

# In Solidarity

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT'S PRISONER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Dear Friends,

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) welcomes you to the Winter edition of the Prison Advisory Committee (PAC) publication, *In Solidarity*. As many of you know, *In Solidarity* is a collaborative newsletter created by PAC members, SRLP staff & volunteers. SRLP greatly values this opportunity to share your inspiring work and reflect on our joint struggle against the violence of policing and incarceration.

At this historical moment, we feel hopeful as movements of resistance are being fortified and spaces for reflection are growing. We want to share with you in this edition both the hope for the future that we have heard from across the world and also hold the trauma and sadness of the violence of the prison, policing and immigration enforcement systems.

It is such an honor for us as SRLP staff to work with each of you and we value your input into our work and our political goals.

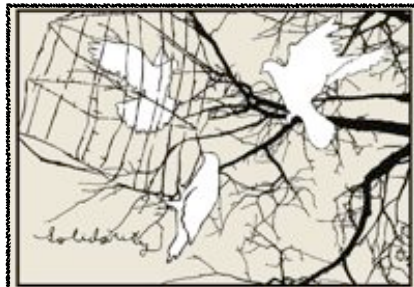
In solidarity,  
SRLP staff & volunteers



## INSIDE...



Legal Updates



Poetry & Art



SRLP Happenings

# Inside this issue of IN SOLIDARITY



## PRISONER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project strongly believes that the people most affected by the systems of violence and oppression we fight against are the best people to lead that fight. We also believe that social justice organizations must find ways to directly involve the members of our community who have been separated from us by the criminal injustice system. The Prisoner Advisory Committee (PAC) is one way to overcome the enormous state-created barriers to communication and political participation for the people who are most affected by the prison industrial complex.

## DISCLAIMER

Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in In Solidarity are solely those of the authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. The Sylvia Rivera Law Project makes no representations as to the accuracy of any statements made in In Solidarity. Authors and artists bear sole responsibility for their work.

PAC currently has around 60 amazing members who are enthusiastic about sharing their time, passion, and expertise with SRLP. Our members are trans, intersex, gender non-conforming people and allies who are currently incarcerated in New York. Members of PAC work together with members of our collective to develop strategies & goals for our work.

## IN SOLIDARITY

is a collaborative newsletter created by PAC members, who are involuntarily locked away, SRLP staff & volunteers . Together our words & collective efforts work against injustice for low-income and/or people of color who are trans, intersex & gender non-conforming both inside and out of the prison industrial complex and towards gender self determination for all. Additionally, this newsletter has always been a critical way for SRLP staff to connect with & inform volunteer members of the Prisoner Advisory Committee.

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| 1     | About PAC                          |
| 2     | About SRLP                         |
| 3-4   | SRLP Collective, Structure & Staff |
| 5     | PAC Member Self Interview          |
| 6-7   | In the news                        |
| 8-10  | Occupy Wall Street                 |
| 11    | PAC Art & Poetry                   |
| 12    | Legal Updates                      |
| 13-14 | PAC Essay & More                   |
| 15    | Word Search                        |
| 16    | PAC Member Self-Interview          |
| 17-18 | Transforming Justice               |
| 19    | Resources                          |
| 20    | PAC Art & Poetry                   |

## Submission Guidelines

## CONTRIBUTORS

Shaniece Nyasia Powell  
Stephanie Jo Gilley  
Thomas A. Ross-Sobcezk  
Chase Stranggio  
Reina Gossett  
Katherine Brown  
Tabitha Emo  
Shaylanna Smith  
N. Vellon  
Paul  
Ronnie Brown  
Shardea La'Ajia Nevaeh  
Bradley  
Gabriel Foster



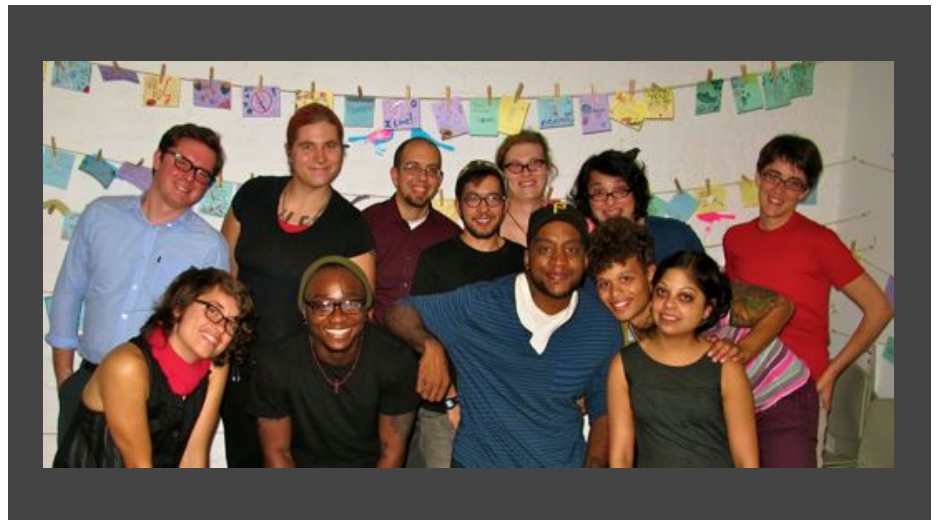
## THE SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) works to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine their gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination, or violence. SRLP is a collective organization founded on the understanding that gender self-determination is inextricably

intertwined with racial, social and economic justice. Therefore, we seek to increase the political voice and visibility of low-income people and people of color who are transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming. SRLP works to improve access to respectful and affirming social, health, and

legal services for our communities. We believe that in order to create meaningful political participation and leadership, we must have access to basic means of survival and safety from violence.

SRLP STAFF & COLLECTIVE MEMBERS



## SYLVIA RIVERA STORY

This project is named for civil rights pioneer Sylvia Rivera. A veteran of the 1969 Stonewall uprising, Sylvia was a tireless advocate for all those who have been marginalized as the "gay rights" movement has mainstreamed. Sylvia fought hard against the exclusion of transgender people from the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act in New York, and was a loud and persistent voice for the rights of people of color and low-income queer and trans people. This project works to continue Sylvia's work by centralizing issues of systemic poverty and racism, and prioritizing the struggles of queer and trans people who face the most severe and multi-faceted discrimination.



