

Our All of Us 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.



ALL OF US OR NONE

NEWSPAPER

We want to ensure that the voices of our people inside are heard and the inside artists are recognized for their contributions to this movement.

Your stories matter!

AUGUST 2023

Unyielding Spirit

by Paul Briley, LSPC Deputy Director

August is a month of significance and remembrance for the Black community, as it marks the annual commemoration of Black August. This prison-based holiday serves as a tribute to Black freedom fighters and political prisoners, while highlighting the resilient spirit of Black resistance against racial oppression. With historical events intertwined throughout the month, August becomes a time to reflect upon the struggles, sacrifices, and triumphs that have shaped the fight for equality. Let us delve into the events and figures that have contributed to the significance of Black August.

The inception of Black August can be traced back to 1979, within the walls of San Quentin State Prison, where incarcerated individuals from the Black Guerilla Family initiated the commemoration. It was during this time that a group of prisoners came together to honor the lives of brothers Jonathan and George Jackson, both of whom tragically lost their lives in the month of August. This solemn occasion became a rallying point for the recognition of Black freedom fighters and a reminder of the ongoing struggle against systemic oppression.

August becomes a time to reflect upon the struggles, sacrifices, and triumphs that have shaped the fight for equality.

One of the pivotal events in the history of August is the arrival of Angolans in the British colony of Virginia on August 20, 1619. These "20 and odd" Angolans, who were kidnapped by the Portuguese and subsequently sold to English colonists, represent the harrowing beginnings of chattel slavery in what would become the United States. Their arrival marks a somber reminder of the deep-rooted history of racial injustice and the enduring fight for liberation.

The Haitian Revolution, the largest and most successful rebellion by enslaved people in the Western Hemisphere, holds tremendous significance in the struggle against racial oppression. Commencing on August 14, 1791, the uprising lasted for over a decade, culminating in Haiti declaring its independence from French colonial rule in 1804. This revolutionary event not only ended chattel slavery but also established Haiti as the world's first Black republic, serving as an inspiration to future generations fighting for freedom.

Nat Turner's Rebellion on August 21, 1831, stands as a testament to the unwavering spirit of resistance against slavery. Nat Turner, an enslaved Black freedom fighter, led a courageous insurrection against chattel slavery with the assistance of over 40 other enslaved individuals. The swift and brutal repression that followed, including the execution of Nat Turner and the subsequent murder of nearly 200 Black people by white mobs, underscored the threat

that these rebellions posed to the deeply ingrained system of white supremacy.

The Fugitive Slave Law Convention, chaired by the renowned abolitionist Frederick Douglass, took place on August 21-22, 1850, in New York. This convention aimed to organize opposition against the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which

legalized the capture of escaped enslaved people in every state. Despite the increased risks, the 1850s witnessed thousands

of enslaved people fleeing to freedom, often through the Underground Railroad. The convention's efforts were instrumental in amplifying the resistance against the oppressive legislation.

Frederick Douglass, a prominent figure in the fight against slavery, delivered his notable "West India Emancipation Speech" on August 3, 1857. On the twenty-third anniversary of the West Indian slaves' struggle for emancipation, Douglass highlighted the role of British efforts in achieving freedom. Importantly, he also emphasized the crucial truth that progress is only possible through struggle, a sentiment that resonates strongly with the ongoing fight for racial equality.

In a significant moment for sports and civil rights, on August 28, 1945, Jackie Robinson met with Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Following a legendary interview, the two signed an agreement that broke the racial barrier in Major League Baseball (MLB), paving the way for Robinson to become the first African American to play in the MLB. Robinson's groundbreaking achievement challenged racial discrimination and marked a significant step forward in the ongoing struggle for equality.

The Rivonia Trial, which commenced on August 5, 1962, played a pivotal role in the fight against South Africa's apartheid system. Nelson Mandela, a renowned South African activist, was initially



Artwork: Tasin Sabir

We Got it Good!?

by Ojore McKinnon, San Quentin, CA

"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." -Fyodor Dostoevsky

It is often stated as a matter of fact by astute politicians or opinionated individuals who are misinformed that prisons are like "country clubs," or that "prisoners have it better than those out in society." To that, I say, nothing can be farther from the truth or reality.



Golf player at a country club. Photo: Shutterstock

I have no experience inside country clubs; however, any country club that can be compared to America's penal colonies should be shut down, and their operators arrested.

For those who truly believe such nonsense, I challenge you to trade places with me for those hours spent inside a country club.

The San Quentin News (an institutional newspaper written by S.Q. prison journalists) published an article about "The world's worst 5 Prisons," which had death row inmates abuzz with appreciation for being imprisoned in the United States. I was

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Jesse's Corner

by Jesse Burluson LSPC/AOUON In-Custody Program Coordinator

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All of Us or None is an organizing movement started by people who have been in prison in order to challenge the pervasive discrimination that formerly incarcerated people, people in prison, and our family members face. Our goal is to strengthen the voices of people most affected by mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex. Through our grassroots organizing, we are building a powerful political movement to win full restoration of our human and civil rights.

www.prisonerswithchildren.org



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**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**



"I have given them all I know" – Marcus Garvey,
UNIA

In the spirit of this celebrated month of August, and all those who led, struggled, fought, organized, and supported movement for the well-being and advancement of People, I would like to share a few passages from one of our beloved Brothers and Leader Marcus Garvey, who left behind his valuable insights and wisdom relating to HOW to build, HOW to move forward, and HOW to get up!

Marcus Garvey started The Universal Negro Improvement Association and created multiple streams of income by creating small businesses across the country. I encourage you to study the writings of this highly successful organizer, leader, and businessman.

