

Fall Edition
October 2021

the inside journal



Who is Initiate Justice?

Initiate Justice is an organization led by people whose lives have been impacted by the California prison system - people who are currently inside, formerly incarcerated, or those who have loved ones inside. Our goal is to build the political power of people impacted by incarceration so we can fight for freedom and bring everyone home. We are 45,000 incarcerated members, 180 Inside Organizers, 180 Outside Organizers, and members and volunteers across California, working together to build our knowledge and understanding of the political system, and changing laws to build the world we want to live in.



The IJ team in the office.



Three IJ staff who came home and just voted for the 1st time!



You're holding the autumn issue of *The Inside Journal*!

Initiate Justice's quarterly newsletter has become *The Inside Journal*, a 4-times-a-year magazine that shares news about California state laws, CDCR policies, and campaigns pushing for prison abolition, as well as stories and articles gathered from Initiate Justice's inside and outside members. We hope the magazine is informative and fun, and builds connections between all parts of the Initiate Justice community.

What's inside?

- Interview with our Policy Manager, Greg Fidell - Pg 2
- Member Artwork - Pg 4
- Policy Corner - Pg 5 & 6

Mobilizing New Voters for the CA Recall Election

New staff member, Efrain, was featured in an article on Spectrum News about new and renewed voters showing up to the polls. The article discussed California's voter support for Prop 17, and how our team had been working to register roughly 50,000 people on parole to vote in time for the recall election for governor. Towards this effort, we hosted Secretary of State, Dr. Shirley Weber, at an online event to encourage those eligible, with criminal records, to get registered and get voting. **The recall election was held on September 14th and the incumbent (the person currently in elected office) Governor Gavin Newsom was declared the winner with 62% of the vote.**

We receive thousands of letters every few months! Please give us 1.5 months to reply to you.



When you send us multiple letters asking for a response, it just takes us longer to get any answer back to you since we have to sort, read, and write to your duplicate letters. Also, please write as clearly as possible on new member sign up sheets and letters to us so that our staff and volunteers can read it. For letter guidelines/tips, see page 4.

INITIATE JUSTICE MAILING ADDRESS

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Los Angeles, CA 90015

WEBSITE

www.InitiateJustice.org

EMAIL

info@InitiateJustice.org

Social Media

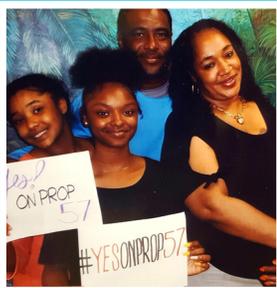
facebook.com/InitiateJustice
instagram.com/InitiateJustice
twitter.com/InitiateJustice

abolition is for everybody

Abolition Is For Everybody (AIFE) is a podcast that tackles the sometimes-difficult conversations around prison abolition. It is co-hosted by three members of the Initiate Justice team—Taina, Lee and Ra. All three are system impacted, and add their perspectives to friendly chats with special guests to delve into the history, futures, obstacles, and joys of abolition.

Abolition is for Everybody launched in June of 2021, and since then we've had six episodes. We've covered topics like: Abolition 101, decriminalizing drug use and mental health issues, the importance of community connections, gender equity, the school to prison pipeline, and poverty.

The transcripts for these are available on our website!
www.initiatejustice.org/podcast



Happy 5th Birthday to IJ!

Initiate Justice celebrates 5 years in the fight against incarceration.

A Quick Interview with IJ's Policy Manager, Greg



How did COVID change the legislative processes?

Because of the ongoing effects of COVID, lawmakers were each asked to carry a reduced number of bills in the 2021-22 legislative cycle. As a result, everything became a squeeze and there was greater competition to find authors to carry bills.

There was also a lot of uncertainty around the state budget which pinched some really good bills this year.

How do you choose the bills you'll work on for next year?

We get so many great bill ideas from our Inside Organizers. In addition, we have community organizers out here who send us lots of ideas too. We try to work on bills that directly improve the lives of our Inside Members and put us on a path to end mass incarceration.

