

# Turning Point: The Newsletter of



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Citizens United for  
Rehabilitation of Errants

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From the Vice-Chairman

by Keith Brown El

## A Shared Anniversary

The year 2020 marks the 30-Year Anniversary of two very important events: The release from prison of the world's renowned freedom fighter, Nelson Mandela, and the founding of Missouri CURE, which has been fighting for the rights of incarcerated citizens throughout Missouri and elsewhere for 30 years.

Missouri CURE began in 1990. That was also the year that Mandela at age 71 was finally released after 27 years of imprisonment. Madiba (his tribal clan name) was the revolutionary leader of the movement to end South African apartheid—a brutal and deadly form of white supremacy and racial segregation. In 1944, Mandela, a lawyer, had joined the African National Congress (ANC), the oldest black political organization in South Africa. He became leader of Johannesburg's youth wing of the ANC. In 1952, he became deputy national president of the ANC, advocating nonviolent resistance to apartheid. However, after the massacre of peaceful black demonstrators at Sharpeville in 1960, he helped organize a paramilitary branch of the ANC to engage in guerrilla warfare against the white minority government.

In 1961, he was arrested for treason, and although acquitted he was arrested again in 1962 for illegally leaving the country. Convicted and sentenced to five years at Robben Island Prison, he was put on trial again in 1964 on charges of sabotage. In June 1964, he was convicted along with several other ANC leaders and sentenced to life in prison.

There are many forms of oppression in the world, to be sure, but living with oppression from inside the walls of a prison is an experience like no other. Mandela spent the first 18 of his 27 years incarcerated at the

brutal Robben Island Prison. Confined to a small cell without a bed or plumbing, he was forced to do hard labor in a quarry. He could write and receive a letter once every six months, and once a year he was allowed to meet with a visitor for 30 minutes. However,



Mandela's resolve remained unbroken, and while remaining the symbolic leader of the anti-apartheid movement, he led a movement of civil disobedience at the prison, which forced South African officials to drastically improve conditions on Robben Island. He was moved to Pollsmoor prison in 1982, and then in 1988 to Victor Verster Prison, where he lived in a cottage for his last year prior to release.

In 1989, F.W. de Klerk became president of South Africa and set about dismantling apartheid. De Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC, suspended executions, and in February 1990 ordered the release of Nelson Mandela. This makes it sound like De Klerk was the champion and did all this out of the goodness of his heart, but it was the long struggle of the people that forced these changes.

Mandela subsequently led the ANC in its negotiations with the minority government for an end to apartheid and the establishment of a multiracial government. In 1993, Mandela and de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. One year later, the ANC won an electoral majority in

## Summer 2020

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the country's first free elections in 1994. Mandela, voting for the first time at age 76, was elected South Africa's president.

Mandela retired from politics in 1999, but remained a global advocate for peace and social justice until his death in December 2013.

In 1991 Madiba and his wife, Winnie, came to the U.S. and spoke at Tiger Stadium in Detroit, invited there by the UAW. Our Chairperson Hedy Harden and her son Rob drove there along with two other young men. Jamala Rogers of OBS

See Shared Anniversary p.12

**Missouri CURE unfortunately won't be having our annual conference this year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it just wouldn't be safe or practical.**

## Missouri CURE

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 Keith Brown El: KCMO Outreach

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- ◆ Bev Livingston, MISD KCMO
- ◆ Margaret Phillips, MADP

Turning Point Editor: Hedy Harden  
 Webmaster: Clare Petersen

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

## Mission Statement

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

## Ricky Kidd's Freedom Lap 2020

by Michelle Smith

One year after his exoneration—following 23 years of incarceration due to a wrongful conviction, Ricky Kidd has embarked upon a tour of several states to put a spotlight upon the issue of wrongful convictions. Ricky languished in prison as an innocent man who dreamed of his freedom and of wanting to help others in the same situation. He has created a platform called “I Am Resilience” to be the vehicle of his mission to fight against injustice, while helping people pursue their purpose, passion, potential, and spirit of resilience.

Ricky marked his one-year Freedom Day of August 15<sup>th</sup> by hosting a zoom meeting of his closest supporters and family. So far this month Ricky and his fiancée, Dawn, have traveled to states

including Missouri, Georgia, South Carolina, and Ohio. His Freedom Lap has included interviews of incarcerated individuals fighting for their freedom, legal scholars, and other supporters of the wrongfully incarcerated.



This Freedom Lap 2020 tour is the kickoff of so much more to come. Ricky envisions a paradigm shift in how wrongfully convicted people can obtain publicity, support, and legal assistance. Of course, this endeavor requires support, both of time and finances.

For more information on how to support and donate, please visit [www.ResilienceMode.com](http://www.ResilienceMode.com) or email [info@ResilienceMode.com](mailto:info@ResilienceMode.com).

And to join the live broadcasts or view prior videos, go to and follow [facebook.com/ResilienceMode](https://www.facebook.com/ResilienceMode). ♦



A few of the 60 or more ExpectUs protestors present at the capitol Aug 25 holding up red-stained hands to represent the blood they believe Missouri lawmakers have on their hands. (See article, page 11.)

# EXPO

EX-incarcerated PEOPLE ORGANIZING

Guest Panelist: Murala Askari

Facilitator: Ronnie Amiyn (EXPO STL)

Guest Panelist: Kenneth Clayton (EXPO STL)

## PRESENTS

A VIRTUAL DISCUSSION ON POST TRAUMATIC STRESS AFTER CONFINEMENT  
 8.12.20 @ 6PM  
 REGISTER: [WWW.MOUSTLOUIS.ORG](http://WWW.MOUSTLOUIS.ORG)

**Ronnie Amiyn hosts EXPO forum Aug 12**



## More Black People report Depression and Anxiety due to Pandemic and Police Brutality

By Ashley Johnson (from Prison Legal News) Thursday, July 16, 2020

It's been a heart-wrenching outlook halfway through 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, a major priority especially pressing for the Black community and the fight against injustice and police brutality is still fresh.

