

Turning Point: The Newsletter of



Citizens United for
Rehabilitation of Errants

Missouri CURE
P.O. Box 28931 St. Louis MO 63132

STL 314-730-CURE (2873)

KCMO 816-377-CURE (2873)

Email: hedyharden995@gmail.com

Web: www.missouricure.org

From the Chair

by Hedy Harden

I never Thought I'd get an Award for doing Time!

At Missouri CURE's 16th Annual Conference on September 28, Cornell Jackson El received the Courageous Prisoner Award. In this photo, he joyfully observed, "I never thought I'd get an award for doing time!"

But it wasn't just time he was doing. Cornell spent 47 years in prison, 44 of them for a crime he did not commit. He spent 17 years in continuous lockdown in adseg, from 1975 to 1992.

Finally released from prison November 1, 2018, he is now an active member of Missouri CURE.

Charlie Sullivan, president of National CURE, requested that Keith and I bring Cornell with us to Detroit October 5-7 for the conference on fighting life sentences. However, Cornell was unable to join us. His parole officer had given permission and was enthusiastic about Cornell making the trip. But shortly before we left, Cornell developed an abscessed tooth that had his entire face swollen up. Taking antibiotics and scheduled to have the tooth pulled the following week, he was truly disappointed to miss the gathering. No doubt this crisis was just one result of nearly 50 years in prison with little or no dental care—not to mention having to use tiny "shankless" toothbrushes.

Other Conference Highlights: More than 100 people attended this conference celebrating 29 years of CURE in Missouri. The theme was "Impact of Incarceration on Women and Children," and it was dedicated to "The Women in Missouri Prisons and the Children who Need Them."

Workshops were held on women in

prison (led by Michelle Smith and Patty Berger), the Campaign to Abolish Life Sentences (led by Ronnie Amiyin and Malik Sellassie), overall prison conditions (led by Tacuma/Don Harden and Malik), and abuses in segregation (led by Keith and Cornell).

We heard from Judy Henderson and Stacey Lammert, both pardoned by Gov. Greitens. Judy spoke of the national campaign to free women prisoners such as lifers, survivors of violence, and those with terminal illnesses. She came from Kansas City bearing a quilt featuring names of nearly 50 such women in Missouri prisons. Stacey spoke about her journey. After a childhood of sexual abuse and years in prison, she emerged and has earned a law degree. Stacey is now an attorney with the St. Louis Public Defenders Office.

Washington University art professor Denise Ward-Brown and her assistant Michael Francis videotaped parts of the conference in preparation for a film she's creating.

Lunch was deli sandwiches, chips, grapes, soft drinks, and anniversary cakes.

We recognized those present who were former prisoners as well as those on the outside who support loved ones in prison.

We observed a moment of silence for Terry Tillman, an 18-year-old black youth shot and killed by police August 31, 2019. Terry was the best friend of my beloved grandson, Tyrie Powell, and a close friend of the family. Tyrie's mother, my cherished stepdaughter Natasha (Nicole) Hurd, was scheduled to be here to speak about growing up with a father in prison. Nicole teaches math at Vashon High School and recently earned her masters

Autumn 2019

Inside this issue:

Photos from Conference	2
Hope in a Hopeless Situation	3
Superhero Bruce Franks Jr.	3
Detroit Conference	4
More photos	5
Why Justice does not Prevail	6
Photo	7
Trends in Incarceration	7
FreeHer Conference	8
Photos	8
Autumn Activities	9
Video Parole Hearings	9
Photo	9
Cure Violence-Jamala Rogers	10
Photos	11
OK Releases 462 in One Day	11
Life or death at CCC	11
Thank you	12
Life Sentence?	12
Central Park 5	12
Join CURE	12

degree. She coaches the cheerleaders at Vashon and had to be present for a rescheduled football game, so was unable to join us.

Keith spoke about why justice does not prevail (*see p. 6*).

Other Awards: We thanked and awarded **Mayor Tommie Pierson** and the **Staff** of Bellefontaine Recreation Center for

See Conference page 10

Missouri CURE

Executive Board:

Chair: Edna (Hedy) Harden
 Vice-Chair: Keith Brown El
 Secretary: Renese Drake
 Treasurer: Kathy Franklin

Board of Directors:

Ronnie (Amiyn) Axell Stephanie Charles
 Shirley Miner Angelika Mueller-Rowry
 Denorce Starks Shirley Sutton

Committee Coordinators

Frances Cummins: Membership
 Angelika Mueller-Rowry: Prisoner Health
 Ronnie Amiyn/Malik Sellassie: Outreach

Advisory Board

Kenneth Bell Shango Bey
 Kevin Hammerschmidt Travis Henderson El
 Lonnie Lockhart Bey Shon Pernice
 Judy Pickens Patricia Prewitt
 Roosevelt Price Jr. Michelle Smith
 Joseph Williams

Special Liaisons

- ◆ Aaron Burnett, OBS STL
- ◆ Nathaniel Johnson, STL Community Re-entry
- ◆ Bev Livingston, MISD KCMO
- ◆ Margaret Phillips, MADP
- ◆ Michelle Smith, Empower Missouri

Turning Point Editor: Hedy Harden
 Webmaster: Clare Petersen

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.



