Editorial

Togetherness We Get Free

For 25 years, CCWP has been publishing the writings of people incarcerated in California’s women’s prisons, breaking the walls of silence and advocating for the civil and human rights of all incarcerated people. This past year and a half of extraordinary conditions created by the COVID pandemic has made us acutely aware that “No One Gets Free Alone,” and that collective care, mutual respect, resilience, and determination, are the foundations of our community, where our strength and power are built and sustained.

Longtime outside member of CCWP, Urszula, raised the question, “What does freedom mean? Is it only about getting out of prison?” Or is it also, as so many of us experience, about the ongoing work for prison abolition and a just society, about how people achieve their own peace and freedom and struggle for their humanity to be recognized while they are in prison and together with their family and community once they return to the outside.

The Fire Inside posed this question to all our members, inside prison and outside. You will see many of the responses in these pages. We look at both past and current work of CCWP that reflects the mutual life-building that is so central to our ability to be free.

As an anonymous writer from VSPW wrote in FI #25 in 2003: “We need to get our spirits and mentalities strong and together, to fight the good fight! We must do whatever we can to work the program to heal our scared and scarred cores, and not let the prison system work us. . . . We cannot lose that hope, not now—not ever.”

Together, we conquer our fears and obstacles. Together we get free.

We chose the theme, “together, we get free,” for The Fire Inside’s 25th anniversary issue, because this theme has animated the publication from the very beginning.

In FI #1, contributor Linda Fields wrote an impassioned entry about her friend Anna, who passed away due to obscene medical neglect. Linda and other women at CCWF tried tirelessly to get her help when she was alive. “We stole food for her that she could barely eat. We begged for medical help,” she wrote. Linda continued, “Who cared about her? I did. I loved Annie. She was my best friend, my roommate. I swore that I would never watch another person die like she did. I promised her I would tell her story. Please, remember Atrina Jackson. She was a mother, a daughter, a friend. Don’t let her suffering be for nothing. Don’t ever let this great state of California kill another woman like her again. I have her name on the inside of my locker. I read it every day. I will remember her. Make my last memory of her racing the wind and winning, not laying in front of an MTA’s clinic, sobbing. Let her live through us, the women left doing time in CCWF, with a medical department that treats us as humans.

No doubt, it was witnessing harrowing experiences like this that motivated Linda, Charisse and others to mount their medical neglect lawsuit in 1995. Through Linda and the brave acts of women at CCWF, Anna is remembered.

In FI #11, Katherine Dillon wrote an article titled “Sisters and Sisterhood: Tearing Down Walls Behind Walls.” In it, she described how the purpose of prisons may be to tear people apart, but at CIW, women created a powerful sisterhood.

“Within this barbed-wire community here at the California Institution for Women (CIW) there exists a sisterhood among many of the women,” she wrote. “We together find how the medical staff and staff in general neglect and abuse us. We together find how as children and as young adults we were abused. And we together discover that we all need healing to become whole people again.”

“Sisterhood is found in our religious activities, in our various special interest groups, in our sports and charitable activities, in our classes and our jobs. This sisterhood is also found in a few close friends, with whom we can feel safe, without fear of our real selves being rejected…”

“I have found a sisterhood that goes beyond biological blood ties. These beautiful women have become my dearest friends, mentors and my sisters in this closed custodial community.”

In FI #13, CCWP founding member Charisse Shumate penned an article, “The Community of Women Inside” and it spoke about the ways survivors of domestic violence got together to find healing among each other. “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.”

In FI #34, Hamdiya Cooks reminded women to not put their own needs on the back burner, especially while fighting for social justice. In “It’s All About Us: How did you survive your time inside” she wrote, “Too often women carry burdens that aren’t ours to bear. We weren’t taught how to take care of and nurture ourselves.

“Let’s begin taking better care of ourselves wherever we are. Love ourselves enough to nurture our spirits as we feed our bodies. As we position ourselves in the world attempting to resolve social justice ills, we must not forget our own needs.”

Continued “How We Get Free…” p. 12

A Tribute to Charisse Group Photo taken on August 8, 2021.

California Coalition for Women Prisoners
Compañeras was initiated in 2005 by CCWP members inside and outside prison (CCWF, VSPW and CIW) in the struggle for civil and human rights. We acknowledged the specific experiences and discrimination faced by this part of our community—the threat of deportation; BPH denials related to not speaking English and so not being able to access programming required by BPH; the story of trauma—including trafficking—that many immigrant women, trans and gnc people face; the racism and violence of US and the CDCr immigration policy.

