

Turning Point: The Newsletter of



Citizens United for
Rehabilitation of Errants

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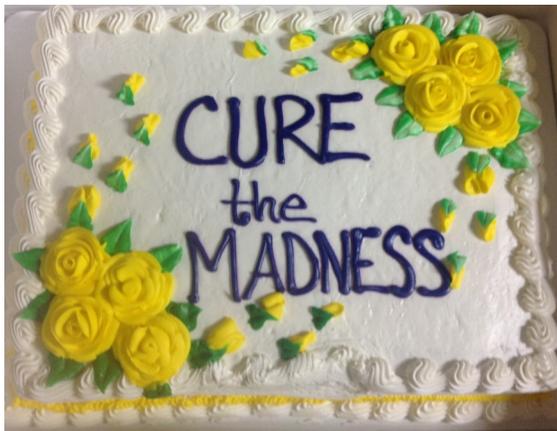
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From the Chair

by Hedy Harden

Address to Missouri CURE Conference

This is a very crucial time for all of us in this country. The new administration in Washington has brought and is bringing more and more repression down on all vulnerable citizens, especially people of color. Incidentally, Trump's war against immigrants is basically only a war against black and brown immigrants. It has been widely predicted that in less than 20 years the majority of people in the U.S. will be people of color. That's what the powers that be are trying to prevent. Besides the locking up and/or killing of so many black people, they'd like to run other people of color out of the country or prevent their entry.



throughout the country and around the planet. Now, once again, after the denial of justice for Anthony Lamar Smith, who died at the hands of another murderer in blue, people have come out in force to protest, day after day, night after night, walking for hours in pursuit of fairness and justice.

We salute the thousands of people who have been marching and protesting the acquittal of former cop Jason Stockley in the 2011 murder of yet another innocent black man. Just as in the case of Michael Brown, the apologists for police murders are trying to dig up dirt in Smith's past to justify his murder. But there is no justification! Murder by police is still murder! In fact, it is even more egregious because police have the duty to "serve and protect," not kill and cover up!

Fascism has been creeping in for decades, but never has it been as open and widespread as now, when it is blatantly supported and encouraged by the President. If there's anything good about this era, it's that more and more people are waking up to the fact that this so-called democracy only offers true freedom for the rich and powerful. White privilege is still alive and well, but even white folks are beginning to suffer and to wake up. Witness the white majority that has been part of the recent protests in St. Louis. It's right that white people should fight against racism. Black people are the main ones getting murdered by the police and getting their heads busted and thrown into jail and prisons. With a majority of white protestors, we haven't seen a lot of head-busting here lately.

We come here today to fight for the human rights of prisoners in the State of Missouri. Our conference this year is dedicated to the freedom fighters both in Missouri prisons and here in St. Louis. We all have the same goals: freedom and justice for black people, for poor people, for all those disenfranchised and oppressed by the powers that be. Our theme this year is "CURE the Madness!"

This is where it all started in 2014. Michael Brown's brutal murder by police put St. Louis and Ferguson on the map around the world. It wasn't the first by a long shot, but it was the final straw that ignited the community, and the fire of their righteous anger spread

Last month on August 19 in KCMO Keith Brown El, our Vice-Chairman, led approximately 200 people in a march and rally. The rally itself at a downtown park was surrounded by white militia in camo with high-powered assault rifles, from a group called the Three Percent United Patriots.

This is what so-called freedom in this country has come to. Instead of protecting the freedom of nonviolent protestors, police

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*May the blessings of
CURE shine a light so
bright that it blinds all the
enemies of struggling
humanity.
—Travis Henderson El*



Valencia Cheeks-Pate won the 50-50 Drawing at our conference.

Missouri CURE

Executive Board:

Chair: Hedy Harden

Vice-Chair: Keith Brown El

Secretary: Renese Drake

Recording Secretary: Shirley Miner

Committee Coordinators

Maria McEntire: Finance

Frances Cummins: Membership

Angelika Mueller-Rowry: Prisoner Health

Auch family: Special Communications

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Special Liaisons

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- Brianna Burton, IWW of KCMO
- Nathaniel Johnson, STL Community Re-entry
- Bev Livingston, MISD KCMO
- Angelika Mueller-Rowry, Gateway Greens
- Margaret Phillips, MADP

*CURE is **NOT** a service organization. We are an all-volunteer non-profit criminal justice advocacy organization. CURE has **NO** legal services—please do NOT send legal papers. We advocate for criminal justice reform, but we cannot take on individual cases.*

Mission Statement

CURE believes that prisons should be only for those who MUST be incarcerated and that prisons should only exist for the purposes of education and rehabilitation. CURE is a membership organization. We work hard to provide our members with the information and tools necessary to help them understand the criminal justice system and to advocate for positive change.

Why Should We Stand? by Travis Henderson El

The thirteen stripes on the American flag represent the beginning of this land that was once oppressed by another. Yet before the colonialism, this land was taken from the Natives. A radical change took place, and justice took its course for the Europeans who came to North American shores, but the Native Americans lost everything. Why should we stand?

Millions of Africans were kidnapped from their home and brought here, forced to work, get beaten, watch their women and children get raped, passed around and sold, get killed, and die stripped of their culture, history and nationality. Why should we stand?



As time went on, the flag of 13 stripes developed 50 stars, while the U.S. reached a peak of international power—through slavery, Jim Crow, and bloodshed of the Natives and Africans, as well as Europeans, while taking the resources of other nations. Why should we stand?

The Constitution of the U.S.A. didn't apply for my people, but the spirit of our true warriors found a way, and we are still here in stiff struggle and resistance. How could the Constitution be for all, when there were slave-owners as leaders? Why should we stand?

My people were "freed" in 1865, yet with no reparations. The same 13th Amendment that declared an end to slavery excluded freedom for prisoners, who became slaves of the state. Why should we stand?

The glorified U.S. National Anthem by Francis Scott Key, descendant of slave owners and a slave owner himself, contains verses like, "No refuge could save the hireling and slave." So why should we stand?

The glory is misplaced, but the brother Kaepernick opened many eyes, and this consciousness is unfolding to a body beautiful. When I stand, it's in stiff resistance! ❖

Missouri CURE Celebrates 27 Years

On September 23, Missouri CURE held its 14th Annual Conference at Greater St. Mark Family Church. The church was ground zero and a sanctuary for Ferguson protestors following the murder of Michael Brown in 2014. African drumming by the Infrared Rockers welcomed people as they entered the conference.

