Welcome.

Dear Friend of A New Way of Life,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of our Freedom Work magazine! Freedom Work is replacing our quarterly newsletter, so that we can better provide you with high quality, in-depth information on our work to eliminate systems of oppression and create a world where everyone is valued.

As with all that we do at A New Way of Life, Freedom Work is designed to educate, empower, and promote empathy for formerly incarcerated individuals and systems-impacted communities. Each issue will highlight our ongoing projects, spotlight our talented staff, inform readers of key issues and policy initiatives, and more.

This month’s inaugural issue highlights the work that our advocacy team is doing to support family reunification policies. From co-organizing the “Protect Children, Restore Families” Statewide Rally in Sacramento to working with California State Senator Sydney K. Kamlager’s office to redefine neglect in dependency court, our advocacy team has had an incredible start to the year.

Since our founding in 1998, by Susan Burton, we have worked diligently to change the narrative surrounding the criminal (in)justice system. This magazine is an outgrowth of those efforts to advocate on behalf of our constituents, to give voice to the voiceless, and to continue our freedom work!

Best,

Pamela Marshall & Michael Towler (Co-Directors)
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To learn more about A New Way of Life, please contact: info@anewwayoflife.org.

March 2022
On January 18, A New Way of Life and a coalition of 20 organizations met in Sacramento to advocate for families that have been impacted by family separation.

**PROTECT CHILDREN, RESTORE FAMILIES STATEWIDE RALLY**

**By Kaylee Sic**

On January 18, A New Way of Life, local activists, families, and government officials rallied on the steps of the State Capital to protest the harm done by Statewide Departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS). This day-long rally had been planned by ANWOL in conjunction with Starting Over, Inc., Western Center on Law & Poverty, and 16 additional organizations.

Representing A New Way of Life, Family Reunification Attorneys Brian Barajas and Brian Tan and All of Us or None Organizer Stephanie Jeffcoat made the journey to advocate for those harmed by DCFS. As Stephanie Jeffcoat, one of the event planners said, “It is important for us to come together and demand a radical transformation of the Child Welfare System—including that all families have access to their children, and an end to the system’s practices of criminalizing poverty and seeing low-income families as neglectful.”

Speakers addressed the harms caused by state sanctioned and imposed family separation. Many spoke of their own experiences with DCFS. Ashleigh Albert, a mother from Washington State shared that “losing my children did turn me bitter, but I had to do the work. The internal work: forgiveness, you know, I’m learning how to self-advocate.” Event organizer, Vonya Quarles
from Starting Over Inc., made the important point of emphasizing that the majority of families impacted by this system are Black, Brown, or poor.

ANWOL Attorney Tan underscored how DCFS “practices are institutionalized by the national Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, which sets unreasonable time restrictions and financial incentives for states like California to prioritize the allocation of funds to adoptions rather than reunification services themselves.” This federal law requires States to petition to terminate parental rights once a child has been under the responsibility of the State for 15 of the previous 22 months. Since the average time served in State prison is 2.6 years, many incarcerated and formerly incarcerated parents have been harmed by this law (to learn more about the ASFA, see page 5).

All agreed that the system should be reformed to focus on supporting impacted families rather than punishing them. Funds could be refocused from rewarding family separation to instead providing struggling families with the support they deserve. “Instead of money going towards allowing fast-track adoptions to take place, there has to be more money in terms of helping families get the resources needed, so that they can provide for the children and are able to convince the courts that they are fit to have their children in their custody,” stated ANWOL Attorney Barajas.

Though the struggle to transform DCFS is ongoing, State Senator Nancy Skinner highlighted that Senate Bill 354 (which went into effect on January 1, 2022), removes obstacles in the foster care system that have prevented children from being placed with a relative caregiver. As Skinner stated, “SB 354 ensures that children in our foster care system have a higher likelihood of being placed with a family member, a caregiver situation that is proven to help a child thrive” and “addresses the clear racial disparity” in family separation practices.

Another promising policy initiative is SB 1085, which ANWOL is co-sponsoring with State Senator Sydney K. Kamlager. SB 1085 seeks to protect and keep families together by redefining the definition of neglect in the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 300(b) (1). Please see page 6 for more information about SB 1085.

To learn more about how you can help support formerly incarcerated parents, their children, and families, please contact ANWOL Attorney Brian Tan (btan@anewwayoflife.org) or ANWOL All of Us or None Organizer Stephanie Jeffcoat (sjeffcoat@anewwayoflife.org).
In 2019, the United States Government paid states $70.4 million to terminate the parental rights of thousands of parents, many formerly incarcerated. California alone received $2.6 million—the seventh highest payout after Indiana ($7.6m), Pennsylvania ($5.8m), Georgia ($5.8m), Minnesota ($3.5m), Massachusetts ($3.3m), Florida ($3.1m), and Mississippi ($2.7m). These funds came from the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payment Program, and are authorized by the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA).

