



trans prisoners' rights newsletter

FALL/WINTER
2024

The Trans Prisoners' Rights Newsletter (previously the Legal Aid Society's LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit's Newsletter) shares news and New York State laws, policies, and campaigns pushing for the humanity and dignity of incarcerated Trans Gender Non-Conforming Non-Binary and Intersex (TGNCNBI) people.

Who is the Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition?

Formerly known as the G.I.R.D.S. (Gender Identity Respect Dignity and Safety) Coalition, the Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition was established in **2023** and is made up of several organizations in New York State working toward the liberation, safety and dignity of TGNCNBI incarcerated people. We are grassroots organizers, legal service providers, and people impacted by the cruelty of the criminal justice system fighting for a more equitable world. Our goal is to pass legislation making this a reality and to do this work with the voices of our inside activists leading the way.

What is included:

- Community Check In
- Political Education
- Update on G.I.R.D.S Bill (New York State)
- Update on Int. 625 (New York City)
- Advocacy Opportunity
- Art Exhibit

Who is an Inside Activist?

To end incarceration and implement reforms that are just and dignified, we need the insights and leadership of people directly impacted by the current system, who can speak directly to the what is needed to truly feel safe, be treated fairly, and rehabilitate. Inside organizers' insights are the guiding light for outside organizers and policymakers to design a more equitable world.

Wellness Corner: Write & Dispose of Your Anger

The 2024 Presidential Election results are bringing up so many feelings about what it means to move forward together and safely, and understandable anger and confusion related to this constant fight in our communities for dignity, safety, acceptance and respect. In a study published in the journal Scientific Reports, data showed that if we write down our feelings of anger on a piece of paper and then crumple that piece of paper and throw it away, our feelings of anger will diminish or return to the state we were in before feeling angry. The fight towards freedom is a long and tough one— let's use this brief moment to release some of the anger and frustrations that can result from it. **Here is what you can do:**

1. Recognize your anger: Realize and acknowledge that you are feeling angry.
2. Write down what you're feeling: List the reasons you are angry and why.
3. Read and think about what you wrote:
4. Rip up the paper and dispose of it: Imagine you are getting rid of your anger as you do this.
5. Breathe and Reflect: Take a moment to pause and reflect- how are you feeling now?

Hopefully, you're noticing the anger diminish and wash away. Know that we stand alongside you in this fight. And we honor our anger and collective rage through never ending the fight to liberation.

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199 Water Street #6067B
New York, NY 10038

www.transprisonersrightsny.com

[@transprisonersrightsny](https://www.instagram.com/transprisonersrightsny)



community check in



On Friday September 27th, 2024, members of the Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition stood in solidarity with our comrades at Freedom Agenda, demanding accountability and transparency from the NYC Department of Corrections at a rally on the steps of NYC City Hall. Council Member Sandy Nurse, chair of the Criminal Justice Committee, was also in attendance. TPRC members were there in support of Intro 625, which once passed would house TGNCNBI people in NYC jails where they feel safest. Members of our coalition also spoke in favor of Intro 152: A bill that would give the city Task Force on Issues Faced by Incarcerated TGNCNBI People more oversight, and Intro 1027, a bill that once passed would allow incarcerated people in NYC jails access to gender affirming medical devices.



Members of the Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition stand alongside members of the Freedom Agenda on the steps of City Hall in New York City demanding transparency and accountability from the Department of Corrections. Members of the Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition spoke on favor of Intro 625, which is a bill that when passed would effectively house Trans, Gender Non-conforming, Non-binary and intersex people where they feel safest within New York City Jails.



Last month, organizers and community members as part of the Prisoners' Brain Trust proudly celebrated the 5th Annual Community Remembrance Day of the Attica Uprising — five years of honoring our history and empowering the voices of incarcerated individuals.



new york state incarceration

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, New York has an incarceration rate of **317 per 100,000 people** (including prisons, jails, immigration detention, and juvenile justice facilities), **meaning that it locks up a higher percentage of its people than almost any democratic country on earth. As of 2023. 59,000 people from New York are behind bars.**

How many New York residents are locked up and where?

