

To: Department of Corrections
From: Paula Hill Harris

To all it concerns:

2 years ago I was told that I'd be the property of the Department of Corrections and I would be Inmate 561791, but I would like to inform you that on 1-10-2010 I will be leaving the dehumanizing confines of the Institution not as an inmate, but as a Souljah in the struggle to change while being held captive within the razor wire.

The Correctional tactics at your institution has broken many, but I refused to bend which I was placed in Tango dorm labeled Close Management inmate, confined 23 hours a day to one cold cell, forced to eat food unfit for any human. Sitting in that cell, I was subjected to the toxic fumes of CN, CS being sprayed to control females for the least infraction. Or not to mention the cell removal team made up of 5 or 6 men to force one female out of a cell or to comply. These females end up with cuts, bruises, not to mention black eyes from being punched by the officers who are restraining them. This is not corrections in any sense of the word. This is **brutality**! So, while you keep putting LOL (Laugh Out Loud), I'm doing to do my own LOL, but mine will mean Lead Out Lead!

When I finish speaking, change will come to the fraud you have presented to the world. I plan to open the book on your corrupt mistreatment and abuse.

Souljah #7
aka Paula Hill Harris
formerly inmate 561791

*Paula Hill Harris was released from
prison on Jan 10, 2010*

Thank you for participating in the response zine to *Using Media to Connect People Inside and Out*.

At the 2009 Allied Media Conference, over a dozen media makers created a zine page (or pages) for a zine to be sent into people in prison across the nation. The zine was distributed through several books to prisoners programs and to the approximately 75 incarcerated women on the mailing list of *Tenacious: Art and Writings from Women in Prison*.

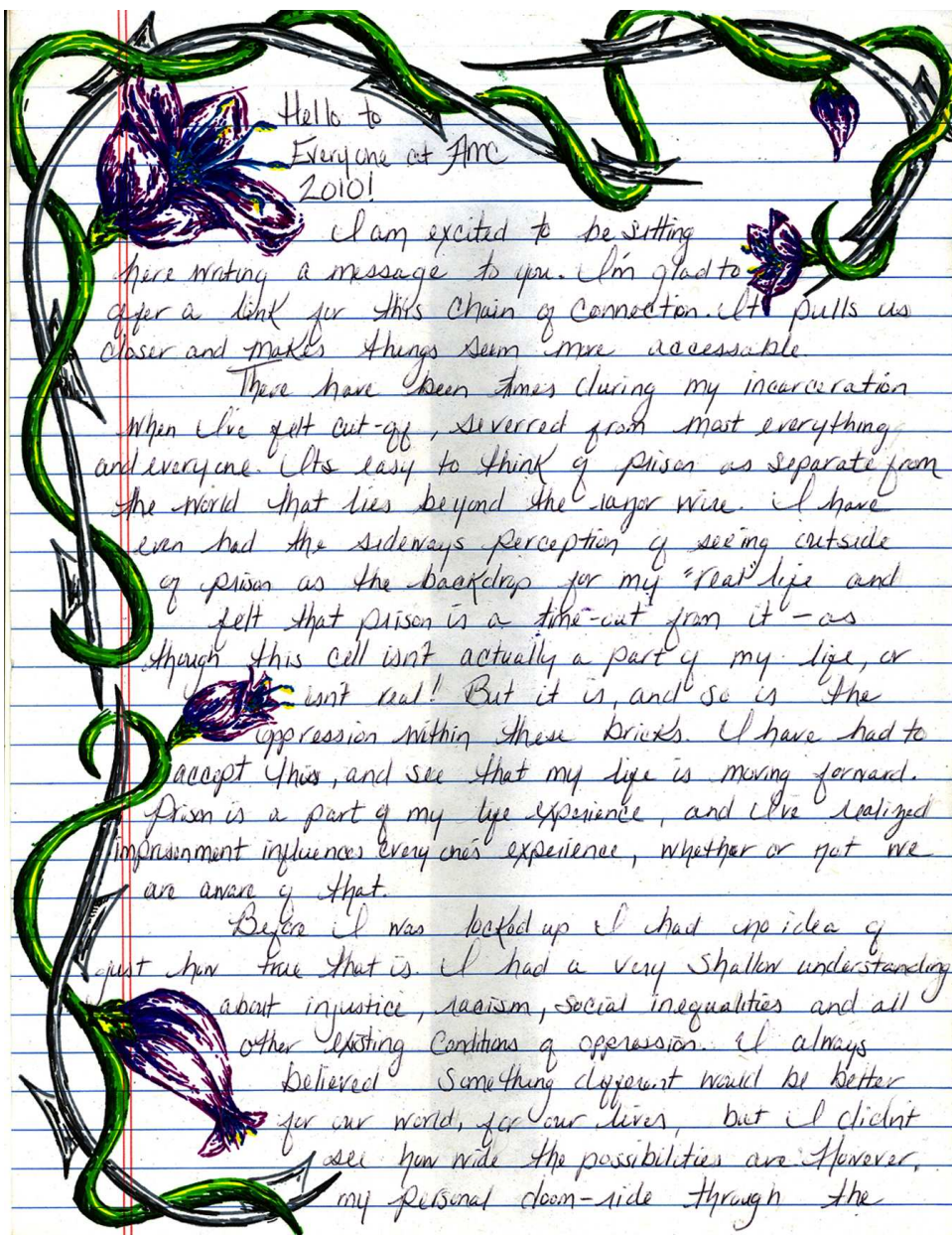
As you can see, these are the responses.

