

Monday, December 21, 2020

A Unified Statement in Support of George Gascón's Justice Reforms

The undersigned organizations, coalitions, unions, and movement partners representing civil rights attorneys, public defenders, social justice organizers, and directly impacted communities are committed to reversing the tide of mass incarceration and advancing a new approach to public safety in Los Angeles. On November 3, 2020, Los Angeles voters elected George Gascón as the new District Attorney (DA) by a clear majority and, in doing so, delivered a powerful mandate to shift from the decades long tough on crime approach that has made Los Angeles the capital of human caging in this state and home to the largest jail system in this country, while failing to address any of the underlying issues that most significantly impact public safety.

Voters have recognized that prosecutorial discretion is a tremendous source of power in our criminal legal system that can be dangerously wielded to criminalize poverty, flood prisons and jails, deepen systemic racial disparities, exempt police killings from accountability, justify bloated policing budgets, and prosecute youth like “super predators.” It is the potential for this power to be used to help decriminalize public health issues, make diversion the default, restrain the excesses and violence of law enforcement, end mass incarceration, and ultimately produce safer and healthier communities, that has ushered in a wave of progressive prosecutors around the country. On his first day in office, Mr. Gascón enacted the policies that were at the center of his widely publicized campaign: The elimination of sentencing enhancements, youth no longer sent to adult criminal court, cash bail drastically scaled back, non-prosecution of low-level misdemeanors, expanded opportunities for parole and resentencing, and the reopening of some cases of police killings.

These sweeping reforms will enhance public safety and are well-aligned with a burgeoning national consciousness that we can no longer police and cage away the many social ills produced by inequality, racism, and poverty: the root causes of crime. We commend DA Gascón for his deep and ongoing collaboration with progressive thinkers, activists, leaders, and organizations, as well as crime survivors and community members who are seeking meaningful societal transformation as opposed to solely punitive measures. The open resistance and brazen hostility displayed by some judges, commissioners, and even certain factions of the DA's staff who oppose Mr. Gascón's new directives, only serves to underscore the transformational impact of these directives. The pushback to a progressive approach to crime and safety comes as no surprise, especially as we see the same decades old dog whistle of “Law and Order” being used to undermine a less punitive and more productive approach to public safety. But, now more than ever, we must protect the reimaged vision for public safety in Los Angeles. **Mr. Gascón's election represents the will of the people, and WE THE UNDERSIGNED strongly support his directives which are a critical first step to unseat Los Angeles as the capital of mass incarceration in California.**

Sincerely,

American Indian Movement SoCal  
ACLU of Northern California  
ACLU of Southern California  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Southern California  
Black Jewish Justice Alliance  
Black Lives Matter – Los Angeles  
Black Lives Matter – Long Beach  
California Coalition for Women Prisoners  
California Conference for Equality and Justice  
Californians for Safety and Justice  
California Public Defender’s Association  
Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice  
Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, Loyola Law School  
Centro CSO  
Children’s Defense Fund–California  
Coalition for Engaged Education  
Color of Change  
Court Watch Los Angeles  
Creating JusticeLA  
Dignity and Power Now  
District Attorney Accountability Coalition  
Essie Justice Group  
Frontline Wellness Network  
Gender Justice LA  
Ground Game LA  
Immigrant Defenders Law Center  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace  
Jewish Voice for Peace – L.A.  
JusticeLA  
LA County Public Defenders Union  
La Defensa  
LA Voice  
M.A.R.I.A (Mothers Against Racism in America)  
Me Too Survivors' March International  
National Lawyers Guild – Los Angeles  
New Earth  
Occupy ICE LA

Reform LA Jails  
Re: Store Justice  
SEIU Local 2015  
Smart Justice California  
Stonewall Democratic Club  
The Arts for Healing and Justice Network  
The Church Without Walls – Skid Row  
The Future Left  
The Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership  
UCLA Cops off Campus Coalition  
UCLA Labor Center  
Urban Peace Institute  
White People 4 Black Lives