Happy Pride! I hope you reflect on reasons to be proud. Being LGBTQ+ is a gift. In the past we came together to revolt against police, resist prisons, and care for one another during the HIV epidemic. There is so much power and untapped potential in the LGBTQ+ community.

Being Executive Director of this community is a lot like being the shepherd of a flock. Their role is to guide the flock to green pastures, make sure the sheep don't get lost, and stay away from dangers -especially wolves.

I didn't formally train to be an Executive Director. I watched others, experimented, and peeped game. I applied what I learned. I learned how to act in "high class" spaces so that I could be effective. I taught myself grant writing, effective messaging, graphic arts, and social media.

A good shepherd knows when to respond to change. Weather, illness, or a dead pasture are all examples. Now is one of those times for us,

There was a problem with the budget. Approved by the Advisory Council, % of the budget was for payroll. When cash ran low we still had to pay staff but did not have enough funds for mutual aid, newsletters, and stipends. The members suffered.

I thought investing in more staff was smart. It wasn't. Like the shepherd, I made changes to protect the flock. I modified the budget, cut payroll, and laid off two staff to save $145,000. This allows us to go back to work for you.

With the available funds, we immediately launched a campaign for Pride Month called #PrideBehindBars2023. (pg.4)

We incorporated as an LLC, received non-profit status, and formed a Board of Directors (Board). Board members arrive with a wealth of experience and the majority are LGBTQ+, Black or people of color, and formerly incarcerated.

Incorporating has a few upsides. It gives us more direct access to our funds. It saves us $22,000 annually in fees. And it opens the door to pursue government grants. One downside is more paperwork.

You may know two of our board members, Carlos Morales & Su'ganni Tiazu! Carlos is formerly incarcerated and former Inside Organizer. Su'ganni is incarcerated at Norfolk and helped start United for Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Progress (UGP), a support group for queer prisoners.

Now we have a team of shepherds to guide the flock! The incorporation, Board, and new budget are like a new map and compass. We can return our focus to what we love most -tending the flock, making sure no sheep gets lost, and keeping wolves at bay.

I hope you will give me grace as I learn, and allow for experimenting so we can share in something all of us can be proud of at Black and Pink MA. In Solidarity, Michael Cox

Happy Pride Month! Each June we celebrate the LGBTQ+ community our part in it. This year we launched the #PrideBehindBars2023 campaign to focus on YOU! (p.4)

UGP Spotlight

UGP is a support group for GBT people at MCI-Norfolk. It now has an official spotlight. If your institution has an org and you want a spotlight, let us know!

The Way Out has a new look and is moving to bi-monthly distribution. That means we'll need more submissions. Drop us a line! Let us know what you think of the new changes.

We have a new PO Box: You can write:

Black and Pink MA
PO Box 30502
Worcester, MA 01603

We reorganized Black and Pink MA. We incorporated with a simpler structure, larger leadership team, and a budget that works harder for you.

We made major budget revisions. You will see and feel immediate benefits.

Survey Update

We received over 115 survey responses last year! This project is on hold while we handle business. Stipends will be tackled after June.
Growing Our Capacity for Inclusive Leadership

We must remain accountable to our inside members. How do we design a system of accountability that balances many factors. How do we engage meaningfully and with authenticity?

The Board of Directors is our oversight body. It has 7 members & 1 is currently incarcerated. Feedback, transparency, and accountability can happen & involve people behind the wall.

Su'ganni's presence is a reminder to prioritize inside members. Like many of you, he is thoughtful, respectful, responsible, and strategic.

Adding an inside member is simple but not easy. It requires 5-10 calls per week but I expect that to be reduced. Board emails need to be forwarded to him and visa versa. Large documents need to be mailed inside. We can't call emergency meetings as easily. As you can see, it requires a serious commitment but it's worth it!

We will take the next 3 months to redesign the structure of the org and streamline communications to expand leadership opportunities for inside members.

Send us ideas!

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<th>New</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
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<td>Weekly pickup at PO Box 30502 Worcester, MA 01603</td>
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Let’s Make It Rain...Leaders

Over the next 3 months we will design a new structure of leadership that includes incarcerated members of Black and Pink MA. This includes a clear structure, role descriptions, and policies required for success. At the end of 6 months, we will create and offer a leadership development program for inside members. This will prepare inside members to step into the new leadership roles.

We need more leaders, and opportunities to lead. The road we travel to Leader-Town needs to be intentional. Otherwise, people could get hurt.

We will not toss members into leadership roles so we can "check a box" Likewise, we will not take an otherwise prepared member and throw them into a leadership role without structure or guidance. That would be unfair to everyone.

The Advisory Council recently hurt a lot of people because they were not prepared. Not enough structure was in place. They did not create clear expectations of the Executive Director role. They did not provide feedback, performance reviews, or a job description. They did not follow the employee handbook. Because they were not fully prepared and because a clearer structure was not in place, people got hurt.

What Is A Board of Directors?

A board of directors is the governing body of a nonprofit.

They focus on the high-level strategy, accountability, and oversight of the organization. They approve large-scale planning, and general direction of the nonprofit. They are responsible for the organization’s mission, strategy, and goals.

They act as the guiding voice for large decisions like approving the annual budget, and setting plans for major growth or reorganization.