"Message to the People: The Course of African Philosophy" edited by Tony Martin.

LESSON 18 – Commercial and Industrial Transactions

Commerce and industry are the feeding props of the economic life of the state, the community or society as a whole. On these two foundations rest the universal system of exchange with its financial factors.

Every progressive people and nation indulge in some form of commerce and industry, manufacturing or agricultural industry. It is by such activities that individuals find occupation within the normal life of the state.

You are either an employer or an employee, big or small ... Those who do not work in this way are either wards of the state or recipients of charity or people who live off the earnings of others which flow from those who are industrious enough to work either as an employer or an employee. Every self-respecting man finds an occupation, either as an employee or as an employer; according to his choice ... All men try to earn as much as they possibly can. To do so, they generally equip themselves for their occupation...

The man without a business of his own or without training to perform a particular type of job is always at a disadvantage in making a living ... The examples of small men starting small businesses and building them up to massive concerns are common ...

The industrious man must find an occupation in one or the other of these enterprises or professions if he is to be a proprietor or employer ... Find a particular kind of business that you would like to engage yourself in, because you can make it profitable, and start it with whatever capital you have ... Find out what your neighbors want most and are willing to buy. Start selling it to them, if not in a shop, by going door to door...

The Negro must start from the ground floor of commerce and industry and climb up ... Without commerce and industry, a people perish economically. The Negro is perishing because he has no economic system, no commerce and industry ...

If you like to indulge or engage yourself in a certain line of business, spend as much time as you possibly can investigating from your friends, acquaintances or whoever you can approach who is already in that business or knows about that business, so as to have all the information necessary about it before you start. It is the people who know of the tricks in trade that make the most profit out of the trade."

These excerpts are a reminder to study. As we build movement, we must continuously educate ourselves through non-fictional literature on history and business. We must learn what we don't already know so that we can work together industrially, each person doing his small contribution so we can build and run any political or business enterprise, together.

Comic by Jessie Milo

San Quentin, CA



A Softball Game Inside San Quentin

by TaSin Sabir, AOUON Editor and LSPC Communications Manager

In a heartwarming and inspiring initiative, a formerly incarcerated clean and sober softball team recently made history, Sunday July 23, 2023, by playing against the Hardtimers—the San Quentin softball team—inside the walls of San Quentin Prison. The game marked a rare occasion where an outside team of formerly incarcerated players would compete within the walls of San Quentin.

The idea for the game came from John Sommer who served 12 years in prison with friend Nathan Venegas, current player of the Hardtimers. With the help of Venegas' coach Sommer and his fiancée Mei Lia Storelee they submitted the proper forms to make it possible to play monthly softball games at San Quentin.

"We played for 2.5 hours, and we got our butts kicked, but it was the most fun losing I've had in my life! I will say that I played well, along with the other woman on our team. We played great actually, but the guys couldn't get it together – just kidding." Mei Lia Storelee laughs as she recalls Sunday's game.

Mei Lia Storelee is the Senior Financial/Administrative Operator at Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and has a history of struggling with drugs. On her road to recovery Storelee found solace and healing through softball, which played a crucial role in her journey towards maintaining sobriety.

Reflecting on her transformation, Storelee shared, "Softball came into my life during my recovery journey. It was a turning point for me, a positive outlet that allowed me to reclaim my life from drugs and jail. When the opportunity arose to play inside San Quentin Prison, I knew it was my chance to inspire and bring hope to those still on their paths to redemption."

Despite the red tape and lengthy processing time, Storelee along with five team members entered the prison for their first game calling themselves "Dream Awaken". A name inspired by the passage from Narcotics Anonymous which states, "Lost Dreams awaken and new possibilities arise. Our willingness to grow spiritually keeps us buoyant. When we take the actions indicated in the steps, the results are a change in our personality. It is our action that is important."

Storelee, along with her team Dreams Awaken, composed of individuals who had triumphed over intense obstacles in their pasts, faced the formidable San Quentin Hardtimers—a team that remains undefeated. Despite the odds stacked against them, the game went on to become an unforgettable experience for both the players and spectators.

The day of the game dawned with excitement and anticipation as Dreams Awaken was escorted, by a volunteer, onto the field. Amidst the towering walls there was a sense of camaraderie as players from both teams came together on the field. The Hardtimers, reigning champions, lent a few players to Dreams Awaken to ensure a fair competition.

As the game began, cheers echoed through the prison yard, with spectators showing their unwavering support for both teams. Despite the disparity in skill and experience, Dreams Awaken displayed remarkable determination and sportsmanship, holding their own against the formidable Hardtimers.

Memorable moments punctuated the game, with one of Dreams Awaken's players, Solo, striking out his own coach from the Hardtimers—a feat that elicited roars of laughter and admiration from both teams. Another heartwarming instance was when a female player, Star, scored a run, and Storelee and her teammates rallied behind her with words of encouragement, emphasizing the importance of women supporting each other.

Despite their valiant efforts, Dreams Awaken ultimately faced defeat against the Hardtimers, yet the loss did little to dampen their spirits. After the game, both teams came together for a post-game circle, where emotions flowed freely as they talked about their experiences. Storelee tearfully expressed her gratitude, saying, "I wouldn't have had this incredible opportunity without Venegas and Sommer coordinating this and making it possible for this game to happen. This moment has changed my life and given me purpose and hope."

Following the game, Timothy Hicks, the San



(l-r) Mei Lia S., Hannah R., Kelly C., Jorge Z., Garrett L., and Matt E.

Quentin newspaper's sports editor, interviewed the players to learn more about their experiences. This interaction further strengthened the bond between Dreams Awaken and San Quentin's community.