This zine will be distributed at this summer's Allied Media Conference in Detroit, MI. We hope this project will continue and are encouraging this year's conference attendees to respond to the contents of this zine. Hopefully they will and a conversation—if not multiple conversations—can continue between this year and next.

Thanks again for participating.

*cover image by Rachel Galindo, 131837
1401 West 17th Street, Pueblo, CO 81003*

To read or download a copy of the original zine, go to:
<http://alliedmediaconference.org/files/amczine.pdf>



Hello to
Everyone at Amc
2010!

I am excited to be sitting
here writing a message to you. I'm glad to
offer a link for this Chain of Connection. It pulls us
closer and makes things seem more accessible.

There have been times during my incarceration
when I've felt cut-off, severed from most everything
and everyone. It's easy to think of prison as separate from
the world that lies beyond the razor wire. I have
even had the sideways perception of seeing outside
of prison as the backdrop for my "real life" and
felt that prison is a time-out from it - as
though this cell isn't actually a part of my life, or
isn't real! But it is, and so is the
oppression within these bricks. I have had to
accept this, and see that my life is moving forward.
Prison is a part of my life experience, and I've realized
imprisonment influences every one's experience, whether or not we
are aware of that.

Before I was locked up I had no idea of
just how true that is. I had a very shallow understanding
about injustice, racism, social inequalities and all
other existing conditions of oppression. I always
believed something different would be better
for our world, for our lives, but I didn't
see how wide the possibilities are. However,
my personal doom-side through the

court re-appearance, write letters to get to
know the person and learn of their problem. This
is not to excuse the crime but to help stop
recidivism and proper reentry to the free
world. With connection and support, all things
(positive) are possible.

You can find the network site on

www.postpartum.net

God bless us all! Together we can rebuild a life
that was shattered.

Margaret Majos

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Lincoln Correctional Center

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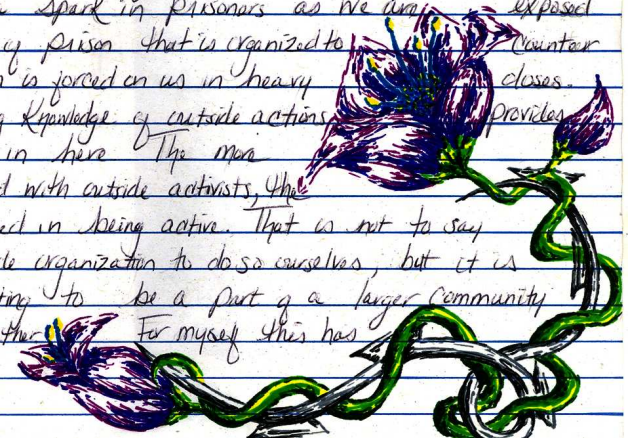
daughter who suffered from ppd. Carol Blocker started a website line and mothers act project, and finally it was accepted by legislators as the Mothers' Act Law. It involves screening new moms for possible ppd symptoms to prevent them. It's a great idea. Women suffer from postpartum depression and are too embarrassed to reach out. Now, through the network, its leaders and media, those moms are helped. We, on another side, inside the walls, established support for one another, fighting to regain our freedom one more time. The support group is there to assist us. The letters on behalf of postpartum victims like me and many others to court or the governor if in a process of clemency. The ppd has its symptoms and has to be diagnosed by the medical doctor or psychologist. When I realized (after diagnosis) that I suffered from ppd, I was and still am determined to advocate the subject.

How could media help even more? First, to educate itself on ppd, reach out to inmates, moms, to their families, perhaps follow on their

criminal (in)justice system and within the prison system has shed for me much needed illumination.

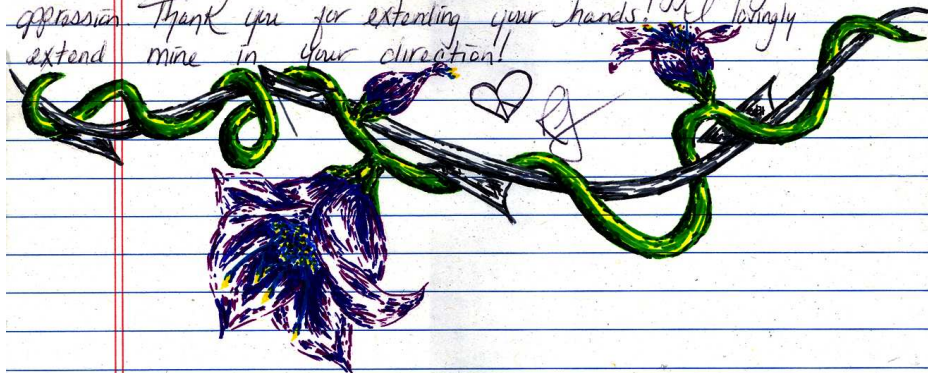
Since I've been locked up, whether accidentally or because I was searching, I discovered that there are (or was discovered by) communities and individuals who see that something else for our world is possible. From some of these groups and individuals I have received zines, art, books, pamphlets and other creations put out by the presses of alternative media. Corresponding with radical thinkers and having access to radical works has had an impact on me. I have lived off of these connections and am grateful because I continue to learn and to be inspired. Inspiration has been part of my own inner-expansion, enabling me to acknowledge what I have to offer and feel more able to share.

