

# THE SANKOFA MIGRATION

AN OFFICIAL BLACK PRISONERS CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

## S.U.R.E.

### Successful Unified Re-Entry

By Shawn Cooke

The BPC, and WSP administration have collaborated to bring the Washington State Penitentiary its very first reentry fair presentation!! With the growing importance of reintegration into society, DOC has partnered with BPC's efforts to ensure successful reentry for individuals leaving WSP. In recent months, our Reentry Committee has been networking with reentry navigators from across the state. This team-building has led to the creation of the Successful Unified Re-Entry event (S.U.R.E.). S.U.R.E.'s goal is to show how the BPC, outside community, and DOC work together to give people the best possible opportunities for reentry.

One of our collective goals is to make this a reoccurring event. With 50 in attendance, there are hopes of growing in scope and size in the future. Guest speakers included BPC members, DOC reentry navigators, WSP counselors and education staff, formerly incarcerated success stories, and Ms. Linda Scott of the STAR project. The presentations covered what each organization offers, as well as how we all work together. Bringing color to the reality of the reentry process will hopefully aide people in preparation for their release.

During the building of this event, the importance of inclusion was a main topic. We offer reentry services to *anyone* who wants to start taking their life seriously. Together, we made sure **all** would be invited regardless

of their time structure. If someone with a release date 20 years in the future, or no release date at all, is ready to prepare themselves as well as those around them, we're going to provide them the needed resources and connections. This was a key-point in our involvement in this event, reentry resources **will** be provided to all who come to BPC for assistance.

The hard work and group efforts put into the organization of this event will hopefully lead to long-standing partnerships with BPC, DOC, and the community. In addition, the population here at WSP will see the opportunities available to them, and hopefully spread the information. We look forward to providing our readers with more news on reoccurring SURE events, as reentry becomes a more and more pertinent issue.

We would also like to give a special thanks to Dean Fillion, and Stanley Harewood for speaking at this event and inspiring the incarcerated individuals here to work on bettering themselves and preparing for *their* release.



Megan Pirie (Director of Person-Centered Services for Washington State DOC), Chet Mills (HVAC Instructor at WSP), and Stanley Harewood (formerly incarcerated at WSP and successful HVAC Technician), enjoying themselves at the SURE event.

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## MULTI-CULTURAL EVENT

BPC Social Committee, Changing the Narrative

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### By Shawn Cooke

In the past few months, our Social Committee has been working extremely hard to put together a Multi-Cultural Event to be held in the prison. News just came in that we have finally been approved for May 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year!! The Multi-Cultural Event is planned to be a social event that highlights some of the many cultures we have within our collective community. There will be guests from outside, food for all, and

performances from various cultures from within the incarcerated population here. It has taken an extreme amount of networking and facilitating by our Social Committee to put this event together.

The BPC not only stands for the Black Prisoners Caucus, but also means Building Positive Communities. We make sure to build these connections with our surrounding areas in order

to revolutionize the way incarcerated peoples, and the communities they are part of interact with each-other. In-line with this goal, we make sure to invite our sponsors, and anyone else who wants to participate in change, to our meetings and events. This will be Washington State Penitentiary's first Multi-Cultural Event, and we are very excited to share it with the community in hopes of this becoming an annual staple!

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## LFO WORKSHOP

Shackled by Debt, Liberated by Knowledge

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### By Roy Murry

Until recently Legal Financial Obligations (LFO's) were mandatory "debts" which persons convicted of a crime in Washington would be required to pay regardless of whether they had the current or likely ability to pay them in the future. More often than not, these LFOs would accumulate massive interest at 12% per year including during the person's sentence. (Doubling every 6 years). Many counties had even begun referring these "debts" to collections agencies. As a result of having unpayable debts levied against them and sent to collections, many people coming out of prison found it impossible to rent an apartment, buy a car or otherwise get ahead.

Recent laws have been passed giving people the ability to ask a court to waive or reduce their

LFO's based on indigency (inability to pay). For most, this means that the \$500 Crime Victims Compensation fee, \$200 court filing fee, and \$100 DNA collection fee – and all interest accumulated from these can be waived. Typically, this is at least \$1000 per case. While this is amazing news, the amount of currently and previously incarcerated people who *know* this is surprisingly low.

