



IMPROVING COUNTY JAIL CONDITIONS: A COMMUNITY APPROACH

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Abstract:

This paper will explore Americas rise to incarceration, the theories behind it and how prison overcrowding has led to a series of lawsuits which allege both civil and human rights violations. This is most notable in California, and in how in efforts to address these issues on the state level through precarious policy reforms have inadvertently replicated the same problems prisons faced in county jails. This is especially true in Riverside County California, where the county is under federally imposed population caps based on significant overcrowding issues. However, despite court ordered mandates, organizations like Starting Over Inc and Riverside All of Us or None continue to fight an uphill battle against elected officials for a more humane treatment of people housed within jail confines. Thus, this paper will explore how community involvement can improve conditions inside county jails where court mandates have failed.

Positionality:

Before I delve deep into the subject of criminal justice reform and advocacy, I think it is important to highlight my positionality regarding the subject. I am a Latino, heterosexual male, of mixed race with a Caucasian last name who grew up in a dual parent middle class household. My mother was a first-generation immigrant from Guatemala who traveled to the United States with her 8 brothers and sisters. My father is a white male of mixed ancestry, and 3rd generation U.S citizen. My father has one brother with no children, so I mostly grew up with and associate myself with my Latino heritage and the struggles, and discrimination they faced as immigrants

coming to a foreign land. Despite my looking and associating with my Latino heritage. I cannot claim the struggles of my mother's side of my family as my own. My citizen status and last name alone give me privileges that they struggled years to achieve, and even today still struggle with. Rather the stories they have told me, give me a unique perspective, and insight to the struggles they faced, and to whom I am eternally grateful; for without their sacrifices, I surely would not be here. For years of my life, I've struggled with this duality, and identity. Looking and feeling Latino, identifying with their struggles but not speaking the language, has made me feel at time embarrassed. Today however, I am coming to terms with my identity and learning to embrace it. For it is in my uniqueness, which make me, me. While I may not have faced the same struggles as my mother and her family, my struggles are an entirely different set; as I struggled with juvenile "delinquency", crime, drugs, and gangs. All problems unbeknownst to me until much later in life were reflections of the larger societal problems at play. I, a child victim of society; became its manifestation and began to victimize society. Eventually landing me in prison for 6 years. It is true, going to prison defined who I was for a long time. It even was a motivating force behind my early activism around criminal justice reform. However, just as I believe that I should not be defined by my worst mistake, nor should my passion for social justice, advocacy and effecting community change be defined solely by my incarceration but rather it is a contributing factor to my identity.

Like many of those interested in forwarding a specific social conflict issue, my early motivation for doing so stemmed in large part because of my own personal experience. While these desires still motivate me today, I am finding the more introspection I do, I am learning new and more complex reasons why I remain involved. Tessa Hicks-Peterson speaks about this in her book as she states, "*Cultivating critical awareness of self and others through introspection and*

community engagement can thus result in profound shifts in understanding of both social biases and interconnectedness (pg. 69)". Thus, critical awareness for me has come hand in hand with both my maturity as an activist and my understanding of social injustice. The more I became critically conscious of the larger social and political contexts of the injustices I faced in my community and other communities not like mine, the more empowered I became to affect change from "the inside out" as someone who was labeled as part of "the problem" to the desire to become part of the solution. I approach my work in this class, and in this paper with this in mind, and that my lived experience often viewed by society negatively, in this context gives me a unique perspective approaching my research.

Settings

On Saturday February 27,2021 I drove to West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga, Ca to protest the lack of visitation taking place there due to Covid-19 pandemic. This was a place I knew far too well from the inside, having spent two and a half years there "fighting a case". But I had little knowledge of what it looked like from outside, and what surrounded it. What strook me most, was the drive to the jail itself. Located in the industrial region of Rancho Cucamonga/ Ontario, the jail was surrounded by many familiar corporations. Home Depo distribution center, New Balance, Tristar Industries, Bradshaw Home furniture. Each Facility a central logistical warehouse where different companies distribute their goods. In the center of it all, another warehouse of a different kind. The warehousing of people for central distribution across the state of California. The resemblance is striking, and while those other warehouses were big, they pale in comparison to the behemoth that is the San Bernardino county jail. As I arrive at West Valley, what I notice first is the immense size of the building, a two-story building which stretches more than a city block which houses 3,337 people and processes

55,000 bookings a year. The second thing I notice is that I do not see any protesters. I decide to drive into the facility thinking they may be protesting in the parking lot.

As I drive up the one-way street, I notice at the end of the driveway is a small guard shack. I reach the guard shack and a sheriff comes out and asks for my ID, patting my pockets, I notice that I do not have my wallet on me. I know I must have it somewhere, since I had just used it to pump gas in East LA before driving to Rancho Cucamonga, I think about digging around in between my seats or on the floor thinking it may have fallen, but I think the better of that decision, having seen all too many YouTube videos and police involved shootings. Instead, I explain to the officer that I cannot find my wallet. he asks for my name and driver's license number; I give him the information which he writes down and asks me to pull over to the side as he verifies my information.

I felt a little unease about the situation, I have had quite a bit of police interaction in my life, and admittedly I hold a certain amount of mistrust. I grab my cell phone text a couple of loved ones and let them know I where I am just in case something should happen to me. About 15 minutes later I see the officer exit the guard shack and proceeds to walk towards me, hand firmly placed on his holster. *"excuse me sir, can you please turn off your vehicle"*, "yes sir, I reply" *"sir when running your information, we noticed that you seem to have an extensive criminal history, can you please tell me what you are doing here"*. "Sir I am a student at Pitzer college and interning with an organization called StartingOverInc, a nonprofit organization which provides reentry services to formerly incarcerated people, such as housing. We are here to peacefully protest the lack of visitation that is taking place here at west valley, which has been occurring for almost a year now". *"can you tell me what your criminal history has to do with this protest"* *"what are you planning on doing?"*, "excuse me? I am here to peacefully protest with the organization I am

interning with”. “*well, I noticed that you have a criminal record, can you tell me what you were arrested for?*” “I don’t understand, didn’t you just look up my record?, I am no longer on parole or probation and those charges were over 12 years ago” “Yes, I want you to tell me” emphasis on the YOU “okay, I was arrested for robbery and assault, I was sentenced to 6 years in prison, and got out almost 7 years ago, I am no longer on parole” “ “ *You do know what is going to happen next don’t you? Do you know that it is a felony to a felon to be on this property? we can arrest you right now for entering this property?*”. “I didn’t know that, actually, I’m just trying to do my internship” “*tell me again what college you go to? “Pitzer college” what is the organization you’re interning with? And what are you doing here? How many people are going to be with you? Do you plan to be violent? What are you planning to do here? What does your conviction have to do with you being here? You say your interning, where is this organization?* these questions proceeded for about 20 minutes, but felt like an eternity, each passing minute I felt my freedom slowly drifting away. Eventually a sergeant came and told me I could go, informing me that while I can lawfully protest outside on the street, I am not welcome back on this property in the future, and adding in a” *get the hell outta here*” for good measure. To which I happily obliged. I drove down the street parked my truck and took out my iPad to journal my “field notes” not sure why exactly but feeling that this experience would prove vital to my work down the line.

