



Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants

A National Grassroots Effort by People in Prison and their Families, Former Prisoners and Other Concerned Citizens to Reduce Crime Through Criminal Justice Reform PO Box 2310 Washington, DC 20013 202-789-2126 cure@curenational.org www.curenational.org

WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING A NEWSLETTER IN JANUARY?

Since George Washington was President, Congress has met for two-year sessions every other year. Normally a Congress ends in November. But, this Congress which was the 116th Congress ended January 3, 2021.



PELL GRANTS ARE BACK IN PRISON

The most important reform was the return of Pell Grants (federal financial aid) for incarcerated students seeking a college education. In 1994, CURE urged Congress not to do away with this aid. But, the Crime Bill shortsightedly did. For the past 26 years, we have advocated to lift this ban on Pell Grant eligibility for prisoners.

The good news is that there are no exclusions in the Grants for the criminally committed based on offenses. However, there is a question whether those civilly committed for sex offenses are included.

The language states that one needs to be enrolled in "a prison education program." If a civil commitment facility doesn't provide this program, CURE is not sure if it can use the recently passed Pell Grants

Longtime CURE supporter Cong. Bobby Scott (D-VA), Chair of the House Education & Labor Committee, was the key to Pell grant restoration. Also, Sen Brian Schatz (D-HI) was able to organize hundreds of organizations in support. Finally, Health, Education Labor & Pensions Committee leaders Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Patty Murray (D-WA), worked hard together.

MONEY FOR INCARCERATED

During the 116th Congress, checks for \$1,200 and \$600 went to people in prison from the Internal Revenue Service. Federal Judge Phyllis Hamilton of Northern California ruled that prisoners were entitled to these stimulus funds. Dependents such as their children were also entitled to more of the funds.

MADE SURE IT HAPPENED



In October, Alan Mills and his staff at the Uptown People's Law Center in Chicago with volunteer Northwestern law students mailed these above completed forms from all Illinois prisoners to the IRS. Photo by Terab Tolner

Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein and Equal Justice Society represented pro-bono prisoner-plaintiffs Colin Scholl and Lisa Strawn in the class-action lawsuit. See website www.caresactprisoncase.org

OTHER REFORMS

The law excluding college students with a drug conviction from receiving federal financial aid was repealed. Also, funding was provided for establishing family-based pilot alternatives for parents with non-violent sentences.

ONE BIG ANTI-REFORM

Along with programs for rehabilitation, there was support for one important appropriation that was counter to rehabilitation. This was a whopping \$200 million which was provided to fund totally ineffective treatment programs. That money, or even a portion of it, could have been used to fund help with job assistance, housing, etc. to assist reintegration into the community for those who have been convicted of an offense of a sexual nature.



National CURE has an email list of over 1,000 contacts.

If you want to receive these daily updates about criminal justice issues, please provide your email information on the form below.

Dear CURE Supporters, While walking in our neighborhood we saw this sign "These are not ordinary times." How true! COVID-19 has made necessary changes. Now, in our apartment we keep up with the issues through zoom and webinars. Our office at St. Aloysius Church is now used for CURE storage. The then pastor, George Anderson, S.J., provided this office for us twenty-five years ago. This past year, Father Anderson died at 86 and is greatly missed. He was devoted to the poor especially prisoners.

So, as we begin a new year we thank each of you for your generous support. We are grateful for all the volunteers who give of their time and talents to bring about justice. CURE Co-Founders Pauline and Charlie Sullivan

I DO WANT TO HELP CURE CONTINUE ITS WORK IN 2021.

Here is my tax-deductible contribution. CURE PO Box 2310 Washington, DC 20013

\$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$25 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$500 ___ \$1,000 ___ Other \$ ___

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State : _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____



HARM REDUCTION IS THE SOLUTION



Shown left is a young woman overdosing on drugs. On the right is a Supervised Injection Site (SIS) or often called an Overdose Protection Site (OPS) in Vancouver, Canada. This facility provides a location to inject drugs that has clean needles and access to treatment and other help. This assistance can include food, clothing and housing as well as services such as primary health care, dental and mental health. In the last newsletter, we asked you to vote on whether (SIS) or (OPS) is a solution to the drug crisis.

FOR

We received 68 “yes” votes. Explanations included “my brother overdosed and his body was found in a dumpster. If he had a safe place to use his heroin, he would be alive today.” Also, “I have been to Europe and have seen first hand how well it has helped there” and “as a former paramedic who has dealt with the realities in our streets, I recognize the sense that having SIS makes.” Finally, “despite my disdain for drugs we can’t stop this opioid epidemic without assistance” and “within each site there should be counselors to help with overcoming addictions, locating jobs and obtaining medical care.”

AGAINST

26 voted “no” comments included “it appears to be another band-aid, and feeble attempt to be perceived as doing something about the problem” and “don’t make legal what is illegal.” Also, “it would only help turn our country into a bunch of brain dead junkies” and “supervising drug abuse should not be publicly funded programming.” Finally, “it would create a whole section of other problems outside the SIS such as people living on the streets and used needles lying near them.”

MAYBE

12 voted that they may support it but “I don’t know enough to say” and “would like to hear/learn all of the facts-the good, the bad and the ugly.” Also, “yes, if cities are willing to pay for trained staffers, doctors, nurses and counselors and “are there any stats on money saved by traditional medical institutions vs. money spent on SIS?” Finally, “it may work in some cases, but in others there may be problems.”