Filling out the paperwork is easy. All you have to do is put in your case info and check some boxes. It typically takes less than an hour. All you need to do is either go to law library or send a kiosk message to the law librarian and ask for four copies of "the LFO packet" and four copies of "Form S-09" for each cause number you have.

Don't know your cause numbers? Try asking your counselor or records for a list. I/I Banking also tracks your LFOs, and it is worth checking with them to see if your county has already eliminated some or all of your LFOs before filing the packet.

The recent laws allow most people to completely eliminate their LFOs while they are incarcerated and have a fresh start when they get out. There are some exceptions, such as for most types of restitution. But hey - when's the last time you made \$1000 an hour without committing a felony?

Two individuals from our Reentry Committee recently took it upon themselves to create an "LFO Workshop". This workshop was designed to provide people information on LFO waiver and/or reduction, as well as offer hands on help to individuals in completing and filing the paperwork. This was held in William Unit of WSP-MSD and the workshop lasted for around 3 hours. Several people were provided information and assisted with completing their LFO paperwork. They were assisted in making sure the filings were sent to the proper counties and

agencies. Unfortunately, the proposal which sought to make this in unit LFO Workshop a regular program was denied by senior facility staff. As a result, these workshops can now only be held in the law library.

We will be setting up specific times in the law library to hold workshops to assist with completing and filing LFO petitions. Due to limited space this will take a while to complete. If you are close to your release or just want to figure it out yourself, ask around. There are many people in the units who have already figured out how to do these. Someone you know may already be able to help you if you request the packet and forms listed above from the law librarian.

This is vital information to *all* people who are, or have been incarcerated and had to deal with the unjust monetary impacts. Spread the word. Even your friends and family outside who have previous convictions can take advantage of the recent changes in law. We would like to recognize the initiative shown in the organization of this event!

## VETERANS LUNCHEON

Bridging the Gap, and Building Connections

**By Christopher Gates**

In similar spirit as the S.U.R.E. event held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of last month, January 30<sup>th</sup> marked another successful collaborative effort towards rehabilitation and reentry, between the Washington State Penitentiary chapter Black Prisoner's Caucus, and the Washington State Department of Corrections (WADOC). This

day marked the first ever Washington State Penitentiary Veterans luncheon, aimed at creating and cultivating a network of resources for our incarcerated veterans.

The need for such a collaboration could not be more glaring. The number of veterans incarcerated in

WADOC facilities is growing every day, and with such growth comes the prevalence of problems and challenges that are unique to individuals in that situation. Not only do the practices and procedures for obtaining verification of a veteran's status differ from institution to institution, in many instances no individual

person is responsible for following up on particular inquiries, or obtaining precise information. As with most bureaucracies, when any specific thing is not the responsibility of a specific person, the buck gets passed, and the task does not get done.

Such a reality is even more detrimental when dealing with individuals with greater needs for support. According to VA policy, an individual on disability benefits who is incarcerated has a responsibility to alert the agency of their incarcerated status. Such an alert triggers a significant reduction of their benefit payments, through the duration of their incarceration. When such a reduction is not made, payments continue at the full amount, sometimes for over a year, leaving the recipient on the hook for reimbursing the total value of any overpayment. Unfortunately for incarcerated veterans, these reductions are very commonly not put into effect. While there are many reasons for such a mistake, the impacts are nearly ubiquitous; thousands, and sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt, are saddled upon individuals who not only needed disability benefits to

make ends meet in the first place, but who are now removed from society, and often, any support systems they once had. Everyone knows that this happens, and that it happens regularly. But preventing it is no one person's job, and therefore it goes unaddressed, continuing to cause unquantifiable harm.

The BPC-WSP has heard this story far too many times, and has just as often seen the harm that such a financial pitfall can wreak on the most vulnerable of individuals. Motivated by a desire to help prevent this harm, members of the BPC mobilized to create a Veterans sub-committee, focused on providing resources specific to the needs of incarcerated vets. But as with any truly meaningful endeavor of such a large scale, it could not be done effectively without a good team. The purpose of the veteran's luncheon event was to grow our network and cultivate such a team, and the turnout was amazing. Thanks to our local Walla Walla County veteran's service officer, Wendy Cheng, a roster of individuals from organizations around the region all showed up in support of the common goal of supporting our incarcerated

veterans. With the approval and help of WSP admin staff, the BPC was able to host these individuals in the newly created "resource room" in Victor unit of WSP's Medium Security Complex. The result was a precedent setting team-building session, thanks to the attendance of Dawn Avery and Joshua Wentz, Veteran's Affairs; Kerry McEwen and Mike Gibson, C.O.R.D; Gina Sullivan, BMAC; Edgar Rivera, Veterans Justice Outreach Program; Michael Ensor, Consolidated Veterans; Anthony Chester, Walla Walla Veteran's Center; and our own Linda Scott, of the S.T.A.R. Project.

