

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!

OCT 2023



All of Us or None and The Black Caucus on the Assembly Floor. Photo courtesy of Office of Assemblymember Lori D. Wilson

ACA 8's Journey and the Fight to End Slavery in CA

by Jesse Burluson, LSPC In-Custody Program Coordinator

The moment of truth arrived on the Assembly floor at the State Capitol Building in Sacramento, California on September 13, 2023. I arrived wearing my All of Us or None (AOUON) shirt, joined by my comrades, some of whom wore shirts that read, "Retired Slave." As we approached the room, a giant painting of Arnold Schwarzenegger from his tenure as the Governor of California adorned the hallway. Inside, the full Assembly comprised of 80 members representing 80 districts in the state awaited. The burning question on everyone's mind was, "What would they do?" At stake was ACA 8, addressing the issue of "slavery" that persists within prisons and jails in California and across the nation. We took the lead by crafting constitutional language designed to prohibit the practice of slavery, as sanctioned by the exception clause in the Federal Constitution's 13th Amendment, which allows for slavery to persist among incarcerated individuals. It was a historic moment, and once again, the question lingered, "What would they do?"

Last year, we presented this very issue of involuntary servitude, essentially a euphemism for slavery (ACA 3), to this Assembly. It passed with a vote of 59 - 17, only to be subsequently blocked from reaching the voters by the Democratic State Senate. Today, the Assembly would vote once more, this time on ACA 8, a bill aimed at removing the language from the CA State Constitution that legalizes involuntary servitude within prisons. To our satisfaction, it passed with a resounding vote of 68 - 4. The question now looms over the Senate: What will they do?

No one knows, but I felt a glimmer of hope as I stood in that room, witnessing the votes sway in our favor. Why? Because I sensed a palpable shift within the Capitol. After the bill passed, AOUON and our coalition members were invited to the Assembly floor for photographs with the Black Caucus and Assembly Members. We believe that this was the largest gathering of formerly incarcerated people invited to the Assembly Floor. Subsequently, we were ushered down to the basement where The Black Caucus hosted a special luncheon.

The atmosphere exuded festivity, celebrating this legislative milestone. Our efforts were acknowledged and revered as a historic event. This leads me to believe that "they know" it's time. They recognize that this bill is destined to pass in the Senate this time around. They are aware, and they wish to be part of the history as we dismantle the vestiges of slavery still entrenched within the American so-called criminal justice system. The signs are clear; we are living in a transformative era.



(l-r) Barbara Chavez, Jeronimo Aguilar, Jesse Burluson, and Chris Lodgson

In the 1860s, chattel slavery prevailed. A century later, segregation was abolished. Now, we find ourselves in the midst of the next frontier—the criminal justice system. While legislation in the 1960s brought about integration, the underlying culture and practices have endured. It is now incumbent upon us to bring the criminal justice system in line with our contemporary norms. In today's world, we refuse to condone slavery. We will not tolerate the continued imposition of racist ideologies through antiquated laws. We are in a period of change, dedicated to eradicating, step by step, an inhumane system and its practices.

What a pivotal way to end this year's Elder Freeman Policy Fellowship, a project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children where formerly incarcerated Fellows learn grassroots organizing, legislative and administrative advocacy, and other strategies to run local and state campaigns.

I would like to end with a shoutout to all 68 Assembly members who stood up and passed this historic legislation.

Local Chef Offers 'Second Chances' To Formerly Incarcerated People



Prep cook Angelo Paul shuffled around various jobs after incarceration before landing at Alta Adams. (Ural Garrett/AfroLA)

This story was first published by AfroLA, nonprofit solutions journalism for Los Angeles told through the lens of the Black community.

AFRO LA.

by Ural Garrett, AfroLA

Finding employment after being incarcerated can be a complicated and daunting process. It's something Keith Corbin understands quite well. Serving roughly a decade in prison for drugs, he found a knack for cooking while behind bars. But when he got out, he faced a new set of challenges.

"When I started off, I didn't have no one to look towards in this field," said Corbin.

Depending on the job, certain criminal charges or even lack of experience may pose significant obstacles in the shift from incarceration to civilian life, a transition that more than 600,000 people make each year in the U.S., according to the Prison Policy Initiative. In California alone, approximately 40,000 people are released from state prisons annually, according to the Workforce Development Board.

Last August, Corbin released his memoir, *California Soul: An American Epic of Cooking and Survival*. It tells the story of how he grew up in Watts learning to cook from his grandmother before getting caught up selling drugs in his adolescence.

Later, as a free man, he found a job working as a kitchen manager under popular Los Angeles chefs Roy Choi and Daniel Patterson at the Watts restaurant Locol. After Locol closed in 2018, Corbin struck out on his own.

He's now the co-owner and chef at Alta Adams restaurant in L.A.'s West Adams neighborhood.

