

Turning Point: The Newsletter of



Citizens United for
Rehabilitation of Errants

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From the Chair

by Hedy Harden

Missouri CURE to Welcome Andrea James

After many years as an attorney representing families in her community of Roxbury Massachusetts, in 2009 Andrea James was sentenced to two years in prison for wire fraud. Her youngest child was only 5 months old and still breast-feeding when James was incarcerated.

She was stunned at what she saw upon entering the federal prison system.

"During my incarceration I was deeply affected by the great number of women who are in prison. Most of these women are serving very long mandatory minimum or guideline sentences for minor participation in drug possession or sales. Most of them are mothers. Their sentences are unreasonably long, the average being ten years. They have been in prison long after what should be considered fair sentences. They are provided limited educational opportunities. The women have managed to hold it together while psychologically and physically enduring such long sentences. They remain positive and hopeful amidst a torrent of regret, heartache, remorse, alienation, loneliness and a host of other problems mostly related to being warehoused in prison while their children struggle to survive."

Since her release she has dedicated herself to advocating for imprisoned and formerly imprisoned women and girls.

In 2015 Andrea founded Families for Justice as Healing (FJAH), a criminal justice reform organization advocating for community wellness initiatives to replace the war on drugs and incarceration. FFJAH speaks from the perspective of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and their children.

With financial help from a Soros Justice Fellowship, she later founded the National

Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, which is currently waging a 50-state Clemency Campaign to release long-time female prisoners (see article page 8).



Andrea James

Andrea will be the keynote speaker at Missouri CURE's annual conference this year on September 28.

Judy Henderson, who spent 36 years imprisoned for murder in Missouri before being pardoned by Gov. Greitens, leads the campaign in Missouri. She'll be on hand as well as Stacey

Lannert, also pardoned by Greitens, now an assistant public defender in St. Louis.

Pastor Tommie Pierson, a former state representative and the newly elected Mayor of Bellefontaine Neighbors in North St. Louis County, will sponsor our conference at the Bellefontaine Recreation Center, 9669 Bellefontaine Road 63137.

The theme is The Impact of Incarceration on Women and their Families. Workshops will be held on this and other topics, including abuses in segregation/solitary and a special workshop on prison conditions led by Pastor Myron Mitchell, a retired Captain of Missouri DOC. Superhero Bruce Franks will also be in attendance.

The conference will be held Saturday, September 28, from 10 am to 4 pm. Awards will be presented. As always, admission is free and lunch will be provided.

Many thanks to former State Rep. Sharon Pace, who helped us obtain the venue this year, and to Pastor Myron Mitchell, who directed us to her office.

If you are a former prisoner, a loved one of someone imprisoned, or a member of society who cares about justice, you won't want to miss this very special event. ♦

Spring 2019

Inside this issue:

River of Misery	2
Bad Apples	2
Segregation/Solitary Watch	3
100 Days of Justice	3
Empower Missouri Event	3
Constitutional Variances	4
Railroaded by Racism	4
Spring Activities	5
Statewide CURE Board Meeting	6
Incarceration Stats	6
CURE Endorses Cure Violence	7
Frank Chapman blog	7
Clemency for Women Lifers	8
First DOC Same-sex Marriage	8
Winter Newsletter Fiasco	9
Contraband	9
Legislation	10
Prison Thoughts	10
Why Bruce Franks Resigned	11
Still a Threat	11
Thank you	12
Mama don't you cry	12

Injustice must be exposed,
with all the tension its
exposure creates, to the
light of human conscience
and the air of national
opinion before it
can be cured.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Missouri CURE

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Turning Point Editor: Hedy Harden

*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.

River of Misery

The Prison Industrial Complex continues to wreck human lives, as racism, poverty and hypocrisy continue to rise.

The disparity between rich and poor is obvious to the naked eye, and from these wretched conditions, all other social problems worsen, as the common people struggle to survive and this disturbing list goes on as the River of Misery goes by.

The level of despair and hopelessness is soothed by drugs creating shattered and unstable family units throughout the hoods.

State sanctioned terrorism being injected into Our lives as the political propaganda machine ramps up the war on the common people, a severe penalty for trying to survive.

Obtaining blind support for this new and improved COINTELPRO—AKA Homeland Security now with this in-your-face Trumpism, fascism is no longer a political concept of obscurity.

Gradually eliminating the few Civil Rights we once had—Dr. King never dreamed that conditions could turn so bad.

What we're watching is a River of Misery going by reaching in by traditional means, saving some here and there, but it never seems to be enough, as the River of Misery continues to go by.

We do Our best, scoring a minute victory here and there, amid so many demoralizing defeats, but giving up would mean giving in to something so unspeakably horrible – the River of Misery.

Death would be easier, but We want to live. We continue the fight. With Hope, Love and Commitment serving as Our beacon light, this River of Misery will be relegated to the annals of history and no longer be a visible sight.

Together We Will Win!!!

Shango Bey

Bad Apples: 85,000 Cops Investigated for Misconduct in U.S.

