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CA Senate Bill 423: Origins, Organizing,

& the Fight for Firefighter Justice

by **Lawrence Cox**, *LSPC Regional* Advocacy and Organizing Manager

I was born in Oakland, California, into a world where stability was elusive and the foster-care docket turned faster than any child could comprehend. I never learned permanence; I learned placement. By age seven, I was a ward of Alameda County, rotating through foster homes and group facilities where the idea of permanence was more myth than promise. By twelve, I had cycled through six placements, a group home, and finally landed in kinship care. These early experiences taught me two enduring lessons: that systems can fail people, and that people, when organized, can transform those systems.

My adolescence unfolded in a neighborhood economy fueled by substances and survival. In my early twenties, I was sentenced to 23 years inside California's prison system. But even behind bars, transformation was possible. It was there I encountered incarcerated firefighters: individuals who fought wildfires for \$2 to \$5 a day, risking their lives without receiving recognition, credentials, or opportunity upon release. These were not just workers; they were heroes denied dignity.

Seventeen years in the prisons of California perfected my education in institutional neglect and survival. Although I never wielded a Pulaski along the fireline, I stood next to men who did—they rose from prison fire camps in the morning to carve containment lines only to return in the evening to a system in denial of the value they brought. I advocated for court filings, organized literacy circles, created grievance forms, and rallied entire yards

Freedom for Few: Immigration & "Independence" in America by Uma Nagarajan-Swenson, AOUON

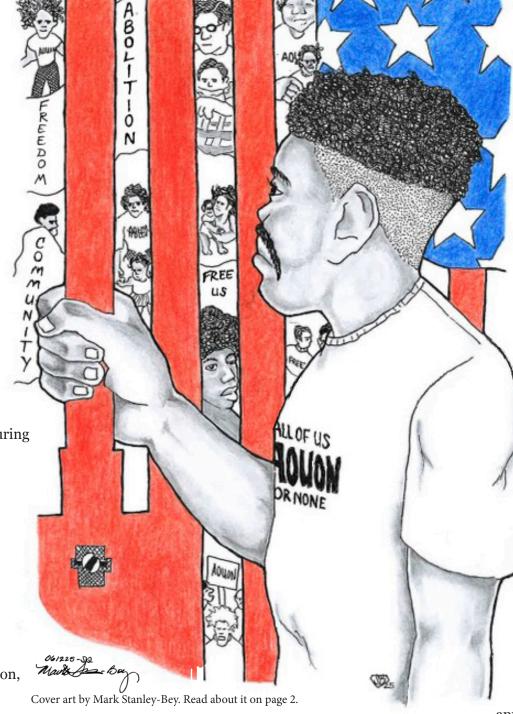
Newspaper Editor

n July 4 every year, millions of people across America celebrate the nation's independence. The contradictions of this day to those denied full rights were famously articulated by Frederick Douglass in his 1852 speech addressing the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society: "Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn." Över 170 years later, his points are worryingly pertinent. On "Independence" day, President Donald Trump signed into law the ineptlynamed "Big Beautiful Bill," which is set to invest \$100 billion into immigration enforcement, detention, and border patrol, funded by massive cuts to healthcare, food stamps, and social security benefits to invest. As the U.S. federal government throws money at its deadly deportation

apparatus, criminalizing the very act of seeking a safe home in a new country. This is, unfortunately, a completely logical move from the death ine known as the United States whose historical record of enslavement, genocide, and mass incarceration has enabled a framework in which entire communities are rendered "disposable" and treated as slaves.

American racial capitalism is deeply entrenched within a framework that deems entire communities and

Continued on page 6



against unjustified policies, all in the face of correctional staff retaliation. This practice perfected in me procedural endurance that drives my advocacy to this day, especially in the pursuit of Senate Bill 423 (SB 423).

Walking Free, Fighting Back

Thirty months ago, I reentered society with a single mandate: dismantle the systems that perpetuate cycles of marginalization and structural exclusion. Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and All of Us or Continued on page 3

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Winner:

All of Us or

None

Jessie Milo



Our All of Us or None newspaper serves to link those of us who have been locked up, those who are locked up, as well as our families and allies in this struggle.

We want to ensure that the voices of our people inside are heard and that inside artists are recognized for their contributions to this movement. Your stories matter!



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SELF-DETERMINATION PLEDGE

As members of All of Us or None, we pledge to:

Demand the right to speak in our own voices;

Treat each other with respect and not allow differences to divide us;

Accept responsibility for any acts that may have caused harm to our families, our communities or ourselves

Fight all forms of discrimination

Help build the economic stability of formerly-incarcerated people

Claim and take care of our own children and our families

Support community struggles to stop using prisons as the answer to social problems

Play an active role in making our communities safe for everyone.

AOUON ART COMPETITION

We invited AOUON members to create art for the t-shirt of our national convening. The winning design was created by Jessie Milo, an AOUON member and incarcerated artist. We had amazing submissions, and we thank you all from the bottom of our heart for all of the time and care you put into your designs.





Finalist: Freedom/Abolition Angel Garza

About the Cover:

artwork by Mark Stanley-Bey

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	STAN-BEY

Letter to the Editor

from **Deshon AKA Jeruz** April 15, 2025

I've always been a thinker, although I was on some full fledge foolishness. The straw that broke the camel's back for me was when us (the "Blacks) and the other races had a meeting to see what days we would have the basketball court to play basketball, and what days "they" would get it to play hand ball, and I was mind blown. Because here we are ready to go to war with one another & risk our precious lives over something Prison officials designed it that way for, but we're taking cold showers, getting fed less than kids meals, receiving inadequate medical care, and not being afforded sufficient programs, now that sounds like something to politic about.

My point being the so-called powers to be/shot callers are as blind as the sheep that they lead to the slaughterhouse. It's all a facade! I hate that it took me forty years to see things for what they are and not what they appear to be.

