Letter from the Editor:
Brothers and Sisters!

I’ve been very pleased to see prisoners exercising their citizenship through collective demonstration. Story after story comes out every week notifying people of incarcerated citizen’s decision to take action from Solano prisoners petitioning against a ‘man down’ policy at California State Prison-Solano to prisoners protesting against collective punishment at Clallam Bay Corrections Center in Washington State. Prisoners have the right to raise concerns about their conditions and prison staff held the responsibility of addressing prisoners concerns. Along with this, organizing is an inherent right to citizenship within a democracy. Prisoners are citizens with the right to raise concerns about their environment, the right to have their concerns addressed adequately and the right to organize peacefully. The more I see prisoners taking advantage of these rights the closer I feel we are to securing prisoners’ right to vote.

Now is the time for you all to stop acting like prisoners: you are not helpless, ignorant or futile. You are connected to all of the resources that you need in order to execute your means. Your experience within this system is an invaluable resource. You are intelligent and wise beyond your own comprehension, your words are seeds that plant fruit into the masses when you speak. You are fully capable of success. I hope you feel encouraged because we need you in order to effectively run our democracy, we need your perspectives, your voices and your experience in order to succeed. Through organizing for your voting rights you all will be equipped to mobilize your voting power once they’re obtained.

I want to notify you all of the upcoming events I will be attending this month. There is a Fight Toxic Prisons Convergence happening in Gainesville, Florida June 14-17 and I look forward to connecting with organizers there, passing out newsletters and strategizing with people who are committed to severing our nation’s dependence on exploiting human beings. Following that event I’ll be attending the Reparations Summit Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Slavery in Detroit, Michigan June 18-19. I look forward to attending and covering both events in next month’s newsletter.

Finally I want to thank you all for your love and support. This season of my life has brought more unexpected blessings than I’ve ever experienced. I believe its because I’m in the right moment in history doing what I’ve been called to do. There’s been an exciting development in Washington D.C. Politicians there are eager to make the region the first in the country where its incarcerated residents can vote! The New Suffrage Movement is spreading like wildfire and this one can’t be put out until the last prisoner can cast their vote in the ballot box.

In Solidarity,
Amani Sawari
@Sawarimi

These are the NATIONAL DEMANDS of the men and women in federal, immigration and state prisons:

1. Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women.

2. An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.

3. Recision of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.

4. Recision of the Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to death by incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.

5. An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in Southern states.

6. An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and brown humans.

7. No denial of access to rehabilitation programs for imprisoned humans at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender.

8. State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services.

9. Reinstatement of Pell grant eligibility to prisoners in all US states and territories.

10. Recognition of voting rights for all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees and so-called “ex-felons.” Their votes must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count!

Recent State Action

RESTORE THE VOTE AMENDMENT ACT OF 2019 INTRODUCED TO RESTORE VOTING RIGHTS OF INCARCERATED D.C. RESIDENTS.

The Colorado legislature adopted legislation to enfranchise people on parole effecting 10,000 ex-felons. Nevada Senate passed a bill to restore the right to vote to convicts upon their release from prison.

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D.C. to Become the First Jurisdiction to Reenfranchise Incarcerated Residents

by Amani Sawari June 4, 2019 | www.sawarimi.org

It’s critical right now for political officials to get on the right side of the new suffrage movement. Just this week council member Robert White announced the proposal of legislation that would reenfranchise incarcerated citizens residing in the District of Columbia, making D.C. the first jurisdiction in the country to reenfranchise incarcerated residents. While already has the support of more than half of the DC Council, so he is confident he can get his Restore the Vote Amendment Act of 2019 passed before the presidential primary. This is incredible progress for the Right2Vote campaign and I urge every political official to do with it takes from where they stand in legislative power to push the initiative for universal suffrage forward. We need to be calling out the hypocrisy of the land of the free stripping the rights of its incarcerated residents from participating in the legislation that governs their lives. There is no reason why someone who’s incarcerated shouldn’t have any sort of voice socially economically or politically and now the time has come to restore their political voices.