I wish we could do more bills each year, but we try to take a measured approach where we don't stretch ourselves too thin and instead put our hearts into each bill we sponsor. With AB 1509 for example, our research showed that gun enhancements are the most common type of enhancement in CA. So that bill would have impacted 30,000+ incarcerated people and is something we wanted to put our energy behind.

Thanks for taking the time to talk with us. Is there anything you'd like to add?

This will be the last decade where mass incarceration exists in CA. We will end extreme sentencing, we will close prisons, and we will build a future where communities are healthy and safe. Please stay involved with IJ and continue to support our work by filling out legislative letters of support. I use all of your stories when I lobby lawmakers about our bills to help change their hearts and minds.

ART CALL

Guidelines for Submission

All submissions are donations to Initiate Justice.

Theme:

Abolition (What does abolition mean to you? How do you envision abolition? What has incarceration meant to you and your loved ones?)

In a cover letter, include:

Title of your piece, materials used, where/when it was created, and (optional) 2-3 sentences describing your art.

Notes from Gallery Consultants:

- We will not use artwork with hand symbols/signs or anything gang related. Consultants and former IOs will be reviewing
- Please do not write "Initiate Justice" on the artwork.
- Limit the amount of words on the art itself

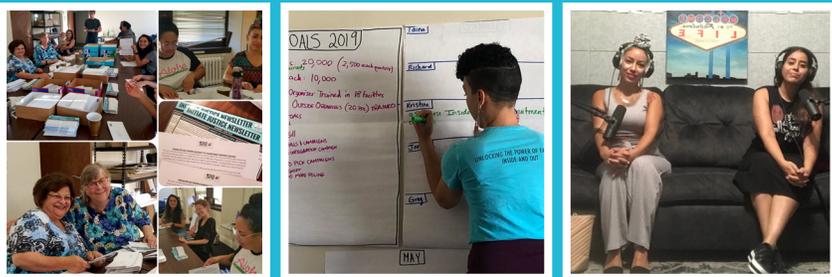
Selection Process:

Gallery consultants will review and choose the artwork to be used in the show. You will be notified around April 2022, only if your piece is selected.

Everyone will receive an update on details for this event in the January 2022 edition of *The Inside Journal*.

Kind reminder:

We provide different ways to get involved in our movement towards abolition (ex. legislative letters of support, donations, etc). All forms of participation, movement holding, and power building are optional. We are simply here to make them available.



Thank you for joining us in our movement!

A Message from Organizers Working On Repealing the Three Strikes Law

We would like to sincerely thank Initiate Justice and everyone who donated to support the movement to repeal California's Three Strikes Law! So far, we have raised more than \$2,000 from trust withdrawals, more than \$3,000 from a fundraiser held by Initiate Justice Inside Organizers at High Desert State Prison, and countless pieces of artwork that we will use for a fundraiser later on this year. Everyone who donated will receive letters of acknowledgement in the coming months.

We are incredibly grateful for contributions towards this important fundraiser, and we also want to provide an update. After much thought, conversation, and advice from political strategists and consultants, we believe that the campaign to Repeal Three Strikes is not likely to be successful if we placed it on the state ballot in 2022. In order to get 51% percent of CA voters to say yes, we need more than one year to build support, to share stories of people impacted by Three Strikes, to get almost one million signatures from voters to put this issue onto the ballot, and to mobilize people statewide to vote yes.

Therefore, we have adjusted our strategy to spending the next two years doing intense research, polling, and grassroots organizing so that we can place this initiative on the November 2024 ballot instead.

All organizers involved in this movement are directly impacted by incarceration and recognize the urgency of repealing this law. It is because we realize how important this is that we want to make sure that we do this right - we do not want to try in 2022 but fail, because that could prevent us from trying again for several years to come.

While we recognize this will be disappointing news for many, we have to work hard and work smart to make sure that when we do qualify this initiative for the ballot, we are successful. We will continue to send updates on our campaign's progress to Initiate Justice to let you know how the funds you have contributed are supporting our research and organizing efforts. Stay tuned.

Artwork from our Inside Members



Fernando D.



David L.



Joe W.



Donald W.

Initiate Justice is here to help you build your political power, with the goal of helping you and everyone inside come home and to create a new society based on true justice.