"Black men, we really don't have the opportunity to say we're not okay," said Taj Murdock of North Philadelphia.

Michael Brown of Pine Hill said, "I feel anxiety every day and I just realized that my depression is deeper than I really thought it was."

"There are days where I just want to end it all because I don't want the burden," said Kyle Morris of West Oak Lane. Kyle, Taj and Michael are friends

and mentors who hope by being real with their feelings to inspire others.

The group speaks to why a recent U.S. Census Bureau survey finds 41 percent of Blacks report significant mental health concerns directly related to



the disproportionate rate the coronavirus has affected blacks and the killing of George Floyd.

"I can't relax; why is it so hard for the black man to relax? When you say self-

care, that's a lot of work for a black man to do," said Murdock.

Action News spoke with America's psychologist Dr. Jeff Gardere during an Instagram live discussion.

When asked how does someone know when to seek professional help? Gardere said, "Where it's turning into some sort of clinical depression where you're completely exhausted."

"I think it's important for people of color to absolutely understand that telepsychology and other forms of therapy are out there for them," said Gardere.

And even the strong group of Black men admits to having mental health concerns, but says it starts by being free to say you're not O.K. ♦

## Corizon's MO Prison Healthcare Contract Up for Grabs

According to the 9/9/2020 Washington Examiner, Gov. Parson is looking to settle on a four-year deal

with an option of four additional one-year renewals that could be worth \$1 billion to the private vendor awarded the contract.

Several companies have made bids, among them Corizon Health, which has held the contract to provide health services at the MODOC for more than 20 years.

Corizon was paid more than \$147 million for its work in Missouri in 2019.

Angelika Mueller-Rowry, Missouri CURE's Prisoner Health Committee Coordinator, made the following statement:

**For decades**, Corizon Health LLC has earned a sinister reputation of maximizing profits over providing adequate healthcare for MO prisoners, violating RSMo 217.230, which requires "medical care equivalent to community standard", explicitly stressing "healthcare education, disease prevention, immediate identification of health problems and early intervention to prevent more debilitating chronic health problems," with the declared goal "to return offenders to the community as medically stable as possible, so they may become productive citizens of the state."

Corizon has also maximized its prof-

its on the backs of its nurses who claim untold millions in outstanding back pay in a 2019 lawsuit.



For many years Missouri CURE has documented hundreds of cases of severe medical negligence and malpractice resulting in chronic suffering and deaths of state prisoners. It is time for a change.

However, we doubt that the choice of yet another for-

profit company – no matter which one may emerge as winner from the vetting process currently under way – will solve the problem, because *any* provider focused on making (and maximizing) profits will necessarily neglect its consumers (prisoners) as well as its own staff.

Undercutting one another in the vetting process may even *exacerbate* the already extremely dire situation, as Gov. Parson will also be most concerned about expenses to the state that are anticipated to be \$1 billion over the time of the contract.

From long years of experience, we have identified many *systemic* issues of concern which is why *any* for-profit company will fail to provide appropriate medical care equivalent to community standard, the most prominent being:

- ♦ **MODOC's contract** with a provider stipulates that *all* services that the company cannot provide *itself and onsite* (such as specialist visits, external testing and treatments, and hospitalizations), have to be paid for *by the provider*.
- ♦ **MODOC contract** allows company administrators to *override* any community specialist's recommendations
- ♦ **Absent or insufficient "immediate identification"** of health issues (early intervention), exempts the provider from the legal requirement of adequate follow up as seen in routine negligence during the initial diagnostic process, e.g., regarding transmittable diseases such as HEP A/B/C, HIV, etc.
- ♦ **Procrastination and Denial of adequate medical care** (tests/exams/treatments) result in *more* chronically ill prisoners in the longer run, requiring *increased* Chronic Care monitoring, particularly of long termers and the aging prison population, which, in turn, increases any company's profits.

Therefore, Missouri CURE believes that *under the current condition* in which RSMo 217.230 stipulates that medical services for state prisoners are outsourced "on a contract basis", it is crucial that a new or renewed contract:

See Contract-page 11

# What is Black August?

By Harmeet Kaur, CNN 8/4/2020 Activists and social justice organizations are celebrating the history of Black resistance this month in what's known as Black August.

This year's commemoration follows months of ongoing nationwide protests over systemic racism and the killings of Black people at the hands of police.

"During Black August, we honor Black freedom fighters, many of whom were killed by the state or imprisoned for defending Black lives," Monifa Bandele with the Movement for Black Lives said in a statement to CNN.

"This month is a time to reflect and learn about the legacies of Black revolutionaries, while we rededicate ourselves to the protracted struggles against white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism. We study, plan, and pledge to continue the work and fight for Black liberation."

Black August is a tradition that originated in California's prisons in the 1970's after the deaths of brothers Jonathan and George Jackson as well as other incarcerated Black men who sought freedom.

George Jackson, considered one of the most outspoken voices on racism in the criminal justice system at the time, died at a California prison on August 21, 1971.

He had received one year to life in prison in 1960 for allegedly stealing \$70 from a Los Angeles gas station, according to a 1970 book review from The New York Times.

During his time behind bars, Jackson began studying the ideas of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin.

In letters to his parents, his younger brother Jonathan, activist Angela Davis and others, Jackson articulated his frustration and rage over systemic racism and his imprisonment. The letters were ultimately published as a collection entitled "Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson."