Our keynote speaker was Attorney Mae Quinn, Director of the MacArthur Justice Center in St. Louis, who spoke about the multiple lawsuits MJC-STL has filed against DOC, seven so far in the past nine months. Mae received our 5th annual Courageous Citizen Award.

State Rep. Bruce Franks Jr. was our special guest speaker. Bruce not only was active in the Ferguson rebellion, but he continues to lead the protests following the September 15 acquittal of former cop Jason Stockley in the murder of Anthony Lamar Smith. A hero to strug-

gling people here, Bruce received our 4th annual Rory Ellinger Award. Bruce was recently arrested along with other protestors on Black Friday when they temporarily shut down the Galleria shopping mall. An active member of the State Corrections Committee, Bruce works closely with Missouri CURE.

Our Jon Marc Taylor award went to Rev. Nathaniel Johnson, a former prisoner and long-time director of St. Louis Community Re-entry.

Humanitarian awards were presented to Brianna and Carl Greer of Kansas City IWW; Shirley Miner of St. Louis, our recording secretary and MC for the conference; longtime member and supporter Stephanie Charles of Kansas City; Frances Cummins of St. Louis, who heads up our Membership Committee; and Jeff Humfeld, director of Jaws of Justice radio in Kansas City.

Workshops were held on Prisoner Health, Legislation, Abuse & Long Term Segregation; and Re-entry. ❖

Together We CURE!



Some Las Vegas attendees: Front row left to right: Checo Yancy (LA), Pauline Sullivan (DC), Donna Hamm (AZ) Theresa Squillacote (NY), Claudia Whitman (CO), Janine Bertram (WA), Hedy Harden (MO), Terri Leclerca (TX) and Emily Zisette. Back Row: Henry Curtis (HI), James Hamm (AZ) William O'Connell (NV), David Johnson (CO), Paul Erickson (OR), John Linton (MD), Cheryl Erickson (OR), Lea Green (MD), John Witherow (NV), Charlie Sullivan (DC) Andrew Matson (CO) Dianne Tramutola-Lawson (CO), Daniel Shea (WA), Dawna Mosburg (OK), Larry Rubey (ND), Annelise Hafer (MD), Gregory Eve (IN), Hans Hallundbaek (NY), Kat Brady (HI), Keith Brown El (MO), Kay Perry (MI), Debbie Alford (AL), Carla Dawson (IA) and Jean Basinger (IA).

CURE Meets in Las Vegas

by Hedy Harden

Keith and I were among 40 people who attended the National CURE board meeting in Las Vegas Nevada October 6-9, 2017. It was the first time I'd been able to attend a National CURE gathering since 2009, when it was held in Baton Rouge Louisiana. It was Keith's first time flying and his first time attending a National CURE function.

Our plane was late arriving on Friday and we had to wait a long time for the next shuttle to the hotel, so we missed the introductory gathering. As we registered at the Palace Station Hotel, we first encountered Checo Yancy, head of Louisiana CURE and member of CURE's Executive Board. Checo spent decades in Angola before his life sentence was commuted by the Governor. Working along with other groups, LA CURE's efforts to effect prison reform bore sweet fruit this year with the passage of legislation including all 10 of CURE's proposals.

While still in line in registration, we were joined by other CURE folks on their way back from the meeting. These included Dianne Tramutola-Lawson, Chair of Colorado CURE and of the National CURE executive committee; Kay Perry, Director of Michigan CURE and secretary

of the executive committee; Pauline Sullivan, Co-Director of CURE-National; and a few others.

Charlie Sullivan greeted us joyfully as we entered the meeting room the next morning at 9 am for the first day's program.

Representatives from International CURE, National CURE and various state and special issue CURE groups reported on their activities. We discussed various matters of interest, including Amazon hiring practices, the American Correctional

Association, (ACA), litigation regarding climate control in jails and prisons, Pell grants, prison phone rates, sex offender issues, opposition to building a maximum security federal prison in Kentucky, the Webb Study Commission, the Costa Rica

and Rwanda CURE meetings, lifers, and filing a bill to repeal the punishment clause in the 13th Amendment.

Following lunch, reports were presented by state and issue chapters as well as invited prison reform leaders regarding efforts and developments in their areas. Nevada DOC Director James Dzurenda spoke, and we were impressed with his knowledge and aims.

After the dinner break, there was an Open Mic session. Fortunately the room was small enough that we could hear each other without a microphone, as the hotel wanted \$180.00 to provide one. Plans were to include videos, but technical problems made that impossible. Still, we had no problem filling up the time slot.

We met folks I hadn't seen for years as well as many who were new to me. Kat Brady and Henry Curtis hailed from Hawaii. I met Lea Green, head of Maryland CURE, for the first time. Carla Dawson came from Iowa with long-time leader Jean Basinger.



Red Man's Legacy

Walter Hunter—a prisoner affectionately known as “Red” or “Red Man,” was involved with the local prison branches of the NAACP for more than 15 years. In appreciation of his impeccable conduct, Red was assigned to the privileged housing unit for the past 10 years before being enrolled in hospice care.

Afflicted with Hepatitis C for many years, Walter was finally given the new and effective treatment in 2015. It cured his Hep C, but tragically much too late. Walter's liver was already destroyed.

For many years Red had assisted less literate prisoners to understand institutional regulations and articulate themselves. He helped create a positive environment by providing others with advice and guidance.

After being given six months to live, Walter filed for medical parole. He was denied due to “serving a life sentence for which parole eligibility is restricted by statute until March 14, 2096.”

The date is no typo. Former Governor Jay Nixon (D) ignored Walter's subsequent compassionate clemency request, as did Governor Greitens (R).

The MacArthur Justice Center in St. Louis (MJC-STL) had challenged MDOC's denial of medical parole consideration for Walter Hunter. According to a lawsuit filed almost one year ago, “Missouri sentencing law makes clear that *any* dying inmate may be considered for what is called ‘Medical Parole.’”

The MJC-STL press release stated: “It is remarkable to us that the Missouri Department of Corrections is seeking to avoid application of the law as written to cases of inmates like our client who are on death's doorstep, in need of constant assistance, and an extreme financial burden on the prison system.”

