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LSPC Newsletter, April 2021

Our Voices Matter, and Can Move Legislative Mountains

Message from the Executive Director



Dorsey Nunn

The arrival of Spring also brings—in addition to flowers and pollen—the start of the legislative cycle in earnest. Committees begin hearings on bills, our coalitions start advocating in earnest, and the window of opportunity opens wide for our community of people directly impacted by the legal justice system to have a profound effect on state policy.

Dismissed and excluded from so much of the machinery of democracy—either through centuries of felony disenfranchisement, Jim Crow voter suppression tactics, or just lack of access to elected officials—it is vital that formerly and currently incarcerated and convicted people, our family members, and our allies have the opportunity to speak directly to legislators about the policies that directly impact us on a daily basis.

“Nothing about us, without us.” We are the experts on the effect of criminal / legal justice policies, and our voices must be at the table. Anything else is willful subversion and dismissal of our humanity.

So as our [9th Annual Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day](#) approaches early next month on May 4, I’m becoming even more excited about the number and breadth of policies and work our organization is committed to this legislative cycle.

We are pushing groundbreaking legislation to make visiting incarcerated loved ones a right, not a privilege. Expanding our work in San Francisco, Alameda, and other counties, we’re on the verge of eliminating onerous court fines and fees statewide. We’re working to stop ICE from taking our loved ones after they

complete their sentence. And we're kicking off a major campaign to finally eliminate slavery and involuntary servitude from the California Constitution.

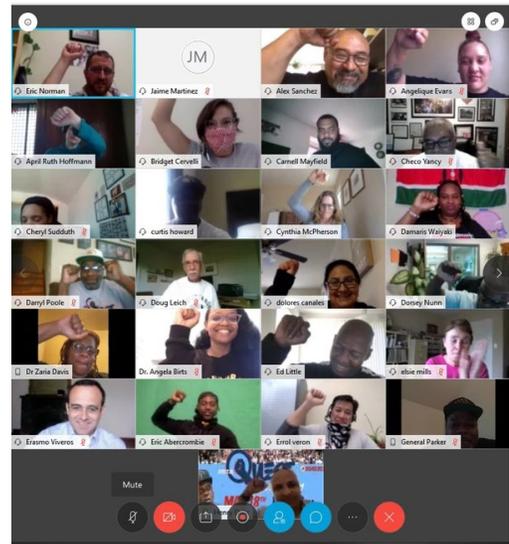
Our staff is so hungry for change, and it's a testament to their passion and the quality of our work that—despite a pandemic—we have grown both in numbers and capabilities. COVID didn't kill us—we've filled empty positions and added more staff, and not only formerly incarcerated organizers and fellows, but more attorneys as well. Our capacity to process policy, craft and implement campaigns, and provide assistance to the hundreds of letters requesting legal help has increased across the board.

This benefits not only our community, but our staff as well—our 2021 Elder Freeman Policy Fellows are able to dive into a structured, supportive environment, and I'm already witnessing their intellectual and experiential growth. All LSPC staff and AOUON organizers are soaking up and engaging in an intellectually rich environment I've rarely seen or experienced at a non-profit organization.

We are full of energy and passion, and we're ready to make a difference in crafting state and local policy to benefit our communities this legislative cycle. Please [RSVP here and join us](#)—in person online or in financial spirit—at [our 9th Annual Quest for Democracy this May 4th from 10-2](#) Pacific.

And join us **May 7th for a special event with Dr. Angela Davis and Dr. Dennis Childs** to kick off the [Abolish Bondage Collectively](#) campaign to end Involuntary Servitude & the last vestiges of slavery in the California Constitution.

Your voice matters just as much as ours, and together we can move legislative mountains.



Participants from the 2020 Digital Quest for Democracy celebrate a successful day of advocating online to legislators. JOIN US on May 4, 2021 for this year's #DQ4D2021! [RSVP HERE!](#)



Why I Give

Malinda Donovan of Maryland is a member of our Sustaining Giving Program.

“This donation is dedicated to all the hearts who have experienced the US legal system. May you all be blessed and heal completely.”

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 with any questions.



Donations from people like Malinda (see left) help us organize our Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day (above) and allow people directly impacted by the legal justice system to speak to legislators about bills that affect us.