I went through a vicious paradigm shift, my thinking & focus is not on what another man's faults are, what his business is, or what his past consists of, I'm too focused on self and that's the problem with eighty five percent of the human population, their lives are in shambles but yet they worried about your shortcomings. It's soo much more to life! I'm currently penning a guide to battling depression, and working on myself to be a success story for anyone who was a victim of this new aged slave trade they call "prison."

I'm a father of two, a boy and a girl...I am an active father from afar, I aim to enlighten them through every letter & phone call, constantly introducing new ideas, planting seeds of life within their fertile young minds and allow it to resonate on their subconscious minds.

Wa Alaykum As Salam. With honor and Loyalty, Deshon AKA Jeruz July 2025 AOUON NEWSPAPER | 3

SB 423 continued from page 1

None became the institutional backbone for

Senate Bill 423: Incarcerated

Authored by Smallwood-Cuevas

Firefighters Workforce Development

This bill would require the CDCR and the office of

the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges

to expand access to community college courses that

lead to degrees and certificates in specified subjects

including fire science for individuals serving in Cali-

fornia Conservation Corps handcrews or institution-

al firehouses. Existing law establishes in the Natural

Resources Agency the Department of Forestry and

Fire Protection, and requires the department to be re-

sponsible fire protection and prevention. The depart-

ment, CCC, and CDCR would operate an enhanced

firefighter training and certification program at the

Ventura Training Center at a facility in the northern

this personal mission. After completing the Elder Ronald Freeman Policy Fellowship, I became a regional advocacy and organizing associate, overseeing eight statewide chapters of All of Us or None.

This multifaceted advocacy, rooted in lived experience and carried out through legislative strategy,

culminated in my co-leading campaigns to erase involuntary servitude from our state constitution and in crafting policy that would finally translate incarcerated labor into recognized, compensated, and transformative career pathways. In these efforts, no issue called louder than the inequities surrounding incarcerated firefighters.

region of the state.

The Incarcerated Firefighters Workforce Coalition, which I helped found, emerged from the necessity to legitimize lived expertise. This legislation proposed to simultaneously address three critical crises:

Workforce Shortfalls & Overtime Costs: California has over 3,127 wildland firefighting positions available, and they use \$124 million in annual CAL FIRE overtime.

Recidivism & Public Safety: More than 1,000 camp-trained inmates exit custody each year with no formal certification, going back to communities without marketable job opportunities.

Regional Inequity: The northern counties' interiors have vacancy rates in excess of 24%, and areas operating at full capacity receive unequal investment.

Our original bill proposed robust, databacked measures: an Office of the State Fire

backed measures: an Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM)-approved curriculum in every prison firehouse, a five percent civil service hiring preference, and a Community Reinvestment Fund to redirect \$34 million in verified savings toward housing, apprenticeships, and mental-health services.

Unfortunately, as of May 24, 2025, legislative editing has watered down SB 423 to the bare essentials. While the ever-critical portable expansion of the education, training and certification remains part of the package, the previously universal statewide initiative has been aggressively rewritten to just two standalone entities: a Ventura-only "enhanced training center" and a discretionary five-year hand crew pilot in the County of Los Angeles. Vital provisions like civil service preference points, statewide training mandates, and the Community Reinvestment Fund have been removed.

In Senate committees, where the bill was hailed as bipartisan, its strongest provisions were gutted or substituted with weak replacements. Senate Appropriations saw uncontested language magically modified. Even moves to ensure transparency and to ground the pilot program in proven cost savings were voted down. In quietly giving into the unions' opposition, which effectively turned over discretionary control to L.A. Fire Chiefs in the lowest vacancy areas, they have forsaken Northern California, the most needy region.

We countered this backroom politicking with

strong evidence:

Currently, \$29.7

million is spent in overtime costs in Northern Interior California—triple Ventura's.
For each vacant engine position, the overtime costs exceed the hypothetical \$11,000

per-trainee cost.
This bill would result
in an estimated \$19
million in future
recidivism savings by
duplicating Ventura's
supports throughout
the state.

Despite this, legislative consultants warned

that restoring the North would require resubmission to the Senate.

Fighting for the Program We Need

From the outset, our coalition rooted SB 423 in the principle of geographic equity. The promise of certified training, organized reentry, and post-release hand-crew employment cannot be doled out selectively. It must be statewide, and it must be to California's most under-resourced and fire-exposed areas. Counties like Shasta, Lassen, and Susanville experience both the sharpest shortages of staff and the highest risk of wildfires, with vacancy rates routinely over ten percent and with "Very High" firehazard severity rankings the default. Any meaningful reforms to public safety must understand that necessity is not tied to ZIP code— it is tied to exposure, vacancy, and capacity.

To address these disparities, we authored amendments to have the concurrent initiation of a northern "enhanced training center" in conjunction with Ventura. Eligibility for hand-crew pilots is not tied to local politics, but to objective standards wildland staffing shortages and Cal FIRE hazard zone assignments. To guarantee fiscal soundness, we created cost tables and analyses proving the possibility of North-South dual launch: average per-trainee costs were approximately \$11,000 per region, particularly where existing infrastructure heavily in the form of state prison fire camps—was utilized. The language authored in the bill to delay implementation until there was a fiscal budget or stand-alone policy to justify fiscal appropriation amplified this. The math was irrefutable: proportionate distribution would cost no more.

But even in the absence of fiscal friction, political pressure quietly constricted the geographical impact of the bill. The Ventura and Los Angeles carve-outs were no accident: they were strategic, negotiated in back rooms by players afraid of disrupting the workforce and reshuffling the budget. Committee aides acknowledged, in the shadows, that our Northern language was budgetarily neutral, but warned that re-insertion would result in a legislative "jailbreak"— returning the bill to the Senate, where opposition forces would have the opportunity to organize to kill the proposal in its entirety.