For quite some time I'd been looking for a way to effectively get the word out about important issues. This opportunity finally arose while signing a “change.org” petition circu-

lating online in support of Marcellus Williams, a likely innocent man who was facing execution.

On the bottom it read: “*Start your own petition.*” I began to read and learn. On October 6, when it had become obvious that Walter would not live to see the outcome of MJC-STL's lawsuit, I launched the petition: “Demand Compassionate Clemency for a Dying



Prisoner at SCCC, Licking, MO!” It was addressed to the Governor, setting a goal of 5,000 signatures, to be reached by November 1. It was high time that Red be released to die in dignity at home.

The petition reads in part: “*This (MJC-STL) lawsuit will have significance for many more of MDOC's rapidly aging and increasingly chronically ill offender population, but it is very unlikely that Walter Hunter will live to see the out-*

come as his condition has dramatically deteriorated. Walter developed a mass on his liver that is suspected to be cancer. He was denied a biopsy, as well as an evaluation for the presence of metastases. Both would underscore the terminal stage of the illness.

“*On May 12, 2017 an MDOC Contract Monitor confirmed that ‘Mr. Hunter is currently a permanent patient in the Infirmary and is in the end stages of liver disease.’ Governor Greitens, Missouri CURE urges you to grant Mr.*

by Angie Mueller-Rowry

Hunter clemency so that he can die reunited with his family and in dignity.”

This new endeavor was not without challenges. Requiring individual postings to hundreds of e-mail and newly befriended Facebook contacts, the petition ended up being extremely time consuming.

On Oct 14 I looked at the petition website for the first time. There were 118 supporters, creeping up to 151 on Oct 22, but the next day I hardly trusted my eyes: 1,127 supporters, not only from Missouri, other U.S. states, and Germany, but from all over the world!

On Oct 27 the number had exploded 12,745! This was the last number Walter would ever know. “Really?” he asked his sister Renese, who was keeping him updated by phone. “That’s amazing!”

After a long and courageous battle, Walter passed away October 28 in SCCC infirmary. Renese spent two hours with him that last day, but Walter didn’t appear to be conscious.

The petition has since reached 15,311—sadly, too late to benefit Red—but the larger issue remains: MDOC's current policy denies terminally ill and aging prisoners medical parole consideration. This is inhumane and violates state law. This policy must be changed.

That’s why Missouri CURE and MJC-STL have decided to use the overwhelming support and international scrutiny the petition has garnered to hold a press conference in Jefferson City in January 2018. The signatures will be delivered to Gov. Greitens, his Criminal Justice Task Force, and the MDOC/Parole Board, requesting policy changes that comply with RSMo 217.250 and allow “aging or terminally ill” prisoners to die in dignity.

May the life of Red Man and those of all other suffering and dying prisoners not be in vain. You can still sign the updated petition. Go to Google.com and search for “Demand Compassionate Clemency for a Dying Prisoner at SCCC, Licking, MO.”

Editor’s note: Walter’s sister Renese Drake thanks all those who loved Walter and those who expressed condolences. ♦

**RIP Red Man...
you will be
missed!**



L-R standing: Nathaniel Johnson, Harriett Clark, Amaya Rodgers, Kenneth Carter, Elaine Auch, Angie, Tacuma, Mary Ann Mc-Givern, Carl Greer, Shirley Miner, Jeff Humfeld, Denorce Starks, Renese Drake, Tadar Wazir, Keith, Deborah Burch, Frances Cummins, Sha-heer Akhtab, Mae Quinn, Denzell Jones, Evelyn Gates, Jesse Scott, John May. **L-R Sitting:** Hedy, Shirley Sutton, Billy J. Ford.

Address from p. 1 protected the freedom of 30 heavily armed white supremacists to lurk in the bushes in sniper positions intimidating and disrupting our freedom to protest.

In St. Louis we held a rally across from the Old Courthouse, where slaves were bought and sold, and where the Dred Scott decision was rendered. The Supreme Court in Scott's case found that no black person, whether free or slave, could claim U.S. citizenship or petition the court for their freedom because black people were not considered human beings when the

Constitution was written.

Now instead of parading black people in shackles to be bought and sold on the courthouse steps, now black people are brought up in impoverished, drug-ridden communities and pursued by police (slave catchers) to be sent off to prisons as slaves of the state.

Prisoners serving extremely long sentences or life without parole have no hope. One of our prisoner members, Joseph Williams, a very effective leader and a profound thinker, is serving 754 years for a sentence not involving homicide.

Another CURE member serving life without parole, Shango Bey described the horror of prison life in our last newsletter.

These prisoners are our family members and loved ones. They are people snatched from the relative freedom of life in the ghetto to be enslaved by incarceration. They represent the future of our youth in the era of mass incarceration.

We urge you to get involved in the fight for prison reform. Join CURE or some other organization that is fighting for the rights of prisoners. Join the fight to CURE the madness! ♦

Hedy presents Humanitarian Award to Brianna Burton and Carl Greer.

27 years of Missouri CURE



Keith presents Humanitarian Awards to Frances Cummins (left) and Stephanie Charles.



SCCC Breaking News

By: On-site Reporter Eye Bee Seeing

On the morning of Friday, September 15, a Mr. (first name unknown) Possum unlawfully entered the South Central Correctional Center. Mr. Possum was spotted by staff about 8:00 in the morning. Mr. Possum was so startled at being spotted, he climbed on the top rail of the fence that encircles HU's 5-6 exercise field.

Despite numerous lawful orders given to him, Mr. Possum defiantly refused to obey said lawful orders and remained at the top of the fence.

SCCC staff had no alternative but to call in the Cell Extraction Team, commonly referred to as the E-squad.

On arrival, the commander gave Mr. Possum several verbal commands to disembark the fence and surrender peacefully.

Staff's only response from Mr. Possum was a lot of hissing, baring of teeth, and spitting.

Given no other option, the Cell Extraction Team suited up in their body armor, warning Mr. Possum again that if he didn't obey their verbal orders, they would have to forcibly remove him from the fence.

Mr. Possum adamantly refused, saying he was protected by his rights guaranteed by the fact that he was born in

America and was an American citizen, and his ancestors were here first.