I mention this anecdote to illustrate a fundamental point I will be making throughout this paper, that no matter how far someone may be removed from their criminal history, the harsh reality is no amount of success can remove the stigma associated with a criminal conviction, and the lifelong ramifications that it can have on those who possess one. Incarceration is a demeaning process, used as a mechanism to strip people from their dignity, separate people from

their community, families and often leaves those who experienced it reeling in its wake as they are faced with barriers housing, education, social services, and employment. Once released probation and parole offer little to no assistance for those who have experienced such a traumatic experience. That is why the work of reentry organizations is so vital, they are organizations which are providing the services that the government is unable or unwilling to provide. They act a support system for the hundreds of thousands released from jails and prisons every year and are often staffed with people who have lived experience, having been to prison, and successfully transitioned back into society, and offer guidance and services for returning citizens as they leave prison and reenter society.

As a student engaged in the Critical Action Social Advocacy (CASA) program at Pitzer College I have partnered with StartingOverInc (SOI) and Riverside All of Us or None (RAOUON) to conduct a participatory action research project. StartingOverInc (SOI); is a 501c3 organization based out of Riverside County California whose mission is to “assist low-income men, women, and children in need of housing by providing transition or permanent supportive housing and reentry services while effectively fostering self-reliance, leadership, civic engagement, and economic development.”¹ Starting over inc is also the parent organization of Riverside All of us or None (RAOUON). RAOUON Is a local chapter of the national organization All of Us or None, which is a is “a grassroots civil and human rights organization fighting for the rights of formerly-and currently incarcerated people and our families. All of us or none is fighting against the discrimination that people face every day because of arrest or conviction history. The goal of All of Us or None is to strengthen the voices of people most affected by mass incarceration and the growth of the prison-industrial complex. Through

¹ <http://www.startingoverinc.net/?redirect=false>

grassroots organizing, they aim to build a powerful political movement to win full restoration of our human and civil rights.”² Riverside all of us or none, likewise is building a grassroots coalition of organizers and system impacted people to improve the lives of those currently, and formerly incarcerated and their families. This is achieved through civic participation such as legislative visits, meetings with elected officials, protests, and legislative reform.

Organizational Funding and Staff

SOI is supported financially by various philanthropic and grant giving organizations such as: Shades of Africa, the Weingart Foundation, Criminal Justice Initiative, Annenberg foundation, the Community Foundation, Rosenberg foundation, Pacific Premier Bank, East Bay Community Foundation, McMillian Foundation, San Manual Band of Mission Indians and Ben and Jerrys Foundation. SOI is staffed with 11 positions consisting of: The Executive director, Operations manager, Family reunification Project Coordinator, Administrative and Reporting Manager, Employment and Special Projects Manager, Participatory Defense Organizer, two Administrative assistants, Paralegal, Case manager, Peer Support Specialist and one Policy Fellow. The positions are a combination of part-time and fulltime employment and comprise the SOI staff.

I was first introduced to StartingOverInc, on day one of week one in my Qualitative Research Methods course CASA 105, by a representative from SOI named Erika Smith. In her presentation Erika said, “The goal of Starting Over Inc is to catch people, embrace them support them, and elevate them.” It was those words which helped me make my decision to intern with

² <https://prisonerswithchildren.org/about-aouon/>

the organization and I have dedicated the last 16 weeks of my life to finding out how exactly that is accomplished:

Starting Over Inc provides a variety of different services to people both inside jail and upon their release. Some of the services I observed were as follows:

- **In-reach:** Starting Over Inc has a letter writing campaign, where people incarcerated can write to the organization to find out more information about the services they offer. During the pandemic, SOI also aided people filing their 1040 IRS forms so they can receive their economic impact payments entitled to them. This came in the form of an information packet, which gave detailed instructions on how to file for these payments.
- **Housing:** Since 2004, SOI has provided “emergency and transitional housing and have aided people in their transitions back to an independent lifestyle. They have 9 houses located in the Southern California located between three counties, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Los Angeles. The housing they provide are for formerly incarcerated people, unemployed, recovering alcoholics and addicts, disabled, domestic violence survivors, or those otherwise unable to obtain housing independent of assistance.”³
- **Participatory defense:** Participatory Defense (PD) is a community organizing model developed by Silicon Valley De Bug⁴ aimed at helping people affected by the criminal justice system and their families, either in pretrial or post-conviction by empowering them to be actively involved in the court proceedings. Participatory Defense recognizes that court proceedings are designed in such a fashion where the accused and their families

³ <http://www.startingoverinc.net/?redirect=false>

⁴ <https://www.participatorydefense.org/about>

are often regarded as bystanders in the process. PD aims to change that by leveraging the power of the community and help the accused and their families become actively involved in their defense. This occurs through weekly meetings held every Wednesday from 6 pm- 8 pm, where SOI staff facilitate community meetings aimed at helping the accused and their families become more knowledgeable of the court process and empower them to take an active role in their defense⁵ . This occurs through:

-The development of social Biography packets/ videos

-Identifying various defense strategies

-letters of recommendation

- **Civic participation:** Civic participation takes on many forms, it can be everything from attending city council meetings, board of supervisor meetings, participating in coalitions discussions aimed at tackling statewide policy initiatives, holding rally's, and protests.

Methodology

Unsure of how to initially start my research, especially because of the limitations placed on me as a student during the midst of the pandemic. I decided the best place to start was just to be of service. By taking a participatory action research centered approach, I was able to gain a fuller understanding of the organization and work collaboratively in ways we might create the world we wish to see.

During the semester, I have been involved in various capacities in both Riverside All of Us or None and Starting Over Inc. Being both a formerly incarcerated person and a student has given me a unique perspective while conducting research with the community, and the research that

⁵ <https://www.participatorydefense.org/trainings>

ensued was truly the definition of participatory. During my time between the two organizations, I was able to show up both as an intern as well as a movement participant.

As an intern I was able to gain an inside perspective on the inner workings of both SOI and RAOUON and the important work they were doing both inside county jails with currently incarcerated, and upon their release and with the community. At the start of my internship, I was involved in various communications tasks needed to bring awareness to certain events, advertise for various job openings, and creating social media campaigns. This included internal and external organizational emails, and designing graphics aimed at garnering support for various initiatives the organization was undertaking in its fight for justice and social change. In addition to the aforementioned, I was also tasked with reading letters from incarcerated persons housed in county jails and transcribing these letters into google docs. I also attended a handful of weekly staff meetings and partook in Participatory Defense case review on two occasions.

