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Re: RTS zine

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MAILROOM

AUG 08 2022

RETURNED

- Special mail services not permitted for indigent envelopes
- Indigent envelope exceeds allowable 13 ounces

- Face sheet/legal documents not pertaining to offender
- Unauthorized use of facility forms
- Item enclosed in plastic/laminate/tape/cardboard folder
- Photos of staff / facilities
- Artwork or items prohibiting adequate inspection, stickers, white-out, padded envelope/bubble wrap, unable to search
- Multiple/duplicate photos/printed material, intent to distribute
- Photos/publications featuring tattoos
- Turned over to OSI for disposition  Held for review by
- Photo of offender taken during incarceration

urity of the facility, specific individuals or the general public, 3-way phone calls, people searches, etc.  
out of the facility.  
tortion or other criminal activity.  
affiliation with security threat groups.

or illicit use of weapons, explosives or devices which create a substantial danger of physical harm or  
e of drugs, drug paraphernalia or intoxicating substances.

To: Central Office Media Review Committee

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RE: ~~Paraphernalia~~ Denial - Due to Risk of Lawlessness.

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nts are written in code or not understood by

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people 2: LEGISLATOR  
law-less (l'yo-las) adj (12c) 1: not regulated by or based on law 2 a  
: not restrained or controlled by law: UNRULY B: ILLEGAL — law-  
less-ly adv — law-less-ness n  
law-mak-er (l'yo-ma-ker) n (14c): one who makes laws: LEGISLATOR  
— law-mak-ing (-kin) n  
law-man (l'yo-man) n (1944): a law-enforcement officer (as a sheriff or  
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atin phrases, UCC citations, miscellaneous  
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d procedures, or was an unallowable item.

Department Mail/Property Date 8/8/22

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# PREFACE

BY JESSICA PHOENIX SYLVIA  
WASHINGTON

Censorship is custodial. One must have power over people and the world around them if they are to censor ideas and communication. In a prison, incarcerated people are taken hold of as objects and branded as dangerous. To the captor, their thoughts amount to dangerous thinking.

The suppression of thoughts and words may seem like silence. However, that silence communicates a message very loudly. The censor says, "Leave the world the way you found it and don't touch anything without permission!" Censorship is necrophelic, death-making.

I remember being in prison and having my communication and literature censored. As I educated myself I realized that censorship is dehumanizing. Not only is it dehumanizing, it starts from a position of dehumanization. One is taken hold of as an object. Dehumanized as an object, one is controlled.

What happens when that object begins to think and reflect? What happens when they know that they are human, and insist on being treated as such? They cease to be an object for the purpose of others and become a subject.

In other words, what happens when the slave understands they are human? What happens when that human decides to stop being a slave and live with their own purpose? That is dangerous thinking to the authoritarian. When one begins by claiming the space between their ears they claim power.

Power can be defined as the ability to influence one's environment consistent with their own interest. A radical subject can think and dream. A radical subject can transcend and become greater. A radical subject may even transform the world around them.

When one begins to dream of a world that values them and functions according to self-interest they can no longer be satisfied to be an object for others.

The first crimes of this country were supported by censorship. African people were taken hold of as objects. They were dehumanized and used to create a world that served the interest of the people who objectified it. The radical subjects who spoke of freedom expressed it by taking that freedom from others.

Anti-literacy laws were passed, not only making it illegal for people of color to read and write, but also for anyone to teach them to do so. Why was education seen as dangerous thinking?

Slave owners were afraid that their objects would realize that they are human and insist on being treated as such. They may become radical subjects with the power

to dream and change the world. They would be able to do this if they could first claim the space between their ears - the power to do so. Today, that history itself is often censored.

Slavery has evolved and has been reformed through the 13th Amendment and the criminal legal system. In the U.S. about 10 million people are arrested and taken hold of as objects every year. About 2.3 million are incarcerated.

Existentially, demanding to be human requires an anti-censorship position. Allowing others to be human requires this as well. If we do not, we cease to be humane ourselves. Denying others their due humanity exposes the absence of one's own.

The art, poetry, and essays in this zine express a struggle for life. Those impacted by prison censorship have a chance to say their word in the container that is this zine. This is their time, place, and purpose.

— Jessica Phoenix Sylvia

**RIGHT :**

**KINCAID AND  
WELLS**

**BY PAUL LACOMBE  
NEVADA**



# CENSORSHIP IS A DEATH KNELL

BY PAULA SIMS  
ALABAMA

Censorship takes many forms. It can be a denial of what is said, but it can also involve being forced into a role that one does not want.

My first censorship came when my brother and I were in a terrible car accident. My brother was killed and I was severely injured. When my mother was informed of this tragedy, she had to be sedated and hospitalized. When the two of us were released, my father told me that I had to ignore my own pain to be strong for my mother. I was barely sixteen. I didn't want to be strong, but I had to be. While my mother grieved, I put my emotions aside and blocked them with drugs and alcohol.

During my marriage, my husband rarely listened to me, choosing to verbally abuse me when I spoke about how I felt. I knew I needed help, but his answer was to suggest I drink and smoke some pot or take pills. My mother's mental state was precarious, and I could not get any help from her. My father traveled and was hardly home. Regardless of their circumstances, my husband did what he could to keep me away from them.

With each of my pregnancies, I suffered from either postpartum depression or postpartum psychosis. I censored myself by hiding my mental condition and trying to be strong. When I talked about making an appointment for mental help, my husband told me that mental health providers were crazier than I was, and I would be okay. Nobody in his family saw a psychiatrist. The result was that I ended up in prison due to the death of my child.

In prison, I began to remember a lot. I told my family how my grandfather had molested me as a child. My family was horrified, not that I was molested but that I would openly tell the truth. They all said I was a liar, and most turned their backs on me. For them, the only way to handle this, whether truth or a lie, was censorship. "We do not speak of this," they said.

I learned that speaking out had many consequences, yet I continued to express myself. When I spoke out, I felt liberated. I no longer felt the need for drugs or alcohol.

My mother and father died while I was incarcerated. My husband divorced me and refused to let our son see me. I believe that if I had not been censored by my family that things would have turned out differently, and I would have been healed instead of incarcerated.

Censorship is a death knell that needs to be silenced so that the truth can be told.

# CENSORED FROM THE START

BY PATRICIA TRIMBLE  
MISSOURI

What comes to mind when you hear the word “Censorship”? If your first thoughts revolve around print media or pornography, you wouldn’t be wrong. But there is a whole separate meaning to the word censorship, and for an incarcerated person, it begins the moment you are arrested.

The very moment the handcuffs are brought out, an officer advises you of your Miranda rights. Everyone knows “You have the right to remain silent...”. Anyone who has been to jail or prison knows the right to remain silent is not just a right, it is highly encouraged by any lawyer you may get. For most, not remaining silent brings forth harsh consequences.

When you are first brought before the Judge, he will ask your lawyer how you plead, and if you have no lawyer, the judge will enter a plea of not guilty on your behalf and appoint counsel. Rarely would a judge permit you to speak because “you have the right to remain silent” and the judge will be sure to insist on that.

Eventually you are given a choice: You can plead guilty for a reduced sentence or demand a jury trial where you would be permitted to testify in your defense. If the jury convicts you, the State will demand a much harsher sentence—all because you wanted to have your say.