They do NOT manage the day to day operations. The executive director and team members take care of the regular activities that put the vision determined by the board of directors into operation.

3 Key Board Roles

The President facilitates meetings and creates meeting agendas. They supervise and are the primary contact for the Board. While this individual may serve as the executive director of the organization, the role is different.

The Secretary distributes meeting agendas, takes notes, keeps all official Board records and submits paperwork to the state.

The Treasurer monitors the financial health by keeping track of revenue and expenses.
5-Point Plan to retrench, rebuild and relaunch

We will use this plan to rebuild, repair, and relaunch. We are drawing up blueprints for a 12-month work plan. More to follow!

1. Commitment: Be Clear & Focused

Prioritize inside members
We will respond to mail within 1-week, actively recruit new pen pals, develop new programming and opportunities for inside members.

Racial Justice as a Cornerstone
We will report race based data on a quarterly basis, solicit feedback on perceptions & experiences of inclusion & equity, and strive toward representation throughout all parts of the organization.

2. Collaboration: It Takes a Village

We will create more opportunities for members and volunteers to participate in leadership, decision-making, and feedback; develop a process to host independent projects and offer technical support to non-BnP projects.

3. Culture

Normalize Direct and Proactive Communication
We will review policies, job descriptions, and expectations for all staff, members, and volunteers. On a quarterly basis we will host Chapter Meetings, publish Quarterly Reports, and distribute feedback surveys. We will make info about organizational structure and operations available online, and create a committee to support the Executive Director.

4. Craft Intentional Strategy

Mapping Out Our Work
Develop a 1- and 3-year strategic plan with metrics and benchmarks.

5. Critical Investments

Resourcing for Results
Invest in opportunities to develop staff, members, and volunteers. Michael has applied to 2 programs. One is a leadership development program and the other is a racial justice program for leaders.

Get Ready By Su’ganni Tiazu

History teaches us that those who prepare for tomorrow are more likely to succeed.

Most of us had at least one - others had many - situations where we needed help from a friend, lawyer, or outside advocate. Maybe you needed to address harassment from staff, support for a parole hearing, or to write a grievance. How many of you had a situation like this but nobody to help you? That feeling of aloneness and powerlessness is awful!

While I was at Shirley Max I experienced homophobia. I am grateful for the people that taught me how to prepare for tomorrow.

I learned to stay away from petty prison politics and childish ways. I was taught to create a plan, stay focussed on it, and execute it to the best of my ability. My hard work, sacrifices, and networking paid off. Today, I have a strong team of amazing people on the outside and I have reliable people on the inside.

Last November I got a phone call from an inside member. He wanted an update on his bail request. I had to give him crappy news: that it wasn’t processed. “Sorry, not yet” isn’t something you want to hear when you’re trying to get home in time for the holidays. I knew I had to give him a reason why he had to sit in jail longer.

I told him, “Sorry man, I got arrested on Sunday and I’ve been dealing with that since.” He replied, “ Arrested?! For what?” I explained how my GPS malfunctioned and the police scooped me up. “Wait, you’re on probation?” he asked. I chuckled and said “Yeah?! Most people at BnP have done time! We’re no different than you.”

I felt my stomach drop when I saw the headlights of three cop cars come down my drive way. I felt the cold pinching of cuffs as I was transported. While in the holding cell I tried to convince my brain that the blanket was warm and go to sleep. I tried to slow my brain from jumping to the worst conclusions.

Luckily it was just a warrant and not any new charges. My GPS strap got replaced and I was on my way home, still free. The next day I answered the phone and spoke to that member about his bail request.

Out Isn’t Free by Carlos Morales

and hanging with positive people.
If you have a cultural or LGBTQ+ group at your facility, go get support. You will need support no matter how independent you think you are. Remember, tomorrow is going to come and you best be prepared for it.

It takes a village. I want everyone to have community and people to lean on when the road gets bumpy. Do everything to prepare now for life outside prisons later.
# Pride Behind Bars 2023

A new friendship between myself and a member at the TC began with friction. After sharing the 5-Point Plan (p.3), he said, "Talk is Cheap!" I responded, "Challenge Accepted!"

But you know what they say, skeptics make the best believers.

Commitment to prioritize currently incarcerated members assumes supremacy within the 5-Point Plan because incarcerated people face the harshest impact from the system. Naturally, I wanted to do something to show action for the crown jewel of our 5-Point Plan.

Our members can’t come to Pride BUT we could bring Pride to them! That’s how the idea for #PrideBehindBars2023 was born.

Over 30 people signed up to be Pride Ambassadors. Each Ambassador is assigned 1-5 members. Anyone not assigned is a consumer. They’re a member. We speak to my manager. We work hard, this is what we offer, and how we offer it. Go meditate!"

A member is not a customer, client, or consumer. They’re a member. We are peers on equal footing. Picture yourself in prison addressing a peer. That’s the mentality we should bring here.

It’s noteworthy that middle & high school kids perceive "direct" and "slang" as rude or unintelligent. They confuse loud for aggressive.. These perceptions are classist and racist.

Like Mariah, I apologize if I misrepresented myself. I never promised professionalism. I’m just an ex-con muddling through the world.

For more information about The Way Out, please visit: [Black and Pink Massachusetts website](http://www.blackandpinkma.org)