



The Light Inside

ISSUE 1

A Newsletter from the Women & Justice Project

“The relationships and bonds women create with each other, and the love we have and nurture despite it all, create light. We were the light inside of prison, and women continue to be that light inside.”

– Miyhosi Benton, Policy expert and leader in NY’s 2015 anti-shackling campaign, and WJP Strategic Consultant

WJP works in deep partnership with women directly impacted by incarceration to transform the criminal legal system and create a just and loving world.

Our guiding principle is that women who are directly impacted by incarceration are experts and should be leaders in transforming the criminal legal system.

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WJP Highlights

Since WJP began in 2015, we’ve carried out a wide range of impactful projects. Each year, we partner with women who are leading efforts to end mass incarceration and provide thought partnership, support, and strategic advice. We helped successfully advocate for the 2015 Anti-Shackling Law which banned shackling of pregnant women in prisons and jails, and a 2019 law, the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA), that creates sentencing alternatives

and resentencing options for domestic violence survivors. (Learn more about the DVSJA on pages 2 and 4.) WJP has also partnered on powerful art projects including the mural pictured below, and another piece highlighting contributions from women who are incarcerated on the concept of transformation. With our partners, we’ve also worked to educate elected officials and the public about many critical issues related to conditions of confinement for women and the need to end mass incarceration.



WJP coordinated this piece with social justice muralist Katie Yamasaki, leaders who are formerly incarcerated, and mothers and children who are part of the Hour Children community. The mural’s two 8’ x 10’ panels show women on both sides of the walls creating community and claiming their power to transform themselves and the world.

WJP Highlights

Holiday Book Drive

Every year during the holiday season, the New York chapter of the National Association for Women Judges (NAWJ) Women in Prison Committee collects donations of books, stationery, and toiletries for women at Albion, Bedford, and Taconic, and toys and books for their children. WJP participated in the 2021 holiday drive, purchasing dozens of books, including children's books like *Visiting Day* by Jacqueline Woodson, and *Kofi's Mom* by Richard Dykes. This year, WJP will again contribute books for each prison library, as well as adult coloring books. We hope you have been able to enjoy the books from this drive.

Birth Support Working Group

In 2022, we convened a Birth Support Working Group to develop recommendations for a doula pilot program for people incarcerated in New York. A doula is a person who is trained to provide continuous emotional, informational, and physical support during pregnancy, childbirth, and after delivery. The working group includes women who are formerly incarcerated, WJP staff, OB-GYNs, and others working towards healthy, supported births for all people. Our recommendations will be grounded in the expertise of people who have given birth in prison, and we are committed to a broad vision of reproductive justice and women's health.

This effort grew out of a new law we supported which gives pregnant women and gender expansive people in New York's prisons and jails the right to have one support person of their choosing in the delivery room during labor and recovery. The law also allows birthing people to have a doula present, if they are available. This law changed Section 611 of New York's Correction Law. You can find the specific changes in paragraph C of subdivision 1 and 2, and section 4, of Section 611 or by looking at this citation in McKinney's Consolidated Laws of New York: 2021 N.Y. Sess. Law Ch. 621.

If you would like to learn more about this effort or share your thoughts, please write to WJP.