The cell extraction team was prevented from using mace due to the wind blowing towards them, so they physically assaulted the fence, knocking Mr. Possum to the ground with the electrified shield. They then forcibly restrained him in four-paw restraints position, each staff member holding one of his paws, until he could be placed in shackles. A spit bag was placed over his head to prevent him from spitting or biting restraining staff. Mr. Possum was then taken out of the institution in a four-man possum carry position, while one staff member continuously maced Mr. Possum in the face to subdue his struggling.

Mr. Possum was taken before the local Licking magistrate and charged with: unlawful entry into a correctional institution, assault on correctional staff, failure to obey the lawful orders of correctional staff, and interfering with the duties of a correctional official.

Mr. Possum pled not guilty and demanded a trial by a jury of his peers, appointment of a Public Humane Society Defender, and his right to a phone call, so he could call PETA.

The magistrate summarily denied all of Mr. Possum's requests and found him guilty, sentencing him to death, without his right of appeal or his last cigarette.

Mr. Possum was summarily executed, and his remains were donated to the Licking Redneck Association for the Advancement of Trump's Agenda (RAATA). They immediately prepared possum stew and served it at their banquet the same evening. All Correctional staff were invited.

Rumor has it that the family and friends of Mr. Possum tried to hold a candle-light vigil/memorial for Mr. Possum outside of the banquet hall, but were prevented by a group of armed militia rednecks with spotlights. Family and friends of Mr. Possum swear they will continue their battle for possum rights, as possum lives matter—specially to other possums.

William Larson ❖



Fifteen Men Exonerated: Were Framed by Corrupt Chicago Cops

Former Chicago police officer Ronald Watts was involved in around 1,000 arrests between 2004 and 2012, resulting in some 500 convictions. Watts and another officer, Kallatt Mohammed, were sentenced to 22 months and 18 months in federal prison, respectively, in 2012 and 2013 after stealing drug money from an FBI informant. There have been numerous allegations that Watts and Mohammed demanded payoff from people where they patrolled at the Ida B. Wells public housing project, and framed their victims on drug charges when they didn't get money.

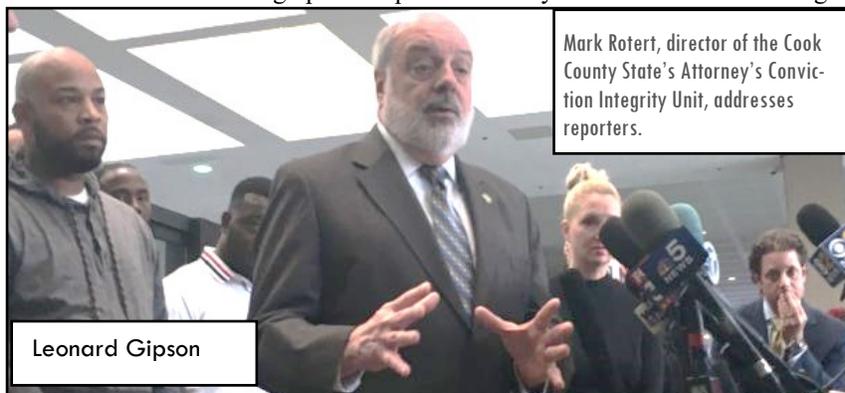
Thanks to the Cook County State's Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit, in cooperation with lawyers from the Exoneration Project, 15 men convicted of felo-

nies in Cook County IL were exonerated November 16 based on evidence that they were framed by members of a corrupt Chicago police squad headed by former

years. Twelve of the 15 men were present in court.

Leonard Gipson, 36, convicted three times on drug charges, served four years behind bars between 2003 and 2009, said at the press conference that Watts planted drugs on Gipson every time he saw him because Gipson refused to pay him off.

Philip Thomas, 58, served more than six years in prison total after being repeatedly framed by Watts' squad, he said at the press conference after winning exoneration. "The whole crew, they all victimized me for years. There was no way to get away from them. They would plant drugs on you, they would beat you," he said. "Now I have vindication." The exonerees' petition named seven officers directly involved with Watts' corruption. ❖



Mark Rotert, director of the Cook County State's Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit, addresses reporters.

Leonard Gipson

Sgt. Ronald Watts.

This unprecedented development grew out of a brief but historic hearing in which Judge Leroy Martin signed orders exonerating the men of convictions they have lived with for

Autumn Activities

- September 3 Lifers National CURE Conference call; National CURE chapter support committee conference call
- September 7 Lindy Lou, Juror #2 documentary at Tivoli sponsored by MADP-St. Louis (Angie & Hedy)
- September 9 STL CURE met via conference call
- September 23 CURE Conference at Greater St. Mark Family Church 10am-4pm
- September 30 Criminal Justice Ministry Trivia Night fundraiser (Shirley Miner, Hedy)
- October 1 MJC-STL one-year anniversary and celebration of release of Kenneth Carter (Evelyn, Hedy)
- October 6-9 Keith & Hedy fly to Las Vegas for National CURE board meeting
- October 11 Meeting with Liza Weiss of national legal research nonprofit "Appleseed" (Angie & Hedy)
- October 16 KC CURE Meeting
- October 24 Meeting of Governor's task force on Corrections in Jefferson City (Hedy, Deborah, Evelyn and Shirley Miner from St. Louis; Keith, Danny, Stephanie and Maurice from KCMO)
- November 3 Walter Hunter's funeral in KCMO (Keith)
- November 4 Death row exonerees Joe Amrine & Reggie Griffin spoke along with Rep. Bruce Franks in STL (Angie & Hedy)
- November 5 IWW meeting KC; documentary "Never Been a Time" about E. St. Louis massacre of 1917 (Angie)
- November 6 Meeting of KC Grassroots Coalition (Keith)
- November 10 St. Louis CURE Meeting
- November 14 Phone meeting with Alana Boyles, Director of Adult Institutions, MODOC (Keith & Hedy)
- November 15 Meeting at MacArthur Justice Center (Mae Quinn, Angie, Hedy)
- November 20 KCMO CURE Meeting/Pot Luck in honor of Walter Hunter and his sister, Secretary Renese Drake
- November 24 Meetings of Membership and Prisoner Health Committees STL



Vegas from p. 3

John Witherow, head of NV CURE and National Executive Committee VP, hosted the weekend.