“So, that goes to show the rest of the community, that technically when we ask for your support, we want your support. But in the long run, if it’s not there, we will acquire what we need”

— Sylvia Rivera, from her talk at Latino Gay Men of New York, June 2001

# SRLP COLLECTIVE STRUCTURE

SRLP functions as a multi-racial, intergenerational collective of people committed to a broad understanding of gender self-determination. As a collective, we recognize that it is essential to create structures that model our vision of a more just society.

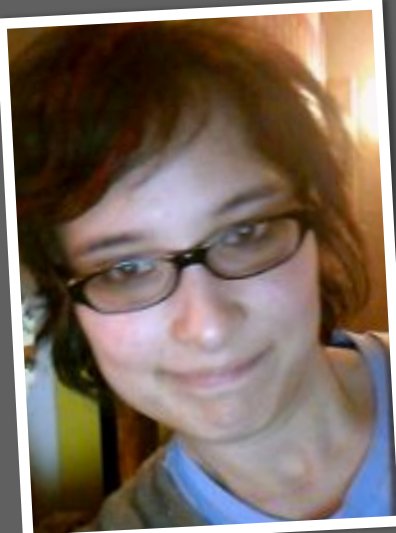
We believe that in the struggle for social justice too often change is perceived as a product and not a process. We seek to use a non-hierarchical structure to support work that aims to redistribute power and wealth for a more just society.

We also strongly believe that our community-based structure, which maximizes community involvement, will support the sustainability of our work and the accountability of SRLP to its constituencies.

We have developed an organizational structure with five equally important teams and a Board working together on a shared vision and mission.

**The Direct Services Team** provides direct legal services, runs our legal clinics, makes determinations about how to take and handle cases, advocates for policy reform within institutions that impact our community, and sustains relationships with allied service providers.

**The Public Education Team** creates and implements our trainings for other groups



## NAOMI

Collective Member

has volunteered with SRLP since 2004, serving first as a part of the Public Education Team and now as a member of the Movement Building Team. She's helped build SRLP's websites and has spoken at many SRLP trainings and events, and was one of the first members of the SRLP collective when it was formed. Naomi spends the rest of her time designing video games for a living and occasionally playing the drums.



## GABRIEL

Collective Member

is a white Muslim transgender queer man who joined the collective in 2004. He was on staff providing legal services until 2010 when he became an Acting Assistant Professor of Lawyering at NYU. Now he volunteers on the Collective Development Team at SRLP. In his free time, he loves playing table-top role playing games, reading science fiction and fantasy, and dreaming of a world with no prisons.



## JAMILA

Collective Member

joined SRLP in June of 2010, helping the collective move in to the new office. They have since worked as the tech support consultant, and as a member of the Movement Building Team, helping plan and run events for our community. They are glad for the opportunity to use their skills to help create and maintain a safe and welcoming space for our community.

## MIK

Collective Member

is a queer white trans male law student at CUNY Law in NYC. Mik formerly worked at the Ali Forney Center where he became invested in youth organizing, re-thinking the way we view mental health, and stopping the school-to-prison pipeline. When he's not trying to understand the law in order to use it as a tool for social change he is reading, watching British comedy, or outside trying to re-connect with his midwest roots.



and organizations, creates and distributes our public education materials, develops and maintains our website, and creates and implements SRLP's media advocacy work.

**The Fundraising and Finance Team** is responsible for raising money for our operations, coordinating our budget-planning process, maintaining relationships with our donor base, creating fundraising events, and administering our financial systems.

## HELEN

Collective Member

is a newbie to SRLP and New York. Originally from Seattle, where she worked with LGBTQ youth, Helen recently finished social work school at the University of Michigan. She got involved with SRLP in the spring when she helped out with the most recent edition of *In Solidarity*. Helen is enthusiastic about trying new things, like playing musical instruments while hula hooping.



**The Collective Development Team** is responsible for recruiting staff and collective members, for making policies and programs regarding SRLP's diversity, and developing policies and procedures for SRLP staff and collective members.

**The Movement Building Team** supports the community-based leadership development and organizing of SRLP's low-income trans communities & trans communities of color.

## OLA

Staff, Director of Grass Roots Fundraising

is a Brooklyn-based Nigerian queer transfag activist, feminist & gender liberationist of Edo & Yoruba descent. He organized with the Audre Lorde Project's TransJustice & Immigrant Rights Work Groups for years. He has also worked for Queers for Economic Justice and with Uhuru-Wazobia and Liberation for All Africans, both in the diaspora and on the continent.



The Board is charged with oversight of the legal, ethical, and moral responsibilities of the organization and its financial health. SRLP is developing a structure where people committed to gender self-determination, and trans, intersex, and gender variant people can take powerful leadership roles in transforming their own lives as well as their communities.

# PAC Member Self-Interview

**SHANIECE  
NYASIA  
POWELL**

---

## Where I Grew Up:

Born in Wyandanch, Long Island, raised in Jamaica, Queens.

---

## How Long I've Been a PAC Member:

I have been an active PAC member for about a year now. I decided to join PAC because advocacy is in my blood, and I love my people and helping my people. A dream of mine is to open up Safe Haven Houses/homeless shelters for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] LGBT youth.

---

**Favorite Song:** *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, by Lauryn Hill

---

**Favorite Movie:** *The Color Purple*

---

**Favorite Book:** *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou



## FAVORITE ARTISTS:

Patti Labelle, Chaka Khan, Luther Vandross, Marvin Gaye, Bob Marley, Aretha Franklin, Fantasia, Jennifer Hudson, Trey Songz, Beyonce, India Arie, Erykah Badu, Ciara, Rihanna, Musiq, Maxwell and the list goes on and on (smiles)...oops [and] Lauryn Hill, my favorite.

## Something That is Really Important to Me:

Helping others make a change.

I am inspired most by Maya Angelou.

Like her, I am a poet, and she speaks volumes to my heart and soul. I want people to know that I love my people and I love being a transgender and can't wait until equality is finally reached.

# IN THE NEWS...

## **From Attica to Pelican Bay: A Brief History of Prison Rebellions**

by Bryan Gerhart  
from Colorlines Magazine  
Wednesday, July 27 2011

After three weeks and thousands of refused meals, the Pelican Bay hunger strike came to a end last week. The protest, which began on July 1 with inmates in the California prison's isolation wing, quickly spread across the state, both inside and outside of correctional facility walls. The massive scope of the demonstration stands as a testament to the strength of its organizing, which started months before Pelican Bay prisoners began turning away state-issued meals.

