

Unraveling Lockdown:



**A Participatory Action
Handbook to Working
Collectively Across Prison Walls
In a Move to
End Mass Incarceration**

The Artist (front cover) and Co-researcher—Marie Bandrup

NOTES:

Marie (rest in peace [RIP]) passed on July 14, 2011. She was a Seneca elder and artist. A proud mother and grandmother, Marie lost the ability to raise her daughters to the prison system through the separation and fragmentation of families imprisonment creates. She channeled much of her love for her girls into mentoring youth in prison and teaching art. She credited the ability to help people escape the everyday hardships of prison life and enter a powerful world of activism through artistic expression as the saving grace of her life. Through her art, she envisioned a world without prisons, a world free of violence, and a world of strong communities and families. Her art also served as her connection to her native community, culture, and spirituality. Listen to her ideas and vision here:

<http://vectors.usc.edu/issues/4/publicsecrets/>

SURVEILLANCE AND RETALIATION

Administrative retaliation in prison is a dangerous reality for the co-researchers on this project. All mail correspondence is subject to surveillance by prison administration. Agreeing to meet with outside groups known to be sympathetic to prisoners can result in verbal, physical, sexual, spiritual, and/or psychological retribution. Dilemmas of collaborating under surveillance include unpredictable retaliation, rampant violence, and possible influence on paroling. Lacking this analysis could result in furthering domination and oppression. Working towards transparency, I critically and analytically engaged with people inside over these possibilities in order to strive towards safety and support throughout this project. In order to minimize potential retaliation as much as possible, I followed the lead of the co-researchers. Knowing all mail is possibly tampered with and an unreliable source of personal information, I made it a priority to commit to prison visits. Overall, I participated in eight prison visits to CCWF.

UNDEREDUCATION AND DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

Many people inside prison are undereducated and/or learn in different ways. Similar to folks outside of prison there are folks who articulate themselves best on paper, those whose ability to get their points across lies in verbal interactions, and those who require a lot of trust—building through all mediums before they feel safe sharing anything. In an attempt to create spaces across each strength, I wrote letters, sent in surveys, and visited in person. I want to note that people inside CCWF are very creative and if someone is undereducated in the reading and writing realm they employ others to assist them. Also, if someone is educated in a way absent of the ability to read and write that does not mean they best communicate through verbal visits. In fact, due to the trauma, violence, and social control from incarceration, it was crucial to create the time to reflect upon the work in which we were collaborating both with learning styles and physical/emotional abilities in mind.

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Outside In—Inside Out: Who We Are and the Intended Use of This Handbook

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This handbook is the culmination of a collaborative journey across prison walls, serving to address the ways specific choices of theoretical frameworks and activist approaches to solidarity shape whose knowledge is produced and the outcome of influences of that production. Meaning, constantly focusing on the outcome of our activist endeavors misses the attention needed to dissect the process itself. This process requires a step back inside the solidarity work of creating a compassionate world without prisons. Recognizing the production, regulation, and normalization of the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) in the US lends itself to exploring the politics of space and resistance. To question the myriad and conflicting ways that normalize the subject or “criminal,” as related to the intersections of power, privilege, and oppression, and which operate invisibly within binary constructions of crime and punishment discourse. In an attempt to disrupt this sphere, I strive to recognize the agency of those in lockdown through a participatory action (PA) approach inside the PIC and with those recently re-entering post sentencing.

By directly working with prisoners at Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF), those formally housed at CCWF, and Justice Now (a non-profit in Oakland, California), this handbook was born out of surveys, extensive mail correspondence, and on-site interviews in collaboration with nine co-researchers: six inside prison and three of whom I had met inside, who were recently paroled. I approached interviewees as co-researchers challenging the traditional hierarchal approaches to this kind of work, while simultaneously being aware that “free” people working in solidarity with individuals inside women’s prisons has both strengths and limitations, because they are never occupying truly equal footing. The co-researchers’ self-authored biographies are included inside the handbook. Here, we interrogate approaches to solidarity across prison walls. I asked what the co-researchers wanted, believing the best work comes from those experiencing the oppression, thus recognizing the power and social insight that arise from bottom—up approaches.