Many times having zines and such has provided a focalization for conversations and conversations between women here. Inter-prison networks rely heavily on sharing resources, and for us who have them, reading material and contact info is never exempt. Time and time again, I have seen a spark in prisoners as we are exposed to resistance outside of prison that is organized to counter oppression, much of which is forced on us in heavy closes. In a large way, having knowledge of outside actions provides hope for us to resist in here. The more prisoners feel connected with outside activists, the more we are also engaged in being active. That is not to say that we rely on outside organization to do so ourselves, but it is rewarding and motivating to be a part of a larger community that is working together. For myself this has been true.



I definitely agree that in order for us to disarm the Prison Industrial Complex we prisoners must be a bigger part of the dialog. And for that to happen we need to be as vigilant as guerillas scaling walls to reach each other. As time goes on, I ask myself more and more what am I able to do? How can I resist right now? This is why I'm excited to see that on both ends of a continuous chain we are striving to strengthen our connections and demolishing state-laid barriers that sometimes obstruct what could be a larger organization.

Though there is a persistent illusion that people in prison and people on the streets live in two separate worlds, the truth is we share one and share the struggle against all oppression. Thank you for extending your hands! I'll lovingly extend mine in your direction!



Rachel Galindo, 131837, La Vista Correctional Facility
1401 West 17 Street, Pueblo, CO 81003

Without any results, for years, I tried to connect with other women who suffered from it. I read books, researched, and decided to write letters and sent them to everybody I knew: churches, even senators. About five to six years ago, I have learned there is a postpartum network established in California and Illinois, and a great group of professionals and volunteers want to help women like us. The main idea is to educate the society, hospitals, legislators, court officers, about the subject, to help them to understand it. The network grows daily. More and more professional medical staff become aware of the importance of educating others, especially expecting moms. The support group responded to me and other inmates. We exchange letters, newsletters, and developed a pen pal program. The media is aware of that and follows up interviewing some of us, writing articles in newspapers and magazines. They support us not only through sending us mail but emotionally and mentally by sharing their experiences. We met great women, doctors, senators, even a mother of her deceased

Thoughts on Post Partum in Prison and Out

As a woman who is incarcerated for the last long 20 years, and used her time in advantage of getting more and more education and perhaps finding solitude again in our noisy world, the stereotype ideal is "to lock us away because we deserve it and forget about us!" Media plays a big role in the prison system. For many years, I watched outside society ignoring the cry of the inside world. We are just human beings with souls who made mistakes, but then again, don't we all? Don't we? Mistakes? Yeah!

Connection and support can transform lives. For a long time, I tried to "educate" other women, young mothers, and write people in the free world about the issue of postpartum depression (ppd) which led many to prisons. It's a horrible disorder! I suffered from ppd before my incarceration, which led me to prison. At the time, no one understood the danger of ppd.

September 30, 2009

Dear Professor Susan,

You asked what I as a prisoner would like to say to your class on the subject of prison. Well, I have before me an article out of Newsweek magazine full of statistics, etc. but your students probably don't need anymore of those. I could wax long on the handfuls of abuse of authority witnessed that went unreported because that man had nobody on the outside to speak up for him, but then it would also be necessary to comment on the humane actions of certain guards who risk disciplinary action giving food and hygiene to those without. It all seems petty.

No—what I would say is simply this: We are your brothers and sisters. We are people of all stripes, not the refuse of society. We are a microcosm of the world, but we are forced to live out of balance. This is hard to explain; living it is really the only way to understand. We need you out there to keep the lines of communication open and see us as what we truly are...the other part of you.

I graduated from Mineral Wells High School in 2003. I took AP classes mixed in with some honors courses, yet none of that prepared me for what was to come. I've been in since May 2004 for a crime committed at 17, receiving 6 years' incarceration. I've never been in trouble before that, nor since, while in here, but I was denied parole and required to serve it all flat because I was considered "violent." The truth is I haven't been in a fight since the 7th grade. Nobody showed their support during my parole hearing and the parole board sees that

as an opportunity to keep someone. Maybe you guys talk a little about parole statistics in class or how they spend an average 2 -3 minutes on each file that comes up (unless you have the good fortune to hire a parole lawyer) or on the monstrous lengthy sentences that are given out by one-horse-town judges here in Texas without batting one eye. These are people's lives...

I don't know how to solve the P.I.C. problem All I know for a fact is the isolation and resentment it breeds only exacerbates an already grievous situation within our justice system. You live in a fast-paced world of texting, Twitter, facebook, and sometimes forget that snail mail is the best we have at times. (The phone system installed recently allows us to call a very limited group of people for high charges) this usually leads to a schism between us and you in my experience, which is really sad. Contact with us is inconvenient by design...think about that for a while.

I get out May 7, 2010. I haven't really had constant contact with anyone regularly out there, so I'm anxious, scared and insecure about reintegration with society. I feel different. So please, if any of you know anyone who is locked up, just stay in touch and let them know they are loved. It makes all the difference, and you will be helping somebody in need in far greater measure than you can imagine...

My love to all of you.

Sean Anthony
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The GEO Group Inc.
Bridgeport Correctional Center
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stressors). She's lost more weight than she can afford to lose and looks more waif-like than ever.

As Dostoyevsky writes, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons."

