Not Worker, But Chattel
by Ivan Kilgore, CSP-Solano CA
Except taken from the essay previously published in Propter Nos Vol. 3 (2019)

One of the most overlooked contradictions that imprisoned abolitionists face today is not merely the issue of our resistance meeting a master’s repress, nor is it a matter of finding off the Democratic Party’s attempt to co-opt—to steal and covertly misdirect—our efforts into the legal machine of Civil Rights reform. What we prison slaves and millions of other “prison slaves-in-waiting” have yet to comprehend is the extent to which an internal ideological struggle must be waged among ourselves, within a segregated prison population, as well as in our neighborhoods and communities, if we are ever to realize our potential as revolutionary class.

Rendered civilly dead by U.S. law, I am to the State as the slave was to the plantation Master. The same relation of coercive racist violence applies: my black body is always vulnerable, open to an enveloping State terror. As property of the State, I exist in direct confrontation with the punitive core of capitalist relations of force. Every movement I make carries with it the possibility of authority’s lash. I am the bodily raw material that gives the prison industrial complex purpose and social meaning. Beyond recognizing the structure of violence that I inhabit, I must also note how the very act of naming my own experience—a slave held captive by the State—as the slave was to the plantation Master. The same is true with the structure of violence that I inhabit: these terms also apply.

Experiences with collective interprison actions demonstrate the gravity of our ideological struggle. Because job assignments are seen as a relative privilege behind these walls, we are lured into conformity and compliance to work, often merely out of a need to survive. While I discuss this latter dilemma for the majority of this essay, I would first like to begin by unpacking the former, clarifying the structural position of the (prison) slave.

There are two essential dilemmas that prisoners face when organizing as the worker-on-strike instead of the slave-in-revolt. One is that a prison strike must be organized differently, its operations conducted differently, and requires a level of active solidarity (from others in the position, non-imprisoned people) far greater than any other united workplace action. Many on the outside need to take up more of our all or none newspaper serves to link those of us who have been locked up, those who are locked up, as well as our families and allies in this struggle.

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Plan to Close Ten Prisons by 2025
by By Robert J Hansen
Reprinted with permission from The Davis Vanguard.
www.davisvanguard.org

S acramento, CA – Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) held a statewide online rally calling on Governor Gavin Newsom and the state to adopt a comprehensive plan for future prison closures and to halt CDCR spending increases.

CURB is calling on California to close at least 10 prisons in the next 5 years.

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Message From Dorsey
by AOUON Co-Founder Dorsey Nunn

I wish you all a Happy New Year. 2023 is LSPC’s 45th Anniversary, and a look back lets us see how far we’ve come, and how we’re in such a great position now to continue our critical work. When Ellen Barry started LSPC in 1978 as Network of Women in Prison, she did so with grants totaling $12,000. She had a staff of 4, including a woman incarcerated at FCI Pleasanton, and a legal intern from UC Berkeley Law.

45 years later, LSPC has an over-$3 million budget, owns our own building, employs 27 people—mostly formerly incarcerated and system-impacted—and has had hundreds of interns, many of whom became lawyers and are doing amazing work at organizations such as the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Equal Justice Initiative, or writing books that impact our national consciousness, like The New Jim Crow. And that first legal intern, Pamela Price, was just elected as the first Black District Attorney for Alameda County.

Over the past 45 years, LSPC founded or fiscally sponsored All of Us or None, California Coalition of Women Prisoners, and the first Critical Resistance conferences, groups that have produced fundamental change in both policy and culture. Not only is the majority our staff formerly incarcerated, but we also created the Elder Freeman Policy Fellowship to train our future leaders.

I’m very proud that over the course of the COVID pandemic that we’ve been able to maintain and support all our staff. It wasn’t too long ago—less than a decade—that Administrative Director Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah and I were taking serious pay cuts to keep as many staff as possible. Our current financial stability is a sign of the scope and quality of our legislative, litigation, and grassroots organizing work. We now have a great mix of people who will allow us to accomplish more than we’ve been able to before.

We have a team of four attorneys who are committed to the work in a real, personal way. They are doing everything from training lawyers at other legal service organizations, to crafting legislative policy, to continuing our suit to end long-term solitary confinement, to responding to the hundreds of letters we receive each month requesting legal advice.

I’m very excited about the next generation of organizers and civil rights attorneys. For example, our Housing Advocate Taqwaa Bonner, after having served decades incarcerated in prison, has successfully helped pass Fair Chance Housing ordinances in Berkeley and Oakland, and soon in Alameda County. Not only does this continue All of Us or None’s initial Ban the Box campaign we started in 2003, but these campaigns provide a model for other counties, like Los Angeles, and across the nation.