Isaac Ontiveros, Communications Director for Critical Resistance, a member of the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition, explained that the prisoners chose to use the strike to make their voices heard because it was the last means available. "They had exhausted the legal process, going through the avenues, no matter how narrow, outlined by the prison administration. They had nothing else besides their bodies to use."

Supporters of the protest consider it somewhat successful. More than the minor concessions made by the prison, Ontiveros says the biggest victory is the hope that it brings to such a monolithic, hopeless situation. But California prisoners aren't the first incarcerated population to use non-violent protest as a means for change. The United States' prison industry is massive and damaged, and there's an extensive history of peaceful demonstration by prisoners who put themselves at risk to effect change. "Pelican Bay situates in a long tradition of people, especially people who are struggling amidst incredibly oppressive conditions," said Ontiveros, "Who resort to using, and possibly sacrificing, their bodies as a means of trying to make change."

We've put together a brief history of organized prison rebellions since inmates fought back at Attica in 1971, the event that was arguably the turning point in U.S. prison reform.

### **Attica, New York (1971)**

Began as a protest of the death of black radical activist prisoner George Jackson at the hands of a San Quentin prison guard. Quickly turned from a peaceful demonstration to a riot. Approx 1,000 of the prison's 2,200 inmates rebelled, seizing control of the facility and taking 33 staff hostage. Authorities agreed to 28 of the prisoners' demands, which included creating a committee of

politicians and journalists to oversee the negotiation talks about better living conditions. The end came when law enforcement officials opened fire, leaving 29 inmates and 10 hostages dead. A class-action suit filed later in the 1970s was finally settled in 2000, when a federal judge ordered New York state to pay \$8 million to the surviving inmates.

### **Fox Lake, Wisconsin (1972)**

Peaceful protest among prisoners demanding changes in medical services following the death of an asthmatic inmate. Around 150 demonstrators simply sat without moving in the prison's outdoor recreation area. Their demands included a full replacement of medical staff, issuance of murder warrants against the prison's hospital staff and the presence of a competent doctor at the prison hospital 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

A legal adviser to the governor went to hear the inmates' demands and said grievances would be considered by the state correctional and governor's offices, but that no other concessions would be made.

### **Walla Walla, Washington (1981)**

Eight hundred of the Washington state penitentiary's 925 prisoners protest the lack of communication between inmates and administration. The week long demonstration

## **FROM ATTICA TO PELICAN BAY, CONTINUED...**

of good faith to the new governor.” They called unsuccessfully for the replacement of prison Superintendent James Spalding, who ironically, considering the central reasons for the protest, refused to meet with the strike leaders.

### **Norfolk, Massachusetts (1987)**

Over 1,200 inmates protested in the prison yard for the beating of a fellow prisoner by guards and for the what they called the staff’s lack of respect and sensitivity. Video footage of the two day incident showed no violence on the part of the prisoners. In total, 79 inmates, who the prison identified as troublemakers, were transferred to other penitentiaries. Then-Governor Dukakis agreed to meet with prisoner advocate groups to hear inmates’ complaints. Later that year, a special legislative committee faulted state prison officials for ignoring the warning signs that led to the uprising. The panel said it was a “surprisingly orderly and peaceful protest” and said prison administrators mishandled the response to the demonstrations, retaliating against black inmates more severely than others.

### **Sterling, Colorado (2003)**

Prison officials locked down the Sterling Correctional Facility after dozens of inmate cooks went on strike to protest wage cuts. Prisoners’ pay was dropped from \$2 to 60 cents a day. Multiple shifts of cooks refused to leave their cells, halting meal preparation for a number of days. Strikers were placed in administrative segregation, lost earned release time, and were transferred to higher security prisons. Officials refused to negotiate with the inmates over pay and the prison remained on lockdown until the inmates went back to work. They received peanut butter sandwiches and other cold food for meals until the things returned to normal.

### **Georgia (2010-2011)**

It’s a felony in the state of Georgia for an inmate to have a cell phone, but this didn’t stop the inmates from organizing a statewide prison protest via text message on phones believed to have been procured through guards. Thousands of Georgia prisoners across the state refused to work, stopped all other activities and locked down in their cells in a peaceful protest for human rights. Set forth demands that included living work wages, educational opportunities, decent health care, nutritional meals, access to families, vocational and self-improvement opportunities, end to cruel and unusual punishments, decent living conditions and just parole decisions. The protesting

inmates remained non-violent, despite the Warden’s orders that heat and hot water be turned off, and the DOC’s violent attempts to force the men back to work. Some men were ripped from their cells, resulting in a number of broken ribs, and one inmate was beaten beyond recognition. The demonstration crossed racial, religious, and gang-affiliation lines. “We have to come together and set aside all differences,” one inmate said.

### **Pelican Bay, California (2011)**

Prisoners in Pelican Bay’s Security Housing Unit, the isolation wing of the supermax prison, announced a hunger strike to protest the inhumane conditions of their confinement. Word of the strike quickly spread, thanks largely to a network of supporters outside prison walls, and soon correctional facilities across the state were reporting shows of solidarity by their inmates. At its peak, 6,600 prisoners in California were refusing their state-sponsored meals. The strike ended more than three weeks after it began, in exchange for the promise that SHU prisoners would be given all-weather caps, wall calendars, and educational opportunities. More substantially, inmate organizers say the CDCR has agreed to investigate changes to certain policies, including the gang validation and debriefing processes that were mentioned in strikers original demands.



## How to Make Occupy Wall Street More Trans-Inclusive

by Toshio Meronek  
from the Bilerico Report  
November 1, 2011

A big problem with social justice movements? Forgetting - and sometimes resisting - to include the people who are the most oppressed in the process. The crew at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project knows the problem first-hand, and stopped by Occupy Wall Street last week to help other protesters understand where they're coming from.

Reina Gossett described trans revolutionaries Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson's struggles in the 1960s and '70s with STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries). The group's first occupation happened at NYU's Weinstein Hall, when the school refused to allow two queer dance parties and called in the NYPD to get rid of protesters. Many people left when the cops arrived. Later, STAR released an impassioned statement: "All that we fought for at Weinstein Hall was lost when we left upon the request of the pigs, you people run if you want to, but we're tired of running. We intend to fight for our rights until we get them." Rivera also helped organize New York's first Gay Pride, then called the Christopher Street Liberation Parade. The parade ended at a women's prison in protest of the mass incarceration of queer and trans people - a fact lost on most people who attend today's corporate Pride celebrations. Naomi Clark focused on the lack of acceptance and resources that trans and queer people face, and how it's sometimes necessary to turn to survival crimes



Left to right: Lauren Jones SRLP DST Intern, Christine Davitt SRLP supporter, SRLP Membership Coordinator, Reina Gossett

("also known as Survival"); compounding the problem are associated mental health and substance issues.

