

ROMARILYN RALSTON

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Black Feminist Abolitionist Scholar (she/her)

EDUCATION

- 2027 (exp.)** **PhD Student, Executive Management** – Claremont Graduate University, The Drucker School of Management, Claremont, CA
- 2016** **Master of Liberal Arts** – Washington University in St. Louis
Thesis: "The Darkside: The Debilitating Consequences of Colorism for Dark Girls"
- 2014** **Bachelor of Arts, with Honors, Gender and Feminist Studies** – Pitzer College
Honors Thesis: "Good Start for African American Children: The Importance of Early Childhood Education"

FELLOWSHIPS

- 2021** **Fellow**, Galaxy Gives, New York, NY
- 2017** **Policy Fellow**, Women's Policy Institute, Women's Foundation of California, Sacramento, CA
Competitive statewide fellowship
- 2017** **Leading with Conviction Fellow**, Just Leadership USA, New York, NY
- 2014** **Coro Fellowship in Public Affairs**, Focus St. Louis, St. Louis, MO
Competitive national fellowship in public affairs, local, state, and national policy
- 2014** **Napier Initiative Peace and Justice Fellow**, Pilgrim Place, Claremont, CA

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2025** **Certificate of Commendation**, City of Los Angeles – recognized for outstanding community service, reducing recidivism, and empowering women. Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez, District 1, May 6, 2025
- 2025** **Activist in Residence**, UCLA Center for the Study of Women, Spring 2025
- 2024** **Woman of the Year Award**, Senator Josh Newman, 29th District, Orange County, CA, March 30, 2024
- 2023** **Women of Distinction Award**, Assemblymember Sharon Quirk-Silva, California 67th District, March 26, 2023
- 2021–23** **Galaxy Gives Fellow** – Awarded \$150,000 grant to write memoir and develop proposal for the Institute for Transformative Justice and Freedom
- 2020** **Social Justice Champion Award**, Women of Distinction – awarded by California State Senator Ling Ling Chang
- 2020** **Distinguished Alumni Award**, Pitzer College
- 2020** **Policy Brief Award**, UCLA Center for the Study of Women – recognizing outstanding applied feminist scholarship by graduate students and system-impacted community members
- 2019** **Certificate of Achievement, Policy & Advocacy Training**, Congressional Black Caucus Institute, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018** **California State Senate Certificate of Recognition**, Senator Connie Leyva – in recognition of public education and advocacy on Senate Bill 960
- 2018** **Civil Rights Advocacy Award**, National Coalition of 100 Black Women Inc., Orange County Chapter
- 2018** **California State Assembly Certificate of Recognition**, Assemblymember Mark Stone – in recognition of public education and advocacy on Assembly Bill 2533
- 2018** **California State Senate Certificate of Recognition**, Senator Holly Mitchell – in recognition of completion of the Women's Policy Institute Fellowship
- 2018** **California State Senate Certificate of Recognition**, Senator Josh Newman – in recognition of contributions developing Project Rebound at CSU Fullerton
- 2017** **Pete & Carol Beckendam Legacy Award**, Crossroads, Inc., Claremont, CA

2015	Missouri House of Representatives Resolution , awarded by Rep. Sharon Pace, District 74
2014	Academic Excellence Award , Office of Black Student Affairs, Claremont University Consortium
2014	John Payton Leadership Award (Nominee) , Office of Black Student Affairs, Claremont University Consortium
2014	PNME Ecumenical Mission Scholarship Grant Recipient – for undergraduate honors thesis: "Good Start"
2012–14	Bernard Osher Educational Scholarship Award , Pitzer College