We would like to offer a heartfelt thanks to these individuals and programs, as well as a special acknowledgement to the S.T.A.R. Project, Dept. of Corrections admin staff, and others who worked to make this event a success. The BPC, and the Washington State Penitentiary Veterans Committee, look forward to working closely with these organizations in the near future, coordinating resources and continuing to set precedent for the availability of vet centered help in WSP, and all WADOC facilities.

## POEMS &amp; ARTWORK

Inspiration via Ink

**“Brain Waves and Ghosts”**

You can hear my voice, you can feel my skin against yours. You know we’re not really touching right? Our atoms repel each other, we never really make contact.

We’re just atoms, smashed together, barely gripping one another to form our bodies. It’s chaotic. When I speak, the sound crashes into your eardrums, shaking them up in ways your brain can read. When I touch you, my hands send heat to your skin. When I release you, the heat remains. A signature.

Our brains have so much power. So much electricity, sending so many signals one way and the other. There’s so much we don’t know. What if our brains can leave signatures, like the heat from my hand? What if our brains can leave emotional markers, like echoes of our former selves.

Not ghosts, echoes. Reflections of who we were.

-Shane Chamberlain

**“Poem”**

**All poems can’t possibly be painful,  
Perhaps the problems can be for paintings,  
The probability is almost playful,  
Preparation for the pay-out pays me,  
Patiently proceeding to the pavement,  
Provided my property is pacing,  
Prevention from the pages that I’m placing,  
Is preposterous for you to play with,  
Practice is perfection for my patients,  
Practically progression is so painless,  
Prepossession properly will pay rent,  
Please prepare all the people for the  
prayin’  
Pry the posture from penalization,  
Penitentiary packed for playa hatin’  
Position planted perfect presentation,  
Planetary payment for the placement,  
Paternity pushes all pulsations,  
Placidly your placards will pull payments,  
Panicking profusely pains my plating,  
All poems can’t possibly be painful.....**

**-Cooke**





"LIVE PROUD"

WITH COMPETITION  
THERE'S REPETITION,  
CONSISTENT IN DAILY LIVING,  
NO FEARS ON MY BEHALF,  
IMMENSELY DETERMINED TO BE GLAD,  
FOR THE SIMPLE FACT OF  
UNDERSTANDING LIFE AND ITS COURSE,  
BELIEVE THERE'S A WAY OUT  
THE STRUGGLE AND GET IN A HUDDLE,  
FIND A WAY ACROSS THE PUDDLE,  
THAT'S A CONUNDRUM,  
BELIEVING IN YOURSELF IS A STATE  
OF MIND,  
FIND A WAY TO DEFINE,  
YOUR PEACE OF MIND,  
AND TAKE TIME TO OVERCOME  
BEING BLIND,  
REWIND THE WHEELS OF TIME,  
AND LET IT PLAY OUT,  
WHAT DOES NO REGRETS  
AMOUNT TO?  
NO REGRETS IN COMPETITION  
LIVING CONSISTENT WITH  
CONFIDENCE  
THAT THINGS GET GREATER LATER,  
BE AN INNOVATOR AND MOTIVATE

-DEANDRE  
AARON

I see you

*Behind me is the devil  
Ruthless rebels  
Possessed men on saddles  
Slaves admiring gravel  
Oppression with shackles  
Mental battles  
Life milked like cattle  
No compass to travel  
Men afraid to dream  
Hearts that scream  
Pain that drowns the seas  
Evil that comes in peace but throws  
away the keys  
Scorching heat  
Blistered feet  
Boots that make a heart skip a beat  
Eyes so dry it's hard to weep  
From ashes I speak  
From the fire I rise  
I won't just be  
Until this dehumanizing organized  
corporation dies.*