Jeannine Tang ended the event with seven statements to help make the Occupy movement a safer space queers and trans people:

1. At meetings, assemblies, and social spaces, we support people self-identifying their preferred name and their preferred gender pronoun.
2. At meetings, assemblies, and social spaces, we support calling people by their preferred name and their preferred gender pronoun, even when they aren't here.
3. If we're unsure of someone's gender pronoun, we'll ask, and share our own. We won't assume.
4. We will not out someone as transgender without their permission, since we recognize transphobia can be dangerous.
5. If we create or plan public shelter, medical access, or bathroom access, we will create access that's open to all genders.
6. In our direct actions and protests, we will not draw police attention to groups including transgender people, gender non-conforming people, and people of color.

## Continued...

We will prevent harm to trans and gender non-conforming people at the hands of the cops.

7. We support gender self-determination for trans women, trans men, gender non-conforming people, and we desire gender self-determination for all.

.....

## SRLP Occupy Wall Street Teach In Speech

by Reina Gossett

November 26, 2011

Self determination, to us means that the people most affected by oppression, like economic violence & capitalism, are powerful and capable of organizing to transform the world. Self determination means that the people most affected should be in the leadership of organizing! So while we here in the park might be the most visible part of this movement we know our community members are organizing outside of this space and we have been for a long long time.

Our community members are: low income trans and gender non conforming people, trans and gender non conforming people of color. Trans and gender non conforming people with disabilities, who are jobless, have HIV/AIDS, are undocumented, homeless trans and gnc people and people who have resisted the occupation of this land, of their bodies and

spirits for centuries, since the Dutch built the wall on wall street to keep out the Wappinger (wop'injur) people living here out and allow black people to be sold as commodities, right here on wall street!

So we hope everyone can remember: not everyone who supports OWS and has helped create this historical moment can be in this park today! We want to talk about why & what we can do about it to create an even stronger movement. But first we wanted to make sure that the spirit of Sylvia Rivera is alive and present in this space! Sylvia Rivera and countless other trans and gender non conforming people have a strong legacy of leadership the movements for self determination. Maybe you were there that night or already know that "Who's streets, our streets" was first chanted at the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, a queer & trans uprising against the policing of our communities. It was first chanted by trans revolutionaries, including Sylvia Rivera. After the Stonewall uprising, Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P Johnson and Bubbles E Lee formed STAR: Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. You might have taken part in or know that STAR's first action was to OCCUPY New York University! STAR decided Occupying NYU was necessary after the university refused to allow two queer dances to happen and called in the police to disrupt a sit in protesting

NYU; STAR explained to their allies why they were occupying NYU rather than leaving with everyone else. They wrote: "All we fought for at Weinstein Hall was lost when we left upon the request of the pigs.... You people run if you want to, but we're tired of running. We intend to fight for our rights until we get them." You might have worked with her or know that that same year Sylvia Rivera helped to organize the first annual Christopher Street Liberation march (now known as corporate Gay Pride), which ended on purpose at the Women's House of Detention in order to connect against the mass incarceration of people of color, queer people, trans people with organizing done by other revolutionary organizations like the Black Panthers. It was no coincidence Joan Bird and Afeni Shakur members of the Black Panther 21 were currently held in the Women's House of Detention when the Christopher Street Liberation March arrived there chanting "Free Our Sisters, Free Ourselves!"

Like many of us here, Sylvia Rivera knew that the police and prisons were fundamentally racist and transphobic institutions designed to control our lives and deliver our deaths. She also knew that it was vital to connect with other organizations doing revolutionary work to promote self determination. In order to Free Our Siblings & Free Ourselves, Sylvia knew she had to help build a mass movement.

How many of us knew this history? How many of you didn't?

If you didn't know this history, that's ok! That's why we are here. But there are reasons why! Historical erasure of our movement legacies is part of the transphobia we must resist daily. So is fighting being exiled and isolated from movement space and queer space, particularly for trans women of color, trans women with disabilities, and low income & undocumented trans women.

The GOOD NEWS is: If you did know this history, we are doing something right! including the organizing, relationship building and story sharing done with other trans and gender non conforming people, our friends and community. We do this work in order to fight back against transphobia, colonization racism, ableism, xenophobia and homophobia. We do this work to build strong communities and support each other. We do this work to build an even strong movement that we can all be a part of.



From SRLP's Movement Building Team's OWS sign making party

**“Historical erasure of our movement legacies is part of the transphobia we must resist daily.”**

Before we strategize, we want to shift some of the dialogue here that we are using to describe gender & our current economic situation, an economic situation that forces trans and gender non conforming people of color, particularly black and brown trans people to navigate and resist tremendous amounts of economic violence (through job discrimination,

One of our community members who could not be here explains it very well when she wrote (paraphrase): “I keep seeing signs saying "women own --% of the wealth" "women make --% of what men make" "gay people make --% of what straight people make". On their own, these statistics imply that justice would be achieved if "women" "men" and "homosexuals" had equal access to resources. Not only is this limiting in terms of who is seen/not seen in these statistics, but I think that the people who are left out (people of color, trans and gender non conforming people, queer people, people with disabilities, first nation people) speak to a lack of systemic analysis around how these (partial) realities came to be.

These disparities exist because the construction and policing of the gender binary are among the violences of capitalism and white supremacy. I want to say things that make people stop trying to add trans people into an already developed feminist analysis i.e. "women and queer and trans people are so oppressed by patriarchy!" and make people feel the necessity of gender liberation for all people. I'd like to say that being queer and trans and supporting gender self-determination are anticapitalist acts with a potential to transform identities and ways of interacting that were violently imposed in order to establish and maintain colonization, white supremacy, capitalism. I'd like to say that embracing gender liberation within occupy wall street will transform our relationships in ways that will make us so much stronger.”

It is in this spirit that we come to Occupy Wall Street foregrounding gender self determination as a radical anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist act and demanding a stronger movement for all of us.

To all who hide behind a mask, today is your day. you have no need for fear, nothing is in your way.

Remove your mask and show the real you. You're not alone, others are doing it too.