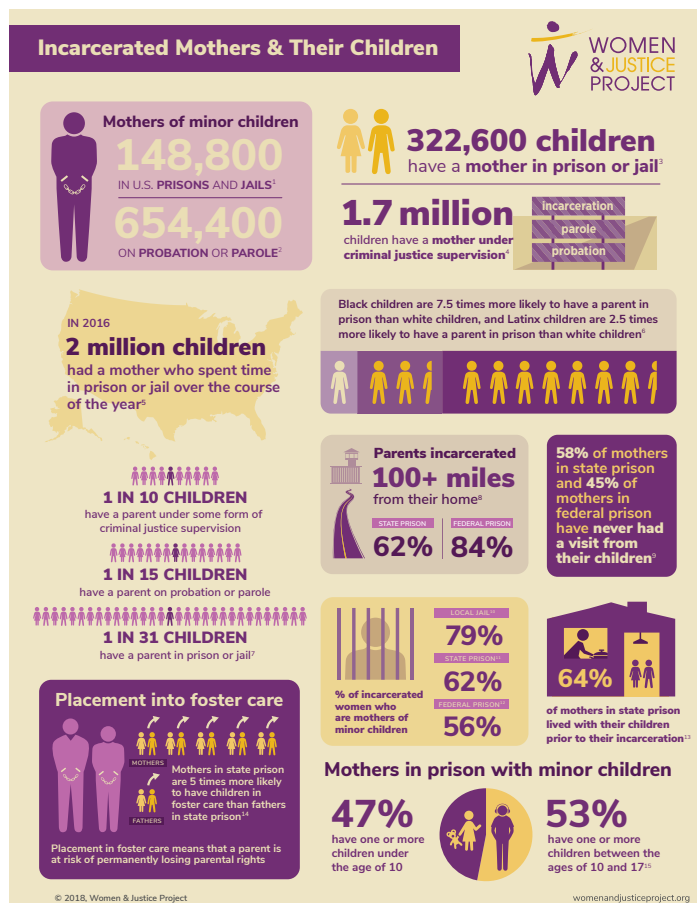
DVSJA Implementation

WJP continues to support the implementation of the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA), which

became law in New York in 2019. The DVSJA was enacted after a 10-year campaign organized by the Coalition for Women Prisoners and led by survivors on both sides of the walls. We played a key role in the DVSJA campaign and are excited to support the vital work being carried out to implement the law, especially the work of the Survivors Justice Project (SJP). Read the Partner Spotlight for more information about SJP's work.

WJP Infographics

To help educate the public about the devastating impact of mass incarceration on women and gender expansive people, WJP has produced several infographics. So far, our infographic collection includes: 1) *Pregnancy, Childbirth, & Shackling*, 2) *Incarcerated Mothers & Their Children* and 3) *The Incarceration of Trans, Nonbinary, Intersex & Gender Expansive People*. Please write us to request a copy. WJP and Survivors Justice Project are currently collaborating on an infographic about the DVSJA, the role of domestic violence in women's incarceration, and SJP's findings on DVSJA resentencing cases.



Kathy Boudin—In memoriam, 1943 – 2022



“I see myself as somebody that really believes in the power of people who have been thrown away. I believe in the wisdom and the enormous capacity... I am someone who believes in hope, that hope is something that carries us and will carry us through this next period.”

- Kathy Boudin

Kathy Boudin, our beloved friend, mentor, and long-time partner, passed away on May 1, 2022. We are devastated by Kathy’s passing and our hearts are with her family and her vast beloved community.

Kathy was truly extraordinary – a mother, sister, colleague, and leader who made a profound impact on countless lives and on the movement locally and globally. We were honored to partner with and learn from her over many years. Kathy’s integrity, loving energy, creativity, and dedication to collectivity, community, healing, and transformation were – and will continue to be – a north star for us.

Columbia University’s Center for Justice wrote a beautiful article on May 2 describing Kathy’s extraordinary life and work. Here are two excerpts from the article, [“Kathy Boudin: A Great Life and A Great Loss”](#):

“In prison, Kathy underwent a profound transformation, grappling with her crime and its consequences. She became a leading advocate for women in prison, fighting for the reunification of imprisoned women and their children, bringing college courses back to Bedford Hills after the termination of Pell grants, and building a community response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, saving countless lives. She was the first woman to earn a master’s degree while incarcerated in New York State Prison. Her outward-facing initiatives became a path to seeking restorative justice for many, and eventually led to parole and release from prison....”