Judges, prosecutors, police officials, legislators, bureaucrats, union representatives and representatives of virtually every other constituency in the justice system have conspired to keep secret vital information about police misconduct. A year-long media investigation tries to cut through all the official secrecy. (USA TODAY) from **The Marshall Project** May 24, 2019 ♦



From the MacArthur Justice Center website:

Segregation/Solitary Watch

Solitary confinement has many euphemisms: administrative segregation, restrictive housing unit, security management unit, secure housing unit. No matter what you call it, the practice remains substantially the same: for months, years, or even decades, a single human being is confined in a bathroom-sized cage for 23 hours a day.

Their single hour of respite is taken alone in a tiny outdoor cage, with no

space for any recreational activity other than pacing. Even that meager privilege is always denied on weekends, and sometimes permanently. Those in solitary have little or no opportunity to talk to or otherwise meaningfully interact with other human beings. With the exception of incidental contact accompanying the placing or removal of shackles, some go years or decades without experiencing human touch. In short, they are utterly alone.

Irespective of the precise set of restrictions, the outcome is unvarying: prisoners condemned to solitary confinement endure grave and permanent psychological and physiological harm. As Supreme Court Justice Kennedy has written, it is a practice that brings prisoners “to the edge of madness, perhaps to madness itself.” Today, 80,000-100,000 humans endure this regime in American prisons and jails. It is time to put an end to it. ♦

100 Days of Justice

from Organization for Black Struggle

“I Will Not Prosecute Poverty.”

To a standing-room-only crowd on April 15, Wesley Bell talked about what he’s been up to in the first 100 days as the first African American St. Louis County prosecutor.

One of the areas of concern that was brought up was the issue of child support. Bell stated that from experience he knows how it feels to keep up with child support. He’s thankful to be able to go to work and pay it off, but he understands that not everyone has the money and opportunity to do so. He sided with keeping family members together and will not prosecute people who fail to pay their child support.

Bell will also not prosecute marijuana possession cases of fewer than 100 grams, “What we can do is disincentivize those types of unfair stops & policies. By not prosecuting these cases we help disincentivize these stops.”

The majority of people being held in jail for

misdemeanors cases are working poor and can’t afford the amount the bail is set for them. Bell’s office will not request cash bails but instead issue summonses on class D and E felony cases. This would help low income household members by giving them the opportunity to await their court date while being able to work and take care of their family needs.

He has reduced the jail population by 12% since being in the prosecuting attorney’s office. ♦



Empower Missouri Holds Annual Awards Dinner *by Hedy Harden*

This gala event was held in St. Louis May 23 to a sold-out crowd. CURE members Michelle Smith and I were on hand, as well as member Stanley McCoy, who is also on the Empower Missouri St. Louis Council.

St. Louis County Prosecutor Wesley Bell was the keynote speaker. Bell was part of a group of 20 progressive prosecutors who traveled—at no taxpayer expense—to Berlin and Portugal to study the criminal justice systems there. A national organization, **Fair and Just Prosecution**, sponsored the trip. The group included St. Louis’ Kim Gardner, Larry Prazner of Philadelphia and Rachel Rollins of Boston.

In Berlin they studied Germany’s

charging and plea bargaining approaches, rates and length of incarceration, youth justice practices and conditions of confinement. In Lisbon they learned about models of decriminalization and public health responses to drug use.

Portugal has the dubious distinction of having started the slave trade, while the U.S. has carried it to the extreme and continues it to this day in

prison. Both Germany and Portugal have more advanced systems of incarceration with shorter sentences. Diversion programs also keep the prison population low.

Bell is studying other municipalities with progressive prosecutors, such as Wyandotte County in Kansas, and he has recently posted a position for a person to start a **conviction integrity**

unit in his office.

Awardees included Bruce Franks, Jo Mannies, Mama Kat, and Christ Church of Maplewood.

Franks, who recently resigned from the state legislature, started his acceptance speech with a spirited rap, assuring us all that he is still a superhero in St. Louis. He had nothing but praise for his able and dedicated assistant, Danielle Spradley, saying he would miss his best friend.

When I asked him afterwards what would happen to the 4-drawer file cabinet holding copies of Missouri CURE’s records of prisoner abuses, he said he would leave it for his successor. The two people who will compete to replace Franks are both good, he said, and he’ll let them know that “this is how we do things here.” ♦



Constitutional Variances

by Kevin Hammerschmidt

In studying case law and lawyer reviews I have discovered issues involving court rulings of our Constitution. I believe the following article is a serious matter we face today and is in the public interest to realize.

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the sex offender registry, stating, 'Even though the sex offender registry does present a constitutional violation to those on it, the security to the public outweighs those violations.'

Of course, I am paraphrasing, but this is what they inferred. I am confused, though. The U.S. Constitution's purpose is to protect the individual, not certain groups of people or people as a whole. By protecting each individual, the constitution in turn protects all of society. There is a Federal case which states, '... Ms. Hicklin seeks to protect her constitutional rights. [I]t is always in the public interest to prevent the violation of a party's constitutional rights'. *Melendres v. Arpaio*, 695 F3d 990,

1002 (9th Cir. 2012).

