Message from the Executive Director

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children is approaching our 35th Anniversary!

We’ve seen a tremendous change in the landscape since our beginnings in 1978. As bad as we thought the prison system was then, we could not have foreseen the marriage of punishment and profit resulting in the bloated prison industrial complex we have today. Organizations focused on progressive criminal justice work are more needed than ever before, and yet foundation funding for such work has become more restricted. So we are proud that LSPC is not only still around but continues to be a movement and policy incubator.

In response to the rise of mass incarceration we have continued to evolve the way we do our work. Moving into policy work was an important key to reaching more of the ever-expanding numbers of people locked in cages, and we’re proud of the policy changes we have spearheaded. But our problems are so encompassing we need to make sure all oars are in the water. That’s why a key element in our future work – both internally as well as with our community organizing – is to empower the leadership of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, and families with loved ones behind bars.

LSPC is committed to developing an organizational apparatus to strengthen and sharpen the voices of people most impacted by mass incarceration, so we can be heard in the hallways of government as well as on the street. Increased community outreach will help ensure that we are reaching more people in heavily impacted communities. This larger base will then be able to participate in our Human Rights Policy Project, an initiative that will train formerly incarcerated people and families with loved ones inside to step into leadership positions on state and local policy campaigns aimed at ending human rights abuses in California prisons and jails, and facing people being released. The future of LSPC will be tied to the skill development of our communities.

In light of all of this, we will celebrate 35 years of LSPC’s resilient and committed community organizing and progressive legal work with a GaLa event. We hope all our new friends and old friends will join us and keynote speakers Angela Davis and Michelle Alexander in this celebration on October 19 in San Francisco. Please come, show your support, and help us continue to do this work!

SAVE THE DATE!
LSPC’s 35th Anniversary Celebration
October 19, 2013, 6-9 p.m.
Featuring Angela Davis and Michelle Alexander
More info inside.
FAMILY UNITY PROJECT

Helping Incarcerated Women Keep Their Children

“Lifelines: Protecting the Rights of Incarcerated Parents and Their Children” is a 6-week course designed to inform incarcerated women of their rights, and empower them to advocate for themselves in the areas of child custody and visitation. It is vital for women in jails to receive family law information as soon as possible after arrest, so they do not lose their children once in prison. Classes include practical information on how to represent themselves in court as well as skill-building for parenting and communication. Taught by Carol Strickman, Sheila Blake and Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah, LSPC will continue offering this class in the San Francisco women’s jail and expand from there. We are developing this curriculum with the vision of its use in other jails around the state.

Pelican Bay Solitary Confinement Lawsuit

LSPC staff attorney Carol Strickman is co-counsel with the Center for Constitutional Rights and other lawyers, on a federal class action lawsuit representing Pelican Bay prisoners. The suit challenges the CDCR’s use of long-term solitary confinement.

The lawsuit seeks a court ruling that solitary confinement for over ten years is cruel and unusual punishment. It also challenges how prisoners are assigned to these torturous cells as violating due process. Plaintiff Jeffrey Franklin states, “I look at the big picture of what CDCR is doing, not just to me, but to all people in the SHU and Ad-Seg (Administrative Segregation). I am looking for this lawsuit to make real changes for all of us.”

In June, the court allowed the attorneys to meet with all ten plaintiffs together, a never-before event, over CDCR’s objection. A court hearing on August 22 has addressed our motion to certify the class. Settlement talks are also underway.

Support for Hunger Strikers Fighting Torture

On July 8, 2013, 30,000 people housed in prisons all over California resumed hunger strikes and work stoppages, first initiated in 2011 to change the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation’s (CDCR) torturous practice of solitary confinement. The strikes resumed because little has changed for people enduring extreme isolation, some for decades.

LSPC is playing a strong leadership role in state-wide organizing efforts to build a grassroots movement to end long term solitary confinement, working closely in solidarity with family members of those in the SHUs. This year we engaged in a public education campaign in universities all over California, as well as helping organize mass mobilizations to a February hearing in Sacramento on solitary confinement conditions and to Corcoran Prison in July.

