

Turning Point: The Newsletter of



Citizens United for
Rehabilitation of Errants

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From the Vice-Chairman

by Keith Brown El

An Open Letter to Missouri Prisoners

Missouri CURE is primarily an information distribution organization. We disseminate information about laws and prison conditions to prisoners and the public that we feel is important for them to know—**information that is not likely to otherwise be reported by mainstream media.** We also advocate for better prison conditions.

But we tell everyone in every newsletter we publish that we don't have the time or financial resources to help prisoners with their criminal cases or civil litigations. (Please see page 2.)

It costs \$100,000.00 just to exonerate **one** innocent person once he or she is inside the Department of Corrections. No organization has that type of money, especially if you multiply that amount times the number of people who proclaim their innocence or being wrongly convicted. Still, many prisoners choose to ignore this and continue sending us information about their legal cases and expecting us to respond.

Missouri CURE is not some big major corporation with an army of staff members. We are a grassroots group of volunteers doing the best we can. Most of us have family responsibilities and other obligations. Some of us work full time. We can't answer every letter we get from prisoners, even when they don't ask for legal help and are just corresponding to let us know what is going on.

A lot of people talk about how they can't wait to come home and work with us when they get out, but as soon as they hit the streets we don't see or hear from them any-

more. We are aware of how great a struggle it is for all of us to try and get our lives together and keep them on track after coming out of one of those places. So we do understand. But those of you who are still in there also need to understand that the rights of people out here on the streets are being taken away from us just like your rights are being taken away in there.

Politicians and big money corporations like to talk about how great and wonderful America is because of the freedom that it affords every citizen. Yet every day they are making more laws and decisions that are calculated to take away as many of our freedoms as possible. What the Constitution won't allow them to take, they simply ignore and do whatever they want to do anyway.

It's now considered okay for those in high places to outright ignore anything the Constitution now prohibits. Pretty soon there won't be any real difference between being in prison and being out here on the streets. I tell people this all the time: If you let the system get away with doing what it is doing to people in prison, the next thing you know they will be doing it to us out here as well. **And they are!**

I may have been gone from prison a long time, but I will never be back out as long as the 36 years I was in. Yet not for one minute have I ever forgotten where I came from, and I know just how easy it is to end up right back in one of those places, regardless of how long I've been out here on the streets. This is why I'm out here every day trying to fight the battles that need to be



Spring 2018

Inside this issue:

Ricky Kidd book	2
KC Welcomes Bobby Seale	2
Treatment of Mentally Ill	3
Retaliation	3
Drug of Choice	4
Feminine hygiene	4
Life in the Hole	5
Angola closes Camp J	5
Lost Souls	6
Sex Offender legislation	6
Spring Activities	7
Victory in Louisiana	8
NY restores voting rights	8
Ode to CURE Family	8
Faces of Innocence	9
Healthcare for Profit	9
Legislation 2018	10
First Step passes Congress	10
Lobby Day	10
SB 966 Highlights	11
Thank You	12
Save the Date	12

fought. I'm doing it for myself as well as for people like you.

Therefore, if you have written and haven't received an answer, one of the reasons above is probably the reason why. ♦

Missouri CURE

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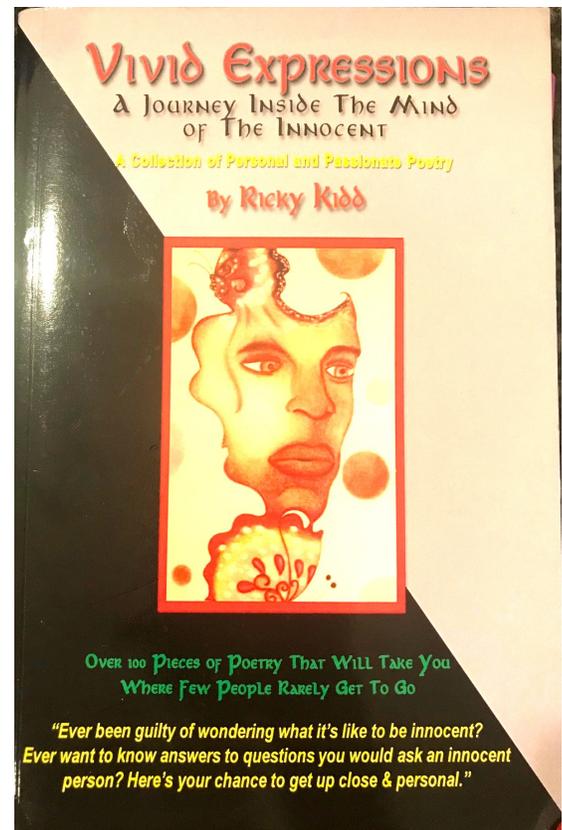
Missouri CURE is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible.