As a movement participant, I was asked to participate in organizing efforts for monthly meetings, be a guest speaker in a panel discussion aimed at ending involuntary servitude in California (ACA 3), invited join a coalition of nonprofits called Abolishing Bondage Collectively (ABC)⁶, attend monthly meetings for both Riverside All of Us or None, and the Justice Table⁷ and lastly conduct a policy training ahead of a yearly event called Quest For Democracy⁸. While technically I was still an “intern” in these roles, I separate it as movement

⁶ Abolish Bondage Collective is a campaign led by formerly incarcerated persons in efforts to amend the California Constitution to end legal slavery.

⁷ The Justice Table is a criminal justice focused civic engagement association based in Riverside County revolving around public safety and increasing district attorney accountability.

⁸ Formerly incarcerated & convicted people, family members, & allies gather at the CA Capitol in Sacramento to strategize, train, & then advocate directly to legislators on a platform of bills that directly affect our community.

participant because my role was less student and intern focused and more focused on my role as a formerly incarcerated activist fighting for social change. My experience as a formerly incarcerated person with knowledge of carceral systems, helped me immensely during my time at the organization and in deciding the direction that my research would take.

As a student and intern, I conducted three informal semi-structured interviews, two with Starting Over Inc Staff, one of whom was formerly incarcerated (see appendix 1, 2). The third interview conducted with a state representative of the Inmate family council arose because of a common theme that emerged from a combination of participant observation, archival research, interviews, field notes and transcriptions during my 16 weeks working with the organizations. The two interviews with SOI staff, helped me identify challenges the organization faced when trying to improve Riverside County jail conditions. I conducted the third interview with a state representative of for inmate family council with a deductive approach, as prior experience in prison has given me insight in the power of such councils, this focused approach allowed me to gauge the feasibility of such a council in county jails. This third interview came as a result of google search and emailing all the statewide inmate family council members in California⁹, of the representatives I contacted, I received one response back. See transcription 3 in appendix.

- **Participant observation:** Through the combination of tasks, I was assigned as an intern social media action campaigns, weekly staff meeting attended, showing up as a movement participant in various forums including panel discussions, being invited to advocacy campaigns and strategic planning sessions. I was able to gain deeper understanding of both SOI and RAOUON their staff, their mission and some of the challenges they face.
- **Archival research:** To gain a better understanding of the problems the organization faces in addressing Riverside county jail conditions, it was necessary that research the history

⁹ The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and representatives of families of the Incarcerated are jointly committed to work together to support connections between inmates and their families through improved communication, shared information, issue identification, and resolution.
<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/sifc/>

of U.S prisons, their purpose, and the effects that it hopes to achieve and court cases, grievance procedures, legislative reforms, and litigation over the years which have had both positive and negative effects on prison and jail conditions.

- **Interviews:** The most salient part of this research project came from conversational semi structured interviews with two starting over inc staff and the chair of California Department of Corrections Inmate family council. From these meetings I was able to gain a better understanding of the challenges SOI and RAOUON continue to face while addressing jail conditions.
- **Field notes:** field notes taken during meetings, and conversations with staff and events aided me in finding a common theme, and direction for my research.
- **Transcribing letters:** During much of my internship I was asked to read letters sent to SOI and RAOUON from incarcerated persons from Riverside county. These letters provided a good source of data and sense of what is important.

Literature Review and Research

It is important to highlight that my literature review comprised of my research as well, as one cannot fully understand the conditions that incarcerated people face without, fully understanding the historical context which prisons were made, the theories for their expansion, and legal efforts underway to reduce its size and the ramifications of those efforts.

History of Prisons in the U.S

I believe that very few men are capable of estimating the immense amount of torture and agony which this dreadful punishment, prolonged for years, inflicts upon the sufferers; and in guessing at it myself, and in reasoning from what I have seen written upon their faces, and what to my certain knowledge they feel within, I am only the more convinced that there is a depth of terrible endurance in which none but the sufferers themselves can fathom, and which no man has a right to inflict upon his fellow creature

Charles Dickens on American prisons and the utilization of solitary confinement — 1842

These were the words of famous author Charles Dickens after he visited Eastern Penitentiary in 1842 upon witnessing the cruel and unusual conditions of this separate confinement penitentiary in Pennsylvania, the first of its kind, and the effect it can have on his fellow man.¹⁰ The prison he saw, was viewed as the great advance in penology of the

¹⁰ <https://www.usprisonculture.com/blog/2011/01/30/on-solitary-confinement-and-charles-dickens/>

time¹¹. Despite his criticisms of the prison, the scene he described was considered to be the most progressive substitute to the existing forms of corporal punishment where branding, mutilation, pillory, whipping, and death were all common forms of punishment for even the most minor of crimes.¹² It was religion that promoted the rise of the modern prison as a more humane treatment to those punishments. Founded in 1829, the Quakers believed that the Bible and repentant solitude would return the offender to the fold. (higher education in prison: a contradiction in term? Oryx press, 1994, Yates, Mark, time. Pg. 18) It was thought that punishment would help to maintain the distinction between right, and wrong thus promoting a more moral and just society¹³. Eastern Penitentiary, located in Cherry Hill outside of Philadelphia, was said to be the fullest expression of the concept of rehabilitation through separate confinement, and it was also said to be the most expensive public structure of its time, as well as the most imposing. The scene Dickens saw likely resembled that of the scene described in the book titled *Historical Origins of the Prison System in America*¹⁴ where Charles Williams an 18-year-old African American from Delaware County Pennsylvania began serving a two-year sentence on October 25th, 1829, for larceny at the Eastern Penitentiary and was the first person ever housed there. Confined to a cell which measured 12 by 8 by 10 and an 8-inch window which could be blocked to plunge the cell into darkness as a disciplinary measure. During his time at this prison,

¹¹ <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2009/03/solitary-confinement-brief-natural-history/>

¹² Harry, elmer barnes: historical origins of the prison system in America pg.46

¹³ james, kirk a., "The Invisible Epidemic: Educating Social Work Students towards Holistic Practice in a Period of Mass Incarceration" (2013). Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) Dissertations. 34. http://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations_sp2/34

¹⁴ "American Corrections : Clear, Todd R : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming." *Internet Archive*, Belmont, CA : West/Wadsworth, 1 Jan. 1970, archive.org/details/americancorrecti00clea/page/6/mode/2up.