My old comrade and former political prisoner Janine came from Seattle along with newcomer Emily Zisette. Theresa, a former lawyer and prisoner from New York, shared a lot of insight and information. It was good to once again see Claudia Whitman, a death row advocate from Colorado.

Donna & James Hamm of the organization Middle Ground continue to do a great job in AZ. Donna was a municipal judge. James went to law school and passed the bar after decades in prison. I was glad to finally meet Annelise Hafer of MD, who works with Pauline at the DC office, and Hans Hallundbaek of NY, a prison chaplain who speaks several languages and is CURE's representative to the United Nations.

We began Sunday's session with discussion and brainstorming about the needs and challenges facing chapters and potential solutions. This was followed by a panel presentation regarding the

effective use of prisoner grievance systems.

A group picture was taken by a professional photographer, Craig, who donated his services.

After lunch John Linton gave a presentation regarding correctional education, including the return of Pell Grants for incarcerated persons.

Following a break, the business meeting was held. Several other leaders of the fully compliant CURE chapters around the country joined us by phone when we voted on issues.

Charlie conducted a memorial service for those who have died in the last two years. Among those remembered was "**Jon Marc Taylor**, who spent 35 of his 54 years in prison in Missouri and Indiana and became as one judge stated 'one of the most remarkable examples of rehabilitation' he had ever seen." Among his achievements was earning a doctorate and writing his thesis on the



importance of Pell Grants for people in prison.

Finally Charlie remembered "**Robert Silvestri Jr.**, son of Hedy Harden, leader of Missouri CURE. Rob gave time to many organizations, including CURE. Hedy writes in *Ode to a Beloved Son* that Rob was 'ready to lend a helping hand...assisting struggling humanity' and that 'a person's 'true worth is measured by the love he freely gives.'"

Minutes of the last meeting were approved, and a financial report was given, including approved of the 2018 budget. A proposal was made to boycott Amazon due to their poor record of hiring formerly incarcerated people, but we voted to table it until more information was gathered. A motion to eliminate CURE's policy that prohibits chapters from engaging in providing revenue-generating services was defeated. A report was made on National CURE Transition Planning, and we ended with a discussion of old and new business.

Keith and I caught the red-eye just before midnight Sunday night and arrived in St. Louis around 5 a.m.

And no, we didn't gamble. ❖

Combat Recidivism

by Shango Bey, ERDCC

I'm sitting here in this prison cell reflecting on how prisoners can take a more significant and meaningful step to Combat Recidivism. Of course, the Missouri Department of Corrections (MDOC) offers state sanctioned programs, which purport to offer a solution for recidivism. These programs are centered on subservient behavior-modification methods, which do not address the root cause of recidivism. They gloss over or completely avoid the true cause of recidivism.

I have attended some of these programs during my years of captivity. My attempts to expand the discourse to include not only the subjective factor (individual choice) but also the objective factor (concrete reality), which influences and conditions the psyche towards recidivism, have been met with vehement opposition. I have been rebuked, put out of the program, or reprimanded with segregation as rewards for my sincere efforts.

How can we progress if we refuse to educate on the key factors that contribute to our retrogression? A reasonable thinking person can only conclude that MDOC efforts to combat recidivism are a mere façade. However, I'm not surprised by this reactionary stance. As Daniel Singer noted at the Evergreen Conference in 1987:

"Is it possible for a class which exterminates the native peoples of the Americas, replaces them by raping Africa for humans it then denigrates and dehumanizes as slaves, while cheapening and degrading its own working class—is it possible for such a class to create a democracy, equality, and to advance the cause of human freedom? The implicit answer is, no, of course not."

This indictment by Mr. Singer is quite telling on the pivotal question of why the State is so vehemently opposed to addressing the true cause for recidivism. An honest discussion will undoubtedly result in a condemnation of the status-quo while exposing the systemic nature of the present-day social and economic order, which drives so many—too many—into a life of recidivism. Before I delve deeper into this subject, one thing must be clearly understood. Nothing written here is intended to justify or excuse any of our horrendous acts committed against each other. Instead, my purpose is intended solely for understanding, with hopes that it will inspire us to discover our humanity and

choose a more enlightened path in life to really combat recidivism.

Recidivism doesn't develop out of a vacuum. It is a by-product of crime, which is defined and classified by the social structure of society, influenced by the economic structure of society, and enforced by the state structure of society. The actual acts of crime are by-products of a grossly disproportionate distribution of material wealth and privileges throughout society.

Practically no one who owns their own home, has a refrigerator full of food, and who is able to take care of his/her family and

make ends meet is out on the streets stealing, killing, robbing or selling dope. These actors are predominantly those who have been effectively excluded and without social or economic capital. There are so many jails, prisons, and people locked up and enslaved in America (by way of the 13th Amendment) because of this massive disproportion of wealth, because we live in a capitalist society that is designed to keep the poor poor while the rich and rulers get richer. The systemic nature of the present-day social and economic order is riddled with contradictions that are incompatible with human needs and aspirations. This system is ultimately responsible for crime itself, which gives rise to recidivism.

The psychological effects of our forced introduction and assimilation into Western ideas of capitalist and imperialist aggression have had a profound and detrimental effect upon the human psyche. This way of life has given birth to a subculture that is anti-human, that is grounded on moral solitude and greed, and that promotes individual interests over collective interests, one that sets the matrix for success by the acquisition of material wealth.

Listen to the lyrics of a commercialized and popularized song by DJ Khalid:

"All I do is win, win, win—
no matter what.
Money on my mind—
I can never get enough."

The social structure promotes these types of values by bombarding the public psyche with movies, commercials, music,

etc., showcasing middle class affluence to promote and develop artificial needs in the people. With profit as the motivating factor, the economic structure changes styles rapidly in everything from cars, clothes, shoes, housing, furniture, appliances, etc., inducing people to buy long, long before the goods they own have lost their utility. This two-headed monster (socio-economic structure) promotes a "keep-up-with-the-Joneses" rat-race mentality, with status as

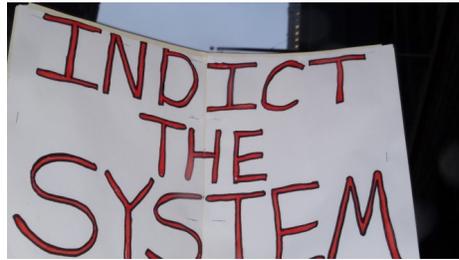
the reward for those who manage to keep up and ridicule and loss of face for those who fall behind. The resulting paradigm for success and acceptance into society, which is imposed upon the human psyche, becomes

material wealth. However, this status is unattainable for most due to the grossly disproportionate distribution of wealth and privileges. As a result, this large segment of society (poor blacks, browns and whites) are lured into chasing this illusion of inclusion for survival and acceptance by other means!

