Our Stories

Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah has spent most of her life rebelling against the status quo and fighting for what's right. Even amid this perpetual struggle, however, LSPC’s Administrative Director has found joy and peace in the work. PAGE 3

MORE ART!

We got so many great submissions after our November 2020 Art Issue that we couldn’t wait until this November to share some. Check out the beautiful work coming out of the incarcerated artists movement, and keep sending us your art! PAGE 10

Ending the Vestiges of Slavery

Fighting to remove slavery and involuntary servitude from state and federal constitutions is a difficult but necessary battle. PAGE 6
Rod Black is an incarcerated artist in Illinois. His watercolor depicts a man in a prison cell, head buried in his hands, set in stark contrast to the radiating heart in front of the steel bars.

So many of the injustices embedded in the criminal legal system stem from the exception clause in the 13th Amendment -- the allowance of state and federal governments to use slavery and/or involuntary servitude as a punishment for crime. This allowance begins an inhumane and inexorable cycle of dehumanization. As we discuss the loophole that allows for legal slavery in America today, I would ask that you find compassion and get involved. See if your state contains remnants of slavery in its constitution and, if it does, organize to change it. As the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle.”

A drawing by incarcerated artist Donald Hooker symbolizing the deconstruction of the prison industrial complex.

Medusa busts, surrounded by the face of a black man, a black woman, a Latin man, and a Latina woman. The Art of Resistance, 26 x 26 inches, 2017.

A letter from a California prison detailing the daily threat of sickness and violence many incarcerated individuals face with little chance of finding safety or justice. Page 5

Members of All of Us or None Wisconsin are making their voices and needs heard in a series called 2021 Quest for Democracy. Plus info on Inside Chapters and Bill Watch. Page 8

It's going to take all of us to stop white supremacy and dismantle systemic racism, from our own towns all the way to the White House.

(extended quote from The INjustice System)
The day Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah walked out of federal prison in Dublin, California, the usual chaos and bustle of the work yard quieted to a mild din. Hamdiya had spent 20 years of her life in the echo chamber of a prison, but she had somehow found a way to make her voice reverberate beyond the concrete walls. She wrote to educators and organized programs for the women in her facility. She developed relationships with activists like Angela Davis and Alice Walker, and close friendships with Yuri Kochiyama and Dr. Chinosole, both of whom came to visit her during her years of incarceration. And, perhaps most significantly, she started to make noise about many of the injustices she and her peers suffered at the hands of corrections officers.

"It took years, sometimes, to win any kind of complaint against the system," Hamdiya said. "You could hardly win even when you were right, but we did win many times throughout the years." Hamdiya had been rebelling against the status quo from a young age. While her sister attended debutante parties, Hamdiya was wearing her hair in its natural style and associating with the Black Panther Party. Their stark differences put them on opposite paths: While Hamdiya was locked up, her sister became a career-long employee of the prison system.

"It’s an example of how the system repays its citizens," Hamdiya said. "If you don’t accept the status quo and accept the contradictions about how Black people are treated in the world, you pay a price." But Islam, a religion she embraced shortly after she was incarcerated, gave Hamdiya’s rebellion a new purpose. She successfully advocated for Muslim women to wear traditional Islamic head coverings known as hijabs. The victory opened the doors for Native American prisoners to wear traditional headdress during their religious ceremonies, for Muslims to fast for Ramadan, and for any other religious person to practice in their traditions without interference or restriction.

"There’s a verse in the Qur’an that says, ‘After difficulty, comes ease,’" Hamdiya said. "As a Muslim, you have to try to be a righteous person in this world, even if it’s hard." Hamdiya’s dedication to the education and devotions of the women she was incarcerated with is why the yard stood still the day she left. Having been so intertwined with their lives, she said, her freedom meant something to all of them. It was a moment Hamdiya still remembers vividly.

"Those of us who’ve done so much time, when we get out we have a strong desire and a commitment to not forget the people we left behind," she said. "You can’t just stop. You have to keep on.”