Williams was not allowed any human interaction, food was inserted through an opening in the wall, and inspections of the cell were made through a peephole on the wall so Williams could not see the guard. Solitary labor, Bible reading, and reflection on one's behavior were viewed as the keys which would provide the opportunity for repentance. The only human contact afforded to Williams was a once-a-week visit from a Chaplain, other than that, every measure was taken to ensure that the prisoners would not be distracted from his moral rehabilitation.

This form of sensory deprivation was the scene or one similar that Dickens likely saw in his trip to Eastern, and this was the treatment that Charles Williams and countless others endured during their time there. Not surprisingly, five short years after Eastern opened its doors, the Penitentiary was subjected to the first of several investigations carried out over the years by a judicially appointed board of inspectors, the reports detailing how the instead of separate confinement, physical punishments were often used to maintain discipline, because of such isolation prisoners often suffered mental breakdowns. While separate confinement declined by the 1860s, due to prison overcrowding. The practice was not abolished in Pennsylvania until 1913 This anecdote is important for many reasons, as it serves as an example that nearly 200 years later, not much has changed in the treatment of incarcerated people, as the practice of solitary confinement is still being used a method of punishment, court-ordered investigations are still happening, mental illness and quality health care are not being adequately addressed inside correctional facilities, prisons are still overcrowded, officers are still accused of using excessive force, and prisons and jails still say that the purpose of incarceration is for the sake of rehabilitation. I mention the story of Williams, in the preface to what this literature review will undertake, which is what scholars are saying which attributed to America's rise to mass incarceration, and how because of this rise, conditions inside have severely deteriorated forcing

judicial oversight and mandated reductions. While prison populations are on the decline, court-ordered remedies have shifted the problems facing prison populations to county jails.

Capitalism and Americas Rise to Mass Incarceration

There have been many scholars who have traversed America's rise to mass incarceration, however, I have yet to see an author more quoted than sociologist Loic Wacquant in his book titled *Punishing the Poor*. In it, Wacquant poses that the ascent of the penal state in the United States, and in other advanced societies over the last 25 years is a response to the rising social insecurity, not criminal insecurity; and that the retrenchment of the welfare state and the rise to the penal state are intrinsically linked; As restrictive workfare and expansive prison fare have been coupled "into a single organizational contraption" used to discipline those who do not conform to the post-industrial capitalist society which he termed the "neoliberal leviathan". In his book, Wacquant asserts that America is a living laboratory of neoliberalism, a policy model that encompasses both politics and economics and seeks to transfer the control of the economic sector to the private sector.¹⁵ Wacquant refutes the notion that mass incarceration arose because of omnipotent rulers, who are interested in profiting from the poor" but rather that penalization serves as a technique used for the invisibility of social problems, that the state no longer cares to treat as its roots, and that prison operates as a "judicial garbage disposal into which the human refuse of the market society is thrown." (xxii) A central theme to Wacquant's theory is that capitalism, not a race, is the driving force behind many of the social problems we see today, and mass incarceration is a symptom of a capitalistic driven society, and it is the market that determines the "survival of the fittest", where the winners are praised and rich, and the losers are poor and go to prison. (pg. 6)

¹⁵ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/neoliberalism.asp>

Under this model Wacquant notes that the state acts as a mechanism to control poverty, closely supervising those dependent upon it through “rigorous protocols of surveillance, deterrence, and sanctions” (pg. 60) and to those whom the state feels have violated the civic law of wage work, who persist to live on the margins of unemployment, sub employment, and precarious work are made to disappear from the scene. Thus, it is the neoliberal leviathan that created the system the monster of mass incarceration, and a capitalistic society that feeds and sustains it, and until we address this root cause we will not eliminate the system it helped create.

Mass Incarceration a New Form of Slavery

Another author who has been increasingly quoted in scholarly conversations regarding America's rise to Mass incarceration is lawyer and civil rights advocate, Michelle Alexander, in her book titled *The New Jim Crow*. In her book, Alexander lays out a compelling case as to how she believes that the system of mass incarceration we see today arose as a new mechanism of social control, and states that “America has not ended the racial caste in America, we have simply redefined it.” (Pg. 8) it is this system she asserts that has led to the rise of the system of mass incarceration we know today. She poses that those society labels as “criminals” have scarcely more rights and arguably less respect than a black man living in Alabama during the height of Jim Crow”. (pg. 2) as people with a criminal conviction are denied many of the same rights that blacks have historically been denied, and that the civil rights movement fought to gain. She states that while black people won the right to vote with the passage of the landmark civil rights legislation in 1957, in 2007 more black people were disenfranchised than in 1870 the year that the fifteenth amendment was passed which explicitly denied people the right to vote based on race. (pg. 3) Alexander notes the many parallels between slavery and a criminal conviction, stating that many people with a criminal conviction are not allowed to vote, serve on

juries, and are legally discriminated against in employment, housing, access to education, and public benefits much as their grandparents and great grandparents were in the height of Jim Crow (pg. 8).

It is this “othering” of people, which has allowed some of the most horrendous atrocities to be permitted under the law, as it has been used as justification to prove both that people of a different skin tone or conviction record are less worthy and less deserving of the same rights as whites or those without a criminal conviction. It is this same “othering” of criminals which like slavery, allows the justification for people and corporations to profit from the mass incarceration of people of color, and their labor. Michelle points out that there are more African Americans under correctional control today (jail, probation, or parole) than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the civil war began at the height of slavery in the U.S. Alexander asserts that much like the Jim Crow Laws were intentionally made as a mechanism to control the newly free slaves in the years after the civil war. The war on drugs was used as a mechanism in which to incarcerate and disenfranchise large swaths of communities of color after the passage of the landmark civil rights legislation as part of what she calls the “southern strategy”. (pg. 9) A strategy that used racially coded appeals on issues of crime and welfare to create laws that were aimed at communities of color. (pg. 15) It is based on this strategy, which promoted the tough-on-crime era, and the war on drugs and it was also during this time that America saw its prison population increase 500% in less than forty years, despite records indicating that the crime rate had decreased during that same period¹⁶.

¹⁶ [Trends-in-US-Corrections.pdf \(sentencingproject.org\)](#)

The Effects of Mass incarceration on the Incarcerated

In the last forty years, the United States prison system has quadrupled in size, as both authors have pointed out, for reasons that have little to do with crime. During this time, the US prison population exploded from 300,000 to more than 2 million (pg. 11), and the United States went from being known as “the land of the free”, to the world leader in incarceration.. Today U.S. incarceration rates are dwarfing the rates of every developed country in the world including repressive regimes like China, Iran, and Russia. As referenced at the start of this literature review, the United States has always struggled with providing adequate care for its incarcerated populations. However, as incarceration increased so have conditions inside worsened. Political scientist David Skarbek in his study of prisons around the world uses Governance theory, to explain how high prison populations can result in many of the problems facing U.S. prisons and jails today, as high prison populations combined with low levels of official governance (staff to prisoner ratio) is correlative to deteriorating health amongst the incarcerated, high levels of violence, little access to rehabilitation, and high recidivism rates. Prison overcrowding and the problems associated with it have led to a series of lawsuits that allege human rights violations at prisons across the United States. Federal oversight and court-ordered prison reduction have forced states to reexamine their laws and lower their population to ensure a better quality of care to those housed within its confines. (rework)

include one more paragraph under Skarbek.

