

the inside journal

The Inside Journal shares news about California state laws, CDCR policies, and campaigns pushing for prison abolition, as well as stories and art gathered from Initiate Justice's Inside and Outside Members. **The journal is sent to the printer in late February, late May, mid August, and mid October. It takes about three weeks to get delivered to everyone.**

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 Inside Members, 280 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.

What's inside?

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- **Policy Corner - Pg 5 & 6**



Pictures of Initiate Justice staff and Outside Organizers at the retreat last year. This summer, we're graduating 62 more Outside Organizers!



Looking towards the next issue in August

Thanks to your feedback over the last year, we have made some changes to the timeline of this journal. We will still be mailing it out four times a year, but we've lined it up with the legislative calendar so that you will be receiving the most important policy information as soon as we can put it together. This issue was sent out as soon as the legislative bills had a chance to be heard on the floor. This timing also allows us to remind you that we are still asking for Letters of Support! (See Pages 5 & 6 for Policy Corner.)

WE NEED YOUR LETTERS OF SUPPORT!

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.

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Hope is a discipline.

- Mariame Kaba

It is easy to think of hope as passive, like something that you save in your back pocket for hard days.

In reality, hope is active, alive, and always in need of kindling. Hope reminds us to maintain focus, and stay on the path that ensures collective freedom. It is what gives us strength to stay the course.

Through hope, we can encourage ourselves to keep going, and encourage others to join the work of building a better world. This is how we teach ourselves (and allow ourselves) to imagine a future.

Hope is how we allow ourselves to courageously commit to a future worthy of us all.



Meet the Team!
(We've grown a lot in five years!)



Intersectionality: (noun) The idea that social identities and positionalities such as class, race, and gender, are compounded when applied to an individual group. This overlapping creates an interconnected, heightened experience of privileges or oppressions.

Prison Abolition: (noun) The movement that is trying to think beyond prisons as a tool to solve society's problems.

Intersectionality & Abolition Means No One Gets Left Behind

By asking questions and believing that people are the experts of their own experiences, we can look at a problem through more than just the lens of our own story. We can look through the lens of others whose identities might make them more vulnerable to harm. Thanks to Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, this way of looking at situations (that had been a practice of Black feminists and other women of color for centuries) was given a name in the late 1980's. It's called intersectionality.

For Initiate Justice and most abolitionist community organizers, intersectionality is core to how we address problems. We examine situations through the lens of identity, power, and change. We consider how a problem plays out differently for different people, making it way more likely that we'll find a solution that solves the problem for everyone.

Solving the problem for *everyone* is the most effective way to actually solve a problem for *good*.

Abolition is intersectional work because we know that the current structures don't actually help everybody, or even most people, and that certain identities are often left out of the solution-creating process. For us, practicing abolition with a tool like intersectionality, and a focus on steady and careful policy change, is how we make sure no one gets left behind.

What does justice look like when it is not based on punishment?

Punitive Justice, which can also be called retributive justice, is a way of addressing harm by punishing the person who caused harm. Punitive Justice believes that punishment or pain is the most effective way to change future actions, and that an act of harm should be met with another act of harm. The whole U.S. carceral system is designed around this idea of retribution, and the data shows it does not work.

The data, instead, shows that punishment is ineffective, rehabilitation is key, communities can control crime by controlling care, and victims should only be *voluntarily* involved in the system. This is the framework of Restorative Justice and Transformative Justice styles. Both are responses to wrongdoing that prioritize repairing harm while recognizing that maintaining positive interactions in our communities is vital. They address the root causes of crime. They create clearer divisions between wrongdoing, harm, and crime. Part of this justice work is to create better responses to unjust systems and structures, in an effort to build long-term and community-centered public safety.

This type of justice work goes hand in hand with cultural change, which emphasizes the possibility of storytelling and art as activism.

The Inside Journal Companion is now available to your loved ones who want to read along with you. They can subscribe to or download a digital version at the website:

www.InitiateJustice.org/TheInsideJournal

THE A.R.T. GALLERY

Thank you for your submissions of art and jewelry to the abolition-themed virtual Art Gallery. Response letters to those accepted have been sent out and we're getting ready for a great show! The month-long exhibit is scheduled for August.

By the way: thank you for using "ATTN" on your envelopes to us. It helps us process your letter faster! (See example on Page 6.)

For artwork submissions:
Attn: Artwork

For Legislative Letter of Support
Attn: Letter of Support

For New Member Sign Ups
Attn: New Members

For Inside Organizers
Attn: Inside Organizers

Wellness Corner: Color Breathing

Think of something you want to bring into yourself, like a positive emotion, energy or good vibes. Next, assign this feeling a color. There's no right or wrong answer here, any color you choose. Once you have your desired emotion and corresponding color in mind, get comfortable, and follow these steps:

- Close your eyes and relax by breathing slowly and deeply.
- Visualize the color you've chosen.
- Continue breathing while holding that color in your mind, thinking about what it represents for you.
- With each inhale, imagine the desired color slowly washing over your body from head to toe. Continue to breath as you visualize the color filling your entire body, from your fingertips to your toes.
- Imagine unwanted emotions draining out of your body with each exhale; replace them with your chosen color with each inhale.
- Continue the visualization as long as you like.

Artwork from our Inside Members



M. Castaneda



R. Hernandez



J. H. Liebl



P. Baca



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 Art to Initiate Justice

Reminders

We cannot give legal advice on individual cases or review personal details on cases. We cannot review legal paperwork, court transcripts, and cannot contact attorneys/judges on your behalf.

If you write to us asking for updates that will be included in the next issue of The Inside Journal, we will not respond to your letter since you'll be receiving answers then.

