



Issue 17: Winter 2016

## Welcome to issue 17 of the Word is Out!

### We've missed you!

It's been a difficult month to cap off a difficult year. The election of a far-right government promises bad things to come for the rights of prisoners, workers, and LGBT people across the United States and around the world. One of the things that has helped is conversations with older activists who organized during the Bush and Reagan years. They help to remind us that what will get us through is what always has: building networks, relying on each other, and drawing on our collective strength. In that vein, welcome to our Winter Issue!

As mentioned in *Since We've Been Gone*, we have some new student interns from the university who have written all of the news articles in this issue. Also new to this issue, one of our outside penpals Anna has created a great crossword puzzle that you will find on page 3.

We unfortunately had some mail problems so we don't have the Crush + Blush column by Widow in this issue, but we have printed some of her other writing. Don't worry, the advice column shall return. Lastly, we received only a couple of submissions on the newsletter theme this time round, so we would strongly, strongly encourage you to consider writing something for next time.

And a special thanks to the contributors of #17! Sara, Amber, Fatima, Jiordi, Tiffany, Cherrie Bomb, Patrice, Pieface, Byron, Carlos, Danni, Jacob, John, Matthew, Shyla. You are the greatest people to work with. Thank you for sharing.

Until then,  
In struggle and solidarity,  
*Your friends at the Prisoner Correspondence Project*

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# Since We've Been Gone

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Hello there dear PCP family members! The snow has finally landed in Montreal, but things are still heating up with the project as we round the corner on our 9th year in existence (according to our best guess)!

We've had a few change ups with the collective, with Audree and Caitlin taking a step back, Sanjeevan moving to New York City, and Cooper joining the group. We are a smaller group now, but we're making do. Luckily, we're hosting a couple students from the HIV/AIDS class at Concordia University again this year, which helps with the work load.

The past few months since our last newsletter have been quite busy! October was our fundraising month, where we held a series of events and tried to get more people signed up to be a part of our monthly donor program. We had a tattoo and haircuts fundraiser, which successfully raised around \$850 for the PCP. We had a cover band show for Halloween featuring bands covering hits by the Smashing Pumpkins, the Strokes, and other crowd favourites. We also held a flash collective, where 5 local artists came together to brainstorm and design 4 new posters for us to sell to fundraise for the project. We gave a number of workshops

over the past few months and even got on the local radio station a few times to talk about the project and hopefully get some more members.

There have been a couple organizational change ups as well, with a new filing system (I know, it's truly exciting), a second "boxchecking day" where we sort through and respond to the 100 or so letters we get a week from you all. Finally, we launched a brand new website that is much flashier and allows for your penpals to download, print, and send you resources directly without having to go through us! That means that you can now write directly to your penpal, requesting any resource and, barring any technical glitches, they should be able to send it to you directly.

As the streets get filled with more and more snow and the new year approaches, we'd like to take this opportunity to send you, our gay, queer, trans, bi, etc. family, well-wishes and solidarity. Enjoy the newsletter!

In Solidarity,  
*Parker, Josh, Olivia, Kristin, Bruiser, Cooper*

# Standing Rock Protest

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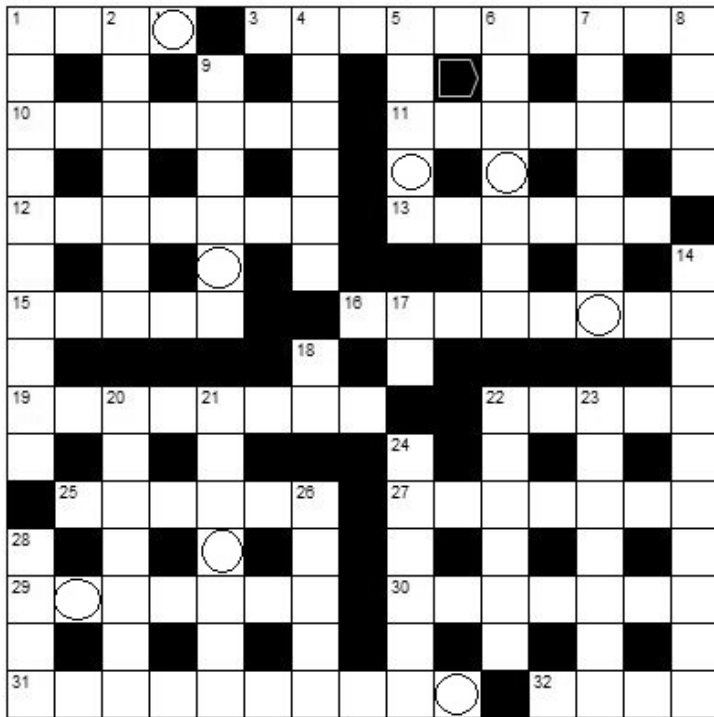
The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), is a \$3.7 billion project that would transport crude oil from the Bakken oil field in North Dakota to a refinery in Patoka Illinois, near Chicago. This is a project of company Energy Transfer Partners. The local Standing Rock Sioux tribe, thousands of Native Americans with support from people all over the world have set up camps to block the project. The Tribe says the project threatens sacred native lands and will contaminate their water supply. The tribe leaders say that the half-mile pipeline on reservation Land was done without their consent.

The activists have kept their promise to protest peacefully and remain unarmed by using prayer circles, demonstrations and setting up camps on the property where the construction is planned. They have been doing this since the beginning of their protest in April. But the police have not remained peaceful. Armed with large tanks and riot gear, they have pepper-sprayed, used Tasers and rubber bullets on the protesters and forcefully arrested them. The police have also been accused of human rights violations in their treatment of the protesters arrested.

Following the arrest of hundreds of people, it was reported that an anonymous donor just donated \$2.5 million to bail out everyone who was arrested at the protests. This information was given by the family of the Caddo Nation chairwoman (a local tribal leader), who was wrongfully arrested then released after spending two days in jail. This seemed like good news for the people putting their bodies and lives on the front lines every day. Unfortunately there are conflicting reports. Two days after the news of the anonymous donor, a nonprofit legal group involved in the proceedings issued a statement denying that such a donation was received. Further information has yet to be given.

Tribal leaders say these conflicting reports could deter people from donating which is what they are relying on. Standing Rock is still raising legal fees for future arrests, which are guaranteed to happen. The tribe leaders have said that the lack of national coverage on this issue is causing more tension between the police and the protesters. This injustice is not being shown to most of the country, but against all odds independent news sources, activists and allies continue to support this ongoing fight to protect water and sacred indigenous land.

# The Word is Out Crossword



Hot Tip for Crossword noobs: Crossword clues and answers often rely on wordplay. If a clue has a question mark at the end of it, that means something tricky is afoot in the answer--usually a pun or play on words. So a clue like "Fat feline's favourite Olympics category?" might be "track and Garfield" (instead of "track and field"). 3 and 31 Across, and 1 and 14 Down in this puzzle are this kind of tricky clue.

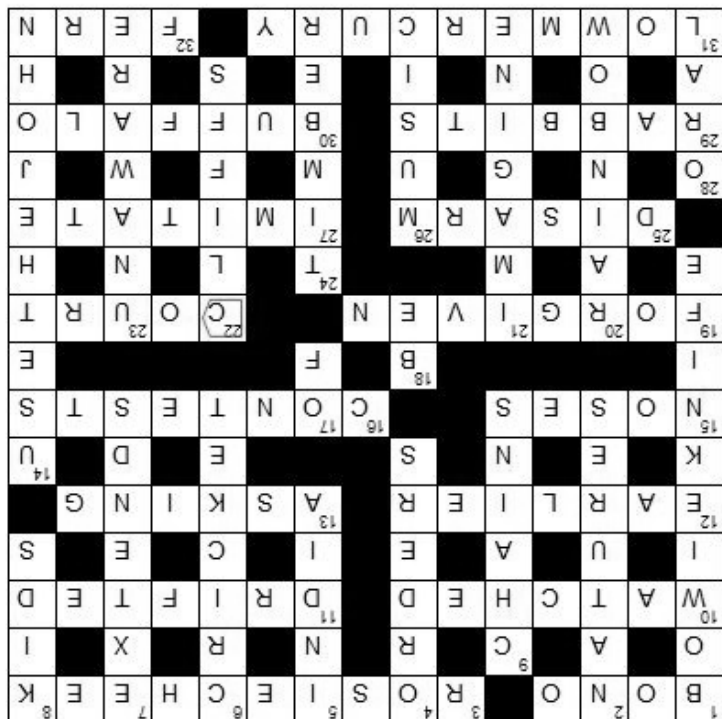
## ACROSS

1. U2's lead singer
3. Talk show host O'Donnell's face when she comes in from the cold?
10. Viewed on TV
11. Floated aimlessly
12. Before now
13. Politely requesting
15. They smell
16. Competitions
19. "Repent, and your sins shall be \_\_\_\_\_"
22. A judge presides over it
25. Take away one's weapons
27. Act like
29. Bunnies
30. Animal hunted almost to extinction in the USA and Canada
31. How "Queen" singer Freddie feels in winter?
32. Leafy forest plant

## PUZZLE THEME: GAY ICONS

## DOWN

1. British singer David's favourite blade?
2. Innate characteristics
4. Commands
5. Gandhi's homeland
6. Popular sport in 5-Down, played with bats and wickets
7. Makes longer
8. Young'uns
9. A ghost might rattle them
14. What singer Elton has to do when his bladder's full?
17. "It's only a matter \_\_ time"
18. Exist
20. Popular symbol for gay pride
21. 1971 hit for John Lennon
22. Leading cause of lemming deaths, according to common myth
23. Clueless
24. Lumberjack's cry
26. "That's \_\_\_\_\_ to my ears"
28. Having to do with the mouth



BONUS: Unscramble the circled letters to reveal the puzzle's theme! \_\_\_\_\_

# Conclusively Gay?

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This month, I have decided to once again adorn my furred scarlet robe, attach my full bottom grey wig and dust off my centuries old hardwood Gavel in order to bring you, dear readers, another conclusive, 100% certified, official verdict of *GAY* or *NOT GAY* (while retaining my legal right, mind you, in some circumstances to deliver an equally valid, yet certainly less-titillating verdict of *MAYBE COULD BE GAY*) on some random celebrity of my choosing.