The ASFA authorizes the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payment Program to reward States with $5,000–$10,000 per foster child adopted out in excess of the base number of foster child adoptions for the fiscal year. The base number had been set as the highest number of foster child adoptions for any fiscal year from 1997 to the present, but the base number calculation was revised in 2014 as many States were struggling to meet this requirement. It is now set as the total number of adoptions “for the immediately preceding fiscal year or the [average number of foster child adoptions] for the immediately preceding three fiscal years,” whichever is lower.¹

This means that if, for a given State, 1,000 foster child adoptions were the base in 2020 and 900 foster children were adopted that year, with another 1,000 adopted in 2021, the State would receive no funding in 2020 but would receive anywhere from $500,000 to $1 million in 2021 for the 100 children adopted out in excess of the 900 base (which would have been set by the 2020 total).
The exact amount States are awarded is determined by the status of the foster child adopted out. When the ASFA was first enacted, the amount was $4,000 per foster child adopted out in excess of the base, with an additional $2,000 for each special needs adoption in excess of the special needs base. Subsequent legislation amended the ASFA to include legal guardianship, reward pre-adolescent child adoptions and guardianships, and remove funding for special needs adoptions. The current amount is: $5,000 per child; $4,000 per foster child guardianship; $7,500 per pre-adolescent adoptions or guardianships; and $10,000 per older child adoptions or guardianships.

The result is that the ASFA incentivizes States to terminate parental rights and accelerate adoption or guardianship of children “who have been in foster care under the responsibility of the State for 15 of the most recent 22 months.” The intent of the law was to address concerns about “the growth in foster care caseloads, a pattern of children lingering in care too long, and the obstacles to adoption that prevented children who would never go home from ever achieving a place within a permanent family.” The effect, however, is that the number of parental rights terminated and foster children adopted out has increased substantially since the passage of the ASFA.
In the immediate years following the ASFA’s enactment, the annual number of foster children adopted out increased from about 36,000 (in 1998) to roughly 51,000 in 2000. The numbers remained steady, between 50,000–57,000, until 2014 when the rate of foster child adoptions started to rise again, topping 60,000 in 2018 and 65,000 in 2019. The ASFA and subsequent amendments to the funding model and eligibility requirements have incentivized States to terminate parental rights and accelerate adoption or guardianship of children.

Indeed, a 2021 study of foster care exists from 2013–2017 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, found that family reunification “becomes substantially less frequent after the 17-month mark,” as only 23 percent of children in foster care beyond 17 months reunite with their parents—and only 57% of children in foster care less than 17 months are reunited with their parents.

One reason is that the 15/22 timeframe imposed by the ASFA makes it “extremely difficult—if not impossible—for [formerly incarcerated] parents to demonstrate that they are sufficiently rehabilitated such that they are allowed to resume a relationship with their child.” As A New Way of Life’s White Paper on Amending The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 notes, “Courts are quick to terminate parental rights whenever a parent is unable to meet demanding treatment and visitation plans.” With the median prison sentence being 15.6 months—not to mention pre-trial detentions—most incarcerated and formerly incarcerated parents will be unable to prove rehabilitation prior to the termination of their parental rights.

A more ethical and just alternative, from the perspective of both children and parents, would be to invest in welfare initiatives that fund child removal prevention and family reunification programs. This is why A New Way of Life proposes that Federal and State funds be allocated to support reentry programing, such as pro bono legal services, family reunification legal clinics, mental health counseling, and more.
Notes:


The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) incentivizes States to terminate parental rights and accelerate adoption at the expense of the rights and best interests of parents and removed children. The ASFA does this by offering States funding for each adopted foster child. Subsequent legislation has added additional funding for older children and guardianships.

This funding only applies for each foster child adoption for the immediately preceding fiscal year, for the immediately preceding three years.

PRIOR YEAR ADOPTION BASELINE

This State adopted out 60 foster children—two more than the prior record. This State would receive $8,000-$20,000.

To be eligible for funding, states must act to terminate the legal rights of any child who has been in foster care for recent 22 months.

The 15/22 rule is a baseline, as many States, including California, use Family Code section 7825 for example, states that can bring an action at any time against a parent who has been ruled to be an unfit parent or parents. The state could use any felony conviction as the basis for proceeding.