The sense of shared humanity was palpable as Storelee interacted with everyone, who eagerly surrounded her after discovering her connection to Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. One man patiently waited for hours until the game concluded to speak with her about his desire to connect with LSPC Staff Oscar Flores about resentencing. This in itself is a testament to the impact Storelee's presence had on these individuals.

Storelee's mission does not end with a single game; her vision involves getting a fellow inside the prison to facilitate ongoing communication with Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. Speaking on this endeavor, Storelee stated, "I may not be an organizer, but I am committed to doing whatever needs to be done to maintain this connection. Having a fellow inside will ensure continued collaboration and advocacy for those in need."

For those involved, the game at San Quentin Prison was a powerful reminder of the transformative power of sports and human connection. Through softball, Dreams Awaken has found a way to rewrite the narrative of life after incarceration and addiction, demonstrating that with perseverance and support, the possibilities for rebuilding lives are limitless.

Softball is more than just a game—it is a path to healing, hope, and a brighter future.

We Got it Good!?! (Continued from page 1)

disturbed by those prisoners who proclaimed, "We got it good" and "we have nothing to complain about" in response to the article. What I heard was condemned prisoners dismissing our daily suffering and strife simply because we were imprisoned in the United States, and not one of those five worst prisons in the world.

From where I reside, there is nothing cushy or cozy about California's death row. Prison is a place of confusion, chaos, contempt, and excommunication. There is not one thing good about being stranded on California's death row. Surely, there is much to complain about: from the State-sanctioned murders that have taken place, to the number of flushes one can access on the commode. Those are only two complaints numerous condemned prisoners have railed against.

My disdain for their comments stemmed from the fact that these were the same inmates who were often heard complaining about the conditions and treatment of East Block and its goons, who were

now dismissing the limits placed on our privileges, the constant isolation, the required restraints on our wrists, and the arbitrary punishment imposed on us for minor infractions. Furthermore, we resided in a prison that allowed unit conditions to deteriorate so badly over the decades that a court order was imposed on the prison to improve conditions.

Personally, I do not waste time comparing the hardships and conditions of one prison to another. Everything has its pros and cons; however, incarceration and all its repressive elements are not meant to cultivate sound human beings. Prison is designed to break people, then shape them to endure the controlled conditions imposed on them by goons and designed by Correctional Departments.

How do I begin to compare one man or woman's solitary confinement or isolation to mine, or China's death row to Texas' death row, or both to California's death row? How do I measure the suicides in East Block to those in Cuba? Is there a just way to measure another person's suffering, or do I use a

sliding scale, with the U.S. as the barometer?

Have you heard this saying: "If Democracy is so good, why isn't the world dying for it?"

I ask, "If we got it so good, why are East Block inmates committing suicide?" My answer is, "To escape the decades of isolation, the harsh conditions, the mistreatment, the mental strain caused by the daily monotony."

Every moment of joy, laughter, or hope I experience or express while stranded on death row will never change my perception of my present predicament as good; nor will I exist here without complaint. The real threat of death and the ever-growing chasm that is the great divide between my family, my friends, and myself is sorrowful. It is these realities and hardships I endure that make my confinement all bad!

From my stance on maa, this is a voice for death row.

BASICs Act Moves Forward

Prison Canteen Markups Targeted for Reduction with SB 474

by Co Sponsors of SB474 (Becker): Ella Baker Center-Isabella Borgeson, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children-Ivana Cortez, Legal Aid at Work-Sandra Johnson, MILPA-Airam Coronado, and UnCommon Law-Su Minkko

Sacramento, CA — On Tuesday, June 27, the Assembly Public Safety Committee unanimously passed SB 474 (7-0), a bill authored by Senator Josh Becker that will reduce canteen markups to 10% across California prisons and alleviate the financial burden for incarcerated people and their families. The bill — called the BASICs Act (Basic, Affordable Supplies for Incarcerated Californians) — will relieve the financial pressure for tens of thousands of families and incarcerated people, who spend over \$80 million on canteen sales each year.

“For too long, incarcerated people and their loved ones have suffered under unfair financial burdens from high markups of canteen items in correctional facilities,” said Senator Becker. “Today’s vote in the Assembly Public Safety Committee on SB 474 brings our state closer to creating financial viability for the loved ones of incarcerated individuals to continue to provide basic necessities and help reduce the risk of recidivism.”

Over 2,000 support letters from currently incarcerated people and their loved ones speak to the impact that canteen prices have on families across the state. For at least the past decade, the California Department for Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has marked up prison canteen items 65% over the price paid to vendors — regardless of inflation — for items like toothpaste, soap, toilet paper, food, and hygiene supplies. This financial pressure falls heavily on Black, Brown, and Indigenous families who support their loved ones while incarcerated. The BASICs Act, if signed by the Governor, would save incarcerated people and their families over \$30 million each year. “SB 474 is a public safety issue. No one should have to worry about where their next meal will come from. No one should have to wonder if they can afford their next shower,” said Phillippe Kelly, an Outside Policy Fellow with the Ella Baker Center

for Human Rights. “During my incarceration, I became a ‘bill’ to my family who had to send me money so I could afford food and basic hygiene supplies. No person should be reduced to a burden because of insurmountable canteen prices.”


“I grew up hearing from my mom, ‘Que con la comida no se juega’ — ‘You don’t play with your food.’ At times, it feels like both CDCR and food vendors play with this basic human necessity of food,” said Edgar Ibarra, Communications and Leadership Coordinator with the MILPA Collective. “While incarcerated, I constantly had to be mindful of asking my family to send me money for the canteen as I had restitution and anything they shared with me would be cut in half. I didn’t want my sisters and mom to have to decide between me and [paying] a bill.”