-Abel Linares

Where to begin/indelible

-Where to begin?-

I been tryna take it easy  
 Tired of duckin all the reasons for the grievin  
 When she told me that she need me I ain't  
 believe it,  
 now she don't  
 Time to figure out my purpose or my reason,  
 Tellin people im'a call 'em when I know I prolly  
 won't,  
 nothin personal, but i just aint been feelin it  
 Im still alive, while they been out here killin  
 sh\*t  
 So how can I complain? I guess I wont  
 Out of sight out of mind  
 the way that I been doin' all my time  
 never know just what u got until its gone  
 Lately I just aint been feelin' it,  
 Can't even figure out what I want  
 No direction like my compass is broke  
 need to open your eyes  
 u day dreamin' while u woke  
 done w spinnin' my wheels like the rubber  
 round the spokes,  
 this where the rubber meets the road...

-indelible-

Can't get it off, it's no erase  
 like a permanent pen  
 The stain'll have u sittin' permanently in  
 the pen  
 Sittin' here contemplating the difference  
 between my folks n my friends  
 & if the means overshadow the ends  
 the rules that we bend  
 false priorities we tend  
 relationships that we neglected to mend  
 and when it's over, do it over again



**Freedom**

**Freedom, What is freedom? Freedom is coming to a clear understanding and realization that all humans are supposed to be free and equal. For we know that if it wasn't for Abe Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation we will still have that pandemic for African Americans called slavery.**

**-Theo Fuller**

# EDUCATION FOR ALL

Agency in Education

**By Christopher Gates**

The availability (or lack thereof) of educational resources for incarcerated individuals has long been a “black eye” for the Washington State Department of Corrections. Not only is the variety of any DOC supported and/or provided resources extremely limited, but the space available in any such classes is severely limited as well. There just are not enough meaningful programs, for WAY too many people, and it has been this way for a long time. Equally as antiquated, are the procedures by which individuals are selected for, or excluded from, participation in these programs. Due to the current DOC policies concerning eligibility for educational programs, classes are often automatically packed with “short timers” having no interest in those programs, or not enough time left to finish them. Meanwhile, individuals with longer sentences (those that have 6-7 or more years left to serve), are placed at the back of any waitlist, often having to wait multiple years to get into programs that they could have graduated multiple times over. These individuals who get “left behind” are often the older cats who set the tone of the institutions, serving as guides and role models to the younger generations. Just as frequently, they are the youngest of us; those with the most potential and the highest need for productive, positive outlets.

It goes without saying that if we want to give people the best chances at success upon eventual release, as well as provide them with the safest and healthiest environment possible *while* they are serving their sentences, then education **MUST** be a priority when we envision how our carceral institutions are to look and function. Rehabilitation involves learning new coping methods and strategies, as well as building the confidence and developing the agency to utilize them, as one navigates the balancing act of reintegration. These skills are only nurtured through the exposure to both pro-social relationships, and a meaningful education, i.e., one that is meaningful to the person receiving it.

The WSP Black Prisoners Caucus, and **The Sankofa Migration**, are dedicated to helping individuals from all backgrounds better themselves, their environments, and their communities, in ANY way we can. We believe that one of the best ways to do this is to provide people with any resources and information available, that can assist them in helping themselves. Stay tuned to future issues for news on anything that affects our right to pursue a meaningful education of our choice!

## **Community Recognition**

We at The Sankofa Migration would like to give a special nod of recognition to some guys who are taking their education, and their futures seriously. The following individuals took classes totaling up to at least 12 credits last QTR, and maintained at least a 3.5 GPA. Let their efforts and accomplishments serve as motivation to us all.

**Presidents List (3.90-4.0 GPA):**

Ralph Arnold  
 Barclay Bennet  
 Navin Milko  
 Kyle Pinney  
 Deontae Rasul-Chiono

**Vice-President’s List (3.70-3.89 GPA):**

Sean Astry  
 Russel Ford  
 Brian Green  
 Tyler Moons  
 William Parker  
 Nicolas Searcy  
 Da’ron Jackson-Warren  
 Tanner Woolery

**Deans List (3.50-3.69 GPA):**

Edgar Alejandre  
 Justus Cyr  
 Mumin Hussein  
 Justin Turner  
 Case Van Kooten



## ANTHONY COVERT

### The Second Chance of a Lifetime

By Christopher Gates

12/07/23 was an extremely significant day for the population at the Washington State Penitentiary (WSP). This was the day that the Washington State Clemency Board unanimously approved the clemency of a man named Anthony Covert. Few people have had as meaningful of an impact on the people currently “housed” at WSP than Mr. Covert. But becoming a staple of positive change at the Washington State Penitentiary did not come without a fair share of dues paid; 16+ years of consistent dues to be exact.

