

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/orange-new-black-author-speak-upcoming-ed-likover-memorial-lecture>

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Are you hooked on the Peabody Award-winning, critically acclaimed Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*? The stories of main character Piper Chapmans time in prison have been shown on screens across the country, and brought prison issues to the conscience of the general public. In fact, *The Washington Post* called it [the best TV show about prison ever made](#). Character complexities, a diverse cast, drama and humor, have all added to the success of the show, and exploited societys binge-watching tendencies. **Events and Inspirations** The real-life inspiration behind the show is [Piper Kerman](#). In 1993, after graduating from Smith College, Kerman became romantically involved with a woman, who was a drug runner for a West African kingpin. Piper herself never smuggled heroin, but she did help launder money. In 1998, years removed from her life of crime, customs agents came to Pipers New York City apartment with an [indictment for money laundering and drug trafficking](#). In 2004, after years of legal entanglements, and over a decade after her criminal involvement, Piper went to prison. The people Piper met along the way and the experiences she had became the inspiration for her memoir, *The New York Times* No. 1 bestseller, *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Womans Prison*. Through her wonderful book, and the subsequent TV show, Piper has captured the hearts and minds of the country, and introduced them to the world of prison, in a way that no one else has. **An Agent For Change** But Piper is not just an author, she is an activist. Currently, Piper serves on the board of the Womens Prison Association in New York City. The WPA recently introduced the program, [JusticeHome](#), which will allow some mothers to remain at home with their children, while serving their sentence, helping to keep families together. Piper frequently uses her [Twitter account to dialogue](#) on girls and womens rights, as well as mental health and mass incarceration issues. Piper even [testified in front of congress](#) on the negative impact of solitary confinement.

Get a [copy](#) of *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Womans Prison* and [watch](#) the show *Orange is the New Black*. For more information on prisoner rights, [visit our issue page](#).

Women in prison are much more likely than men to suffer from mental illness, which makes being put into solitary confinement much more likely, and much more damaging, Kerman testified. The U.S. Supreme Court and international human rights groups and medical professionals say solitary confinement is akin to physical and mental torture. **ACLU of Ohio in Action** The ACLU of Ohio is fighting for some of the same issues as Piper. We have released a [briefing](#) on solitary confinement and the mentally ill, published [letters to the editor](#). We opposed extreme conditions at Ohios super-max prison by [going to the media](#), and sending letters to the [Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, Ohio State Penitentiary](#), and a [key Ohio lawmaker](#) proposing much needed reforms. And now we are working together. **Join us Sunday, October 25 at 2 p.m. for the 2015 Ed Likover Memorial Lecture, with our special guest Piper Kerman.** Engage with Piper and hear her discuss her personal experiences, as well as relay stories and insights into the issues surrounding womens prisons, mass incarceration, and solitary confinement. The event is free and open to the public. Visit [our event page](#) for further details and to RSVP.

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