CCWP asked our members in prison what they needed to stay out of prison and what could be positive alternatives to incarceration that utilized restorative/transformative justice methods instead of using punishment and isolation. Here—continued in the centerfold— are the responses we received:

I needed counseling as a kid, a stable home; help getting clean and sober, a job education. Family support would have been nice but I would have taken any support. I think that people should have to take classes like we do here, get counseling, court ordered ankle monitors, programs, housing—these are some of the biggest issues. I think groups like ARC (Ant Recidivism Coalition) do a lot to help people who are coming home and it would be great to have something like that for people before sending them to prison.

_Shawndra Boode, CCWF_

To stay out of prison, I needed better care—drug counseling and mental health services after overdosing at the age of 16. I would have focused more in school if I had better opportunities for education, like a tutor. Also, if I had better support from both of my parents after their separation when I was 9, like family counseling, I would probably not have ended up in the street.

Positive alternatives to stay out of prison would be self-help groups being offered in schools instead of only in prison. Counseling or a program would be recommended instead of being given a life sentence would be a good alternative to mass incarcerations with ridiculous life sentences slapped on us! Who doesn’t deserve a second chance?

_Anonymous_
E)n todo el país, el tema de las cárceles de mujeres se ha convertido en un punto álgido de enfoques marcadamente diferentes para cambiar el fallido sistema actual. En la ciudad de Nueva York, feministas prominentes como Gloria Steinem están promoviendo el modelo de Women’s Community Justice Association (Asociación de Justicia Comunitaria de Mujeres) que aboga por reemplazar la dilapidada cárcel Rose M. Singer en Riker’s Island con una “cárcel feminista” construida en Harlem. Afirman que una nueva cárcel para mujeres creará un lugar “más seguro” y sensible al género para mujeres, personas trans y personas de género no binario.

CCWP y los abolicionistas de prisiones de todo el mundo no creen que ninguna instalación penitenciaria pueda brindar seguridad, justicia, dignidad o un camino hacia cambios en la vida de las personas encarceladas de todos los géneros. Rechazamos las llamadas “prisiones feministas” como una fantasía de las feministas que recurren al estado para resolver problemas de violencia de género, racial y económico. De hecho, el estado y su complejo industrial penitenciario provocan y exacerban todas estas formas de violencia. Es por eso que CCWP, en colaboración con CURB (Californians United for a Responsible Budget / Californianos unidos por un presupuesto responsable), se está embarcando en una campaña para cerrar todas las prisiones de mujeres en California. Sabemos que este es un objetivo visionario, pero también creemos que es posible.

En 2010, había 12,668 personas en las cárceles de mujeres de California. Hoy hay aproximadamente 3,699 personas, una reducción de aproximadamente 70.8%. La abogacía de CCWP, junto con docenas de otras organizaciones, ayudó a catalizar esta reducción dramática en la población carcelaria de mujeres. Si pudimos ganar la desacarcelación de 8,969 personas, deberíamos poder encontrar alternativas al encarcelamiento para 3,700 más. Si identificamos las causas sociales fundamentales por las que las personas terminan en prisiones de mujeres, en lugar de culpar a cada individuo por sus defectos, podemos formular rutas que conduzcan al cierre de las prisiones de mujeres en California.

Nuestro primero paso es producir un informe en colaboración con CURB y HIP (Human Impact Partners / socios de impacto humano), que analizará por qué dicha cierre es necesario y está al alcance. Un líder de CCWP, Jane Dorotik, quien fue encarcelada injustamente durante más de 20 años, está trabajando en este informe. Explicó que el actual complejo industrial penitenciario “es solo una gran red que atrapa a quien puede; la red se tira y atrapa [a las personas] y las mantienen tras las rejas tanto tiempo como sea posible…” pudimos liberar a una gran cantidad de mujeres sin ningún efecto adverso. Así que tomémoslo hasta el final”.

No estamos solos en proponer tales demandas. A diferencia de los defensores de la “cárcel feminista” en Harlem, #NoNewJailsNYC afirma: “Nos oponemos con vehemencia a los esfuerzos para calificar la expansión del complejo industrial penitenciario como ‘feminista’ o ‘humanitario’.” Andrea James, fundadora del The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls (Comité Nacional para Mujeres y Niñas Encarceladas y Anteriormente Encarceladas), publicó recientemente un artículo de opinión en el que se opone a la construcción de una nueva prisión para mujeres en Massachusetts. Ella escribió: “Deberíamos vaciar MCI-Framingham [la prisión de mujeres en MA], cerrarla para siempre y nunca construir otra prisión en Massachusetts.”

Nos unimos a feministas y abolicionistas de todo el país en el lanzamiento de nuestra campaña para cerrar las cárceles de mujeres de California y desarrollar alternativas comunitarias arraigadas en la justicia transformadora y el cuidado colectivo.

