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LSPC Newsletter, March 2021

# Supporting Asian American & Pacific Islander Communities in Times of Violence

## Message from the Executive Director



*Dorsey Nunn*

I am a co-founder and proud member of All of Us or None. I am also in the winter of my life, and a Black, formerly incarcerated person. Over the course of this lifetime, I have lived in a world divided by race, class, colors, geography, and prison walls. On January 28, I was watching the local news and saw the story about an elderly Asian man, Vicha Ratanapakdee, being senselessly pushed down, later dying of his injuries. It has been weeks since and I have not been able to shake the sight of this elder being slammed down.

It is not like I am unfamiliar with death or seeing people senselessly dying. In fact, I went to prison for being involved in a robbery where a man was senselessly killed. But with incidents of violence against Asian and Asian American elders gaining frequency, I need to use my voice to express my concern, my rage, my grief and my confusion. Given that some of these tragedies have been perpetrated by people of color, on people of color, I don't want my silence to be misinterpreted as complicity or a cover or justification for unnecessary violence.

I, personally, and All of Us or None, as an organization, reject violence between marginalized peoples and stand ready to continue our work to create healthy, safe communities for everyone. We have already participated in a press conference of Black leaders standing in solidarity with the Asian Community as well as rallied in Oakland with them.

From the very beginning in 2003, All of Us or None was founded on inclusivity and common struggle. Our Code of Conduct includes: "No racism, sexism, or homophobia in our language or



*Dorsey speaking at the Heal Our People, Heal Our Communities rally against violence against Asian elders in Downtown Oakland, February 13, 2021.  
(Photo: Joyce Xi)*

interactions with each other, as these divide us.” At our first Peace & Justice Summits, we were honored to have the late SF Public Defender Jeff Adachi involved from the beginning. Over the years, our policy campaigns have included working with state legislators such as Assemblymembers David Chiu, Rob Bonta, Philip Ting, and organizations such as Asian Americans Advancing Justice and the Asian Prisoners Support Network on issues ranging from stopping deportations, to eliminating court fines and fees, to ensuring access for family members to visit incarcerated loved ones. Our Quest for Democracy demands all directly impacted people standing shoulder to shoulder at the center of the bridges that connect our communities.

We need more bridges, as the oppressor constantly attempts to divide and conquer us. It was soon after the 1965 Watts Riots that media started publishing articles bestowing the Asian community with the “honor” of being “the Model Minority.” In other words, using the stereotype of Asian quiet subservience to admonish the “uppity” Black community’s protests against social and economic inequality. During the 1992 Rodney King Riots, media played non-stop the footage of a Korean shop owner shooting a Black teen, even though the vast majority of cornerstore shootings that year involved white proprietors shooting Black people. So, when the “Black mob” moved from South Central north towards Beverly Hills, it was easy for a line of National Guard to redirect the violence toward Koreatown. Now, after a summer of BLM protests, we again run the risk of allowing a media spotlight on violence between marginalized people to divide and pit our communities against each other. We must take this opportunity to continue building solidarity and provide mutual aid—we have so much more in common than not. Fortunately, these examples of past violence between our communities have also resulted in a blueprint for working together, as after every incident groups of all our peoples got together to build better connections.



One thing for sure I know that our elders should be able to walk the street in safety and not be violently attacked. I am absolutely aware of the assaults and sometime deaths of Asians are sometimes at the hands of young Black men. Several years ago, longtime comrade Eddy Zheng pointed out an incident in the Bayview and this made me more conscious and sensitive that something peculiar and wrong was happening. And at that time, we didn’t have a President of the United States openly fanning the flames of racism and attaching a deadly virus to a particular group of people, which made this matter even more dangerous and divisive. In a country built on racism it is not hard to create an escape goat, a distraction, a deflection, and an enemy to rally the mislead people into believing that, if not for those marginalized people, that everything would be better.

