



the inside journal

April 2026 Edition



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 40,000+ Inside Members (like you!), 400+ Inside Organizers, 300+ Outside Organizers, and members and volunteers across California.

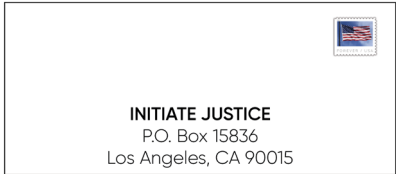
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Journal Timeline:



The Inside Journal shares news about California state laws, CDCR policies, and campaigns pushing for decarceration, as well as stories and art gathered from Initiate Justice's Inside Members. **In 2026, the journal will be sent to the printer in mid April, late May, mid September, and mid October and it takes about three weeks to reach you after it's sent to the printer.**



Kindly note: We strive to meet this timeline, but due to the nature of our work and the size of our team, *The Inside Journal* may take us a bit more time to complete and therefore more time to reach you. We appreciate your patience and understanding!

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A Message from the Initiate Justice Team

Over the past two years, public safety policies have started to move back to stricter “tough-on-crime” methods. This shift has led to many new bill proposals that could cause harm. In the movement, we call these “bad bills”. As we move through 2026, we expect this to be another challenging year for our work. There are many bad bills being introduced that threaten to undo the progress we’ve fought hard for over the last decade.

We cannot and will not allow that to happen, but it will take all of us!

Advocacy isn’t just about supporting the bills we believe in. It also means standing up and pushing back against policies that will harm our communities. We will continue to focus on our co-sponsored bills, while working just as hard to stop bad bills from becoming law and setting our movement back.

Stay connected with our work to learn how you can support our advocacy this year, and encourage your loved ones on the outside to do the same.



Top row from left to right:
Adrianna, Liz, Lee, Adam, and Efrain

Bottom row from left to right:
Alyssa, Michelle, Antoinette, Shivani, and Marta



Have you heard of our Institute of Impacted Leaders Program?

The Institute of Impacted Leaders is a 12-week organizing training program designed specifically for people directly impacted by incarceration. Participants learn the basics of community organizing, the legislative process, how to change statewide laws, and how to advocate for themselves and their loved ones in prison.

This summer we are going to be in Los Angeles and Coachella Valley! If you have a loved one in either area, please share this opportunity with them!

They can apply for the program or request a cohort in their area by visiting:

www.TinyUrl.com/InstituteInterest

What is a Policy Committee? What is the Public Safety Committee? And why does it matter?

In California, lawmakers in the State Legislature form committees to review and shape new laws in both the Senate and Assembly. These committees focus on specific areas like education, health, public safety, and more.

One committee that Initiate Justice works with most is the Public Safety Committee. This committee reviews legislation related to Penal Codes, legal procedures, and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Like all other committees, they also suggest **amendments*** before a bill advances to the next stage. Their decisions impact incarcerated people and public safety policies across the state.

The Assembly and Senate Public Safety Committees consist of legislators from different areas of CA and political parties, each bringing different priorities and perspectives into the conversation.

While Initiate Justice’s bills usually go through the Public Safety Committee, some bills are referred to other committees, sometimes to two different ones, depending on their subject matter. For example, AB 1851 (Gipson) was referred to both Public Safety and Education committees since the bill relates to schools and students. When bills are referred to two committees, this is called “double-referred”.

Legislators determine whether a bill is amended, advanced, or halted in their committee. This is why organizations like Initiate Justice work hard to build relationships with legislators and understand what they care about most. This helps us advocate effectively on behalf of our community for bills moving through their policy committees.

***As a reminder, an amendment is a proposed change to a bill.**



Sign new members up by sending us the attached New Member sign-up sheet!

Thank you Inside Members

At Initiate Justice, our movement is built from the inside out and it continues to grow because of you. Today, nearly 40,000 members inside state prisons receive *The Inside Journal*. That didn’t happen by chance. It happened because you are signing people up, sharing about our work, and bringing others into this movement every single day.

You are the reason our community is growing and the reason our voices are getting stronger. **This movement moves because of you.** Continue to sign up new members using the sign up sheet attached to this edition and mail it to us so we can add them to our mailing list and continue growing our movement.

Every Election is Important— Primary Elections, Too!

In just a few weeks, your loved ones will have the opportunity to vote in California's primary election, and the stakes are high.

