



ALL OF US OR NONE

NEWSPAPER

Vol. 6 #10 • October 2025 • Published by Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, Founded in 1978 • prisonerswithchildren.org/newspaper

The 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.

RAZOR WIRE PLANTATIONS: America's Addiction to Slavery & Sadistic Cruelty

By **Troy T. Thomas**, *California Health Care Facility*
An enslaved individual.

The United States is predicated upon permanent disparities and inequities in life expectancy, mortality rates, education gaps, incarceration, economic solvency, and counter-development burdened upon Africans domestically and internationally. Founded in enslavement, these disparities were facilitated by military conquest, and perpetuated through economic, legal, and social stratification with Africans occupying the lowest echelons of the American caste system. Africans have forcefully served as the cash crop of the United States and the so-called "New World," a permanent source of free and cheap labor in the plantation and prison system; a varying source of free and enslaved soldiers for all major wars fought in North America and the European internecine wars; and an endless source of flesh for medical experimentation in prison, plantation, and military sites. Entire industries were created to dehumanize and master the control of the African population in the United States for profit and superiority. Put simply, the suppression of African culture and life provides the lifeblood of the United States and their allies. This suppression, violent and repressive, permeates the space in which Africans exist and is experienced as power disparities.

In recent decades, United States jail and prison populations have grown exponentially. In 2023, the United States is still the world's largest incarcerator. Despite comprising only five percent of the world's population, the U.S. holds a quarter (2.4 million) of the U.S. population. African so-called "Americans"



Not Feelin the Freedom by Scott W. "Scotty Scott" Smith, 2022

constitute over 60% of the prison population. Women of color make up two thirds of incarcerated women. Yet, in the 1990s, during an era of presumably economical and technological advancement, the U.S. experienced its fastest growing incarceration rate since chattel enslavement. Sparked by former Democratic (the so-called "First Black President") president Bill Clinton, whose 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act gave \$9.9 billion for prison construction, the rates of imprisonment have increased dramatically since the 1970s.

People of African ancestry experience incarceration at rates far greater than any other group in the world. In 2004, an estimated

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THESES ON LABOR, EXPLOITATION, & INCARCERATION

By **Eric C. Sapp**, *LSPC Staff Attorney*

Prefatory Note: This an abridged version of a text written in Spring of 2023, in the context of advocacy regarding carceral wages.

- \$1 Workers' rights are human rights; let it be stated unequivocally that incarcerated workers are workers.
- \$2 The prison and industrial capitalism arose in tandem. Carceral punishment on a mass scale served as both a deterrent to radical labor activism and as a device for exploiting productive labor. At various periods of history, workhouses and prisons functioned to warehouse excess labor power and to contain disruptive elements within the proletariat or at its margins; under certain conditions, the warehouse is converted into a factory.
- \$3 Labor organizations claiming to further the workers movement should not exclude or disregard the formerly or currently incarcerated, persons with arrest or conviction records, or other forms of involuntary involvement with the criminal legal system. Otherwise, the union becomes a tool, unwitting perhaps, of the system of oppressive exploitation.
- \$4 As abolitionism preceded or accompanied organized mass labor, so the radical incarcerated worker is an historical actor prior to the labor union as a form of organization. Slave revolts preceded strikes by millennia.

❗❗ For decades, subaltern workers—immigrant agricultural or domestic laborers, incarcerated workers, food servers, etc.—have been sacrificed on the bargaining table of officially-recognized labor rights."

\$5 The point of awareness is not to stoke rivalry or to position new leadership. Rather, it is to recognize that existing asymmetries have effects that function to preserve the status quo or exacerbate its maldistribution of power. For decades, subaltern workers—immigrant

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ALL OF US OR NONE

NEWSPAPER

All of Us or None is a movement led by and for formerly incarcerated people. This newspaper is a way to ensure that the voices and struggles of our people inside are heard and build solidarity across prison walls.

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.

This newspaper wouldn't be possible without incarcerated and system-impacted artists and writers. We want to hear from you.

Your stories and art matter.

SEND US YOUR SUBMISSIONS

Submit news articles, opinion pieces, essays, poetry, art, comics and letters to the editor for consideration for publication. You can also send any questions or feedback to the address below.

AOUON Newspaper Editor

4400 MARKET STREET
OAKLAND, CA 94608

Submission Guidelines

Prose pieces tend to average 750-1500 words. We reserve the right to publish excerpts of pieces that are exceptionally long. Minor edits may be made for grammar and clarity only.

All poems will be published as-is, including grammatical choices, unless otherwise indicated.

Submissions are chosen at the editor's discretion based on topic and relevance to general membership among other factors.

If you have any specific requests about how your piece will be represented, please state that in your submission.

All submissions chosen for publication are compensated.

Editor: Uma Nagarajan-Swenson
uma@prisonerswithchildren.org

A Hidden Legacy: Story of a Stolen Past, Part II

by Chase Doulphus, Valley State Prison

A Hidden Legacy is a graphic novel by Chase Doulphus. We published the first five panels in the September issue, and we will continue publishing this in monthly installments.

Hi, I'm Nobody

CREATED BY OSART

HELLO, HYPERATED AMERICA

THE UNITED STATES SEEM TO HAVE TAKEN A FEW STEPS BACK AS A BEACON OF LIGHT TO THE REST OF THE WORLD.

HOW SO?