It is not very often that I choose to wield this particular type of permanent judicial power (even if I did go deep into debt doing the 12 years of schooling in the most prestigious institutions that the post requires) for I know what consequences indeed arrive whenever I do and it is not my intention to reproduce the logic of the closet. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, not at all you see. In fact, I reserve this right in only one instance: to serve the advancement of total queer liberation. As a judge of the highest order it is of course my duty as a Representative of justice to commit myself to the struggle for full revolution (it's part of our oath we all must take in order to be judges as you surely are aware).

Anyways, enough of the political mumbo jumbo and onto the juice. Yoko Ono is probably one of the baddest bitches there is and I can't even tell you how excited I would be if she was indeed gay. I must assure you, however, that as a judge, my personal excitement about this prospect would never influence my investigation. Still I can't deny that a verdict of gay for Yoko Ono would be huge for us. Not only does Yoko Ono have a lot of cash which she would then have to donate to radical organizations doing queer liberation work, but also a gay Yoko Ono would mean that she was one of the first gay people ever because she is quite old and would therefore be a trailblazer and an elder with lots of resilient wisdom to bestow.

Unfortunately after searching google with the words "Is Yoko Ono gay?" I came up with approximately no damning evidence on the very first page of results. What

this means is that Yoko Ono is officially and 100% certified *MAYBE COULD BE GAY*. This is quite excellent news if you ask me (personally) and a huge leap forward for homosexual visibility in the age of hyper-surveillance. Anyways Yoko Ono was quite happy to receive the verdict the bailiff tells me and has started attending a lgbt discussion group at a local college near her home, so let's wait and see how this one plays out.

As happy as I was to find out that Yoko Ono *MAYBE COULD BE GAY*, my researches into her led me to an unexpected case that was much less interesting, but which had much more bland mass appeal. For whatever random reason, while searching Yoko Ono, I came across numerous articles alleging that John Lennon, the singer songwriter from the soft rock band "the Beatles" was indeed hetero*FLEXIBLE*. This was a tasty accusation, one that my overworked and exhausted judge brain (from the previous Yoko Ono investigation) could not turn down even if I wanted to.

While I found John Lennon to be horrendously boring as a human being, I knew this was the case of a lifetime, a case of tremendous importance. Honestly, I didn't even know if I was up to the task, but I knew the world needed me in this moment, and I leaped into the dark chasm before me with nothing but my little gay heart lighting the way. This could make or break my career, I thought, but it didn't matter, this was bigger than me, much, much bigger.

The very first component of any investigation of mine involves, of course, a scientific read of my gaydar machine, which I assure you is of the highest quality. After running John Lennon through the machine, my interest was indeed piqued because the machine's arrow fell directly in the middle between the two extremes of *HOMO* and *NO*. This was not going to be easy I thought. One thing that I knew for sure is that John Lennon preferred to spend the majority of his time in close proximity with other men, playing

indecent, sweaty, and debaucherous music. This meant that heteroflexible sex was at least always in the background of their musical project, if never in the foreground.

I began to ruffle through their catalogue of songs and one track in particular that John Lennon wrote entitled “You’ve got to hide you’re love away” caught my glittered eye. At first, it struck me as a totally straight title for a straight song about a straight individual, but then I thought, hey, wait a minute, heterosexuals don’t normally have to hide their love! They normally flaunt it like a giant rainbow lollipop in front of sugar deprived homosexuals! Where could John possibly be hiding his love? The closet, I bellowed????????

This is when the heterosexual curtain began to unhinge itself from its hooks letting the deeply heteroflexible moonlight shine through. An intense cross-reference search through John’s acquaintances turned up the deeply shocking fact that the Beatles’ manager Brian Epstein, was very much gay. This was undeniable proof that John not only knew, but also spent time with a gay person. The odds of him being heteroflexible just shot through the motherfucking roof. A further look into Brian Epstein revealed that John Lennon and him actually vacationed together in Barcelona in 1963, a top contender for the gayest city in the world during one of the gayest years we have on record. What could one gay man and one potentially heteroflexible individual be doing in Barcelona alone together I ask? There’s only six answers to that question possible and two of them are quite homosexual in content.

I did also learn that John Lennon was married to a woman, which definitely confirmed the “hetero” part of “heteroflexible” which was an enormous breakthrough for the case. When I looked into their marriage I found the nail on lid of the coffin in an interview she did just after he died. After his death she told the worldwide press that John Lennon admitted to her that the reason he liked her was because “she looked like a bloke in drag, she was like a mate.” And that did it folks. John Lennon was certified 100% heteroflexible, emphasis on the flexible. You heard it here first.

This is a shout out to any transgirls in the California state jurisdiction prison system who have ever been rehoused from a men’s prison to a women’s prison. Specifically, Sherri was so rehoused, in 2008, as was another girl. I am currently litigating the issue for my own female housing and need the testimony of any such girl to challenge the prison department’s bogus claim that it doesn’t house transgirls. Any information on the subject will be sincerely appreciated. Please contact:

(regarding Eva Contreras)  
Angela Junck, ESQ  
California Coalition for Women Prisoners  
1540 Market St, #490  
San Francisco, CA  
94102

## Adam Capay’s Case

Four years ago, First Nations man Adam Capay was put in solitary confinement at a facility in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He originally was at the facility based on minor charges but was segregated after an altercation that resulted in the death of another inmate. That was in 2012, it is now 2016 and Capay is still awaiting a trial whilst in segregation.

Until recently, Capay would spend twenty-three hours a day in a windowless room with the lights on and would get one free hour each day to shower and maybe make a phone call. When Renu Mandhane, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, visited him she reported that his speech was delayed from the lack of human contact and that he showed signs of self-harm. Recently, however, Ontario’s Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services introduced an ‘external independent review’ of the use of segregation.

Since this, Capay’s conditions have improved slightly: he is now in a room where the lights can be dimmed and he has regular access to a day room, showers, a phone, and even a TV. This ‘external independent review’ also immediately changed the time allowed in disciplinary segregation to fifteen days for inmates in Ontario. However, Capay is considered an ‘administrative segregation’ case due to his mental illness and the prisons lack of resources, so he has been in solitary confinement for almost 1500 days. This prison is known for placing mentally ill inmates in segregation for ‘the safety of other prisoners’, however the mental condition of the segregated prisoners continues to worsen.

Additionally, in the past The Supreme Court of Canada has stated thirty months to be the limit to which a person should wait for a trial, anything past that is a violation of the accused’s Chartered right to be tried within a reasonable amount of time; Capay has been waiting almost twice the allocated time. Ontario MPP Randy Miller stated that the province has a horrible track record for getting cases to trial or for getting charges withdrawn, which leaves people in jail for far too long.

# A Letter from My Jail

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*From Sara G. Outman (Widow)*

When you look in the mirror and see a stranger staring back;  
When your outward appearance repulses you to the point of  
physical illness;  
When you want to be seen and accepted for who you are on  
the side;  
When being forced to undress and shower without privacy  
causes an uncontrollable anxiety;  
When your called a sissy even when you act as best you can;  
When you've felt this way since you were but five years old  
and it never went away;  
When you are comfortable, confidant, and empowered  
while dressed in "traditionally" female clothes;  
When you struggle with an untold and pervasive depression;  
When your gender is in complete discord with everything  
your heart and soul says.  
Then, and only then, will you comprehend why we cannot  
live by your gender binaryism and demands!  
Not until you allow me to live as my own person;  
Not until you stop attacking my presence within women's  
facilities;  
Not until you understand my medical and surgical needs are  
not "cosmetic";  
Not until you accept me as a human;  
Will I be allowed to be who I am and deserve to be!  
I'm not going to try and deceive you;  
I'm not going to change or grow out of a "phase";  
I'm not a deviant or a freak;  
I am only; I am solely; I am wholly  
Who I am born and meant to be!