Jane Dorotik
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testify at Doris's hearing. And so, of course, Doris was found guilty.

Doris spent 60+ days in Ad-Seg, has a serious disciplinary on her records (her first serious in 28+ years of incarceration)—all over the presumption of what constitutes “excessive toilet paper.”

Does this sequence of events make anyone wonder how the prison system's 11 billion dollar budget is being utilized?

Does anyone wonder how Doris may fare with the parole board (IF she ever is allowed in front of them) with this kind of charge on her record?

Does anyone even care about what goes on behind prison walls?

The sequel to all of this—now 6 months after it all happened—is Doris's seriously deteriorating health. She has now suffered a perforated bowel requiring emergency surgery secondary to debilitating ulcerative colitis (a disease closely related to psychological

1/25/10

Dear AMC,

I've been holding your zine in my locker for a while now trying to decide what I can tell you that you don't already know. You all have asked what you can do to reach us in here, how we can reach you out there, and how we can dismantle the prison-industrial complex together. I don't know. I've spent a lot of time thinking about why this place exists and how we all ended up here. I just don't know what to do about it.

I do know that a lot of us need help. Some women here have no one at all. No one writes them, no one visits them, and they have nowhere to go when they leave. Some women only know people who live criminal lifestyles and even though they mean well, they drag each other down time after time. Then there are women like me, who come from good homes and have a hard time identifying with their families at home and end up returning to destructive behaviors out of boredom and loneliness. We need friends who do the right thing day after day to help us get on the right path. We need a crowd to hang with that isn't all about getting high or getting over on people. I guess what I mean is that we need mentors, or just people that can point us in the right direction from time to time.

A specific thing I know of that can help would be a scholarship for inmates taking college correspondence courses. I have earned 20 credits so far, but it's taken me more than 5 years because of the cost. My family can barely send me money for my canteen, all my courses were paid for by my hitting up everyone I know for donations. Even a loan program would be great. Education is the best safeguard against coming back and it's important to me. I'd like to someday work building zero-energy buildings, maybe as an architect, maybe as an engineer. I know I'm not the only one that's having trouble finding tuition money; most women I talk to say that's why they've never taken any courses.

Other than that, keep doing what you're doing. I found your zine on the wall, so someone must've read it before I did. After I mail this, I'm putting it back on the wall so someone else can read it. It'll probably be passed a dozen more times before it ends up in the recycling bin. You are definitely reaching us here.

Anyways, thanks for thinking of us. Please send your 2010 issue when you make it. I promise to pass it around when I get it. ☺

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The previous, more humane sergeant was not to be seen for the rest of the night, and the new sergeant sends the goon squad to escort Doris back up to the program office. There she is, spread-eagle against a wall, feet kicked out to a wider and wider stance by aggressive sergeant, pat searched, handcuffed, and escorted for a medical evaluation. She was then sent to Ad-Seg ("the hole") for 60+ days. She was charged with "Assault on a Peace Officer." The toilet paper cop substantiated the charge by her own trip to the medical evaluation clinic (more than 2 hours AFTER the alleged incident according to the time on the form). The evaluation form stated "slightly reddened forearm."

Now this same CO has a habit of taking her pepper spray gun out of its holster and twirling it or shaking it...perhaps she bumped her own arm with pepper spray and that's how the "redness" occurred...wouldn't be the first time!

The prisoner witnesses who saw the whole exchange in the cell wrote statements that no assault occurred, but they were not allowed to

“excessive toilet paper” from another 15 cells...and this should have been the end of the unpleasant interaction.

But it wasn't.

Thirty minutes later, Doris is summoned to the program office and handcuffed by toilet paper cop and her partner. The sergeant is notified, comes in, takes one look at the frightened Doris and asks toilet paper cop if she feels threatened by Doris. The CO answers “no” and so the Sergeant orders Doris unhandcuffed and tells her to go back to her cell. Sergeant also tells toilet paper cop that “there is no need for a 115” (disciplinary write-up) as “it will not fly.”

Now this REALLY should have been the end of the issue. But it wasn't.

Enter new, more aggressive sergeant spoiling for a show of dominance. Hew as overheard saying:

“I'll make sure she gets arrested.”

“I'll body slam that old bitch.”

WARNING: This essay discusses experiences of sexual violence, which may be triggering or upsetting for some readers.

From “Can Anyone Hear my Scream?”

I grew up in 2 different homes. One bein' with my mother in FTC where I was born and tha other with my father in G-town where I was mostly raised with 5 siblings, 2 of which bein' were adopted. My mother and father were never married and I have no childhood memories of them bein' together. Although it doesn't show very much, I do carry a deep pain of wantin' my parents together.

I was never reminded of my childhood, which is probably for tha better cause I was molested at a young age. Although I remember rarely cryin' unless I needed somethin' and back then tha pain was too deep, I only cried on tha inside. So it seemed that I was okay, six years old walkin' with such pain inside, pero still held my head up so tha monster couldn't see that I was afraid. Quiet. But not for long. I don't remember havin' toys or playin with other kids. I only remember growin' up too fast.

Not too many fotos as a child, pero one I do remember of my brother Rudy and I, who was a monster to me when I was younger. Even though he was a monster to me, this is one foto I will never forget cause when I think bout it, I feel connected. I know I was a confused child.

Tha different homes...tha rules. Stubborn, I know. I would get bored a lot, almost like waitin' for someone to come around and hurt me.

