**Our Stories**

Harry Goodall Jr., an incarcerated writer in San Quentin State Prison, contributes a column about the need to heal as a community as we attempt to take on the true object of our oppression: white supremacy. **Page 4**

Susan Burton knows the trauma of incarceration does not end upon release. As the founder of A New Way of Life Reentry Project and co-founder of All of Us or None, she works to end discrimination against formerly incarcerated people. **Page 3**

**Chapter Update**

California chapters are galvanizing support for ACA 3, a proposed amendment that would remove "involuntary servitude from the state constitution, by rallying their local communities and boards of supervisors. Plus, Bill Watch. **Page 8**

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**My Life is Not a Game: Ending Three Strikes**

Incarcerated writer Kelin D. Harris writes about the personal and historical impact of the Three Strikes law and the need to repeal it. **Page 6**
All of Us Or None Self-Determination Pledge

As members of All of Us or None, we pledge:
• To demand the right to speak in our own voices
• To treat each other with respect and not allow differences to divide us
• To accept responsibility for any acts that may have caused harm to our families, our communities or ourselves.
• To fight all forms of discrimination
• To help build the economic stability of formerly incarcerated people
• To claim and take care of our own children and our families
• To support community struggles to stop using prisons as the answer to social problems
• To play an active role in making our communities safe for everyone.

Correction: The March edition of All of Us or None news contained the following error: The “Spotlight” article mentioned several relationships Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah made while she was incarcerated, including Dr. Chinosole, whose name was misspelled in the article. Additionally, the article should have said Hamdiya began wearing her hair in a natural style, rather than saying she “associated with naturals.” We regret this error.

Inside This Issue

Gary Brunzo is an incarcerated artist at Tecumseh State Correctional Institution, a maximum security prison in Nebraska. “Freedom,” the piece featured on the cover of this month’s issue of All of Us or None, was part of a 2016 art exhibition in Lincoln, Nebraska, called “Captive Creativity: Dispatches from Tecumseh.”
Becca Ross, who organized the exhibition, told the Lincoln Journal Star, “This exhibition is evidence of the life and creativity that refuses to disappear or be diminished, despite the most repressive circumstances. It forces those of us on the outside to remember the humanity of those on the inside.”
Brunzo was given a life sentence and sent to adult prison when he was 21 years old.

Incarcerated writer Kelin D. Harris writes about the need to repeal the Three Strikes law and other extreme sentencing that is devastating communities. Page 6

Incarcerated columnist Harry Goodall Jr. writes about the need to heal as a community as we attempt to take on the true object of our oppression. Plus, Mail Bag. Page 4

California chapters are working to galvanize support for ACA 3, a proposed amendment that would remove “involuntary servitude from the state constitution. Plus, Bill Watch. Page 8

AOUON Central Illinois has been rallying to free Brian Burnside from federal prison. Now, he’s finally home. Photo credit: General Parker

A Note From AOUON Founding Member Dorsey Nunn

L ast month, on March 3, we recognized the 30-year anniversary of the brutal beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police. As I reflected on that moment in history, I thought about the progress we’ve made in those three decades -- and the progress we have not.

Last summer, it seemed like everyday there was an incident like that horrific evening in 1991. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake, even peaceful protestors were being assaulted by police in riot gear. It was easy to think we hadn’t made any progress at all.

But there was one significant victory that I hope does not go unnoticed. For centuries, the oppressor has been trying to pit minority groups against one another in hopes that a united front will never threaten the white establishment. Our progress is in our ability to see this as what it is and stand shoulder-to-shoulder to defeat white supremacy in this country.

It was soon after the 1965 Watts Riots that the 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 a National Guard to redirect the violence toward Koreatown.

Fortunately, these examples of past violence between our communities have also resulted in a blueprint for working together, as after every incident recently, groups of all our peoples got together to build better connections.

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 misled people into believing that, if not for those marginalized people, that everything would be better. I ask you not to be fooled by this, comrades. For it is only by standing together will we be able to defeat white supremacy and secure freedom for all our people. It’s All of Us or None.

Dorsey Nunn
Perilously situated between the pricey Arts District and skid row, the Los Angeles Bus Station is the drop point for women being released from state prison.