AN ALABAMA LAWMAKER, GOP REP. CHRIS SELLS INTRODUCED A BILL TO ALLOW STATE PRISONERS TO BE SENT TO FOREIGN PRISONS.

SINCE WHEN DO AMERICA FOLLOW THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES LIKE EL SALVADOR???

THIS RACIST CRACKER REP. CHRIS SELLS SAID HE LIKE THE IDEA OF DICTATOR NAYIB BUKELE'S BRUTAL CECOT PRISON. SAYING OTHER NATIONS ARE BETTER AT MAINTAINING MORE ORDER AND OUR PRISONS ARE TOO SOFT. WTF!!? THIS SNOWFLAKE WOULDN'T LAST A HOT MINUTE IN "CORCORAN" OR NEW FOLSOM.

WE EVEN HAVE COSTA RICO JUMPING ON THE BANDWAGON TO COPY EL SALVADOR'S GIANT PRISON SIDESHOW

THIS REDNECK CHRIS SELLS, IS THE KINDA DUDE THAT WILL TELL YOU IF HE WAS AROUND DURING THE SLAVERY ERA, THAT HE WOULD NEVER HAVE OWN SLAVES.

THEN AGAIN, WHAT DO I KNOW... AFTER ALL I'M NOBODY

The California Model, No More Cages: Comix From the Inside

by Angel Garza, Corcoran State Prison

No More Cages

COMIX FROM THE INSIDE

"Everyone is Reading About it, Everyone is Seeing Pictures About it, Everyone Hears The Talks About How Good it is in Their News Paper, But... Why is it Just Their ONLY? Because, it's The "Giant Fish Bowl" To Look at From Far Away, Get Use To it!

- In Solidarity and Strength
ANGEL GARZA - CORCORAN 2025
Toward Abolitionist Horizons

The California Model

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center

critical resistance

ALL OF US OR NONE!

Dolt Look, Stay on the Vision to dismantling Toxic Prisons!

Why Can't I Go there?

Every one Look at The Fish BOWL OF The California Model, it's The closest You Will Ever Get to it!

What About The Rest of us?

Are We Ever Going To Get To Go There? Or is it Just a Carrot On a Stick to Look at?

Excerpt from Angel's accompanying letter:

"The 'California Model'... it's meant for the staff, not prisoners...San Quentin has always had the spotlight on it due to death row. Most feel it to be a fish bowl effect. it's for everyone to see from far off, and that's as close as some or maybe most people will ever get to the California Model. Counselors don't tell people how does one get there, or what's the criteria to get there? ...

I'd rather stay focused on critical resistance and to continue to shut down toxic prisons, reduce the prison population, and dismantal CDCR's multi billion dollar slave complex!"

A Hidden Legacy: Story of a Stolen Past

Written and Illustrated by Chase Doulphus

They recorded this wisdom in vast libraries across the land.

The most magnificent of these was the Grand Temple of Luxor, built by Pharaoh Amenhotep III and Ramses II.

People from all over the ancient world traveled to Egypt to study what became known as the Egyptian Mystery System.

Three Palm Trees

by **Jennifer Fletcher**, *Central CA Women's Facility*
CSJG Journalist & CSU Fresno Debate Champion

Beautifully Majestic, full of life, oceans of azure blue
Softly caressing toasty warm sands; coming so close to you
Your palm fronds blow in the breeze, swaying to and fro
Wondering with life's many choices, which way you will go
Sunshine glowing bringing warmth to the sands of time
Praying constantly for you, wishing you are doing just fine
Seagulls off in the distant horizon meet the sun's rays
Turning the sands of time and looking upon better days
Whispers of your names flow in the breeze caressing our ears
The voice of God assures us you are just fine, so dry those tears
Rippling, swirling, thoughts roll like the water's crest
Our "Justice System" ripped you out of our family nest
Bending, growing, maturing Three Palm Trees on the beach
Our oceans water's mist flowing to you, just out of reach
Two parents immersed in an ocean rolling to the shoals
Watching from afar as their three children reach their goals
Come hither says the warm sand to our hearts sea flowing with love
Finding faith god is keeping you safe from the heavens above
Hope cherished, our hearts afloat in between two ethereal wings
Thinking and dreaming of you, painfully yet joyfully our heart sings
The beating of our hearts mimic the fluid pulse of the waters
Loving, missing, and praying fervently for our Son and Daughters
Visit the oceans shore, look for the Three Palm Trees
Visions of freedom, families reunited as true love are the keys
Unlock a beautiful picture framed just for you delicately beside one another
Who else could love you like endless waves of the ocean, your Father and Mother.

California Special Election: Prop 50

California has a special election coming up! On November 4th, many Californians will have the chance to vote on Proposition 50, the Election Rigging Response Act. This constitutional amendment, proposed by Governor Gavin Newsom, would create a new congressional district map that favors Democrats for the next three election cycles (through 2030) in an attempt to offset partisan gerrymandering in other states, most notably Texas.

What does Prop 50 do?

Proposition 50 will determine how Californians are represented in the U.S. House of Representatives by redrawing the district map that determines who votes for which representatives. California has 52 congressional representatives in the House, of which 43 are Democrats and 9 are Republican.

The proposed map voters will be deciding on on November 4th would potentially flip five seats.

Why is California doing this?