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

2026–	Executive Director, UCLA Prison Education Program and Center for Justice, Los Angeles, CA The Executive Director (ED) leads the Center for Justice (CFJ), which also houses the UCLA Prison Education Program—an interdepartmental UCLA center based in greater Los Angeles serving incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and justice-system-impacted students and community partners. The ED reports to the CFJ Faculty Advisory Board and works alongside the Faculty Director. Responsibilities include overseeing affiliated initiatives such as the Bachelor's Degree in Prison (BDP), the Returning Scholars Program (RSP), the Digital Literacy Program (DLP), and the Community Engagement & Development (CE&D) project. Major duties include: leading research and evaluation efforts, developing strategic plans for the Center, implementing a communications strategy, and overseeing the planning, management, and execution of courses and programs for incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and justice-system-impacted students—both in carceral facilities and UCLA spaces. Additional responsibilities include managing budgets, pursuing fundraising opportunities, overseeing teams responsible for academic, advocacy, and arts-based programs, and engaging stakeholders and community partners. Supervisory responsibilities include PEP Interns, Internship Coordinators, Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs), Teaching Assistants (TAs), Beyond the Bars LA Fellows, and coordinators of the Connecting Art & Law (C.A.L.L.) Festival.
2025–26	Visiting Adjunct Professor, Pitzer College – Organizational Studies Courses: "The Carceral State in Comparative Perspective" (Spring 2025); "Foundations of Management" (Summer 2025); "Foundations of Management II" (Winter 2025–26)
2024–26	Senior Director, Justice Education Center for the Claremont Colleges, Claremont, CA The Senior Director holds an expanded range of responsibilities, including support for the justice education major, the inside-outside education program, and faculty and student development and programming. This full-time, three-year, grant-funded position focuses on enhancing and expanding The Claremont Colleges' (TCC) curricular and co-curricular justice education projects under the Mellon Higher Education Grant. The Director reports to the Dean of Faculty and collaborates with the Justice Education Faculty Director, the Justice Education Steering Committee, the Office of Consortia Academic Collaboration, and the respective Community Engagement Centers of TCC.
2023	Advisory Committee Member, Haymarket Books – "Writing Freedoms" Fellowship The Writing Freedom Fellowship awards emerging and established poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers impacted by carceral systems for their notable and necessary work.
2022–	Coordinating Committee Member, California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), Oakland, CA Responsibilities include executive management, leadership, vision, and strategic planning. Additional duties include media support, fundraising, policy and advocacy, and serving as Founder of Fire on the Outside.
2022–24	Executive Director, Project Rebound, California State University, Fullerton Primary responsibility for developing, implementing, and coordinating CSUF Project Rebound's growing portfolio of inter-divisional programs, services, and initiatives—including student support, enrichment, and academic programs; outreach and recruitment; admissions; basic needs provisions; off-campus housing; mentorship and tutoring; community garden and food justice initiatives; and juvenile justice engagement and bridge programming.
2021–24	Chair, Policy and Advocacy Committee, California State University Project Rebound Consortium Coordinates and leads student-centered advocacy projects and trainings for the statewide Project Rebound Consortium.

- 2018–** **Program Director**, Project Rebound, California State University, Fullerton
- Acts as a liaison and maintains strong relationships and partnerships with faculty, staff, and administrators in various departments on campus (e.g., Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Academic and Student Affairs), local community colleges, and key stakeholders in the external community (e.g., reentry organizations, probation, parole, and corrections). Conducts workshops for prospective students in correctional facilities and community organizations and assists students in navigating the university admissions and success process.
- 2018–21** **Co-Chair, Policy and Advocacy Committee**, California State University Project Rebound Consortium
- Developed advocacy opportunities for students to engage in the political process through civic engagement and leadership. Designed and coordinated a 14-week curriculum for the Project Rebound Capacity Building Workshops: Civic Engagement and Community Building. The workshop series provided a structured path for community members to learn about the policymaking process and deepen civic engagement beyond voting, addressing how those impacted by mass incarceration can effect meaningful legislative change.
- 2018–** **Organizer and Policy Advocate**, California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP)
- Monitors and challenges abusive conditions inside California women's prisons; advocates for the release of incarcerated women and trans individuals; supports community reentry. Served as lead policy campaign advocate and provided civic engagement and advocacy training for CCWP membership and the DRP LWOP Coalition.
- 2016–18** **Program Coordinator**, Project Rebound, California State University, Fullerton
- Supported the CSU Project Rebound Consortium's mission to advance higher education and the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals. Contributed to programs designed to eliminate equity gaps and cultivate cultures of care and belonging for formerly incarcerated, first-generation, and historically underserved students.
- 2015–16** **Program Assistant**, Center for Women in Transition Reentry
- Assisted with developing and implementing gender-responsive, restorative justice, and trauma-informed programs. Provided direct client services including life skills instruction, house management, student internship supervision, and social media administration. Additional duties: research and community engagement liaison.
- 2012–14** **Research Assistant**, Claudia Rankine, Henry G. Lee Professor, English Department, Pomona College
- 2013** **Intern**, Community Engagement Center, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Policy advisor for the following legislative bills enacted into California law:

