

MOSES



Madison Organizing in Strength, Equality, and Solidarity
for Criminal Justice Reform

In this issue:

Describing a Better Future

Organizer's Corner

Upcoming Events

SB 54 Victory

Race to Justice

Interview: Sagashus Levingston

Book Review

Describing a Better Future

for people with mental health issues

by Tom Gilbert, MOSES Justice System Reform Workgroup

As the MOSES JSR Crisis/Restoration Center workgroup advocates for a better mental health care system in Dane County, and a reduction in the number of people with mental health issues who are incarcerated, we recently employed a planning tool called Desired Future Conditions.

Desired Future Condition statements describe what the future looks like, or the way that it works. They are a powerful tool for bringing together varied interests, even opposing parties, in support of a common vision for the future.

A Desired Future Condition (DFC) statement is similar to a goal or an objective. However, there are a couple of key differences.

It is written using a present-tense verb, as if it has already been accomplished, and ... without any regard to limitations of resources or time.

Tom Gilbert, who worked for the National Park Service (NPS), suggested using this tool. The NPS uses DFCs to plan its national park areas. Tom has also used this planning tool to help decide the future reuse of the Badger Army Ammunition Plant and resolve the disagreements about the redevelopment of US 12 north of Middleton and its potential adverse impacts on critical natural resources in the Baraboo Hills.

We began work on this last fall by rewriting the Guiding Principles in Resolution 556 into the

form of DFC statements. Various members of our workgroup proposed additional DFCs.

On Saturday afternoon, March 10, our workgroup met for four hours to work through the 24 draft statements, one by one. We clarified the wording, combined statements where appropriate, and added other important details. We ended up with 15 DFC statements. We are working on final refinements.

The introductory preamble:

"The criminal justice system is not designed to meet the needs of people needing mental health care. Yet, today, a large portion of people in the Dane County Jail have mental health issues (nearly 40% are receiving psychotropic medications). There is a high racial disparity in this population. Many stakeholders in the county are now working to reduce the number of people with mental health issues who are incarcerated in the jail and are searching for effective approaches to achieve this objective. As a contribution to this effort, MOSES (Madison Organizing in Strength, Equality, and Solidarity) offers the following Desired Future Conditions to describe an improved criminal justice system, an improved mental health care delivery system, and the kind of community in which we desire to live."

continued on page 3

Executive Committee

Eric Howland, President
 Alison Mix, Vice President
 Talib Akbar, Vice President
 Ann Lacy, Financial Secretary
 Janice Greening, Treasurer
 Barbie Jackson, Secretary
 Mary Wells,
 Assistant Secretary
 Joan Duerst,
 Religious Leaders Caucus

Operational Team Leads

Communications
 Alison Mix
 Tina Hogle
 Data/Information
 Terry Millar
 Event Programming
 Lucy Gibson
 Todd Marcotte
 Event Logistics
 Linda Wills
 Talib Akbar
 Fundraising
 Rachel Morgan
 Joan Duerst
 Media/Government Relations
 Gil Halsted
 Jeanie Verschay
 Recruitment and Retention
 Karen Julesberg
 Frank Davis
 MOSES Justice System Reform
 Task Force
 Paul Saeman
 Jeanie Verschay

Organizer's Corner

The importance of elections

Many people remember the old adage “April showers bring May flowers”. In the nonprofit world of criminal justice reform and eliminating racial disparities, I have coined my own adage: “April elections bring much reflection.” While I was locked away in the Wisconsin prison system for 20 years, I ignorantly viewed the election process and, consequently, those who ran for office, as a foreign entity that didn’t involve me. I believed that it was a process that, because I couldn’t vote, I shouldn’t even waste my time on.

Oh, how wrong I was, especially when it comes to our local and state elections. In most cases they are more important than national politics. Because where local candidates stand on pivotal issues like prison reform, crimeless revocation, restoration centers, mental health, TAD funding, etc., could shape our communities for years to come. Judges who sit on the bench will affect policy and people’s lives for many years. To inform and to be informed: both are essential to making a change in our community. Sitting voiceless on the sidelines is tantamount to being complicit with the political machine that kills, steals, and destroys so many lives.

Throughout the months of April and May, MOSES will be participating in a series of WISDOM-sponsored trainings that will teach people about Wisconsin’s criminal justice system and how we can safely and responsibly reduce the prison population by thousands of people. Yes, *thousands*! Doing so will restore hope, fairness, and sanity to a currently broken system. In these trainings we will strategize to ensure that our issues are heard by all who are running for office and to make sure that criminal justice reform is a top priority in the 2018 election campaigns. To be informed is to be empowered!

