

# The Western Prison Project

**T**he Western Prison Project (WPP) was formed in 1999 as a project of the Western States Center to help coordinate a regional response to the unprecedented build-up of the prison system and to work toward progressive reforms in the criminal justice system.

The Western Prison Project initiated a region-wide mapping project to gather baseline data on the prison industry, to identify current prison activism, and to assess the needs of prison activists in our region. On April 8th, 2000 the WPP convened the Grassroots Action for Criminal Justice Reform Conference, which brought together twenty-six grassroots organizations from six states to identify priorities and strategies for organizing on criminal justice issues in our region. Participants in the conference identified sentencing reform and increased services for prisoners and ex-offenders as top priorities, along with shifting the public dialogue away from punishment to community-based alternatives to sentencing. As a result of that conference, work is underway to launch a regional grassroots coalition for prison and criminal justice reform.



T. Coyote Days

The Western Prison Project, as a regional resource for activism, will assist local grassroots efforts to improve conditions for prisoners and confront injustice within the larger criminal justice system. Forming the regional coalition is a major focus of the WPP's work this summer, along with research, technical assistance to grassroots groups, and outreach to prisoners and families.



T. Coyote Days

Small group sessions at Western Prison Project Conference



*For information about services available to prison activists, or to request a copy of the project's quarterly newsletter, Justice Matters, contact:*

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