Hamdiya was familiar with Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. During her incarceration, she was constantly writing letters to organizers on the outside, and the people at LSPC were a rare breed: They always wrote back. She had also met Dorsey Nunn during an event she had organized and told him straight out, "I’m going to work for LSPC!" She got her chance in 2002, when the nonprofit brought her on as a volunteer organizer. She eventually moved into bookkeeping, where she found her true passion. She managed books for LSPC, then helped the California Coalition for Women Prisoners transform into a sustainable nonprofit. Now, as the Administrative Director, she has a part in everything the organization touches, from policy to training. Most recently, she joined the SAFE House Network and became the director of Founding Mother’s Inc., a reentry home for women, located in Phoenix, Arizona.

With over three decades of fighting for what’s right, one might think Hamdiya would begin to embrace the “ease” promised her in the Quran. But having found purpose and meaning in her work, Hamdiya has been able to find ease within the difficulty.

"I get ease and peace and pleasure out of so much that I do," she said. "We’ve all made sacrifices for what we believe in, and do what we need to do to move this perpetual ball up the hill.”

Nominate someone you know for our Spotlight feature by sending an email to the Editor:
paula@prisonerswithchildren.org
Mixed Emotions as COVID Vax Arrives Inside

AS THE COVID VACCINE ARRIVES INSIDE CALIFORNIA PRISONS, AN INCARCERATED WRITER GRAPPLING WITH EMPATHY AND REMORSE

By Reginald Thorpe

When I first heard that there was a vaccine for the novel coronavirus, I got very emotional. Who am I to get a vaccine before any one of my victims? I spent most of my life denying my feelings, a response that usually caused me to entertain negative thoughts and engage in antisocial behavior. Fortunately, I have been able to shed the weight of my fear, shame and guilt, weight that, for a long time, prevented me from doing further exploration of who I was and from understanding why I ignored my feelings. This overdue self-examination has made the last six years of my life in prison the most difficult of the 22-and-a-half years I’ve been incarcerated. On the other hand, the past six years have also been the best years of my life.

In September 2015, after my custody points dropped, I left the maximum security facility at California State Prison, Sacramento (New Folsom) and transferred to a Level III institution. A month later, I learned that my first parole hearing had been changed from 2048 to 2022. I started learning from incarcerated men who were striving for a release date even though they were sentenced to life in prison. I heard them talking about “insight,” attending self-help groups and programs, and staying out of trouble. I observed their movements and their conduct intensely, while mustering up the courage to approach them and inquire about their endeavor to free themselves. Some of them were people I knew from other prisons, others and, unfortunately, my taking of their conduct intensely, while mustering up the courage to approach them and inquire about their endeavor to free themselves. Some of them were people I knew from other prisons, so I was not a stranger to them. But they had changed in the years since we’d first met. It wasn’t long before I realized I had to change, too, but I didn’t know how. I thought I had changed because my custody points dropped and I had been transferred to a lower-level prison. I did not know that I needed to change on the inside.

It took years for me to figure out that I had to go back over all the trauma I experienced during my childhood and identify how those experiences informed my feelings, thoughts, beliefs, values, morals and perception. I had to ask God to help me get through the pain that came with those experiences. He revealed to me that there are two important things I must be willing to do; become vulnerable again and forgive.

My ability to embrace and accept the person I was before that first trauma, enabled me to become vulnerable. There have been times when I have discovered how much easier it is to forgive people, things, and myself when I am vulnerable. There have been times when I have revisited experiences that were so painful and sensitive that I had to stop and cry, realizing that I had never given myself a chance to cry about them before. Then, later on, I could forgive myself for not addressing them earlier in my life, and I could forgive those who caused that pain, whether they had hurt me emotionally, psychologically, physically or verbally. I believe that forgiveness allowed me to find a purpose for my life and experience peace within myself.

My inability to forgive before I started on this journey is what prevented me from having remorse and empathy, and from processing the underlying issues that contributed to my criminality, my victimization of others and, unfortunately, my taking of someone’s life. On the other hand, the forgiveness I am capable of today has afforded me an opportunity to process the emotion I got when I heard about the coronavirus vaccine.