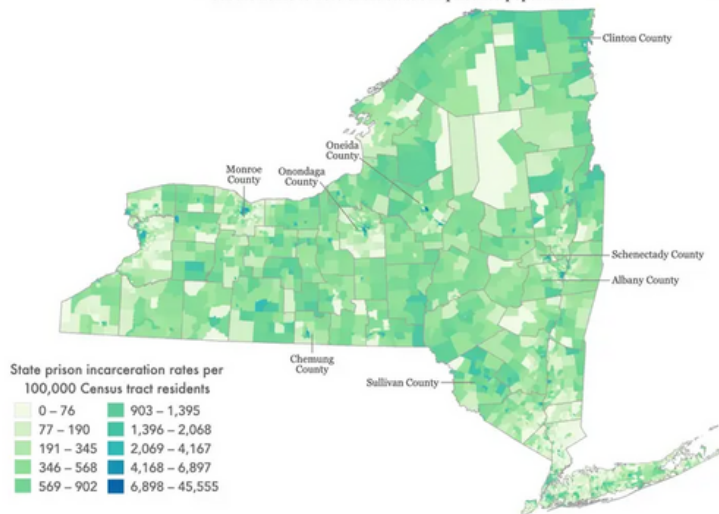
59,000 of New York's residents are locked up in various kinds of facilities



PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE Details may not add to total due to rounding.
Sources and data notes: See www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/correctionalcontrol2023.html

****the number of people impacted by county and city jails in New York is much larger than the graph above would suggest, because people cycle through local jails relatively quickly. Each year, at least 267,000 different people are booked into local jails in New York.**

The 8 counties missing the largest portion of their residents to state prisons account for only 10% of the state's pop but are home to 20% of the state's imprisoned population.



Using 2020 census data, the Prison Policy Initiative also looked at where people in New York prisons come from. They found they come from all corners of the state, but disproportionately Upstate and traditionally under-resourced communities.



PRISONS & THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Many prison and jail facilities are built on hazardous waste sites left by corporations. The environmental pollution exposes those inside and the surrounding area to serious environmental hazards. From tainted water to harmful air pollutants, these conditions manifest into lifelong health conditions and deaths.

"In some ways, a prison is a factory farm for humans," says Panagioti Tsolkas, who directs the Prison Ecology project. "And sadly, it has the equivalent output."

- Sing Sing Correctional Facility and the Indian Point nuclear plant in New York – A 2012 legal proceeding filed by environmental groups in the Hudson Valley of New York during an administrative hearing of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission exposed a completely insufficient emergency evacuation plan for prisoners held at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, again illustrating why this population fits the criteria of an EJ demographic.
- Rikers Island jail, New York City – The Rikers Island jail complex has become notorious for its location on a toxic waste landfill site where lawsuits have been filed against the facility by employees who have become ill due to the conditions there. As a result of this landfill, there have been frequent methane gas explosions on the site. In addition, the lack of an evacuation plan during Hurricane Sandy illustrated the increased potential for disaster at this facility.

george jackson and black august



Black August is a month dedicated to honoring Black resistance and the legacy of political prisoners who have fought against racism and state violence. Originating in the 1970s to commemorate the life of revolutionary George Jackson, Black August is a time for reflection, education, and action.

At the age of 19, George Jackson was sentenced to 1-to-life on armed robbery charges for stealing \$70 from a gas station. Imprisoned at San Quentin State Prison and under the mentorship of incarcerated revolutionary W. L. Nolen, George Jackson became politicized. He studied Fanon, Lenin, Marx, and Mao, and led study sessions to raise the political consciousness of his peers behind the walls, and organized those imprisoned in the California prison system- co-creating the San Quentin Prison chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Black Guerilla Family. While incarcerated for 11 years, 7 of which were in solitary confinement, George Jackson published two revolutionary texts: “Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson” and “Blood in My Eye”.

While at Soledad State Prison, George Jackson witnessed the assassination of W.L. Nolen, Cleveland Edwards, and Alvin Miller by a Soledad prison guard after an altercation with members of the Aryan Nation. Black prisoners staged a hunger strike in response to the murders, demanding an investigation. The prison guard was exonerated, causing an uproar inside Soledad State Prison. In the uprisings, another prison guard was killed.