California Coalition for Women Prisoners

¡Cierren las cárceles de mujeres de CA! Traducido por Laura Santos

A cross the country, the subject of women’s prisons has become a flashpoint for starkly different approaches to changing the current failed system. In New York City, prominent feminists like Gloria Steinem are promoting the Women’s Community Justice Association model which advocates for replacing the dilapidated Rose M. Singer jail on Riker’s Island with a “feminist jail” built in Harlem. They claim that a new women’s jail would create a “safer,” gender responsive place for women, trans, and non-binary people.

CCWP and prison abolitionists everywhere do not believe that any carceral facility can provide safety, justice, dignity or a pathway towards life changes for incarcerated people of all genders. We reject so-called “feminist gender-based prisons” as a fantasy of feminists who turn to the state to solve problems of gender, racial, and economic violence. In fact, the state and its prison industrial complex cause and exacerbate all of these forms of violence. This is why CCWP, in collaboration with CURB (Californians United for a Responsible Budget), is embarking on a campaign to close all women’s prisons in California.

We know that this is a visionary goal, but we also believe that it is possible.

In 2010, there were 12,668 people in California women’s prisons. Today there are approximately 3,699 people, a reduction of approximately 70.8%. CCWP’s advocacy, along with dozens of other organizations, helped catalyze this dramatic reduction in the women’s prison population. If we were able to win the decarceration of 8,969 people, we should be able to find alternatives to incarceration for 3,700 more. If we identify the root social causes for why people end up in women’s prisons, instead of blaming each individual for their shortcomings, we can formulate road maps that lead to the closure of women’s prisons in California.

Our first step is to produce a report in collaboration with CURB and Human Impact Partners (HIP), which demonstrates why such a closure is both necessary and within reach. CCWP leader Jane Dorotik, who was wrongfully incarcerated for over 20 years, is working on this report. She explained that the current prison industrial complex “is just a big net that catches whoever it can; the net is thrown out and pulls [people] in and keeps them behind bars as long as it possibly can… we were able to release a large number of women without any adverse effects. So let’s take it all the way.”

We’re not alone in raising such demands. In contrast to the proponents of the “feminist jail” in Harlem, #NoNewJailsNYC states, “We vehemently oppose efforts to brand the expansion of the PIC [prison-industrial complex] as ‘feminist’ or ‘humanitarian.’” Andrea James, founder of The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls recently published an op-ed opposing the construction of a new women’s prison in Massachusetts. She wrote, “We should empty MCI-Women’s prison in MA, close it forever, and never build another prison in Massachusetts.”

We join with feminists and abolitionists all over the country as we launch our campaign to close California women’s prisons and develop community-based alternatives rooted in transformative justice & collective care.
Norway: Kinder, But Still Prisons

By Prof. Jennifer James

The Fire Inside

The Norwegian prison system is seen as a model form of incarceration. Many in the US who disagree with mass incarceration or who have heard about the deplorable and inhumane conditions inside US prisons and jails, think we should strive to be more like Norway. I had the chance to visit several prisons in Sweden and Norway in Fall 2022 and learn from the people who live and work in their women’s prisons.

Norway incarcerates dramatically fewer people and for far less time. The Norwegian model is based on a few key principles: dynamic security—correctional officers, who receive several years of training including in topics like psychology and ethics, get to know the residents of prisons. They are tasked with checking in with incarcerated people regularly, supporting them around education and reentry planning and more, all with the idea that relationships are a key aspect of security. Second is the principle of normalization—Norwegian prisons want to mirror the community as much as possible. Many prisons have grocery stores where residents can purchase their own food then cook in a real kitchen. Rooms look much more like dorm rooms than jail cells and people have bathrooms with doors. In many prisons, people wear regular clothes. Finally, they have the principle of progression—while many start at a maximum level of security, there is a goal and a responsibility to move everyone down the security level, increasing responsibility and freedom and decreasing restriction and security. Prior to release, many people are working jobs in the community and spending time with family outside of prison.

Overall, there was a much higher level of respect and humanity for incarcerated people. Most officers don’t carry weapons; they have coffee and meals with the residents. They may shop at the same stores in the prison or get their hair done by the residents working in the prison salon. I noticed officers speaking to and about residents with respect and, often, affection. The difference was stark. And yet, these are still prisons. Residents spoke of trying to sleep while hearing yelling and distress all night. Others noted that prison was a deeply traumatizing environment. Freedom is still restricted, and autonomy is still lost. It was clear that Norway, like the US, over-incarcerates people of color and immigrants. While their approach to family reunification and maintaining relationships with children are different, incarcerating parents is still catastrophic. In fact, people in Norwegian prisons have less time each day to talk to their family.

