

**THE TREATMENT
OF WOMEN &
TRANSGENDER PEOPLE
IN THE CA
PRISON INDUSTRIAL
COMPLEX**

OUR PROJECT

After learning about the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) in class, the four of us became interested in how the treatment of incarcerated people differs depending on a prisoner's sex and gender identity. While conducting initial research, our group narrowed our focus to women and transgender people in the PIC. We focused on California prisons because of their proximity to our colleges. Additionally, there are many CA-based abolitionist organizations and researchers we wanted to work with and learn more from.

WHY A ZINE?

To conduct research for our class project, we researched over 15 abolitionist organizations to find groups that prioritize supporting incarcerated women and transgender people. We also interviewed professors, professionals, organizers, and PIC writers to gain specific insight and advice. With all of this collected knowledge, our group wanted a way to share this with fellow students and even our community as a whole. We decided to create this zine with key takeaways from our semester-long project. It can be shared digitally and physically.

Things Happened Inside

1. Misgendering & Deadnaming

Refusing people's names; identities stripped away
Social networks destroyed; isolation intensified
Medical Neglect

2. Denial of medication and hormone therapy

Chronic conditions and mental health needs being
ignored

3. Sexual Violence

Staff and other incarcerated people commit
assault, coercion, and harassment

4. Housing Discrimination

Placement denied because of gender identity
Forced into unsafe or hostile units

5. No Access to Gender-Affirming Items

6. Solitary Confinement

Isolation justified as "protection," causing
severe psychological harm

7. Retaliation

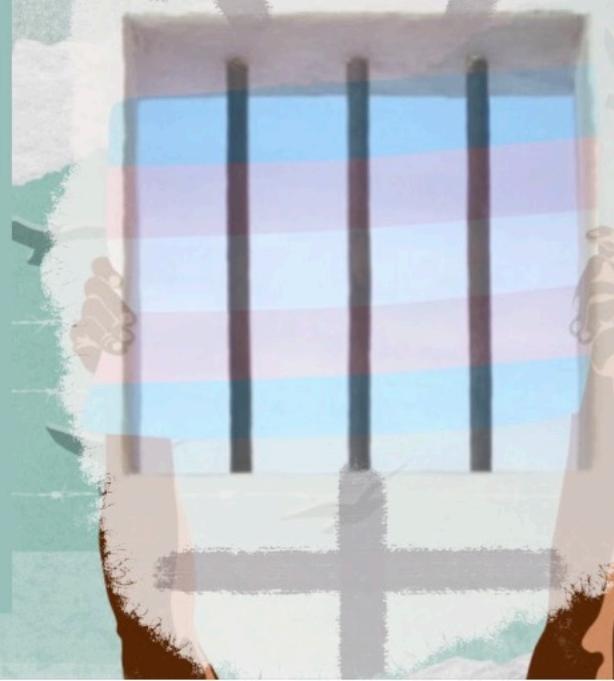
Punishment for reporting abuse or requesting care
Threats, transfers, restriction of programs or
visits

8. Invasive Searches

Strip searches used as humiliation or control
Trans bodies treated as "suspicious" or
"problematic"

9. Communication Barriers

Visits restricted; calls monitored or denied





Syiaah Skylit

Syiaah Skylit is a Black transgender woman at Kern Valley State Prison. She survived repeated physical, sexual, and psychological violence from staff and other incarcerated people. Many attacks happened because she spoke up for herself and other trans women. Prison staff ignored her reports of threats and assault. They placed her in unsafe housing and denied her repeated requests to transfer to a women's facility. Cases like Carmen Guerrero show the danger is real.

Although Syiaah's story happened before SB132, the fact is that no law can prevent all harm. The system still leaves transgender women at risk.

Jordan Walker

Punished for Attempted Suicide

Jordan Walker is a woman who has faced injustice from the prison system, with her due process rights being violated and mental health being taken advantage of. She has a history of mental illness, and in prison, attempted to kill herself.

She was unsuccessful. Rather than offer her any help, the prison charged her for the attempt. She was denied representation during her hearing, and a doctor who had never even met her was brought in to testify that her attempt was a manipulative tactic.

The prison system cannot be trusted to care for anyone, and should not be taken at its word when it claims to be protecting people inside or out.

Advice from Professor Drake

"I don't write about the prison experience. I don't have prison experience. I have the experience of being a teacher inside a prison, so that is what I write about."

Kimberly Drake, a professor at Scripps College, has given a lot of advice on being ethical and utilizing respectful language when writing about incarcerated people's experiences. Firstly, instead of picking out quotes from people and writing about your views, it's important to focus on what others are saying. Secondly, when talking to incarcerated people, it is imperative not to allude to their crime in any way; if an interviewer asks about their life before becoming incarcerated, that may lead to them talking about what they've done. Drake also emphasizes how it's important to conduct research, create organizations, advocate, and publish with incarcerated people rather than about or for them: it's best if they are co-authors, because then they get a publication. It's also important not to put these people on a map or in public. This means not to share any information compromising their identity or location, protecting their anonymity.

Advice from Professor Cheng

Jih-fei Cheng, a professor at Scripps College, believes that dismantling the prison system is what's best for the community. In his view, we should begin with a community-based approach to violence instead of appealing to the state, and also begin regarding violence as something that is systematic, not emerging from one person. Therefore, we should begin to refuse to see people as strangers. Also, there should be efforts to demilitarize, as well as de-privatize land, housing, healthcare, and education, and make them accessible to everyone.

ADVICE FROM PROFESSOR STANLEY

"There's no way to reform prisons into a kinder, gentler, more acceptable form of torture"

Professor Eric Stanley teaches at the University of California, Berkeley. They have written multiple books connecting the PIC to gender and sexuality based violence including "Atmospheres of Violence" and "Captive Genders". They are abolitionist and reminded us that the PIC is not broken; rather, it is functioning as it was made to. Additionally, they stressed the importance of maintaining the dignity of imprisoned people when interacting with them and taking actions on their behalf. This helps keep the identity of the incarcerated person rather than limiting them to a handful of identity traits.

How To Take Action

To develop a relationship with an organization, you may invite a guest speaker to a college, or volunteer there first. Good organizations to reach out to include:

Black and Pink

They're dedicated to liberating LGBTQ+ people and those living with HIV/AIDS. They have volunteering opportunities available, and may also do interviews if reached out to.

The Trans Latin@ Coalition

They provide services to TGI individuals in Los Angeles. This is also a great resource for undocumented people. They may offer an interview if reached out to.

California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP)

This organization visits incarcerated people, offers writing correspondence programs, and produces a newsletter. They offer monthly statewide chapter meetings in LA and the Bay Area, where anyone can start getting involved.

Organizations for Donation

Black and Pink

Critical Resistance

Prison Journalism Project

Transgender Gender-Variant & Intersex

Justice Project (TGIJP)

Dancing Through Prison Walls

Essie Justice Project

Crossroads, Inc.

Alyssa Rodriguez Center for Gender Justice

Advocates for Trans Equality

Prison Activist Resource Center

California Coalition of Women Prisoners

TransLatin@ Coalition

APAIT

Survived and punished