One of the initiatives he wanted to push as an entrepreneur was to give formerly incarcerated individuals looking for work an opportunity.

"The fact that I was able to become an author, executive producer, own a restaurant and hire people that come from situations like mine... means my number one responsibility is to be [that] representation to people that are starting out," he said.

Alongside small businesses like Alta Adams that are trying to make a difference, local government is also addressing the difficulties of reentry after being incarcerated.

Between the lack of resources many formerly incarcerated individuals face and probation terms that require some form of employment, recidivism, or the likelihood a previously convicted person will

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NEWSPAPER

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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

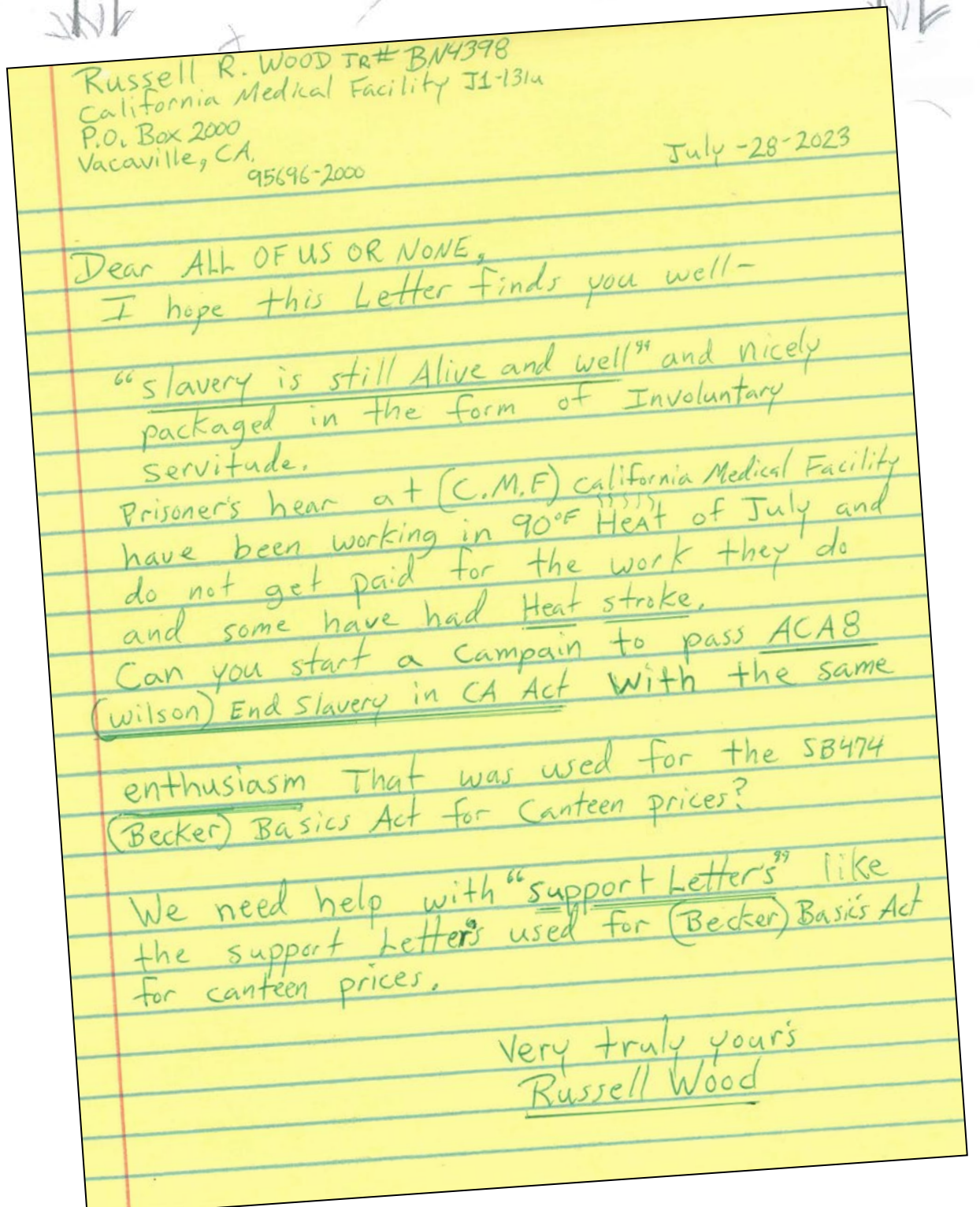
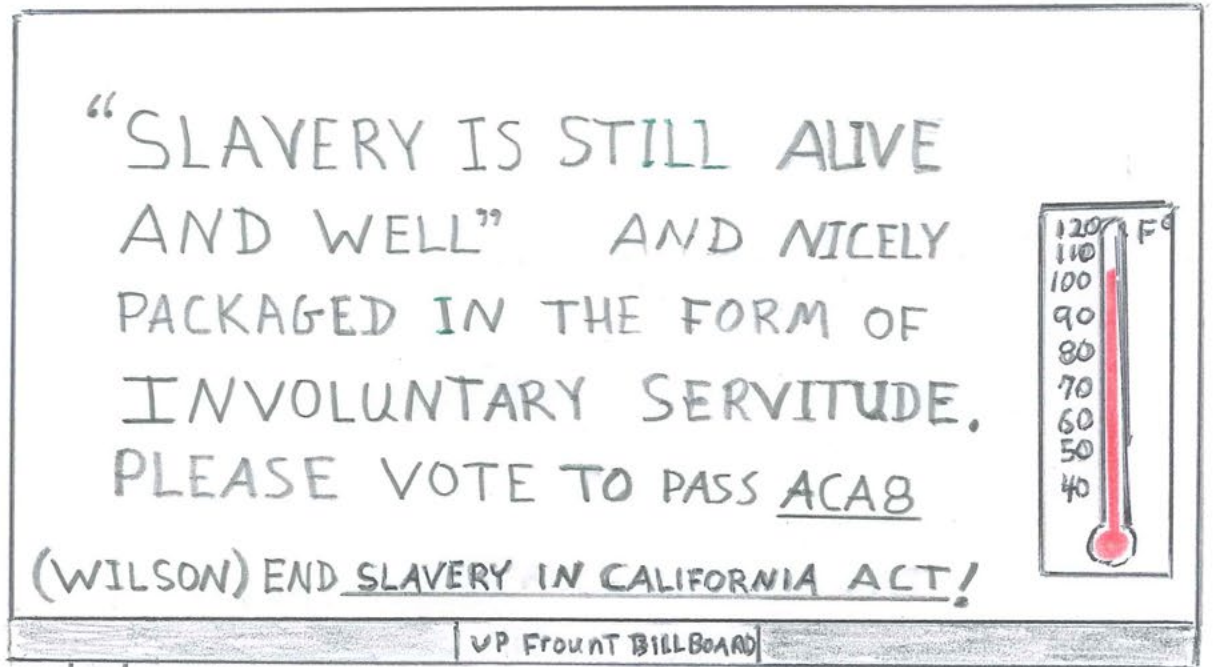
To claim and take care of our own children and our families