At the Freedom and Movement Center here in Oakland, we have a wall

dedicated to our spiritual and political ancestors. They daily inspire us, and we are excited to share them with visitors. We already have photos of Fred Korematsu so we can talk about his heroic struggle around Japanese internment, and of Yuri Kochiyama, who, in addition to all her abolition work, cradled Malcolm X when he was dying on the floor of the Audubon Ball Room. Fred and Yuri hang on the wall in the company of Rosa Parks, George Jackson, Martin Luther King, and many others. The wall shows more about what we have in common than what we have that is different.



*AOUON Organizer Aaliyah Muhammad reflects on photos, including Yuri Kochiyama (far right) on our Ancestor Wall at the Freedom & Movement Center in Oakland, CA.*

I hope that I can secure a photo of Vicha Ratanapakee to hang on our ancestral wall because he has inspired complicated and difficult conversations. Just maybe we can create a narrative that is more complicated than senseless and tragic crime that has victimized our communities. I sincerely believe that police alone can't fix what is wrong. Often crime drives fear, anger, poor public policies, and poorer practices. Maybe this time we can seek what serves our common interest and what is beneficial to us.

I heard Eddy raise the issue of anti-blackness in the Asian community at the rally and this was something that I was trying to figure out silently. I never told Eddy that I took it personal when he told me about the violence on Asian people. I never told him my great uncle George was Chinese, and we called him Papa (Paw Paw). He clearly loved my aunt Mary, and our family and George would bring in the New Year together. Four generations later, my two oldest grandchildren both have partners who are Chinese. I have had the privilege of meeting both of them, and they have attended our family gatherings and functions. Over the course of the last several years I have been silently waiting for one of the couples to announce that I will have another great grandchild, a child who will also be a bridge between different communities.



*Eddy Zheng (left, holding sign) stands with other formerly incarcerated Asian / Asian American organizers at the 2019 Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day in Sacramento, CA.*



*All of Us or None: Formerly incarcerated organizers, family members, and allies of all backgrounds gather to speak to legislators at the 2019 Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day in Sacramento, CA.*

Maybe somewhere down the line a generation will come along who are smarter than us. Maybe they will learn how to build bridges instead of fences, nurture hope instead of fear and anger. Maybe they will learn that our unity will make us safe, that our compassion and love will make us stronger. Maybe they will seek what is in our common interest, like our elders being safe, our children being educated, and a common fight to reject the efforts to divide and to criminalize. These things will not come easy and they will not come in silence. Eddy, I appreciate you and your constant friendship, and your dedication to creating healthy, safe communities for all of us. And it's definitely going to take all of us to stop white supremacy and dismantle systemic racism, from our own town all the way to the White House.

## Why I Give

Supporters from across the country donate to LSPC for many reasons. Maya Perkins of California is a member of our Sustaining Giving Program and donates monthly to LSPC.

Maya gives because of "gratitude for Dorsey and the LSPC team for the help you've provided for my family and community."

Why do you give? Visit [our Facebook page](#) to share why you support LSPC. You can also [visit our website to make a contribution](#). While there, consider joining our Sustaining Giving Program by committing to give on a recurring basis. Contact Eric Norman, Director of Development at [eric@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:eric@prisonerswithchildren.org) with any questions.



*Donations from people like Maya (see left) help us organize our Community Giveback (above) and keep families connected to incarcerated loved ones.*

# Policy Update

## 2021 Legislative Campaigns

LSPC is excited to share our 2021 Policy Platform, which focuses on many of the major issues directly impacting our community, including family visiting rights, sentencing reform, and eliminating court-imposed fines and fees. Our 2021 Policy Platform includes:

- Formerly/Currently Incarcerated Civil Rights
- Economic Justice
- Pre-Trial Release
- Youth Justice
- Probation, Parole, Pardons
- Immigration
- Prison Conditions, Facilities, & Regulations
- Family Unity
- Criminal Law & Sentencing
- Policing Equity

Based on our Policy Platform, LSPC—including our projects All of Us or None and Family Unity Matters—are co-sponsoring and supporting the following CA legislative bills:

[AB 328 \(Chiu\)](#) - Establishes a state-wide Reentry Housing Program to assist counties in providing housing for recently released people.