What do you think of “Decrim” first?

Although your votes show great support for SIS or OPS, should we push first to have drug sentences decriminalized like Oregon voted to do recently? This is not legalization. Drug prohibition would still exist for hard drugs, but the fine would be about the same amount as the cost of a “parking ticket.”

Also, simple drug possession/use sentences would be a civil fine, no jail time and no record. Many drug sentences would be “defelonized,” which means felonies would be reduced to misdemeanors.

Finally, two results of decriminalization would be a greater respect for police officers in that instead of booking people, neighborhood police would immediately direct them into drug treatment or other supportive services. And secondly, “decrim” would soften the community for acceptance of a SIS or OPS.

Should CURE advocate for decriminalization first before advocating for a SIS or OPS? Please check one. Feel free to explain on a separate piece of paper.

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

U.S. CURE CHAPTERS

www.curenational.org

Alabama-CURE PO Box 190504, Birmingham, AL 35219 Phone 205-481-3781 rosemarytc@bellsouth.net Leader: Rosemary Collins

CURE- California, PO. Box 2523, El Segundo, CA 90245 Cure.calif@gmail.com Leaders: Aileen Hongo and Orla Bewley

Colorado-CURE 3470 S. Poplar #406, Denver, CO 80224 Email Dianne@coloradocure.org web www.coloradocure.org Phone: 303-758-3390, 720-335-2721 Leader: Dianne Tramutola-Lawson

CURE-Connecticut, PO Box 173, Middletown, CT 08457 203-747-2410 jacobsdenise115@yahoo.com www.internationalcureceinc.org Denise Jacobs is the leader.

District of Columbia CURE POB 15067 S.E Station, 600 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20003 Email: cure.washdc@yahoo.com Leader: Scott Breeze

Indiana-CURE PO Box 40065, Indianapolis, IN 46240, 317-603-6119 Email: katwarner6@gmail.com Leader: Kat Warner

Iowa-CURE POB 41005, Des Moines, IA 50311 515-277-6296 web: IowaCURE.org Leaders: Wendy Whitrock and Sue Hutchins

Kansas-CURE 2137 N. Battin, Wichita, KS 67208 316-618-8652 ejcancarterboniface@gmail.com Leader Jean Carter Boniface

CURE-Kentucky PO Box 221481, Louisville, KY 40252-1481 Phone: 502-425-3623 Leaders: Carol and Louis Brown

Louisiana-CURE PO Box 181 Baton Rouge, LA 70821 Email: checo_yancy@yahoo.com Web www.curelouisiana.org Phone: 225-270-5245 Leaders: Checo Yancy and Kelly Garrett

Maryland-CURE PO Box 1541, Millersville, MD 21108 Phone: 443-224-0537 Email: marylandcure@gmail.com Website: www.MarylandCURE.org Leader Lea Green

Massachusetts-CURE 670 Washington St., Dorchester, MA 02124 Email: Louise.carcione@verizon.net Phone 781-925-7018, 617-697-4149 is cell phone Leader: Louise Carcione

Michigan-CURE PO BOX 2736, Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2736 Phone 269-383-0028 Email: kayperry@aol.com web: www.mi-cure.org Leader: Kay Perry

Missouri-CURE PO Box 28931, St. Louis, MO 63132 Phone: 314-730-CURE (2873) Email: hedyharden995@gmail.com Web: www.missouricure.org Leaders: Hedy Harden and Keith Brown El

Nevada-CURE P.O. Box 231953, Las Vegas, NV 89105 Web: www.nevadacure.org Email: nevadacure@gmail.com Phone: 702-347-1731 Leader: John Witherow

New Mexico-CURE 1914 Washington Ave. Alamogordo, NM 88310 Email: prwr1960@gmail.com Ph. 575-430-4409 Leader: Parla Rathgeber

CURE-New York PO Box 182, Hopewell Junction, NY 12533 Phone 845-417-5497 Email: curenuewYork@aol.com Web: www.curenuewYork.info Leader: Deb Bozydaj



CURE-North Carolina. (Official chapter of National CURE) P.O. Box 461 Morrisville, NC 27560-9998 email infoCURENC@gmail.com Leaders Glenna Batson & Tanya Neuman

OH CURE 10011 Walford Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102 Email: info@ohiocure.org Website: www.ohiocure.org Leaders are Taylor Berenda and William Persinger

Oklahoma-CURE POB 9741, Tulsa, OK 74157 Email: okcure@okcure.org Leader Kevin Armstrong

Oregon-CURE POB 80193, Portland, OR 97280, in Portland 503-977-9979 outside of Portland 866357-CURE (2873) Email kc196123@yahoo.com www.oregoncure.org Leader Karen Cain

Virginia-CURE PO Box 2310, Vienna, VA 22183 Phone: 703-272-3624 or 703-242-6459 carla4vacure@gmail.com Web: www.vacure.org Leader is Carla Peterson

ISSUE CHAPTERS (National Jurisdiction)

CURE-SORT (Sex Offenders Restored through Treatment) PO 1022, Norman, OK 73070-1022 Ph 405-639-7262 Email: info@cure-sort.org www.cure-sort.org Leader Wayne Bowers

