

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!

MARCH 2024



Legal Services for Prisoners with Children's Managing Director, Dr. Tanisha Cannon. Photo by TaSin Sabir

## A New Leader Emerges LSPC's Bright Future with Tanisha Cannon

by Alissa Moore, LSPC Re-Entry Coordinator

In 2022, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) proudly welcomed Dr. Tanisha Cannon as the new Managing Director. Tanisha's appointment marks a pivotal moment for LSPC with the upcoming retirement of Executive Director Dorsey Nunn. Tanisha's leadership brings a wealth of experience and a passionate dedication to championing the rights of all incarcerated people and their families.

Tanisha's path into the realm of legal advocacy and prisoner rights is a testament to her commitment to social justice reform. Holding a doctorate in Educational Leadership from California State East Bay, Tanisha has dedicated her career to addressing systemic barriers and issues within the justice system, particularly those affecting incarcerated individuals and their families. Her academic achievements and hands-on experience make her a formidable force in this fight for justice, but what's more than that Tanisha comes from the trenches, and has dealt with incarceration, loss of loved ones to gun violence, juvenile detention, foster care, group homes and more. Most of the same traumas in her personal life mirror that of the people she serves. She is very relatable and empathetic to our plight.

"Tanisha Cannon is truly an asset at LSPC. Her ability to lead and support others to be their best selves creates an environment that breeds camaraderie among staff and allies alike. We are lucky to have her on board." -Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah, recently retired Administrative Director of LSPC for 20 years.

As the new Managing Director, Tanisha has stepped into her role with a clear vision for the future of LSPC. Her leadership is characterized by empathy, resilience, and an unyielding



Dr. Tanisha Cannon. Photo by TaSin Sabir

determination to uplift the voices of those often marginalized in society. Tanisha firmly believes in the power of legal and policy advocacy to break down systemic barriers and create a more just and equitable system. Her vision has even inspired our staff on a personal level; she has gone the extra mile to establish a true culture of collaboration, fostering teamwork through bi-weekly check-ins with staff, promoting open communication and mutual contributions, giving staff anonymity and encouragement to develop and implement new ideas.

There is no doubt that Tanisha is an inspiration, especially to incarcerated individuals who will no doubt face the similar disproportionate challenges that she did as they enter the workforce, particularly women. Her presence in

### HAPPY WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



ALL ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE ARE  
WRITTEN BY WOMEN

### Courtroom watchdog program holds Los Angeles judges accountable

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

by Eliza Partika, AfroLA

Local residents sign up with CourtWatch LA for many reasons. Some volunteers are law students or lawyers. Others are formerly incarcerated or have incarcerated family members. Some are just curious. But, all volunteers are dispatched to courtrooms across Los Angeles County to take notes on Superior Court proceedings. Volunteers' observations are foundational to the Rate My Judge platform run by La Defensa, the decarceration nonprofit that relaunched CourtWatch after a three-year hiatus.

CourtWatch LA is among similar watchdog groups in Florida, Missouri, Virginia, Connecticut and New York. Los Angeles's program was designed to mirror a successful accountability program in New York, where judges have resigned because of information revealed in court observations. Founded in 2018, the New York program is also powered by volunteers. In addition, Court Watch NYC produces zines introducing readers to the judges, court system jargon and policy changes like bail reform.

Court Watch NOLA, launched in 2007, is one of the oldest courtroom accountability programs. Black people make up roughly 39% of the U.S. prison population, according to 2024 data from the Bureau of Prisons. In Louisiana, more than half of the prison population is Black. New Orleans court watchers' success is undeniable: Orleans Parish has the most proven wrongful convictions per capita of any jurisdiction nationwide.

In California, Black people are incarcerated at 9.5 times the rate of white people, according to a Prison Policy Project report. In Los Angeles County, one of the country's largest judicial and carceral systems with 38 courts and more than 2.7 million cases filed each year, CourtWatch provides important oversight on the criminalization of income and race in court.