California's 2026 elections are shaping up to be competitive. Governor Gavin Newsom's term is ending and a large number of candidates are running to replace him. Major ballot measures are being proposed like a "billionaires tax" and voter ID requirements. New congressional maps, passed after Proposition 50, could shift the balance of power in the U.S. House. At the same time, all 80 CA Assembly seats and 20 of the 40 CA Senate seats are up for grabs. That's over 80% of the CA state legislature.

This is a critical moment especially for issues like criminal justice, where elected leaders play a major role in shaping and passing laws. Talk to your loved ones about registering to vote and voting early. Help them make a plan and be ready to vote.

We challenge you to remind at least two eligible loved ones, whether they're on the outside or returning home soon, to register and vote!

Don't forget: Californians on parole can vote, thanks to Proposition 17, passed in 2020.

Tell your loved ones about the June 2nd Primary Elections

May 4: Ballots mailed to all registered voters

May 5: Drop boxes open for early voting

May 18: The last day to register to vote online

May 23: Early in-person voting centers open

June 2: Primary Election Day

They can register to vote by visiting: RegisterToVote.Ca.Gov **or calling the national voter hotline:** 1-800-345-VOTE (8683)



Reminder

Last fall, we launched our new report: *The Road to Democracy: Honoring Incarcerated Voices and the Right to Vote*. The report uplifts YOUR voices and wisdom, highlighting how your voting rights hold the key to creating a democracy that includes everyone.

If you would like a copy of the report, you can write to us with ATTN: The Road to Democracy, or you can have your loved one fill out this online form at:

www.TinyUrl.com/TheRoadToDemocracy for us to mail one to you. **Please Note:** At this moment, the report is only available in English.



INITIATE JUSTICE
Attn: The Road to Democracy
P.O. Box 15836
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Community Corner: We Fight Together

Across this state, organizations like ours are fighting for us—currently incarcerated people, people coming home, and our loved ones. We understand that freedom takes all of us, and we're stronger when we work together.

This new section will uplift the organizations and fellow leaders standing with our community, supporting our people, and building real pathways towards freedom. **One of those organizations is: The Prism Way.**

The Prism Way's mission is to foster human connection, empathy, and purpose, breaking down barriers to work, education, and housing while promoting hope, healing, and restoration. Led by those impacted by the criminal legal system and survivors of harm, they focus on building bridges, not walls.

Their programs include transitional support circles like criminal gang member anonymous, anger management, post-incarceration support groups, peer support specialist training. They currently offer a Whole Integration Self Education (W.I.S.E.) Program, a holistic approach empowering individuals to understand themselves and create positive change at CIM and SATF, W.I.S.E. plans to expand to other institutions.



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If you'd like to connect with them and learn more about their work you can write to them at:

The Prism Way
1150 S Hope Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015

or have your loved one visit their website at:
www.ThePrismWay.org

Tell your loved ones to connect with us on the outside!

This year, our Monthly Community Meetings are way more accessible. **We're hosting hybrid meetings throughout the state.** That means your loved ones and community members can join in person or online via Zoom.

These meetings are a chance for them to learn about the work we're doing, get involved in campaigns, volunteer, share opportunities, meet special guests, and build community together.

We kicked off January in Los Angeles, then went to Sacramento in March to unveil this year's bill package. We can't wait to connect with more people across California. Everyone is welcome! We can't do this work alone, it takes all of us!



Share this with your loved one so they can join us for our next community meeting by visiting:
www.TinyUrl.com/IJMeeting

What Happens Before a Bill Gets a Vote?

Most people think a bill becomes law when legislators vote “yes” or “no.” But the truth is, many of the biggest decisions happen before that.

Before a bill is heard in committee (where the first vote happens), legislators are already meeting with staff, the Governor’s office, lobbyists, and advocacy groups. They’re shaping the bill, making changes to the language (called amendments), and deciding if it should move forward.

The process also isn’t a straight line. Bills can move back and

forth between steps in the process, and changes can happen at many stages—even late in the process. Many amendments happen after a bill passes its first committee, when legislators are trying to gain broader support as the bill heads to the floor.

So by the time many people see a vote, many of the real decisions have already been made. **That’s why our voices from inside and outside of prison matter so much, why they matter early, and why they matter throughout the entire process.** When directly impacted people speak

up, share our stories, and advocate for change, we can shape a bill before it is finalized. **That is how real change happens.**

The system can feel closed off, but it is not out of reach. **At IJ, we work to make the process less closed off and more accessible to you.** By engaging with us and learning the legislative process, you can be part of important conversations that happen leading up to the votes. **Your voice can shape the outcome long before a vote is taken.**

See the attached legislative cycle to learn how a bill becomes law.