In 2010 the Compañeras Project worked with Latinas Unidas, an organization then existing in VSPW, to publish a bilingual booklet sharing the stories and work of the immigrant community at VSPW. Many people were forced to leave their home countries due to US foreign policies that devastated their economies and political life. They faced trafficking and other severe forms of abuse. With language and legal barriers, many immigrants, trans and gender non-conforming (GNC) people had little protection from the violence of the US criminal justice system. And after 9/11 2001, there was a huge negative impact on Middle Eastern and Muslim people and gender non-conforming people from the US “war on terror”, with a rise in violence and incarceration.

Compañeras touched upon spirituality often. How do you see the importance of passing on knowledge intergenerationally with people inside?

PF: Connecting social justice and healing is very important. We all have spirituality. I am a medium, a woman, a healer, and as a social justice worker I was thinking of this always. We need to heal ourselves to create what we want. This is in what the structures want. We need to heal and cleanse our body, heart, soul and mind from more than 500 years of colonization, imperialism, racism, patriarchy and all the isms. All those oppressions are a hard injury on us.

Compañeras touched upon language barriers, how this impacts everything from access to health care, education and other programming, to legal issues, including parole.

PF: Before beginning Compañeras, I was reading and responding to letters from Spanish speaking CCWP members. Many were not able to do necessary paperwork or attend required meetings because they did not speak and understand English. The papers were in English and there was no translation. CCWP did not have access to a Spanish speaking lawyer at that time.

This is part of the history of the continued “Compañeras...” p. 13 The Fire Inside causing an aumento de violencia and encarcelamiento.

Fire Inside (FI) has reflected the work of our members on both sides of the prison walls: the violence of ICE detention centers (FI #30); racist uncaring treatment of prisoner sentence or earned their parole.

FI had the opportunity to speak with Patricia Fernandez (PF), one of the outside founders of the Compañeras Project, and with CCWP member Laura Santos (LS) about the current work with Latinx people. Below are parts of these conversations.

How can CCWP build and expand the network of support for immigrants?

PF: People need support if they are deported, otherwise we have a circular dynamic. We can help support conscious communities families (FI #32); conditions for women in Mexican jails (FI #33); the importance of spirituality and religion in different cultures (FI #38); and incarceration in different cultures (FI #44); the work to pass the Vision Act that would prevent any cooperation with ICE by CDCr or CA county jails and stop the double punishment of deportation after a person has completed their

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Conscientes que sean saludables para las personas. Podemos construir esta red poco a poco.

Las compañeras tocaron el tema espiritual varias veces. ¿Cómo ve la importancia de transmitir el conocimiento espiritual y medicinal de manera intergeneracional con las personas que están adentro?

PF: Conectar la justicia social y la curación es muy importante. Todos tenemos espiritualidad.

Why are people forced to flee their own country and how do you see access to immigration legal assistance and representation for immigrants?

PF: Everyone wants to show that they are innocent, that they are not criminals or others who are subjected to exploitation, mistreatment, racism.

The papers were in English and so not being able to access programming required by BPH related on no hablar inglés. Much of the programming required by BPH, the history of trauma, included the trata de personas, that confrontan muchas mujeres inmigrantes, personas trans y personas de género no conforme (GNC), el racismo y la violencia de Estados Unidos y la política de inmigración de CDCr.

In 2010, the Proyecto Compañeras trabajó con Latinas Unidas, una organización que entonces existía en VSPW, para publicar un folleto bilingüe compartiendo las historias y el trabajo de la comunidad inmigrante en la cárcel. Muchas personas se vieron obligadas a abandonar sus países de origen debido a las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos que devastaron sus familias. Se enfrentaron a la trata y otras formas graves de abuso. Con las barreras legales y del idioma, muchas mujeres, personas trans y GNC tenían poca protección contra la violencia del sistema de in-justicia criminal de EE. UU. y, después del 11 de septiembre de 2001, hubo un enorme impacto negativo en el tratamiento de mujeres en el oriente medio debido a la “guerra contra el terror” de Estados Unidos, causando un aumento de violencia y encarcelamiento.