Norwegian prisons are not a substitute for abolition. The US system targets, harasses, and incarcerates mind-boggling numbers of people. It terrorizes communities and perpetuates violence. Prisons are a critical aspect and an extension of this system. We must fundamentally abolish this system and invest in community rather than policing. And, yet, if believes that there are people who need support, structure, and intervention in order to be able to live in community, the Norwegian model may be a way we can imagine this. What is clear is that the culture of US prisons creates violence and disrupts safety and community. It cannot continue, and, in many ways, it remains hard to imagine a world in which reform—even based on the Norwegian model—is possible.

LEGAL UPDATES

AB937 - Vision Act (Asm. Carrillo)

Once again, the Vision Act—legislation that would prevent CDCr and county Sheriff’s Depts from cooperating with ICE—failed to receive the necessary number of votes in the Senate. The statewide ICE Co-Resident Coalition—with over 100 organizations participating, including CCWP—is now strategizing next steps to ensure we are protecting all our community members, regardless of where they were born. Phoeun You, paroled after 27 years incarceration, was snatched by ICE and deported to Cambodia. Phoeun said, “Without the Vision Act we have a continual cycle of separation, trauma and grief. It is perpetual punishment for people not born in the US.” CCWP is committed to next steps to protect our immigrant community members.

SB 300 Sentencing Reform Act – Senator Cortese

SB 300, a proposed reform to CA’s “Felony Murder Special Circumstances” law, unfortunately did not pass. On August 29, SB 300 was moved into an inactive file as it did not have the required votes to pass through the Assembly. Nonetheless, Senator Cortese, author of SB 300, CCWP, and the DROP LWOP Coalition will continue to push for policy that upholds the reforms outlined in SB 300. The DROP LWOP Coalition’s statement perfectly summarizes, “Our work presses onward. Let’s be clear: today is a disappointment, but not defeat.”

AB 256 Racial Justice Act for All - Asm. Kalra

AB 256 which expands on the 2020 Racial Justice Act (AB 2542, R/A) to be applied retroactively to those currently incarcerated—was signed by Gov. Newsom on September 29. While AB 2542 prohibited the use of race, ethnicity, or national origin from being considered in sentencing and conviction, it was not applicable to convictions before January 1, 2021. With the passage of AB 256, those with judgements, sentences and convictions prior to 2021 can petition the court. Here is the phased-in timeline to petition:

• January 1, 2023: individuals facing deportation or sentenced to death
• January 1, 2024: individuals incarcerated for a felony
• January 1, 2025: others with a felony conviction entered after 2015
• January 1, 2026: all others with a felony conviction

People v. Strong

On August 8, 2022, the CA Supreme Court reversed the decision of the appeals court that denied Christopher Strong’s petition for resentencing under Senate Bill No. 1437. The CA Supreme Court found that certain special circumstance findings did not preclude him from making a prima facie case for resentencing. This decision is important for many people currently serving LWOP sentences.

In 2014, a jury found true felony-murder special-circumstance allegations that Christopher was a “major participant” who acted with “reckless indifference to human life” under Cal. Penal Code 190.2, subdivision (d). But in 2015, the Supreme Court decided People v. Banks, 63 Cal. 4th 788 and in 2016 People v. Clark, 63 Cal.4th 522, which provided guidance on the meaning of the statutory phrases “major participant” and “reckless indifference to human life.”

SB 1008, Free Phone Calls!

Gov. Newsom signed bill SB 1008, the Keep Families Connected Act, that makes phone calls from CA prisons free of charge. Rather than placing the cost burden on incarcerated people and their loved ones for this critical resource to stay connected, CDCr is now financially responsible for this service. California is the second state after Connecticut to pass this law and will hopefully weaken the $1.4 billion exortionist prison telecom industry.

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**JANE DOROTIK EXONERATED!**

In October 2022, longtime CCWP member Jane Dorotik was finally exonerated from her 21-year-nightmare. After spending 20 years in prison, she was released in 2020 and her conviction was overturned. But she spent the past 2 years battling a vicious San Diego DA's office intent on retrying her case despite lack of evidence, false evidence, and Jane's innocence.

Jane was supported in her court battle against her wrongful conviction and incarceration by the Loyola Innocence Project. Now, after being on the receiving end of the legal and forensic support, Jane is a policy advisor for the newly-formed Los Angeles Innocence Project. Jane describes it as a “full circle” moment, and now she can “help steer what it is they’re attempting to achieve and how to help the formerly incarcerated.” Jane added, “I feel very strongly this is my life’s work going forward, to help expose the number of wrongful convictions and show how prevalent they are when people think they are such a rarity, in order to prevent them from happening.” Jane is hopeful about the new LA Innocence Project - a partnership between the Loyola Innocence Project and the Forensic Science Institute affiliated with Cal State LA - and what they can do together.