Once in the prison system, you find a whole new type of censorship. Not only are certain books, magazines and pictures forbidden, but your very faith may be forbidden as well. When I was first sent to prison, my hair was cut off while I proclaimed my Native heritage. The year was 1977 and I was informed Native American Spirituality, Buddhism, Wicca and a whole range of other religions were in fact not permitted within the prison system.

While reading an anarchist publication I remember seeing a drawing of a Prisoner resembling the famous statue of David. The prisoner was blindfolded, so his vision was limited to what was told to him. His wrists and feet were bound with chains to keep him from resisting. His heart was wrapped with barbed wire and locked behind steel bars to prevent him from feeling love or empathy. Lastly, his groin had a steel plate riveted on to prevent him from any pleasurable stimulation or sexual activity.

The ultimate prison censorship is realized when the prisoner is fully cut off from all friends and family, made to believe they are the sum of zero, a nonperson without gender or sexuality. They are reduced to the number given them when processed into the system. There are exceptions however. Others, like myself, who refuse to be just a number, refuse to be censored. Driven to advocate for those who can’t advocate for themselves, willing to shine light on injustices through the written word.

George T. Wilkerson [REDACTED]  
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### Breaking Free

4/9/23

From 2013 to 2018, North Carolina's Death Row had access to therapeutic activities, such as writing and art classes, mostly taught by outside volunteers who had to submit to censorship: the warden swore them to silence about Death Row. From writing, I learned that words are powerful. Words are ideas, and ideas have consequences. Ideas make up thoughts, which shape our emotions and behaviors. Thus, what we think about someone impacts how we feel about and treat them. But it begins with the stories we believe about them.

I witnessed this when new volunteers started. They often seemed leery, some clearly afraid, as if we might attack them. I empathized. Before living on Death Row, my expectations were defined by Hollywood's exaggerated characters, sensational media coverage, and the rich soil of my imagination, watered by fear. On the way here, I envisioned bloodthirsty psychopaths and vicious animals awaiting me, so I, too, entered Death Row with wary eyes and taut nerves.

In 2014, as another man was tried for homicide, we watched prosecutors and media wield these stereotypes to stoke fervor for the death penalty: it's easier to kill demons, monsters, and rabid animals than humans. Decrying these distorted public narratives, a volunteer named Tessie Castillo wrote an op-ed for a local paper to give a more human picture of us:

"...I don't see heartless killers... I see anger problems, stubbornness, lack of self-control, immaturity, and miseducation. I see these same qualities in people outside prison too. I see them in myself sometimes. But in these men, I also see pain, regret, a capacity for kindness, and self-reflection — and a desire to be seen for what they are: flawed and very human."<sup>11</sup>



# BREAKING FREE

BY GEORGE WILKERSON  
MARYLAND

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"I don't see heartless killers. I see anger problems, stubbornness, lack of self-control, immaturity, and miseducation. I see these same qualities in people outside prison too. I see them in myself sometimes. But in these men, I also see pain, regret, a capacity for kindness, and self-reflection—and a desire to be seen for what they are: flawed and very human."

Reading this, I realized that by censoring our volunteers the prison kept Death Row prisoners clothed as monsters. A week later, because Tessie refused to incarcerate her tongue, the warden barred her from returning. It touched me that someone was so enlightened by *our* stories that she sacrificed her job to bear witness, showing the public we are *men*.

Soon Tessie wrote some of us letters, and we collaborated on a book, *Crimson Letters*, to share our stories and hers, to: A) offer the public a chance to see what Tessie saw, and B) embolden other prisoners to publicly share their stories, to demonstrate that if we truly wish to change the public narrative, it is essential for incarcerated people to speak out.

In 2020, when *Crimson Letters* was published and fellow prisoners began reading it, guards confiscated the copies. It got banned from N.C. prisons because in it I'd told the story of being so depressed that I slit my own throat and wrists in the jail. Administrators claimed this "depicted an escape attempt." This lie validated our efforts, because the only escape it depicted was our voices slipping past the hands covering our mouths—our humanity breaking free of stereotypes.

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# PRISON CENSORSHIP HARMS US ALL

BY KIM WILSON, PHD  
PENNSYLVANIA

There are innumerable ways that incarceration inflicts harm, and prison censorship is just one example of an insidious practice that purposely aims to limit, disrupt, and in some cases, leads to the permanent loss of communication between prisoners and their loved ones outside. While much has been written about prison book bans, and the censorship of other published materials such as magazines and news articles (and all of these things are important), less attention has been paid to the ways that prison censorship causes harm to communities.

I'm writing this as a mother with two incarcerated sons, both of whom are currently sentenced to life in prison. I am also an organizer, and a prisoner rights advocate, so I come at this issue from a deeply personal place. However, I want to situate my anger, my overwhelming frustration and sadness in a broader context by highlighting how prison censorship collectively harms us.

Prison censorship is a practice that restricts the communication of prisoners with each other, and with the outside world. This includes monitoring and censoring their mail, limiting and banning access to certain reading materials, and censoring their speech. Prison officials claim that censorship is necessary to maintain safety and order. Yet, time and again those of us who are in relationship with people inside have had letters returned or destroyed, photos damaged, legal mail tampered with, and books thrown away, without a shred of evidence that any of these materials posed a threat to anyone. It is also important to note that with many prisons contracting third party communications companies to process physical mail, and to manage electronic communications including, emails, photos, and video visitation, there are ever increasing opportunities for prison officials to arbitrarily disrupt communication. This raises issues over how this data is being monitored, stored, secured, and used, which deserves further and careful exploration that falls outside the scope of this short essay.

One of the most significant ways that prison censorship collectively harms us is by disrupting and limiting our ability to maintain contact with our incarcerated person(s). When letters and other forms of communication are censored, delayed, or shut off, it threatens our mental health. Knowing what is happening with people that you love is such a fundamental part of being in relationship with folx, and the not knowing that comes from disrupted or delayed communications means that every day our bonds are under attack, and we are expected to suffer in silence. One cannot claim to care about mental health or disability rights, and exclude incarcerated people and their loved ones.

Most of the people that perform the work of staying in touch with people inside are women and femmes. We are the ones that do the emotional, physical, and financial work of establishing, re-establishing, and maintaining relationships—and hence, community, with incarcerated people. We are the ones that buy and mail birthday cards months in advance so that our person(s) inside will hopefully get them on time. Too often the cards, letters, and drawings never arrive, and as a result, we feel like failures, and our person(s) inside feel neglected, or forgotten. We are also the ones that soothe the sore feelings. We are constantly having to regulate our emotions and theirs. This is work that is often invisible, it's exhausting work, and it is work that we do every day. One cannot claim to care about women's rights or LGBTQIA+ rights and leave us to do this work alone.

Prison censorship restricts the ability of people outside to support and advocate for their incarcerated loved ones. When email communication costs money and has a character limit, and physical mail has a page limit and prison censors can arbitrarily deny anything they don't like, it makes it extremely difficult to send people inside important information about their legal case, or about medical conditions (such as a pandemic), or other vital information that could impact the well-being of the prisoner. When our person(s) inside aren't doing well, we aren't doing well, and that impacts everything from our home life, to our work, to our capacity to engage in hobbies, social activities, and community building outside of direct support. One cannot claim to care about community and ignore the financial burden that prison censorship places on the very people that do the overwhelmingly large share of community care work to begin with. One cannot claim to care about justice and ignore the myriad ways that prison censorship denies prisoners access to legal information that could set them free. One cannot care about public health, or anyone's safety while denying incarcerated people access to accurate and potentially life saving information.

