

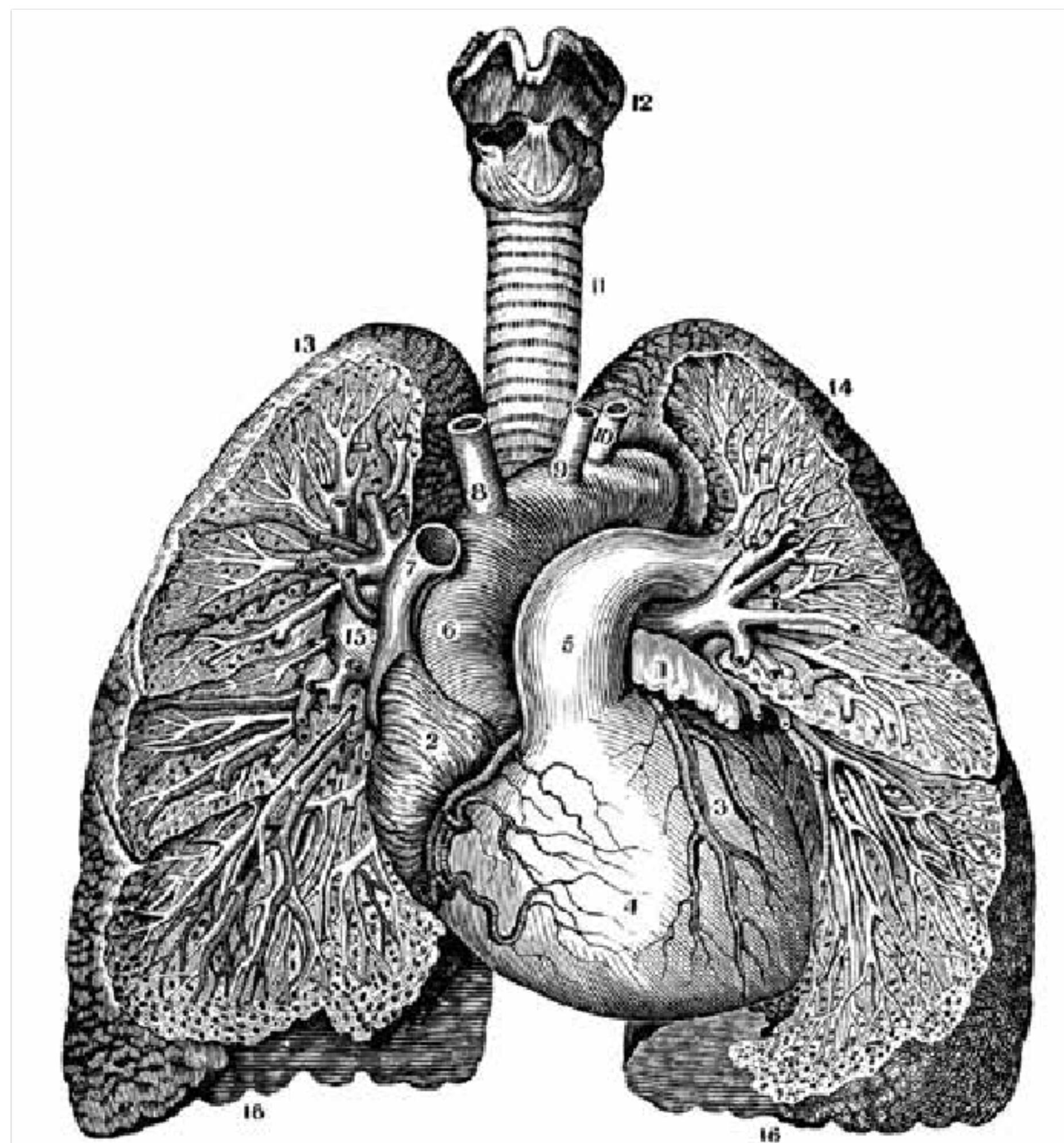
In addition to my mentoring job, I have also completed my HVAC diploma from Lincoln Tech, as well as finishing my paralegal degree from Blackstone. I'm hoping to get a chance to use these skills to help others when I get to work in the free world someday. In the meantime, I will be starting a new paralegal course, specializing in either criminal or immigration law in the next few months.