In August 1970, Jackson's brother Jonathan was killed in a shootout with

police outside the Marin County Courthouse after taking a judge hostage to try and secure his brother's release, the Los Angeles Times reported in 2015.

On August 21, 1971, George

outside of prisons, too."

Social justice organizers also point out that numerous other instances of Black resistance against systemic racism and state-sanctioned violence took



About 1,500 mourners give the Black Panther salute as the body of "Soledad Brother" George Jackson was carried from St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Oakland, California, in 1971. © Robert Klein/AP

Jackson, who was incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison at the time, was killed as he allegedly attempted to escape from prison.

A group of incarcerated people came together to commemorate the death of Jackson and other prisoners in what became known as Black August.

"So there was an idea that this could be a time that imprisoned people in the California prison system could use for reflection, study, and to think about how to strengthen their struggles," said activist Rachel Herzing in a 2016 interview with True Leap Press.

"During the month, people wouldn't use radios or television, would fast between sun up and sun down, and practice other measures of self-discipline. Eventually the commemorations during that month were taken up

place in August, including Nat Turner's Rebellion, the 1963 ML King March on Washington, and the Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles.

August is also the birth month of Black Nationalist leaders Marcus Garvey and Fred Hampton.

"Fifty years later, groups like Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and New Afrikan Independence Movement continue the Black August legacy of celebrations by amplifying our history of resistance and creating spaces for Black people to come together in community to recharge the revolution, Movement for Black Lives notes on its website.

Black History Month in February is a federally recognized celebration that calls on all Americans to reflect on how African-Americans have shaped US history.

Carter G. Woodson, the son of former enslaved people, is largely credited

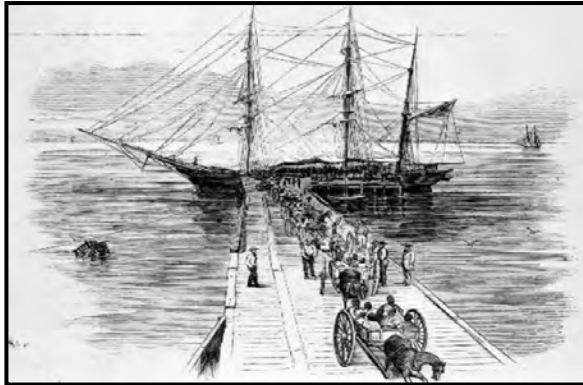
# I Can't Breathe! *By Lonnie Lockhart Bey*

**F**or over 400 years African Americans have continuously been suffocated by a system of meticulous design. In 1555, Sir John Hawkins was traversing the roaring seas writing his name on the walls of time as one of the most notorious slave traders that America has ever known. The 64 bloodiest years of slavery (1555-1619), were followed by the tragedy of 1619, when European imperialistic-fascists decided to impose colonialism on foreign lands. The Portuguese and the Catholic Church did their best to enslave the entire continent of Africa. With the assistance of invading Arabs and compromised African tribes, by the sixteenth century the Portuguese and other European nations had established an "Asiento" system in West Africa, selling slaves across the ocean. This system allowed for slaves to be purchased from any plantation ground on the globe, and shipped to whomever, so long as proper tax was paid to the "Throne."

The savagery of slavery was said to have concluded on January 1, 1865, with the Emancipation Proclamation.

However, by January 1, 1866, "Black Code" laws were being written in legislatures all across this country. A few months later, the Ku Klux Klan was being organized in Pulaski Tennessee, and many Klansmen were law enforcement officers by day, and trained terrorists by nightfall. During the Civil Rights Protests

of the 60's, openly defiant cops who opposed "Black equality" required LBJ to send federal agents and national guardsmen into states to arrest policemen in an effort to ensure some sense of fairness for



the emancipated African descendants. Here we stand today on the heels of state-sponsored murder and brutality by police, while America pretends she has no "Klu" that generational racists are a residual constituency promoting systemic bias in many of the 18,000 police departments across America.

The public lynching of George Floyd sparked a debate amongst Anglo-America that has been a motif in "Black" circles since the advent of institutionalized slavery.

The "Fugitive Slave Act" propelled policemen, then known as "Slave Catchers", to apprehend those fleeing systemic racism. From its very inception, law enforcement was built on keeping individuals in their places.

Change has never been easy, and

whether it was Malcolm X warning us about the "white liberal" politician who only courts the "Black" vote until he gets it, or Dr. King's vision of reaching the other side of the mountain—we must hear the whispers of our vanguards whose faint voices are carried on the winds of time.

All too often, white media personalities quote Dr. King from a "What would he do?" posture. What I've come to realize is that it is easy to love a man like MLK in death, because in death he poses no threat to the systemic nature of police brutality or the racist policies that were imposed on him. The world watched as Dr. King was brutalized by police and their dogs alike.

What matters in our quest for liberation is first breaking the chains of psychological slavery. Colonialism did more than enslave those of African descent; it perpetuated a false sense of superiority that gave even the most impoverished white person a belief that their culture was supreme, and a notion that exemplifies, "I may be poor and struggling, but at least I'm not Black."

Frederick Douglass said, "I prayed for freedom for 20 years and received no answer, until I prayed with my legs."

Never in the history of humanity has a beggar people reached the heights of social equality. And to my comrades of the white struggling mass, I say this, your privilege may minimize your chances of experiencing a "stop and frisk", "stop and run" or "stop and be killed", but it does not negate your impoverished caste

**See Breathe page 9**

## August from p. 4

with the February celebration. In 1976, Negro History Week expanded into Black History Month.

Black August, which also came about in the 1970's, specifically honors "political prisoners, freedom fighters, and martyrs of the Black freedom struggle," according to the Center for Constitutional Rights, a progressive advocacy group.