The Madison training will take place Saturday, April 14, 9 am-1 pm, at Damascus Road Church on South Park Street. The trainings will culminate in a statewide candidates’ forum on June 11th for the fall election. Stay tuned ...

MOSES operational teams

A year ago, six MOSES operational teams were created for the purpose of engaging our members and connecting with the community at large: Communication, Fundraising, IT, Recruitment & Retention, Media & Government, and Event Planning. These teams are at the heart of making MOSES a successful organization. We have had different levels of growth and success

among the teams, and some of them are in need of participants and leadership. If you are interested in participating in one of our teams, please contact me via email.

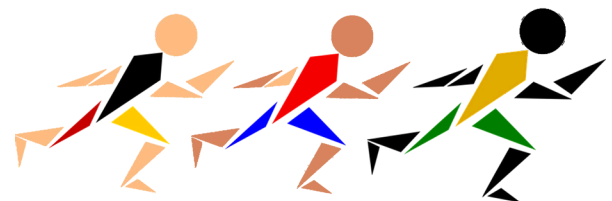
In addition, we are in the process of forming a new core team: the Incarcerated Persons Outreach (IPO) team will be in charge of connecting with people in the prison system and keeping them and their family members more informed about what affects them and what MOSES is doing to help. If you are interested in being part of this effort or have ideas for how we can make it more effective, please feel free to contact me via email.



Frank Davis
32davisfrank@gmail.com
(608) 445-9811

We need you!

Lastly, we need *you*! We need you to educate yourself on these issues. Read this newsletter, read the emails from MOSES and WISDOM, find out what our legislature and governor are doing and what the candidates in our upcoming elections stand for. Then, get involved. Attend the WISDOM training on April 14 and strengthen your ability to make a difference in our community. The issues we are fighting for are far too important for anyone to ignore. And what we do will affect hundreds, even thousands, of lives, both now and in the future. What better reason than that for each of us to do whatever we can? ■



Describing a Better Future...

continued from page 1

Examples of the statements:

There is timely access to effective mental health care for everyone in Dane County through a coordinated system of providers, regardless of payer status.

Case management (identification of needs and coordination of services) is available to all individuals who need it, bridging provider and agency boundaries. Peer support specialists are used throughout the system.

A Crisis/Restoration Center (providing mental health urgent care services 24 hours a day) is available to anyone in the community having a mental health crisis. The Crisis/Restoration Center provides immediate triage and stabilization followed by seamless/uninterrupted access to community services for longer-term treatment as needed.

We anticipate having a final version soon for sharing with in MOSES and with other stakeholders in the community. ■

Upcoming Events

WISDOM conference calls (605) 468-8012

- Old Law: April 14 and May 10 at 8:30 am (code 423950)
- Solitary Confinement: April 10 and May 8 at 4:00 pm (code 423950)
- Prison Prevention: April 10 and May 8 at 5:00 pm (code 423950)
- Post-Release: April 26 at 7:30 pm and May 22 at 7:30 pm (code 423951)

MOSES Religious Leaders Caucus

- RLC Monthly Meeting: May 9 from 8:30-10:00 am
St. Luke's Episcopal Church (Jericho Room)

MOSES Task Force: Justice System Reform (MJSR)

- MJSR Monthly Meeting: April 12 and May 10
6:30-8:30 at Madison Police Station South District, 825 Hughes Place

Race to Justice Spring Training

April 14th, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm, Damascus Road Church, 1702 S. Park St.

WISDOM Candidate Forums

SE Wis.-April 7
Madison-April 14
Green Bay & Fox Valley-April 28
Eau Claire-May 5
(Superior-May 4)

Next MOSES monthly meeting

Sunday, May 6, 3:30-5:30 pm
Messiah Lutheran Church, 5202 Cottage Grove Rd, Madison

Joining one or more of the WISDOM conference calls is easy and can be very informative.

At the appointed date and time:

- Call (605) 468-8012
- Enter the code after the beep
- State your name and that you are from MOSES after the greeting
- Listen, learn, and contribute as you wish