For example, recent canteen prices at California State Prison Solano show toothpaste costs \$4.45 in the canteen store, meaning the purchase of one tube of toothpaste can cost up to 37% of an incarcerated person’s monthly income.


“Women in prison need canteen items in order to survive. I was considered an “indigent” woman inside prison because I had no money,” said Barbara Chavez, a member of All of Us or None and Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. “Not being able to contribute food when other women cooked inside was hungry and painful. I would just sit there and smell the food being shared. I wanted to belong and be a part of it, but I didn’t have a family to support me with canteen items.”

The BASICs Act builds off of the successful campaigns that made phone calls free and eliminated commissary markups for people in San Francisco county jail, as well as SB 1008 championed by Senator Becker last year that made phone calls in all California prisons free.

**STEPS TO PASSING
SB 474 (BECKER)**
#MarkDownTheMarkUps!
Toolkit: bit.ly/SB474Toolkit



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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SENATE APPROPRIATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SENATE FLOOR	<input type="checkbox"/> ASSEMBLY FLOOR
	<input type="checkbox"/> SENATE CONCURRENCE VOTE
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“Let’s be honest about what’s going on. Price gouging refers to the practice of charging excessive prices on goods needed by victims of disaster or crisis, and that’s exactly what is happening,” said Su Kim, Policy Manager with UnCommon Law. “CDCR is taking advantage of a disenfranchised population that is experiencing enormous deprivation — a population who have no choice but to shop at prison canteens to meet their basic needs for nutrition, hygiene, and human dignity. It is unacceptable for CDCR to force incarcerated Californians and their loved ones to directly fund operating expenses by paying egregious mark-ups on essential goods.”

SB 474 is co-sponsored by All of Us or None, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Legal Aid at Work, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, MILPA Collective, and the Women’s Foundation California Solís Policy Institute.

Unyielding Spirit (Continued from page 1)

arrested on charges related to leaving the country without a passport and inciting opposition to apartheid. A year later, during the Rivonia Trial, Mandela faced additional charges under the 1962 Sabotage Act. Despite being sentenced to 27 years in prison, Mandela’s resilience and determination remained unwavering, eventually leading to his release and the dismantling of apartheid.

Martin Luther King Jr.’s iconic “I have a Dream” speech, delivered on August 28, 1963, during the March on Washington, became a central part of his legacy. King’s powerful words called for a future in which individuals would be judged by their character rather than the color of their skin. His vision of equality and unity resonated with millions of people worldwide, inspiring generations to strive for a more just and inclusive society.

The Watts Rebellion erupted on August 11, 1965, in Los Angeles, fueled by a history of police brutality, housing discrimination, and inadequate educational opportunities for the Black community. This five-day uprising was a response to the mistreatment of a Black man during a traffic stop. Although a gubernatorial commission recognized the underlying issues, little progress was made in improving the social and economic conditions in the Watts

neighborhood, highlighting the systemic nature of racial oppression.

Tragedy struck during the Marin County Courthouse incident on August 7, 1970, when Jonathan P. Jackson led an uprising demanding the release of the Soledad Brothers, including his elder brother George Jackson. The attack resulted in the deaths of Jackson, Superior Court Judge Harold Haley, two prisoners, and left prosecutor Gary Thomas paralyzed. Political activist Angela Davis, who supported the Soledad Brothers, faced trial for her alleged involvement in the incident but was ultimately acquitted of all charges.

George Jackson, a prominent figure in the prisoners’ rights movement, met a tragic end on August 21, 1971. While incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison, he was assassinated by guards during a rebellion. Despite facing accusations of stealing \$70 from a Los Angeles gas station and being sentenced to one year to life, his fervent activism and tireless advocacy for prisoners’ rights made him a marked target of the prison authorities. His murder not only exposed the injustices within the prison system but also intensified the fight against systemic racism and oppression.

As Black August unfolds each year, it serves as a reminder of the countless individuals who have fought, sacrificed, and contributed to the ongoing battle for racial equality. These historical events and figures underscore the indomitable spirit of resistance against oppression and provide inspiration for future generations in their quest for justice. Black August stands as a powerful testament to the resilience and determination of the Black community, serving as a call to action for all individuals committed to creating a more equitable society. The memory of George Jackson, along with his unwavering dedication to prisoners’ rights and the fight against injustice, remains an indelible part of the legacy honored during Black August.

Call for Submissions

Send your stories and/or artwork to:
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Oakland, CA 94608





ALL OF US OR NONE CELEBRATES BLACK AUGUST

NEWSPAPER

George Jackson

Lives!



by Mitra Zarinebaf, LSPC Communications Associate

Black August is a powerful month, sinking deeply into the history of liberation of Black Americans, political prisoners, and the pursuit of freedom. August collectively holds a wealth of Black history and revolutionary struggle. What may be most significant, though, is the amplification of voices that the prison industrial complex attempts to erase.

The catalyst for Black August stems from George Jackson's rebellion and eventual assassination at San Quentin State Prison in 1971. Jackson had been incarcerated for 10 years in a 1-year-to-life sentence for his affiliation with a gas station robbery when he was 20-years old. For the rest of his short life, he was forced from freedom as his parole was regularly denied. He was punished to several years of solitary confinement, racism, and strenuous labor for little to no pay, akin to slavery. Despite this, Jackson embodied the revolutionary spirit and was self-educated by reading a variety of texts, co-led study groups, published books, and co-founded the Black Guerrilla Family.

