

# MOSES



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

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## Dems Commit to Criminal Justice Reform

**Close to 700 citizens in attendance**

*by Alison Mix, MOSES Vice President*

**A**lmost 700 people participated in WISDOM's Gubernatorial Candidate Forum on June 11<sup>th</sup> in Pewaukee. The event was co-sponsored by 16 organizations, including The ACLU of Wisconsin and the Dane County NAACP.

Seven of the then nine candidates attended, while one, Tony Evers, provided written responses to our questions. (Paul Soglin neither attended nor responded to our invitation.)

Participating in person were: Dana Wachs, Mahlon Mitchell, Kelda Roys, Matt Flynn, Kathleen Vinehout, Mike McCabe and Andy Gronik.

Fourteen issues were raised in what was an ambitious yet meticulously managed program lasting two hours. The candidates sat in the front row, initially with their backs turned to the audience. WISDOM leaders, including MOSES VP Talib Akbar, gave testimonials about each issue in turn.

Then the candidates were asked a question related to that issue, for example:

*"If you are elected governor, will you direct the Department of Corrections to end the use of incarceration for crimeless rule violations?"*

After each of the 14 questions was asked, the candidates had the option of raising a

*continued on page 3*



*Candidates hold up cards at forum*

## Executive Committee

Eric Howland, President

Alison Mix, Vice President

Talib Akbar, Vice President

Ann Lacy, Financial Secretary

Janice Greening, Treasurer

Barbie Jackson, Secretary

Joan Duerst,

Religious Leaders Caucus

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Data/Information

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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

## A change is gonna' come

The one constant in life is the ever presence of change. As I listen to Otis thru the speakers in my office, I can't help but do some reflecting on some of the things that have changed me. In June my little baby turned one, I have a sixteen-year-old who is about to get her license, I'm coming up on my fourth wedding anniversary in November, and a few other blessings.

Over the last couple of months, change has been an important topic of conversation in MOSES, too. The imminent closing of Lincoln Hills and the question of how those youth will be cared for once they return to the county dominated discussions at the Kids in Cages forum. More than 70 people showed up to stand for our youth and say that we want to be at the table contributing to the conversation when change comes to Dane County. During June's WISDOM Gubernatorial Candidate Forum, close to 700 supporters (including many from MOSES) stood together and heard candidates make verbal commitments to change the criminal justice system. Change happens one vote at a time, so your voice and votes are important. Three days before the state primary on Aug 14<sup>th</sup>, MOSES members will be

going out into the Bram's Addition neighborhood talking about our issues and reminding people to vote, as part of our Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) initiative. MOSES has also been focusing on internal change: strategic planning, to improve the efficiency with which we do things, and racial justice education, to better understand how racism has played a part of our everyday lives.

How are you going to contribute to the change that's coming our way? Power concedes nothing without a demand. We must demand that there is a change in how people are treated. Contact MOSES to get more involved in our task forces and operational teams. As James Watkins has said: "A river cuts through rock, not because of its power but because of its persistence." ■



Frank Davis  
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## Upcoming Events

### WISDOM conference calls (605) 468-8012

- Old Law: August 9 and September 13 at 8:30 am (code 423950)
- Solitary Confinement: August 12 and September 10 at 4:00 pm (code 423950)
- Prison Prevention: August 12 and September 10 at 5:00 pm (code 423950)
- Post-Release: August 28 and September 26 at 7:30 pm (code 423951)

### MOSES Religious Leaders Caucus (RLC)

- RLC Monthly Meeting: August 13 and September 11 from 8:30-10:00 am  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church (Jericho Room)

### MOSES Task Force: Justice System Reform (MJSR)

- MJSR Monthly Meeting: August 14 and September 12  
6:30-8:30 at Madison Police Station South District, 825 Hughes Place
- Youth Justice Forum: September 12. Location TBD

### MOSES Race to Justice: Knocking on Doors in the Bram's Addition neighborhood

August 11th. Meet at Damascus Road Church at 10:00.

### Next MOSES monthly meeting

Sunday, September 8, 3:30-5:30 pm  
Location to be announced. Check the website.

