What is the #I'mAffected Campaign, you ask?! Well, let me tell you! It is a national campaign sponsored by TPCA, intended to bring awareness to the public about how incarceration affects EVERYONE. The goal of this campaign is to help Americans understand that incarceration affects ALL of society and that criminal justice reform and, specifically, humane conditions are the responsibility of every American.

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Announcing the #I'mAffected Campaign

During the summer months, we tour Texas with our Heated Mock Cell and exhibit, which allows both affected family members and formerly incarcerated folks such as Marci Marie and others to share their stories. These events allow the public to experience what incarcerated people, staff, and officers go through every summer.

TPCA is working with researchers and other advocates throughout the United States, exploring inhumane prison conditions. For example, most recently, we coauthored a study with Julianne Skarha, PhD et al., which found that "an average of 14 deaths per year between 2001 to 2019 were associated with heat in Texas prisons without AC vs. no deaths associated with heat in prisons with AC." Of course, TPCA has long intimated that there are more deaths each year from heat than are recorded due to technicalities, and we hope that the public and our legislators will reach a higher level of understanding through this report so that life-saving changes can be made for Texas’ incarcerated citizens. Of course, there is more happening and more that we would like to do. In short, although we are going through our growing pains (thank you for your patience), we simply strive in empathy, love, and compassion to "do the best we can to do the best we can".

#I'mAffected

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Peppermint Holiday Hot Cocoa
Crush peppermint candy until pulverized and place it in a cup. Add the cocoa mix from the commissary. Add hot water and stir until incorporated. Add a peppermint stick to the cup for garnish and a glimpse of childhood. Enjoy!

Note: You can also add a cinnamon candy instead of peppermint for cocoa similar to the kind Abuelita used to make.

TPCA Mission Statement
Our Mission is to support affected family members and incarcerated individuals, increase awareness, and empower all through education, collaboration, and connection to organizational resources, thereby creating effective advocates prepared to advance humane conditions within the Texas Prisons.

TPCA Board
Amite Dominick, PhD
President and Founder
Tanika Solomon, Esq.
Secretary
Jessica Dickerson
Treasurer

Donations can be made on our website or Checks can be made out to Texas Prisons Community Advocates and mailed to the following address:
TPCA Contact Info:
P.O. Box1974
Fulton, TX 78358
TPCAAdvocates@gmail.com
www.TPCAdvocates.org

TPCA is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

TPCA does NOT have a legal department yet, so we can’t assist with any legal recommendations or legal advice.

Kathy's Corner
Happy Holidays everyone.
While the holiday time is meant to be a time of laughter and cheer, for many people it is a time of sadness. We at TPCA want y'all to know that you matter and that you are not forgotten. May this holiday season and the New Year be filled with joy and laughter.

Another Summer has been defeated, but that does not mean that TPCA is taking a break. NO SIR! We are pushing ready for next the legislative session, educating and facilitating bills with our legislative partners, creating media to educate the public, and creating tools for your loved ones to use as they advocate for change to prison conditions. We are busy, busy, busy! To recap the last legislative session, our bill HB 1971 passed the House of Representatives with a vote of 118 to 23. That was overwhelming support from our Reps. and TPCA is grateful that so many on both sides of the political aisle agreed that inhumane heat is unacceptable. Unfortunately, we did not get that same support from our Senators or the Lt. Gov. and Governor. The Senate did not hear the bill. Since then, Dr. Carlee Purdum and Dr. Amite Dominick have both testified before several different committees and continue to press our legislators to hear our demand for humane temperatures in Texas prisons. This next session will Include more bills requiring humane temperatures and other bills related to our agenda items. We had hoped to give you some information from interim reports, but unfortunately, those reports have not been posted yet. Please remind your family members to pay attention to our social media pages as the session begins so that they can participate in the actions TPCA will be launching. Change requires that these legislators know that prison condition reform is important to their constituents, so we must be LOUD and INSISTENT to be heard. Session begins on January 10, 2023.

Region 1: currently vacant.
Region 2: Lisa and Jai
Region 3: Yvette
Region 4: Carla and Lisa
Region 5: Grace Renee Montford Unit
Region 6: Heather

We have communicated with Family & Friends to enquire about international passports being accepted as ID to enable people who live outside the US to register their phones. According to recent email correspondence, this is not something that is going to happen soon. Don’t give up as we are going to continue to work on this and hopefully make changes. It was also brought our attention. I that some of our survey questions are not applicable to the folk who are housed in Death Row and/or Ad Seg. I want y’all to know that it was not our intention to exclude y’all and we want your input as to how we can be y’all’s voice too. With this in mind, we are asking you to work with us and help create a survey where you can get your voice heard.