This logic laid bare the calculus: better to pass a partial, politically safe bill than risk an equitable one. Our efforts for parity were ignored. The final engrossed version of SB 423 at the time I write this failed to include even a discretionary pilot in the north. No data triggers. No reporting requirements. No accountability for regional imbalance.

What committee voted down was more than just language: it was a lifeline to counties routinely left behind in both disaster aid and workforce preparation. This deliberate exclusion, even by the terms of budgetary neutrality, is now cited by the coalition as a paradigm on how gatekeeping and regional favoritism makes rehab and public-safety equitability obsolete. It drives home the point that the life and labor of jail inmates in Northern California is politically disposable, even as communities around them burn and job opportunities disappear. This is also a glaring violation of legislative & democratic integrity. Our state cannot claim to create a 21st-century wildfire workforce while disqualifying the very regions at the forefront of climate catastrophe. If SB 423 is to realize its full promise, this carve-out needs to be fixed— not in theory, not in future budget periods, but in statute. Until that time, the regional omissions in the bill will remain testimony to the fact that equity denied in language is equity denied in law.

As SB 423 moves forward in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, its disfiguration reveals the cracks of political power. Proposals based on evidence were dismissed. Provisions from non controversies were modified. Shared language was quietly removed. These moves betoken strategic roadblocking or bureaucratic misalignment. Left behind is a watered-down version of legislation once containing transformative justice and equity. This is more than just amendments; this is the moral understanding between the government and its most excluded constituents. Favouring financial restraint over the safekeeping of the general public and rehabilitation institutionalizes gatekeeping where doors ought to be open.

This silent erosion converts a promising policy into a discretionary experiment—all predisposed to early rescission, blurry implementation, and political desertion. Our ongoing dilemma is to re-establish those guardrails to save public investment and the men and women who earned this moment.

Others call for compromise, but I see evidence of why this battle is worth fighting. California continues to contract its wildfire defense to prisoners earning \$2 per day (although that has the potential to change due to another LSPC co-sponsored bill by Assemblymember Bryan, AB 247(2025)). Those same workers continue to emerge from prison with no credentials, no preference in hiring, and no way to continue the job they are an expert at. And California continues to spend \$124 million on unnecessary overtime. My life demonstrates that when systems focus on investment over punishment, transformation is not just possible-it is inevitable. SB 423 remains that opportunity. So I will keep drafting amendments, organizing coalitions, having 11 PM calls, sending 2 AM emails, and walking Capitol corridors late into the night. Because wildfires do not ask whether a rope-rescue was learned in Susanville or Ventura— and courage deserves more than a "may." I

used to be the shuffled child in placement. I was the incarcerated individual struggling to be treated with respect. I am now the lobbyist who will not permit the vagueness of the legislation to diffuse the courage. SB 423 continues to promise justice— it just has to have the words and the areas hastily excised reinserted.

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California on Lockdown: Know Your Rights

On June 12, CDCR placed all Level III and Level IV facilities on an indefinite lockdown due to an alleged increase in "violence, overdoses, and the discovery of contraband." This affects 23 facilities and 34,000 incarcerated people. The lockdown effectively restricts internal movement (including to showers and dining halls), cuts off in-person and virtual visitation, prevents access to tablets and communications, and ceases canteen operations. CDCR also ceased all educational, rehabilitative, and recreational programming in impacted facilities. The California Public Defender's Association (CPDA) characterized CDCR's policy as "a blanket deprivation of fundamental rights and a human rights crisis." This lockdown resulted in a hunger strike at Salinas Valley State Prison (see page 5). The lockdowns have been lifted, but we wanted to share information + resources for future reference.

Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) definition of "lockdown"?

The restriction of all incarcerated persons to their cells/dormitory beds encompassing no less than a Facility.1 15 C.C.R. §3000.

How is this different from CDCR's definition of a "modified program"?

CDCR uses the term "modified program" to describe a restriction that applies only to some activities or a subset of the facility's population, and lasts longer than 24 hrs. 15 C.C.R. §3000.

What are some of CDCR's record-keeping and oversight obligations when it places a Facility on Lockdown or extensive modified programming?

Incident reports for any such event are promptly required. §3382. Approval from the Secretary or designee is required for lockdowns or extensive modified programming lasting for longer than 24 hrs or after 72 hrs for less extensive modified program. §3383(c).

What activities are permitted to be suspended during these events?

In states of emergency, of any duration, institution heads are only allowed to suspend nonessential services. 15 C.C.R. §3383(a) & (d). Outdoor exercise is required if a lockdown exceeds fourteen days. Mitchell v. Cate, U.S. Dist. E.D. Cal 2:08-CV-01196-TLN-EFB; MacKay, Heather & the Prison Law Office, The California Prison and Parole Law Handbook (2019), 90.

What are my rights to challenge a lockdown in California?

The right to submit a grievance and appeal remains. §3481. If the Office of Grievances fails to meet its response deadline, the administrative remedy process is exhausted by time expiration. §3483; CA Code Civ. Pro. §1086. If you miss an administrative deadline for filing a grievance or appeal due to lockdown restrictions, despite your good faith efforts to meet them, there may be good cause for excusing that, but you should still try to meet statutory deadlines. Civ. Pro. §312; §910. If the government prevents that, you

What is the California Department of can argue that equitable doctrines of tolling and estoppel apply so as to make your claim timely. Hopkins v. Kedzierski, 225 Cal.App.4th 736 (2014). The right to petition a state court for a writ of habeas corpus, on the grounds of unlawful conditions of confinement, also remains during a lockdown. Expedited petitions are available for good cause. CA Rules of Court 4.551(i).

Can I go to federal court?

Before a lawsuit to vindicate federal rights can be brought in federal court, administrative remedies must be exhausted. 42 U.S.C. 1997e(a); Woodford v. Ngo, 548 U.S. 81 (2006). The burden of proving non-exhaustion rests with the government, which has to show that a remedy remains "available." Fordley v. Lizarraga, 8 F.4th 344 (9th Cir. 2021); Brown v. Valoff, 422 F.3d 926, 935 (9th Cir. 2005) ("a prisoner need not press on to exhaust further levels of review once he has [...] been reliably informed by an administrator that no remedies are available"). unreasonably prolonged prevention of grievance submission could mean that administrative remedies ceased to be available, and hence exhaustion would be satisfied; or that a failure to meet ordinary deadlines would be excusable.