When asked about her process of working with outside groups, Cindy responded:

“The processes have been educational for me. They’ve made me stretch my mind and seek out answers to things I’d never really considered. In the process of doing this I developed a greater sense of self-discipline and a greater awareness that I do have something of value to contribute and that I can be part of a community that works for improvements for all concerned. I think many of the inmates who have participated have felt a sense of self-growth and self-worth for having done so. Active participation reduces despair and the sense of helplessness we often feel in here. Also, the process has helped me identify areas I need to improve in communication skills, self-discipline, etc.”

Cindy Oakley
(letter correspondence from inside CCWP,
January 2011)

BIOGRAPHY: CINDY OAKLEY

“So many policies are decided without any understanding of how we [prisoners] will be impacted. Many times we can’t express ourselves clearly due to fear and communication limits so really hearing what we say—and even listening to what we fail to say is very important.”

Cindy Oakley
(letter correspondence from inside CCWP,
January 2011)

BIO: Cindy Oakley “As an activist, I’ve helped Justice Now write chapters on *Navigating the Medical System* and human rights violations documentation. I also did some activist writing for Just Detention International. My place in this world seems more like the little girl who shocked the world when she announced that the emperor wasn’t wearing any clothes—I am growing more and more dedicated to exposing the lies that are being perpetuated on society under the twisted and misapplied guise of “tolerance” from those who are anything but tolerant themselves. I am of European heritage, heterosexual, a conservative Christian, and a die-hard capitalist. I’m convinced that, when applied Biblically, Christianity builds a society that cares for the needs of all its members and neighbors, and that true capitalism is the only system that allows people to enjoy the benefit of their efforts, encourages full expression of ones capabilities, and permits people to succeed or fail on the merits of their own choices.”

HISTORICALLY SITUATED

I, Sam McEwen Page, am the lead research facilitator of this handbook/project. I took this project on as a partial fulfillment to my graduate thesis. I am a white, college-educated, cisgender female, middle-class, gender-variant, queer, anti-oppression activist. These identities intersect privilege and oppression simultaneously. In addressing my privilege and the ways it operates I want to articulate that I do not claim authority over this project and I strive to pay acute attention to working against my agenda setting power in order for the handbook to be directed by the co-researchers.

In 2007, I began working with Bar None, a grassroots prison solidarity group located in Arcata, California. This work includes building relationships, documenting human rights violations, and disseminating resources across prison walls with individuals inside Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP). Starting with exploratory interviews in 2008 with an Oakland prisoner solidarity group, California Prison Focus (CPF), I began building relationships with individuals inside Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF). These relationships deepened during a summer internship at Justice Now, May-Aug 2010. This work unraveled the hegemonic crime and punishment knot I was forced throughout my life, requiring constant attention to the constructions of “criminal” that naturalize “other” and blame. Interrogating the ways “criminal” is socially produced and the oppressive legacies that operate within today’s criminal discourse, I hope this handbook further inspires this process in all who seek to strengthen the movement and create change.

INTENDED USE OF HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to serve as a tool for those outside of prison wanting to collaborate in solidarity across prison walls in a forward movement toward a world without prisons. It's a collective action to inspire counter-hegemonic knowledge production. Meaning, this project works against inequality, violence, and social control. The priority is not only to expose the injustices of the PIC, but also to engage the reader/activist in critically reflecting upon their own constructions of crime and punishment. Thus, I encourage the reader/activists compass to locate itself outside the confines of crime and punishments' binaries in order to interrogate and locate their own social positioning. Moreover, I urge them to understand how they collide and collude with and are affected by the PIC within their own lives, and most importantly, how they reader/activist can engage in transformative change individually and collectively, situated in approaches to solidarity.