In 1955, Congress imposed a disenfranchisement law on the District that prohibited incarcerated men and women from voting. Similar laws like are currently implemented in 48 states as a tool to marginalize people of color with 1:13 African-Americans voting rights lost as a result in comparison to 1:56 non-Black voters. We see this reflected in D.C. which has the highest incarceration rate of any city in the United States with Black citizens as the overwhelming majority of the District’s incarcerated residents.

The legislative that stripped these right was established many decades ago and now is the time to recognize that those choices were not for the benefit of the whole. The trend of public opinion as it relates to voting rights is steadily shifting towards approval with more and more citizens leaning in their favor of restoring because of the sacrificial work being done by activists on the inside. As more people are beginning to understand why voting rights were taken away from people in the first place the demand for inclusion incarcerated citizens voting rights. This is due to the understanding that disenfranchisement laws are rooted in racist Jim Crow politics.

Incarcerated citizens fighting for their right to vote has been successful in securing the voting rights of ex-felons in Florida, Nevada, Colorado and Missouri over the past year. Nationwide citizens and public officials are in agreement on expanding voting access to include former felons. This is growing. There was never a distinct connection between restricting someone’s access to influencing policy and incentivizing good behavior. In fact, we actually see the opposite occur, when we bar people from participating in civics we encourage them to commit crimes by pushing them on the margins of society. By making them feel like they don’t belong individuals are more likely to commit crimes against those who push them to the outskirts. We need to be doing all we can within this country to facilitate cohesion and unity.

The New Suffrage Movement Leading the Way for the Decarceration Era

Universal Suffrage for this impacted by incarceration is imperative following the Era of Mass Incarceration. Knowing that many citizens were unjustly arrested and imprisoned due to racist and overbearing ‘tough on crime’ legislation we must do all we can to restore the aspects of citizenship that were stripped from certain groups at an overwhelming rate in order to thwart their political power. We cannot be satisfied with a simple end of Mass Incarceration. We must push for a Decarceration era in the United States. We must organize in support of retroactive, non-divisive policies that reduce the number of incarcerated people and restore the wholeness of individuals in prison in the U.S. We must force Corrections Departments to recognize the humanity of their incarcerated populations with the passage of legislation like Councilmember White’s Restore the Vote Amendment Act of 2019.

There’s something special about being able to cast your ballot, regardless of where you are in the process of serving your sentence. Being able to say that you have a voice is extremely rehabilitative. Understanding that our Department of Corrections are much too focused on punitive punishment, it’s time that we aim to restore the rehabilitative aspects of prison by showing prisoners that they do belong in our society and we value their voice and see them as capable of making educated and informed decisions. Even so, making educated and informed decision is not an eligibility requirement for voting. Hundreds of thousands of American citizens may be consider uneducated, ignorant or biased, but we don’t exclude them based upon that judgement because we value their citizenship. It is a basic human right of citizenship within a democracy to have access to the polls and we need to do the same for our incarcerated brothers and sisters.

It’s exciting to see Washington D.C. join the list of regions to propose legislation for universal suffrage along with New Mexico, New Jersey and Massachusetts this year. As our nation’s capital, it would be massive for Washington DC to be the first region of our country to restore incarcerated citizens voting rights.
Tell Me Again Why Prisoners Can’t Vote

Maine and Vermont allow inmates to cast ballots. The 48 other states should too.

by Jamelle Bouie April 11, 2019 | www.nytimes.com

A representative of the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition speaking to female inmates in Denver about their voting rights before the 2018 midterms.CreditCreditAAron Ontiveroz/The Denver Post, via Getty Images

At a forum in Iowa last weekend, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts gave what has become a standard answer for Democrats on the question of felon disenfranchisement.

“Once someone pays their debt to society, they’re out there expected to pay taxes, expected to abide by the law, they’re expected to support themselves and their families,” she said. “I think that means they’ve got a right to vote.”

Most Americans agree with her. Nearly two-thirds of respondents in a March 2018 poll by HuffPost and YouGov said that former felons should have the right to vote. Voters and lawmakers across the country have begun to roll back the laws and procedures that, according to the Sentencing Project, kept an estimated 6.1 million citizens from the ballot box in the 2016 presidential election.

