I heard the protesters asking for the quiet ones to come forward
Do not stay silent any longer
It’s not enough to not act racist because the not act is the only thing that comes through
I was judged because I am a silent one
I know I am not part of the problem
What I did not notice was I’m not part of the solution either
I will choose to move forward with an action of equality.
As we all watched George Floyd die as if he didn’t matter,
he is showing us that he does matter.
In the silence of a prison cell I heard him and I will treat people different because of him.

—BM, CCWF

In regards to the blm/police brutality/pandemic,
I’d like to say these are sad times but also may produce change so that the pain and suffering may not be in vain, much like the pain of childbirth that is followed by something beautiful.
In this pandemic many who work here refuse to wear a mask and therefore expose us to an infectious deadly disease because we are prisoners and they think our lives don’t matter.
They are much like street police with that mentality and we are a group of disadvantaged people saying OUR LIVES MATTER!

—Christy Phillips, CCWF

Continued “Tidal Wave” on p. 9
Welcome Home!

Here with CCWP’s Cyrus.


On July 24, 2020 Jane’s sentence was overturned—after over 20 years of wrongful imprisonment. We are so glad she is home!

Pamela Thompson, Oct. 2018
Cynthia Purcell, Dec. 2019
Lyris Wolfe, Feb. 2020. After 3 years in the San Francisco County Jail fighting a 30 year charge, we are glad to have Lyris back home.

Elisha Gooch, July 2020.

Kathy Phillips released June 2020

Marcel Rabanes released April 9, 2020.
Seen here with CCWP’s Colby.

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Other releases:

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Elisha Gooch, July 2020.
Welcome Home!

Valerie Campbell released May 1, 2020.

Doris Roldan (right) released June 17, 2020, with Susan Bustamante.

Patricia Wright (3rd from left) with her kids, July 21, 2020. After 26 years in prison, and a hard fought battle by her family and community, Patricia is free.

LISA STRAWN IS HOME!
CCWP celebrates the grace, strength and courage of Lisa Strawn, fighting for dignity, safety and rights as a trans woman in CDCr prisons, most recently at San Quentin. After 26 years inside, Lisa has paroled to the Bay Area. We look forward to working together.

7 Former Lifers & LWOPs from LA Area Celebrate Being Together.
Este es un momento histórico de cambio y desafío a la supremacía blanca en medio de una pandemia mundial que también está arrasando las cárcel de California. Los asesinatos policiales de Breonna Taylor y George Floyd son solo dos ejemplos de un gran número de asesinatos de personas Negras en este país. También enfrentamos la muerte de docenas de personas encarceladas, incluida Madonna Watson en CIM, y las más de 50 personas que han muerto en CIM, San Quentin, Avenal y otras cárcel de California por COVID-19.

CCWP fue fundada hace 25 años en una lucha por los derechos humanos de las personas en las cárcel de mujeres de California, organizar contra la negligencia, abuso médico, lideradas por mujeres Negras, personas trans y gente de diversos géneros en VSPW, CCWF y CIW. Como Marcia Bunney escribió en la primera edición de The Fire Inside:

Cualquiera que sea el delito, es aborrecible permitir el tratamiento del tipo que soportan las prisioneras de este estado. Los californianos miran a Bosnia, China y Rwanda y retroceden horrorizados e incrédulos; sin embargo, ¿cómo justifican presuntamente la tortura de prisioneros diciendo: “Los prisioneros no deberán tener derechos?” ¿Cuántos niegan y, en última instancia, ignoran las condenas de muerte dictadas por el Departamento de Correcciones de California bajo la apariencia de atención médica para quienes están bajo su custodia?

El hacinamiento en las cárcel de California ha sido una crisis de salud pública durante décadas, creando incubadoras para enfermedades infecciosas. El coronavirus se propaga como un incendio forestal, exacerbado por la incapacidad de poder distanciarse socialmente, los suministros de limpieza no son suficientes, el personal que no usa máscaras y el movimiento entre las cárcel. A partir de agosto de 2020, más de 7,500 personas dieron positivo para COVID-19. Hay más de 2,400 casos activos; han muerto más de 50 personas, y el virus ahora se confirma en cada prisión de California.

Más del 75% de las muertes de COVID-19 en las cárcel de California son personas Negras, Latinas, Asiáticas o Indígenas, un resultado directo del racismo sistémico, la incompetencia y la falta de respeto por la vida humana de CDCr. A partir de agosto de 2020, más de 7,500 personas dieron positivo para COVID-19. Hay más de 2,400 casos activos; han muerto más de 50 personas, y el virus ahora se confirma en cada prisión de California.