When Susan Burton stepped off the prison bus in 1987, there were two immediate options: One direction led to blocks of warehouses -- what’s now a collection of vegan eateries and Instagrammable wall murals -- the other to a more populated area with missions and shelters.

She walked one block in the only direction that seemed to make sense and found herself on skid row. It wasn’t long before she found herself back in prison.

The next time she was released, Susan had a friend take her to a treatment facility in Santa Monica. She thrived in recovery, got her life back and opened a treatment facility closer to the bus station, steering women toward housing and help and away from skid row. She called her organization A New Way of Life Reentry Project, which now employs a staff of 30 including six attorneys.

“After receiving the level of support and services I needed in a predominantly white, middle-class community, I realized we needed something like ANWOL in South L.A., where the war on drugs had devastated our communities,” Susan said. “Someone needed to start investing in women and in our community, so I made the investment.”

Saving up her money from working as a caretaker, Susan purchased a transitional home for women coming out of prison in South Los Angeles.

But as residents began to settle in, Susan began to notice a recurring pattern of trauma: It seemed as though no one outside of the formerly incarcerated community wanted these women to succeed. They were banned from housing and turned down for jobs because of their conviction history. They were constantly under surveillance by parole officers and inundated with fines and fees.

“There are the horrors of incarceration, but there are other horrors that are pretty invisible that we walk through each day in what we call the ‘free world,’” Susan said. “The level of discrimination we face and the double jeopardy we face over and over again for the crime we’ve already done time for is a different kind of torture.”

Even Susan struggled to shirk the residual effects of her incarceration. After her autobiography, Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women, was published, she was barred from traveling for a book tour. She began to realize her fight for fairness would need to reach beyond housing.

“I thought if people had a safe place to go everything would be alright, but I realized the level of continued discrimination, that people were being pushed out of places that would give them a chance to rebuild their lives,” Susan said. “There had to be advocacy and some real creation of voice around what was happening.”

Susan ended up going to a conference for formerly incarcerated people in Oakland, a meeting that resulted in the founding of All of Us or None. She worked on Ban the Box legislation, which prevented employers from discriminating against people with conviction histories when making hiring decisions. She eventually founded the Los Angeles chapter of All of Us or None, which has been instrumental in the restoration of rights for formerly incarcerated people. In addition to local ban the box initiatives, the chapter mobilized community members to rally against excessive fines and felony disenfranchisement.

Susan received a pardon from California Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2019, but her work often requires she continue to recall the horrors of her incarceration and the discrimination she faced upon reentering society. It is a burden she does not take lightly, but takes on with fierce determination.

“We have to educate our community, educate our policymakers about the reality of what’s happening,” she said. “Anyway, how do you forget the type of harm that’s done to you as a result of the criminal justice system and the prison industrial complex?”

“I want to live freely, vibrantly and lively,” she continued. “I won’t suffocate under the harm that’s been done to me.”

Susan Burton uses the pain she endures as a formerly incarcerated woman to fight against the ongoing discrimination of those harmed by the criminal legal system.
Op-Ed: Avoiding the Conflict from Within

The need to heal as a community and take on white supremacy as a united front

By Harry Goodall Jr.

I cannot say the horrific event of eight minutes and 46 seconds of the knee on George Floyd’s neck is not a crime. There has been a serious issue with police misconduct in this country. Police are not hired to play judge, jury, and executioner. They are supposed to protect and serve the people of their community.

The battle cry to defund the police may be necessary, but there is still the problem of Black-on-Black crime. All police are not responsible for the harm inflicted on every Black man. Black people must demand the same treatment from each other as they do from law enforcement.

There is, however, another deep, underlying problem. Too many police view Black men with the same loathing as some Black men see each other. How many people can honestly say they respect a Black man sitting next to them in a classroom or job site if his/her skin color is different from their own? Or, if they see a group of Black men walking towards them, does a hint of fear invade their senses? Many people of color growing up in this country are taught and raised to be afraid of Black people.

Racism and hatred are a learned behavior. Many of the things we see in the media are taken as reality. A stereotype of the way we talk and act. Can it be conditioning as described in the William Lynch speech, in which the aim was to guide or keep slaves under control? In his speech, he described saying slaves are easily controlled by exploiting differences such as age and skin color in order to pit slaves against each other. He insured this method would control slaves for at least 300 years.