We look forward to continue our campaigns into 2023, especially our work to expand visiting rights for family members and to remove the exception clause from Article 1, Section 6 of the California Constitution that legalizes involuntary servitude and perpetuates the practice of prison slavery. And we look forward to welcoming you to our 45th Anniversary Gala later this year!

Move Movement Maker

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

SYBYAALHBLYMETFCTRZHTEO  YROTESIHBTZRHDA  JAAAPRCRLDENUZABH  VYUSAIYLMORTHA  ANODMAKAIGNHBUU  LURKILDHNWLEA  ULEHSPAEQTQLR  AOAMTRTKOESTEY  BVMKOFARTRTCKI  LNSTNQEGKINZHE  ELIEPOWERDREAPS  RSVETUDEISWCY  TSENILEFILPSYOE  EDARMCKIXSETTW  CONSTITUTIONAL

Answer key on page 7

Comic by Jessie Milo - California State Prison - Corcoran

Call For Art
AOUON wants to feature your original drawings, paintings, or comics!
Submit your artwork: AOUON News Editor
4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608
Todays corner highlight a few of the bills happening this year. FYI - a bill is a new law "proposal" that if passed becomes the new law. These bills are important as we fight to roll back these antiquated (outdated) laws from segregation that continue to hold us down!

1) The Wilma Chan Fair Chance Housing Ordinance (Alameda County) May go state-wide soon!

February 28, 2023, marks the date of the second reading of the Fair Chance Housing Ordinance which would make formerly incarcerated persons "eligible" for section 8 housing and removing the question "have you ever been convicted of a felony?" from apartment rental applications throughout Alameda County. This matters because housing is limited in poorer communities already, and with discriminatory anti-black laws made during segregation and Jim Crow days still on the books barring us from housing opportunities, such as section 8, and screening us out during the application process, we are constantly susceptible to the designs of homelessness. Being unhoused is not a crime, but it is a crime against us because blocking us from housing perpetuates crime when you force people into not having a place to stay. So Fair Chance Housing opens another door that was mended shut by those who dont care about us. Shout out to those Alameda County board of supervisors who voted to pass this ordinance at the first hearing in the face of strong opposition from the landlords and their associations.

2) Restoring Visiting Rights Inside California Prisons (AB 990 2022)

In the 1970's prisoners established their "right to personal visits." It was codified in the penal code section 2601(d). However, that "right" was changed to a "privilege" in the mid 1990's by former governor Grey Davis. That was also when lifers had their right to family visits taken. Last year we moved a bill called AB 990 through both of the state capitol houses (the senate and assembly) to restore the visiting rights taken from us by former Governor Grey Davis. Even Republican Assembly Member Marie Waldron of the 75th district, San Diego County, voted to restore our visiting rights. But the oft-praised Governor Gavin Newsom "vetoed" our bill siding with the prison guards. So now we are coming back to the legislature again to fight for visitation rights! What will the bill do when passed? It would mean your visits cant be canceled, your visitors cannot be turned away, and you can appeal or sue for violations of your visiting rights. Without "rights" you only have "privileges" and privileges are things that can be lost, forfeited, taken from you by prison staff, and not challenged in court. But your "rights" cannot be touched! So tell your folks to support the Coalition for Family Unity who is leading this bill. (Assembly member Santiago, district 54, Los Angeles)

3) Minimum wages for all prisoners and no more 115's for refusing to work

Yes, you read that right. There is a bill that proposes to raise the minimum wage in California and we made sure that prison labor was included in that bill. If passed, then prison jobs would pay the same minimum wage that gets paid outside.

We also have a bill that would remove from the state constitution language allowing for the state to force prisoners to work. Specifically, "involuntary servitude" (as a punishment for crime) would be removed from the state constitution and prisoners would no longer be penalized (written up) for refusing to work jobs that they dont like or want.

The bill would take the pen (modern-day whip) out of master's hand and allow prisoners the freedom to decide if they want the jobs that they are assigned to without any penalties if they decide they dont want it. This would empower prisoners to seek higher wages for their own work.

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Canteen Bill Proposal

End price gouging on essential supplies for incarcerated people

Senator Becker will be authoring the Canteen bill proposal! Senator Becker was the successful author of SB 1008 that made free phone calls in state prisons and juvenile detention centers.