## **The Gender Divide**

With the transgender rights movement in full swing, and so many strong voices stepping forward to demand equality (i.e., Sylvia Rivera, Caitlyn Jenner, Laverne Cox, etc...), it's time to start looking deeper into the transgender issues that face our nation and society. Are we doing enough to protect and support this most vulnerable population? Do we even have an obligation to do so? Most importantly, are we as a progressive and democratic nation on the right side of history with the controversial issue?

The first step in answering these questions is to take the time to understand what being "transgender" means. While not all are, most individuals who identify as "transgender" experience a clinical distress called "Gender Dysphoria": and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-V) defines it as: "...a distress that may accompany the incongruence between one's experienced or expressed gender and one's assigned gender." The DSM-V goes on to say that: "The current term [Gender Dysphoria] is more descriptive than the previous DSM-IV 'Gender Identity Disorder,' and focuses more

on dysphoria as the clinical problem, not identity per se." What this ultimately means is that to the large majority of transgender individuals, men, women, and children, they are silently suffering with the unbreakable belief that the psychological identity is different from their physical anatomical gender. According to the DSM-V, compiled by the American Psychiatric Association, the prevalence of natal [by birth] males diagnosed with the condition is currently approximately "from 0.005 to 0.014%," and approximately "from 0.002 to 0.003%" in natal females, in the present American communities. By and large, that means that the majority of American families have or know at least one person that suffers from this condition, whether the family realizes it or not.

The next step is to understand what the laws say on the issues related to the transgender movement. So, how does the federal government view this issue? Currently, the federal government recognizes Gender Dysphoria/"Transgenderism" as a legitimate disability under the Social Security Disability regulations; this was made official in a landmark case titled "Manago v. Barnhart" in the US District Court—Eastern District of New York in 2004. Beyond that it's a complicated and varied outcome. Some states have laws recognizing it as a disability and/or "protected class", while others have no laws and it is perfectly legal to discriminate in housing, employment, and public assistance. New York and California are two states leading the way; the state Human Rights law, and the New York City Human Rights law, both recognize Gender Dysphoria as a disability and the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act of 2003 made it illegal to discriminate in any way based on sexuality or gender identity in NYS. In California, the Medicaid system, dubbed "Medi-Cal", provides for some transgender and gender reassignment treatment by the state's medicaid program. But most interesting is the Prison Rape Elimination Act passed by the Department of Justice, and Congress, in 2012. P.R.E.A. paved the way to making prison slightly more "safe" for transgender and gender-non-conforming inmates nation wide, and if a prison system refuses to, or fails to, abide by the standards they lose their federal funding.

In 2015, a lawsuit was filed in Albany Supreme Court demanding equal and separate transgender housing for those inmates housed in the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision prisons whom identify as transgender and/or are diagnosed as Gender Dysphoric, and prone to rape and victimization. The lawsuit, filed in the Albany Supreme Court in February 2015, brings to light the brutal and deplorable conditions transgender inmates in NYS are subjected to. This includes: rape, assault, extortion, emotional and sexual harassment, and extreme discrimination; all of which are committed by both male inmates and Corrections Officers. This lawsuit goes into detailed account, with evidence and documentation, of the

plaintiff's experiences of being raped, assaulted, extorted, and harassed in a sadistic manner by inmates and officers. This lawsuit is likely to be landmark.

This brings us back to our responsibility to, and our protection or lack thereof, of transgender citizens. Do we have an obligation? If we do, how do we do so? In Los Angeles County Jail, New York City's Rikers Island, and even in Texas DOC, there are specialized separate housing units for just LGBTQ inmates, and most specifically transgenders. Is this a waste and misappropriation of tax payer funds, or is it right in line with where we all should be?

No matter where you stand on this issue, there is no doubt that we can all agree that no life is too little or too worthless to protect. Transgender people are real, they're in our communities, and they're not going to go away. Can we find it in our hearts to embrace diversity and personal identity, or will we regress back to the issues and mistakes of our past? Transgender individuals are citizens of this great nation, and we must find a way to continue our nation's legacy of diversity, freedom, and safety... no matter what our political or religious beliefs tell us to believe.

Where do you stand on this? Are you on the right side of history?

## True Colors - Being Transgender in a Black + White World

Throughout history, our society has made a point of actively delineating the social hierarchy and caste system; first it was a hatred for Protestants, then blacks, then women, then Spanish immigrants, then the brunt of the societal hierarchy landed directly upon us; the LGBTQ-I2S community with oppressively smothering force. All of the "community" is affected and attacked on a constant basis, but it is those of us within the "undesirables," the Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Two-Spirited, that are truly victimized on a prolific level. Sadly, those of us within the "undesirables" must contend not only with the Gender Binaryism system, heterosexual, transphobic, and religious communities; we must also manage attacks from within our own corner! L.G.B. individuals often "separate" themselves, sometimes viciously, from those of us in the TQ-I2S "section," refusing to accept us in our own backyard.

This division within our own home makes it nearly impossible for us to stand united against trans/homophobic discrimination and oppression/violence; it was sixteenth U.S. president Abraham Lincoln who once said: "A house divided against itself, will most certainly fall."

My name is Sara, and I was born a "biological male"; at the age of five (5) I first actively understood that something was massively wrong with my body, and that my penis was not supposed to be there. I knew that I was a girl; but sadly society says that gender is solid and inflexible so, not matter what I knew to be true, I was a boy! I am twenty-five (25) years old and only within the last two years have I found the courage and resolve to finally buck the system, and be who I'm meant to be. that is not an easy decision for anyone, but even more so because I began my transition, officially, when in the NYS Corrections system; a decision that inevitably draw in extra-ordinary discrimination, harassment and

abuse at the hands of inmates and Corrections staff. My hope is that this exposé will shed some light on the rocky tumultuous path that one must journey down to finally find & lovingly embrace yourself as a beautiful woman.

First and foremost, let me start by saying that we each have our own journeys to walk in, becoming our "greatest self," and just because something did or did not work for me does not necessarily mean it will/won't work for you. find the most comfortable portion of the "trail" to walk on, and stick with that and, if necessary, find an ally or friend who is willing to walk it with you; I've been hiking the rugged cliffs for a long time and am comfortable doing so in the most challenging portions. So go slow, steady, and don't feel like you have to dive in head first. OK?

Trying to become your greatest self, my way of saying "achieving your highest potential as the person deep within your soul," is a scary idea in prison. The penitentiary is not exactly welcoming to gender variant individuals who actively buck the established "norm," in fact there is never a better example of "the nail that sticks up, is the one that gets hammered down" than transgender and gender variant inmates. You may be saying to yourself, "damn, you're making a pretty strong point of why we should stay in the shadows, and blend in." I'm not saying all of this to scare you but rather to inform you. There's no sugar coating here, and I'm not going to blow sunshine and smoke up your ass; if and when you choose to "come out" as transgender, or however you identify, you will face great adversity and an emotional rollercoaster. But if you stay focused and determined it will get easier, and you will find eventual comfort and resolve that will do you well in most situations in life. :)

Also, the stronger a support system you build with family, friends, and fellow t-sisters/LGBTQ-2SI, the less stressful and adverse your experience will be. My advice is to find one person, whether family, friend, or staff member (counselor, chaplain, etc), that you trust implicitly and respect, who you can confide completely in about your transition and journey. Mine are what I refer to as my "trinity." My "trinity" consists of three women whom I know I can talk to about anything no matter what; my mother, my aunt, and my mental health counselor. They may not be personally experienced in male-to-female transgender issues and transition, but most importantly they support me 100% and provide honest, unbiased, and loving advice rooted in my best interest. I cannot express strongly enough that you need to be very careful when choosing this inner circle, because you need to feel comfortable and confident in their advice and support. If you aren't careful, you may find yourself suddenly "alone" because they aren't truly there to help lift you up. You may accidentally choose someone whose only intention is to talk you out of your beautiful transition, or someone who wants to get close enough with enough information to exploit or take advantage of you. So just as you'd be picky about who you'd let handle your most private records and documents, or who you'd let perform surgery on you, be careful and picky about who you ask to be your "transition mid-wives."

During your transition, and long after, you will be bombarded with opinions and advice from others; not always is this advice in your best interest or welcome. One of

the most common struggles I am currently battling is that, while we transition, people expect your personality and inner-self to “change” as well. They expect you to become a completely different person. I’m often criticized by people whom I consider to be “friends” in my prison unit, who wrongly assume that, because I’m transitioning to my true feminine-self, I should then conform to their view of what a “woman” is. They expect us to magically become this whole new person, with a different personality and demeanor. That is not the reason we go through this transition. We are not making change for others; we are doing this for ourselves! I will be me on the inside, the same person I am now, I am only changing my body to match my truest gender, what I was meant to be... not to change my inner-self for someone else. They will say you’re supposed to be “prim and proper”, “soft and delicate,” “submissive and quiet,” and if you’re not these things then your transition isn’t “real.”