At a Black man’s funeral, the initial thought probably isn’t, “Was he killed by another Black man?” The reality is too many are killing each other in the name of big war, drugs, and false pride. For those who do not consider themselves to be gang members, a broad definition of California law considers a gang as a gathering of two or more individuals committing a crime. As a firm believer that Black Lives Matter, I feel that Black people united is a force nothing can stand against. It is taught to every American as we grow up and pledge allegiance to the flag. It is taught to every American to stand and divided we will fall. I ask myself if the idea that we’re ‘ridding ourselves of an inferior group when we’re all Africans is ludicrous, yet the same process takes place on American soil. African genocide is relevant, as it shows a thought process to what Black men in America do to each other physically over something as trivial as clothing.

I am a Black man and I encourage others to change and stop the needless loss of Black lives. I’ve personally witnessed levels of inter-Black racism, Blacks killing Blacks. It’s almost psychotic, so much so that inter-racism among Blacks is normal in too many communities. The “N” word is used so frequently that Black people are not longer offended by its use. We hear it so much that it has literally become part of the African American vernacular. Conversely, those who depart from the use of such language and seek to broaden their education are sometimes criticized and ridiculed by other Black people who accuse them of “acting white.” There are even instances in the Black community that provoke unsolicited laughter and finger-pointing to a so-called “Uncle Tom” seen being interviewed using proper, or “white,” grammar. “You know he from the ghetto,” one might say. It seems that some Blacks have forgotten that the slaves who were brought to America were descendants of Kings and Queens from the Motherland in Africa. We would be better off if it was understood that intelligence is not an act.

Society is able to alter the minds of each Black man by changing the way he thinks about himself and his brothers. So, when Blacks witness other Blacks making it in the world, a part of them loses the envy felt, and instead feels joy for the strides being made by his brothers and sisters. Is the current envy that is so prevalent as a throw back to our days of slavery and Jim Crow that shaped such a mentality? Perhaps it’s historic from our slavery times when those who lived in the house were enslaved by those who lived in the fields. Perhaps it’s not more than an inherent need to want what the next man possesses. This behavior has been transferred to Blacks from a distorted ideology. Because of this, whites probably don’t believe we respect each other or value each other’s lives. And why should we?

What happened to George Floyd and so many other whose lives were cut short by acts of senseless police violence is a brutal tragedy. I don’t see it changing, regardless of police policy changes until Blacks learn to respect each other; that we see another man of color and not see the color of his skin but the merit of his conduct.

Lynch suggested to slave owners that they should exploit differences such as age and skin color in order to pit slaves against each other. The rest, as it is said, is history.

There is a solution: We need to embrace one another. There is a real need to talk about the shame and pain we carry. If it was a gang or street thing, let the dead take care of the dead. Fifty years ago, George Jackson said, “Settle your quarrels.” We have to live for our future, free from America’s penal colonies and cemeteries. Let’s respect each other’s lives and make the reality of Black Lives Matter not just an outlook police should embrace, but a concept we cherish as well.

Harry Goodall Jr. is an incarcerated journalist at San Quentin State Prison in California.
Admitting social distancing in crowded prison is impossible would demonstrate a maturity that is expected of an institution that is over 150 years old.

Social distancing is impossible during meal times. The modified programs in prisons due to the pandemic include how meals are served. Under the guise of social distancing, prisoners wait in their cells instead of the chow hall. Around 4:45pm, the workers are let out of their cells to set up and hand out food trays for the evening meal. Roughly 15 minutes later, chow release starts with the release of the fifth tier. Approximately 45 minutes later, the first tier is released. This means that some 720 men have been served their trays. That is roughly 16 mean every minute, one man every three seconds. Clearly the men in line are much closer than six feet, and social distancing is negated.

Time constraints mandated by Title 15 California Code of Regulations cannot support social distancing when there are so many prisoners to feed. Namely, Article 4, 3050 (a)(2) that states, “The breakfast meal shall be served not more than 14 hours following the previous day’s evening meal.”