Ronnie Amiyn Axell called keynote speaker Andrea James his "home girl." Also from the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury (called the Heart of Black Culture in Boston), he introduced Andrea and presented her with our 4th Annual Jon Marc Taylor Award.



Keith Brown El, Vice-Chairman of Missouri CURE, upon receiving our Lifetime Achievement Award. Keith spent 36 years in Missouri prisons as a respected activist and earned a paralegal degree. Released in 2008, Keith continues his fight for justice.



Board members Shirley Sutton and Shirley Miner, both supporting imprisoned loved ones, staffed the reception table.

Hedy with Michelle Smith, who received our Courageous Citizen award. Michelle spent 3 years in Missouri prison and was released in 2015. She and her son Jared, who works 2 jobs, experienced homelessness. Eventually she found a job and a place for them to live. Once settled, she became a dedicated activist working with CURE and other organizations. A great asset to our work, Michelle was Emcee at our conference, led a workshop, and helped in many other ways. We eagerly await her return next year.



Keith Brown El, Malik Sellassie and Ronnie Amiyn, who spent 36, 30 and 25 years, respectively, in Missouri prisons, are active contributing CURE members.



Hope in a Hopeless Situation

by Justin Bennett

I have been in prison eleven years. I was a first-time offender of a violent crime. I came to prison at 22 and I am now 33 years old. I am praying for a second chance to see my kids on the other side of these prison gates. I do not want to spend the rest of my life in prison. For the past 11 years I have been doing everything in my power to right my wrongs. I have obtained a GED and learned a trade. I am a facilitator who teaches many classes in the areas of Critical Thinking, Relationships, reactions, and overall thinking errors. Also I teach older and younger inmates about traumatic circumstances and how to avoid them.

There's many good people locked up in prison due to mistakes made under the influence of drugs and alcohol. But it seems no matter how much these men rehabilitate themselves, the system refuses to give them a second chance. Prison is designed for punishment for the crime that you committed. On the

flip side, it's supposed to correct. That's why these prisons are named "Correctional Centers." A prisoner who is serving life without parole but who has subsequently rehabilitated himself, shown sufficient remorse, and remained committed to atonement should one day be given a second chance.

No person is the worst thing they ever did. Pursuing change and not really getting rewarded can cause a person to lose hope and ultimately give up. I always motivate guys in here to never give up. I remind them and myself that our change is not for a reward. We changed because we want to be better men. I tell guys in here to have faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and not yet seen. If we hold on, freedom can be ours just as it was for those before us who fought decades for their freedom. So we can never, ever give up.

We must continue to hold on to our commitment to change ourselves and the communities out there that we have destroyed. Our families and communities hoped that one day we would change our criminal ways, and now that

we have rehabilitated ourselves, all we can do is call upon society to not give up hope in us. Even those like me serving life with-



out parole are worthy of a second chance.

I hope that you out there will call upon legislators and state governors to help craft legislation or use their clemency power to give hope of a second chance to these thousands of changed men in America serving a sentence of life without the possibility of parole.

Until then, my friends in here, I call upon each and every one of us to keep hope alive. Remain hopeful in what seems to be a hopeless situation. ♦

"Superman" Bruce Franks at History Museum

by Angie Mueller-Rowry

No, the "St. Louis Superman" ain't back for good – not yet, anyway. The documentary short film shown November 17 during this year's St. Louis International Film Festival allowed glimpses into 34-year old battle rapper, Ferguson activist, and recently resigned State Representative Bruce Franks Jr.'s fights and struggles, family life, frustrations and insights as a black man coming from the 'hood, poised to stir up friend and foe in the attempt to bridge the well-known gridlock in the state capitol – for the sake of his constituents.

Bruce looked good, relaxed. He gave me a bear hug as we talked for a minute before the show. I told him we'll want to get his take on his experience on the corrections committee and dealing with DOC. He was all for it. And he'll connect us with his successor, newly elected State Rep Rasheen Aldridge. I've known Rasheen for years, ever since he spear-headed the "Give me 15" campaign to raise the minimum wage in Missouri. He's just as straightforward and no-nonsense as Bruce.

After the show Bruce spoke about the lingering trauma of losing his little brother decades ago, pointing to the "ripple effect" as the "root cause of gun violence" that had caught up with him. His hard-won success in getting a law passed that

mandates treating gun violence as a "public health" issue came after a long and tough struggle of "putting political differences aside to keep my people alive" — came with a high personal price: recurring dreams in which he "relived all the funerals I'd been to in my life".