#### Observations in action

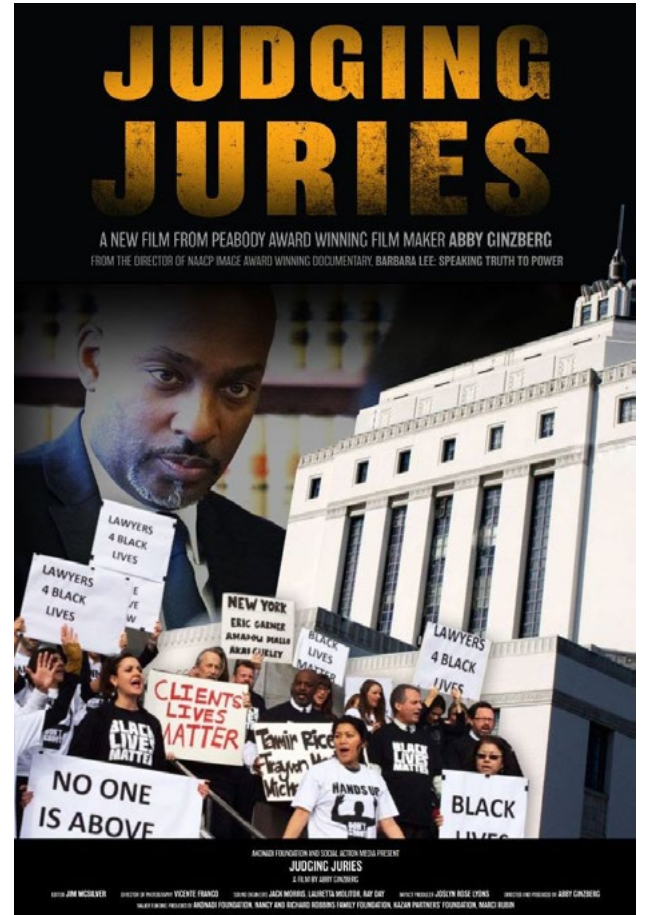
La Defensa staff and a growing army of CourtWatch volunteers—130 and counting—try to visit as many courtrooms as possible. Last fall, I spent a morning at the Inglewood Courthouse in pretrial hearings with four CourtWatch volunteers and Bryanna Siguenza, La Defensa's judicial accountability coordinator. No one at the entrance tells you which court to be at or when. When there were announcements about changes to hearings, it was unclear which courtroom or judge the

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# Judging Juries

by Leena Dinh Piper, LSPC 2023 Elder Freeman Policy Fellow



Poster from Judging Juries.

The passage of the 19th Constitutional Amendment in 1919 guaranteed and protected women’s constitutional rights to vote led to contemplate the roles women play in the justice system as jurors. Although over 100 years have passed since its passage, state courts still continue to refuse women and African Americans the right to serve on juries. The Civil Rights Act of 1957 gave women the right to serve on federal juries, but it wasn’t until 1973 that all 50 states passed similar legislation. In 1975, the United States Supreme Court found constitutional protection for the right of women to serve on juries in Taylor v. Louisiana, implementing inclusion in the rule of law.

Everyone should have the right to be given the opportunity to be a juror, regardless of age, race, color, gender, occupation or creed. Juries without women would neither represent the community nor allow women full participation as citizens of the United States. All of Us or None is celebrating Women’s History Month to bring awareness to women’s rights to serve as a juror. As women, our rights to serve as jurors—whether on a grand jury or petit jury—together with our rights to vote, are our most direct participation in our democracy. I encourage women, especially women of color, to use this year of celebration as an opportunity to learn more about women’s rights, representation, and responsibilities as an American citizen.

The documentary Judging Juries by Director Abby Ginzberg tears back the curtain of the longstanding injustices of the jury system. Ginzberg focuses specifically on the Bay Area and concludes that the hardest obstacle in retaining a diverse jury is the extremely low pay of \$15 a day. Additionally, many employers do not give paid time off for jury service, leading to individuals forced to rely on an incredibly small budget. However, there is hope. During the film, filmmakers documented an experimental San Francisco program where jurors were paid \$100 per day. This eventually led to an increase in working people and people of color to serve their democratic right without fears of feeling financially restrained. While the plan was temporary, it ignited the movement to ensure that all jurors in California are paid enough to contribute to the justice system.

The Judging Juries documentary has made me look at this from a different perspective on joining the jury when I am summoned for duty. I feel like I now have the confidence and courage to be a part of the jury for my community and peers. In too many parts of this country, law enforcement agencies do not represent the communities they serve and in many smaller police departments, Black representation remains virtually nonexistent. The constitutional right to a jury of one’s peers empowers our community members to shield defendants from unfair or excessive treatment by prosecutors, policies, jurors and the judges.

The absence of Black representation means that decisions about who to arrest, which crimes to prosecute, and how to punish people are made by individuals who have less experience and background contending with racial bias. People of color are significantly underrepresented in these positions of power. Jury service is often the only opportunity for a community perspective to impact the outcome of a case in America’s legal justice system.

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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](http://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**



LSPC/AOUON held a free screening of Judging Juries followed by a panel discussion at the New Parkway Theater in Oakland on 2/29/24. Photos by Mitra Zarinebaf



# Mitra's Minute

by Mitra Zarinebaf, LSPC Communications Associate

When we say we're abolitionists, what does that mean? Does our liberation only extend to the human-made borders of the U.S.? Or does it extend outwards to the oppressed people of the world who are often captured in their own unique form of the prison industrial complex? For me, when I think of mass incarceration in the United States, it's difficult to ignore the tight grip of patriarchal colonialism that has failed to succumb after centuries of reform and wars. It seems obvious as western imperialism attempts to cling onto the majority of the world, that there are deep connections between our carceral system and regions abroad.