Bill Proposal:
Legislation that would prohibit items sold in California state prisons' canteens from being sold to incarcerated people at a price beyond that paid to the vendor. This bill would end price gouging on essential supplies for incarcerated people (including food and hygiene products), a burden which is mostly carried by poor families.

On average, canteen items are marked up roughly 65% beyond the cost paid to the vendor. The revenue generated from canteen sales makes up the majority of the Inmate Welfare Fund, a fund that is intended to be used for the benefit, education and welfare of incarcerated people. The greater portion of the Inmate Welfare Fund is used to fund the operational costs of CDCR canteens, while a small portion funds innovative programs, recreation, etc.

Due to CDCR's failure to provide adequate food and essential hygiene supplies to incarcerated people, the ability to purchase items at canteen is a necessity for incarcerated people. Given the essential nature of prison canteens, the cost of operating canteens across CDCR institutions should be a responsibility held by the state and taxpayers, rather than one pushed onto low-income families via exorbitant mark-ups.

Markups on canteen items make it difficult, if not impossible, for incarcerated people to meet their basic needs. In California, the minimum wage for prison labor is only eight cents an hour, before fees and deductions. In many cases, an incarcerated person's income after a month of full-time work would not be enough to afford a single 8 ounce cup of coffee, which is currently priced at $7.80. In a 2020 report from Impact Justice, three-fifths of the formerly incarcerated people surveyed said they could not afford commissary purchases, and 75% reported that access to food, including commissary items, was limited by their own or their family's finances. Many people reported having to choose between buying food and purchasing necessities such as toothpaste, tampons, and inpurofen, or even at times going hungry to make expensive phone calls.

CDCR's failure to provide adequate nutrition and essential supplies to the people it incarcerates makes the cost of items at canteen a crucial factor in determining incarcerated people's well-being and health.

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This bill will impact families of incarcerated people who are often the sole economic support for their incarcerated loved ones - majority of whom live in low income communities. Data show that family members who supported their loved ones through incarceration also experience trauma and long-term stress that can result in mental health issues and physical health conditions. This also leads to economic stress for these communities.

Bill Sponsors:
Women's Foundation California, Solis Policy Institute, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Legal Aid at Work, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, MILPA Collective, and UnCommon Law.
Not Worker, But Chattel
(Continued from page 1)

situations, but disrupting this fascist regime requires a whole lot more.

In the antebellum South, plantation slavery was not only an institution for the production of material goods at a cheap cost for the ruling class. Slavery established the very structure through which white freedom was, and is, made legible. The machinery of slavery was foundational to the non-slave’s experience of freedom at a psycho-social level. In fact, there would be no need to use the word “freedom” at all had there not first been the creation of a structural position called the Slave. It has always been white freedom and life produced in opposition to Black unfreedom and death.

State power is not only repressive but productive of social relations. It creates traps that lure us into complicity and participation whether it is for our own benefit or not. We need to understand work in prisons as such, and promote an abolitionist politics of that is profoundly anti-work. We can’t see the struggle as merely a fight for better wages, because the majority of us don’t have wages at all. We have to abolish the apparatus that cages us, separates us from our families, and disappears us from our communities.

Often when I tell fellow prisoners of my reluctance to work in one of the many prison factories or so-called “job assignments,” I am looked upon as if I have said something foolish. They always defer to the question of “Why?” As if being exploited for pennies on the dollar or no wage at all for our labor is an acceptable situation. As answering their question, I explain to them my experience in the Seminole County Jail in Wewoka, Oklahoma.

For twenty-three months, I was trapped in that Barney Fife of a hellhole, fighting for my life on a capital murder charge. It had no commissary. No TV. No outside cell activity. No library. Nothing. We were housed six to a cell, and all we had were our bunks, a few card games, and what few books we could get our hands on. Lunch was reheated for dinner and, needless to say, the food was terrible. All our exercise was the occasional sparring that a few of us could not resist which never lasted longer than twenty-five years later I still can taste that stale Thursday morning breakfast. It was degrading; an army ration of dehydrated ham and egg. Mixed with a little hot water it swelled up like dry dog shit on a rainy summer day. After flushing it down the toilet for about six months I finally relented. When you lose thirty pounds from starvation you begin to acquire a taste for this sort of shit.

As for the rest of us, we were allowed nothing. No commissary, no TV, no outside cell activity. Nothing. Old cornbread, wrapped in some toilet paper wrapper, was the only thing we had to eat that kept our stomachs from growling at night. Man, how I wished to be a “trustee” during those days. The “perks” alone made it to where nobody in that situation, including myself, cared that we were in fact being paid nothing for our labor.