While most people were filled with hope and optimism about returning back to normal life, whatever that may be, and ending this horrific pandemic raging throughout the world and killing thousands every single day, I was angry. How could I be angry? It is simple: There is a very strong possibility that I will receive a vaccination before any of my victims because I’m incarcerated. This does not sit well with me. In my emotional work, I have come to have remorse and empathy for those who I had harmed, and I believe I do not deserve to be vaccinated sooner than any of them. If I could, I would give my vaccine away to any one of my victims or their family members, or to any of the thousands of seniors I see on TV waiting on line. Unfortunately, I cannot do this and it angers me.

There was a point when I believed and thought that being angry was bad. Today, I know that the anger I am experiencing is healthy and for good reason. Instead of anger caused by unprocessed fear, shame and guilt, I am angry because of my compassion, empathy and remorse. I am angry because I did the work, and continue to do the work, that is necessary for me to change and never become the person I was before I learned how to be vulnerable and to forgive.

Reginald Thorpe is a regular contributor to All of Us or None, often reporting on conditions inside as they relate to the pandemic. Reggie has been incarcerated since May 2000 and is currently in custody at San Quentin State Prison in Northern California. The diagram above is derived from a depiction he sent the All of Us or None newspaper outlining how he sees California’s phased vaccination plan.

By Reginald Thorpe

Mrs. Thorpe has not been able to attain a vaccine, a fact that weighs heavily on her son. Photo courtesy Reginald Thorpe

Reginald Thorpe with his mother. Though in a high-risk category for COVID, Mrs. Thorpe has not been able to attain a vaccine, a fact that weighs heavily on her son. Photo courtesy Reginald Thorpe
The following is a letter from Mike Phillips, an incarcerated writer, filmmaker, and cartoonist. Readers should be warned certain parts of this letter to AOUON are graphic.

O

Once again, as it has occurred numerous times before, the prisoners -- the majority of whom are innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted -- are on quarantine lockdown.

I appreciate reading, for both a current and historic perspective of politics while trapped inside the vile and insidious system of incarceration. This now allow me to give my impressions and experiences as a presently incarcerated man who is suffering as a political prisoner, although they used non-political excuses to ram me through a kangaroo court.

What I deal with in prison may be much more common than I know.

It cannot be argued that, shortly after the Civil War, Blacks were supposedly freed, but as a prisoner, I'm not allowed 99.9% of any books to quote statistics and relevant studies, of the tools that a "free" person can access, so I must utilize what information my mind holds of the human property safely dying and caught in it also. Specifically, placed in solitary, in sanitary, with no open access. No one is allowed to speak, write, or receive mail. From our cells we can hear, and sometimes see, the employees unmasked, partying, often hugging and within inches from each other's faces. As George Orwell wrote in his novel Animal Farm, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

Before the police carjacked and kidnapped me, I was a bit naive about the law. I was always a social activist: anti war, pro feminism, pro civil rights, pro same sex marriage, pro environment, pro animal rights, against sex slavery and human trafficking. The law itself never interested me, but as a prisoner, I'm not allowed 99.9% of any books to quote statistics and relevant studies, or even to study into the tools that a "free" person can access, so I must utilize what information my mind holds.
Ending the Vestiges of Slavery in California

Fighting to remove slavery and involuntary servitude from state and federal constitutions is a difficult but necessary battle

By Jesse Burleson

A

semble Constitutional Amendment 3 is not ordinary legislation. ACA 3, a bill authored by Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager (D-Los Angeles), will help transform thousands of people’s lives for good by erasing forced labor from our state constitution. It is a directive from the people of California that says we will not accept slavery in our state.

Why do we need such a law in this day and age? Wasn’t slavery abolished 150 years ago?

The answer is: not completely. Although slavery purportedly ended in 1865, the prohibition against the practice of slavery applies only to private citizens. In other words, the Emancipation Proclamation prohibited citizens from keeping other people as slaves in their backyards the way some did before. The 13th Amendment “abolished” the private ownership of people by other people. However, the 13th Amendment was written with an exemption clause, a caveat that preserved the right of state and federal agencies to practice slavery. As a result, the Black slave population, who were considered “freed” by the 13th Amendment, were systemically “re-enslaved” by that same law:

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.

When slaves were “freed,” states enacted new laws known as the “Black Codes” and Jim Crow resulting in the incarceration of many former slaves for petty offenses. These menial offenses led to arrests, placing former slaves back into slavery within government ran plantations — prisons.