Last year, for example, a supermajority of voters in Florida endorsed a state constitutional amendment to end the draconian policy of permanent disenfranchisement (barring a pardon from the governor). As of 2018, 15 states and the District of Columbia restore voting rights to felons upon release from prison. Likewise, Alabama, which had denied rights for the vague offense of “moral turpitude,” redefined the meaning of the term, reportedly making thousands of former convicts eligible to vote.

But the growing tide against felon disenfranchisement raises a related question: Why disenfranchise felons at all? Why not let prisoners vote — and give the franchise to the roughly 1.5 million people sitting in federal and state prisons? Why must supposedly universal adult suffrage exclude people convicted of crimes?

There is precedent for this idea. California allows voting for those in county jails (with limited exceptions). Colorado does too. New York recently allowed those on parole or probation to vote. And two states, Maine and Vermont, already let prisoners vote. In fact, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont affirmed his support for voting rights in prison the same week Warren backed automatic enfranchisement for former felons. “In my state, what we do is separate. You’re paying a price, you committed a crime, you’re in jail. That’s bad,” Sanders said, responding to a question at a town hall. “But you’re still living in American society and you have a right to vote. I believe in that, yes, I do.”

Warren was also asked to weigh on this question, but deferred it, saying only that it’s “something we can have more conversation about.”

We ought to have that conversation now. Americans may see it as common sense that you lose your right to vote when you’re imprisoned, but in many democracies prisoners retain the right to vote. When that right is revoked, it’s only for particular crimes (in Germany, it’s for “targeting” the “democratic order”), and often there is a good deal of judicial discretion. Mandatory disenfranchisement is unusual, and permanent disenfranchisement is even rarer.

Mandatory disenfranchisement is constitutional — the 14th Amendment allows the government to restrict the right to vote because of “participation in rebellion, or other crime” — but there are few good reasons for the practice. The best argument, outside of the case from custom and tradition, is that committing a serious crime voids your right to have a say in the political process. You lose your liberty — your place in civil society — and the freedoms that come with it.

But doing it that way — subjecting prisoners to a kind of social death — is in conflict with the idea of “inalienable” rights that cannot be curtailed.

As it stands, incarcerated people retain a variety of rights, some of which touch on the political rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Prisoners have freedom of worship. They can protest mistreatment and poor conditions. They can exercise some free speech rights, like writing for newspapers, magazines and other publications. To that point, there is a rich literature of work by incarcerated people tackling complex social and political issues. Voting would be a natural extension of these activities.

An obvious objection is that criminal transgressions render prisoners unfit for participation in democratic society. But there’s nothing about committing a crime, even a serious one, that renders someone incapable of making a considered political choice. Losing your liberty doesn’t mean you’ve lost your capacity to reason. Prisoners are neither more nor less rational than anyone else who is allowed to vote.

If anything, the political system needs the perspectives of prisoners, with their intimate experience of this otherwise opaque part of the state. Their votes might force lawmakers to take a closer look at what happens in these institutions before they spiral into unaccountable violence and abuse.

There are practical benefits as well. Racial disparities in criminal enforcement and sentencing means disenfranchisement falls heaviest on black communities. This is not just a direct blow to prisoners’ electoral power; it also ripples outward, depressing political participation among their friends, families and acquaintances. On the other end, suffrage in prison may help incarcerated people maintain valuable links to their communities, which might smooth the transition process once they’re released.
Citizenship is not a right that expires upon misbehavior,” Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote for the majority in Trop v. Dulles, a 1958 case dealing with the rights of a military deserter. And, he continued, “citizenship is not lost every time a duty of citizenship is shirked.” Yes, prisoners have committed crimes, and yes, some of those are egregious. But depriving any citizen of the right to vote should be the grave exception, not a routine part of national life. Universal suffrage means universal suffrage.—

Debate on Felony Disenfranchisement Is Already Here in State Legislatures Around the Country

Daniel Nichanian May 2, 2019 | www.appealpolitics.org

Voting rights may be a growing issue in the presidential election, but the organizing to reform or abolish felony disenfranchisement has taken off at the state level. Some states, most notably Colorado and Nevada, are moving to enfranchise everyone upon their release from incarceration, a step that would itself significantly expand and simplify eligibility. But other legislatures have killed even such proposals. In the states with the most restrictive rules, proposals modeled after Florida’s Amendment 4 to restore voting rights immediately upon release from incarceration, sending it to the Senate. This reform would get to the same point as Colorado’s through a bigger jump since Nevada currently has some of the country’s harshest laws. It is one of 12 states where people remain disenfranchised after completing their sentences. A reform that took effect this year scaled back the permanent nature of disenfranchisement, as I wrote in December, but did not abolish it.