Social distancing is also impossible during shower times. In West Block, there are 16 hower heads and two ADAP showers for 877 men. While 16 men are showering, there are no less than 16 men waiting for the next available shower to open. For the shower program, one tier is released for one hour to shower. Approximately 180 men must shower within this hour using 16 heads that are 28 inches apart.

If these men took five to eight minute showers, it would take from 57 minutes to an hour and half for everyone to shower. Showering means that these men are unclothed and unmasked in a crowded area. Pushing past the 60 minutes allotted, some prisoners “double up” to ensure that they get a shower. During shower times, the lines are long, the time is short and social distancing is impossible.

Being truthful goes a long way. Prisoners are not going to be released now any more than before, but simply admitting that social distancing in crowded prisons is impossible would demonstrate a maturity that is expected of an institution that is over 150 years old. We are all in this together no matter what profession, religion, gender, ethnicity, or race we identify with.

Social distancing in prison is impossible to sustain when there are so many bodies within so little space. To pretend or arbitrarily enforce social distancing where it can be, and ignore it completely where it can’t be is inviting the devastation covid is known for.

On the morning of May 31, 2020, there were ZERO cases of COVID-19 among the prisoner population at San Quentin. A week later, there were over a dozen and one death. Pretending that social distancing in crowded prisons is possible is, in fact, deadly.

Since March 18, 2020, prisoners in West Block have patiently and anxiously hoped for an effective plan that would make social distancing a possibility in prison. West Block at San Quentin State Prison in California houses 877 men within 449 cells. The cellblock is five tiers high with 90 cells on each tier. Each cell houses two men, with a few exceptions. The cells are 4.5-feet wide by 10.5-feet long and 7.5-feet high. There are two beds, two wall lockers, and a sink/toilet combo inside the cell. When using the toilet, the person’s knee is within two feet of the other’s foot an inches from his bed.

Knowing how the cellblock is constructed is important because it is within these fixed parameters that social distancing is impossible. Not because of the physical construction, but because of the number of prisoners housed within its confines. Social distancing in an overpopulated prison is impossible. The futility of implementing a program that meets the standards of social distancing in prison is exhaustive. This results in a complete breakdown of integrity on both sides of the bars: The guards cannot enforce a protocol that cannot exist, and the men in blue are at the mercy of those in control.

The choking points that cannot be overcome are meal times and showers. This is because of the sheer number of prisoners participating and the time constraints that these necessities need to be completed within to ensure the safety and security of the institution.

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More Guilty By Reason of Priors

THE CRUELTY BEHIND EXCESSIVE SENTENCING, ENHANCEMENTS AND THREE STRIKES LAW

By Kelin D. Harris

A s we venture cautiously into the second quarter of 2021, careful to protect ourselves and others while awaiting our turn to get vaccinated, let us not forget the epidemic that has existed decades before we heard of coronavirus. America has employed mass incarceration as an inoculation. About 2.24 million people in this country are being held in prison or jail, more than a quarter of the world’s total 8 million prisoners. Another 4.8 million are under supervision through probation, or parole. In 30 years, our prison population has quintupled.

Since 1994, California has experienced a hyper-incarceration crisis. This has been achieved through sentencing enhancements, the most Draconian being the Three Strikes Law, which has no “washout” period. Alternatives to these enhancements are purely discretionary. According to Penal Code 1385, the presiding judge or the prosecuting attorney can offer a dismissal of a strike, but the lack of implementation has led to prison overcrowding and an application of PC 1385 has been more discriminatory than discretionary. Discrimination is an inevitable by-product of discretion. We see this vis-a-vis county-by-county variations, which has resulted in uneven justice and undercutting a law aimed for uniform treatment of defendants. In the dissenting opinion in Ewing v. California, Justice John Paul Stevens questioned whether the state should be allowed to double count a defendant’s prior convictions. He wrote: “I think it clear that the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition of cruel and unusual punishments expresses a broad and basic proportionality principle that takes into account all of the justifications for penal sanctions. It is this broad proportionality principle that would preclude reliance on any of the justifications for punishment to support, for example, a life sentence for overtime parking.” Ewing v. California, 538 U.S. 11 (2003)

According to CDCR data, over 45% of people serving life sentences under the Three Strikes law are African American.

California’s State Auditor estimates that the Three Strikes law adds over $19 billion to the state’s prison budget.

