



Activist Toolkit

Lucasville Justice Project

Dear Activist,

Thank you so much for taking the time to join this effort to bring justice to the inmates of the 1993 Lucasville Prison Uprising at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) and for adding your voice to the chorus of people who stand in protest of discrimination within the U.S. justice system.

April 11 - 21, 2008 marks the 15th Anniversary of the disturbance in Lucasville. The story of Lucasville is a textbook case for what can go wrong in the U.S. justice system. The evidence against those convicted following the uprising is spurious at best, and brings into question the intent of prosecutors to bring vengeance over truth.

In this toolkit, you will find information on steps you can take to organize for the Lucasville Justice Project at home, in your office, on campus, in your community, and online. We've done our best to assemble step-by-step guides and to map out just how little (or how much) time and effort each action will require. You will find a link to an online petition in favor of a special investigation into Lucasville that you can sign. If you have more time, there is also a copy of the petition within this toolkit that you can copy and distribute for signatures. If you'd like to do even more, there are lists of activities that you can organize and links to even more resources.

This toolkit is a work in progress - we'll continue to update events and actions that relate to this project and compile resources to help activists learn more about issues surrounding Lucasville and the Ohio penal system. As you plan activities, keep us updated by emailing **stopthedeathpenalty@acluohio.org**.

Please check back regularly as we build momentum in our effort to bring justice to the inmates from Lucasville.

Peace,

Susie Beiersdorfer
Lucasville Justice Project Organizer

1 Minute

Sign the Petition encouraging the governor to appoint a special commission to investigate the sentencing of prisoners following the Lucasville Prison Uprising

5 Minutes

Add a button to your website
Copy the petition to share with others

15 Minutes

Write a Letter to the Editor
Write a Blog Post

1+ Hours

Read "Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising" by Staughton Lynd
Hold a performance or dramatic reading of the play "Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising"
Organize a vigil
Create a one-act play
Organize an art show
Host a Community Forum

Materials

LJP Petition
LJP Web Button
Script of "Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising"
Resource list

1 Minute

Sign the Petition for a Special Commission

As Americans, we believe that equal justice should be administered to all.
Sign the petition today.

5 Minutes

Web Button

Add a Lucasville Justice Project web button to your page and let your audience know that you support equal justice for all.

Gather Signatures

Make copies of the petition on the next page and encourage everyone you know to sign. With your help, we can persuade the governor to appoint a special commission to investigate the Lucasville uprising.

15 Minutes

Write a Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor are great advocacy tools. They:

- reach a large audience
- are often monitored by elected officials
- can bring up information not addressed in a news article
- create an impression of widespread support or opposition to an issue

Here are some basic tips on how to write a letter to the editor.

Keep it short and on one subject. Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. Keeping your letter brief will help assure that your important points are not cut out by the newspaper.

Make it legible. Your letter doesn't have to be fancy, but you should use a typewriter or computer word processor if your handwriting is difficult to read.

Send letters to weekly community newspapers too. The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the easier it is to get your letter printed.

Be sure to include your contact information. Many newspapers will print a letter to the editor only after calling the author to verify his or her identity and address. Newspapers will not give out that information, and will usually print your name and city only if your letter is published.

Make references to the newspaper. While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a specific article. Here are some examples of easy ways to refer to articles in your opening sentence:

- I was disappointed to see that The Post's May 18 editorial "School Vouchers are Right On" omitted some of the key facts in the debate.
- I strongly disagree with (author's name) narrow view on women's reproductive rights. ("Name of Op-Ed," date)
- I am deeply saddened to read that Congressman Doe is working to roll back affirmative action. ("Title of Article," date)

Write a Blog Post

Add a blog post discussing why you think the governor should appoint a special commission to investigate the Lucasville uprising. A blog post, like a letter to the editor, is best when it is clear, concise, and brief. Here are a few pointers on a good blog post:

Link (a lot). Linking allows your readers to judge your references and get more in-depth information. Link to Wikipedia, press reports, and newspapers.

Keep it Simple. When you use clear accessible language, it is easier for your audience to identify with your arguments. Don't use too much jargon. Even though you may know the ins and outs of the justice system, your reader may not. Spell things out and explain in simple terms. And do it in 250 words or less.

Personalize it. When you reference your own beliefs and use personal anecdotes to talk about abstract issues, you demonstrate the ways in which large human rights issues affect us all.

Its All in the Headline. Your headline should say it all, only better, than the rest of your post. Use it to draw your reader into the post.

I+ Hour Commitments

You can organize your own Lucasville activities. Community events are a great way to provide information, motivate activists, bring allies together, and increase awareness of the issue in your area. Whether you decide to hold a vigil, present the play, organize an artshow or host a community forum, the timeline below is a useful tool in planning your event.

Sample Planning Timeline

2 - 4 weeks before the event

- Plot your general program timeline
- Select location, make necessary arrangements, set event date and time
- Decide on intended audience and ideal number of guests
- Secure co-sponsor(s)
- Announce the event to your friends, neighbors, and associates
- Seek out volunteers
- Determine appropriate promotion strategies

1 - 2 weeks before the event

- Submit advisory notices and information to local media and community event listings
- Send emails and place phonecalls
- Post flyers
- Prepare checklist of items necessary (refreshments, handouts, sign-in sheet, nametags, etc.) and begin gathering them

2 days before the event

- Send follow-up emails to media and attendees
- Make follow-up phone calls to media and attendees
- Finish gathering all necessary items, including food and supplies
- Confirm the date and time of your event with venue
- Draft and practice your opening remarks
- Confirm final tasks with volunteers
- Test any technology you plan to use

1 day before the event

- Send second advisory notice to local daily media venues

Two hours before your event

- Set up all technical devices and test your technology!
- Set up tables and chairs
- Set out handouts, sign-in sheet, pens, and nametags
- Arrange refreshments
- Answer last-minute questions from volunteers

As a community event organizer, you are an integral part of the Lucasville Justice Project educational and activist mission.

Keep Us Informed

As you plan your events, keep us up to date. Email information to stopthedeathpenalty@acluohio.org.