*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.

22 years wrongfully convicted and still imprisoned, Ricky Kidd takes you inside that journey in his book "VIVID EXPRESSIONS"—thought provoking and emotionally stirring pieces that will move the reader. A MUST READ! Available on Amazon.com for \$11.99.



Kansas City Welcomes Bobby Seale

Bobby Seale, Co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, was an honored guest in KCMO on May 18-19.

Concerned about the horrible conditions that poor and oppressed people must live and die under, Rev. Ester Holzendorf thought about the 10-point program that the Panthers wrote 50 years ago. She contacted Seale and asked if he would come to KCMO to help create a ten-point program for Kansas City today.

Holzendorf said, "I believe rational people can agree that we have the same problems now that we had 50 years ago, only worse." A long-time Missouri CURE member, Holzendorf was the keynote speaker at our 2014 annual conference in KCMO.



"Wherever there was a Panther Party," she said, "there were programs: breakfast for the children, food pantries for the community, medical clinics, ambulance services, transportation, care for elders, and community schools." She invited Bobby to tell the Panthers' story and to work with the Kansas City community to develop a program for survival in these troubled times. The program is called Sankofa, which is a word in the Twi language of Ghana that means, "Go back and get it."

Sankofa for Kansas City is a grassroots movement of individuals, groups, churches, etc. After a successful weekend of launching the program, the organizing continues. Keith Brown El was asked to lead the team for the Criminal Justice component. ❖

Insane Treatment of Mentally Ill in Prison

In 1946, Life Magazine published an exposé that declared most American mental hospitals "a shame and a disgrace." In the report, Albert Q. Maisel featured biting anecdotes of routine abuse, starvation diets, overcrowded bathrooms and cynical charades of treatment that mocked the very word. "Through public neglect and legislative penny-pinching, state after state has allowed its institutions for the care and cure of the mentally sick to degenerate into little more than concentration camps," Maisel wrote.

Now, some 70 years later, journalist Alisa Roth has written a chilling book arguing that American jails and prisons

have become de facto warehouses for the mentally ill, and that conditions inside have scarcely improved from the horrors Maisel uncovered.

More than half of prisoners incarcerated in America suffer from some kind of



mental illness, Roth writes. A federal study she cites states that 75 percent of women locked up are mentally ill. Yet the American prison system is distressingly unprepared to offer treatment or provide even basic mental health care to its wards. The poor conditions inside in fact make the sick sicker.

In one of the book's many interviews with front-line observers, a Los Angeles corrections official, Alejandro Fernandez, tells Roth "We're not psychiatrists."

"We, as deputies, we know how to arrest people. We know how to put people in jail. We don't know how to take care of people with mental illness."

Just as Michelle Alexander wrote in "The New Jim Crow," many others have written in recent years about the brutal racial disparity in American incarceration, which has locked away generations of black men at a rate dramatically outpacing that of whites.

In "Insane," Roth aims to frame the incarceration and treatment of the mentally ill as the next civil rights issue. ♦



Retaliation and Free-casing

by Hedy Harden

Last September the MacArthur Justice Center in St. Louis filed suit against Missouri prison officials who retaliate against prisoners who complain about mistreatment. The suit, *Smith v. Sachse*, names a few plaintiffs who are clients of MJC. From reports we've been receiving, it appears a class action suit might be more appropriate.

We've been inundated with reports from prisoners who have been discriminated against for attempting to use the grievance procedure or file lawsuits. Some staff members appear to use these constitutional violations routinely and with impunity.

For example, at ERDCC 14 prisoners were reportedly written up after cell searches, each for having a bottle of prayer oil, which a field test supposedly showed positive for methamphetamine. The fragrance is used to counter the odor of toilet use in the cells. Thirteen of the prisoners filed grievances and were placed in segregation. The one prisoner who did not file a grievance was not so punished. At least one of the prisoners who was punished, and who has been outspoken about this abuse, has since been transferred to SCCC, in the opposite direction from his family members, who live in another state.

The lawsuit "sets forth state and

federal constitutional violations that include MODOC officials searching the cells of prisoners who seek to file complaints against prison officials" and "moving prisoners without any prior notice to far-flung facilities as a form of punishment." It includes failing to pro-



vide IRR forms that prisoners need to file complaints, which appears to be a prevalent practice in ad seg. Reminiscent of Jim Crow laws in the south, one poor, uneducated prisoner at SECC was told before he could have a grievance form he would have to recite the First Amendment of the Constitution.

I contacted Attorney Amy Briehan of MacArthur Justice Center about this issue. She suggested prisoners write MJC when this type of retaliation occurs so MJC can get a feel for the scope of the problem. You can write to Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center at St.

Louis, 3115 South Grand Blvd., Suite 300, St. Louis, MO 63118.