George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Cluchette were charged with the murder of the prison guard, becoming known as the Soledad Brothers. The campaign to free the Soledad Brothers received international support, condemning racist state violence and abuse in the California prison system..

This month also reminds us of the often overlooked struggles of Black transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and intersex (TGNCNBI) political prisoners. Black TGNCNBI individuals are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement and criminalized for survival-based activities like sex work and drug use. Inside prisons, they face heightened violence, including sexual assault, solitary confinement, and denial of gender-affirming healthcare.

Activists such as CeCe McDonald, Jennicet Gutiérrez, Alisha Walker, Passion Star, and Ky Peterson have shared their experiences, drawing attention to the struggles incarcerated TGNCNBI individuals face and advocating for their freedom.

May we always recognize the intersections of racial and gender oppression, work toward dismantling the systems that criminalize Blackness and queerness, and advocate for the release of TGNCNBI political prisoners. Their liberation is integral to the broader struggle for abolition and collective freedom.



Left to Right: George Jackson, Cece McDonald, Jennicet Guitierrez, Ky Peterson

attica uprising



Many prisoners at Attica prison in upstate New York had been radicalized by the upheavals of the 1960s, and the racism permeating Attica Prison and US society. Guards routinely abused prisoners and living conditions were horrific, but the state refused to address prisoner grievances. Prisoners silently fasted after they heard that on Aug 21 guards at San Quentin prison in California had murdered the revolutionary prisoner George Jackson.

On September 9, 1971, half of Attica's 2,200 inmates, mainly Black but also white and Puerto Rican prisoners, seized control of large parts of the prison, and took 38 guards hostage. This was the most powerful and significant prison rebellion in US history.

Prison officials refused to accept the prisoners' demands, especially for amnesty. Governor Nelson Rockefeller and state police forces secretly planned a full-scale military assault.

September 13, 1971, shortly after 9:30 am, the assault began. National Guard helicopters showered the prison with a fog of tear gas. The prisoners had no guns and hadn't engaged in any violence after their takeover, but more than 550 state troopers and sharpshooters opened fire for a half hour in an indiscriminate barrage of perhaps as many as 4,500 rounds. Guards murdered 29 prisoners and 10 guards who had been held hostage.

Leaders of the uprising were singled out and executed, including Black Panther Kenneth Malloy; white revolutionary Sam Melville; and prisoner spokesman LD Barkley. Prisoners were forced to strip naked, crawl through mud and run a gauntlet of baton-wielding cops. Frank "Big Black" Smith was stripped naked and tortured for 6 hours. One inmate's femurs were shattered by a bullet but he was ordered to walk. When he couldn't, a trooper repeatedly jammed a screwdriver into his rectum and forced him to crawl. 89 prisoners were wounded by gunfire and 319 more were injured. No guards were ever charged, but 62 prisoners were indicted for "crimes" stemming from the rebellion.

policy update: the gender identity respect; dignity and safety act (g.i.r.d.s.)



What is G.I.R.D.S.?

A bill that when passed in New York will make jails and prisons house Trans, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary and Intersex (TGNCNBI) people where they are safest and make sure they get access to gender-affirming medical care and personal items.

The vast majority of TGNCNBI people who wish to be housed in accordance with their gender identity are not in most NYS prisons and jails and face high levels of violence and sexual assault as a result. ***Unfortunately, the GIRDS Act did not pass in 2024.***

G.I.R.D.S. Updates

The Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition is gearing up for big wins in 2025!

- The State Legislature (The Senate and The Assembly, which are the two governing bodies that create and pass laws) has not been in session since June, so there are currently no major updates related to the Gender Identity Respect Dignity and Safety Act (GIRDS).
- The Trans Prisoners Rights Coalition has been base building on a local level in New York City in an effort to help the passing of Intro 625 (next page); a bill that once passed would allow TGNCNBI people jailed in New York City to be housed where they feel safest. We believe that a win on the local level in New York City will enable big wins for incarcerated TGNCNBI folks on a state level.
- We are working on a campaign targeted to Speaker Adrienne Adams and will keep you all updated with next steps in the coming months.