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| Yard | Area of prison where a person lives; there are four yards at CCWF and VSPW labeled A, B, C, and D with each building/unit numbered 1-4. Also means the common outdoor recreation space for a housing unit. |
| 115 | Serious write-up by a guard for a violation of an institutional rule; goes into the C-file; individual has a right to appeal. |
| 128 | Less serious write-up by a guard for a violation of an institutional rule; also appealable. |
| 602 | Grievance procedure for people inside prison; write-up performed by a person inside as a challenge to some action committed (or omitted) by a staff member. |
| 1030 Chrono | Confidential informant who is not known but put into C-file. |
| 1824 | ADA (American's With Disabilities Act) grievance form concerning the state prison's housing and care that do not comply with medical necessities laid out in the ADA. |

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| PT | Physical Therapy |
| SHU or Ad-Seg | Security Housing Unit or Administrative Segregation; also known as lockdown or the hole; solitary confinement cells ostensibly used for individuals who cannot remain in general population due to discipline problems or who are in danger of harm from other people. |
| Title 15 | Section 15 of California’s Administrative Code, which governs prisons in the state of California. |
| Unit | The short term used at CIW for housing unit. CIW has 6 housing units. At CCWF and VSPW there are several housing units per yard. They are referred to by the name of the yard within the housing unit. |
| U-Turn | Organization of lifers and long—termers: they mentor youth. |
| VSPW | Valley State Prison for Women, located in Chowchilla, CA: currently the largest women's prison in the world. |
| WAC | Women's Advisory Council; group of people inside elected from individual yards to represent the GP’s interests and bring institutional problems and issues to the administration in monthly meetings. |
| W# or X# | CDCR’s identifying numbers for a person who is criminally committed in a women’s prison in California. Commonly the CDCR number in women’s prisons is referred to as their “W#.” People in men’s prisons have CDCR#’s that begin with other letters. |

BIOGRAPHY: AMTUL HAKIM

Hakim reciting from memory (interviewed at CCWF, January 2011):

“The circumstances that surround a man are not important. His response to that circumstance is important. His response is the ultimate determining factor between success and failure.”

BIO: My name is Amtul Hakim (the servant of the all-wise). I converted to Islam with the Ahmadiyyat community. I have been incarcerated since the age of 15; I am now 29. Since my incarceration I’ve been certified as a peer health educator; I’m a welder/electrician; I have clerical skills; I now work as a house keeper/porter for Paris Lamb hospital. I’ve completed multiple self-help groups. My favorites were victim’s impact self-awareness (V.I.S.A), the stress-management group, and the generation II generation group that deals with gang members changing their lives.

I am a confident mentor to the women in prison and can be very resourceful, even a tutor to the women getting GEDs or in college. I fight for the rights of those being dehumanized, discriminated against, and overall being threatened unjustly by that I mean, helping to write 602s, reporting poor treatment to the proper authority figures and/or to Justice Now.

I am a Muslim, poet, writer, rapper, welder, electrician, a peer health educator, and an overall good person. I am African amerikkkan (this country was founded upon the back-breaking, dehumanizing slavery of African American’s and even still with Obama as president there is a plethora of white supremacist groups that are against desegregation), and also a Lesbian with a multitude of obstacles placed before me that I “will” rise above.

Check out Hakim’s article:
http://www.alternet.org/story/23324/what_to_the_soner_is_the_fourth_of_july

Myths About People in Women's Prisons

- **MYTH:** All women are either helpless, disadvantaged, misunderstood victims who only need someone to love, understand, and encourage them, or dangerous, evil individuals who can never change and who should be locked away from society for the rest of their lives.
- **TRUTH:** While there are some (very few) who fit these extremes, most fit somewhere in the middle. Many inmates have made very conscious, albeit unwise, choices on their own free will and a wise person will recognize that these women will continue in that trend until they learn better. In most many cases, the women made their choices without fully understanding the probable consequences of those choices. Given appropriate intervention many inmates can become healthy, productive members of the free-world community.
- **MYTH:** All inmates are 100% responsible for their choices and behaviors—situational influences are irrelevant or do not exist; or, corrections is 100% responsible for its influence on and the decisions made by the incarcerated—disposition and individual accountability do not exist.
- **TRUTH:** While people are “accountable” for their choices, and do experience the consequences thereof, research has consistently shown, and is widely known in corrections, that certain easily produced conditions will inevitably create a hostile and violent response and environments, regardless of the passive predisposition of the individuals. Prisons repeatedly produce these environments, overtly reward the violent behaviors and publicly punish peace-seeking behaviors.