FI tuvo la oportunidad de hablar con Patricia Fernández (PF), una de las fundadoras exteriores del Proyecto Compañeras, y con Laura Santos (LS), miembro de CCWP, sobre el trabajo actual con personas Latinx. A continuación se muestran partes de estas conversaciones.

¿Cómo puede CCWP construir y expandir la red de apoyo a los inmigrantes?

PF: La gente necesita apoyo si es deportada, si no tendremos una dinámica circular. Podemos ayudar a apoyar comunidades...
Freedom means free from the inside out. While incarcerated, I was imprisoned and thinking of women as fellow prisoners was new to us. That prison was solely comprised of women regardless of race. Getting accustomed to life in prison rebuilding my life after nearly two years, I still wake up every morning startled that my hips don’t hurt from sleeping on my back. I choose to be active. My freedom is never giving up on your dreams and believing that you can achieve anything. Freedom is the recognition, healing and forgiving of things or people that we have hurt or that have hurt us. Freedom goes deeper than physical freedom. For those of us inside, we want more than anything to be at home with ourselves.

I am either part of the problem or part of the solution. I choose to be active. My freedom is the recognition of the multiple environments and systems we walk in freedom with me. I send love and hope and encouragement to survivors of state-sponsored sterilization. A coalition of community groups including CCWP, CCWF, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, CA Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and Back to Basics-LA, worked for four years to win this reparations program.

We applaud Governor Newsom for signing the 2021 CA state budget which included a $7.5 million allocation for reparations/compensation to survivors of state-sponsored sterilization between 1909 and 1979 and survivors of involuntary sterilizations in CA women’s prisons after 1979. This Compensation Program will be administered by the California Victims’ Compensation Board (VCB) and will be supported by community groups, including CCWP. Specific guidelines and applications are not yet available, but below is some general information about the process mandated by this new law. Please note that details are subject to change as the program is still in development.

• The Compensation Program is not scheduled to begin until January 1, 2022.
• Applicants will have a two-year claim period during which to apply for reparations/compensation on the program start date.
• Applications can be accessed by writing directly to the VCB or you can write to CCWP.
• Any individual believed to be sterilized either under CA’s eugenics laws or while in state prison should submit an application for compensation to: California Victim’s Compensation Board (VCB), 400 R St, Sacramento, CA 95811.

VCB will review applications and determine eligibility by reviewing medical information from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCr), and the Federal Receiver for Inmate Medical Services. Applicants are also permitted, and encouraged, to submit their own evidence demonstrating eligibility. If VCB determines that an applicant is not eligible for whatever reason, the Applicant will be informed of the decision and can appeal and submit further evidence as long as the applicant is within the two-year claim period.

• Compensation payments will not be considered taxable income for state tax purposes and will not be subject to enforcement of a money judgment, including restitution, fees and fines.
• Compensation payments will be distributed in two payments.

If you believe you may be entitled to compensation/reparations under this new program and you want to be notified when applications are available, please write to: CCWP, ATTN: Compensation Program, 4400 Market Street, Oakland, CA 94608.

This year, California (CA) has become the first state in the country to provide notification of coerced sterilization and reparations to survivors who were sterilized while incarcerated in its women’s prisons after 1979. It is only the third state in the nation to provide monetary compensation to survivors who were sterilized under CA eugenics laws. This historic victory comes after a state audit in 2014 revealed that at least 144 people, the majority of whom identify as Black and Latinx, were illegally sterilized during labor and delivery while in custody in women’s prisons. A coalition of community groups including CCWP CA Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and Back to Basics-LA, worked for four years to win this reparations program.

As of Jan 1, 2021 women who are pregnant, being held in CA California prison or jail, may not be subjected behind the back or around the neck. Around the neck. Around the neck.

Credit: Sonny Ramirez, San Q

Programa de Reparaciones Por Esterilización

Este año, California (CA) se ha convertido en el primer estado del país en proporcionar una notificación de esterilización forzada y reparaciones a las sobrevivientes que fueron esterilizadas mientras estaban encarceladas después de 1979. Es solo el tercer estado del país en brindar compensación monetaria a las sobrevivientes que fueron esterilizadas bajo las leyes eugenésicas de CA. Esta victoria histórica viene después de que una auditoría estatal en 2014 revelara que al menos 144 personas, la mayoría de las cuales se identifican como personas de raza Negra y Latina, fueron esterilizadas ilegalmente durante el parto, y que no se encontraban bajo custodia en las cárcel femeninas. Una coalición de grupos comunitarios que incluyen CCWP, CA Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund y Back to Basics-LA, trabajaron durante cuatro años para ganar este programa de reparaciones.

