

“Few participants had ever before been asked such questions systematically, and the questionnaire fueled extended discussions,” historian John D’Emilio explained. “Group members speculated on causes of homosexuality, reasons for social hostility to it, and where sexual ‘deviants’ could lead well-adjusted lives. They described the pain of discovering their sexual identities and the surrounding tragedies, as well as the strengths that survival in a hostile society had produced. Together they imagined how life might be different, how a gay subculture might emerge to provide emotional sustenance, and how homosexuals and lesbians might act to change social attitudes.” (“Sexual Politics”)

Hay noted, “The meetings were mostly male. A few women came and protested that they were not included, and after that more women came.”

At first, Mattachine leaders adopted noms de guerre. Rudi Gernreich was referred to as “X” or “R”; his role in Mattachine was not revealed until after his death.

Those who took part in the discussion groups were “petrified that the government might get a list” of participants and feared that “the cops would come barging in and arrest everybody.” (“Sexual Politics”)

“But as time passed and no raids materialized, men and women dropped their defenses, friendships formed, and the meetings took on the character of intimate gatherings,” D’Emilio continued.

James Gruber described the experience: “All of us had known a whole lifetime of not talking, or repression. Just the freedom to open up. . . really, that’s what it was all about. We had found a sense of belonging, of camaraderie, of openness in an atmosphere of tension and distrust. . . Such a great deal of it was a social climate. A family feeling came out of it, a nonsexual emphasis. . . It was a brand-new idea.”

Geraldine Jackson, who became active in Mattachine, said that “people were able to bloom and be themselves. . . [It] was something we didn’t know before.” She added that, finally, there was the chance to “say what you wanted to say and feel accepted.”

She concluded, “You felt that you were doing something terribly worthwhile for our people.”

## Struggling with Existence

### Preface

3:37 AM

The brickz are speaking 2 me  
It seemz failure materialize outta thin air.  
The more I try, the more I fall down  
So tonight I out my fear away,  
Letting go of my breath  
That waz never given 2 me  
Blood rain down my arm causing me 2 be  
memorized by the fire  
Authoritiez tried 2 help, but I became more  
rebellious to their homophobia eyes.  
Against time, the colorz we’re a disguise  
My mask of shame their patronizing mindz  
encourage me 2 let go,  
Causing me to powerdown cry out the emotional  
pain  
Story to the many facez of this world, who haz given  
up,  
Due 2 hard timez, struggling w/ they’re identitiez,  
and existence to live.  
Itz going to alright. You were me, and I am you.  
Your not along, and everyday I will listen 2 you  
heart.  
Keep yo’ head where the starz be.

## Learning to Love

### Pen of Passion

When to learn to communicate  
You learn to be understanding  
When you learn to be understanding  
You learn to care  
When you learn to care  
You learn to love  
When you learn to love  
You learn to be patient  
When you learn to be patient  
You learn to appreciate to one you love!

# New Prisoner Correspondence Project Resources

Here are the new resources that we've added since the Winter 2015 issue of the *Word is Out*. You can still request the free LGBTQ publications from our last resource list. Send us a letter if you want to receive an updated list of our entire resource library!

## **The Spirit Inside: Black and Pink Members on Religion and Sexuality Behind Bars (Issue 1)**

A collection of writings, poems, and reflections on faith, prison, and sexuality, published by Black and Pink. Writers from the inside share their stories of prayer, struggles with faith, strategies for working through issues with family, and other topics. This resource covers a variety of spiritual and religious perspectives, including Christianity, Judaism, Agnosticism, Paganism and more.

## **How to use the Law Library and Write Your Own Law Work - Salerno**

This booklet provides information that empowers readers in the United States to use law library materials, prepare a basic legal document, and understand a standard path through the courts—from trial to petitioning the Supreme Court.

## **Criminal Law: Case Citator - Salerno**

This resource outlines some tools for understanding the court system: what can be filed, how to prepare and file a pleading, and other topics. The case law presented also offers a great place to begin drafting legal documents. In order to reduce the amount of research involved in discovering the constitutional violations present in your case, this resource provides a non-exhaustive but helpful list of case notes, citations, and standards of review.

## **Criminal Law Concepts - Salerno**

This booklet outlines useful tools for understanding often-used concepts in criminal law. Covering topics such as Manifest Weight, the Presumption of Correctness, working with ineffective counsel, accessing courts, and much more, this zine provides a broad education on criminal law.

## **Criminal Law Forms - Salerno**

In an attempt to fill the gaps in access to educational legal material, this resource is meant to accompany the *How to Use the Law Library* booklet. It outlines useful legal forms often needed in criminal law cases. The resource provides examples of legal forms filled in with fictional cases.

## **Catherine Lynn Quick Triple Pack (Comes with all 3 zines)**

### **1. How to Change Your Prison (changing/creating Transgender Policy) - Catherine Lynn Quick**

Building on her years of experience in dealing with prison bureaucracy as a trans inmate, Catherine Lynn Quick passes on insightful lessons on understanding the laws and regulations around trans inmates, and how to work these to your benefit.

### **2. Choosing Life or Death - "Suicide" (It's *your* choice...so be sure)**

Writing from a perspective that respects people's ability to make their own decisions, Catherine Lynn Quick offers supportive words to those considering suicide. A must read for those who feel like they are out of options and wish to hear words from a friend.

### **3. When your Sky has fallen**

Building off of her previous work, *A Caged Bird Sings*, Catherine Lynn Quick presents this booklet to those whom have lost all hope. Using personal experience, her writing speaks to what happens and what your options are when you truly have nothing, including no hopes or dreams.