What can YOU do?

1. Continue writing to New York State Legislature leadership! (script on page 7)
2. Encourage loved ones on the outside to get involved in this work! Tell them to visit our website where they can find relevant information and even register a loved one incarcerated in New York State to start receiving this newsletter.
3. Create artwork expressing the need for GIRDS to pass in New York!
4. Please encourage your community members on the inside to write to us and become an inside activist for the Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition! We need all hands on deck.
5. Host letter writing/ art making parties on the inside that also function as teach ins. Support in educating siblings on the inside on why this legislation is important and that Trans liberation liberates us all!

policy update: int. 625 in new york city



What is Int. 625?

Int. 625 is a bill re-introduced this session that would protect the housing rights of transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and intersex people held in the NYC jails. In the last newsletter we wrote to you about Int. 728 – this is the updated version for 2024. The heart of the matter is the same – we have a right to say where we will be most safely housed and for that right to be honored. But edits have happened to give the whole bill more strength.

Int. 625 Updates:

- The Trans Prisoners' Rights Coalition has been hard at work to get intro 625 passed in New York City. Thanks to support from our Primary sponsor, Council Member Keith Powers, the bill was heard as part of the Criminal Justice Hearing chaired by Council Member Sandy Nurse from Brooklyn. Members of the community, including attorneys, formerly incarcerated activists, organizers and volunteers with TPRC testified on behalf of this important legislation, and read letters from all of you speaking to why this bill is so important and life saving.
- Since June 2024, we have a total of **7 new co-sponsors** of the bill! This brings our total to **17 co-sponsors**!
- In order for the bill to reach the Mayor's desk, we need a total of 26 co-sponsors.
- In order for the bill to be "veto proof" we need a 2/3 majority of 34 co-sponsors.

What YOU can do:

We would love your support in two ways!

- 1) Write to your city council member or encourage your family and friends to write to their city council member to co-sponsor Int. 625 and make it clear that in New York State, human rights are for everyone. If you want to write to your city council member but don't know who they are you can send your letter to us at Legal Aid and we can try to look them up and forward the letter on. Just tell us a NYC address that you consider to be your home so we can find the right person.
- 2) If you're not in New York City or returning to New York City you can still help! Write a letter to Sandy Nurse, Chair of the Committee on Criminal Justice telling her why this is so important. You can send that letter to: Chair Sandy Nurse, 56 Pennsylvania Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11207

script on page 7

policy update: advocate for g.i.r.d.s.



Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker of the Assembly Heastie:

I am writing to urge you to support and do everything in your power to pass the Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety (G.I.R.D.S.) Act without amending it. GIRDS a bill that ensures transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and intersex New Yorkers are treated consistently with New York's Human Rights Law in state prisons and local jails by housing people presumptively based on their gender identity, unless they voluntarily chose otherwise. When passed, it would mean that NY Human Rights Law would finally be applied to our most vulnerable New Yorkers who are incarcerated. I am a resident of New York State and constituent from *[insert district here]*.

We are, as a nation and a state, at a political crossroads where the courage to do what is just is imperative, as the far right are steadfast in their mission to erase TGNCNBI people. In order to maintain New York's support of the LGBTQ+ community, and fulfill the promises our elected leaders have made to represent our needs as constituents, we must increase and amplify our collective efforts to protect the inalienable rights of all New Yorkers, but in particular those who are most vulnerable and under attack, like the TGNCNBI community. As recognized by our human rights law and by the public statements of New York's leaders, transgender, gender-nonconforming, non-binary, and intersex people have a right to have their gender identity acknowledged and respected. These protections must not stop at the jailhouse door. Presumptive housing based on gender identity is the backbone of this bill and should not be watered down to appease those seeking to erase and harm the TGNCNBI community.