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| MTA | Medical Technical Assistants were guards with very limited medical training who performed triage functions for the medical department. CAN's now replaced MTA's. |
| MVA | Medical Vehicle Assistant: person in prison who drives vehicles in medical emergencies and when disabled people from the outside need to get around the prison. |
| N-number | Identifying number of a person committed civilly rather criminally for drug/alcohol related offenses. |
| NCWF | Northern California Women's Facility, located in Stockton. |
| Off-brand | Staff correctional officer's not regularly assigned to work a specific area or unit. |
| Psych | Psychiatric: sometimes refers to the psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse or to psychotropic drugs (psych meds). |
| PIA | Prison Industry Association: jobs for people in prison in sewing, dental, or optical industries. |
| Program Office | Building where captains, sergeants, and lieutenants' offices are located, as well as location of counselor meeting rooms and prisoner insubordinate cages. |



If you don't stand for something you don't stand for anything.

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| Main Yard | On weekends, a place where people are able to mingle with people from other yards, except A yard. |
| MCH | Madera Community Hospital. Individuals from CCWF and VSPW are often sent to this hospital for medical care not provided at the prisons. |
| MCMC | Merced County Medical Center; the county hospital. |
| Medically Disabled | Doctor—approved status; person in prison excused from working and still getting good time credit. |
| Medically Unassigned | Doctor—approved status; person in prison excused from work but placed on 1/3 time credit; usually a temporary condition. |
| Med Line | A line in which people must wait to receive their RX meds at scheduled times. |
| In The Mix | In the thick of things in general population; someone who hangs out in the yard during the day and participates in the prison community. Generally involved in drug and alcohol use; can include drug trafficking. |

NOTES:

THE EAGLE AND OPEN HANDCUFFS:
Marie Bandrup (same artist as the front cover)



On my very last prison visit with Marie, before I knew she was ill, we spoke in great depths about a logo for this handbook. Brainstorming ideas of birds, freedom, liberation, and cracking prison walls, we decided on the eagle with open handcuffs. I did not receive this image before the news of Marie's death and thought this image would only exist in my memory; however, her cellmate found this drawing and sent it to Justice Now. I received the image on the day of her memorial. The same day I met Marie's daughter who I had heard so much about. Marie's daughter is a tattoo artist and many individuals touched by Marie's strength are now getting this tattoo in her honor. Marie and her strength live on.

BIOGRAPHY: THERESA MARTINEZ

- **MYTH:** All people inside women’s prisons identify as feminine and female.
- **TRUTH:** What a “woman” is inside prison varies, vastly. Challenge yourself to think outside of traditional constructions and gender identities. Ask people what they prefer to be called, what pronoun they feel comfortable with, and know that might change over knowing and working with an individual.
- **MYTH:** People chose to commit crimes.
- **TRUTH:** Crime is often constructed as a “choice”, however rethinking the notion of “choice” allows us to understand it’s built in privileges of access juxtaposed against those who are systemically denied those privileges.

Misty Rojo describes, “Women are disproportionately locked up, poor women of color most of the time, or poor women period. Most of the women in prison are sex workers, they are drug addicts, a lot of them are in there for defending themselves in domestic situations. Many women are there simply for committing a crime with someone that they loved, or they were with someone and they did something....and the women end up serving a life sentence with them whether they had actually participated in the crime or not.

NOTES:

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| Dining Room | One dining room per yard for serving meals to General Population (GP); two meals daily. |
| DOM | Director's Operating Manual; institutionally created rule book with detailed explanation of Title 15. |
| Ducat | Permission slip which allows a person to move around an indicated area of the prison. |
| Free Staff or Free World People | People from outside; for example, staff who come in to run a particular program, teachers, leaders of work crews, or people on a tour. |
| Good Time Credits | Time off of sentence in exchange for work, usually day for day |
| GP | General population; where a person inside is typically placed if not in isolation or medical facility. |
| Head Count | Daily accounting of people inside; happens several times a day; no movement within the prison during count. |
| Lockdown | Confinement of a person to their cell; can be a disciplinary or safety measure. The entire prison is secured with all individuals reporting back to their housing units. |
| LWOP | Life without the possibility of parole. |