"Black August is a call for reflection, study, and action to promote Black liberation," said Herzing.

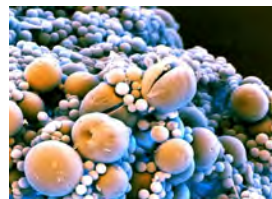
## The Unholy Spirit

**S**ee the world in vivid colors. I have no use for knowledge; therefore I make final judgments at the outset.

I am blasphemous, for although God created all people from two, I am the very idea that humanity is manifold. I know nothing of the human spirit... nothing of its depth or substance.

I have no empathy for the pain and struggles of "others." Their tears are not real, their anguished screams are pretend, and their corpses are mannequins. They are so

insignificant to me that I claim discovery of their land, though it be inhabited by millions. I am the eighth deadly sin, unnamed in the list of seven.



It is true, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," so I have divided the house of mankind. Like an ethereal virus I have corrupted every vital organ of society: labor, religion, education, and government.

The longer I remain, the more difficult I am to uproot. If I am not rooted out to the last cancerous spore, I will slay the body politic. ♦

*by Kenneth Bell*



## Historic NBA Protests are Season Changers

Professional sports seasons seemed in doubt as athletes staged walkouts to protest the shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man who was partly paralyzed after a white



police officer shot him 7 times in the back in Kenosha, Wis., this week. The NBA's Milwaukee Bucks boycotted their playoff game yesterday, which quickly led to the cancellation of other

NBA games, as well as events in the WNBA and professional baseball, soccer and tennis. Players on the NBA's two Los Angeles teams have voted to cancel the rest of the season, according to The Athletic, and the league's players and owners will meet separately today to make decisions, according to ESPN.

**NY Times 8/27/2020 ♦**

## California Scrambled to Staff Wildfire Crews with Firefighting Prisoners Locked Down Due to COVID-19

*With nearly one in four of the state's frontline firefighters being state prisoners during peak wildfire season, California has been scrambling to find enough qualified firefighters to staff its fire crews for the upcoming season. This is because the state has locked down its prisoners, including all firefighting prisoners, amid the coronavirus pandemic that has ravaged its prisons.*

As of early July 2020, 12 of California's 43 prison fire camps have been on lockdown due to the massive COVID-19 outbreak, including the training facility in Northern California in Lassen County. This means that only 30 of the 77 prisoner-staffed wildfire crews were available to battle these devastating blazes.

For decades, prisoner wildland fire-

fighters have fought on the front lines as "hand crews," using chainsaws and hand tools to cut fire lines around properties. It's a critically important and dangerous job. Each crew has 17 prisoners trained in firefighting, led by a Cal Fire captain. There are about 2,200 prisoners certified as firefighters to work alongside Cal Fire's 6,500 year-round employees.

Prisoners save the state a lot of money. A specially trained firefighting prisoner

earns just \$2.00 to \$5.00 per day, plus only \$1.00 an hour while fighting a fire. David

Teeter, chairman of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors, cited the bigger picture. "I think it's one of the best programs CDCR's got going in some ways," he said. "One of my ambitions and beliefs is you make people better — not by giving them things, but by giving them purpose."

Name any major wildfire in recent memory and firefighting prisoners were there. Meanwhile, Cal Fire has been trying to come up with ways to staff its wildfire crews without the firefighting prisoners this year. ♦



## March on Washington

More than 70,000 people took part in the March on Washington Aug. 28. The theme was "Get your knee off our necks." It was a march to restore and recommit to Dr. King's Dream expressed in that same spot 57 years ago, in 1963. Missouri CURE's own Michelle Smith participated.

The families of Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Jacob Blake were among the long list of speakers calling for justice. Breonna Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, asked the crowd to commit themselves to enacting long-term change.

Floyd's brother, Philonise Floyd, said through tears, "I wish George was here to see this right now — that's who I'm marching for." The crowd chanted, "I can't breathe" in response. Floyd's sister, Bridgett Floyd, also spoke and declared that she believes today, people have the power to make the changes that Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed about.

Blake's father, Jacob Blake Sr., said, "I'm tired of seeing young Black and brown people suffering."

Only a week before the march, police in Kenosha WI shot Jacob Blake seven times in the back in front of his children, and ultimately in front of the world. Jacob lay paralyzed from the waist down, and shackled to a hospital bed at the time of the event. ♦



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Friday, August 21, 2020

## Missouri DOC Required to Provide Lifesaving Hepatitis C Treatment to Thousands Behind Bars

The MacArthur Justice Center, Wilkinson Walsh LLP, and the ACLU of Missouri have reached a settlement with the Missouri Department of Corrections and Corizon Health, the department's medical provider, ensuring that people incarcerated in Missouri's prisons receive vital Hepatitis C treatment and education.

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV), which can lead to life-threatening conditions including cirrhosis and liver cancer, is widespread in Missouri prisons. Although the exact number of incarcerated people with HCV is unknown because of a lack of routine testing, an estimated 10 to 15 percent of those under the supervision, care, and custody of MDOC and Corizon are infected with HCV.

During the last decade, a new class of drugs known as direct acting antiviral (DAA) medications was approved to treat HCV. However, these drugs are expensive and were routinely denied to incarcerated people in Missouri, leading to lifelong injuries and deaths. As a result of the settlement agreement, however:

- ◆ Over the next eight years, MDOC and Corizon will spend approximately \$50 million to treat incarcerated people in Missouri with chronic HCV, beginning with the sickest individuals.
- ◆ MDOC and Corizon will monitor individuals at high risk for serious health conditions as a result of current

or past HCV infection.

