

# About the Virginia Prison Justice Network

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There are several statewide organizations that work to improve conditions for prisoners, amplify the voices of prisoners, establish a more effective penal system, or to implement alternatives to incarceration. By being a part of the Virginia Prison Justice Network, these organizations mobilize for actions, network and learn from one another, and build a movement across our state to create change in our carceral system and in the lives of prisoners and their families. Learn about these organizations. Family member and supporter involvement can help grow a movement for change. Get involved!

### **Bridging The Gap In Virginia**

Offices in Richmond and Newport News

Richmond office serves Richmond and Central Virginia (2507 5th Street, Suite B, Richmond, Virginia 23222)

Newport News Office serves the Peninsula and Hampton Roads area (115 28th Street, Newport News, Virginia 23607)

Website: [www.bridgingthegapinvirginia.org](http://www.bridgingthegapinvirginia.org)

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C. Dallas Bell is the Executive Director of the Newport News office and can be reached at 757-928-0888, his email address is [cdallasbell@bridgingthegapinvirginia.org](mailto:cdallasbell@bridgingthegapinvirginia.org)

BTGIV mission is to empower formerly incarcerated persons, veterans, at-risk youth, substance abuser, and homeless individuals by helping them overcome the barriers that hinder the effective transition following incarceration, military duty, recovery into mainstream society.

BTGIV's primary goal is to provide services that will enable returning citizens and individuals with adverse criminal records to readjust into society in order to abstain from criminal lifestyles. The program works with the judicial system and other agencies to aid in the wholesome spiritual, social and economic rehabilitation of the individual being released from the criminal justice system.

### **End Mass Incarceration in Virginia**

Email: [emiiva17@gmail.com](mailto:emiiva17@gmail.com)

We work directly with prisoners and their families as they navigate the prison system to ensure that their rights are observed. Through our advocacy, and through a network of individuals and groups, we work to end mass incarceration in our state. We are based in Lynchburg.

### **Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality**

Address: PO Box 23202, Richmond, VA 23223

Website: <https://defendersfje.blogspot.com>

Email: [DefendersFJE@hotmail.com](mailto:DefendersFJE@hotmail.com)

Phone: 804-644-5834

An all-volunteer, multi-issue organization working for the survival of our communities through education and social justice projects. We began in 2002 as a group of relatives of prisoners, concerned about the conditions in the state's jails and prisons. We correspond with inmates, speak at prisoner-organized events, support prisoner struggles and report on prison-related issues in our quarterly newspaper The Virginia Defender. We are a statewide organization based in Richmond, VA.

### **Coalition for Justice**

¡Ahora tenemos apoyo con el español para quejas o preguntas!

Contact/Contáctenos en: [justicebburg@gmail.com](mailto:justicebburg@gmail.com) or/o: Coalition for Justice, PO Box 299, Blacksburg, VA 24063

We are a 501c3 non-profit operating out of Blacksburg, VA, which was founded in 1981 in response to the US-backed "contra" war in Nicaragua, a large scale terrorist war, that claimed the lives of 78,000 people. Through the years, we have developed an intersectional approach to our work and recognize that all systems of oppression are interconnected and form a larger, overall system of domination. In 2017, we formed a Prison Justice Committee, which works to support the many disadvantaged groups within the prison system, recognizing that our group must be supported and must work collaboratively with those inside in order to support all oppressed peoples, so that no one falls through the cracks.

We seek to empower prisoners, advocate for them through our prisoner grievance work, and see other struggles (i.e. environmental, racial justice, food justice, economic equality etc.) through the lens of our prisoner/er justice work. We call for an end to mass incarceration and seek change to a repressive and unfair criminal justice system. We are proud to be a founding member of the Virginia Prison Justice Network and a sponsor for VAPOC (Virginia Prisoner of Conscience)

### **First Alliance Consulting Group**

Telephone: 804-220-1029

Email: [firstalliance@consultant.com](mailto:firstalliance@consultant.com)

Website:

[www.firstalliance8.wixsite.com/consultant](http://www.firstalliance8.wixsite.com/consultant)

The Alliance group is Virginia's first community consulting group that provides consulting in the area of communal rehabilitation, resource management and fiscal responsibility. This grassroots organization works in human rights, criminal justice reform and environmental justice. BeKura Waliah Shabazz is the founder of this dynamic group which operates in Hampton Roads, Tidewater, Richmond and the surrounding areas. For environmental issues she represents VCN Virginia Conservation Network with the same contact info.

### **Humanities Behind Bars**

In 2016, Dr. Meghan McDowell and Dr. Alison Reed, both professors at Old Dominion University, co-founded Humanities Behind Bars after facilitating a weekly reading group at Norfolk City Jail.