Does the U.S. Constitution's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment apply in these circumstances?

Even during lockdown, conditions in prison must meet the requirement of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments, prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment. Deliberate indifference to life and health is grounds for a constitutional challenge; but see MacKay, Handbook, supra. at 89 (citing case authorities suggesting that initial emergency measures to gain security in a riot or similar conditions will be upheld if they meet the standard of not being "malicious and sadistic" because prison officials are given "reasonable leeway" to maintain security in an emergency).

Restrictions on civil rights generally must meet the so-called Turner test: Turney v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 89 (1987), whereby measures reasonably related to legitimate "penological"

interests, such as security, are upheld. Of particular relevance to lockdown policy are that the restriction should bear a rational connection that is not arbitrary or irrational, and that it not be an "exaggerated response." Ibid. at 89-90. Accordingly, unfettered discretion to arbitrarily impose lockdowns, and to impose restrictions on activities that pose no real security threat or serve no legitimate purpose, would fail the test.

there additional rights under California law I should be aware of?

California statutes provide certain express protections of rights of persons incarcerated in prisons that may be relevant in a lockdown or modified programming event. For example:

Confidential correspondence may only be inspected to detect contraband, and prison authorities cannot use the pretext of a lockdown to conduct surveillance of attorney-client privileged communications or to bar access to civil courts. CA Penal Code §2601(b) & (d).

You retain your right to ownership of personal property under lockdown conditions, restrictions on possession during a lockdown do not extinguish the property right. PC §2601(a) & (c)(2)(B); §2085.

Free phone calls between persons incarcerated in prison and others are mandated by Penal Code §2084.5. Although "operational discretion" is accorded to CDCR, the discretion is for the purpose of preventing interference with "necessary programming." §2084.5(a). Therefore, only if restrictions are "necessary" to prevent such interference are lockdown restrictions permitted statute to affect telecommunications. A suspension of calls to the outside world that did not meet this necessity requirement, but was instead purely vindictive or arbitrarily coercive, would be unlvawful.

Prepared by Eric C. Sapp, Staff Attorney, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

Disclaimer: This informational flyer is not intended as legal advice and is not a substitute for speaking with an attorney. This communication does not constitute an offer or acceptance to provide legal representation to its bearer or recipients.

The Real Reasons Behind CDCR's Reported Increase in Violence

Adapted from Youtube video by Joshua Mason, Homie Hangout

As a lot of you heard, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) decided on June 12 to slam all level 3 and 4 yards in the state because of increased violence. I thought it was a ridiculous move: it's not going to do anything to stop the violence. And the core of what we're getting at here, is taking people's visits and taking people's access to communicate with their loved ones.

Let's not forget that the chaos of the Sensitive Needs Yard (SNY) is entirely a creation of CDCR, who designed, built, and filled the SNY vards and made them incredibly dangerous. These are where most of CDCR's violence is coming from, but the yards getting locked down are essentially all the GP yards in California. I can think of four or five people that have been killed just last year for being put on yards where

they weren't supposed to be. And they told the staff they couldn't be there, and staff said it was out of their hands. That blood is on CDCR's hands.

It's particularly cruel to do this lockdown when Father's Day is right around the corner. There are a lot of guys in prison who are fathers, and the only time they see their kids during the year is Father's Day. CDCR says that having relationships with your family and soscial relationships is all part of the rehabilitation process: that's the point of the tablets. So they say this but then kills visits and tablets before Father's Day, when you have a lot of fathers incarcerated. So now you can't even talk to your kid, email them, have a video chat. That causes so much harm to families. It's not the kid's fault that their dad's in prison, it's not the kid's fault that there's all this violence in prison. They just want to talk to their dad. CDCR is saying, "No."

CDCR says the other part of the California model is "Hey, we're not going to do these blanket moves, we're not going to punish the many for the actions of the few." What is this? This is exactly that, and in a particularly cruel way. It's not the family's fault, and for the most part it's not the fault of more than the 90% of people that are on those yards who are locked down. There's no rational reason for it, except that CDCR wants more violence and aggression.

As I and others that have done time in California prison have said, violence is the language of prison. And we can wish it was different, but it's a fact. Thankfully, due to the Agreement to End Hostilities, there's a lot less violence between groups and more communication. Salute to the guys in Salinas Valley who have decided to take the hunger strike route instead of the take-your-head-off route. That's pretty responsible communication. But how is CDCR going to respond?

AOUON NEWSPAPER | 5 July 2025

A Brief History of Hunger Strikes

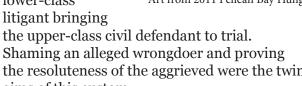
by Eric Sapp, LSPC Staff Attorney

If the traditional struggle concerning nutrition in carceral facilities is that of getting enough food of decent quality, and adequate hydration, the hunger strike inverts the situation. The hunger striker refuses the state's regimen as an act of noncooperation, to which protest the authorities react by seeking to reimpose order and discipline. When incarcerated activists for women's suffrage went on hunger strike in the British isles in the half decade before WWI, the British state imposed force feeding on at least 165 suffragists. Mary Richardson described physical and psychological torture, to which forcible feeding through the nose or mouth amounted, as simultaneously "brutal" and "subtle." The dialectic of hunger strike and state response of force feeding was repeated in the Irish national liberation struggle in the ensuing years, with Easter Rising participant Thomas Ashe going on hunger strike in 1917 and dying from complications probably due to force feeding. In 1920, mass hunger strikes among Irish political prisoners resulted in several deaths but also secured releases. Though voluntary fasts for religious or other purposes have existed in various cultural traditions for millennia, it is in the modern age that the confluence of mass media and professionalized disciplinary institutions sustained conditions for hunger striking to become a recognizable technique of resistance.