[AB 677 \(Holden\)](#) - Requires community care facilities, while collecting background information, not to force applicants to disclose conviction history information.

[AB 937 \(Carillo\)](#) - The VISION Act will stop prisons and jails from transferring people who finish their sentences into ICE custody.

[AB 990 \(Bonta\)](#) - Establishes visits to incarcerated loved ones as a right, not a privilege.

[ACA 3 \(Kamlager\)](#) - Removes involuntary servitude as punishment for a crime from the CA constitution.

[SB 354 \(Skinner\)](#) - Reforms the placement process to allow exceptions so that children can be placed with relatives who have conviction histories.

[SB 416 \(Hueso\)](#) - Requires CDCR to implement and make accessible college programs provided by CA public colleges and universities.

[SB 586 \(Bradford\)](#) - Ends the collection of state court-imposed fees, ends charging people convicted of non-violent drug offenses to pay for their court-imposed programs.

[SB 731 \(Durazo\)](#) - The Sunsetting Convictions Act will seal conviction histories upon the completion of the sentence.

The [Abolish Bondage Collectively \(ABC\) coalition](#) is spearheading our campaign to denounce structural racism and remove the last vestiges of slavery in

CALIFORNIA

He wants to kick Jim Crow out of the California Constitution



Dorsey Nunn, who spent 11 years in prison for murder, is now runs an advocacy group called Legal Services for Prisoners with Children.  
(Dave Getzschman/For the Times)

[Read the recent L.A. Times article on our campaign against voluntary servitude here!](#)

the California Constitution.

[Click here to watch our press conference](#) with members of the San Francisco and Riverside County Board of Supervisors announcing resolutions to remove all aspects of slavery and involuntary servitude from their governing practices.

[Click here](#) for more information and to get involved!

And **Digital Quest for Democracy 2021** is coming up May 4!

Check out below in the Calendar section for the

Save the Date. More details about our annual Advocacy Day coming soon!!

For more information about our Policy Platform, or if you want to get involved, please contact LSPC Policy Manager Joanna Theolene at: [policy@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:policy@prisonerswithchildren.org)

## Family Unity Matters

### Helping Relative Children Be Placed with Family Members with Conviction Histories

LSPC/AOUON are working with the Family Reunification Equity and Empowerment (FREE) project of Starting Over, Inc., A New Way of Life, and Underground Scholars on a bill that would make it easier for people with convictions to get relative children in the dependency system placed with them.

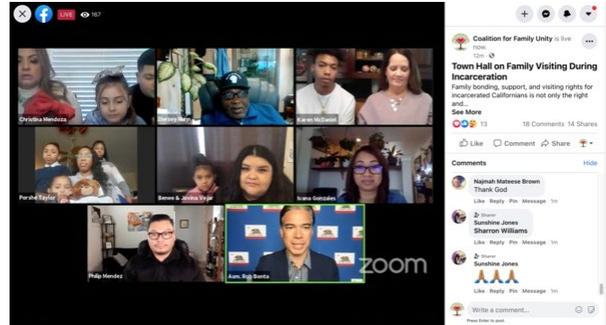
Senator Nancy Skinner introduced our bill (SB 354), which will:

- require child welfare agencies to grant criminal exemptions if there is evidence that the caregivers do not pose a risk of abuse and neglect to the child.
- expands the simplified exemption process to misdemeanors more than three years old and felonies more than five years old and to convictions for which the applicant has received a certificate of rehabilitation or pardon.
- allow courts to rule on an exemption and order placement when the agency's administration process is delayed, especially when the child is ready for a permanent placement.

The first hearing on the bill will be March 23, 1:30 pm, in the Senate Public Safety Committee. Stay tuned for updates!

