

# 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 mailed out in late February, late May, mid August, and mid October.

## 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, 300+ Inside Organizers, 200+ 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.



Sign up yourself or another person to receive this journal! You'll know you've been successfully added to the list when you receive the March 2023 Journal.

## What's inside?

- **Become an Inside Organizer with Initiate Justice - Pg 3**
- **Member Artwork - Pg 4**
- **Celebrating our successful bills and the end of the legislative cycle - Pg 5 & 6**

## How To Submit Your Art to Initiate Justice

- 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.



## Your next journal will arrive in March 2023.

We receive thousands of letters every few months, please be patient with responses to mail.

- If you send us multiple letters asking for a response, it takes us longer to get any answer back to you. We still have to sort, read, and write to duplicated letters.
- 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 more letter guidelines/tips, see page 2.

**INITIATE JUSTICE MAILING ADDRESS**  
PO BOX 15836  
Los Angeles, CA 90015

**WEBSITE**  
[www.InitiateJustice.org](http://www.InitiateJustice.org)

**EMAIL**  
[info@InitiateJustice.org](mailto:info@InitiateJustice.org)

**Social Media**  
[facebook.com/InitiateJustice](https://facebook.com/InitiateJustice)  
[instagram.com/InitiateJustice](https://instagram.com/InitiateJustice)  
[twitter.com/InitiateJustice](https://twitter.com/InitiateJustice)

## From our Board of Directors

In July, Initiate Justice's co-founder, Taina, stepped down from her role as Executive Director to devote herself to the leadership of a new organization, Initiate Justice Action. It has been a busy three months, as we had huge shoes to fill! We reviewed many applicants and held several interviews for the role of Executive Director, and after weeks of careful consideration, we came to a decision.

The Board would like to congratulate Antoinette Ratcliffe as our next Executive Director! Antoinette knows this organization inside and out and has a clear, bold vision to move us forward and to the next level.

Antoinette brings educational and professional experience in the fundamentals of organizational management and development including a Bachelor's Degree from CSU Fullerton in Business Management and professional experience developing small businesses. She has demonstrated success in improving administrative and operational functions, building effective workflows and operating procedures, engaging diverse groups of stakeholders, and employing creative solutions to solve complex problems.

During the interview process Antoinette shared, "I believe that my experience will be extremely valuable to the future of our organization and our organization's impact. Initiate Justice has established a significant presence in our California communities, and we now have an apparent need to expand our infrastructure. I am beyond excited to lead Initiate Justice, invest in the leadership of our people, and continue bringing the systemic change required to abolish prisons and empower families and communities impacted by incarceration."

INITIATE JUSTICE  
Attn: Inside Organizers  
PO BOX 15836  
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Antoinette's tenure with Initiate Justice began in 2019 as she started as a participant of the Institute of Impacted Leaders; at the time she was coping with the impact of having three brothers incarcerated in California state prisons. She was hired in 2020 and has since contributed to improving Initiate Justice's Inside Mail program, Outside Organizing program, and Outside Membership base. Antoinette has also been instrumental in building the knowledge and skills of advocates throughout California. She has facilitated several Institute of Impacted Leaders cohorts, managed our Outside Organizing programs for the past 2 years, and supported a wide range of other projects and efforts throughout our organization since becoming full-time staff in 2020.

"It's my experience with the impacts of incarceration and the criminalization of families and communities who are trying to survive on the margins of society that drives my passion to serve our communities and for abolition." expressed Antoinette.

**Thank you for using "ATTN" on your envelopes to us. It helps us process your letter faster!**

**For artwork submissions**

Attn: Artwork

**For New Member Sign Ups**

Attn: New Members

**For Inside Organizers**

Attn: Inside Organizers

**The following ATTN's will not be opened by general staff, and will be delivered directly:**

**Well wishes to Taina**

Attn: Taina

**Congrats to Antoinette**

Attn: Antoinette



## Future Inside Organizers!!!

Thank you for your interest in becoming an Inside Organizer. Our Inside Organizers (IOs) are currently incarcerated members of the Initiate Justice organizing team. The process to become an IO takes about two months to get started. First, interested applicants learn about IJ's grassroots organizing and share it with peers. Then, they get a correspondence curriculum that teaches about the legislative process, inclusion, and fairness. It explains the possibilities and importance of organizing and power-building from the inside. Upon completion and IJ staff review of the curriculum, new IOs receive a certificate and support letter.

**To apply, send in a maximum one-page letter of interest to Lee and Adam about why you want to be a part of Initiate Justice as an Inside Organizer.**

**This opportunity is available to all currently incarcerated folks in CDCR, however the curriculum is currently available only in English. Please send application letters in English only.**

**Journal 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.

One more little reminder:  
Any mail about or for Inside Organizing  
must be addressed  
**ATTN: Inside Organizing**  
or it will be discarded.



**INITIATE JUSTICE**  
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A Quick Reflection with IJ's Inside Programs Associate, and former Inside Organizer, Adam

I became an Inside Organizer by accident. I first heard about Initiate Justice in 2016 when a friend send me a survey. It only made sense for me to make copies and get others involved.