California has received $69,702,460 in Federal funding for adoption. This is more funding than in the prior year.

Sources:
THE FAMILIES ACT OF 1997
LIFE REENTRY PROJECT

$5,000 - $10,000
PER FOSTER CHILD ADOPTED
$5,000 FOR EACH CHILD
$7,500 FOR EACH CHILD AGES 9-13
$10,000 FOR EACH CHILD 14 AND OLDER
SO FOR LEGAL GUARDIANSHIPS BY FAMILY MEMBERS AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION.

Adopted in excess of the total number of
all year or the average number of foster child
fiscal years," whichever is lower.¹

CURRENT YEAR ADOPTIONS

This state adopted out 50 children—ten
less than the prior record. This State
would not receive any funding.

terminate the parental
are for 15 of the most

Funding California have more restrictive policies.
petition to terminate parental rights may be
convicted of a felony 'of such a nature so as to
this terminology's vagueness is such that the State
parental termination.

funding since the ASFA was initiated³

in any state except Texas

² 111 STAT. 3112. Date: 11/19/1997
³ 117 STAT. 1880. Date: 12/2/2003.
Legal Guardianship Incentive Award
/2/adoption-and-legal-guardianship-
and Legal Guardianship Incentive
$5,200
A New Way of Life Reentry Project is working with California State Senator Sydney K. Kamlager to protect and keep families together by exempting conditions of poverty from definitions of neglect.

**Policy Initiative:**
**Senate Bill 1085—Redefining Neglect in Dependency Court**

By Robert Mejia

On November 17, 2021, California State Senator Sydney K. Kamlager urged those dedicated to family reunification to look “at what neglect means, and how it is applied and defined in code and then in practice.” These remarks, made at A New Way of Life’s Peace and Justice Summit on Family Wellness, were taken to heart by Brian Tan of our Family Reunification Team.

Tan knew that the existing legal definition of neglect disproportionately punished poor, families of color. Neglect—defined as the “negligent failure of a child’s parent or guardian to adequately supervise or protect the child from the conduct of the custodian with whom the child has been left, or [...] negligent failure of the parent or guardian to provide the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment”—is one of criteria for which parents can lose custody of their child (the other are physical, emotional, and sexual abuse). Under this definition, parents can have their children removed due to having a broken cell phone, destroyed furniture, or other forms of damaged property.
Working with Stephanie Jeffcoat (ANWOL All of Us or None Organizer) and Andi Mazingo (ANWOL Family Reunification Attorney & Orrick Racial Justice Fellow), Tan reached out to the Senator’s office to discuss their call to rethink the meaning of neglect. They learned that the Senator was planning to introduce a new Senate Bill that would redefine neglect for Dependency Court, and so the team offered to support the Senator’s office with ANWOL’s expertise in family reunification law.

The proposed Bill that emerged, SB 1085 "Redefining Neglect in Dependency Court", amends the definition of neglect that appears in California’s Welfare and Institutions Code (300)(b)(1) by providing a carve-out exception for conditions of poverty when determining child neglect in Dependency Court hearings.

Carve-out exceptions are not unique to WIC (300)(b)(1) as exemptions already exist for (1) lack of emergency shelter, (2) failure of parents to seek court orders for custody of the child, and (3) refusing to pursue adequate medical treatment based on religious or spiritual grounds. SB 1085’s proposed carve-out exception for conditions poverty places financial difficulty on the same legal ground as the hardships caused by losing one’s home to a natural disaster or fire, difficulty navigating the legal system, or practicing one’s faith tradition.

SB 1085 recognizes that good parenting exists across all income levels. This bill—which is working its way through the Senate at the time of this writing—is designed to keep working class families together and stop the State from punishing parents for being poor.

To learn more about SB 1085, please contact Brian Tan (btan@anewwayoflife.org) or Stephanie Jeffcoat (Sjeffcoat@anewwayoflife.org).
Staff Spotlight: Stephanie Jeffcoat

Interview by Kaylee Sic

KS: I’d like to begin by discussing the work that you do for All of Us or None (AOUON). I know that there was a recent event up in the Bay Area, where all of the organization’s chapters gathered for a weekend together to share strategies, compare campaigns, participate in workshops, and discuss ways to support each other. How did that go?

SJ: AOUON had a national convening that was called “Building the Movement.” One of the things we did was go to Alcatraz to visit the museum. Dorsey Nunn, the executive director of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children—an Oakland based organization that provides legal services for prisoners—and Susan Burton along with some other people were a part of making that excursion possible. Once we came back from seeing Alcatraz, we had panel discussions around slavery and the work to abolish slavery.

