

# RUTH MORGAN

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Photography Collections

1979-2018



## About Ruth Morgan

[www.ruthmorganphotography.com](http://www.ruthmorganphotography.com)

Ruth Morgan is an award-winning documentary photographer and a prison reform advocate. Since the 1970s, she made thousands of courageous, uncompromised, and challenging portraits of inmates in California prisons. Her photographs made in San Quentin maximum-security prison were used in a Supreme Court case against brutal prison conditions. An exhibition of life-size prints of men in the 4x4' cells traveled throughout the country. In 1994 Morgan founded an organization that combines her interest in working directly with people and communities impacted by incarceration and her commitment to social justice, Community Works West, serving as its founding executive director until 2021. Throughout this time, Morgan continued to make art for social change by working on major projects documenting Native Americans in their historical homelands: California and Kentucky. Morgan's photographs are in private and museum collections, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Oakland Museum of California, Menil Collection, and the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive. She has received numerous art awards, including the Creative Work Fund, the California Arts Council, and the San Francisco Arts Commission.

# SAN QUENTIN: MAXIMUM SECURITY

**1981-1984**

## **Exhibitions**

MOPA, San Diego, CA, 1988

SF Camerawork, San Francisco, CA, 1988

Fireside Gallery, Houston Photofest, 1988

Light Work, Syracuse, NY 1987

More College of Art, PA, 1987

North Light Gallery, Tempe, AZ, 1987

University Art Gallery, California State University,  
Chico, 1986

Houston Center of Photography, TX, 1986

Women's Building, Los Angeles, CA, 1985

Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, OR, 1985

University Art Museum, MATRIX, Berkeley, CA, 1985

Triton Museum, Santa Clara, CA, 1984

College of Marin, Kentfield, CA, 1984

Otis School of Design, Los Angeles, CA, 1983

Minnesota Museum of Art, MN, 1982



“It is the humanity in the inhuman humorless situation that I have tried to confront in these images. From 1981 to 1983 I had the unique opportunity, with a colleague Barbara Yaley, to photograph and interview the men at San Quentin State Prison, which at that time was a maximum security facility. For approximately two years we had incredible access to the prison and to the men locked up inside and I was able to produce a portfolio of life-sized portraits that would tour the country.”

Ruth Morgan and Barbara Yaley negotiated for months before they were able to convince the prison warden to let them photograph and interview in San Quentin, allowing the women unprecedented access to this man’s world. Equipped with a tripod and long-exposure camera, Morgan faced the prisoners. The exhibition prints are life-size portraits: 4 x 4 ft—the width of a prison cell.

Morgan’s photographs were used as evidence in a Supreme Court case *Toussaint v. McCarthy* (1984/86) that declared conditions in the segregated lock-up units at San Quentin, Folsom, Soledad, and Deuel Vocational Institute unconstitutional.

Barbara Yaley (d. 2016) was a private investigator and a collaborator on the project. After a JD in criminology from UC Berkeley, she earned a Ph.D. in the History of Consciousness from UC Santa Cruz, where she was in the same cohort as the Black Panther Huey Newton, writing her dissertation on the history of California prisons. Yaley used her academic training to work on such cases as the death penalty, racial discrimination, and long-term solitary confinement.



**Negatives**

5 sheets of color medium-format negatives

13 sheets of black and white medium format negatives

Approximately 245 black and white negative sheets (approx. 12 negatives per sheet)

15 black and white digital files

**Prints**

53: 8" X 10" black and white prints

16: 20" X 20" black and white prints with overmats

15: 48" X 48" black and white prints mounted on canvas and rolled up

41 sample contact sheets

**Unpublished**

Hard copies of 31 interviews (ranging from 2 to 25 pages) with men in San Quentin, 180 pages

Conducted by Barbara Yaley and Ruth Morgan. Morgan owns the copyright.

**Additional**

Exhibition ephemera

# OHNONE ELDERS AND YOUTH SPEAK: RESTORING A CALIFORNIA LEGACY

2006-2014



"Writer, historian Janet Clinger and I documented the efforts of three generations of Native Americans in California committed to keeping their native culture alive and thriving, as they straddle living in two worlds. For fourteen thousand years the ancestors of contemporary Ohlone peoples served as caretakers of this beautiful region— from San Francisco to Pt. Sur.

The photos and the desktop-published book represent only a small portion of present-day Ohlone who are currently active in various aspects of cultural revitalization and committed to keeping their cultural expressions alive for generations to come. We dedicate this project to all of the Ohlone and their ongoing efforts and struggles to restore the rich legacy of their ancestors."



**OHLONE WOMEN ELDERS:  
RESTORING A CALIFORNIA LEGACY, 2006**

**Negatives**

86 sheets of medium-format black and white

**Prints**

33: 8" x 10" black and white

Contact sheets

**Additional**

8 full interviews with women elders



**OHLONE ELDERS AND YOUTH SPEAK:  
RESTORING A CALIFORNIA LEGACY, 2014**

**Negatives**

40 sheets of medium-format black and white  
2 sheets of 35 mm color negatives

**Digital Files**

Over 3,000 color digital files

**Prints**

Black and White

7: 8" x 10" (not framed)

4: 5" x 7"

Color (framed with glass):

20: 20" x 30" portraits

13: 24" x 36" portraits and contextual images

1: 30" x 45" contextual image

2: 16" x 24"

Color (not framed):

70: 8" x 10"

10: 7" x 11"

**Additional**

20 quotes and 19 full interviews with youth and elders



**OHLONE ELDERS AND YOUTH SPEAK:  
RESTORING A CALIFORNIA LEGACY, 2014**

**Publication**

**Ohlone Elders and Youth Speak: Restoring a California Legacy, 2014.** 421 pages

Ann Marie Sayers, Project Director (Mutsun Ohlone); Tribal Chairperson, Indian Canyon Nation;  
Founder of Costanoan Indian Research, Inc.  
Ruth Morgan Photographs  
Janet Clinger, Oral Histories

**Exhibitions**

Tides Building, San Francisco, 2020  
DeAnza College, 2017  
Coyote Hills Recreation Center, CA, 2011, 2016  
Jewett Gallery, SF Public Library, 2015  
Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum, Vallejo, 2015  
Presidio, San Francisco, 2011



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