Do NOT let those closed minded, chauvinistic opinions change who you know you are! If you are naturally those things, wonderful; if you’re not and are outspoken, authoritative, type-A, outgoing, and a leader, then be you! I am no less a woman in transition because someone thinks I’m a “bitch” and “unwomanly”!

We must be ourselves, because that is what your transition is about—finding your truest self and releasing the shackles of society’s expectations and rules.

Be true, be real, be you!  
With love and solidarity,  
Sara Outman

### **‘We’ll Protect You...’**

“It is a fundamental right of all persons under our supervision to be free of the threat of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. DOCCS strives to provide a safe, secure, and humane environment in which inmates can be safe from sexual abuse and sexual harassment by other inmates and by staff.”

-- Mr. Jason D. Effman  
(NYS Dept. of Corrections and Comm. Sup.)  
Associate Commissioner/PREA Director

These words sound good, in fact they sound and look great... but the problem is exactly that, words, ones that are empty and meaningless. They’re meant to mollify and convince, a way to plausibly deny the reality of everything that actually happens behind these walls!

I have been in prison in NY since December 2012 and, as a transgender woman in a men’s maximum security, I have been sexually harassed and assaulted over a hundred times in those two and a half years. On several occasions I have reported the rape, sexual harassment, threats, and extortion, and yet every time they claim there is no “evidence” to “support the allegations.” I’ve been bruised, driven to attempt suicide three separate times, emotionally and physically devastated by unchecked rape and harassment, and made to feel as if I am worth nothing. This has happened largely in what is known as “protective

custody,” where I am supposed to be safe. I have spent only five months total in two separate general populations (Attica and Auburn), and the remaining two years have been spent in protective custody (Attica, Auburn, Clinton). Largely, I have been allowed only two hours out of my cell a day (22 hours locked in by myself), feed in my cell, and allowed to shower only three times a week. Officers have opened my cell and allowed other inmates to gang rape and beat me!

Does this sound like an attempt at “striving to provide a safe, secure, and humane environment...”? Absolutely not! They continually deny the rampant existence of transgender inmates being raped and abused on a daily basis across the state.

I refuse to lay down and allow it to happen, and I pray that all my trans brothers and sisters, as well as any other inmate being abused, will find the strength, resolve, and courage to fight back by standing up and refusing to become a statistic! I pray that those who are abused will step forward, talk, and hold their abusers and imprisoners responsible!

We are under attack as a community, and no one in the Prison Industrial Complex cares in we live or die—breathe—or cry! So we must resist and use our voices and pens to make ourselves heard, and demand justice and protection we deserve in the P.I.C., Courts, and society as a whole.

Stand Up—Speak Out!  
Sara Carmine

### **Be Free, Be Who Your Meant to Be**

Man, woman, boy, girl... to so many these designations are finite and unchanging; you are what is in between your legs. But what about your soul, what about who you are in your heart? Is it fair for society to look us up and down, head to toe, and say “yup, you’re this” or “you’re that”?

For twenty-five years I’ve lived a lie, existing as someone I am not, and it has destroyed my spirit... but not my will to survive! You can call me “queer”, “freak”, “faggot”, whatever you like... you can laugh in my face and sneer behind my back. But I will not allow anyone to tell me who or what I am supposed to be any more. Only I can make that decision. No one is required to accept or condone how I live my life, but on the same token no one has the right to make me accept theirs. So, in the end, all are welcome to join me in my life, but if you choose not to, I will not allow it to cause me to lose sleep. So as I take my hormone therapy medication every morning I smile because it’s an act of social defiance, and a hostile takeover that takes complete control of my life for the first time.

I will love, live, and express my gender freely, and you may attack me for it but your status quo is not my reality!

Are you ready to break through those ceilings, and find a world that accepts everyone for who their heart is, or are you so afraid of the light of hope, change, and freedom that you’ll cling needlessly to a flawed gender tyranny?

Break free my sweet trans-sisters and brothers, or whoever you, they, he, she, xe, ze want to be!

- Sara

## Down the Rabbit-hole

Dear family,

It's weird how quickly things begin to change when we begin our hormone replacement; there are many unexpected turns ahead. I was officially diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria in May 2014, and began a slow progressive HRT regime under the supervision of an outside consulting endocrinologist in October 2014. I was started on 2 milligrams of estradiol (similar to estrace) and 200 milligrams of spironolactone (t-blocker) per day. 4 months later I was upped to 4 milligrams of estradiol, and this month in June I was again increased one last time to the max estrogen dose of 6 milligrams of estradiol. In the nine months that I've been on HRT, I have seen considerable breast growth, considerable sculpting and redistribution of body fat and facial features and, most unexpectedly, I have actually lactated (produced fluid from my breasts) on a couple occasions. The doctor assured me it was rare but not completely unheard of. With all of these major changes in 9 months, and the doctor telling me that it takes approximately 3 years (or 36 months) to get to the maximum development and feminization, I cannot help but wonder how well the HRT will have worked for me in 3 years.

The reason I tell all of you this is to remind you that there is hope! Just a year before, I was diagnosed while in NYS prison, where it was not allowed or recognized, and you could not get HRT unless you were on hormones prior to being arrested (the famous "freeze-frame"). But because

of the courage of one trans-woman in NYS prison, Jessica L., who in a landmark 1983 Federal Lawsuit in 2003 [filing #: 00-CV-1433] forced NYS prison to discard their "freeze-frame" policy in March 2013, and allow inmates to begin HRT while in DOCCS and to be diagnosed by a specialist while in DOCCS. If it wasn't for this brave woman I would never have had the opportunity to become my real self, because I am in for "25 - life" and have 23 years to go. Her courage gave me the opportunity to finally live!

The moral is that we are faced as the oppressed and demonized minority to stand up and fight for our rights; if we don't fight for ourselves no one will! So that issue you feel strongly about, or the medical care you've been denied... should not be sat on and let go, we need to demand our place in the courts and be heard. Only we can sue for what we need, so if your too timid to do so or too complacent then the problem will never get better only worse.

Currently, I am in court, state and federal, for several issues related to the LGBT+ community.

1. Transgender housing (State Supreme Court)
2. Laser Hair Removal (Federal w/ legal rep.)
3. Gender Reassignment Surgery (Federal)
4. Gender Affirming Clothing/Makeup (State)

I will stand for myself & my brothers and sisters, and demand what we deserve. *Please* do the same.

Fight for love and life!

- Jakaelynn



# Femme & Fierce

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## Recipe for DIY Lip Gloss

You will need a tube of lip balm, powdered sugar-free instant juice, two pieces of plastic wrap, the bottom half of a paper cup, plastic bowl, a hot pot and ice.

Once you've gathered your supplies wrap the lip balm in the plastic wrap and place it in the bowl with just enough water to cover the lip balm. This goes on top of your hot pot, creating a double boiler. When the water in the bowl is just passing 'warm' and approaching 'tasty' the lip balm should be melted. Pour the lip balm into the paper cup and add your sugar-free juice. CAREFUL: HOT! The more powder you use the richer the color you end up with. Quickly pour this back into the lip balm tube, wrap it with plastic wrap, and put it on ice.

After it solidifies, enjoy!

*Amber Fayefox*

## Defining the Divine

Recently *The Word Is Out* asked if contributors would send in work on being fierce and femme. So let me tell you who I am. My name, for those who don't know me, Fatima Malika Shabazz. I am at the moment confined to one of the State of California's many Gulags. I am an African American Transwoman, attempting to navigate my way through the maze of homophobic hatred that sometimes is overbearingly prevalent in the system; however, through all of that, the good and the bad, I make every attempt to stand firm on my womanhood, which as you can imagine is an everyday overtime job.

So in answer to the questions posed to your readers, here you are. I have had the misfortune of serving time in various states, over a lot of years, so I've seen how gender roles and the expression thereof have changed over the years. Historically, the role of gender establishment is predicated on the jungle mentality. The stronger "Alpha Males" usually dictate who is what, and what the person is supposed to do.

Depending on your level of aggressiveness and your ability to defend yourself, you will either be a part of the dominate culture or not. So in the good ole days (so to speak), if you presented as effeminate in any way, and could not defend yourself, you became the maytag, meaning you cooked cleaned washed clothing and serviced whomever you were told to service. However if you were challenged, be you GLBTQ or not, and could defend yourself (like the legendary Mother dear) you were actually left alone, and in most cases very well respected.

So early on my choice was to be very very good at defending myself. Conversely my life on the outside was very different. When I originally began presenting full time I had already established myself where I lived at the time, so I came into a welcoming environment as opposed to the one

I grew up in. It has had its challenges, but I've managed to overcome them for the most part.