I cannot think of a clearer example than Israel—a western backed, settler colonial state—inflicting a massive genocide on Palestine since October 7th, 2023, whom Britain and Israel have occupied since the early 20th century. Even before October 7th, experts have called Palestine an “open air prison,” referring to the mass surveillance, punishment, and the forced scarcity of basic needs. As of writing this, over 30,000 Palestinians have been massacred, 1.9 million Palestinians have been displaced, and Israel has continued to bomb hospitals, schools, holy sites, and refugee camps. While not to conflate the struggles of the U.S. and Palestine, there are clear patterns and concrete relationships between these oppressive systems that must be recognized if one is to call themselves abolitionists and feminists.

For one, there is intersectionality in who these forces impact. As the Black Power organizer Kwame Ture said, “you can never make an analysis of the oppressed in any aspect of their lives and leave out the oppressor. If you do so, you'll blame the oppressed for their condition.” Western states like the U.S. and Israel, who created their wealth through white supremacy, genocide, and a hetero-patriarchal oppressive society, will in turn oppress Black, Brown, women, and gender-nonconforming people. To add further nuance, as Scholar Stuart Hall puts it, “race is the modality in which class is lived.” In other words, class and race are intertwined and

racialization creates class—Black and Brown people are therefore predisposed to be a “lower class.” With all that in mind, when these identities overlap, these oppressions become more and more crystal clear and often more violent. Because it's Women's History Month, we cannot ignore how the forces of the U.S. and Israel endanger pregnant people.

As Israel continues to bomb Northern Gaza for the past five months in retaliation for Palestinians decolonizing their land, one cannot possibly imagine how brutal it must be to live in a war zone. When we reflect on reproductive rights and bodily autonomy—one of feminism's greatest fights—Palestine is important as the epicenter of intersectionality. Reproductive injustice has only intensified since the genocide has begun, and pregnant people are disproportionately one of the most impacted populations. There are currently 50,000 pregnant Palestinians and zero hospitals left in Northern Gaza. There are only 7 United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) health facilities left when there used to be 22. Moreover, there has been a 300% increase in miscarriages, in fault by the intense stress of living in a war zone. Pregnant people are being turned away from delivery rooms because they are full from servicing other victims of the genocide and the extreme instability in housing and nourishment during and after pregnancy.

I appreciate how Journalist Rimsha Syed frames this as a clear feminist struggle: “equitable access to sexual and reproductive health care stands as a significant part of Palestinian women's pursuit of self-determination. One must not forget that intentionally controlling women's reproductive livelihoods is part of Israel's goal of eradicating the Palestinian population.” To maintain Israel, it has to decimate the livelihood of Palestinians. This strategy reminds me of the U.S.'s carceral system, where facilities still shackle people while giving birth. This cruel practice puts the parent and the newborn at extreme risk while also dehumanizing the parent in not receiving the necessary care during labor and delivery.

LSPC and the California Coalition for Women's Prisoners (CCWP) played a major role in California

for several decades in fighting to ban shackling while giving birth; as of now 37 states have also followed suit in banning it. However, medical malpractice still occurs throughout the nation the entire time someone is pregnant. This includes neglecting treatment for at-risk pregnant people, correctional officers not believing they are in labor and forcing them to give birth in their cell, and the absence of regulation for prenatal care. In both of these cases, pregnancy and overall reproductive care are systematically targeted. The U.S. carceral system was never set up to care for its incarcerated population, especially ever expecting to care for pregnant people as the system expanded. Israel has no desire to care for reproductive rights in Palestine as it would contradict their struggle to take their land. Therefore, pregnant people and women are disproportionately oppressed by violent colonial states. This is further exemplified with race, where Black and Brown pregnant people are the most impacted in the U.S. carceral system and in Palestine (a mostly Arab state). Even with reforms like training correctional officers what to do during pregnancy or Israel and the U.S. enforcing a temporary ceasefire to send in necessary resources, the roots of these states are still present.

When communities pick apart at this society's seams and organize with each other, we find that these patriarchal and colonial roots can be pulled out. If one is to imagine an abolitionist world, it must be feminist and intersectional too. These carceral systems must go and be replaced with blossoming forms of sustained care for everyone, including legitimate forms of reproductive care. During this year's Women's History Month, let us remember that all of this work is interconnected across regions, gender, and race. All of us must be cognizant that while we all have different experiences according to our identity, our collective power can truly change the future of society and imagine a future where we can all live in safety and with care.



Mitra Zarinebaf, photo by Tasnim Sabir

# Mailbag

by Diana Lynn Nice, CIW

When I came to prison in 2000, we were offered several different vocations to prepare us for life after prison. We had PIA laundry, woodworking, printing, landscaping, cosmetology, welding and auto shop. We also had to take substance abuse programs that actually helped people. Fast forward to 2024, that's a joke. Board didn't even accept that I took the criminal thinking class from staff, they said it wasn't enough. And I've never had a write up.