I am writing to demand accountability to the countless organizations and community partners and organizers that support GIRDS, to our incarcerated TGNCNBI New Yorkers, and the New Yorkers who voted for you in good faith to protect our rights during such a critical time in our collective struggles toward liberation. We are already following the GIRDS policy in 15 counties in NYS by way of legal settlement or voluntarily to prevent a lawsuit and firmly believe that the passing of GIRDS is necessary to ensure the state (regardless of the county) can be in alignment. Let's keep our promise to LGBTQ+ New Yorkers by being in alignment with many states and counties around the country to safely house TGNCNBI incarcerated people.\

**TRANS
POWER**

Thank you,
[insert name here]

**TRANS RIGHTS ARE
HUMAN RIGHTS** ♥

ADDRESS LETTERS TO:

**ASSEMBLY MEMBER CARL E. HEASTIE &
SENATOR ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS**

MAIL LETTERS TO:

**THE LGBTQ+ LAW AND POLICY UNIT
49 THOMAS STREET #1065
NEW YORK, NY 10013**

policy update: advocate for int. 625



Please feel free to write your own letter! But below is a template to inspire you. Remember, your city council member might not know anything about being transgender or city jails, in fact many think we already corrected this issue! Your story could help them understand how much more we need to do.

Dear City Council Member,

My name is ____ (your name) ____ and I am a transgender/gender non-conforming/intersex/non-binary person currently held in New York State prison/New York City jail. I am writing to urge you to support Int. 625 on housing of TGNCNBI people in the New York City jails, and to rally for its passage into law this year.

I want to share with you why this matters to me personally: (share your story here, if you feel comfortable).

Right now, a TGNCNBI person is protected in employment, housing, medical care, and so many other ways in New York. But once the police stop us, our gender and sex become suspect, and we can and are housed in truly dangerous situations. Sexual violence, physical violence and lack of access to medical care are real consequences to incorrect housing. This isn't right. Not for New York City. Please pass Int. 625 and correct this for all of us.

Looking forward to your support,

(sign your name)

PREVIOUS CO-SPONSORS:

Council Member Sandra Ung
Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez
Council Member Rita Joseph
Council Member Nantasha Williams

OTHER TARGETS:

Council Member Carmen De La Rosa
Progressive Caucus, Women's Caucus Co-chair
Council Member Althea Stevens
Progressive Caucus
Council Member Farah Louis
Committee on Women and Gender Equity Caucus Co-chair
Council Member Julie Menin
Women's Caucus Co-chair
Council Member Kevin C. Riley
Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus Co-Chair
Council Member Oswald Feliz
Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus Co-Chair
Council Member Lynn Schulman
LGBTQ+ Caucus

MAIL LETTERS TO:

The LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit
49 Thomas Street #1065
New York, NY 10013

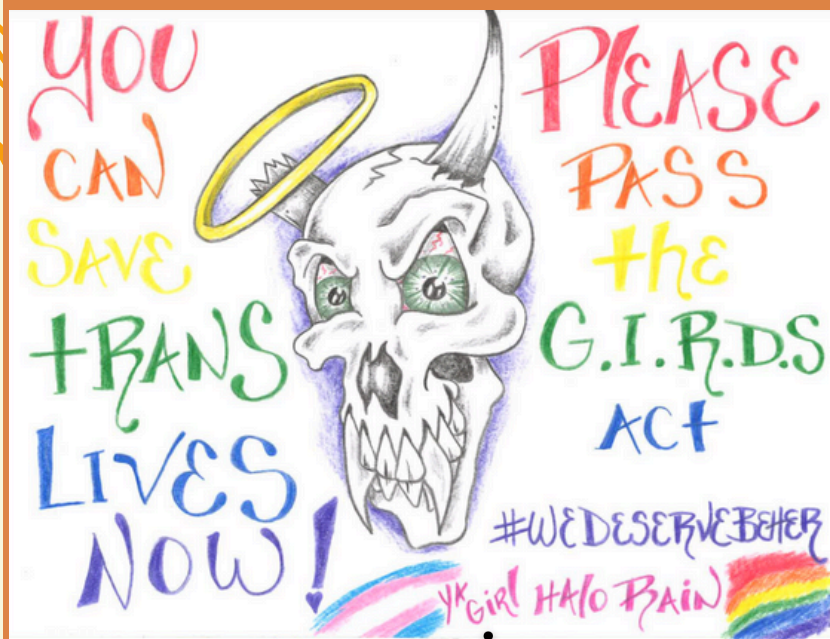


HELPFUL TIPS:

1. If writing to previous co-sponsors, share how important their support has been. That this is the year we will ensure the safety of our most vulnerable citizens.
2. If writing to the other targets, use their positions in different caucuses to connect different struggles together. We are all in this together and there can be no true liberation without Trans liberation.