My thoughts on being feminine are very simple, I believe being a woman to be the best damn thing on the face of the earth. I love every aspect of my womanhood and would not trade that for anything on earth, and being in prison has not changed my feelings in that regard. What has changed is my ability to outwardly express that feeling in my everyday presentation. In the state of California we have been fighting for sometime now to be allowed to present in our gender identity, and despite winning a court decision to that affect, the state is still being highly obstinate in giving us what we have coming. This is very disconcerting and rather depressing.

Being as Feminine as I can possibly be helps me get through not just my day, but (for lack of over expressiveness) it helps me get through my life, but as I stated previously, the state makes it hard for us as transwomen to present in a feminine manner, the prevailing statement is "this is a men's prison". At every turn we are reminded of our "biology." What is need to address the issue (at least in this state), is more understanding from the human level. The staff in this state are only driven to respect paperwork. If it is not written in a memo from Headquarters they are not compelled to care. And as long as the governing administration doesn't say it's wrong, the custody staff will perceive "all" they do as right; so basically since their bosses did not tell them it is wrong to mistreat trans inmates and be discriminatory toward members of the GLBTQ community it gives them license to do as they please in committing acts of homophobia in the name of the "policy".

Despite all this, I still make every effort to maintain my femininity, my DIY stuff is also fairly simple. I use colored pencils to create makeup, something as simple as paint and floor wax becomes nail polish. Though I don't do my fingernails much any more, I give myself pedicures regularly, and make every attempt to keep as many paint shades as I can get my hands on. I also do a lot of sewing, making skirts and dresses out of re-purposed things like sweatpants, and very big t-shirts I cut down and fit to my size. I can't wear any of the out fits outside the building, but whenever I am in my housing unit I am always dressed in female clothing.

My inspirations are wide ranging, from my friends, like Sarah, Anita, Jordan, and the girls at STELLA, as well as all the volunteers at QPIRG in Canada, to my people here in the states, Robyn and Tsunami, my Sisters, Jennifer in particular, and rani. All the way to people like Janet Mock and Laverne Cox. Not to mention Martine Rothblatt and her wife Beena, the two of them are amazing in what they have done across the board, not just for the GLBTQ community. We also have all the people at the TGJIP and Janetta Johnson from Stiletto.

The list of people who inspire me is endless. I'm even inspired by rapper Foxx Jazell, if you don't know her, then you

should get her Boy Girl Whatever track and check her out. To my knowledge she is the first Transgender (transwoman) hip hop artist. I'm inspired by any transgender person who has the courage to stand against racism, discrimination and for human rights, and do it not because it's fashionable, but because it's the right thing to do.

In the future I plan to create and build a non-profit organization based here in Los Angeles for the purpose of helping to build a better GLBTQ society, and by this a better society at large, and if you are anywhere in the known universe and want to be a part of the Griot Soul Collective, if you want solid positive change for the better, then we want to hear from you.

In the mean time, you can check out my written work at the following site: [fatinaspeaks.weebly.com](http://fatinaspeaks.weebly.com) For those who want to know about the Griot Soul Collective, email Sarah Mangle at the same site, and she and I will discuss it. Thank you all for your great work at QPIRG, you all do a great service for the GLBTQ community, and I for one greatly appreciate all of you.

In Solidarity Forever,  
*Fatima Malika Shabazz*

Dear family;

I hope you're well and warm because you are all definitely loved. The gang (figuratively speaking) at the PCP asked for experiences, stories, feelings regarding being fierce and femme. But to be honest, I'm much more butch; I have my moments though... tee-hee (Oops! That was one).

1) "How are gender roles established in prison? How does this compare with your experience on the outside?"

Gender role for me, no matter where I've been, cis male. Categorically and character-wise I exhibit strong maleness wherever I am. But like any of us, in circumstances where I can relax, I tend to channel some of the more feminine traits.

In prison for some, it's a bit different. If you're "out," even if you present like me, you're pursued by predators, at least at first. I define a predator in prison as anything from a gangster to/or anyone pretending to be "straight" in front of their "homeys," and yet gets down with men in secret. I'm careful to exclude anyone who's simply "closeted" due to fear, and isn't trying to subject anyone to his will, against their own.

2) "What are your thoughts and experiences of being femme or feminine? How did being in prison change this?"

The way I see myself and what I feel are what matters to me. I matter to me. So my experiences are of me. Prison won't change that. I'm too arrogant, conceited, and self-absorbed to lie, pretending to be someone I'm not, and don't care what inmates think about me. They're just inmates.

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?"

What helps me, regardless of the day or circumstances, is based on my own self-knowledge. Self-knowledge can make you self-determined. But whether this takes a gender specific form? No. Not only that, the sole mission of prison is to deny you self-determination which ensures your return. Your will to be self-determining is challenged and shouldn't be.

Changes?? Abolition. Alternative means of securing justice. Short of that: zero-tolerance, strict enforcement of PREA against prison employees who lie about and misrepresent PREA, which compromises the safety of the very people PREA was passed to protect; segregate gangs, gang "drop-outs," and like troublemakers at high security facilities, not medical or convalescent, or "soft" yards, which should be classified for senior prisoners, medical treatment, healing and physical therapy, and for prisoners who have exhibited no history of, or propensity for, violence, during their time in custody, and strictly construed and narrowly defined to particularly defined instances on a case by case basis.

4) "What are some of your 'DIY' or 'do-it-yourself' tricks and tips to expressing femininity in prison?"

No tricks. Just "be." Butch, femme; how you feel is what matters. You are who you are. Be proud. Be happy. Be fierce. If you're in a bad place, be smart. I happen to be at a facility that's slightly more "progressive."

5) "Who are some of your femme-inspirations?"

I've been isolated from popular gay culture since 2001, because I "came out" in prison. I guess you could say I'm "media-challenged" having had no access to TV, radio, etc. I saw a copy of Rolling Stone with an article about Adam Lambert. He presents what I've termed "Male Drag." He's the limit for me for femme inspiration.

*Jiordi Russell*



These are my thoughts of reality. My love and sincere thoughts to all our friends and their families who became victims from a senseless act of violence that took place at the “Pulse” nightclub in Orlando, FL, USA 2016. I visited there many of times. It was my safe haven.

I’m in full support for equal rights for all who are part of our community. I’ve been part of the “LBGT” family since birth if that’s possible. I’ve gone by the name Tiffany Joy (T.J.) since 11 years old. I identify myself as a female. There isn’t one ounce of masculinity within me. I walk, talk, dress, and think as any women would. No one will ever forcefully change me nor take it away. I’m honest with whom I keep with and never use my femininity for gain or to directly or intentionally deceive.

In my DOC surroundings I’m observant of individuals who act... so I would come to believe, that they have the female role down. They very flamboyant. They say they are trans. I just see them as flamboyantly gay. I don’t consider myself as gay, and by far have no flamboyancy about me. I see another side of some. In a situation or confrontation I kick and scratch and maybe even bite. Some who consider who say they like me fight better than Mike Tyson. I’m comfortable for the most part while here and with who I am. But why I am 97% girl but others don’t conduct themselves close to how I am. It’s hard to relate with most girls here. Who knows if they are being truthful with me or even themselves. I have a naive side about me that I have to keep in check. I’m an easy target for manipulation or even rape which is what one fears the most.

You would think being in an all male institution would be like a kid in a candy store. However it’s far from that. You get a lot of unwanted invitations like “I’ll do this for you baby” or “I’ll protect you.” I’m like “OH PLEASE! I can kick and scratch just fine without you.” There are some though that genuinely do care. I do get lonely here. I’m a hopeless romantic and one that needs love. So as a remedy my connection with y’all fills that void in my life for now.

Life is tons different for me now versus life on the street. I’m constantly having to remind myself about the way I walk. My hips have natural swing about them and it’s a dead giveaway sometimes I let loose. However it once again brings unwanted attention.

Some things I won’t give up shaving my underarms, it’s a must, shaping my eyebrows which I enjoy doing and spending lots of time on my finger and toe nails. I miss having them done. Just a few normal enjoyments. When it comes to my hair, well it was a little past my shoulders with bangs. Now it’s at the top of my ears and bangless. I miss my hair. My bras and panties are another thing I miss. Jail house G-strings – been there done that.

I’ve adapted by watching others and choosing for me what type of normalcy would work and what type definitely would not. In prison I’m trying to live life with some type of normalcy to it. Sometimes I become too relaxed, believe or not, and have to reel myself back in, it’s very frustrating for me.

I receive gifts from my women magazines I subscribe to. Sometimes I’ll receive samples of eye shadow, foundation or even lip gloss. The lip gloss is my favorite—once again normalcy in my life, my girlfriend applied some

red m&ms to my eyelids but it’s not the same. I was in a 2 person room at the time. I miss it but the temperature was like way to hot in the summer (no A/C).

Before I was hauled off to DOC (single digits and counting) I was to start my hormone therapy. I was so looking forward to this. Then finishing up with my gender reassignment. Can I still do this while on probation? It’s my body. Maybe Sara a.k.a. “Widow” can enlighten me in the direction I need to pursue in DOC and on the outside. How much is reassignment now? Hormone therapy. It’s been a while.