I am still doing yardwork and gardening on the compound, trying to create gardens that are both nice to look at but also important food sources for pollinators and birds. They really love zinnias and sunflowers! I am also practicing guitar and Hebrew. Both studies give me a lot of peace.

Though I have been redesignated since January 27, I am still waiting to be transferred to FMC Ft. Worth to receive my medical/surgical treatments to complete my physical transition. Waiting is making me anxious, as I am feeling my age these days. I try to stay focused on how I can help people here, helping folks write letters home or navigate the bureaucracy of prison life, though I am deeply troubled by the way the world suffers right now.

This country continues to slide towards a civil war, as irreconcilable visions of the social structure of our society contend for ascendancy. We face an imminent decline into fascism and only the concerted efforts of a principled movement will avert it. These same forces in conflict here are also in play internationally. It's hard to be very well informed from where I sit, so I don't feel very qualified to comment much on things outside the cage where I live now. But it is only because of my great faith in you, my free community of resistance, that I hold a candle of hope for our collective future. I know you are out there for us. And, please know that we are in here for you.

Together, we are strong.
Marius Mason
june11.org



MARIUS MASON'S 2023 JUNE 11TH STATEMENT

Dear Community, Family and Friends,

Thank you for the work you are doing to make the change we need to make into the world for our collective survival. Your dedication, support and love are a constant source of inspiration and motivation for me; and I am betting for other prisoners, as well.

This has been as eventful year and a half here at FCI Danbury. My transfer to a male facility had been viewed with great trepidation both by those supportive of trans people and by those who are adamantly opposed to our existence. I've had many memorable experiences; some humiliating, some merely annoying and awkward. But, also several that have been rewarding and deeply affirming.

There has definitely been a sense of working things out as we go—the way strip searches have been conducted has been all over the board. Sometimes they have been done by one male staff person, sometimes by one female staff person and several times by several male staff people. Strip searches occur before and after visits, before and after medical trips out, and also when going into the SHU (I had to go there before a medical procedure to fast).

I missed one that was conducted down at the Rec when a fight between inmates was suspected. For the most part, as embarrassing as strip searches can be (they definitely trigger my dysphoria), most staff have been professional about them. There have been some unprofessional remarks made on occasion, though, that have been dehumanizing and dispiriting, but actually have happened a lot less often than I was expecting. A nice surprise.

Mostly, I have been able to navigate what negativity and attempted exploitation there has been, taking it as the cost of admission to this new circus. I am determined to make progress on my transition, and have appreciated the opportunity to keep growing in my social transition and to make all the benchmarks necessary for satisfying the requirements that the BOP has set. For the most part, I keep it moving and accent the positive and eliminate the negative.

There has been a lot of positive movement in my transition to a predominantly cis-male-identified prison. While there are about six transwomen here that I have met, and one gender fluid person, I have yet to meet anyone else who identifies as a trans man at this prison. I did know about eight transmen at Carswell, where I was placed in Texas. Being in this population, there has been a lot of opportunity to discuss trans issues with people. They ask a lot of questions, some related to trans policy and some personal to my situation. Other questions make me laugh as they are blunt and impertinent, but honest curiosity is important to helping with trans visibility and acceptance, so I try not to be offended by some of the more off-putting questions I get asked many times (Will your penis work? Do you like men or women? Why don't they just trade parts with a trans woman?). I try to keep a sense of humor about it all, and focus on science and acceptance.

My responsibilities as a peer counselor in my unit, which is a mental health unit, keeps me busy and on call 24/7. I'm glad that such a community exists, as it is a necessary support and safe environment for people who might otherwise be persecuted and exploited because of their mental and physical disabilities. This idea is actually to create a small community based on mutual aid, which is intriguing especially as I know from experience with other radical communities in the free world how very, very challenging this kind of social network is to build. But despite the additional hurdles that people in my unit face, we often are able to be the help we need to be for each other. To me, this is proof of the concept of an egalitarian society. If we can do it under these conditions, even if only sometimes, then it is possible.