While wrongful convictions are a passion for Jane, she advocates for all women locked up in cages. “It is much larger than innocent or guilty,” she said, “And ultimately I ended up feeling like, who cares, innocent or guilty? … Everybody has done something in their life that they’re not proud of, that they wish they could go back and change, but that doesn’t define who they are. To have a system that says, ‘You did this terrible thing and the only solution is to put you behind bars for multiple years, and maybe we’ll let you out, or maybe we won’t.’ You have to go in front of the parole board and prove to them that you’ve been rehabilitated. It struck me as so wrong.” She continued, “It was very clear to me that there’s no difference between me and them. I’m factually innocent, but so are so many women in prison innocent of a lot of things; maybe not the one crime that sent them to prison, but they’re decent people and they deserve an opportunity to give back to society.”

It is this attention to the fundamental injustice of the prison industrial complex that animates the new campaign to close all women’s prisons in California, a campaign that Jane is an integral part of. “I believe strongly in the closure of women’s prisons,” she said. “I think we need to close the prisons to help prevent people from being incarcerated.”

When ACJJC is not a prison, Rogers believes that “comfortable,” Rogers refers to the kind of resources and opportunities a Juvenile Hall may have for youth, such as education programs or libraries. “A kid might leave DJJ and go back to LA County and the Juvenile Hall system is really different,” she said.

Following the passing of SB 823, the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR), was created in July 2021. OYCR’s goal is to engage with all 58 CA counties to provide technical assistance, generate a profit and keep people employed because if people were actually being rehabilitated and reformed, then they would lose their population and therefore their jobs,” she said.

Though ACJJC is not a prison, Rogers noted how as a librarian she “works directly with the people in the institution...The more that people are impacted with kindness and learning and care when they come into the juvenile hall library, they have the potential to not come back in,” she explained. “So that’s our day-to-day mission.” Still, her work, Stacey Barker, CCWF

**SB 823 - YOUTH INCARCERATION**

In September 2020, California committed to closing the state’s Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) by 2023 through the passing of Senate Bill 823. About 600 youth up to age 25 who are incarcerated across DJJ’s four facilities, will now be housed and treated at the county level. This closure of DJJ facilities and shift from state to local control presents an important question: How will this actually affect youth?

At the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center (ACJJC), SB823 is already in effect. “Counties are getting the kids back from DJJ where they are put into separate units. At the ACJJC it’s called the secure track unit,” said ACJJC librarian Jenny Rogers. Rogers is part of the Social Justice Services run through the county’s library network and has been working within JJC since 2019.

At JJJC, there are two units that were created…since the enactment of SB 823: one unit for kids who returned from DJJ and another unit for kids who would have gone to DJJ. While the closing of DJJ – known as the “gladiator school” to kids at JJC for its infamous amount of fighting, violence, and disorder– is necessary, according to Rogers, there is still uncertainty about how this will affect youth.

“You’ve got the DJJ where kids from all the counties are in one space,” she said. “…every county has a very different juvenile hall, just like they do in a jail. So depending on the county you’re in, it might be a more comfortable space than others.”

By “comfortable,” Rogers refers to the kind of resources and opportunities a Juvenile Hall may have for youth, such as education programs or libraries. “A kid might leave DJJ and go back to LA County and the Juvenile Hall system is really different,” she said.

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**Continued on p.13**
As far as closing prisons I feel that it will give CDCR the excuse to pile us all on top of each other like they have in the past with criminal overcrowding. They will feel like they have no other choice. Like letting people go isn't even an option. I believe there are too many women in prison for anything of that magnitude to take place.

What I would have needed to stay out of prison: instead of assigning parole/probation officers after you mess up, they should assign Educational Long-Term Counselors who guide us towards what each person needs to make it from junior high all through college for our intended profession.

To guide us through every step because a lot of us do not have parents that are acquainted with the college world, paying for college and its benefits. Even if they point us towards education we don't necessarily have a clear path to our profession.

Anonymous, CCWF

I've always been quiet about my own needs and/or feelings. I was taught, "Don't Tell!" And, that's how and why I was abused my whole life, first by my mother, then her boyfriend, then my spouses. Their happiness came first. And my fear of their abuse and/or leaving, made me "do" for them, and not myself. Education on domestic abuse would've done me good. I've been to a battered women's shelter before, but I just went back to the abuse, because the spouse promises to never do it again, and apologizes emphatically until I gave in. Court assistance would've helped immensely. Court doesn't protect a woman or children from the abuser. With no help, support, education, or mental help, I broke.