Kathy’s work had a major impact on the struggle for the decent treatment of incarcerated people, the fight against



mass incarceration, and on criminal justice reform. Jarrell E. Daniels, a staff member at Columbia’s Center for Justice and a formerly incarcerated person says, “Kathy’s legacy, mission and lifetime commitment to advancing social justice, supporting disadvantaged communities and reforming the criminal legal system will never be forgotten, especially by those whose lives she touched... Her leadership with the Center for Justice empowered community members and returning citizens to stand as advocates for institutional and systematic change. Although she was a mother of one, she was a mother and fearless leader in the global movement for justice reform, social equality and re-enfranchisement. For so many of us, Kathy was a legend that defied odds and broke through the boundaries. She will never be forgotten.”

Please reach out to WJP if you would like a copy of the full Center for Justice article, or if you would like to learn more about Kathy’s life and legacy.

Partner Spotlight



Survivors Justice Project

Survivors Justice Project (SJP) is a collective of activists, lawyers, social workers, students, and researchers – many of whom are survivors of domestic violence and long-term incarceration – who are fighting for decarceration through implementation of New York’s Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA).

The DVSJA gives discretion to judges to sentence survivors of domestic violence convicted of crimes related to abuse to shorter sentences and sometimes community-based alternative to incarceration programs. It also allows survivors who are currently incarcerated and serving a sentence of 8 years or more to apply to the courts to be resentenced and come home sooner.

SJP was created when efforts by WJP to develop a project to implement the DVSJA merged with related work being done by attorneys and researchers. SJP is housed at Brooklyn Law School and works in partnership with the CUNY Graduate Center’s Public Science Project and Gender/Women Studies and an advisory group of powerful women leaders who are formerly incarcerated.

SJP works to identify survivors in prison who may be eligible for sentencing relief under the DVSJA and supports them through the resentencing process. SJP also develops resources for attorneys working with survivors, and educates judges, prosecutors, and community members about trauma, domestic violence, and the DVSJA. SJP collects data on DVSJA resentencing cases and supports efforts across the country to enact similar legislation.

SJP hopes to expand eligibility for the DVSJA – an important next step. In May, SJP released a DVSJA Resource Guide for people applying for either sentencing or resentencing under the law. Please connect with SJP if you would like a copy of the guide, have questions about eligibility for the DVSJA, and/or need help filing an application for resentencing:

Kate Mogulescu
Survivors Justice Project
c/o Brooklyn Law School
250 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201



Advocates gather in Albany to press for the DV Survivors Justice Act in 2011 as part of the Coalition for Women Prisoners’ 10-year DVSJA campaign.

In every issue, WJP will highlight the work of an ally organization or initiative and share information about the work that they do.

Ask the Experts



Leah Faria is the Community Organizer for Women's Community Justice Association (WCJA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of women and gender expansive New Yorkers affected by mass incarceration. WJP spoke with Leah about her experience looking for housing after she had returned to the community.

What was your experience like finding housing when you came home?

Oh, it was extremely difficult, because I spent a lot of time in prison and society had changed. Coming home and trying to navigate was extremely hard. I didn't really know where to go. I tried to connect with people who I did time with. But the world is constantly moving fast. I was basically suffering, living with my mother, and working to be able to provide for myself but not being able to get housing, because everywhere you went, they had obstacles and on every application was that question: "Do you have a criminal record?" And that right there automatically shuts you down. And it was for literally over a year I was looking and couldn't find anything.

It's really being present, and utilizing your resources, because you never know who you may come across, and how that person may be able to help you.

Was that the biggest roadblock you encountered?

The background checks and navigating where to look. You have so many different sites but coming out of prison after serving so much time, you're very vulnerable. You don't know who to trust. You don't know which direction to go. Your resources are limited financially, you're in this box where you only have a certain amount of money to do XYZ. Then you might have parole – I had parole – and you've got to make sure and check in with them. So, there were a lot of different obstacles, and a lack of resources. My family was there, they may have been supportive on one aspect, but they didn't know what my needs were coming home from prison.