Whole families have been affected by disproportionate sentencing because of the prison industry’s misinformation campaign. According to the ballot argument for the Three Strikes Law, voters were assured that passage of the measure would keep “career criminals, who rape women, molest innocent children and commit murder behind bars where they belong.” Yet the empirical data suggests otherwise. I have several misvises from victims of enhancements and their stories are analogous to my own. None I’ve come in contact with are serving sentences for the above cold offenses.

During the Clinton administration, Three Strikes was put into law by Proposition 48 and the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA). It is reported by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation that there were 6,900 individuals serving sentences in 2019.

According to the Center for American Progress, Blacks are 12 times more likely than whites to get Three Strikes. The Human Rights Watch has found that African-American youth are sentenced to life without parole at a rate that is 18.3 times the rate as their white peers. We know this, even with more current data being withheld and made redacted. In The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander cites an abundance of facts that make racial caste injustices a cognitive reality abroad. For those immediately afflicted by incarceration, it removed the glare, revealing the current system as a new antebellum department of corrections.

When minorities are targeted for arrest and prosecution, we can assume the chief aim is to keep them in prison, not rehabilitate them. Ominously, it has been said sentences like my own -- 75 years to life for attempted robbery -- are de facto torture. Defacto torture are enhancements, such as youthful priors, being passed off as rehabilitation. Youthful priors are serious or violent felonies that were committed by a person when they were 25 years old, or younger. But according to Prof. Jody Sundt, a tenured criminologist at Indiana University, makes an argument against punishing the current crime through the lens of past crimes. Instead, she suggests alternatives to prison the time frame around. “Referring a defendant to treatment, rather than sending him or her to prison, may well be the most prudent choice -- saving government resources and potentially saving the defendant from a lifetime of addiction,” Sundt wrote in an academic journal. “Likewise, imposing a short sentence (or none at all) may increase the chances that the defendant will experience successful reentry. A lengthy prison term may increase the odds that re-entry will be extremely difficult, leading to relapse, and re-imprisonment.”

Through research and close analysis, it’s clear that youth (anyone 25 years old or younger) given life without parole or a death sentence is a quasi-lynching, an inscrutable phenomenon executed under the label “special circumstances.” Prosecutors allege special circumstances through a medium, Mens Rea, the Latin word for a guilty mind. This is captured and cultivated from subjective testimony alone. We see a continuity in attitude when it comes to defense attorneys. They are not automatically attached to a defendant and, once one is assigned, they often fail to inquire about mental trauma. In Psychotic Disorders in Children and Adolescents: A Primer on Contemporary Evaluation and Management, psychiatrists found “children rarely have insight into the significance of their symptoms, and, consequently, their judgment and impulse control are usually compromised (particularly around self-destructive or aggressive impulses).”

When we look at “reform” in its rawest form, it boils down to keeping the good and discarding the bad. But something archaic cannot be acculturated and expected to retain or augment value. The cornerstone of reparations...
April 2021

NOTE FROM THE ARTIST: BACKGROUND IMAGE

William “Tariq” Palmer painted this image while he was incarcerated. He is now a Communications Fellow at Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and a member of the Abolish Bondage Collectively coalition. He wrote this about the drawing:

My inspiration came from The New Yorker review of Stephen Spielberg’s “Amistad” artist Kadir Nelson. I read this while in Solano State Prison. His work impacted my vision, which was to connect the past with the present. Here, slave masters and overseers are replaced by wardens and correctional officers. There are prisoners in uniforms, and others you can’t make out which are the spirits of the millions of unknown slaves. We’ve replaced cotton with license plates, office furniture and PIA laundry service. Let there be no mistake that slavery and involuntary servitude is alive and well. The Review Boards have replaced auctioneers by sending CDCR prisoners from prison to prison based on need and space. It has become my purpose in life to turn prisons into centers of healing. May this painting spark that movement to kick Jim Crow out of the California Constitution.

A growing problem: People serving long sentences

The number of people in state prisons who have been incarcerated for over 10 years has nearly tripled since 1999. In 2015, they made up 1 in 6 people in state prisons.

STRIKE (continued from PAGE 6)

is retroactive relief. In view of the prodromal nature of youthful priors, retroactive relief should not be left unattached.