Overcrowding and Constitutional Rights Violations: Litigation

This is especially apparent in California, where prison populations became so high that the massive system had reached a breaking point, as more than 165,000 people were housed in a system that was designed to hold just 85,000 people¹⁷. Prison overcrowding has led to a number

¹⁷ [Cruel and Unusual: A Guide to California's Broken Prisons and the Fight to Fix Them — ProPublica](#)

of issues that have been brought to public attention, as national news outlets are reporting dozens of riots and attacks on guards every year, people that needed medical/mental health services were being denied, and suicide rates were 80% higher than the rest of the nation's prisons¹⁸. While California prisons have always been marked with a low standard of care for those housed within its confines, as documented in lawsuits dating back to the 1970s and '80s. The year 2001 is especially important in American correctional reform litigation, as it is this year that the Supreme court decided against the state in two class-action lawsuits combined into *Brown v. Plata*, which alleged that high prison population and poor quality medical care has resulted in serious constitutional right violations resulting in serious medical and medical and mental health conditions.[5] In *Brown v Plata*¹⁹ the court required that California remedy these longstanding constitutional deficits in prison medical and mental health care by ordering the reduction the prison population to 137.5% of design capacity.²⁰ Even Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy was quoted as saying “A prison that deprives prisoners of basic sustenance, including adequate medical care, is incompatible with the concept of human dignity and has no place in civilized society.”²¹

This decision set the wheels in motion for California to become a leader in criminal justice reform legislation. Soon after the Supreme Court decision, the voters of California were sending clear signals that they wanted to end the era of mass incarceration as well. Through three statewide initiatives, Propositions 36²² and 47²³, and 57²⁴, voters managed to amend the three

18 “

19 [BROWN v. PLATA \(cornell.edu\)](http://BROWN.v.PLATA.cornell.edu)

20 https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2011/crim/overcrowding_080511.aspx

21 <https://www.lexisnexis.com/community/casebrief/p/casebrief-brown-v-plata#:~:text=Rule%3A,the%20resulting%20Eighth%20Amendment%20violation.>

22 [California Proposition 36, Changes to Three Strikes Sentencing Initiative \(2012\) - Ballotpedia](#)

23 [Proposition 47: The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act - criminal justice \(ca.gov\)](#)

24 [California Proposition 57, Parole for Non-Violent Criminals and Juvenile Court Trial Requirements \(2016\) - Ballotpedia](#)

strikes law, stopped imprisonment of thousands low level offenders, while giving incentive to thousands in prison to earn their way out through education and rehabilitation. While no law is perfect, these reforms was a clear indication that California was moving away from the tough on crime and punitive approach to public safety that both of the 90's. However, one law passed in the flurry of criminal justice legislation only shifted the problems facing the state prisons to county jails. In May 2011, at the urging of now-governor Brown, the Democrat-controlled California legislature passed what Stanford University law professor Joan Petersilia calls the "biggest penal experiment in modern history"²⁵. Assembly Bill 109 called Public Safety Realignment, which aimed to keep nonviolent, non-sexual, and non-serious convictions (non-non-non's) in the county jail. Realignment shifted incarcerated people who would've previously served their sentence in a state prison, mandate that they serve their sentences in county jail instead. AB 109 reclassified the way the state looked at about 500 crimes to effectively eliminate the possibility of prison time. It applied to anyone convicted of a crime after Oct. 1, 2011, and changed the statutes throughout California law, everything from criminal to vehicle laws.

Ab 109 was supposed to be a collaborative effort of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and individual counties. Theoretically speaking realignment was designed to promote rehabilitation and reentry by moving incarcerated persons closer to their families and community-based services. However, many counties struggled with its implementation and continue to struggle today, as its acted more as a relief valve for prison overcrowding than a better alternative to a prison sentence. In fact, for many of the incarcerated it seems AB 109 acted more as a punishment than something that they benefitted from. For many local jails, the

²⁵ Donald, M. H. (2017). *The war on cops: How the new attack on law and order makes everyone less safe*. New York: Encounter Books.

state's transformation has caused a host of problems, as those confined within its walls are now being denied quality healthcare, and both educational and recreational programming that would have been available to them had they been in prison. This means counties are being asked to accommodate higher number of people for longer periods of time in facilities that were designed to house people for short amounts of time²⁶. For example, from 2011 to 2013 a survey conducted by the California State Sheriffs' Association found that from 2011 to October 2014 the jail population rose 14% from 71,800 to 82,000 people incarcerated²⁷ and 1,109 prisoners in county jails were serving 5- to 10-year sentences.

The Effects of Prison Reduction on Riverside county jails

The effects of county jail overcrowding are increasingly apparent in Riverside jails, as the county has been faced with a slew of bad press, lawsuits, and federal oversight in in years since AB 109 implementation. Prison law office in its class action lawsuit Gary v. County of Riverside²⁸ says this led to cruel and inhumane conditions as prisoners face serious deficits in medical and mental health.²⁹ Similarly, in a report conducted by Dr. Scott Allen an independent medical contractor and expert in correctional health who was tasked with evaluating Riverside medical facilities. His report titled *Review of Riverside County Jail Medical Services published in 2015* stated that "realignment created a host of new challenges to county jails and created increased burdens on the provisions of healthcare in a system that was designed for short stays." He found that for the last two years one lone physician has been on staff to serve 60,000 people amongst 5 jails and spread across 7,300-mile county,³⁰ And that overcrowding of county jails has

²⁶ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6180158-15-07-15-Allen-Final-Report.html> pg 6

²⁷ <https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-county-jails/>

²⁸ <https://www.clearinghouse.net/chDocs/public/JC-CA-0105-0001.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.clearinghouse.net/chDocs/public/JC-CA-0105-0006.pdf>

³⁰ <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/fellowships/projects/riverside-county-jails-rebound-shocking-lack-resources>

resulted in “significant risk of serious harm to inmates confined there and in the opinion of this expert does not meet minimum constitutional standards.” This While the goal of AB 109 implementation was to improve prison medical and mental healthcare due to overcrowding. The affects of this legislation inadvertently created the same problems at the county jail, that the state aimed to fix. In addition to virtually nonexistent medical care in county jail, people are sentenced to stay for years inside county jails are not afforded the same rights or privileges as they would have been, had they gone to prison. Access to education, recreation, vocational trades, and rehabilitation is nonexistent in the county level.