- ◆ MDOC and Corizon will provide educational materials regarding the risks of HCV, the benefits of testing, and their policies relating to treatment.
- ◆ Corizon medical staff will receive HCV-related training.
- ◆ MDOC and Corizon will provide quarterly reports to Plaintiffs' counsel regarding the progress of treatment.

"This settlement will save countless lives," said Amy Breihan, Co-Director of the MacArthur Justice Center's Missouri office. "It means Missouri will go from treating less than 1% of its infected prison population, to eventually treating every incarcerated person with chronic Hepatitis C. The impact on the health of our incarcerated clients and the public overall will be immense."

"Missouri prison officials and their chosen provider have known there is a safe cure for thousands of individuals in their custody with Hepatitis C and could have prevented unnecessary pain and death by allowing treatment," said Tony Rothert, legal director of the ACLU of Missouri. "This settlement is a step toward correcting the state's failure to provide necessary medical care to persons in the state's care and will help protect the public from the spread of this terrible ill-

ness by curing individuals before they return to the community."

"We got to this point by demonstrating in the courtroom that the science defendants relied on to justify their lack of treatment was indefensible," said Betsy



Henthorne of Wilkinson Walsh. "From the week-long hearing on our motion for a preliminary injunction, through our depositions of senior MDOC and Corizon officials, we established a factual record

of indifference that was as heartbreaking as it was compelling. We are grateful that those whose lives and health had been disregarded by MDOC and Corizon will get the treatment they deserve."

The federal class action lawsuit was originally filed by the ACLU of Missouri and the MacArthur Justice Center in December of 2016. In July 2017, the case was certified as a class action consisting of thousands of incarcerated Missourians. In August 2019, the court held a 4-day hearing on a motion for preliminary injunction.

The proposed class action settlement must be approved by the federal District Court following a fairness hearing, which the parties anticipate will be held sometime this fall. ♦



## Still a Dream

by William "Bill" Murray

Through dark clouds of America's past, dreams and visions of the things hoped for are evident and still remain as less than a reality in this country. Decade after decade, our governmental leaders have either forgotten or ignored the hopes and dreams that so many have fought and died for. Although they live no more, their dreams live on. Their quest for fellowship and peace, and an end to all prejudicial disorder, must and will continue to plague the damaged minds of our irrationally segregated brothers and sisters.

Since the invasion of the northwestern

shores of Africa, what was once a proud free people have since been severely tormented and abused. Our forefathers were brought to this country against their will, and they fought against discrimination and hatred for hundreds of years. Their self-esteem has been attacked daily as they struggled to survive. They weren't allowed to read or write, bear arms, educate themselves, or vote. But all of this barely scratches the surface of the inhumane travesty that our people suffered during the times of slavery, which in some form still exists today.

Our women were routinely raped, while families were being torn apart and slaughtered daily. Poverty, exploitation and public lynchings were all too common. How much longer?

Through blood, sweat and tears, we helped to create this country. By force or by choice, whatever the case was, we contributed to the history of this "America". Our journey has been long and fierce.

Today there is still a beast called racism that continues to fuel its sick, indifferent, evil-minded oppressors that seek to maintain the Jim Crow attitude and mentality. The trials and tribulations of seeking equality, education and justice have been a painful and bloody history. How much longer must we wait for this dark cloud to pass? How much longer before those dreams become reality?

The blood, sweat and tears of the fallen will never be forgotten, no matter what race, creed or color—we still have a dream. ♦

## COVID-19 Actions: Letters Sent to MO Officials

**I.** Missouri CURE has joined with the NAACP of Missouri, Empower Missouri, Greater Kansas City Southern Christian Leadership Conference and others in a letter to Governor Parson regarding COVID-19 practices in Missouri prisons, particularly urging that the wearing of masks be mandatory, especially for staff.

**II.** Missouri CURE has also joined with Washington University's Prison Education Project, ACLU of Missouri, the Bail Project-St. Louis, From Prison Cells to PhD, St. Louis University Prison Education Program, STL Reentry Fund and LouHealth in an Aug. 26 advocacy letter to Governor Parson and other state and local officials. It reads in part:

**As organizations** that directly work with and advocate for incarcerated and justice-involved people, we are writing to encourage immediate action in response to the dangerous and life-threatening conditions at prisons across Missouri. As of August 16, there have been 687 cases of COVID-19 among the incarcerated population and there are 276 currently active cases. The already-strained medical services at the prisons, combined with the rampant transmission within the facilities are putting the health—and lives—of the incarcerated population at imminent risk.

Missouri Eastern Correctional Center (MECC), a men's prison in Pacific, Missouri, and Chillicothe Correctional Center (CCC), a women's prison in Chillicothe, Missouri currently have the largest outbreaks in the state. In both prisons, there were no confirmed cases until individuals were transferred there from other prisons. As of our writing of this letter, at Chillicothe, the total number of reported cases among incarcerated people is 232, and at MECC, the number of confirmed cases among incarcerated people has quickly risen to 140. These prisons have the largest outbreaks in Missouri, and the number of cases is likely to increase exponentially, yet the necessary steps to protect the most vulnerable from this exponential outbreak have not been taken."

...It is disturbing that transfers have been allowed to continue during this global pandemic—particularly from prisons with very few cases to prisons with clear outbreaks.

In addition to prison transfers, the current structure and regulations in place at prisons are frighteningly inadequate to the task of keeping people safe. Accord-

ing to our contacts at MECC, for example, men continue to be housed in close proximity—64 cells to a wing—two individuals per cell, all sharing the same showers, sinks and toilets with no ability to sanitize these before and after individual use; these men have not been provided with even the most basic sanitizing agents to protect themselves. Even more dangerous, 248 men in each housing unit share crowded indoor spaces, even after the CDC has informed the public that the virus is most likely to be spread quickly through the air, where the virus lingers. There are currently no requirements (*Ed: being enforced*) that staff, including Correctional Officers, wear masks or gloves, even though these staff come into contact with multiple housing units that are otherwise kept separate. Moreover, according to some reports, even individuals experiencing COVID symptoms who have proactively sought medical diagnosis and treatment, have been denied treatment and sent back to their housing units, where they have likely spread the virus further.