I always say that the re-entry starts at the entry. [When you're inside] you're so detached from society. Everything in there is contained inside the walls. And you don't know what's going on outside. You're not prepared. So, it's really, really hard when you're trying to come out and navigate. It's like you go from 'A to Z', and 'B to Y' is just missing. If you're being released, you need to know where you could go to get some clothing. If you're coming out, you need a resume [and] resources... because your mind starts thinking, "I want to go home, get a job, so I can get my kids back."

What were the strategies that you used to overcome those challenges? Do you have any advice for people in the same situation?

I think that it is key to connect with like-minded people or people that also have lived experience. I guess I was under the assumption that people were going to welcome me with open arms, and it would be laid out there: "Oh, Leah is coming home, Leah needs XYZ, we're gonna make sure to help her with that." But it takes more work, because people are so busy doing what they need to do for them.

I do think that the nonprofit space with resources for people transitioning from prison is key. I came home, and I ended up working for a private company, where I was fortunate that the owner was justice impacted – his father was incarcerated. So, some of that understanding was there. And still, I wasn't fully understood because he was a privileged white man, and we didn't come from the same background, so that experience was difficult for me.

What I also did was utilize the relationships that I had with people [who went through reentry], and they in turn introduced me to other people. That's how I was able to access certain resources, like the building I live in right now.

A friend told me, "When you meet people and they become a part of your network, utilize your resources." I was reaching out to different nonprofits to pitch a safety training, and I ended up meeting the executive director of a program. One day we were by the Starbucks downtown and I told her I wanted to talk to her about my backstory. I told her I was looking for housing, and I've been struggling. I said, "I've been struggling, I can't seem to get a foot in, I have a job, and I want my own space. Coming from a 2x2 cell, you know, I need that sanity." And she started telling me her backstory, and then it was like "I'm gonna do everything in my power to see how I could support you." And that's how the relationship started building.

Resource Spotlight

The Osborne Association is currently accepting applications for a new supportive housing program for people in reentry who do not have stable housing. The Marcus Garvey Supportive Housing program is located at 461 Chester Street, Brooklyn, NY. It has 52 new studio and 1-bedroom apartments. The program is open to people of all genders and will prioritize people who:

- Are over age 50
- Have served lengthy sentences
- Have been incarcerated or under community supervision within the past 3 years
- Make less than the maximum income of \$41,800 for 1 person, \$47,750 for 2 people

The on-site services that Osborne will provide include benefits advocacy, health and wellness services, independent living skills training, substance use disorder treatment, workforce development, family and relationship coaching, and case management. The building also has a laundry room, a courtyard, and a community room with computer lab.

If you are interested in this program, you may wish to reach out as soon as possible:

Christina Green
Program Director, Marcus Garvey
The Osborne Association
461 Chester Street, Brooklyn, NY 11212
(646) 871-3766
CGreen@osborneny.org



In 2013, the Coalition for Women Prisoners published *A Place To Call My Own: Women and the Search for Housing After Incarceration*. This book includes first-hand accounts from 21 women in New York who have experienced the challenges and barriers facing people returning home. It also includes detailed lists of New York agencies, resources, and a glossary of commonly used terms related to housing. While the book was published almost a decade ago, it still serves as a useful guide for women navigating the search for a clean, safe, affordable place to live, and for anyone interested in advocating for better housing policies and practices. Please write to WJP for a free copy.