Currently, Republicans have a five-seat majority in the House of Representatives. All representatives (there are a total of 438) are up for election every two years. President Donald Trump has been so legislatively powerful in part because he has a Republican-controlled House, Senate, and Judiciary; that is to say, every branch of government follows roughly the same policy agenda.

Based on fears that he would lose the Republican House majority, President Trump pressured Texas Republicans to gerrymander their congressional districts, effectively turning five seats Republican. Gov. Newsom's move, if voters decide to pass it, would functionally even the score.

Even with a felony conviction, you can vote if you are currently:

- In local detention facility:
 - Serving a misdemeanor sentence (a misdemeanor never affects your right to vote)
 - Because jail time is a condition of probation (misdemeanor or felony)
 - Serving a felony jail sentence
 - Awaiting trial
- On parole
- On probation
- On mandatory supervision
- On post-release community supervision
- On federal supervised release
- A person with a juvenile wardship adjudication

However, you CANNOT vote if you are currently serving a state or federal prison term for the conviction of a felony in:

- State prison
- Federal prison
- A local detention facility

Above information from CA Secretary of State Office.

For more information, you can call the CA Secretary of State Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE (8683).

Have you experienced dangerous conditions in prison work settings? Legal Aid at Work would like to hear from you.

Legal Aid at Work (LAAW) is a partner organization to LSPC that supports low-income workers in California by helping to ensure fair treatment in the workplace. We provide free legal services and advocate for policy changes that fight against injustice and systemic barriers to equity for low wage workers. LAAW’s Disability & Health Justice Program advocates to combat ableism in the workplace and unsafe work conditions for low-paid workers.

We are currently investigating ways to advocate with and for incarcerated workers. As part of that investigation, we would like to hear from incarcerated workers who have been exposed to dangerous work conditions that impact their health.

- Have you had to work in extreme heat conditions while on your work assignment? If so, have you gotten injured or sick from that exposure?
- Have you been exposed to poor air quality (including smoke from wildfires) while working outside? If so, have you gotten injured or sick from that exposure?
- Have you gotten sick from working outside, including getting Valley Fever and/or illnesses from bug bites?
- Have you had to work with toxic chemicals, bodily fluids, dust, mold, and/or other hazardous materials without proper training or protective gear? If so, have you gotten injured or sick from that exposure?
- Have you been forced to do work that is especially difficult because of a disability, or have you been forced to work when you are sick? Have you faced retaliation, including loss of privileges or isolation, when you have tried to take time off because of illness or disability?

If the answer is YES to any of the questions above or if you know anyone who has experienced these kinds of conditions, please reach out to Legal Aid at Work at the contact info below:

Mailing Address:
LAAW Disability & Health Justice Program
180 Montgomery Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94104-4244
Intake Line: (415) 864-8848
Website:<https://legalaidatwork.org/>



TIME KEEPS TICKING: We Pay the Price

by **David Maldonado, Ph.D**, *AOUON Oakland*

Capital, money, wages, profit, and time. These interrelated terms comprise key aspects of the prison-industrial complex and explain the grotesque, exponential rise of what we call a “prison nation” or carceral state. However, each of these concepts is very distinct, and they should not be lumped together to explain its rise. First and foremost, prisons are an expression of class warfare. Class warfare is never neutral. Just like capital, class warfare uses difference (racialized, gendered, abled, etc.) to maximize its destructive force. We already know this based on the history of this country: global capital got its start from genocide, the theft of native land, and from kidnapped and enslaved African people. Periodt. Before this, race and capital were in their infancy; only afterward did they together become the earth- and life-threatening monster we know today.

Let’s start by explaining terms.

Capital, according to Marx, is basically value in motion.

Value comes from a relationship between the big boss—the capitalist—and the worker. The worker functionally sells their labor to the capitalist for a certain amount of time. The capitalist must never give a “fair” wage that matches the actual time the laborer spends or the system collapses—there would be no profit. In other words, we work eight hours, but no bell goes off when our labor meets the capitalist’s break-even point and when the capitalist starts to keep the rest. Capital is slick. It is a slick ass way of stealing time, life, and labor.

Money is just the representation of capital and a means of exchange. You can’t build a house with money (it is made of paper). Money represents trust in the state— don’t feel so safe now, does it.

Profit is when the circuit of stealing time hits a temporary end point, called exchange. The capitalist takes his extra (or surplus value part) and starts again, thus the “in motion” part. It is worth mentioning that capital increasingly favors speculative capital in the form of rents and speculation. Also, many sell or improve intellectual property. Then, there is a new dynamic some are calling techno feudalism. This form of capital sells virtual cloud rent to all comers, buyers and sellers and also relies on our free labor to improve its algorithms. That argument is beyond the scope of this work but worth looking into (Varoufakis, Y., 2024).

What prisons are not primarily about:

Prisons are not about profit. Although private prisons are on the rise vis-à-vis detention centers, almost 90 percent of prisons are public. This means that the taxes taken from our wages (again, which already represent theft by the capitalist) are what fund prisons. This form of taxes is often called a social wage. So, we pay a portion of our wages, which again, is partially stolen time, so the state can use it to lock us up. The rise of mass incarceration happened as the state began gifting tax dollars to the super wealthy, spending huge amounts toward “law and order” and prison building.

However, even prior to this, there were all kinds of problems with time and labor.