What I say:

My position is simple; no radical reform of the criminal justice system is complete without community involvement. What I’ve tried to accomplish through this literature review is highlight the injustice and human suffering throughout history that has been brought about by the denial of freedom. Whether it be through slavery or mass incarceration, imprisonment, or involuntary servitude, all work in concert to achieve the same the same goal, separation. The separation of black from the white, the rich from the poor, the rights from individuals, and lastly, individuals from families and communities. Whether mass incarceration in this society was created as a symptom of a capitalistic driven society like Wacquant mentioned, or a new mechanism of social control as Michelle Alexander asserted, one common theme emerges: prisons have been and continue to be a tool of separation.

Today, the United States, California, and Riverside are all working on ways in which they might lower prison and jail populations through precarious policy shifts and legislative reforms. These prescriptions as shown above, cannot fully address the illness that plagues this nation, the states, counties, and cities within it. Mass incarceration does not affect just one

person, like a virus it infects the government, the states, the cities, the communities, families, and individuals. It affects everyone and everything, it is embedded in our history and enshrined in our constitution and is as American as the flag. To fully address this issue, we must stop “othering” the incarcerated and recognize them for what they are: our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, classmates, neighbors, and coworkers. Recognizing this is a vital step in accepting that they too are part of our community.

Building on the works of scholars such as Tessa Hicks Peterson, Paolo Friere, _____ whose works in community based approaches and engaged pedagogy are the shoulders on which I stand. It is my firm conviction that the answer to the ills of mass incarceration and the problems our loved ones are faced with lies within the community itself. It is my belief that to heal the harms of incarceration and address the growing inequalities both inside and outside of prison, it's important that we center the voices of the families and communities which have often been left out of the prescription. Only through meaningful conversation, and engagement with communities, can we bridge the divide that exists between policy reform and systemic change. Thus, my research will forward the knowledge of others who have traversed this path before me and explore how community-based approaches which have led to transformative change, can be used in the context of jail reform in Riverside county. I contend that serious and sustained engagement would not only improve the quality of life for those held within jail confines, but also work to the benefit of sheriffs who are resistant to change and the communities. I hope to show that community-based approach is the missing link which can bridge the divide and provide the stitching needed to heal the wound that incarceration has left on our society.

Data coding and thematic analysis:

Based on the transcriptions of interviews and letters, my field notes, and participant observation, two main themes emerged which contribute to the suffering of incarcerated persons and their families.

1. Conditions inside Riverside County jails are deplorable and fail to improve
2. Oversight mechanisms in place have little effect.

Conditions Inside County Jail facilities	
<p><i>They are not cleaning inside properly (interview 1)</i></p> <p><i>People are getting sick (interview 1)</i></p> <p><i>No cleaning supplies (interview 1)</i></p> <p>No education</p> <p>For 8 months I wasn't offered any religious Services (interview 2)</p> <p>Involuntary servitude (field notes 4)</p> <p><i>"They are not even allowing birthday cards, now how ridiculous is that? And they based this on, like everything else on safety and security of the institution."(interview 2)</i></p> <p>Police brutality</p>	<p>As my literature review outlined, reduction in prison overcrowding has created similar conditions inside county jail facilities in counties all over California, This is especially true in Riverside County. Due to AB 109 public Safety Realignment, people are spending longer times in jail, which is resulting is constitutional rights violations in regard to quality access to medical and mental health. Covid-19, only further exacerbated the already prevalent problems.</p>
Visitation	
<p>No visitation taking place for over a year (field note 2)</p> <p>Visitation areas are not cleaned (fieldnote 5)</p> <p>Hard to make a visit (field note 5)</p> <p>No sanitizer in visiting rooms (fieldnote 5)</p>	<p>Incarceration doesn't just affect the incarcerated, it also affects communities and families of those incarcerated. In my interviews. Visitation was a constant theme that SOI, RAOUON were fighting to improve/receive. And once received the conditions areas were not clean.</p>

No Accountability	
<p>“Suggestion box is not even acknowledged.” (field notes 5)</p> <p>“Sheriff is an elected position.”</p> <p>“Can’t file lawsuits” (interview 2)</p> <p>“There is this one commission, but they don’t collect any information from people inside or their family members” (interview 2)</p> <p>“There is zero accountability” (interview 2)</p> <p>Politically too conservative to hold the sheriff accountable for police brutality (interview 2)</p>	<p>During the course of the interviews, and internship. I observed that Riverside is a very conservative county, as such they have very conservative elected officials who have been unwilling to work with organizations in improving conditions inside jail or holding police accountable for brutality/ conditions inside.</p>

The codes presented above are the labels or man ideas for my research findings.

Research

Conditions inside county jail facilities.

The world is amid a global pandemic, and like colleges, students, and professors, for nonprofit organizations working on social change, the work does not stop. As highlighted in my literature review even before SARS Covid-19 pandemic, county jails and prisons were already facing a precarious situation in terms of providing adequate mental and medical health care to incarcerated people. Covid-19 pandemic only exacerbated already prevalent problems that existed in these overpopulated facilities. From the very first meeting with SOI and RAOUON, it became very apparent that they were actively working on ways in which to address some of these issues. This theme continued to emerge throughout my internship as they worked in various ways in which to improve the conditions inside including data collection in the form of a

questionnaire (fieldnote 4), brainstorming on how to obtain access to grievances filed and coding them (fieldnotes 3) , attending board of supervisors meetings(field note 2), hosting rallies to get visitation restored (fieldnote1) below are some salient quotes from interviews obtained.

Theme quotes related to conditions of confinement.