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

Slavery is Alive

Artwork & Letter by Russell Wood
(California Medical Facility)



The Return of Alicia Perez

by TaSin Sabir, LSPC Communications Manager
and AOUON Editor in Chief

Alicia Perez has defied the odds by turning her life around after serving 24 years behind bars. Her journey is a testament to the power of self determination and the importance of support networks like Uncommon Law, The Uncuffed Project, Arsolas, CROP, Impact Justice and All of Us or None (AOUON), a project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. Perez's journey is marked by challenges, surprises, and unwavering hope as she transitions from incarceration to freedom.

"Prison was scary, and I was scared of the unknown," Perez recalls, reflecting on the daunting experience of being locked up. Being away from her family, especially her children, added to the emotional toll of her incarceration. But Perez's determination to rebuild her life led her to seek support through Uncommon Law where she began preparing for her board hearing with Emma Tolman. Tolman provided guidance and support throughout the process, ensuring that Perez was ready for her board hearing. "I was getting ready for board and got connected with Uncommon Law," Perez explains. "My attorney was Emma Tolman, and she worked with me for a year. With her help I was able to reconnect with a long-time friend, Alissa Moore who works at AOUON. Moore was the one who greeted me the day of my release and has been supporting me with guidance and resources ever since."

However, Perez's release day held an unexpected twist. "I thought when I was released I was going to be brought to the program without shackles," Perez says, her voice filled with the memory of that moment. But the reality was different – Perez was shackled, handcuffed, and waist-chained upon her release, leaving her to question whether she was truly free. "They gave me a bag with a lunch and water bottle, which there was no way I could open because I was shackled and handcuffed at the same time," she recalls. "I thought, 'Am I getting released, or am I still imprisoned?'"

Being restrained was one of Perez's worries and two days prior she asked her attorney if she would be transported in handcuffs? Her attorney assured her that that was not the procedure. As the prison transport van approached the drop off location Moore was shocked to see Perez shackled and cuffed as she exited the van. Moore asked the officers why and they replied, "That's our policy, we're going to take them off now." It's a procedure that many would agree needs reform.



"There is so much support that a lot of girls don't know about when they are getting ready to go to board and how much support they have when they get out."

-Alicia Perez

Upon exiting the transport van the officers indeed removed her restraints and Perez was finally free. After settling things at the parole office Moore takes Perez to the Freedom and Movement Center (FAM Center), the building of All of Us or None headquarters and Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and a place that recently released people like Perez can call home. Entering the FAM Center Perez was greeted and embraced by staff as the words, "welcome home!" echoed through the building.