It is false to claim that those of us advocating for an end to prison censorship do not care about safety or order. Loved ones spend a tremendous amount of time and energy worrying about the health and safety of people in prison. We know that anything that is seen as a threat to the order of this system will be dealt with harshly. We obsess about how to keep people safe, and our dreams are haunted by the very idea that at any moment officials could harm someone we love. We understand that our person(s) safety is not guaranteed in a system designed to terrorize. Prison censorship is largely security theater. It is a performance of power and authority designed to remind us in a thousand ways that we don't matter.

Instead of choosing to give prisoners the tools they need to rebuild and strengthen their ties with loved ones outside, prison censorship makes it expensive and nearly impossible for people to stay in touch. Instead of choosing to support loved ones outside including the partners, the children, and friends who are lifelines for incarcerated people, prison censorship creates the conditions for more suffering. In this context, prison censorship harms all of us.

# SENSELESS ROBBERY

BY MR. L. U. N. O.  
NEW YORK

They violated on my senses. My sight, my smell, my touch—all gone with the passing of another arbitrary policy. I will forever miss the clash of magenta and violet or the multicolored letters sprawled across the image of a bear or a deer or a bird or a rose. Yes! These images too will fade into the abyss of black and white photocopy print. Yes, these vibrant colored items of love expressed on a hallmark will fade like the scent that once accompanied them. The intoxicating scent of lemon of her Versace will no longer mingle with (or linger in) the stale air of my 8 × 10. The hint of cinnamon clinging to the envelope is (and will be) forever gone. And the familiar sting of lavender sprayed between the margins of the loose leaf pages reminding me of life beyond walls and bars entirely vanished in one unprovoked decision to make this a “safer” space. Regrettably, these soothing and familiar smells evaporate into the air of black and white ink cartridges leaving the familiar smell of impersonal. It is sad to say that my sense of touch followed suit. The miniature checkerboard feel of sparkles strewn atop the well wishes of a thoughtful hallmark made me feel whole. Tracing the eight elevated letters from the words “I-L-O-V-E-Y-O-U” or “I-M-I-S-S-Y-O-U” with my pointer finger made me feel like I had the world in my hands weeks and, sometimes, months following mail call. So, the answer is yes! Yes I feel robbed of my senses by the plain, scentless, colorless, embroidery-less photocopies of personal letters and greeting cards. I feel robbed of all of the thoughts that went into making my day, week, and month better and doable. I feel robbed of the sentiments that attempted to soothe my pain caused by the away-ness of prison. I feel robbed of the only intangible connection to the world beyond these walls that I call home and all of the love that awaits me. When will the senseless robbery end?\*\*\*

Censorship has robbed me of the right to use my voice freely, but I am now ready to shine a light that has the potential to expose what is hidden within this dark place. Prison was not built with the intention to rehabilitate an individual, prison was built with the intention to profit off of individuals.

I am no longer scared of the repercussions that may come with using my voice because I have been silenced for far too long. My humanity has been censored as I am no longer identified by the name that my mother has given me, but instead I am identified by a number provided to me by the Department of Corrections.

I am no longer a human being, as I am now property of the State of New York. Throughout the time that I have served thus far I have witnessed authority figures abuse their power by abusing incarcerated individuals physically, spiritually, as well as mentally.

Authority figures have beaten incarcerated individuals brutally in front of other incarcerated individuals as an example of what any of us individuals wearing green can be subjected to, if we choose to disobey the officer's, in blue, demands.

Mentally I have suffered as I have been locked in my cell for days without being offered a shower, hot water, or even a phone call.

Spiritually there has been days when correctional

# UNCENSORED

BY BRYAN PANERELLA  
NEW YORK

Censorship has robbed me of the right to use my voice freely, but I am now ready to shine a light that has the potential to expose what is hidden within this dark place. Prison was not built with the intention to rehabilitate an individual; prison was built with the intention to profit off of individuals.

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Authority figures have beaten incarcerated individuals brutally in front of other incarcerated individuals as an example of what any of us individuals wearing green can be subjected to, if we choose to disobey the officers in blue's demands.

Mentally, I have suffered, as I have been locked in my cell for days without being offered a shower, hot water, or even a phone call.

Spiritually, there have been days when correctional officers chose to deny me the right to practice my religious beliefs due to their misunderstanding of the Santeria practice. I have lost the right to speak freely, to practice my religious beliefs, and to be equally protected by the same laws afforded to everyone else, due to me being viewed as of a man. Is this what the thirteenth amendment entails?

My introduction to this censorship began at the Downstate Correctional Facility on April 4th of 2018. The sergeant in charge informed all of us as we came off the bus that we are no longer on Rikers Island. We are now in his CUSTODY, he does not CARE nothing about us, and that he has full CONTROL of us from that point forward. This is the custody, care, and control that the Department of Corrections imposes upon the incarcerated individual.

My phone calls are constantly monitored, my letters are read and photocopied, and even as I am participating in a higher learning program, my voice is forced to be censored. Malcolm X (1925-1965) once stated that "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today." How is that possible when I am unable to express myself freely?

Every college assignment is monitored by an officer who believes that I am not meant to be nothing more than a felon and that I should not be afforded the opportunity of a "free" college education.

This is my personal experience of censorship, and it not only affects me, but my family and friends as well. They are scared to converse with me freely on the phone, because if the officer listening to our conversation does not agree with what is being said my call is subject to being terminated, and I am subjected to a misbehavior report.

3/4

Bryan Panarella

officers chose to deny me the right to practice my religious belief due to their misunderstanding of the Santeria practice. I have lost the right to speak freely, to practice my religious beliefs, and to be equally protected by the same laws as afforded to everyone else, due to me being viewed as three fifths of a man. IS this what the thirteenth amendment entails?

My introduction to this censorship began at the Downstate Correctional Facility on April 4<sup>th</sup> of 2018. The sergeant in charge informed all of us as we came off the bus that we are no longer on Rikers Island. We are now in his CUSTODY, he does not CARE nothing about us, and that he has full CONTROL of us from that point forward. This is the custody, care, and control that the Department of Corrections imposes upon the incarcerated individual.

My phone calls are constantly monitored, my letters are read and photocopied, and even as I am participating in a higher learning program my voice is forced to be censored. Malcolm X (1925-1965) once stated that "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today". How is that possible when I am unable to express myself freely?

Every college assignment is monitored by an officer who believes that I am not meant to be nothing more than a felon and that I should not be afforded the opportunity



My packages are limited because it is left to the package room officer's discretion on what I am allowed to receive and what I am not.

My wife cannot even share personal pictures with me because those are censored as well. If one looks close enough, then it becomes transparent that these authority figures are censoring my relationships. This has altered my behavior towards my family and friends.

3/4

Bryan Tonarella

of a "free" college education.

This is my personal experience of censorship and it not only affects me, but my family and friends as well. They are scared to converse with me freely on the phone because if the officer listening to our conversation does not agree with what is being said my call is subjected to being terminated and I am subjected to a misbehavior report.

My packages are limited, because it is left to the package room officer's discretion on what I am allowed to receive and what I am not.

My wife cannot even share personal pictures with me because those are censored as well. If one looks close enough then it becomes transparent that these authority figures are censoring my relationships. This has altered my behavior towards my family and friends.

My wife told me a few days ago that it appears as though I feel everyone is against me; and although it is still hard to admit to it her words held the truth. I did feel as though the world was against me during those moments of my life.