In 1974, the people of California voted to remove the term “slavery” from our state’s constitution, but our state constitution maintains the use of “involuntary servitude,” for which there is very little legal distinction. As a result, our state prison system still utilizes slave labor for industries. Our government Penal Code states that every able-bodied incarcerated person shall work, and it allows for the state to contract out prison labor without payment for wages. Factories are built on prison properties and prisoners are forced to work in them. The majority of those men and women utilized in this manner are the direct descendants of our former slave population: They are overwhelmingly Black.

In 2020, as demand in the U.S. grew for masks, women incarcerated in Cheno stitched masks for 12 hours a day, but were forbidden from wearing them.

Other work at the prison includes delivering meals from cell to cell, cleaning communal showers, and cleaning COVID-19 units in prison hospitals.

For their work, the women at CIW are compensated with a wage between 8 cents to $1 an hour.

In 2021, the Californian Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA) oversaw roughly 7000 incarcerated workers in California, and fabric manufacturing alone brought in revenue of $23.7 million in 2019 for CALPIA, with furniture manufacturing following closely behind with $16.9 million of revenue.

By August 2020, 83 percent of prisoners that staffed the furniture factory at Avenal State Prison had contracted COVID-19.

Jesse Burleson, a policy fellow at Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, experienced the vestiges of slavery first hand when he was incarcerated. Photo credit: TaSin Sabir

ABC continues on Next Page
SLAVERY IN AMERICA: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In December 2020, a joint resolution entitled the “Abolition Amendment” was introduced by members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The proposed amendment to the federal Constitution would prohibit the use of slavery and involuntary servitude as a punishment for a crime.

In a statement, Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) said the following:

“As we take on the long and difficult challenge of rooting out systemic racism in our nation, ending the slavery loophole in the 13th Amendment is a critical step in that challenge. Slavery is our nation’s original sin and this loophole has been exploited for far too long to criminalize Black and Brown Americans.”

The Abolition Amendment dropped off the legislative agenda with the conclusion of the 116th Congress, but Merkley plans to reintroduce it in the coming months.

ABC (continued from Page 6)

I spent 31 years inside of California state prisons, from 1987 until 2018, and I can recall the slavery process vividly. I had chains wrapped around my waist and my wrists were fastened to them. I was told to kneel on a wooden box so that my legs could be shackled at my ankles restricting my movement to small, short steps. I was placed on a bus along with dozens of other shackled men, mostly Black like me, and driven to a prison facility where there were thousands more Black men waiting. I was taken to a hearing and told that my name would be placed on a worker’s waiting list. I was informed of the job assignments I was eligible for and asked what the pay rates were, I was informed that most of the jobs I was eligible for were “non-pay,” that I was informed that my name would be placed on a worker’s waiting list. I was informed of the job assignments I was eligible for and asked what the pay rates were, I was informed that most of the jobs I was eligible for were “non-pay,”

I worked in the kitchen (12 cents an hour) so I could prepare my own food; I worked as a teacher’s aide (no pay) so I could help others with their learning. I worked in the library ($36 a month) so I could access law books and use a word processor.

I recall at the kitchen job being “told” I must work seven days a week because the prison was on a lock-down. But when I got my check, it didn’t include payment for the extra days I had worked. Even though it was only 12 cents an hour, I filed a grievance on principle.

At the end of the litigation process, I learned that the state of California was authorized by the state and federal constitutions to treat me as a slave! I had already figured that part out at my first hearing, but now I saw how they were able to get away with it. It was in the laws! It was in the constitution!

Our state’s slave population has increased over the past 25 years, as the mass incarceration boom has offered a “profitable solution for government budgets. Where there had once been less than 10 prisons in the entire state, there are now over 30 prisons in California! And although incarcerated persons can no longer be classified as “slaves” under our state’s constitution, our systemic practice of slavery survives under the often-overlooked term in our constitution. “Involuntary servitude” is simply slavery under another name, and today, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation operates 70 factories, all operating using slave labor. Data says that poverty is a central cause for recidivism, but also that capital gains from exploited labor are the central cause for our state’s continued investment into mass incarceration. My brother Jeronimo Aguilar sums it up perfectly: “It is long overdue for California to right the wrongs of the past.”