Policy Update

2021 Legislative Campaigns

This year, we are advancing legislation in California to release incarcerated people, restore human and civil rights, and reunify families and communities. We will be fighting to reduce the disproportionate impact of long and unjust sentences on communities of color. We are seeking to end involuntary servitude, a vestige of slavery and a tool of economic injustice. Building upon our successes of last



year, we will work to further eliminate criminal fines and fees, which disproportionately harm low-income communities. We stand against the discrimination that people face because of their arrest or conviction history, and we will be aiming to pass a comprehensive system that prospectively and retroactively seals criminal and arrest records for all Californians.

Family ties, education, and housing are all essential components of a successful re-entry from incarceration. We are leading a campaign to establish a right for people in prison to have frequent contact with their loved ones and be given the opportunity to reunite with them upon release. We are working on initiatives to provide more access to higher education for people in prison, as well as better access to housing upon their release. We believe in protecting our community members who are at risk of being deported. This year, we will continue to advocate for all people who have completed their sentence to be released to their families, not immigration enforcement. Throughout 2021, we will need your support to achieve our goals of full restoration of human and civil rights for formerly and currently incarcerated people and their families.

Here is a list of upcoming hearings for our priority bills. The hearing links include information on how to call-in if someone wants to give a “me too” in support.

[The Vision Act | Assembly Bill 937](#) – Immigration Enforcement (Carrillo, Kalra, and Santiago)

- Passed out of Assembly Public Safety Committee April 6

[FREE Bill | SB 354](#) – Foster youth: relative placement (Skinner)

- Passed out of Senate Human Services Committee April 6

[Sunsetting Criminal Records | SB 731](#) – Criminal Records: Relief (Durazo)

- Set to be heard in Senate Public Safety Committee April 13 [\[link\]](#)

**Support #AB937
The VISION Act**

The VISION Act (AB 937) takes urgent and necessary strides toward ensuring that our local and state resources are not used to funnel immigrants into inhumane health conditions in immigration detention, violate Constitutional protections, and separate immigrant families and communities.

<http://www.iceoutofca.org/get-involved.html>

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children All of Us or None

SUPPORT #SB354

This legislation would make it easier for people with convictions to care for relatives who are in the child welfare system to #KeepFamiliesTogether and place children with #FamilyFirst. The bill would also prevent courts from denying reunification services based solely on a parent's violent felony conviction, no matter how old or unrelated to child safety.

#KeepFamiliesTogether #FamilyFirst



[The Cunningham Fix | SB 567](#) – Criminal Procedure: sentencing. (Bradford)

- Set to be heard in Senate Public Safety Committee April 13 [\[link\]](#)

[Abolish Unjust Fees | SB 586](#) – Criminal Fees. (Bradford)

- Set to be heard in Senate Public Safety Committee April 13 [\[link\]](#)
- AOUON Senior Organizer Henry Ortiz will be testifying!

[Protecting Incarcerated Students | SB 416](#) – Corrections: Educational Programs (Hueso)

- Set to be heard in Senate Education Committee April 14 [\[link\]](#)

[Visitation as a Right | AB 990](#) – Prisons: Inmate Visitation (Bonta)

- Will be heard in Assembly Public Safety Committee April 20.
- [Sign up here for updates.](#)

JOIN US! to end the last vestiges of slavery in California!

[Sign up for the Abolish Bondage Collectively \(ABC\) coalition](#) to join the fight to end involuntary servitude.

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

Fines & Fees Update

AOUON California Chapter Coordinator Paul B. discusses some of the recent work he's done over the past month to continue LSPC's Fines & Fees work to eliminate financial burdens to those who can least afford them.

On Feb. 23, I spoke [on a panel with the Aspen Institute](#) (based in Washington D.C.) about what steps advocates, policymakers, and people directly impacted by the criminal justice system can take to make jail phone calls free and end commissary

markups. I spoke as one of the leading advocates in San Francisco that ended the practice of generating revenue for jail operations from high priced phone calls and jail commissary items, the burden of which often falls upon families and loved ones who are



disproportionately low-income and people of color. The “People Over Profits” ordinance was introduced on June 2, 2020 by San Francisco Supervisors Sandra Lee Fewer and Shamann Walton. This ordinance ensured the city of San Francisco can no longer generate revenue on products and services for incarcerated people and their families.

On March 4, I made a public comment at the California Public Utilities Commission about the need for protection of incarcerated people who share testimony at an upcoming public participation hearing. There is a great fear of retaliation from service providers and possible facility staff, if they identify an incarcerated person who is calling into the hearing. So, I spoke to CPUC commissioners about these worries and concerns, requesting they make sure to anonymize and block caller information.

