

Newsletter

AUGUST 2023

Commemorating Black August



"Settle your quarrels, come together, understand the reality of our situation, understand that fascism is already here, that people are already dying who could be saved, that generations more will live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act. Do what must be done, discover your humanity and your love in revolution."

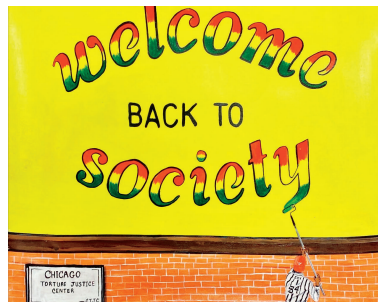
George Jackson

We honor Black August, a time for commemoration that originated in California prisons during the 1970s. Black August remembers the lives of fallen freedom fighters like Jonathon and George Jackson, who were killed a year apart by prison guards after organizing liberation movements with their fellow inmates. George Jackson is remembered as a prominent voice, writer, and activist of the Black liberation movement.

Black August offers us a time to honor the lives and struggle of Black political prisoners, freedom fighters, and survivors of police violence.

In this issue, we're featuring submissions from our incarcerated community. As always, thank you for sharing your talents, vulnerability, and wisdom with us. We hope that all of you in our community are inspired by these pieces.

Artwork from Inside



We recently received some beautiful and moving artwork from some of our community members at Dixon! Survivors at Dixon Correctional Center have created extensive arts programming that includes opportunities for folks to participate in the fine arts, poetry, writing, and performance art. The Dixon CC Performing Arts (formerly Dixon CC Theatre Workshop) "was started in 2018 by a diverse group of prisoners from different age groups. Their purpose was to use the creativity of the theatre as a forum to amplify the voices and stories of prisoners during the era of mass incarceration. To accomplish this the DPA wrote and performed original plays, concerts, spoken word poetry, they also hosted writing expositions, and roundtable discussions."

We're so excited to display these pieces in our space! We also received some other amazing paintings that we will feature in upcoming newsletters, so if you don't see your piece here, don't worry! We want to have the space to properly display your work, and we are looking forward to sharing your artwork with the rest of our community. If you have shared your art with us, **we send our deepest thanks!**



Dear Summer was produced by Facilitator **Toussaint Daniels** and headlined by fellow Facilitator Brian "King Moosa" Harrington in 2019. It was a Spoken Word/ Hip Hop concert centered around a young man during his journey of transformation one summer.

Toussaint defly infused each performance with an element of drama as the performers narrated the the young man's journey with each poem and song. Toussaint says, "I designed the program to ensure all the attendees witness a spectacle that induced a feeling of nostalgia, as the participants provided songs and poems that covered an array of challenges such as; pain, loss, love and ultimately triumph. All the emotions synonymous with the season of summer."

Summer is the hardest season to be in. Everybody is moving around and we are feeling stuck. Anger and frustration permeate the prison atmosphere. The genius of Dear Summer addressed the emotion of summer and made the pain fade away for a while.

Dreamer's Nightmare was painted by **William Lopez** and several other artist for the Dixon Performing Arts (DPA) program to represent playwright Apolinar Sernas-Jacobo vision for his play "Dreamer's Nightmare." Apolinar, who was incarcerated at age 17, joined the DPA as an actor. He immediately made a favorable impression on the facilitators with his positive attitude and humble demeanor.

When asked if he wanted to write and deliver a story that would address some of the issues in his community, he stepped up.

Dreamer's Nightmare is comprised of a lot of the stories Apolinar heard growing up in Chicago. It is about a young man, Pablito, who leaves a life of poverty in Mexico and plans to live the American dream. He gets in trouble dealing with the coyotes, struggles in America, and his parents die in Mexico. Pablito gets arrested as a result of his alcoholism and faces deportation.