Technological advances started throwing many people out of the labor market long ago: think of the auto industry, mining industry, and numerous other industrial fields. Instead of having our taxes go toward housing, federal jobs, education, unemployment or various other social programs which a social wage would fund, the power elite and the state told us our time was no longer needed for this new automated job market. This new labor surplus represented an opportunity for a new form of totalizing time theft, the immobility of the prison: The taxes spent on law and order can be used to imprison one portion of the surplus working class to hire a new portion in the prison industry: corrections officers, judges, police officers, Aramark truck drivers, prison building construction companies, and to fund Bob Barker’s extremely overpriced Canteen garbage (IYKYK). It even opens the academy to “carceral experts” and enables countless non-profits. This is an uncomfortable contradiction. If you have incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people leading these, the contradictions greatly decrease.

Anyone who has “done time” knows that time stalls for us. While we are stuck, a new class of workers is having their time stolen, albeit at a slightly higher rate. The Capitalist and his handmaiden, the State, are feasting while we starve. Further, the State promised all kinds of growth and development to mainly rural towns in exchange for hosting prisons. These communities had already been overwhelmingly ravaged by capital’s failures, and not surprisingly, these promises greatly underdelivered.

On class, race, and labor:

According to prisonpolicy.org (the best folks for stats), around 90 percent of people in prison had very low incomes prior to their incarceration. The average annual salary for this group is below \$37,000. Perhaps surprising to some, 1/3 of the people in prison are white. They make up a far higher proportion of the U.S. population, but poor whites are also getting destroyed by this system. It is legalized theft, and it is coming for all of us, just more slowly for some. Make no mistake, it is class warfare. Concerning labor, formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at rates higher than any other population, at numbers higher than during the Great Depression (Prisonpolicy.org). Our labor is needed to cook for, clean, and maintain the prison, and to fight fires as climate change devastates our landscape. But we ain’t worthy of a wage. Our time isn’t even good enough to steal from at a percentage. They want all of it! Prop 6 anyone? Black Panther Party co-founder Dr. Huey P. Newton understood, perhaps best, the changes that were coming. Huey does not get enough

credit for anticipating the rise of neoliberal policies. His work on Intercommunalism and On Technology should be revisited by all, especially activists and academics (Huey P. Newton Reader, Hillard). His concept of “survival pending revolution” explains the work prison abolition needs to do: He saw how racial capitalism (all capitalism) was developing automated technologies that would make industrial workers redundant, especially workers of color. Much like Trump is doing, the State waged war on poor and working-class communities while giving huge tax breaks

to corporations. In the early 80s, the State began severely cutting social programs and focusing on permanent domestic warfare—key features of neoliberal punishment. Further, the State deregulated worker protections, attacked unions, and allowed companies to leave the country in search of cheaper labor and production, without tax penalty. Not only did this devastate American workers, but it saddled the public with a bill for unusable infrastructure that became public debt.

Huey and the Black Panther Party understood that survival programs included critical revolutionary elements. They understood that when people have their needs met, they are open to political education. By working together on alternative infrastructure, people begin to see revolutionary possibilities.

While the breakfast program is well known, I like to focus on some of the lesser known projects. One project gives us an example of how we can move now. The Party was seeing Black elders having their government checks stolen in an unfortunate dynamic in Oakland neighborhoods. The Party decided to hire youngsters from different hoods to accompany elders when they needed to run errands, especially on the 1st and 15th of every month: check days. This brilliant organizing tactic satisfied multiple needs. Younger Black folks, both then and now, suffer some of the worst job prospects. By hiring them the Party could have been hiring the same people who may be so desperate as to take advantage of their fellow elders. Elders not only now had safe transportation, but also the ability to pass intergenerational knowledge to the younger generation, critical in building consciousness.

It is hard to mention this without thinking about what we saw in Oakland’s Chinatown several years ago after a rash of elder robberies. The largely Antiblack outcry was, of course, to call for more Oakland police and sentencing enhancements. My Comrade Connie Wun and other API activists instead got together with Black activists and began to do what the Panthers did, walking with elders.

Police are never the solution, periodt. And—this is very important—neither are sentence enhancements. A quick history of “hate” crimes shows that seemingly ‘liberal’ sounding enhancements are rarely used to protect vulnerable populations. Just recall that after the January 6th storming of the Capital, people were calling for new enhancements. This fundamentally and completely misunderstands where police are and what they do. If you think police are out profiling white and middle-class populations, you will have to read a whole other

!! Huey and the Black Panther Party understood that survival programs included critical revolutionary elements. They understood that when people have their needs met, they are open to political education. By working together on alternative infrastructure, people begin to see revolutionary possibilities."

!! Anyone who has “done time” knows that time stalls for us. While we are stuck, a new class of workers is having their time stolen, albeit at a slightly higher rate."

paper that I don’t have time to write. Sentence enhancements just give police more tools and technologies to do what they are already doing, where they are doing it. Enhancements are a huge factor in the buildup of the carceral state. So called gang and antiviolenace enhancements just allow for police to label, deem unworthy, and send away poor and people of color for longer periods of time. Even gun enhancements do not serve their supposed purpose. Here, you are welcome to disagree with me. But look at who commits mass shootings: They tend to be legal gun owners who are also

part of the white population that will not be racially profiled. From what I have seen with my own eyes, all enhancements do is widen the net in places like East and West Oakland, East L.A., Compton, South Side Chicago, and more. Places that were, of course, hit hard by Redlining, Blockbusting, underfunded schools, deindustrialization, cutting of social programs, the war on crime, oh yeah, and mass incarceration. These are also places where the state systematically murdered and incarcerated Black Panthers.