For twenty-three months, I was forced to live under the foregoing conditions, wanting nothing besides freedom, and willing to slave just to get a small taste of it. Yet because I was charged with a M1 (i.e., 1st-degree-murder-charge) and would later face a death penalty trial, there would be no listening to country music or enjoying the sliver of mobility that cages us, separates us from our families, and disappears us from our communities.

Looking back on that situation today, I cannot help but think of how unfreedon and “gut” starvation condition me. I internalized so much stress, fear, and anger that it tempered my spirit. I failed to even realize how profoundly it suspended my reluctance to work in a carceral setting. Essentially, I was disciplined to withstand the taunting effects of my incarceration which prompt so many of us slaves to hustle for in prison.

Years later, when I was committed to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), one of the first of many cells I was to have over the years himself managing the hustle and perks of prison work assignments. The perks, he explained, ranged from something as simple as stealing extra food from the kitchen, to manipulating staff for sex and other “contraband.” Indeed, the inducement to work seemed to have its advantages.

However, as he explained all of this, I thought back help but think that while he meant no harm with his advice, he was thinking backwards. At this point, he had done almost twenty-one years in prison. And what he was kickin’ me to was hustling to be content with his life in prison and being “penitentiary rich.” As time passed and we became better acquainted with one another, I eventually pointed out to him that neither the “perks” or anything he had hustled for in twenty years of being incarcerated has purchased his freedom, or created any kind of financial stability either inside or outside these walls. I explained that hustling in prison is, to hustle on the bricks, is short-lived.

It’s corner hustling at its worst, dealing with shifty-ass scavengers, opportunists and scalawags—REAL LIFE DOPE FIEND SHIT! Where snitching at an all-time high and it’s a hit-and-miss inconsistent game where the hustlers, often more than not, wind up in the “hole” with more time, restrictions, and defeated, giving their hustle stacks back to the canteen or their own habits.

Despite having explained all this, none of it seemed to register with him or countless other prisoners who, because of a lack of productive opportunities, confidence, knowledge, discipline, and plausibility of instant gratification, disregard the odds and relent to the bullshit.

In time, I observed that it wasn’t even about the hustle and perks for most prisoners. Many were simply looking for an escape from the daily monotony of an otherwise drab existence. Prisons, we know, are idle and mundane places. They are isolating. And the majority of us do not have the fortunate of any, or any, interaction with the outside world. Therefore, to be able to get out of the cell to work—especially in a maximum security setting—and to be able to fraternize with other inmates or staff—especially those staff who are comfortable sharing their life experiences, which many prisoners have yet to have, if ever they will— is vicariously and psychologically rewarding in and of itself.

Having observed the foregoing, it became abundantly clear that while the majority of us are conscious of the fact that our labor is being exploited, the value we have come to place on a work assignment has been manipulated by the structural environment created by prison officials. To this end, we know prisoners are purposely designed to be easily manipulated, that despite countless court rulings ameliorating the abuse we frequently encounter at the hands of prison administrators, the intent remains to maintain oppressive conditions that, in effect, aim to keep us impoverished, dependent and, thus, powerless. Consequently, this has given life to the culture...
that we subscribe to where, for example, pushing a broom on the tier for 20 years with little to no compensation is accepted as a norm so long as we may entertain the illusion of a ‘come up.’

"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."

—13th Amendment of the United States Constitution

In 2014, Free Alabama Movement co-founders Melvin Ray, Kinetic Justice, and I were discussing the prospect of kicking off a “Free California Movement” in which California prisoners were to join the international movement to abolish prison slavery. My initial response was, “It’ll never work in Cali.” Why? To be clear, in no way was my response a reflection of any animosity, but rather it was a reflection of the many conversations I had had on the subject over the years with fellow prisoners.

Time and again, what they say is, “Man… I ain’t got not outside support. I can’t risk losing my job. That $10, $50 and, in some cases $200 pay number, counts!” or it’s “I’m trying to come up!” And I’ve told them that the chowhall workers. They like to eat! It’s that simple. (And that’s not to mention how all the recent changes in law that now provide earned time credits and parole consideration mean prison industries are expected to make a profit in such a way that "protesting" anything is the last thing they’re concerned about.) For them the inducement to work is simply too strong. Then, of course, there are those concerned about). For them the inducement to work is simply too strong. Then, of course, there are those who honestly believe they owe a debt to society.