Living on the outside my true girlfriends always looked out for me because they loved me and well that naive thing again. Not about who I am but because I have an open heart and tend to believe anyone or anything that is said. This default of mine I believe is what keeps me pure and being pure means a lot to me.

And finally with my long winded self. I’ve been asked a lot about how I chose my name “Tiffany.” Here it is in a nut shell. I was 11 years old at the dinner table w/ my mom dad and siblings. Out of nowhere I said I don’t like my name, it doesn’t fit who I am. (My birth name is Robert.) My family are very supportive of my life style, my mom looked at me and asked “well what name do you feel would be more fitting?” It was quiet for a moment. I looked up as though to ponder and above our table was a beautiful hanging Tiffany light without hesitation I said “Tiffany”. My mom I remembered had hugged me and whispered in my ear “Tiffany is a beautiful name and you’ll bring a lot of joy and love to the world, I love you.” From that day forward most all recognize me as “Tiffany Joy Fairfax” (T.J. for short). Fairfax is the street we lived on when I chose my name. My favorite color? Pink and purple of course.

My love to all LGBTQ’s around the world specially to my new family!

*Tiffany Joy Fairfax*



# Miscellaneous thoughts on the Prison Industrial Complex

To all the lawyers up in the jailhouse:

I'm Jiordi. I've been writing for *The Word Is Out* a while now, along with reading as much as I can about all of you (tough without a computer), and this article's been trying to get out. Black and Pink's newspaper has also added to its urgency, as well as UltraViolet, published by LAGAI, San Francisco, California, USA.

The work I do is indirect, passive representation. I try to promote "inside out" activism. Obviously connection is key. Another GLBTQ advocacy group, Black and Pink in the US, has even been testing the feasibility of establishing chapters inside prisons. This could potentially streamline all prison activism, and make it feasible for other orgs similar to Black and Pink to do the same. How much longer I can do this without assistance, though, I can't say.

So, I want to start a dialog on certain issues I've compiled in the last couple of years or so. Many of you put your complaints, dreams and poems in print about you or your circumstances, and each says something about you you may not realize, which connect in ways we, on this side of the wall, don't fully grasp. That is to say, Hollywood on prison is pretty distorted. Build on the following thoughts. Critique each. Include benefits or drawbacks (feasibility) and whether you've watched any of these play out, how they relate, and what's "right" or "wrong" with each.

## I. Token economies on the yard. Who's rehabilitating who?

A token economy can be described as one which operates within a larger "legitimate" economy, with or without sanction. It may include all things related to economic exchange such as buying, selling, bartering, trading, transferring, or anything related to commerce.

## II. Refusal to participate. Grinding the prison industrial complex to a halt.

Revenue extraction and transfer are the primary functions of the prison industrial complex. It produces nothing. It is a vacuum. A "mindless eater" of resources. The more energy expended to maintain it, the more energy it sucks into its gaping maw. As a result, the bigger and hungrier it gets, and the more adept at consuming.

## III. Mission and goals of the prison industrial complex. How do they interrelate with rehabilitation and "public safety?"

The US has been successfully justifying its prison industrial complex for nearly 500 years. Fifteen generations. A blip in time in terms of the 50,000 to the more than 430,000 years at which some researchers place humankind on Earth. Yet over the course of this, gradually, more and more things are made criminal offenses.

## IV. Manipulating natural causes. How the prison industrial complex sees it.

"Natural causes" is a euphemism. An umbrella term that seeks generally circumstances within a concept or legal fiction of "nature" relating, in this sense, to how the prison industrial complex manages your time.

## V. The Prison Rape Elimination Act. Does anybody know anything at all, and if so, what?

The PREA has been both exalted and vilified. Sometimes in the same breath. It is misapplied, lied about, laughed at, made jokes about, and feared, all at the same time. Yet precious few can say truthfully, they understand it. And, yet fewer can prove it.

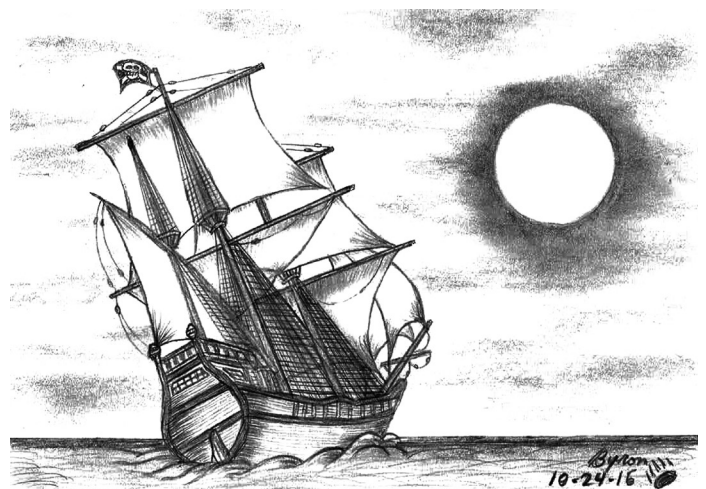
## VI. When are you "snitching?" Or not?

It may be important. Or not. "Snitching" is the only thing more politicised in prison than sex offenders. In the public sphere it's the reverse. Sex offenders are more politicised.

## VII. The Fourteenth Amendment. Its misuse, abuse, and who benefits.

Few could predict what ultimate effect the Fourteenth Amendment would have on prison culture. Admittedly, the legal impact has been extremely broad and profound. As with every piece of legislation, however, there have been unintended consequences. In this respect, it has facilitated and allowed various "privileged" classes to form, complete with a hierarchical "upper" class, with lower classes in descending order.

All my love to you, and all my love to all of you.  
This is Jiordi, standing in the gap...  
Jiordi Russell



# Homoscopes

## Aries



Well, Trump got elected so we are all going to need to kick and scream a little, Aries style. Thanks for offering true models for being a hot sexy baby and making noise about what feels wrong in the world and what feels awesome. Aries energy provides hot top dom possibilities for playing with control and thinking about what feels good in a moment where loss of control is a very possible option. Use this Daddy Power to show the rest of us bratty children how to play fair and have fun while things just feel like a zombie apocalypse. We love you, Ram Child.

## Taurus

You make all the spaces around you a delight to share. And you are so sturdy and bably and cool. We all need to lean on you now to get through Trump times and Trump hair and other science fictions on TV these days. Please tell us all your secrets, Taurus: how do you say “no” even when it feels like the only option is consent? We have watched you stomp your feet and grumble and keep your ground, which makes us all want to hold on to your amazing post-post gym body for dear life. You are solid. You are thoughtful. Keep doing what you do and make some room for us on your pedestal, please.



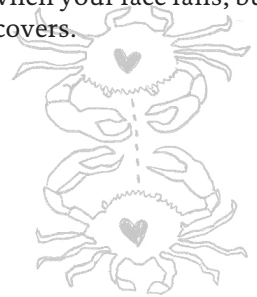
## Gemini

Chatty Cathy Gemini over here is yet again telling me all the things I don't want to think about! Why are you saying that my panty lines are visible and that Trump is president and that my love is too gay? I mean, I'm sure these things could be true but can't we just sit in silence and ponder them and daydream harder about the world we want to see? Why do we have to talk and talk and talk and talk? Gemini, we want to kiss you and hold you and spoon you into the night and hear all your plans for getting rid of prisons and eating birthday cakes to celebrate. So fine, you can still keep us chatting but please whisper something really dirty into my ears.



## Cancer

Oh no, Cancer. Please don't cry. I know this fall has been really heavy and Trumpy and hard. But think of all the things we have to cheer us up: 1) Being homos. That's fun! 2) Loving each other. Even though sometimes they tell us that is impossible. 3) Being hard and unbreakable but a total softie, just like you! And, don't forget that Mars is on your side this month, making you break through the limits others have set that keep you sobbing. Let us hug you if that would help any. You're beautiful when your face falls, but also you cheer us all up when it recovers.



## Leo

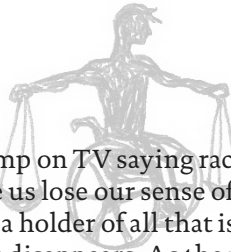
Only a Leo can make winter fashion so fun! Bundled, and cloaked, and wrapped in layers, you still manage to make your Lion heart glow gold and neon through all the dreary moments of Trumpy Winter. We are going to gravitate to your sunny gay glow now more than ever, needing a little taste of what comes to you so easily, Leo. You are radiant. You are stunning. And you want us all to recognize that- and we do- even if we have all been too busy Sigourney Weaving aliens through our abdomens to give you the high five you deserve.



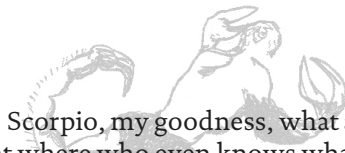
## Virgo

Organize this, Virgo, because we all need to make a list. We need to get grounded and real and sassy and call out what we don't like and fix it. You might be panicked, but you are also right in squealing and crying and having a meltie, because Trump is here and things are scary! We love you for saying it as it is and for fixing our hemlines and rolling up our sleeves and making us look orderly when we all feel kafuffled and stressed the eff out. Draw on Venus and Saturn this month to give you what you need to keep the rest of us together, and we will keep loving your sweet self as hard as we can.