## Town Hall on AB 990: Visiting Incarcerated Loved Ones

The [Coalition for Family Unity](#), comprised of dozens of community organizations from across the state, are working with author Assemblymember Rob Bonta and other legislators to pass AB 990 and keep families connected to loved ones inside. Watch the Town Hall with Asm. Bonta announcing AB 990 and our discussion on why visiting incarcerated loved ones should be a right, not a privilege.



[Click here](#) for more information and to get involved!

To learn more about both these bills and offer support, please contact Ivana Gonzales, Family Unity Coordinator, [ivana@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:ivana@prisonerswithchildren.org).

## AOUON Community Engagement

### Rally Against Anti-Asian Elder Violence

January and February saw a spike in violence against Asian and Asian American elders, one of the most shocking being the unprovoked assault on Vicha Ratanapakee, an elderly Thai man in San Francisco. That some of these attacks have been at the hands of Black youth has brought up many issues between communities not openly addressed since the aftermath of the Rodney King / L.A. Uprising in 1992.

On Saturday February 13, AOUON attended, and Dorsey spoke at, the Heal Our People Heal Our Communities, organized by the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Oakland Asian Cultural Center, AAPI Lead, and others in Downtown Oakland in support of our Asian community members.



This was the first support rally for 2021 Policy Fellow John Cannon, who said, "The event had a very good turnout. As a member of LSPC and All of Us or None, I want to let the Asian community know that we do not condone in the recent attacks on the elderly. We stand in solidarity and want to be part of the solution."

*AOUON supporting the Heal Our People, Heal Our Communities rally against violence against Asian elders in Downtown Oakland, February 13, 2021. (Photo: Joyce Xi)*

AOUON is constantly out in the community, building bridges and supporting our comrades and allies. Want to get involved in the Bay Area? Contact AOUON Regional Chapter Coordinator Paul B. at: paulb@prisonerswithchildren.org.

## AOUON National

### National Newspaper!

The March, 2021 issue is out & [available here on our website!](#)

This issue covers conditions in prisons during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as widespread practice of prison slavery and our campaign to strip involuntary servitude from California's Constitution.

The AOUON Newspaper, which comes out monthly, is a platform to amplify the voices and stories of our members. If you're interested in sharing a personal story—be it of triumph or hardship—please get in touch with the newspaper editor Paula Lehman-Ewing at [paula@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:paula@prisonerswithchildren.org)



### AOUON National Chapters

Want to get involved in other communities across the country? [Contact one of the many AOUON chapters:](#)



Don't see an AOUON chapter near you? Contact AOUON National Organizer [Oscar Flores](mailto:oscar@prisonerswithchildren.org): oscar@prisonerswithchildren.org / 415.625.7048

## One Community One Mic

Join us for our online AOUON Chapter strategy-sharing & community-building forum!

OCOM is a space where our leadership can form a think tank and advocate for our collective and individual services, policy initiatives, coalitions for change, and social outreach. A place where we express our strategies, successes and challenges so each one, teach one. It is my objective to also provide forgiveness, unity, love and healing to all our membership and audience. This will foster a healthy and effective community both inside and outside. Turn up for your Community. Tune in to share the mic and amplify our voices. This is All of Us or None live in action!

Our first show of 2021 will drop on Thursday, March 11 at Noon (Pacific) with a roundtable on "Reimagining Reentry." OCOM will then be live every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at noon. RSVP here: [bit.ly/OCOM2021](https://bit.ly/OCOM2021)

## ONE COMMUNITY ONE MIC

All of Us or None's bi-weekly online gathering  
JOIN US! Every Other Thursday at Noon (Pacific)

<https://bit.ly/OCOM2021>

Contact: William "Tariq" Palmer / Soul Brother #9  
at [tariq@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:tariq@prisonerswithchildren.org)

All of Us or None

A grassroots organizing project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children



[www.allofusornone.org](http://www.allofusornone.org)

## "The Letter Room" - Screening and Conversation

On Friday, March 5, LSPC / All of Us or None was honored with a special screening of the short film "The Letter Room" and a conversation with film's cast and crew with LSPC leadership.