"My biggest goal for today is to immerse myself in the program, learn the rules, understand what I can and cannot do, and start this new chapter in my life," Perez shares.

AOUON and other organizations have provided crucial assistance during her reentry, offering a helping hand when she needed it most. "There is so much support that a lot of girls don't know about when they are getting ready to go to board and how much support they have when they get out," Perez emphasizes.

AOUON is excited about collaborating with Uncommon Law. Moore notes, "We want Uncommon Law to know we are in it for the people and we will continue to assist them in future endeavors of getting people out."

Uncommon Law attorney, Emma Tolman, shares the sentiment, emphasizing that it's a team effort. "It's not just about getting people home but also ensuring they succeed once they are home," she says. "We are so happy to have great collaborators and amazing advocates like Alissa."

As Perez reflects on her journey, she shares the importance of giving back to the community. She volunteers at AOUON, dedicating her time to help other women navigate the challenging process of reentry. Her experience has given her a sense of purpose and the opportunity to offer a helping hand to others facing similar circumstances. "I am grateful for the help of AOUON and other organizations like The Uncuffed Project who also supported me with a phone as soon as I got out as well as clothes and hygiene products."

Throughout her journey, Perez's children have been a constant source of strength and support throughout her journey. "Coming home has been a blessing. Throughout the years its been a struggle. While inside my parental rights never got taken away however CDCr did put a stipulation for not to see my kids and for a long while I wasn't able to see them. I worried me coming home was going to be hard for them however my oldest son has been coming every weekend to visit me and it's just been awesome. Just a blessing to know my children are one hundred percent there for me," she says, her eyes shining with gratitude.

Alicia Perez's remarkable journey from incarceration to reentry serves as a beacon of hope for others in similar situations. Her story reminds us that with determination, support, and a resilient spirit, individuals can overcome the odds and rebuild their lives, even after enduring lengthy periods of incarceration. Perez's journey is a testament to the power of second chances and the boundless potential for positive change, no matter the obstacles in one's path.

The Unexamined Life

by Ojore Mckinnon
San Quentin, CA

"The unexamined life is not worth living." - Socrates

We are all born to die, however, have you come to the conclusion you're on earth to die?

Over my two decades on death row I have overheard it declared or spoken to me as a matter-of-fact: "I'm here to die."

For example: Out on the yard one sunny afternoon, a brother proudly and confidently stated to me: "I'm here to die. I'm not going to be here beyond ten years." This was in response to my statement of Counsel. Basically, he was indicating he would go out on his own terms, meaning he would force the gunman to kill him if his case is unresolved after a period of ten years. This was the first time someone professed such a notion to me. Due to him declaring this as a fact, I pulled out my bullshit repellent, then responded, "You don't want to die, believe me, these goons will be happy to oblige you." After some back-and-forth banter, I pointed out, "If you really desire to die, start climbing the fence, surely the goon in the tower will execute you." He peered at me as through I was crazy. Then asked, "Why would I do that?" I replied, "You have come to the conclusion your sole purpose on the row is to die; and that's why you have done nothing to cultivate your being. Therefore, why wait ten years?"

Of course my rational was too real for him to continue the conversation.

During another occasion, my former neighbor, who was agitated by the dialogue and antics around us, stated, "Do you hear all these complaints; what do they expect, we're on death row, we're here to die." His expressed frustration was in response to prisoners griping about the inadequate water supply issued to us during a Legionnaires outbreak within San Quentin, that left the water unable to drink.

"No, not we, you," "We're here to die," as though simply being on the row justified the treatment we were enduring. He doubled-down, pointing out the purpose of death row is to await death. My

unwillingness to go along with his notion caused him to state out of frustration, "I'm here to die."

A week or two later, in separate showers, he begun to complain and vent about the lack of water pressure coming from the shower-head (that had been broken for months). This created an opening for me to lampoon his complaints and reiterated my point from weeks earlier. "What are you complaining about, Mista, 'I'm here to die...'" I stated from the other shower. "So what if you die funky... matter-of-fact, why are you wasting water? From today on I'll grab all your trays, you don't need to eat. Just lay over there and die."

Of course he did not find my satire funny. However, after a few days of pondering that encounter, he did come to the realization I was correct in my point.

In a third case, one guy ranting over the wire, down on the second tier, was professing his 'I don't give a fuck,' about life and others, rendition. He proclaimed he did not care to better himself; nor did he care about his homies, because he was on the row for killing them. His only concern in life was for his daughter. Yet he proudly proclaimed he was here to die. Literally, hours later, I heard him call to one of his homies for something to eat. Which I found funny. All that talk about fuck life, his homies, and being here to die was lost in the silence of the unit, once his belly desired nourishment.

In many of these cases, the declaration: "I'm here to die," comes from the uneducated mind and the mouth of individuals who have failed to examine their life. They have conformed to prison, embraced ignorance, and are trapped behind the mask of ego, villainy and bravado, that is a profile in unnerved callousness, and a show of being unmoved by the threat of death imposed on their life.