LIFELONG-CURE, 4417 Second Ave. #211, Detroit, MI 48201-1214 Phone: 313-324-2666, 313-282-3889 Leader: Willis X. Harris

NDRAN of CURE/NCCAN, (National Capital Crime Assistance Network) PO Box 758, Mancos, CO 81328 Phone: 970-533-7383 Email claudia@celldoor.com web: ndran.org/nccan.org Leader Claudia Whitman

OTHER COUNTRY CURE CHAPTERS www.internationalcure.org

Pan Africa CURE PO Box 2903-80100 Mombasa, Kenya. Ph +254724944181 www.panafricacure.org office@panafricacure.org Seeks to network country chapters listed below and others. Leaders are Peter Onyango Olwal onkols@gmail.com & Seth-Benoit Niyukuri ikikishalom2@gmail.com

Ghana-CURE website: www.ghana.internationalcure.org augustin.thecheck@yahoo.fr Kassi Djeinzou Augustin.

Kenya-CURE Peter Maiyo maiyo.peter@gmail.com 7 Peter Onyango Olwal onkols@gmail.com are the leaders.

Malawi-CURE Simplex Chithyola chinansifoundation07@gmail.com and Rev. Stanley Chimesya stanleychimesya@gmail.com are the leaders.

CURE-Nigeria cure@curenigeria.org www.curenigeria.org Sylvester Uhaa is the leader.

Rwanda-CURE goodnewsrwanda@gmail.com Pius Nyakayiro is leader

Senegal-CURE eric_henoc@yahoo.fr Eric Diouf is leader.

Zambia-CURE Fr. Romek Janowski and Rev. Samuel Kawilila samuel.kawilila@zambia.co.zm

AMERICAS

Canada-CURE Wayne Northey wayne@smartsettle.com and Joshua Agaba jmagaba@gmail.com

COTA CURE Of The Americas, cure@curenational.org seeks tranformative justice & start country chapters.

Please become a member of your state, issue, or country chater of CURE. Support their wonderful work. CURE is unable to assist you with your legal representation thus please do not sent us your case.



2 Awesome Freebies

Every person incarcerated should immediately send for the free 24-page directory from Prison Activist Resource Center.

PO Box 70047, Oakland, CA 94612 (510) 893-6448. Or, print it from <https://www.prisonactivist.org/>

Also, subscribe to the free *News Inside* published by The Marshall Project, 156 W. 56th St. Suite 701, New York City, NY 10019 (212) 803-5200. People "in" can receive it by mail if you do not have email.

Conditions: HEARD, SW & SLEEP

Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of Deaf Communities (HEARD) PO Box 1160, Washington, DC 20013; info@behearddc.org; HEARD is now focusing on wrongful convictions of deaf people.

Solitary Watch, PO Box 11374, Washington, DC 20008 Email: info@solitarywatch.org is a national watchdog group that investigates, reports on and disseminates information on the use of solitary confinement in prisons and jails.

Christopher Lipsey Jr., a person in a California prison, has filed a lawsuit *Lipsey v. Pfeiffer* that he and others have been subjected to virtual "torture" through loud and too frequent nightly checks.

Help for People Convicted of SOs

On the first Saturday of each month, Eldon Dillingham hosts a national conference phone call about civil commitment. To receive notice of the call, email eldondillingham@gmail.com or call 786-458-9546. <https://vimeo.com/423495927/1dedf9e422> shows Eldon speaking in 2019 at a CURE conference.

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059 505-286-8807 donmagicjohnston@gmail.com www.titushouseministries.org helps all people who are registered, or about to be released to reintegrate back into society. Includes helping families/friends.

Women Against Registry, PO Box 463, Arnold, MO 63010 www.womenagainstrestry.com Email: contact@womenagainstrestry.com 800-311-3764

Just Future Project brings shadow prisons (civil commitment facilities) into the light. 202-350-0531 Contact@ajustfuture.org www.ajustfuture.org

NARSOL (National Association for Rational Sex Offender Laws) PO Box 25423, Raleigh, NC 27611 888-997-7765 www.Narsol.org contact@narsol.org

Organizing Against both the Death Penalty & Life Without Parole (LWOP)

Pope Francis continues to speak out not only against the death penalty but also life without parole which he calls "a secret death penalty." To abolish the death penalty globally, google the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

Also, in the United States, please help Death Penalty Action in memory of Bill Pelke, longtime organizer of the Journey of Hope, who died recently. CURE worked with DPA against the many executions in 2020 by the Trump Administration and will work with them to abolish the death penalty in the 117th Congress that began in January, 2021.

Finally, rather than life without parole, a life sentence should end at twenty years or sooner. Email Nicole Porter nporter@thesentencingproject.org to receive notices of national meetings to discuss releasing those serving life/practical life sentences.

Go to: <https://vimeo.com/e1a0ed05a5> for a

Why is he in prison?



Photo by Alan Pogue

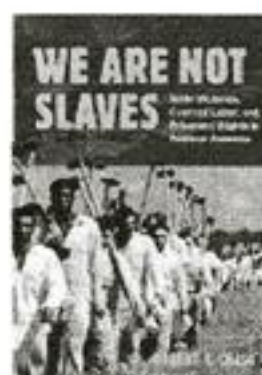
short presentation by Claudia Whitman about the legal challenges of releasing those serving life and practical life sentences. Claudia has done this work for years.

