Reflections on *The Fire Inside* issue number 50

**Linda Field**, W26257, free for 8 years after serving 19 years

Two of my most heartfelt stories jump right to mind. My first visit with my children made me realize that I wasn’t the only one in prison but my children were too, as my youngest begged to stay with me. To this day, 24 years later, I can still see Sara’s hands over my father’s shoulders, opening and closing for me as giant tears rolled down her cheeks.

The second story was of Annie Bells, Anna Jackson, who died from cancer. She suffered from medical interference while in CCWF. She went from the most fun loving, flower growing person to a bag of skin and bones begging, crying for help and being kicked to the curb by the medical staff that were paid to heal her.

Stories like these would be lost if not for *The Fire Inside*. All I can say is bless all who have contributed- inmates and free staff. Without all working together, our stories would never have been told. Many of us would still be imprisoned. Thank you.

**AnnaBell Chapa**

*The Fire Inside* inspired me so much, I never knew that people could give so freely. You all became like my family and loved me without judging me and without expecting something in return. Once again, thank you *Fire Inside* for being the voice outside prison walls for the ones that have no voice inside.

With love, respect and appreciation.

**Urszula Wislanka**

*The Fire Inside* has been an indispensable organizing tool for activists inside and out. The transformation that prisoner’s words go through from being a spoken “gripe” to a printed article validates the writer’s sense that their thoughts and feelings are objective, that they speak to others who hear them in this form. I have learned a great deal from prisoners as we discuss material for the next issue. For example, I learned that prison uses racism to break people, to turn prisoners against each other. Prisoners’ solidarity breaks that cycle.

**Karen Shain**

Issue #50 of the *Fire Inside*! Wow…what an amazing accomplishment. We had no idea when we started what an important newsletter this would become. Congratulations to all of the writers on the inside who gave this newsletter its heart—and its soul!
Con el número 50 de la edición del *Fire Inside*, honramos y celebramos 18 años de publicar continuamente historias, poemas, luchas y victorias de las mujeres y transgeneras presas en las prisiones para mujeres del estado de California. Como Linda lo dice en la cita arriba, el *Fire Inside* provee un espacio para que la gente dentro comparta entre sí y con la gente afuera, lo que sucede y lo que está cerca de nuestros corazones.

El *Fire Inside* nació de la lucha por cuidados de salud y derechos humanos. Tomó su nombre de un ex preso que se identificó la pasión, determinación, fuerza y el coraje de las mujeres que publicó sus nombres en la acción de clase, Shumate vs. Wilson. Exigieron que CDCR tratar a todos los prisioneros como seres humanos y proporcionar una atención médica adecuada. Es el fuego que desde dentro de los muros de la prisión dio el empuje a CCWP y que sostiene el trabajo hoy en día.

Hoy, la gente que está dentro enfrenta de nuevo una enorme crisis de cuidado de salud, debido a la drástica sobrepoblación: Sobrepoblación por: realineación convierte cárcel femenina de Valley en una cárcel de hombres, metiendo gente de tres cárceles superpobladas en dos; mientras que las personas que califican para un ACP, libertad condicional, libertad por razones medicas o por compasión, no están siendo liberadas. ¡Hoy en día la CCWF y CIW están más del 195% de su capacidad!! Esto significa hay entre 6 y 8 personas en una celda con capacidad para 2 a 4 personas.

Cuando la gente se transfirieron desde VSPW al CCWF o CIW, sus archivos médicos generalmente no fueron con ellos, o no por mucho tiempo. Se les ha negado medicamentos recetados a la gente. El acceso a jabón, agua y otros artículos de higiene son extremadamente limitados, así como lo es el acceso a personal médico. El reporte publicado en diciembre del 2013 acerca de una revisión médica independiente sobre los servicios de salud dentro de la prisión la cual fue ordenada por la corte, reconoce el terrible estado de cuidados de salud- y ¡nadie esta haciendo nada al respecto!

Bevery Henry (alias Chopper), otra de las fundadoras de la CCWP, murió en marzo 21 del 2014, en gran parte como consecuencia de los constantes problemas de salud por los pobres cuidados de salud en la prisión que sufrió por años. Chopper fue de las primeras compañeras educadoras de salud, haciendo alcance para educar sobre el VIH, Hep C y otros problemas de salud. Judy Ricci, otra de las fundadoras de la CCWP y compañera educadora de salud, recibió libertad condicional tan solo para morir enseguida, como resultado de la negligencia médica que sufrió ahí dentro. El año 2014 vio muchas muertes en las prisiones de mujeres en California. Actualmente, la CCWP está trabajando con familias y miembros de la comunidad para demandar una investigación independiente a la muerte de Shadae Schmidt (alias Dae Dae) en el CIW SHU en marzo 13 del 2014.

Levantar la voz contra las malas condiciones médicas ahí dentro, es un acto de resistencia increíble y es la expresión del fuego interno. Este *Fire Inside* arde fuerte hoy. Gracias a la presión y los reportes de los presos, la Legislatura Estatal mantuvo una audiencia en Sacramento y legisladores llegaron a visitar la CCWF en la primavera del 2014. Unas ex-presas han levantado su voz en las audiencias legislativas y han sido escuchadas y vistos.