When I would visit my mom's on weekends, I would feel like tha outcast cause my sister Tiara grew up normal and no one hurt her. It hurt. But I stood tall, cryin' on tha inside. I had no understandin' at my mom's. Totally different. I had not relationship with my mother, only that she was my mother and I was her daughter. But we were okay. I believe we all had a special relationship with my mother, pero mine always felt like a secret. Though at times I felt special, but distant with my siblings. Maybe cause I was tha only one bein' abused at tha time. I jus' know that I felt left out.

My skool years were good...I only stood around one person which was known to be my best friend. Nia was her name, tall beautiful dark skin girl at tha time. She was positive and knew what she wanted and I fed off of her energy. Though my learnin' was quick, it took me a long while to grasp tha concept. I was a foolish kid, always actin' out or making' fun of others. I rarely seen or have known anyone interested in my skool performance.

My homes were 2 different. I incorporate both because I was in both. My dad's always the same—small, but tha same. My mom's always changed. Mom 's house was so much bigger and it meant more space to oneself. I felt like I noticed more bout myself there cause there was

As the CO pulls out the toilet paper rolls and confiscates them in the plastic bag she carries, Doris gets up from her bunk and goes to look. From the anger emanating from the guard, Doris thought something must be terribly wrong.

“I'm so sorry, I didn't know,” Doris says as she leans over to look at the stack of toilet paper. In leaning over, she MAY have inadvertently touched or brushed against the CO's uniform. After all, Doris is 70 and balance can be a problem.

Now the CO is angrier than ever and yells at Doris. “YOU COULD BE CHARGED WITH ASSAULT.”

Doris is stunned and asks, “What?” unclear about what the CO is intimating. Every prisoner knows that when faced with an angry cop, the safest demeanor is to shut up and grovel if necessary.

Finally, after the requisite tongue-lashing, the CO leaves and continues on down the hall, collecting and confiscating more and more

youthful style. She reminds me a little of Yenta from Fiddler on the Roof, only more petite. On this particular day, she was sitting in her cell chatting with a friend. The housing CO (guard) was conducting a cell-to-cell search for “excessive toilet paper.”

Searching cells for these personal hygiene “excesses” is a phenomenon peculiar to the prison system. Why any woman would hoard, in the tiny cell space available, a necessary item like toilet paper IF it were consistently available, is a question that is never asked. It is a prison rule and that makes it inviolate.

So the CO asked how many rolls of toilet paper were in Doris’ cell. Doris answered, “I see three.” Well, it turns out there were more than 3 rolls stacked beside the toilet and this angered the CO. The CO is now yelling at Doris.

“DO YOU KNOW WHY I AM CONFISCATING YOUR TOILET PAPER? BECAUSE YOU LIED AND THAT MAKES YOU A LIAR.”

less to do. I didn’t like it there. I was beginnin’ to see myself and my worth.

My feelings didn’t matter. Not much of that inner communication at either home. In my mom’s I saw a lot of conflict and emotion. I expressed little of anythin’; if I did it was only confusion, which looked like more of a dumb reaction. I never thought much ‘bout safety. But if I felt safe with anyone it was me. Growin’ up I rarely experienced affection verbally or physically. And if someone got close, I would be still. With cousins there was a lot of affection, but it was always them givin’ it to me and not in a respectful way.

Discipline was always in my mom’s home. Dad didn’t discipline me; he would let me learn the hard way. Momo would have her kane in hand or yell out that I’m grounded. It was always confusin’ goin’ back and forth. I never knew what to expect. I believe my upbringin’ was difficult. I couldn’t be certain ways at mom’s after comin’ from dad’s, which was runnin’ around getting dirty. My sister would make me clean at mom’s. I felt I had to be careful with my actions.

My mom bein’ the discipliner, I believe, abused me physically & spiritually. She would take me next door to grandma’s, the witch doctor. She would cast anythin’ out that may have had a hold of me. Two older brothers also abused me with force. I didn’t like it. But I was too young to understand it either. Bein’ that I never understood any kind of emotion in either home,

I would never fight back. I thought it was normal. So I told not a soul. But it didn't make it okay either. I would act out my abuse, violence, negligence and abandonment. On myself.

At a young age I was sexually touched by an uncle. I was led to believe these actions were normal and everyone did it. Bein' a target to everyone around made me feel wanted. I had no idea that what was goin' on was wrong. So I never sought help. I was jus' a walkin' target. Between 6 and 20 years old, I was sexually abused by family. My cousin Willie made me believe it was okay and that he was so in love with me. Everythin' was so up and down. Tha high spots bein' with family for celebrations. Tha low when I was targeted for everthin'. I don't know what I'd change. If I could.

I first got in trouble when I was only 15. My cousin Jacob which later would molest me had me tryin' to break into a home with him and all I wanted was to fit in. We were caught & put on probation. After that everythin' was down hill. At this time I lived with my dad which has been married to tha love of his life. A big crack whore, but love is blind and it got him by tha balls. She wasn't dumb. She knew I always had money and would later on turn me onto crack. It worked. I later lost everythin' at such a young age, but most high I lost my self-respect. I betrayed those which loved me most and to this day I'm payin' my debts. My friends, no real friends anyway. My appearance, I didn't pay attention to. I became more closed up 'bout myself mentally & physically. I know I covered

than 100 lbs. She's a very gregarious little lady, talks with her hands a lot, and always has a smile for anyone, guards and prisoners alike.

