



Taina Angeli Vargas co-founded Initiate Justice in September 2016 with the intention of activating the political power of people directly impacted by mass incarceration. Prior to creating Initiate Justice, she worked in the organizing and policy advocacy field as the Statewide Advocacy Coordinator with Essie Justice Group, State Campaigner with the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, and as a Field Representative for the California State Assembly. She is directly impacted by mass incarceration, with her husband having served seven years in CA state prison.

Initiate Justice's mission is to end mass incarceration by activating the political power of the people it directly impacts. They organize their members, inside and outside of prisons, to advocate for their freedom and change criminal justice policy in California. Their report, ["Democracy Needs Everyone: The Urgency of Ending Felony Disenfranchisement in California"](#) is a first-of-its-kind report unveiling our groundbreaking research on the importance of restoring the right to vote to people in prison and on parole. They surveyed more than 1,000 incarcerated people and people on parole in California with the goal of uncovering how our political system could improve by ending felony disenfranchisement. Their key findings were:

- **People who are incarcerated and on parole believe that restoring the right to vote would improve public safety.** A majority of respondents indicated that voting would make them feel connected to their community and help prevent them from returning to prison. Many had policy proposals on how to prevent incarceration in the first place.
- **People who are incarcerated and on parole want to vote.** They care about issues that affect everyone, not just themselves, and have ideas about how to make our country a better place.
- **People who are incarcerated and on parole contribute to their community in a variety of ways.** They are trying to have a positive impact despite their circumstances, and we would all benefit by hearing their voices, as they grapple with social issues, political concerns, and ideas for a better future.