To those who are familiar with him, when thinking of Individuals that strive to make the environments they are in a better place, Anthony’s name undoubtedly nears the top of any list. But Mr. Covert was not always the beacon for change that he is now. Anthony’s coming of age story is one of highlights and accomplishments, equal in quality only to the hardships and traumas he faced in order to earn the opportunity he has recently been blessed with.

Known by many as “D-Loc”, Mr. Covert says he remembers his first experiences in the WADOC system, “like an elephant”. Incarcerated just 3 months after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, Anthony had no idea how to do time. In a misguided attempt to look out for a young D-loc the way he knew how, an older man in Spokane County jail known as “Crypto” told Anthony to “find the locs, ask what your job is, and get to work,” once he got to the joint. D-loc was caught off guard when, upon arrival at the penitentiary, he didn’t get the

reception he expected. He expected it to be “*THE Penitentiary*”, that organized and well-oiled machine of prison life that so many of us have seen in the movies. D-loc was just a kid when he was sentenced to 36 years in prison, and he had no idea how to do time. “I just coasted; hooped, sports, altercations, smoked and drank. I was being a kid. The reality of the time didn’t hit me...I let the time do me.” Anthony says that he “felt like [his] life was gone”, that he had “nothing left to grasp” onto. In his mind, he could either become a zombie, numb to his own reality, or

become a snap case, hypersensitized by it. He “chose both.” Cats around Anthony used to say he was “on the innertube”, meaning he was just aimlessly floating through his life. Anthony admits that he “never even thought about” the prospect of “going home.” While he did eventually wake his game up, it was not before experiencing a cumulation of extremely destructive and humbling

circumstances.

While numerous individuals along the way told Anthony of the potential they saw in him, and his family consistently pleaded for him to make some changes, the tragedy that struck on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 brought him to the “rock bottom” that compelled Anthony to find himself. A month after a stabbing in the West Complex of the WSP, Anthony’s unit (Delta) was still on lockdown on the morning of February 13<sup>th</sup>. During such an event, standard procedure is to let smaller groups of people out for a limited amount of time, on a

**“I made it my responsibility to not fail others. Anyone that came to me for help, I made it my responsibility to do that, to be a source for help”**

rotating schedule, so as to make sure everyone gets time to shower and/or use the phone. This morning, Anthony opted to use the phone and check in with his family, specifically, his 2-year younger brother, who was fighting a battle with cancer. When his mother picked up the phone, she told Anthony that it was time to say goodbye to his brother. He was crushed. Anthony took the remainder of the phone call doing his best to pour his heart out to his 19-year old little brother for the last time. Anthony was struck by the painful irony of his brother's promises to "bring [him] home", when he was granted a temporary furlough to come home for his brother's funeral.

It was during this time that a devastated Anthony learned that sometimes, tragedy is the most effective catalyst for change. Up to that point, Anthony says, he was "lost, confused, and hurt." The hardships Anthony endured, culminating in this horrific experience, caused him to re-evaluate his life, his behavior, his relationships, and most significantly, his identity. At the WSP-MSU chapter's BPC general meeting the day after receiving the clemency news, Anthony spoke candidly about how reclaiming his own self-perception was a foundational step in his own growth. Anthony was tired of trying to be who people thought "D-loc" was supposed to be, who he thought "D-loc" was supposed to be.

As if by fate, the first steps in Anthony's transformation were prompted by a fortuitous happenstance. Anthony began to notice that certain individuals in his unit were doing a much better job of navigating the environment, they were actually having fun, and seemed to be living with purpose. One of those men was Grady Mitchell, the head of the Inmate Incentive Program in Anthony's unit. When one of the incentive program positions opened up, Anthony decided that he wanted to be the one to fill it. Mr. Covert now admits that his chief motivation in applying for the job was "eat[ing] all the snacks"

and extra food those guys get, but collaterally, that trivial motivation jump started his own transformation. In order to obtain such a position, Anthony would have to stay infraction free for at least 6 months, which can feel like a lifetime when you're in the mix, but that is exactly what Mr. Covert did. As soon as his 6 months passed, Anthony put in an application and hoped for the best.

