Amani Sawari

In Solidarity,

putting yourself out there so that the movement can find you and if you/quote.rightrealDonaldTrump, etc. Whatever you/quote.rightve been gifted with keep going, stay consistent and keep writing, drawing, speaking, art, mentoring, teaching, styling hair, playing a

I hope that you all feel the same love and value in your passion: whether it/quote.rightslove and value that I feel here is inescapable.

rowing into marriage that I committed to because the love had the courage to publish, the movement found me and now the interest turned into/quote.rightsmy basement. My love to write kept me writing. Through the writings that I stories in elementary school that are lost in journals scattered around my par

For as long as I can remember I wanted to be a writer, I used to write small

work...it was the work that got into me. I continued to be handed opportunities that I refused to pass up.

presentation is demanded. All voices count!

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!

California’s ACA 6 is now scheduled to be heard by the Assembly Appropriations Committee next Wednesday, July 10. Nationwide Compassionate Release program launched by FAMM, Washington Lawyers’ Committee, NACDL.

Attorneys defend California’s new SB 1437 that outlaws unfair felony murder rule

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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. Rescission of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.
4. Rescission 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!
Debrief on the First Democratic Debates: An Empty Stage-d Performance

by Amani Sawari June 28, 2019 | www.sawarimi.org

Day 2 candidates on the NBC News Democratic Stage

The ‘performance’ was shown on NBC news, the largest media network owned by Comcast, one of the most hated companies in the nation. I must note that we regretfully pay a company that we do not trust every month to dispense election information. Along with that NBC sets debate participation eligibility, eliminating many candidates from introducing or defending their ideas on this national stage. This is why I’m hesitant to deposit my trust into the debate. However, I understand that this is the only National Stage that the world has to present these conversations and when looking at the coverage by corporate media I feel responsible to reflect on and share my thoughts on the underrepresented issues that were glazed over during the debate.

Police Accountability Cannot Be Achieved without Systematic Transformation

Though Yang wasn’t given very much space to speak he was the first to mention the potential of savings on incarceration on Day 2. Warren was also the first to mention the role private prisons play in the economic divide less than five minutes into Day 1’s debate. I commend those two who brought the devastating effects of incarceration onto the presidential stage, “[the economy] is doing great for people who want to invest in private prisons, just not for the African Americans and LatinX whose families are torn apart, whose lives are destroyed and whose communities are ruined”. Many especially popular politicians fail to see the connection between the way that we treat incarcerated citizens and immigrants who are both suffering from physical and psychological abuse by our nations criminal justice system which is in need of a major overhaul. Without a transformative change we will continue to see these abuses, including abuses to young immigrant children, citizen children, men and women legally held in our juvenile detention facilities.

We cannot transform our criminal justice system without holding executive forces accountable. During the debate Pete Buttigieg, mayor of South Bend, Indiana since 2012, listed all of the failed attempts that were taken to enforce police accountability including officers wearing body cams, bias and de-escalation training which he admitted, “these didn’t save the life of Eric Logan” who was recently killed by a white officer that did not have body cam on. Many candidates agree with Buttigieg’s statement that “until we move policing out of the shadow of systemic racism... we will be left with the bigger problem, the wall of mistrust... it threatens the well-being of every community”. Sadly, no candidate provided actual solutions of how to expel systematic racism from policing. John Hickenlooper, former governor of Colorado, added that a civilian oversight board was established under his jurisdiction 10yrs ago and that also didn’t work.

We’ve come to a critical point in our nation in understanding the direct relationship between policing and systematic racism but we fail to reach a conclusion on how that relationship can be severed. I honestly, do not think that it can be which is why grassroots organizers have been calling for a complete overhaul of the system entirely, but this is of course too radical for the NBC stage.

Defending Democratic Socialism by Expanding Healthcare Access

John Hickenlooper was firm in his stance against democratic socialism. However, socialism is what draws many marginalized citizens to the Democratic party. The majority of the masses, flock to the Democratic party because they believe that it is much more likely than the Republican party to cater to the needs of underserved, impoverished communities. It’s unwise to diminish the attractive qualities of socialism that contribute to what draws people to the Democratic Party.

The vast majority of the democratic candidates on both days agreed that universal healthcare should includes undocumented immigrants. I wondered whether those candidates would have been as eager to include incarcerated citizens in the promise of sufficient care for all people.