I appreciated how this brilliant, energetic young man, whose father was imprisoned during most of his childhood, challenged his party's higher-ups. "Safety," he said (speaking of a solid political career as a supposed vehicle for a change that ends up being forever postponed) "ain't gettin' us there. We need to focus on the legacy of the fights and sacrifices of those who came before us." After three years, he realized that the state house was not for him. I love Bruce's realism and genuine honesty.

"Working there needs patience," he said. "I'm just not that person. I'm a black man. I don't have time to wait!"

This was met by roaring applause – and not only from black folks.

Addressing a young man's question, Bruce said: "Use your heart, love and passion to keep fighting. Listen to your conscience, it will tell you what's right."

Bruce hinted at the attacks he experi-

enced from adverse sides while in office: "I ran into so many challenges—from people who look like me and people who



don't look like me," he said. He was accused on one hand of being a sell-out (as portrayed in the battle rap scene of the film), and on the other hand for uprooting the status

quo, linked to the symbolism of him wearing a hoodie. "I had to do this," he said. "You have to be yourself at all times."

Explaining why he resigned, Bruce said "I had so much energy and love for my position, trying to help my people" that he neglected self-care.

"We black folks are raised to always be strong." He realized that there are limits, and that it is important to acknowledge them, and get help. He sees raising mental health awareness as his current task.

"Speaking up about it is the first step," he said. "My job right now is to say out loud: 'It's okay to not be okay!'"

Asked about his future plans, Bruce said "I'm almost there." He'll continue working with organizations, elected officials and everybody else on the issues that plague the community.

Right on, Bro! We ready! ♦



Some of the people from around the country who attended the Detroit conference October 5-7.

Detroit Conference: Challenging Life Sentences

Nearly 60 people from around the U.S. and Canada gathered in Romulus, Michigan October 5-7 for a conference sponsored by National CURE and the Sentencing Project. Enoch (Malik) Sellassie joined Keith and Hedy as we drove to Detroit. Malik was a fully active participant.

Registration was Saturday evening. The conference began with self-introductions. The packed room included advocates, former lifers, formerly incarcerated, and those with a loved one serving a life sentence. People spoke of what brought them to the meeting and what work they were doing. Released lifers in attendance had served hundreds of years.

On Sunday morning Nicole Porter introduced the Sentencing Project's Campaign to End Life Imprisonment and the movement to abolish life sentences. Former lifer Eddie Sanders presented on the Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth. They were followed by a half hour of questions and answers.

Next, Catherine Brooks, Director of St. Leonard's Halfway House in Windsor, Ontario, Canada described their Peer Life Transition Service for lifers in Canada.

With a radically difference release system than here in the States, many lifers in Canada are released to St. Leonard's House where they are re-socialized, allowed to seek employment in the com-

munity, and given free time to mix with the public. Initially, Canadian citizens were apprehensive and fearful of convicted murderers living and interacting with the public. This perception changed as lifers were working in the communities, keeping them clean and performing other needed services. The fear subsided and people began to embrace St. Leonard's House and its mission. The program has spread to cities throughout Canada. Brooks answered questions and showed a brief film about the program.



After lunch, activists and lifers conducted a panel discussion on how to successfully reduce life sentences. The panel consisted of 12 leaders from 6 states including Keith Brown El and Hedy Harden from Missouri.

The evening session included a brainstorming session led by Kay Perry and Nicole Porter. The purpose was to identify actionable steps for participants to use to end life sentences. The session focused on the following areas for criminal justice reform: felony murder, elderly parole, mental health, juvenile lifers, compassionate release/commutations, developmental disabilities/cognitive impairment, virtual lifers (minimum of 50 years), sex offenders, and the Exception Clause of the 13th Amendment.

Impact strategies were discussed such as group unity, establishing rapport with departments of corrections, civil service vs. political decisions, a Constitutional Convention to limit gubernatorial

powers, redefining parole board powers with 100% compliance; seeking unusual partners, educating parents/kinfolk of prisoners as well as the community about criminal justice, better use of conference calls, dynamic risk assessment tools, video participation at parole hearings, voter registration by prisoners, utilizing federal dollars for reintegrating lifers into society, abolishing the death penalty, former lifers as speakers, lifers participating in legislative hearings, restorative justice, ways to give prisoners and their families hope, post-conviction remedies for lifers, and a second look at life sentences.

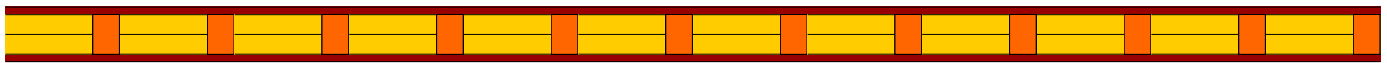
Charlie Sullivan shared information on the movement to replace the use of ankle bracelets for lifers with smart phones. This generated mixed discussion.