The incarcerated individuals at CCC and MECC, like all people incarcerated in state prisons, are the responsibility of the state and have no power to isolate themselves or to take many of the precautions private citizens can. Many individuals at these prisons are elderly and suffer from health conditions—asthma, heart disease, diabetes, etc.—that have already been made worse in prison. For many of these individuals, COVID-19 may be lethal.

The DOC does not have an infectious disease specialist, which exacerbates the current conditions, as no one employed by the department is trained to handle the current situation.

These individuals were not sentenced to death. Yet the state's neglect and inaction in the face of this outbreak will make the state complicit in the long-term health damage and deaths of men and women that are almost certain to occur.

We ask you to act with all urgency to prevent further illness and death among this population the state is mandated to protect by taking the following steps. Taking these steps will also protect the health of DOC staff and the communities to which they return.

1. Immediately cease all transfers of in-

carcerated individuals from prisons with confirmed COVID-19 cases to prisons without documented cases.

- If transfers occur, every person transferred should be tested. While awaiting test results, and if they test positive, they should be held in medical quarantine (**not** solitary confinement) for fourteen days or until they test negative twice before coming into contact with the full population.

2. Extend and expedite any legal authority available to grant clemency, compassionate release, medical and geriatric parole, or medical furloughs for those most vulnerable to the deadly spread of COVID-19, including:

- Incarcerated citizens who are classified as elderly (55+).
- Those who are immunocompromised, seriously ill, or with pre-existing and/or chronic medical conditions.

3. Implement and adhere to all guidelines recommended by the CDC and other health experts to slow the spread of COVID-19, including:

- Require staff members to wear masks or other face coverings at all times.
- Provide masks for incarcerated individuals and require that they are worn when they are outside their cells.
- Facilitate routine and repeated COVID-19 testing of all incarcerated people and staff members on an ongoing basis, isolating and treating those who present with even mild symptoms.
- Provide adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE), soap, hand sanitizer, and cleaning supplies to everyone in the prison and ensure washable surfaces are disinfected.
- Use the opportunity of a reduced population following the release of vulnerable individuals to implement proper social distancing practices for incarcerated people.

In these demands, we join with previous requests from state coalitions of medical professionals, civic and religious leaders, academics and legal professionals who have already called on policymakers and the Missouri Supreme Court to be leaders in saving vulnerable lives in this time of pandemic. ♦





## Summer Events & Activities

- June 12, 26, July 3, 10, 24, Aug 14, 21, 28, Sept 4** Empower Missouri Smart Sentencing call meetings
- June 21, July 29, August 19** Statewide CURE phone meetings
- July 6** Gov. Parson signs "tough on crime" **SB 600** legislation amidst protests
- August 7 (1970)** Jonathan Jackson killed at Marin County Courthouse in California
- August 12 EXPO ZOOM** Forum discussed PTSD after imprisonment (Amiyn, Hedy, Angie, Jeff Humfeld)
- August 18 OBS** Monthly Membership Meeting via ZOOM (Hedy)
- August 21 (1971)** George Jackson killed at San Quentin prison 1971
- August 25 PRIN WEB-EX** Meeting, including representatives from the Governor's Office, Attorney General's Office, Missouri CURE, the Urban Institute, and the Missouri Department of Corrections in JCMO. The goal for this meeting was to orient project partners to the Initiative and Network by providing an overview, activities to date, and roles moving forward. (Keith & Hedy)
- August 26** Federal execution of Native American Lezmond Mitchell, violating tribal sovereignty.
- August 28** Federal execution of Keith Dwayne Nelson; Trump administration has carried out more federal executions than any other administration since that of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Two more federal executions are scheduled for September, William LeCroy (9/22) and Christopher Vialva (9/24). Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty holds watches and vigils in solidarity with abolitionists across the country.
- August 28 "Off our necks"** March on Washington (Michelle Smith)

### Breathe from page 5

status. Socioeconomic impoverishment is a social status imposed on the undervalued and uneducated through capitalistic design.

Malcolm X once said: "If you are not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing."

**W**hen you head to the polls in November, vote your conscience, but remember to vote Reform. Prison reform is a top priority in this election, because in so many ways Missouri is again seeking a "Compromise" to retain its captives. This is the "Show Me" state, and with its prison population ranked 8th in the nation, Missouri has shown me through its schools, housing, courts, and prisons that "Black and white" impoverishment don't matter until your

vote is needed. Know what your politicians stand for, both liberal and conservative, and don't give away your vote to those who have not earned it.

For those who are truly seeking prison reform, we have to elect prosecutors of integrity, who only follow the facts and not the emotional sensibilities of far right or far left politicians or do

### Vote Prison Reform

favors for friends and associates. Prison reform begins with retaining judges who are able to follow legal precedent and reject prosecutorial favors without legislating from the bench.

Many of these politicians are not counting on their constituency knowing anything, which means that they can say anything.

Not this time! Struggle is prescribed for all those who believe in any cause bigger than themselves—**FIGHT!** The great General Tarik crossed the straits of Gibraltar to fight the forces awaiting him, wherein he told his men, "... the ships have been burned, and nothing but the sea is behind us, and in front is our enemy. In order to live we must fight with all we have; our survival depends upon it."

