



2020 Impact Statement

Since 2012, NPR member station KALW has taught people in prison how to record and edit audio stories.



The participants record honest conversations about the struggles and triumphs of people behind prison walls. Then, they edit those interviews themselves, using industry-standard equipment and software. The finished product goes out on KALW's airwaves and [website](#), prison TV systems, and the award-winning podcast [Uncuffed](#). KALW works with people in San Quentin and

Solano State Prisons, and is funded by the California Arts Council's [Arts In Corrections](#) program.

Our goal is to transform the criminal justice system by elevating the voices of incarcerated people.

“We’ve got the mic, and we’re telling our own stories.”

– *Uncuffed* Producers

2020 in review

2020 was an extremely difficult year for people in prisons. Visits from loved ones, teachers, volunteers, have been canceled since March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Incarcerated people endured long periods of extended lockdown.

As of December 18, 32,232 residents and 9,608 staff in California state prisons have tested positive for Covid-19. 104 residents have died from the virus.

Uncuffed producers haven't been able to use the media centers where we work, and KALW teachers and editors haven't been able to visit. We responded by providing remote programming, and by documenting the outbreaks in prisons from the perspective of people on the outside.



Uncuffed producers Nathan McKinney, Edmond Richardson, Thanh Tran, and Chanthon Bun at San Quentin

Coronavirus Roundtable

In March, the *Uncuffed* producers at Solano recorded a special episode about Covid-19, which had begun to spread in California. Their memories of previous disease outbreaks shed light on what a new lockdown would mean. The conversation was featured in *Reveal* and other national media. This was the last story we were able to record inside before the coronavirus lockdown.



Uncuffed producers Joe Kirk, Brian Thames, Spoon Jackson, Bryan Mazza, and Damon Cooke at Solano State Prison

Letters From The Outside

In July, we released a special episode featuring people with loved ones in prison. They recorded heartfelt letters addressed to their sons, fathers, partners, and friends whom they hadn't been able to visit in months as the pandemic threatened their lives. Highlights appeared in the podcasts *Snap Judgment* and *The California Report*.



Chanthon Bun, the day after his release from San Quentin.

Unconfined: Chanthon Bun and Joe Kirk

Two *Uncuffed* producers were released from prison in July! Unfortunately, both contracted the coronavirus while inside. They shared their experiences on the podcast, describing the horrors of the pandemic, and the struggles they face returning to a closed-down world.

Correspondence Courses

We provided correspondence courses to old and new participants at San Quentin and Solano. The courses include listening assignments to KALW stories and other radio and podcast programs. We provide exclusive interviews with the producers of KALW stories, asking them about their process.

New listeners

The *Uncuffed* podcast was downloaded 45,139 times by 26,874 listeners in the past year, growing our audience with each episode.

Broadcasts Across CDCR

We partnered with an institutional TV program to broadcast captioned Uncuffed stories throughout the California state prison system.

Community Advisory Board

We formed a Community Advisory Board of formerly incarcerated artists, writers, journalists, and advocates to guide our decision making.

Local That Works

We were named finalists for the national “Local That Works” Award, which honors innovative media projects, rising to the top five from out of over 130 entries. [Get to know Uncuffed producers in the video we made for the contest.](#)

Looking ahead to 2021

We will...

- Expand our correspondence courses and record new audio from our participants.
- Record new episodes of “Letters from the Outside”
- Become a founding member of Prison Radio International, the first organization of radio and podcast makers in prisons.
- Explore opportunities to expand the training program to other prisons.
- Restart our program inside as soon as we can!



Support our work

Help us take Uncuffed to the next level. We're raising funds to reach more listeners and to expand our training program to more prisons. With your support, more incarcerated people can create powerful radio stories that reach far beyond the prison walls.

If you're inspired and if you're able, donate here:

bit.ly/DonateUncuffed

“To call home and talk to my family and tell them, ‘Listen to this story,’ and then to hear them say, “We heard your voice, we’re so proud of you,” that’s always been the greatest reward for me.”

– Greg Eskridge, participant at San Quentin State Prison