This clearly states that the constitution was created to protect the individual. Then why is the U.S. Supreme Court going against that right and precedence in this situation, professing to protect the public as a whole?

I'll tell you why. There are those in power who wish to take away our

"Those who would trade freedom for security deserve neither."

rights—why not start with undesirables (sex offenders); then the powers that be can desensitize the public, pitting groups against individuals and other groups, paving the way for their own agenda.

Our constitution is under attack and being watered down and eventually the foundation of our constitutional rights will be weakened and dissolved. Then neither the individual nor the whole of society will be constitutionally protected, but instead exploited.

Allowing any type of constitutional violation to stand, for any reason, goes against our country's principles. These individuals want us to believe that security is better than or 'outweighs' freedom (as this constitutional violation presumes).

Yet, Ben Franklin said, 'Those who would trade freedom for security deserve neither.' So, when are we going to stop these violations?

When will we say enough is enough? I am afraid that if we wait until a constitutional action of this kind affects you, it will already be too late to do anything about it. These types of constitutional variances (no matter how small) subject the individual to harm and are not in the public interest. We need to stop these variances before they cause irreparable harm to all of us. ♦

Concealed evidence, a coerced confession and a biased detective sent an innocent 17-year-old to prison for murder, prosecutors say

Gus Garcia-Roberts 5/22/19, USA Today

Prosecutors in Long Island, New York filed a motion today to vacate the conviction of a black man who spent 33 years in prison for a murder they now say he did not commit, declaring that the case against Keith Bush was tainted by a coerced confession, a prosecutor who illegally suppressed evidence, and racial animus by a lead detective.

The action marked a dramatic reversal by the Suffolk County District Attorney's office, which had long fought Bush's efforts to reexamine his 1976 conviction, even as his steadfast refusal to admit guilt likely earned him an extra decade-plus in prison. Bush, who is now 62, was 17 when he was arrested. He was released on life-

time parole as a registered sex offender in 2007.

The motion will need to be granted by a judge before Bush is officially exonerated, but the filing details why the District Attorney's Conviction Integrity Bureau — a unit responsible for examining potentially unjust convictions — is seeking to clear him. The motion accuses former law enforcement officials of concealing evidence of a second suspect in the case, which involved



Keith Bush

the murder of a 14-year-old girl. Prosecutors now believe that second suspect, since deceased, could have been the real killer.

Retired homicide detective August Stahl, pictured, helped send Keith Bush to prison for 33 years. When investigators questioned him about the case last month, they said he responded: "That n---- did it."

According to the court filings, Stahl referred to murders in mostly-black neighborhoods as "misdemeanor homicides" and boasted that he had done his work as a detective in a way that would've gotten him indicted today. He also lamented to investigators that in his old age, "I can't pound people the way I used to be able to," the records show.

Stahl later denied having made these statements. ♦



"When the Power of Love Overcomes the Love of Power, The World Will Know Peace." Jimi Hendrix

Spring Activities

March 2019

- 3 National CURE Lifers Conference Call (Keith)
- 12 The Interrupters film, introducing the Cure Violence campaign (Angie, Hedy, Malik Sims)
- 16 MADP Board Meeting
- 18 KC CURE Meeting
- 21 Women and the CJ System seminar (Michelle) by STAR (STL Alliance for Re-entry)
- 22 STL CURE Meeting
- 23 CURE pot luck party at Hedy's place
- 28 The **Injustice of Innocence** seminar sponsored by Criminal Justice Ministries, Midwest Innocence Project & Clark-Fox Foundation (Michelle, Angie, Shelby, Hedy)
- 1,8,15,22,29 Weekly Empower MO Smart Sentencing Conference Calls (Michelle)



April

- 2 Sankofa Leadership Training Class (Keith)
- 5 STL CURE Meeting
- 9 Sankofa Legal Justice Team (Keith)
- 13 MO CURE Statewide Board Meeting in New Bloomfield MO
- 15 Interview on KKFI: Can a black man claim self-defense in MO? (LaTarah, Keith)
- 15 KC CURE Meeting
- 17 State Parole Reform Strategy Call 4/17 (Keith, Hedy)
- 22 Keith interviewed Lamar Vickers re nephew Victor Vickers' wrongful conviction on KKFI
- 23 Hearing for Ricky Kidd (Jeff Humfeld, Keith)
- 25 Criminal Justice Ministries Dinner Program (Shirley M., Michelle, Angie, Hedy)
- 5,12,19,26 Empower MO Smart Sentencing Conference Calls (Michelle)



May

- 2 CCHD Site Visit for grant (Bill Reyland, Hedy)
- 10 STL CURE Meeting
- 20 KC CURE meeting
- 23 Empower Missouri STL Awards Dinner (Michelle, Stanley, Hedy)
- 17 Missouri legislative session ends
- 3,10,17 EM Smart Sentencing Conference Calls (Michelle)



June

- 3 Sankofa Board Meeting KCMO (Keith)
- 7 STL CURE meeting 6:30 pm, University City Library
- 7 Bruce Franks leads anti-violence protest honoring his brother, Christopher Harris (Michelle)
- 16 Smart Sentencing Conference Call (Michelle)
- 17 KCMO CURE meeting 6 pm, 3811 Chestnut

Prisoners

Please let us know if your organization is prohibited from contributing to Missouri CURE. Also, if you are a member and not receiving Turning Point, let us know. We need as much information as possible when calling Central Office, so please give us the name(s) of CO's that are handing out the mail. Thanks!