Old Law Parole: code 423950#

Solitary Confinement: code 423950#

Prison Prevention: code 423950#

Post-Release: code 423951#

Victory on Senate Bill 54

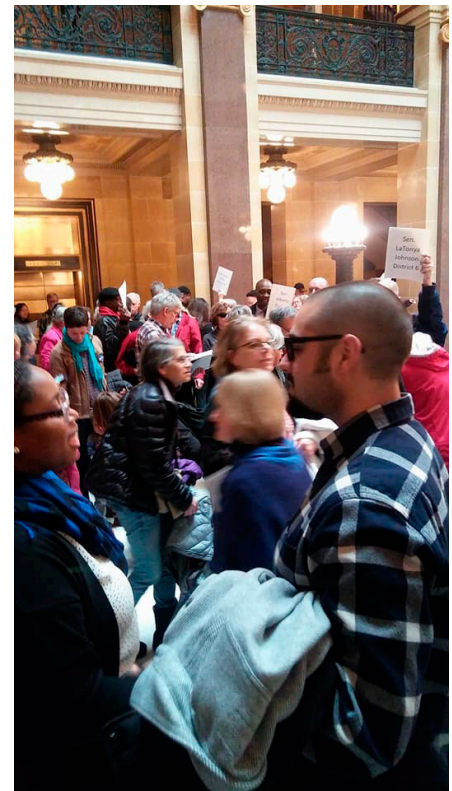
MOSES, WISDOM and ACLU make an impact

by Margaret Irwin, MOSES Communications Team

A large number of MOSES members and folks from many other sponsoring organizations gathered at the State Capitol on March 13 to defeat SB 54. The original bill, passed by the Assembly, would force the Department of Corrections to “revoke” people on probation or extended supervision back to prison if they were charged with certain misdemeanors or low level felonies like second time possession of marijuana. This would hinder the rehabilitation of offenders, harm their families, and significantly increase the number of incarcerated persons. Because the prisons are already overcrowded, the Assembly tacked on a last-minute amendment to build a new prison for \$350 million, plus an additional \$50 million annually for administration. Our goal was to convince the Senate to reject the bill before they joined the Assembly in recess.

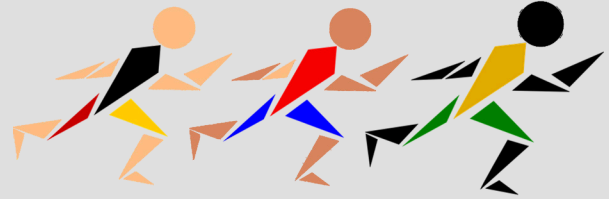
After an informational session led by the ACLU and WISDOM, we divided into groups to visit our state Senators and ask them to defeat the bill.

The good news is that on the last day, of the Senate session, March 20, SB54 did not come up for a vote. This means the bill is dead. It will have to be reintroduced in the next session in order to be considered again. Congratulations to MOSES, WISDOM, and the ACLU for helping put this bill in the garbage bin where it belongs! ■





Race to Justice Spring Training



WHAT

Learn more about Wisconsin's Criminal Justice system, methods to safely reduce the prison population by thousands of people, and restore hope, fairness, and sanity to the criminal justice system.

Meet with other people who share your passion and concern. Share your story and hear the stories of others.

Strategize to be sure these issues are heard by all who are running for office, to make criminal justice reform a top priority in the 2018 election campaigns, and work to get out the vote this fall.

WHO

Everyone concerned about justice.

SIGN UP

Email MOSES organizer Frank Davis at 32davisfrank@gmail.com with your RSVP or call the MOSES office (608-509-7433). There is no cost to attend.

WHEN & WHERE

April 14

9 am to 1 pm*

Damascus Road Church

1702 S. Park St., Madison

*Water and coffee will be provided. Please feel free to bring cookies, muffins, or fruit to share.



Interview: Sagashus Levingston

Founder, Infamous Mothers, LLC

by Alison Mix, MOSES Communications Team

Sagashus, your social enterprise, Infamous Mothers, focuses on the empowerment of women who mother from the margins of society. These specifically black single mothers are often stigmatized in our society. Yet, as your coffee table book of the same name describes it, these are “women who’ve been through the belly of hell ... and brought something good back”. As MOSES, we are interested in knowing how the lives of the women you represent have been impacted by the criminal justice system:

First, black mothers—especially ones living with poverty—are criminalized in our society. Always under surveillance, they are seen as unfit to mother their own children and treated with suspicion. If they are involved in the sex trade or with crack or opiates, they are the devil—at least that’s how we treat them. Take for instance the hysteria about “crack babies.” It was largely unfounded; no long-term effects have been identified, which is not the case for fetal alcohol syndrome. The “crack baby” fear represented instead a societal anxiety about “black women mothering.” Cultural assumptions about black mothering often shape the response of police and social service professionals to mothers in crisis. Second, many women, one featured in my book, have loved ones, typically partners or sons, who have been incarcerated as boys or young men and never recover. Finally, here is a way – to flip the question on its head – the criminal justice system could be impacted by these women I call “infamous” mothers: they can be enlisted as a resource for resistance against unjust practices and overly long sentences of loved ones. Moms are and can be change agents.