A negative (crime), plus a negative (prison), does NOT make a positive (functional member of society). Many women are first time offenders, have not used drugs or alcohol, even people on women's death row! (90% out of 24). Mental health is number one. Most bad behaviors are taught/learned. You may need to remove a person from those who are enabling bad behaviors. Alternatives deal with harm through mental healthcare, doctors, groups, classes, jobs, and a mentor, someone who's had the same experiences, and can guide the person to succeed. Family/friends are more important to a woman than putting them in prison, removing their support, and hurting them MORE, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Anonymous, CCWF

To stay out of prison in the first place, I needed someone in school (teacher, counselor) to notice that something wasn't right. I needed to know that there was some alternative to remove me from my home.

Long periods of incarceration don't work. They don't help reduce recidivism or make communities safer. That's supposed to be why people are punished - to illustrate that the behavior was wrong and give consequences for those actions. But to throw people away not only goes against those supposed goals but is incredibly expensive and short sighted. We should look to European countries to get better ideas for our country.

Anonymous

I am afraid of prison closures. CDCR is still based on punishment despite their mission statement. They may use it as an excuse to overcrowd or warehouse people far from loved ones. The best solution would to adopt the Norway model. No excessive life, LWOP or death sentences. Prep all offenders for successful release beginning on day 1 of imprisonment regardless of crime. It's been shown to work infinitely better than our system in terms of public spending and public safety.

Anonymous, CIW

What I needed at the time of my arrest was guidance. I didn't have any role models. Yes, my parents and my brother were there, but they weren't. They were not emotionally available. I was looking for that family unit elsewhere that I could relate to. I didn't know my self-worth and value.

Positive alternatives to incarceration? I think it should be case by case. But I absolutely do think the "why's" are very available. I was looking for that family unit elsewhere that I could relate to. I didn't know my self-worth and value.

Positive alternatives to incarceration? I think it should be case by case. But I absolutely do think the "why's" are very important. Why do we do what we do? If someone is being punished by incarceration, they should find out the why before they sentence them. Also, drug offenses should be treated, not locked up. An addict has a disease and should not be locked up. We need the why's, not just lock people away and throw away the key.

Anonymous, RP

To avoid prison, I needed support: emotional, financial, material, educational support. I needed to be encouraged, believed in, shown different options and resources. I needed to be educated on health care/hygiene, future goal setting, and planning, to be taught the importance of saving and financial planning, help with basics like food, clothing and housing. I needed someone to show me something different was attainable, not just for white people on TV. I needed to be accepted and not always be or feel so different. I shouldn't have been able to find the answers who by selling and using drugs.

Anonymous, CCWF

Prior to being incarcerated I had it all, jobs, car, home, the one thing I didn't have was family, I spent twenty-three years with depression. I needed psyche meds and a therapist. I was adopted when I was a month old, but later returned to the foster care system. A month before I was arrested my biological mother found me on Facebook! My life spun out of control, I LOST IT! All could have been different if I had gotten the help I needed. Having prison as an alternative to incarceration would make sense including but not limited to: mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, parenting, healthy relationships, sex worker survivors, and survivors of abuse and abandonment.

I lost everything through my struggle with mental health. If I knew 15 years ago the resources and coping skills I have now, I believe I would not have committed my crime. Our prison system is an injustice to you and me because no one is getting the help that they could potentially receive.

Daniella Lopez, CCWF

I'm afraid of prison closures. I need to know my self-worth and value. Yes, my parents and my brother were there, but they weren't. They were not emotionally available. I was looking for that family unit elsewhere that I could relate to. I didn't know my self-worth and value. I didn't have any role models. Yes, my parents and my brother were there, but they weren't. They were not emotionally available. I was looking for that family unit elsewhere that I could relate to. I didn't know my self-worth and value. I didn't have any role models. Yes, my parents and my brother were there, but they weren't. They were not emotionally available. I was looking for that family unit elsewhere that I could relate to. I didn't know my self-worth and value. I didn't have any role models. Yes, my parents and my brother were there, but they weren't. They were not emotionally available. I was looking for that family unit elsewhere that I could relate to. I didn't know my self-worth and value.
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Growing up, I was never taught to acknowledge, label and process my emotions, so wasn't able to share or express my thoughts. Because I was unable to speak up for myself, and because I didn't know how to reach out for help, I experienced severe physical, mental and emotional domestic abuse. My free will to make my own choices and decisions was taken away. I felt helpless and hopeless with no self-worth and no self-esteem. I learned to be a perpetual victim where I took accountability and responsibility for nothing.

Since coming to prison, Bridges To Life (BTL), a self-help group created by John Sage (a man who experienced great loss through violent crime) has helped me make the most positive change. The curriculum walks you through your current decision-making process and how it developed, defining accountability, responsibility, reconciliation and restitution. It creates a space for you to be able to learn empathy and compassion.