The workshops were led by members from the different chapters on topics such as abolishing fines and fees, the school-to-prison pipeline, the sexual registry, child abuse registry, family unity, and visitation rights for our loved ones who are incarcerated. Kimberly Dunne, who is one of our AOUON fellows, and I did a workshop on the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act.

I felt like the event itself was amazing. To see so many people come together from all over the United States, who share our common cause and have the passion to try and make a change in this world, was incredible. I really enjoyed it. I love that this event encouraged chapter members to participate and provided the opportunity for us to share our experiences with the organization.

KS: So you mentioned Alcatraz, which is a small island located in the San Francisco Bay. I can imagine it was
really cold; don't you think that it was inhumane to keep people there?

SJ: I mean, I think the conditions at any prison are bad. It was cold and the cells that they were in are like tiny little boxes. I've been incarcerated myself and my cell wasn't that small, so just seeing it was really jarring. Then, to think that they're on this little island and it's separated from everything, which I mean most prisons are, but this separation felt even more intense. There were signs throughout the structure that amplified this intent and stuck with me. One said “You’re entitled to food, shelter, clothing, and medical attention. Anything else is a privilege.” All of these factors created a dehumanizing environment for the people who were there.

KS: Would you be willing to talk about your own activist journey and how that led you to advocacy work?

SJ: After struggling with addiction and cycling in and out of incarceration for over 19 years, I gave birth to a little girl in 2016 who was taken by the Department of Children and Family Services. Going through that experience made me decide that I wanted to get into a position where not only could I have power, but to where I would be able to help make a change to the system. That experience lit a fire in me to want to get involved. One of the members of the church that I attended introduced me to All of Us or None and took me to a meeting in February 2019. When I was presented with the opportunity at my first AOUON meeting to get involved in organizing and civic engagement, I immediately jumped on it.

KS: Can you speak more about how that led you to work as an AOUON organizer with A New Way of Life?

SJ: In 2019, at my first AOUON meeting, I was offered a job opportunity with Community Coalition, and from there I was able to build a relationship with one of the AOUON fellows at the time who was working for A New Way of Life. After attending multiple meetings, I found out about the Women Organizing for Justice and Opportunity (WOJO) cohort that ANWOL was having and joined to become a part of that cohort in 2019. Upon joining the cohort, I found out that ANWOL was going to be doing another fellowship for 2020 for AOUON. So I applied, got the position, and here I am now.

KS: As the AOUON Organizer at ANWOL, is there anything that you and your team have been working on or have accomplished recently?

SJ: I do have three AOUON fellows who I work with, and I’ve been in the position to show them the ropes and help them throughout their journey into activism, advocacy, and organizing. Right now we are working on a few different policies. One of them is SB 354 implementation, which is a bill that we co-sponsored that just became law in January 2022. That bill focuses on allowing relatives with past criminal convictions to be able to be caregivers for their loved ones who are in foster care. We are going to be having a webinar on March 22nd with judges and lawyers to help bring awareness to how they can implement this new law.

We are also working on a bill that will provide people who are just coming home from prison with more money than the $200 that they’ve been getting all these years. We’re trying to make it to where they get at least $2000 upon their release. Another policy that we’re working on is redefining neglect with our Family Reunification team, which will help so many parents who have been separated from their children, simply because of poverty or bias.
KS: Do you have any professional goals you would like to accomplish for this year?

SJ: We've been looking to do training to help with personal development and our organizing skills. Also, being more involved in the policy work and teaching the fellows how to do policy. They haven't really had the opportunity to see how to start a bill or the steps it takes to get a bill passed since they came on once our bill (SB 354) was in the process of being passed.

KS: Do you have any upcoming events that you would like people to be aware of? Either on a smaller scale such as the monthly membership meetings you hold on Zoom, or a larger scale such as the Sacramento Rally earlier this year?

SJ: Yes. Every second Tuesday of the month, from 5:30–7:00 PM, our chapter hosts our monthly Zoom membership meetings, and we do have a rally that we are planning to do at the Los Angeles Children's Court that will be sometime this summer. We also have our Mother's Day event that we usually host at the Lynwood County Jail where we come together with other organizations and advocate for our women that are still inside. We are going to be attending Survivors Speak next month, so we will be traveling to Sacramento to be a part of that conference where hundreds of crime survivors all across the country will gather to heal together, share their stories, and advocate for change.

