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Protecting visiting rights for families
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

Protecting visiting rights
LSPC Staff Attorney Rita Himes writes about the process of pushing Assembly Bill 990 to protect visits.

An intern’s perspective on AOUON
LSPC Summer Intern Anna Dubin interviews Dorsey Nunn and Sandra Johnson about the history of AOUON.

Coming home
LSPC Summer Intern Jericho Rajninger writes about Rasheed Stanley-Lockheart's experience of becoming a firefighter engineer, slave wages, and involuntary servitude.

A Note From AOUON Founding Member Dorsey Nunn

Recently I had the honor of traveling to Milwaukee to participate in the All of Us or None Wisconsin chapter’s first annual Justice Ball. Chapter President Caliph Muadel and AOUON WI members put together an amazing gala—bringing together members of the community to recognize formerly incarcerated organizers, family members, and local and state politicians in a professionally produced and extremely exciting and satisfying celebration of movement advocacy.

The fact that they organized such a meaningful event in less than 30 days, with more than 400 people—including 30 elected officials—showing solid support for the chapter, made the night even more special.

As someone who was there at the beginning in Oakland, CA in 2003, I am very proud of the work All of Us or None is doing across the country. From beginning with a few small chapters in California to now over 30 spread across the country, All of Us or None continues to grow and make significant, substantive change to the benefit of our communities at the local and state levels. It is extremely satisfying to see all the training and support we’ve provided local chapters lead to the point where some are now able to not only stand on their own feet, but run with purpose and poise.

Growing nationally has also allowed us to more effectively share strategies and our successes, as well as our setbacks. Our AOUON National Convening in 2019 allowed organizers from all the chapters to come to the Freedom & Movement Center in Oakland to learn from each other, as well as support each other. And as we grow larger, it’s more important than ever that AOUON chapters grow together—in terms of our objectives, methods, and mutual support—especially as larger national organizations try to co-opt our work and messaging, or even try to peel off our chapters to add window dressing for their own work.

All of Us or None has taken almost 20 years to become an effective national advocacy organization. We must remember that our communities are made up of individuals who are still processing the experiences and trauma of incarceration. I left San Quentin over 40 years ago and am still wondering how best to follow the guidance from my elder Kalima to “Return to the community as an asset, not as a liability.”

(An excerpt from July E-News Message from the Executive Director on AOUON chapters: Walking, Running, Flying, and Growing Together)
AOUON Wisconsin chapter President Minister Caliph Muab'El and LSPC Executive Director and AOUON founding member Dorsey Nunn

All Of Us Or None holds first annual Justice Ball for community leaders fighting against mass incarceration

By Olivia Harden

All of Us Or None (AOUON), a grassroots organization with a mission to fight for the rights of all people impacted by mass incarceration, has over 40 chapters across the country.

The Wisconsin chapter was looking for a positive way to celebrate the achievements of community leaders and organizers doing the hard work to make their communities better. That’s how they landed on a black-tie, red-carpet event, the Justice Ball.

“I was thinking we celebrate all of these entertainers and rappers and actors and stuff like that. But, how are we celebrating the boots-on-the-ground work that’s out here every day, risking our lives, our freedoms, and putting our liberties on the line to secure the freedom and justice for all of our people from within the own social constructs of our communities and our environment? What are we doing to highlight and celebrate these people?” said Minister Caliph Muab’El, President of the Wisconsin Chapter of All Of Us Or None. “The Justice Ball is geared toward liberating the voice of the voiceless, recognizing the work and highlighting the efforts of the grassroots boots on the ground people and the people who are allies to us in this movement.”

Muab’El had a challenging past. At 15, he became the youngest person in Wisconsin to go to an adult prison, and he spent 10 of his 15-year sentence in solitary confinement.

But Muab’El took his experience and turned it into a positive future. He became a motivational speaker and teacher regarding the impact of mass incarceration and started his nonprofit organization Breaking Barriers Mentoring, which empowers youth facing societal barriers through mentoring and community support.

“All Of Us Or None Wisconsin is a project of Breaking Barriers Mentoring, where we do advocacy, and we do leadership and development for people who are impacted directly and also indirectly impacted...directly meaning you’ve been to prison, jail, arrested, etc. And indirectly impacted meaning, you’re a friend, loved one, and supporter of someone who is going through, is wrapped up, or who has gone through the system,” Muab’El said.