In conclusion, if we are serious about combating recidivism, our struggle must call into question the systemic social and economic order which drives so many—too many—into a life of recidivism. We must struggle to create and establish a social and economic order that will facilitate a more egalitarian society. Our battle cry to combat recidivism must be synonymous with this goal in mind. Our aim should be to create an atmosphere where a person need not have a dime in order to participate in society as a human being; one where a person need not feel ashamed for their lack; a society where there is no status associated with material possession and wealth. This type of psychology must be promoted. The time for half-measures is over!

This is not to say that people should seek to live bare, austere lives, but we must struggle to liberate our psyche from the lust for material goods. Neither is this to say that we must accept the status-quo; rather we must strive to change it. We must struggle to instill and reinforce the values that promote the humanity of people above all else, and we must work to make this concept live.

Let's struggle to Combat Recidivism! ❖



Making America Great Again...Mission Accomplished

by Keith Brown EI

This year on Columbus Day, a Facebook friend of mine suggested that in order to celebrate the anniversary we should all go out and “Steal something and then claim we simply discovered it.” I clearly see his point, because stealing is a criminal act, and the history of criminal conduct in this country would make it entirely appropriate that we should always do something to mark this occasion. In fact, it was a little bit tempting for me not to go out and “Discover” this pen and paper I’m using to write this article. But I reminded myself that I am a non-traditionalist and I don’t celebrate anything that glorifies American culture.

But let me be clear: When I speak about “criminals” in this article, I’m not talking about the criminals (or alleged criminals) we already have in jail or prison; I am referring to the other criminals who are unlikely to ever go there, because they are the ones who have all the keys or are making all the decisions about which people will be incarcerated and which ones will not.

It’s always been well accepted in this country that ‘might makes right’ and that those who have the weapons make the rules—never mind right and wrong. At no time has this been more obvious than in these times we are now living. Even with as much noise as politicians and others in this country like to make about terrorism, terrorism itself seems to be okay as long as the terrorist is wearing a uniform and a badge or can otherwise claim to be acting in the name of the law or the military. We have seen this thousands of times. So apparently what terrorism is and what it is not depends on who is committing the act.

A case in point: I recently did an interview on “Jaws of Justice,” 90.1 FM KKFI, Kansas City Community Radio. My guest was a young Latino woman of 5ft. 4 inches, about 137 lbs. This woman was brutally assaulted by an off-duty Kansas City policeman. This “officer” was about 5ft. 10, weighed over 200 lbs. and was acting as a part-time QuikTrip security guard. The young woman’s only crime was trying assist a lost black child in finding her mother and younger siblings. The policeman had declined to help, apparently too busy flirting with

another woman. The woman I interviewed had also rightfully criticized the officer for failing to do his job. For this, she was told to leave the premises. When she refused on the grounds that she was not violating any laws, the officer became aggressive and belligerent. She turned her camera on to record his behavior, and the cop tried to snatch the phone out of her hand. When she passed it off to someone else, she was body-slammed twice, front and back, then pinned down with his knee in her chest. She was then handcuffed, shackled, and hauled off to jail to suffer further mistreatment, and finally hit with a barrage of bogus charges.

Now she is afraid to go public about this out of fear that she will be targeted by the police and may possibly end up dead.

Her fear is not unfounded. There have been a number of otherwise inexplicable deaths of people who have had problems with the Kansas City police. Nor is it likely a coincidence that a number of the people who were leaders and organizers of the Ferguson Rebellion in St. Louis have turned up mysteriously deceased.

Many so-called law enforcement officials in America do not like to be video recorded by citizens while they, the officers, are engaging in illegal or otherwise improper behavior. However, the United States Supreme Court has clearly held that citizens have a constitutional right to video-record such events, that our phones and cameras cannot be taken away to prevent us from recording, and that we cannot be detained or arrested for doing so.

One of the strategies police have developed to combat this is to somehow provoke a confrontation with the camera-recording citizen and then use this as an excuse to approach the person in a hostile and aggressive manner, and then physically abuse the citizen for allegedly refusing to cooperate or “resisting arrest.”

This is becoming all too common in

America and is being perpetrated against innocent, law-abiding people by those who are supposed to protect and serve us.

There is no question that we have reached a point in this country where authority figures take it for granted that they can do whatever they wish to other people and get away with it. Most of the time they do. Many of them intensely dislike

being told the truth about themselves, because they know when accusations and charges are made against them, they have no legitimate defense. Yet rather than change their ways to avoid this kind of criticism, they persist in their corrupt behavior and are willing take whatever steps they find necessary to silence anyone who tries to confront them with the truth.

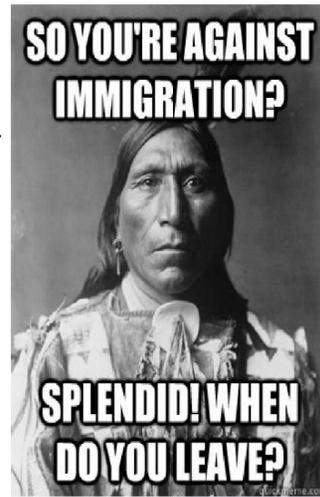
You can try all you want to assert your rights—it does not matter to them whether you are right or wrong, and they couldn’t care less how non-violent,

legally correct, or diplomatic your tactics are. It is the mere fact that anyone they consider to be inferior to them would dare to even question or challenge their authority at all. If you do so, you risk having your employment terminated, being escorted (or dragged) off the premises of whatever location you happen to be in, met with a billy club upside your head, thrown in a jail cell that is waiting on you, or even summarily executed on the spot without even being charged with a crime, much less having a judge and jury produce a death sentence on you. These things happen most frequently when the victim is black or among some other unfortunate class of people.