These organizations provide assistance with accessing transitional and permanent housing for people returning home from incarceration:

Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS)

Supportive housing and housing resources
Walk-ins not currently accepted, please contact via email
✉ Housing Resource Center
Center for Urban Community Services
198 East 121st Street
New York, NY 10035
☎ (212) 801-3300
📧 cucsinfo@cucs.org | housinginfo@cucs.org
www.cucs.org/housing

The Fortune Society

Transitional and permanent housing and reentry support
✉ Fortune Society - Housing Services
29-76 Northern Boulevard
Long Island City, NY 11101
☎ (212) 691-7554
📧 info@fortunesociety.org
www.fortunesociety.org

Hour Children

Transitional and permanent supportive housing for women and their children
✉ Rubernette Chavis, Director of Programs
Hour Children
36-11 12th Street
Long Island City, NY 11106
☎ (718) 433-4724
📧 inquiries@hourchildren.org
www.hourchildren.org

HousingPlus

Community-based transitional housing for people at RMSC
✉ HousingPlus - SHERO Program
8 West 126th Street
New York, NY 10027
☎ (646) 741-7421
📧 www.housingplusnyc.org

HousingWorks

Reentry and housing support for women and TGNC people
✉ Eileen Millsaugh
HousingWorks
301 W 37th Street – 5th Floor
New York, NY 10018
☎ (929) 472-2778
📧 E.Millsaugh@housingworks.org
www.housingworks.org

Osborne Association

Marcus Garvey supportive housing program
✉ Christina Green
Osborne Association
461 Chester Street, Brooklyn, NY 11212
☎ (646) 871-3766
📧 CGreen@osborneny.org
www.osborneny.org/our-services/housing

Osborne Association

Reentry hotline for people in NYC DOC jails
☎ NYC Reentry Hotline 1-833-672-3733
📧 jailreentry@osborneny.org

Providence House

Transitional, temporary, and permanent housing for women
✉ Providence House
703 Lexington Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11221
☎ (718) 455-0197
📧 info@providencehouse.org
www.providencehouse.org

Women's Prison Association

Community Linkage Unit (CLU) - Housing search assistance for women with any criminal legal system involvement
✉ Women's Prison Association
347 East 10th Street
New York, NY 10009
☎ (646) 292-7740
📧 [Miriam Goodman | mgoodman@wpaonline.org](mailto:Miriam.Goodman@wpaonline.org)
[Shanikka White | swhite@wpaonline.org](mailto:Shanikka.White@wpaonline.org)
www.wpaonline.org

Fair Chance for Housing Campaign

The Fair Chance for Housing campaign is made up of advocates, service providers, lawyers, and people who have experienced housing discrimination based on their conviction record. The campaign is working to pass the **Fair Chance for Housing Act**, which would protect people in NYC from discrimination in housing based on a conviction record by prohibiting most landlords from doing criminal background checks. The Act came close to being passed during the 2021 New York City Council session and was reintroduced in August 2022.



To learn more about the campaign, contact:

Alison Wilkey
c/o Community Voices Heard
115 E. 106th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10029
alison@fairchancehousing.org



Words with Wings

In this issue, we're sharing selected works from the **Write to Heal Initiative**, a collaboration between V-Day and the Center for Justice at Columbia University. "The Write to Heal Initiative's mission is to educate the public about the experience of women in the criminal justice system while also providing a pathway for women to heal themselves through the therapeutic power of writing and storytelling that lead to redemption and connection." We are reprinting these poems with the authors' permission.

Please contact WJP to get involved or share your own work!

Longing

© 2022 Tatyana Tomlinson

I Longed,

For years for you to feel what I've felt.

I Longed,

For you to in vision a life with me, accept me for "ME"

As I longed for the impossible to happen, I lost the ability to see life & any opportunity for what it could be.

I was stuck in a fantasy

BLINDED, you were all I could see

But now I'm aware, awake!

I see all that I need to see.

No more longing for validation. I know my worth, I accept me & validate myself.

Emotionally & mentally free, finally at peace.

I only long for the day I'm physically free. Now more than ever, I am ME unapologetically.

There's no way I won't succeed.