¡La única respuesta a la sobrepoblación inhumana e inconstitucional es que se libere gente! La respuesta NO son más prisiones y la “expansión de instalaciones médicas”. La respuesta NO es abrir más prisiones privadas para mujeres que harán negocio del abuso, como la nueva prisión GEO en McFarland. ¿Podrá alguna vez la CDCR proveer un cuidado de salud con los mismos estándares dentro de la comunidad? Después de 9 años de observación del Receivership, y 19 años después de la acción legal *Shumate vs. Wilson*, nosotros decimos ¡NO!. El CDCR ha probado que no es capaz de proveer un cuidado humano y decente.

Como escribió Charisse Shumate en la primera edición de *Fire Inside* en 1996, “si las paredes pudieran hablar no hubiéramos tenido que rogar y pedir auxilio.” Pero las paredes sí hablaron por las poderosas voces de Charisse, Chopper, Judy, Linda, y muchas otras. Y no guardaremos silencio hasta que nuestras familias estén seguras y estén en casa.
“Fire Inside was the only way we were able to be heard. The wonderful staff became not only our friends but our family. They allowed us to share our sorrows and our joys.”
Linda Field, CCWP founding member

With this 50th issue of The Fire Inside, we honor and celebrate 18 years of continuously publishing the stories, poems, struggles and victories of women and transgender prisoners in California women’s prisons. As Linda says in her quote above, the Fire Inside provides a way for people inside to share with each other and with people outside prison what is happening and what is closest to our hearts.

The Fire Inside was born out of the struggle for health care and human rights. It got its name from a former prisoner who identified the passion, determination, strength and bravery of the women who were willing to put their names publicly on the class action lawsuit Shumate v Wilson demanding that the CDCR treat all prisoners as human beings and provide adequate medical care. It is the fire from inside the prison walls that gave CCWP its start and sustains the work today.

Today people inside are facing a huge crisis in health care once again due to drastic overcrowding—overcrowding because: realignment converted VSPW from a women’s to a men’s prison, stuffing people from 3 crowded prisons into 2 super crowded prisons; and people eligible for ACP, parole, medical and compassionate release, and elders are not being released.

Today CCWF and CIW are almost 195% over capacity!! This means 6 and 8 people to a 2 or 4 person cell.

When people transferred from VSPW to CCWF or CIW, their medical files did not follow them either at all or for a long time. People were denied prescribed medications. Access to sufficient soap, water, and other hygiene supplies is extremely limited, as is access to medical personnel. The December 2013 report issued by the court-ordered independent medical review of prison health services acknowledges the terrible state of health care- and no one is doing anything about this!

Beverly Henry (AKA Chopper), another of CCWP’s founders, passed away on March 21, 2014, in large part due to ongoing health problems from years of poor prison health care. Chopper was an early peer health educator, reaching out to teach people about HIV, Hep C and other health issues. Judy Ricci, another CCWP founder and peer health educator, was paroled only to die too quickly partly as a result of years of medical neglect inside. 2014 has seen too many deaths inside California women’s prisons. CCWP is currently working with family and community members to demand an independent investigation into the March 13, 2014 death of Shadae Schmidt (aka Dae Dae) in the CIW SHU.

Speaking out against the poor medical care inside is an incredible act of resistance and an expression of the fire inside. This Fire Inside is burning brightly today. Because of the pressure and reporting from people inside, the State Legislature held hearings in Sacramento and legislators went to visit CCWF in Spring 2014. Formerly incarcerated people have spoken out at the legislative hearings, and been heard and seen by legislators. Their truth cannot be denied.

The only answer to the inhumane and unconstitutional overcrowding is to release people! The answer is NOT more prisons and ‘expanded medical facilities’. The answer is NOT opening private prisons for women that will profit off of abuse, like the new GEO prison opening in McFarland. Can the CDCR ever provide a community standard of health care? After 9 years of Receivership oversight, and 19 years after the filing of Shumate v Wilson, we say NO! The CDCR has proved they cannot provide humane, decent care.

As Charisse Shumate wrote in the very first issue of Fire Inside in 1996, “If walls could talk we would not have to beg help.” But the walls did talk because of the powerful voices of Charisse, Chopper, Judy, Linda, and many others. And we will not be silent until our families are safe and at home.
In March 2014, Federal Judge Lawrence Karlton upheld a ruling against Prop 89 and some provisions of Prop 9 (aka Marsy’s Law). The state immediately appealed, which means there is as yet no change in parole procedures for lifers, but if the appeal is defeated these decisions will be a huge win for prisoners.

Judge Karlton’s ruling on the class action lawsuit Gilman v Brown means that it is unconstitutional for the Parole Board to use Marsy’s Law to deny a parole hearing for more than five years for lifers convicted of murder before 2008, or for more than two years for lifers convicted of any other crime before 2008. Judge Karlton ruled that applying Marsy’s Law to people sentenced before Prop 9 went into effect violates the ex post facto right of lifers. Marsy’s Law changed the California state constitution, granting victims of crime and their relatives and representatives the right to participate in prosecution and to testify at parole hearings. The law was a disaster for lifers, requiring the BPH to start with a 15 year denial, and then decrease to 10, 7, 5 or 3 years if presented with “clear and compelling evidence” in favor of reduction. Since passing Marsy’s Law, the percentage of lifers in prison and the length of their sentences have increased. In 2009, 20% of lifers (656) received parole denials of 7 years or more. In 2009, only 3.5% received denials of two years or less.

Prop 89, passed in 1988, gave the Governor the authority to approve, modify, or reverse any decision by BPH regarding the parole of people sentenced to an indeterminate term for murder. Judge Karlton observed that Governors have used the law to deny parole to prisoners approved by the parole board. If Karlton’s ruling stands, the Gov. will no longer have the right to reverse the BPH and deny parole to lifers who were convicted of murder before Prop 89 went into effect.