On March 24, I spoke on a virtual forum about prison labor hosted by the San Francisco Living Wage coalition to a group of college students from UCLA and USF on how corporations using prison labor to produce goods and services is a result of involuntary servitude in the California constitution and a leftover vestige of slavery.

For more information about LSPC's Fines and Fees work, contact Paul at: paulb@prisonerswithchildren.org

Family Unity Matters

Press Conference: AB990 & the Resumption of CDCR Visits

On Wednesday, April 7, the Coalition for Family Unity held a press conference at the Capitol in Sacramento to address issues in CDCR’s plan to resume prison visits, and to promote AB 990 (Bonta), a bill which would make visiting loved ones in prison a family right, not a privilege.



CFU coalition members traveled to Sacramento from across the state to share their own experiences and hardships visiting their currently incarcerated loved ones. Family members demand the return to visiting times being available throughout the week and into the evening to accommodate working families.

[Video of the press conference is available on the CFU Facebook page here.](#)

CFU also calls upon legislators to pass AB 990 (Bonta), which would make visiting a right and help improve conditions that make visiting so traumatic for family members.

Webinar: "Parenting Beyond Bars" with Chesa Boudin

As part of the "Week of Action" in support of AB 990 and restoring family visits, the Coalition for Family Unity held a webinar panel entitled "Parenting Beyond Bars" moderated by San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin and featuring several CFU families.

Parenting Beyond Bars
with Chesa Boudin

Join us for an hour of conversation on how incarceration affects children and parents' mental health and relationships.

San Francisco DA Chesa Boudin grew up visiting his parents in New York prisons and recently published 'Across Prison Walls, I Felt My Parents' Love.' He will share his experiences in conversation with California families also impacted by incarceration, and discuss how #AB990 will expand visiting in CDCR.

Thursday, April 8, 2021 12 - 1 PM

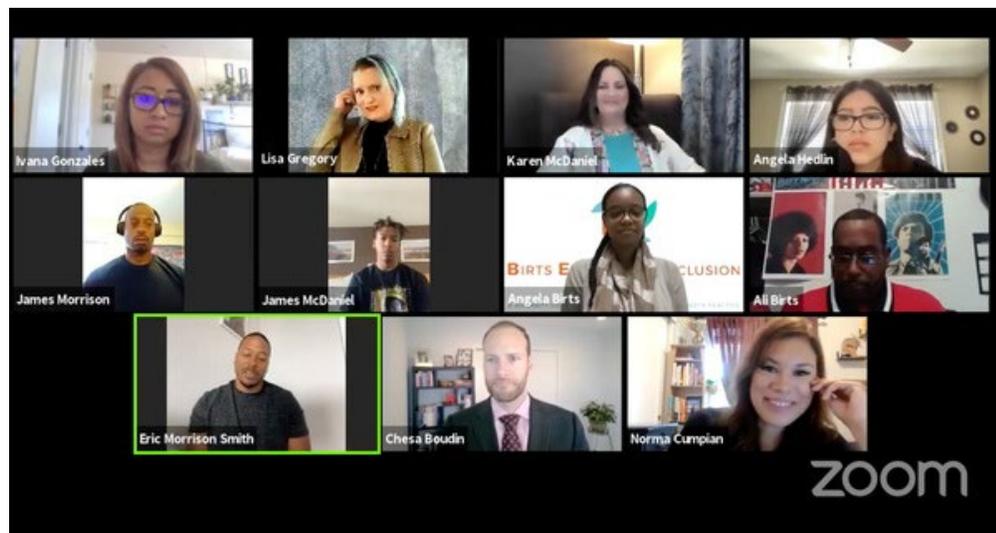
RSVP:
bit.ly/ParentingBB-RSVP
or Join Via
www.facebook.com/CoalitionForFamilyUnity

For questions, email ivana@prisonerswithchildren.org

The poster features a logo of a tree with a heart as its trunk and a small illustration of a child reading a book.

DA Boudin grew up with both parents in prison since the early 80's and with his father still currently incarcerated, so he knows well the challenges and trauma involved in visiting loved ones in prison, as well as how important those visits are to maintain connection and family. Since being elected as District Attorney in 2019, [Boudin has stopped requesting cash bail—reducing pretrial jail population—and has sought diversion and restorative justice programs over incarceration.](#)

Joining D.A. Boudin on the panel were several families—including children—who shared their often-traumatic experiences visiting loved ones in prison, and why those visits are so important to keeping their family connected. All panelists discussed their support for AB 990 (Bonta), which would restore visiting as a family right.