Currently prisoners have no choice but privatized healthcare companies whose goal is to price them out of receiving the care that they need in order to survive. The phrase, “death by incarceration” is a dangerously reality for citizens who have no choices in food, mental health or medical care. This includes detained immigrants and immigrant children at the border.
Our nations prisons are a hyper-intensified reflection of the condition of our society as a whole. In the same way that we see how the conditions of the prison environment is contributing to degrading healthcare in our prisons, this is the case for the whole of our nation. Interestingly, William-son was quickly cut off when her response to the question of universal healthcare, includes the need to make changes to chemical, environmen-tal, and drug policies that contribute to the critical health condition of the American population. However, holding large companies who contribute to the health crisis accountable was discussed. Both Biden and Booker advocate for holding insurance and pharma companies criminally liable for their misleading ads as well as for their contribution to the opioid crisis. Democrats on Day 2 agreed that companies should not be able to dodge the consequences of their impact to the opioid crisis, Booker emphasized, “We can’t arrest people out of addition”, but it should also be noted that in the same way we cannot criminalize addiction we should not criminalize poverty. Booker expanded on this saying, “there are too many people profiting off of the pain of Americans from the pharma companies to the insurers”. Warren added to this saying, “insurance companies last year alone sucked $23 billion in profits out of the healthcare system”. This astronomical number proves for a need for the overhaul that majority of candidates advocate for. Most believe that universal health care with a public option, such as Obamacare, that one could chose to opt into if needed. In contrast, Sanders strongly advocates for completely scrapping the privatized system.

Addressing the lack of Economic Mobility, but Dodging the Reparations Question

The candidates voiced their concerns about the widening wealth gap, many unafraid to blame big companies and the 1%. However, none of them address the government's role in contributing to the wealth gap between Blacks and whites with the refusal to pay out reparations over the past 154 years. Like Hillary, the candidates advocate for a solution to bolster the entire economy. This is why the Democratic party is not our own, they refuse to stand firm on defending our case for individual reparations payments for the descendants of slaves. If they did in even the slightest, we would have had it by now.

Of course Yang discussed his base monthly income payment of $1,000/month. My hope is that those payments would also include those impacted by incarceration. Bill De Blasio, currently the mayor of New York city, voiced his plan to address the city's astronomical income gap with a commitment to break up big corporations. John Delany added to the discussion, sharing his plan to double earned income tax credit, raise minimum wage and create paid family leave.

Aside from all of these wider solutions, which would be great to have incorporated for all people, we cannot provide true equality in peoples’ access to the basic necessities if humanity without addressing the needs of those who have been left behind in the economic fabric of America for centuries, the descendants of the enslaved African people who built this country. This is why I was disappointed, but sadly not surprised, to see that the reparations discussion was not brought to the national stage, especially with H.R. 40 making progress in congress less than a week a go. Williamson did note that systematic racism and police bias are a couple of thermons why we should be supporting reparations.

Being the only Black candidate represented on the Day 2 stage, ‘repara-tions’ never left Harris’ lips though she did frequently use her Black card throughout the debate to snatch more talking time. But, she didn’t even need to seeing as how she was placed right next to center stage. Harris called out Biden on his position on integration and segregation. Harris, who served as the attorney general of the second largest Dept. of Correction in the U.S. in the state of California, praised her enforcing the use of body cams. Biden swiftly called out harris saying, “I was a public de-fender not a prosecutor”. Biden was slick in his response, I myself am not fooled by Harris’ performance. My vote is not only determined by what candidates are saying now but on their track record and Harris’ track record shows a contribution to the mass incarceration era.

