



# 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, 300 Inside Organizers, 287 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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## SCHEDULE REMINDER

Just a month after receiving this, you will be receiving the last 2022 issue of The Inside Journal.

All questions about the legislation will be answered then!

## WELLNESS CORNER

Begin in a comfortable seated position.

Feel grounded through your seat, and when you're settled, close your eyes. **This guided meditation script will help you feel more gratitude.** Start to pay attention to your breath by taking mindful breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in for the count of four and out for the count of four. What are you grateful for? Take a moment to name at least three things you are grateful for. As you inhale, send extra gratitude to these things. If your mind starts to wander to other things, simply be an observer of your thoughts and do not judge them. Then, bring attention back to your breath and the things you're grateful for.

Keep breathing. All you need to do right now is breathe and drench yourself in gratitude. Notice how practicing mindfulness and gratitude can help you feel happier. Open your eyes and take this amazing feeling of gratitude with you throughout your day.

**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 last journal of the year in late October.**

**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

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)

## A Message of Gratitude from Taina, as she transitions from her role as Executive Director of Initiate Justice



It is with much joy that I share the exciting news that I am transitioning away from my role as Executive Director of Initiate Justice so that I may serve as Executive Director for our 501c4 organization, Initiate Justice Action!

Initiate Justice began as an idea inside of a prison visiting room, and in the last almost six years, we have helped pass bills and ballot propositions, trained hundreds of system-impacted people in policy advocacy, and built a membership of tens of thousands of people in prison. I am proud of the work we have done.

I am also thrilled to welcome our incoming interim Executive Director, Antoinette Ratcliffe, who joined Initiate Justice in 2019 as a participant in our Institute of Impacted Leaders and has since become an Institute Facilitator, Director of Organizing, and incredible leader overall. Over the last three years, I have watched Antoinette learn and grow and I know Initiate Justice will continue our work toward prison abolition under her strong leadership and with the support of our powerful staff.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Initiate Justice and myself as a leader. I am forever committed to this movement, and will continue to serve on our Board of Directors moving forward. I cannot wait to see what Initiate Justice does in the future – in this political moment in particular, it is so important that people directly impacted by incarceration continue to organize and make our voices heard.

With Love and Gratitude,  
Taina Vargas

For messages of goodwill for Taina:  
Initiate Justice  
**Attn: Taina**  
PO Box 15836  
Los Angeles, CA 90015

For questions about the transition  
Initiate Justice  
**Attn: ED**  
PO Box 15836  
Los Angeles, CA 90015

**Letters to ATTN: Taina will not be opened by Initiate Justice staff**, so it's important that you do not include any information you are trying to get to us. Letters to ATTN:ED will only be responded to if the answer is *not included* in the upcoming October issue.

## How does this Executive Director transition affect the vision?

We have the same mission as always.

We are committed to political change that centers the most impacted people, and we will keep fighting to bring people home. With all seasons come change, and we are joyful and excited about our path.

We are looking forward to adding creative and expansive new directions to the work we already do, and the vision we work towards everyday. Initiate Justice has an invested staff, an engaged Board, and the support of all of you. We are in steady hands for this next part of our journey.





## Dear Initiate Justice Community

In 2019, I joined Initiate Justice’s Institute of Impacted Leaders program with the desire to learn how I could advocate for my three brothers who were each serving 20+ years for decisions made in their youth. Under the mentorship of our Co-Founder, Taina, and with the support of an entire community of impacted people, I learned not only about the necessity of advocating for my loved ones, and how to advocate for their rights and freedom – but also realized just how critical and urgent it is that all impacted people work collectively in our fight for freedom.

Having supported my incarcerated loved ones for over half of my life, I am deeply committed to our mission of empowering impacted people to center our voices for policy change that progresses us towards an abolitionist future. For the past 3 years I have continued to develop my leadership, I have effected lasting change, and I have empowered others to use their political power in my roles as an Initiate Justice Outside Organizer, an Institute of Impacted Leaders Facilitator, and the Director of Organizing. I have witnessed hope being restored for countless people who had given up their fight, myself and my brothers included, and have experienced the transformative power of impacted people as leaders.

As a dedicated advocate, I will continue to uphold our mission, empower leaders among our community, and ensure that the experiences of people currently and formerly incarcerated, and their loved ones, inform our policy campaigns. We will continue to equip impacted people with the knowledge and tools necessary to make policy change, both inside and outside of prisons. We will continue to organize from an abolitionist, intersectional lens, and we will continue to be courageous in our pursuit of freedom for all people.

I am honored and excited to dedicate my leadership to continue shifting power back into the hands of our families and communities. I am grateful for the leaders and activists who have come before us, and for each of you in this fight with us.

Thanks,  
Antoinette

### 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.**

**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.**

## Meet our Board of Directors

The members of a non-profit board focus on the high-level strategy, oversight, and accountability of the organization. We’re grateful to have an active and involved team!



Jonathan Barber



Mireya Gonzalez



Jay Hockley



Zakiya Prince



Rahsaan Thomas



Taina Angeli Vargas



Jose Anthony Orozco



Virginia Ann Krall



Scott Wade Smith



Miguel Barajas



Jessie Milo



Jaime Isla Pena



Ray Lewis Williams



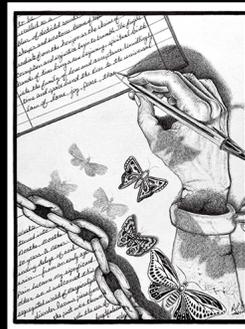
Orlando Ernie Smith

Congrats to the 11 artists included in The ART Gallery! We're grateful for your participation in this activism and fundraising effort.

[www.InitiateJustice.org/TheARTGallery](http://www.InitiateJustice.org/TheARTGallery)



Linda Elizabeth Ricchio



Raul Gonzalez



Jovan Mendoza

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 penal 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

- 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

## IJ Co-sponsored bills updates:

The Governor has until September 30th to sign or veto all bills that are sent to his desk. Bills that he signs go into effect January 1, 2023.

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

This bill would make legal protections against racism, bias, or discrimination retroactive for currently incarcerated people. Incarcerated people will be able to file petitions to get back to court for hearings to challenge their conviction under the following ways:

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, unless the prosecution proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the violation did not contribute to the conviction or sentence.
- Use of racially discriminatory language in court and during the criminal proceedings, whether intentional or not, unless the prosecution proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the violation did not contribute to the conviction or sentence.
- 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.]

This bill will have a phased-in retroactivity under the following timeline:

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

January 1, 2024  
individuals incarcerated for a felony.

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

January 1, 2026  
all others with a felony conviction.

AB 256 passed both houses and is currently awaiting the Governor's approval or veto.

**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.

AB 2167 passed both houses and is currently awaiting the Governor's approval or veto.

**AB 2632 (Holden): The CA 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.

AB 2632 passed both houses and is currently awaiting the Governor's approval or veto.

**AB 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 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.

AB 2195 passed both houses and is currently awaiting the Governor's approval or veto.

**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.

SB 1106 passed both houses and is currently awaiting the Governor's approval or veto.

**District Attorney Gascon will not face a recall in 2022**

Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascon faced two separate recall efforts, but neither effort qualified for the ballot in Los Angeles county. This means DA Gascon will stay in office for the rest of his term until 2024. His policies will remain in place and he will continue to resentence people under the 1170(d) process. (Note: You cannot request resentencing from the District Attorney's office, they are undertaking their own tiered approach to resentencing. Contacting the office slows down that process.)