“Incarcerated individuals are human beings that deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, not to be exploited for capital gain,” Jeronimo says. “Our diverse state should abolish ALL vestiges of slavery and give incarcerated community members the opportunity to work for a living wage and not be forced to work for pennies on the dollar. Enough is enough.”

If ACA 3 passes out of the legislature and is signed by the governor, its enactment will be up to voters. We urge you to support this bill and vote to end slavery in California.

Jesse Burleson is an Elder Freeman Policy Fellow with Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. LPCS is a supporter of ending involuntary servitude and denouncing structural racism through our coalition Abolishing Bondage Collectively (ABC). Find out more information and how you can get involved at Prisonerwithchildren.org/ABC

Progress at the State Level

In 2018, Colorado voters removed the state’s constitutional slavery language. In the November 2020 elections, Utah and Nebraska voters followed suit.

In addition to California, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota and New Jersey legislatures are still wrestling with the issue of constitutional slavery language. At present, more than 20 state constitutions still include language that allow slavery by way of this loophole.

About the Artist: Background image

“Tear Down This Wall” was drawn by incarcerated artist Donald “C-Note” Hooker in 2018. C-Note originally created the work for Critical Resistance’s 20th anniversary forum on strategy and struggle to abolish the prison industrial complex.

C-Note’s work has been featured in AOUON News previously — his “Incarceration Nation” was the backdrop of our April 2020 issue and he contributed a column about the importance of prison art for our November 2020 Art Issue. His work is released under Creative Commons to allow free access to the public.

In an letter to AOUON Editor Paula Lehman-Ewing, C-Note said this about his work:

“My art is for the people. We all have talents we can bare in the cause of justice. Art just happens to be mine.”
**Regional Highlight**

All of Us or None Wisconsin has started a new initiative to allow directly impacted to speak in their own voices to the people making policies that influence everyday life. AOUON Chapter President Minister Caliph Amiri Muab’El wrote the following description of the series:

All of Us or None Wisconsin kicked off our “Our Quest for Democracy (Justice Check-In)” series in December. Throughout the series, we will be going through each branch of local government agencies to have them interface with directly impacted communities and the community at large in a panel/town hall-style set up.

We kicked off our first Justice Check In with the Elected Officials Edition: Elected Officials in City, County and State offices. This was followed up by a Judicial Edition, where the Chief Supreme Court Judge and Chief Deputy District Attorney of Wisconsin sat on our panels. They heard from directly impacted people and the community at large about their concerns regarding issues of racial disparity in the criminal legal system, sentencing and our ideas for alternatives to prison. Our latest edition was the Department of Corrections Edition, where the Secretary of Wisconsin’s correction’s department sat on our panel to address the pressing issues regarding the malfunctions and improprieties of the Department of Corrections. The result was a powerful and moving experience and an important conversation.

This event is put on every third Saturday of each month. The next edition will be on policing and will take place March 20, 2021 from 1-3pm CST. Follow us on Facebook (@allofusornonewi) and tune in to our Facebook LIVE when the event kicks off. Fellowship with us, learn about our state and the boots-on-the-ground work that directly impacted people are doing in Wisconsin. Our quest for Democracy is a tool to build power among the directly impacted community within the state of Wisconsin.

The town hall style meetings have been 60% virtual and 40% in-person with social distancing practices heavily enforced. Participants can opt to agree solely to the virtual option available.

For more information about our organization please wiaouon.org. These events are put on in collaboration with Breaking Barriers Mentoring Inc., where I am honored to serve as Executive Director. Should you have any questions please feel free to ask.

Peace, Love, and Solidarity.

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**Getting Organized Inside**

Legal Services and All of Us or None is proud and excited to announce that longtime AOUON member and veteran organizer Sandra Johnson is returning to LSPC’s staff as an AOUON Organizer. Sandra will be organizing AOUON chapters of currently incarcerated members as well as take on distribution of the AOUON Newspaper beginning April 1, 2021.

In 2017, Sandra was an inaugural “Elder” Freeman Policy Fellow. Sandra was a fearless leader from the start testifying in front of state legislators on the importance of California’s Fair Chance Act, known more colloquially as Ban the Box.