The date of the Justice Ball, June 20, 2021, was intentionally held the day after Juneteenth, on Father’s Day, because of the impact mass incarceration has had on fathers in the community. Within 30 days, the team secured a venue, music and food for the black-tie event.

The community response was overwhelmingly positive. With all 250 seats sold out on Eventbrite, the AOUON Wisconsin team worked to squeeze more people into the event. If you couldn’t grab a seat, the event was also held virtually.

“There are great fathers out there. A lot of our fathers are plagued with mass incarceration. They’re taken out of the households, far removed and things of that nature. Some of them aren’t in the children’s lives, but there are a lot of fathers who are, and we want to celebrate those efforts,” Muab’El said.

The Justice Ball Awards spanned over 10 different categories including the Justice Media Personality Award, Community Stabilizer Award and an Art of Justice Award. A selection committee chose nominations due to time constraints, and then opened up voting to the people. Next year Muab’El hopes to institute a “people’s choice awards”-style event, where all community members will be able to nominate and vote.

“This has been such a journey. It’s been a great journey, and it’s been a great learning experience in the process. Being able to produce or host an event like this, which is out of the box, very innovative and very courageous, especially within the constraints that we had to do it,” Muab’El said. “We only had 30 days to put this thing together, make it make magic and get the community involved and invested.”

“This article was first published on carvdnstone.com, a positive news source seeking to "educate, inform and give the people a spotlight through a different lens of the media..."
No longer us against each other

By Kellie Walters
LSPC Staff Attorney

It’s a practice that dates back to ancient Rome: gladiator fights that pit prisoner against prisoner for the entertainment of the masses, with little to no regard for the prisoners’ safety or integrity.

In the California Department of Corrections (“CDCR”), it’s a practice that dates back at least thirty years. CDCR correctional officers call it “incremental release” and it refers to the desegregation of “prisoners by mandating the simultaneous release of rival gang members onto the prison recreational yard.” You read that correctly: it is the intentional and simultaneous release of prisoners who the officers know to be rivals and likely to engage in a physical altercation. The officers not only know it, but they count on it for their own amusement or retaliation.

“The practice became public knowledge when a couple of whistleblower correctional officers informed on other officers.”

The practice became public knowledge about thirty years ago, when a couple of whistleblower correctional officers informed on other officers who were setting up these fights and making bets on the winner. Later, a jury acquitted these correctional officers, under the theory that they were simply following CDCR policy. Defense attorneys for the “Corcoran 8” stated at trial that the defendant correctional officers should not be held responsible for the behavior of the “vile and violent” prisoners.

In 2012, in an attempt to end the institutionally promoted violence, so-called rival gangs leaders entered into the “Agreement to End Hostilities.” In a statement, the representatives stated, “We can no longer allow CDCR to use us against each other for their benefit!!”

Despite the prisoners’ best efforts to cease conflicts, and CDCR’s insistence that this practice has ceased in September 2019, on May 23, 2021, Soledad experienced an incident that was reported as a riot on the internal memos. However, the prisoners have reported different. CDCR had been put on notice that there was no longer us against each other, but they saw CDCR staff watching and doing nothing. Some prisoners even report that they saw staff videotaping the incident.

Many of the prisoners were injured by the inevitable physical fight and they were also injured by the correctional officers who organized the altercation then used force to purportedly try to break it up. In addition to the bruises and black eyes, one prisoner was shot, another prisoner dislocated his shoulder, another prisoner suffered a brain hemorrhage after being hit in the face with a brick. Several prisoners ended up going to the hospital. One had to have his face reconstructed.

CDCR has defended this practice by stating that it is forbidden from instituting race-based lockdowns and segregating inmates based on race or ethnicity. However, this argument is immaterial and shortsighted, as the prohibition of race-based segregation is a far cry from the orchestrated bouts between rival gang members.

Not surprisingly, the prisoners who were unwittingly pushed into these gladiator fights have always been punished for their perceived involvement. Some of the retaliatory acts disguised as discipline have included Rule Violation Reports, placement in solitary confinement, and placement of contraband in prisoner’s cells. These purported disciplinary issues are always a factor in front of the Board of Parole Hearings.

The Constitution guarantees that prisoners should be free from cruel and unusual punishment. However, like so many other broad legal terms, it is not entirely clear what constitutes “cruel and unusual.” With regard to incarcerated people, the Ninth Circuit has held that “after incarceration, only the ‘unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain . . . constitutes cruel and unusual punishment.’”