Media coverage has been extensive and mostly positive. Public support is strong and growing daily. It has included over 60,000 petition signatures; an Open Letter to Governor Brown signed by numerous celebrities and persons of stature; and strong statements by the faith, medical, mental health, and legal communities. While the numbers on hunger strike have naturally gone down, those who remain are determined to persevere. CDCR’s response has been to isolate hunger strikers and leaders; issue disciplinary violations; withhold adequate medical monitoring; and generally refuse to negotiate.

For more information or to get involved, go to Prisoner-HungerStrikeSolidarity.wordpress.com
Families who can’t afford $150 for the Alameda County Probation Department’s fee to seal juvenile records can rest a little easier – there is now a low-income waiver option. This resulted from a six-month “Free the Fee” campaign waged by youth advocates and lead by One Fam, All of Us or None, and East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC). Mark another one for the underdogs!

In Alameda County, formerly incarcerated people successfully challenged the proposed allocation of $25.1 million realignment funds to law enforcement. Due to our advocacy in collaboration with the Alameda County Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform, the county increased funding for community-based services by $2,200,000.

Our campaign to amend San Francisco public policy to prevent the city from contracting with private employers who ask for conviction history on the initial application is moving forward. Currently there is strong support for the initiative on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. We are also continuing the struggle to limit expansion of county jails in San Mateo County and San Francisco, while working to improve basic living conditions and programming for people inside Alameda County jails.

All of Us or None is developing a Freedom School – a grassroots leadership academy that will train formerly incarcerated people to more methodically organize our communities. The goal is to ensure our effectiveness in reaching out to other formerly incarcerated people and developing them into activists, as well as increasing the number of formerly incarcerated people involved in the policy-making process who understand and work for issues concerning our survival.

All of Us or None is publishing a newspaper! The paper is a powerful organizing tool for helping others to understand our struggles, as well as those facing people inside jails and prisons. So far over 2500 copies have been distributed throughout the Bay Area and to All of Us on None chapters throughout California, as well as to chapters and supporters in Detroit, Texas and New York City.

If you would like a copy of our latest issue, send us $5 (or what you can afford) and we will mail you one. Better yet, if you’d like to be an ongoing supporter of the paper you can have a one-year subscription for $25, for yourself or for someone you know who is incarcerated.

Fair Chance Pledge

I PLEDGE TO:
To open up opportunities for people with past convictions in our workplace
To welcome people back to our community after their release from jail or prison
To institute fair hiring practices concerning past convictions
To eliminate any restrictions on membership, volunteer or Board participation that may exclude people with arrest or conviction history

The Fair Chance Pledge is a call for non-profit and social justice organizations and foundations to join our Ban the Box campaign. Take the pledge at bantheboxcampaign.org.

With Gratitude for Linda Evans

After ten years as a dedicated organizer with LSPC, Linda Evans has decided to move on. She began work at LSPC after 16 years in federal prison, where she helped found an inmate-to-inmate AIDS peer counseling organization and the Council Against Racism, a prisoner organization that worked to lessen institutional racism and racial tensions inside the prison. Also a co-founder of All of Us or None, she was LSPC’s primary organizer for Ban the Box policy work. Under her detail-oriented and persistent efforts, Ban the Box initiatives achieved national success. Although she is irreplaceable as a high caliber organizer with decades of organizing experience, we are grateful for the time she worked with LSPC and take comfort in knowing she remains a proud member of All of Us or None dedicated to the larger struggle.
Over 40 Domestic Violence Survivors Released From Prison

Since 2002, over 40 women have been released from prison through the California Habeas Project, a statewide collaboration coordinated by LSPC in partnership with the California Women’s Law Center, University of Southern California (USC) Gould School of Law Post-Conviction Justice Project and the Public Defender’s Office of Los Angeles County.

The project recruited and trained volunteer attorneys to support incarcerated survivors of domestic violence who lacked the full benefit of expert testimony in filing habeas petitions challenging their convictions. LSPC’s legislative efforts last year resulted in removing the deadline for filing these petitions, as well as making parole more available to domestic violence survivors. Women with legal teams and those at the California Institution for Women will continue to be supported by the USC Project and others.

Due to attorney recruitment challenges, changes in parole and project funding cutbacks, LSPC and our partners have restructured the project. To date, LSPC has found representation for all but two clients at Central California Women’s Facility. We are also producing a habeas manual for prisoners wishing to file their own petitions.