Statewide Missouri CURE Board Meeting Held

On April 13, Missouri CURE board members from St. Louis and Kansas City gathered at Oak Chapel M.B. Church in New Bloomfield MO. Affectionately known as the “Little Chapel in the Woods,” this is the church of Pastor Myron Mitchell—formerly known as Captain Mitchell before his retirement from the Missouri DOC.

We began the meeting with self-introductions. This was the first time some of our board members had formally met. Seven board members were in attendance: Hedy Harden, Chair; Keith Brown El, Vice-Chair; Renese A. Drake, Secretary; Stephanie Charles, Kathy Franklin, Michelle Smith, and Angelika Mueller.

Hedy presented a financial report in the absence of a Treasurer.

A grant update was given and discussed. Our new employee, Bill Reyland, is making good progress. He has been working closely with Angie preparing prisoner narratives for publication.

We have applied for another CCHD grant for the coming fiscal year. Angie has also brought us information on a smaller grant opportunity to supplement our funds for this project.

Angie will be traveling for about 3 months starting April 22. After her return she will be going to Germany for an extended period, so she will be gone most of this year.

Keith presented a proposal on the nature of the board, which we discussed.

Hedy emailed our by-laws and articles of incorporation to all board members.

The CURE website is in the process of being updated. Kathy has made some

excellent suggestions for this purpose. She and Hedy will work on this together and give instructions to Clare Peterson in South Carolina, who is our webmaster.

We discussed the 2019 Annual CURE Conference, which will be held in STL September 28. Possible themes are abuses in segregation and the Sentencing Project’s campaign to abolish life sentences.

Hedy will contact Nicole Porter to inquire. Since the publication of the book, “The Meaning of Life: the case for abolishing life sentences,” by Marc Mauer and Ashley Nellis, they are available to speak at events throughout the country.

Other possible speakers suggested by Michelle Smith include Stacy Lannert, who was exonerated and is now an attorney with the St. Louis Public Defender’s office; and Shantell Fisher, who was also in prison and now is doing great things.

We discussed a possible site. Angie has a friend had who offered to let us use her church during the 2017 STL conference. Angie is attempting to contact her.

Pastor Mitchell told us to contact former State Rep. Sharon Pace and give his name and ask if she can help us find a place, possibly free of charge. Hedy will contact her.

It was suggested to have workshops on Life Sentences and Adseg. We asked Rev. Cpt. Mitchell if he would also lead a workshop on prison conditions, since he has a unique perspective. He said just give him a call; he won’t sugar-coat anything, will keep it real.

We discussed fundraising between

Conferences: Keith will research the possibility of bingo. Renese makes decorative candy arrangements as gifts. We might make some for fund-raising purposes. She will get with Hedy on this. Stephanie offered to research possible donors. Research is her passion.

Keith mentioned the First Step Act, which he sees as a hoax. Only \$14 million was appropriated for the entire country (federal and all state prisons) for this purpose, which would be laughable if it weren’t so tragic.

Current Newsletter: We used a new printing company this time, and the newsletters were mailed out without prisoner ID numbers and without showing the facility, so many of them are being returned. Kathy spoke with the company, which is owned by a friend of hers, and they will make it right, re-printing and re-mailing all of the newsletters at no charge.

Michelle offered to prepare a membership packet to use for new members in both Kansas City and St. Louis. Pastor Mitchell said if we make flyers and get them to him, he will distribute them in his area.

We are greatly indebted to Pastor Cpt. Mitchell for his wonderful hospitality, providing us with breakfast and lunch as well as his delightful “Chapel in the Woods” for our first statewide board meeting. Cpt. Mitchell was a rare and extraordinary DOC employee. He and Keith formed a strong bond during the many years at MSP as they worked together to improve prison conditions. ❖



Nationally, according to the U.S. Census, Blacks are incarcerated five times more than Whites are, and Hispanics are nearly twice as likely to be incarcerated as Whites.

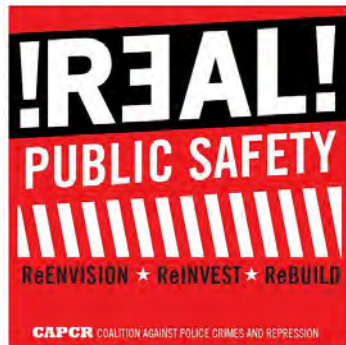
Race/Ethnicity	% of US population	% of U.S.	National incarceration rate (per 100,000)
		incarcerated population	
White (non-Hispanic)	64%	39%	450 per 100,000
Hispanic	16%	19%	831 per 100,000
Black	13%	40%	2,306 per 100,000

The racial and ethnic make-up of incarcerated populations is dramatically different from that of the U.S. as a whole.

