

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 Members. **In 2023, the journal will be sent to the printer in late February, late May, mid September, and mid October. It takes about three weeks to reach you after it's sent to the printer.**

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. We organize, advocate, and build together. We work to make statewide policy change, build relationships with state senators and assemblymembers, and build the world we want to live in. We are 45,000+ Inside Members (like you!), 300+ Inside Organizers, 200+ Outside Organizers, and members and volunteers across California.

What's inside?

- **An update on AB 1310 (McKinnor) and a note from our Executive Director – Pg 2**
- **Intersectionality at Initiate Justice– Pg 3**
- **The 2023 ART Gallery – Pg 4**
- **A resource for AB 256 (Kalra) – Pg 5**

! Schedule Reminder: Just a month after receiving this, you will be receiving the last 2023 issue of *The Inside Journal*. The bills are currently sitting on the Governor's desk who has until October 14th to sign or veto them. **All questions and updates about legislation will be answered in the October 2023 edition!**

Wellness Corner: Breathing Meditation

Step 1 Position: Find a space and a position that you feel comfortable in. Place your feet flat on the ground and just relax. If you are comfortable, allow yourself to close your eyes.

Step 2 Meditation: Take a deep breath, focus on your breathing and tell your body, "Thank you for showing me grace and for being able to get me through today." Take a deep breath.

What is your intention for this moment? As you reflect, take another deep breath, releasing all burdens and stress that may hinder you. Take another deep breath and reflect what has brought you joy today.

Step 3 Reflect: How do you feel?

Deep breath in, inhaling all the positive things that came of this moment. Deep breathe out, releasing things that no longer serve you. Take 3 more breaths. **Thank you for making time for this meditation.**



Initiate Justice staff during The 2023 ART Gallery event!



Members of our community admiring the art wall! More about the gallery on page 4.

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tiktok.com/InitiateJustice

What is the Appropriations Committee?

After bills pass the Policy Committee, the Appropriations Committee is the next step in the Legislative Process. This is the step in the legislative process where bills go if they are going to have a fiscal (meaning financial) impact if passed. If they don't have a fiscal impact, the bill will skip the Appropriations Committee.

If an Assembly bill costs more than \$150,000 and if a Senate bill will cost more than \$50,000, they will be referred to the Suspense File in the Appropriations Committee of their respective houses. The cost is estimated in the Appropriations analysis which is available online at www.Leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/ on the outside and "Law Library" on the inside via tablets.

The Suspense File hearing happens twice a year, usually in May and August. Unlike other committees, during the Suspense File hearing, there is no testimony from either the author or witness. This means that we don't have an update on the status of the bill until right before the deadline to move to the next step, the floor.

Keep in mind! This occurs both in the Assembly and Senate! There is an Assembly Appropriations Committee and a Senate Appropriations Committee.

Have any questions regarding these details of the Legislative Process?

Don't forget you can reach out to an Inside Organizer in your yard/building for help!

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 2023, 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 2024.

An update on AB 1310 by Assemblymember McKinnor:

On September 1st, 2023, AB 1310 the Equal Chance Act, by Assemblymember McKinnor was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee. **It will not be moving forward.** We fully understand the impact that firearm enhancements have on our incarcerated community and remain committed to the long-term vision of ending gun enhancements in California. We understand this may be upsetting news to some of you, but know we will continue to work tirelessly on this issue. We ask that you please be patient with us as we navigate next steps. We will be sure to keep you all updated on any future endeavors pertaining to firearm enhancements.

A note from our Executive Director:

Dear Inside Members,

I understand that many of you inside are serving terms that have been drastically increased by firearm enhancements. Having loved ones inside impacted by AB 1310 (McKinnor), I want to acknowledge the feelings you may have right now. The news that this bill was held in the Appropriations Committee is difficult.

Despite this setback, as Executive Director of Initiate Justice, I want you all to know that we are still committed to ending firearm enhancements in California. **We will use this as a moment to empower and re-energize our efforts forward.**

I encourage you all to keep advocating alongside Initiate Justice as we continue working toward freedom of all people.

In solidarity,
Antoinette Ratcliffe
Executive Director, Initiate Justice

What is an amendment?

When we say a bill was “amended” that means the language of the bill was changed. Amendments can be language that was added or removed to the bill and are often suggested by members of the legislature, the governor’s staff, and the authors and cosponsors of the bill. **Amendments are often made to give the bill the best chance at passing.**