Sometimes we ask for submissions of artwork. To participate:

- 1 Mail your work to our P.O. Box and write "Attn: Artwork"
- 2 Do not send anything you need back. **We cannot send anything back.**

By mailing in artwork, addressed to Attn: Artwork, you are giving Initiate Justice permission to use your material in whatever way most benefits the movement. Usually, this means participation in The Inside Journal or inclusion in social media or fundraising efforts.

policy corner

2022 Election Reminder: Remind your loved ones to vote in this 2022 election! Helping to elect progressive candidates is a great way to help end incarceration. Remember, because of IJ's work passing Prop 17 Californians on parole are able to vote. Your loved ones can find more information on their voting rights at InitiateJustice.org/voter-engagement

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

TWO-YEAR BILL

This bill 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. AB 256 did not pass in 2021, but is on track to move in 2022 and be sent to the Governor by Fall.

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.

PASSED THE ASSEMBLY & IS ONTO THE SENATE

Assembly Bill 2167 (Kalra): Alternatives to Incarceration

This bill requires a court to consider alternatives to incarceration, including, collaborative justice court programs, diversion, restorative justice, and probation. The bill also states the legislature's intention that criminal cases use the least restrictive means available. This bill is not retroactive and does not change judges discretion, but it does encourage courts to stop relying on incarceration.

PASSED THE ASSEMBLY & IS ONTO THE SENATE

Assembly Bill 2632 (Holden): The California Mandela Act on Solitary Confinement

This bill provides a clear definition of what constitutes solitary confinement in jails, prisons, and immigration detention facilities, and sets limits on how it can be used. This bill ends the use of solitary confinement for vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities, pregnant women, and other vulnerable populations. The bill prohibits long-term solitary/segregated confinement by limiting the time spent in confinement to not more than 15 consecutive days, or 20 days total in any 60-day period; and require facilities to keep clear records on the use of solitary confinement in order to provide public transparency.

Please complete a letter of support for this bill! Tell CA legislators why AB 2632 (Holden) needs to pass! See page 6 for information on why a Letter of Support is so important, and how to address your envelope so we will get your letter in time!



Kevin McCarthy (Former IJ Inside Member) testifying in support of AB 2632

PASSED THE ASSEMBLY & IS ONTO THE SENATE

**Assembly Bill 2195 (Jones-Sawyer):
The Alternative Plea Act**

This bill will create an alternative plea for those charged with specified drug offenses to protect immigrants and other state residents from having a drug conviction and facing collateral consequences. This bill will stop unnecessary deportations for minor drug offenses for noncitizens by providing a safe alternative plea option to resolve their case. In creating an alternative plea, California citizens will also be able to avoid the devastating life-long consequences of a drug conviction, which can include the loss of educational opportunities, housing, public benefits, child custody, and immigration status.

This bill focuses on the intersection of the criminal justice system and immigration law, sometimes called "crimmigration". Convictions related to drug offenses are the most common basis for arrests and detention by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We are excited to work on a bill that protects all communities from the devastating impacts of mass incarceration.

Please see the attachment on the Legislative Process to guide you through your reading of Policy Corner. We're almost at the halfway mark of the Legislative Process!

HELD

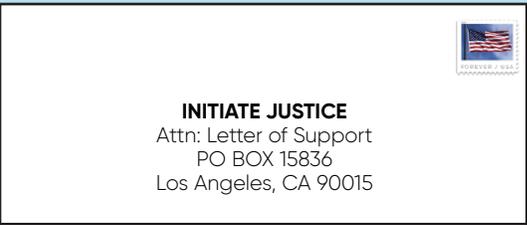
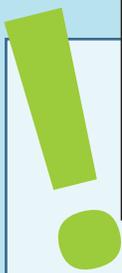
Senate Bill 875 (Skinner): Parole Suitability Reform

This bill blocks the Board of Parole Hearings from using any discriminatory factors in reaching a finding of unsuitability for parole, including, but not limited to: The person's race or ethnicity, cognitive or physical impairment, current or prior history of mental illness, an incarcerated person's ability to express complex or abstract concepts, among other factors. SB 875, the Parole Suitability bill, did not make it out of the Senate Public Safety Committee and will not be moving forward this year. We're disappointed that we weren't able to continue with this bill, but we'll continue investing in a political climate that will help prepare for future campaigns on much needed parole legislation.

PASSED THE SENATE & IS ONTO THE ASSEMBLY

Senate Bill 1106 (Wiener): The Fresh Start Act

This bill prevents restitution from acting as a barrier to criminal record relief like expungement or record sealing. Expungement or sealing criminal records increases access to employment, education, housing and other social services which support successful re-entry. In the future, we will tackle other areas related to restitution, like ending collateral consequences for people who owe restitution, CDCR garnishment, and finding other ways to provide compensation for crime survivors.



<<< Be sure to address your envelope like this, with nothing else in it, so we can process it right away!

A Legislative Letter of Support is a short letter that goes to your representatives and lets them know that you support, or don't support, a bill. It also tells them a few reasons why you feel how you do, including any personal stories that show how it would impact yourself, your family, or your community. Representatives use these letters to get an idea for how their constituency feels about the bill. They use them to make decisions, often counting them up to see how many people are on either side. The personal stories included can make a big impact. Last year, Assemblymember Alex Lee received a letter of support from one of our Inside Members and read it aloud to the Assembly Public Safety committee.

For Initiate Justice bills, we always provide a template like the one included with this journal! This is an important way to stay involved in the legislative process! **In 2021, we received over 1,500 Letters of Support from Inside Members. Can we double that in 2022?**

UPDATE ON AB 965 IMPLEMENTATION AS YPED REGULATIONS: We submitted 727 public comments to CDCR demanding implementation of all 5 credits under Prop 57. We are currently awaiting final regulations to be public and will update Inside Members as soon as possible.