Freedom is nothing but an illusion to the enslaved and I was enslaved. I broke those chains by searching within myself and discovering that I am the only person who could truly bound myself. Bondage is the tool that oppressors have been using for many years against the oppressed. Oppressors attempt to silence others

My wife told me a few days ago that it appears as though I feel everyone is against me, and although it is still hard to admit to it, her words held the truth. I did feel as though the world was against me during those moments of my life.

Freedom is nothing but an illusion to the enslaved, and I was enslaved. I broke those chains by searching within myself and discovering that I am the only person who could truly bind myself. Bondage is the tool that oppressors have been using for many years against the oppressed. Oppressors attempt to silence others with their chains by making others believe that bondage is their soul's purpose, but it's not. We were all meant to be heard, which is how this essay was created, sent, received, and uncensored. Those who possess the belief that their power can limit one's growth are truly powerless because every flower rises from out of the dirt.

4/4

Bryan Tonarella

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# MARSHALLING THE TROOPS

BY DANIEL PIRKEL  
MICHIGAN

*My submission for "Return to Sender, an exhibition about prison and censorship policies curated by Mariame Kaba in partnership with PEN America, et seq."*

When it comes to censorship, Michigan is one of the worst states in the country. Most of the organizations that donate books to prisons and prisoners refuse to work with the MDOC. The book donors' reasons vary, but their disdain mostly stems from the MDOC's willingness to reject books for any reason and their adherence to irrational rules. For instance, the MDOC refuses accept used books, period. While some might think this is based on a concern about incoming contraband, MDOC libraries will not even accept books donated by the prisoners themselves!!!

The MDOC also requires all prisoners to order books through Bargain Books, Amazon, or Barnes & Noble. While Amazon offers the most titles, there is a good chance that several of them will be rejected (say 2 out of every 5 ordered) simply because Amazon used a third-party shipper. Some facilities allow prisoners to receive such books if they can prove that the books were originally ordered through Amazon, but other facilities will not. And this problem has been ongoing for 15+ years!!!

The MDOC also engages in extensive censorship based on a book's content. For instance, SMT rejected a murder mystery a few months ago because someone killed a detective in the story. The fact that TV shows regularly display such situations doesn't encourage prison authorities to take a more reasonable position. Instead, such arguments lead to further censorship: some facilities refuse to play movies that are rated PG-13 or higher. I still have not been at a facility that will play Game of Thrones! D@mn you Lanisters!!! Why did you have to take out Rob Stark!

Another censorship example revolves around the idea that prisoners seeking educational materials only do so to become better criminals. SMT recently rejected books related to entrepreneurship because they could "help prisoners run a business while incarcerated" (presuming that such activities would necessarily be illegal). Although such books could theoretically help, SMT currently facilitates college courses like "Entrepreneurship 101," a blatant act of hypocrisy. If this sounds too crazy to believe, just take a look at the MDOC's banned book list; it includes books on electrical, welding, and computers, despite the fact that multiple prisons teach vocational trades based on these very subjects.

These bureaucratic rules and decisions have led to an abysmal selection of outdated books in prison libraries, and a populace that has essentially given up on ordering books (as I have). From what I've seen, most of the books in prison are between 20-50 years old!

Regardless of how this system developed, we only need to understand that it is incredibly powerful, and potential ways to challenge censorship practices. Below are some examples:

1. change policy
2. require prisons to follow their own policies when reviewing censorship decisions
3. train &/or remove recalcitrant staff
4. force the courts to overrule unreasonable administrative decisions
5. change the hearts & minds of society towards prison
6. marshal the troops
7. help the troops accomplish the goal.

Except the last three, these strategies require legislative or governor intervention. With such entities, we should create proposals that can make the biggest difference, while producing the least amount of political controversy.

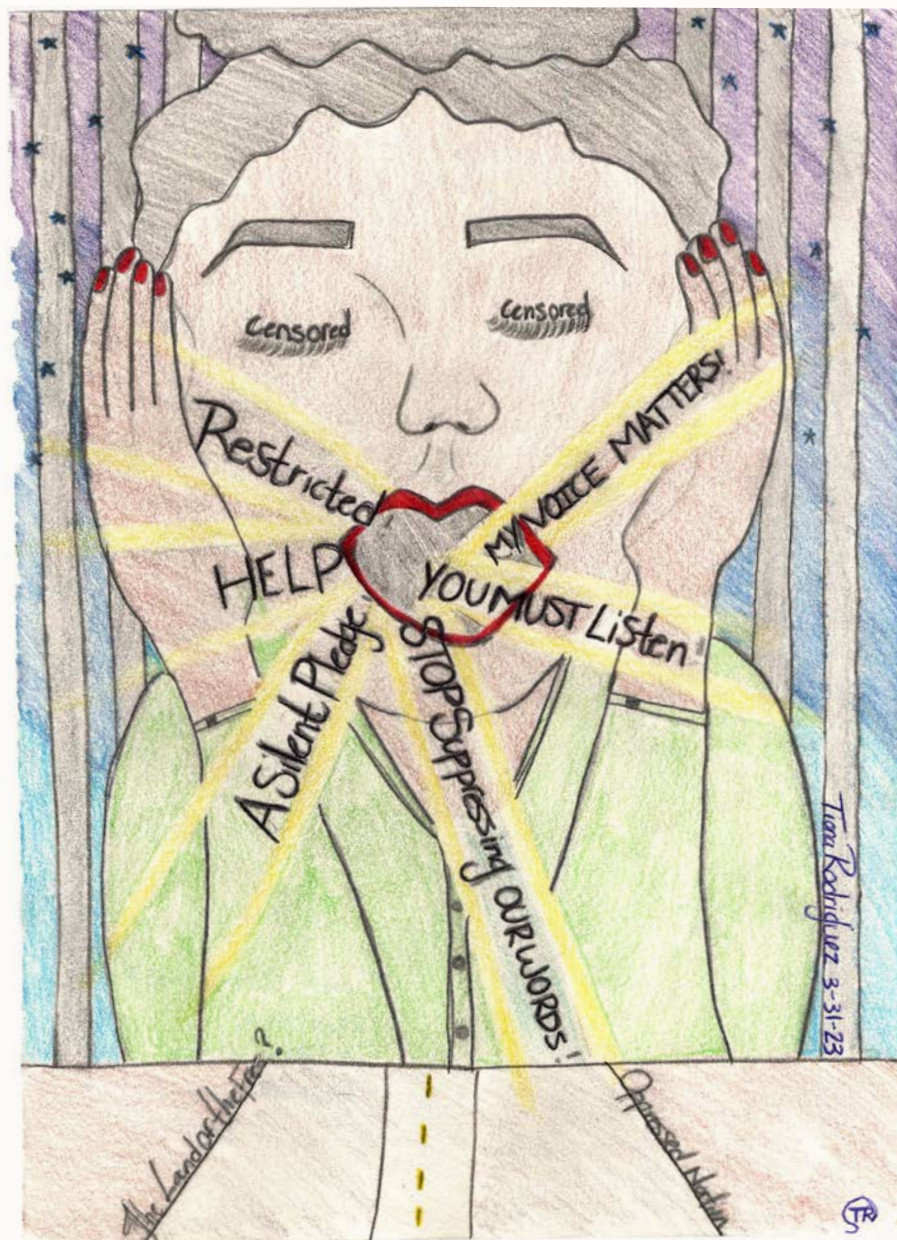
For instance, the current MDOC Director has been in office for 12+ years, and the legislative Ombudsman for 20+ years. During their tenure, prison conditions have declined in many ways. Therefore, both should be replaced with people who are willing reform policy as well as hold staff accountable. I've seen the above administrators rubber stamp far too many grievances to believe that they are interested in anything other than the status quo, so they've gotta go.