Neither Colorado nor Nevada’s bills would abolish disenfranchisement; they would leave people unable to vote while incarcerated for felony convictions. I asked Herod what motivated the choice of championing legislation that would enfranchise people on parole specifically. “Abolishing disenfranchisement entirely will likely require amending the state constitution, a difficult process that needs a vote of the people to succeed,” she answered in writing through her spokesperson. But she called “restoring parolees’ voting rights” an “important first step,” and stated that “we need to consider restoring voting rights to those incarcerated. Felon disenfranchisement laws disproportionately affect people of color and since the civil war have been used to erode our political power... If anyone should be voting, it’s those who have been most affected by our laws.”

Other legislatures have proved less receptive so far to proposals to expand voter eligibility:
- Constitutional amendments that would enable people to vote when they complete their sentences derailed in Iowa and Mississippi. Iowa and Mississippi have some of the country’s most expansive lifetime bans on voting.
- Florida significantly expanded eligibility this year. As a result of Amendment 4’s win in November, approximately 1.4 million people who had completed their sentences became eligible to register in January, and the state has even held some local elections since. But the state legislature is poised to restrict the reform’s implementation this week, and again disenfranchise some of these individuals. Kira Lerner reported on the latest from Florida in The Appeal on Wednesday.
- Democratic legislatures defeated legislation to enfranchise people immediately upon their release in New Mexico and in Washington.
- Hawaii and Massachusetts already restore people’s rights upon their release. They were considering proposals to entirely abolish disenfranchisement and to allow people with felony convictions to vote from prison. Both proposals failed this year.

I reported on Hawaii’s abolition legislation in March, but Massachusetts’s proposed reform (S.12) failed just last week, when the Joint Committee on Election Laws effectively voted to table it. The
committee vote was not public. Only four of its 17 members answered my multiple requests for comment about how they voted.

All those who replied told me that they voted to advance the reform. They are state Representatives Russell Holmes and Lindsay Sabadosa, and state Senators Sonia Chang-Díaz and James Eldridge. All four are Democrats, but so are 14 of the committee’s 17 members. “It’s very easy for prisoners to lose hope and their connection to society, and restoring the right to vote would provide an enhanced capacity to stay connected,” Eldridge told me. State organizers have taken issue with the secrecy of this process. “When legislators vote behind closed doors to continue to a racist history of disenfranchisement, with no public record of how they voted for their constituents, that’s a fundamental failure of democracy,” Jonathan Cohn, an organizer with Progressive Mass, an advocacy group that supported the proposal, told me in a written message. He added that the lack of public votes is “a systemic problem for activists in Massachusetts because bills can be killed with everyone having ‘clean hands.’”

The Emancipation Initiative and the Harvard Prison Divestment Campaign, two state-based groups, are planning a citizen-initiated ballot initiative to abolish felony disenfranchisement in Massachusetts. They launched this effort at an April 1 event in Boston. U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley, who represents the district where the event was held, told me at the time in a written message through a spokesperson that “it’s time to have this conversation” and to ask whether suffrage “should… be a fundamental human right.” Pressley noted that Massachusetts only disenfranchised prisoners in 2000 in “reaction to organizing efforts on the inside in prisons in my district.”