Always remember, “Nothing is impossible. The word itself says ‘I’m possible.’ " - Audrey Hepburn

Sincerely,
Kathy Dunbar

Quick Meditation
1. Come to a seated position on a chair with feet placed on the ground and hands resting on the thighs.
2. Close your eyes and physically relax them, but don’t strain your focus on one thing. Adopt “soft eyes”, otherwise known as a path focus on your surroundings.
3. Connect to the breath and become aware of the inhale... and exhale... slowly before repeating a positive phrase or thought that resonates with you.
4. Repeat this process as long as you like.
5. Feel refreshed. Today is a new day to be confident!

Some of the benefits to meditation are a reduction in negative emotions, increased patience and tolerance, and a healthier management of stress.
Incarcerated Persons Mediator Spotlight
Hello Warriors!
I'm Lisa Renee from here and there. I say, FROM here and there because I grew up as an Air Force Brat and spent 21 years as an Army Spouse. I was once falsely incarcerated and can relate to the feelings of frustration while at the mercy of our judicial system. My passion and commitment is to see others treated as compassionately as possible, which is why I chose to be an Advocate for you and others through TPCA. I pray for you daily and I send Peace your way to start each day off with something to smile about. Remember, you matter, you are loved, TPCA Cares and someone is always praying for you and advocating on your behalf.😊

Director of Family Mediators Note
This is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year. We should acknowledge the importance of being there for one another because, for some, it can be sad and depressing. This can cause many emotional and physical health issues. We all function as a community, and we all need each other's support. Here at TPCA, we would like to acknowledge you, the incarcerated individuals, that we are here to support.

Our team continues to grow bigger each day. We have brainstormed and decided to cater and personalize to you and your loved ones on the outside who are advocating for you. So, we have made individual Facebook family group pages for your unit. We are on the hunt for volunteers to assist. If you have a loved one who is interested in moderating one of our TPCA- family group pages, please have them contact me. If you are in need of assistance, your loved one can go to our website at www.tpcadvocates.org. Click on “about us,” than Family Mediators, and fill out the “Request for Advocacy Assistance” form. It’s as simple as that.

I truly believe and have faith that you will come home and be reunited with us sooner than later. We all are a team when it comes down to advocating for you. I am not giving up on this journey or the possibility of helping others!!! Thank you!

Update on visitation vending machines - Effective Monday, December 5, 2022, each adult will be permitted to bring $35.00, in coins, for the purchase of vending items. As per existing policy, all vending items must be consumed during the general or contact visit. Any visitor that violates this rule may have the visit denied and may be removed from the inmate's Visitation List.

Help us Help you
• File your I-60’s and Grievances. Communicate with your Loved Ones about what you filed and send copies when you can.
• Once you send in your Step 1 grievance then, send in an I-60 to the grievance coordinator.
• Grievance forms and instructions on how to use them are available from staff in each housing area or at the law library. You always need a paper trail to prove that you filed a grievance and to show the response you were given.
• Please do NOT mail us your original grievance as items get lost in the mail or we may not be able to return your grievance to you in a timely manner.
• Getting it done is better than not getting it done, in the long run.
Reflection From Behind the Walls -Op-Eds from the Inside

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the policies of TPCA.

A MAN’S WORLD

By Sonya Amador/Mountainview Unit

“Adam and Eve”, seems like women were doomed from the beginning of time. Okay, so we all know the slogan, “All equal opportunity employer”. Let’s be honest men get paid more than women, even a woman with a college degree and with an outstanding resume. This is the real world. Biased decisions are based on sexual preference. In a prison setting, men are fed more than females (true story). On chicken fried steak or burrito day, some men’s units receive extra while females get only one. Men make parole sooner than women because they are considered “the breadwinner.” Aggravated men offenders get to work with heavy machinery, while aggravated females have difficulty getting into the cosmetology program at Mountain View Unit. Females are limited to what type of education level they may obtain. “G3, 50 years and above are considered NOT a priority to the education system in TDCJ due to the female’s stay in a Texas prison system. In college, an Associate degree is what women can complete. While men can exceed and receive their masters. Why is that?