ARTIST EXHIBITION

A celebration and showcase of abolitionist art by incarcerated New Yorkers.



ms. rain



gee gibson



ms. rain



ms. rain

If you would like to be featured in our newsletter's artist exhibition, and also on our website when it launches, please send us your artwork and let us know you give consent for your art work to be shared! (mailing address on page 1)

If you have a friend on the inside who would also like to start receiving this newsletter and submit work, please have them write to us with the following:

NYC DOC: Chosen Name and B&C
NY DOCCS: Chosen Name and DIN

“we are not free until we are all free”

BY KENNEDY

We are not free until we all are free.

With 107 days of campaigning, we knew it would be hard, but it was a breath of fresh air. There was hope... Kamala Harris.

A woman of color, an educated woman of color, the current Vice President of The United States running for the presidency. The momentum and the hope that she was building was historic.

And then we witnessed Donald J. Trump's victory, a man who has not once left the media since the insurrection, since the day that he was forced out of office in 2021.

So how does his 2025 presidency affect cis, queer, people of color, women?

It means that those minority groups may have their rights taken away.

From Health Care To the education system.

The talks of mass deportation to ending birth rights. Enforcing a zombie law that has been banned for years can mean abortion pills, dilators, and or any medical devices or assistance is out of the window and you would go to jail if you tried and the licensed medical professionals will lose their license and face jail time as well.

Some LGBT members don't know if they will have the freedom to express themselves. The plan is to stop the acknowledgment of LGBTQ people, including cutting funding for HIV resources, trans health care and any schools that teach the subject of LGBT their federal funding will be cut.

We are not free until we all are free.

Biden has said to accept the difference and bring peace and transition. Many politicians can go back to their homes because as stated by Biden this is a “contest” but at times it's not that easy and that outcome and what can be implemented by Trump will have real-life consequences.

It is time to ally yourself with your communities, vote for your state and local government, and more importantly educate yourself. There is no need to desensitize yourself, there is no need to hide because a loss was taken, there's no need to hide your Blackness or your Queerness, or the love that you have for yourself. It's okay to cry, but the reality is it's time to educate now more than ever.

Kennedy is an intern for the Legal Aid Society. She has interested in law and lives in Manhattan with her husband and dog.



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED, IN LOVING MEMORY

I deeply sadden to Announce the passing of my beloved best friend and our beloved sister Sabrina "Bree". So many of us within these prison walls know her as, was a very bright, big, unifying force regardless of race, gender or social group you may belong to. If there was a situation to right the wrongs of injustice, abuse or discrimination Bree was by your side willing to help in anyway she can. Throughout her imprisonment in a male prison Bree was a fearless advocate for incarcerated transgender women as well as incarcerated LGBTQIA+ person. I so miss my spirited debates with Bree as we sat playing card games in the prison yard. Our debates were always centered around how best to advocate for the rights and safety of all members of the LGBTQIA+ community in and outside of these prison walls. I must say while Bree was not a very good spades player, her visions for the future for the LGBTQIA+ community as a whole was rich and bright. Many may only know Bree for her many art submissions to this publication which was funny but very insightful to our incarcerated souls. Just know she was not only trying to make us smile. She was trying to guide us to understand and appreciate that we can rise like a phoenix above our situations and circumstances that are intended to hold you back or impede you from achieving greatness. Bree will be deeply missed by all and never forgotten by any. I will always love and appreciate you and the time we spent together.

By: Gee Gibson

Sabrina Rose

May her legacy of love, compassion, and beautiful heart live on.