This short film—[shortlisted for an Academy Award nomination!!!](#)—takes a personal look into the lives that pass through a prison letter room, and the complex issues and relationships that the prison industrial complex creates. [Click here to view the trailer.](#)



The event included a special conversation in which cast members—including Director Elvira Lind, Producer Sonia Sondervan, and actors Oscar Isaac, Brian Petsos, and John Douglas Thompson—discussed those issues with LSPC Executive Director Dorsey Nunn, LSPC Administrative Director Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah, and Root & Rebound In-Prison Coordinator Sandra



Johnson. They also shared the work formerly incarcerated organizers do to keep incarcerated loved ones and family members connected.

Over 350 people attended the event, joining us from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Saudia Arabia, and other global locations in addition to people from all corners of the U.S. We are grateful for all who attended, and for all who also donated to LSPC.

You can watch the [Screening Conversations here](#) (33 min) [starts at 03m38s]

A [Q & A with Director Elvira Lind & Actor Oscar Issac](#) (10 min) is also available for viewing.

On March 15, 2021, the final list of Academy Award nominations will be released—will a film that humanizes people on death row make the cut to be considered Best Short Film?

No matter the Oscars outcome, we are grateful to the filmmakers for this opportunity to highlight the humanity of people directly impacted by the criminal legal system and the prison industrial complex.

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## Calendar

### **AOUON – One Community, One Mic**

**When:** Starts at Noon (PT) on March 11, 2021 (Noon every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month)

**Where:** [bit.ly/OCOM2021](https://bit.ly/OCOM2021)



An opportunity for AOUON chapters from across the country to come together, share strategy, and build community.

For more information, contact LSPC Communications Fellow William "Tariq" Palmer II at: [tariq@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:tariq@prisonerswithchildren.org)

### **AOUON – Oakland Meeting – Digital!**

**When:** 6:30 P.M., March 18, 2021 (3rd Thursday of every month)

**Where:** Online on Zoom: <https://bit.ly/AOUONGeneralMeeting>

All people and family members directly impacted by the criminal justice system are invited to join [All of Us or None](#) at our monthly meeting the 3rd Thursday of each month in Oakland, CA. We discuss local and state legislation, plan community events, and strategize how to advocate for our community in our own voices.



For more information contact Paul: [paul@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:paul@prisonerswithchildren.org) / 415.255.7036

## Digital Quest for Democracy 2021

**When:** 10AM-2PM, Tuesday, May 4, 2021

**Where:** Online (TBD)

### Save the Date!

#Q4D2021 is our annual event during which hundreds of formerly-incarcerated and convicted people, family members, & allies will convene online for community, advocacy training, and legislative visits to convince lawmakers to pass a platform of bills to improve access to employment, housing, and education, and to restore our civil and human rights.

**SAVE THE DATE: MAY 4, 2021**

**DIGITAL QUEST FOR DEMOCRACY**

Digital Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day  
Training - Rally - Meet with Legislators  
Tuesday, May 4 - 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

We invite you and your organization to join us at #Q4D2021, where hundreds of formerly-incarcerated and convicted people, family members, & allies will convene online for community, advocacy training, and legislative visits to convince lawmakers to pass a platform of bills to improve access to employment, housing, and education, and to restore our civil and human rights.

Get your org on board! Contact Michael G.: [policy@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:policy@prisonerswithchildren.org) / 917.596.2615

We're currently organizing the event with many of our organizational allies, so keep an eye out for registration soon!

For more info, or **if your organization is interested in participating**, please contact LSPC Policy Coordinator Michael G.: [policy@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:policy@prisonerswithchildren.org) / 917.596.2615.

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LSPC's office will be closed until further notice.  
Staff will be monitoring email and voice mail.

For general information, contact [info@prisonerswithchildren.org](mailto:info@prisonerswithchildren.org) / 415.255.7036

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