The interview closed with Stephanie sharing a few personal achievements and goals she has for herself. Stephanie revealed she would be graduating from Fullerton College this upcoming summer with a few Associate degrees and plans to transfer to a university to get her Bachelor's degree in political science. She will also be studying for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) so she can attend law school and become a lawyer for parents who've been separated from their children.
Diane Figueroa is a safe house resident and an All of Us or None Fellow with A New Way of Life. We met to discuss her reentry experience, including her life as a resident and work with the advocacy team.

**Resident Spotlight:**

**Diane Figueroa**

**Interview by Robert Mejia**

RM: I want to begin by thanking you for your willingness to share your experiences. Retelling these stories means revisiting these experiences, and that can be difficult at times. It can also be healing and empowering, not only for ourselves but others as well. So again, thank you.

DF: Thank you. I am so grateful for A New Way of Life. It has changed my life, and I want to share my experiences so that others can know about the work A New Way of Life is doing. I also am learning about why telling my story matters. Before coming to A New Way of Life, I was ashamed of my past and my convictions. I thought I was a bad person, that I had nothing to offer. But now, I see that what I needed was help and not incarceration, and I want to help others by sharing my story.

RM: Absolutely. We are often made to believe that the conviction of a crime means that the convicted person is an inherently bad person, when instead we should be asking whether the law itself is moral and why some individuals are granted grace and support and others shame and punishment. Indeed, you mention having previously felt ashamed of your life, but now understand that sharing your story can help others. Would you feel comfortable sharing a bit about your past?

DF: I was born in Boyle Heights, California. My mom was born in Honduras, and my dad was born in Mexico—they met in Los Angeles. My family was very poor. My dad left when I was 9 years old, and though my mom did her best, life was difficult. We were constantly being evicted, and so I moved around a lot as a kid. I attended ten different schools by the time I started eighth grade.

In eighth grade, I joined a gang. I was desperate for some sense of community, and they promised to take
care of me. Shortly after, I was arrested at the age of 13 for being under the influence of marijuana.

While incarcerated as a juvenile, I was molested by an officer. That changed my life. It made me distrust and hate authority. I was given juvenile life probation—which meant that I was under state supervision until I turned eighteen. I dropped out of school shortly after that, and never returned. I ran away and worked wherever they didn’t ask questions. I had my first child at the age of 19, but was arrested and lost custody of her three years later. I had my second child in 2010, but was arrested again and lost custody of him two years later. I have spent most of my life in and out of incarceration, and had no hope for the future.

RM: It seems like what you and your family needed was financial and social support. Moving so frequently as a child, with few resources, must have been very difficult. The molestation by an officer while under the care of the State seems especially traumatic. I can understand why you would have felt such little hope for the future. It seems as though you now have hope, what changed?

DF: I have been with A New Way of Life for ten months, and I have never been this happy. All my life, I had never felt accepted. My mother did her best, but growing up poor, facing constant evictions, moving from school to school, was hard. I turned to gangs and got arrested. I lost my kids, and society looked at me like I was the worst. I became suicidal. I believed it—that I was the worst. This is why I had no hope for the future. This is actually my second time with A New Way of Life, because the first time, I came with no hope.
RM: Can you tell us how you were introduced to A New Way of Life, what your first experience was like, and how you came back to the program?

DF: I found out about A New Way of Life in 2016 when I was approaching the end of my prison sentence. Initially, I was going to be released to my sister in Las Vegas, but the State required an inspection of the house to make sure that it complied with my probation requirements. The inspection was undertaken like a raid, and it traumatized my sister. She knew the State would do regular inspections, twice per month, and she wanted nothing of it. I had no place to go, when I learned about A New Way of Life from a woman in my cell. I called, and was invited to live at one of the houses. I wasn't ready though. My probation officer would not allow me to see my kids because they lived over 52-miles away. I was depressed and making bad choices, so I left the house after three months. I went back on the streets, got back into drugs, and was sent back to jail.

RM: What made you want to come back to A New Way of Life after that experience?

DF: I had continued to cycle in and out of incarceration, going to rehab, trying to get clean, only to relapse and start back at the beginning. While I was sitting in my cell, thinking about my life, I realized that, even though I was not ready, my time with A New Way of Life was the best. I remembered how Susan Burton saw potential inside of me. I realized that I wanted to go back—but was afraid that A New Way of Life would not take me back. My counselor encouraged me to call A New Way of Life, so with the help of my counselor and my sister, I eventually got the courage to reach out for help.

RM: I want to ask you about how it felt coming back, but before you answer that, can you tell us why these other drug treatment programs were not helpful for you?