Aplaudimos al gobernador Newsom por firmar el presupuesto estatal de CA para 2021, que incluyó una asignación de $7.5 millones para reparaciones/compensación a las sobrevivientes de esterilización patrocinada por el estado entre 1909 y 1979 y sobrevivientes de esterilizaciones involuntarias en las cárcel femeninas de CA después de 1979.

Este Programa de Compensación será administrado por la Junta de Compensación de Víctimas de California (VCB) y contará con el apoyo de grupos comunitarios, incluido el CCWP. Las pautas y aplicaciones aún no están disponibles, pero a continuación se incluye información general sobre el proceso exigido por esta nueva ley. Tenga en cuenta que los detalles están sujetos a cambios ya que el programa aún está en desarrollo.

• El Programa de Compensación no está programado para comenzar hasta el 1 de enero de 2022.
• Los solicitantes tendrán un período de reclamo de dos años, empezando en la fecha de inicio del programa, durante el cual pueden solicitar reparaciones/compensación.
• Se puede obtener aplicaciones escribiendo directamente al VCB o puede escribir a CCWP.
• Cualquier individuo que crea que ha sido esterilizado bajo las leyes de eugenesia de CA o mientras se encuentra en un prision estatal debe presentar una solicitud de compensación a: California Victim’s Compensation Board (VCB), 400 R St, Sacramento, CA 95811.

• VCB revisará las solicitudes y determinará la elegibilidad mediante la revisión de la información médica del Departamento de Correcciones y Rehabilitación de California (CDCr) y el Receptor Federal de Servicios Médicos para Reclusos. A los solicitantes se les permitirá y se les anima a presentar sus propias pruebas que demuestren su elegibilidad.
• Si VCB determina que un solicitante no es elegible por cualquier motivo, el solicitante será informado de la decisión y podrá apelar y presentar más pruebas siempre que el solicitante se encuentre dentro del período de reclamación de dos años.
• Los pagos de compensación no se considerarán ingresos sujetos a impuestos a los efectos de los impuestos estatales y no estarán sujetos a la ejecución de una sentencia monetaria, incluida la restitución, las tarifas y las multas.
• Los pagos de compensación se distribuirán en dos pagos.

Si cree que puede tener derecho a una compensación/reparaciones en virtud de este nuevo programa y desea que se le notifique cuando las solicitudes estén disponibles, escriba a: CCWP, ATTN: Compensation Program, 4400 Market Street, Oakland, CA 94608.
Freedom is the sound of the birds singing on a spring afternoon. Freedom means being safe in my home’s arms. Freedom is in my children’s bright smiles. Freedom is not where I am located on the planet, it is internal. I am free!

-MICHELLE REMSEN, CIW

Freedom comes from within. I have been physically incarcerated for almost 22 years but have not allowed these bricks and barbed wire to steal my joy, hope, and peace. I find freedom in the fact that I can feel joy and happiness, that I dream, I have hope and aspirations, and my spirit is at peace. I don’t just survive, I THRIVE and that is what freedom means to me.

- AMEND-AB 1308

The meaning of freedom has transformed for me through the years. Today it means nothing to do with physical freedom. Being incarcerated for 10 years and looking back prior to my physical incarceration, I see that I was imprisoned on the inside. To experience true freedom to me is to no longer be in bondage to my past. To no longer be in turmoil, suffering quietly in my addiction. To have healing where the feeling of talking about the things I’ve seen, been through and have done no longer are holding me hostage and they are now tolerable and intense. It doesn’t mean pain is no more, but my past is no longer controlling my actions. Freedom? I rather be incarcerated for the rest of my life and have making those mistakes again. Using the inner freedom I do have today than to be released into the world feeling like the air I breathe, so fresh and clean. Freedom is not just being free from behind bars, it’s almost like an epidemic, it’s very contagious. Me, I just want to be free, not for me but my whole family.