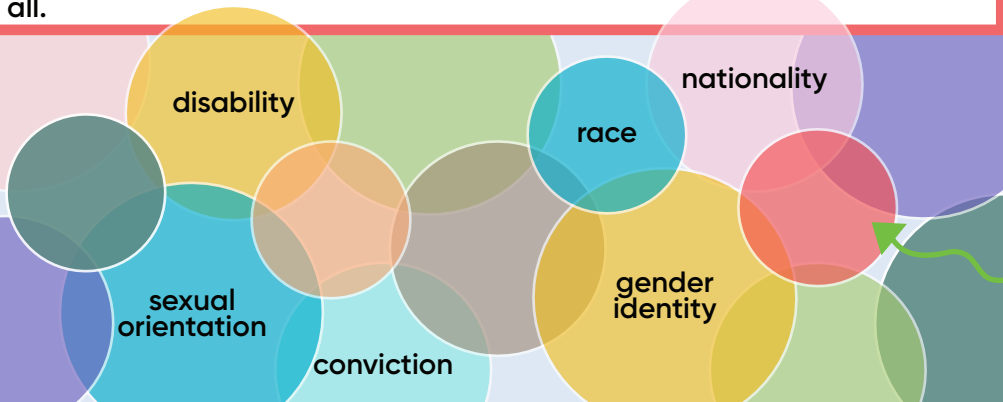
Most, if not all, Initiate Justice bills are amended throughout the legislative process, but we have internal standards we hold ourselves accountable to as an abolitionist organization. For example, when we take amendments to our bills, we make sure they won’t have any unintended consequences like carving out certain groups of people, or deviating too far from our original goal.

Intersectionality at Initiate Justice!

Initiate Justice is a feminist, intersectional organization. We believe that, regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, and/or conviction, **none of us are free until all of us are free.** We know that in order to end mass incarceration, we must acknowledge all of our oppressions and privileges. At Initiate Justice, we understand that people incarcerated in women’s facilities face unique barriers and hardships before, during, and after incarceration.

This is why Initiate Justice has visited and held Inside Organizing workshops at CCWF. We understand that individuals incarcerated in women’s facilities have unique experiences, and we *must* take into consideration their experiences when advocating for the *freedom of all*. During these workshops, we were able to have discussions on civic engagement, intersectionality, and how our legislation can better support members in women’s facilities.

Collectively, we are making sure they are a part of the conversation needed to end mass incarceration, so that we can achieve freedom for all.



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

Feminism (noun): The advocacy and cultural, social and socioeconomic efforts for equal rights of all sexes.



Interested in the Inside Organizing Program? Write to us and let us know with ATTN: Inside Organizing on the front of the envelope!

What is retroactivity?

When a bill is “retroactive”, that means that people who are currently incarcerated will benefit from the bill if it is passed. Initiate Justice ensures that most of the bills we cosponsor are retroactive. **If a bill we are cosponsoring is not retroactive, or if the bill was amended and retroactivity was removed, we ensure that the bill has language that does not prohibit us from making it retroactive in the future.**

For example, AB 2542 (Kalra) the California Racial Justice Act was introduced and passed in 2020, but retroactivity was removed, so it did not apply to currently incarcerated people. Because of our commitment to retroactivity and currently incarcerated people, we joined the original co-sponsors of the RJA and reintroduced the bill in 2021 as AB 256 (Kalra) the Racial Justice Act 4 All, ensuring the bill was retroactive to include currently incarcerated people.

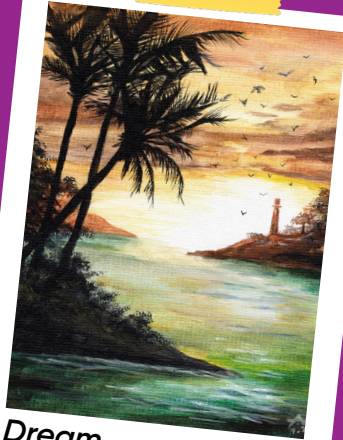
Fill in the blank bubbles with some of your own personal intersections.

Compare them to someone else’s and talk about how they’ve shown up in your lives.

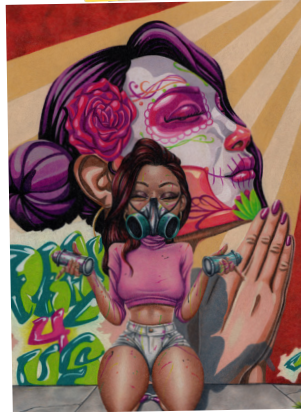
The 2023 ART Gallery



Regal's Color
Harold T.M Smith III



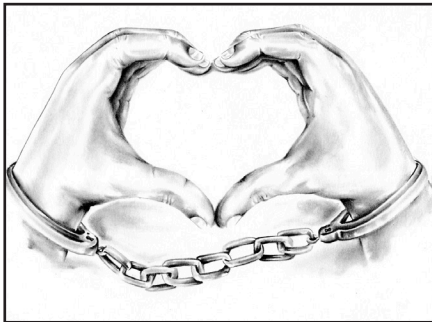
Dream
Anh Nguyen



Graffiti Sweetie
TOAST



Top Ramen Out The Pack
Gerry Phongboupha



Extract From Pain
Paul Ahumada



Freedom
Richard D. Cox

Initiate Justice launched The 2023 ART Gallery in July with an empowering in-person event. We featured 6 incarcerated artists' artwork and uplifted their stories on incarceration, hope, love, and freedom. We were joined by members of the Initiate Justice community, new community members, and some of the artists' families.

At the event, the community had the opportunity to view art from various Initiate Justice's artists, including paintings, drawings, jewelry, and much more!

Thanks to the 6 featured artists and their loved ones for this inspirational gallery, and to members of the community for their amazing support.