The question then becomes what constitutes “wanton” conduct. In order to determine whether behavior that leads a prisoner’s injury is wanton, the court will ask whether force was applied in a good faith effort to maintain or restore discipline or [was it] applied maliciously and sadistically for the very purpose of causing harm.

“We can no longer allow CDCR to use us against each other for their benefit.”

It seems obvious that the acts of these correctional officers were not in good faith, and instead were for sadistic pleasure and attempts to control the prisoners and their fate. The prisoners have reported that they would be punished for refusing to go to the yard and punished with force when trying to survive these fights.

Additionally, there are various reports of CDCR staff standing by as these fights progressed and taking video of the altercations. The most telling factor that this practice is the product of malice is the fact that there is no good explanation for intentionally putting rival gang members in an enclosed space, knowing that physical violence would be likely.

Timothy Malone laid out how these organized fights maintain “carceral social control” by “1. Criminaliz[ing] racialized and superfluous labor; 2. Concentrat[ing] and impound[ing] scarcity; 3. Further criminaliz[ing] their survival strategies, and steer[ing] them for the purposes of institutional control; [and] 4. Dehumaniz[ing] the targets of this operation.”

“Timothy Malone laid out how these organized fights maintain ‘carceral social control’…”

It’s these acts and these mentalities that allowed the Corcoran 8 to get away with organizing fights thirty years ago and will allow the new generation of correctional officers to get away with it again.

Until we stop viewing prisoners as a social liability and start viewing them as the people our Bill of Rights was intended to protect, this will go on and on. Until this time, we have to hope our brothers and sisters can keep themselves safe from the very people entrusted with their custody.

Footnotes:
8. Const. Am. VIII

Submit your art and/or news articles for publication. Nominate a formerly incarcerated person 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
Abolish Bondage Collectively

W e are pleased to introduce our “Abolish Bondage Collectively” coalition and ask that you join us.

As an organization that centers the voices of those most impacted by the carceral system in this country, AOUON felt the need for a broad front coalition to engage in this historic work of abolishing slavery: the “Abolish Bondage Collectively” coalition.

The mission of the “ABC campaign” or the “ABC Collective” is to denounce structural racism and vestiges of slavery through the removal of the Article 1, Section 6 Exception Clause from California’s Constitution.

Article 1, Section 6 of the California Constitution currently allows the practice of involuntary servitude as a means of punishing crime. California’s reliance on involuntary servitude for a crime predates the U.S. Constitution’s 13th Amendment Exception Clause from about 15 years.

How I supported ACA3 while on parole, unable to travel

By William Palmer
LSPC Communications Fellow
Host of One Community One Mic

W hile sitting in the LSPC Comms Department satellite office that is my living room, one of the few benefits of the Covid-19 office protocols, I opened an email about the upcoming Sacramento legislation visit for ACA3. A call came in on my cell phone. I started to feel my usual anxiety. It was not as bad as in the past, but it was still temporarily paralyzing. The caller ID revealed that it was my Parole Agent.

Several reasons as to why he was calling me flashed through my mind. Hopefully he was notifying me that I was off parole. More than likely, he could be exercising some punitive condition of parole. I thought to myself, “Going back to the parole office, but stating an alternative date was better for me.” I’d stop by your house between 1:00 and 4:00 on Wednesday. The Parole Officer said, “I’ll see you then,” I responded.

After we disconnected an exhale followed. Yet my mind was still racing. I thought about calling Liliyah to ask for assistance. She sent me the right code in a text and I called in. I was no longer an observer, but in the virtual line to use my voice.

I picked up the phone to call in. Now, calling in was challenging. The voices on the call-in lines were my comrades back at the Oakland office and throughout the state. Frustrated, I called Aaliyah to ask for assistance. She sent me the right code in a text and I called in. I was no longer an observer, but in the virtual line to use my voice.

The cue came, “87 go ahead.” The operator stated, “I’m William Palmer from the Communications Department of LSPC and All Of Us Or None.”

As the hearing got underway, former Assemblywoman and newly-elected Senator Sydney Kamlager stood behind plexiglass and was speaking about the need to remove the vestiges of slavery. I felt that her passion to end the exception clause for involuntary servitude was genuine. I watched this politician speak like she was a member of the Abolish Bondage Collectively (ABC) coalition working to assist in the cause.