-TANYA RUSSELL, CCWF

Support is freedom. Helping another person in this world. I have insight on what it means to have the world against you. Everything went wrong in my life; this is not how it was supposed to be, sentenced to live in prison until I die. Support was and continues to be given to me. We have a community of advocates and families attempting to get this enormous justice system from killing us in here. Freedom means I go home to support my family, my friends and continue to support those that are still fighting the same LWOP sentence the justice system means to kill us with. Support means freedom.

-BOWLY MANSANGHIN, CCWF

Freedom is freedom means having the ability to choose for myself. I understand some things like laws need to be followed. When I say "choose for myself" I mean being able to choose what I want to eat and wear when to go to sleep; where to live and who to live with. This definitely means being out of prison.

-DIANA SAVIN, CCWF

Freedom means a world without hate and discrimination, to be able to be whoever you want to be without being afraid of being killed for the color of your skin, or for being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Freedom is not having prisons and jails and people being treated like modern day slaves. Freedom as a trans woman means I should be able to walk into any clothing or beauty store to buy anything I want without being discriminated against. My question to you is how do we all start this freedom process?

-MICHELLE KAILANG CALVIN, CCWF

Freedom is a gateway to amazing opportunities that most people take for granted. I would like to have liberty to do the things I only can wish for or dream of. Freedom is about deliverance and being home with my loved ones. The thought and feeling of breaking free itself is exhilarating and liberating. It is about reconnecting and building relationships with my family and friends. It is about positively contributing and volunteering services to my community. Freedom is being independent and able to do what I please without restrictions; to have gainful employment; to be a productive member of society. This hope of freedom lights my path. For now, freedom reigns in a grateful heart. Freedom lives within me...it is a state of mind.

-LARRY GALLARDO, CCWF

I have always said that doing prison time is like waking up every morning fighting a dragon with a teaspoo, but you just keep fighting, and like myself, one day you see the dragon fall.

-SUEZ ROBERTSON, CCWF

When I was growing up in Somalia, America was touted as the ‘land of freedom, milk and honey’. This is high praise, as Somalis, a culturally nomadic and pastoral people, place a high price on freedom, milk and honey. Twenty-five years of living in America, ten of which I have spent incarcerated, have disabused me of my romanticized ideations regarding the ‘freedom’ America has to offer. To be fair, America affords a chance to be all that we can be. But what of those of us who also reside behind bars? What does one do when the prison gates open but the stigma of being formerly incarcerated means the shackles never actually come off? Will we be free? I believe the only way to attain freedom is for our thinking to move from ‘me’ to ‘us’. We shall all be free when what we want for incarcerated individuals and formerly incarcerated individuals is what we want for our children, what we want for ourselves.

-SAGAL SADIQ, CCWF
Freedom goes deeper than physical freedom. For those of us inside, we want more than anything to be at home with our family, friends, loved ones; one day that will happen. In the meantime, we can be free within ourselves, letting go of all the things that have held us in bondage. Freedom is the recognition, healing and forgiving of things or people that we have hurt or that have hurt us. Freedom is never giving up on your dreams and believing that anything is possible. Someone very close to me told me at the beginning of my time that our bodies may be locked up but our minds and hearts do not have to be. That has proven to be true. For anyone that may be struggling, just know that you are amazing and worth it and can do great things! I believe in you! Fulfillment, Redeeming, Exciting, Exhilarating, Dreams, Optimism, Significant, Miracles!

- ERICA OLSON, CCWF

After nearly two years, I still wake up every morning startled that my hips don’t hurt from sleeping on my prison slab. Each and every day, I come across things that seem to be part of an alternate and unfamiliar universe. It’s all an amazing adventure, one I never imagined could be my adventure. The very idea of freedom was something I had buried behind the walls surrounding that LWOP sentence. I dedicate every day to a celebration of this incredible gift. Sometimes it still seems surreal and impossible. So, I rejoice and laugh and embrace everything good and beautiful in my life. How very blessed I am. I send my love to all of my sisters who walk in freedom with me. I send love and hope and prayers to my sisters still inside.

- JUDITH BARNETT, RELEASED 2019

Freedom means free from the inside out. While incarcerated, I was part of the CIW community participating in self help groups, allowing me the freedom to express my unresolved traumas and issues. This freedom helped me to heal and transform from the inside out. I use my freedom out of prison rebuiding my life with my family and advocating for freedom/fitness from the inside out in my community through social media. Love and Freedom Beats, geriFree.