BOOKS

Bleak Walls Bright Minds has been compiled by Sue Huchins of Iowa CURE. It is 27 lifers stories "and a rare opportunity to read their thoughts and accomplishments in their own words."

Aging Behind Prison Walls By Tina Maschi and Keith Morgan

When Truth Is All You Have is a memoir by Centurion's founder Jim McCloskey. Centurion seeks freedom for the innocent in prison.



We Are Not Slaves: State Violence, Coerced Labor, and Prisoners' rights in Postwar America by Robert T. Chase is a comprehensive reform of the Texas prison system. CURE began in Texas and as the book explains played a major role in the reforms especially in abolishing prisoners being used as guards.



Books, etc. (cont.)

Shown is Nkechi Taifa, the author of *Black Power*, *Black Lawyer: My Audacious Quest for Justice*. Nkechi is founder of the progressive Justice Roundtable. Google their website.

Correctional Health Care Delivery by Kenneth L. Faiver Charles C. Thoms Publisher.

Aging Behind Prison Walls by Tina Maschi and Keith Morgan

Justice that Transforms Vol.1 by Wayne Northey Human Kindness Foundation, PO Box 61619, Durham, NC 27715 www.humankindness.org mails over 300 free spiritual books a week to people in prison that are written mostly by Bo Lozoff.

Adopt-A-Prison (AAP) is based on the same idea as adopting a highway or a park. For more info, email Hans Hallundbaek hanshall@optonline.net

www.prisonlaborreform.com is a very new Prison Labor Reform website. For more information, email Tom Petersik tkpetersik@yahoo.com

Editor Todd Clear of the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* is planning an issue on Violence, Voice and Incarceration. He is seeking personal reflections by March 21, 2021 in a 1000-2000 essay by those who had these experiences. For more information, email todd.clear@rutgers.edu or mail a self-addressed stamped envelope to Todd Clear, 59 Crestwood Dr., Whitefish, MT 59937.

Congrats Human Rights Defense Center, POB 1151, Lake Worth Beach, FL 33460 for being there 30 years! See www.humanrightsdefensecenter.org

In November, Utah and Nebraska joined Colorado in approving removal of the exception clause in the 13th amendment. People convicted of crimes would no longer be slaves. Called the Abolition Amendment, it was introduced in the 116th Congress and has 6 Senate and 21 House cosponsors. It is a top priority and 2/3 of Congress and 3/4 of states must vote for it. A big challenge, but we are on our way!

National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, 100 R Warren St., Roxbury, MA 02119 <https://nationalcouncil.us/> Phone (617) 905-2026.

For People in AZ, FL, HI, NE, NH & WI

Middle Ground Prison Reform, Inc. 139 East Encanto Drive, Tempe, AZ 85381 (480) 966-8116 email: middlegroundprisonreform@msn.com website: www.middlegroundprisonreform.org/ Donna and James Hamm are leaders.

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) Get In Touch 407-901-3749 Get Help Now info@floridarrrc.org

Community Alliance on Prisons, PO Box 37158, Honolulu, HI 96837-0158 (808) 927-1214 Kat Brady, Coordinator

Nebraska Criminal Justice Review, Holy Family Ministries, 1715 Icard St., Omaha, NE 68102 (402) 558-2085 Editor: Mel Beckman

Citizens for Criminal Justice Reform-New Hampshire, PO Box 3942, Concord, NH 03302-3942 (603) 832-1555 info@ccjrn.org

The Community, Box 100392, Milwaukee, WI 53210 email: thecommunitywis@gmail.com website: thecommunitynow.us provides anti-mass incarceration news and connections.

Government Assistance (Nationwide)

Call 1-844-872-6327 for Official Guide to Government information and services. On the web check out www.USAGOV and www.benefits.gov SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) 800-662-HELP (4357) is available 24/7 and answered by a live operator.

Employment 1-877-5627 will transfer you to American Jobs Center in your state. Ask about Federal Bonding program and Work Opportunities Tax Credit that will help with being hired.

Employment Discrimination Run it by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 1-800-669-4000 if your criminal history was the only reason that kept you from being hired.

Health 1-800-318-2596 www.healthcare.gov

Housing 800-955-2232 Ask about Section Eight.

When you get home

Call 2-1-1 or 3-1-1 for local needs as above.

A program of Successful Release is *Companies that Hire Felons* which has a nationwide list. Use a computer in local library to find it.



Pan Africa Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants PAN AFRICA CURE

P.O Box 2903 - 80100 Mombasa, Kenya.

Tel. +254 724944181 Email: office@panafricacure.org www.panafricacure.org

MISSION:

"To use prisons for only those who have to be in them. And, for those who have to be in them, to provide the rehabilitative opportunities to turn their lives around."

MISSION

"Utiliser les prisons uniquement pour ceux qui doivent y être. Et, pour ceux qui doivent y être, offrir des possibilités de réadaptation pour changer leur vie."

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SIMPLEX CHITHYOLA
LEADER, MALAWI CURE



FR. ROMEK JANOWSKI
LEADER, ZAMBIA CURE



CHARLES HOUNMENOU



REV. STANLEY CHIMESYA
DEPUTY LEADER, MALAWI CURE

SUPPORT US BY GOING TO
www.InternationalCURE.org.