Eldon Dillingham advocated for the movement to abolish life sentences to include the 6,400 people civilly committed for sex offenses.

Claudia Whitman, who has successfully brought about releases of prisoners serving life sentences, closed out the meeting with her thoughts regarding her work.

The conference ended with breakfast Monday morning before traveling back home. *(Thanks to Willis Harris of CURE Life-long for some of the details of this report.)* ♦





Thank you, Members, Volunteer Staff and Friends of
Missouri CURE
for making our 2019 Conference a Success!



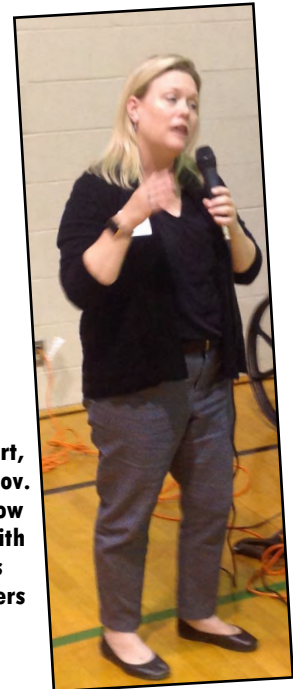
Some of the attendees at Missouri CURE's 16th Annual Conference held in North St. Louis County September 28.



Judy Henderson, pardoned by Gov. Greitens, a leader of the National Council, also leads the Missouri chapter of the national clemency campaign. Below is the quilt bearing names of some of these women lifers.



Malik (Enoch) Sellassie and Tacuma (Donald Harden) led the workshop on Abolishing Life Sentences.



Stacey Lammert, pardoned by Gov. Greitens, is now an attorney with the St. Louis Public Defenders office.



Why Justice Does Not Prevail

by Keith Brown El

The impact of incarceration on women and children is the theme for this year's annual statewide conference. Since I am a man and have never been incarcerated in a woman's penal institution, I really don't know a lot about what goes on in women's prisons. Therefore this is a subject that is probably better addressed by the women who are also here to speak to you today. Nevertheless, since it is my turn to speak here on the podium, I will try to address the subject as best I can.

I have spent a lot of years out of my life being locked up in men's penitentiaries and jails. I've also served portions of my young life in juvenile prison facilities. A lot of people would say "A prison is a prison; if you've seen one, you've seen 'em all." If that's true, then I'm pretty sure that both women's and men's penitentiaries have a lot of things in common. And if that is the case, I can tell you in one word what the impact of incarceration is on anybody's life. That one word is destruction! However, incarceration is often just a mere consequence of living in a society where inevitable destruction is already waiting to happen in the lives of many.

One obvious example of that is this: Many women at the time of their incarceration were raising children in a home environment without a father. The father was not there either because he was dead, strung out on drugs, already incarcerated himself, or absent for some other reason. When the criminal justice system or child welfare services steps in and also removes the mother from the home, the lives of these children become far more devastating. Now these children will most likely grow up with a warped and distorted picture of the world. This picture will most likely lead them down the road to crime, prison, death row, or dying in the streets. However, as cruel and dangerous as the real world sometimes truly is, it may be that their picture of the world is not so warped and distorted after all.

To be sure, doing time in prison is no cake walk but, unlike a lot of incarcerated

people, I found my time in prison to be a learning experience for me. The more obstacles that were put in my way, the more determined I became to defeat them. One thing I learned very early and very well while I was incarcerated is that some of the most lawless and unjust people on this planet are the persons who have specifically been given the responsibility of upholding the law and maintaining justice. I'm speaking of corrupt cops, jail and prison guards, and other correctional officials. I'm speaking of right-wing conservative politicians and every aspect of the courts. I'm sure we all have our own personal horror stories to tell about our encounters with such people. But what I wanna know is this:

How did these people manage to acquire the title of "Right Wing" in the first place? The WRONG WING is what we all should be referring to them as, since everything they do is wrong.

The only things they seem to be able to do "right" are lying, stealing, cheating, condoning acts of out-right murder committed by the cops, rigging the outcome of elections, promoting racism and gender discrimination, sending the wrong people to prison, and keeping the ones who actually deserve to go to prison (i.e. corrupt public officials, etc.) out here on the streets. They intentionally cause death and destruction in our communities by saturating our homes and neighborhoods with guns, alcohol, drugs and every other destructive device they can think of. Their laws are not made to protect people like you and me. Their laws are made to give their people an excuse to either kill us or lock us up in jail.

The people who do these sorts of things are all in the same gang and will almost never go against each other. They don't care what the law says, just how wrong one of their own people might be, or the amount of damage and destruction their actions or inactions will inflict upon the lives of innocent and guilty alike. The people in this particular gang are

going to stick together no matter what because that is the only way they can stay in control, and staying in control is the only protection they have.