We remain committed to providing these women with the maximum resources possible to achieve release. If you are an attorney and would like to get involved, please call Carol Strickman at 415-255-7036 x324.

2013 Interns Donate Their Time to Justice Work

Ariela Westlake
In this workplace I am shown everyday people stripped of many years of their lives and many of their basic rights, rising up from second class citizenship to fight back and challenge the very institutions and policies working to silence and condemn them. To me this is beautiful and powerful, and inspires me daily to dedicate my own body to this fight.

Rudy Howell
Answering calls to LSPC from people whose loved ones are caught up in the prison system, has helped me see the need for someone like myself who really understands what they’re going through. This experience has made me change my major at San Francisco State to Criminal Justice, so I can use my own experience with incarceration to help other people.

Emily Orloff
This internship has made me realize that I want to work to expand prisoner rights. I feel like everyone deserves to be heard, to get a second chance, and to be treated with dignity.

Sydney Carson
It was interesting listening to the guys inside Pelican Bay Prison talk about their lives and conditions. I feel a responsibility to share their experiences with other people to help spread their stories in ways that they can’t.

LSPC has been blessed this summer with a group of highly motivated and passionate interns from law schools and colleges all over the country. The group also included one high school student and one who made the flight from England to work with us.

As part of their intern experience they’ve visited jails and prisons around California and helped out with advocacy work for our San Francisco Ban the Box anti-discrimination campaign. They’ve done policy research for Alameda County Free the Fee – the campaign to eliminate the fee for sealing juvenile records. We are grateful to them for taking on the lion’s share of the coordinating for the exhibit of art created by people in California solitary confinement cells. In addition, they have expertly answered hundreds of letters from jails and prisons. We will miss them greatly when they return to school.

In addition to the summer interns, we are fortunate to have Rudy Howell at LSPC for a six-month internship, after recently being released from 20 years in federal prison. He completed paralegal training and an Associate’s Degree in Business Administration while on the inside, and handles incoming phone calls and letters to LSPC from family members looking for help for their loved ones.

If you are interested in an internship at LSPC, please contact Hamdiya at Hamdiya@prisonerswithchildren.org.

Our Summer 2013 Interns. Pictured, top row L-R: Eva DeLair (Drexel Univ), Sydney Carson (Haverford Coll), Mariam Nasrullah (JR Gunn HS), Ariela Westlake (Tufts Univ), Laura Jones (Scripps Coll), Stella Sy (Boston Univ), Jo Ann Dearman-Seeney (Intern Coordinator), Rudy Howell. Bottom row L-R: Sheila Ozomaro (Univ of SF), Nicole Ross (Law Univ of West England), Emily Orloff (Univ of SF).
For the 2013-2014 legislative session, LSPC is supporting or opposing over 60 bills, and is co-sponsoring a statewide “Ban the Box” bill AB 218. We also co-sponsored AB 870, prohibiting state government from contracting with companies inquiring about conviction history in initial job applications. 870 made good progress but was held on the Suspense Calendar, and we hope to move it forward next year. LSPC has taken strong supporting stances on SB 283 (allowing people with drug convictions to receive CalFresh benefits), AB 651 (expungement of county jail felonies), and California’s new anti-shackling law for pregnant inmates (Penal Code 3407).

**AB 218: Support “Ban The Box!”**

An estimated one in four adult Californians has an arrest or conviction record. AB 218 would prohibit state and local agencies from inquiring into job applicants’ conviction histories (with the “Have you ever committed a felony?” box on employment applications) until determining that applicants meet minimum employment qualifications. LSPC organized a support campaign, including testifying at the State Capitol and meeting with legislators. If passed, this bill will lead the way in allowing people with conviction histories to compete fairly for employment.

**AB 651: Allow Expungement of County Jail Felonies**

Current law permits people with felony convictions receiving probation to petition the court for relief under Penal Code section 1203.4, to set aside and dismiss their convictions. The 2011 Criminal Justice Realignment Act created a new class of “1170(h) felonies” punished with sentences in county jails, not state prisons. AB 651 would allow those completing felony sentences in county jails to petition the courts to set aside and dismiss their convictions after one year. This would increase their access to employment and housing.