Getting the job was one of the best things that had happened to Anthony in a long time. He finally got a taste of true responsibility, and took to heart the precept that, "with great power comes great responsibility." Mr. Covert thrived in his position, and people noticed. His momentum eventually snowballed, getting him subsequent positions as a representative for his unit, and then as an event coordinator. Having such success had an enormous impact on Anthony's self-esteem. He realized that he was "really good at this kind of stuff" and decided "I'm a keep doing this, keep fulfilling my purpose." Mr. Covert began voraciously educating himself, taking advantage of any educational opportunities open to him. He also became very scrutinizing about the places he allowed himself to be, as well as the people, and influences, he allowed himself to be around.

Anthony is quick to caution that "everything did not suddenly become peaches and cream. I still had my faults, but things started to subside." Anthony no longer felt responsible for towing a certain predestined line, and began accepting responsibility for picking the side he was going to be on. A driving force of Anthony's tenacity, was his determination not to be an inconsistent leader. "I can take you to class with a book, or to war with a knife, but not vice versa." Mr. Covert was resolute in his intention to really step with conviction in everything he did. No pun intended.

Unfortunately, Anthony learned that the old adage about crabs in a barrel is all too real,

especially for individuals from underserved, undereducated, and socio-economically disadvantaged communities. “People want you where they expect you to be. It’s hard [for people] to see others running in front of them...but I want to win MY race. I decided to take care of myself, and some people didn’t like that I began to speak properly, that my skin began to look flush, people that I thought were my friends.” Anthony however was more than dedicated to his new path and continued to make choices to hold himself accountable. Upon arrival to medium security, he even selected a cell in the middle of his tier with the logic that “Nobody wants to live in the middle of the tier, but I did because I can see everyone and everyone can see me. I can’t do crime even if I wanted to.” Mr. Covert says that at that point, he wanted every person who was in the same space as him to meet someone different than who he was before. He had been “transforming, transcending, from what was, to what is.”

But make no mistake, Mr. Covert is in no way embarrassed of or abashed by his past. In fact, his experiences have always been a driving force in his personal development, and when he began to learn his history, what was once a source of pain and negativity became one of community and empowerment. Among many others, Anthony credits a brother named “Chi” from the Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma, with challenging him to acknowledge and live up to his potential. “[Chi] used to always tell me ‘you’re only dumb cause you choose to be’, but I never understood. I always thought he was just cappin’. As a young gang member, he reminded me what gangs were meant to do, not what they are doing. They were created to protect our communities, not destroy them.” Once Anthony woke up, he could never go back to the way he was before. “I decided to take my influence within my affiliation and change the

description. I chose to turn it into an opportunity to build.”

When asked about what he feels he has missed out on while being incarcerated, Anthony’s answer is an unhesitating, “Responsibility. As men we have responsibilities to our families, to our communities. Being locked up chokes our ability to be accountable. Losing my brother reminded me I had a responsibility to be there for him. Because of that, I made it my responsibility to not fail others. Anyone that came to me for help, I made it my responsibility to do that. to be a source for help.” Anthony’s hard work, dedication, and perseverance allowed him to become the person he wanted to be, the person he was always meant to be, someone who has already done “way more than D-loc could ever do.”

Anthony has dedicated the last number of years to becoming the person he was meant to be, and he works tirelessly to live up to the potential he knows he carries. As a self-described workhorse, which he defines as someone who “cares about the circumstances we are in and wants to see them better”, Anthony’s dedication to building positive communities not only drives his own progression, but tills the soil for all those around him, enabling them to sow seeds of positivity as well.

It feels almost wrong to admit that seeing Mr. Covert take his leave evokes something of an incredibly bittersweet feeling. As BPC members, nobody is prouder of Mr. Covert earning an opportunity for a new beginning than his fellow BPC brothers, but being privileged with the presence of someone like Anthony, inevitably means being faced with the prospect of his absence. This space will not be the same without him, but the lessons imparted by him will forever equip us with the tools we need to continue to make it a better one.