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| CDCR | California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. |
| C-file | Central file: institutional file in which all information about an imprisoned person is kept. |
| Chrono | Permission slip granting special privileges or rights to a person in prison and usually from a doctor. Chronos could be for lower bunk, access to ice, special diet, or no heavy lifting. |
| CID | Chronic Infectious Disease. CDCR's: abbreviation for classification. |
| CIW | California Institution for Women, located in Frontera, CA, is the oldest women's state prison in California. |
| Class Action | Lawsuit brought on behalf of an entire group of people; seeks systemic change. |
| CMO | Chief Medical Officer; head doctor at a prison. |
| CNA | Certified Nursing Assistants: replaced prior MTA positions at prison medical facilities. |
| CO | Correctional officer: also known as cop, guard; staff hierarchy of COs is militarized (sergeant, lieutenant, captain, etc). |
| CRC | California Rehabilitation Center: located in Norco. Civilly committed N-numbers, not felony sentenced persons, are housed here. |

BIOGRAPHY: MICHELLE "Cookie" CONCEPCION

"I am half Jewish and half Mexican. The Jewish side of my family fled to the US with numbers tattooed on their wrists and the Mexican side did whatever was necessary to get to the US for a better life for their family. Now both of those blood lines stop inside Central California Women's Facility, because gay or straight that right was taken from me inside here."

Cookie (Interviewed at CCWF 2010)

BIO: "Michelle 'Cookie' Concepcion is a male identified, Chicano, human rights violation documenter, and an incarcerated board member of Justice Now. He feels the only way to break through California's department of corrections and rehabilitation's bricks used to conceal its abuse, is by forming connections "Across Prison Walls." Due to California's unjust 3-strikes law he was sentenced to 13 years plus 50 year to life. His first opportunity to go to board will be in 2045. He will be 75 years old. He works for the benefit of all prisoners by exposing the California department of corrections lies of discipline, security, and rehabilitation with the truth of abuse, fear, and indoctrination."

What People Inside Want You to Know

- Language—watch out for academic language and knowing “inside” language and terminology makes communicating that much easier.
- Don’t come in with preconceived notions—be open, non-judgmental, and know learning happens both ways.
- Ask what people inside want—never assume.
- Speak up for what you believe is right and care about the next individual by stepping outside of the box.
- Show your humanness.
- Women are important and women have a voice—whether in custody or out.
- Inform people inside on rights to standard care and what those standards are.
- Go on line and read Prison Legal News to get an idea of what life inside is really like before you go on a visit as a “free” individual.
- Truth about life inside: racism, violence, drugs, abusive relationships.
- Prisoners come from all walks of life, everyone’s ethnicity, financial background, and biological background is different.
- Everyone in prison isn’t guilty. Don’t assume that is always the case.
- There is an assumption that prisoners can’t change because lawmakers don’t believe change is possible.
- Put your privilege on the shelf. There is little to no trust especially with white folks.

DEFINITIONS: Both Prison Slang and Correctional Jargon



Put your best foot forward and exhaust all avenues because when one door closes, another one opens.

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| A-days | Flat time—no additional time added, none taken away; given when absent from work with no excuse. |
| Annual | A once-a-year classification for a progress report or job review. |
| AUC or CPMP | Mother-Infant Care program or Community Prisoner Mother Program; 6 programs which place mothers in transitional homes in LA, San Diego, Oakland and Salinas with their young children; increasingly limited space—now 96 beds available. The program is administered by Women's and Children's Services, a new division of the CDCR. |
| CC-1 | A unit staff counselor; does initial issuance of time computations; available by appointment or “open line” to assist with all paperwork concerning accounts, parole, etc. |
| C/C or C-status | A status assigned when a person refuses to work; under C/C individuals have no privileges, can make no phone calls, and receive no packages; on C/C, a person is on lockdown for 22 hours a day and may only leave their cell between 2 PM to 4 PM. |
| CCWF | Central California Women's Facility, located in Chowchilla, CA. |

BIOGRAPHY: MISTY ROJO

“Misty Rojo is a 35-year-old mother of four Native Warriors, ex-prisoner, woman of color, and avid activist. Misty has been active in teaching peer safety and tolerance. Developing a curriculum focusing on HIV and HEP C that was mailed into all California prisons. This body of work was designed to help build self-awareness and serve as a map to surviving the state. She is trained and facilitated peer trainings to document Human Rights abuses in women’s prisons. She’s involved with family preservation through advising parents of their rights and writes op-eds looking into the racial and economical issues that precipitate mass incarceration, empowered to look beyond prison and raise community awareness to stop the direct route from targeted communities into surveillance and adult institutions of slavery.”