I don't know what sent Doris to prison; whatever happened 28 years ago doesn't matter now. I only know Doris is a lifer and as a lifer, her hope of ever being released from prison is kept alive by a very tenuous thread. I know her from her demeanor and interactions now, today in this prison. I know she has never had a serious disciplinary write-up...until now.

You'll probably find it hard to believe these events occurred—but I assure you it is all 100% documented. You can look it up on the court's pacer website in the Writ Doris now files to try and clear herself. The really unbelievable part, beyond the personal pain and grief Doris suffered, is the cost to society all of this inflicts. As taxpayers and members of a so-called civilized society, we ALL pay for it in so many ways greater than the tax dollars.

Doris is very expressive, effusive in her speech, with her ready smile and her silver blunt-cut hair falling over her eyes in a

A LOT HAS BEEN WRITTEN about the prison system lately—why we as a nation incarcerate so many, why the bureaucratic and unwieldy system is only expected to make minimal cuts to its 11 billion dollar budget while education and social supports are slashed to the very core, why California's prison system has the highest recidivism rate of any state in the nation?

BUT LITTLE IS WRITTEN OF THE INDIVIDUAL

SUFFERING that occurs in devastating ways on the inside of prison walls. That's because the system does not WANT you to know. It's easier for all of us to compartmentalize our thinking and believe all of those behind bars are monsters of one kind or another—undeserving of kindness or consideration.

I'M GOING TO TELL YOU ONE STORY OF SUFFERING—so you can know, really know, what it is like to be incarcerated. And also know how your 11 billion in tax dollars are being spent.

Doris has been locked away now for more than 28 years. She is 70 years old, stands 5' 1 ½" (that ½" is important to Doris), and weighs less

up because I began cuttin' on myself and hidin' my real self.

I don't know at what point of my life I stopped carin' bout my life & others. But I did. I was sick of tha abuse and I built a wall around me, so no one could get close. Many times I've attempted suicide or put my life at risk. I've died 3 times and I'm still here. I don't know if it will sound right to my readers, but I've seen myself dead. Stood outside my body lookin' at my dead body laying there. Who would have thought I would be here today to share my story. But I made it.

Four years after bein' incarcerated my dad and I eventually began to build our relationship back up. He was hurt cause for a long while he believed that I took part in really robbin' an old man. He came around. I wouldn't like it if someone did that to my father, so wouldn't do it to someone else...though I felt like I needed answers. But how do I ask the question without makin' it a battle. I eventually jus' allowed my dad to be how he needed to be. Jus' a person. But our relationship is the best again: good, open, healthy. I always feel a cleansing to my innerself when I talk to my dad now. I can tell him anything.

At times I can admit that I still feel like an outcast and a scapegoat. Thoughts and flashes oif becomin' violent...suicide. There's times when I'll begin livin' tha past in tha present and it becomes too overwhelmin'. But only I can see it. Hidin', everythin'. It later became somethin' I professed. Always in and out of tha hole cause

of actions that would appear from tha blue. Eventaully being ad-segged. But I decided I needed to step out a' my shell and begin to fight cause no one else will fight for me.

Being ad-seg doesn't bother me. I've learned to be secluded. Tha only difference this time is that I want tha help. I want a breakthru. I want or I actually see this as a positive obstacle. Now I want to create a healthier view of my incarceration. I have a long while...but now I need to face my issues and seek tha necessary guidance needed. I know and believe others can be a positive influence on me.

Though I'm in a new place...anxiety has taken its toll. My introduction still needs to take place... I need tha tools to regain a better self and my goal is to focus on that.

Juana La Mala Salazar
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Denver Women's Correctional Facility
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them. Can you see where I'm asking how we're affected by this?

Honestly, I've heard good things about the MPRI program. If the women take the tools they are given through the program, build in themselves the right attitude and focus in life, success can be obtained on the outside. But, I ask, what percentage of women this program is affecting.

I stand with my brothers in the struggle for liberation against this oppressive existence we find ourselves in, but my sisters deserve the same avenues to that liberation.

Kebby Warner
Huron Valley Complex/Women's in Ypsilanti, MI 48197

NOTE: Kebby wrote about the move of 800+ women from the Robert Scott Correctional Facility in Plymouth, MI, to the 400-bed Huron Valley Complex for Issue 18 of *Tenacious: Art and Writings from Women in Prison*. Her account can also be found on-line at:

<http://www.pmpress.org/content/article.php/20090819123659984>

After spending more than 10 years in prison, Kebby is scheduled for release on May 11, 2010.

separate report for each population because what I see here at the women's prison is that we are crowded.

One of the closings of the 8 prison facilities was the women's level 1 camp. Now we are all crammed into 2 prisons that they have made into one. We have one health care, dental, quartermaster, property room, grievance coordination, etc. They've doubled the population, but we have the same amount of staff to take care of our needs. The consequences of that is the taking care of those needs has gotten worse. Health care is terrible in the first place, even the ACLU report "criticizes Michigan's failure to adequately provide necessary mental and medical health care to its prisoners."

Others and myself have tried to get into health care for appointment and have been told we are being put on a list. I've been trying to see dental for 3 months. In January, I saw the doctor for my diabetes. She was to order different medications for me. After a week passed without me getting the medication, I asked a nurse to please check into it for me. I found out that the doctor had been so busy that day that there wasn't even a record of me being seen.