Other speakers started coming up to the microphone using their voices. My eagerness to be there was building rapidly. One by one, I watched the Elder Freeman Fellows and our Policy Manager using their actual voices to make history long overdue. “I should be there,” I yelled to the imaginary coworkers in the satellite office that is my living room.

I was unable to travel, but stating an alternative date was better for me. “I’ll stop by your house between 1:00 and 4:00 on Wednesday,” the Parole Officer said. “I’ll see you then,” I responded.

Tuesday morning came and my computer was broadcasting the Public Safety hearing for ACA3. I woke up with intense anxiety that held me in bed longer than I should. I did not want to leave the house today. I did not want to deal with traffic. It is not exactly that I just did not want to, but more like a feeling of not being able to mentally exert the energy that it would take to navigate the world outside my front door. The work I needed to do could be done from home, so why not.

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Want to get involved with AOUON Sacramento? Contact Henry 24/7 at: henry@prisonerwithchildren.org / 209.762.0850.
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n October 2020, LSPC and AOUON convened a meeting of directly- and system-impacted families and advocacy groups to discuss how we can improve visiting in CDCR. Folks shared their experiences, generating a list of problems that needed to be fixed. Then we set about writing a law that would fix these problems: our motto was “think big,” don’t censor ourselves with what we thought was possible, but propose the law we wanted to see written.

We formed the Coalition for Family Unity and wrote a comprehensive Family Unity Bill that would address multiple barriers to visiting in CDCR, including traveling distance, cost, exclusions based on visitors’ conviction/arrest history and mistakes on their applications, exclusions based on the incarcerated person’s conviction/arrest history or housing status, denials of visiting as discipline for non-visiting-related RVRs, disrespect, and inadequate judicial enforcement.

Meanwhile, committee staff was pushing back about the scope of our bill. We knew AB 990 was expensive and comprehensive, but our approach was to ask for what we really wanted and see what happened during the legislative process. Now we had to make some tough decisions.

The legislator we had counted on as the back-up to Bonta wasn’t willing to take up the bill as currently written. Legislators we approached to take over the bill were also being asked to take over other Bonta bills, so there was competition for attention. And committee staff was threatening to keep the bill from being heard this year unless we obtained a new author and significantly amended it.

Finally, Miguel Santiago of LA came through. He became the new bill author and we limited the bill to the following provisions: restore the right to visiting for incarcerated people with a strengthened legal standard; prohibit denials of visits as discipline for non-visiting RVRs, for mistakes on applications when the correct information is available on a DOJ background report, and for conviction/arrest histories of visitors and incarcerated people except for serious violations of visiting rules. The bill also would have required a minimum of 4 visiting days a week and access to emergency calls and visits when an incarcerated person is seriously ill.

Our next step was to find an author. Then-Assemblymember Rob Bonta enthusiastically offered to author the bill and promised to help us find another author if he was appointed Attorney General, a job he was seeking. We agreed and Bonta introduced the bill in February: the bill was assigned the number AB 990. We signed co-authors as well: Senator Nancy Skinner, then-Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager (now Senator Kamlager), and Assemblymembers Ash Kalra and Mark Stone.

First Policy Committee

Our first hurdle was to get the bill through the Assembly Public Safety Committee chaired by Assemblymember Reginald Jones-Sawyer. We prepared a fact sheet for the bill and met with staff members for the committee and for legislators on the committee.

We also met with CDCR officials to hear their reactions to the bill. We had to worry about not only the content of the bill, but also the costs of implementing it. During these meetings, directly- and system-impacted people explained the need for the bill and why our solutions would work. The meetings were beautiful: people speaking truth to power and sharing expertise in the issues that directly affect them.

Obstacle #1:

Bonta is Appointed Attorney General

Before the Assembly Public Safety Committee hearing could take place, Gov. Newsom appointed Bonta Attorney General. We were happy about the appointment, but nervous about losing our bill author and champion.

On April 20, 2021, the Assembly Public Safety Committee held a hearing on AB 990 and other bills. Ally organizations submitted support letters to the committee ahead of time, and two coalition members – a mother who raised her son while she was incarcerated and a son who talked about his need for contact with his incarcerated father when he was growing up – testified. During public comment, about 50 family members called in to support the bill and several other callers listed off names of supporting organizations. It was a very moving experience. The bill passed 6-1 with one member not voting. Two of the committee members even asked to join as co-authors: Assemblymembers Bill Quirk and Alex Lee!