The [Parenting Beyond Bars panel](#) is available for viewing [here](#).

For more information and to join the campaign to pass AB 990, check out [the CFU page on our Family Unity Matters website here](#), or contact FUM Coordinator Ivana Gonzales at ivana@prisonerswithchildren.org

AOUON Community Engagement

Community Organizer Training

AOUON recently conducted another Community Organizer Training at the Freedom & Movement Center in Oakland, CA. AOUON members, LSPC Policy Fellows, and others spend a pair of Saturdays to learn effective organizing skills and info such as



computer skills, the history of organizing, outreach strategies, policy advocacy, power mapping, facilitation, and campaign organizing.

The next Community Organizer Training will take place in a few months. To sign up, contact Oscar Flores at oscar@prisonerswithchildren.org

Hitting the Streets!



AOUON members tabling at Lake Merritt, Oakland, CA on a Friday afternoon in early April. From left to right: 2021 Policy Fellow Alex Diaz, AOUON National Organizer Oscar Flores, AOUON Chapter Coordinator Paul B., and 2021 Policy Fellow Jeronimo Aguilar.

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: paul@prisonerswithchildren.org.

AOUON National

National Newspaper!

The April issue of the AOUON Newspaper is out and [on our website here!](#)

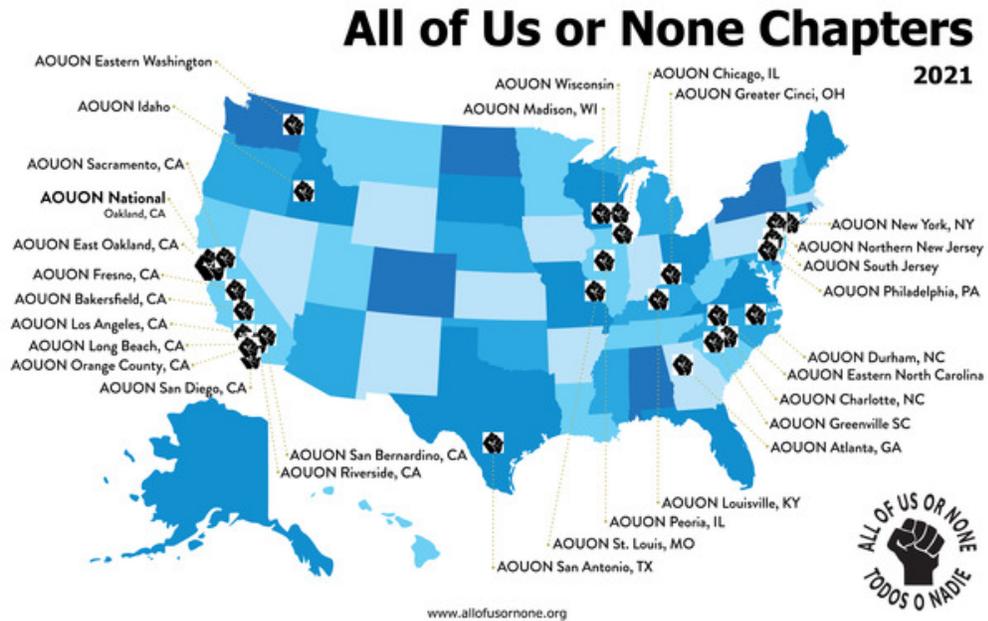
The AOUON Newspaper, which comes out monthly, is a platform to amplify the voices and stories of our members. If you're interested in sharing a personal story—be it of triumph or hardship—please get in touch with the newspaper editor Paula Lehman-Ewing at paula@prisonerswithchildren.org



AOUON National

Welcome three new AOUON chapters: Greenville, SC, Atlanta, GA, & South New Jersey!

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](#) to start one:
oscar@prisonerswithchildren.org / 415.625.7048

One Community One Mic

Did you catch first three episodes of One Community, One Mic?

If not, we got you covered!

You can watch:

the [March 11 Kickoff episode on Reentry here](#),

the [March 25 episode on AOUON Women Organizers here](#),

And the [April 8 episode on Policy Advocacy with our Policy Fellows here](#).



2021 Elder Freeman Policy Fellows join One Community, One Mic host Tariq Palmer (bottom right) to discuss our 2021 Policy Platform and which bills we're sponsoring for the current legislative cycle.

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!