Having said that, I’ve noticed a slight change of disposition amongst many prisoners in California. Before and during the hunger strikes, many were doubtful, if not pessimistic, as to our ability to bring about change and abolish many of the oppressive and inhumane aspects of prison. However, after the hunger strikes led to the 2015 settlement in “Ashker v. Brown,” which supposedly abolished indefinite SHU terms, the conversation on the yard has been somewhat optimistic. That said, the most significant result of the hunger strikes was not forcing CDCR to reform its bogus gang validation procedure and indefinite SHU placement scheme, rather it was the cultivation of faith that we as prisoners—as a collective and enlivened political body—have the power to dismantle the oppressive and inhumane system. According to Brow, “All incarcerated persons have worked hard to change the dysfunctional belief system that once governed their lives. They have suffered, adjusted and adapted to an environment that produced additional trauma than to overcome the struggle of a broken and broken system. According to Brow, “All incarcerated persons have worked hard, removed from their home and separated from their families thus producing further trauma. The hope of one day having the opportunity to show their change removes the stress of seeing what will eventually kill them, slowly suffocating as their mental or physical health decline. Thus, their resilience is their inspiration.”

How many of you have felt powerless, experienced anxiety, or depression?

One of every seven prisoners is serving a life sentence, all of whom are women, and are serving LWOP sentences, as they have been sentenced to death by incarceration. One of the most valuable gifts you can give to those who feel forgotten and left behind is emotional support. To improve the hearts and minds of those in desperate need of connection and wellbeing, Amie Ichikawa has met the challenge. She brings hope to the community.

Amie Ichikawa has embraced a selfless journey, reaching beyond her home and into the hearts of countless women in CCWF and CIQ. Amie’s compassion is demonstrated through women’s outreach, in addition her zeal to act upon the imminent need to minister in women’s recovery. While we could never amalgamate everything Amie has done for us we would like to share the creative ways she has brought greater possibilities to restore women’s worth. This advocacy has allowed women to know they are not a means of production but created for something more beautiful than the mistake they are judged by.

Amie has opened her heart and acquired financial obligations by providing transportation and devoting countless hours to aid the successful reentry of women who have no support, ie. She personally rented a car and drove hours to meet women at the gate upon release, brought them clothes, hygiene, and safely got them to their destination.

In support of preserving mental wellness and emotional release, Amie designs therapeutic postcards; each card reflects a wellness technique that aids in decontamination of the body and mind. The postcards are also a reminder that you are not alone in the struggle for freedom. M.J., who was sentenced to LWOP, conveyed her mental issues stem from being separated from her children and having no outlet. In pursuit of mental wellness she credits Amie as her emotional support and refers to her as a “friend”.

Amie has attempted to restore women’s femininity, as prison structure purposely eradicates all appearance of softness and identity, by donating hair accessories. Colorful clips in forms of hearts, flowers and butterflies.

Attesting to the benevolence of Amie, V.N. stated, “Even with the smallest insignificant hair clips she has found a way to brighten our spirits and has allowed us to find a grateful cheer each time they are worn. Reminding me that in a forgotten world I am significant to someone by enabling us to have just a brief moment to feel as if I am a worthy human in a place intended to house the human wreckage, and strip away all the color and humanness.”

J.H. an incarcerated woman for 21 years says, “Amie is a big asset to our community, helping us network with people in other countries to provide housing for those who were forced into deportation, she has remained supportive even after post incarceration. At the end of the day, she love everyone the same, she love people for who they are and helps all those who she can.”

In conclusion, Amie has attended several hearings to support the release of prisoners in the BPH proceeding in which our freedom is contingent upon. Amie Ichikawa has empowered many incarcerated women throughout the state of California.

Amie Ichikawa is one the founders of WomanIIWoman, a non-profit organization providing re-entry services, parole hearing prep., and advocacy for the safety and dignity of incarcerated women in California. She serves as an advocate for women in the Central California Women’s Facility and the California Institution for Women, standing for justice for victims of State abuse. www.WomanIIWoman.org
“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.”
- Desmond Tutu

“He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.”
- Muhammad Ali

“never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.”
- Dr. Mae Jemison, first African American female astronaut

“The battles that count aren’t the ones for gold medals. The struggles within yourself—the invisible, inevitable battles inside all of us—that’s where it’s at.”
- Jesse Owens, U.S. track & field athlete

“Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody’s going to know whether you did it or not.”
- Oprah Winfrey

“One of the lessons that I grew up with was to always stay true to yourself and never let what somebody else says distract you from your goals. And so when I hear about negative and false attacks, I really don’t invest any energy in them, because I know who I am.” —Michelle Obama