As a new round of technology driven by

artificial intelligence kicks into high gear, expect more devastation and prepare for the State sponsored corporate theft and looting that can certainly be expected. Many more will feel this next round.

It’s time for us to decide what our labor should go toward. Can we imagine a world without a wage? Who decided the value of our time? What can we build instead? The next time someone talks about profit and prisons maybe think about the ways that time expands and complicates that analysis.

All power to the people.

Razor Wire Plantations continued from page 1

12.6% of all Black males in their late 20s were in jails or prisons, in comparison to Latinos (3.6%) and Caucasians (1. 7%). The current crisis of African imprisonment in the U.S. has caused some authors to call the prison industrial complex "The New Jim Crow."

Prisons played a vital and necessary function in the colonial world. In fact, the early European imperialist powers sentenced criminals to slavery in distanced colonies as a means of manpower and labor resource. These nations were common for exploiting their criminal population in the acquisition of land, resources and power. Later, once the land was conquered/stolen, whites employed a system called transportation. Thus, "transportation" provided the option of being deported to a colony for the mistreatment of free labor and services or receiving a severe criminal penalty (usually death). Another known system was workhouse incarceration, which served two main purposes: (a) providing free labor to developing capitalist nations and (b) rehabilitating recalcitrant workers back into the capitalist work force. These systems introduced and provided the foundations for the United States prison-industrial complex. Again, under capitalist economic arrangement, the prison-industrial complex provided several economically necessary conditions: physical control of the surplus African population, the potential for the production of goods without labor costs, and rehabilitation and resocialization of the marginalized African workers through the use of hard work as part of the penal response.

The continual incarceration of Africans, in the interest and service of whites, has its origins steeped within the fabric of American history. Since the time of enslavement, Africans were seized and exploited for white profit. Even thereafter, despite the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment, which supposedly ended slavery, Africans were sanctioned to "involuntary servitude" as punishment for "crimes." To illustrate, Section 1 of the 13th Amendment of the United States' Constitution: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

According to data from Tennessee's Main Prison in Nashville, immediately following the Civil War, the incarceration rate for Africans increased significantly, whereas the rate for whites decreased. This trend has persisted throughout the decades, which partially explains the "prison-industrial complex" today. To date, prisons represent a \$147 billion per year industry.

With the current privatization of prisons, major corporations, such as the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), are recording astronomical profits through the exploitation of African incarceration and subsequent slave

labor. In addition to the prison owners, services and products as food, clothing, construction companies, medical transportation, security, and many other white profiteers have and continue to-benefit from the incarceration of people of African descent. America has not abolished slavery; it has simply transferred it into the prisons.

Prisons are now the epicenter around which many towns have sprung up, reviving the rural communities (e.g. Susanville, Sacramento, Stockton, Lancaster, Marin, Pelican Bay, etc.). The local populations compete for these jobs, which are unique in their high wages and pension plans, while requiring minimal thinking ability.

No one can deny the stark increase in incarceration of Black and Brown folks within the past three-plus decades. This increase is largely due to policies and harsh laws which are racially motivated (e.g.,the "Three Strikes Laws" and LWOPP, Life Without the Possibility of Parole). One notorious example is the federal guideline that sentences people to 10 years for possession of 5 grams of crack or 500 grams of cocaine, when whites are much more likely to be caught with cocaine. No study has ever proven that crack—cocaine in its coagulated form—is more harmful than its powder form. And though this law was modified recently, its purpose has already been served.

Since "the end" of slavery's role as a profitable enterprise for the U.S. farming industry, the principal question for law officials has been,"what is to be done about the fast growing population of restless young Black and Brown men and women?” Prison has become the genocidal solution to this never ending "problem." A population that is no longer a significant source of slave labor to be exploited, nor allowed to be junior partners to the imperialists, has no role to play in the "Corporate Oligarchic Police State." Hence,we have seen the growing slave class behind U.\$.

prison walls/plantations.

Black and Brown men and women born in America & blessed enough to live past the age of 18 are psychologically conditioned to accept the inevitability of being sent to a so-called "correctional” facility (modern-day slave plantation). For the vast majority of us, it simply looms as the next phase in a sequence of profound humiliations. In other words, **the real roots of crime in America are associated with a constellation of suffering so hideous that, as a society, it cannot bear to look it in the face, so it hands its casualties over to a system that will keep us from its sight.** Indeed, a people already invisible can be easily made to disappear as this is the primary function of ghettos, barrios, reservations, trailer parks and prisons in America.

In sum, the prison industrial complex is a very deliberate and calculated product of the

white power structure in the United States. It reifies the colonial relationship and power disparity between Africans, Latinos, along with other marginalized populations in America. Particularly oppressive for Africans in America, the expansion of prison has resulted in the neo-commoditization of Black bodies in a capitalist system with roots in the original commoditization of the African body, labor. Thus, Black incarceration serves as a deliberate and specific purpose in sustaining white terror, power, and domination. In other words,the relationship between Africans in America and the holders of state power in the United States is similar to that which exists between the colonized and the colonial master. Focusing on the spatially separate African "American" communities of the urban North and the heavy concentrations of Africans in the Southern Black Belt, the colonial model views Americanized Africans as a unit, a part, an internal colony, which is systematically exploited by white society. Blacks are viewed as a separate nation that exports cheap labor and imports finished goods from the broader community.