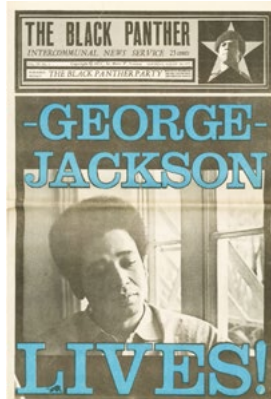
Between 1970 and his death in 1971, a series of intense events catapulted Jackson's revolutionary tendencies. At CTF Soledad in 1970, a white guard callously killed three Black men during a minor conflict. Several days later, a different white guard was found beaten to death, and although no one admitted to the act, three men, including Jackson were charged with the murder. Dubbed the "Soledad Brothers," the whole nation watched their case, many criticizing the charge for jumping to conclusions because the men were political figures. Eventually, Jackson transferred to San Quentin while his case pursued. On August 7th, 1970, Jackson's brother Jonathan, with radical inspiration from his sibling, decided to avenge his brother's indictment by storming into a Marin County courthouse and kidnapping the judge. Although his goal was to create enough pressure to acquit the Soledad Brothers, Jonathan was killed at the scene, along with three others.

It is no doubt that George Jackson is a powerful figure, influencing those around him while alive and after his death. His final act is the landmark of Black August, inspiring incarcerated people, organizers, and activists. On August 21st, 1971 in San Quentin, Jackson pulled out a pistol, unlocked several prison cells and held correctional officers and a few white prisoners hostage. He then found the keys to the exit and sprinted to escape. Before he could escape, George Jackson was shot and killed mid-sprint.

Jackson's incredible persistence and passion for the liberation of his incarcerated siblings and of the greater country sparked an ever-growing number of events and emotions. While correctional officers and the greater carceral system brutally hindered his escape and spirit, it sparked a movement that still continues over 50 years later. Jackson's political influence empowered many and posed a threat to the prison-industrial complex. After his death, CDCR banned his books from the prison system because

they feared his words would encourage revolt.

Even with attempts at banning his powerful words, several weeks later, over 1,500 incarcerated people at Attica State Prison in New York rebelled, uplifting a list of demands in their manifesto and taking control of the prison for four days, now known as the Attica Prison Riots. Some of the demands were for a proper diet, an end to censorship, and an improvement in education programs. The right to bodily autonomy in labor and incarceration was and still is today a national and international political struggle. Black August represents this determination: the month is full to the brim of historical anniversaries that began even before George Jackson's revolt. On August 14th, 1791, the Haitian Revolution erupted, and it was the first successful anti-colonial revolution. On August 11th, 1965, the Watts Rebellion began in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, in a response to the police murdering Marquette Frye during a traffic stop. It eventually developed into a riot against police brutality and poor economic conditions. Finally, in August, we celebrate the births



of revolutionaries, such as Black Panther Deputy Chairman Freddy Hampton and Pan-Africanist leader Marcus Garvey. It goes without saying that this month deserves to be commemorated and a reminder of the ongoing movement to liberate our incarcerated community members.

Now published in his book *Soledad Brother*, Jackson wrote a letter to his lawyer on April 17th, 1970, where he accurately displays his poor conditions, specifically on how his basic needs, food and hygiene, were tied to forced labor for few to no pay. He writes, "The sense and meaning of slavery comes through as a result of our ties to the wage. You must have it, without it you would starve or expose yourself to the element . . . one's entire day centers around the acquisition of the wage."

In California's prisons people are demanded, under law, to work or face repercussions such as an extended sentence or loss in privileges. These job assignments are performed for cents on the hour without any days off for sickness or injuries. LaRene Austin, currently incarcerated at Central California Women's Facility describes her experience as dark. "I have worked in fabrics, silkscreen, and dental and each job has its own dangerous exposures. You do skilled work that makes a profit, sometimes working long hours to meet deadlines with a pay grade of .35 cents. These jobs put you at risk to lose fingers and damage your eyesight and expose you daily to cancer causing agents. The skills you gain at these

jobs would be useful in the free world and would be great pay [if they were transferable]. Inmates that work these jobs should at least be able to pay their restitution or obtain their basic hygiene to comply with CDCR grooming standards."

To this point, Jackson writes, "Slavery is an economic condition. The classical chattel and today's neo-slavery must be defined first in terms of economics. The chattel is a property, one man exercising the property rights of his established economic order, the other man as that property."

This is where we are at presently. History is not in the past and the present language of the Article 1, Section 6, of the California Constitution outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude "except as a punishment for crime where of the party shall have been duly convicted." Simply, involuntary servitude is another name for slavery. Our country's economy functions extensively from the labor of our incarcerated loved ones. Considering the mass incarceration of people of color and especially Black Americans, involuntary servitude aka slavery is very much alive. This is why All of Us or None, a project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, and a coalition of other organizations are sponsoring ACA 8, a bill to amend the California Constitution to remove the clause that allows involuntary servitude. Last year, voters in Alabama, Tennessee, Oregon, and Vermont voted to remove involuntary servitude from their states' constitutions. California must catch up! To learn more about ACA 8 and to hear more stories from current and retired slaves visit: CASlave.com



CASLAVE.com



"Slavery is an economic condition ... one man exercising the property rights of his established economic order, the other man as that property." -George Jackson

Policy Update

by Jeronimo Aguilar, LSPC Policy Analyst

“Legislative Recess, but the movement never stops!”

As we continue to move through another legislative session, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge all of you that have supported our policy work by sharing our posts on social media, making calls to your elected officials, and sending in letters to ensure they are supporting these important pieces of legislation. Not to mention the lobby days, Quest for Democracy, and all the legislative visits and actions folks have been engaged with. I can't understate the value in these legislative offices hearing from us, the people, and especially those of who have been directly impacted by mass incarceration in this country.