When I paroled after serving my whole adolescence locked up, finding paperwork was precarious. Once I was hired, it was difficult to perform my duties: I suffer from a disease that causes chronic pain. Without access to adequate health care, the pain worsened and I became an alcoholic and a drug addict and eventually lost my job. Homeless with my then-pregnant girlfriend, three children of her own in tow, to say the circumstances were tumultuous would be an understatement. I stopped picking up my psyche medication and checking in with my parole officer. Unbeknownst to me, Los Angeles Sheriffs had a warrant for my arrest. When I came in contact with the police, it was past midnight and I was in a motel parking lot. I was detained and handcuffed, placed in the back of a patrol car where I was pepper-sprayed. When we arrived at the station, I was placed in a chokehold until I was unconscious. When I awoke, I was in the Palmdale Regional Hospital ER. When I was indicted for robbing the clerk at the motel.

Before prison, I was a registered bulldog breeder and show dog exhibitor. I attended Santa Monica City College and my goal was to become a veterinarian. That is what people who know me share with my daughters Kalia and Kalina. As I mark four years into my second prison sentence, I rely on donations to fund tuition for my current undertaking: paralegal college. Since Prop 57 passed, the California prison department has introduced a number of education programs. Some even employ formerly incarcerated people to reenter penitentiaries to teach. The logic is those closest to the problem are closest to the solution. The self-corrective literature of programs like PREP’s Turning Point and Getting Out By Going In (GOGI) have been essential to my sobriety and recovery. Through application of the principles I’ve learned in these programs, I’ve gained insight into myself and paid penance to each person I’ve injured or traumatized. My favorite “tool” and principle is carrying the message to other at-risk peers.

Last year I had surgery to target the cause of my chronic pain. Most of the acute pain I suffered with for years is gone. It is my hope that relief is given to those who have been given enhancements under the Three Strikes Law, especially for youth priors. I want another chance to be an asset to my community while I’m still in my prime.

Editor’s Note: In February, California Assemblymember Alex Lee (D-San Jose) introduced AB 1509, the Anti-Racism Sentencing Reform Act. The legislation seeks to chip away at the state’s harmful sentencing laws by reducing enhancements for firearms, which punish people duplicatively for the same crime without enhancing public safety. The bill was referred to the Committee of Public Safety in March.
Currently, our state and federal constitutions ban involuntary servitude except as punishment for a crime, leaving our incarcerated community members vulnerable to labor exploitation across our state and county. Conservative state legislators in Utah, Colorado, and Nebraska have all amended their constitutions to remove their state version of the 13th Amendment's Exception Clause. California must join these states in denouncing structural racism and in removing vestiges of slavery from our constitution.

All of Us or None's California chapters have been campaigning to move local government bodies to consider resolutions supporting Assembly Constitutional Amendment 3, which would remove the "involuntary servitude" clause from the California State Constitution, Article 1 Section 6 (“A156”). A156 is modeled after the U.S. Constitution's 13th Amendment Exception Clause. This clause legally transferred slavery from individuals' ownership of slaves to ownership by the state. In California, the descendants of enslaved Africans are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system through the over-policing of marginalized communities and the enhanced sentences imposed. Any and all forms of slavery should be prohibited.

Our Constitution should reflect a legal and moral baseline against involuntary servitude and all vestiges of slavery. As All of Us or None founder Dorsey Nunn puts it: "We're not talking about being soft on crime — we're talking about being just on humanity."

This vote will officially determine Riverside County's stance on involuntary servitude; join us in making sure our representatives support this historic change.

The following letter was sent by the Riverside chapter of All of Us or None to community members. The letter sought to galvanize support for a resolution by the Riverside Board of Supervisors to support ACA 3 and denounce all vestiges of slavery. A similar resolution was introduced by Supervisor Matt Haney of San Francisco in February. It is our hope that growing support from local communities for ACA 3 will make its passage in the legislature inevitable and its ideals a reality.