**Stacey Barker, CCWF**

If our society faced the reality of child trauma and had the motivation for each child and person to be empowered to really know and love themselves, I feel we could eliminate women’s prisons entirely and cut male imprisonment by 80%.

**Anonymous**

I believe that if any issue is creating hopelessness, we need input from a neutral viewpoint. One on one help, and possibly a family member. What would have helped me? Professional help, a roof over my head, some means of financial support, a job, treatment for addiction and guidance from a person that could support me making decisions for positive outcomes. Prisons do not prevent crime. It is warehousing, and criminal activities don’t stop. Counseling, treatment, food and clothing, a warm bed and a bath or shower, Humane and caring people such as yourself… and the church support. It’s the constant support that makes a difference.

**Sandie W**

I needed guidance from a young age to show me what possibilities were out there, to teach and guide me. I believe this would have made a difference in my life. I believe we should be held accountable for breaking laws. There should be consequences to horrible actions. I also believe in second chances, so through an extensive program where we are taught to change our thoughts and behaviors, there could be change.

We've been punished our whole lives; that route doesn’t help. A different solution would be to teach us what we did was awful and help us understand the impact it had on so many people, how we can make it better; to give back what we've taken from so many people. Restorative Justice!

**Anonymous, CCWF**

There is no question that mass incarceration has failed us. It was an ideological fantasy to believe we could arrest our way out of the social and situational problems that plague us. Prisons just make things worse, starting with the dissolution of the family. The vast majority of women incarcerated in the US were arrested for crimes involving their significant other; think toxic boyfriends who involved them in criminal activities, trapped them into domestic violence situations, or who otherwise mistreated them. Once inside women face more abuse and mistreatment. Studies show that while incarcerated, women are much more likely to be sexually assaulted than their male counterparts. This compounds the trauma they came to prison with.

In spite of these travesties, women remain the fastest growing sector of the U.S. prison population. Since the 70s the imprisonment of women has grown 200%, even during downturns in crime. In other words, crime is not driving incarceration rates, policies are; intentional decisions to lock people up instead of offering them the intervention and services they need to live productive lives.

I believe that when any system does more harm than good that system needs to be dismantled. The harm? Studies indisputably demonstrate that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to end up in prison themselves, motivating a generational cycle of imprisonment in the same geographical clusters. Responding to harm after the fact does not protect any of us. It only reinforces revenue and retribution by locking up and traumatizing millions of our own citizens. We should all be demanding prevention of harm for every citizen, so that no one ends up the collateral consequence of bad policy.

NOTE: Dortell Williams is a longtime prisoner advocate, incarcerated for over 30 years on an LWOP sentence. You can write to him: Dortell Williams, H45771, CVSP, POR 2349, Blythe, CA 92226•

**Valerie Juarez, CIW**

I was sentenced to 81 years to life. My base term is 25 years and the 56 years are enhancements. I was a heroin addict for 37 years. Growing up there should have been a place where children were taught to identify their feelings and what healthy boundaries and relationships looked like. Education is key to a successful future. Investing in our youth can prevent a whole lot of unhealthy teenagers that will one day be unruly adults. More employment opportunities for the youth so they can see how great it feels to earn money. The confidence and the fulfillment of being esteemed.

**Anonymous**

Prison should have a 90-day-trial period to see if a person is a criminal. Not everybody that arrives here belongs here. Some crimes such as stealing to eat need community service hours to work at the food banks, not prison sentence. More outpatient programs for mothers with abuse. Community service to pay off property crimes. More employment upon release and job training. Shutting down this drug infested prison would force people into sobriety and the reality of wanting to be home with their loved ones.

**Valerie Juarez, CIW**

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Prison is the reason for the drug infestation. I would like to see people given the opportunity to change their lives. The system should be geared towards rehabilitation.

**Anonymous**

Continued on p. 11

Women and Mass Incarceration

Credit: Georgianna Krieger

There is no question that mass incarceration has failed us. It was an ideological fantasy to believe we could arrest our way out of the social and situational problems that plague us. Prisons just make things worse, starting with the dissolution of the family. The vast majority of women incarcerated in the US were arrested for crimes involving their significant other; think toxic boyfriends who involved them in criminal activities, trapped them into domestic violence situations, or who otherwise mistreated them. Once inside women face more abuse and mistreatment. Studies show that while incarcerated, women are much more likely to be sexually assaulted than their male counterparts. This compounds the trauma they came to prison with.

In spite of these travesties, women remain the fastest growing sector of the U.S. prison population. Since the 70s the imprisonment of women has grown 200%, even during downturns in crime. In other words, crime is not driving incarceration rates, policies are; intentional decisions to lock people up instead of offering them the intervention and services they need to live productive lives.

