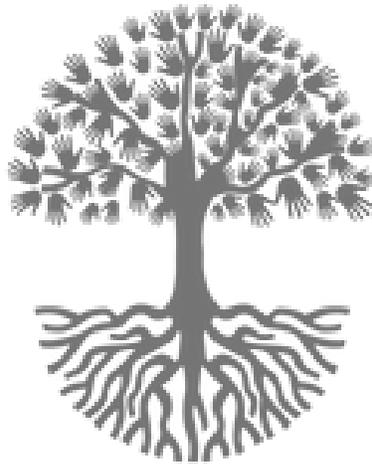


IMANI'S SAFEHOUSE



Hello, Family!

Thank You so much for reaching out to keep connected. The purpose of Community Connects is to bridge the connection. Human contact and connections are so necessary that they can impact our health and well-being. Through writing to encourage each other through the pages of our newsletter and volunteering to write, you are building community.

Imani's Safehouse Inc recognizes your contributions. We understand that every second of your time is valuable and want you to know you are important members of our community

Also, we are not a legal service. We can't help you with legal advice or work because that's not our area of expertise. We are into community building through keeping lines of communication open. Until you are all FREE, we will keep lines of communication open. We do not believe in prisons for any human beings.

Freedom for all,
Love and light from,
Jennifer

NEW YORK STATE BUDGET: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The New York legislature and the governor must negotiate and pass the state's annual budget by April 1. This year, as of April 5, an agreement has still not been reached. By the time you are reading this the budget may have passed, but one of the reasons for the holdup is of particular concern to our community.

As Nick Reisman, a reporter for the blog *State of Politics* wrote in an op-ed on April 4, budget negotiations have stalled over policy disagreements—not, as is more common, over disagreements about how the state should actually spend money. Days before the budget deadline, Governor Hochul offered a series of controversial proposals to gut recent criminal justice reforms.

In late March, Governor Hochul offered a 10-point Public Safety Plan to address fears about crime. (Fear, as many politicians and activists have noted, is the key word; the plan does nothing to keep the public safe.) Her plan includes sweeping rollbacks to New York's 2019 bail reform laws, encouraging judges to increase bail amounts and set bail more often—increasing pretrial detention as city jails are in crisis. She also calls for making more crimes eligible for arrest.

The plan calls on legislators to gut “Raise the Age” legislation that only fully went into effect in 2019. The legislation increased the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18. Governor Hochul, with strong support from New York City Mayor Eric Adams, wants to amend the law so that judges may try young people as adults in some cases. Finally, the plan proposes significant rollbacks to discovery reforms, favoring law enforcement and allowing prosecutors to withhold evidence from the defense.

Legislators are currently negotiating these proposals. While it is unlikely that all of them will be adopted as proposed, it cannot be ignored that Governor Hochul has aligned herself with punitive, “tough-on-crime” politics in an election year. Jose Saldana, of the activist group Release Aging People for Prison (RAPP), said in a press release that Governor's Hochul's proposals harken back to the painful, failed policies of the mass incarceration.

“Governor Hochul's ‘public safety plan’ is akin to the same racist policies that created the atrocities of mass incarceration, separated tens of thousands of Black and Latinx families, and didn't make our communities any safer,” he said. “Rather than systemically addressing the fundamental roots of crime and interpersonal violence, like institutional racism, perpetual poverty, homelessness, lack of mental health services, failing public schools, substandard healthcare, wage discrimination, and police violence in our communities, county jails, and prisons across the state, Governor Hochul has committed to continuing the racist policies of mass incarceration.”

RALLY TO CLOSE RIKERS



On March 21, activists with the HALT Solitary campaign and other organizations held an emergency rally after two more people died on Rikers Island. The humanitarian crisis on Rikers is dire, but the state has yet to respond with any meaningful action. "It's a shame that we have to be here once again to raise awareness to the deplorable conditions at Rikers," Pate said. "We are here to say to Governor Hochul and our legislators that you need to release our people. Three deaths on Rikers in 2022, and that's three deaths too many."

Victor Pate of HALT Solitary in front Governor Hochul's office demanding people be released from Rikers, March 2022



A woman holds a sign that reads, "Why are people dying in NYC jails???"



A woman holds a photo of Layleen Polanco, who died in solitary confinement at Rikers in 2019



IN LOVING MEMORY OF ANNETTE WASHINGTON

BY MOLLY HAGAN

Annette Washington served many years at Bedford, but I met her when I was teaching art and writing at the Women's Prison Association in 2019. She was wickedly funny; the kind of person you want to sit next to so you can whisper jokes to each other during class.

Annette was an exceptionally talented artist. She made this drawing of a woman in 2019, and used eyeshadow to shade it—a technique she picked up at Bedford. She was very precise. Her drawn lines and calligraphy looked perfect, like they weren't even made by a human hand. But her art was also full of life and joy. Last year, she was commissioned by the CBD company oHhO to make a product label. She drew a simple candle, but it manages to convey all of her warmth and love. Annette passed away on March 10, 2022. The world is a little lonelier and a lot less fun without her.



One of Annette's pieces, 2019

Some of you have reached out asking for a writing prompt—we are happy to honor this request!

*"Kindness eases change.
Love quiets fear.
And a sweet and powerful
Positive obsession
Blunts pain,
Diverts rage,
And engages each of us
In the greatest,
The most intense
Of our chosen struggles."*

This is a quote from Octavia Butler's book, *Parable of the Talents*. Let any part of it inspire you to write something, or create a work of art.

Contact us at:

**1365 West 7th Street, Apt. 3F
Brooklyn, NY 11204**

If you are still interested in joining the Imani's Safehouse book club, please let us know and we will send you a free copy of Octavia Butler's *Kindred*. For anyone who is reading the book now, let us know what you think! We're looking to publish short reviews (200-300 words) but are also interested in any poetry or art inspired by the book!

And as always, we welcome all essays, poems, and artwork. Send us anything you would like to see published!