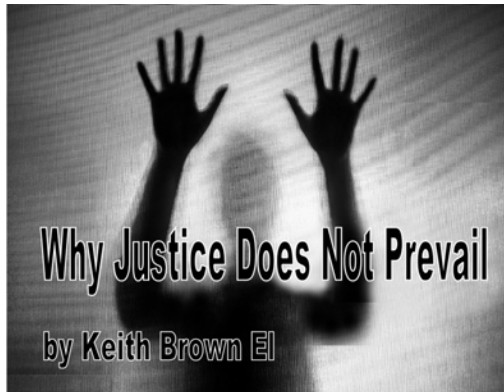
You don't have to look very far to get a glimpse of what I am speaking of here. Only a few months ago we witnessed one of the Trump Administration's massive deportations. Thousands of children were separated from their parents and other family members while they were in detention. Till this day, some of these children still have yet to be re-united with their families. They are lost in the system and may never be found again. This is but one example of the many forms of destruction which the impact of incarceration can have on people's lives.

Some of the excuses we were given for these deportations are as follows:

- ♦ America cannot continue to allow unrestricted access to people from foreign countries into the United States; otherwise we will soon run out of room.
- ♦ Separation of families during deportation will discourage illegal immigrants from seeking entry and re-entry into our country.
- ♦ American citizens also need protection from dangerous and violent illegal immigrants who commit, murders, rapes and assaults etc., when they shouldn't even be here in the first place.

Of course, the real truth is that these new deportation policies are being directed only at non-white people, and it is being done because in 31 more years white people will be outnumbered by Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Asians, Latinos, Haitians, Somalians, African-Americans and other non-white races. If that happens white people will likely no longer be in control. That is why several weeks ago the conservative majority of the United States Supreme Court upheld the Trump Administration's highly discriminatory deportation practices. It is now law that any non-white person suspected of not being born in this country can be arrested, taken to jail and deported to another country.

If you are African-American and you think your future in this country is safe



Justice from page 6

and secure because you've got a good job and were born here, think again.

First of all, many undocumented immigrants were and are being forced to work for ridiculously low pay—or slave wages. They have to do this just to stay off the radar and remain in this country. The work many of them do consists of jobs which most black people wouldn't even consider having today. But once all the immigrants here are gone, who do you think white America will use to fill that void? It won't take much to make those jobs the only ones available to African-Americans—then what choices will we have?

Also we black people are doing a fantastic job of killing off each other. It is quite common for people who are oppressed to turn on each other and strike out at those closest to them. Yet despite all of this, the government is still using the police and the courts to kill off and incarcerate all of us disobedient, non-compliant, and rebellious Black people. The rest of you docile Negroes as well as poor people who have been struggling and striving all your lives to be assimilated into this American culture will in fact be assimilated, but it will be by way of the slave plantation. This is what Donald Trump

obviously meant by the phrase “Make America great again.” (Keep America white, and keep whites in control). This is the reason why right (wrong) wing Americans love him so much.

Some of us remain in a perpetual state of denial because we still can't bring ourselves to believe all of this,



even though we see it happening every day right before our eyes. Despite a long and well-documented history of outright lawlessness, despite unspeakable acts of cruelty and terror being committed by this government day after day against blacks, poor whites and other underprivileged people, and despite a refusal to even recognize us as human beings, we still don't get it. Many of us are still foolish enough to believe that all we need to do is confront this government with the truth—and they will do what is right, just because the law says so. Well, if it were that easy, all of our troubles would have been over with a long time ago.

It is true that the lawless and unjust rulers in our society never seem to tire of

bragging about how proud they are to be living in this country and being part of such a great democracy. And it is democracy—for them. Keeping the idea in your head that this nation is built upon the principles of Freedom, Justice and Equality is all a part of their game to have us running around in circles like a dog chasing its tail. Yet this so called “great country” seems to be everything but a democracy—if you can get past all the lofty words in the United States Constitution or the Declaration of Independence and judge this “democracy” strictly according to the way it is governed.

Having the right to free speech, to protest, dissent and litigate in the courts means nothing if the ultimate outcome of your efforts still won't get you any results—even when your cause is just. All this does is make a mockery out of everything that democracy is supposed to stand for.

Therefore we need to get it in our heads once and for all that Justice cannot and will not Prevail, until the Power to Render Justice is Removed from the Hands of the Unjust! That also means, if we really want change, we have stop looking for ways to get out from under our oppression without having to make real sacrifices. That kind of victory over oppression has never happened—and it never will. ♦



We recognized those who have and continue to support imprisoned loved ones.

U.S. Prison Population: Massive Buildup & Modest Decline



The Sentencing Project, September 26, 2019: “By year end 2017, 1.4 million people were imprisoned in the United States, a **decline of 7%** since the prison population reached its peak level in 2009. This follows a nearly **700% growth** in the prison population between 1972 and 2009.”