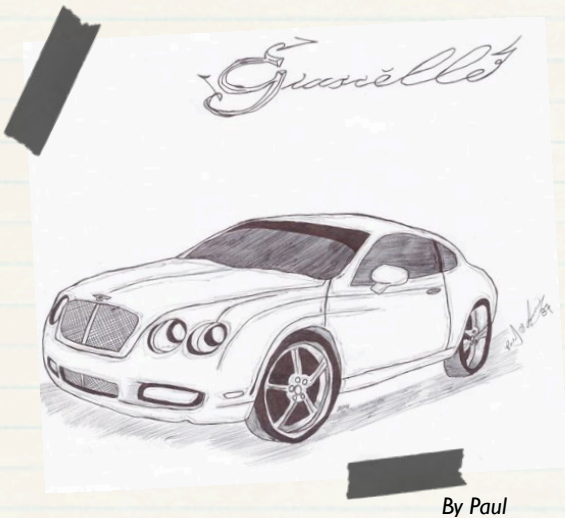
We have said it before and we were loud.

I am (fill in the preference) and I am proud, there is no longer a need to hide.

We are now a force and we're world wide. In the world or behind these prison bars, people look at us, yes we are stars.

A state cell holds the shell of me. But because I'm loved, I am free.

by Stephanie Jo Gilley  
Prisoner of Clinton, free in heart



By Paul

## A Precious Occurrence

by Em Claire, submitted by PAC Member, Ronnie Brown

I am a precious occurrence,  
And i don't have long.  
We are a precious occurrence  
And as long as we thing we have-  
We don't have long.

Too much time is being wasted running  
from pace to pace  
Asking, what is my name?

If you don't yet know it  
or if you've forgotten,  
then become still, go within  
And answer it.

You are a precious occurrence!  
Tell us your name

# LEGAL UPDATES

The Direct Services Team (DST) at SRLP is composed of our three staff attorneys, Chase Strangio, Elana Redfield, and Pooja Gehi. We represent transgender, gender non-conforming and intersex individuals who are low-income and transgender, gender non-conforming and intersex people of color in a range of civil legal cases including name changes petitions, immigration applications, public benefits, and challenges to conditions of incarceration. We wanted to share some updates on the legal front and remind you of some ongoing programs.

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS SETTLEMENT

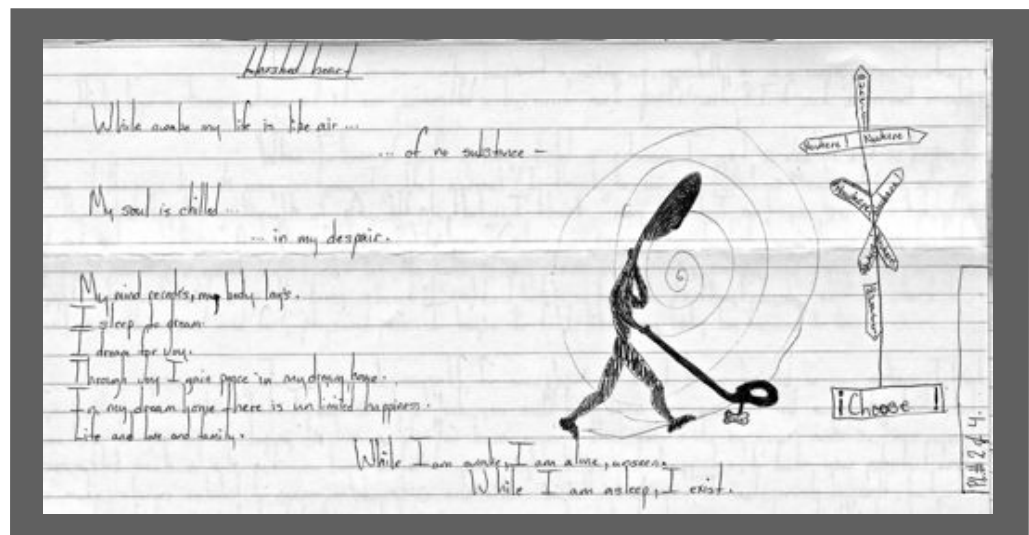
A transsexual-identified woman in a men's federal prison sued the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) for the BOP's failure to provide her with any treatment for her diagnosed Gender Identity Disorder (GID) under their so-called "freeze-frame" policy that required an individual in custody to be maintained at the

level of transition they were at prior to incarceration. According to a press statement by the attorneys representing the plaintiff, pursuant to the settlement agreement, "BOP will implement an official policy memorandum stating that individuals in the custody of BOP with a possible diagnosis of GID will receive an individualized assessment and evaluation and that treatment plans will be developed based on current accepted standards of care for GID and will not depend on the individual having received GID treatment prior to incarceration." If you are interested in seeing a copy of the new policy, please write to us and we can send you that policy for your review. Unfortunately, federal prison policy does not directly control the policies of individual states, it is definitely persuasive evidence that the general trend to move towards individualized assessments and away from blanket policies limiting care for transgender individuals.

We are continuing to work on improving access to hormones for individuals in New York State DOCCS custody. If you are currently being denied hormones, please write to Chase to figure out next steps for filing or appealing a grievance.

## JESSICA BROOKS PROPOSAL

Many of you responded to our last mailing to let us know that you had never received copy of Ms. Brooks's proposal for changes to the current Health Services Policy Manual § 1.31 governing access to transition-related healthcare such as hormones in DOCCS custody. I have started sending copies to everyone who indicated that they had not received one. If you want to comment on the proposal and do not have a copy, write to us and let us know and we will send you a copy. We will be extending the deadline for comments to April 1, 2012.

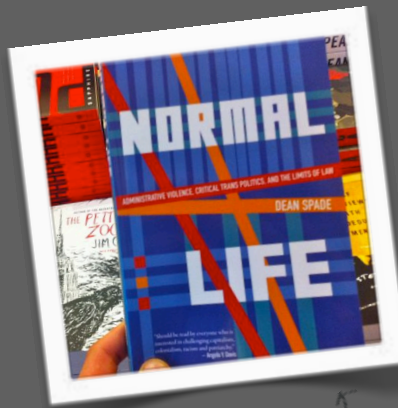


# The Life of A Barbie Incarcerated

by Shardea La'Ajia Nevaeh Brodley

Well for starters, my name is, Shardea La'Ajia Nevaeh Bradley. I'm Puerto Rican and Jamaican. I've been incarcerated now for almost 3 years. Being incarcerated in a state prison and being a transgender female is not a good match. It's not how the girls make it seem in New York City. Yeah, you get your life when you get up here, what girl doesn't? You feel untouchable because you know you hold what the boys want in the palm of your hand. Then you have the ones that claim that homophobic stuff. I don't believe in homophobia, that should tell you a lot. I've been around long enough to know that homophobia is just a saying just to cover up your true identity. But in prison that word means just that.