- “I started working at SOI almost a year ago at the start of the pandemic, and it became very evident, very quickly, that the Sheriff does not give a shit, that he didn’t give a shit if people inside got sick, and he wasn’t going to release anyone, he said it to the press and he said it to the people.” (interview 2)
- “a last resort, kind of, we are writing a letter citing a lot of research to the Attorney General of California asking him to do an investigation into potential civil rights abuses in Riverside counties jails, which was accomplished in Los Angeles, BLM LA and other organizations wrote a letter to Attorney General asking him to do an investigation of their county jail and succeeded” (interview 2)
- “A year ago, they passed a policy saying that *you cannot get greeting cards in the county jail*, how ridiculous is that. They implemented where if you send a birthday card so someone in a county facility, they will send it back to you because they said they are no longer accepting them, basing this on the safety and security of the institution like they do on everything but also that is an issue. (interview 1)
- “They don’t even sell them pencil anymore, so how are they to write letters if they are not allowing them to purchase certain items to write, in society it not a big thing because everything is on the internet and email, but for them who don’t have aces to those they still need to be able to purchase them. These is an abundancy of issues that need to be address they are not cleaning visiting rooms., they are still feeling them bologna sandwiches 3 times a day instead of feeding them two hot meals a day like they are supposed to be.” (interview 1)
- I stayed in county jail for 8 months and I was never allowed to go to a church service, I was not even allowed to sit in fellowship they did not offer that. I could not go to class, I could not go to school, they didn’t have any programs in that facility, they let you out to day room for an hour or three hours whatever it was, and you can use the phone, watch tv and take a shower, other than that you didn’t have anything coming to you. But that is not enough for people who are spending years in these facilities. (interview 1)
- “We are holding a rally to protest the lack of visitation taking place for over a year now in county jails, due to the covid 19 pandemic, despite the visits being non-contact visits through glass” (fieldnote 1)

- Another thing. They are not cleaning inside properly, there is a lack of cleaning supplies and I'm constantly being told that visitation is not clean. Or people inside saying that people are getting sick because they are not cleaning. They are also giving people inside 3 cold meals a day, which is usually bologna sandwiches, money was allocated for 2 hot meals a day, and people inside are not getting any hot meals for over a year now. (interview 1)
- Health conditions not being addressed (letter transcribed)
- Interested in information on lawsuits being filed (letter transcribed)

Theme Quotes Regarding No accountability.

SOI and RAOUON have been and continue to work tirelessly at improving the lives of formerly incarcerated and currently incarcerated people. However, during the course of the semester it became abundantly clear that they lack support from elected officials, and while the county is under federal mandated oversight, the oversight committee only has the power to make recommendations they do not actually have the authority to hold the sheriff accountable to the conditions of county jails. This was evidenced in these quotes:

- “After that we started looking into sheriff accountability, and what that would look like. And what we found out is that is almost impossible to hold a sheriff accountable for anything, he is an elected official, he doesn't respond to board of supervisors, he receives funding from them, but they actually have can't control what he does, and they are too politically conservative to even talk about reallocating funding, especially for punishment for abuse in the jail or punishment for police brutality in the sheriff's department, they won't even pass basic police accountability legislation last summer when that was happening across the country.” (interview 2)
- ” All of that is to say. That we have this information about some of the most inhumane conditions you can image specifically about medical and mental health abuse and neglect and nobody is there to collect it, no one is there to report it to anyone, because no one wants to hear it. And we have also been ignored by the press. There has not been a significant amount of press attention, it just has a strong law enforcement narrative, the police union has a stranglehold on local police and the press, I guess what me in has so much despair is that people are languishing in these jail conditions, people are suffering people are dying, I requested the official in custody death reports, from 2010-2021 so we have some information about how many people died during the pandemic” (interview 2)
- “Where is the money going? Why are people inside still getting two cold meals a day, rather than two? These councils or whatever they have that they put up are fearful to ask

these types of questions because of the strength of the unions, and most of these entities that they set up are paid by the same entities they are kind of covering each other's back.” (interview 1)

Analysis of the data

As I reflect upon my journey at SOI and RAOUON, and the data I compiled in my research methodology, the words of my professor and friend Barbara Junisbai ring in my ear as she said I should highlight “the power of conversation, and how meaningful dialogue coupled with community action can serendipitously lead to solutions.” Another wonderful author, friend, and mentor of mine Tessa Hicks Peterson in her book *Student Development and Social Justice* describes this process as *Accompanimento*, or accompaniment in English, which involves “sharing and participating with a community in their ways of being from a position of epistemological situations that honors the knowledge and lived experiences of the community” (pg. 25) Similarly, Brazilian Philosopher Paulo Freire calls critical pedagogy a “primary step towards challenging oppression through authentic relationships based on mutual learning, critical reflection, and reciprocity where a liberatory education of self and other can take place. As such critical pedagogy is both a methodology of teaching and learning and a site for socio-political activism. It is a community based educational model that aims to deconstruct hierarchies of power and knowledge by re-centering common knowledge (knowledge/wisdom of the people, formed by lived experience) in a consciousness-raising process that mobilizes communities toward grassroots social change.” (Hicks, Peterson pg. 23) I highlight these quotes because, the most salient data I obtained during this internship did not come from statistical analysis, numbers or reports it came from the real “experts”, in meaningful conversations with people with lived

experience, the formerly incarcerated, the staff and families of those most affected by incarceration.

Throughout my time at SOI and RAOUON, I noticed two emergent themes; conditions inside county jail were terrible, and any efforts to affect change within them were met with resistance, contempt, or outright dismissal by the counties own elected officials. The interviews I conducted, combined with my other methodological approaches told a powerful story, a story I had nearly forgotten but is eerily reminiscent of my own time in county jail 12 years ago, in the neighboring county of San Bernardino. I heard things such as “I was in jail for eight months, and I was not even offered religious services, the opportunity for fellowship” (interview 1), “ people are languishing inside, people are dying, and they don’t care, and there is no one to hold them accountable”(interview 2), “they don’t even let in birthday cards, how ridiculous is that?” (interview 1)

Hearing these stories and reflecting on the themes that emerged allowed me to reflect deeper on my own experience in both prisons and county jail and helped me to become “critically conscious” that I might have some knowledge to contribute in how we might address some of these issues. Tessa says this “raising consciousness from the inside out, about issues of structural domination cultivates the power awareness and agency necessary to begin to effectively dismantling the narratives and deconstructing the systems that cause the suffering”. (Hicks, Peterson 22) With this in mind, I continued my internship, more intentional about how conversation was approached and how we might mobilize our personal stories and lived experiences towards improving the lives of those incarcerated through grassroots social change.

[Inmate Family Council \(IFC\)](#)

The SIFC serves family and friends of incarcerated loved one in the state of California.

“The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and representatives of families of the Incarcerated are jointly committed to work together to support connections between inmates and their families through improved communication, shared information, issue identification, and resolution.”

Thus, my last section of this paper will focus on forwarding the decentralized knowledge Tessa Hicks Peterson and Paulo Freire spoke of, and we collectively can work on ways we in which we can adapt and improve this model on the county level to achieve transformative change.

Background information:

At every prison in California there exists an IFC, this family council, is comprised of families and friends interested in the wellbeing of their incarcerated loved one. I know of this IFC from my personal lived experience in prison and having been a beneficiary of their work. However, in order to gain a better understanding of the work they do, I conducted an interview with a state representative of the IFC (Interview 3) she told me that “Prisons are required by law to have an IFC... and wardens are required to hold an IFC meeting every 60 days”. (Interview 3) This was an interesting revelation for me, because although I knew prison had IFC, I did not know that they were required by law to have them. In thinking about how to move forward with establishing a family council (I don't like to use the word inmate) in county jail, I think the case can be made by way of (AB 109 public safety realignment) since people are in county jails now have prison numbers, and are spending years in side county facilities then, county facilities should be required by law to have a family council as well.