**Follow up on Anti-Shackling Legislation**

Legislation co-sponsored by LSPC (effective January 1, 2013) has transformed previous California law allowing shackling of pregnant prisoners until labor. Jails are now forbidden from restraining pregnant women using handcuffs behind the body, leg irons, or waist chains. Further, wrist and ankle restraints during delivery and recovery are prohibited without a stated security reason, and pregnant women must be released from restraints if ordered by a medical professional.

LSPC has contacted the sheriffs of all 58 counties to inform them of the change and request their newly revised policy. We will summarize the information we gather and issue a report analyzing counties' compliance. So far most counties are copying our new law directly into their policies — a definite victory!

Meanwhile, we want to make sure the new anti-shackling law and policies are followed. Please call our hotline at 415-625-7049 if you know of any violations.

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**LSPC’s Mission**

LSPC organizes communities impacted by the criminal justice system and advocates to release incarcerated people, to restore human and civil rights and to reunify families and communities. We build public awareness of structural racism in policing, the courts and prison system and we advance racial and gender justice in all our work.

Our strategies include legal support, trainings, advocacy, public education, grassroots mobilization and developing community partnerships.
Thank you so much to our generous donors and funders! Your support makes our victories possible.

Individuals

Anonymous
Fred Abdullah
Karin Albright
William “Buzz” Alexander
Deborah Allen
Gloria & David Amell
Assemblyman Tom Ammiano
Phyllis Annett
Rita Archibald
Susan Arthur
Tonia Baker
Jane Barbarow
Nancy Barrett
Jennifer Beach
Victoria Becker
Dan Berger
Iris Biblowitz
Terry Bisson & Judy Jensen
Phyllida Burlingame
Deane and Richard Bunce
Jason Bucy
Peggy Bruggman
Paul Brown
China Brotsky & Daniel Roth
Sam Brooks
Bella DeSoto
Steve & Karen Devich
Leslie & James Dibenedetto
Adams
John & Peggy DiGiacinto
Cornelius Doherty
Sally Douglas & Francisco Arce
Marta Drury & Kerry Lobel
Kathleen Duffy
Barbara Duhl & David Block
Robert & Mary Eager
Laurie Earp
Soffiyah Elijah
Jerry & Miki Elster
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Kathleen Gilhooly & David Sokolower
Dana Ginn Paredes
Rebecca Gitlin
Robert & Dorothy Gloyd
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Miye Goishi
Deborah Gold
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Joe Goldenson
Sheila Goldmacher
Sonja Gonzales
Eva and James Goodwin
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Legal Services for Prisoners with Children warmly invites you to celebrate our 35th anniversary with us!

Saturday
October 19, 2013
6:00-9:00pm

The Hotel Whitcomb
1231 Market Street
San Francisco

FEATUREING
Wine Reception – Delicious Dinner – Awards Ceremony – Entertainment

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS
Angela Davis
Michelle Alexander

& over 200 Guests, including
Nationally Recognized Civil Rights Leaders
State & Local Legislators
Formerly Incarcerated People
Families with Incarcerated Loved Ones
Social Justice Advocates

See www.prisonerswithchildren.org for sponsorship opportunities, tribute book ad rates and ticket information
We believe in the human dignity of people in prison and recognize that they come from and are part of our communities.

First Annual Quest for Democracy Day

It is paramount for formerly incarcerated people to lead the efforts in fighting for our civil rights. For those disenfranchised due to felony convictions, there may be no other way to engage in the democratic process.

That’s why All of Us or None organizers at LSPC, working with other formerly incarcerated organizers around California, helped organize the first annual Quest for Democracy Day on May 13, 2013. This historic statewide event brought over 200 formerly incarcerated people and their supporters to Sacramento for a day of advocacy and education. The mobilization was timed to coincide with the California legislature’s consideration of numerous bills potentially impacting participants’ right to vote, work and feed their families, as well as opportunities for incarcerated youth.

Creating quite a buzz around the capitol, the event empowered participants most impacted by mass incarceration to share their knowledge of the structural racism within the system, practice public speaking, and learn how to speak with legislative aides. Four legislators came and addressed the crowd. Afterwards lunch was provided to all participants by the Formerly Incarcerated and Convicted People’s Movement.

The day was a great success as an introduction to the legislative process for many formerly incarcerated people, and organizers plan to continue it as an annual event. Look forward to a “Quest for Democracy Day” video coming soon.