## \* ON THE RADAR:



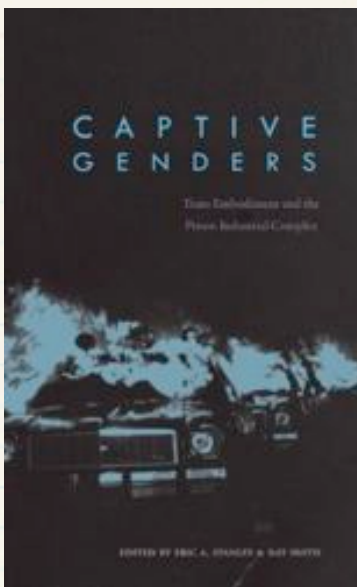
Congratulations to Dean Spade, SRLP founder and current collective member on the release of his new book!

*Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* raises revelatory critiques of the current strategies pivoting solely on a “legal rights framework,” but also points to examples of an organized grassroots trans movement that is demanding the most essential of legal reforms in addition to making more comprehensive interventions into dangerous systems of repression—and the administrative violence that ultimately determines our life chances. Setting forth a politic that goes beyond the quest for mere legal inclusion, *Normal Life* is an urgent call for justice and trans liberation, and the radical transformations it will require.

[E]specially when you have a body like Nicki Minaj. It brings a lot of attention. And that's when the c.o. gets ready to come out and show out because you're involved with someone and being the closest to a female in an all man prison, there are a lot of men that want you but they're in a gang or

scared that their friend might find out about them. They drop slip because if they can't have you, no one else can. That's when the superintendent, deputies, captains and c.o.'s get involved. They put you in the Box. Being in prison you have to stick to yourself most of the time. Continues on next page

## EVEN MORE BOOKS TO WATCH OUT FOR!



**Captive Genders:** Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex

“Pathologized, terrorized, and confined, trans/gender non-conforming and queer folks have always struggled against the enormity of the prison industrial complex. The first collection of its kind, Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith bring together current and former prisoners, activists, and academics to offer new ways for understanding how race, gender, ability, and sexuality are lived under the crushing weight of captivity. Through a politic of gender self-determination, this collection argues that trans/queer liberation and prison abolition must be grown together. From rioting against police violence and critiquing hate crimes legislation to prisoners demanding access to HIV medications, and far beyond, *Captive Genders* is a challenge for us all to join the struggle.”

A special shout out to SRLP staff member, Reina Gossett for her contribution to this book!

## Life of a Barbie Incarcerated, ctd

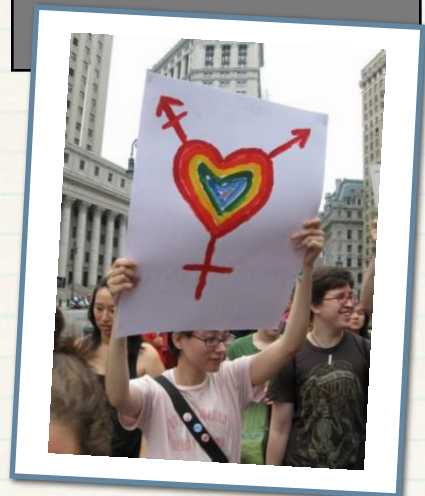


That's the best thing to do to give the c.o.'s out of your sight. It's hard being in prison when you don't have family or a friend to be there for you, write you, put money in your account, send you clothes. Just be there. So I try to get a job but being a transgender female, the c.o.'s give me a hard time. Sometime [s] it's like I don't have [a] choice but to do what I know [is] best to get clothes, food, things to get me by. If you're reading this and you are one of the girls, you know what I mean by doing what I do best. Sometimes you get left locked in your cell just because they

don't want to deal with you. If you don't do what they (c.o.) want you to do, they beat you bad! They want you to kiss their behind. They take away your Rec because they say you are bringing too much attention to the facility. It's hard but if you're a strong person you'll get by just fine. Always keep your head up at all times. I thank the Sylvia Rivera Law Project for being there for me when I needed them. The most for those of you that need advise or help, you can always go to SRLP for it. Well, I've been to hell and back but I'm happy to say that my time in Correctional Facility is almost up. July 20, 2012 is the day for me to hit the town again. I'm not happy with the things I've done but I've learned form my mistakes. It's like they say, what don't brake you, makes you stronger. Well, thank you for your time and reading the Life of a Barbie Incarcerated.

It's a beautiful time to be alive.  
And the long walk home is peopled-  
We, are everywhere.  
Yet the struggle to surrender is where we walk alone.  
So the next time you fall look  
to either side where you lie  
And take the hand  
of your dear sister or brother  
whose own face is muddled.  
We can rise together,  
even if we fall alone-  
for it's a beautiful time to be alive  
Even if it's a long walk home.

-Rise Together, Em Claire  
Submitted by PAC Member,  
Ronnie Brown



## A LOVE LETTER

When was the last time you wrote a love letter...  
A love letter to yourself?

When was the last time you gave yourself permission to appreciate yourself? Thanked yourself for getting through the day, or gave yourself props for making it through challenging times. As individuals and communities who face oppression, we're feed a lot of messages (not always positive ones) about who we are. So, who are we?

In Solidarity encourages you to take a minute to step outside of yourself for a different prospective and show some love by writing yourself a love letter. Maybe the letter is something you keep to read at a later time, send to someone or get rid of it right away. The point is, THIS is for you!