Elsewhere in the British empire, Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi's hunger strikes, as has been observed, were immediately addressed not to the colonial authorities but to his comrades in the Indian decolonial movement, typically urging nonviolence and unity as against violent uprising and religious disunity. He described fasting as a "last resort

in the place of the sword—his or other's" when there is "no other remedy left" for a "wrong done by society." Rooted in the concept ahimsa, non-violence, the fast allows for "reclamation of the human mind" in a "process of selfpurification" that "quicken[s] conscience." Gandhi stressed hunger striking's moral purity, even against critics who called the technique "coercive."

Gandhi's invocation of pursuing a "remedy" for a wrong suggests a sort of notion of exhaustion of moral remedies, which resonates with an early Irish history of fasting as a prerequisite to litigation. The practice of troscud, or fasting during daylight hours at the threshold of a noble's home, was performed prior to a lower-class



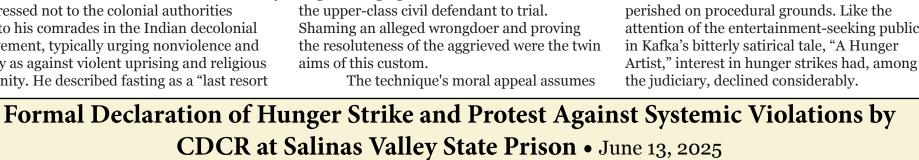
that a conflict remains within bounds whereby adversaries retain a sense of social relatedness. That is not always the case. Whereas in the 2010s, hunger striking by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centers could be counted on to have a symbolic effect on a global public, today, when the Israeli state openly practices forced starvation in the blockade and assault on Gaza, the call of a hunger strike there would be

inaudible amidst the din of bombs.

The American empire, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, witnessed sporadic hunger strikes from sea to shining

sea. In the concentration camp at Guantánamo Bay, the U.S. military lawlessly force fed hunger striking detainees granted neither ordinary criminal-legal process nor prisonerof-war status under international law, in the name of waging a "war on terror." At Pelican Bay, the state of California, more heedful of legality, negotiated with class members in the Ashker case who challenged prolonged and indefinite solitary confinement in state prisons. A success in large part due to hunger strikes, the case ultimately

Art from 2011 Pelican Bay Hunger Strikes, Artist Unknown perished on procedural grounds. Like the attention of the entertainment-seeking public in Kafka's bitterly satirical tale, "A Hunger



We, the incarcerated individuals housed in Salinas Valley State Prison, formally declare the beginning of a peaceful hunger strike, effective June 13, 2025. This action arises in response to persistent and unlawful practices by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, including the use of indiscriminate lockdowns, deprivation of rehabilitative and constitutional rights, and collective punishment of the incarcerated population.

This protest is not rooted in defiance, but in our firm demand that CDCR adhere to its obligations under the U.S. constitution, CA Penal Code, and Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations.

I. Legal and Factual Basis for Protests A. Prolonged and Arbitrary Lockdowns CDCR continues to impose indiscriminate, prolonged lockdowns on entire yard populations in response to isolated incidents directly stemming from the decisions of CDCR and the actions of its employees or vague reports of potential violence. These lockdowns confine individuals to their cells for excessive periods without any individualized threat assessment or due process in violation of basic procedural fairness, and contravene the Eighth Amendment, which prohibits cruel and unusual punishment as recognized in Madrid V. Gomez, and violate CDCR's own operational guidelines by extending beyond reasonable time frames without adequate justification or oversight. These collective actions punish all regardless of individual conduct, and erode trust in institutional fairness and rehabilitation.

B. Suspension of Visitation Rights

CDCR has suspended all in-person visitation for levels 3 and 4 prisons, a clear violation of Title 15, which guarantees a minimum of two days of visiting per week, one of which shall be on a Saturday or Sunday. Visiting shall be for a minimum of eight hours per day. The blanket cancellation without individualized assessment compelling penological justification undermines family integrity and violates our right to maintain crucial community and legal connections. This also contradicts U.S. Supreme Court precedent in Overton v. Bazzetta, which emphasized that visitation can only be limited based on legitimate and individualized safety concerns.

C. Revocation of Phone & Canteen Access

The shutdown of phone access and canteen services during these lockdowns is particularly egregious. These actions: cut off communication with family and legal representatives, create food insecurity by removing access to essential supplemental nutrition, and are not reasonably related to institutional safety. These conditions lack any clear nexus to legitimate security concerns and appear designed to exert pressure through deprivation— a form of retaliatory punishment forbidden by law (see Rhodes v. Chapman).

Additionally, Title 15 mandates: inmates shall be permitted to shop at the canteen at least once per month, provided they have sufficient funds and privileged group status permitting such activity. CDCR's failure to meet this obligation further compounds the harm caused by these

unnecessary restrictions.

II. Objectives of the Hunger Strike

Our protest is intended to secure compliance with existing legal and constitutional rights, not to create unrest. We respectfully demand the following:

- 1. Immediate end of collective punishment and indiscriminate lockdowns.
- 2. Restoration of visitation in accordance with Title 15.
- 3. Reinstatement of phone access during any security evaluations, unless specific restrictions are applied based on individual conduct.
- 4. Immediate operation and canteen services as required by Title 15.
- 5. Adherence to due process and humane treatment standards as guaranteed by the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments.

III. Call to Oversight and Action

We call on the following parties to review and act upon these ongoing rights violations: legal advocates and civil rights attorneys, oversight entities, members of the California Legislature, journalists, prison rights organizations, and the concerned public. We urge these bodies to intervene, investigate CDCR's repeated failure to follow its own regulations and constitutional obligations, and support the restoration of humane and lawful conditions within the California prison system.