We are so crowded that there are women sitting in segregation who are "released," but are still there "pending bed space" because there's no place else to put

10/31/09

Hi,

My name is Antoine. I'm from Greensboro, NC. I'm sitting here in my one man cell, lost in my own world of imagination. Here's a poem I wrote called "What Means Do I Have..." and if you close your eyes and get lost in my words for just a few seconds, I promise you will be able to feel my pain for only that long.

WHAT MEANS DO I HAVE

Alone I sit, wondering how did I get to this point in my life or better yet, is there any means of escape. My soul; although blanketed by a warm spirit remains so cold; almost to the point of seeking refuge into another willing vessel. My mind; although mirrored by an impeccable personality; has a hard time grasping what's real and what's reality, especially when my wrongs seem right and my days turn night along this lonely path I've took.

As I sit alone, I ask myself, Who's more foolish, the child afraid of the dark or the man afraid of the light? Because all and all, the truth, which falsehood could never stand beside, never conquer; has kept me in the dark almost against my own will, so again I ask,

What Means Do I Have???

Antoine Hightower
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To the people who wrote the AMC zine to prisoners in 2009:

Thank you, thank you, thank you! You give me pleasure and hope. Hope that the world will become fair for all. There is so much (unpaid) work to do and I appreciate every single one of you. When I re-read the zine, I felt energized physically and mentally. I felt love for all of you. I even felt like I was a part of the resistance, even though I'm sitting in prison.

We often feel forgotten and helpless here as uncaring bureaucrats try to run our lives. In reality, they cannot control my mind. I choose what to think, say, feel and do.

To Susan, the college professor who asked what we would like to say to college students, this is what I say: Do the RIGHT thing, not the EASY thing. Be strong and compassionate. Put yourselves in others' shoes. Be brave! Be passionate! YOU are the future. Join together, find each other, love each other and work for the greater good. It is so much more fulfilling than just looking out for your own selfish desires. Thank you for your sincerity and your effort. It will not be easy but it WILL make YOUR life better. Justice for all!

Diana Waggy
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A response to the ACLU report from a woman imprisoned in Michigan

After reading "ACLU Report Hails Michigan as Model for Reducing Prison Population," I can't help but ask, "Has reducing the prison population helped ALL prisoners in Michigan?"

It seems like a lot of things that happen affect men prisoners first, then it comes down to women. Most of the time, it's negative. For example, if they do something that affects policy, the policy changes for us too, or if they do something to get the things we are allowed to have taken, even though we didn't use it for a negative purpose, it gets taken from us too.

So, when I read about the drop in prison population, the percentage of prisoners being released by their estimated first out date and there being a 6% decrease in prisoners being locked up past their first out date, I have to ask who they're really talking about.

I do see the reality that the majority of people locked up in Michigan are men, so when you look at percentages, it will be higher for them. What I would like to see is a

with a budget gap of \$1.4 billion, to announce this year the shuttering of eight prison facilities, with a projected budget savings of \$120 million. In the Michigan Department of Corrections budget for fiscal year 2009-2010, direct expenditures for operating prison facilities were reduced by approximately \$192 million while the budget for various initiatives to further reduce the prison population was increased by about \$59 million.

"Michigan's example is just another sign that mass incarceration may finally be imploding, collapsing under its own weight as the global financial crisis renders it unsustainable," said Alexander. "Michigan inspires hope as a concrete example of the change in incarceration policies that the United States so desperately needs."

The report, however, criticizes Michigan's failure to adequately provide necessary mental and medical health care to its prisoners.

A copy of the report, "Michigan Breaks the Political Logjam: A New Model for Reducing Prison Populations" is available online at:
www.aclu.org/prisoners-rights/michigan-breaks-political-logjam-new-model-reducing-prison-populations

I got your letter and zine yesterday. The writing about Picture the Homeless really touched me. Growing up, my family was homeless quite a few times, living in our van or staying in a shelter. Once we stayed on a river bank with other homeless people and I met men who rode the trains in empty cars. As an adult, I've been homeless also, by myself and with Tommy [my ex-husband]. I've slept in doorways with no place else to go when the shelters were full. So to see homeless people stick together like that, along with others who want to help them, is very touching. What happened to the Tent City Ten?

Kebby Warner
259737, Huron Valley Complex/Women's

After spending more than 10 years in prison, Kebby is scheduled for release on May 11, 2010.

Warning: The following piece describes sexual abuse.

Sunday, January 17, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Terrina Flora-Alexander, an inmate at DWCF. I have been incarcerated since 10/1/06, the date of my crime. Since that day, I have been embarrassed, humiliated, put down, shunned, and degraded from the correctional officers. I sat here and took it, because I am an inmate. However, after today's experience, someone has to learn about the treatment of women in the Colorado prison system.

A strip search is a necessary evil of the surroundings in which I reside. That is a fact and understandably so. Many items can be passed back and forth through the prison system in unmentionable areas. Items and areas that do not need to be listed in this letter, however, this letter is to bring attention to the strip search procedure and the areas that are currently in question. I seem to be stalling because I don't really know how to politely say what needs to be said, so please excuse the harsh bluntness in the rest of this letter.