Update on Prop 9 and Prop 89

Proposition 36, passed by California voters in November 2012, revises the State’s Three Strikes Law and permits resentencing for certain qualifying people whose third strike was not considered by the court as a serious or violent offense. According to the CDCR website, over 1,700 petitions have been reviewed by state courts and only 59 petitions were denied resentencing. Of the 1,649 people who were resentenced, 1,571 have already been released from CDCR custody. An additional 78 people have been resentenced and are waiting for a future release date.

The deadline to file a petition asking for resentencing is coming soon!!!!! Prop 36 went into effect on Nov. 7, 2012. Petitions must be filed by Nov. 6, 2014.

If you think you may qualify, contact the Public Defender’s Office in the county of your current conviction. If you need the contact information for your county Public Defender, please write to us ASAP and write on the outside of your envelope PROP 36, so we can reply quickly.
Death whispered in my ear tonight, like the passing wind.
The very moment I felt the cold breeze it was already gone.
Only the chill coursing through my body proves its existence.
Listen, it’s so soft it sounds inviting, welcoming you in,
Such a quiet noise, it’s mistaken for silence.
Everything stops, as if paused in mid-motion.
The briefest of seconds you’re able to see the nothingness
As it moves on, with it brings a complete darkness.
My screams are drowning with everything not said.
Can’t you hear my voice? Speaking with my pen?
Every fear I have
All the doubt I carry
The grief that sits, swinging, deep at the bottom of my soul.
Alone, I don’t feel as threatened by them
Combined they fester into a growing danger,
An exploding pain.
So I use my greatest weapon of defense,
My painted words fight fiercely,
The pen moves on victorious in battle,
And as it writes its last word,
This war has been won
For now.

From a friend of Shadoe’s in the SHU: I want you to know the background story behind the poem. A few months ago someone very close to Shadoe died suddenly and unexpectedly. She witnessed the fight for her friend’s life right in front of her door and she had a very personal, spiritual moment. Later that day she found out her friend didn’t make it.

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Under California Penal Code Section 3407, starting January 1, 2013: no pregnant woman in a California prison, jail, or juvenile facility may be handcuffed behind her back, chained around her ankles or shackled around her belly. During a medical emergency, a medical person can require that a pregnant woman be released from her restraints. During labor, delivery and recovery, no pregnant woman is to be restrained at all unless there is a stated security reason for that restraint. AND, if a medical person states that a pregnant woman must be released from her restraints, no restraints may be used.

No woman should be shackled while pregnant or while giving birth. Please let us know directly if you (or anyone you know) have been wrongly restrained. To request a free copy of our report, No More Shackles and for more info write: Legal Services for Prisoners With Children, ATTN: Jesse Stout, 1540 Market Street, Suite 490, San Francisco, CA 94102.
The Fire Inside

Fonda Gayden, CCWF

When I came here 35 years ago, I was angry. I was hurt—physically, mentally and spiritually. I fought very hard to become a person who lives with dignity. Now I have completed my GED, gotten a college degree and completed a lot of other vocational certificates. More importantly, however, I have become a person full of compassion. I have lots of it now, where I didn’t have it before I came.

I want my life to be a service to others. I want my story about my dysfunctional life to be a lesson to others so they can avoid the mistakes I made. To have compassion, an open loving heart towards other people, is healing. Don’t judge, don’t assume, don’t stereotype.

To become whole, you have to be honest with yourself, take an inventory, figure out what made you a dysfunctional, hate-filled person. It could have come from various sources: abuse, rape, poverty, addiction as a way to deal with the hurt in your life. You need to be honest about it. Talk about it, not to re-live it, but to turn it around to make it empower you to help others get past their hurt, to realize that to share means you are not alone. When you learn to ask for help you practice an open loving heart.

Now I am facilitating a Natural Healing Group. It teaches how not to suppress yourself by shutting down or medicating. It’s about talking it out, sharing with others in the group. I want people to understand that people do change. It’s a slow process, but it works! Don’t hold on to the hurt in your life. By sharing you can get rid of it. I know who I am today—a loving person who would help anyone. All I need is a chance.

Brutality and Use of Excessive Force
Tammarra Tanner, CIW

I am 29 years old and currently in SHU. I suffered a brutal attack of excessive and unnecessary force by a male CO on May 23, 2013. I’ll never forget that day. I was escorted by this CO to medical, handcuffed to the examination chair. I was being seen for migraine headaches that I get due to past head trauma. The RN and I had a mild disagreement about proper medical treatment and medication. The RN said there was nothing she could do to help me.

In frustration I stated, “You guys don’t do shit. This is bullshit,” and began to lean forward to get up. Then the CO began to pepper spray me at arm’s length from my face. I pleaded with him stating, “Please stop spraying me. What do you want me to do? I’ll comply.” He said, “Get up.” As I did, he began spraying me once again. I could not see or breathe as I am allergic to OC Pepper spray (which is documented in my file).

Next thing I knew, I was snatched out of the exam chair, slammed around the office a few times until I was slammed on the floor with the CO on top of me. I felt blood gushing from my mouth. I was panicking, not able to breathe, so I began to scream for the Sergeant; the CO finally loosened up and the alarm button was pressed. I suffered several facial fractures, my teeth went through my bottom lip where one was knocked out and another was chipped. Since then I have placed staff complaints, 602s all based on the misuse of force and lack of medical care, among other issues related to this brutal attack. I even complained to ISU, but no one took the time to really address the issue.