International CURE based in Washington, DC, The United States has consultative status from the United Nations (and thus, the Pan Africa CURE Chapter does too.)

He was family oriented. He loved teaching children about their heritage, attended family events and tried to be a good example for the young men of his family. Mike was also a veteran of the United States Air Force and an Activist for his community. A devoted community organizer, proud revolutionary socialist, prison abolitionist and leader that was never intimidated to say what was on his mind and fought for economic empowerment and social change.

When it was time to protest against injustice and police brutality, he was there. Although his chronic illness presented challenges for him, he always tried to make an effort for change! Mike was honored for his political and educational advocacy by our community with the Democratic Socialists of Central Ohio Eugene V. Debs award. Mike's commitment to improving the quality of life for his people was and still is an inspiration for us all to do the same. He will forever be loved and missed!

This mailing is a collaboration of several groups, including Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, Fight Toxic Prisons, Nation Inside and FL Prisoner Solidarity. Letters can be sent to P.O. Box 358439, Gainesville, FL 32635. Thought we cannot guarantee responses. YOU CAN CALL TO SHARE YOUR STORY THROUGH THE NATION INSIDE STORYLINE 24/7 AT (910) 604-6519

In response to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, Nation Inside's #CagingCOVID campaign encourages all people in prison with pre-existing health conditions that may result in greater harm from the impact of this virus to immediately apply for early release.

This process varies from state-to-state and may come in the form of clemency, compassionate release, commutations, pardons, reprieve, or the reduction/elimination of bail bonds in pre-trial cases.

In some states, "reprieves" are exempted from more arduous requirements to ensure a governor's ability to act swiftly in times of emergency such as this to to suspend sentencing on a limited or indefinite basis.

NYU Law School has compiled an exhaustive list of state-by-state laws surrounding reprieve power, available online here: WWW.LAW.NYU.EDU/CENTERS/ADMINOFCRIMINALLAW/COVID-19

Families Against Mandatory Minimums has compiled an extensive list of resources, with a focus on federal prisoners which can be found here: FAMM.ORG/COVIDRESPONSE/

For a longer list of resources, #CagingCOVID can be reached at INFO@NATIONINSIDE.ORG
Unfortunately we don't currently have staff available to handle phone or letter correspondence.



#CAGINGCOVID

**2,020 DEATHS
329,298 POSITIVE CASES
5.5X HIGHER INFECTION RATES**

**DUE TO INHUMAN CONDITIONS IN JAILS,
PRISONS, AND DETENTION CENTERS**

**THE ANTISTASIS PROJECT CALLS FOR
DECENTRALIZED ACTIONS ON FEBRUARY 1ST
ACROSS THE SO-CALLED UNITED STATES, AND
INTERNATIONALLY, IN SUPPORT OF MASS
CLEMENCY FOR PRISONERS AND DETAINEES.**

LEARN MORE AT bit.ly/38IwccC

know how we can work together.” And they would. On the occasion where someone made the unwise decisions to write something sexist or disrespectful, Karen would tell them firmly to cut that shit out. And they listened. She could command respect like that, even from someone she never met in person.

At any given point in a day, she might step away from a conversation with you to take a phone call, and come back having coordinated a legal defense strategy with someone sitting in solitary. By the end of the day there would be a phone zap going to support their fight for law library access, better sanitary conditions in the kitchen or getting moved out of solitary...

Being in her presence had the feeling of working alongside a legend, those who got letters from her on the inside will say the same. Perhaps the highest compliment to her work is knowing so many wardens and prison staff across Florida and beyond have cursed her name, surely wondering themselves if she was a real person or some fictitious, omnipresent force out to kick their ass.

In her last hours, she helped a friend and homestead-mate on creating a hip hop video highlighting prisons, police and food justice (she was part of an effort to get free produce into the neighborhoods of southeast Gainesville). The last images captured from her life are videos of her dancing around a raging bonfire draped in a protest banner while an effigy of the Florida prison system burned to the ground. Seriously.

Now we get to carry her work of toppling the prison system forward, and though it's daunting, it truly feels like an honor to be part of that legacy. With her memory and her spirit to drive us, we will fight inside and out, harder than we ever imagined possible, till the walls come crumbling down and every cage is reduced to ash, as were the slave plantations that came before them.

REMEMBERING MICHAEL VINSON

A dear friend, beloved community organizer, IWOC activist and freedom fighter in Columbus, OH, Michael Vinson, also passed this summer. In his memory, members of Michael's family, along with a couple of his friends have started a project called Michael's Way to provide support to families of incarcerated people. Their first project was a holiday gift drive for children and families.

From Michael's aunt: "We want to be a light to these individuals, and their families, whose lives have been touched by a form of darkness where the family unit has been torn apart due to the mother, father, sister, brother, son, or daughter being absent from the family."