- SB 416 – Incarcerated Student's Bill of Rights (Sen. Ben Hueso). Amends the Penal Code to protect incarcerated students' access to face-to-face instruction from regionally accredited, non-profit higher education providers, and amends Title 15 to recognize full-time college enrollment as a full-time assignment.
- AB 2542 – The Racial Justice Act (2020, Ash Kalra, D-San Jose). Prohibits racial discrimination and explicit or implicit bias in sentencing, jury composition, law enforcement conduct, and prosecutorial behavior.
- SB 118 – Budget Trailer Bill (2020) – Ban the Box in Higher Education. Prohibits inquiries related to criminal history on initial post-secondary application forms.
- SB 136 – RISE Act (2019, Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco). Narrows application of the one-year sentence enhancement, reducing disproportionate impacts on Black and Brown communities.
- AB 45 (2019) – Eliminating Copays in Prisons and Jails (Mark Stone, D-Monterey Bay). Ends copay requirements for incarcerated individuals seeking medical care and expands access to durable medical equipment.
- AB 2533 (2018) – Inmates: Indigence (Assemblymember Mark Stone, D-Scotts Valley). Requires that state prison inmates maintaining account balances of \$25 or less for 30 consecutive days be deemed indigent and provided with personal hygiene supplies and court-access resources.

- SB 960 (2018) – Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation: Suicide Prevention (Sen. Connie Leyva, D-Chino). Requires annual legislative reports on suicide risk evaluations, treatment plan completion, and initiatives to reduce suicide risk factors.
- SB 1393 (2018) – Prior Serious Felony: Court Discretion (Sen. Holly Mitchell & Ricardo Lara, D-Los Angeles). Removes restrictions prohibiting judges from striking prior serious felony convictions in connection with five-year sentence enhancements.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

64. "Telling Our Stories; Archiving Our Fight: Oral History and Movements Against Mass Incarceration," Beyond the Bars Conference, Columbia University, New York, NY
63. Moderator, Discussion with Angela Y. Davis and Reverend Deborah Lee, California Coalition for Women Prisoners 30th Anniversary Event, October 11, 2025, Oakland, CA
62. Moderator, Hammer Forum: "Fighting Two Battles: Inside California's Inmate Firefighting Program," May 27, 2025
61. Speaker/Author, UCLA Center for the Study of Women, Memoir Reading, May 6, 2025
60. Keynote Speaker, 3rd Annual CSU San Bernardino Reentry and Higher Education Conference, April 16, 2025
59. Keynote Speaker, Claremont University Club, March 3, 2025
58. Speaker, University of Mississippi – Study & Struggle | All Our Trials | Free the Mississippi Five, February 2, 2025
57. Speaker, Clean Break Theatre Company for Women, Memoir Reading, London, UK, December 3, 2024
56. Keynote Speaker, Pennsylvania Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (PACHEP) – "Overcoming Obstacles, Transforming Lives through Higher Education," November 17, 2024
55. Speaker, University College Cork, Ireland – "Education is Liberation," October 9, 2024
54. Keynote Speaker, CSU Northridge Project Rebound Graduation 2024, May 2, 2024
53. Panelist, University of California, Riverside – "Queer and Trans Abolitionist Education and Research In/About Prisons: A Roundtable," February 16–18, 2024
52. Keynote Speaker, 3rd Annual Conference on Community Policing: Building Community to Advance Public Safety, Los Angeles County Civilian Oversight Committee, October 27, 2023
51. Keynote Speaker, FreeHer Conference, National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, Puerto Rico, October 14, 2023
50. Instructor, Barnard College Feminist Freedom Summer School, May 2023
49. Keynote Speaker, Santa Fe College Social Justice Symposium – "Unlocking Purpose and Potential," April 12–14, 2023
48. Public Memoir Reading, Pitzer College, PZ 36.1: Women, Crime, and Punishment, June 27, 2022
47. Lecturer, Pitzer College Inside Out Class at California Rehabilitation Center – Topic: Prison Abolition, June 7, 2022
46. Public Memoir Reading, Columbia University, Abolition Feminism (WMSTW4555), April 26, 2022
45. Panelist, Harvard Keeley Institute of Ethics – "Public Safety & Policing in America," April 21, 2022
44. Panelist, The Petey Greene Program – "Educational Access for Incarcerated Women: Challenges and Opportunities," April 7, 2022
43. Beyond the Bars Conference – "Intersectional Approaches to Abolition," University of California, Los Angeles, January 15, 2022
42. Host, California Coalition for Women Prisoners – 25th Anniversary of The Fire Inside, November 12, 2021
41. Speaker, Oxford University's Rothermere American Institute – "Historical Perspectives on Gendered State Violence in the United States," October 27, 2021
40. Moderator, Cornell Law School – The Sentencing Project and The National Black Women's Justice Institute, 2nd Alice Convening, September 24, 2021
39. Panelist, Ed Trust – Second Racial Equity Professional Institute Flash Talk: "Accountability and Access for Incarcerated Students," September 22, 2021
38. Co-Moderator, Six-Foot Apart Productions – "The Meaning of Life: Stories of Incarceration, Reconciliation, and Redemption," September 2, 2021
37. Co-Facilitator, Pitzer College – PZ 36: Philosophy, Women, Crime, and Punishment, May 26–June 30, 2021