By way of Jim Crow laws, Bill Crow (Clinton) laws, and the likes of the Missouri legislature, by proxy all prisoners are now political prisoners, because the systematic mass incarceration that exists in this state is not about the victims of crime, or making the community safer. It is about—and has been since the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment:

**CRIME + SLAVERY = WEALTH.❖**

## From Empower Missouri

by Jeanette Mott-Oxford ("J-Mo")

**M**issouri's General Assembly and executive branch have moved into political chaos following a pair of racially insensitive proclamations to Special Session by Governor Mike Parson. These came on the heels of signing Senate Bill 600, a "get tough on crime" package of measures that repeat mass incarceration failures of the past that had racially disparate impact. Presently, African Americans constitute 12% of state residents, but 34% of people in Missouri prisons according to an incarceration trends summary from the Vera Institute of Justice.

The Special Session comes during a pandemic that has taken a severe toll on African American and Latinx communities. Transmission of COVID-19 and deaths from coronavirus are especially high in these communities. People of Color also are being disproportionately harmed by the economic downturn, according to this report issued by the Coalition on Human Needs and Empower Missouri.

Gov. Parson has missed the real needs of our current moment:

- Responding to the public health emergency and related devastating recession, and
- Leading our state in sincere apology and offering amends for the legacy of racial injustice in our state and nation, with decade after decade of aggressive segregationist public policy, which advantage white communities at the expense of African Americans and other People of Color.

The racial insensitivity of this Governor and General Assembly, should they continue to pass his legislative priorities as they did with Senate Bill 600, is clear:

The Governor refused to call a Special Session on policing reform at the request of the Legislative Black Caucus, after the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others a few weeks ago.



Changes are being proposed to put more children through adult certification hearings, even though we know that, according to 2017 court data, Black children were almost six times more likely to be certified as adults than white children.

The Governor's demand that the Missouri Attorney General be allowed to prosecute certain homicides in the City of St. Louis would disempower the only elected Black female prosecutor in our state. Kim Gardner, the first African American elected to be St. Louis City's Circuit Attorney, won her party's nomination for re-election to her seat with sixty percent of the votes in the August 4 Primary Election.

*SB1 was broken down into six smaller bills, five of which were passed by the House. The bills were then passed by the Senate, but must go back to the House. One concerns police residency in STL; all the bills are moves backward from previous efforts to enact prison reform. ♦*

## Jonathon Irons Exonerated

**W**hen Jonathan Irons was 16, he was put on trial for burglary and assault with a weapon. According to CBS Sports, Irons was tried as adult, and an all-white jury found him guilty—despite there being no witnesses, no fingerprints, no footprints, and no DNA proving his guilt.

Irons began his 50-year sentence in a Missouri state prison in 1998. Now, 22 years later, he's a free man, largely thanks to the tireless efforts of WNBA superstar Maya Moore. Arguably the most decorated professional women's basketball player in the U.S., Moore was a first-round draft pick in 2011. She's played for the Minnesota Lynx, where she became a six-time WNBA All-Star, a five-time All-WNBA First Team player, a four-time WNBA champion, and the WNBA Most Valuable Player in 2014.

But before the 2019 season, in the peak of her career, Moore decided to take the year off for a different kind of court battle—one that had wrongfully convicted a young man and doomed him to spend most of his life behind bars. Her decision rocked her sport, and there was no guarantee that sacrificing an entire

season to fight for criminal justice reform would bear any fruit.

Moore's family met Irons through a prison ministry program. According to The Undeclared, Irons wouldn't have



Maya Moore with Jonathan Irons

been eligible for parole for another 20 years, but in March a Missouri judge overturned his conviction. A string of appeals were rejected, the Supreme Court refused to take the case, and the lead prosecutor declined to retry Irons.

That meant he was free.

Moore was at the prison to meet Irons when he walked out, falling to her knees in the emotional moment.

from Upworthy 7/2/20

"I feel like I can live life now," Irons said in a video from outside JCCC. "I'm free, I'm blessed, I just want to live my life worthy of God's help and influence... I thank everybody that supported me, Maya and her family... To have somewhere to be home, I'm so grateful."

**M**oore told Good Morning America after Irons' release, "In that moment, I really felt like I could rest. I'd been standing, and we'd been standing, for so long; and it was an unplanned moment where I just felt relief. It was kind of a worshipful moment, just dropping to my knees and just being so thankful that we made it."

Moore will continue her hiatus from basketball through the 2020 season.

Minnesota Lynx coach and general manager Cheryl Reeve said:

*"On behalf of the Lynx organization, we are so proud of Maya for earning the biggest win of her career. I am sure that she was voted MVP of this championship, too. This time there is no hardware to take home to the trophy case, just a wrongfully convicted black man walking free." ♦*



## News Sources: COVID-19 cases in Missouri prison system

On August 20, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that “Confirmed cases of the coronavirus within the Missouri Department of Corrections increased more than 50% during August, according to department figures published this week.”

State figures showed 333 new cases among offenders and staff since the beginning of the month with 661 reported until that point. The increase was attributed to two eastern Missouri prisons, ERDCC, where the number of cases among offenders and staff more than doubled, from 105 on Aug. 1 to 232 on the 18th; and MECC, where cases rose from 108 to 163 during the same period.

Karen Pojmann, spokesperson for MODOC, reported that mass testing had been completed at all Missouri prisons, which would naturally result in more positive cases. All prisoners and all staff were tested at least once.

At the same time, the state doesn’t always require prison staff to wear masks, generating frustration among prisoners and their families,

**The Columbia Missourian** reported July 22 that the eight states bordering Missouri all require prison staff to wear masks inside facilities.

Pojmann said the state requires use of N95 masks and personal protective equipment in isolation units and when interacting with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

As of August 18, the total number of cases in Missouri’s 22 prisons — those who still are infected and those who have recovered — was reported as 994.