[Legislative Recess] The California State legislature has begun their annual recess which takes place from July 14th until August 14th. Most legislators take this time to go on vacations and take some time off; a luxury that those we advocate for can only dream about. For us, the struggle doesn't stop, pause, or slow down. So we are keeping our foot on the gas during this time to ensure we get as much work done as possible as it relates to our priority legislation.

[Letter to Assemblymember Lori Wilson] During our weekly meeting with our author for ACA 8, Asm Lori Wilson's office, her legislative staffer Aldo Garcia shared a moving testimony. An incarcerated individual wrote Asm Wilson's office to thank her for highlighting the issue of forced labor, exploitation, and slavery/involuntary servitude happening on a mass scale inside California's carceral institutions via ACA 8. He shared that he is 69 years old, and has been down for the last 29 years inside and has consistently worked during his entire incarceration. For all those years of faithful work he has been able to pay a little more than \$400 dollars of the \$10,000 restitution debt that he owes.

What's more is in his letter he talked about how he is literally physically disabled and not able to perform the labor they are demanding of him. He shared that just recently, despite his physical disability, he was written up with a disciplinary infraction for not being physically able to report to his job duty.

The cruelty and injustice of this individual's experience was eye opening to legislative staffer Aldo Garcia and a clear illustration of the grave injustice running rampant within CDCR and all carceral institutions throughout the state. This individual's letter demonstrates the power of our voices, our experiences, and our ability to articulate them in a way that is a catalyst for change.

[Update on where our policies are at in the legislative process]

SB 474 (Becker) Canteens: The BASIC(s) ACT

Status: In Assembly Appropriations. Reach out to members of the CA Assembly and ensure that they are in support of this important legislation. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Assemblymembers and ensure that they are in support of this important legislation which would reduce the ridiculous markup on canteen items by CDCR which affects the most economically vulnerable and needy communities. For more information on this legislative effort, reach out to Family Unity Coordinator Ivana Cortez at ivana@prisonerswithchildren.org or write her at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

AB 1226 Keep Families Close Act

Status: Awaiting Governor's Signature. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Senators and encourage them to support this common sense legislation which prioritizes maintaining family connection. For more information on this legislation or campaign, reach out to Family Unity Coordinator Ivana Cortez at ivana@prisonerswithchildren.org or write her at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

AB 1266 Infractions: Warrants and Penalties

Status: In Senate Appropriations. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Senators and encourage them to support this reform which would put an end to petty warrants that often lead to very serious consequences for marginalized communities. For more information on this legislation reach out to LSPC Policy Analyst Jeronimo Aguilar at jeronimo@prisonerswithchildren.org or write to us at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

AB 958 (Santiago)

Status: In Senate Appropriations. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Senators and encourage them to support this legislation which prioritizes visitation as a limited right for incarcerated people, their families, and loved ones. For more information on this legislative effort, reach out to Family Unity Coordinator, Ivana Cortez at ivana@prisonerswithchildren.org or write her at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

AB 1186 (Bonta) Juveniles: Restitution

Status: In Senate Appropriations. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Senate members and encourage them to support this legislation which would reform the restitution debt system for our young people that end up in the criminal justice system. It is proven that crippling debt only sets our young people up for failure and further incarceration. For more information on this you can reach out to LSPC Policy Analyst Jeronimo Aguilar at jeronimo@prisonerswithchildren.org or write to us at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

AB 1516 (Kalra)

Status: Awaiting date on Assembly Floor- 2 Year Bill Stay tuned for opportunities in the near future to get involved with this historic campaign to raise the minimum wage for all California workers, including incarcerated workers.

ACA 8 (Wilson) Slavery End Slavery in CA Act

Status: Awaiting Date on Assembly Floor. **What you can do:** Reach out to all Assemblymembers and Senators and ensure that they are in support of this very long overdue amendment to our state Constitution which would allow California voters to decide on the issue of slavery/involuntary servitude. Slavery and involuntary servitude have ZERO place in our state and society. For more information or to join our “Abolish Bondage Collectively” (ABC) campaign reach out to Jeronimo Aguilar at jeronimo@prisonerswithchildren.org or write to us at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

AB 1306 (Carrillo) ICE Transfers

Status: In Senate Appropriations. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Senators and ensure that they are supporting AB 1306 which would stop the transfer of undocumented prisoners in CDCR that benefit from any type of resentencing relief, commutation, pardon, etc. The state of California continues to treat those not born here with cruelty and increased incarceration which needs to stop. For more information reach out to LSPC Policy Analyst, Jeronimo Aguilar at jeronimo@prisonerswithchildren.org or write to us at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

AB 442 (Villapudua) State summary criminal history information

Status: In Sen Approps. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Senate members and ensure they are in support of this modest but very necessary reform which increases access to criminal records for public defenders so they can more effectively serve their clients. For more information on this legislation reach out to Eric Sapp at erics@prisonerswithchildren.org or feel free to write to us at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

SB 824 (Ashby) Reunification Services

Status: In Assembly Appropriations. **What you can do:** Reach out to your Assemblymembers and ensure that they are supporting this important legislation which would increase access to reunification services for those involved in the justice system. Too many parents have had their children stolen from them without any recourse. For more information on this legislation you can reach out to our policy team at advocate@prisonerswithchildren.org or write to us at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608.

Legal Corner Qualified Immunity: The Notorious Legal Shield that Destroys Confidence in the Judicial System

by Kellie Walters, JD, LLM, LSPC Staff Attorney

The concept of qualified immunity in the American legal system is a paradox that can be both complex and disturbing. Its original purpose was to safeguard government officials, particularly those in law enforcement, from being targeted by baseless lawsuits. However, it has now evolved into a formidable obstacle, preventing citizens from seeking justice for constitutional violations.