When marshaling the troops, the most persuasive action that an advocacy organization can take involves showing results, e.g. the MDOC changed a policy in response to a demand letter or lawsuit. In my experience, challenging censorship in the MDOC is an exercise in frustration and futility. Prison administrators refuse to follow policy or federal law. Thus, the only recourse prisoners have involves judicial review, a proceeding that is far too difficult for most to navigate. Further, this avenue often does not produce any positive results, with the courts usually dismissing the claims for procedural reasons.

Thus, prisoner's current apathy towards criminal justice reform isn't simply a matter of laziness; it's the seemingly futility of such efforts. If advocacy organizations want to enlist prisoners into their ranks when challenging the system, they must demonstrate a willingness and ability to change the system (even a little). It's the reason why Human Rights Defense Center receives so many letters every month- they're relentless in their pursuit of justice. As all of us should be.

# TERRIFYING REALITIES

BY TIONA RODRIGUEZ  
NEW YORK



Copy  
Jan

pg 1 of 3

## Return To Sender

### Anticipating Agony

The Prison System is in a constant battle to censor everything incarcerated individuals create, consume, and come into contact with. From mail, books, TV, movies, human contact, free staff visits, phone calls, clothes, and now tablets, when the pandemic hit it was a closed door zipped lip conspiracy. The institution didn't want the word to get out that we were being treated worse than caged animals. Hot meals were off the table and if it wasn't for a few brave souls with phones that took pictures of the cold state boxed lunches we were receiving for every meal nothing would have changed. Inhumane is a word I have become familiar with pertaining to living conditions, nourishment, treatment and regulation of interpersonal familial connection. Smoke & mirrors, lets tell the public who pays our paychecks how good these less than human rejects of society are being treated. Cognitive dissonance is a poison filled with lies and hypocrisy. When you say "Return to Sender" we enter a realm of institutional mail rooms. The CO's that often violate incarcerated individuals rights or are caught up in numerous CO's & citizen complaints, are often reprimanded and relocated to a mail room assignment where they further victimize families of the incarcerated. As I wait next to the black bars of a 4 1/2 x 10 foot cell compartmentalized with another grown man, a toilet/sink, and a double bunk, deemed by the city of San Francisco too small to house one canine companion, I anticipate a letter card, or any correspondence that will let me know someone still cares and knows I exist. The void, an apparition fades past my door, the CO's keys echo down the empty tier, a desolate and deserted emptiness. Contemplation, the keys resonate, the CO drops an empty envelope that states we have confiscated "contraband". The picture my young son drew of him and I on a boat fishing or

# ANTICIPATING AGONY

BY JON G

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When you say, "Return to Sender," we enter a realm of institutional mail rooms. The COs that often violate incarcerated individuals' rights or are caught up in numerous 602s and citizen complaints are often reprimanded and relocated to a mail room assignment where they further victimize families of the incarcerated. As I wait next to the black bars of a 4 ½ x 10 foot cell, compartmentalized with another grown man, a toilet/sink, and a double bunk deemed by the city of San Francisco too small to house one canine companion, I anticipate a letter, card, or any correspondence that will let me know someone still cares and knows I exist. The void, an apparition fades past my door, the CO's keys echo down the empty tier, a desolate and deserted emptiness. Contemplation, the keys resonate, the CO drops an empty envelope that states we have confiscated "contraband." The picture my young son drew of him and I on a boat fishing or painting the house is considered contraband because it was composed with a crayon. The empty envelope of a christmas card sent by my cousin from Texas. Contraband because it had glitter in the writing or it was 3D. If you want us to Return to Sender just send a trust account withdraw slip and admit you were at fault. After 30 days it will be destroyed.

Recently I began mailing out letters for transitional housing. 75% were "Return to Sender"—this address is no longer occupied or doesn't exist. I sent three books of stamps to a non-profit as a donation to letters for struggling youth. When the letter was returned to sender, I noticed one of my books of stamps was removed with a letter of confiscation in its place. You are only allowed to receive 2 books of stamps. They instructed me to provide a stamped envelope so they could "Return to Sender." I am the sender?? So I sent a self-addressed stamped envelope. They promptly informed me I would have to prove another address on the street I wanted

By  
Jon

pg 2 of 3

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By  
Jon  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

pg 3 of 3

They knew the COs that had broke a federal law for tampering with mail. They still work in the unit and still come into contact and have access to our mail. "Return to Sender" I remain cautiously coherent & cognizant.

Feel free to edit to your liking. I could write a book on this very topic as it relates to CDCR. For my own safety and BPH consideration please use initials JDG or Jon G. If you would like other contributions you can contact me @ Jon [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Thank you for the opportunity  
Jon [Redacted]

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# DEFIANT HOPE

BY PAMELA A. SMART  
NEW YORK

3 April 2023

Censor my clothes

  censor my words

    but you can never

      censor my hope.

It rises

  defiant

    like a Phoenix

      from the ashes

        spreads its wings

          and flies

over and above

  these prison walls

    beyond the barbed wire

      Defiant hope is free.

# CENSORSHIP IN AMERICA'S PRISONS: ROOTED IN PURITAN CHRISTIANITY

BY FELIX D'ALLESSANDRO  
WASHINGTON

Christianity, from our nation's Puritan roots, fuels censorship in America's prisons. Its moral rigidity is its legacy. As a Washington State inmate who's spent the last two decades in prison, I have watched our access to unadulterated media (pictures, literature, music and television) become progressively curtailed, and increasingly monitored.

While a few of us still have "grandfathered" CD and cassette tape players and fewer of us have tapes and CDs, the Securus Unity Tablet, provided free of charge to Washington inmates, is our primary source for media content. And what of this content? Songs like Nirvana's "Rape Me" are banned simply for their titles and bands like Orgy face a similar problem. Songs proclaiming to be "explicit versions" are inexplicably censored when purchased and downloaded, yet Securus does deem this false advertising cause for refund.

Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) policies implicitly support this ban on "vulgarity," but do not explicitly forbid it. A censored song is not the same; it is altered, and done so out of a sense of Christian morality. Because we are required to use headphones with our devices, the only person who could be offended is the person who owns the music. What other reason than imposing their moral code could they have for depriving us?

Speaking of the Securus Unity Platform, it gives DOC an enhanced toolset to monitor and curtail our communication with the outside world. They have removed programs that were available on the previous tablet, JPay, that we used to write articles and stories. Our tablets are always online, so anything we put on our tablets can be reviewed at any time, and due to a recent statewide outage glitch, we now know that both DOC and Securus can reset our tablets, costing us all of our data since there is no cloud backup of our files. So, what happens if they don't approve of something in our "Drafts" folder? DOC has offered no assurance that the remote reset won't happen again.

Then there is our mail policy. It goes far beyond "no nudity." Images of butt cheeks can cause a magazine or newspaper to be rejected and banned. A friend had a picture of his wife and kids at the beach rejected for "what appears to be minors in sexually suggestive clothing/attire." Another was forced to get rid of intimate pictures of his wife because he would receive a major infraction for having them in his possession. Images of breasts and breastfeeding are also barred.

There are exceptions codified in administrative code for images that have artistic, educational and medical value. Yet the three-person Publication Review

Committee, which frequently meets and makes decisions without its only non-Department member, rarely grants those exceptions.