## IN SOLIDARITY WORD SEARCH!

N O I T A R I P S A S O X T Y  
C O M M U N I T Y L H E R H R  
U H R E Z I N A G R O A K A O  
P R A E S O P R U P N B K W T  
Y Y E T C Q D G C S O X N N A  
R T S S E N L U F R E W O P R  
A I I Q I D A O Z T J I W C B  
N R I L F L R T N P T A L U E  
O A E C I M I E S A X T E L L  
I D P C A B M E R I I T D T E  
S I P T R E I I N R S M G U C  
I L I B V E M S I C D E E R N  
V O U O G D I P S S E L R E F  
N S M P A X S F N O F L A I R  
L I B E R A T I O N P H P T W

Admiration  
Community  
Fierce  
Liberation  
Possibility  
Resilience  
Spirit  
Aspiration  
Culture  
Flair  
Movement  
Powerfulness  
Resistance  
Transformation  
Celebratory  
Faith  
Knowledge  
Organizer  
Purpose  
Solidarity  
Visionary

## THE PEN PAL POSTCARD PROJECT



*“And the day came when the  
risk to remain tight in the bud  
was more painful than  
the risk it took to blossom”*

-Anais Nin

SRLP's Prisoner Pen Pal Postcard Project  
gathering, November 2011



**THOMAS A.  
ROSS-  
SOBCZEK**

**Where I grew up:**

Well, Collier County, Naples, Florida. It was such a beautiful place! My childhood was so normal and my family was normal and happy. I loved my childhood so much that I'm a kid at heart. Always have been and always will be!

**How long I've been a PAC member:**

Well, I joined just recently back in Nov. or Dec of 2010

**Why I decided to join PAC:**

Well, to reach out and make an impact on those around us and to better myself in some sort of way. I believe that if I can make an impact than I can change lives in a positive ways. It's one of my best qualities, to be a factor in a persons' life, to show them (if they're gay, that they're not alone and they've got support. If they're straight, that's there's

## **PAC Member Self-Interview**

nothing wrong with the way a person lives their life, because gay doesn't define a person, it's just a part of them and that they embrace it.

**Favorite Song:** Well, and oldie would be "*Wannabe*", by the Spice Girls, "*Larger than Life*", by the Backstreet Boys, "*Toxic*", by Britney Spears. New releases..."*What do you want from me*", by Adam Lambert, "*ET*", by Katy Perry. As you can tell I have a taste for all sorts of music! Because of variety is a good thing. But my guilty pleasure is listening to classical symphonies. Like Bach and Bettoven. Depending on my mood or scene/environment.

**Favorite Movie:** The Matthew Shepard Story & Brokeback Mountain

**Favorite Book:** The Twilight series and the Harry Potter series

**Favorite Artist:** Adam Lambert, because he's hot and people say I look like him. In fact, I've been asked if I'm his brother. That's funny!

**Something that is really important to me:** Well, depends on what we're talking about, because this in a generalized question. Though, if I had to pick one thing I'd have to say, "Equality"!

**Have I ever been inspired by anyone or anything:**

Yes, at 14 I was so inspired by my mother's passion for writing, that I began to write and grow a passion as well and hope that I become the author I and my mother wants me to! God rest her soul, RIP Mommie,  
7/10/1968-2/22/2011

**What else would you like others to know:** Well, I am currently working a novel titled, "Through love, sweat and tears!" I hope to start an outreach/crisis shelter and center for homeless LGBT youth. Also a cancer foundation.

# 2011 TRANSFORMING JUSTICE CONVENING

## Regina Slacks Sounding Off

*is a new column in In Solidarity where Regina, an aspiring question- and answer transgendered journalist, interviews guests! In this issue Regina interviews Reina Gossett, an SRLP staff member, about the Transforming Justice gathering in Atlanta this past September. Regina also asks questions about the new book, Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex.*

**Regina:** Welcome Reina, thank you for joining me! Will you introduce yourself to the readers of In Solidarity?

**Reina:** Thank you for having me Regina, I'm really happy to get a chance to be interviewed for In Solidarity. I am on staff at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project as the membership director. That just means I work with a great group of people, the Movement Building Team, to host regular community discussions, Know Your Rights trainings, as well as do leadership development and get more people to take part in the all aspects of SRLP's work!

**Regina:** That sounds so exciting! Is there anything that

happened recently you want to share with the readers of In Solidarity?

**Reina:** Actually, yes Regina. I wanted to update you about the work of Transforming Justice! Transforming Justice has been an alliance of individual activists and organizations who've worked around the causes and consequences of trans imprisonment and our desire to end it since our Conference in SF in 2007. Since then, we've gathered at the CR10 conference in San Francisco in 2008 and at the us social forum in Detroit in 2010. Most recently we had a gathering in Atlanta on September 30th to October 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Regina:** Wow! What was the gathering like?

**Reina:** It was amazing. We met at Agnes Scott College, caught up with each other because all of our work so far had been on conference call. Cheryl Courtney Evans was there from Tilting the World Towards Change, which is in Atlanta. Also Joshua Holiday a minister and trans activist was there from Atlanta. Miss



Ms. Cheryl Courtney-Evens

Major, L, and Morgan represented the Transgender Intersex Justice Project. Darby came from Washington DC and Mya Vazquez came from Trans Justice of the Audre Lorde Project. Dean Spade, Stefanie and I represented the Sylvia Rivera Project.

We spent two days deciding our next steps for Transforming Justice and then on the last day had a public event for the Agnes Scott community where we watched Make It Happen, the Transforming Justice documentary and discussed issues affecting our community. We decided that we do not have the capacity to continue meeting on conference call but that we will be putting together a monthly calendar focusing on different issues transgender and gender non conforming people navigate as well as the power that we have. We cannot wait to share it with you!

**Regina:** Let me say, Reina: we cannot wait to see the calendar! I hear that some of those people in Transforming Justice are also have writing in the new book Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex. Also, I've been told that all the money that is made from the book will be used to give free copies to trans and gender non conforming people who are currently incarcerated?

**Reina:** That's all true, Regina! I'm really pleased with Captive Genders and think that everyone who wrote chapters are really brilliant. Please spread the word!

**Regina:** I will, Reina. I will. Well, this has been a **Regina Slacks Sounding Off** exclusive. Thanks for being interviewed Reina!