DF: The other drug treatment programs were not helpful because we would have to read out of books that
didn't feel like they were made for us. The counselors don't have lots of time to spend one-on-one with you. Some can be nice, but most are looking at their clocks, like they have somewhere else to be.

RM: How has this felt different at A New Way of Life? What was it like returning to our program?

DF: I was released to A New Way of Life's Long Beach house. It is such a beautiful home, and so close to the beach. My housemates and I would go to the beach every other day. I loved it.

Right when I arrived, I learned that A New Way of Life was hiring an All of Us or None Organizing Fellow. I had been involved with All of Us or None during my first stay with A New Way of Life, and really enjoyed it. I applied, got an interview, and then got the job. I was so happy. When I first started telling my story, I initially held back, because I had always felt separated from society, but All of Us or None has taken all of those feelings of shame, and made me feel like it's okay to tell my story. It has been like entering a whole new world. A world where no one is judging you. A world where it's okay to tell my story.

Now, I'm able to tell my story, and see the impact it is having on decision makers and other groups. I have pictures with politicians and other people. Like, they want to come up and speak with me, to take my picture. It's healing.

I used to live in the now, the fast life. I couldn't think into the future. Every day that I have been a part of A New Way of Life, it gives me a vision for another year, of what I want to accomplish in the future.

RM: Diane, thank you so much for sharing your story. I want to conclude with one final question. Can you share what you are looking forward to? What you would like to accomplish in the near or distant future?

DF: I would like to continue growing closer to my children. Now that I have grown, and become more mature, I've learned to accept things and be at peace with my past. I visit and speak with my children regularly. When the time comes, I will take steps towards regaining custody.

I would also like to start my own nonprofit and be a part of the SAFE Housing Network. I have learned a lot about how the criminal justice system impacted me and am fortunate to have this space to heal from that trauma. I have been in and out of incarceration since I was 13 years old. I used to hate the world, but coming here has been healing. I have accomplished so much in these past ten months. I spoke at the November 2021 Peace & Justice Summit on Family Reunification to an audience of over 200 people, including State Senators and LA county politicians. I am looking forward to building on those experiences, continuing to grow, and helping others like me.
For Black History Month, we created a social media campaign honoring the critical work of past and present Black activists. This campaign was seen over twenty-thousand times across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

**Communications: Black History Month**

Feb. 1. Sojourner Truth (1797–1883) and Alicia Garza. Truth escaped slavery in 1826 with her infant daughter, and was a famed abolitionist, women’s rights activist, and renowned public speaker. Garza co-founded Black Lives Matter in 2013. Like Truth, Garza is a renowned activist, having organized and inspired intersectional abolitionist movements across the globe.

Feb. 2. Biddy Mason (1818–1891) and Regina Benjamin. Mason was an emancipated slave who became one of the first African American women to own land in Los Angeles and was a renowned philanthropist. Benjamin served as the 18th Surgeon General of the United States from 2009-2013 during the Obama administration. Benjamin founded the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic in 1990.
Feb. 3. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) and Cornel West. Douglass escaped slavery and became a notable activist and author. His autobiography, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,” was instrumental in promoting the abolition movement. West’s writings on race, gender, and class in American society have influenced generations of scholar-activists.

Feb. 4. Charlotte E. Ray (1850–1911) and Michelle Alexander. Ray was the first black woman in the United States to become a lawyer and the first woman to practice law in Washington, D.C. Alexander is a highly acclaimed civil rights lawyer and author of “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.”

Feb. 5. Ida B. Wells (1862–1931) and Nikole Hannah-Jones. Wells was a prominent journalist, civil rights activist, and educator. Hannah-Jones is a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist who co-founded the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting, an organization dedicated to training and mentoring the next generation of investigative reporters of color.

Feb. 6. W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963) and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. Du Bois was a writer, activist, renowned sociologist, and founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Bonilla-Silva is a distinguished professor of sociology at Duke University and a leading scholar of race and racism.
Feb. 7. Selma to Montgomery March (1965) and Taking a Stand in Baton Rouge (2016). In 1965, hundreds marched with Martin Luther King Jr. from Selma to Montgomery to advocate for their civil rights. In 2016, thousands, including Iesha Evans (photographed), met in Baton Rouge to protest the police shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile.

Feb. 8. Olympics Black Power Salute (1968) and NFL Kneeling (2016). During the 1968 Olympics medal ceremony, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists and bowed their heads in a Black Power salute during the American national anthem. Colin Kaepernick began kneeling during the American national anthem in 2016 to protest the oppression Black and other people of color face in the U.S.