NOTES:



With all trials and tribulations to conquer these tasks nothing beats a failure but a try. So if I put forth an effort in something and fail, the fact that I’m not the winner doesn’t mean I’m not successful. For example, I’m running in a race and I don’t win, but I put forth the effort to win. I did everything in my power to win but somebody was faster-it’s still successful to me.

- People don’t have to know prisoners’ life but many prisoners’ desire to know about your life outside. Don’t expect an equal exchange of information.
- Understand there is a code of ethics inside: a community inside a community
- Prisoners can be a positive and contributing member of society if offered a chance. Prisoners are not a waste, drain, or a parasite, they have things of value to contribute.
- Many prisoners don’t know how to do better, but would if they knew how.
- Many prisoners don’t have what it takes to live and navigate society’s mainstream, but are not by nature “criminal.” Yet to survive we must do things that *are* criminal.
- Know your self enough to know when and how to say ‘NO’.

INTERVIEW: COOKIE 1.7.11 INSIDE CCWF

“This work has to be about “us” (people inside), not what the interns or academics warm fuzzys get out of it. That’s why people leave this work, its time consuming, an up-hill battle, and difficult to get inside because the staff doesn’t want you here. When the negative outweighs the positive—those people quit. I think this is true of all work of this nature but especially working with the incarcerated.”

Check out Cookie’s article:
<http://www.feministing.com/archives/009186.html>

What Motivates People Inside to Work with Those Outside

- Feeling of family
- Investment in teaching people inside how to do things.
- Validating opinions: validate answers and praise feedback helps to boost self-esteem and confidence
- Feel important and not a throw away
- Justice Now helping to maintain custody
- True partnership and respect
- Constantly redefine common goals and consensus
- Being clear about what you are good at so you can further alliances
- Communication that doesn't demonize those inside: recognizing and nurturing different styles
- Learning to seek answers, greater sense of discipline, awareness to do something of value, work with community for all those affected
- Learning how to work with people with different educational and communication skills
- Constantly involving new people to get a broader range of support
- Create and nurture ongoing dialogues.
- When the outcome is clearly communicated and what is needed is fully understood. Clear idea of expectations
- Listening and making a huge space for communication
- Love dedication and ability to organize
- Our needs don't need exaggeration because its horrible inside here
- Behind these walls is the same diverse community that is outside but with much more needs due to the realities behind these walls.
- I want people who are interested in how we live and who we are.

INTERVIEW: MISTY ROJO JANUARY 2011, COMPTON, CA

“The petition signing and the stamp drive are a lot of work. But the petition signing was great because so many women were doing it. You took your petition in one place and another already has one getting signed. It was great to see the response and mobility. So many women getting the petition signed and signing the petition even though the CDCR was saying these new bigger and better prisons would place those incarcerated closer to their children. It took getting the women to see through the lie to see the truth and sign the petition. The petition was a good eye opener for people on the inside because just running around with the petition brought awareness to a lot of women who didn't even think of the issues on a day-to-day basis. Instead of just thinking about themselves or their families we were able to get more women involved in the broader issues of what Justice Now is and what is prison abolition.”

NOTES:

THE GAPS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

- The need for lawyers.
- Need for more direct service capacity.
- Tokenizing people inside.
- Exploiting peoples' stories for your own gains and agendas.
- Resources about trauma.
- Outside groups focusing on unrelated issues, going off track
- Breaking what movies and the outside constructs as "criminal."
- Getting those outside to understand the psychological trauma of being in a cage
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/03/30/090330fa_fact_gawande)
- Reentry and how people are trained to return to prison.
- Inmate ranks and how unity is almost impossible
- Lawmakers make decisions without knowing the true feeling from those inside.
- Getting things done, seeing a project through to the end
- Surveillance- even President Obama breaks the law but certain people are unequally targeted.
- ART!!
- Compassionate community involvement.
- Community release support: corporate involvement (US based re-entry programs with jobs and housing instead of shipping jobs overseas)
- Reduce the number of "behaviors" society responds to by use of incarceration.