The legislator we had counted on as the back-up to Bonta wasn’t willing to take up the bill as currently written. Legislators we approached to take over the bill were also being asked to take over other Bonta bills, so there was competition for attention. And committee staff was threatening to keep the bill from being heard this year unless we obtained a new author and significantly amended it.

Our next step was to get through the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Our bill was placed on the suspense file because it would cost more than $150,000 to implement. We reached out to all of the committee members to urge them to support the bill, but the key decisionmaker was the committee chair, Lorena Gonzalez. We had constituents meet with her staff and call in messages of support to her office. There is no hearing in the Appropriations Committee so we had to wait and see what was going to happen.

Welcome Budget News

In May, we were thrilled to hear that Governor Newsom included ongoing funding for a third visiting day in his May Revise Budget. While this wasn’t the same as the statutory guarantee of a minimum number of visiting days we had proposed in AB 990, as a practical matter it went a substantial way toward meeting our goals and it apparently influenced Gonzalez. Meanwhile, CDCR told the Appropriations Committee it would costs millions to fund the emergency call/visit provision on top of the costs for a fourth visiting day.
“Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing and ciphering, acting as clerks, merchants and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian’s God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!”

—Frederick Douglass, July 5, 1852

July 2021

On May 20, 2021, the Assembly Appropriations Committee passed the bill as newly amended: gone were the provisions requiring 4 visiting days and emergency calls and visits, but the bill still contained restoration of the right to visit and bars some against unreasonable barriers to visiting, provisions that would provide families some real relief.

The Fight on the Assembly Floor

Next step: getting the whole Assembly to pass the bill as amended. We located constituents of moderate Assemblymembers all across California and urged them to call their representatives asking them to vote yes on AB 990. Slowly, our vote count crept up until we felt confident enough to call for a vote on the floor. On June 2, 2021, the bill was passed by a vote of 47-18.

On to the Senate!

Now we are trying to get the bill passed in the Senate and then signed by the Governor. Next stop is the Senate Public Safety Committee, which will hear the bill on July 13. Two of our co-authors are on this committee, and we feel confident the bill will pass. Meanwhile, we are meeting with the Governor’s office to hear their feedback on the bill, because the bill only becomes law if he signs it.

After the July 13 hearing, we go to the Senate Appropriations Committee in late August — like the Assembly Appropriations Committee, much of the negotiating here goes on behind closed doors so all we can do is bring as much attention as possible to the bill in the office of the committee chair, Anthony Portantino of the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. We’re looking into creative ways to promote the bill in and around his district.

Watch this paper for next steps. In the meantime, encourage your family members to join the Coalition for Family Unity to learn how they can help promote AB 990. You can also write to your representatives to explain why it is so important for the bill to become law.

Join us at: bit.ly/JoinCFU

Justice Corner with Joanna

By Joanna Theolene
LSPC Policy Manager

July 5, 2021 will commemorate 168 years since Frederick Douglass’ speech. Oddly enough, things feel awkwardly stagnant. Many of our people are still “erecting houses, constructing bridges … reading, writing, and ciphering…” while being sentenced to involuntary servitude. Though we’ve added more “lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, and authors…” our people, alongside our brown brothers and sisters, are still needing to “prove that we are men!”

As Americans, we have and always will value what it takes to claim our nation as “free.” We take moment to recognize those of us who have believed freedom is possible even if they never saw as a result of conscription immediately following emancipation during the Civil War.

Our humanity alongside our commitment to this country makes us true patriots. That is why this year, whilst the concept of freedom repeats its farce for many, let us be MINDFUL of who we are and embrace our freedom; not just from an external and global perspective, but let’s continue to free our families, friends, and communities from the shackles of the culture of a society that still cannot see us for who we are.

“We have got to find a way to bring some loving here today.” Join me as we explore these concepts and look at justice.
ALL OF US OR NONE
FROM AN INTERN'S PERSPECTIVE

By Anna Dubón
LSPC Summer Intern

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ince 2003, All of Us or None, a project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, has been instrumental in creating and passing legislation on the local, state, and national level in order to extend the rights of formerly and currently incarcerated people. Through community organizing, coalition building, and political advocacy, what begins as just an idea has the potential to impact thousands of lives.