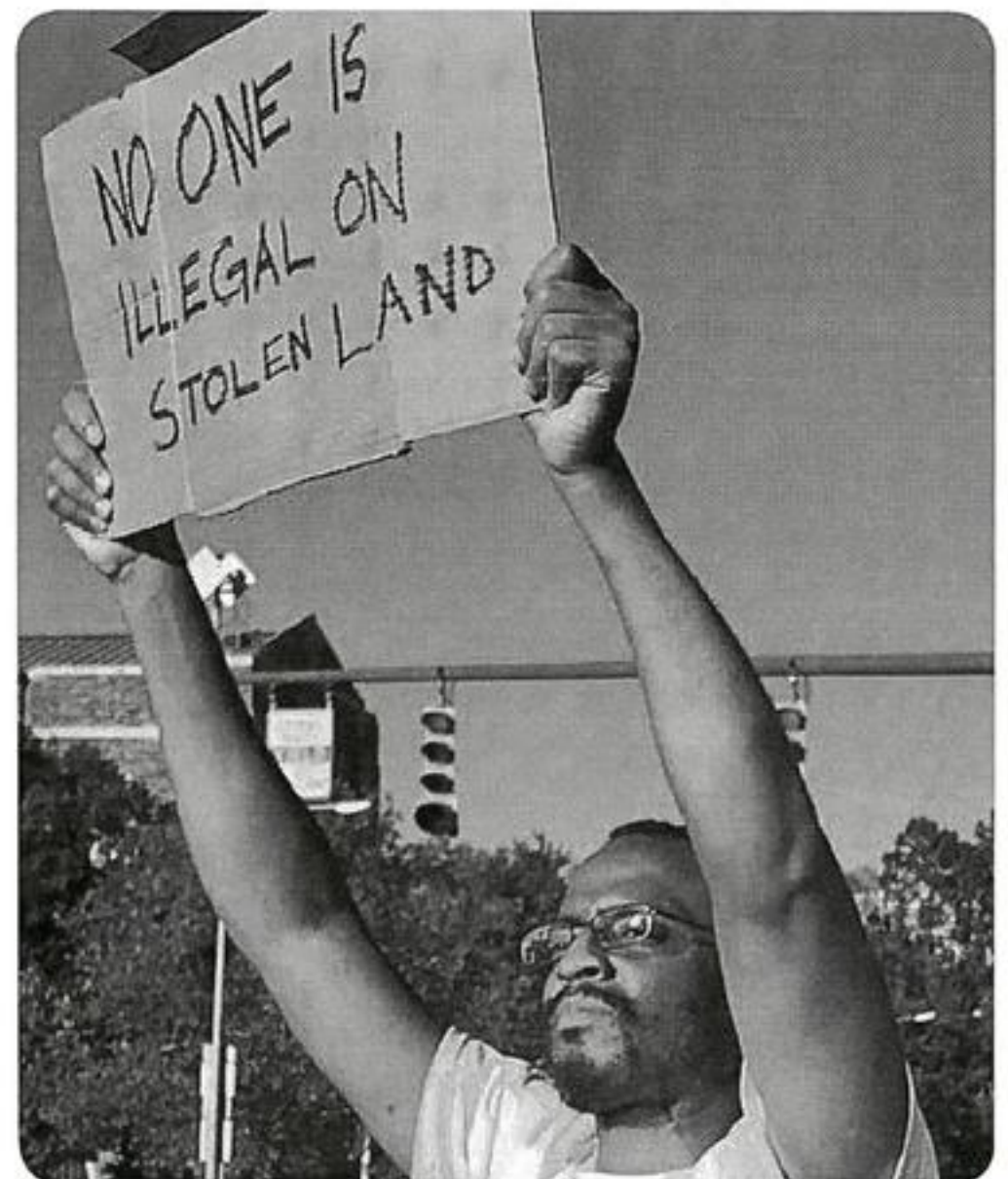
Michael's Way Inc. is a nonprofit organization honoring the life of Michael A. Vinson. Michael lived a life of service to individuals who needed their voices to be heard for justice for them, their families and those living in the community of incarceration. He had a special heart for those in jail, and behind prison bars, where their lives are often forgotten in the system. Someone needed to advocate for them, so Michael would join with like minds to fight for justice for these individuals.

Michael had a vision that went far beyond just these causes but he had an international vision to advocate for those touched by systemic racism, and social and criminal injustice.

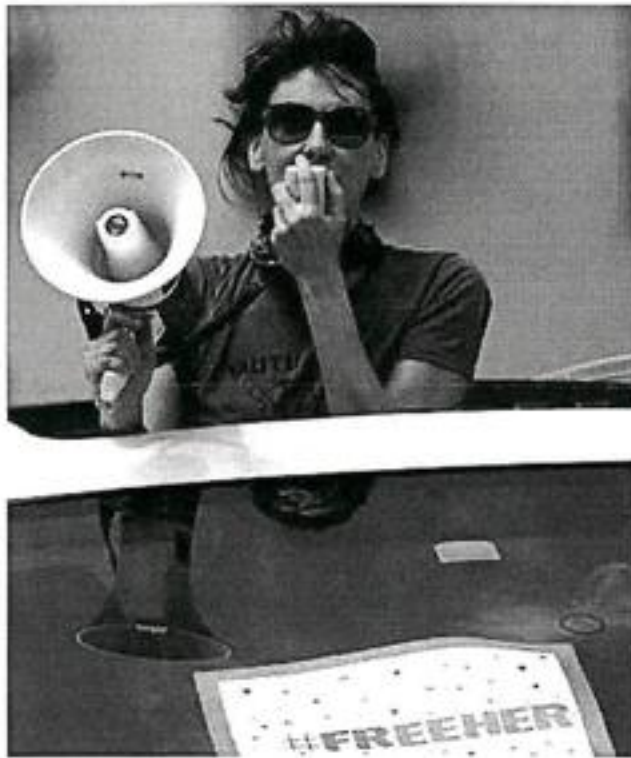
Find out more at MICHAELSWAYOHIO.ORG

FROM HIS OBITUARY: Michael "Mike" Allen Vinson, age 41 of Columbus Ohio, entered the realm of eternal peace and rest on 14 July 2020. Michael was a beautiful, compassionate, humorous, outspoken shining light!

