

Empowering Families



The Vital Role of Prison Families Alliance (PFA)

By Julia Lazareck

In the still of the night, when a phone call brings the unsettling news of a loved one's arrest, a labyrinth of uncertainty and distress unfolds. Where does one turn? What steps should be taken? The journey through court processes and visiting a loved one in jail or prison is a tumultuous road, often traveled alone and steeped in judgment and stigma.

The staggering statistics surrounding incarceration in the United States are stark reminders of the urgency of PFA's mission. The impact reverberates widely, with approximately 2 million individuals in state and federal prisons and an additional 5 million in various stages of the justice system. The U.S., with only 5% of the world's population, harbors over 20% of the incarcerated populace—a harrowing reality demanding attention and action.



Prison Families Alliance (PFA) stands as a beacon of support, understanding, and guidance within the shadow of the carceral system. For families thrust into this unfamiliar territory, PFA offers more than just a platform; it

extends a lifeline. A source of compassion and solidarity for those enduring the often silent struggles outside prison walls. Co-founders Julia Lazareck and Barbara Allan, having personally navigated the complexities of having a loved one incarcerated, draw from their firsthand experience to drive their commitment to supporting others in similar situations.

Yet, incarceration can happen to anyone. This reality fuels PFA's advocacy, highlighting the hidden sentences served by families outside prison walls. They carry the weight of separation, navigating a complex world while their loved ones serve time behind bars.

The call to action is clear: raising awareness, educating communities, and fostering empathy. By supporting PFA through volunteering or donations at <https://PrisonFamiliesAlliance.org> or reaching out via email at comment@PrisonFamiliesAlliance.org, individuals can contribute to building a more compassionate world.

PFA hosts PFA CARES, a weekly Thursday gathering at the Foundation For Recovery building in Las Vegas, NV. This inclusive program welcomes adults and youth impacted by a family member's incarceration, providing Community, Advocacy, Resources, Education, and Support. It creates a non-judgmental and compassionate environment—a safe space fostering camaraderie, knowledge sharing, and support, vital in navigating the challenges unique to prison families.

For valuable perspectives on navigating the challenges of having a loved one in the carceral system, explore books authored by PFA co-founders. Barbara Allan's "Doing Our Time on the Outside" and Julia Lazareck's "Prison: The Hidden Sentence" are available on Amazon.

Moreover, PFA extends its reach beyond physical meetings, hosting several online support sessions weekly facilitated by individuals with firsthand experience of navigating the incarceration of a loved one. These virtual gatherings serve as digital beacons of hope, connecting individuals, fostering understanding, and providing a sense of community. Details about PFA events and support meetings can be found at <https://PrisonFamiliesAlliance.org/calendar>.

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