We elect judges and politicians (black and white) in hopes that this will bring about change. But once these people get into office, they seem to shy away from change and continue business as usual—or create more laws that will heap even more oppression upon our heads.

If this was Donald Trump’s vision of “Making America Great Again,” he has certainly done an excellent job. ♦

Ed: This article was edited for length.



Open Letter to Gov. Greitens Re Lifers & Emerging Adults

Dear Gov. Greitens:

Hello. My name is Kenneth Bell, and I am a man serving a sentence of life without parole in the Missouri Department of Corrections. I would like to applaud your intentions to reform our criminal justice system. I would also like to offer a couple of suggestions. Initially I hesitated to write this letter for two reasons. The first is because today's society is so hostile and unreceptive to prisoners and our issues that I felt that my attempt to enter the public discussion on criminal justice reform would be futile. The second reason is because public officials tend only to listen to donors or large voting blocs. I, being neither, am not only con-demned to serve out the remainder of my life in prison, but I must do so mutely—being denied any input even upon issues of which I may possess a valuable perspective, and which hugely affect my life.

However, I sat and considered all of the men and women who were victims of American slavery. I thought of how hopeless their situation must have seemed. According to the Supreme Court they had “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” (See **Scott v. Sanford**, 60 U.S. 393 (1865). They could not vote, organize, or even lawfully defend themselves against their captors' brutality. They were politically unpopular. In many respects they were in a similar position to today's prisoners. Yet time after time they spoke up and stood up until their cause was vindicated. So I will follow their example.

Although I have much to say about effective criminal justice reform, having studied the subject now for nearly 30 years, there are two issues which I wish to highlight in this letter:

1. Any criminal justice reform in Missouri will be ineffective if it does not focus on rehabilitating and releasing those who are less likely to reoffend;
2. The power of the board of probation and parole must be properly limited so that its only function is to determine whether a candidate for parole has conducted him/herself well during his/her incarceration and whether he/she is likely to reoffend if released back into the community.

Regarding the first of these issues I refer you to the research of Marie Gottschalk, Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, whose research cites numerous studies indicating that sentencing reform, if it is to be effective, should be focused on older prisoners, and those who have served at least ten years of a life sentence. These are the prisoners less likely to re-offend. Until now there has been so much anger and bitterness involved in the administration of our criminal justice system that wise sentencing schemes (which would focus on releasing prisoners who would not re-offend) have been rejected in favor of onerosity in sentencing. There has been

“Lifers are the best parole risk of any group of prisoners. Lifers just don't violate paroles and seldom commit new crimes. Nationwide data support this truth. Why then don't parole boards release lifers or recommend them to state governors for commutation?”

(from Willis Harris, CURE LifeLong Newsletter August 2017)

too great a desire to emasculate prisoners while they are incarcerated and to exclude us from society upon release.

I would be remiss if I did not bring to your attention the need to enact legislation for the group known among psychologists as “Emerging Adults.” This group is composed of prisoners who were between the ages of 18 and 25 when they committed their crimes. According to the American Psychological Association, this group should be treated differently for sentencing purposes than adults over 25 years of age because their brain development and personalities are very similar to those of juveniles. See Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Adolescence to Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach” (4th ed. 2010); Arnett, “Debating Emerging Adulthood: Stage or Process” (2011) <http://www.jeffreyarnett.com/about.htm>; and Kevin J. Holt, “The Inbetweeners: Standardizing Juveniles & Recognizing Emerging Adulthood for Sentencing Purposes After Miller.” 92 Wash.U. L. Rev 1393.

Emerging adults seem to suffer the same injustices and share the same rehabilitative potential as juveniles sentenced to life in prison.

If the entire focus on sentencing reform is on drug-addicts and other non-violent offenders, recidivism rates will continue to be an issue, because addiction is a relentless disease which fuels crimes such as drug possession, theft, robbery, etc. There must be a focus on prisoners

not likely to reoffend, even if they have committed violent crimes in the distant past. An inability to forgive us our sins has contributed to this great financial strain on our nation and has also kept many people in prison who are truly reformed and would contribute greatly to their communities.

As for the board of probation and parole, its only true function should be to determine a person's fitness to return to society after the person has served the minimum required by law. Often prisoners are denied parole “due to the seriousness of the offense.” However, the General Assembly sets minimum and maximum sentences and determines the time to be served before minimum parole eligibility for every grade of offense. These terms set by the General Assembly are based upon the seriousness of the offense. So once the General Assembly has determined, for instance, that a specific class of felony is so serious that minimum eligibility is 7 years, the parole board should not be allowed to effectively overrule the General Assembly by saying that the seriousness of the crime should require 12 years. Instead, the parole board should only determine whether a prisoner has conducted himself or herself well during incarceration and whether he/she can safely return to society without reoffending. If so, and if he/she has also served the minimum required by law, there can be no justification for denying parole.

Giving the parole board virtually unlimited power to grant or deny parole, and granting them such secrecy that they may even discriminate against prisoners on the basis of race, sex, religion, etc. without being found out encourages abuses of power, such as the games played by Don Ruzicka and his co-worker. Although a great deal was made of this incident in the media, there have been many more abuses which have gone unaddressed because the board has too much unnecessary authority. I have included a modification to the current Missouri Statutes which govern the parole board's authority: 217.670 and 217.690 RSMo. This modification is titled “The Parole Reformation Act.”

Please consider these suggestions as you begin to push for criminal justice reform, and thank you so much for your time and efforts.

Sincerely, **Kenneth Bell** ERDCC ❖

Court Advances Class Action Challenging Parole Process for JLWOP-Sentenced Plaintiffs

St. Louis MO – On November 6, a federal court ruled in favor of plaintiffs who sued MoDOC, challenging the Parole Board’s disregard for the constitutional rights of youthful offenders. The class-action complaint argues that such defendants are entitled to a meaningful opportunity for release under a recent series of United States Supreme Court decisions.

Brown v. Precythe, filed earlier this year by the Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center of St. Louis (MJC-STL) in the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri, alleges deeply troubling actions and practices on the part of MDOC and the Parole Board that demonstrate abuse of power, disregard for due process, and failure to comply with state and federal law.

In permitting the case to proceed, the Court held that juvenile offenders are constitutionally entitled to a meaningful and realistic opportunity for parole release.

The Court also ordered the defendants to turn over parole files and recordings of parole hearings—materials historically withheld not just from the public, but from prisoners and their attorneys as well.