In the final analysis, African so-called "American" slaves must accept the reality that, for the white American "race", "Democracy" and racial oppression/slavery are not conflicting ideals. The fact that Black people have been and remain enslaved for over three hundred-plus years by a "Democratic" (largely "Christian" form of government) should be evidence enough. Furthermore, a Democratic government presupposes an inherent equality of races; it does not provide methods of liberation for those who are not equal. Slavery in California along with America in general which is why white America has made it very clear that it has no intention of ever giving up its slaves. California slaves have come to fully understand our position in this state and we know quite well that one of the most tragic beliefs widely shared by Blacks in California/ America is that white Americans as a whole want to help Black people prosper and have equal access to society's resources. Faith continues to prevail in spite of overwhelming evidence which disputes this belief. Black people continue to ignore the irrefutable truth that in a racist social system, all institutions will reflect, protect, and sustain values that are consistent with racism/white supremacy. Slavery is the system that California/America has chosen. To argue otherwise makes no historical sense!

THIS IS WHAT "DEMOCRACY" LOOKS LIKE. PLEASE VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES: 1) www.abolishbondagecollectively.org 2) www.endslaveryincalifornia.org 3) Abolish Legal Slavery in Amerika Movement to amendthe13th.org

CONTACT THE AUTHOR AT: Troy T.Thomas, H-01001, E3B-136 C.H.C.F. P.O. BOX 213040, Stockton, CA 95213

WINS FROM CA 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

Incarcerated Firefighter Wages, Remote Access to Hearings & More

by **Uma Nagarajan-Swenson**, *LSPC Communications Manager & AOUON Newspaper Editor*

The 2025 California Legislative Session adjourned on September 13, with the passage of several bills co-sponsored and supported by LSPC. We're excited to share these victories with you, with the hopes that Governor Newsom signs these into law ASAP.

Assembly Bill (AB) 247: Incarcerated Firefighter Wages (Bryan)

AB 247 passed the California Legislature, marking a huge step towards justice for incarcerated firefighters. AB 247 requires incarcerated hand crew members to be paid an hourly wage equal to \$7.25 while assigned to an active fire incident. AB 247 also increases the amount of days of credit earned for trainings and assignments: upon completion of training or assignment to a crew, incarcerated firefighters become eligible to earn 2 days of credit for each day thereafter.

In February, AOUON Organizer John Cannon spoke to us about his experience in a hand crew fighting fires in California:

The work was brutal. We hiked steep mountains in 100-degree heat, cutting fire lines with tools like chainsaws and McLeods, a combination rake and hoe to stop a fire's spread. Each person on the line worked in sync, moving vegetation one strike at a time, in a process we called "bump and move." It was grueling, dangerous work. I saw people collapse from heat exhaustion and dehydration. Others suffered injuries from tools or were bitten by spiders and venomous rattlesnakes during the nights we slept outdoors... For all of this, we were paid just \$1 a day. During active fires, the rate increased to \$1 an hour, but half of that was garnished for restitution...those of us who fought fires from behind prison walls deserve fair pay, proper recognition, and the chance to rebuild our lives.

Involuntary servitude is slavery, and forcing people into highly dangerous work for essentially no compensation is cruel and inhumane. If passed or signed by Governor Newsom, AB 247 would be a step towards ending slavery in California by acknowledging that incarcerated work must be more fairly paid.

AB 248: County Jail Wages (Bryan)

Existing law authorizes the board of supervisors to credit each prisoner confined in or committed to county jail up to \$2 for each 8 hours of work performed in jail. AB248 would instead authorize the board to credit each prisoner with a sum of money to be determined by the board.

This is another win on LSPC/AOUON's efforts to secure livable wages for our incarcerated and impacted population. We've been fighting to do that at a state level for the last six years, so to be able to do this and bring

potential for a raise in wages is a step in the right direction towards securing respectable living wages along with fair labor practices.

AB 651: Remote Access to Dependency Hearings (Bryan)

On 9/4/2025, California Assembly Bill (AB) 651, which expands mandatory remote access to dependency hearings for parents in California state prisons, passed the State Senate with a decisive 39-0 vote. The bill now awaits Governor Newsom's approval.

The dependency process for families with incarcerated parents is highly convoluted, currently excluding the incarcerated parent from virtual participation in all hearings except the first and last. Incarcerated parents only have "discretionary" remote access to a select few hearings: jurisdiction hearings, which are the first to occur, and permanency hearings with the recommendation to terminate parental rights, which are often the last to occur. Incarcerated parents have no right to attend the remainder of dependency hearings, during which a majority of significant decisions around custody and care are made. In-person attendance entails a significant disruption to programming and good time calculations, so parents incarcerated in state prisons are often unable to be present at hearings.

The critical importance of parental attendance at dependency hearings cannot be overstated: family and child outcomes are greatly improved by parental participation, and parental exclusion from these hearings can result in accidental exclusion of grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives that could facilitate parent-child visits or provide a familial home placement for the child. Parents are uniquely positioned to speak to their child's

needs. Their exclusion can also undermine the already disrupted relationship between a child and their incarcerated parent. Incarcerated parents deserve to fully participate in their children's court proceedings, and children have a right to the full participation of their family members.