Feb. 9. Langston Hughes (1901–1967) and Tongo Eisen-Martin. Hughes was a poet, social activist, and playwright known as a leader for the Harlem Renaissance. Eisen-Martin is an educator, social organizer, and San Francisco Poet Laureate whose works focuses on mass incarceration, extrajudicial killings of Black people, and human rights.

Feb. 10. Eroseanna “Rose” Robinson (1924–1976) and Gwen Berry. Robinson was one of the first American athletes to refuse to stand for the national anthem at the Pan-American Games in 1959. Berry is a track and field athlete who holds the world record in the weight throw who has protested at various major track and field events over the years to highlight racial injustice in America.
Feb. 11. Charles Mingus (1922–1979) and Naomi Campbell. Mingus was known for speaking truth to power against racism, the corruption of the music industry, and the consistent underpaying of Black musicians. Campbell is a renowned supermodel and activist who has advocated against racism in the modeling industry.

Feb. 12. Marvin Gaye (1939–1984) and John Legend. Gaye was one of Motown’s most successful soul artists who released ‘What’s Going On’ during the height of the Vietnam war when polarized sentiments swept the nation. Legend is a singer-songwriter and activist who, throughout his career has been vocal in advocating for social change.

Feb. 13. James Baldwin (1924–1987) and Ta-Nehisi Coates. Baldwin was an American writer whose work spoke passionately to the experiences of Black people in a racist White America. Coates is an acclaimed author and journalist who has written extensively on race and racism, often powerfully weaving in his own personal experiences. His “Between the World and Me” was inspired by Baldwin’s “The Fire Next Time.”

Feb. 14. Richard and Mildred Loving (1958) and Davone Madison-Jackson and Tiffany Jackson (2012). The Lovings, an interracial couple, were arrested after Virginia’s anti-miscegenation laws deemed their marriage in Washington D.C. to be illegal. The Jacksons were the first LGBTIQ couple to appear in the pioneering Black media outlet, JET magazine’s “Love” section, in March 2011.
Feb. 15. Audre Lorde (1934–1992) and Christina Sharpe. Lorde was a pathbreaking Black, lesbian, warrior, poet highly regarded for her writings on issues of race, sexuality, and feminism. Sharpe is a leading Black feminist scholar highly regarded for the beauty and power of her writings on what it means to be Black in a racist society.

Feb. 16. Tupac Shakur (1971–1996) and Kendrick Lamar. Shakur was a legendary rapper, whose love for poetry led him to write music which often described the injustices endured by Black Americans. Lamar is an award-winning rapper and songwriter whose music is influenced by his experience growing up in Compton.

Feb. 17. Nina Simone (1933–2003) and Beyoncé. Simone was an acclaimed musician who evoked strong emotions with her songs about love, protest, and Black empowerment. In the 1960s, Simone performed at Civil Rights demonstrations and released protest songs. Beyoncé is an acclaimed singer-songwriter known for using her music and music videos to shed light on social issues communities of color face.

Feb. 18. Mamie Till (1921–2003) and Lesley McSpadden. Till was the mother of Emmet Till. She held an open casket funeral so the world could see how badly mutilated her son's body had been left after his murder. McSpadden is the mother of Michael Brown. She has continued to speak out about the injustices her son and other Black Americans face at the hands of the government and has advocated police reform.

Feb. 21. Richard Pryor (1940–2005) and Chris Rock. Pryor was a legendary stand-up comedian and actor who used his platform to forcefully address race, racism, and capitalism. Rock is an American comedian, actor, and screenwriter whose comedy effortlessly exposes the tragic absurdity of racism and politics. Pryor and Rock have inspired generations of comedians.

Feb. 20. Shirley Chisholm (1924–2005) and Holly J. Mitchell. Congresswoman Chisholm was the first African-American woman elected to Congress, and is remembered as a woman “who dared to be a catalyst for change.” Supervisor Mitchell is a representative to two million residents of Los Angeles County’s Second District. She too has dared to be a catalyst for change.

Feb. 22. Maya Angelou (1928–2014) and Amanda Gorman. Angelou was a celebrated poet, author, and civil rights activist who was the first Black woman to write and perform a poem at a presidential inauguration (in 1993). Gorman is an acclaimed American writer and poet who is the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history. Her work focuses on Black identity, feminism, racism, and climate change.
Feb. 23. Chester Pierce (1927–2016) and Kimberlé Crenshaw. Pierce was an American psychiatrist and a professor at Harvard Medical School who developed the concept of “microaggressions” in 1970. Crenshaw is a leading scholar of critical race theory and a professor of law at UCLA and Columbia who introduced and developed the concept of intersectionality.