- I want people in the "free" world to know prisoners are more dynamic than black and white as you always read about and/or are bombarded with by the media. Challenge yourself to rethink the media stereotypes you've been bombarded with so you are able to meet individuals inside who will blow your mind.
- The social aspect to prison visits, offer an escape of the hostile environment. The creation of a space for the prisoner that is confidential leaves them feeling better, stable, supported.
- Access to specific areas of expertise and the internet.
- Sometimes it can take 3 tries to get it right, prepare for this outcome.
- Speaking at conferences
- Petitions across prison walls offer a medium to communicate w/others, can intersect the CDC's empty promises, is a good way to get people inside to think about things outside of themselves and their own families, and to think broadly about issues of abolition.

INTERVIEW: MISTY ROJO APRIL 2010 ARCATA, CA.

"The peer education program that was put into place by the people inside was awesome, it really was...we weren't just peer educators—we were peer counselors. That is what we were and what is what we did. We not only counseled people we also educated them on these diseases, we educated them on tolerance, and awareness. We also helped a lot of the women. We were a lot of the force behind-the proper medical care. We at one point had the power to call the medical department and get people to doctor's appointments."

INTERVIEW: CHOPPER 1.4.11 IN LOS ANGELES, CA

“Truth To Power is where we testified—that was good. The senators, judges, and congress people listened, they inquired and right then in that point they were active. Whatever issue was brought up they addressed it and we were being heard. We were very respected, we didn’t have to rush through anything, we could take whatever time we needed to speak. All the women were heard that day.”

- Stamp Drive: a fundraiser across prison walls. Its successful because people inside can donate stamps to organizations outside so its accessible to people on both sides of the wall.
- Compassionate Release: having people outside advocate for a humane passing of those inside offers hope and solidarity to a serious issue affecting those inside.
- Peer education: working on educational information written by those inside for those inside on how to navigate the system.
- Truth to Power: finding mediums that give people inside a chance to be heard by government officials.
- Projects that offer back and forth formats, shared drafts, mail and phone conversations, and clear deadlines.
- Interns: offer a bright, diverse, interesting, an compassionate space for those inside.
- Political Activism Inside: learning what medical neglect is, INS issues, gender discrimination, and illegal hysterectomies and tubal ligations
- Exposing justice system but in the process not exploiting people inside.
- Accessing knowledge base: having those outside access the internet for research conducted inside.



Knowing those outside care.
Justice is making a difference in someone’s life.

BIOGRAPHY: SHAWN

“The prison doesn’t like the consistency of the organizations coming in here, that’s when you know the R (for rehabilitation) in CDCR isn’t working. The correctional officers treat organizers like they are prisoners too. I don’t like that.”

Shawn
(interviewed inside CCWF on 1.7.2011)

BIO: “Shawn is silly, loving, attentive, strong-minded, and caring. Shawn is the type of person who is for the people. She can dance, organize, make things happen even when she has nothing, and is a good cook. Shawn has a good eye for details and is a big kid who appreciates cartoons. She is a baker with a serious comforting side. She is dedicated-staying true to the game on an independent level and as an activist.”

NOTES:

- If I live in a community where violence is endemic, that is especially common, it is more likely my kids will become drug addicts and end up in prison?

TRUE: However, healthy parenting makes an incredible difference between children becoming survivors or victims.

Things to do include:

- (1) Be a healthy role model in the legal economy
- (2) Maintain your own sobriety
- (3) Learn self-awareness and teach it to your children
- (4) Read self-help books
- (5) Encourage formal education
- (6) Be an attentive parent: make sure your child's early years are violence free in real life and on TV.
- (7) Have a positive relationship with a higher power and teach your children
- (8) Teach your children a self-defense martial art so they can be mentally prepared for a violent world upon adulthood

BIOGRAPHY: DONNA ANDERSON

BIO: Donna Anderson, "I am a 58-year-old physician and survivor of a traumatic birth experience. I lived a wonderful and privileged life in the free world until age 49. The mistake I made is that I avoided violence thinking that educational attainment would protect us all from violence. Regrettably in today's world that is not true. I know now we need to become healthy survivors of trauma in the midst of a violent world. I firmly believe that our own attempts to be healthy survivors of trauma is required for us to re-create safer communities for our selves and our children.