We're also getting many reports of prisoners receiving bogus drug charges where it seems staff are trying to impress higher-ups that they are fighting the influx of drugs. One prisoner at ERDCC was charged with a drug violation and placed in adseg because a letter addressed to him—with no return address—was received in the mailroom and reportedly contained "a small amount of marijuana." The man never had the letter in his possession, and it could have come from anyone, including someone trying to get him in trouble.

We will continue to monitor this situation with information from our readers. ♦

*No One is
Free
When Others
are Oppressed*

Drug of Choice

by Santino Walker, SECC

I'm not sure if you've heard, but there's a new drug kingpin in town, and its name is Missouri DOC.

Everyone knows that to be successful in any trade, there has to be a supply and demand. As you know, it has been mandated that all tobacco and tobacco paraphernalia are to be banned from Missouri prisons by April 1, 2018. All sales are to be stopped March 1. Strangely, all sales stopped January 1. Then around the first of February the institution informed the slave population that Central Office had approved the sale of tobacco, at a price of \$3.14 a pouch, which is up 15% from the previous selling price.

This reminds me of the life I was exposed to as a teenager. Drugs, and how they destroyed my life and everyone's around me. The things that people are willing to do to obtain drugs, it's the same in here - except that the drug is tobacco. It's always been tobacco. They claim that marijuana is the "gateway" drug to all other illegal drugs. This is a

After 23 years a slave, I've realized that the biggest and most powerful drug ever released upon the slave population was and is the vapor of hope.

lie perpetrated by tobacco companies and supported by the government in exchange for a few dollars in taxes. The truth is that 90% of drug addicts started with tobacco before moving on to other drugs. In this case it's the addict that's punished and not the kingpin!



Another anomaly noticed is the springing up of a number of classes here offering help with stopping smoking. After April 1 it's mandatory anyway, so why all the classes? Money? Money!

After 23 years a slave, I've realized that the biggest and most powerful drug ever released upon the slave population was and is the vapor of hope. Even though we have the potential to monetarily cripple the system, most of us are easily distracted by the mere talk of change, keeping the slaves docile and incapable of doing what must be done to bring about this change.

While we're on the subject of money, most black intellectuals I've come across have made the argument that

black people no longer hold monetary value to the slave-holder. I strongly disagree. Why are so many being re-enslaved? Slaves were once the source of wealth to the enslavers. Still are. It's a fact that once the Emancipation Proclamation was set in place, those who were enslaved were never truly freed, not even physically. Anyone black, caught out in the open, could be kidnapped by any disgruntled confederate and sold to the sheriff who in turn sold the brother or sister right back to the enslavers—who are today's big coal mine companies, railroads, steel and other corporations. Those who resisted were shot dead and left out on display!

Bottom line: Discipline is needed amongst the slaves. This includes the white prisoners, too. You make up a small section of the slave community, but nonetheless you share the black folks' misery. 2/23/2018

Keith read the above on air 4/16/18 on KKFI Jaws of Justice in KCMO. ❖



Feminine Hygiene Products Needed! Missouri Senator Maria Chappelle-Nadal

It has recently come to my attention that women incarcerated in our prison system must pay for their own feminine hygiene products. Items such as tampons, pads, pantyliners, etc. are not provided by Missouri's prison system, even though these products are used by almost all women.

Many women in these institutions have little to no money to help pay for these necessities. I have taken it upon myself to help these women obtain these products that the rest of us take for granted.

With that being said, a local sandwich shop, "Which Wich" at 6662 Delmar Blvd. in St. Louis is now



offering to collect donated feminine products for these indigent female inmates. The restaurant has agreed to take donations. Please join me in this urgent cause. Every woman deserves

to have these products provided for her physical and emotional well-being. Thank you for your help!

Editor: It remains to be seen whether the donated items will be allowed into the prisons. A similar effort called "Tampons for Prisoners" is underway in Kansas City, where a Kansas jail will not allow women access to these products. Although activists have been collecting tampons and money for these women, the jail has refused to accept them. ❖

Respect Existence—or Expect Resistance!

Life in the Hole

by Hedy Harden

Whether you call it ad seg, dis seg, solitary, or “The Hole,” these units continue to be a problem in prisons across the country, requiring 23-hour a day lockdown and deprivation of all but the most bare necessities.

The Vera Institute conducted a study of restricted housing units in several states and released a recent report on solitary housing units or SHU’s, which were created to discipline the most

violent prisoners and separate them from the rest of the prison population. The study found, however, that most individuals are there for low-level, nonviolent offenses such as disobeying a correction officer. These prisoners could be in solitary confinement for a few days or a few months.

The study collected data from restricted housing units in Nebraska, Oregon, North Carolina, New York City, and Middlesex County, NJ.