- GERI MEYERS

When I first received The Fire Inside around 2005, I had already spent more than 25 years in prison and had been in solitary at Pelican Cany for several years. We had been in prison since before the explosion of women’s imprisonment and thinking of women as fellow prisoners was new to us. By 2011 we were formulating demands as we embarked on serious and massive hunger strikes against indefinite solitary confinement. Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa, one of our four main negotiators, asked Ursula what demands we should include specifically from women prisoners. We started challenging the roles assigned to us by the system, especially by race (most of us in the SHU had been “validated” as gang members based on race). We wanted the prison, and society, to know that we are, first, human beings. We started by recognizing each other’s humanity regardless of race. Getting Fire Inside helped us become more true to ourselves as human beings. We could do no less than recognize humanity in our fellow women prisoners.

- BETTY MCKAY

Legal Update

CCWP co-sponsored and supported many bills in 2021. Unfortunately, few were passed into law. Some became two year bills as a means of keeping them alive for the 2022 legislative session. Some were weakened during the legislative process. The failed effort to recall Governor Newsom contributed to the cautious approach when it came to progressive criminal legal reforms. CCWP will continue fighting alongside our many partners to make legislative changes to overturn unjust laws that keep so many of our community members behind bars. Below are summaries and current status of some major bills we supported in 2021.

SB 300 Sentencing Reform Act of 2021 – Sen Cortese, Inactive SB 300 would reform California’s unjust “felony murder special circumstances” law. The bill would ensure that the death penalty and life without the possibility of parole would not be imposed on those who did not kill a person, or who as an accomplice to a felony, did not intend that a person die. It would restore to judges the discretion to strike the ‘special circumstances’ enhancement in the interest of justice. On July 7th, SB 300 was amended and no longer includes retroactive re-sentencing provisions that would provide relief for currently incarcerated people. It seemed necessary to move the bill forward at all. The bill then passed the Senate with the necessary 2/3 vote. However, the Assembly decided to put the bill on hold. Since it is a two-year bill it will be taken up again during the 2022 legislative session. Meanwhile the coalition is working hard to educate legislators and win the necessary votes to get it passed by the Assembly.

AB 256 Racial Justice Act for All – Assemblymember Kalra, Two-year Bill AB 256 extends the protections provided in AB 2542, the 2020 Racial Justice Act, retroactively to those currently incarcerated. AB 2542 was a first-of-its-kind law that made legislative changes to exclude a victim and had a reasonable fear of harm. It requires prosecutors to consider the impact of violence experienced by the survivor, whether the individual was a victim at the time of the commission of the offense, or whether the individual was a victim of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or human trafficking during plea negotiations. AB 2542 allowed courts to reduce sentencing post-conviction after considering the survivor’s experiences.

- FARUQ, RELEASED 2019

Felony Murder Special Circumstances

Credit: Elizabeth Marnos

California Coalition for Women Prisoners

- Fariq, Released 2019
The Fire Inside
Continued from p. 3
needs. Let us continue to remind ourselves that we are worthy of being loved and nurtured as we work to nurture and protect those we love.”

One more example in FL #43, people wrote a collective article speaking out against the punitive, racist immigration law, SB 1070, enacted in Arizona in 2010. The article expressed anger and solidarity, acknowledging how our fates are all connected. “We are all immigrants,” they wrote. “We all come from elsewhere. The Arizona law serves as a platform for racism.”

“Why are people forced to flee their own country and forced to make a living somewhere else, where they are subjected to exploitation, mistreatment, low pay with no health insurance, no retirement benefits? The solution is for all people to thrive where they are.” They concluded by saying reform is not enough; we need total abolition of the system.

Whether addressing and intervening in medical neglect, coming together and forming sisterhood and communities of healing and care, or taking a stand against racism and xenophobia, the theme “together, we get free” has been taken up consistently in The Fire Inside, answering clearly that freedom is collective, freedom is community, freedom is a right to safety, life, and family, and the necessary resources to thrive.

Recent Legislation
Continued from p.11
to counsel. It provides a presumption in favor of resentencing for all law enforcement referrals. It clarifies that a judge can reduce a charge to a lesser-included or lesser-related offense.

AB 990 Visitation Rights – Assemblymember

Santiago, Vetted

AB 990 would have made visitation a civil right for incarcerated people in California prisons. The bill successfully passed the Assembly and the Senate, but on October 7th Governor Newsom vetoed it, saying it went too far.