COs, among other staff, often cover up the way they mistreat us. They fabricate stories of how an inmate did this or did that to cover up their own unprofessional mistakes and blame us for what happened. It’s as if we are not human beings, only a number, disregarded and ignored. I just pray that someone will reach out and help me bring this story to peoples’ attention to help prevent this happening to another inmate at CIW, and help me pursue justice.
On February 23rd, 2014, over 250 people packed Humanist Hall in Oakland, CA to hear from Piper Kerman, author of the book *Orange is the New Black*, and a fiery panel of formerly incarcerated women and trans prisoners. Moderated by Shanelle Matthews, the panel addressed issues that impact people in women’s prisons, including: atrocious health care; family separation and unity; gender identity, sexual expression and resistance behind walls. Voices of women and trans prisoners were brought into the conversation through recordings from people inside. After the panel, formerly incarcerated people were honored and there was time for Q&A. In a message to CCWP and Justice Now (the event organizers) following the event, Piper wrote:

*Thank you all for a truly amazing afternoon. I know it was an enormous amount of work to put together such a powerful event, and it’s worth it. I am especially honored to have shared the panel with such impressive and audacious women.*

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**CCWF Health Care Condemned!**

In December 2013, the CCWF Health Care Evaluation issued by court-ordered independent medical reviewers noted serious problems and unacceptable health care at CCWF...with NO press and no attention paid to the shocking findings!

In their summary findings, the medical experts state: “We find that the Central California Women’s Facility is not providing adequate medical care, and that there are systemic issues resulting in preventable morbidity and mortality and that present an on-going serious risk of harm to patients.... We believe that the majority of problems are attributable to overcrowding, insufficient health care staffing, and inadequate medical bed space (p.5).”

The following problems were highlighted and have been repeatedly confirmed by prisoners at CCWF:

- Inadequate continuity of care for prisoners who were transferred from VSPW to CCWF.
- Insufficient beds in the Skilled Nursing Facility.
- Poor quality of care for chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes, HIV, Hep C, etc.)
- Inadequate assessments and appropriate referrals by nursing staff. Physicians do not address the reason the patient was referred and do not do assessments for multiple conditions in one visit.

- Health record inadequacies, including insufficient staff to update records on a timely basis.
- Pharmacy problems, including lapses in continuity of chronic disease medication and medication errors.
- Disciplinary, credentialing and peer review problems with providers.
- Ad-seg clinic is only cleaned twice a week and the exam table doesn’t permit a gynecological exam.
- People using wheelchairs are unable to access exam room.

CCWP has also noted an increase in drug overdoses and suicides. Solitary confinement is increasingly used to house prisoners with mental health problems at CCWF.

This report reveals a shocking picture of terrible health care. The problems are also the result of a culture of neglect and incompetence, racist attitudes of providers, and an overall disregard for the health of prisoners-patients. If such a report were issued for a community health care facility, its accreditation would immediately be revoked. However, because it is prison health care, the recommendations of the medical experts are limited and do not respond to the full scope of the problems that the report identifies.
Save a Life
PREVENT OVERDOSE

If you haven't used in a while, your body isn't used to the same amount as before. Go slow and be careful.

If someone looks like they are in trouble, check in with them.

HOW TO PREVENT AN OVERDOSE

- **Know what you're taking:** It's hard to get the same thing each time you use, it may be stronger or weaker or cut with something different than you're used to.

- **Test your drugs:** If you haven't used in a while your body isn't used to the same amount as before. Go slow and be careful.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE IS OVERDOSing?
If a person has any of these signs and can't respond to you, they're overdosing.
Not all overdoses happen immediately. An overdose can happen up to 1 to 3 hours after a person has used.

WHAT TO DO...
If you think someone might be overdosing or if someone is not breathing
1. Try to wake person up by yelling their name & rubbing the middle of their chest hard with your knuckles.
2. Call for help—say the person is "not breathing and won't wake up," no

WHAT NOT TO DO
These things will not keep the person alive if they are overdosing and might do them harm. There are a lot of myths out there.

- **DO NOT** put them in the shower.
- **DO NOT** inject them with milk.
- **DO NOT** inject them with an upper to try to counteract the downer.
• Mixing different types of drugs or drugs with alcohol puts you at risk: Especially benzos (Xanax, Klonopin, Ativan, Valium) or other downers with opiates like heroin, oxycodone, hydrocodone & morphine.

• Let someone you trust know if you are using something new: If no one knows then no one can help you if something goes wrong or if you’re putting yourself in a dangerous or bad situation.

First, look for these things:
• Heavy nodding
• No response when you yell person’s name or rub the middle of their chest hard
• Dark bluish lips or fingertips
• Slow breathing (less than 1 breath every 5 seconds) or no breathing
• Very limp body and very pale, bluish, or grayish skin color
• Choking sounds or a gurgling, snoring noise

need to mention drugs.

3. Try rescue breathing (see other side).
4. Put the person on their side so they don’t choke on vomit or fluid in their mouth.
5. If your friend has taken any kind of opiate, like heroin or pain pills, they may need to be given “Narcan” to wake them up. Let the prison medic

- Do NOT try to get them to eat charcoal pills to absorb the drugs.
- Do NOT feed them baking soda.