## Libra



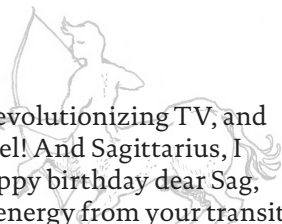
Safe word, Libra! Trump on TV saying racist things and then getting elected made us lose our sense of justice. We need you Libra, as you are a holder of all that is fair in the world, even when fairness disappears. As the vanguard of accountability, we all know you are stellar at holding people to a balance and reducing harm and ending prison and being more gay and so forth. Saturn advises to please do not let moments of racist injustice block your work and your kindness and insights. We are still looking to you for guidance, and we think you are just darling and winning and great.



## Scorpio

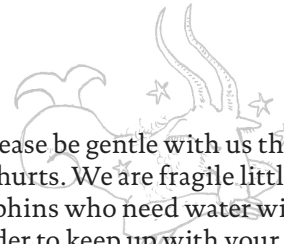
Scorpio, my goodness, what a sneaky Trumped out moment where who even knows what is real. Is the Internet real? Is Beyoncé still Queen? Is Q.u.e.e.n. real? Is water sacred? Am I a water sign or a secret ice queen in a metal onesie? Be careful to thaw out that frozen heart in order to save what you know to be necessary. Protests at Standing Rock for indigenous lands and clean water systems are teaching us all to take to the frontlines, like a Scorpio, and fight for water and all that is real to us.

## Sagittarius



There are trans women revolutionizing TV, and I never want to change the channel! And Sagittarius, I want to ask you out on a date! Happy birthday dear Sag, you are here just in time to draw energy from your transits with lucky Jupiter to fly us up into outer space where we can have threesomes with androids, and create robotic butterflies and rechargeable vibrators, and new faraway planets inhabited entirely by cats. You are a brilliant resource in the wake of Trump, and we want you to shuttle us off into your rocketship, phallic connotations and all.

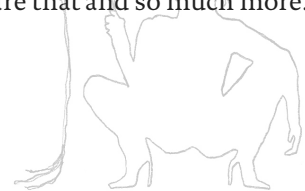
## Capricorn



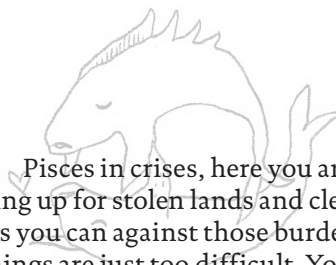
Capricorn, please be gentle with us this winter. Trump is here, and it hurts. We are fragile little baby deer and tiny majestic dolphins who need water wings and magic healing crystals in order to keep up with your stunning but intimidating levels of productivity. You are doing it. You are making stuff happen in spite of everything. You are backed by Mars and working out harder than ever for all of us, but I beg of you not to judge. We want to stand behind you and admire your work (and your butt). Just please give us some space to appreciate you without peeing on our naptimes and our alone time and our meltdowns and our coffee breaks. Thanks, baby.

## Aquarius

Aquarius you are going to be the next President, so don't even worry about the election. What election, you ask? Exactly. You are drawing on all your retrogrades and magnetic Jupiter energies to take down the systems that lock us in cages. We will all stay up at night and wet dream about every possibility, until you are free also. You are giving us what we need so we can love one another. Speaking of love, did I mention that I have a secret crush on you? How do you get your eyes to sparkle so intensely? Magic??? Yes, I believe you are that and so much more.



## Pisces



Pisces in crises, here you are at the frontlines standing up for stolen lands and clean water and rallying hard as you can against those burdens that make us all feel like things are just too difficult. You are doing reps and laps and pumping trump to make your workout more passion filled and consensual/sensual than ever before. You are telling us secrets and staring right into our souls and I hope one day I can kiss your lips and hold you forever and show you that we will all be there for each other until the pain ends. Sending witchy astrological love to hold you and us all into the spring. XO.

# Lavender and Red #116

## The Cynical Abuse Of 'Women's Rights'

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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.*

The U.S. did not unleash war on Afghanistan in 2001 to “liberate” women. But pro-war spin doctors—embedded with the corporate media—went into overdrive to create that impression after 9/11. Public relations campaigns “sold” as liberation a high-tech imperialist war against an impoverished country with no air force.

This was designed to obscure the fact that imperialism had no right to violate Afghanistan’s self-determination and sovereignty.

The New York Times offered a more candid geopolitical view as early as Jan. 18, 1996, in an article entitled “The New Great Game in Asia”—referring to the 19th century struggle among capitalist powers to control the Eurasian landmass and the warm-water ports of the Persian Gulf.

The Times explained, “While few have noticed, Central Asia has again emerged as a murky battleground among big powers engaged in an old and rough geopolitical game. Western experts believe that the largely untapped oil and natural gas riches of the Caspian Sea countries could make that region the Persian Gulf of the next century. The object of the revived game is to befriend leaders of the former Soviet republics controlling the oil, while neutralizing Russian suspicions and devising secure alternative pipeline routes to world markets.”

After overturning the bloc of workers’ states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, U.S. finance capital schemed to secure ownership of trillions of dollars worth of buried oil and gas treasure in the Caspian Sea region, which had for decades been collectively owned by the workers and peoples of the region.

Transnational energy giants like Unocal and Enron saw Afghanistan as the best path to pipe oil and gas from Central Asia to the world market.

The Bush neo-cons, Pentagon brass and the military-industrial complex worked overtime to frame this as a campaign for women’s rights.

Laura Bush delivered the presidential radio address on Nov. 16, 2001—a month after the Pentagon assault began. Her speech focused on women’s rights in Afghanistan: “The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.” It was a total lie.

### Afghan Revolution advanced women’s rights

An article in Workers World on Oct. 10, 1996, by Deirdre Griswold showed how a progressive revolution in Afghanistan in 1978 had taken measures to liberate women and challenge centuries of landlordism. In response, the U.S. pulled together an army of pro-feudal elements to crush that revolutionary government, forcing it to call on the USSR for support.

The WW article quoted from a 1986 Department of Defense publication titled “Afghanistan—a Country Study.” Even this Pentagon book had to admit that the 1978 revolution brought many gains to Afghan women and girls.

Women were organized in the Democratic Women’s Organization of Afghanistan. The national group had been founded in 1965 by Dr. Anahita Ratebzada. Her companion Babrak Karmal, who founded the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan the same year, later became the country’s president.

One of the first actions of the revolution was to end “bride-price” and allow women to make marriage choices. Punishment of women who had sex outside of marriage was prohibited. Women could choose to wear or not to wear the veil, travel in public, get an education and work at a job. Women of all classes—not just the well-to-do—were trained as doctors, teachers and lawyers.

Brigades of women and other young Afghans brought medical care to rural peasants.

The revolution impacted the life of one third of the rural population—landless peasants, sharecroppers and tenants held in virtual bondage to landlords and money lenders.

Before the revolution, 5 percent of the landlords claimed ownership of more than 45 percent of the country’s arable land. “When the PDPA took power,” the Pentagon report noted, “it quickly moved to remove both landownership inequalities and usury.” One of the revolutionary land reforms was the cancellation of mortgage debt for agricultural laborers, tenants and small landowners.

On the eve of the revolution, 96.3 percent of the women of Afghanistan were illiterate; rural illiteracy for all the sexes was 90.5 percent. The progressive government created massive literacy programs and printed textbooks in Dari, Pashtu, Uzbek, Turkic and Baluchi.

The 1986 Pentagon report stated, “The government trained many more teachers, built additional schools and kindergartens, and instituted nurseries for orphans.”

The Washington Post admitted that Afghan women were the strongest supporters of the 1978 revolution.

But this revolution was crushed by a well-funded, well-armed counterrevolution in which U.S. imperialism made common cause with feudal patriarchs. Women were then bought and sold as property once again.

National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and

former CIA Director Robert M. Gates later publicly bragged that, beginning in early 1979, the CIA had funneled money and arms to counter-revolutionary groups, many of them members of militias loyal to local landowners.

Democrats and Republicans had approved at least \$8 billion for this counterrevolutionary effort that hired, armed and trained the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and other forces.

CIA historian John Ranelagh recalls that then President Jimmy Carter OK'd "more secret operations than Reagan later did." Carter later admitted in his memoirs that his administration actually considered the use of tactical nuclear weapons against the progressive developments in Afghanistan.

## U.S. set women's rights back centuries

By 1992 the Soviet Union was overturned and the progressive government in Afghanistan was defeated by imperialism. After four years of internecine struggle among different Afghan factions, the Taliban came to power.