36. Panelist, Michelson 20MM Foundation – "Pell Grant Restoration and the Future of Higher Education in Prison," March 23, 2021
35. Panelist, San Francisco Unity Group's Conference on Mass Incarceration, February 27, 2021
34. Panelist, UCLA Center for the Study of Women – "Gender, Race, and Age Behind Bars: Impacts of Long-Term Sentencing," February 3, 2021
33. Panelist, Tennessee Higher Education Initiative, Nashville, TN, January 29, 2021
32. Panelist, "Amplifying Our Legislative Voice," Sacramento State University, December 10, 2020
31. Panelist, 10th Anniversary Justice Conference at Columbia University – "Ending Death by Incarceration," March 5–8, 2020
30. Keynote Speaker, Y2L Second Annual Girls Conference, Bakersfield, CA, February 8, 2020
29. Panelist, University of Mississippi – "Making & Unmaking of Mass Incarceration: Ending Women's Incarceration," December 4–6, 2019
28. Panelist, Yale University Law School – "Lifting As We Climb: Life for Women and Families After Incarceration," New Haven, CT, September 9–10, 2019
27. Visiting Teacher, Prison Education Project – Scotland, HMP Addiewell Prison, Edinburgh, Scotland, July 28–August 3, 2019
26. Panelist, "Ending Perpetual Punishment," American Friends Service Committee & The Sentencing Project, Detroit, MI, July 11–14, 2019
25. Panelist, Community Engagement Center 20th Anniversary Celebration, Pitzer College, April 30, 2019
24. Keynote Speaker, "Thinking Gender 2019: Feminists Confronting the Carceral State" – "Abolitionist Feminist Futures," UCLA, February 19
23. Panelist, Review of Sarah Haley's No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and Jim Crow Modernity, American Studies Association Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA, November 2018
22. Panelist, Presidential Panel, National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA, November 2018
21. Panelist, Prison Education Project – London, HMP Brixton & HMP Whitmore Prisons, June 18–26, 2018
20. Panelist, Third Annual Conference on Reintegration of Formerly Incarcerated Populations, Cal State University, Los Angeles, April 6–7, 2018
19. Keynote Speaker, Ventura Youth Correctional Facility – Women's History Month: "Honoring Formerly Incarcerated Women," Camarillo, CA, March 27, 2018
18. Keynote Speaker, Napier Initiative Awards Banquet – "It's Not About the Money," Claremont, CA, March 24, 2018
17. Panelist, UC Berkeley – "Invisible No More Conference: Policing, Reproduction, Sex & Sexuality," March 22, 2018
16. Presenter, Cal State University, Fullerton – 2017 Social Justice Summit, February 25, 2018
15. Panelist, "What Good are the Humanities in Prison?" USC Levan Institute for Humanities and Ethics, January 24, 2018
14. Panelist, "With the Guidance of Our Foremothers: The Combahee River Collective and Black Lives Matter Movement," NWSA Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD, November 2017
13. Panelist, "Mass Incarceration and the Global Rise of Authoritarian Capitalism," Los Angeles, CA, September 21, 2017
12. Presenter, UC San Diego – Students Against Mass Incarceration: "Gender and Mass Incarceration," May 30, 2017
11. Panelist, Cal State University, Long Beach – California American Studies Association Conference, April 29, 2017
10. Panelist, National Domestic Violence Conference – "Shifting the Lens," March 15, 2017
9. Presenter, Cal State University, Fullerton – 2017 Social Justice Summit, February 25, 2017
8. Panelist, 2016 USC Lifer School, USC Gould School of Law, Los Angeles, October 2016
7. Panelist, Mayor Garcetti's Access to Higher Education Challenge Event, USC Gould School of Law, Los Angeles, June 2016
6. Keynote Speaker, "How People Like Me Get Degrees," Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, Pacifica, MO, June 2016
5. Panelist, "Claremont Colleges Alumni: Prison Justice and the Liberal Arts," Criminal Justice Symposium, Pomona College, March 2016
4. Student Convocation Speaker, University College in Arts & Sciences, Washington University in St. Louis, September 2015
3. Panelist, "Seeking Justice Inside and Outside the Walls: A Roundtable," NWSA Annual Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 2014