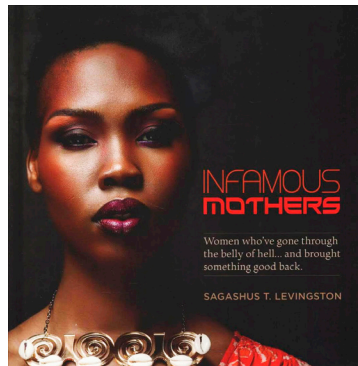
Have you experienced the incarceration of a loved one yourself?

Yes, the father of two of my six kids, Richard (also called Ray), is currently in federal prison in Elkton, Ohio, serving a 10-year sentence. Although he and I split up eight years before his arrest, he was always an excellent dad, committed to his kids. He kept our son Ryland with him so that I could pursue

Dear Judge,

I love my dad because I always spend time with him when I am in Chicago and I also talk to him on the phone. But that is not better than seeing him. We go to Chucky Cheese and to the water park. We play video games and football. He hugs me. I like going to his house because he is a fun dad. I know he loves me because he spends time with me. I miss him because we can’t do fun things now. He got me something for Christmas. Even though I can’t see him, he is always my dad.

Ryland, 7 years old



my master’s degree in Madison. He raised him for five years. He was so heartbroken about the fact that I would not move back to Chicago so that he could be closer to our children that he did not allow himself to get as emotionally involved with our daughter Brooklyn. But he was still her dad and used to come up to Madison to visit her. (She has never really recovered from losing her dad, right when they were starting to bond, when he was incarcerated three years ago. She had behavior problems in school, which is why I am home schooling her.) Richard was a great dad, and that’s why I fought for him even though we’d been broken up for close to a decade.

How did you fight for Richard?

He was charged not just with dealing drugs, but with being a ringleader, some kind of drug kingpin. Well, I dated Richard on and off for about 12 years. In all those years he did not have the drug-dealing lifestyle he was accused of. We lived in different cities in the ensuing years, so I did not follow his subsequent life closely. Would I be surprised if he sold drugs? No. But do I think he was a kingpin? Absolutely not! Prior to

his arrest three years ago, when he was almost 40, he had never been convicted of more than a traffic offense. He adored kids, especially his kids. They were trying to give him 22 to 28 years, which was just ridiculous to me. The charge and punishment didn’t fit his profile. It upset me that his children would be without a father for all that time. So that’s why I helped him. He called me because he was a very involved dad. He said: “I’m in jail, you’re going to have to take care of everything now. I won’t be coming home.” He didn’t tell me what he was accused of.

Although I wasn’t that involved in the case, I became very involved in the sentencing. While drugs were never found on him or his property, about eight people testified against him, all of whom had something to gain in terms of plea bargains, etc., and his lawyer said the case rested a lot on his character. We needed to counter what amounted to hearsay. We needed to show the judge the difference Richard made on the outside.

How were you able to do that?

We weren't sure we were going to be able to speak in court, so a caravan of children, family and friends showed up in white t-shirts with black lettering that said: "He shows up to my track meets", "He helps me with my homework", "He's my superhero", "He listens to me when my heart is broken". The kids and I also wrote letters to the judge. Also his brother, his sister, his cousin, wrote letters. All in all some 30 letters were delivered. While I was not able to attend his sentencing, I orchestrated this effort. I collected letters: from professors (who knew about black men in the system, because that was their research), friends, people who knew about him as a parent, etc. We also got 600 signatures, mostly online and also from his sister who got some in Chicago. As a result, Richard was sentenced to roughly ten years.

What makes you think that your efforts made the difference?

Richard was relying on his lawyer. He really didn't know how to fight for himself in the system. It was swallowing him up, and he felt powerless. So many of our people—men, women and children – get bullied by the system. I knew he wasn't a talker. I knew he wasn't going to fight. But I felt that I could. Women can humanize their partners; our society doesn't always prepare men to do this. That was the month I was supposed to walk across the stage with my PhD, in April 2016. For me this was more important.

I knew that my kids were suffering and would suffer without their dad. I couldn't afford to lose a good dad. And my own life has been affected by mass incarceration. My current partner was incarcerated on and off for six years and that amount of institutionalization has affected him. My brother, my dad, all of my boy cousins have been incarcerated. There was a good chance that my son was going to escape that fate because his dad had never been behind bars. Then this happened. I had already seen the devastation, so that's why I had

to stop everything I was doing and fight for this one. That's why moms are important because we can speak with first hand experience whereas professors, etc., cannot. They can provide the statistics and the analysis, but we are directly having our jobs as mothers made harder.