The problem with this mentality is, if one is so passionately set on dying, there are plenty of opportunities to embrace death. No one who is openly declaring this notion has waived their right to appeal; committed an act that has drawn gunfire; and none have been bold enough to take their own life.

By no means do I encourage this behavior or wish to see these guys do something to bring about their premature death. Instead, I propose they think different. There is too much to live for and I know like they know, 'Dying is easy, living is hard.'

Of the three young men I spoke of, only my former neighbor has come to the realization there is much to live for. He has put in the hard work to think different and act different. He has embraced the hard work of living and self-reflection. I now count him amongst those who are life-affirming. The other two have remained stunted and have rejected self-reflection. They are the proverbial leaf in the wind, while dwelling in the darkness and chaos of San Quentin's death row.

I, like everyone else on the row, have been confronted with the decision to sink or swim? After my wrongful conviction and being found guilty of special circumstances, I did not lose my resolve to live, better yet, I became more life-affirming. At no point after arriving on California's death row, did I ever perceive or come to accept the fact this was my final destination, or a place I would meet my expiration date.

Even during those times I found myself fueled by my anger and frustration, or burdened by the maladies and monotony of prison did I ever contemplate dying. Not even when my predacious urges consumed me; or when the mental and emotional toll of feeling left for dead by family and homies did it cause me to give my mind to the darkness of the rabbit hole. My will to live and be free of this injustice remained resilient as I stumbled through the darkness. During my days of solitary isolation, I fought through the burden of feeling abandoned. And, eventually I exhausted my anger, disappointment and negative thoughts that once consumed me, to see the light that illuminated my unexamined life.

Personally, due to my examination, my life is continuing to blossom and flourish. To U ALL, LOVE LIFE, LIVE MAAT !

From my stance on Maa, a voice from Death Row.

Legal Corner: In Search of Consistency

by Eric C. Sapp, LSPC Staff Attorney

In the novels of Franz Kafka, the law is seen, not through a glass darkly, but through a kaleidoscope dizzyingly. As with the sociological and realist schools of jurisprudence of the same era (beginning of the twentieth century) in Europe and North America, the system of law in the codes and that of administrative practice are understood as divergent though mutually intertwined. We see structures of internal, logical contradiction in the midst of bureaucratic stasis even today in California.

To resolve a conflict of regulatory standards within title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) issued Notice of Change to Regulations (NCR) 23-05 this past summer. It would lower the standard of 15 C.C.R. §3176(a)(3)(A) from "probable cause" to "reasonable suspicion," which standard describes the basis for CDCR's request to strip search a visitor suspected of carrying contraband, the refusal of consent resulting in CDCR's denying the visit. This change would harmonize that section with 15 C.C.R. §3173.2(d)(7) ("reasonable suspicion" grounds for unclothed search when no less intrusive alternatives exist). At the same time, §3173.2(d)(7) would be amended to

specify that visual inspection of "body cavities" is part of an unclothed search of a visitor.

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) submitted a written public comment analyzing the proposed changes. Among other points, LSPC noted that the state's Office of the Inspector General in an audit published in January found deficiencies in CDCR's inspection of staff for possession of contraband and also found that contraband continued to be present in prisons during COVID shutdowns, when nearly all visits were curtailed. These findings suggest that the focus on searches of visitors may not be the most efficient way to deal with contraband. LSPC also argued that NCR 23-05, by lowering the standard of §3176 rather than raising the standard of §3173.2, would establish consistency among regulations at the price of infringing on the rights of visitors, including family members of incarcerated persons. It would do so by pressuring them to waive their exercise of constitutional rights to be free of invasive searches— simply to be able to see their loved ones. Additionally, LSPC pointed out that the potential costs due to liability for misconduct made possible by the nature of the searches in question needed to be factored into the rulemaking calculus.

The Coalition for Family Unity also submitted a written comment

highlighting the need for attention to the situation of minors subjected to searches of visitors. Several individuals recorded audio comments at a "public hearing" which CDCR held via tape recorder in an empty office room in Sacramento.

As of the time of writing the present column, CDCR's response to public comments was pending. Until it decides, the existing, conflictual regulatory scheme remains in place. Meanwhile, any nonincarcerated person who believes they have been subjected to an unlawful or abusive search while visiting a CDCR facility can submit a "citizen's complaint" regarding staff misconduct, pursuant to 15 C.C.R. §3417 and Cal. Penal Code §832.5.

Regardless of whether NCR 23-05 is adopted as is or goes back to the drawing board for revisions, vigilance from visitors, the public, state officials, and incarcerated persons will be needed to ensure that visits are conducted in a way that is safe, lawful, and respectful toward everyone.