Feb. 24. Angela Bowen (1936–2018) and Indya Moore. Bowen was a writer, dancer, and prominent LGBTIQ rights activist who served on the board of the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays. Moore is a transgender and non-binary actor and model named one of Time’s 100 most influential people of 2019 for using their voice to center marginalized communities.

Feb. 25. Muhammad Ali (1942–2016) and Maya Moore. Ali was a three-time heavyweight boxing champion, activist, and philanthropist regarded as one of the greatest sports figures. Moore is a four-time Women’s National Basketball Association champion and an advocate for criminal justice reform.

Feb. 26. bell hooks (1952–2021) and Safiya Noble. hooks was an author, activist, and intersectional Black feminist whose transformative work challenged social structures. Noble is a professor, author, and prominent critic of the racism and sexism prevalent in technology and algorithms.
Feb. 28. We concluded Black History Month with this collage honoring past, present, and future generations of Black Excellence. From top left to bottom right: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, Lisa Jones, Ersula Ore, Rebecca Ginsburg, Stephanie Jeffcoat, Sarah J. Jackson, Roxane Gay, Amaniyan Copeny, Fatimah Nyeema Warne (Noname), Amandla Stenberg, Chancelor Johnathan Bennett (Chance the Rapper), Pamela Marshall, Michael Towler, Nupol Kiazolu, John Boyega, Zendaya, Lonnie Chavez.

Black excellence extends beyond any given individual, community, or territory. There are so many individuals we wish we could have included, from Aimé Césaire, Ruha Benjamin, Amílcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Cheryl Harris, Bessie Head, and more. Indeed, you may be asking: where is A New Way of Life’s founder, Susan Burton? We could never forget. For our February 27th tribute to Ms. Burton—our modern-day Harriet Tubman—please see the back cover of this magazine.
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals committed to recovering from the harmful effects of alcoholism. A New Way of Life hosts weekly, Monday meetings at our 420 Date St., Montebello, California location, from 6:00–7:30PM. Membership is free and open to all individuals.

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)

Cocaine Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals committed to recovering from the harmful effects of cocaine. A New Way of Life hosts weekly, Wednesday meetings at our 420 Date St., Montebello, California location, from 6:30–8:00PM. Membership is free and open to all individuals.

All of Us or None – Southern California (AOUON)

All of Us or None is a grassroots human rights organization fighting for the rights of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. Our monthly membership meetings are free and open to all individuals. Meetings are currently held online, via Zoom, every second Tuesday, from 5:30–7:00PM PST. To learn more, contact: AOUON@anewwayoflife.org.

Mother’s Day Rally (MD)

Join us as we advocate and rally in support of Mother’s who have had involvement with the child welfare system. The rally will be held at the Edmund D. Edelman Children’s Court in Monterey Park, California beginning at 9:30AM on Wednesday, May 4. There will a sign creation station for those attending. To learn more, contact: kdunne@anewwayoflife.org.

A New Way of Life – Legal Clinic (LC)

Our legal team offers pro bono legal services to help people with their criminal convictions. Legal clinics are held on the second and fourth Saturday of each month from 10:00–12:00PM, and the third Wednesday of each month from 6:30–8:00PM. Legal Clinics are currently held online. Registration is free and open to all individuals. To register, please call: 323-563-3575.
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Upcoming Holidays

**Ramadan**
The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community for Muslims. Ramadan will be observed from April 2–May 1 this year.

**Good Friday**
This Christian holiday marks the crucifixion of Jesus and is a day of fasting and church services for many Christians. Good Friday is April 17 this year.

**Earth Day**
This global event was first held on April 22, 1970, to encourage support for the environment. This year’s theme is Invest in Our Planet. Earth Day is April 22.

**Easter**
This Christian holiday celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. As a symbol of life, “easter” eggs are often a part of the commemoration. Easter is April 17 this year.

**Mother’s Day**
The second Sunday of May is a day for honoring all that a mother does for her family. This holiday was first observed in 1907. Mother’s Day is May 8 this year.

**Memorial Day**
This federal holiday honors the lives of military personnel who died during their service to the country. Memorial Day is observed on May 30.

**Father’s Day**
The third Sunday of June is a day for honoring all that a father does for his family. It was made a permanent U.S. holiday in 1972. Father’s Day is June 19 this year.

**Juneteenth**
This federal holiday celebrates the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in Texas on June 19, 1865, three years post-Emancipation Proclamation.
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Juneteenth Flag.