In keeping with the medical definition, neither the Washington State Secretary of Health nor the U.S. Surgeon General classify breasts as genitalia because they are not part of the reproductive system. This disgust of the human body is a deeply ingrained moral value of shame in the Christian faith, and one that because of policy and administrative code, we are constantly subjected to. Various solutions have been proposed and rejected, such as a “sensitive materials” box or envelope that would signify to searching staff the nature of the material contained within.

Washington State, and DOC in particular, need to move beyond this archaic moral code. We are all adults in here, and would appreciate being treated as such. Profanity, nudity and radical political ideals are no longer the anathema they once were in society. We, as a people have moved on, and it's time DOC did as well.

# MONSTER

BY JANET JACKSON  
ILLINOIS

I was first censored by the courts who would not allow me to present my abuse as a defense. I received a sentence of life without parole for the murder of my abuser. When I came to prison, I was completely censored. I wore clothes they issued, ate food they prepared, and did as I was told. I had no input into my life. My wants did not matter and at times neither did my needs.

Several years after my conviction, a group of advocates against domestic violence came to prison. They organized groups to help us heal and grow. Finally our voices were heard. I felt empowered, and I learned to speak out. Words rushed out of me and tears flowed as I talked about life with my abuser. Together and separately we continued to heal and grow.

The advocates were able to convince a film company to come in and film us for a program to be shown to the legislators. Each of us was given a chance to speak. I chose to write a poem called "Monster" that I am sharing with you.

*This is my way to make myself heard. I wrote this for all the victims of domestic violence. Stay strong.*

## *Monster*

I'm in love with a monster and he has no face.

We meet at midnight in a very dark place.

He climbs the stairs, knife in his hand.

I can see you don't understand.

Sometimes he has a tail and a pair of paws,

Furry face, and massive jaws,

Razor sharp teeth that tear and bite,

My beloved creature of the night.

Does he speak the truth or pretty lies?

Is this real or just a disguise?

Silence now, no more words,

But it doesn't matter, for you won't be heard.

Blood spatters upon the floor,

Deep gouges upon my door.

Silken bonds and wide spread thighs.

It's not rape if I close my eyes.

Bring on the whips, hoist the chains.

It's not love if there is no pain.

At sunrise when I'm wide awake,

It's turn about, for this is give and take.

I was in love with a monster and you haven't a clue.

I was in love with a monster; now they call me one too.

To: Central Office Media Review Committee

RE: Publication/Book denial - Due to Risk of Lawlessness.

From: Leonard Wilson, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED], New York [REDACTED]

November 30, 2022

Central Office Media Review Committee, I am writing this letter to support the appeal connected to the denial of material content within the Archive Based-Creative Arts, Book 2 Reader (here after referred to as A.B.C.A Book 2 Reader), a historical reference reader which covers content of marginalized individuals. Expressly minorities, Women, LGBTQ+ people and incarcerated individuals.

The Archive Based-Creative Arts reader is a publication compiled by members associated to the Parole Preparation Project. While deciding what material to include in the A.B.C.A-Book 2 Reader, the organization utilized and relied on the standards of Directive #4572 (Media Review) to guide them.

The Facility Media Review Committee sent me a disposition notice of denial stating: A.B.C.A Book 2 Reader has been found unacceptable for the following reason(s): Entire book, more than 8 pages, violates 4572-II-D-Risk of Lawlessness.

Directive #4572-Section-D, Facility Media Review Committee Operations, #4: States Literally, Should the F.M.R.C disapprove a publication such decision shall be set forth in form #4572B, Incarcerated Individual Disposition Notice. It shall include a brief statement of REASONS, explaining why the publication is deemed to violate one or more of the Media Review guidelines, and identify by page number, Article Title, and location on the page, The Contents Objected to!! (THE F.M.R.C SHALL NOT STATE THAT A PUBLICATION IS UNACCEPTABLE IN ITS ENTIRETY.)

# MEDIA REVIEW APPEAL

BY LEONARD WILSON  
NEW YORK

To: Central Office Media Review Committee

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An example concerning such brief statement of reason(s) is set forth below.

- The Following Is An Acceptable Statement of Reason(s): This publication incites incarcerated individuals to commit assaults on Corrections Officers in the Article 'Prison Rebellion Now' on page 10, near the bottom.
- The Following Is Not An Acceptable Statement of Reason(s): This publication incites disobedience towards law enforcement personnel on page 10.

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Reading Directive #4572, and its instructions - direction - or controlling guidelines to F, M, R, C Operations... The reason alone on the current disposition notice is insufficient, contrary to all written guidance. This is the primary reason for this appeal to the Central Office Media Review Committee.

In support of this appeal of the Archive Based Creative Arts Book 2 Reader, I can only briefly reference the materials in question since I have not read the book. The information I've been provided comes from conversation with the sender of the Book 2 Reader.

The pages in question make reference to the years 1894 and 1850, as well as a young woman's account of her experience with her menstruation and coming of age.

The 1894 materials are testimony of Men at E. Reformatory as to the abuses they endured. The 1850 materials reference a Historical 19<sup>th</sup> Century Corporal Punishment review at Auburn Correctional Facility; from a Cornell University Archives History Overview.

Also included in the denied materials is a New York Times Article about a Memoir discovery. Written by a Black man incarcerated at Auburn Correctional in the 1850's. These are references of conditions which existed in Corrections



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Also included in the denied materials is a New York Times Article about a memoir discovery. Written by a Black man incarcerated at Auburn Correctional in the 1850's. These are references of conditions which existed in Corrections One Hundred and Seventy Two (172) years ago, and One Hundred and Twenty Eight (128) years ago respectively.

Please note, the risk of lawlessness is described in section II-D, of Directive #4572 within a statement which reads: D - Any publication which advocates and presents a clear and immediate risk of lawlessness, violence, anarchy, or rebellion against Governmental authority is unacceptable.

This statement does not specifically detail or outline any examples which may constitute a violation. Utilizing the word lawlessness is vague, or a blanket statement at the least.

Furthermore; the Webster Dictionary defines the word lawless as: 1, Not observing the rules and Forms of the law (lawless transaction). Illegal, unauthorized, wrongful, unwarranted, forbidden, criminal, illegitimate, disobedient, felonious, ultra vires, law breaking, illicit, wrong. 2, Uncontrolled (lawless society), Rebellious, unruly, anarchic, uncivilized, savage, untamed, recalcitrant, riotous, degenerate, disreputable, wayward, unbridled, nihilistic, unchecked, seditious, defiant, disorganized, wantan, terrorist, etc.

The addition of the suffix 'ness,' adds additional meaning to the word lawless. Expressly defined as: Ness = a state of being, condition, quality, or degree.

As I have stated previously; the risk of lawlessness is a broad, vague statement. Are we to believe that Correctional facilities reflect directly in the year 2022, the same dire, desperate conditions, and circumstances prevalent One Hundred and Seventy Two, or One Hundred and Twenty Eight years ago?

Lawlessness can and should only be attributed to the factual nature of its inevitable possibility.

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Furthermore, the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the word lawless as: 1, Not regulated by or based on law. 2a, Not restrained or controlled by law: Untidy. B, illegal.

The Black's Law Dictionary defines the word lawless as: 1, Not observing the rules and forms of the law (lawless transaction). Illegal, unauthorized, wrongful, unwarranted, forbidden, criminal, illegitimate, disobedient, felonious, ultra vires, law breaking, illicit, wrong. 2, Uncontrolled (lawless society), Prebellious, unruly, anarchic, uncivilized, savage, untamed, recalcitrant, riotous, degenerate, disreputable, wayward, unbridled, nihilistic, unchecked, seditious, defiant, disorganized, wanton, terrorist, etc.