LSPC brought Sandra on after the conclusion of her fellowship, making her an AOUON Senior Organizer. She was the primary organizer of the 2019 Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day, bringing over 650 formerly incarcerated advocates, family members, and allies to the California Capitol to speak directly to legislators on bills that directly impact our community.

For the past two years, Sandra has been working at Root & Rebound, a reentry nonprofit who’s mission is to restore power and resources to the families and communities most harmed by mass incarceration.

If you’re interested in starting a chapter inside a prison, jail or detention center, get in touch with Sandra directly.

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Interested in starting an Inside Membership Chapter of All of Us or None?

Contact:
Sandra Johnson
All of Us or None
C/O Legal Services with Prisoners with Children
4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608
Bill Watch

California

- Removal of Involuntary Servitude from the State Constitution (Kamlager) ACA 3 would remove the vestiges of slavery from California’s foundational legal document: its constitution. As a constitutional amendment, the bill requires approval from both legislative houses. Should it be approved by the legislature, it will be posed to voters in the 2022 midterm elections.
- CRISES ACT (Kamlager) AB2054 would establish the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (CRISES) Act pilot program, which will scale up community-based alternatives to police.
- Parole Credits (Bonta) AB990 would enshrine visitation as a right (rather than a privilege) for incarcerated individuals and their families.
- VISION Act (Carrillo) AB837 would set the national model for inclusive immigration policies, and end the harsh double-punishment of incarcerated community members.

Idaho

- Clean Slate (Rubel and Lent) [number pending] would allow individuals with felony convictions for nonviolent and sexual crimes to petition the courts to seal their public records. Individuals applying for sealed records would need to have served their whole sentence and have not reoffended in the three years following their release.

Illinois

- Right to Vote (Ford) HB4377/HJRCA33, a bill and constitutional amendment, would ensure incarcerated people would be able to vote in the state of Illinois.
- Electronic Monitoring (Madigan) HB 1115 would eliminate the use of electronic monitoring for people who have completed their state prison sentences and are not required by statute to be on a monitor, ending the practice of imposing electronic house arrest for people who have already done their prison time.

Kentucky

- Kentucky Voting Rights (Higdon) SB62 would amend the Constitution of Kentucky to grant persons convicted of a felony other than a sex offense, a violent offense, or an offense against a child, the right to vote five years after completion of sentence. This bill passed the Senate but was not voted on by the House before the end of the 2020 session.
- Successful Supervision (seeking sponsor) is a proposed bill being made by All of Us or None Louisville and ACLU Smart Justice Advocates of Kentucky. It will seek to target supervision to ensure successful outcomes for those that are dealing with the issues from being on probation parole, including the elimination of fines and fees. It will also establish a system of compliance credits, such as Work for Time credit, Education for Time credit, and a mandatory time calculation.

Missouri

- Fresh Start Act (Koenig) SB 647 would require that no person shall be disqualified from pursuing, practicing, or engaging in any occupation for which a license is required solely or in part because of a prior conviction of a crime, unless the crime for which an applicant was convicted directly relates to the duties and responsibilities for the licensed occupation.
- Death Penalty With Mental Illness (Hannegan) HB 1756 would prohibit the execution of any person found to have suffered from a serious mental illness at the time of the offense for which they are accused.

New Jersey

- Slavery Exemption (Rice and Cunningham) SRC 96 is a proposed amendment to the state constitution that would prohibit slavery or involuntary servitude in New Jersey prisons.
- Public Health Emergency Credit (Mukherji and Sumter) A4235/S2519 would require credits to be awarded to certain incarcerated individuals and returning citizens during public health emergency. It would also prohibit the credit to have contact with victim upon release.

New York

- Mental Health Bail Reform (Kaplan) S7242 would establish a pretrial mental health and substance abuse services bail fund.
- Voting Rights (Parker) S 6821 would require the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, in collaboration with the state and county boards of election, to establish a program to facilitate voter registration and voting for incarcerated individuals.

North Carolina

- The Second Chance Act (Britt, Daniel and McKissick) H 874 would set up automatic expungement for people who are found not guilty or have charges against them dismissed after July 1, 2020, and allow people to petition for the expungement of nonviolent misdemeanor and felony charges after a period of good behavior.