Also in today's women's prison with all the funds that are supposed to help people rehabilitating and preparing for reentry but we have instead jobs like carpentry, plumbing, painting, and sewing. And most of these are not taught vocations. They're just poorly paid jobs. More slave labor.

All that money and the sidewalks are broken up and even the staff have fallen on them. The vents in our room so thick with dirt and dust. During rainy weather the ground drains have not been cleaned out. I know for a fact since 2014. So we have to wade through puddles and ruin our shoes, get wet socks and end up sick.

They tell me there's a transition class here. I asked to be placed on that list for transition on August of 23. Today is February 7, 2024 and I'm still waiting for it to come.



It seems like the more money they get the worse things are getting. It seems that they don't really care. Nobody knows where the money is going. But it's definitely not going into this institution. And don't get me started on the food they feed us because they don't.

by Barbara Philip, CIW

My name is Barbara Philip who is currently housed at CIW and going on my 27th year of incarceration still serving an LWOP sentence. What inspires me to keep pressing for my freedom is my mother, my four children, and my eight grandchildren.

I have always been an advocate for others, because I truly believe that all of us, survived the belly of the beast can be a beacon of light to the next sister who is depressed.

I have been treated inhumanely for so long that I don't even expect authority to do the right thing. Thank heavens for my sisters out there advocating, being our voices and changing policies to help regain our humanity and dignity.

I salute all the women out there who are holding the families together. I salute my mother, who inspired me to be free in my soul and my mind. Thank you for allowing me to share.

To all my beautiful sisters who have endured the Belly of the Beast with me. I salute you.

**MAIL YOUR SUBMISSIONS TO:**  
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**AOUON Newspaper Editor**  
**4400 MARKET STREET**  
**OAKLAND, CA 94608**

*Inside News Articles. Opinion Pieces. Reviews. Features:  
 Creative or exploratory. News Analysis. Poetry. Art. Comics  
 We can't wait to hear from you!*

# Courtroom watchdog program holds Los Angeles judges accountable

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bailiffs were speaking about. Hushed murmurs and furtive glances around the whitewashed halls accentuated the seeming need for silence. On this day, Siguenza pointed toward a crowd of people waiting outside another court. Bailiffs tell them that they are waiting for a judge stuck in traffic, but are given no further instructions.

Besides confusion, there was an air of suspicion. Bailiffs sometimes “keep an eye” on CourtWatch volunteers because it’s unusual for people who are not family members of defendants or directly involved in a case to show up for court, explained Siguenza. A bailiff’s attitude toward observers often reflects how their judge treats defendants and others in their court proceedings, she said. Titlayo Rasaki, policy and campaigns strategist for La Defensa, told me that cases of volunteers being verbally harassed by bailiffs or police officers have been recorded, although they are uncommon. Rasaki said that is all the more reason for court watchers to be present in the courtroom, to document the behavior.

The ability to participate in CourtWatch, and the court system as a whole, said Rasaki, means you have to have “some sense of financial security” and flexibility in your schedule to be present. “It’s part of the same reason why it’s hard for people to go to jury duty. This part of our system is really opaque, and it’s hard to get in. And often people only engage with it once it touches their lives.” CourtWatch, she said, is a way to make the court system in Los Angeles accessible to everyone.

As Christine Rodriguez pursued her masters in legal studies, she became interested in observing how trial courts in her area operated. She’s now one of CourtWatch LA’s regular volunteers. She’s become especially intrigued by an evictions court in Pasadena, from where she regularly posts observations to social media.

In her first post of 2024, Rodriguez speaks about a trial she attended in Los Angeles, where Los Angeles Superior Court is held. She felt Judge Jerrold Abeles was harsh on a tenant who was representing himself in court, and lenient on landlords’ lawyers when they asked irrelevant questions about the defendant.

Rodriguez said she’s noticed that judges are often upset when tenants show up and do not understand the legal proceedings or legal terminology. Instead of guiding tenants through the process, she said judges often side with their landlords. Similarly, when defendants don’t make their court appearances, judges and prosecutors capitalize on their absence, recounted Rodriguez, by bringing up previous convictions and the like. “That person is not there to contest or give an explanation,” said Rodriguez.

Judges and legal teams often criminalize individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness, said Siguenza. Judges order unreasonable fines and fees, which can impact whether a defendant is able to appear in court and whether they can feasibly make bail. In many cases, inability to pay means jail time. People who are already detained are more likely to be convicted or receive harsher sentences because they miss key opportunities to bargain for dismissal of charges, sentence diversion or pretrial plea negotiation, according to a 2019 Vera Institute of Justice study. Additionally, people who spend even a short time in jail, as opposed to being released pretrial, are more likely to commit a future crime.

These practices disparately affect Black, Indigenous and Latine people in Los Angeles, said Siguenza. “There has been a major lack of oversight and judicial accountability within the

L.A. Superior Court system.” CourtWatch LA has the power to impact outcomes for individuals and lawyers, she continued.