Michael Meacher, a senior Labor Party member of Parliament who had been a member of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's cabinet, observed in a Sept. 6, 2003, article in the Guardian of London, "Until July 2001 the U.S. government saw the Taliban regime as a source of stability in Central Asia that would enable the construction of hydrocarbon pipelines from

the oil and gas fields in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, through Afghanistan and Pakistan, to the Indian Ocean.

"But confronted with the Taliban's refusal to accept U.S. conditions, the U.S. representatives told them 'either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs.'"

Washington took advantage of the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, to launch an invasion of Afghanistan.

U.S. occupiers appointed former Unocal advisors to be both the titular president of Afghanistan and the U.S. ambassador to the country.

The continuing imperialist blitzkrieg has destroyed the infrastructure—including potable water, sewage and electricity—worsening hunger and disease. Soviet-built public urban housing complexes and schools lie in ruins.

These conditions create suffering for all sexes, genders and sexualities in Afghanistan, particularly for women. In 2004, some provinces reported 593 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births.

Pentagon Special Forces commandos can kick in the door of a home at any hour of the day or night, body search Afghan women and their loved ones, and drag them all off in hoods to torture chambers.

That's imperialist-style "liberation."

## U.S. Prison Strike

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As of September 9th, prisoners incarcerated in at least 21 states began to strike prison labor, or that they have called "modern-day slavery." Although exact numbers are difficult to find, reports say that over 20,000 inmates in over 29 individual prisons have launched strikes and skipped work since the initial strike. The strike marked the 45th anniversary of the 1971 Attica Prison riot in New York state when 1,300 prisoners demanded political rights and better living conditions that have not improved today.

While some State officials deny the presence of the strike, some criminal justice advocates on the outside say this is the largest and most significant inmate strike in American history. In California, at least 150 inmates are confirmed to be on strike in the John Latorraca Correctional Facility and Merced County Sheriff Jail, demanding an end to solitary confinement, and reports state that the largest women's prison in the state, Central California Women's prison in Chowchilla, is on an all-out strike. In Florida, protests erupted in 4 facilities in the north of the state - visitations were cancelled and lockdowns began. In Michigan, prisoners at the Kinross Correctional Facility refused to report for kitchen work, forcing correctional officers to provide bagged food for lunch and breakfast the next day. And at the same facility, 400 prisoners marched peacefully in the yard for several hours when a common room was damaged, and the facility was put on lockdown.

The strike was organized at Holman Prison in Alabama by a group of inmates who call themselves the Free

Alabama Movement. The organizers chose not to release a single list of demands, deciding that separate state prisoner groups should issue their own because conditions differ by state and prison, but the strike's central focus is to end legalized slavery in prisons. The US Supreme Court claims that prisons should not be dangerous or dehumanizing, but allowing people to work for little to no pay is clearly dehumanizing and nothing short of modern slavery. The 13th Amendment of the US Constitution allows this treatment because it outlawed slavery but with the exception of people convicted of crimes.

While prisoners are not included in national employment numbers and surveys, at least half of the nation's 1.5 million prisoners do have a job. The average wage for an American prisoner is 20 cents per hour, however, some states like Texas, Arkansas, and Georgia, pay nothing at all. Despite having jobs, the court has consistently ruled that captive workers are not employees and therefore do not require fair wages. Those involved in the movement believe that the prison system depends on exploiting these workers and that many prisons would be forced to close without their slaves. So many inmates risking discipline, solitary, and extended sentences to protest shows the intense need for changing conditions on the inside and is hopefully forcing those on the outside to question the existence of mass incarceration and the American prison system as a whole

# Our Powerful Rainbow

Cherrie Bomb

The beauty in the blue sky  
Also in our hearts  
I'm happy with our people  
We are everywhere in life  
Straights hate us even kill us  
But there misled and afraid  
Our path is hard but we love everyone  
Regardless of homophobic's sour souls  
We are strong and precious people  
All sex is good sex in my book  
I'm universal I love both genders  
But I go crazy in love for any red head transgenders  
Our colorful flag I'm so proud of  
I'm fully out the closet not afraid to show my face  
My family is religious and disowned me now  
But with my art skills I will survive on my own  
I love looking at our rainbow in the clear sky  
I'm proud of our community who is strong and proud.

# Determination

Patrice Daniels

The determination to transcend the narrow confines of this temporal plane is at the very core of who I am as a person. Determination allows me to face each and every day of this incremental death sentence with purpose, relative peace of mind, curiosity, courage, relative compassion, and a spirit of general optimism. Determination gives me the ability to reject the stereotypes, profiles, and statistics that would otherwise box me in. Determination has afforded me the ability to see beyond the regrettably horrible crime I committed and yet still carve out some semblance of self-worth/value despite. And that's not at all meant to be dismissive—nor to minimize—the mere acceptance of full responsibility for my actions and voluntary efforts towards changing says plenty about my genuine, heartfelt remorse. Determination is in large part the engine that drives this vehicle—and without it my life would be wholly stagnant and frankly a waste.

# Queer & Trans Organizing

We want to hear from YOU: Submit to the next issue!

For our next issue, we are looking for art, poetry, and writing on the topic of gay, queer, and trans organizing inside. There is so much potential in organizing on the inside with other inmates. Jirodri Russell, on page 13 of this newsletter, discusses some thoughts on the Prison Industrial Complex, exploring some possible avenues for resisting and organizing. He brings up the idea of “inside out” activism, stressing the importance of connections with other people, outside organizations and other groups to form networks of support and resistance.

We want to hear about your experiences, thoughts, ideas, and stories about organizing and working with trans siblings, gay brothers, queer sisters and others in and out of prison to support each other. As always, we're looking for **art, writing, and poetry** on this theme.

Have you been a part of gay prisoner-led or prisoner-initiated support groups? Do you have any advice on starting a support group? Do you have stories about organizing with fellow trans people to improve your conditions? What kind of actions, techniques, or strategies have you employed? What roles have straight allies played in your experience? Do you have any community organizing experience outside? How has this influenced your experience inside? How have you worked with outside organizations?

# Straight Talk

Thanks to a growing partnership with Recon, a prisoner-initiated support program also based in Montreal, we're exploring an opportunity to go into a local institution to give a workshop to their inside members. We were thinking of using this chance to talk to a group of largely straight men about being allies to gay, bi, trans and other queer inmates. That's where you come in! Send us any stories you have about examples of times straight allies have supported you. If you have any stories or other ideas for what we should talk to this group about, write us a letter with “ATTN: PCP Workshop” at the top.

# 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!

## Thin Lines: Perspectives on HIV from Behind Bars

Assembled from submissions from our very own inside members, this zine gives insight into life with HIV in prisons as well as providing some tips for safe needle use and a snapshot of HIV positive prisoner's rights.

## A Prisoner's Guide to: Health and Medical Information – compiled by Salerno

This resource is a comprehensive guide of common injuries, allergies and ailments and how to treat them. A great way to take health matters into your own hands with the resources that are available to you. This zine is the first volume of what we hope will be many more!

## 6 Things to Know about Hep C

This essential resource provides six key messages on hepatitis C—in a clear and direct way, with simple images—about: what it is, how it is different from other hepatitis viruses, routes of transmission, the importance of testing, and the effectiveness of new treatments.



# A Love Letter to the Orlando Nightclub Kidz

## Starkissez to All 49 Soulz

### Pieface

Legacy...Beautician...Gaga...Tremendous...  
My flavour is L.B.G.T.  
Oh, and by the way,  
*I'm different.*  
Dancing w/ him in the ocean seahalls, only to see nemo,  
Hi, nemo, have you found dory, ? Freedom iz looking 4 you.  
Hate of someones gum, materialize outta thin air.  
My friendz, my dear friendz, my love,  
Why do you fear our gay? My style, being different, my beautiful smile of free life. Is that why you abuse me?  
Flaunt my love,  
Judging my sexuality w/ bullets,  
No more crying queer, our tears are being taken 4 granted.  
Were going to show them fire & rain, bury hate and control (you).  
Whatever it costs, send it to space so it can't breath and hurt us anymore. It'z not about being gay, it'z about our humanity and civil rights of freedom. Is this America, or a dictatorship of genocide w/ people who lookz different in love.  
Do you fear my everything? Are my colorz 2 bright, or your Christianity too conservative lace w/ being a hibernate,  
my play w/ wordz are intentional, because you ho'z are so hilariously.  
My mama taught me to fight w/ my intelligence.  
Your mask of shame, (is not my fault)  
you swim w/ shame bitch and see how far that gets you.  
Patronizing faces encourage rage,  
caramelsweet orlando nightclub kids, I'll give up my life to hold you in gods empathy, without fear of oppressive-hearts.  
Humans look at your identities as if they're your children, and surrender humanity's love.  
It's going 2 be alright orlando world, one day life will be different. No bitternezz in your conscience spirit, your joy of singing w/ Rihanna, will keep the mosquitos away.  
Send my hugs 4 you,  
wine kisses w/ warm giggles, and pecan pie will keep you sweet.  
Orlando nightclub kids, lets dance 4 the fallen,  
shake yo' hips boo-boo kitty

