



JUSTICE UPDATE

WINTER 2010

advocacy – grassroots organizing – movement building

Strengthening our Voices, Growing our Impact

After 10 years as Co-Directors, Dorsey Nunn and Karen Shain stepped into new leadership roles at LSPC. Dorsey is now Executive Director, making us one of the first public interest law offices in the country to entrust executive leadership to a formerly-incarcerated African American. Karen's newly created position as Policy Director marks our shift toward actively shaping the laws and policies that impact our lives, while remaining grounded in grassroots organizing.

Campaign to End Employment Discrimination Goes National

The question "Have you been convicted?" appears on applications for jobs, housing, vocational licensing, benefits, entrance to college, student loans and insurance. It is part of a pattern of discrimination that denies formerly-incarcerated people the right to sustain ourselves and our families. Initiated and led by formerly-incarcerated people, LSPC project **All of Us or None's** Ban the Box campaign—to eliminate the box requiring criminal records disclosure and to end unnecessary background checks—has sparked a national movement. Ban the Box policies have been adopted in 6 states and 23 cities or counties nationally, including California!



Executive Director Dorsey Nunn at party celebrating LSPC's new leadership.
Photo: Scott Braley.

Domestic Violence Survivors Released from Prison

California is the only state that allows domestic violence survivors who are incarcerated for crimes directly related to their experiences of being abused and who were unable to introduce expert testimony on abuse during their trial proceedings to file for *habeas* relief. The **Habeas Project**, coordinated by LSPC, connects incarcerated survivors of domestic violence with pro bono attorneys to pursue their legal rights in court and works to release survivors who were unjustly incarcerated. We are thrilled to celebrate the freedom of seven incarcerated domestic violence survivors through the Habeas Project since our last newsletter: Minda Wilcox, Deborah Peagler, Michelle Purugganan, Theresa Fredericks, Barbara Nicole Hammond, Frankie Williams and Beatrice Smith-Dyer. Deborah Peagler passed away from lung cancer after just 10 months at home with her family. We join everyone who knew Debbie in mourning her loss.



Pauline and Women's Policy Institute allies advocate in Sacramento to stop shackling pregnant prisoners.

LSPC Sponsors Bill to Stop Shackling Pregnant Prisoners

While a pregnant prisoner in Contra Costa County Jail, Pauline was repeatedly shackled when going to court and in the hospital for pregnancy complications. Her experience was legal. Under current California law an incarcerated pregnant woman can be shackled anytime except when she is in labor or delivery. This year, LSPC's **Family Unity Project** worked with the Women's Policy Institute of the Women's Foundation of California to sponsor AB1900, a bill introduced by Assemblymember Nancy Skinner that would have made it illegal to shackle pregnant women in state, county or juvenile detention facilities unless there is a security reason. The bill passed through the legislature with an unprecedented unanimous vote. Unfortunately Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed the measure. We will try again in 2011.

Older Prisoners Gain Recognition & Rights

"Gertrude" is barely recovered from her hip replacement surgery and fears she will be forced to drop to the ground for an alarm. She is one of more than 10,000 people growing old in California's prisons who face unique challenges and abuses in a system not geared to their needs and vulnerabilities. Developed in response to prisoners' demands, LSPC's **Older Prisoner Campaign** aims to win comprehensive geriatric correctional policies throughout the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and to release low-risk frail elders on parole. Our work is making a difference. This year women's prisons implemented an Elder ID Card program that entitles seniors to lower bunks, first meal shift and other accommodations.



From *Connie the Convict* cartoon series by Andrea Mims (Central California Women's Facility), incarcerated 28 years.

Training the Next Generation of Advocates

LSPC's **internship program** hosts students every year who learn about the work we do and develop their capacity as future advocates for our movement. Interns Joseph Clark and Lauren Liu describe how their experiences at LSPC impacted them this summer: "My favorite LSPC experience was writing a research memo about restorative justice. Treating a crime not merely as grounds for punishment but also as an opportunity to communicate, heal, and grow, that really intrigued me, and forever changed my notion of what true justice looks like." (Joseph Clark, UC Berkeley School of Law). "Attending the Juneteenth Celebration at Deuel Vocational Institution was an indescribable experience. I wasn't expecting to meet such politically conscious and intelligent souls. For days/weeks afterwards, I carried around a heavy heart with lingering feelings of sadness and indignation. I realized I *have* to be involved in this movement - I was touched too deeply to now overlook the injustices of incarceration." (Lauren Liu, UC Berkeley).

Oakland Coalition Challenges Legalized Racial Profiling

Oakland City Attorney John Russo launched an initiative this year to institute "gang" injunctions in low income and gentrifying communities. "Gang" injunctions are civil court actions brought against an arbitrary group of young men of color, restricting their activities in a specific geographic zone and creating new crimes that only apply to them. "Gang" injunctions strip people of color of their basic civil rights and circumvent due process of law, while failing to improve public safety. **All of Us or None** helped build a diverse coalition of community organizations and residents determined to stop the injunctions throughout Oakland. Due to coalition efforts, the first injunction was significantly narrowed by a requirement to name specific individuals.



All of Us or None members Arthur League, Hamdiya Cooks, Linda Evans and Elder Freeman at the Detroit installation of the international memorial to the Underground Railroad *Gateway to Freedom*, by Ed Dwight.

A National Agenda for Formerly-Incarcerated People

As formerly-incarcerated people, most civil rights are legally denied us. **All of Us or None** was created by formerly-incarcerated people to restore our rights. This summer, we brought our vision to the US Social Forum (USSF) in Detroit. The USSF is a movement building process; it brought together 18,000 people from across the country to advance an agenda for transformation, inspiration and leadership from the grassroots. We helped pass a resolution that supports a national gathering of formerly-incarcerated people and calls for social justice organizations and funders to eliminate discrimination against formerly-incarcerated people in their personnel and board policies. As part of the Excluded Workers Congress launched at the USSF, we joined with domestic workers, farm workers, taxi workers, welfare/ workfare workers and restaurant workers who also lack basic rights under federal labor law to share lessons from our movements and outline a common agenda to change policy. .