Criminal Legal News can be found online at: <https://www.criminallegalnews.org/news/issue/2/8/>

FreeHer: Nothing About Us, Without Us!

by Michelle Smith

The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls held its annual conference in Montgomery, AL from October 3rd - 6th, 2019. I was honored to be invited and thankful that I could attend due to issues I was dealing with personally.

In fact, as I write these words and recollect the amazing experience of the conference, I sit in a federal prison; truly appreciative that I had the chance to fill my spirit with the love, camaraderie, and support of so many women and girls. I promised myself that I would take in every moment in gratitude and hold my sisters close in my heart and mind to help me to survive this imprisonment.

The Council was formed by Andrea James and other formerly incarcerated women because they recognized the need for justice-impacted women and girls to be involved in criminal justice policymaking and decarceration efforts, as well as the need to unite women and girls affected by what I term, the criminal (in)justice system.

Andrea had recently honored us by attending and giving the keynote address at this year's Missouri CURE conference in St. Louis on Sept. 28th. A powerful, dedicated, and determined advocate for

justice-impacted women and girls, Andrea had recently testified in a congressional hearing concerning the implementation of 'The First Step Act'.

The FreeHer conference was attended by women and girls from across the country and around the world; whose

Feelings of guilt, abandonment, frustration, and hope were expressed and understood by us all. Language interpretation devices were provided, but there was no barrier to understanding the empathy, care and concern of those present.

Several leaders of organizations gave speeches about the work they are doing to free incarcerated women, including 'Color of Change' and 'The Clemency Project', whose representative Judy Henderson presented quilts with the names of women with life sentences written on each square. We also viewed a documentary called "Pushed Out" about the discrimination and trauma experienced by black girls in schools. Andrea gave a moving speech to inspire us to never relent and continue to fight for women and girls affected by these systems of enslavement, marginalization,

subjugation, and oppression. The entire conference was a time of healing, consoling, and rededication for us to help our own. The mission statement "Nothing About Us, Without Us," is the driving force behind all of the advocacy, activism, support, and care of The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. ♦

FreeHer! FreeMe! FreeUs!



Photo taken at previous FreeHer conference

lives are impacted by incarceration and dedicated to decarceration and advocacy.

On Friday and Saturday, Oct 4th and 5th, many workshops were conducted where women shared, learned, cried and laughed together, as well as inspired each other to get involved and/or continue to fight. I recall one workshop where women from the United States, Brazil, Mexico, and other nations spoke of and listened to experiences, both personal and those of parents, spouses and children.



Ansar Mahdi (Jesse Scott), Tadar Wazir and Ronnie Amiyn Axell



The group Cylint Praize

Autumn Activities

September

- 16 Keith interviewed Hedy on Jaws of Justice about upcoming CURE Conference.
- 28 Missouri CURE's conference commemorating 29 years.

October

- 3-6 FreeHer conference in Montgomery AL (Michelle)
- 5-7 National CURE conference in Detroit (Keith, Malik, and Hedy)
- 20 The Central Park Five at Washington University (Ronnie)
- 22 Panel discussion—Community Solutions in Criminal Justice: Diversion and Reentry (Malik Sellassie, Ronnie, Carol Corey and Hedy)



November

- 14 Keith asked to testify at KCMO City Hall hearing on bill to reduce gun violence in KCMO; bill passed.
- 16 "The Voice Within" at Missouri History Museum; St. Louis International Film Festival features PPA production of Women at Vandalia—a moving and powerful film (Angie and Hedy)
- 17 "St. Louis Superman" documentary about former State Rep. Bruce Franks Jr., his trauma and career (Angie).
- 20 Town Hall meeting on prison reform with Bruce Franks & Cori Bush (Shirley Miner, Malik Sellassie, Ronnie Amiyah and Tacuma attended) ♦



Video Parole Hearings

A prisoner asked us to inquire about the new parole board policy of videotaping all parole hearings except for those of prisoners held in the Jeff City area. We received the following response from Steven Mueller, Parole Board Operations

In response to your inquiry, the Parole Board began conducting video hearings in December 2013. Currently video hearings are conducted at the majority of the institutions, except those that are in or near Jefferson City. Although initially both the offender and victim were required to consent to video hearings, with the recent passage of **HB 1355**, changes to 217.670 RSMo which became effect **08-28-2018** removed the requirement for the offender to consent to video hearings. At this time, only the victim is required to consent to a video hearing. If the Institutional Parole Supervisor does not believe that the offender's

mental health, functioning ability or the logistical dynamics of the hearing room can be altered to accommodate a video parole hearing, the hearing may be conducted in person. Otherwise, most hearings are conducted through use of video conferencing. ♦

It's Time to Cure the Violence – and the Politicking

October 17, 2019 Jamala Rogers,
St. Louis American

The carnage of black bodies this summer, especially children, took a toll of all of us who care about humanity and who tirelessly work for racial justice. What compounded this bloody summer's negative impact is the way some chose to respond to the crisis.

The Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression (CAPCR) led the grass-roots efforts to bring a violence-prevention program to the attention of a city often referred to the Murder Capital. Cure Violence (CV) is a health-centered, evidenced-based program producing dramatic reductions in high-violence cities.

What's so disgusting to me is to find out that Cure Violence was asked to come to town about four years ago. What happened? Absolutely nothing. Had the city taken its violence problem seriously, it would have embraced CV then and Bloody Summer 2019 might have been averted.

While Mayor Lyda Krewson's head was in the sand and others were victim-blaming, CAPCR studied the program for almost two years to confirm CV's bold claims. Once convinced, CAPCR put up the money for the CV team to do an assessment of the St. Louis crime situation. Grieving families and a desperate community were looking for effective solutions.

CV's Marcus McAllister traveled here in June, making a compelling case to

bring the program to St. Louis. He also got questions and concerns from elected and appointed officials, health providers, community groups and other stakeholders. There's no doubt that our city is in bad shape; most agreed we needed Cure Violence.

In a serious scenario, all parties would have pulled together to identify the needed funding and cut through the bureaucracy to get the program going by any means necessary. Several funding streams were identified – but then the politicking kicked in even as the body count increased. The mayor has been hi-jacking the community-driven process behind the scenes while publicly expressing alarm over the violence. It's slowing down the implementation of a plan long overdue.

While we were working through heartache and trauma, some folks were faking concern about the violence but unwilling to put time and energy into seeking alternatives. There was the outrageous challenge that a multi-million program that benefitted black folks was not the best use of city dollars. I'd love to see this kind of scrutiny of the police department's bloated budget.

Speaking of the police department,

the St. Louis Police Officers Association talked about broken urinals and bald tires on police cars in the middle of Cure Violence discussions – as if to say the money proposed for CV could be better spent on police needs.

Those of us who are active in community-building know that violence and crime are symptoms of deeper problems. Like poverty, under-employment and unemployment, miseducation, unhealth care – created by systems of oppression and fueled by racism. These are issues that elected officials on the local, state and federal level can do something about. Ditto for civic and corporate leaders.

Getting \$5 million passed for Cure Violence by the

Board of Aldermen was no small feat. It was truly a collective effort. With these kinds of controversial issues, only the most committed push forward, dragging those with hidden agendas behind them. Those who straddle the fence think they will have a win-win situation. They can say, "I told you so" whether there's success or failure.

Making St. Louis livable for all is a task for all of us who share a vision of a more just and equitable region. We'll be working side by side with those fighting just as hard for an unjust and inequitable St. Louis. It's time to cure the violence. It's time to cure the politicking. ♦



Jamala Rogers

Conference from p. 1

the use of this venue.

Former **State Rep. Sharon Pace**, who provided invaluable assistance, received our Rory Ellinger Award. "**Cylint Praize**," a group of black youth, was enthusiastically received and awarded.

Our EmCee and board member **Michelle Smith** received our Courageous Citizen Award. Working with several organizations, including CURE, attending forums, seminars and lots of meetings, she represented us in Empower Missouri's Smart Sentencing Coalition, participating in weekly conference calls and lobby days at the capitol. Michelle is a shining example of what one committed person can accomplish.

Our new board member Ronnie Amiyon Axell introduced our keynote

speaker **Andrea James** and presented her with our Jon Marc Taylor Award for her advocacy and dedication.

Born into a family of lawyers and civil rights champions, Andrea practiced law in her community for years until the real estate market crash put her in a bind. Embarrassed at being in trouble, she tried moving money around but finally turned herself in, surrendering her law license, and was sentenced to 2 years in federal prison for wire fraud, where her eyes were opened to the plight of women in prison. She now advocates for and is devoted to women and girls who are and were incarcerated. Andrea eloquently articulated her work with the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls.

Our final award was presented to our own Vice-Chairman **Keith Brown El**. It was my great pleasure to present this award to a man I greatly admire, who has been my partner in this venture called CURE ever since he was keynote speaker at our conference 6 years ago at Ferguson Middle School. After 36 years in prison, he is a devoted community leader who courageously speaks truth to power at every opportunity. His award reads: "Missouri CURE presents this Lifetime Achievement Award to Keith Brown El this 28th day of September 2019 for a life of Passion and Struggle for Justice—and Unselfish Devotion to Those in Need."