Beto O’Rourke from Texas noted that the population of 2.3 million incarcerated people was due to the failure of our criminal justice system, saying its imperative that we help those help those who continue to be victims of this system. O’Rourke stressed the need for treatment and longterm care to those suffering from addiction but made no reference to retroactive steps to reverse impacts of incarceration for those who contribute to sit behind bars. O’Rourke also mentioned the expansion of voting access with the passing of the new voting rights act, sadly there was not reference to restoring the voting rights of those impacted by incarceration, not even from Senator Sanders. Booker noted that, “our country is profiting off of incarceration and immigration lockups…our country has made so many mistakes criminalizing things…immigration, mental illness, addition…this is not the way to deal with problems, there is a human way that helps human rights and human dignity that will actually solve this problem”. At this point the state level discussion is insufficient. Harris noted in her defense of bussing and desegregation with Biden that, “there are moments in our history where states failed to protect the rights of all people”. Well we are now at the point with Corrections Departments that the federal government must be required to step into this civil rights issue that includes failing to protect prisoners voting rights (in states other than Maine & Vermont), conditions in prisons, reversing truth-in-sentenc-ing month several other issues that prisoners brought to the surface during the National Prison Strike. Current civil rights legislation has failed to be protected for decades. Today there are many who suffer behind bars who are citizens whose rights must be lifted and protected civil rights act.

Final Thoughts: We Need a Leader of the Coming Decarcer-ation Era

It’s obvious that certain candidates, Biden, Sanders and Harris were given more direct questions and much more time to speak during the debate seeing as how they were placed at center stage on finally Day 2, NBC wanted these three to be our center focus. Biden’s referenced a commitment to, “Restore the soul of this nation” which he said was de-graded by Trumps dangerous lack of morality. For me, the soul of this na-tion is dangerous and has never been healthy, it is what brought Trump to power and has continued to demonize and exploit people. Bernie’s com-mitment to defeat the Military Industrial complex was comforting, however he failed to explain how the Military Industrial complex, also known as the prison industrial slave complex, negatively impacts Americans. Finally, I’ve never been attracted to Harris as a candidate. I hope that the Obama syndrome, a desperation to see a certain type face in office, isn’t what leads to her being elected. She is a prosecutor who oversaw the Califor-nia’s exploding incarceration rates. Yang (with what he could get our), Warren, and Williamson were the most vocal about the negative effects of incarceration. Williamson even noted how cages is a form of abuse, a state sponsored crime. One that not only happens to incarcerated immigrant children but to millions of United states citizens. Kristen Gillibrand, a New York Senator, also mentioned the the money being contributed to for-profit prisons.

If I were to say who won based off of qued clapping and generalized popularity it would be tied between Castro and Warren for Day 1 with Castro for Day 2. Though the hosts emphasized that the stage placements were random but it’s obvious that wasn’t the case.

My expectation for the election is for a candidate that will be committed to resolving the collective issues with our criminal justice system that contribute to the conditions suffered by the entire incarcerated population in the United States once they take office on Jan 20, 2021 . Candidates also mentioned the need for decriminalization, surprisingly even Biden demonized the method that are executive forces depend on far too much saying, “we should not be locking people up we should be changing the circumstances of why they would [leave] in the first place”. Of course Booker could not go without mentioning his living in the inner city and his role as the candidate with candidate Amy Klobuchar, in pushing the empty and virtu-ally meaningless First Step Act to criminal justice reform through con-gress. Klobuchar mentioned her commitment to passing the Second and Third steps in the future. Beyond the surface level need for change that we can all agree on, the question I hope will be asked of candidates is, How will you lead the coming decarceration era?

We cannot have a Mass Incarceration Era that failed millions of people with discriminatory police bias, ineffective pretial conditions (from over worked public defenders to very unsteady trials) and dramatic over sen-tencing without bending the fold back in the opposite direction to restore the lives of millions who were impacted and continue to sit behind bars waiting for the voices to be heard. How would you address this critically sensitive national issue? Without directly asking this candidates will continue to skate around the issue and we’ll cast our vote making assump-tions on what we hope to see someone do once they’re in office, but the position is much too powerful for presumptuous decision making.
In the next debate we must insure that this issue is addressed, until then my ballot awaits a name to cast. As for representation, Candidates I wish I could have seen share the stage are Anita Belle, a longtime reparations activist from Detroit, MI and Wayne Messam, the current mayor of Mira

Civic Engagement Doesn’t Die in Prison

A state bill outlines an education program for those about to be released.

Christian Belanger May 2, 2019 | www.chicagoreader.org

In 1992, Nasir Blackwell was desperate. He had been convicted of murder and sentenced to be executed. While incarcerated in Pontiac Correctional Center, he visited the law library—a six-by-nine-foot cell, most of its books published in the 50s—and picked up a volume on homicide. “I began studying law. I was studying history, and so I began studying the history of jurisprudence. I could not believe how law was man-made,” he says. “It just became a passion. It helped me litigate on behalf of people that were incarcerated. I was empowering voices—teaching people how to study law, [helping] if they needed a transfer.”