As I sought to simply create a historical account of All of Us or None's past legislative actions, I realized that the impact of their work far surpasses the text of the legislation itself, but strengthens democracy, transforms public narratives regarding system-impacted people, and amplifies the authentic voices of formerly incarcerated people.

After just a few weeks of working as an intern at LSPC, I could easily see the tremendous degree to which Dorsey Nunn, the executive director of LSPC and a co-founding member of AOUON, inspires, uplifts, and affirms his staff and community.

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Dorsey and ask him about LSPC and AOUON’s previous policy and legislative campaigns. While Dorsey expressed immense pride in their victories, it was clear how much he values the immaterial, interpersonal aspects of the movement as well. Whether it is working in an office that employs mostly formerly incarcerated people or watching staff members learn to exercise their rights and the power of their voice, it is the people in his life that drive him forward.

He told me, “It’s not always measured in money; it’s measured in all these other non-tangible things. It gives you the quality of your life a real meaning.” Under Dorsey’s leadership, LSPC/AOUON has successfully led multiple policy campaigns in support of formerly and currently incarcerated people, including the passing of AB2530, which reduced and regulated the shackling of incarcerated women before, during, and after giving birth, ACA-6, which restored the right to vote for incarcerated individuals, and AB1008, otherwise known as “Ban the Box.”

One of the most significant pieces of legislation that LSPC pushed through the state government is AB1008, which prohibits an employer in the state of California from inquiring about an applicant’s past criminal conviction before making a formal job offer.

Sandra Johnson, LSPC’s In-Custody Program Coordinator, was instrumental to the success of the “Ban the Box” campaign. After working at a company for six years, Sandra was unjustly fired from her job due to her past criminal conviction in 2015. When Dorsey got wind of Sandra’s story, he invited her to join the Ban the Box campaign and she became, in her words, the “human story” of the movement.

When reflecting on the Ban the Box campaign with me, Sandra emphasized how the experience transformed her as a person. Immediately after she lost her job, Sandra was consumed with shame and anxiety. She felt like the words “formerly incarcerated” were “tattooed across her forehead,” especially when it came to applying to new jobs. However, through organizing with All of Us or None and Dorsey and other formerly incarcerated people, Sandra gained confidence in herself and learned the power and worth of her voice. “They held me until I could hold myself,” she told me, referring to AOUON. Sandra credits Dorsey specifically with giving her the confidence to be her most authentic self. He told her that when sharing her story, she shouldn’t change how she speaks or the words she uses in order to accommodate the ears of politicians. Using her own voice to speak her own truth was more than enough.

By sharing her story, Sandra reminded lawmakers, who are often so removed from the populations affected by legislation, that their decisions impact real people with real lives. Sandra’s story makes visible the humanity of formerly and currently incarcerated people, a population that is too often pushed to the margins of society.

LSPC policy manager Joanna Billingly shared similar sentiments when reflecting on LSPC’s work. To Joanna, LSPC and AOUON’s legislative and policy actions serve to strengthen democracy. When currently and formerly incarcerated people are empowered to speak their truth in their own voice, they transform public narratives regarding system-impacted people, which in turn transforms the ways that people engage government and policy. To Joanna, “democracy ultimately translates into reminding folks that we are human.”

What makes the policy work of LSPC/AOUON remarkable is its ability to transform society on an individual, governmental, and cultural level. All of Us or None provides a community for formerly incarcerated people who are united by shared experience and a drive to make the world a better place. LSPC and AOUON provide their members, such as Sandra, with a platform to speak their truth to the world, reminding these individuals of the value and power of their voice. In doing so, they actively disrupt the destructive narratives that inform harmful legislation, challenging people to reckon with prejudicial preconceptions that they may have, especially those held subconsciously. As a result, legislators and voters alike are able to engage in policy with a greater sense of compassion, awareness, and respect for humanity.

Anna Dubón is working as a summer intern with Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. She was born and raised in Oakland and is currently a senior at UC Berkeley majoring in Political Economy with a concentration in Poverty and Globalization.
July 2021

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) AB118 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 12,202.5 gun enhancement completely from the state penal code and change the 10-20-25 gun enhancement to 1, 3, and 5 years, respectively.

- Visitation (Santiago) AB8990 would enshrine visitation as a right (rather than a privilege) for incarcerated individuals and their families.

IDAHO

- Clean Slate (Rubel and Lent) [number pending] would allow individuals with felony convictions 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.