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CCWP cree que la abolición de las cárcel debe ser parte de esta conversación. El terror policial y la violencia estatal en la calle están vinculados a condiciones mortales dentro de las cárcel. Nos solidarizamos con las protestas para parar los asesinatos policiales de personas Negras y liberar a todos bajo vigilancia y encarcelamiento.

Mientras los asesinatos policiales de hombres Negros han sido los más visibles, la violencia estatal es fundamentalmente opresiva al medio del género. Las mujeres Negras y las personas trans son atacadas y resientas por la policía. Levantamos las historias de Sandra Bland, Natashia McKenna, Michelle Cusseaux, Riah Milton, Dominique "Rem'Mie" Fells y las familias que trabajan por la justicia, como Diamond Reynolds y las Madres del Movimiento.

La familia y la comunidad son poderosas fuentes de fortaleza y oposición a la estrategia deshumanizadora del sistema penitenciario de separar y aislar a las personas en prisión. La forzada separación de familias tiene raíces profundas, que se remontan a la historia de la esclavitud en este país y la brutal destrucción de las familias Negras. Las personas en prisión siempre han construido familias y comunidades de amor y fortaleza. Charisse Shumate, una de las fundadoras de CCWP, escribió: “No había grupos de autoayuda cuando llegué aquí, algunas de nosotras nos reuníamos una vez por semana en el patio principal y comenzamos nuestro propio grupo de apoyo para mujeres maltratadas. Por primera vez en cinco años pude abrimos y hablar sobre el dolor. Conocí a otros prisioneros que compartían el mismo dolor y aprendimos a sanar juntas.”

CDCr colabora con ICE (Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas) deteniendo a personas a punto de libertad condicional y reteniéndolas para su transferencia directa de CDCr a ICE. En junio, las personas detenidas en el centro de detención de inmigrantes de Mesa Verde iniciaron una huelga de hambre. "Casi todos hemos sufrido a través del sistema de justicia penal corrupto y racista de nuestro país antes de ser empujados a manos de ICE", escribieron los organizadores de la huelga. ¡En julio de 2020,
This is a historic moment of change and challenge to white supremacy in the midst of a worldwide pandemic that is also sweeping through CA prisons. The police murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd are only the tip of the iceberg of murders of Black people in this country. We also face the death of dozens of incarcerated people, including Madonna Watson at CIW, and the over 50 other people who have died at CIM, San Quentin, Avenal and other CA prisons from COVID-19.

CCWP was founded 25 years ago in a struggle for human rights of people in CA women’s prisons organizing against medical neglect/abuse, led by Black women, trans and GNC people at VSPW, CCWF and CIW. As Marcia Bunney wrote in the first issue of The Fire Inside:

Whatever one’s commitment offense, it is abhorrent to allow treatment of the kind endured by the women prisoners of this state. [...] Californians look to Bosnia, China and Rwanda and recoil in horror and disbelief; yet how many smugly justify the torture of prisoners by saying, ‘Prisoners shouldn’t have rights.’ How many deny, and ultimately ignore the ad hoc death sentences delivered by the California Department of Corrections in the guise of medical care for those in its custody?

Overcrowding in CA prisons has been a public health crisis for decades, creating incubators for infectious diseases. Coronavirus spreads like wildfire, exacerbated by the inability to socially distance, insufficient cleaning supplies, staff not wearing masks and movement between prisons. As of August 2020, 7,500+ people tested positive for COVID-19. There are 2,400+ active cases; over 50 people have died, and the virus is now confirmed in every CA prison.

Over 75% of COVID-19 deaths in CA prisons are Black, Latinx, Asian, or Indigenous people, a direct result of CDCr’s systemic racism, incompetence and disregard for human life. People went on a hunger strike at San Quentin prison to protest the horrendous care in the face of the pandemic.

Millions of people left their homes to protest against state violence and the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks and many others. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests continue across the country and the world have made the BLM movement one of the most significant in U.S. history. People will not accept reforms that set rules for how the police can kill. We demand an end to police violence and to defund the police. Many are reimagining what community safety means, and how to accomplish this without punishment and incarceration.

CCWP believes that the abolition of prisons must be part of this conversation. Police terror and state violence on the street are linked to the deadly conditions inside prisons. We stand in solidarity with the protests to stop the police murders of Black people and to free everyone under surveillance and incarceration.