Qualified immunity operates under the subterfuge of maintaining law and order. Yet, its fervent application furthers an environment where public servants can evade accountability, leading to a troubling erosion of trust between citizens and the justice system meant to protect them.

The Supreme Court has cited three primary reasons for the consistent use of qualified immunity to protect public officials from accountability for their actions. Firstly, the Court has argued that cases against public officials are unfair because these officials may not be lawyers, and the boundaries of constitutional law are vague and constantly changing. However, this reasoning is hypocritical because it allows government officials to remain ignorant of the law while simultaneously expecting those injured by the officials to know precisely what actions they must take to maintain a viable case.

For instance, in a case involving a failure to protect an incarcerated individual the injured incarcerated individual must be able to predict the nature and time frame of the next attack so that their warnings of

the impending attack, to a correctional officer is not deemed "too vague". This requirement, combined with a view of qualified immunity that assumes public officials should not be held accountable, is simply unjustifiable.

Secondly, the Supreme Court justifies using qualified immunity by stating that officials could be "overdeterred" without it, which is another flawed argument. Harlow v. Fitzgerald, 457 U.S. 800, 806–07 (1982). This was noted by the Seventh Circuit in a different situation, “A sound common-law remedial determination should also take account of the general problem of overdeterrence, but we cannot see how prosecutors and law-enforcement officers could be ‘overdeterred’ in the disclosure of exculpatory material to criminal defendants.” Engel v. Buchan, 710 F.3d 698 (7th Cir. 2013). Similarly, in our hypothetical situation, it's hard to see how a prison guard could be "overdeterred" from removing a prisoner from a dangerous situation.

Thirdly, the court has argued that qualified immunity is necessary due to the potentially high social costs of defending lawsuits, such as expenses and distractions that could interfere with performing duties. As an initial matter, the assumption that most Section 1983 cases are frivolous is offensive and not factually supported. However, even if such claims were primarily frivolous, the Court has already established a system for dealing with them. It does not involve granting law enforcement agencies a free pass to violate civilians' human and constitutional rights. The costs and distractions associated with a lawsuit

pale compared to the "high social costs" of violating an individual's right to be free from governmental overstepping.

Furthermore, the defense of qualified immunity requires that the government official act reasonably. Courts often require a prior case whose facts closely resemble the current one to determine whether the government official should have known they were violating someone's rights. To avoid being held liable, defendants use qualified immunity as a defense, claiming that no published case has the same facts as theirs. As such, they argue that they could not have known they violated the plaintiff's rights. If there is no precedent, qualified immunity is granted, making it challenging to establish new legal standards and adapt constitutional rights to keep up with societal changes.

In order to restore the trust of the public, it is crucial to conduct a thorough review and reform of qualified immunity or even consider its complete elimination. As a society, we all require protection against unjust lawsuits, including government officials. However, our commitment to justice and upholding the Constitution must prioritize the protection of civilians. The current form of qualified immunity unfairly favors officials over regular citizens, which undermines our commitment to justice.



Mailbag

America's Slave Ships on Dry Land: The present Day Sale and Trade of Africans

By Asar Imhotep Amen (Troy Thomas)
California Health Care Facility, CA

For African people in America, captivity began in Africa when we were captured and confined in slave forts like the Gold Coast's Elmina and Goree Island's "House of Slave". From those colonial forts we left Africa in chains and shackles through the "Door of No Return" and were transported to America in bowels of slave-ships.

Africans were dropped off in various places around the world, and in what is now referred to as North America, in chains and colonized here to work as slaves on the plantations of the settler-colonies of European imperialists.

The slave economy

As slaves we were chattel, owed as private property, becoming the first commodity that gave rise to a global colonial-capitalist system.

Slavery was absolute captivity with complete deprivation of freedom for life. The only means by which Africans could seek freedom was by revolt or escape, which is something we've struggled to do since our first initial capture from our homeland.

Colonialism's plantations were forced labor camps where Africans slaved in the fields and were housed in hovels and fed slop. We were forced to work day in and day out suffering severe beatings and some of the greatest acts of cruelty to force our submission. If we escaped we were hunted and tracked by slave catchers with guns and bloodhounds. Once caught, we were brought back to the plantation from which we fled.

Escaping slavery was a crime that was punishable by flogging, lashing, branding, mutilation and death.

After the settler-colonies within North America consolidated into the "United States," slavery was expanded to new territory, as the colonizers continued stealing more Indigenous land.

It continued to reap the filthy lucre of the dirty business of the flesh-peddling slave-trade and the human trafficking of slavery until slavery was finally "abolished" after the civil war, an intra-conflict between two rival settler-colonialism groups – the union versus the Confederacy.

With the abolition of slavery, Africans ceased to be formally held as slaves, but we remained colonial subjects all the same as colonialism continued to rule and regulate every aspect of our lives through the brutal exploitation of our labor through sharecropping, peonage and convict-leasing.

The myth of the 13th Amendment

The 13th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, believed to have formally abolished slavery, simply limited slavery, making it a punishment for a crime, and that punishment was imprisonment.

Therefore, slavery became penal servitude and prisoners became "slaves of the colonial state". Prisons became slave labor camps and being sentenced to prison was to be forced to do "hard labor".

It was a sentence of forced labor in addition to a term of imprisonment. This was where the term "hard labor" came from.

As a direct result of black codes developed specifically for our people, Africans were arrested for petty violations of those codes and sent to prison where we not only toiled in slave labor camps and worked in chain gangs, but were also contracted out to private companies to work for railroads, mines and mills.