ILLINOIS

- Right to Vote (Ford) HB4377/HJRC33, 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

- Voting Rights (Barke) 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.

- Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act (Salazar) S2836 has been SIGNED INTO LAW! The passage of the HALT Act will considerably restrict the practice of solitary confinement by limiting the time incarcerated people can be housed in isolation and prohibiting it altogether for vulnerable populations. The law will take full effect in one year.

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LSPC Elder Freeman Policy Fellows at the California State Capital speaking in support of ACA3. ACA3 passed the Public Safety Committee. See page 5 for more on ACA3.

WASHINGTON

- Earned Release Time (Simmons) HB 1282 would restore Washington’s earned time accrual rate to 33% for all incarcerated individuals, ensuring that people are able to earn time off their sentences through participation in education, employment, and rehabilitative programming so that they are better prepared to succeed upon reentry into the community.

- Juvenile Points Bill (Hackett) HB 1413 would give anyone who had juvenile crimes (also known as “juvenile points”) used against them in adult sentencing the ability to go back to court for re-sentencing under a lower sentencing range. The bill includes ALL juvenile crimes without any exclusions. HB 1413 has the potential to impact thousands and thousands of people serving (in some cases decades) longer sentences because of crimes they committed as children.

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A few years ago, Rasheed Stanley-Lockheart began work as a firefighter engineer in the Bay Area. He soon learned how to operate all components of a fire engine and, having quickly earned the trust of his superiors, assumed a leadership role at the station, working directly with his captain to assess emergencies and decide courses of action.

In this way, Lockheart was like many other firefighters: an invaluable member of a skilled team and a co-worker others could depend on with their lives. Unlike other firefighters, however, Lockheart was on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for three years straight. His hours were different from other firefighters because he worked at the San Quentin Prison Fire Department, where he was serving a 24-year sentence for armed robbery. If Lockheart had requested a day off of work, he would've been promptly locked in solitary confinement, at the will of prison administrators.

Ironically, Lockheart applied for the firefighter position because of the benefits that came with the job — benefits, here, being a relative term. While it would ultimately be a fundamental lack of benefits that would have the most profound and lasting impact on Lockheart, at the time that he discovered the opportunity, firefighting seemed a step forward.

And in many ways, it was. After spending virtually every year since he was 15 years old behind bars — in juvenile detention facilities, jails and prisons across California — Lockheart sought an escape. Firefighting provided a partial way out. At San Quentin, incarcerated firefighters live apart from other prisoners, in rooms of their own, with real beds, drawers and cabinets. They eat higher quality food off of ceramic plates — fine china, as far as dishwasher in prison goes, according to Lockheart — and experience a level of freedom denied to other prisoners.

Even more than material benefits, a palpable trust and camaraderie among incarcerated crew members, as well as between the crew and captains, was something Lockheart noticed and appreciated right away.

"Dealing with the fire chief was the first time I had really been in a conversation with somebody of authority within the prison system that felt somewhat relatable," Lockheart said.

Gone was much of the prison hierarchy and power structure that had permeated every corner of Lockheart's life for the better part of three decades. In fact, Lockheart went so far as to liken firefighting to serving life in prison — an affinity of mentalities that surely drew those at the firehouse together.

"The reality of a lifer is that, at one point, the world has been snatched away from them, they don't know if they'll ever get to go back to it," Lockheart said. "And with firefighters, it's that you never know what the next day is going to bring, what the next hour is going to bring, what the next moment is going to bring."

Because of the nature of firefighting — engineers and captains alike place their lives in each other's hands every day on the job — the environment in the firehouse was even friendly. To Lockheart, unexpectedly so.

"I'll never forget sitting in the sally port," Lockheart said. "The captain pulls up in a truck... and he goes, 'Man, just throw your stuff in the back and hop in'... I'm confused because I don't know, do I get in the back of the truck, or what's happening? I know I don't just jump in the front seat with you, right?"

He ended up sitting beside the captain in the cab — a meaningful, if small, symbol of fraternity that came to define much of Lockheart's time at the firehouse.

Still, this camaraderie was not total. Even though the captain and crew rode side-by-side in the fire engine and ate shoulder-to-shoulder at the dinner table, there still existed a chasm between them. Captains were regular, salaried employees of the prison, with normal working hours and ample pay to match. Not only did the incarcerated crew members not receive time off, but they were not adequately recognized or compensated for their labor. In California, firefighters make an average of about $75,000 per year, with a range of benefits from insurance to pensions. By contrast, Lockheart and his fellow crew members received pay of less than $48 per month, or $576 per year.

