

**Life Support:
Ritual, Community, and Healing Through the Eyes of a Juvenile Lifer**

**by
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Abstract

In the United States today, there is approximately 2,500 “juvenile lifers” (an adolescent that was admitted into the prison system and who received a life imprisonment sentence). Incredibly, over 500 juvenile lifers are incarcerated in Pennsylvania alone, making it the most draconian of any state towards adolescent boys and girls trapped in the cycle of poverty, racism, direct, and structural violence. Over 57 percent of all juvenile lifers in the United States of America are Black. This dignilogue presentation will examine *Life Support*, an innovative post-secondary approach for restoring ritual, community, and healing for a group of juvenile lifers housed at maximum security facility SCI Forest, in Marienville, Pennsylvania.

Tony Gaskew, Ph.D., is Professor of Criminal Justice, Director of Criminal Justice, and Founding Director of the nationally recognized and award-winning Prison Education Program at the University of Pittsburgh, Bradford. He is a Fulbright Hays Fellow and a University of Pittsburgh Faculty Diversity Fellow, who has conducted critical autoethnographic research in Africa and across the Middle East. He has authored over 40 books, books chapters, and journal articles on the impact of policing on the Pan-African experience in America. He is the book series editor of Critical Perspectives on Race, Crime, and Justice (Rowman & Littlefield) and his latest book project, Stop Trying to Fix Policing: Lessons Learned from the Front Lines of Black Liberation (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020) examines the physical, psychic, and metaphysical ritual of abolishing policing in America.