AUTHORED WORKS AND FEATURED ESSAYS

- "Silenced by the Pain of a Tumultuous Life," Ms. Magazine. A personal essay on domestic violence, incarceration, and the silencing of women through trauma and the justice system.
- "Schools, Prisons, and Higher Education," in Critical Perspectives on Teaching in Prison, ed. Rebecca Ginsburg. An in-depth chapter exploring the power of higher education in prison, drawing from lived experience and leadership in justice education.
- "Caring Collectively: 25 Years of Abolitionist Feminism in California," in Abolition Feminisms, Vol. 1. A contribution highlighting collective care and the legacy of abolitionist feminist work in California.
- "Disrupting the Abuse-Prison Nexus: The Gendered Violence of Prosecution and Abolitionist Feminist Approaches to Social Care Work," Social Sciences Journal (2025). Co-authored with Sid P. Jordan, Emily Thuma, Aylaliyah Assefa Birru, Deirdre Wilson, Norma Cumpian, and Joseph Hankins.
- "Towards an Abolitionist Drama Therapy as a Pathway to Freedom," Drama Therapy Review Vol. 11.2 (October 2025), pp. 245-251.

Books Featuring Acknowledgments or Contributions

- Freedom Time: Dancing Through Prison Walls – Suchi Branfman
- Socialist Feminism: A New Approach – Frieda Afary
- All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing, and the Feminist Fight to End Violence – Emily Thuma
- Critical Perspectives on Teaching in Prison – Rebecca Ginsburg (ed.) – contributor/chapter author
- Citizen: An American Lyric – Claudia Rankine
- Abolition Feminisms, Vol. 1 – "Caring Collectively": Twenty-Five Years of Abolition Feminism in California

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- "How Trauma Impacts Social, Emotional, and Mental Health" Workshop, Alive and Well St. Louis, February 8, 2016
- Peacemaking Circles within a Restorative Justice Framework Workshop, presented by Kay Pranis, February 1, 2016
- New Leadership Southern California: Training Women for Politics and Public Affairs, Scripps College, CA, June 22-27, 2014

SERVICE

- Harvard Radcliffe New Horizons in Higher Education After Prison, Advisory Committee, June 2023
- Haymarket Books Advisory Committee, Writing Freedoms Fellowship, appointed January 2023
- The Education Trust, Advisory Board Member, appointed May 2022
- Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, Board Vice Chair, appointed August 2021
- MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Equity Cohort, Committee Member, 2021
- Pitzer College Alumni Board Member, appointed June 2021
- The Million Book Project, The Justice Collaborative at Yale University – bringing curated 500-book literary collections to prisons and juvenile detention centers across the United States, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico
- Steering Committee Member, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation CARE Grant Program (\$10 million), FY 2021
- Steering Committee Member, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation CARE Grant Program (\$10 million), FY 2020
- Member, Blue Ribbon Commission on Fair Employment & Equity, City of Los Angeles – Mayor Eric Garcetti, July 2017-2019
- California Coalition for Women Prisoners – Co-coordinator, Research & Organizing; Core Committee, Los Angeles Chapter, October 2016-present; CCWP Statewide Coordinating Team Member since 2018

- Strategic Planning Committee Member, National Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, June 2016–January 2017
- Concordance Institute for Advancing Social Justice, Community Liaison Board, Washington University in St. Louis, May 2016–2018
- Volunteer, Ferguson Commission – "Forward Through Ferguson," St. Louis, Missouri, 2014–2015

References available upon request