An Organizational Call to End Involuntary Servitude

The United States declared its independence in the summer of 1776. Despite the claim of independence, the blood of Africans would be used to build this nation's infrastructure, and land from Native Americans would be usurped for the "greater good." Our Nation's ugly history adversely impacts so many demographics: Women (and their lack of suffrage until the 1900s), Asian Americans (such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and Executive Order 9066), the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC community, and so many others. Though 1776 began the herald of our nation's freedom, there always remains a class of Americans who are exempt from freedom's provisions. Despite our growth, there are areas in our Nation, like California, that struggle to denounce structural racism and relinquish vestiges of slavery.

Since the Emancipation Proclamation, chattel slavery ended but convict leasing would become the next institution to maintain classism, racism, and slavery. Not until 1964, almost 200 years later, would Civil Rights legislation bring a beacon of hope to many still living the reality of stigmatization, exploitation, and injustice. However, California has yet to make a decision to remove the language of slavery, by keeping involuntary servitude — slavery by another name and practice — in its Constitution. Article 1, Section 6 in the CA Constitution is modeled after the U.S. Constitution's 13th Amendment Exception Clause. The Federal clause reads, "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." This clause legally transferred slavery from individuals' ownership of slaves to ownership by the state. The Exception Clause led to the intentional creation of the Black Codes and Vagrancy Laws which disproportionately impacted Americans who were promised equality. Once again, the promise of freedom, this time through 1964 Civil Rights legislation, was undercut by the crime bills of the 1960s-90s, which disproportionately impacted many people of color and promoted the premise that "criminals" were less than human and deserving of slavery as punishment.

There is a direct correlation between the promise of freedom under Federal law and the injurious nature of state instruments of law disproportionately impacting Black Americans and people of color. When considering the history of convict leasing, it is no accident that Black Americans and people of color comprise the largest demographic serving as "convicts," both in the Nation and in California.

Removing involuntary servitude from California's Constitution is not being soft on crime or a partisan play to open the prison doors. Instead, this is a human issue about the redemption of dignity. If we do not confront ourselves, the outlook is grim. Currently, children of incarcerated fathers stand a 70 percent chance of dropping out of education or becoming incarcerated themselves. These statistics impact everyone.

America's aspiration for rights and freedom has led Conservative state legislators in Utah, Colorado, and Nebraska to pass laws for immediate or gradual emancipation. People of all ethnicities have embraced the spirit and logic of the revolution. Some have petitioned state legislatures as individuals or coalitions. Others have sought freedom through military service. Many thousands of enslaved people chose not to rely on external benevolence and undertook the brave and dangerous task of petitioning the courts while incarcerated. Considering our diversity, there is no reason California should not join these states in denouncing structural racism and in removing the vestiges of slavery.

Ending forced labor, divesting from the prison industrial complex, and ultimately fostering a truly emancipated America is possible here, in our golden state of California. It is possible for local jurisdictions in the State of California to see slavery as immoral. It is possible for the County of Riverside to patriotically embrace the true value of American freedom. Join us in supporting a resolution by our Board of Supervisors in favor of removing involuntary servitude from our state. We implore Riverside to stand on the right side of history. Slavery has no place in our values as a county or as a state.

Learn more at https://prisonerswithchildren.org.
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.
- Anti-Racism Sentencing Reform Act (Lee) AB1509 would remove the 12202.5 gun enhancement completely from the state penal code and change the 10-20-25 gun enhancement to 1, 3 and 5 years, respectively.
- Visitation (Bonta) AB990 would enshrine visitation as a right (rather than a privilege) for incarcerated individuals and their families.

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 Sunter) A4235/S5219 would require credits to be awarded to certain incarcerated individuals and returning citizens during public health emergency. It would also prohibit the creditee to have contact with victim upon 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 nonviolent and nonsexual 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.

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 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.

Members of All of Us or None showed up in Oakland to stand in solidarity with Asian comrades after a number of violent acts of hate against members of the community. Photo courtesy Ali Birts
Brian Burnside never fully accepted his life sentence. It just didn’t make sense. Mandatory minimums, as they were inked in 2007 when Brian was sentenced, required the judge sentence him to life for drug possession with priors. It was surreal for someone who had seen the person who’d killed his brother sentenced to 10 years. The federal guidelines that allowed his priors to be used against him also came as a shock. He had been charged as an 18-year-old and told he’d get time-served and probation, after which it would all be behind him. To have it enhance his sentence to a drug charge 22 years later seemed cunning.