Rachel Corey, an organizer with the Emancipation Initiative, confirmed that a ballot initiative remained an objective for her group in the wake of the legislative setback. “The legislators were the people who got us into this mess and stripped people of their right to vote less than 20 years ago,” she said. “The ultimate decision makers on a constitutional amendment are the citizens of the state, so we also want to raise awareness about the issue through signature collection.” The group plans to gather signatures in the fall. Multiple bills to expand eligibility are still pending in California, Connecticut (Senate Bills 25, 53, and 155), Minnesota (House File 40), Nebraska (Legislative Bills 83 and 91) and New Jersey (SB 2100, Assembly Bill 3456). None has received a floor vote. File 40), Nebraska (Legislative Bills 83 and 91) and New Jersey (SB 2100, Assembly Bill 3456). None has received a floor vote. File 40), Nebraska (Legislative Bills 83 and 91) and New Jersey (SB 2100, Assembly Bill 3456). None has received a floor vote. File 40), Nebraska (Legislative Bills 83 and 91) and New Jersey (SB 2100, Assembly Bill 3456). None has received a floor vote. File 40), Nebraska (Legislative Bills 83 and 91) and New Jersey (SB 2100, Assembly Bill 3456). None has received a floor vote.

New York City Aims to Free Thousands
by Amani Sawari June 10, 2019 | www.sawarimi.org

As we move into the Decarceration Era, organizers in different states are pushing prison officials to dramatically reduce their incarcerated populations. Proposed criminal justice reform legislation is sweeping the nation from the West Coast to the East. On the West cost, in California Initiate Justice organizers are advocating for those incarcerated as youth to have the ability to earn time off of their earliest parole date with AB 965. In the Midwest, Michigan residents are pushing legislators to expand Good Time from benefiting not only youth offenders but to retroactively impact all of Michigan’s incarcerated residents with the #PassMIGoodTime campaign. On the West Coast organizers with Aging People in Prison Campaign are advocating for the release of elderly and terminally ill Prisoners in Washington D.C. In New York, Just LeadershipUSA organizers are pushing legislators to dramatically reduce their jailed population with the #BUILDcommunities campaign.

All of these align with the national #Cut50 campaign, an initiative to cut the prison population by at least half. There’s no benefit to having people in prison, especially people who are equipped to function as contributing members of society on the outside. In New York activist are drawing a firm line in the sand when it comes to reducing the number of holding facilities we have operating in New York City. New York has the highest cost for taxpayers per prisoner at $69,355 per year. The greater number of people there are incarcerated, the higher the cost is for taxpayers in maintaining the residency of imprisoned people people who aren’t contributing to the social or economic fabric of society through their own social and economic growth.

The exploitive measures used on prisoners are not sufficient to true economic growth. They are actually destructive to prisoners’ social, intellectual and psychological well-being. We’ve seen many examples of the way that prison conditions have had a negative impact on individuals throughout history. A devastating example of this can be found in the story of Kalief Browder, who took his own life after being held at Rikers Island without trial for over three years after being accused of stealing a backpack. The effort to close Rikers is one that we should all be following closely. We all know the terribly unfortunate case of Browder who lost is life as a result of NYC indifference to conducting speedy trials. The violent and hopeless environment of the New York prisons is not exclusive to Rikers. This is why organizers have extended their call from #CLOSErikers to closing at least 8 facilities across the state with the goal of dramatically decreasing the number of incarcerated people from 15,000 to 3,000 .

There are currently 7,800 people incarcerated in jail in New York City. This is the lowest the population has been in NYC jails since the 1980s and organizers look forward to continuing to shrink those numbers with the use of multiple decarceration strategies.
These strategies include decriminalizing certain activities such as marijuana use and sex work in combination with replacing sentences of 1 year or less with other alternatives like treatment facilities, community service and home monitoring. Along with these methods, properly addressing mental health issues with adequate mental health care would be enforced as opposed to incarceration. Most significantly, organizers aim to complete a pretrial overhaul from bail through discovery and speedy trial process. Browder waited for his trial for three years before taking the situation into his own hands. His suicide showed everyone that life inside of a prison pushes people to their limits, especially for those that are innocent.

Closing the prison on Rikers Island will save New York City more than $1.6 million annually. Organizers propose shifting saved funds to investing in community resources. It’s not profitable, monetarily or socially to have tens of thousands of incarcerated citizens languishing in facilities. A focus on decarceration is a focus on building communities by restoring those communities that are torn apart by the loss of its members to the state. Our new collective vision for the U.S. in 2020 needs to be Decarceration. I want to urge grassroots organizers across the country to take a hold of whatever resources you have access to in order to focus on reducing the numbers of incarcerated citizens you have in your state. The time has passed for waiting for prison officials and politicians to make reform enough of a priority for them to figure out how prison numbers can be reduced. Like organizers in New York at Just Leadership USA, conduct your own study to figure out what changes need to be made in your state’s criminal justice system. It is our responsibility to do the research necessary and set a hard-and-fast line as to where incarceration numbers should be in order to #Cut50 nationwide in the upcoming years.