As they established this community partnership and educational ties between the university and jail, the Humanities Behind Bars (HBB) program grew into a grassroots collective of teachers, students, activists, and artists committed to imagining a just world. Our work is rooted in community-based education and organizing that centers formerly and currently incarcerated people and their loved ones.

In addition to teaching and learning with incarcerated students at Norfolk City Jail, Humanities Behind Bars facilitates critical spaces in the Tidewater community. For example, we offer a reading and film series, Humanity Without Bars, for collective study and critique of the Prison Industrial Complex. We also facilitate a reading group on prison pedagogy. Our political education program thus models our commitment to cultivating inside/outside alliances and abolitionist praxis.

## **Interfaith Action for Human Rights**

Rabbi Charles Feinberg  
 Interfaith Action for Human Rights  
 POB 55802, Washington, DC 20040  
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 Website:  
 www.interfaithactionhr.org

Interfaith Action for Human Rights, a Mid-Atlantic coalition of faith communities and people of faith, brings action, education and advocacy to eliminate the practice of solitary confinement of prisoners in state facilities in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia.

IAHR's network of multi-faith, multi-ethnic and multi-racial groups seeks to change the culture, policy and practices that violate the human rights of prisoners held in correctional facilities.

We believe that: Solitary confinement is a form of psychological torture; Solitary confinement is costly and ineffective; Short-term confinement of juveniles, the mentally ill and other vulnerable prisoners poses grave risks to the health and rehabilitation of these prisoners. Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the wisdom of our respective faiths, IAHR advocates for more just and compassionate laws and policies.

Through pastoral outreach, educational efforts and legislative advocacy, IAHR engages and mobilizes faith communities, families, the media, elected and appointed officials, and the general public.

## **Rise for Youth**

Valerie Slater  
 RISE Campaign Coordinator  
 8 West Leigh Street  
 Richmond, VA 23220  
 Email: valerie@justice4all.org

The mission of Rise For Youth is: to increase the likelihood that youth will become law-abiding adults by investing in community-based alternatives to juvenile justice system involvement; to reduce the number of youth arrested, referred, under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Justice or committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice; to close Virginia's juvenile prisons and re-invest savings from their closure into evidence-informed, community-based alternatives that will keep youth at home with their families and communities and keep communities safer and to build a true continuum of evidence-informed placements for youth that cannot safely remain in their homes.

## **K.I.T (Keeping Inmate Families Together)**

Email: tashabescott@gmail.com

Keeping Inmates Families Together is a group that was created to keep Inmates and their families close through this process of separation. By all means.

We are based in Richmond, VA

## **RIHD (Resource, Information, Help for the Disadvantaged and Disenfranchised)**

RIHD  
 P.O. Box 55  
 Highland Springs, Virginia 23075

Email: rihd23075@gmail.com  
 Twitter: @rihd  
 Phone: (804) 426-4426  
 To receive their daily-digest sign up at:  
 InMateResource@yahoo.com

RIHD was founded in 2002 by Lilly Brant Kennedy, retired from a US Government career, in response to the barriers she experienced while engaging the criminal justice system on behalf of a family member who had been given an egregiously long sentence. RIHD formed with other volunteers in a similar situation to educate and empower Virginia families and communities on the negative impact of a racially disparate system to mass incarceration and provide educational outreach to reduce the level of societal disenfranchisement of people with a criminal record.

An award-winning all-volunteer statewide organization known for its low-cost transportation service to faraway Virginia rural prisons. Sentencing reform, sentencing guidelines, restoration of civil and voting rights, and ban the box for fair hiring in the workplace are just some of the ways RIHD has helped ordinary Virginia to understand and navigate the criminal justice system and bring about necessary reform.

## **Richmond Jericho**

The Jericho Movement,  
 P.O. Box 2164, Chesterfield, VA 23832

Email: richmondjericho@gmail.com

We strive to maintain a nonsectarian movement that supports revolutionary prisoners of all stripes, and other political dissidents within prison walls. We define a political prisoner as anyone imprisoned for acting on their political beliefs. Jericho is a movement with the defined goal of gaining recognition of the fact that political prisoners and prisoners of war exist inside of the United States, despite the United States' government's continued denial ... and winning amnesty and freedom for these political prisoners.

The Jericho Movement grew out of a call for a national march on the White House during Spring Break of 1998 by political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim. The call was made in October of 1996 through the Provisional Government–Republic of New Afrika and the New Afrikan Liberation Front, but the organizers decided to use this opportunity to jumpstart a much needed movement to build a national support organization for political prisoners in general.