“Just by blasting on social media, and having a consistent presence in the courtroom, it allows judges to know we are watching them and that everything they do is no longer behind closed doors,” said Siguenza.

## Rating judges’ behavior

At monthly training sessions, CourtWatch LA volunteers are coached on the basics of L.A.’s court system and how to take good notes. They’re taught the meaning behind common court jargon and important conversations to look out for, including discussions around bail, bench warrants, or a defendant’s race or socioeconomic status. They fill out an observation sheet to identify any biases while they watch court proceedings. Some judges are known by La Defensa and court watchers for unfair treatment, if not outright misconduct, said Judicial Coordinator Siguenza.

Rate My Judge, an online database created and maintained by La Defensa, has become an important way for those with court appearances and their family members to express frustrations or compliments about Superior Court judges and the treatment they encounter in court. CourtWatch reports and the experiences of others present in L.A. courtrooms are analyzed by La Defensa staff to find patterns in judges’ behavior. The goal is to sound the alarm on judges that they find have engaged in misconduct.

No defendants showed up for their hearings on my day at the Inglewood Courthouse, which I’m told isn’t unusual. But, instead of reprimands, punitive jail time or increased bail, misdemeanor Judge Holly Hancock worked with the attorneys present to delay decisions until a later court date. Hancock is the first Black woman public defender elected to the judicial bench in LA County. With clients who needed housing and committing crimes of survival, Hancock said she and La Defensa were on a similar mission. She was seeking a group that was also focused on reducing bail and enacting just bail practices for minor convictions. Hancock connected with La Defensa in 2021 at a forum about the judicial system, where she spoke about her 2018 campaign and the lack of public defenders running. She announced her intention to run in 2022 for an open seat, and La Defensa approached her about joining their “Defenders of Justice,” a group of public defenders running for progressive, open seats in Los Angeles County.

“My position was always that we need to help in different ways other than just incarceration, you know, there needs to be many different alternatives. That was already happening. It was something I had said I was seeing for many years, but it was just starting to emerge in the public mind and in the budget of the legislature. We cannot just keep incarcerating and incarcerating, certainly for these minor issues,” she said.

Judge Hancock said she ensures she applies an even hand in her courtroom, and that she appreciates court watchers being there to monitor judges like herself. It holds courts accountable and encourages new attorneys, like she had been, to enter bigger courts as judges.

“Every two years, between 100 and 120 judges go up for reelection in the California court system, but rarely, if ever, are they seen on the ballot, because they are never challenged for reelection. . . . But they [court watchers] want people

New Orleans court watchers’ success is undeniable: Orleans Parish has the most proven wrongful convictions per capita of any jurisdiction nationwide. Moreover, the exoneration rate in the New Orleans area is nearly eight times the national average of 0.75 per 100,000.

	County	Number of Exonerations	Standardized Rate Per Capita
1	Orleans Parish, Louisiana	23	7.92
2	Cook County, Illinois	230	5.87
3	Harris County, Texas	175	5.17
4	Suffolk County, Massachusetts	28	4.8
5	Baltimore City, Maryland	19	4.1
6	Bronx County, New York	42	4
7	Kern County, California	25	3.81
8	Jefferson Parish, Louisiana	12	3.67
9	Wayne County, Michigan	48	3.64
10	Kings County, New York	70	3.55

Note: Counties represent jurisdictions with populations more than 300,000. All rankings are based on 2017 data from the United States Census Bureau, which reported a national population of 320,332,016.

to challenge the judges,” said Hancock.

“Judges have the power to uproot people’s lives. If we don’t have the tools to hold them accountable, then what will happen?” said Gabriela Vázquez, La Defensa’s deputy director.

Things like high bail and bench warrants, as well as inexperienced judges, can create an environment in which defendants are treated with less dignity than they deserve.

La Defensa is working on a comprehensive report in collaboration with UCLA’s law school to be published in the coming months. The report will include data on the courts with judges getting the most complaints, which demographics are most affected by judicial misconduct, and some of the most common complaints against judges are.

“[Rate My Judge] gives folks an outlet to express something that they’ve never been able to express before. So, we are seeing people use it. People are very excited about it every single time we [do outreach outside the courthouse],” Siguenza said. “It gives them liberty, a sense that they finally have somewhere they can file complaints against the judge.”

In 2022, the California State Bar received 295 complaints of misconduct. Nearly half are still pending investigation. Only summary statistics are available about complaints filed with the state. Rate My Judge is accessible to anyone, and the easy-to-use interface can be less cumbersome than the official complaint process, said Laura Coholan, a La Defensa representative. The platform also allows users to file ethics complaints, a first for non-lawyers in Los Angeles.

La Defensa is planning awareness campaigns during election season to address some of the patterns they already see on Rate My Judge.

According to Rasaki, the group is creating Justice Report Cards that will be published and disseminated to community members via social media, digital advertisements, and hopefully, billboards during the November election season. There are also plans to distribute literature about the debate over cash bail in California, something consistently monitored in their CourtWatch observations.