While police murders of Black men have been the most visible, state violence is deeply gendered. Black women and Trans people are targeted and murdered by the police. We lift up the stories of Sandra Bland, Natasha McKenna, Michelle Cusseaux, Riah Milton, Dominique “Rem’Mie” Fells, and the families who labor for justice, such as Diamond Reynolds and the Mothers of the Movement.

Family and community are powerful sources of strength and opposition to the prison system’s dehumanizing strategy of separating and isolating people in prison. Forced separation of families has deep roots, going back to the history of slavery in this country and the brutal destruction of Black families. People in prison have always built families and communities of love and strength. Charisse Shumate, one of CCWP’s founding members wrote, “There were no self-help groups when I first got here, so some of us got together once a week on the main yard and started our own battered women’s support group. For the first time in five years I could open up and talk about the pain. I met other prisoners who shared the very same pain and we learned to heal together.”

CDCr collaborates with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) by detaining people about to parole, holding them for direct transfer from CDCr to ICE. In June, people held at Mesa Verde immigration detention center launched a hunger strike. “Almost all of us have suffered through our country’s corrupt and racist criminal justice system before being pushed into the hands of ICE,” strike organizers wrote. In July 2020, a huge victory to STOP ICE! was won because of the persistent work of Asian Americans Advancing Justice and Asian Prisoner Support Cmte. Chanthon Bun, who had served almost 20 years in CDCr, was released from San Quentin to return home to his family and community instead of being deported. The power of a caring community acting collectively brought Chanton Bun home.

CCWP—our members inside prison and out—is committed to continue working with other community organizations to defund the police, and dismantle the prison industrial complex, including immigration detention centers, and stop all deportations. We believe in and will continue to work towards communities built on justice, love and support, that do not rely on policing, jails and prisons to resolve violence and oppression.

As Charisse Shumate wrote over 20 years ago, “What has been forgotten by most, inside and out, is that we are human. Mothers, sisters, daughters.”
In these dire times, advocacy for incarcerated people has grown stronger. CCWP has joined with organizations across the state and across the country to demand people be released from prison and treated with dignity and care. We have organized car caravans, media advocacy days, protests, vigils in Sacramento and at local city halls, supported newspapers and networks to report on conditions inside and built spaces of support for families with loved ones inside.

On May 22, 2020 F.U.E.L (Families United to End LWOP) and CCWP led a car caravan protest that started at the California Institution for Men (CIM) and then went to California Institution for Women (CIW). Hundreds of family members gathered outside, chanting for their loved ones’ release. Cars circled on the road beeping to make noise for their loved ones. #FreeThemAll

CCWP initiated petition campaigns for some of the most vulnerable people inside CA women’s prisons. Covid-19 is especially dangerous for those fighting cancer. Petitions for Lucia “Mama Lucia” Bravo, Maria Aredondo, and Patricia Wright, and Elaine Wong’s received 1,000s of signatures. Pat came home to her family on July 21, 2020. On Mother’s Day weekend, posts were shared with #LeadWithMercy to Free the incarcerated Mamas.
#ClemencyCoastToCoast and #FreeThemAll is a media advocacy effort between California and New York organizations, supporting the mass release of incarcerated people.

#FreeThemAll14 chained to Gov. Newsom’s home, 7/27/20.

ICE protest in San Mateo, April 2020

March 3, 2020 Drop LWOP! rally in Sacramento

Commuted LWOPs at the March 3, 2020 rally
HEY THERE
by Sherie Jarvis

Thanks for the strength and the courage you have shown.
People blow in the wind forgetting that with help change is growing.
People like me broken but still manage to keep the love flowing...

It was once #metoo, I am #transgender and #black lives matter even in this prison
where the way I look keeps bad chatter.
I've fallen but if they'll remove their foot off my neck I can get up and breathe.
Scattered scars, bruised heart, memories that don't leave.
Childhood in a wild hood just now learning to read.
Understand my struggle before calling me a bad seed.
HEY THERE no one was there why didn't they take the time to love me.
God is near, but why didn't they physically hug me.
When the masks come off and the smoke has cleared,
when all lives matter and no one is weird just maybe I'll make it home to say
HEY THERE.
There’s a level of trauma that I believe has built up in individuals across this country. And it’s no longer just a Black protest or a Black movement. At this point, we’re looking at a nation and a world that has decided that what we saw happen on camera, not just in one incident, but Ahmaud Arbery and this incident, is no longer acceptable. And we cannot continue to meet and ask and cry and beg for change. People have taken to the streets to demand change.

—Tamika Mallory, Black activist, former national co-chair of the Women’s March and co-founder of the social justice organization Until Freedom. Excerpt from an interview with Democracy Now.