We will continue to uplift the artwork and the artists on our social media! To the 6 artists included in The 2023 ART Gallery, we're grateful for your participation in this activism and fundraising effort.

Our shop, where we have T-shirts, prints, and original pieces of artwork for sale, is now open on Facebook and Instagram! We can be found @initiatejustice All proceeds directly support Initate Justice and the artists.

Your loved ones can also view a recording of the event, and all of the stories behind the pieces, by visiting: www.InitiateJustice.org/TheARTGallery

policy corner

ON THE GOVERNOR'S DESK

AB 1118 (Kalra): Racial Justice Act 3.0

This bill will make technical changes to the Racial Justice Act and ensure implementation is streamlined for all currently incarcerated people.

- First, it allows people in prison to raise a claim while their case is already being reviewed on direct appeal, instead of starting over with a new petition.
- Second, it allows folks on death row to bring their claim to the trial court instead of waiting a decade for the death penalty appeals process.
- Lastly, it clarifies that you can bring a claim if your case isn't set for trial.

Update: AB 1118 (Kalra) passed the Legislature and was sent to the Governor on September 7, 2023.

ON THE GOVERNOR'S DESK

AB 60 (Bryan): Restorative Justice

This bill will notify victims of available restorative justice programs in their counties.

Update: AB 60 (Kalra) passed the Legislature and was sent to the Governor on September 12, 2023.

ON THE GOVERNOR'S DESK

AB 581 (Carrillo): The PATH Act

This bill will standardize the clearance process for program providers to enter prisons.

Update: AB 581 (Carrillo) passed the Legislature and was sent to the Governor on September 12, 2023.

A few resources for AB 256 (Kalra): The Racial Justice Act 4 All

We've received lots of questions regarding next steps and resources for AB 256 by Assemblymember Kalra. **Unfortunately, implementation for the bill is still being worked out.** In the meantime, we recommend the following:

EBC (Ella Baker Center for Human Rights) has created an extensive guide regarding AB 256 (Kalra)- Racial Justice Act 4 All that is very informative. The guide is available both in English and in Spanish. We encourage you to write to them directly at the following address to request the guide.



Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Attn: Racial Justice Act
1419 34th Ave, Suite 202
Oakland, CA 94601



Our Policy Analyst, Sarah, with community partners at the Dream Alliance Lobby Day!

We've also received lots of questions regarding the statistical data that is needed to prove certain RJA claims - **though there isn't much information on this yet, organizers have put together a list of resources and data portals that people can access.** Your loved ones can gather this list by visiting: www.Tinyurl.com/RJADataResource

Kindly note: These resources were not created by Initiate Justice. We will continue to provide updates via *The Inside Journal* as more resources and information become available. As a reminder, we cannot offer legal advice.

policy corner

HELD

AB 1310 (McKinnor): The Equal Chance Act

This bill will allow a person who was convicted of firearm enhancements (Penal Code sections 12022.5 or 12022.53) **to be resentenced. Under AB 1310 (McKinnor), CDCR will identify people in custody who have a firearm enhancement and send that list to courts to recall people for resentencing hearings.** The bill will require the court to have a presumption in favor of resentencing, which may only be overcome if a court finds the defendant is an unreasonable risk of danger to public safety. The bill will also require the court to appoint counsel for the hearing. A previous bill, SB 620 (Bradford) allowed judges to strike enhancements at sentencing, but it was not retroactive. This bill is trying to make it fully retroactive.

Update: AB 1310 (McKinnor) was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee on September 1, 2023.

TWO-YEAR BILL

AB 1186 (Bonta): Youth Restitution

This bill will replace youth restitution with a more sustainable and accessible system of compensation for crime survivors by ensuring timely payments from the California Victim Compensation Board while holding youth accountable in appropriate ways that do not involve them paying money. Instead, youth will participate in restorative justice conferences, perform community service, or be connected to job opportunities.

Update: On September 6, 2023 AB 1186 (Bonta) was strategically held by the author as a two-year bill on the Senate Floor. The bill won't move forward until 2024. We are grateful to the author for her continued commitment to this important issue.

Reminder! The bolded sections in the bill descriptions are language changes/updates since the May edition of *The Inside Journal*.



Policy Analyst, Sarah, with Senator Bradford (right), Senator Durazo (left) and German from Tech Equity Collaborative Project (far left) at the Dream Alliance Lobby Day.

TWO-YEAR BILL

AB 544 (Bryan): Voting in Jails

This bill will establish polling centers in county jails and require county jails to provide voter registration forms to eligible incarcerated voters.

AB 544 is a two-year bill and won't move forward until 2024.

PASSED ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

ACA 4 (Bryan): Voting Rights in Prison

This constitutional amendment will allow currently incarcerated people in California prisons to vote. If the constitutional amendment passes the Legislature, it will then be sent to the voters to decide on the November 2024 ballot.

Update: ACA 4 passed the Assembly Elections committee in April and is currently pending a vote on the Assembly floor. The constitutional amendment needs to pass by Summer of 2024 to qualify for the ballot.