Under current policy, visits are considered a “privilege” not a right and prison staff have a lot of leeway in determining when a person can be denied a visit and which visitors can be denied entry to the prison such as formerly incarcerated people with recent felony convictions. Bill co-sponsors and supporters (including CCWP) ar...
**Tejer un Petate - To Weave a Mat**

BPH busca talleres de autoayuda en torno a la crianza de los hijos, la violencia doméstica y el alivio de las víctimas, etc. ¿Se ofrecen estos programas en algún idioma que no sea el inglés?

**LS:** Todos son en inglés. Todos quieren demostrar que están trabajando para mejorar, en los términos de CDCr. Asisten a grupos en inglés, pero responden en español. No pueden aprovecharlo al máximo cuando está en inglés. También asisten a la escuela de inglés porque quieren demostrar que están trabajando para poder conseguir un trabajo cuando salgan de la prisión.

¿Cómo ve el acceso a la atención médica para las personas que no hablan inglés?

**LS:** Es más difícil para las personas que no hablan inglés abogar por sí mismas. Hubo un incidente en el que una mujer estaba hablando en español con una enfermera. El médico le dijo: “Aquí no hablas español”. Eso realmente la afectó. Ella no quería recibir más tratamiento de él. Ella sintió que si él le puede decir algo racista, ¿cómo sabe ella que la va a tratar adecuadamente? Es más difícil para ella abogar por la mejor atención médica cuando no siempre hay alguien que hable español.

Hubo una situación en la que el CDCr dijo que cualquier persona en CIW que usará andadores como ayuda para la movilidad tenía que transferirse a CCWF. Dijeron que CCWF tiene un mejor acceso para discapacitados. Muchas personas decidieron dejar sus andadores en lugar de irse porque pensaron que era mejor quedarse cerca de casa y de sus seres queridos. Envié una carta al alcalde en nombre de una persona que necesita su andador porque no puede caminar. Y el alcalde me dijo: “Hablamos con ella y con el médico. Ella tiene todo lo que necesita “. Tomó dos meses para que le devolvieran su andador.

**Parte del trabajo de Compañeras es la conexión cultural, la construcción de un sentido de comunidad.**

**LS:** Una persona con la que trabajo es de Guadalajara, Jalisco, de donde son mis padres. Al poder compartir eso con ella, sintió que había alguien más allá afuera con quien podía hablar, a quién le importaba. Compartir esa cultura es importante.

Hay un vínculo entre los miembros del CCWP, un vínculo en términos de corazón y compromiso, afecto, sin importar de dónde vengas o qué idioma sea tu primero. Todos compartimos esto, ya sea que estemos dentro o fuera de la prisión, lo que nos une. Pero hay algo tan importante en tener esa cultura compartida, por eso es muy importante tener Compañeras.

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**Prison Health News is free for people in prison!**

Printed and mailed 4 times a year, Prison Health News covers COVID-19, hepatitis C, HIV, diabetes, asthma, depression, PTSD, exercise, nutrition and more. If you’d like to get Prison Health News, send your name, ID number and address to:

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

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**Next Issue of FI will bring us into 2022. Please send us your poetry, artwork, and updates.**

Help us celebrate by sending us your thoughts, poetry, artwork and/or photographs

We will not use your name unless you check the box below:

- I want my name to appear in the newsletter
- I would like to get the next issue of The Fire Inside

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**California Coalition for Women Prisoners**

Credit: FI Issue 9
Credit: FI Issue 6
Network on Women in Prison
California Coalition for Women Prisoners
4400 Market St.
Oakland, CA 94608

COME WORK WITH US!

CCWP SF Bay Area  CCWP Los Angeles
4400 Market St.  PO Box 291585
Oakland, CA 94608  LA, CA 90029

(415) 255-7036 x4
www.womenprisoners.org
info@womenprisoners.org

CCWP MISSION

CCWP is a grassroots abolitionist 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.

Funded in part by:
Alcibie Alliance; Ben & Jerry’s Foundation; Circle for Justice Innovations; East Bay Community Fund; Galaxie Gives; Heising-Simons Foundation; Libra Foundation; Lloyd Foundation; Meadow Fund; National Institute for Reproductive Health; Race, Gender & Human Rights Fund; SF Foundation; The Sentencing Project; Social Venture Partners; Unitarian Universalists.

Cover Art: Jessica Jiang