Putting ice in armpits, crotch, and body cavities may keep them from slipping into an overdose but won’t help someone start breathing again if they’ve stopped.

Remember...

Airway - Breathing - Compression
A - B - C

Here are some simple steps to follow if it seems like someone has stopped breathing or is struggling to breathe.

1. Try to wake the person.
2. Yell their name and rub the middle of their chest with your knuckles.
3. If they do not respond, call for HELP and check their breathing.
4. If they are breathing, then just keep their airway open (see picture), if they are NOT breathing then begin rescue breathing.

NOTE: If you think someone’s heart has stopped, begin compressions immediately.

Open the Airway. Tilt the head back and lift the chin up, pinch the nose and make a complete seal over the person’s mouth with your mouth (see picture). Give 2 Breaths.

After 2 rescue breaths start the cycle of 30 compressions to 2 breaths until help arrives. If you’re not comfortable giving rescue breaths keep giving compressions until help arrives, the person starts breathing or moving, or you’re too tired to continue.

Give 30 compressions.

For more information, contact the DOPE Project at 510.444.6969

Let’s take care of each other

Design by Dunya Alwan
En el año pasado escuchamos muchas de las preocupaciones de gente dentro de las prisiones de mujeres sobre el aumento de sobredosis de heroína o con mezclas de heroína y pastillas para dolor y/o alcohol. Si usted usa o si está cercana a gente que usa, saber cómo reconocer y responder a una sobredosis puede salvarle una vida. La CCWP trabajó con el Proyecto DOPE y mujeres dentro, para crear un pequeño panfleto sobre prevención y respuesta a una sobredosis. El cartel en las páginas 8-9 tiene esta información.

La gente ha luchado y ganado leyes de “Buen Samaritano” en los Estados Unidos. Estas leyes protegen a quien hace una llamada al 911 para una sobredosis y que no corra el riesgo de que sea arrestado. La idea detrás de estas leyes es de animar a la gente para que ayude a alguien que lo necesita. La política del Buen Samaritano en la prisión puede significar que la gente que pida auxilio no será forzada a dar una muestra de orina y no será puesto en ad seg o castigado. La gente estaría más dispuesta a ayudar si supieran que no serán castigados.

Una razón importante para pedir ayuda es porque los médicos en prisión pueden tener Narcan, una droga que bloquea opiáceos (heroína, pastillas para el dolor, etc) y puede ayudar a alguien que sufre una sobredosis. El Narcan puede prevenir que estas personas mueran. Si pides ayuda, puedes decir que la persona “no está respirando y no despierta”. Una vez que llegue la ayuda, puedes decir que la persona estaba fuera de sí misma y sugieran que cree que necesita Narcan.

Mientras que espera a que llegue la ayuda o si no hay ayuda disponible, vea la página 8-9 para saber cómo puede ayudar. Si usted cree que alguien tiene una sobredosis de heroína u otro opiáceo y usted sabe cómo efectuar respiración de emergencia – inténtralo. Usted no corre el riesgo de contraer una enfermedad seria si da respiración de boca a boca. Si da respiración de boca a boca y la persona tiene gripe, puede ser contagiada de eso, pero no de VIH o Hep C. Si alguien tiene una sobredosis de un estimulante (“upper”), es posible que esta persona este sufriendo un paro cardiaco. Pedir ayuda y hacer compresiones de pecho.

Ya sea que usted use regularmente o solo por diversión, puede estar en riesgo de sufrir una sobredosis. Si no ha usado por algún tiempo, su cuerpo no está acostumbrado a cierta cantidad como antes. VAYA DESPACIO. En mayo, un amigo cercano a la familia murió de una sobredosis de heroína. El estaba joven. Había dejado de usar por un tiempo y después comenzó de nuevo. Eso es particularmente peligroso para sufrir una sobredosis – su tolerancia es baja, más baja de lo que se imagina. Me recuerda lo increíblemente fuerte que somos – lo que nuestros cuerpos y almas sobreviven- pero también lo frágiles que somos y que tan fácil se nos puede ir la vida.

Esperamos que este y futuros artículos sobre la reducción del daño pueda ayudarnos a cuidarnos, y mejorarnos, cómo nosotras mismas y unas a las otras, y que nos mantenga y mantenga a nuestros seres queridos vivas y seguras, para que podamos alcanzar las vidas que queremos y la justicia que merecemos.

Si quiere que le envíemos panfletos de prevención de sobredosis, por favor envíenos una nota a: CCWP, ATTN: OD Info, 1540 Market Street Room 490, San Francisco, CA, 94102.
In the past year we have heard a lot of concern from people inside women’s prisons about the rise in heroin overdoses or from mixing heroin with other pain killers and/or alcohol. If you use or if you are around people who use, knowing how to spot and respond to an overdose can save someone’s life. CCWP worked with the DOPE Project and women inside to create a small pamphlet on preventing and responding to overdose. The poster on pages 8-9 has the same information.

People have fought for and won “Good Samaritan” laws around the US. These laws protect someone from risking search or arrest if they call 911 for an overdose. The idea behind the laws is to encourage people to call for help if someone needs it. A Good Samaritan policy in prison might mean that people calling for help if they think someone is overdosing will not be forced to give urine tests and will not be placed in ad seg or punished. People may be more willing to help if they know they won’t be punished.