CURE Endorses “Cure Violence” Campaign in St. Louis

As part of their **Campaign for Real Public Safety**, the Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression (CAPCR) and DSA STL hosted on March 12 a screening of ‘The Interrupters’ from **Cure Violence**. ‘The Interrupters’ is a critically acclaimed 2011 documentary that shows the Cure Violence public health model in action. It tells the story of three Cure Violence workers who work to protect their Chicago communities from the violence that they themselves once employed.

Missouri CURE members in St. Louis voted to endorse this campaign by lending our name and spreading the word about actions and events. The Cure Violence program takes a public health approach to violence by identifying and treating high risk individuals and connecting them with social services or other resources. The program stops the spread of violence by using the methods and strategies associated with disease control, resulting in reductions in violence of up to 70%.



Cure Violence trains carefully selected members of the community — trusted insiders — to anticipate where violence may occur and intervene before it erupts. They engage the entire community to change behavior and norms.

“These Interrupters are real heroes in the community,” said Reverend Marshall Hatch, New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago.

Just as it’s now been discovered that it is more effective and cost saving to treat drug addiction as a health issue than to punish it, it likewise makes more sense to prevent events and provide treatment for people at high risk.

Like all potentially harmful behaviors — drug addiction, smoking, eating too much, exercising too little, risky sexual behavior and other behaviors — violent behavior can be understood, diagnosed, and treated through a health lens.

Cities around the world have turned to the Cure Violence Health Model to prevent violence — from sectarian violence in Iraq, to community violence in Honduras, to prison violence in Eng-

land. The program is also found in the Middle East and in several African countries.

CAPCR is pushing to bring Cure Violence to St. Louis. The program hires people from affected communities who mediate and de-escalate disputes. They



also hook youth up to job and education programs, and work with existing community networks to strengthen social bonds. Cure Violence does not work with police, thereby better building trust on the streets.

CAPCR leader John Chasnoff talked about the money St. Louis is spending on cops and jails and how much more effective it could be if used to support poor neighborhoods with jobs and resources. ♦

Frank Chapman

blog from Chicago May 21, 2019

What’s on my mind this morning is what a great moment in history we had yesterday with the inauguration of the first Black woman Mayor and gay person in Chicago history. And 12 new Alderpersons, five of whom were socialists. The Mayor, Lori Lightfoot, outlined a program of change that definitely engages our people, but the question is how will our movement be engaged going forward. I think Mayor Lightfoot’s inaugural address was clearly informed by the democratic demands of the people for change.

We didn’t get to the elections and through the elections sleeping. We saw change in the Wards and now we see it in the City of Chicago being articulated by Mayor Lightfoot.

It is often said that history shapes



memory, so let us not forget that it was our movement that created the condi-

tions from which Lori Lightfoot and the 12 newly elected Alderpersons emerged.

I think it highly significant that in laying out her four pillars of reform (public safety, education, fiscal stability and integrity), Mayor Lightfoot put public safety and police reform first.

For me this means that CPAC, community control of the police, is on the front burner. #CPACNOW!!! ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!!! ♦

Editor: CPAC (Civilian Police Accountability Council) seeks community control of the police. A Missouri native, Frank Chapman was the keynote speaker at Missouri CURE’s 2018 conference. The book (pictured) about his life will be available in a couple of weeks.

Women Lifers Clemency Campaign

The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls has started a 50 state Clemency Campaign to release long-time female prisoners. The Council is headed up by founder and CEO Andrea James of Massachusetts.

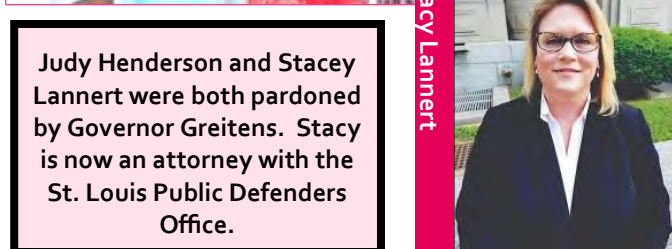
Judy Henderson, who spent 36 years in Missouri prison for murder before being pardoned by Gov. Greitens, is leading the effort here in Missouri.

You can help.

Buy a dozen post cards and mail one each week to Governor Michael Parson. Write something on the card to the Governor asking him to grant clemency to the women who are sick, who survived violence and were punished, lifers, etc. Help us to bring awareness to Missouri's forgotten women lifers. ♦



Judy Henderson
with her children



Stacy Lannert

Judy Henderson and Stacey Lannert were both pardoned by Governor Greitens. Stacy is now an attorney with the St. Louis Public Defenders Office.