21st Century Pillory

by Leo Cardez
Illinois Department of Corrections

I believe that ex-offender public online registries are ineffective security theater and amount to nothing more than a modern-day pillory—one of those medieval devices where an offender's hands and head are fastened to a wooden instrument to be ridiculed. This dual punishment and spectacle started more than a thousand years ago in Europe before spreading to the New World. It lasted well into the Nineteenth century before it was deemed too cruel and outlawed. In the 21st century, it has been replaced by various criminal online registries—sex offenders, youth offenders, violent offenders, etc.—living on the new public square: The internet.

For better or worse, the internet and social media have significantly amplified humanity's means of public shaming, taking its victims from the town square to a global network of connected screens. The internet has simplified and super-charged our ability to publicly shame on a scale never previously imagined. The result is a steady flow of new names and faces as targets—both high-profile and everyday returning citizens—flooding our media feeds and rage cycle. Some proponents call it justice, others embrace it as a social reckoning, while politicians hide behind unfounded community safety arguments. Whatever it's called, this new wave of public shaming is affecting individuals and communities in various forms of psychological turmoil, recent research has found.

Public shaming is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, we can see various examples of offenders violating moral codes being fastened to pillars, stocks, and pillories—even Jesus Christ endured a type of public shaming in his crucifixion. Regardless of the method, the history of human civilization runs parallel with shaming. Some social psychologists believe that it is possibly an evolved mechanism to ensure our survival by favoring group cooperation. Shame may be a way of encoding the social cost of certain behaviors, wherein, it helps to protect individuals from undesirable social circumstances, such as being ostracized by a group. Unfortunately, the reality is that these feelings of shame are internalized and evolve into a feeling of disgust and unworthiness for the individual.

Shame is linked to various forms of mental, emotional, and physical distress, wreaking havoc on the individual. It has been seen to cause extreme negative moral emotions associated with feelings of powerlessness, like being stuck in a barrel at the bottom of the ocean with no options—there is no worse feeling. Even if, at best, it could be attributed to even the slightest community benefit, the cruel effects on the individual level are simply too high.

Experts agree we should not confuse guilt and shame. Guilt can be good for us. It teaches us when we have done something wrong through feelings of regret and remorse. Shame, on the other hand, is pointless, causing mostly feelings of uselessness and self-judgment which can inevitably lead to more serious mental issues. More simply, it is the equivalent of "you DID something bad" versus "you ARE bad." It is hard to imagine a scenario when simply making someone feel small and helpless is the morally correct thing to do—sounds more like torture or revenge.

I suppose the question begs, to what degree should any single mistake define a person's reputation and ability to ever live a normal life again? When does shaming cross the line to simply another form of bullying? It is complicated. Registries are devoid of context. There is no opportunity to hear both sides of any given circumstance; no back-and-forth discourse that people would be able to use in real life. It is simply a red dot on a map on your computer screen that, when clicked, shows a photo, name, and address: "This is where the monsters are, stay away or... go get them." But it is hard to think of someone as sub-human when you get to know them, when you see their humanity. Registries are designed for broadcasting; it is all one-sided, there is no opportunity for listening or understanding. They are simply a platform for public moral outrage directed at certain offenders.

It is interesting to note that shaming through registries isn't the same worldwide. Only in America do we feel the need to endlessly punish ex-offenders, oftentimes, for life, by berating them with this idea that since they did something wrong they are a piece of s%t—unworthy of redemption. In mostly first-world Asian countries, shame is used thoughtfully in a manner meant to express love and moral guidance,



connecting and repairing relationships... sounds a lot like the pillars of restorative justice initiatives (which are still in their infancy in America).

Online registry-caused shaming or violence against ex-offenders can become ever more complex when the target is the history of the stigmatization of ex-offenders as social pariahs in the U.S. Exposing these matters and their effects can spark an array of reactions in individuals, driven by their own prejudices—not backed or based on any research, data, or science. People often act and react only by the prompts of current societal notions. It is no surprise, therefore, that shaming certain ex-offenders found on the internet will continue. They are an easy target, just like those stuck in a pillory in the public square.

The criminal offender registry system is a result of the conflation of public safety with public vengeance. By branding them with a scarlet letter, unlike any other offender, the justice system has to bear, no matter how terrible the offense, is harmful to the person who has paid his debt to society. The registry further harms the families by exposing them to undue ostracism and, in many cases, hate crimes that include stalking the registrants and killing them. There is a solution: The immediate and complete abolishment of all national and state public online criminal registries. There is a horrible cost every time we create a sub-human scary creature to justify our cruelty, which only results in finding the monster within us. Brutality taxes the deliverer and community in invisible ways, not as apparent, but just as detrimentally as the receiver.