Respectfully,

on behalf of the Incarcerated Population of Salinas Valley State Prison

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The Curious Case of Impending Arbitrary Classification-Based Moves at CCWF

by **Alissa Moore**, LSPC Re-Entry Coordinator

I've been getting an increasing number of calls regarding classification levels and the rumored impending moves to segregate incarcerated people in CCWF based on their classification level. What I've heard is that each yard will be assigned a level and that individuals will be moved to the corresponding yard based on their classification score as a level one, two, three or four. To me, this reeks of a similar late 1990s attempt at Valley State Prison gor Women to segregate all close custodies on one yard (Unit Bravo 2) based on their close custody status: Close A's, Close B's and C/C's. I was there, and it was a complete disaster and disservice to staff and incarcerated folks alike.

I was young at the time and easily alarmed by any new changes or what could be perceived as increased restrictions. We reacted strongly and kicked it all off with a sitout, in an attempt to protest and possibly slow or stop the moves. It was also yet another huge fail and did our plight no good. Administration sent out memos and made visits attempting to appease and inform the population. These were also a failure. So, with CDCR being the beast it is, all of us were failing, and none of us were winning. The moves ensued.

As you may know, if you're designated as a "close" status you are usually serving a longer sentence. In the '90s, there really weren't many options for rehabilitation. In the midto late-1990s, with the added pressure and alarming inflow of more women faster with longer sentences for the same, if not similar or lesser crimes, as California slowly started to shift its aim and hunted women of color. The population as a whole was a bit more rowdy and restless, having very few productive outlets with which to rehabilitate ourselves. Overall, there was a sharp increase in altercations between incarcerated folks and incarcerated folks and staff, and more instances of use of force, 114-Ds and longer and longer periods of lockdown hell. At the time I didn't mind being C/C status because it wasn't like anyone else on our unit was getting out more than the C/C's anyway.

As for these impending moves at CCWF, I can't say whether or not they will happen, but

there are several factors at play today that will help the population cope with changes in a way that is conducive to their rehabilitation journey. Today, there are so many more outlets to process the fear that comes along with the effects these changes will have on the incarcerated. Also, the CCPOA will undoubtedly create a stink about the fact that staff assigned to the level 3 and 4 yards have a much higher probability of dealing with real or perceived violence because they are dealing with a significantly increased concentration of high level offenders. These COs assigned to Level 3 and 4 yards will have increased stress that their counterparts assigned to Level 1 and 2 will not, and they'll do so for not a single penny more. It's rarely seen, but the assumed position the CCPOA will take may be the biggest hope affected populations have in seeking reprieve from these arbitrary senseless moves. Because, let's get real, what does a classification score mean in the women's carceral system anyway? Levels 1-4 have been housed side by side in women's prisons since as far back as this oldtimer can remember. I've seen level ones that are a hell of a lot scarier than level fours, and level fours who certainly didn't live up to their classification score or reputation. So if you want my advice, sit tight, wait it out and see how it all plays out before you waste a second fearing the unknown consequences of these senseless

Independence Day continued from page 1

populations unworthy of aid, support, or even life in America. Sociologist Henry Giroux refers to this as a politics of disposability, "one in which entire populations are now considered disposable, an unnecessary burden on state coffers, and consigned to fend for themselves" (Giroux 2006). This is the logic on which America is founded: the country was built by the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendents, and centuries of genocide and forced removal of Indigenous people.

The profit motive underlying the American disposability framework is seen clearly in the 1808 U.S. ban on "importing" enslaved people. The economic benefits of chattel slavery and its accompanying human trafficking were much too profitable to consider abolition: chattel slavery remained Map tracking locations of US in place for over half

a century following this legislation. In passing this ban, the slave trade's profits were fully domesticized. No money made would leave American land or American hands, and one did not need to own a plantation to profit from the institution of slavery. Rather, the domestic trafficking of people was a moneymaker in itself to those privileged enough to deal in the despicable business of human lives. Why import goods when you could make them on American shores?

Today, America has shifted its gaze from import to export: those viewed as disposable and vulnerable are being sent away. America has long demonstrated that any community or demographic outsider to the ruling class is dispensable in service of the state's sinister agenda, and right now, the population so deemed is immigrants. Those lured by the promises of the "American Dream" (as my own family was) who have not dedicated their lives to the interests of the corporate billionaires running the country are treated as a burden to the state, and therefore as a burden to "real" Americans. From Haitian asylumseekers whose legal statuses have been stripped to lawful permanent residents detained in functional concentration camps or deported to torture centers overseas, the federal administration's rhetoric is clear: immigrants are inherently and categorically "criminal," and to America, state-ascribed criminality is enough to deny someone of their rights.

America's democratic dream is crumbling under the weight of corporations, billionaires, and centuries of deeply entrenched imperialist racial capitalism. Rather than acknowledge the systems keeping us down and padding the pockets of the power elite, the government has crafted and peddled the narrative that immigrants are to blame: those who are sending money home rather than spending it in America; those whose very existence here is seen as a crime; those whose experiences in their home countries

undermine the narratives fed to us about the "freedom" our nation spreads worldwide. It follows, then, that America's answer to rising poverty and inflation, housing crises, crushingly inaccessible healthcare, detention centers and all other problems of June 14, 2025. and total persons detained there to slash spending on Created by Dr. AJ Kim & Unauthorized City Project. social services and

drastically increase ICE's funding to deport any individuals deemed un-American.