One important reason to call for help is because the prison medics should have Narcan, a drug that blocks opiates (heroin, pain pills, etc.) and can help someone who is overdosing. Narcan may prevent them from dying. If you call for help, you can just say that the person “is not breathing and won’t wake up.” Once someone is there you can say that they were pretty out of it (nodding) and suggest they may need Narcan.

While you are waiting for help or if help isn’t available, see pages 8-9 for how you can help. If you think someone is overdosing from heroin or other opiates and you know rescue breathing – try it. You cannot get any serious illness by giving someone mouth-to-mouth breathing. If they have a cold or flu, you could get that but you cannot get HIV or Hep C from rescue breathing. If someone is overdosing from uppers they are probably having a heart attack. There isn’t a lot that you can do except call for help and do chest compressions.

Whether you use regularly or just for fun, you can be at risk for overdose. If you haven’t used in a while your body isn’t used to the same amount as before. GO SLOW. In May, a close family friend died of a heroin overdose. He was young. He had stopped using for a while and then started up again. It’s an especially dangerous time for overdose – your tolerance is low, lower than you think. It reminded me of how unbelievably strong we are – what our bodies and souls survive – but also how fragile we are and how easily life can slip away.

We hope this article and future articles about harm reduction will help us take care of ourselves and each other, and keep us and the ones we love alive and safe so that we keep reaching for the lives we want and fighting for the justice we deserve.

If you want OD prevention info, write: CCWP, OD Info, 1540 Market Street Room 490, San Francisco, CA, 94102.

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**Harm Reduction: Preventing and Responding to Overdose**  
*Sara Kershnar with input from many women inside and out of prison*

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**AGE 46**  
*Linda Woo*

My breasts  
Are empty pillowcases.  
Not starched or crisply ironed,
But gently used,
The excess skin  
Toting around  
Hollow individuals.

Little white hairs  
Sprout up among the black ones  
In my private places.  
They are coarse

And resilient,  
Baiting me  
To root them out.

I can’t look at  
The skin on my face  
Up close.  
Why didn’t I stay  
Out of the sun  
Like my mother  
Told me?

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**LWOP Story Project**

*Living Chance: Storytelling to End Life Without Parole*, is a multimedia storytelling project in collaboration with people serving LWOP in California women’s prisons. People serving LWOP are the “lost population” of the prisoner rights movement. Through visual storytelling, *A Living Chance* will make visible the struggles and resiliency of people who are, essentially, sentenced to die in prison. Watch our video on youtube.com

Your donation to *A Living Chance* will go directly to the creation of the website and travel costs to the prisons, building a campaign to change these draconian sentences. Donations can be made by contacting adrienne@womenprisoners.org or sending checks to CCWP/LSPC memo: *A Living Chance*.

If you are sentenced to LWOP and want to share your story please write to CCWP, ATTN: Adrienne.
The Fire Inside

The February road trip to see Chopper and the gathering in LA of many of her friends and family was filled with so much love. People were there who knew her 40+ years, and her daughter and granddaughter were able to come in from Las Vegas. There were more than 200 years of collective incarceration in that room and each of us carry our own scars from the journey. Each of us knows we are all the stronger and bound that much closer because of them.

Chopper said to Phoebe as we left, “Don’t let me down!” As she has for decades since the founding of CCWP, Chopper speaks for all prisoners, particularly those calling for resistance. She suffered so much due to medical negligence and misdiagnosis by the CDCR medical system. So many have suffered and died before they should have because of the toxic conditions and outright medical abuse. We have to continue to fight. I appreciate everyone who stands up in whatever way manifests in your life to challenge the racist, oppressive, abusive nature of the prison system and to support collective healing of those whom it seeks to devour.

Saying Goodbye to Chopper
Deirdre Wilson

The Power of the People Frees the People’s Lawyer
Jesse Trepper

Lynne Stewart, veteran civil rights activist and lawyer, left Carswell Federal Medical Center on compassionate release on December 31st, 2013. Stewart, known for representing such high-profile political defendants as Willie Holder of the Black Panthers and David Gilbert of the Weather Underground, was the subject of an international grassroots campaign that gathered over 60,000 signatures and prompted innumerable solidarity demonstrations and phone calls to the President and Attorney General demanding her release. Stewart was diagnosed with breast cancer before her trial began and her condition worsened over the course of her four years in federal prison.

In 2009, Stewart was sentenced to 10 years for distributing a press release to Reuters news agency on behalf of her imprisoned client, Egyptian Muslim cleric Omar Abdel-Rahman, in violation of Special Administrative Measures. Sheikh Abdel-Rahman was convicted of “seditious conspiracy” to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993. Stewart, after performing an act she had done many times before for other political defendants, was convicted of providing material support to terrorists.

At a May 4, 2014 Oakland event welcoming Lynne and raising money for her medical bills and the campaign to free Mumia Abu Jamal, supporters expressed a different analysis: that Sheikh Abdel-Rahman was targeted by the U.S. government for his outspoken stance on American imperialism and Egyptian complicity, and Stewart was similarly targeted for opposing the political will of a post-911 federal agenda to roll back civil rights and silence dissent. “I was accused of the big ‘T,’ such a scare word, such a fear word. But you came to my rescue and I did walk out of that prison and I am free,” said Lynne at the event. “The prosecution is flexing its muscle all the time, trying to take more and more away from us and we can’t let them. Every incursion is so important; if it happens to one of us, it happens to all of us.”