Pennsylvania

- Probation Reform (Williams) SB 14 would reform how long Pennsylvanians stay on probation and the time served in prison for probation violations. It also specifies that a court may not impose a sentence of probation consecutive to another sentence of probation.

Following testimony from 16-year-old Samiyah, Charles Boyer, and AOUON N. New Jersey Chapter President Tia Ryans, a New Jersey Senate committee passed S2924, which would reallocate nearly $10 million of the youth prison budget into transformative justice programs. Photo credit: Ryan Haygood
In Re: Art Issue

We love our incarcerated artists, men and women who free themselves each time they put pen to paper, voice to spoken word, or paint to canvas. All of Us or None received such an amazing response from our November 2020 Art Issue that we couldn't possibly wait a year to publish them.

Our regular “Coming Home” section will resume next month.

All Together Now

Black, White, and poor lives. Do they really matter?
Blood, bone, and skin, in alleyway they splatter.

“Hands up, unarmed. Please don't shoot!”
If they think someone’s watching, you may only get the boot.

“Please stop choking me! I can’t breathe or catch my breath!”
Police answered this cry with a quick and speedy death.

Somewhere in the desert, “Rise up and stand still!”
As a homeless man rose, they opened fire to kill.

Playing with toys as all children have done,
Has now cost the poor many dauthers and sons.

Another teeny bopper, digging raps and rhymes,
Police shot in cold blood 16 times.

Mentally ill, not in his right head,
Safely locked up is where they pronounced him dead.

Another unarmed man, breaking into parked cars,
Legally shot dead, leaving his family 20 scars.

How many more of us have to be shot in our backs,
While those paid and trusted plant tasers to cover tracks?

When will it stop? Will it ever end?
Local, state and federal law can no longer be called our friend.

“Mother with Baby” by Paul John “PJ” Denham, incarcerated at SATF Prison in Corcoran, California. This drawing was done in pencil.

“Bigger than Life,” a portrait of John Lewis in black-ink pens, is by Scott Smith, an incarcerated artist in Corcoran, California.
Resources & Events

Coronavirus Resources
Supporting directly and system-impacted people during crisis
https://www.beyond-prisons.com/covid19

Safety Manuals for individuals in state, federal and California Correctional Facilities
prisonerswithchildren.org/Coronavirus

COVID-19 Mutual Aid (Newark, NJ)
https://www.allofusornone-northernnj.com/covid-19-newark-mutual-aid

Welcome Home Initiative
Since the Public Health Credit Bill was signed into law, our communities must prepare for the influx of need to make sure that our brothers and sisters have the mutual aid support they require during this critical time following their immediate release.

If you’re able, please help us welcome our family back home.
Visit www.allofusornone-northernnj.com to donate.

Participatory Defense
Join on Zoom
Link: https://bit.ly/2zJa5fH
Password: 12345

A community organizing model for people facing charges, and to help communities impact the outcomes of cases and transform the landscape of power in the courtroom.

Every Friday 6PM-7PM

The Bail Project-Louisville is providing services to anyone released from jail during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Contact Us Via Facebook @TBPLOUISVILLE or at ANY NUMBER BELOW
(502) 324-7442 | (502) 813-5421
(502) 252-1626 | (502) 438-0164
(502) 209-5472 | (502) 289-1234

Yoga and Pilates Classes
As part of our Wellness Initiative, join us as we alternate yoga and pilates classes on Thursdays, 6:15pm-7:00pm via Zoom.

A donation for any amount is requested to attend. If you are unable to join us on Thursday evenings, we will provide you with access to session recordings.
www.allofusornone-northernnj.com/wellness-initiative

All of Us or None Monthly Virtual Membership Meeting
Every Third Thursday
6:30pm to 8:30pm PT

No More Slavery
Learn more at prisonerswithchildren.org/abc
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 his 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 men can feed 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.

Beaten man, who shall avenge you?
You, on whom the blows are falling,
Hear your wounded brothers 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?
He who can no longer bear it.
Counts the blows that arm his spirit.
Taught the time by need and sorrow,
Strikes today and not tomorrow.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)