Blackwell’s death sentence was thrown out by the Illinois Supreme Court in 1996; he received a 49-year prison term after his retrial. In prison, he eventually made it to Danville Correctional Center, where there was a bigger library, and read nearly all the books there. He also helped organize a tutoring program at Danville that, he says, significantly improved educational participation in the prison, whose inmate population until then had a low literacy rate. And he formed groups with other inmates to lead conversations around masculinity, conflict, and basic civics. “We talked about the democratic process and government involvement. There’s a lot of negative feedback [from other prisoners] telling you the system is rigged,” Blackwell says. “Once you have the knowledge that you can speak out against an issue that affects you, that’s empowering.”

Upon his release on parole in 2015, he began organizing for the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN). Now, Blackwell, 54, and IMAN are part of a coalition working on a new piece of statewide legislation that would give more inmates access to the knowledge he found so liberating. House Bill 2541, which is due for a full vote from the state Senate later this month, would put in place a civics education program for people who are about to be released from prison, taught primarily by their fellow prisoners—one of the first of its kind in the country.

The bill is in large part the brainchild of Christina Rivers, a political science professor at DePaul University. While much of Rivers’s early work focused on constitutional law—she wrote a book about the 14th Amendment and the Voting Rights Act—she says that in recent years her research has shifted toward the problem of felony disenfranchisement. In drafting an early version of the bill, Rivers got a boost from her students: she used some of the research papers from a class on law, politics, and mass incarceration as inspiration. (The class itself alternates annually: one year it’s taught at DePaul, the other at Stateville Correctional Center, just north of Joliet.)

Voting rights laws vary widely among states. In Maine and Vermont, felons can cast a ballot while imprisoned, while a dozen other states require the formerly incarcerated to jump through administrative hurdles—such as a governor’s pardon or petition to a court—before they can vote again. In Delaware, anyone convicted of certain crimes, including murder and bribery, is permanently disenfranchised.

Illinois has one of the more liberal set of laws: all felons have their voting rights automatically restored when released from prison. In recent years, advocacy groups like Chicago Votes have also ramped up organizing in Cook County Jail, running voter registration drives within one of the largest detention facilities in the country. Last fall, then-Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed a bill that would’ve turned Cook County Jail into a polling location for pretrial detainees. In a statement to the House, he argued that one particular section of the bill—which required the Department of Corrections and county jails to disseminate voter registration information to prisoners upon their release—exceeded the “legitimate role” of law enforcement personnel. It was written by now-Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton; a modified version, put forth by state Sen. Omar Aquino, sailed through the Senate in early April, and is now in a House committee.

But even if voting rights are secured for pretrial detainees and former felons, there’s still the problem of ensuring that people know how to exercise those rights. While it’s difficult to get exact data on how many formerly incarcerated people vote, a 2009 study by political scientist Michael V. Hasekler found that only about 5 percent of eligible ex-felons had voted in a 2005 election in New York, compared to 39 percent of the general population. One reason could be that those released from prison don’t know exactly how to exercise newly restored rights.

“Preventing someone from exercising their rights, or perpetuating a system where huge groups of people are unaware of their rights, can in itself be a statement about what voting rights are,” says Ami Gandhi, director of voting rights and civic empowerment at the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, one of the organizations advocating for HB2541.

The new bill would create a civics education course designed for inmates about to be released from prison. Rivers says it’ll be nonpartisan, along the lines of an introductory political science text on government, and cover issues like voting registration and current affairs. “There’s a myth that people who are incarcerated . . . are politically disinterested,” Rivers says. “This would be promoting civic engagement, promoting folks’ reentry into society, and give them more of a sense that they have a stake.”
(Aquino's bill contains a similar provision—it would require the Illinois Department of Corrections to provide a voter registration application and voting information to anyone in custody eligible to vote.)

Importantly, the course would be taught mainly by other prisoners, who will have been trained by nonpartisan civic organizations. Gandhi notes that the idea for peer education was suggested by people with a criminal record who had input in writing the bill; they argued that it would make for less "preachy" classes. "Symbolically, it says a lot—it sends the message that civic engagement does not die [in prison]," says Rivers.