AB 651 (Bryan), for which LSPC was a co-sponsor, expands the hearings at which remote access must be available for incarcerated parents. These include disposition, statutory review, paternity, and Welfare and Institutions Code 388 petitions.

LSPC is thrilled about AB 651's decisive victory in the California State Legislature, and we hope that Governor Newsom will sign this bill as soon as possible to pave the path towards more unified families. LSPC's Family Unity Policy Analyst, Ari Vazquez, emphasizes this bill's importance: "Being incarcerated doesn't remove your right to parent, and it doesn't remove the child's need to have a parent in their life. Parents, even when incarcerated, have tangible input around and knowledge of their child's needs, and every child deserves to have their needs recognized and met."

AB 651 now sits on Governor Newsom's desk, awaiting his signature to ensure that families can remain unified even in the face of dependency courts.

AB 1376: Ending Endless Probation (Bonta)

AB 1376 establishes clear hearing timelines for youth on formal wardship probation supervision, also known as "non-custodial wardship probation." This will prevent young people from staying on probation for longer than necessary, which wastes precious resources and negatively impacts healthy development.

Thank you, Reps Isaac Bryan, Mia Bonta, Jesse

Arreguin, and more for your tireless advocacy on behalf of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals!

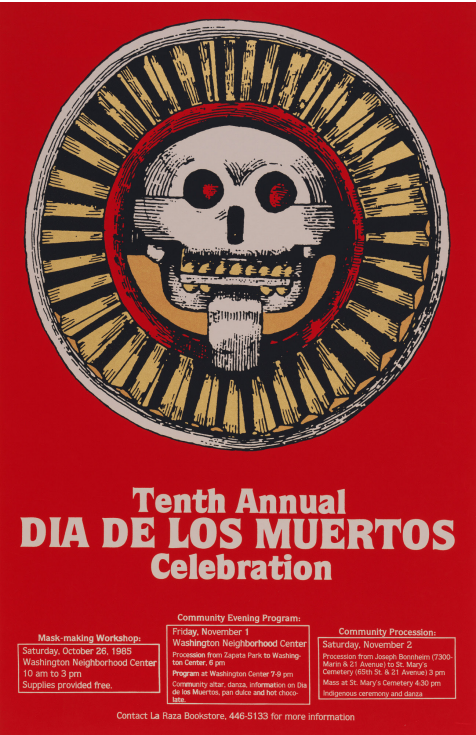
Images clockwise from top: LSPC Ronald "Elder" Freeman Policy Fellow Bernice Singh advocating at the capitol, Singh and Rep. Isaac Bryan, late-night assembly chambers.

All images courtesy of Bernice Singh.



My Eulogy
by Stewart Skuba, Valley State Prison

Do you understand what freedom is truly
Barriers...Cages...Walls....
Restraints...Shackles...Cuffs...
I can't breathe...I can't stand up.
I have had enough.
Truly that man that I was is Dead
this is his Eulogy.
I am no longer him...He is no longer me
I have had enough.
No more looking back...Moving forwards...
things are looking Up.
So good looking out...there is no shadow
of Doubt...Better off now...Free at last
from My past and the Grave where I
put it.
Remorse...Guilt...Shame...
Hurt...Loss...Pain...all are different
and yet the same.
The burden the blame...Cursing my name.
Truly this is a Eulogy.
Now deceased when I cease to be
drowned in my Grief...
Finally I can breath...A moment of peace
I am free...
R.I.P.



Tenth Annual Día de los Muertos
Celebration by Luis C. González.
Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Día de los Muertos

Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, will be celebrated on November 1-2 this year. The tradition is deeply rooted in Aztec and other Mesoamerican traditions, honoring death as a natural cycle of life and celebrating the lives of our ancestors and loved ones who have passed on. It is traditionally believed that the spirits of the dead return home to visit their loved ones. In honor of this event, families create ofrendas, altars, with pictures of their deceased loved ones, sweets, candles, and personal offerings to nourish the spirits.

Lesser known is that Día de los Muertos has a rich history steeped in social movements. Its arrival in the mainstream consciousness began in the 1970s, when Chicano artists and activists held large celebrations and commemorations in America as a tool for identity-building, seeking to celebrate Indigenous roots as part of Mexican American heritage. This cultural consciousness was largely facilitated by a rich printmaking and artistic practice.

The two poems on this page are poignant reflections on the social death imposed by imprisonment.

Seeing the Inevitable
by Deshon AKA Jeruz, Northern Nevada Correctional Center

Everyday I envision my demise,
I even see myself buried in a casket
With insects crawling through my mouth
and the sockets of my eyes.
Laying still, no more blood flow,
embalming fluid in my insides,
flesh slowly decomposing as the seasons
come and go like the oceans tides.
Everyday I envision my demise
because no one lives forever
eventually everyone dies, whether from
natural causes, freak accidents, or homicides
there's not a soul on earth who'll make it
out of life alive.
This is why everyday I envision my demise
so that I can appreciate every breath
and cherish the beauty of life.

Theses on Labor continued from page 1

agricultural or domestic laborers, incarcerated workers, food servers, etc.—have been sacrificed on the bargaining table of officially-recognized labor rights. The long-term interests of all workers, however, are served by solidarity rather than fraternal division.