When I asked (interview 3) what kind of success they have had in addressing issues inside county jails, she said they worked on several different things for example:

- “we were able to increase the amount of money families can bring during visitation from \$60 to \$70.
- “We have a lot of influence on the dress code.”
- “We have been able to implement policy, where we can donate more items to the visiting room. We can donate games for visiting room, and stuffed animals for incarcerated parents to give their children during Christmas time, we have been able to donate flowers for people inside to give their mom on Mother’s Day.”
- “We have been able to implement changes on a wide variety of issues including education, phone calls, tablet computers and catalogs³¹.”
- “the men’s menus and nutritional values of the things that are allowable and not allowable.”

Conclusion:

What does all this information mean? It means that there is program which is supported by the state of California and Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation which focuses on the very issues that legislation, litigation, families, incarcerated people, and organizations are working to address inside Riverside County jails, and it is working. It also means that in prisons, families and friends have a voice in improving the conditions inside and provides a template for RAOUON and SOI as they work toward creating the world they want to see.

During my research, SOI and RAOUON expressed their biggest challenge in improving jail conditions was that they were continuously met with contempt or dismissal by both elected officials and the Sheriff’s department. However, from what I observed there is also no

³¹ Catalogs is reference to items that may be purchased from outside venders for use inside including recreational items such as televisions, radios, cd players, as well as clothing and hyena products.

communication between the community and jail administration, and any changes that have been implemented have been because of court ordered mandates. In prison however, the IFC has been able to implement changes in a variety of different sectors including food and nutrition, phone calls, and education, to name a few. These changes occur because there is constant communication between families and friends of incarcerated persons and prison administration. Sandy Arguellas a former Pitzer professor and Director of the Ontario program (now CASA) calls this the “fusion of horizons” she states that “When the horizons of grassroots people and professionals are fused, a common living language emerges. This language, in turn, facilitates a never-ending process of open and deep conversations, and an ongoing fusion of horizons. Thus, like many other researchers and scholars, including Baker, Jensen, and Kolb (2002), we believe that these conversations and fusion of horizons are critical for effective community based applied research practice.” While Arguellas, is talking about the importance of dialog between academia and community-based organizations in research. I would like to emphasize the importance of ongoing and meaningful conversation and fusion of horizons between jail administrators and families of incarcerated loved ones in creating grassroots community change. If not for these mandated 60-day meetings between the IFC and prison officials, and the meaningful conversations that transpire between families and administration, none of the changes that have been implemented would have occurred. However, because of these meetings do occur, the community and prison administration have been able to work together in addressing systemic issues affecting incarcerated people.

Looking to ahead, I believe there is great reason to believe that such a council could be implemented and give communities a voice in improving conditions inside Riverside county jails. While I do not believe IFC is perfect, the first problem being the name of it, itself, (~~inmate~~

family council) nor do I believe prisons are in any way shape or form humane. I do believe that in this case IFC and prisons can be an example of the change that can transpire when communities have a voice in correctional reform. Thus far, Riverside county has been forced to make changes to comply with court ordered mandates and federal oversight. However, IFC chairperson (interview 3) says “we really are we really should all be pulling from the same end of the rope as far as rehabilitation and bringing people back out into the community when it comes to this whole criminal justice system. What we are talking about more, and learning about more, is that 95% of the people in prison are going to come home, and we can’t lock people up and abuse them, and then release them and expect them to be able to function in society, . . . they will eventually be released and become our neighbors or coworkers. “it is for this reason why we must re-envision corrections and include communities most affected by incarceration in the conversations to improve it and “instead of using punitive methods to separate individuals, use dialog to bring people together for a shared purpose of restoration and reconciliation as a form of justice and healing.”

At this point I have reached the end of my research on this topic. But by no means do I believe the work is over. In fact, in many ways the work is just beginning. I mentioned earlier that the most salient parts of my research came from the meaningful conversations that transpired during my internship, I believe it is those same conversations can transpire between community and corrections within those meaningful conversations hold the solutions that SOI and RAOUON have looking for in improving conditions inside Riverside County jails, and without them no meaningful change can transpire.

Next Steps:

- Create a working group with *Accompanimento* in mind. Honoring and acknowledging the lived experiences of the community, family, and friends of incarcerated people, as well as incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.
- Look at (IFC) as a template that works and work collaboratively to improve and adapt this model on the county level to achieve transformative change.
- Identify stakeholders who would be interested in supporting this initiative.
Approach: board of supervisors, sheriff, captain of each facilities
- Create a pilot model, to prove feasibility.

If no support exists for this initiative

- Identify state lawmakers who have shown a history of being champions for criminal justice reform, ask for support.
- Work with lawmakers to draft policy initiative which would force implementation at the local levels.

AUDACIOUS VISION

Transition practice recognizes that the future can guide us and that we are not constrained to the present or the past.

Q: What do we want and how deeply do we want it?

VISION & COMMITMENT PRACTICES

- Core purpose
- Wholeness
- Courageous responsibility
- Possibility
- Future narrative
- The long view



EMBODIMENT: WHOLE PERSON / PROACTIVE STANCE

Transition practice recognizes that embodiment is crucial to ensure that we have access to all the capacities we need.

Q: Who do we need to be to bring about the world we want and need? What do we need to consciously practice to be the people who reflect the vision?

EMBODIMENT PRACTICES

- Broad awareness
- Proactive stance
- Generate and move energy
- Agility
- Rhythm
- Relational Power
- Creativity and play
- Interrupting habits and redirecting towards a path forward

RADICAL CONNECTION

Transition practice recognizes that everything gets done through relationships and nothing gets done without them.

Q: How are we connected? How do we honor our connections? What is the "We"?

RELATIONSHIP PRACTICES

- Margins to Center: Recognizing and reversing exclusion, isolation, and marginalization.
- Radical connection and Love
- Build the "Bigger We" and move with those who are ready (small teams)
- Recognition of interdependence
- Recognition of / making space to heal from harm

STRATEGIC NAVIGATION

Commitment to practice & action! The three foundational transition practices make strategic navigation possible.

Q: How do we make choices that bring our whole selves, whole communities forward within changing and unpredictable conditions?

NAVIGATION PRACTICES

- Many Paths up the Mountain
- Big Leaps
- Networked Action
- Setting & re-setting; learning as we go and adapting as we learn
- Decisiveness
- Stories of navigation
- Leadership for the whole
- Translating values into technical implementation