In Nebraska, “disobeying an order” accounted for 28 percent of such sentences. In North Carolina, none of the top 10 infractions resulting in segregation were among the most serious charges, as determined by the Department of Public Safety. And in Oregon, 58 percent of disciplinary segregation sentences were for nonviolent infractions.

Since the Vera Institute conducted these analyses, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety has significantly altered its policies governing disciplinary practices, and the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services has

ended its use of disciplinary segregation altogether, the study said.

Around the country there are about 80,000 to 100,000 prisoners in segregated housing units that prisons use as isolation and deprivation to discipline prisoners. Such punishment has been widely criticized as inhumane and abusive.

The Vera study found that infrequent reviews and the absence of set release dates and clear pathways out of administrative segregation led to long stays in the SHU.

In North Carolina, more than 1,200 people were being held indefinitely, waiting for their cases to be reviewed by a staff member or committee that would judge them ready to return to general population. These reviews were infrequently conducted.

In Oregon, people who were incarcerated typically spent 60 to 150 days (approximately two to five months) in administrative segregation before their first review.

Long stays in isolation can have devastating effects on incarcerated individuals’ mental health, making it even more difficult to return to their community upon release, noted the study.

Men of color and those with mental health problems were the most likely populations to be sitting in solitary confinement. Women and older individuals were less likely to spend time in the SHU, the study also found.

While making changes in prison facilities can be a slow, challenging pro-

cess, there are still revisions that need to be made, the study concluded.

The recommendations include:

1. Reduce the flow of people into various types of restrictive housing.
2. Exclude certain vulnerable groups from restrictive housing.
3. Shorten the length of time people spend in restrictive housing.
4. Improve conditions in restrictive housing.
5. Assist people in transitioning to a facility’s general population—and whenever possible, avoid releasing them directly from restrictive housing to the community outside prison.

Here in Missouri, some prisons combine disciplinary segregation with administrative segregation. Lately we’ve heard reports that minor violations are being treated as major ones, resulting in longer periods of segregation. Many people are put in segregation for “investigation,” which can take months. Often it appears to be a form of punishment for speaking out or filing grievances. As the article reveals, getting out of segregation can be difficult. Missouri has a step program requiring prisoners to move through lengthy levels of decreasingly restrictive housing before finally being returned to population.

The overcrowding in Missouri prisons only exacerbates the problem. For decades, people have been moved in and out of segregated housing to accommodate bedspace. For example, when someone was placed in ad seg, someone else would have to be released to make room.

The above recommendations by the Vera Institute would provide a good start for Missouri to tackle this problem. ♦



Angola Closes Its Notorious Camp J

Camp J, one of Angola prison's most restrictive housing units for the past 40 years, is now officially shut down. At its peak, Camp J confined more than 400 people in solitary cells for more than 23 hours a day.

According to one advocate, “Camp J, which was more akin to a dungeon, was used to house individuals who were more in need of mental

health treatment than discipline.”

Corrections Secretary James LeBlanc said that while the closure made

sense logistically, it also aligned with the department’s goal to improve segregated housing. The Louisiana Department of

Corrections partnered in late 2016 with the Vera Institute of Justice to work on an initiative known as Safe Alternatives to Segregation, aimed at reducing the use of solitary confinement around the nation. ♦



Lost Souls

by Travis Henderson EI, SCCC



All across the country, men and women fill penitentiaries to capacity,
 anticipated deaths, slowly dying from genocidal catastrophe
 It's a shame how we die for ghetto fame
 when we consider ourselves to be sane
 tables turning, twisted lives going against the grain
 for illegal proceeds, material love, and the killing sales of cocaine.
 Stagnated malfunctions come from the contact of potent marijuana blunts
 while death-struck fatalities arise from the handling of AKs and pistol grip pumps.
 Ignorance remains to keep us behind time
 While a lack of direction gives us the theory we don't mind dying.
 No spiritual roots or religious ties
 Leaves the mind to ponder about where the soul goes after the body dies.
 Our bodies lay scattered throughout funeral parlors on display.
 Dying young is a hell of a way of leaving this world today.
 The words of our funeral: Shall the world reap 'em?
 Will Allah grant us eternity for committing two-way suicide?
 Lost soul—or shall the devil and I continue to walk side by side?
 Mental illness of tombstones and daisies
 Shattered dreams of this life continue to daze me
 Teenage girls give birth to the newborn, who constantly cries,
 Chasing dreams in the distance despite their dilated eyes.
 No mercy at the hands of this genocidal killer
 Living to reach old age becomes a hellified thriller
 There's no particular reason why life is treated so cold
 It's just generation after generation to suffer from the illness of LOST SOULS.....

SB 655 Passed regarding Sex Offender Database & Registration

SB 655 reads in part: “This act sets out and defines different tiers for offenses, which carry different reporting and registration requirements. The act also specifies which individuals are exempt from the registration requirements.