I believe that when any system does more harm than good that system needs to be dismantled. The harm? Studies indisputably demonstrate that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to end up in prison themselves, motivating a generational cycle of imprisonment in the same geographical clusters. Responding to harm after the fact does not protect any of us. It only reinforces revenue and retribution by locking up and traumatizing millions of our own citizens. We should all be demanding prevention of harm for every citizen, so that no one ends up the collateral consequence of bad policy.

NOTE: Dortell Williams is a longtime prisoner advocate, incarcerated for over 30 years on an LWOP sentence. You can write to him: Dortell Williams, H45771, CVSP, POR 2349, Blythe, CA 92226•

**Valerie Juarez, CIW**

I was sentenced to 81 years to life. My base term is 25 years and the 56 years are enhancements. I was a heroin addict for 37 years. Growing up there should have been a place where children were taught to identify their feelings and what healthy boundaries and relationships looked like. Education is key to a successful future. Investing in our youth can prevent a whole lot of unhealthy teenagers that will one day be unruly adults. More employment opportunities for the youth so they can see how great it feels to earn money. The confidence and the fulfillment of being esteemed.

**Anonymous**

Prison should have a 90-day-trial period to see if a person is a criminal. Not everybody that arrives here belongs here. Some crimes such as stealing to eat need community service hours to work at the food banks, not prison sentence. More outpatient programs for mothers with abuse. Community service to pay off property crimes. More employment upon release and job training. Shutting down this drug infested prison would force people into sobriety and the reality of wanting to be home with their loved ones.

**Valerie Juarez, CIW**

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Wendy Howard—NOT GUILTY!

Wendy Howard and her daughters were physically, sexually, and verbally abused for almost twenty years by Wendy’s abusive partner. In 2019, their abuser attacked Wendy on her property. In fear for her life, Wendy defended herself and her family and her abuser died. Wendy was charged by the Kern County DA with first-degree murder, and taken to trial in Aug. 2022.

On Oct. 21, 2022, the jury found Wendy not guilty of first-degree murder, second-degree murder, voluntary manslaughter (on an imperfect self-defense theory), and involuntary manslaughter. The jury was deadlocked on the charge of voluntary manslaughter (on a heat of passion theory), with 7 voting to convict and 5 voting to acquit. Perhaps not coincidentally, the jury consisted of 7 men and 5 women. The DA’s choice to pursue this trial against Wendy has had devastating consequences for Wendy, her family and the community:

- The emotional cost of not being believed and being forced to relive their experiences of abuse in public.
- The cost of bail, defense attorney fees, and other legal fees to wage a strong defense created great economic stress for Wendy and her family.
- The consequences to the taxpayers of Kern County, whose DA made it a priority to prosecute domestic violence survivors rather than focusing on the community’s needs for public safety, such as extending existing victim resources to all victims, including Wendy and her daughters.

We are waiting for the final court decision in Wendy’s case in early December. If you want to send funds to help with all the legal fees: https://gogetfunding.com/justiceforwendy

Reparations for Reproductive Harm

If you think you were sterilized without your knowledge, under pressure or without sufficient information and time to give an informed consent, you have until December 31, 2023 to submit an application for compensation. Please ask prison staff for an application or write to request one from CCWP.

- 55 applications have been approved for compensation through the end of October for people forcibly sterilized while in CDCr custody.
- Approximately 75 applications have been denied.

If you received a letter from the Victims’ Compensation Board denying your application, you have sixty (60) days to appeal the decision. If you miss the sixty-day deadline you can submit a reapplication up until December 31, 2023.

CCWP can support you with applications, appeals and reapplications. Write to: CCWP, Attr: Compensation Program, 4400 Market St., Oakland, CA 94608. Or you can send an email via GTL to info@womenprisoners.org or to the CCWP member you correspond with and ask them to put you in touch with a CCWP rep who can support you.

Alabama Prison Strike, #ShutdownADOC2022

On September 26, incarcerated workers rose up and went on strike, demanding an end to the brutal living conditions, racist sentencing, and overcrowding they face inside Alabama’s 14 major facilities. The strike began Monday morning when kitchen staff at the Limestone Facility in Harvest, AL, refused to work. The Free Alabama Movement (FAM), an integral organization planning this unprecedented strike, estimates that 80% of Alabama’s prison population (20,000 incarcerated workers) were participating.

A 2020 report by the U.S. Department of Justice stated that conditions in Alabama’s men’s facilities were unconstitutional as they failed to protect incarcerated people from violence and finding that Alabama’s major facilities were operating at 182% capacity. Alabama also has the highest COVID-19 death rate in state prisons in the U.S.