“That’s 2.9% of the 34,652 total

tests conducted since the start of the pandemic. Three prisons — Bonne Terre, Pacific and the Chillicothe Correctional Center — accounted for two-thirds (658) of the total cases.” Those three prisons have seen a dramatic increase in confirmed cases in recent weeks.

Pojmann said the Department of Natural Resources alerted the DOC “to the possibility of a higher concentration of the virus in wastewater” near the Bonne Terre prison. She also said “The testing revealed several additional



asymptomatic cases of COVID-19 at ERDCC (in Bonne Terre).”

**Editor:** Many Missouri prisoners infected with the virus are definitely **not** asymptomatic. Prisoners report many classic COVID symptoms. Here’s one man’s testimony from ERDCC in Bonne Terre:

“I have experienced unusual body aches, loss of taste and smell sensations, chills, sweating and chest pain. I have also witnessed several prisoners who are now confined here coughing, sweating on the brow, sleeping in their cells for days

at a time, and complaining of body aches.

“On August 11, 2020, a man was taken out on a stretcher when he had difficulty breathing. The next day, the wing was placed on quarantine.

“Since testing positive for COVID-19, we have received no medical examination or treatment, no showers and no phone calls. There is an old black man here who is very sick. Anytime an officer comes into the unit he begs for help, and they ignore him. He may not make it.”

The Associated Press reported September 4 that “The number of Missouri prison inmates who have tested positive for the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic is approaching 1,000, and the number of infected prison staff has topped 300.”

Data on the MODOC website Friday showed 953 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19, while 340 staff members statewide have also tested positive. Just one inmate is reported to have died from the virus, a man imprisoned in St. Joseph who died in April.

The largest outbreak has been at the prison in Bonne Terre, where 288 inmates and 95 staff have tested positive. The Chillicothe Correctional Center, which houses women, has reported 252 positive tests among inmates and 27 among staff.

Significant outbreaks have also occurred at prisons in Boonville, Farmington and SECC Charleston.

*Hedy Harden was interviewed on August 27 by a reporter for Illinois News Network regarding the growing number of COVID cases in Missouri prisons. ♦*

### Contract from p. 3

- ♦ Put a **cap on the profit margin**; and
- ♦ Any provider’s operations and spending be **accountable to independent public scrutiny**, in order to guarantee state prisoners’ right to appropriate healthcare as guaranteed in RSMo 217.230, in accordance with the 8th and 14th amendments of the constitution.

However, since 2021 is expected to bring substantial changes in the expansion of Medicaid (MoHealthNet) coverage, which is anticipated to improve general health care in the state, including areas where MODOC prisons

are located, we believe that *stepping away* from outsourced prisoner medical care in favor of a **community-based system of medical care** would allow compliance with the standard of care set in RSMo 217.230. It has been proven that community based healthcare is not only superior to privatized care, but also more cost efficient.

Missouri CURE calls upon the state legislature to change the Missouri statute accordingly and enroll all prisoners in MoHealthNet. This measure would not only significantly improve prisoner health, but also provide relief for a strapped state budget, while improving work conditions for medical staff. ♦

### Protest at Capitol

More than 60 members of the group ExpectUs arrived at the Missouri Capitol August 25 seeking criminal justice reform and protesting Gov. Parson’s agenda for a special session on crime. When the Senate passed five bills, the group began chanting, “Criminal justice reform — not rhetoric.” They met afterward in the rotunda with Rep. Rasheen Aldridge of STL. “We still have high crime,” Aldridge said, “because we’re still not addressing the root cause of the crime that’s going on in our cities.”



## ***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 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.

### ***Asante!***

Many thanks to the following people for their generous contributions: Danny Adams, Dennis Baker-Bey, Kenneth Beck, Deborah Campbell, Carol Corey, Demosthenes Hill, Michael Jarvis, Fredrico Lowe Bey, Bert Mace, Larry Maserong, Kenneth Pickens, Joe Preis, Patty Prewitt, Roosevelt Price, Robert Ross, Myron Sanders, Gary Sonnenberg, Carlos Tureaud and Belvin Williams. Special thanks to Jeff Humfeld for his gift of \$300.

We also thank Charles Curnutt, Jeremiah Edwards Bey, Maureen Flynn, Ron Greer, R. Larry Holland, Curtis Johnson, Jack Lindsey, Brandon McGuire, Cody McKenzie, Mark Porter, Jennifer Reed, Wadud Wali Bey, Bill Murray and Gregory Williams. Once again, our deep gratitude to Carol Corey, our super-giver, for her continued contributions and support. (The first group of people were inadvertently omitted from our Spring newsletter. The second group contributed in the Summer.) Thank you all!

### ***Shared from page 1***

(Organization for Black Struggle) had given them the tickets. Ms. Harden, as part of OBS, had protested against apartheid for many years and demonstrated against stars such as Ray Charles who’d defied the boycott on performing in South Africa. OBS band members, the Infrared Rockers, had written, recorded and performed songs about the anti-apartheid struggle. More than 50,000 people welcomed their hero to Detroit.

Missouri CURE recognizes that this is a battle that must endure. Although Mandela has passed on, and formal apartheid may have ended in South Africa, it still exists in other forms and in other places. It exists in Missouri, throughout the U.S., and in many other places around the world. This is why in South Africa we say “Amandla-Awetu”; in Mozambique we say “A luta continua”; and here in the U.S. we say “The Struggle Continues.”

Missouri CURE is proud of the anniversary we have in common with Madiba and of our legacy of 30 years. ♦



### **Join Missouri CURE!**

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Name/ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Facility \_\_\_\_\_

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