We see this in today's prison system, described by Dr. Angela Davis as "a black hole into which the detritus of contemporary capitalism is deposited" (Davis 2003, 16). Our country's prisons, and any carceral facility, have been created as a catch-all solution to its many unaddressed problems. The government never has enough money for schools, food, or housing, but there's always more to be spent on prisons, police, the military, and now ICE. The deep tie between America's detention, deportation, and incarceration systems have been in the spotlight recently with the rapid, unfettered expansion of ICE. In a mere 8-day turnaround, the state has built "Alligator Alcatraz," a functional concentration camp masquerading as an immigration detention center. In the facility, ICE indiscriminately and indefinitely detains immigrants in chain-link metal cages within a tent surrounded by swamps. As soon as it was open, people detained inside were reporting receiving just one maggotinfested meal a day, no access to phone calls or legal representation, and no access to medication. All of this is with no semblance of due process: masked ICE agents are taking people from

their homes or work, shackling them,

and detaining them with no reprieve in sight. ICE is America's Gestapo. They are the secret police enforcing policies of dehumanization and mass death, terrorizing our most vulnerable people and communities to keep everyone down.

The current administration recently began deporting people to third-party countries. Over half of all people deported in March were sent to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, just three of many nations strong-armed into accepting immigrants via threats of tariffs and sanctions. Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act, falsely claiming "invasion" to justify sending hundreds of immigrants to El Salvador's Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo (CECOT), a mega-prison described as a "tropical gulag" from which detainees have never been released. People incarcerated at CECOT have no visitation or mail, no books except for bibles, and no access to the outdoors. The very design of CECOT is cruel and torturous, and Trump's enthusiastic decision to send immigrants there, as well as to "Alligator Alcatraz" and any of the other detention centers in the U.S. and in "third-party" countries, emphasizes their view that removal is not enough: immigration warrants punishment.

It's hard to imagine a better future when our conditions feel bleaker by the day. But Mariame Kaba reminds us that hope is a discipline that we must practice every day, and the seeds of liberation are being planted. Across the US, direct actions against ICE raids have led to releases and halts of detentions and deportations. People incarcerated in Salinas Valley State Prison are reclaiming autonomy and pushed for a lifted lockdown with a hunger strike. It's not too late: it's time to show up for one another and build a better world.



Countries that have received detained migrants as of July 11, 2025. Data from Council on Foreign Relations, map created by Jane Park + Hermeline Berteloot.

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In Loving Memory of Elias Estephan Mayeda

by Sarah Jane Mayeda, LSPC Office



On May 23, my beloved brother Elias Estephan Mayeda, only 23 years old, was tragically taken from us in a car accident. My family is heartbroken and still trying to make sense of this unimaginable loss.

Elias had a heart that touched everyone who knew him. He was the kind of person who would drop everything to help someone else—always going the extra mile with a smile on his face. Whether you were family, a lifelong friend, or someone he just met, he made you feel seen, heard, and loved.

Elias grew up system-impacted, and he was an example of how love can break cycles of incarceration that haunts generations to come. The love he embodied is what made him open to another life that we had yet to see possible in those before us. He was taken from this world too soon, but we will continue to honor his memory in our work everyday. This is the eulogy I gave at his funeral.

This all feels very surreal and it has been difficult to craft something that can capture Elias' essence and all that we have lost. Most of what comes to mind when I want to speak about my brother seems movie-like or cliche, but I think that's fitting for him. Elias has always had movie-like main character energy. And though I hate the movie right now, seeing you all here today is a testament to that energy he had. He captured many of our hearts through his charismatic personality and evergrowing spirit.

He literally began his journey in life by being born an heir to a family full of deep rooted love. He entered this world an only child and swiftly became THE baby of his family. Baby baby, little baby, the baby. His list of nicknames can go for a while, but Baby is what I knew him as best.

Like most movie stars and main characters, Baby was quickly faced with adversity and plot twists. In his case, he got an evil twin sister about 9 years into his story. When we first became siblings, I always made sure to remind him I was 6 months older. As we both grew up I got a bit more honest—we're more like 5 months apart. None of this really mattered though, because I could never escape the fact that Elias has always been physically bigger than me. He was, as we would say, my big little brother.

Most times, he WAS my big brother. And though I gave him a run for his money being the spoiled one in our family, he always let me have it. He would tell me I was spoiled as he would do me the ultimate sibling favor of serving me water or grabbing the thing I was actually closest to.

That's because more than anything, my brother was kind. I know that's what made him so popular in school. So popular that even when I attended a separate high school across town, I could not escape his name. I remember someone in school mentioning their friend Eli, and how cool they were and so on and I just remember having to say "I think you're talking about my brother." This person did not see the resemblance, and I think it was mostly because we were quite opposites.

Eli, another nickname, was COOL. He always had headphones on him, always had a joke or story to tell, and frankly, he was always pretty fitted up for being a teenager (he had shoe game like his dad). He was chill, he hung out with people after school and had hobbies like basketball at the park and video games with our younger brother. Essentially, he had actual interests like watching sports or the same movie franchise a hundred times over.

I, on the other hand, was pretty uptight for a teen. Always nagging about rules and cleaning and homework. Always afraid to get in trouble— even though we hardly ever actually got in trouble. Well, there was one year we actually both got our phones taken away, and that was probably really formative and for the best for both of us.

Nonetheless, Baby did being a teenager the movie star way. He had the ups and downs of teenage romance, the rush of thinking you're smoking weed but actually getting really light headed and passing out because whatever that was, was more than weed. I'm 100% sure he got to experience the teenage tipsiness that years later made for a very tamed 21st birthday over pasta with our parents.

Baby knew he was a star. He could look back and laugh or reminisce on his life decisions as he grew older. My brother was brave in the way that he lived his life, especially as a young man. Nobody is perfect on this earth, and even so, Elias never allowed his pride to get in the way of being with those he loved. He really did become my big brother and someone I will always look up to. He wasn't afraid to say when he was wrong, always apologized, and was so honest he bordered on being blunt.

He showed me what love can grow into when you reach out for help, and when you have difficult conversations with those that you love.

He overcame a lot in his life, and always came back 10 times better. I could not have been more proud. He worked hard, so hard he became a leader within the company both his grandfather and father worked at for decades combined, which is no small feat if you knew either Pa or Big Baby. Baby had to work twice as hard and he did. He did it because ultimately, he took pride in following their footsteps. It's one of the best examples of his love for his family, and his commitment to us all. Even through the chaos of life, he came out the other side because of the love and support he received from everyone here. His love for all of his family is what I know made him kind.