Policy Update

by Jeronimo Aguilar, LSPC Policy Analyst

Thursday September 14th marked the official end of another legislative session and we end this session with some visible scars as well as some notable victories to celebrate. Either way, we keep fighting and doing all we can to give ourselves the best chance to pass the most meaningful and impactful legislation for the people. Those of us working on statewide policy (or any policy) at LSPC and All of Us or None take great pride in staying ten toes down and remembering WHY we do this work. It's not only about the individuals we help come home through various pieces of policy and legislation, but the ones that we inspire to not give up and to continue keeping hope alive. We do this work because we know that we ALL are more than our worst mistakes. We do this because we refuse to allow this system to swallow up another generation of human beings without resistance. The only way we lose is if we stop trying. So THANK YOU for the support and commitment to this justice struggle; and let's continue to love and support each other, TODOS O NADIE!

Legislative Update:

SB 474 Becker | Canteens: The BASIC(s) ACT
Status: Successfully passed the Assembly floor vote.
Next Steps: Awaiting Governor's signature.

AB 1226 Haney | Keep Families Close Act
Status: Passed both houses and signed into law by the Governor! **What does it do?** This bill, for an incarcerated person with a parent and child relationship with a child under 18 years of age, or who is a guardian or relative caregiver of a child, would require the secretary to place the person in the correctional institution or facility that is located nearest to the primary place of residence of the person's child. The bill would authorize the department to reevaluate an incarcerated person's placement to determine whether existing orders should be modified]. The bill would

allow an incarcerated person to request a review of their housing assignment when there is a change in the primary place of residence of the person's child upon which the person's housing assignment was based.

AB 1266 Kalra | Infractions: Warrants and Penalties
Status: Did not move forward.

AB 958 Santiago | Prisons: Visitation
Status: Did not move forward.

AB 1186 Bonta | Juveniles: Restitution
Status: Will be a two year bill and continue next legislative session in 2024.

AB 1516 Kalra | Living Wage for All Campaign: Looks to raise the minimum wage for all workers in CA, including incarcerated workers.
Status: Two-year bill which we will be ramping up efforts on. We would love to hear your stories related to wages and how a living wage for incarcerated workers would change so many lives.

ACA 8 Wilson | End Slavery in CA
Status: Successfully passed the Assembly floor vote with unanimous support from the Assembly Democrats (68-4 vote).
Next Steps: Senate Public Safety committee 2024. Please reach out with your stories/reflections on the dynamics of forced labor. ACA 8 would stop CA from using forced labor/involuntary servitude/slavery as "punishment for a crime".

AB 1306 Carrillo | State government: immigration enforcement
Status: Successfully passed the Assembly floor vote.
Next Steps: Awaiting Governor's signature.
What does it do? The bill would prohibit CDCR from detaining on the basis of a hold request, providing an immigration authority with release date information, or responding to a notification request, transferring to an immigration authority, or facilitating or assisting with a transfer request any individual who is eligible for release pursuant to specified provisions, including, among others, youth offender, elderly, and medical parole releases.

Also Pursuant to section 1172.2, 3051, 3055, or 3550 of the Penal Code, released after resentencing pursuant to Section 1172.6 of the Penal Code, released after having a conviction and sentence vacated, or a judgment modified, pursuant to Section 745 of the Penal Code, released after having a conviction and sentence vacated, or a judgment modified, pursuant to Section 236.14 or 236.15 of the Penal Code, released after resentencing pursuant to paragraph (8) of subdivision (d) of Section 1170 of the Penal Code, or released after being granted clemency from the Governor.

AB 442 Villapudua | State summary criminal history information
Status: Did not move forward.

SB 343 Skinner | Child Support
Status: Successfully passed the Assembly floor vote.
Next Steps: Awaiting Governor's signature.

SB 824 Ashby | Reunification Services
Status: Did not move forward.

In all, though we had a lot of legislation get held up in the suspense file process we were able to secure a victory for incarcerated parents and their children through AB 1266 (Haney) Proximity as well as move our campaign to End Slavery in CA (ACA 8) forward successfully through the Assembly with a resounding 68-4 vote.

We Need You!:

As we begin to strategize for 2024 and beyond, we'd love to hear from you about which issue areas and problems that you would like addressed either through administrative advocacy, litigation, or statewide legislation. We are only as strong as our connection with those most impacted by the injustices we are trying to change so PLEASE reach out and share your thoughts/ideas/reflections. We also would love to develop some inside organizers and policy advocates that are willing to learn and be trained on legislative advocacy and community organizing. We look forward to hearing from you! Write to us at 4400 Market St, Oakland, CA 94608. Much love and God bless you, we will continue fighting for you, praying for you, and keeping the hope alive until we are ALL free!

In Loving Memory of Tommy Acosta Sr.

(February 24, 1970 - September 1, 2023)

San Antonio, Texas, grieves the loss of an extraordinary leader, Tommy Acosta Sr. Born on February 24, 1970, and left us on September 1, 2023.

Tommy was a cherished figure—a father, grandfather, son, brother, uncle, friend, and an unwavering activist. His strong spirit continues to live within the hearts of those he touched.