FAM notes that in the month of August, only 25 of the 450 people considered for parole were approved. In 2019, the board’s approval rating for Black incarcerated people was 8%. Consequently, one of the strike demands is to create a parole criteria guaranteeing parole to all that qualify. Other demands include: repealing the Habitable Offender law; reducing minimum sentences for youth; and streamlining a review process for elderly incarcerated people to be immediately released.

Prison authorities attempted to break the strike by withholding food, readying riot squads, and retaliating against prison organizers. The strike went on hiatus in mid October to strategize further action and allow the AL Department of Corrections (ADOC) to address their demands. Incarcerated workers have made it clear that if their demands are not met they will reignite their strike.

You can email FAM at freedalamannonvomovement@gmail.com

Continued from p.5, Legal Updates

The Supreme Court ruled that: (1) findings issued by a jury before Banks and Clark do not preclude a defendant from making a prima facie case for relief under Senate Bill 1437; and (2) because Appellant’s case was tried before both Banks and Clark, the special circumstance findings did not preclude a person from making out a prima facie case for resentencing under section 1172.6.

Continued from p.7, SB 823 - Youth Incarceration

job involves striking a balance between “working within the institution to be of service to the people inside of it, while attempting to maintain a distance from the institution and its practices.”

As SB 823 continues to move youth from state to county facilities like JJC, Rogers asks, “When you’re transplanting from one carceral facility to another, is that better? I think it remains to be seen.”
The Next Issue of Fire Inside (#69) will focus on art and artists in women’s prisons. Art includes the written word as well as paintings. We’re not alone in raising the profile of women artists in prison. The work of incarcerated women artists and poets is featured in the pages of The Fire Inside. will focus on art and artists in women’s prisons. Art includes the written word as well as paintings. We’re not alone in raising the profile of women artists in prison. The work of incarcerated women artists and poets is featured in the pages of The Fire Inside.

**MOURNING OUR LOSES**

**Sue Russo—Rest in Power, Rest in Peace**

Sue Russo, long time prisoner rights advocate, member of CCWP and all around good person, died in CCWF on Sept. 27, 2022 from cruel medical neglect by CDCR. Sentenced to LWOP in 1996, Sue was commuted by Gov. Brown in 2017 to 25 to life in recognition of her history as a DV survivor and for her diligent rehabilitation. She had been turned down by the parole board in spite of her caring, remorse and rehabilitation.

One of Sue’s most significant accomplishments during her 28 years of incarceration was the co-founding and facilitation of Prison of Peace, now a non-profit organization working in many state prisons. Prison of Peace aims to end violence in prison through teaching conflict resolution and restorative justice skills and processes.

Sue was diagnosed with Valley Fever, a chronic condition endemic to California’s Central Valley and the prisons where she was housed. She suffered from ongoing respiratory issues due to the Valley Fever, including COPD and had multiple surgeries to remove portions of her infected lungs. If BPH had recognized Sue’s accomplishments, and had CDCR provided necessary and adequate health care, Sue would be with us today. Rest in Power, rest in Peace.

**ALBERT WOODFOX,**
**2/19/1947 - 8/4/2022**

Born in New Orleans, Albert was wrongfully incarcerated for over 40 years in solitary confinement in the notorious Angola, LA prison for a crime he did not commit. Albert shared the mental and emotional freedom he found in himself. He taught fellow prisoners to read; did legal work to help people with their cases; and, together with Herman Wallace and Robert King (the Angola 3), initiated protests, filed grievances, and won lawsuits to force the prison to be more humane.

After his conviction was overturned and Albert was released on February 19, 2016 (his 69th birthday), he continued to advocate by speaking about the atrocities of the criminal legal system. He was a proud former member of the Black Panther Party. In 2019, Albert published Solitary, a biography that tells the story of his unbroken spirit and relentless activism. Albert’s triumph over inhumanity and degradation is an inspiration to us all. Rest in power!

**WELCOME HOME!**

Yaselin Josie Tovar
Amy Davis
Adriana Bedolla
Antoinette Dokes

The Next issue of Fire Inside (#69) will focus on art and artists in women’s prisons. Art includes the written word as well as graphic media. Art helps people survive, thrive, inspire and resist in prison as well as in our communities around the world. What role does art play for you? Please share your experiences, thoughts AND your art- poetry, stories, drawings and paintings.

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

☐ I want my name to appear in the newsletter

Name: ____________________________

Mail to: __________________________

☐ I would like to get the next issue of The Fire Inside

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

☐ Please contact me to volunteer

☐ Enclosed is my $ __________ contribution to help send a newsletter subscription to a person in women’s prison

Name: ____________________________

Phone/email: _______________________

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

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TRANSFORM JUSTICE

Network on Women in Prison
California Coalition for
Women Prisoners
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Oakland, CA 94608

COME WORK WITH US!
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(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.

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