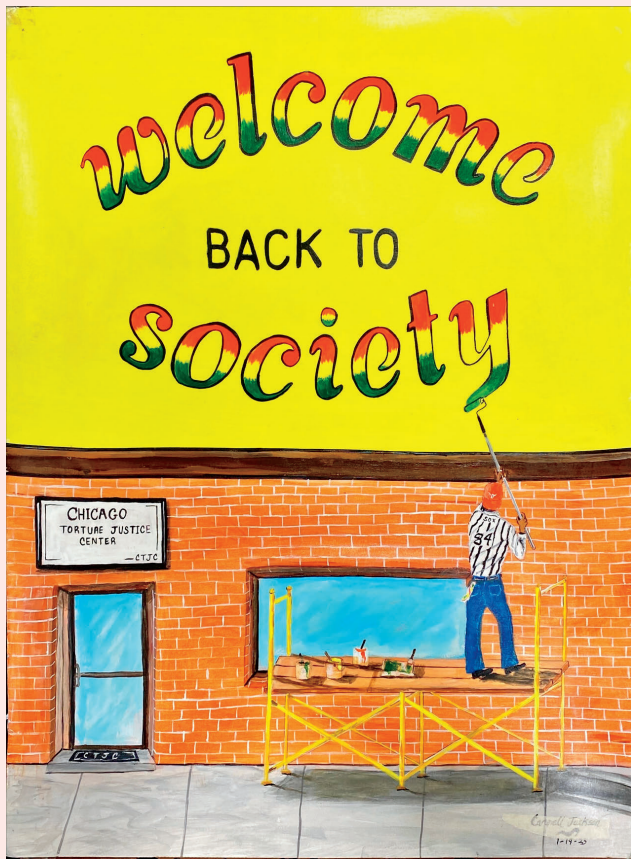
Apolinar infused moving ballets, sung in Spanish, to help tell the story that spans almost thirty years. The Dreamer's Nightmare cast was both multi-cultural and featured actors who ranged in age from their early twenties to their seventies and eighties. After writing, directing and producing Dreamer's Nightmare under the tutelage of the DPA facilitators, Apolinar was promoted to Facilitator.



Mi Gente banner was painted by **Barron Fermin**. The show got cancelled due to an uptick COVID cases. However, there was a writing exposition and painting contest for Hispanic Heritage Month connected to that banner that went well.

The banners are a representation of the creativity, spirit, and desire of the men/women in the IDOC to have our humanity recognized. That is what makes them special. They counter the narrative that the authorities would have the public believe.





Welcome Back To Society painted by Carmell Jackson and commissioned by Brian Beals. The bright colors to represent the future for guys coming home, and the guy working outside cleaning the Center symbolizes them putting in work at the Center, keeping it safe and growing.

Thank you so much Carmell and Brian for this incredible piece. What a beautiful tribute to CTJC, and a reminder of why the Center exists and why we do the work that we do.

Descriptions written by Brian B.

Would you like to submit your work to CTJC? Reach out to us! If you would prefer to correspond through GTL, let us know and we will add you to our network.

Words from Inside

Troubled Waters

by Darrion B.

Afraid of my calling; So I turned off my ears
and buried the whet stone I used to sharpen my skills.
I use to sharpen my skills,
hoping one day they'd point me out of my fear
that the sound over the horizon wasn't meant for my peers.
I made myself deaf. The truth was something
I didn't want to hear
I'd become great in a place, that wasn't meant for my skills
I'd fallen in love with the sounds, that wasn't meant for my ears
Sometimes it ain't about who you are; Its about who you is.
Its like a fish in all water can swim;
but salt water will kill a fish with fresh water gills

My Soledad Brother

by Raymond Galloway

Chicago westsider, who moved to California
And landed in their prison,
Found himself in a fight, He thought he could win
Sacrificed for the change he became
Fought tooth and to usher it in
But those in power who ran the system
Proved too much for one man to conquer
Led him out of segregation, by way of manipulation
Causing him to believe he was being sent back into population
Premeditated Assassination
Believing they killed a visionary
Not knowing this revolutionary fight
Would be passed down to generations
Who'd burn with like minded passions
Pick up his torch of bravery
Stand up for justice in the penitentiary
Honoring the example set by George Jackson
Who gave his life to shed light on
the corruption within the prison system

Dear sisters and brothers,

Peace, and blessing to everyone who reads these words. First, I want to acknowledge all of the real victims of crime as well as their families.

Please forgive us for our mistakes, and sins against you.

The choice and the power is all yours to do so or not? We seek peace, and forgiveness from God and you only!

To every sister and brother incarcerated, be transformed, be reformed, be restored, be humble, be remorseful, be better, but never be broken! Since 1978, there has not been any parole, or system of parole in Illinois, period!