Above all, Tommy treasured his family. His children—Barbara, Tommy Jr., Tina, and Nicholas—were his pride and joy. He relished his role as a devoted grandfather to Jasiah, Johlee, Rafael, Ali, Nyamiah, Tommy, Makayla, Ava, Madilynn, Cahlee, Marilynn, Melayasia, and Ivan.

Tommy is also survived by his parents, Rafael Duran-Sandoval and Ernestina E. Acosta, and his siblings—Marylou, Erlinda, Roberto Sr, Mary Diane, Rosemary, Sandra, Nancy, along with numerous nieces and nephews—his family served as the bedrock of his strength and inspiration.

His journey into activism began with *All of Us or None Texas*, where he organized and passionately championed human and civil rights. This ignited a

lifelong commitment to justice, which he carried into mentoring at-risk youth and adults, offering them hope and a path forward.

Tommy was a fearless advocate, a steadfast defender of voting rights, immigration issues, and women's rights. His dedication to righteousness led him to serve as the Violence Prevention Supervisor with the City of San Antonio.

In 2017, Tommy founded the "Big Homie Street Mentoring and Ministry," a beacon of hope for those in need. He recognized the power of second chances and believed in the potential for redemption in every soul.

As we bid farewell to Tommy Acosta Sr., we honor his memory with heartfelt gratitude.



Local chef offers 'second chances' (Continued from page 1)

re-offend, is astronomically high in California. About 45% of people released from the state's prison system were convicted again within three years, according to fiscal year 2015-16 data from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Of those, nearly 19% committed a new crime or violated parole within their first year of release.

To combat this, L.A.'s "Care First, Jails Last" initiative provides intensive case management for formerly incarcerated people to help them successfully reintegrate into society.

"People are being connected to a case manager, and they're connected to all the services that they need," said Songhai Armstead, interim director of the L.A. County Justice, Care and Opportunities Department, "whether it's housing or employment or social connections, social services, mental health services, food or whatever their needs are." She currently heads the "Care First, Jails Last" initiative, and said they also have programs that focus on training and employment, along with voter registration and housing.

Armstead is a retired Superior Court judge. During her time in that role, she had one of the best records for reducing recidivism in the county.

"It's really focusing on, how do you deliver justice in a way that's equitable across the board?" said Armstead. "[It's] providing the services and opportunities to folks so that they are able to stay out of the justice system, [and] if they're in the justice system be moved from the justice system or [return] back to community in the way that we're supposed to."

Job availability is another issue which the "Care First, Jails Last" initiative hopes to solve. According to Vanessa Martin, director of the Reentry Division

for the Justice, Care and Opportunities Department, they hope to make a dent in sectors that don't historically serve the formerly incarcerated population.

"We're so used to hearing about construction jobs and the typical jobs that are pretty low barrier to entry," said Martin. "So, we are focused on things like IT, health care, green jobs and advanced manufacturing. These jobs can really—if you provide the correct and the robust skills training there—have huge impacts in terms of earnings and employment over time."



Keith Corbin (center) and his team (left to right), Rashad Joy, Fatoumata Bee and Asia Stewart-Howell, pose for a photo together at his Alta Adams restaurant. (Ural Garrett/AfroLA)

Back at Corbin's Alta Adams restaurant, General Manager Asia Stewart-Howell said that taking a more responsible attitude toward their hiring of formerly incarcerated individuals was key to their success.

"I think hiring has a big aspect in this success and retention — giving second chances to people and understanding where they come from," Stewart-Howell explained. "It's kind of a different level of care with employees, empathy and thinking more in terms of investing in the staff, not just punishing

them for labels or firing people for labels. [It's] giving people chances even when they're maybe not qualified."

Edward Hamilton, 23, is a line cook at Alta who hopes to dive deeper into the food industry someday. Hamilton got the job after his aunt saw Corbin's story on Instagram and advised him to apply. Months into the job, he said he doesn't feel so "othered" due to his background.

"It's just the atmosphere where I'm not looked at as too much due to me once being locked up," said Hamilton. "That's never the case, and I'm just myself. Everybody here is individual and that individuality just drew me."

Angelo Paul, 24, who is now a prep cook, recalled a moment after being released from prison where his belief in himself was shaken by the tough job market.

"It's really hard to find a job once you get out," said Paul. "It's a confidence thing not knowing whether you're going to be able to get accepted for the job or whether they're going to turn you down. Putting your first foot out there is always hard. Corbin gave me my opportunity when I came back."

Corbin said he realized that when it comes to formerly incarcerated people reintegrating into society, there needs to be a culture of understanding and forgiveness that stretches across both individuals and systems.

"How can you be aware of these traps that are set up for me as a youth and then when I fall into the trap, you blame me or you turn your back on me or ostracize me, or I have this scarlet letter on my back?" asked Corbin. "It's just about being more empathetic."

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

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

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