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Historically as a whole, society has seen worst atrocities involving law enforcement broadcast on mainstream news. George Floyd's murder, Tamir Rice, Philando Castile's, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Blam, and many more with no resulting lawlessness attributed to any of these more current events inside of Correctional facilities nationwide of the world over. Opposed to events which occurred 172 or 128 years ago in a correctional setting which is non-existent today,

Which leads me to believe, only under the current condition. Expressly my incarcerated state of being; by reading these materials I would then become lawless, act as if a savage, or uncivilized, degenerate man?... I beg to differ!

I ask humbly, that you reconsider the present decision, and in doing so approve the Archive Based Creative Arts Book 2 Reader. I thank you in advance for your consideration, valued time, and assistance in this very important matter.

Respectfully yours,

Leonard Wilson

Historically as a whole, society has seen worst atrocities involving law enforcement broadcast on mainstream news. George Floyd's Murder, Tamir Rice, Philando Castile's, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Blam, and many more with no resulting lawlessness attributed to any of these more current events inside of Correctional facilities nationwide or the world over. Opposed to events which occurred 172 or 128 years ago in a correctional setting which is non-existent today.

Which leads me to believe, only under the current condition. Expressly my incarcerated state of being, by reading these materials I would then become lawless, act as if a Savage, or uncivilized, degenerate Man?... I beg to differ!

I ask humbly, that you reconsider the present decision, and in doing so approve the Archive Based Creative Arts Book 2 Reader. I Thank You in advance for your consideration, valued time, and assistance in this very important matter.

Respectfully Yours,  
Leonard Wilson  
Leonard Wilson, [REDACTED]

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION

INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITION NOTICE

FACILITY MEDIA REVIEW COMMITTEE

████████████████████ CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

DATE OF NOTICE: 11/8

Wilson  
INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL NAME                      NUMBER                      CELL LOCATION

The publication ARCA - Week 2 Reader  
(Title)  
A No Author - Week 2 Reader  
(Author, Date of Volume & Number)

has been reviewed by the Facility Media Review Committee and the following portions:  
pgs 55-70, 105-108, 130-141, 171, 214, 219-220  
(Pages, Articles, or Location of Offensive Portions)

have been found unacceptable for the following reasons: (Entire Book more than 8 pages)  
Violates 4572-II A - Risk of Harmlessness

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Guideline Number and Reason)

Do you wish to appeal this disposition?

- Yes. Appeal to the Central Office Media Review Committee by checking this box and sending this form and (if you desire) a letter in support of your appeal to the Facility Media Review Committee (FMRC).
- No. Choose only one of the following disposal options:

██

- Have the publication sent to a person of your choice, not another incarcerated individual or a Department of Corrections and Community Supervision official, at your expense.  
Send to (include name and address): \_\_\_\_\_
- Have the publication destroyed. If the FMRC receives notice that the publication has been approved based upon an appeal by the sender, you will receive it.

Note: If you choose not to appeal, the publication will be held, as is, for at least 30 days from the date of this notice to allow time for the sender to submit an appeal if any. If the sender submits an appeal, the publication will be held, as is, pending the COMRC appeal determination. For the purposes of this notice, the term "sender" shall refer to the person or entity that sent you the publication, if known, and if that person or entity is unknown, then the term "sender" refers to the publisher, if known.

If you do not make a choice and the sender does not submit a timely appeal, disposal of your material will be at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.

James Wilson  
Incarcerated Individual Signature

11-30-22  
Date



Attn: SJP  
Re: RTS zine  
P.O. Box 1654  
New York, NY 10159

Lobotomized through the Throat

I don't know what made Ike Turner so mean to women, but I live with his clones in full prison guard regalia every day; misogynists clothed as employees of the state.

I'm a transmale that has been incarcerated 36 consecutive years in female prisons. i haven't had steak and lobster in all tht time (and was a fast food conbisseur when I arrived in prison at 19 yrs old.). Shouldn't I be the one that is consummately ticked off?

In my cell, the bed is 2 feet from the desk, but if I am not sitting on my bed for 5 am, 10:30am, 4pm, 9:25pm/standing and 12:30 count, I get a sanction. It is about control and "I said so" or "It's a direct order".

We are not allowed to wave or communicate through windows [Unless you are in the jail of the prison and they force you to visit from behind glass].

I am not allowed mail that has perfume, glitter or p^hotos with tattoos, alcohol, etc. I am not allowed to have mail with stains and I suspect the mailroom is using my letters as coasters to disallow it. I'm enclosing the sheet of why we can't have our mail, because it is beyond your article word limit for me to write it.

Many of the women do not receive issues of their Cosmopolitan and Elle magazines because they are deemed "too sexually explicit". The public paying for full subscriptions finds it discouraging when their loved one only gets a couple issues. i find it ironic that women could look down their own shirts and see naked breasts, so how are the models sexually explicit?

I drew a flower and the stamen were sexual couplings of the entire spectrum. The drawing has the word love in Braille down the side, because the piece is about how love is blind. It is being held for destruciton while I represent myself in the 1st amendment lawsuit.

I'm already in prison, I am not allowed to do much or have much sent in to me. now , my mouth is sewn shut as I am not being allowed to express myself through art. Even if they can censor me, how can they censor what you are able to see (by stopping my outgoing art)?!

Why does the prison administration find my art so threatening? What could I convey to you that is so dangerous, that it must be destroyed? Bullies run the Big House and it's not the inmates.

Zhi Kai H. Vanderford [Mr. /he/him]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## RE: RTS ZINE

BY ZHI KAI VANDERFORD  
MINNESOTA

I don't know what made Ike Turner so mean to women, but I live with his clones in full prison guard regalia every day; misogynists clothed as employees of the state.

I'm a transmale that has been incarcerated 36 consecutive years in female prisons. I haven't had steak and lobster in all that time (and was a fast food connoisseur when I arrived in prison at 19 years old). Should I be the one that is consummately ticked off?

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Zhi Kai H. Vanderford [Mr./he/him]

**NOTICE OF NON-DELIVERY OF MAIL / PACKAGE**

OFFENDER			
Name	OID	Facility /Location (If applicable)	Complex/Unit - Room #
<b>INTENDED SENDER OR RECEIVER</b>			
Name (and Company of Sender (if applicable))	OID (if applicable)	Facility (if applicable)	
Address - Street or P.O. Box	City	State	Zip
NON-DELIVERY INFORMATION			
Date Item Received:	Item Rejected for Delivery		