"It’s credibility for someone that’s coming from your own walk of life," says Blackwell.

After it was filed by Rep. Sonya Harper, the bill moved through the House by a vote of 102-9 on April 10. In early May, it was unanimously passed by the Senate’s Criminal Law Committee. It now moves to the Senate floor. "I think part of the reason that there hasn’t been a whole lot of objection so far . . . is that this bill doesn’t ask for any new rights," said Rivers. "We just want to help people exercise those rights when they get out."

For his part, Blackwell hopes the program, if it comes into existence, will give people leaving prison the sense that they can meaningfully participate in the political process. "A lot of men and women come home after prison, it’s kind of hard [for them] to imagine that you have any semblance of power when you’re still on parole, or incarcerated. The only way you can start to help them is through the dialogue," he says. "It’s people we come in contact with that’s incarcerated that may have never even left the confines of their neighborhood. We’re trying to get them to understand that it’s all about empowerment."

Update: HB2541 passed the Illinois Senate in a unanimous vote on May 23.—

Prosecutors should stop the scare tactics. Reforming felony murder rule improves our justice system

by Nancy Skinner and Joel Anderson July 1, 2019 | www.cal-matters.org

In January, California ended a decades-old legal doctrine that put numerous people behind bars for murders they did not commit. Yet six months after the new state law—Senate Bill 1437—took effect, some prosecutors are trying to overturn it, resorting to scare tactics and false distortions.

We are the legislators who wrote and supported this critical reform, and we need to set the record straight about it. SB 1437 passed the Legislature last year with bipartisan support and was signed into law by then-Gov. Jerry Brown. It reformed California’s outdated and unfair felony murder rule, which had allowed people who did not kill to nonetheless be charged, convicted, and sentenced as murderers. The old felony murder doctrine allowed prosecutors to charge all accomplices to a crime with first degree murder. It did not matter if there was no intention to kill, if the death was accidental, or if the accomplice had no knowledge that someone else would kill. Everyone was just as responsible, as if they had planned and committed the murder themselves.

The California Supreme Court, in a 1983 ruling, termed the state’s felony murder rule “barbaric.” And yet it remained on the books, and people were unfairly sentenced to long prison terms under this law.

We studied this issue for over a year before passing Senate Concurrent Resolution 48 in 2017. That measure recognized “the need for statutory changes to more equitably sentence offenders in accordance with their involvement in a crime.” Then in the following legislative session we introduced SB 1437 to correct what we concluded was a grave and needless injustice. As SB 1437 moved through the legislative process, we made significant improvements to ensure it was fair and that our reform did not let people who are responsible for a murder off the hook.

Based on input from district attorneys and other public safety advocates, we amended SB 1437 to ensure that a criminal was held accountable for murder if they:
- Are the actual killer.
- Aided, abetted, counseled, commanded, induced, solicited, requested, or assisted the actual killer with the intent to kill.
- Were a major participant in the underlying crime and acted with reckless indifference to life.

And so it’s been disappointing to see some of California’s district attorneys now working to block the law’s implementation. They remain intent on pursuing murder convictions for people not guilty of that crime, despite the fact that it’s not in the interest of public safety nor is it just.Yet they have challenged SB 1437 in court arguing it’s unconstitutional on the grounds that it’s allegedly inconsistent with two ballot initiatives California voters passed decades ago.

Before introducing SB 1437, we spent over a year carefully reviewing past statutes, court decisions, and, yes, voter-approved ballot initiatives, to ensure that the provisions in SB 1437 did not overstep our role. SB 1437 falls squarely within the Legislature’s broad authority to make policy.

Prosecutors have also challenged SB 1437 in the press with mischaracterizations. The president of the Association of Deputy District Attorneys for Los Angeles County, for example, recently told The New York Times that under SB 1437, “We’re literally talking about letting murderers go free.” That’s a false claim designed to stoke fear.

Thankfully, many prosecutors have properly applied the law, and courts around the state have upheld the reform as constitutional. As a result, many deserving people have been able to go home—some after serving decades in prison for murders they did not commit. It’s not just those newly freed and their families who have recognized the justice served in these cases. In San Luis Obispo County, after a judge found SB 1437 constitutional, a reporter went to the parents of the victim.