We became the main slaves in a new convict-lease system that was created by colonial capitalism so that it could acquire a steady supply of cheap labor to exploit for the greatest profit without paying for that labor because we were slaves of the State.

After enduring the captivity of formal chattel slavery, Africans began to endure the captivity of imprisonment under colonialism. We went from being slaves on plantations to convicts in prison.

With the dawn of Jim Crow, Africans began leaving the South as refugees fleeing white nationalist violence.

Colonialism is global

We sought refuge in the East, the Midwest and the West, but we found the same treatment from the colonizer population. There was no shelter for us anywhere.

In the "ghettos" where Africans are crowded into every major city within the U.S., we exist in the same penury that nearly two and a half centuries of slavery had left us in.

That extreme poverty was seemingly inescapable and it damned us to a hardscrabble existence of deprivation, destitution and desperation.

The ghetto is a breeding ground for violence, and Africans are arrested by the colonial police for so-called "crimes" and sent to prison in ever increasing numbers. The police are here to protect and serve the colonial order so it's nothing but an occupying army.

Colonialism law was established and created to protect the colonial system and primarily criminalize and punish Africans and other colonized peoples.

As Africans spoke out against Jim Crow laws, lynchings, police brutality, and struggled for freedom, prison became a solution for the colonial State for those it deemed agitators or terrorists.

Colonial world retaliates

During the Black Revolution of the 1960s, the police arrested and jailed Africans such as Fannie Lou Hamer for "civil disobedience". They arrested Dr. Huey P. Newton, Dr. Ben Chavis, Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Mumia Abu Jamal and Geronimo Pratt on trumped up charges, railroading them into prison.

The FBI assassinated leaders like Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Black Panther Party Chicago Chair Fred Hampton through COINTELPRO, as part of a counterinsurgency to destroy the Black Revolution. Those who were captured and thrown in prison became political prisoners and prisoners of war.

At the height of the Black Revolution, the CIA flooded African colonies within the U.S. with heroin from the Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia, where it had long worked to finance its covert operations against China at the same time the U.S. was waging a war of imperialist aggression in Viet Nam.

As part of colonialism's counterinsurgency to crush the Black Revolution, the CIA inundated our neighborhoods with heroin to destroy our will to organize or challenge the colonial status quo.



With this process of narcotization, our communities fell under the control and influence of drugs; the illegal drug business and drug traffickers began a deadly epidemic of addiction.

This was the justification for the "War on Drugs", which the colonial State claimed was to "combat" the surge of drugs circulating in the African community. This war was declared by former U.S. president, Richard Nixon, and it involved police running rampant throughout our communities locking Africans in prison for drug trafficking or use. Arresting drug dealers and drug addicts and sending them to jail and prison.

The War on Drugs was escalated by Ronald Reagan with the beginning of the crack epidemic, started after the CIA flooded the African community with the drug from Central America, where it was waging secret, dirty wars against Nicaragua. It led to increased militarization of the police, tougher drug laws and the greatest prison build-up in history.

As a result of the "War on Drugs", Africans became greatly enmeshed in colonialism's criminal justice system, coming before the colonizer's courts, facing colonial judges, prosecutors and juries, receiving longer sentences for colonizer-defined crimes. We became the main casualties of that ongoing war.

Get rid of modern-day slavery!

As slave/prisoners, we are just bodies that fill cells and dorms in for-profit prisons, situated in economically depressed rural areas, providing jobs for settlers.

The State contracted us out to private prisons just as it once contracted us out to private companies with the convict-lease system. Today, Africans comprise the vast majority of prisoners in the U.S. There are more Africans in prison in this country than there are people in countries like the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada and Trinidad.

America has the largest prison system in the world. More Africans are now convicts in prison in 2023 than we were slaves on the plantations in 1852, and we hardly have anymore rights than we had when we were first enslaved.

For Africans, colonial prisons are nothing but concentration camps. Crime simply provides the justification for locking us up behind the razor-wire topped, electrified fences.

Imprisonment is an integral and inseparable part of the colonization of Africans in America. It is just another form of the captivity we have experienced and endured under colonialism (or so-called "Democracy"). As colonial subjects we have always been captives of colonialism.

America has never been anything other than one big prison for Africans. Minor and gradual criminal justice "reform" won't reduce the high rate of imprisonment for Africans or otherwise reverse mass imprisonment. The imprisonment of Africans in the U.S. and elsewhere will only end when we throw off the chains of colonial-capitalism and free ourselves from the rule of the colonizer. To believe or argue otherwise makes no historical sense!

This is what "Democracy" looks like. If you as a citizen do not like what you see then by all means feel free to change it. If you're a California voter, vote yes on ACA 8. www.endslaveryincalifornia.org or for more information.

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 our lot can't better.
Either gun or fetter.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

You who hunger, who shall feed you?
If it's bread you would be carving,
Come to us, we too are starving.
Come to us and let us lead you.
Only hungry ones can feed you.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.
One alone her lot can't better.
Either gun or fetter.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

Beaten one, who shall avenge you?
You, on whom the blows are falling,
Hear your wounded comrades 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?
We who can no longer bear it.
Counts the blows that arm our spirit.
Taught the time by need and sorrow,
Strikes today and not tomorrow.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.
One alone our lot can't better.
Either gun or fetter.
Everything or nothing. All of us or none.

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)

AOUON is a grassroots organizing project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) fighting to restore the civil and human rights of formerly and currently 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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All of Us or None Membership Form | Yes, I want to become a member of ALL OF US OR NONE!

Name & Number: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

Country of Origin: _____

Do you have children? YES / NO. Do you need support with family issues? YES / NO

Earliest Parole/Release Date: _____ County of Parole/Probation: _____

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

Mail this form & any questions to:
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