“In my opinion, it’s a conspiracy to kill off young black men,” Brian said. “I couldn’t accept it in my heart, that I would die in prison.”

At first, Brian’s method of refusal was common: He learned out to advocate for himself and filed appeals. But in 2010, a glimmer of hope came in the form of a federal bill revising 21 US Code 851, the enhancement that had turned Brian’s punishment for possession from a determinate sentence to life. However, the bill was not applied retroactively. Someone who was imprisoned in 2011 with the same conviction history as Brian could apply for relief under the revision, but Brian could not.

“When it passed in 2010 it was like a punch in the gut,” he said. “It was great because it could reduce overcrowding in prison and people getting excessive amounts of time, but so many of us weren’t eligible.”

It would take another eight years before the federal government would review the legal system’s use of enhancements. Finally in 2018, then-president Donald Trump signed the First Step Act into law, which provided the retroactive application of the revision that would free Brian.

His friend, General Parker, had been instrumental in the development of the First Step Act and had mobilized the Central Illinois chapter of All of Us or None to advocate on Brian’s behalf.

“I was already fighting my case, I had an appeal pending, and I was waiting for a decision, but when the bill came down I got excited,” Brian said, remembering the day he heard the First Step Act was signed into law. “Now I had another weapon to help me get free.”

Brian eventually connected with MiAngel Cody, an attorney and founder of the nonprofit Buried Alive Project, which takes on appeals for people serving life sentences. On February 24, 2021, he walked out of prison after 14 years inside.

“I just remember my mom was shouting and praising God,” Brian recalled. “Her baby boy was coming home, and that was like a dream come true.”

The transition home, of course, hasn’t been all cheers and smiles. When Brian went into prison as a 40-year-old man, he lost his business, custody of his 9-year-old daughter and the nonprofit he’d operated in the area had become dormant. Now, he has to start again.

“When you get out into reality and, at 54 years old, you realize you have to start all the way over, it’s intimidating and it’s a terrible situation to have to be in,” he said. “By the grace of God I have opportunities -- a family business where I can get a job and a family home to live in -- but if I didn’t, the system would have just had me back on the streets from Day 1.”

Because he was released during the pandemic, Brian has been quarantined at home, unable to get an ID or take care of his finances. However, he’s had time to speak on panels put on by Buried Alive and tell his story in different spaces.

“A part of you wants to let it go, but the other part of you knows your testimony can be someone else’s life,” Brian said. “I want to bring life to the harm these sentence enhancements can do to an individual and to the community at large and hopefully make change by telling my story.”

Nominate a returning citizen you know for the Coming Home section or submit your own story about reentry. Nominations and submissions may be sent to:

AOUON Newspaper Editor
c/o Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608
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)

WELCOME HOME INITIATIVE
Since the Public Health Credit Bill was signed into law, our communities must prepare for the influx of people from prison and jail. If you’re able, please help us welcome our family back home.
Visit www.allofusoronenone-northernnj.com to donate.

NO MORE SLAVERY
LEARN MORE AT PRISONERSWITHCHILDREN.ORG/ABC

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) 224-7542 | (502) 813-5421
(502) 252-1526 | (502) 438-0164
(502) 209-5472 | (502) 289-1234

JOIN
Participatory Defense
ON ZOOM
Every Friday, 6PM-7PM
Join: https://bit.ly/2zJeE7N
Password: n84yW8U
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.

JOIN US! Every Other Thursday at Noon (Pacific)
Contact: William “Tony” Palmer / Soul Brother 19
at tony@prisonerswithchildren.org

ONE COMMUNITY ONE MEC
All of Us or None’s bi-weekly online gathering
Join Us! Every Other Thursday at Noon (Pacific)
Contact: William “Tony” Palmer / Soul Brother 19
at tony@prisonerswithchildren.org

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

All of Us Or None

The slave, who is it that shall free you?
The ones 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 feter.
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 feter.
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 feter.
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)

All of Us or None Membership Form

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

Name & Number:

Institution:

Address:

County of Origin:

I can organize & facilitate group meetings
I can help with membership
I can distribute materials & resources
I can address & pass along feedback

Mail this form to:

All of Us or None

Mail this form & any questions to:

Willard Birs/AOUON

4400 Market Street

Oakland, CA 94608