“Certain individuals on the sex offender registry may file a petition for removal, according to the procedures established in the act, in the circuit in which the qualifying offense was committed.

“The court shall not deny the petition unless the petition violated the requirements specified in the act or the prosecuting attorney provided evidence demonstrating the petition should be denied. Individuals who are required to



register but who have committed certain specified offenses are exempt from the public notification requirements if they satisfy specified elements. Juveniles required to register shall be exempt from public notification.”

In fact, studies for more than a decade show that sex offenders, once caught, have one of the lowest rates of recidivism of any class of criminals.

The registry and laws such as child protection zones are based on a set of assumptions that research indicates are highly questionable or outright false. A 204-page report by the Sentencing Commission calls them “myths.” They include:

- ◆ Nearly all sex offenders reoffend.
- ◆ Treatment does not work.

◆ The concept of “stranger danger” — that most sexual assaults are the work of people unknown to the victims.

“Research does not support these myths, but there is research to suggest that such policies may ultimately be counterproductive,” the commission’s report says.

The idea that all sex offenders reoffend apparently originated from a single 1986 Psychology Today article by a therapist who said — citing no research or other evidence — that the recidivism rate for sex offenders reached 80 percent. The number was picked up by a Department of Justice field manual two years later and has been the basis of the claim, repeated over and over, even by a Supreme Court justice, that sex offender recidivism is “frightening and high.” ◆

Spring Activities

March

- 1 Empower Missouri Conference call (Hedy)
- 3 MADP board meeting in JCMO (Hedy)
- 7 CURE joins ACLU Lobby Day
- 8 International Working Women's Day
- 9 Membership committee meeting (Frances, Hedy)
- 13 Keith testifies in capitol for HB 2172
- 19 KC CURE Meeting
- 24 Prisoner Health Committee meeting (Angie, Hedy)
- 30 STL CURE Meeting



April

- 5-10 Keith in STL
- 9 CCHD site visit
- 13 KC MLK march & rally
- 16 KC CURE meeting
- 22 Prisoner Health Committee meeting
- 25 Membership Committee meeting
- 26 Midwest Innocence Project Gala in KCMO (Keith)
- 27 STL CURE phone conference meeting



May

- 10-15 Keith in STL
- 11 STL CURE meeting and pot luck
- 16 Membership Committee meeting
- 18-19 Bobby Seale in KCMO: Sankofa for Kansas City
- 19 Malcolm X's birthday
- 21 KC CURE Meeting
- 23 Prisoner Health Committee meeting



Voting: Poignant Victory in Louisiana!

“We Won!!! Yes, we finally made it happen. House Bill 265 is on its way to the Governor's desk, which means thousands of formerly incarcerated people throughout the state are getting their voting rights back! We truly could not have achieved this victory without the unwavering support of so many people, including YOU! Though in many ways this historic win has been five years in the making, your calls, emails, tweets and relentless commitment to contacting our state representatives over the past few weeks really sealed the deal. This is what people power looks like, and it's just the beginning.” (words from Checo Yancy)

The Louisiana legislature passed HB 265 to restore voting rights to people on probation and parole after a five year waiting period. According to The Sentencing Project, there are 70,000 people on felony probation and parole in Louisiana. Currently, the state restores voting rights once individuals fully complete their probation and parole sentence.

It took three tries for Rep. Patricia Smith, the sponsor of House Bill 265, to get the original bill out of the House. Lawmakers told Smith they had received calls from district attorneys asking them to vote against the bill. The bill earned bipartisan support in the Senate and was approved on a 24-13 vote. Governor John Bel Edwards said he intends to sign the bill into law. Once signed, it will take effect on March 1, 2019. ❖



Representative Pat Smith, who sponsored HB 265, embraces an emotional Checo Yancy, tireless Director of Voters Organized To Educate (VOTE). Checo also leads Louisiana CURE and is on the Executive Committee of International CURE, serving as Vice-Chairman. Checo served 20 years in the notorious Angola prison on a life sentence before his sentence was commuted by Gov. Edwin Edwards.

Gov. Cuomo restores voting rights to 35,000 people on parole

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order to grant voting rights to 35,000 people under parole supervision. The current state law bars people in prison and on parole supervision from voting. The Sentencing Project estimates that 45% of the beneficiaries of Gov. Cuomo's order are African Americans who are disproportionately impacted by felony disenfranchisement laws. The executive order offers

conditional pardons to people on parole, but the pardons will not erase their conviction or any other conditions of their parole. Gov. Cuomo said that he will continue to issue conditional pardons to new people who enter the parole system.