Fact, last year, in 2021, males received the opportunity to sign up for Pell grants. While women must wait until July 2023. Why the delay there should be NO difference. So, “rehabilitation” may seem out of reach for some G3 offenders. Aggravated females are often discouraged from pursuing a vocational/trade due to their time (sentence). If the system limits women, then how can women ever think outside the box (cell, cubicle), dropping I-60s (forms requesting jobs, education, rehab programs) never to hear back or to receive a response with the sticker (on a waiting list) bummer!

Women should be encouraged to join programs and classes. One person can make a difference. We (as women) see that the Echo is filled with men and their graduation photos with many success stories of men who return to society. Where are the women? Being a woman in “the world” and in the prison system is no different from Rosa Parks day. Or any era, for that matter. Women desire and strive for the same opportunities as male offenders receive. Especially education! Do females not desire change within or amongst themselves? Nonetheless, we are all wards of the state awaiting a date. What may I ask are you doing with your time?

Oped #2 In 1992 I was a volunteer at Goodwill industries. During my orientation classes, I was informed that although I would not be working with the residents, I would be passing many of them on the way to the office. I was told that I would encounter things that may seem strange or even uncomfortable but, with proper illumination, would become understandable. There were three main categories of behaviors discussed. 1.) You may see people walking up the hallway very slowly, with one or two hands out. They may suddenly stop and begin violently pinwheeling their arms. If you get in the path while they are panicking, you could get hurt. These are the newly blind. They are learning to navigate the dark. Fear and panic are natural reactions as the body is prepared to defend itself against perceived threats. 2.) You may pass a room with about a dozen residents who will all be sitting in chairs, rocking, moaning, and they may be thumping a fist against their chest or head. These are the blind, deaf and mute. They rock, moan and thump because the mind needs stimulation. This behavior is instinctive, not taught. 3.) You may encounter people with schizophrenia. Their brains may have incurred damage through blunt trauma, drug use, or a genetic anomaly. Their brains register their visual and auditory hallucinations as real. I did, in fact, see and hear all of the above and served two years without incident. I did not think of this experience again until I came to prison, and I started hearing recurring stories about men in solitary confinement who would beat the walls with their fists for hours or would scream until hoarse to no one in particular. The stories reminded me of my training. These men were working to keep their sanity intact. The conditions of a blackout solitary cell, without light and devoid of human contact, had the same effect as having your senses stripped away. I have encountered men who were unaccustomed to fighting and, when threatened with violence, would pinwheel their arms in hopes of mounting a defense. The panic caused by imminent violence was the same as that of someone newly deprived of sight. I knew many men who heard voices and saw things no one else did. Some took their medications as needed, while others felt they were dangerous or just forgot to take them and found themselves in terrible situations. At Goodwill Industries, the residents were gently taught to navigate the world with the goal of returning to society, allowing these people a chance at success. Anyone who could possibly encounter these individuals was educated on what to expect and how best to interact. Within the prison system, residents with the same struggles are treated as pariahs and disciplined harshly for behaviors beyond their control. There is no orientation explaining what a person is likely to encounter and how best to interact. Inmates suffering from mental or emotional trauma make up a large body within the prison population. When you consider the ever-increasing incidents of suicide, it’s apparent that this is a problem that needs addressing. Without professional support and a sense of compassion, the system often releases those who have grown worse, not better, under their watch. Unless these mental health issues are addressed with both concerted effort and resources, I fear we will be releasing individuals who will not do well and will find themselves back in prison. Prisons
Hello all!

Thank you so much for the art that has been sent for publication in TPCA's Coffee Table book. You all are so talented! I would like to open submissions up to poetry and prose as well. If you would like to contribute a written piece of art, please send your contribution to the address on page 2 with the following release. I _____________ (print your name) release this work as a donation to Texas Prisons Community Advocates to be used as they see fit.

_____________________ (Signature) and _______________ (Date) We are continuing to accept donations of art and poetry, so please keep sending things our way. Your work deserves an audience, and your words are important for the world to hear.

I would also like to extend a special Thank You to Mr. Kenneth West for his generous donation of art and sculpture. TPCA will be adding those pieces to the online store and featuring them on our website’s home page. Your work is beautiful, sir! Thank you for sharing it with us.

I want this newsletter to be informative and helpful to you. If you have suggestions, need information that all might find beneficial, or have an op-ed piece that you would like to submit, we would be happy to consider these Items for publication and newsletter content. Not all submissions can be used for the newsletter, but there are many avenues that TPCA is developing to amplify your voices. Thank you for trusting us with your stories, thoughts, art, and contributions. May the Spirit of this season find you all and bring you the warmth that all of us at TPCA send through our thoughts and well wishes.

Jessica Dickerson