Supporters can stay updated at lynnestewart.org and contribute to Lynne’s ongoing medical needs through indiegogo at: http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/lynne-stewart-s-medical-fund or by sending a check to: Lynne Stewart Organization, 1070 Dean Street, Brooklyn, NY 11216.
CWP has received many questions from inside about the transmission of HIV, Hep C and AIDS. It is important to dispel rumors and fears that are harmful to our community. People who are HIV+ or who have Hep C or AIDS often face discrimination, alienation, harassment, and violations of their basic human rights. COs threaten people with charges of attempted murder if they get into ‘altercations’ or are caught having sex. People have their rights violated by: having their status revealed to family, staff and other prisoners without their permission; segregation to other prisons (often times higher security); denial of adequate health care; and fewer work-release and re-entry opportunities. Our community is stronger if we fight this discrimination and support each other.

HIV can be transmitted from person to person ONLY through these 5 bodily fluids: blood; semen (cum), including pre-semenal fluid (pre-cum); rectal fluids; vaginal fluids; and breast milk. These fluids from an HIV+ person must come in contact with a mucous membrane or damaged tissue, or be directly injected into the blood (from a needle or syringe) for transmission to occur. **Risky behaviors that can transmit the virus include:**

- Unprotected sex (anal, vaginal, or oral). Unprotected oral sex is lower risk, but transmission can happen if cum or vaginal fluid or menstrual blood get directly into an open cut or sore in the mouth. Sharing something that is used to penetrate two or more people is higher risk than fingers.
- Sharing needles (injection or tattoo), syringes, rinse water, or other equipment (works) used to prepare injection drugs with someone who has HIV or Hep C.
- HIV can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.

**HIV IS NOT SPREAD** by casual contact such as shaking hands, hugging, or saliva. HIV dies after 8 seconds in open air! **You cannot become infected from a toilet seat, a drinking fountain, a doorknob, dishes, drinking glasses, combs/brushes, minor scratches, food, cigarettes, pets, or insects.** You cannot get HIV or Hep C by giving someone CPR, sharing a shower or touching a wheelchair. Being educated about transmission can help you make safer choices and lower your risk of infection. To be safer:

- Make dental dams and finger condoms from latex gloves or plastic wrap. Use them!
- Powdered bleach can be used to clean needles and works.
- Wait on that tattoo especially if you don’t own your own gun and ink.
- Get tested every 6 months if you know you have risky behavior or question your partner’s behavior. Testing is a way to show you love yourself and your partner/s.

If you aren’t having sex or sharing needles with someone **THEIR STATUS ISN’T YOUR BUSINESS. THEY DO NOT HAVE TO TELL YOU!** If they choose to disclose, this is what you can do:

- Do not tease, isolate or harass someone.
- Be supportive and compassionate. Treat them like a normal person because that’s what they are.
- Learn the facts. Share information and encourage people to educate themselves.
- Respect people’s privacy and status. Do not randomly ask people’s status or share other people’s status and respect their wishes about disclosure.
- Be Safe. Reduce transmission by reducing your own and other peoples’ risky activities.

**SHU Prisoners win class action recognition**

Prisoners held for 10 years and more in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay supermax have won the right to challenge – as a class – the constitutionality of their treatment. In June 2014, U.S. District Court Judge Claudia Wilken allowed hundreds of California prisoners to join a lawsuit challenging prolonged solitary confinement in California prisons when she granted their case, Ashker v. Brown, class action status. The question prisoners are raising is simple: Do 10 years in solitary – and even longer, for dozens at Pelican Bay – amount to unconstitutionally cruel and unusual punishment?
Please sign this letter and send it back to CCWP. We will present all letters to legislators.

We the undersigned incarcerated at Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) and California Institution for Women (CIW) and community members, are outraged that CDCR has signed a contract with the GEO Group, the 2nd largest private, for-profit prison corporation in the U.S. According to the contract, GEO will open a new women’s prison in McFarland, CA by fall of 2014. We call upon California State Legislators to direct CDCR to implement existing release programs to reduce the unconstitutional overcrowding instead of opening a new prison!

Once again we are shuffled around without regard for our well-being or our human rights. Since VSPW was converted to a men’s prison in January 2013, we have been subjected to overcrowding at historically high levels (CCWF is now at 185% capacity), even while the state is under court order to reduce the prison population. This is discrimination against people in women’s prisons! As a result of this overcrowding, health care, mail services, food and education have greatly deteriorated. We are locked down more frequently, leading to heightened tensions, drug overdoses and suicides. The prison staff has responded by locking more people into solitary, further violating our human rights.

CDCR could easily implement existing programs to reduce overcrowding, such as: Alternative Custody Programs (ACP); Elder and Medical Parole; and Compassionate Release. Instead, on April 1, 2014 GEO announced its new contract with CDCR to open a 260 bed women’s prison with an “enhanced rehabilitation and recidivism reduction program.” This is nothing but a bad April Fool’s joke! The 260 women who are “chosen” to go to McFarland could be released through one of these other programs instead. None of us should be hauled off to showcase a so-called “gender responsive” prison and to put money in the pockets of GEO investors.

GEO is a private corporation whose business makes profit from imprisoning primarily people of color and immigrants. GEO’s press release about the new prison reports expected revenue of $9 million in McFarland’s first year. Think of how much $9 million could do for providing community-based re-entry services!

GEO has been the subject of numerous lawsuits around the country about atrocious, unconstitutional conditions. Private prisons are notorious for operating with even greater secrecy than the CDCR: assaults are 49% more frequent; racist behavior and sexual abuse by staff are widespread.