One part of justice is consent - that people should have the choice to agree to engage in a conversation or activity voluntarily. Initiate Justice receives many amazing letters from you, our Inside Members, but we have also been receiving letters with lewd, sexual, or romantic content directed towards our staff, our Outside Organizers, and our Outside Members and volunteers. All the photos in the Inside Journal are meant to build community with you as a member, but people engaging in IJ's work on the outside are not part of IJ in order to penpal or start a romantic relationship. We ask that you please keep your letters on topic to your liberation, power building, education, and political issues, and not romance or sexual comments. Thank you.

How To Submit Your Work to *The Inside Journal*

We will ask for submissions of artwork, poems, and stories from our Inside Members (you!). To participate:

- 1 Mail your work to our P.O. Box and write "Attn: Magazine"
- 2 Keep written material to less than 150 words. Do not send anything you need back.
- 3 We cannot send anything back.

By sending *The Inside Journal* artwork, poems, & stories you are giving Initiate Justice permission to use your material and publish it in future issues of the magazine.

Policy Corner

Assembly Bill 292 (Asm. Mark Stone): Access to Programming Act.

**SIGNED BY THE
GOVERNOR!**

- This bill seeks to limit disruptions to programming by:
 - Minimizing transfers by seeking voluntary transfers first;
 - Prioritizing incarcerated persons for similar programming when transferred;
 - Offering programming to the greatest extent possible during lockdowns;
 - Ensuring alternatives to in-person programming such as tablets or correspondence do not replace or diminish in-person programming;
 - Minimizing program waitlists to less than one year to the greatest extent possible;
 - Minimizing conflicts with work schedules;
 - Making programming available for everyone (regardless of sentence length) to the greatest extent possible.
- As amended in Senate Appropriations, AB 292 does NOT affect credit earning. It's an unresolved legal question as to whether or not legislation that addresses credit earning is constitutional because Prop 57 gave CDCR authority to award credits. However, we plan to address credit earning in a bill next year.
- AB 292 will be implemented starting Jan 1, 2022.

Assembly Bill 256 (Assemblymember Ash Kalra): The Racial Justice Act 4 All.

TWO-YEAR BILL

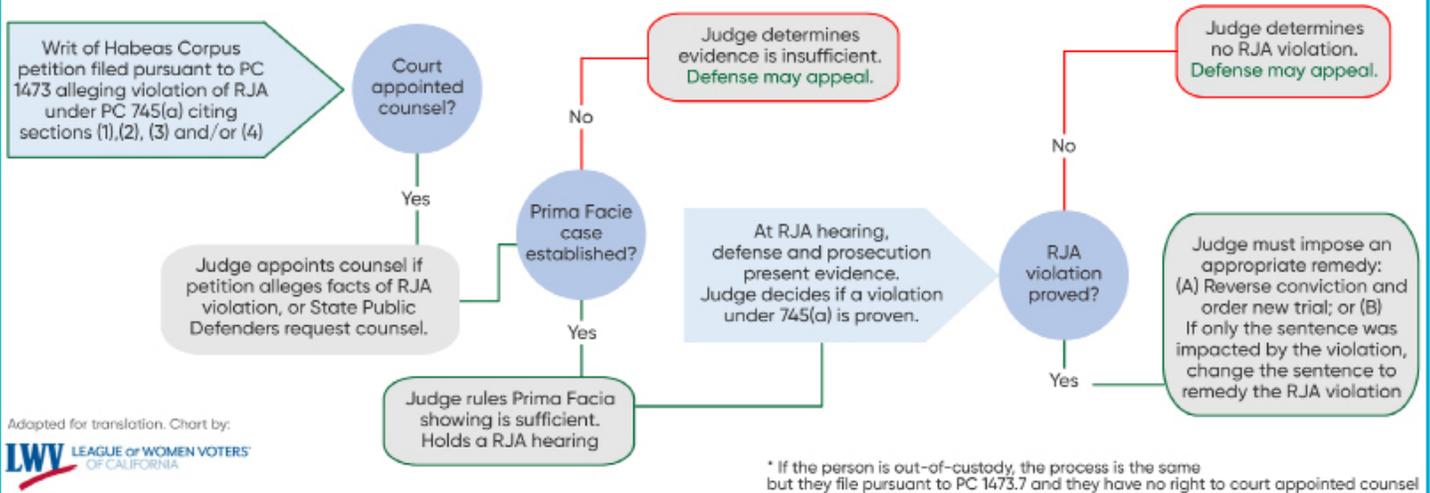
- AB 256 (Kalra), The Racial Justice Act 4 All, would make existing legal protections against racism in the courts retroactive. If this bill passes, incarcerated people could be able to file petitions to get back to court for hearings to challenge racism. (Petition process explained below)
- Under AB 256, these are the following ways to challenge racial bias in someone's case:
 - Explicit racial bias by an attorney, judge, law enforcement officer, expert witness, or juror involved in the case.
 - Use of racially discriminatory language in court and during the criminal proceedings, whether intentional or not.
 - Racial bias in jury selection, such as removing all or nearly all people of color from the jury.
 - Statistical disparities in charging and convictions – that is, evidence that people of one race are proportionately charged or convicted of a specific crime or enhancement.
 - Statistical disparities in sentencing – that is, evidence that people of one race receive longer or more severe sentences, including the death penalty or life without parole.
 - The statistical data to support the racial disparities will be available in the future.
 - (See graph at top of page 6.)