This lack of compensation is the rule, not the exception, behind bars. In California, incarcerated people working non-industry jobs earn as little as eight cents an hour, obscenely far below the state minimum hourly wage of $13. Across the United States, the average minimum daily wage for non-industry prison jobs is 86 cents. Some states — most of them in the rural South — don't pay at all.

Regardless of the pay, incarcerated people often don't have control over whether or not they must work. Due to a carefully-worded clause in Article 1, Section 6 of the California State Constitution, involuntary servitude remains legal as punishment for a crime. Since 1974, the year the clause was ratified, courts in California have upheld the power of prisons to force incarcerated people to work. Refusal will often earn prisoners rules violations or other retaliatory actions from prison administrators, increasing their sentences or otherwise making their lives more difficult.

Lockheart's time at the San Quentin Fire Department helped him recognize the often exploitative nature of prison jobs and the lack of basic human rights afforded to those made to do them.

"This is all part of the manipulation of the system, right?" Lockheart said. "This is how they get you into involuntary servitude. They manipulate the system to work for their benefit."

For Lockheart and thousands of other formerly incarcerated people, this manipulated system extends far beyond prison walls. Even after an incarcerated person is released, remnants of the justice system cling to them, following them to their home and to their work.

After being released from San Quentin, Lockheart sought a job as a firefighter. With his years of experience as a crew member and leader in a fire station, Lockheart could work at any municipal department in the state. The only thing standing in his way: his conviction history.

"I became an avid advocate for what we call ACA 3,” he said. "There is no rational reason for incarcerated firefighters not to have the same pay and conditions as firefighters in the municipal departments."

"ACA 3 would allow incarcerated firefighters to be paid the same as other firefighters, and the benefits that came with that position. They had to be air-worthy medical candidates and pass all the testing. When you're a firefighter, you can help people. That's the only thing that could make being on death row for 24 years bearable."

"My mother passed away when I was a kid. I couldn't save her, I couldn't save my family, I couldn't save me. I went to prison, but I'm going to try to save something else."

"I'm going to try to save the firehouse. It's the one thing I could save, the one thing I could have control over."

In this way, Lockheart was like many other incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, including advocating for ACA 3.

"Coming Home" is a multimedia project produced in partnership with FreeSpeech and ElderLaw. This multimedia story about the experiences of Rasheed Stanley-Lockheart and other incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, including advocating for ACA 3, is produced in partnership with FreeSpeech and ElderLaw.
Now that Lockheart was no longer locked up at San Quentin, he was locked out of a stable, good-paying career he was more than qualified to assume.

Since he was released in 2020, the laws have changed — if Lockheart were to be released today, he would have been able to secure a job as a firefighter beyond the gates of San Quentin.

But the immense level of trust that exists among crew members and captains — incarcerated and non-incarcerated people — inside prisons simply doesn’t exist on the outside. Instead, formerly incarcerated people are too often treated with suspicion and contempt.

Lockheart’s days as a firefighter — what he calls a “young man’s job” — are behind him. But he has continued to dedicate his life to helping better the lives of others. Lockheart now works as a program manager for The Ahimsa Collective, running Empathize — a participatory circle program inside California Correctional Women’s Facility and the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad that explores the impacts of crime. He also helps guide formerly incarcerated people through the reentry process, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie that he had experienced himself so vividly at the San Quentin Fire Department.

Despite the difficulties and unfairness of the job and the betrayal he experienced upon his release, Lockheart doesn’t regret his time at the San Quentin firehouse. In fact, he deems it one of the most rewarding and formative experiences of his life.

“Firefighting was the best thing that ever happened to me,” Lockheart said. “It changed the way I not only see the world and perceive the world, but it changed my obligation to my people, and my people being formerly and currently incarcerated people.”

Jericho Rajninger is an LSPC Summer Intern. He studies English and Global Poverty at UC Berkeley and writes and edits for the Daily Californian.
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 feed 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.
One alone his lot can’t better.
Either gun or fetter.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)

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All of Us Or None Membership Form

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

Name & Number: ________________________________
Institution: ________________________________
Address: ______________________________________
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 & any questions to: Willard Birt/AOUON
4400 Market Street
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