Progressive Democrats have pushed to restore voting rights to people on parole but have been blocked by Senate Republicans and conservative Democrats, according to *The Nation*. Gov. Cuomo's order is

a temporary solution that could be halted when a new governor enters office.

"Restricting voting rights is deeply problematic for a democratic society and compounds the social isolation of formerly incarcerated persons from their communities," The Sentencing Project's Marc Mauer said in a statement regarding the announcement. "I urge the legislature to affirm the governor's executive order by enacting legislation to expand voting." ❖

Ode to the CURE family and others who fight in the everlasting struggle for equality

“It is not the critic who counts, not the [person] who points out how the strong [person] stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the [person] who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends [him/herself] in a worthy cause, who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if

[he/she] fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that [his/her] place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

These are the words, for the most part, of President Theodore Roosevelt, referencing the fighters of days gone by. In today's chaotic world, they couldn't be truer—for those who struggle in the everlasting war of equality for all, not just the chosen few.

William Larson, SCCC ❖

Your mind is a Powerful Thing. When you fill it with Positive Thoughts, your Life will start to Change.
(Inspiration from Kathy Franklin)



“Faces of Innocence” Celebration in KCMO

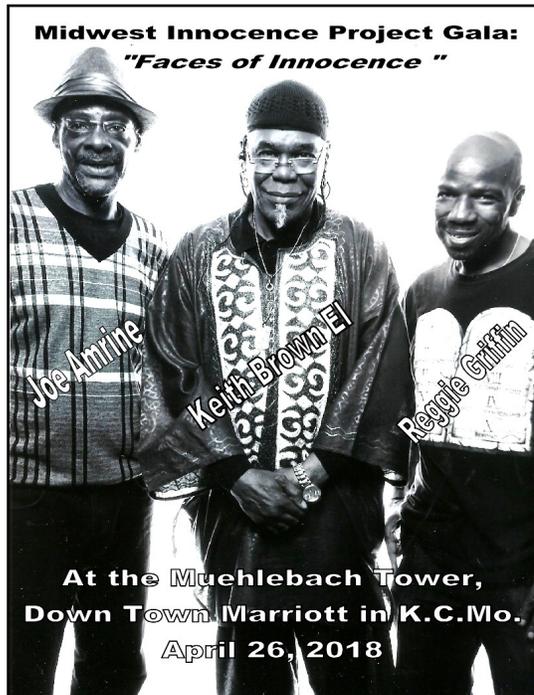
by Keith Brown El

Recently I was privileged to attend the 2018 “Faces of Innocence” Gala hosted by the Midwest Innocence Project April 26 in KCMO. Missouri Exoneree Ryan Ferguson was the honorary chair and M.C. The event included a dinner and speeches celebrating the exoneration of innocent people in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Nebraska and Iowa.

Exoneree Amanda Knox was the keynote speaker. A journalist, speaker, and author of the *New York Times* best-selling memoir, *Waiting to Be Heard* (Harper Collins, April 2013), Knox spent four years in an Italian prison and eight years on trial between 2007 and 2015 for a murder she did not commit.

Awards were presented. Bob Ramsey, a St Louis lawyer, received the Sean O’Brian Freedom Award, presented to individuals for exemplary advocacy and work on behalf of the innocent. Ramsey spent 13 years as a lawyer for Mark Woodworth, convicted twice for murder of a woman near Chillicothe Missouri, but who was exonerated in 2014, after serving 8 years for a crime he did not commit. Currently, Ramsey represents Brad Jennings, whose murder charge in the death of his wife was

thrown out by a judge in February 2018. The Justice for the Innocent Award was given to Rosie McIntyre, Sandra



Newsome, and Gloria Labat, who accepted it on behalf of the brave women of Wyandotte County who came forward to speak the truth about former detective Roger Golubski. and in support of Lamont McIntire's exoneration. Goulubski is a former KCK detective who

framed Lamont McIntire on a murder he didn’t commit because Lamont’s mother rejected the detective’s sexual advances. McIntyre, Newsome, and Labat were unique joint award recipients, since Rosie is Lamont's mother; Newsom and Labat are the mother and the aunt, respectively, of the victim Lamont was wrongly convicted of murdering.

Joe Amrine, Keith Brown El and Reggie Griffin, the three men pictured here, were all wrongfully accused of committing murders while confined in the Missouri Penal System and were eventually exonerated. After briefly reconnecting at the Gala, we paused long enough to take this photo. After talking amongst ourselves and with others, we parted and disappeared into the crowd to share our experiences with others.

This was a very high dollar event with between 500 and 700 people attending. Most of the participants did not come from our type of background. They were lawyers and wealthy people who were there to learn and give their support. I was only able to attend because someone who appreciated the work I have been doing was gracious enough to provide me with a free \$150.00 ticket. This was a learning experience for me because I was unaware that there were so many people who even cared about innocent people being wrongfully convicted. ♦

Health Care for Profit

by Hedy Harden

Corizon Health oversees prisoner health care in Missouri and Kansas. According to an article in the *KC Star*, 283 medical malpractice lawsuits have been filed against Corizon in Kansas and Missouri since 2011.