Rasaki and Siguenza both hope that by continuing to encourage volunteers and advertising the program more people will join and fill in gaps on Rate My Judge’s system. Judges in Compton, Whittier, Antelope Valley, Long Beach, Norwalk, and Los Angeles Superior Courts have the greatest number of comments and ratings so far – all at 2 and below out of 5 stars. To get the attention of younger audiences, they’re pushing more digital engagement.

“It’s been a powerful political tool,” said Rasaki, “in terms of how we think about political education and awareness.”



# ALL OF US OR NONE @Black Joy Parade

On 2/25/24 AOUON floated down the street of downtown Oakland, CA in a decked out truck that demanded the attention of the crowd. The goal - educating the community that involuntary servitude is slavery and must end!



Photos by TaSin Sabir

# Mailbag

by Angel Garza, CIW

Let's remember to continue to share and expose the truth that the prison systems in California, state, and federal will continue with their corruption of staff members, sexually abusing female prisoners. These authority figures who represent the Bureau of Prisons are degrading to abuse their power in women's prisons, operating like predators and rapists towards convicted women prisoners with cruel and unusual double punishment after being sentenced, and into the care of the corrupted prison systems. This is a twisted sinister scheme by correctional officials. The 2022 Associated Press reported that the warden and three other staff members at Federal Corrections Institution in Dublin, California, face charges of sexually abusing women prisoners.

A former correctional worker employee and chaplain, James Highhouse, is the latest to be charged with sexual abuse of a ward, abusive sexual contact, and making false statements to investigators. The abuses occurred between 2018 and February 2019, as reported. How degrading of these authority figures committing high crimes inside of women's prisons are, and to know this continued truth of corruption is going on inside our women's prison systems. More than 100 Bureau of Prison workers have been arrested, convicted, or sentenced for crimes since 2019, according to an Associated Press report.

The warden, Ray Garcia, was indicted after his arrest in September 2019 on charges that he molested a female inmate on multiple occasions.

Ray Garcia is alleged to have scheduled times and places where he would instruct a female inmate to undress in front of him and he would take multiple photos of her naked with his government-issued phone. A correctional officer and a recycling technician worker were also arrested and charged with sexual misconduct. The prison and some workers were still under investigation, according to the Associated Press report. The Bureau of Prisons has been plagued with "criminal misconduct and corruption, dozens of escapes, coronavirus outbreaks, death of prisoners and workers, and frequent staff shortages.

The Bureau of Prisons Director, Michael Carvajal, and Deputy Director have announced their resignations.

The public and communities need to wake up and accept this graphic truth, that this is what the federal prison systems' authority figures are doing to incarcerated women who are victimized inside the prison systems. We also have the continued abuses of elderly disabled and EOP patient inmates, with green wall correctional officers' corruption in men's CDCR state prisons in California, that have been exposed in United States N.D. Courts with additional remedial orders for the protection of prisoners. The communities and public must know that your hard-working tax money is not being used properly inside the prisons. These correctional officials are committing high crimes inside the federal women's prison and also in CDCR men's state prison systems in California, survivors of prison abuses are exposing the truth.

Women prisoners have it the worst and are not safe inside the walls of prisons, due to authority figures who are real predators towards helpless convicted women. These staff workers and correctional officers under the color of law have mastered their own system, violating the law to rape and molest with many forms of sexual misconduct, the helpless convicted women in prisons, using professional obstruction with criminal tactics, to gratify their sexual disorder with a badge as an authority figure. This is a 9-1-1 call to Governor Gavin Newsom and the Attorney General of Sacramento must not continue to turn a blind eye to these prison staff member master criminals and correctional officers, who are committing and will continue to commit crimes inside the women's prisons, because it is its own world of hidden crimes for authority figures inside these women's prison walls to do what they want with power and control over convicted women prisoners.

This is also a call to the community and public to utilize your tax money towards other methods of punishment that do not involve prisons and to help bring our mothers, sisters, daughters, granddaughters, nieces, cousins, wives, girlfriends, home safety to their family, friends, mentors, and loved ones. The community and public citizens can come together to protect these women better with prison reform sentencing solutions, on the GPS monitor at home, on a prison home sentence court order, or open up more live-in program homes for prison sentences.



# Legal Corner

## Understanding Custody of Children, Part I: The Different Courts

by Meredith Wallis, LSPC Staff Attorney

Parents who have situations, like incarceration, which disrupt their ability to spend time with their children often face confusion about how that affects their rights and custody. This series is an attempt to give you information that might help you understand what has happened or might happen to your family legally. Part 2 will address how you can make changes.

Today's column (Part 1) is explaining the different court systems that make decisions about families' relationships to their children.

There are three court systems in California that deal with the custody of children directly: (1) family court, (2) probate court, and (3) juvenile dependency court.