OCOM is live every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at noon. RSVP here: bit.ly/OCOM2021

“The Letter Room” Nominated for an Academy Award

“The Letter Room” made the cut and is one of [5 nominees for an Academy Award for Best Short Film \(Live Action\)](#)

“The Letter Room” 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](#)



Before a special screening, we were honored with a special conversation in which cast members—including Director Elvira Lind and actor Oscar Isaac (*Inside Llewyn Davis*, *Star Wars*), discussed those issues with LSPC Executive Director Dorsey Nunn, Administrative Director Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah, and In-Custody Membership Coordinator Sandra Johnson. They also shared the work formerly incarcerated organizers do to keep incarcerated loved ones and family members connected.

[Check out the conversation here](#), and watch on April 25th to see if “The Letter Room” wins an Oscar!

Welcome (Back) New Staff!

LSPC welcomes Troy Williams as our new Communications Manager, and welcomes back Sandra Johnson as our In-Custody Membership Coordinator!



Troy Williams has decades of journalism experience, including time inside San Quentin State Prison. Troy will be taking over the AOUON Newspaper as well as managing the myriad aspects of LSPC and AOUON communications. A veteran videographer as well, Troy will be creating more video content to support our organizational mission as well as for specific events. Welcome,

Troy!

You can contact Troy at: troy@prisonerswithchildren.org

Sandra Johnson returns to LSPC help coordinate the hundreds of AOUON members currently incarcerated in prisons and jails across the country. She'll also be

helping distribute the AOUON Newspaper to our inside membership—no small task considering the hundreds of

envelopes involved! Sandra was one of the inaugural Elder Freeman Policy Fellows in 2016, later becoming an AOUON Senior Organizer. She organized our annual Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day in 2018 and 2019, and in 2017 her individual advocacy was instrumental in the passage of AB 1008, which extended Ban the Box / Fair Chance Hiring policies to private employers throughout California. Welcome back, Sandra! You can contact Sandra at sandraj@prisonerswithchildren.org



Calendar

AOUON – Oakland Meeting – Digital!

When: 6:30 P.M., April 15, 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 B.:

paul@prisonerswithchildren.org / 415.255.7036

AOUON – One Community, One Mic

When: Noon every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month.

Next: April 22, 2021!

Where: 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

All of Us or None

A grassroots organizing project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children



www.allofusornone.org

Digital Quest for Democracy 2021

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

Where: bit.ly/DQ4D2021

[Now OPEN for Registration!](#)

We invite you to join us at #DQ4D2021, where hundreds of formerly incarcerated and convicted people, family members, and allies will convene online for community, advocacy training, and legislative visits. We speak in our own voices 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.



We invite you to join us at #DQ4D2021, where hundreds of formerly incarcerated and convicted people, family members, and allies will convene online for community, advocacy training, and legislative visits. We speak in our own voices 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.



"We are the experts about the legal justice system. Quest for Democracy is an opportunity to speak Truth to Power in our OWN VOICE."
—BURSEY NUNN



[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!](#)

For more info, or if your org is interested in participating, please contact LSPC Policy Coordinator Michael G.: policy@prisonerswithchildren.org / 917.596.2615.

 **Digital Quest for Democracy Advocacy Day**
Training - Rally - Meet with Legislators
Tuesday, May 4 - 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.
RSVP: bit.ly/DQ4D2021
Questions? Contact Michael G.
policy@prisonerswithchildren.org / 917.596.2615

www.prisonerswithchildren.org

Special Event:

A Talk on Abolishing Slavery with Dr. Angela Davis and Dr. Dennis Childs

When: Friday, May 7, 2021 (Time TBA)

Where: Online (link coming soon)

Did you know that the U.S. never abolished slavery? Nationally, it's still enshrined in the 13th Amendment. In California, Article 1, Section 6 of the state constitution allows "involuntary servitude" for those convicted of a criminal offense. We have launched the [Abolish Bondage Collectively \(ABC\) coalition](#) to campaign to end all forms of slavery in the prison system.

Join us Friday, May 7 (midday–time TBA) for a discussion on how we can finally abolish slavery with Dr. Angela Davis, revolutionary, academic activist, and author of the classic *Are Prisons Obsolete*, and Dr. Dennis Childs, UCSD Professor and author of *Slaves of the State: Black Incarceration from the Chain Gang to the Penitentiary*.

Details and RSVP info will be sent out soon, so keep an eye out! This is an event you don't want to miss!

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

For general information, contact info@prisonerswithchildren.org / 415.255.7036

[Donate to LSPC / All of Us or None here!](#)

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