Wellness Corner

You asked, and we listened. We’re bringing back Wellness Corner! Many of you shared that these activities help support personal growth, connection, and positive conversations.

This prompt was inspired by our co-sponsored bill AB1851 (Gipson), which focuses on expanding opportunities for Social Emotional Learning written by someone inside (just like you!) Social emotional learning is the process of learning how to understand, manage, and express emotions, while also building skills to create positive relationships with others.

Recognizing Your Emotions (Self-Awareness): Write down or draw 2–3 emotions you experienced today or throughout the week. Take a moment to reflect on when these emotions showed up and what might have caused them. Be honest with yourself. Remember there is no right or wrong feeling.

Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Strongest emotion today:		
What triggered these emotions?		

Ask a friend to reflect on this with you and discuss things like:

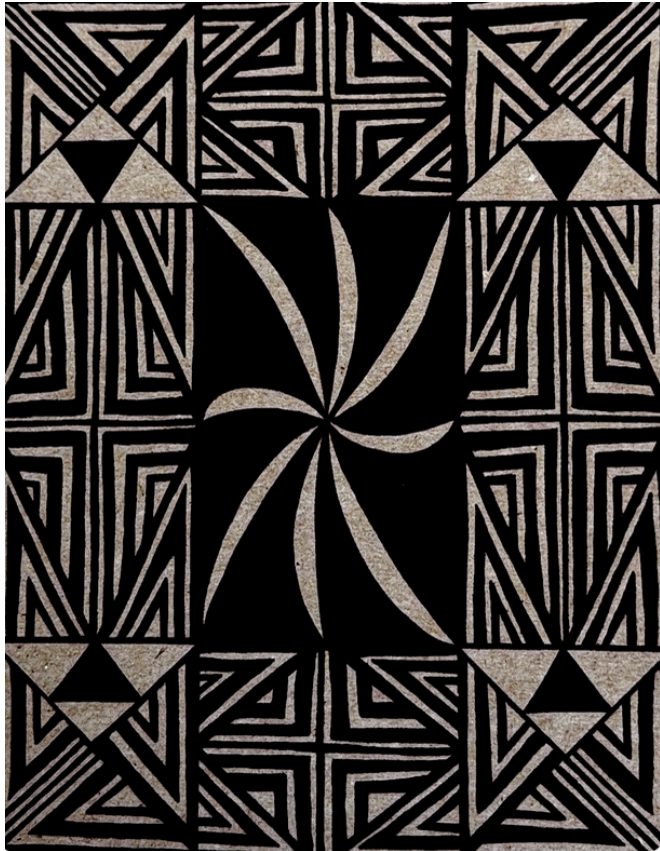
- What emotions did you experience most often?
- Which of these emotions would you want to experience more?
- Which emotions felt too strong or hard for you?
- What helped each of you handle them?

Reflection: Reflect on how your emotions changed throughout the day. Did noticing your emotions help you understand your reactions better?



Use this emotion wheel as inspiration to name your emotions throughout the day!

art from inside



Art by: Okalani L.



Art by: Lee Max B.



Art by: Marcos Z.

policy corner

Our 2026 CoSponsored Legislation:



AB 1851 (Gipson)

AB 1851, authored by Assemblymember Mike Gipson, would implement a Social Emotional Learning curriculum for Kindergarten-12th grade schools as a harm-prevention measure to combat the school-to-prison pipeline.

Latest Update: AB 1851 (Gipson) will be heard in the Assembly Education Committee on April 15th.



AB 1958 (Kalra)

AB 1958, authored by Assemblymember Ash Kalra, would make additional clarifying changes to the procedures for Racial Justice Act (RJA) claims. It will do three (3) things: 1) remove procedural barriers that have blocked disparity claims, 2) make it clear that the law applies to plea bargains, and 3) make it clear that the prosecution must hand over evidence in the hands of law enforcement.

Latest Update: AB 1958 (Kalra) passed the Assembly Public Safety Committee on April 7th and now will move on to the next step.

Our Priority Legislation:

Sometimes, we work on other criminal justice bills, not just the ones we co-sponsor. These bills are aligned with our mission, and help build safer communities. **We do not lead on these bills, but we lend extra support to them.** We talk to lawmakers, ask our community to take action, share information about them, and more.

AB 1229 (Shultz)

AB 1229, authored by Assemblymember Nick Schultz, would change reentry grants to support increased housing to better reduce homelessness for those on parole or who have been released from prison in the last five years.