They said that while they still endure the pain of their son’s death, it did not justify an unfair sentence: “It certainly wouldn’t bring closure to me to see him punished as if he were the murderer,” the parent of one murder victim was quoted as saying SB 1437 is a just and overdue reform. We’re confident that California’s courts will uphold it. —

Sen. Nancy Skinner is a Berkeley Democrat, Senator.Skinner@Senate.ca.gov. Former Sen. Anderson is a San Diego County Republican, anderson4supervisor2020@gmail.com. They are co-authors of SB 1437. They wrote this commentary for CALmatters.

FAMM, Washington Lawyers' Committee, NACDL Launch Compassionate Release Clearinghouse

June 19, 2019 | www.nacdl.org

First Step Act paves the way for a massive pro bono effort to represent sick, dying, and elderly prisoners in court.

Washington, DC (June 19, 2019) – Thousands of sick, dying, and elderly federal prisoners who are eligible for early release will now have access
A Concerned Letter to Right2Vote Advocates

by Horace Harriott Jr. I SCI Mahanoy

I’ve been watching the public conversation in the media about prisoners’ voting rights. The problem - even with Bernie Sanders - is that no one is fully explaining the reasons for this mass disenfranchisement or its results on the disenfranchised people in our communities. Every time the topic is raised, opponents and the media ask questions like: “You believe the Boston Marathon Bomber should vote?” This is how people play

on people’s fears. The response to that question should be: “How would the Boston Marathon bomber voting harm anyone?” Unique in this “civilized” and “developed” world, the citizenry of the United States have been conditioned to see prisoners as less than humans who should have absolutely no Rights whatsoever. The question that needs to be asked loudly and publicly by advocates of Prisoner Voting Rights is: “What exactly is the purpose and benefit to society of all of this mass disenfranchisement?” This disenfranchisement serves no legitimate societal or penological purpose. If the people believe this is an acceptable and constitutional form of punishment, then this significant and absolute denial of political power and forced taxation without any representation whatsoever should be a separate sentence in and of itself. Judges should be required to state in Courts: “I hereby sentence you to (however many years) of state or federal disenfranchisement…” It shouldn’t be a secret or collateral consequence, aside from one’s sentence. Disenfranchisement would be an unconstitutional sentence that could not stand on its own. The secrecy of it may very well be the way to fight it as an unconstitutional punishment.

Then there is the illegal and unconstitutional “gerrymandering” aspect of the Prison Industrial Complex. Hundreds of thousands of Black Men and Women are moved out of their home communities, into these rural white communities, where we are counted as residents of these communities. We have no ties, familiar or otherwise, to these communities and we have absolutely no say in the operation of these communities. Yet, these communities are allowed to count us as residents and, thus, are rewarded
Advocates of Prisoner Voting Rights need to do a much better job of exposing and explaining the racist roots of prisoner disenfranchisement. The same way so many short-sighted and uninformed, so-called “educated” Black leaders were persuaded to wholeheartedly support the 1994 Crime Bill, which exponentially exacerbated mass incarceration and decimated our communities; Black People, out of some false sense of justice are leading the call to deny Prisoner Voting Rights and deny political power to Black and other poor and marginalized communities in the process.

Education on this topic is necessary. Ask the questions: “When did prisoner disenfranchisement start?”, “Why don’t other civilized, developed nations engage in this practice?”, “Does civic education, activity and engagement reduce recidivism?”, “Do we want a civically active and engaged populace?”, “Who does and who doesn’t?”, “Why and why not?”, etc...

These questions are not posed to the mainstream media.

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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 organizations 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.

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 Ivelyse 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 ones 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. This new suffrage movement requires your leadership and we need your voice in the movement to restore your right to vote.

Anyone interested to connecting with VOCAL-NY can do so by responding to the following address: Nick Encalada-Malinowski, VOCAL-NY, 80a Fourth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, 11217

V.O.I.C.Ed Podcast
Beginning this month Amani Sawari will be launching a new podcast V.O.I.C.Ed, 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.

Sawarimi does not provide legal services, but happily forwards requests for legal representation to partners at the National Lawyers’ Guild. Sawarimi 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 Sawarimi Media, 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

source: http://www.realcostofprisons.org/comix/worley/