**Reina:** You're so welcome, thank you so much for having me. I love your column!

## A BRIGHTER TOMORROW WITH FRIENDS WHO CARE

SRLP KNOWS OUR HEARTBREAKS AND PAINS,  
SO WE WILL JOIN THEIR GANG.  
SRLP KNOWS OUR DEEPEST SORROWS, SO WE WILL FOLLOW.  
SRLP KNOWS THAT TRANSGENDERS HAVE RIGHTS,  
SO WE WILL JOIN THE FIGHT.  
SRLP KNOWS HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD,  
SO WE ALL CAN BE HEARD.  
SRLP KNOWS HOW TO KEEP CONTROL,  
SO WE ALL HAVE TO HAVE A STRONG HOLD.  
SRLP KNOWS HOW TO SHINE THE LIGHT,  
SO WE CAN WIN THE FIGHT

BY KATHERINE BROWN



Left to Right: Transforming Justice Members,  
Stefanie Rivera & Mya Vazquez



# RESOURCES

## PEN PAL PROJECTS

### **Black and Pink**

LGBT Prisoner pen pal program & monthly newsletter  
c/o Jason Lydon  
Community Church of Boston  
565 Boylston Street  
Boston, MA 02116

### **Hearts on a Wire**

Ending policing & imprisoning in trans communities. PA only.  
P.O. Box 36831  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

### **Reaching Beyond the Walls**

Inmate pen pal website  
P.O. Box 6905  
Rutland, VT 05702-6905

### **TIG Pen Pal Project**

For transgender, intersex and gender nonconforming prisoners  
P.O. Box 1122  
Portland, OR 97211

### **Write to Win**

For IL prisoners only  
2040 N. Milwaukee Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60647  
(773) 262-2172

### **Queers Against Prisons-Philly**

Grassroots prison abolitionist organizing  
LGBTQ prisoners only  
210 S. 49th St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19139

### **Human Rights Coalition Fedup!**

Prisoner resource and support  
4134 Lancaster Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

### **TGI Justice Project**

California only  
342 9th Street, Suite 202B  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415.252.1444

### **Inside/Out**

NY State only  
666 Broadway, Ste. 444  
New York, NY 10012

### **Gender Mutiny Collective**

PO Box 0494  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

## NEWSLETTERS & MAGAZINES

### **T.I.P. Journal**

Free Trans In Prison newsletter  
Attn: Teeg  
P.O. Box 404  
Kittredge, CO 80457  
Hotline: 303.586.1452

### **Justice Denied**

Magazine for the wrongly convicted  
P.O. Box 68911  
Seattle, WA 98168

### **Prison Health News**

Quarterly newsletter  
c/o Institute for Community Justice  
21 S. Locust Street, 7th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215.525.0461

### **POZ**

POZ is a magazine about the HIV epidemic, including profiles and updates on treatment. It is published in English and Spanish and is free for people who cannot afford it.  
500 Fifth Avenue, Suite 320,  
New York, NY 10110

### **Pro Se**

Prisoners' rights legal updates- NY State only  
114 Prospect St.  
Ithaca, NY 14850

### **Southland Prison News**

Monthly Newsletter  
East Coast Regional  
PMB 339  
955 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

## OTHER PROGRAMS

### **Critical Resistance**

Prison abolition organization  
1904 Franklin St., Suite 504  
Oakland, CA 94612

### **The Fortune Society**

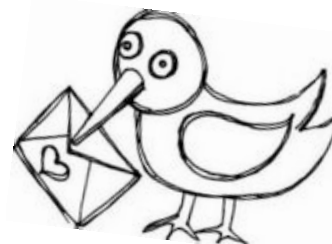
Community reentry program  
26-76 Northern Blvd  
Long Island City, NY 11101

### **Prison Book Program**

Free books for prisoners  
c/o Lucy Parsons Bookstore  
1306 Hancock St., Suite 100  
Quincy, MA 02169

### **Locked Out**

Resource list for LGBT prisoners  
c/o Prison Book Project  
PO Box 396  
Amherst, MA 01004



RISE UP FREEDOMS A MUST! SOMEONE LOVES YOU.



XOXOXO SHAYLANNA XOXOXO

## Who I AM

by Paul "Shaylanna" Smith

I am a proud transgendered woman

I am a victim

I am a survivor

I am a loving partner

I am the light at the end of someone's tunnel

I am somebody's best friend

I am the girl everybody frowns upon

I am the rhythm of someone's heartbeat

I am that diamond in the dirt that hasn't been found

I am a star separate from the other stars

I am an addiction

I am someone's love drug

I am the reason you smile

I am the tissue that wipes your tears away

I am the encouragement that pushes you forward in life

I am your friend and I will not let you down.

If you don't know me, this is me!

## Welcome Home!

Tabitha Emo, PAC member & In Solidarity Volunteer

In August 2011, Tabitha walked into SRLP, making it her first stop upon release. Having been a PAC member for a number of years and someone who had received and connected with *In Solidarity* newsletters in the past, she immediately she jumped at the opportunity to get involved with this edition of *In Solidarity*. Here's a little bit about her.

My name *is* (Ms.) Tabitha Elizabeth Emo. I was in your shoes for more than 10 years, living with the abuse of DOCCS. I refused to take on a nick-name while inside as so many do (for safety, I know), but used my true name. Did people dislike me? I'm a veteran of the Army, so yeah, sometimes. I've sent submissions to the Attorney General's office every time I was asked, as I'm sure you did also.

I'd contacted SRLP in late 2007 to be placed on the waiting list for a name change. In an informational packet that was sent to me, a survey was included asking whether I would be interested in joining PAC. I jumped at the chance. As a non-profit, SRLP can use all the volunteers willing to help. I do a lot of reading, so I keep a finger on the pulse of our community. There are a lot of sources to dig through while looking for pertinent news items. When you're a free person, it can be hard enough to find news about the transgender community. I'm a farm-girl from western New York, where there's next to no help for us. I want to help change that by doing work for those who can't. Other transgender people deserve to be more fortunate than I.

It really does get better over time. I've been in NYC since my release in mid-August, and just over 3 months later things have fallen into place. The veteran bit...? The VA is providing my hormones and mental health needs now. <smile> Don't succumb to the negativity, but educate those who care to listen and are willing to learn. That's pretty much how I survived (even from myself).

## SPECIAL THANKS TO...

- The fabulous & dedicated Prison Advisory Committee
- Those of you who support the voices & experiences of our incarcerated community members

# With You, Not Without You



in the following issue, we will work hard to publish it in future newsletters. We happily accept essays, articles, poems, drawings, short stories, art work, messages of hope & inspiration and letters from transgender, intersex, gender non-conforming people and our allies who are or were incarcerated. Please be sure mark your name clearly, on each page you submit.

## WHAT YOU HAVE TO SHARE IS IMPORTANT

*In Solidarity* accepts submissions on an ongoing basis. **While we may not always be able to get your work published**

## PLEASE SEND YOUR WORK TO:

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project  
In Solidarity Submissions  
147 W 24th Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10011

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.**

**Let us know what you would like to see in the next issue of IN SOLIDARITY...**

**WRITE US!**



147 W. 24th St., 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10011