(1) Family court decides custody between parents. A mother and father who no longer live together and disagree about who should make decisions about their child and how much time the child should spend with each of them would go to family court to settle this dispute. When a father is incarcerated and a mother wants to change their custody arrangement based on that incarceration, the mother would go to family court. These changes to custody do not affect

parental rights---just visitation and custody.

(2) Probate court decides custody between other people who are not parents of a child (usually relatives, but not always) and the child's parents. So---when a father is incarcerated and is a single parent---his aunt would go to probate court to ask for legal custody during the incarceration, in the form of a legal guardianship. She would be asking the Court to shift the custody from the parents to her, and she would need to provide a reason for that, e.g. that the mother is absent and the father is incarcerated. The aunt could later decide another relative should assume custody, and they would ask the court to substitute in a new legal guardian. Families often make this decision so the aunt can more easily get access to public benefits and make decisions for the child for the short-term while the parent is not available to provide care; however, sometimes family members make this decision because they believe they would be better parents, and they can be permanent.

These first two court systems---family and probate---are considered "private" courts, because decisions are being made between individuals aka "private parties." This means individual people (parents or other family or friends) are asking the Court

to decide between their preferred custody and visitation outcomes and have to provide evidence in favor of those preferences.



Whereas, (3) juvenile dependency court is considered "public" the same way criminal court is. This is because the State---through the Social Services Agency, also called CPS, Department of Children & Family Services, Child Welfare etc.---intervenes directly in the case, charges a parent with neglect or abuse, usually removes the children from their home, and eventually asks the Court to make the Agency's preferred custody decision. In dependency court, like criminal court, the state is the moving party to the legal action, meaning they initiate the action, and the other parties are responding to them. At each hearing, the State asks for certain outcomes, submits evidence in the form of written reports, and asks for the Court to sign off on their choices.

In Part 2 we will discuss how these three systems deal with the termination of parental rights.

# Policy Update

by Kellie Walters, JD, LLM, LSPC Staff Attorney

As we close on the final day to introduce bills into this legislative session, we celebrate that our sponsored bills have been assigned numbers. Additionally, we contemplate the way these newly numbered bills could change a system which is long overdue. And as much as I'd like to focus this article only on the bills which attempt to improve our community members' lives, I would be remiss not to discuss (albeit very briefly) a few of the bills that seek to maintain the status quo of the criminal legal system or, worse yet, propose to increase its punitive nature - a method repeatedly relied upon by legislators looking to gain easy points, despite its constant failure.

Most perplexing are the bills that seek to broaden the already overused enhancements in California. For example, AB 758 (Dixon) would provide for a one to three year sentencing enhancement for possession of, armed with, or use of a "ghost gun." AB 1960 (Soria) would create sentencing enhancements for taking, damaging, or destroying property in the commission or attempted commission of a felony. Additionally, SB 268 (Alvarado-Gil) would add the rape of an intoxicated person, where the defendant drugged the victim, to the list of violent felonies. By expanding the definition of violent felonies, even by adding one that makes most of us cringe, it would only increase the likelihood that a Three Strikes enhancement would be applied to a criminal defendant's sentence, but not decrease the likelihood that the crime wouldn't occur.

The threat of enhanced sentences has never been a deterrent to crime and there is no indication that it will be different in the future. Advocates for

enhanced sentences and three strikes policies will argue that the decrease in crime in the 1990s is evidence of the effectiveness. However, there are several other variables to consider when looking at the low crime rates of the 1990s, such as the legalization of abortion. Advocates will also argue that the defendants who have seen heavier sentences were not likely to "reoffend" after release. However, once again, this argument rings hollow when you consider the advanced age of the average individual who completes their sentence under the Three Strikes law.

These enhancements will not lessen the likelihood that people will possess "ghost guns," commit felonies wherein property is damaged, or drug and rape someone. Enhancements are merely the codification of society's knee-jerk reaction to isolate and punish, without consideration to the concept of rehabilitation or accountability, much less preventative measures. Punishment without any further common sense solutions is an experiment that has failed time and again, and it's time to put it to bed and try again.

In addition, here's a rundown of our recently introduced legislation:

### **ACA 8 The End Slavery in California Act** **Asm Wilson**

**Next Steps:** Contact your CA Senate Reps and make sure they are in support of ACA 8.

### **AB 1186 Realizing Equity While Promoting Accountability and Impactful Relief [REPAIR] Act.** **Asm Bonta**

**Next Steps:** Contact your CA Senate Reps and make sure they are in support of AB 1186.

### **AB 1516 Living Wage for All. Asm Kalra**

**Next Steps:** Contact your CA Senate Reps and make sure they are in support of AB 1516.

### **SB 1345. Just Access to Jobs Act [JAJA]** **Sen Smallwood-Cuevas**

**Next Steps:** Contact your Assembly Reps or Asm Public Safety committee members and make sure they are in support of SB 1345.

### **SB 1254 Food for Reentry Ensuring Stable Homes Act [FRESH] Sen Becker**

**Next Steps:** Contact your CA Senate members and/or Senate Public Safety committee members and make sure they are in support of SB 1245.