How Writing Helps Me Feel Free

© 2022 Justine Dorsey

Writing releases my soul from oppression;
I become light as a feather and soar over the gates of my confinement.
Writing releases my hidden talent
and reveals the creative mind that superimposes the criminal.
My words are my voice projecting on a universal bullhorn.
Understand my pain, my struggle, my determination, and drive.
Writing breaks the cuffs of trauma, stigma, regret, and transgression.
When I unload these lines, I'm free, impartial and unapologetic.
Writing takes my mind off this 15-year sentence.

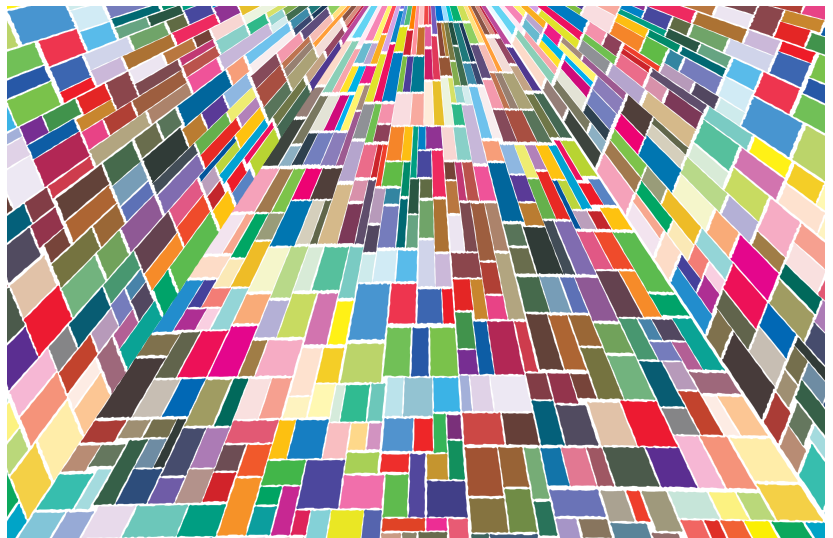
LOSS

© 2022 Tye Gillespie

Loss is dark days in a cell surrounded by
four walls coated in eons of
different colored paint -
layer after layer, like an onion.
Walls that share stories of mothers,
sisters and aunts –
Some innocent
some guilty
Some abused
Some abusive
Some with family
Some without.
Some cried at night to be
Free of their pain
While others denied it.

Loss is the longing to bring back an atom
of a youth spent behind bars,
only to awaken an adult encaged.
A youth that brings joints freedom of movement,
radiant, carefree faces, smiles of America
insecurities and experiences on which to build
confidence and wisdom.

That life, lost at the hands of youthful ignorance
Ignorance all youngsters face to some degree
Caged like a bird, yet a mind that flies free.
This mind wonders at the experience of loss
To be young wild and free –
Wings clipped, but still soaring
Loss
But not losing.



Find Your Words Search

X Z F A L S Y L O V E Q K X Y H J Y N M L Z Y J Y R A C H B
L W K I Q B E T T T T Z M X U A R D O Z J L B Q C C U K I E
I V Y L B R B K C X R R X I L T W F N C E L F X B D Y H J J
O I N E L R N N O K A G X Q Y F B Y J Q R W F F A K I T G J
O A M A I O E N N Y N U Z V O A C P F A M I L Y S G V S T D
L E Z D A H Z N N K S I A H C O M M U N I T Y U G U J T W T
D L M E L S C P E G F V S Q G D P V X J U S T I C E P E Y Z
X X X R O S Y X C M O F P N V N W N X I Q I V H W F I P V O
A C K S O C P J T N R D C T N L X U O M P F F A J D G T N O
A W C H M N H Z I F M P M N W O M E N E J P M I P Z Y L G Z
L H L I F G I U O O A E B K W T M A A D V O C A C Y L O B G
J K G P Z E K G N D T E R S E S U P P O R T O X T U L F F N
D U V V E F R M W Y I O V G V G B X G E U V J P N T X Z R B
P D I G N I T Y T D O S C U O N X R Q T B U B O K R B A I N
G Y N H O W C R U G N D J X I Q C J N A J A A G V E I W L M

Word list:
Transformation
Love
Justice
Connection
Dignity
Leadership
Advocacy
Support
Women
Community
Family

Fill this space with words that come to mind to describe yourself. Create a poem or picture using these words.