(continued on the next page)



In Memory of Karen Smith



A TRIBUTE TO KAREN SMITH, REST IN POWER

She was the founder of Gainesville IWOC and Florida Prisoner Solidarity, as well as an organizer on Fight Toxic Prisons Convergence committees. Shortly before her death, she launched the #CagingCOVID campaign with Nation Inside and we remain committed to honoring her legacy by continuing the organizing she was so dedicated to. The following is an excerpt from a tribute written by a close friend of Karen's.

BY PANAGIOTI TSOLKAS / ANTISTASIS PROJECT

Karen passed on to the ancestors' realm in the early hours of Nov 29, 2020 as the result of a fatal car accident near Waldo, Florida.

It's hard to describe what organizing alongside Karen Smith was like in a way that won't sound hyperbolic on account of her absence. Movement circles can get bogged down and organizers often get overwhelmed by the magnitude of what we face. It's inevitable, yet Karen Smith figured out how to manage it all with a rare style and grace. She dodged the obstacles, confronted the bullshit and stayed focused on her two-pronged mission of supporting prisoners and attacking the prison system, relentlessly. All while

being an amazing mother of two and stellar friend to so many.

Since her passing, several of us who had the fortune of organizing closely with her have noted the feeling of disbelief stemming from a view of her as invincible, unstoppable... a supernatural creature walking among us. The organizational energy that she could harness in planning protests, conferences, bail funds, and social events is unmatched. She could motivate and focus a group without it feeling pushy, and she could host a killer party without seeming stressed, and then totally chill out and relax without seeming high-strung from pulling these things together. She was also an incredible example as a parent that people with kids can balance movement responsibilities and commitments to their children.

She could get wild as hell, then pull it all together to show up for

media interviews, professional appointments, her job as a waitress, etc. When she had to step back to handle work or family matters, she didn't make commitments she couldn't keep and drop the ball.

When Florida Prisoner Solidarity held a campout out in front of prison work camp for 10 days, Karen would come after a late work shift to sleep at the camp, roll out of a tent first thing in the morning with a bullhorn in hand to yell raw, unfiltered rage at guards and shout encouragement to prisoners, then drink some coffee and head back to town to the Sunday brunch shift at 706, where she worked for the past 15 years, till they closed for COVID-19.

I know, I told you, it sounds like the kind of things you say to kiss someone's ass after they're gone. And she would surely be annoyed by praise like this, but ask around, these are the stories you'll hear over and over, from people who met her once and people who knew her for decades.

So many times over the past several years I watched in awe at her ability to connect with people and inspire them to action, in many cases just with a paper, pen and stamped envelope. At prison demos, when we were close enough to establish that those inside could hear our bullhorns, she would often say "this is Karen Smith, call us, write our PO Box. Let us

BACKGROUND ON THE COVID-19 IN PRISONS

This year of pandemic has highlighted how incarceration fails at ensuring public safety but excels at violating human rights. Agency heads and elected officials have watched for 10 months now as COVID-19 cases in their prison systems have spiked and spread, with a massively underwhelming response. As of releasing this call-to-action, a new, faster spreading mutation, the B.1.1.7 strain, has been identified in California, Colorado, Florida and New York. Public health experts expect it to be identified in more states in the coming days.

A supposed cornerstone of the legal system is that its *"better for ten guilty persons to escape than that one innocent suffer."* But in the case of COVID-19, people are suffering and dying in jails without ever having faced trial, when they could have survived in their own home or a hospital; in prisons, people are dying who were convicted (though too often through plea bargains, coerced testimony and factual innocence), but not sentenced to death.

By the state's own laws, as well as international treaties, this is a far overstep of state power. Its cruel and unusual punishment, its medical neglect. Its state terrorism.

COVID-19 isn't the first public health atrocity in the prison system, but it has allowed people to see a fuller picture of what mass incarceration means. It has opened the eyes of many to a problem that has lingered for the past 150 years. There are enough parallels on a local or regional level to say the sort of medical neglect and abuse that COVID is highlighting is actually quite commonplace (such as Legionnaire's Disease and Valley Fever, or extreme exposure to black mold, asbestos, radon, coal ash dust, and even methane from sewage leaks), and that is the problem.

The clearest way to get people who are held in state custody out of harm's way from the pandemic, and the plethora of pre-existing abuses it has highlighted, is through expedited executive clemency or compassionate release. Each state has different policies surrounding this, and we need to understand them and push hard for them to be used. Releases have happened in some facilities across the country, showing that it is possible. But thus far, it has been way too little, much too late.

In federal prisons alone, more than 14,000 clemency seekers are waiting for verdicts on their applications to the Justice Department. But the backlog is not new. In 2014, the Obama administration unveiled a clemency

initiative that created new criteria for commutations, with as many as 10,000 inmates expected to qualify. The administration disappointingly granted a mere 1,696. That has to change fast.