When 2017 came around, I got to be involved in the passing of Prop 57. I sent in support letters, shared my story and also encouraged others to do the same.

In 2018 I had a friend tell me about being an Inside Organizer, and then that's when I realized I was already basically an Inside Organizer. I then completed the formal process to continue to get calls to action.

It was worth it.

When I came home, I was equipped on how to be a better leader for my community. I connected with Initiate Justice because I knew I had a purpose. IJ gave me hope and inspired me to become better and help others become better. Every step, from going through the Institute of Impacted Leader, to becoming an Outside Orgazinzer, to joining staff, has added to my community leadership skills.

I still do this work because it doesn't feel like work. I love to be of service towards others.

## Wellness Corner: Bingo!

**Drink 8+ glasses of water today**

**Set 3 Personal Goals for 2023**

**Read for 30 minutes**

**Take a walk**

**Keep a gratitude journal for a week**

**Stretch for 10 minutes**

**Give yourself a compliment!**

**Try deep breathing or meditation for 10 minutes**

**Draw a picture! (It doesn't have to be good.)**

## Artwork from our Inside Members



Louie J.



Paul C.

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.

### We are committed to offering our members as many ways as possible to get involved in the movement to end incarceration.

For some, this means we deliver their Letters of Support directly into the hands of legislators. For others, we offer this journal as a knowledge bank, while others use it to showcase their political or cultural art. And for some, we connect them to opportunities to donate to organizations that are actively trying to bring lots of people home. These endeavors have to be fully aligned with our views in order to be uplifted by our journal or social medias.

All forms of participation, movement holding, and power building are optional. We are simply here to make them available. **What other types of opportunity would you like to see from us?**

# policy corner

## SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

### **AB 256 (Kalra): The Racial Justice Act 4 All**

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.

Jan 1, 2023  
individuals facing deportation or sentenced to death.

Jan 1, 2024  
individuals incarcerated for a felony.

Jan 1, 2025  
others with a felony conviction entered after 2015.

Jan 1, 2026  
all others with a felony conviction.

## SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

### **AB 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 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.

## SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

### **SB 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.

## SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

### **AB 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.

## VETOED

On September 30 2022, The California Mandela Act on Solitary Confinement (AB 2632, Holden) was vetoed by the Governor. It will not be moving forward.

**What was AB 2632?** Assembly Bill 2632 was introduced by Asm. Chris Holden. AB 2632 hoped to place clear limits on the use of solitary confinement across jails, prisons, and detention facilities, by abolishing the use of solitary confinement for certain vulnerable groups, and ensuring transparent record-keeping over the use of solitary confinement. **What next?** While this exact bill cannot continue any longer, Initiate Justice knows that solitary confinement is torture.

"California has a dark history on the issue of solitary confinement, and this bill was our chance to get it right on this issue," said **Assemblymember Chris Holden**. "The scientific consensus and the international standards are clear, solitary confinement is torture and there must be limitations and oversight on the practice."

**The following bills are not being sponsored by Initiate Justice but could materially impact the lives of incarcerated people. We are not sponsors of these bills, so please do not write to us for details. We do not offer legal advice or representation, so please contact your public defender or attorney for more information.**

Below is a list of bills that passed the Legislature and were signed by the Governor. Signed bills go into effect January 1, 2023.

- AB 960 (Ting): Improves medical parole so more incarcerated people can be eligible for compassionate release.
- AB 1706 (Bonta): Ensures all people with cannabis convictions will be resentenced and have their cases dismissed.
- AB 1766 (Stone): Ensures more people leaving state prison will be issued valid state ID's, if the DMV has the necessary documents on file.
- AB 2657 (Stone): Ensures people on Death Row who are incompetent will not be executed and will be re-sentenced to LWOP.
- SB 990 (Hueso): Allows people to parole to counties that are best for their education/vocational training.
- SB 1008 (Becker): Makes phone calls free in state prisons and juvenile facilities
- SB 1139 (Kamlager): Requires CDCR to notify families when an incarcerated person is sent to the hospital or in other medical emergencies.
- SB 1209 (Eggman): Allows more veterans to be resentenced who have been excluded from previous bills, namely if trauma from military experience was not considered as a mitigating factor at the time of sentencing. However, people convicted of Section 667 or an offense requiring registration pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 290 are not eligible.

**The following bills were Vetoed by the Governor and will not be moving forward:**

- AB 2730 (Villapudua): Allows people within two years of release to be housed in a campus setting to get more vocational training before release.
- SB 1304 (Kamlager): Increases gate money to \$1,300 upon release from prison.
- SB 1371 (Bradford): Increases pay for CDCR jobs over a five-year timeline.

**The following bills were not successful and did not make it to the Governor:**

- AB 937 (Carrillo): Ends ICE transfers after completion of a prison sentence
- SB 300 (Cortese): This bill would have reformed the special circumstances law so only the person who took someone's life, not accomplices, could receive an LWOP sentence. The bill was not retroactive
- ACA 3 (Kamlager): This constitutional amendment would have removed involuntary servitude from the constitution. Since it did not pass the Legislature, it will not appear on the ballot this November.