Andrea James (third from left) with friends

First Same Sex Marriage in MODOC

Same sex marriages have been legal nationwide for several years now. However, MODOC did not update their policies until recently when my fiancé, who is now my husband, pushed for our rights to marry.

My name is Dawson Rennison and my husband is Michael Rennison. We chose to get married and followed MODOC policy. I turned in a marriage application requesting permission to marry Michael on October 1, 2018. I sat around waiting on an approval letter so I could continue the next steps of paying a minister, ordering wedding bands, and paying to get a Marriage License. Doing any of the above would be foolish without approval.

Finally, on December 11, 2018, I

spoke to my case manager, who contacted our facility Chaplain multiple times with no success. Finally I was instructed to contact our Deputy Warden, who never responded. (Note: Another prisoner had

also turned in an application to marry someone of the opposite sex on October 1, 2018, and 14 days later had an approval letter.)

Three and a half months later, after an exhausting persistence in try-

ing to get an answer, I decided on January 15, 2019 to have my family contact MODOC Central Office Headquarters. My institution was then contacted by the MODOC Director and finally on January 18, 2019, I got approval to carry on planning my wedding.



from Dawson Rennison

This story ended happily on March 21, 2019 when Michael and I became the first same-sex couple to ever marry in MODOC since it was legalized.

In June of 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 to protect the rights of same sex couples to marry in all states. If not for our love and persistence, MODOC might have never changed policy and acknowledged the LGBTQ community's rights.

We can proudly say we were the first and hopefully made this process easier for the next couple.

I believe love is a basic human right, so nobody can choose who you love when it brings you happiness.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me, Dawson Rennison #1199537, at FCC. ♦

Winter Newsletter Fiasco

from Hedy Harden

We've received a lot of letters from prisoners at various institutions saying they hadn't received the Winter newsletter. Some that were to go to JCCC were instead sent to Algoa and then re-routed. We've also gotten some letters from other prisoners saying they received two or even three copies of it.

Sorry about the confusion, but let me explain. We started with a new printing company in March. One day I picked up the mail and was shocked to see 100-150 newsletters returned. I had to get help from a postal employee to carry them to my car. As I began recording the ones that came back, I noticed that they had all gone out without registry numbers. Neither did they show a facility name, just a name and address!

We notified the company and they said they would make it right. They re-printed the entire mailing list and mailed

it out again at no charge. About a week or so later—lo and behold!—another deluge of Turning Points were returned.

This time they had gone out with facility names but still no registry numbers!!! Once again, men at JCCC reported their newsletters had gone to Algoa and were re-routed to them at JCCC (for which we sincerely thank the mailrooms at both of these prisons).

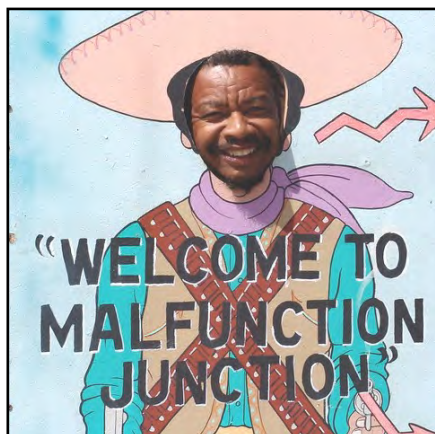
Once again, the company said they'd make it right. They wanted to know if they should re-send all of the prisoner

newsletters or omit the ones from facilities who'd received them. It appeared the guys at JCCC and Moberly and the women at Chillicothe had received theirs, so we didn't send those a third time.

I sincerely hope that all members have now received the Winter issue. Please let us know if you have not. Again, we sincerely apologize for the mix-up. Note that the date above your name is the expiration date for your membership. Please make sure your membership is up to date, as we

cannot afford to send to those with expired memberships.

We truly value you, our prisoner members. ♦



Contraband

from Prince Keyon Dawkins EI

Freedom is contraband in prison because free thinking, independence of spirit, and open mindedness are like acids that eat away at all prison bars.

Equality is contraband in prison because brotherhood always speaks out against and threatens power structures.

Justice is contraband in prison. How many of my brothers are here who shouldn't be? Some innocent of guilt, others guilty of innocence.

Peace is contraband in prison. From fists and shanks, to shields and batons, violence is the way of all tyranny.

Love is contraband in prison. The warm embrace of family and friends. The touching and holding of lovers dear. The fires of passion, stoked, and quenched by hands, lips, tongues, and bodies. All this is denied and forbidden here. There is no room for love in hell!

Truth is contraband in prison. Because if we even knew half of what the system didn't want us to know, surely the walls would come tumbling down. For their bricks are laid with the mortar of double-think. And their foundations are always built upon falsehood. This is the house Capitalism built.

Unity is contraband in prison. Because through unity we can join the fight against cruelty, malfeasance and corruption, as a bulwark of mighty solidarity. For unity always stands tall against unfairness of all kinds.