“The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression.”
- W.E.B. Du Bois, author and activist

“We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated.”
- Maya Angelou

“Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us.”
- Wilma Rudolph, first American woman to win three gold medals at a single Olympic Games

“Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.”
- Langston Hughes

“Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us.”
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“Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody’s going to know whether you did it or not.”
- Oprah Winfrey

“Each person must live their life as a model for others.”
- Rosa Parks

“In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”
- Booker T. Washington, author and politician

“Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.”
- Langston Hughes

“When I found I had crossed that line, [on her first escape from slavery, 1845] I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything.”
- Harriet Tubman

“I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” – Michael Jordan, Hall of Fame shooting guard

“Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us.”
- Wilma Rudolph, first American woman to win three gold medals at a single Olympic Games

Artwork by Donald Diggs
Untitled, mixed media, 2022
Mailbag

Can I Get a Letter?

by Jenkins
CA Health Care Facility

Can I get a letter?
How about some junk mail?
Many many moons sitin' in this cell
Banging my head on the wall
Backin' my brain at mail call
Trying to figure out where I went wrong
Holidays and birthdays it's the same old song
Can I get a letter?
Can someone reach out?
Sometimes I scream and shout, more like all the time no doubt
Depression gets amplified when your letter gets denied
There's no one for me to confide
Can I get a letter?
I don't care who from, send me a bill with a ridiculous sum
As long as they call my name one hour after one
Cut my tears are starting to fill this pail
It's a sad thing getting happy over institutionalized mail
Just tell Mary I'll catch her hail
Can I get a letter?

Plan to Close Ten Prisons by 2025 (Continued from page 1)

closures, like transferring inmates instead of releasing them.

“Throughout the CCC closure, incarcerated people faced retaliation from staff and inhuman conditions,” Ervin said.

Critical Resistance is a national grassroots organization that seeks to build an international movement to end the prison industrial complex.

The Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) in Blythe, is also scheduled to close in March 2025.

CURB said the money should not be saved in the general fund or repurposed for other issues, but to be invested in reentry and other services to be prioritized.

“We don’t want to save the money when we see the budget decreasing for prisons or to store in a rainy day fund,” Howard said. “People who are most directly impacted by the system of incarceration need that money.”

Yoel Haile, ACLU Northern California, spoke at the CURB rally for prison closures on Thursday, January 12, 2023.

Yoel Haile represented the ACLU of Northern California and expressed its commitment to support the cause to close California’s prisons.

Haile said California has a historic opportunity to reform its carceral landscape by repurposing closed prisons.

“If California wants to become a national leader on prison closure, there’s a lot to learn from other states about prison repurposing,” Haile said.

A recent report from The Sentencing Project found that 21 states have partially or fully closed at least one prison since 2020 making those sites prime candidates for community and commercial use, according to Haile.

“Communities that we think of as safe are not those with the most police and the most people going to prison,” Haile said. “Rather they are those with enough resources to provide support to residents and their families.”

CURB is a Black-led statewide coalition of more than 80 grassroots organizations focused on issues like sentencing reform, justice reinvestment and prison closure. www.curbprisonspending.org

Lifelines

is Back!

The Family Unity Matters program is honored to announce that we have resumed our Lifelines program at the California Central Women’s Facility in Chowchilla on Tuesday, January 17, 2023. We are very grateful to Courtney Waybright, CCWF Community Resource Manager, and to CDCR for allowing us to bring this program to the mothers behind bars. Lifelines trains incarcerated mothers on their parental rights, teaches them how to fill out their court forms, and represent themselves in court, and share tips on how to nurture their relationship with caregivers and their children from the inside out.

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A big thank you to the team, (l-r) Tanisha Cannon, Debra Shone, Carol Strickman, and Ivana Gonzalez.
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AOUON is a grassroots organizing project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) fighting to restore the civil and human rights of formerly incarcerated people and our families. Started in California in 2003, AOUON currently has chapters all over the country advocating effectively to Ban The Box, restore voting rights, increase access to housing and education, and end mass incarceration. We demand a voice in building healthy communities.

LSPC organizes communities impacted by the criminal justice system and advocates to release incarcerated people, to restore human and civil rights, and to reunify families and communities. We build public awareness of structural racism in policing, the courts, and prison system, and we advance racial and gender justice in all our work. Our strategies include legal support, trainings, advocacy, public education, grassroots mobilization, and developing community partnerships.

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