As the largest for-profit prison health care provider in the country, Corizon is the recipient of lots of criticism from prisoners, their family members, the ACLU and others who say it takes public money and provides little care—all in an effort to maximize its profits.

Missouri State Rep. Bruce Franks Jr. reports that Corizon staff misdiagnosed his uncle’s prostate cancer as ulcers. His uncle died shortly after leaving prison.

Missouri’s contract has no performance penalties or bonuses.

Karen Pojmann, communications director for MoDOC, said Corizon gives no annual report to the department and there’s no way for the department to provide data on inmate health outcomes.

“Part of the challenge is that our database system is antiquated and it’s very hard to generate those types of reports,” Pojmann said.

Multiple suits claim that Corizon employees classified medical conditions as “cosmetic” in order to avoid providing



care, including one by Philip Vitello who said staff at the Missouri state prison in St. Joseph denied him surgery to remove a tumor on his shoulder.

Missouri CURE’s Prisoner Health Committee has compiled files on 230 prisoners who have written about their situations. We share this information with State Rep. Bruce Franks.

Not long ago I got a call telling me about a Missouri prisoner whose fingers were cut off due to gangrene. The man had repeatedly asked for help from medical and was only given Tylenol. Now, I’m told, the man’s hands are showing signs of gangrene as well. There are thousands of horror stories, yet the private company providing medical care is in it for profit, so human beings suffer. ♦

Legislation: Missouri's 2018 session ended Friday, May 18

The following bills passed:

SB 966 resulted from the Governor's Task Force. It is intended to lower the prison population and decrease recidivism so they won't have to build new prisons. The bill would make changes to the parole board and increase spending and resources for re-entry. SB 966 passed the full Senate and the House (with amendments) and is headed for the Governor's desk (see page 11).

Shackling of pregnant prisoners: Use of shackling or other restraints on pregnant, delivering and postpartum women will now be limited by SB 870.

Raise the Age: Empower Missouri's Criminal Justice Task Force, of which Missouri CURE is a member, was a leader in the effort that secured passage of SB 793 to get most 17-year-olds out of adult courts & prisons. A funding mechanism was negotiated to avoid unfunded mandates to counties. The law will be implemented in 2021.

These bills did not pass:

Good Time: We were disappointed but not surprised that the excellent bill from



Rep. Bruce Franks (**HB 1579**) regarding good time did not pass. The bill did have a hearing before the Corrections Committee and was voted Do Pass, which was further than most Democrat-sponsored bills went. It was not heard by the full House nor the Senate. Rumors have been flying that the bill was passed, but these are false.

Geriatric Parole – HB 1359 passed out of committee and was also amended onto a Senate Bill that crossed over to the House, but died. ❖

Prison Reform Act passes U.S. Congress

May 22: The **FIRST STEP Act** passed the U.S. House with overwhelming bipartisan support. 134 Democrats and 226 Republicans voted in support of the bill, for a final tally of 360-59. A group of Democrats opposed the bill because they hope

to see more action on criminal justice reform, particularly sentencing laws. In the meantime, a battle is heating up to get the **FIRST STEP** through the Senate.

The **FIRST STEP Act** includes a number of substantive changes to the federal prison and re-entry system. Controversy is heavy, with many Democrats feeling it doesn't go far enough, and some Republicans, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions, against any kind of reform. Trump says he'll sign it if it comes before him.

Among other things, **FIRST STEP** would:

- ◆ Allow prisoners to accrue up to 54 days of good time credit a year. The changes would apply retroactively, resulting in the release of approximately 4,000 federal prisoners, according to the U.S. Justice Action Network, a criminal justice advocacy group.
- ◆ Ban the shackling of pregnant prisoners, including while giving birth and postpartum. It would also require Bureau of Prison facilities to provide female hygiene products free of charge and increase available phone and in-person visitations for new mothers.
- ◆ Require the Bureau of Prisons to place prisoners in facilities within 500 driving miles of their families. ❖



State Rep. Bruce Franks Jr. with Keith and Hedy on Lobby Day at the Capitol.

CURE Joins ACLU for Lobby Day

On Wednesday, March 7, Missouri CURE members joined ACLU for Lobby Day in the Capitol. Busloads of people from St. Louis and Kansas City gathered in the Capitol rotunda for a rally at 10 AM, where we were greeted by community speakers and several legislators, including State Rep. Bruce Franks Jr. who lit up the crowd with his spirited remarks.