### **AB 2709 Building Bridges, Rebuilding Hope: Not Barriers Asm Bonta**

**Next Steps:** Contact your Assembly reps and/or Asm Pub Safety committee members and make sure they are in support of AB 2709.

### **AB 2959 Vending Machines. Asm Ortega**

**Next Steps:** Contact your Assembly reps and/or Asm Pub Safety committee members and make sure they are in support of AB 2959.

### **Budget Proposal Transportation/Clothing Support for Returning Citizens. Sen Becker**

**Next Steps:** Contact the Senate Budget Committee members and make sure they prioritize this budget proposal which will give transportation/clothing support for returning citizens.

# A New Leader Emerges

## LSPC's Bright Future with Tanisha Cannon



*Dr. Tanisha Cannon presenting at LSPC's 45th Anniversary Gala. Photo by Scott Braley*

### Continued from page 1

a leadership role not only shatters stereotypes but also serves as a powerful reminder to us all that women can and do excel in positions of influence no matter how humble or hard knock their beginnings. Tanisha's leadership is characterized by inclusivity, understanding, with a strong emphasis on education and a genuine commitment to amplifying the plight of incarcerated peoples and their families.

"One of the greatest strengths of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children has always been the extraordinary people that have come through its doors, as volunteers, staff, board members and allies. Tanisha is a shining example. She is brilliant, dedicated, hard-working and a visionary. She leads with a combination of strength and compassion stemming from a firsthand understanding of the destructive ways of racism, mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex. She has taken these experiences and channeled them into effective leadership at LSPC, creating and developing strategies and campaigns to further the effectiveness of the work at LSPC and All of Us or None. We are so lucky to have her as part of our Leadership Team!" - Ellen Barry, Founder of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

One of Tanisha's primary objectives is to strengthen the support system for those behind bars. She recognizes the unique challenges faced by incarcerated individuals and is determined to implement initiatives that address their needs, promote rehabilitation, and foster dignity for all incarcerated peoples.

When Ms. Diana Nice, a 72-year-old woman incarcerated at CIW, wrote to us stating "I need this class; the board denied me parole and the prison does not provide one that commissioners will accept," Tanisha immediately rolled out two in custody correspondence courses for incarcerated people who need these courses to be found suitable for parole. Not only that, but keeping these classes sustainable with future courses to come. On a personal note, we are happy to share Diana has completed the needed course and has received her certificate!

"I can't thank you [Tanisha] enough. This completion certificate has given me the confidence I needed so that when I go back to board I can be found suitable. Your curriculum gave me the insight I needed to differentiate between my personal entitlement and criminal thinking. Thank you sincerely for reaching out and making my personal insights possible." -Diana Lynn Nice, CIW

Reaching out to the lifer population speaks volumes as we know most times lifers and LWOP more often than not get no love. In addition to this, she

is currently updating our Lifelines curriculum which is a program that trains incarcerated mothers on their parental rights, teaches them how to fill out their court forms, and represent themselves in court, and share tips on how to nurture their relationship with caregivers and their children from the inside out. This curriculum update is important and will help LSPC serve more incarcerated parents in more diverse ways and broaden our reach into more jails and prisons across the state.

Tanisha's undeniable contributions to our organization, and most importantly to the people we serve, are highlighted most recently as she received an award and resolution from the Oakland City Council for her exemplary contributions to the Oakland community. City Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas proudly nominated Tanisha for her outstanding work and unwavering dedication towards building a safer, healthier, and more equitable Oakland. This award reaffirms Tanisha's commitment to working collaboratively with partners, allies, and other organizations in our goal to dismantle oppressive systems and foster liberation for all. California State University East Bay has also honored her with the 2021 Alumni 40 Under 40 Award for outstanding achievements and leadership qualities as a young professional making significant contributions to their field and community.

Tanisha stands as a powerful advocate and ally, committed to leaving a lasting impact on the lives of those she serves. With her vision, empathy, and unwavering determination, she is poised to shape the future of political and legal support for all incarcerated individuals across the state and nation. As LSPC faces the transition of its Executive Director, Dorsey Nunn, Tanisha's graceful and determined leadership as Managing Director ensures the organization's mission and structure remain resolute, assuring a promising future ahead.

"I hired a brilliant sister to step into that newly created role of LSPC Managing Director, a position that will help me work up the courage to step away." Dorsey Nunn, LSPC Executive Director



*Nikki Fortunato Bas and Dr. Tanisha Cannon*



*Dr. Tanisha Cannon and Dorsey Nunn. Photo by TaSin Sabir*



*Dr. Tanisha Cannon organizing staff the day before Quest for Democracy '23. Photo by TaSin Sabir*



*Dr. Tanisha Cannon talking to volunteers at the Community Giveback '23. Photo by TaSin Sabir*

# 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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 Oakland, CA 94608