In 2023, for this to be a reality is totally merciless, and a moral disrespect and dishonor to true justice in our communities!

Former Governor Bruce Rauner once stated that, "The Illinois Supreme Court is corrupt." I must agree, when individuals who have sworn to uphold justice, and protect the rights of citizens under the constitution continue to make rulings which either deny justice, or simply refuse to make rulings giving justice to certain groups of people. Justice that is not equal can never be true justice!

These rulings or lack thereof by the court continues to disproportionately affect Black, brown and poor people in general.

Perpetuating mass-incarceration as well as the disenfranchisement of people historically. Marginalized by systemic, and institutional racism, and therefore, is racist! Also, there are many men and women like myself who have been in prison for decades, and many wrongfully. But the Prisoner Review Board along with the governor continue to deny clemency and requests for mercy, and relief for individuals who overqualify by demonstrating exceptional behavior and records during their incarceration!

Operating in nearby total secrecy and on record stating, "The board along with the governor gives no reasoning for their decisions either way, not matter what."

No transparency at all! Meanwhile, claiming to represent the public, and their interests!

So, I declare to you all now is the time for us to become the agents of our own change and stop waiting for justice to come from unjust systems and people!

Peace,
Dennis M.

Lost Vision

You can take this as an essay, or encouraging words for you. I, Gerald Reed, known as Elijah, came running out here. Doing what I suppose to do. The fact of the matter, the system dropped me off, with no ID to prove who I am. I struggled to balance life, being D.R. with a record/or a background check. That's all employment on the application knew. Being retried for a double murder that I did not do! My mother "Mama Justice" lives in an elderly home, me bouncing from room to room, with no stable job. You end up doing what the system expects you to do. With the special prosecutor hunting your every move, everywhere you stay. Afraid of going back to prison, was what I faced day to day. Living on the streets, I became the next dope fiend prey. Messing with a woman that laced my weed with crack cocaine. I then became a product of the street, in which I hate. As the vision for why I was sent out here started to fade away. Incarcerated now in another state. I won't sing the blues, because I made so many mistakes. Now taped out, praying and thanking the lord, that he's using my voice to say. Give it to God that we see another day. In hopes that the lost vision has gone away, this is what they expected as Elijah's picture and face is shown on the TV everyday. But I can't erase going over mama house with the police guns at my head. Everyday.

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF ENDING MONEY BOND

This article was originally published on endmoneybond.org

Today, the Illinois Supreme Court issued the strongest possible decision finding the Pretrial Fairness Act constitutional and directing courts across the state to implement the law and end the use of money bond on September 18, 2023. This ruling overturns a decision by a Kankakee County judge that sided with State's Attorneys who challenged the law's implementation. The Pretrial Fairness Act was signed into law in February 2021.

The following statement has been issued by the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice in response to the court's decision:

"Today's ruling in favor of the Pretrial Fairness Act ensures that Illinois will end money bond, one of the most glaring injustices in our criminal legal system. We are excited to work with stakeholders across Illinois to reduce pretrial jailing and build safer communities.

Every year, Illinois incarcerates a quarter million people in its county jails. A majority of those people are jailed only because they cannot afford to pay a money bond. The implementation of the Pretrial Fairness Act will make Illinois the first state in the country to remove the price tag from the presumption of innocence. Ending money bond addresses both economic justice and racial justice issues in the pretrial system. In communities across Illinois, Black people have been disproportionately impacted by wealth-based jailing.

The Pretrial Fairness Act will improve community safety by keeping millions of dollars in our state's most marginalized communities every year. Studies have shown that even short periods of pretrial jailing make it more likely that someone will be arrested in the future. Giving people the opportunity to stay in their communities while awaiting trial will enable them to keep their jobs, housing and custody of their children, making us all safer. In 2020, Illinois collected more than \$120 million in bond money. Ending wealth-based jailing will ensure that families are no longer forced to forego paying rent or to pool funds together to free their loved ones from county jails and will keep desperately needed resources in our communities.