AB 292
signed into law!

What is a two-year bill?

Bills have a two year window to pass through the legislative process and get signed by the Governor. So if a bill is introduced in 2021, it can pass as many of the steps or as few of the steps in the first year, and then pick right back up in 2022. The least amount of time it takes for a bill to pass in the two year window is 10 months, and the longest would be two years.

How AB 256, The CA Racial Justice Act, would work in a Post-Conviction In-Custody* Process



AB 965: We are still awaiting the pending Regulations for AB 965 (Stone). AB 965 will be implemented starting on Jan 1, 2022, and we know that CDCR will likely only apply Educational Merit Credits to YOPD's. We will use the public comment period once the Regulations are announced to ask CDCR to apply all types of credits to someone's YOPD to ensure the spirit of the bill is not undermined.

The following bills are not being sponsored by Initiate Justice but could materially impact the lives of incarcerated people.

Don't write to us requesting specific information about these bills. We are not working on these bills and do not have more information than what is shared here.

- AB 124 (Sen. Kamlager): This bill requires courts to consider whether sexual trauma to the defendant or other circumstances contributed to the commission of nonviolent offenses when making sentencing and resentencing determinations and to expand the affirmative defense of coercion currently available to victims of human trafficking to victims of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. **Signed by Governor.**
- AB 333 (Sen: Kamlager): This bill will make it harder to charge gang enhancements, but is NOT retroactive. **Signed by Governor.**
- AB 990 (Asm: Santiago): This bill establishes visiting as a civil right and establishes stronger protections on denying visitation rights. **Vetoed by Governor.**
- AB 1540 (Asm. Ting): This bill cleans up the 1170(d) process by creating a favor in presumption of re-sentencing and requires the court to provide counsel to defendants when referred. **Signed by Governor.**
- SB 81 (Sen. Skinner): This bill gives judges more discretion to not charge enhancements at sentencing, but is NOT retroactive. **Signed by Governor.**
- SB 416 (Sen. Hueso): This bill will require CDCR to offer more college degree programs and prioritizes in-person teaching. **Signed by Governor.**
- SB 483 (Sen. Allen): This bill retroactively applies the repeal of sentence enhancements for prior prison or county jail felony terms (SB 136) and for prior convictions of specified crimes related to controlled substances (SB 180). **Signed by Governor.**
- SB 629 (Sen. Roth): This bill addresses issues with CDCR's Cal-ID program and ensures more individuals who are being released will have valid ID's. **Signed by Governor.**
- SB 775 (Sen. Becker): This bill cleans up the Felony Murder Rule to clarify that a person who was convicted of attempted murder under the natural and probable consequences doctrine or any other theory under which malice is imputed to the person based solely on their participation in a crime or who was convicted of manslaughter when the prosecution was allowed to proceed on a theory of felony murder or murder under the natural and probable consequences doctrine, to apply to have their sentence vacated and be resentenced. **Signed by Governor.**

Tip: Check Lexis Nexis attachment for guidance on looking up laws in your Law Library.