“The MDOC has shown that, absent court intervention, they will continue to disrespect and disregard youthful offenders’ right to a meaningful opportunity for



release,” said Mae Quinn, Director of the MacArthur Justice Center’s office in St. Louis.

Further, when MJC-STL attorneys attended hearings on behalf of clients, they were barred from taking notes, cut off from correcting factual misstatements regarding the underlying offense, and instructed that the hearings are not “lawyering moments.” And despite the fact that *Miller* and the cases that follow emphasize the significance of

youthful offender’s maturation, development, and rehabilitation, the vast majority of those who have had a parole hearing under the recent change in law have been denied because of the circumstances of the offense.

This is one of several challenges MJC-STL has brought against the MO-DOC. On October 26, a state court judge ruled in favor of another of their clients in a case that similarly focused on Parole Board disregard for youthful offender protections.

“The importance of these two decisions should not be underestimated,” said Quinn. “They reinforce what scientific studies and the Supreme Court have already recognized – that youthful offenders are categorically less culpable than adults. Missouri needs to make sure its administration of justice adequately takes into consideration age, vulnerability and other mitigating factors.

“Until then, justice deferred remains justice denied.” ♦

MO Prison Officials Sued for Punishing Prisoners Who Disclose Misconduct

On September 20, 2017 the MacArthur Justice Center (MJC) in St. Louis filed suit on behalf of Missouri prisoners who were retaliated against for accessing the prison grievance process, conferring with counsel regarding conditions of their confinement, and pursuing legal action to protect their constitutional rights. The suit seeks damages, as well as equitable relief, for the plaintiffs, all of whom are clients of MJC.

The civil suit filed in St. Louis County Circuit Court, *Smith v. Sachse*, sets forth state and federal constitutional violations that include Missouri Department of Corrections (MDOC) officials searching the cells of prisoners who seek to file complaints against prison officials, moving prisoners without any prior notice to far-flung facilities as a form of punishment, and failing to provide prisoners with confidential spaces for legal visits and telephone calls.

For example, elderly prisoner Tilman Smith, a disabled former coal miner, found himself denied access to complaint forms to pursue grievances against the Missouri Eastern Correctional Center for conditions of confinement, where the kitchen was without hot water for months on end. Shortly after meeting with his attorneys from MJC about these condi-

tions, he was met with an unplanned move from his facility. He was relocated to Tipton Correctional Center, many more hours away from both his family and his attorneys.

Similarly, MJC represents Norman Brown who, after complaining about repeated disparaging comments directed at him and his attorneys by a South Central Correctional Center (SCCC) staff member, and being named as a plaintiff in a lawsuit against the prison’s parole system, was moved to another facility across the state, more than five hours from his family and attorneys.

These are both examples of a persistent campaign aimed at thwarting both MJC’S advocacy and the efforts of prisoners raising valid concerns about MDOC conditions and practices.

“Over the past year we have noticed a troubling pattern of harassment and retaliation against our incarcerated clients who dare to speak up for their rights and the rights of others. While Governor Greitens and the new MDOC Director claim they are interested in reforming the prison system here in Missouri, our clients are being retaliated against for trying

to do the same from within,” said Amy Breihan, an attorney at MJC.

MJC Director Mae Quinn noted. “Unfortunately, in a state where the public defender system ranks 49th for funding and is unable to even do the day-to-day work of properly representing people in the courts, injustices in the prisons and jails are allowed to fester.”

Quinn continued, “We know there are many caring people trying to do their jobs at MDOC. But recent investigations and news accounts demonstrate staff may face backlash for blowing the whistle on misdeeds. What has not been talked about is the retaliation prisoners face there – and they don’t get to clock out. They contend with that environment 24-hours a day.”

Instead, according to attorney Amy Breihan it seems some in the system have doubled-down on their efforts to exercise their power and authority in inappropriate ways. “The message our clients are getting from those who supervise and control nearly every aspect of their lives is: speak up, and you’ll pay.

“This retaliation is unconstitutional, and we are standing up for and with our clients to ensure it stops.” ♦



Missouri CURE
P.O. Box 28931
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Established 1990

Fight Mass Incarceration—and CURE the Madness!

Disclaimer: The articles in this newsletter are for informational purposes only. Nothing in this newsletter is intended to “promote, incite or advocate disorder or the violation of state or federal law, nor to promote, incite, advocate, facilitate or otherwise present a risk of lawlessness, violence, anarchy or rebellion against a government authority”...or any of the other ridiculous excuses that the Department of Corrections frequently uses to reject Turning Point, the newsletter of Missouri CURE, simply because they don’t want prisoners to have access to the information we are trying to provide.



We are deeply grateful to the following people who donated to Missouri CURE: Antonio Agee, Ronnie Axell, Shango Bey, Luke Cody, Genevieve Fahland, Jessica Groza, Justin Jarvis, Fredrico Lowe Bey, Sherry Matthews, Debbie Norman, Mikel Porter,

Deborah Qualls, Ronald Robinson, Janice Rusk, Donald Statler, Sammy Vincent, and Belvin Williams.

Special thanks to Carol Corey for her donation of \$525.00, to CRCC NAACP for its donation of \$500.00, and to SCCC NAACP for its donation of \$250.00. Once again, we are indebted to Action Mailing for donating the printing of our newsletter. Thank you all for your support!

Finally, we sincerely appreciate Ms. Genevieve Fahland, who donated an additional \$100.00 in memory of her only son, Larry Fowler, who died October 18.

We wish Genny peace in her loss.



RIP Larry Fowler



The American Correctional Association met in St. Louis August 18-22, 2017. Dianne Tramutola-Lawson, National CURE Chair and Colorado CURE Chair, was a vital part of these proceedings.

Since 1999 National CURE has sponsored Dianne’s attendance to these twice-yearly meetings as CURE’s representative. The ACA sets standards for accreditation of prisons and jails throughout the country. The ACA has affirmed resolutions on opposing Life Sentences without Parole for Youthful Offenders, supporting Reimbursement for the Incarceration of Undocumented Immigrants, and supporting Elimination of the Exception Clause of the 13th Amendment.

Dianne was asked to speak on CURE’s proposed standard on climate control, which will be considered at the next meeting in January. ♦

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