2020 is the beginning of the Decarceration era and within the next five years we need to demand to see lower rates of incarceration, lower incarcerated populations and more criminal justice reform legislation passed. Within our lifetimes we will witness the Decarceration Era. We need to stop asking politicians what they think. We the responsibility to tell them what we demand. In your state do the math: How many drug offenses are still in prison? How many sex workers are there? How many people were incarcerated as minors that should be earning time-off credits? Calculate the data and demand that those sentences be cut. It is time that we hold officials accountable to these numbers. Instead of hoping to see changes, we must pick out politicians who prioritize decarceration and the demands of prisoners so that we can see those actions take place.—

American Crime Control As Industry
by Asar Imhotep Amen | California Health Care Facility

There are several reasons why the prison industrial complex continues to grow in America, and I'll focus on two of the most important. The first is that in punishing people we as a society attempt to appease the fearful side of our own human nature. The second is that vested interest keep this very unsuccessful system going. Just as steel companies need iron and timber companies need trees, so prisons use people as the raw material. When it comes to vested interest, there are many groups who have an interest in the maintenance of the status quo of prisons. In no particular order I will nominate 9 such groups. Let me say clearly and emphatically that within each group there is a minority who hold opposing views and are much more open and positive in their approach.

The vast majority of prison guards, police, judges, forensic psychologists, prison vendors of every description, prosecutors and even some and criminal offending, often out of all proportion to other news. Where would the tabloids be without a regular front page crime story? Or the talk show hosts? Or television? One evening recently on Fox news, 9 of the first 10 stories related to crime here and overseas.

The construction in subsidiary industries have a vested interest in expanding prison network and are, by implication, happy see a high crime rate continue. Warehousing the poor is now a worldwide trend in many industrialized countries, with the United States (especially California), Britain Russia and China leading the way. With huge profits being made to constructing, expanding, and providing for new prisons and old, the corporate culture has really taken up the challenge that crime offers to make a profit out of human misery. A directory called the “Corrections Yellow Pages” list more than a thousand vendors. While private prisons are the most lucrative, state-controlled ones are also high on the corporate agenda, providing guaranteed payment and regular income (Google California correctional Peace officers association).

Many academics in the fields of law, social work, criminology, psychology, and psychiatry have a vested interest. Too many sit in ivory towers teaching outmoded theories, denying students opportunities to develop creative responses to the social problems that are largely responsible for crime. Strange as it may seem many politicians also have a vested interest in not seeing creative options to crime and prison research, trialled and reviewed. Gen
eraly they believe it is perceived to be soft to be advocating alternatives. The reality is the exact opposite. Most alternative programs are a lot tougher in that they demand accountability (e.g. restorative justice) with offenders having to take responsibility for what they have done. But few politicians are prepared to promote or fund such programs. The new corporate elite running prison policy were brought in to try to change the harsh macho prison culture that has been built up over generations. While to a degree some dimensions of that I’ve been tackled, they have also brought in the culture of measured success, which in corporate terms often means wage cutting, program deletion.

and prison expansion. Prison numbers have been going through the roof for the past 25 years. All this is conducted with the glossy PR expertise so characteristic of the corporate hard shell. Prisons are now presented to the public as desirable industries to have in local communities because of the job creation and new economic spending power available. Little attention is given to the thought of what a prison is, who is locked up or why. This is a deliberate attempt to shift the public perception of imprisonment from being a scandal and a sign of failure to one that makes prisons desirable acquisition for a local community like a sports stadium, medical center or public university.