NOTE: People at CCWF and CIW sent their reactions to George Floyd’s murder and the protests/uprisings that happened afterwards.

No matter where we are located...we can turn our hearts inside out and stand with George Floyd’s Family. We are All an essential part to our Nation’s revision and healing!

—Michelle Jones

Our lives have definitely been impacted and when I say ours I am speaking of everyone, incarcerated or free. The pandemic did not pick and choose and as a result we as a people have lost jobs, housing, and have had loved ones, friends and family die as a result. I watch on TV how many come together in support of those who have been directly affected [by the pandemic] and it makes my heart smile. On the other hand, in the midst of the Pandemic we have Black men and women being killed because of the color of their skin. Change is long overdue and we can make a difference.

—Erica Olson

I am looking at this tidal change in our global community and here in the States over George Floyd’s murder. If ever was the moment when radical shifts are needed in our capacity to be unflinching in our individual duty to be an American, a human being, it is now. I see peoples of all color, ages, backgrounds standing, kneeling and showing up. A voice so loud by the mere physical presence of standing side by side. Every morning and night the television shows marches and demonstrations and I am held captive seeing this collective swell of people who want things to be different and a compassion and empathy for the injustice of racism in our country that cannot lay hidden behind a badge or skin color or a presidential podium. I wish I could be out there.

—Michele Scott

What amazing times we’re living in right now! I feel so encouraged and uplifted for positive change. It’s become unavoidably clear that our system of law and order in this country needs serious questioning and accountability, the reckoning is here now - finally! I’m done being told weak lies by authorities when I can see the ugly truths myself, along with the rest of the world, over and over again. We can hold institutions with the power responsible for their systemic reliance on manipulation, misinformation, greed, conspiracy, lying, and secrecy to continue to oppress, abuse, traumatize, incarcerate, and kill human beings without question. We can demand appropriate responses to issues of education, housing, healthcare, addiction, mental illness, and poverty, through demilitarizing and rerouting taxpayer funds from the police. We can revoke the power we’ve given to corrupted institutions, never give up on the good fight - real justice is on our collective side. I hope you’re optimistic, too. I think the pendulum is swinging the other way, finally.

—Laura Purviance
Reimaginando nuestro mundo  continuar de p. 4

una gran victoria para DETENER EL HIELO! fue ganado por el trabajo persistente de los Asiáticos Estadounidenses Avanzando Justicia (Asian Americans Advancing Justice) y el Comité de Apoyo a Prisioneros Asiáticos (Asian Prisoner Support Cmte). Chanthon Bun, que había servido casi 20 años en CDCr, fue liberado de San Quentin para regresar a su familia y comunidad en lugar de ser deportado. El poder de una comunidad solidaria actuando colectivamente trajo a Chanton Bun a casa.

CCWP, nuestros miembros dentro y fuera de la prisión, se compromete a continuar trabajando con otras organizaciones comunitarias para desmantelar la policía y desmantelar la estructura de alto encarcelamiento, incluidos los centros de detención de inmigrantes, y detener todas las deportaciones. Creemos y seguimos trabajando para crear comunidades construidas sobre la justice, el amor y el apoyo, que no dependen de la policía, las cárceles y las prisiones para resolver la violencia y la opresión.

Como Charisse Shumate escribió hace más de 20 años: “Lo que la mayoría ha olvidado, por dentro y por fuera, es que somos humanos. Madres, hermanas, hijas.”
Mourning Losses

Madonna Watson with son Gregory. She died on June 9, 2020.

Angel Marie Kozeak, 1954 - 5/5/2020
A tree in her memory

Please send us your thoughts, poetry, artwork and/or photographs for our next issue of The Fire Inside. We will not use your name unless you check the box below:

☐ I want my name to appear in the newsletter

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Mail to: __________________________________________________________

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Come work with us!

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CCWP Mission

CCWP is a grassroots social justice organization, with members inside and outside prison, that challenges the institutional violence imposed on women, transgender people and communities of color by the prison industrial complex (PIC). We see the struggle for racial and gender justice as central to dismantling the PIC, and we prioritize the leadership of the people, families and communities most impacted in building this movement.

Yes, I want to support folks in women’s prisons!

☐ Please contact me to volunteer
☐ Enclosed is $25 contribution to help send a newsletter subscription to a person in women’s prison
☐ Enclosed is my contribution of $ __________

Name: ___________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________
Phone/email: _____________________________________

Please make checks payable to: CCWP/LSPC, 4400 Market St., Oakland, CA 94608