I was studying motherhood as resistance in my work. That is what my dissertation is about: infamous moms as revolutionaries. And I think that a lot of single moms can do this kind of resistance if only our capacity, our agency is recognized. I was home schooling three of my kids and that became part of our homeschooling project: advocacy as part of social justice, fighting for their dad. So that, for me, is just part of motherhood as resistance.

Dear Honorable Judge Donovan,

I write about my brother Richard (name withheld). I don't want him to do more years. I want him to come home, because it's just me and him left. Our Dad is gone. He was killed when Ray was about 9 years old. Our older brother Chuck is gone, he was killed. And our oldest nephew Mike is gone now. He got in a car accident. As for men, we are really all we have. We had a messed up life. We went to nine different grammar schools. Richard was shot when he was 12. The bullet is still in his chest, but he lived. We haven't always done everything right, but tried our best to be better to our children than people were to us. We tried to be there for them, keep them safe and fed. We took them to school and picked them up. We talked to their teachers, we didn't go far ourselves, but we made sure they graduated. We checked on them, paid for things. We helped with homework. I have three sons in college and one daughter. Richard's son is trying to go to college. He raised one of his sons while his [son's] mother was going to school. Our kids did better than us. That's what we worked for. We had something to do with that. We chose good women, nurses, teachers, college girls, because they make good mothers. We are proud that we are better men than we might have been and we will strive to be even better than that. Richard had become better – and then this happened. He lived and I lived but what's the point of making it through all of that if you're going to spend the rest of your life in jail.

(Name withheld)

Mothers in Chains Update

MOSES Religious Leaders Caucus will continue to advocate for legislation prohibiting use of shackles

The Religious Leaders Caucus (RLC) made some great networking connections at their tabling event in March at the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health Conference. Representatives from the Alliance, National Organization for Women, Wisconsin Green Party and the League for Peace and Freedom



expressed a desire to work with us to promote legislation that will limit / prohibit the use of shackles on pregnant incarcerated women. We will press for the reintroduction of a bill in the new legislative session. The RLC meets the second Wednesday of each month at 8:30 am at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. You need not be clergy to attend. ■

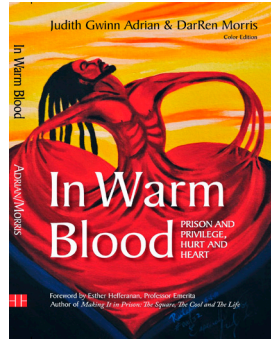
Book Review: In Warm Blood

by Judith Gwinn Adrian & DarRen Morris

reviewed by Pamela Gates, MOSES Communications Team

Judy Adrian, a local college instructor, began the journey that led to this book in an effort to understand her father, who had been briefly imprisoned as a young man. As part of a prison ministry project, she started visiting the Wisconsin prison where DarRen Morris was confined. When the visitation privileges ended, she requested permission to correspond with DarRen. Their correspondence gradually deepened their understanding of each other and of the parallel lives they'd lived geographically, yet of how entirely different their lives had been otherwise. With their understanding came a deepening connection between the two as well: the warmth of blood, the warmth of family.

Judy (she and DarRen are on a first-name basis) often speaks of the “unearned privilege” of simply being white in America. At one point she calls it a cloak she is allowed to wear, unchallenged. But her correspondence with DarRen radicalizes her, and she sees the need for prison reform in nearly every area, whether it be kindergarten for four-year-olds, a healthy diet, or health-care costs. She learns of decent guards and of shamefully abusive guards; of the obdurate power structure that is the Department of Corrections; of terrible physical, emotional, and sexual abuse



in DarRen's early life and how that led to his violence against others; of gangs as a structure of belonging, at least for those who come in at the bottom; of the mental illness rampant in prison populations.

DarRen is the educator in this book. His willingness to answer the very hard questions Judy asks gives him the chance to radicalize all of us. There is so much out there that is wrong, and DarRen has suffered much from those wrongs. He has also done great wrong, which landed him in prison, and he acknowledges and deeply regrets what he did. Could his crime have been prevented, had his earlier life been different? Most likely.

During his time in prison, DarRen's artistic talent has blossomed. Many of his paintings are reproduced in the book, including as the cover artwork. He creates art, he says, in part to help us on the outside understand what people on the inside face. He speaks of the very real need for prison reform, for more commitment to rehabilitation, rather than punishment.

I recommend this book to all concerned about the great inequities in our society. Certainly that's everyone in MOSES. ■

Thanks to our sponsors!

 *Sinsinawa Dominicans*



THE EVJUE FOUNDATION
THE CAPITAL TIMES