§6 Solidarity is no slogan; nor is it (only) an affect. It is the concrete construction of a workable ensemble of mutually supportive actions serving shared interests in the midst of real, mitigable yet ineliminable, tensions of partially competing interests. Individuals and groups whose interests are one hundred percent aligned have no need to appeal to solidarity. Those whose interests are fundamentally antagonistic have no possibility of achieving it. In the middle is the space of movement building.

§7 The system, traditionally, has functioned by placing subaltern workers and the not-quite-subaltern laborer at odds, the former made an example with which to frighten or to flatter the latter. Elites leverage those attitudes to control and efficiently exploit labor. To see this mechanism is the first step in seeing through it, to dismantle it.

§8 Because subaltern workers have generally had nowhere else to turn for alliances, they have hitherto at best entered into asymmetric partnerships with not-so-subaltern organized labor.

§9 A proletariat that despises other workers is a living oxymoron (though not for that reason unreal), as much as is a minimum wage with exceptions creating a “subminimum” wage. An ersatz minimum wage is a front for naked exploitation.

§10 Exploitation of surplus labor is the essence of all waged or unwaged – and salaried – labor under capitalism. The bargaining position vis-à-vis employers, as a function of the credibility of the threat of withholding their labor, of workers with relatively higher levels of economic expectations depends on the position of those below them. Opposing or ignoring the interests of those “beneath” one on the economic ladder undermines one’s own position.

§11 A relatively united strategy is a prerequisite to effectively confronting state-administered oppression and state-facilitated capitalist exploitation of labor. This exploitation comes in many forms: the involuntary servitude of incarcerated workers, their assignment to so-called voluntary work programs at subminimum wage rates, and economic insecurity of supposedly free laborers. Overcoming the system’s divide-and-conquer strategy is necessary.

Honoring Those Who Died in CDCR Custody • September 2025

Though we do not know their identities, we mourn every life taken 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
8/28/2025	71	M	Black	CHCF	Undetermined
8/29/2025	51	M	Mexican	ASP	Undetermined
8/30/2025	82	M	White	CMF	Undetermined
8/31/2025	24	M	Hispanic	SOL	Drug OD
8/31/2025	51	M	Black	LAC	Undetermined
9/1/2025	77	M	White	CHCF	Undetermined
9/2/2025	35	M	Hispanic	SACCO	Homicide
9/2/2025	66	M	White	SVSP	Undetermined
9/4/2025	37	M	Mexican	CTF	Undetermined
9/1/2025	77	M	White	CHCF	Undetermined
9/2/2025	35	M	Hispanic	SACCO	Homicide
9/2/2025	66	M	White	SVSP	Undetermined
9/4/2025	37	M	Mexican	CTF	Undetermined
9/4/2025	53	M	Black	VSP	Undetermined

Date	Age	Gender	Race	Facility	Cause
9/4/2025	40	M	Mexican	CHCF	Undetermined
9/4/2025	63	M	White	CHCF	Undetermined
9/4/2025	68	M	Black	CHCF	Undetermined
9/5/2025	64	F	Mexican	CCWF	Undetermined
9/6/2025	67	M	White	CMF	Undetermined
9/6/2025	39	M	Hispanic	KVSP	Undetermined
9/8/2025	58	M	Black	CHCF	Undetermined
9/9/2025	60	M	Black	CMF	Undetermined
9/9/2025	26	M	Black	CCI	Undetermined
9/10/2025	35	M	Black	KVSP	Undetermined
9/10/2025	68	M	Black	VSP	Undetermined
9/12/2025	54	M	Mexican	CHCF	Undetermined
9/12/2025	39	M	Black	WSP	Undetermined
9/14/2025	32	M	Hispanic	PVSP	Undetermined

Date	Age	Gender	Race	Facility	Cause
9/15/2025	71	M	Black	MCSP	Undetermined
9/16/2025	52	M	Black	RJD	Undetermined

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

AOUON Newspaper
44000 Market St
Oakland, CA, 94608
or uma@prisonerswithchildren.org
for publication in an upcoming newspaper.



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)

Survey for CA residents: In order to support advocacy for AB 1279, please fill out this survey if you have been impacted by juvenile adjudications and "strikes." The form, once filled out, should be mailed to Assemblymember Sharp-Collins.

Juvenile Data Collection Survey

Thank you for participating in this confidential survey. This information is rarely collected and difficult to find, but it’s essential to understanding how juvenile strikes continue to impact people. Your responses will help us better advocate for AB 1279 (Sharp-Collins), a bill aimed at ending the practice of using juvenile adjudications as “strikes” and petitioning for resentencing. By submitting this form, you consent to the use of your responses for advocacy, social media, and policy work. **All questions are optional.** Please return the form to the legislative office listed below.

First and Last Name:

Contact Information:

Age:

Were you ever arrested or detained as a juvenile (under 18)?

Were you ever charged with a felony as a juvenile?

Did you receive a 'strike' under California's Three Strikes Law for a juvenile offense?

Was your juvenile strike ever alleged against you in your adult case?

Was your juvenile strike later used to enhance a sentence as an adult?

What was the final sentence you received after enhancement with the juvenile strike?

We invite you to share your story. How it happened, how it has shaped your life, and what you want others (including lawmakers and the public) to know and understand about your experience:

Would you like to remain anonymous?

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prisonerswithchildren.org/
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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: _____

Address: _____

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 Membership
4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608