But, if I take your hand....you, me, and tomorrow all link up as one, together, perhaps we can find a way out of this deception, this misnomer, this lie the system calls "corrections."

United there is little we cannot do. Making vows against injustice, raising voices in loud protest against harm masquerading as "rehabilitation," speaking truth to power, we are a resounding war cry, shouting down all that is unfair.

We are the caged wretches whose words are a conspiracy against the silence of indifference. And our voices will never stop yelling "foul" until we are finally heard. ♦

Legislation 2019

While some are praising lawmakers for instituting criminal justice reform this year, others see the results coming up short. Even while the House Special Committee on Criminal Justice considered many progressive bills, what passed fell short of making real change to mass incarceration in Missouri. Once again, the Republican supermajority prevented any Democrat-sponsored bills from serious consideration.

Passed

HB 192 (retroactive) passed regarding mandatory minimums, which **ends the 40%, 50% and 80% remand percentages for non-dangerous offenses**. The final bill included language from Rep. Cody Smith's HB 113. **While this new law is a positive development, it does nothing to affect LWOP or 85% minimums.**

It also brought some reform of the debtors' prison policies of some municipal jails, stating that defendants cannot be jailed for inability to pay fines or fees.

SB1 (Curls) adds new categories of crimes to the list where expungement is possible.

HB 397 (Coleman) allows expungement of prostitution convictions for persons who were under 18 at the time.

SB 514 (Sater) includes a provision from Sen. Hough that MO HealthNet benefits shall be suspended, rather than canceled or terminated, for prisoners entering a correctional facility or jail. This will assist returning citizens in retaining steady access to necessary medicines and care.

HB 547 (Griffith) creates a veterans' treatment court, which would provide



community alternatives to incarceration for addicts.

Did NOT pass

Rep. Jim Neely fought a courageous fight for **HB 195**, which would have allowed parole consideration for people serving LWOP who met the following conditions:

- ◆ Served at least 25 years of sentence.

- ◆ Accepted accountability for their crime. Those who have maintained innocence since conviction and meet the other criteria would also be eligible.
- ◆ Made reasonable efforts toward rehabilitation.

HB 352 (Hannegan) would have authorized the early parole of certain prisoners over the age of sixty-five. This geriatric bill passed the full House and had a hearing in the Senate, but didn't make it through.

High praise goes to Jeanette Mott-Oxford and Empower Missouri for its faithful fight for true reform in the Missouri legislature. EM provided exemplary leadership and educated activists and regular citizens on the status of bills and what people could do to affect their outcomes. EM created a Smart Sentencing Coalition and convened weekly conference calls. EM met with the Governor's office and Corrections officials and testified at numerous committee hearings of bills in the Capitol.

Much credit also goes to CURE board member Michelle Smith, our liaison with EM. A devoted activist, Michelle attended lobby days, participated in the weekly calls, and took part in numerous local events. ❖

Prison Thoughts

by Justin Bennett AKA Smiley

Spray for better days in this wasteland, my soul rest on, so many are lost, no sight, no faith, just living, no support from the free world, no love from the free world, broken hearts, broken dreams, family dying off as days pass, as months pass, as years pass, homies changing up, females changing up, loyalty is just a word to some, just as love, but represent the same actions, kids growing like weeds, making relationships through the phone, making moves through the phone, giving emotions through the phone, smiles, sadness, madness and pain



through the phone, reading emails of those you wish to be with, thoughts, pictures, videos, help for the moments, then joy turns into hate and pain due to you can't be free to enjoy those moments, the air is different, the food is different, the shower is different, the water is different, the clothes are different, everything is different—but you must stay strong like a male lion or like David vs. Goliath, you gain new friendships as friends you once had become strangers, lifestyles change, even some family members become strangers, some may even become enemies, as when people think you're not returning

to society, true feelings get exposed and how they really felt, prison life, the struggles of prison life are set up for you to just say ___ it, ___ life, ___ living, ___ everything...but guess what, all this did was make me want to live, made me love everything, made me know my worth, made me understand, brought me closer to ALLAH, made me a helper instead of a destroyer, was someone who took life out of the living, now I give life to those who are lifeless, prison gave me vision, sight, motivation, also it taught me how to be humble, now I just need for these gates to open, to show that my shine can touch many, which God will make happen, so don't be surprised, just be a witness. ❖

Why I Am Resigning as State Rep

I Will Continue to Do the Work of the People



State Rep. Bruce Franks Jr. May 17, 2019—from the St. Louis American

It is with sadness that I announce this will be my last session in the Missouri House of Representatives. This was a difficult decision that I have made for the sake of my health, particularly mental.

The past three years have been both incredibly rewarding and unexpectedly depleting. From winning an election that nobody thought I could win to being a young black man from an economically distressed community sitting here in this legislative body, this has been an essential step for me and for the people I represent, who too rarely see someone who looks like them serving in government.

However, I would be lying if I didn't also acknowledge the enormous toll the past three years have taken on my physical health and my mental health. This past year has been marked by deep personal trauma, from the loss of my best friend and godson to gun violence to the strain that comes from trying to support a family on the salary of an elected official with no financial safety net.