Afterwards we broke into teams and visited legislators, networked during lunch, and ended the day around 3 pm for the ride home. CURE members included Evelyn Gates, Stephanie Charles, Keith Brown El, and Hedy Harden.

Some Highlights of Senate Bill 966

The department of public safety is hereby designated as the central repository for the collection, maintenance, analysis, and reporting of crime incident activity generated by law enforcement agencies in this state. The department shall supervise and manage all correctional centers, and probation and parole of the state of Missouri. The department shall be composed of the parole board and the following divisions: (1) The division of human services; (2) The division of adult institutions; (3) The [board] division of probation and parole; and (4) The division of offender rehabilitative services. Each division may be subdivided by the director into such sections, bureaus, or offices as is necessary to carry out the duties assigned by law.

The department shall operate a women offender program to be supervised by a director of women's programs. The purpose of the women offender program shall be to ensure that female offenders are provided a continuum of gender-responsive and trauma-informed supervision strategies and program services reflecting best practices for female probationers, prisoners and parolees in areas including but not limited to classification, diagnostic processes, facilities, medical and mental health care, child custody and visitation. There shall be an advisory committee under the direction of the director of women's programs. The members of the committee shall include the director of the office on women's health, the director of the department of mental health or a designee and four others appointed by the director of the department of corrections. The committee shall address the needs of women in the criminal justice system as they are affected by the changes in their community, family concerns, the judicial system and the organization and available resources of the department of corrections.

The department shall establish and implement a community behavioral health program to provide comprehensive community-based services for individuals under the supervision of the department who have serious behavioral health conditions. The department shall,

in collaboration with the department of mental health: (1) Establish a referral and evaluation process for access to the program; (2) Establish eligibility criteria that include consideration of recidivism risk and behavioral health condition severity; (3) Establish discharge criteria and processes, with a goal of establishing a seamless transition to post-program services to



decrease recidivism; and (4) Develop multidisciplinary program oversight, auditing, and evaluation processes.

The board shall adopt parole guidelines to: (1) Preserve finite prison capacity for the most serious and violent offenders; (2) Release supervision-manageable cases consistent with section 217.690;

The board shall keep a record of its acts and shall notify each correctional center of its decisions relating to persons who are or have been confined in such correctional center. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any meeting, record, or vote, of proceedings involving probation, parole, or pardon, may be a closed meeting, closed record, or closed vote. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, when the appearance or presence of an offender before the board or a hearing panel is required for the purpose of deciding whether to grant conditional release or parole, extend the date of conditional release, revoke parole or conditional release, or for any other purpose, such appearance or presence may occur by means of a videoconference at the discretion of the board. Victims having a right to attend parole hearings may testify

either at the site where the board is conducting the videoconference or at the institution where the offender is located. The use of videoconferencing in this section shall be at the discretion of the board, and shall not be utilized if either the victim or the victim's family objects to it. 217.690. When in its opinion there is reasonable probability that an offender of a correctional center can be released without detriment to the community or to himself, the board may in its discretion release or parole such person except as otherwise prohibited by law. All releases or paroles shall issue upon order of the board, duly adopted. 2. Before ordering the parole of any offender, the board shall conduct a validated risk and needs assessment and evaluate the case under the rules governing parole that are promulgated by the board. The board shall then have the offender appear before a hearing panel and shall conduct a personal interview with him or her, unless waived by the offender, or if the guidelines indicate the of-

fender may be paroled without need for an interview. The appearance or presence may occur by means of a videoconference at the discretion of the board. However, a parole hearing shall be held if a victim or prosecuting attorney requests one. A parole may be ordered only for the best interest of society, not as an award of clemency; it shall not be considered a reduction of sentence or a pardon. Every offender while on parole shall remain in the legal custody of the department but shall be subject to the orders of the board. 3. The division of probation and parole has discretionary authority to require the payment of a fee, not to exceed sixty dollars per month, from every offender placed under division supervision on probation, parole, or conditional release, to waive all or part of any fee, to sanction offenders for willful nonpayment of fees, and to contract with a private entity for fee collections services. All fees collected shall be deposited in the inmate fund established in section 217.430. Fees collected may be used to pay the costs of contracted collections.

The director of the division of probation and parole shall appoint probation and parole officers and institutional parole officers as deemed necessary to carry out the purposes of the board. ❖

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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. ❖



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Save the Date!

Missouri CURE’s 2018 conference will be held in Kansas City on **Saturday, September 29 from 10 AM to 4 PM**. Our keynote speaker will be **Frank Chapman** of Chicago. A legend among



Missouri prisoners in the 1970s, Chapman is now active in anti-police brutality work. CURE t-shirts can be ordered now and picked up at the conference. Send \$15.00 check or money order to Missouri CURE along with your size requirements (small to 3x). Call 314-730-2873 for more information or check our website as the time gets closer. ❖

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