Brilliant Kids!

Did you know that October was #SeeUsSupportUs Month? Launched in 2015 by the Osborne Association's New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents (NYCIP), SUSU started as a month-long effort to raise awareness about and increase support for children of incarcerated parents. SUSU is now a year-round effort with national partners, culminating in a month of action in October. Children and youth of incarcerated parents, their caregivers, educators

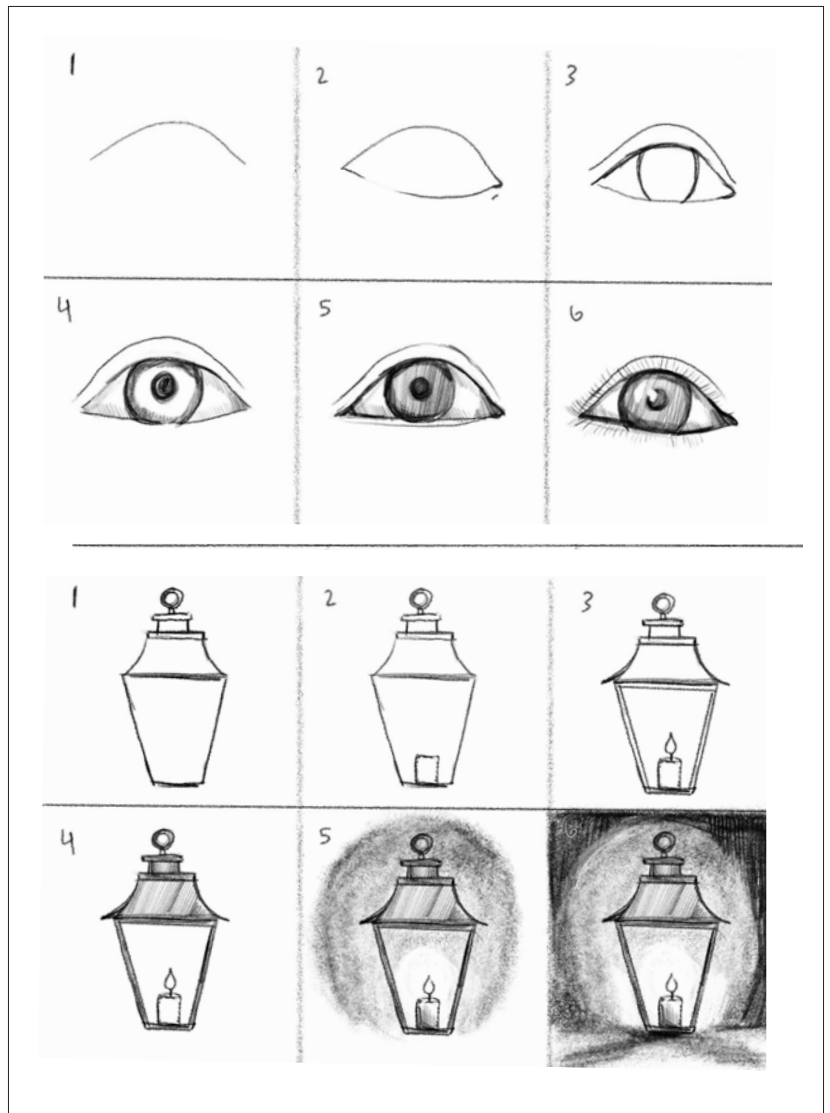
and healthcare providers can find a huge collection of resources and tools by visiting www.susu-osborne.org/ resources. Contact Osborne to learn more:

The Osborne Association
Allison Hollihan
175 Remsen Street, 8th floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-637-6560

Creative Space

WJP is pleased to offer you the activity on the inserted page created by our close collaborator, renowned social justice artist, muralist and children's book author, Katie Yamasaki.