I've fought many battles, but none greater than my ongoing struggle with anxiety and depression. This year, for the first time in my life, I decided to get help. After much reflection, I decided to prioritize my health and my family above my political ambition.

Further, the changing dynamics in the legislative body made it clear that there is little room for the kind of bipartisanship that allowed me to effect meaningful change for my constituents in the past three years. Time is our most valuable resource, and my community doesn't have the privilege to wait for change.

I am incredibly proud of some of the work that my colleagues and I have been able to accomplish these past three years. Passing HCR-70, which declared youth violence a public health epidemic, putting millions of dollars into the budget for youth jobs, and creating a Veterans' Bill of Rights are just some of the highlights.

I am just as proud of my communities and those across Missouri that took matters in their own hands and engaged civically to put help pass bills and create laws that benefit people, not parties or politicians.

There will be those who will frame my decision as selfish or rash, or who will want to try to reframe this story from what it should be about — my decision to take care of my mental health and to share my story so that it can help others to do the same. Those who know me know that I am a person who doesn't let his pride overpower his judgment. Real leadership means doing what's necessary to be the most effective you can be.

I will continue to do the work of the people, no longer as an elected official, but as an advocate for social justice, as a

disruptor to the status quo and as a champion of change. I'm a soldier, and soldiers belong on the battlefield. My battlefields are communities that are still fighting for black lives, racial equity, voting rights, criminal justice reform, gender equality, public education, LGBTQ rights, and livable wages.

So, while I am resigning my title and seat in this body, I am not resigning my role as a leader for my community — instead, just redesigning it to be the most effective I can be. So that includes taking care of my mental health and advocating that others in my community do the same.

Thank you to my constituents for the privilege of serving you. I will continue to fight on your behalf. Thank you to the members of the House of Representatives. I have made many friends here both Democrat and Republican, whom I will hold dear for life. I have also made foes here — both Democrat and Republican. I will continue to show up, knock on your doors and hold you accountable. Above all, thank you to my kids for keeping me grounded and forcing me to think about how I can be the best version of myself.

State Rep. Bruce Franks Jr. (D-St. Louis) represented District 78 in the Missouri House of Representatives. This was his address to that body. ♦

Still a Threat

As of June 7, 2019, 394 people have already been reported as shot and killed this year in so called law enforcement situations—and of that number 31% or (122) were African-American. Many of them were unarmed, as usual, and not resisting arrest or otherwise posing any real danger to cops or law-abiding civilians.

The numbers for 2018 and 2017 are far more staggering, and even though the numbers for this year appear to be far less, 2019 is not over yet, and it is too early to assume that this is a trend that will continue. But when I checked the latest statistics for cop killings in Missouri since January first, I was astonished to read that there have only

been three or four. I don't know if these statistics are reliable but, if so, my guess is that this reduction is probably due to public attitudes slowly changing toward senseless police shooting, and the election of more progressive-minded prosecutors in the St. Louis area who have made it clear that they are not afraid to prosecute police if they go too far in enforcing the law.

Efforts are underway to also replace the current Jackson County Prosecutor in Kansas City. But our situation is not quite as bad there as it was in St. Louis, because juries have been fairly consistent in awarding substantial monetary awards in civil cases

where police have abused their authority.

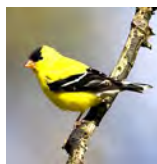
Yet even with all this, Black people nation-wide are still the primary targets of both mass incarceration and the use of excessive force and deadly shootings by police in the U.S.

Therefore it still may be prudent to simply follow conventional wisdom, which says:



by Keith Brown El

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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: Bobby Bostic, Thomas Cunningham, Charlene Drury, Brian Hoffman. R. Larry Holland, David Howdeshell, Linda Howell, Fr. Paul Jones, Joami Kindell, Timothy Rodgers, Damon Thomas and Keyran Swims. Special thanks to our super-giver Carol Corey for her continuing donations and support.



Mama, Don't You Cry

from Darryl C. Merritt

Heyyy Mama, you know
Life for me ain't been no shining light
It has bars all around me, keys jingling
Hard steel and concrete, no carpet on the floor
But I survive the madness day in, day out
They take my freedom but they can't take my thoughts
I find solace in educating myself
How much I have missed!
But all the time I'm trying to regain my freedom
I'm striving, gliding, slipping and sliding
In the dark where there's no sunlight
But still I stand and keep my head high
So Mama don't you cry—I'm strong and hanging on
I have learned too much, Mama, to fall down now
It would so be hard to get back up
I'm still fighting every day
To get from beyond these walls, to see the sunlight
Because from where I'm standing I can't see for looking
Yeah, this life for me ain't been no shining light
But don't cry, Mama—I'm standing strong
and holding on. ❖

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Please check the annual membership type:

- ☐ Prisoner \$2.00 ★
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☐ Donation \$ _____

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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. Help support our upcoming conference which will educate the public about the plight of women prisoners.