The March 27, 1998 demonstration was just the beginning of a whole new commitment to support these political prisoners and demand recognition and amnesty for them. There are hundreds of people who went to prison as a result of their work on the streets against oppressive conditions like indecent housing and inadequate or complete lack of medical care, lack of quality education, police brutality and the murder of people organizing for independence and liberation. These people belonged to organizations like the Black Panther Party, La Raza Unida, FALN, Los Macheteros, North American Anti-Imperialist Movement, May 19th, AIM, the Black Liberation Army, etc., and were incarcerated because of their political beliefs and acts in support of and/or in defense of freedom.

Once the demonstration was over, the real work began. The Jericho Organizing Committees that came into being around this work continue educating people about the existence of these political prisoners. The original structure designed to mobilize people to go to the White House and serve notice that we will no longer allow our political prisoners to be behind prison walls with no support, and that work is being done to free them, has been transformed into a mass-based organizing tool.

At the present time there are Jericho Organizing Committees operating in Albuquerque, NM, Chicago, IL, Los Angeles, CA, New York, NY, Portland, OR, Richmond VA and Italy, and regional committees functioning across the country.

### **SALT (Social Action Linking Together)**

John Horejsi is the Founder and Coordinator and can be reached at [tjhorejsi@cox.net](mailto:tjhorejsi@cox.net) or visit the SALT website at [www.S-A-L-T.org](http://www.S-A-L-T.org)

Contact: John Horejsi, St.Marks  
9970 Vale Road  
Vienna, Virginia 22181

Our Mission: Social Action Linking Together (SALT) is a network of persons in Virginia embracing the principle that “The justice of a society can be measured by how the most vulnerable members of that society are faring and being treated.” This principle can be found in all the great religious traditions and inspires SALT members to propose and shape fair public social policies through our education of policy makers & our advocacy for the poor and powerless.

SALT proposes and advocates for fair & common sense Public Social Policy; THRU our education of policy makers; & THRU our advocacy for the poor and powerless! Our appeal to the faith community is: To get involved! – “To get out of the pew and into the Lobby!” ---- To Be a Voice for the Voiceless!

### **Virginia Prisoner of Conscience**

Email: [dansoaskari@gmail.com](mailto:dansoaskari@gmail.com)

VAPOC is made up of prisoners, serving long sentences, who are incarcerated throughout Virginia. The group is sponsored by the Coalition for Justice, a 501c3 non-profit in Blacksburg, VA. VAPOC works with allies around the state to work to end mass incarceration.

The mission is to end mass incarceration in Virginia by promoting awareness amongst the incarcerated and those in society by enlightening them in the fields of Prison Reform, Law, Politics, and Community Rebuilding/Reentry, thereby motivating them to become more involved in the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality.

### **Virginia Coalition on Solitary Confinement**

The Virginia Coalition on Solitary Confinement is made up of individuals and organizations working to reduce and eliminate the use of solitary confinement in Virginia’s prisons and jails through legislative and administrative policy changes.

Organizations represented in our group include:

Interfaith Action for Human Rights  
ACLU of Virginia  
National Alliance on Mental Illness–VA  
SALT (Social Action Linking Together)  
VACURE  
Virginia Council of Churches  
Virginia Catholic Conference  
Amnesty International of Northern Virginia  
Social Workers Against Solitary Confinement

For more information or to get involved contact Gay Gardner at [gaygardner@msn.com](mailto:gaygardner@msn.com)

### **VAPAC (Virginia Prisons Accountability Committee)**

Virginia Prisons Accountability Committee  
P. O. Box 213, Clintwood Virginia, 24228

Website:

[vapac.blogspot.com/p/our-purpose.html](http://vapac.blogspot.com/p/our-purpose.html)

VAPAC understands prisoner’s struggles as well as triumphs. To share who we are & to answer any questions: Vapac is a group of Virginia Prisoner’s families & friends working to give voice to issues Prisoners are faced with in Prison.

We accomplish this primarily by highlighting Virginia Prison issues & experiences that Prisoners have on our blog “[vapac.blogspot.com](http://vapac.blogspot.com)” We also share the writings as posts on our facebook & twitter platforms (f/b: “Virginia Prisons Accountability Committee” & on twitter: [@vapacommitee](https://twitter.com/vapacommitee)). When visiting please take the time to sign up & JOIN. We amplify the Prisoner’s voice in society so both sides are presented. By doing this there is a more balanced understanding of what is going on in Prison.

When you (prisoners as well as families) send letters/documentation of an issue indicate if you want it published with your name. If not we will then condense & summarize the basic points & publish it as anecdotes.

### **Virginia CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants)**

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Telephone: 703-272-3624

P.O. Box 2310 Vienna, VA 22183

Chapters in Northern Virginia, Richmond and Hampton Roads

Our mission is to support a safe, peaceful Virginia for all citizens by meeting public safety responsibilities for restoration of crime victims, the offenders, the affected families, and the community at large. Our objective is to provide information, support and resources, to serve as an effective voice in gaining public attention for positive changes and improvements in policies and laws.