Prison Mental Health/Self Care Awareness Art Gallery
This health awareness month we want to draw attention to health concerns in our nation’s prisons. Radical health, an New York based organization founded by Roddenberry Fellow Ivylyse Andino, emphasizes the fact that “everyone deserves access to quality care and health innovation” and that includes people who are in prison. Healthcare is more than prevention of sickness, it includes physical, mental and emotional well being. Many people fail to understand how violent and unhealthy prisons are because we don’t have a full understanding of what health concerns exist inside beyond medical care. We are looking for artwork that helps to tell the story behind the experience of maintaining one emotional and mental health while in prison for an art gallery in its early stages of planning.

Right2Vote Campaign Artwork
The campaign is accepting artwork submissions for promoting and marketing the New Suffrage Movement. ALL artwork related to the restoring prisoners’ voting rights will be used to promote the campaign. Please sign your artwork. Artwork will be featured on T-shirts, stickers, buttons, wristbands, tote bags and social media. We are also looking for an official logo to use for the campaign. We want the art ad graphic design to highlight prisoners so we look forward to receiving as many of submissions as possible.

Collaboration with VOCAL-NY
Organizers at VOCAL-NY — a grassroots membership-based organization that organizes with low-income people across New York State — is looking for incarcerated supporters in New York to contribute to our multi-year campaign from the inside.

Prison slave labor is now a compliment to the international movement of jobs. For decades, U.S. based corporations have been moving abroad to avoid high domestic rates as well as labor and environmental regulations. Now such factors as the increasing cost of overseas slave labor, the expense of relocation, and the shipping expense involved have caused many manufacturers to recognize that American prisons, with their abundant supply of slave labor (2.4 million prisoners), are an attractive alternative to foreign-based production. If one has systematically and diabolically tried to create mental illness, one could probably have constructed no better system than the American prison system. The prison industrial slave complex basically has a life love its own. It has become an industry, and a very lucrative one for some. Like it’s cousin the military-industrial complex, it’s pervasive spirit it’s all pervasive and needs plenty of crime and long sentences to maintain its financial viability. So who’s truly the criminal? Is America a “Democracy” or a corporate Oligarchic police state?—

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Call for Content
In addition to publishing content raising awareness about the Right2Vote Campaign and its initiatives, the Right2Vote Report accepts work from prisoners in the form of articles, art and poetry as well as the contribution of stamps. We also work with other nonprofits and organizers to amplify your voices. This publication and its campaign are about you and our most meaningful contributions come from the inside. For readers interested in submitting their work: typed and printed can be sent to the return address or emailed to: amanisawari@gmail.com. Please write your return address on your submission.

Embrace Race Blog & Podcast
Narratives describing the challenges you face patenting, raising a family or maintaining relationships while incarcerated for Embrace Race, a national nonprofit that supports parents, teachers, and other adults to raise children who are thoughtful, informed and brave about race; founded by Andrew Grant-Thomas also a 2019 Roddenberry Fellow. Narrative descriptions are being collected to potentially post on Embrace Race’s Blog Embrace Race’s blog, along with their facebook page, has hundreds of subscribers who are interested in learning about the obstacles that families encounter who are impacted by incarceration. Andrew Grant will also be hosting a podcast featuring Amani Sawari in August where excerpts from submissions will be read to Embrace Race’s listening audience.

Voices Of Incarcerated Citizens EmpowereD
Voices Of Incarcerated Citizens EmpowereD, in order to uplift the voices of those on the inside and having conversations as it relates to criminal justice reform, prison abolition, the prison-industrial-slave-complex, new legislation and current events. If you are interested in being featured as a voice on this podcast please send a letter to the return address with topics that you would like to discuss as well as the process for registering a phone number on your contact list. Those who are interested in being featured will be sent the call line once they’re approved as a guest. All conversations made on the VOICED call line are recorded to be edited for the podcast. Please do not abuse the call line.

Sawari does not provide legal services. Sawari is a platform of expression and empowerment for disenfranchised and marginalized groups, especially members of the African diaspora. Amani Sawari is a writer, founder of SawariMi and SawariMedia, spokesperson for Jailhouse Lawyers Speak and National Coordinator of their Right2Vote Campaign with the support of the Roddenberry Foundation. Download and print issues of the Right2Vote Report for distribution at http://sawarimi.org/right2vote-report
National Progress to Ending Felony Disenfranchisement

By Selinda Guerrero and artist Micah Bazant