It is essential that county officials put politics aside and work together to properly implement the law. The court's majority swept away political arguments and allows everyone in the state to benefit from ending money bond. From the moment the Pretrial Fairness Act was passed as part of the SAFE-T Act in January 2021, conservatives have used fear-mongering and misinformation to try to derail its success. Since the Act was signed into law, voters stood by the elected officials who passed the bill, legislators worked with law enforcement to make modifications, and now the state's highest court has upheld it. Continued attempts to sabotage the Pretrial Fairness Act would not only dismiss the will of the people, but also jeopardize community safety.

As Ella Baker once said, "we who believe in freedom cannot rest." This is a historic juncture in the fight against mass incarceration, but it is far from the end of our work. It is critical that we don't stop at ending money bond and that realize our goal of dramatically reducing pretrial incarceration in our state. Ending money bond and reducing pretrial incarceration bring us closer to a future where our communities are safe, our people are supported, our system is fair, and wealth does not determine one's freedom. On September 18, 2023, Illinois will take our first step down a long road towards that more just future.

We Stand With Survivors In Their Continued Fight for Justice

In July, three torture survivors in our community announced that they will be suing the City of Chicago for the torture they experienced.

Marilyn Mulero was incarcerated and sentenced to death without a trial when she was 23 years old. She was tortured by former CPD detective Reynaldo Guevara, who is a known torturer. Marilyn's sentence was commuted in 2020, and we are so grateful that she has reunited with her family and community after 2 decades. Marilyn organizes with Innocent Demand Justice, which is a group of dedicated community members who fight and organize to free their loved ones.

Sean Tyler and Reginald Henderson are brothers who were tortured as teenagers by CPD detectives Kenneth Boudreau and James O'Brien. They spent 25 years in prison, and were finally exonerated in 2021. Sean Tyler is a member of CTJC's Speakers Bureau, where he visits high school and middle school classrooms to share his story.

We stand with and support Marilyn, Sean, and Reginald as they continue demanding justice and accountability from the City of Chicago and CPD for the wrongful torture and decades lost behind prison walls.



Top: Marilyn Mulero at a press conference at the Cook County Courthouse. Photo by the Chicago Tribune.



Bottom: Sean Tyler and Reginald Henderson speaking to reporters. Photo by the Chicago Sun-Times.

Do you need support for your next court date?

The CTJC offers support and accompaniment to survivors' court dates. We know that navigating the legal system can be daunting, retraumatizing, and often lonely. Do you have an upcoming court date that you would like support with? Please reach out to organizer Mark Clements with the following information:

Name:

Judge:

Case Status:

Turnout preference (minimal, as many as possible etc.):

Attorney name, phone and email:

Please mail court support requests to:

Mark Clements
Chicago Torture Justice Center
6337 S. Woodlawn Ave.
Chicago IL 60637

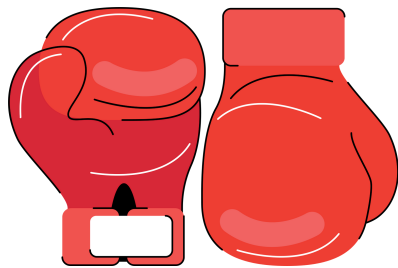
FREE Yoga & Boxing at CTJC

We offer FREE yoga and boxing sessions at the Center every Thursday!

These sessions are tailored for and offered to our survivor and system-impacted community. No experience necessary!

Yoga sessions are typically done from a seated position in a chair, with a focus on meditation and breathing. For boxing sessions, we provide boxing gloves.

We invite you, your family, friends, and loved ones to join us for these Thursday sessions.



Session Schedule (all sessions are 4:30-6pm)

8/3	TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA
8/10	BOXING AS HEALING
8/17	TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA
8/24	BOXING AS HEALING
8/31	TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA
9/7	BOXING AS HEALING
9/14	TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA
9/21	BOXING AS HEALING
9/28	TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA

An Afternoon of Family Fun with WBEZ's Prisoncast

WBEZ will be hosting a free event this September to serve children & families of people in prisons and jails in Illinois.

It will take place at the Gary Comer Youth Center (7200 S Ingleside Ave) in Chicago's Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood on **Saturday, Sept. 9 from 1PM to 6PM**. They are planning an afternoon of fun, food and resources for families, with WBEZ providing a DJ/emcee; free family portraits with professional photojournalists; a recording booth for people to make dedications to their loved ones inside, some of which will be played during the Prisoncast radio show; face painting; and other games and activities.

CTJC will be present at this event, and we hope to see your loved ones there!