Katie has painted over 80 murals with diverse communities around the world that explore local issues of identity and social justice. Her children's book work also focuses on social justice and stories from underrepresented communities. Most recently, she wrote *Dad Bakes*, which tells the story of a father and daughter reconnecting after the father's incarceration. Some of her other books, especially *When the Cousins Came* and *Fish for Jimmy*, recount personal family stories about the internment camps of WWII and growing up in a multi-racial family.



The enclosed drawing activity is for you! However, if you would like to share your work with us (which we would love) please mail it to: Women & Justice Project, P.O. Box 720807, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Please also let us know if we can publish it in a future issue.



Line drawing by Katie Yamasaki



The Light Inside

A Newsletter from the Women & Justice Project
P.O. Box 720807, Jackson Heights, NY 11372



Share your light.

How are you doing? What do you think about our work? What are your ideas for creating a more just and loving world? Please write to us.

We'd love to hear from you!

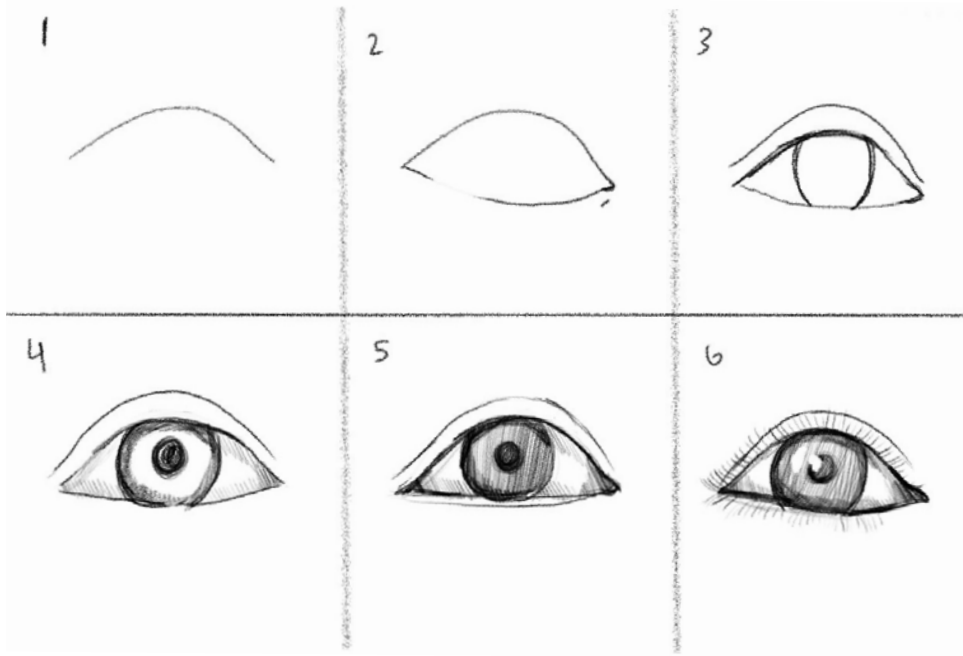
If you know someone who would like to receive our newsletters, they can write to us too.

Women & Justice Project, P.O. Box 720807, Jackson Heights, NY 11372 wjp@wjpnj.org

Creative Space

WJP is pleased to offer you this drawing exercise created by our close collaborator, the renowned social justice artist, muralist and children's book author, Katie Yamasaki.

A Note from Katie Yamasaki: Using a pencil/eraser, follow the steps to create your own version of the drawings below. The point is not to copy exactly (unless you want to!), but to make your own version of each picture. Take a deep breath and try to relax your body before beginning. Notice how everything we draw is just lines and shapes put together in different ways. Don't worry about making mistakes, it's part of learning to draw something new. Enjoy!



Creative Space