The conference concluded with a brief business meeting and election of officers. ♦





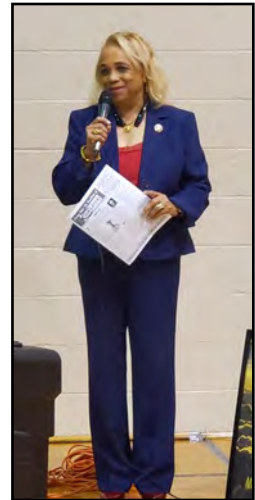
Former prisoners were given special recognition.



Missouri Senator
Karla May could
be seen taking lots
of pictures at the
conference.



Former
State Rep.
Sharon Pace
received our
annual Rory
Ellinger
award.



Oklahoma Releasing 462 Prisoners in Largest Single-day Commutation in US History

Oklahoma will release more than 460 prison inmates on Monday November 11 in what will amount to the largest single-day mass commutation of sentences in US history.

The move, pushed by Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt and the Republican-controlled legislature, is part of the state's efforts to reform its criminal justice system. On Friday, Stitt signed off

on the commutation of 527 inmates' sentences, with 462 to be released on Monday and 65 later, [Holly Yan reported for CNN](#). The inmates were all convicted of nonviolent offenses. ❖

Life or Death at Chillicothe

by Jessica Groza

Missouri CURE, 10/12/19
First of all, thank you for all you do. I am sending a copy of the letter I have written to Gov. Parson, Alana Boyles, Anne Precythe and all the heads of CCC. I thought maybe you could mention something in the newsletter. This is an over-looked situation. This past week a friend here tried to hang herself. They could not cut her down, and medical walked here. I'm hoping this will bring about a change.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in regard to CCC's medical emergency procedures for inmates. In the 18 years I've been incarcerated (16 of them in DOC), I have witnessed numerous code 16's. And, in honesty, they are a joke to staff here due to the abuse of medical emergencies by inmates. When a code 16 is called, nobody including medical, is in a hurry to get there, because to them it's another sprained ankle, fake seizure, or another inmate trying to get

out of work. Staff is not to blame. It's the boy who cried wolf. In the midst of this, though, there are times when it is truly a life or death situation and, instead of it being handled as a medical emergency, it's looked at as another sprained ankle.

On October 8, 2019, a woman's life was truly in jeopardy. Mr. Masuch, Ms. Pettigrew, and a few other staff responded appropriately, but to the majority of staff, especially medical, it was viewed as a sprained ankle. There have been numerous medical emergencies over the years that were life or death that didn't get the response they should have due to the misuse of code 16s.

I know there are several different codes, but can a code specifically for life

or death situations be implemented? This was not the first to need immediate medical attention, lifesaving medical attention at that, and she will not be the last.

Could you also take the time to look into whether the housing unit officers are being equipped with scissors? When suicides and attempted suicides by hanging occur, not all officers are equipped to cut these women down. Yes, there are scissors in the bubble, but every second counts. Situations like this are not an everyday occurrence, and you guys work hard to make sure it's not, but in a place

like this where women have mental health issues, are broken, feel lost, alone, hopeless and helpless, you never know when it could happen.

Could you please look into this? A change needs to be made.

Thank you. ❖





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.



Many thanks to the following people for their generous contributions: LeMoine Carter, Theresa Fortner, Darrel Kind-Summers, Derrick Merritt, Al Richey and Kevin Straub. Special thanks to Maureen Flynn for her donation of \$100.00 to help with our conference expenses. Once

again, a very special thanks to our super-giver Carol Corey for her continued contributions and support. In an act of great kindness, Andrea James returned our \$637.00 check for her transportation, saying she felt we needed it more than she did.

A Prisoner Who Briefly Died Argues that He’s Served His Life Sentence

What does it mean to complete a sentence of life in prison? One prisoner claims he has done it by serving time until the moment of his death — plus another four years since — and says it is well past time to set him free.

The prisoner, Benjamin Schreiber, made that argument to an appeals court in Iowa, saying that when he briefly died in 2015, before being revived at a hospital, he completed his obligation to the state. He asked the three-judge panel to let him get on with his life.

The judges rejected his argument this week, ruling that a lower court had been right to dismiss his petition.

**CS40
2019 FALL
SPEAKER**



**DR. YUSEF
SALAAM**

**FREE.
SEATING IS
FIRST-COME
FIRST-SERVE
STARTING
FROM 6PM**



**THE CENTRAL
PARK FIVE**

**SUNDAY,
OCT. 20
GRAHAM
CHAPEL 7-9PM**



**RAYMOND
SANTANA**



Join Missouri CURE!

Date _____

Name/ID# _____

Facility _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please check the annual membership type:

- ☐ Prisoner **\$2.00 ***
- ☐ Individual **\$10.00**
- ☐ Lifetime **\$100.00**

*** or 5 stamps welcome if allowed.**

☐ Donation \$ _____

☐ New Member **Renewal** ☐

Make checks payable to Missouri CURE.

Donations to Missouri CURE are gratefully accepted and will be used to benefit prisoners and their families and loved ones.