To strip naked, show the inside of your mouth, shake out your hair, lift your breasts, feet and fat rolls, turn away from the officer, grab and spread your butt cheeks, bend over and cough hard enough

According to the report, a key component of Michigan's successful reduction of its statewide prisoner population has been the adoption of the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI), which links internal prison system efforts aimed at preparing prisoners for re-entry into general society with locally developed re-entry support programs. Under the MPRI, prisoners' risks of re-offending, needs and strengths are assessed upon entry into the Department of Corrections. Prison staff also utilize a computer software program to develop a transition accountability plan that serves to guide interventions and services that will facilitate the successful return of prisoners to the community while reducing the potential risk to public safety. About 60 days prior to a prisoner's release date, a more specific re-entry plan focused on housing, employment and services for addiction and mental illness is developed.

The MPRI program, as well as the commitment of corrections officials to providing prisoners with focused re-entry preparation, has increased the percentage of prisoners who are paroled by their estimated date of release to more than 70 percent. The percentage of prisoners serving time past their estimated date of release has fallen in the past two years alone from 31 percent to 25 percent.

"Michigan's experience is important because it demonstrates that common sense can in fact trump demagoguery and that smart-on-crime policies can actually triumph," said Alexander.

According to the report, Michigan's prison population last month had dropped to 47,634, down from a high of 51,554 in March 2007. That allowed Michigan, faced

Denver, CO 80239

**ACLU Report Hails Michigan As Model For
Reducing Prison Populations**

December 18, 2009

**Lowering Incarceration Rates Makes Fiscal Sense
Without Jeopardizing Public Safety**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: (212) 549-2666; media@aclu.org

WASHINGTON – Michigan's successful efforts to reduce its statewide prison population by more than eight percent during the past two years while at the same time improving public safety provides a model for other states seeking smarter, more affordable criminal justice policies, according to a report released today by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The report, "Michigan Breaks the Political Logjam: A New Model for Reducing Prison Populations," details how Michigan's initiatives come in the face of the ongoing and unprecedented growth of prison populations across the country, a reality that has contributed to crippling budget deficits for many states.

"Michigan has undertaken what may be the most effective changes to reduce incarceration of any of our nation's states to date," said Elizabeth Alexander, Director of the ACLU National Prison Project and author of the report. "Michigan provides a compelling example of how we can save money, reduce our prison populations and make our communities safer by abandoning our rush to incarcerate."

to flex, then relax the muscles inside your vagina has been the "norm" and expected strip search. That process alone is already quite humiliating. Now, without any notice or warning of any kind, DWCF has implemented a new step to this search. Depending on which officer is conducting the search, the new step varies. Female inmates are now to spread the labia, lift the hood and expose the clitoris. This step has been titled the "labia lift." The inmate may be asked to do this while bending over after she has coughed, or to turn around and lift one leg onto a chair to be able to "widen" herself more, or to sit (on a toilet or a chair NAKED) and spread herself or to stand up and move her feet apart, leaning her shoulders back and then spread her labia.

Today, I was told (not asked) to do the following: While undressing for my strip search after a visit, Officer * * * mumbles the new procedure to me. I asked if she was serious; she replied, "Unfortunately yes." I immediately had flashes of my attacker from 17 years ago telling me what to do to my body parts. Tears stream down my face. "Do it bitch or I'll go get your sister!" was what I heard in my head as I looked at this officer's face.

1/20/10

I asked her if we could please get another officer in the bathroom due to the mental torture I was going through. She was kind and understood and agreed to get another woman. I was hoping that if there were

two women with me, I could pull myself together and make it through this horrific ordeal. When the officer asked for assistance, the second officer replied, "We are not going to accommodate these inmates, NO!" Panic set in and I started to breathe very slow.

1/25/10

The nicer officer could see the panic on my face. "how can I be a rape 'survivor' if I have to continue to go through the motions over and over? I am being Raped Again!! How many times should I have to go through this? I haven't survived shit! I am still suffering! If I refuse to do this procedure, I will be written up, get handcuffed and put in a dry cell, which of course would just prolong the rape to day instead of minutes. This refusal would cost me the apartment program and my 8-year-old son would not be able to stay the night with me ever again."

Of course, as any good mother would, I follow the orders given to me. I try to be strong, but I can't stop the tears or the visions of my attacker's face. The kind officer tells me I should grieve this process and mentions she does not want to do this procedure. Two women were just scarred by this new policy. This has to STOP. I have had nightmares every night since this ordeal. Memory flashes of the nurses doing the rape-kit procedure haunt me. I thought I was past all of this, but DOC has brought it all back. I couldn't even sit down and

write this letter in one sitting (look at the dates I have marked in). My mother came to visit me this past weekend and, yes, it happened again. I haven't been able to sleep in 3 days. I have asked her to not come again unless it was of extreme importance. My mother is also mortified about the "labia lift." She also told my sister about it and, while I usually see them on Sundays, neither came so I wouldn't have to go through this again. I would love my family to be here to help me through this; however, them coming causes the trauma again.

I thought that being removed from society and incarcerated was my punishment for my crime. I did not think my treatment in prison was to be further punishment. While I have been incarcerated for a while now, I did not know that the government had legalized rape, mental abuse and anguish or cruelty to animals. I said "animals" because that is how we are now being treated. I am in the k-9 program and the dogs we train are treated better. Please, help us, help me! I shouldn't have to be a victim when I have worked so hard and come so far to be a survivor!!

((I had to have someone else type this, because I couldn't do it.))

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