Mass releases from the federal system can and should be an example for states to follow. Especially under a new administration that has claimed to plan on correcting its disastrous policy decisions in manufacturing mass incarceration over the past 40 years.

WHAT IS "NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY"?

It's an obscure holiday to most, but perhaps one we should be getting more familiar with, figuring out how to reclaim it, and holding the U.S. to it.

A 1949 U.S. Presidential Proclamation created National Freedom Day to commemorate both the passage of the 13th Amendment on that day 84 years before and the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations a year prior, which declares that *"recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."*

While we know we can't expect liberation to come willingly from an empire built on slavery and land theft, we need to use strategic moments and symbols to build struggle around. We can make February 1, 2021 one of these.

Image below "No Executions by COVID-19" banner at news conference outside San Quentin State Prison, July 9, 2020, in San Quentin, Calif. A group of legislators, advocates, academics and public health officials gathered at San Quentin State Prison to discuss a COVID-19 outbreak at the facility that has sickened more than 1,400 inmates with six deaths.

(AP Photo/Eric Risberg)



No More COVID-19 Deaths in Prisons and Jails

- End Cash Bail
- Demand Clemency & Amnesty
- Grant Compassionate Release
- Abolish ICE
- Defund Police

National Freedom Day
February 1st, 2021

#CagingCOVID

Caravan to D.C. or take action locally

NationInside.org

TAKING THE MESSAGE OF FREEDOM FROM INCARCERATION TO THE STREETS!

Governor's homes: In many states, Governors have a unique ability to grant clemency, pardons, reprieve, etc, and can do so swiftly in times of emergency such as this.

A local jail or prison near you: Make noise to let prisoners and detainees know you are out there. A prison noise demo is a First Amendment protected activity and it sends a message up the chain to officials who fear demonstrations spreading across the wall.

Regional offices of the DOJ, CDC and UN: Help amplify the #CagingCOVID petition demands by having a presence at these offices as well.

A busy intersection, interstate or shopping area: Reach people on the street. Some times a little disruption can also generate more attention and media coverage that reaches thousands more.

Get creative! Put out flyers and posters, drop banners in visible locations, coordinate phone zaps and social media blasts, affinity group style actions at strategic locations... Just be sure to wear a mask, wash your hands and practice social distance while you do any in-person activity.

February First is "National Freedom Day"

If abolition was the road to freedom, now is the time to finish the long journey.

THE #CAGINGCOVID CAMPAIGN, LAUNCHED BY THE Nation Inside organization and supported by 60+ other groups, is planning to gather in D.C. on February 1st to deliver a petition to the Department of Justice. The DOJ has the responsibility to investigate health standards and civil rights violations in federal and state facilities. Other events are planned across the U.S. in support of mass clemency for people held in jails, prisons and detention centers.

Reports updated as of January 8, 2021 show over 329,298 prisoners have gotten COVID-19, and more than 2,020 have died as a result of it. The pandemic has resulted in prisons and jails abusing isolation more than ever before. *While social distance is a necessary precaution, solitary confinement is torture.*

Crowded quarters, a lack of PPE, inadequate medical care, an aging population, and unsanitary conditions have contributed to an infection rate 5.5 times higher than the already ballooned average in the U.S.

A quick and massive release of prisoners is the safest and most responsible option.

In reality, it's long overdue.

February 1st was declared "National Freedom Day" in 1949, in a Presidential proclamation recognizing both the 1865 signing of the 13th Amendment to abolish slavery and 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. Yet all these years later, today's prisoners are still subjected to conditions those documents were thought to be addressing, from extreme medical neglect and the torture of isolation to outright slave labor.

Let your friends and family know that #CagingCOVID is inviting people to join them in a caravan to DC, where they will have a motorcade rally to hand-deliver their petition to the Department of Justice (DOJ), Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the United Nations (UN) office.

Encourage those on the outside to get involved. There are also countless local and regional targets to apply pressure on in furthering the demand of immediate clemency, amnesty, compassionate release and an end to the cash bail system.

Turn the page for some suggestions on where people can celebrate National Freedom Day this year.



January 25, 1949

HARRY S. TRUMAN

33rd President of the United States: 1945 - 1953

Proclamation 2824—National Freedom Day

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Whereas, near the end of the tragic conflict between the Northern and Southern States, the Congress adopted a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution which would outlaw slavery in the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction; and

Whereas the resolution was signed by President Lincoln on February 1, 1865, and thereafter led to the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution; and

Whereas that Amendment is a corner stone in the foundation of our American traditions, and the signing of the resolution is a landmark in the Nation's effort to fulfill the principles of freedom and justice proclaimed in the first ten amendments to the Constitution; and

Whereas, by a joint resolution approved June 30, 1948 (62 Stat. 1150), the Congress authorized the President to proclaim the first day of February of each year as National Freedom Day in commemoration of the signing of the resolution of February 1, 1865; and

Whereas the Government and people of the United States wholeheartedly support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, which declares that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world";

Now, Therefore, I, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate February 1, 1949, and each succeeding February 1, as national Freedom Day; and I call upon the people of the United States to pause on that day in solemn contemplation of the glorious blessings of freedom which we humbly and thankfully enjoy.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this 25th day of January in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and seventy-third.

Harry S. Truman