Barriers to Organizing

- Differing views: on Abolition, Sexuality, Religion, Gender.
- Shifting the center to include the voices of those most affected by the outcome.
- Long Haul: pre-prison or youth, incarcerated, and re-entry) *return, keep in touch, co.
- Interns wanting to feel good about themselves off the backs of those inside, this work is hard and not always full of "warm fuzzies".
- Not being clear about: expectations, ability, time commitments, and falling off without communicating such.
- LGBT community, identity, gender and trans issues.
- How to work with understanding each other and not blaming.
- Difference is good, it's where we learn the most.
- Don't talk over people: understanding different communications styles.
- Self-esteem, different approaches to learning styles, differing educational backgrounds.
- Affects of abuse and trauma.
- Pitted against each other-no unity.
- Unclear goals.
- Differing definitions: communication, language, value
- Mistrust: wariness of each other motives.
- Inconsistent Values: lead by example.
- Not recognizing others needs.
- Competition: sabotaging/stealing credit.
- Blaming: (if they would....we wouldt...) others are what they are , but we (me) are (am) still responsible for self-actions regardless of the other(s).
- Tolerance of differing goals, objectives, and perspectives.

MYTHS ABOUT TRAUMA

Written by Donna Anderson

- When one human observes the killing of another human being it's not traumatic.

FALSE: Our bodies remember the terror and rage of each of our previous traumas every time we participate in or observe killing, violence, extortion, and malice.

- Trauma to rape (multiple and ongoing) compared to emotional effects of “regular women” who are raped; can't work, rage, emotions out of control are similar to the violations of women in prison. The emotional damage is the same whether the sexual predator/sexual abuse occurs by a stranger on a bus or by “permission” during a “strip-search” or pat search. The only difference is that when it occurs from the former there is support and outrage at the violation in the later, there is no support. No one validates the revulsion, humiliation, and violation. There is only shame and helplessness that one is “deserving” of the violation.
- Post-traumatic stress reactions make a victimized person a victim or perpetrator forever.

FALSE: By coming to understand the normal human responses to trauma and appreciate them in ourselves and others, we can acknowledge those mental and emotional responses for what they are and become a survivor of trauma. We no longer have to continuously replay the roles of victims and/or perpetrator



If you don't stand for something
you don't stand for anything.

- All people who admit to having post-traumatic stress reactions are mentally ill.

FALSE: all human beings have some trauma happen in the course of modern life. The acute stress reaction that follows a traumatic event is the normal expression of the “freeze” response trying to clear itself. This is true even though our society, we often speak to a therapist or clinician after being victimized as the wise, compassionate individual to help us recover. The earlier and more completely a person deals with the acute stress reaction (including grief and loss reactions) after trauma, the less likely the survivor will be to have serious long-term post-traumatic effects. The acute stress reaction must be openly, honestly, and compassionately addressed. Some men and women do develop long term mental health complications from trauma. Post-traumatic stress disorder is well recognized in some veterans after combat and in survivors of rape. The trauma survivors experience during childhood often leads to a prolonged post-traumatic stress reaction. Unfortunately, many children are not treated for acute stress reactions or diagnosed with PTSD and the suffering becomes masked by drug abuse, alcoholism, criminality, and mental health diagnoses. Perpetual exposure to trauma and violence increases the affects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

- Trauma experiences, especially early in life, can cause the likelihood of addictions—to drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, etc.

TRUE: in our society, many people with post-traumatic stress reactions, mild or severe, “self-medicate” with drug and alcohol. Individuals with traumatic backgrounds should be especially cautious with addictive substances. The best alternative is self-awareness. Personal suffering is greatly lessened when we learn why we have certain reactions, what triggers them, etc. We can then learn positive responses to minimize the suffering and avoid negative consequences.