**WARNING: DON'T READ, IT MAY CHANGE YOUR VIEWS.**

## TRANSFORMATION

**By Demar Nelson**

When we think of transformation, it's often associated with magic or something we feel is outside of our scope of control, but it isn't. Transformation is exactly who we are as a human race and how our universe works. Every year we see the transformation that touches the earth when we observe the seasons change our summers into winter, when the leaves fall to the earth and feed our soil. That same soil feeds the vegetation that pushes through the dirt, vegetation then feeds humans and animals alike. "Transformation" is our life code. To fight against that, harms our existence. As an inmate here at WSP, the focus is transformational work that not only blesses our community, but also benefits those who will be re-entering our communities. Through reevaluating my life, I realized that I have a voice, and with that voice came duty. A duty to share my evolution and transformation with others. After all, though change is attractive, it's scary for most because change takes a level of vulnerability and commitment that's sometimes obsolete in terms of accepting that what your doing isn't working, or what you need to do differently will change how you'll do things moving forward. Real transformation changes your identity. In my transformational journey, I created a podcast called SALT. Which stands for SPIRITUAL.AWARENESS.LIFE.TACTIC. From inside these prison walls my voice of transformation vibrates over barbed wire fences and past gun towers, into a world that I left behind before transformation introduced itself to me. I've been dreaming from a prison cell for 15 years, and I am committed to giving back by being sacrificial and transparent.

SALT.... HEALS.

SALT. PRESERVES.

SALT. ADDS FLAVOR.

This is what SALT podcast is all about. Against the judgments that most prisoners face, "I DARE YOU" to try something new. Tune in, so if you're a person who believes that a prisoner is someone trapped by past choice making, you can be exposed to who we can become when we are devoted to transformation.

"I AM THE VOICE OF TRANSFORMATION"..... SALT PODCAST IS LEADING THE CHARGE ON CHANGING THE MINDS THAT HAVE A SKEWED VIEW OF WHO WE ARE ALL OVER THE WORLD.

WE ARE FATHERS.

WE ARE HUSBANDS.

WE ARE VETERANS.

WE ARE SONS.

WE ARE ARTISTS.

WE ARE MORE THAN OUR CHOICES.


TUNE IN TO SALT...

"SPEAKING TRUTH TO EMPOWER YOU"

**Demar Nelson**  
Speaker/Podcaster

**S.A.L.T**  
Spiritual Awareness  
Life Tactics

anchor.fm/salt43  
saltinthevault@gmail.com  
saltwithnelson



## RAPID RESPONSE UPDATE

Dennis Conner

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### By Abel Linares

In our last issue we wrote about our Rapid Response team that handles “critical” reentry cases – those getting out in 6 months or less – and how we helped Dennis Conner. In short, Dennis’s release date was suddenly moved up to 30 days, and he was not prepared to say the least. Expressing his concerns to the Reentry Committee, he was directed to the Rapid Response team. The team got to work, getting him as many resources as possible. We were able to get him in contact with an Oxford house in his area of release, and ensure he at least had a place to go home to.

Recently, we’ve received word that not only was Dennis doing well in the Oxford home, he had gotten food assistance, a new phone, and clothing right away when he got home. His local reentry navigator had connected him with stable employment, and even helped him get a grant for his own vehicle!! We were extremely happy to hear this update, as our goal is to ensure successful reentry for **everyone**.

This was our first personal update on one of the people we’ve been able to assist, we hope to be able to bring more good news in the future.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE S.T.A.R. PROJECT!

Nonprofit of the Year

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Last issue we interviewed Ms. Linda Scott of the STAR Project, our Reentry Committee sponsor. We are happy to report that in December of last year, STAR was awarded for being the “Nonprofit Organization of the Year” by the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce!! We want to congratulate Ms. Scott, and the STAR Project as a whole on this achievement. We in the BPC know how truly valuable reentry work is to those near release, and are ecstatic for STAR’s recognition of all the hard work they do.







This image depicts the West African Sankofa bird, reaching backwards for the seed of hope. This symbolizes the acknowledgement of our past, while striving to sow a better future. The Sankofa bird is the official logo of the Black Prisoners Caucus.

Editor-in-Chief

Shawn Cooke #431351

Washington State Penitentiary

1313 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Walla Walla, WA 99362

Chief of Design

Abel Linares-Montejo #422627

Washington State Penitentiary

1313 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Walla Walla, WA 99362

Chief Advisor

Christopher Gates #360360

Washington State Penitentiary

1313 N. 13<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Walla Walla, WA 99362

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