Our tía Tema truly captures his essence by saying, "Baby was one of a kind and you were considered lucky if you ever got the chance to meet him. His random text messages and his constant reminders of how much he loved his family was the definition of his character. His smile was bright as day, his laugh was contagious and he loved wholeheartedly. He is truly missed and life will never be the same without him."

And though I agree that life will never be the same without him, I challenge myself and you all to walk in his light during this life changing time.

In a way, Baby was like a mirror to me. We were going through life at the same pace just in different lanes. Our relationship was like going somewhere you've never been and looking across the aisle and realizing your friend is right there. I desperately don't want to do this alone but all I can do is continue to keep holding onto him and his memory everyday.

Elias always knew how to hold on to those he loved, in a way I am having to learn to do now. I know that he held on tightly to each and every one of us daily and I know he'd want us to continue to hold each other through all of our tears today.

I love you Baby, may you rest in peace, and until we meet again.

Honoring Those Who Died in CDCR Custody • June 2025

Though we do not know their identities, we mourn every life lost in a carceral facility. The below data is from CDCR and represents the individuals who died in custody in California prisons.

Date	Age	Gender	Race	Facility	Cause
6/2/2025	53	M	White	CCI	Drug Overdose
6/26/2025	72	М	Black	CHCF	Undetermined
6/25/2025	77	M	White	CHCF	Undetermined
6/25/2025	81	M	White	CHCF	Undetermined
6/17/2025	81	M	Hispanic	CHCF	Undetermined
6/7/2025	67	M	White	CHCF	Undetermined
6/8/2025	62	М	Black	CIM	Cardiovascular Disease
6/18/2025	38	M	Other	CMC	Undetermined
6/18/2025	66	M	Mexican	CMF	Undetermined

Date	Age	Gender	Race	Facility	Cause
6/17/2025	85	M	White	CMF	Cancer
6/11/2025	62	М	White	CMF	Cancer
6/5/2025	65	М	Black	CMF	Undetermined
6/4/2025	70	M	Black	CMF	Cancer
6/25/2025	25	M	Black	COR	Undetermined
6/24/2025	68	М	Black	CTF	Undetermined
6/6/2025	44	M	White	FSP	Drug Overdose
6/10/2025	44	М	White	HDSP	Homicide
6/7/2025	40	М	Black	HDSP	Drug Overdose
6/6/2025	46	M	Mexican	KVSP	Homicide
6/1/2025	50	М	Black	KVSP	Infectious Disease
6/8/2025	54	М	Black	NKSP	Pulmonary
6/6/2025	70	М	Hispanic	PVSP	Cancer (HCC)
6/22/2025	59	М	Other	RJD	Pulmonary

Date	Age	Gender	Race	Facility	Cause
6/20/2025	52	M	Black	SAC	Undetermined
6/15/2025	33	M	Black	SAC	Drug Overdose
6/10/2025	44	M	Black	SAC	Homicide
6/4/2025	69	M	Black	SATF	Сапсет
6/11/2025	46	M	White	SCC	Cancer
6/16/2025	86	М	White	SQ	Cardiovascular Disease
6/27/2025	26	M	Hispanic	SVSP	Undetermined

If you would like to recognize an AOUON member who has joined the ancestors, please mail their obituary or a piece honoring them to:

AOUON Newspaper

44000 Market St
Oakland, CA, 94608
for publication in a subsequent newspaper

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ALL OF US OR NONE

Slave, who is it that shall free you? Those in deepest darkness lying. Comrade, only these can see you Only they can hear you crying. Comrade, only slaves can free you. Everything or nothing. All of us or none. One alone our lot can't better. Either gun or fetter. Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

You who hunger, who shall feed you? If it's bread you would be carving, Come to us, we too are starving. Come to us and let us lead you. Only hungry ones can feed you. Everything or nothing. All of us or none. One alone her lot can't better. Either gun or fetter. Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

Beaten one, who shall avenge you? You, on whom the blows are falling, Hear your wounded comrades calling. Weakness gives us strength to lend you. Come to us, we shall avenge you. Everything or nothing. All of us or none. One alone his lot can't better. Either gun or fetter. Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

Who, oh wretched one, shall dare it? We who can no longer bear it. Counts the blows that arm our spirit. Taught the time by need and sorrow, Strikes today and not tomorrow. Everything or nothing. All of us or none. One alone our lot can't better. Either gun or fetter. Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)

REQUEST: SURVEY

All of Us or None is collecting data about the experiences of our in-custody members to advance our policy work. Please fill out the form and mail it to: AOUON HQ Attn: Robert Bowden 4400 Market St Oakland, CA 94608

Before your current incarceration, were you ever involved with the foster care system? □Yes ∏No Before your current incarceration, were you ever in custody in a juvenile facility? ∏Yes \square No Are you currently a parent? ∏Yes □No Was a juvenile adjudication (a strike you got as a youth) used to enhance your adult sentence? ∏Yes ∏No What is your ethnicity? _____ What level of yard are you currently on? If you'd like to give any more info on your answers, please write below.

ALL OF US OR NONE CHAPTER CONTACTS



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Ucedrah Osby: AOUONBakersfield@gmail.com

Los Angeles/Long Beach, California c/o A New Way of Life Reentry PO Box 875288, Los Angeles, CA, 90087

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All of Us or None Membership Form

Yes, I want to become a member of ALL OF US OR NONE!

Name & Number: _ Institution: Country of Origin: ___ Do you have children? YES / NO. Do you need support with family issues? YES / NO

Earliest Parole/Release Date: _____ County of Parole/Probation:_

- o I can organize & facilitate group meeting
- o I can help with membership outreach
- o I can distribute materials & resources
- o I can address & pass along feedback

Mail this form & any questions to: **AOUON** 4400 Market Street Oakland, CA 94608