**REASON FOR NON-DELIVERY:**

- Outgoing item (check which applies):
    - Improper return address
    - Drawings/excessive writing on envelope
  - Item contains contraband (check which applies):
    - Stamps/stamped envelope(s) / blank paper
    - Money/money instruments in unauthoriz
    - Musical, homemade or unsigned greeting cards/posters
    - Card signed in pencil/non-permanent ink
    - Polaroid photos/computer disk/CD/phone card
    - Contains more than 20 photos
    - Sexually explicit material / nude photos/pictures/drawings
    - Correspondence from/to multiple persons
    - Other:
  - Unauthorized/sealed envelope or not purchased from canteen
  - Special mail services not permitted for indigent envelopes
  - Indigent envelope exceeds allowable 13 ounces
  - Face sheet/legal documents not pertaining to offender
  - Unauthorized use of facility forms
  - Item enclosed in plastic/laminate/tape/cardboard folder
  - Photos of staff / facilities
  - Artwork or items prohibiting adequate inspection, stickers, white-out, padded envelope/bubble wrap, unable to search
  - Multiple/duplicate photos/printed material, intent to distribute
  - Photos/publications featuring tattoos
  - Turned over to OSI for disposition  Held for review by
  - Photo of offender taken during incarceration
- MAILROOM**  
**APR 08 2022**  
**RETURNED**
- Constitutes a risk to the safety and security of the facility, specific individuals or the general public, 3-way phone calls, people searches, etc.
  - Pertains to sending contraband into or out of the facility.
  - Threats of physical harm, blackmail, extortion or other criminal activity.
  - Written or pictorial item(s) suggesting affiliation with security threat groups.
  - Teaches or describes the manufacture or illicit use of weapons, explosives or devices which create a substantial danger of physical harm or jeopardize facility security.
  - Pertains to the illicit manufacture or use of drugs, drug paraphernalia or intoxicating substances.
  - Pertains to unauthorized business activity, including such examples as, the practice of a profession, sale, solicitation, manufacture or distribution of goods or services.
  - Advocates racial, religious or national hatred in such a way so as to create a serious danger of violence in the facility.
  - Information, which if communicated, would create a clear and present danger of violence or physical harm.
  - Solicits gifts of goods or money from a source other than family or persons on the offender's visiting list.
  - Contains suspicious messages or contents are written in code or not understood by the inspecting staff, and efforts to have the content interpreted have been unsuccessful.
  - Contains symbols, extra identifiers, Latin phrases, UCC citations, miscellaneous punctuation, or other "sovereign" identifiers.
  - Contains a Uniform Commercial Code (UCC-1) form and has been turned over to OSI.
  - Items / substances which pose a safety or sanitation hazard, including perfume, lipstick, stains, etc.
  - Published material not received directly from the publisher/authorized vendor, or not paid in advance via offender accounts.
  - Gift published material not received directly from the publisher/authorized vendor, no receipt identifying the purchaser or evidence of tampering, alteration.
  - Unauthorized transfer of property between offenders.
  - Item was not ordered through approved procedures, or was an unallowable item.
  - Other (explain):

Staff Signature	Department Mail/Property	Date 8/6/22
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**NOTICE TO OFFENDER**

- Above item presented an immediate sanitation, safety or security threat and was destroyed by staff.
- RETURN THIS FORM FOR DISPOSITION (Check box below) or the item(s) will be disposed of / destroyed after 30 days.**
- RETURN TO SENDER: Attach 2<sup>nd</sup> copy, along with a pre-addressed letter-size  9 X 12 envelope  hope to make a copy & have re mailed. 8/5/22
- Have the item(s) disposed of / destroyed.

**Important Notice:** Appeals should be directed to the Department that denied the item. If you choose to dispute this decision, you may appeal to the Mail or Property Supervisor within 10 working days of receipt of this notice. The appeal must include a copy of this form. A second appeal may be requested by writing the Correspondence Review Authority or Property Manager within 10 working days of receipt of the Supervisor's response with a copy of this form.

- Appeal approved and delivered/mailed
- Returned to Sender
- Discarded/Destroyed

Distribution:  Rejecting Department  Offender  Intended Sender/Receiver (if required)

302.020A (6/2015)

**RIGHT:**

**KINCAID AND WELLS**

BY **PAUL LACOMBE NEVADA**





## IN RE: RETURN TO SENDER

BY CAROLYN CHERNOFF  
PENNSYLVANIA

How many eyes have glanced over these pages? How many fingers and thumbs have smudged each submission? How many people chose, often arbitrarily, whether to grant access to a humble collection of paper and ink?

A collaborative zine is collective work. In this case, in addition to authors and artists and graphic designers and myself and Jessica Phoenix Sylvia, an unknown number of prison guards and other federal employees looked at each submission, including those which perhaps never made it to the mail.

Prison censorship is a system of power and control. Most of it is invisible and unknown. Yes, books are banned. Yes, libraries are restricted. Yes, ingoing and outgoing mail is censored, redacted, or blocked altogether. Information going in and out of prisons, jails, and other systems of carceral control is, well, controlled.

That means if you're incarcerated and request books about menopause, say, or trying to heal from sexual abuse, you may be denied access because the simple mention of anatomical and biological facts can be deemed pornographic. It's not just books that are banned; it's basic information and facts of human existence that are censored.

The authors and artists featured in this zine are telling their own truths of what prison censorship looks and feels like. There are literally millions of other stories. Being able to read and write, being able to send mail, having a network of family or friends or comrades on the outside who can share encouragement and opportunities—these also form a system that penalizes far too many people, through luck or chance or strategy.

Censorship is more than access to books or mail, although that's a big part of it. It's about access to information, to networks, to relationships and ideas. Most of all, censorship is about power and control.

Whose voices do we hear? What's missing? This zine shares a few perspectives. You can agree or disagree or feel your feelings about what you read and see here. Just know that there are an almost-unimaginable number of people in the United States right now who might never see this zine or anything like it.

The "almost-unimaginable" part is important to think about, because perhaps the cruelest censorship is that of the imagination.

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Address - Street or P.O. Box

[Redacted]

**NON-DELIVERY INFORM**

Date Item Received: 01/01/00

Item Rejected for

**REASON FOR NON-DELIV**

- Outgoing item (check which applies):
  - Improper return address
  - Drawings/excessive writing on envelope
- Item contains contraband (check which applies):
  - Stamps/stamped envelope(s) / blank envelope
  - Money/money instruments in unsealed envelope
  - Musical, homemade or unsigned goods
  - Card signed in pencil/non-permanent ink
  - Polaroid photos/computer disk/CD
  - Contains more than 20 photos
  - Sexually explicit material / nude photos
  - Correspondence from/to multiple persons
  - Other:
- Constitutes a risk to the safety and security of the facility
- Pertains to sending contraband into or out of the facility
- Threats of physical harm, blackmail, extortion
- Written or pictorial item(s) suggesting escape
- Teaches or describes the manufacture of weapons or tools that could jeopardize facility security.
- Pertains to the illicit manufacture or use of weapons
- Pertains to unauthorized business activities
- Pertains to the practice of a profession, sale, solicitation or offer
- Advocates racial, religious or national hatred
- Information, which if communicated, could be detrimental to the facility
- Solicits gifts of goods or money from inmates
- Contains suspicious messages or content that has been or could be interpreted have been unsuccessful.
- Contains symbols, extra identifiers, I.D. numbers
- Contains a Uniform Commercial Code document
- Items / substances which pose a safety hazard
- Published material not received directly from publisher
- Gift published material not received directly from sender (evidence of tampering, alteration)
- Unauthorized transfer of property between inmates
- Item was not ordered through approved channels
- Other (explain):

Staff Signature [Redacted]

**NOTICE TO OFFENDER**

- Above item presented an immediate safety hazard
- RETURN THIS FORM FOR DISPOSAL
- RETURN TO SENDER: Attach 2<sup>nd</sup> class postage
- Have the item(s) disposed of / destroyed

**Important Notice:** Appeals should be delivered to the Mail or Property Supervisor within 10 working days of the date requested by writing the Correspondence Request Form and a copy of this form.

Appeal approved and delivered/mailed

Distribution: [1-Rejecting Department]