- GEO is responsible for human rights violations at many of their facilities. In 2012 GEO was forced to close the Walnut Grove, MS Youth Detention Center after being condemned for allowing, in the words of Fed. Judge Carlton Reeves, “a cesspool of unconstitutional and inhuman acts and conditions to germinate, the sum of which places the offenders at substantial ongoing risk.”
- In March 2014, 1200 people detained in GEO’s Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA (for immigrants) went on hunger strike to protest the grossly inadequate medical care, exorbitant commissary prices and low or no pay for work within the center. Other GEO prisoners have since gone on hunger strike at detention facilities in Conroe, TX and Stewart, GA.
- In January 2014, Governor Jerry Brown’s re-election campaign reported $54,400 in donations from GEO Group. GEO Group has spent $7.6 million on lobbying and campaign contributions in the U.S. in the last decade.
- GEO lobbied to advance laws that increased the time served for drug convictions and other non-violent crimes through mandatory minimum sentencing, three-strikes laws, and truth-in-sentencing laws. GEO was a member of the American Legislative Exchange Commission (ALEC) when the model bill that became AB 1070 (profiling immigrants in Arizona) was drafted. These legal changes resulted in significant profits for GEO.
- GEO operated reentry facilities around the state, including the Taylor Street Center in San Francisco and the Oakland Center in Oakland. Residents experience these facilities as “re-entry prisons” that are structured to threaten and punish people rather than providing support to reenter community life.

It is shameful that CDCR is about to open a for-profit “boutique prison” that does nothing positive to solve the disproportionate overcrowding in the women’s prisons at this time. Assembly Members and Senators, please intervene! Stop the GEO prison from opening. Instead use this $9 million to fully implement existing release programs immediately and fund community-based (not for-profit) reentry programs.

Thank you for listening to this urgent request.
California Coalition for Women Prisoners invites and encourages all women and transgender people who have been or are on the inside to send us your writing, letters, artwork, or poetry.

Please send your stories, art and poetry.

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

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Alternate Custody Progam, a better solution to overcrowding

Jane Dorotik, CIW

May 28, 2014

Dear Interested Party:

I am writing to solicit your assistance with an internal issue here at CIW. As you may be aware, the women’s prisons in California have been extremely overcrowded despite the court-ordered population reduction because of the conversion of VSPW to VSP for Men. CCWF continues to be populated at approximately 189% of design capacity, and CIW (when calculating actual available beds) is at approximately 190% of design capacity. The implementation of the Alternative Custody Program (ACP, codified into the Penal Code in 2011) has been a dismal failure with only 290 women released from prison and 2700 legitimate applications denied. Hence the overcrowding is untenable and getting worse.

The overcrowding has resulted in continued horrendous healthcare and failed mental healthcare, with more than six deaths/suicides in the past six months. It has also created an extreme increase in the internal drug trade and all the associated fights, lock-downs and increased restrictions on prison life. It is an impossible environment to survive in, much less access any real rehabilitation.

I understand that Administration is justifiably concerned about safety and security in the prison. We are also very concerned, but we have very different ideas about how to resolve the untenable living conditions. What CIW Administration is attempting to implement is a new Lock/Unlock policy which will limit women’s access to showers, phones and laundry. They also intend to close our beautiful circle (where women socialize), and impose other restrictions.

I am asking for your voice and support to encourage CIW to look to the underlying cause of the overcrowding, and to listen to our voices—those incarcerated—in coming up with a reasonable, pro-rehabilitative response to this situation. I am asking you to contact legislators and let them know you are concerned about all the problems overcrowding creates, and that you want your tax dollars spent on real rehabilitation, not just counterproductive warehousing.

Let your legislators and local media know that an expanded ACP needs to be implemented ASAP. It was CDCR who said four years ago that more than 4500 women were eligible for ACP, yet only 290 women have been approved for this program. Let CDCR know that at a cost to taxpayers of $60,000 per year, per inmate, you expect more and you will not stand for any more deaths, suicides, fights, or drugs.

Thank you in advance for any attention you can bring to this critical issue.

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网络女性囚犯
加利福尼亚女性囚犯联盟
1540 Market St., Room 490
San Francisco, CA 94102

地址服务请求
非营利
美国邮政
PAID
San Francisco, Ca.
Permit #404

来和我们一起工作吧！
CCWP志愿者晚会在每月的第一个周三晚上6点举行。
1540市场街，第490室，旧金山
联系方式：(415) 255-7036 x4
www.womenprisoners.org
Fax: (415) 552-3150
Email: info@womenprisoners.org

CCWP使命
CCWP是一个草根社会公正组织，其成员来自监狱内外，挑战监狱工业综合体（PIC）对妇女、跨性别群体和有色人种社区施加的机构暴力。我们看到为种族和性别公正而奋斗是拆解PIC的关键，我们优先考虑被影响最深的人、家庭和社区在建立这一运动中领导的作用。

是的，我想支持女性囚犯！
- 请与我们联系以参加
- 附上$25的捐款以帮助发送给囚犯的时事通讯
- 附上捐款$________

名：__________________________________________

地址：________________________________________

电话/电子邮件：________________________________

请将支票寄到：CCWP/LSPC, 1540 Market St., Room 490, San Francisco, CA 94102

由Van LobenSels Rembe Rock, Women’s Foundation RGHR Giving Circle, Left Tilt, Ben & Jerry’s, Solidago Peace Development Fund, Resist, Queer Qumbia, Oakland V-Day资助