*Save the date!*  
**Transformation Celebration**  
*December 8th Fundraising Gala*

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#

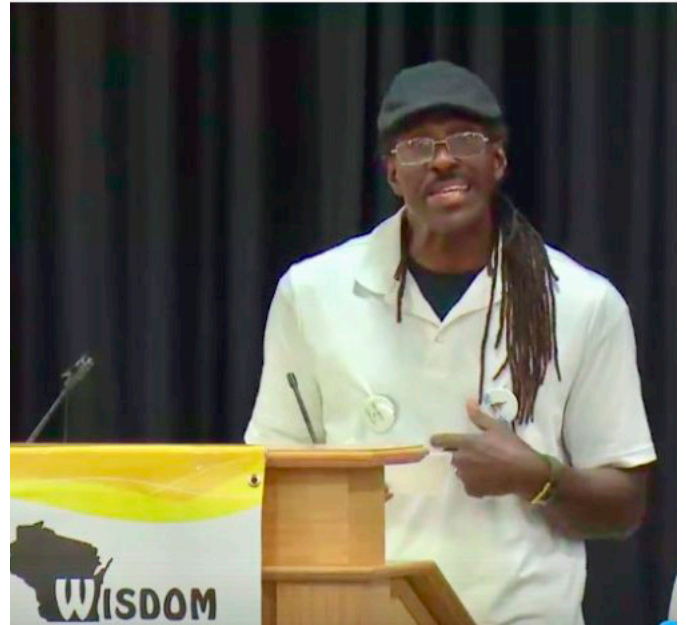
Post-Release: code 423951#

## Dems Commit *continued from page 1*

green card for YES, a red card for NO, or an amber card for UNDECIDED. To the apparent surprise of the organizers, all seven candidates answered YES to every single question. By doing so, they promised, if elected governor, to:

- End Crimeless Revocations and work to close the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF);
- Order an immediate, outside review of the broken parole system, and support the End Child Poverty campaign.
- End the use of Solitary Confinement for more than 15 consecutive days – within four years!
- Support Regional Transportation Authorities;
- Support a re-instatement of the Prove It First Mining Moratorium, Drivers' Cards for undocumented people in our communities, and background checks at gun shows.

After the presentations and questions, each candidate had five minutes to talk about their positions on the issues highlighted by WISDOM, particularly criminal justice reform. There was a straw poll as part of the proceedings, and the winner was Kelda Roys, followed closely by Mike McCabe. ■



*Talib Akbar speaks on solitary confinement*

## Youth Justice in Dane County

### Community conversations about juvenile justice system reform

*by Tina Hogle, MOSES Member*

On May 30, 2018 more than seventy people gathered at First United Methodist Church for a question and answer session with a panel of community leaders featuring Rev. Judge Everett Mitchell, GSAFE's Ali Muldrow, and UrbanUnderground's Sharlen Moore.

The issue of youth justice has become a MOSES focus at this time due to the enactment of legislation mandating the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Juvenile Detention facilities. This will shift responsibility for juvenile justice to counties. Dane County has an opportunity to examine the juvenile justice system that currently exists and create positive change moving forward.

The panelists spoke about the need to address issues in the community prior to the decision to incarcerate. Racism in Dane County was at the center of the panel's conversation. Studies show that racial bias can occur as early as pre-



school. They spoke of the school-to-prison pipeline, in which children of color are strikingly more likely to have encounters with law enforcement. The pipeline was described as "an institutionalized empire being built on the backs of children."

There was a call for trauma-informed care for youthful offenders. This approach during incarceration has been shown to

have the best and longest lasting outcomes. As Judge Mitchell said, "We need to be translators of pain. Just because they act out doesn't mean they are violent."

Part II of this series of community conversations on Wednesday, Sept. 12, will feature Dane County Juvenile Corrections professionals who will provide an update on what is currently in place, the impact of the new law on Dane County, and suggestions for change. (Location TBD)

Part III will feature the experiences of people that have been in the Dane County system. ■



# MOSES Potluck Picnic

## Good food, good music, and good cheer ruled the day!

by Barbie Jackson, MOSES Secretary

**T**he weather threatened but our buoyancy and celebratory good cheer ruled the day. Nary a drop of rain nor a clap of thunder arose to dampen our spirits!

About 50 MOSES members and families attended our potluck picnic on a beautiful Thursday evening within and outside the Burrows Park Shelter in Madison. While people mingled together for conversation and sharing of a wide array of delicious food and beverage, children played with the various lawn games and ran from one activity to another with glee.

After a little while Talib Akbar, Deborah Adkins and Eric Howland brought out their drums and percussion instruments and serenaded us with vibrant sound. Then we settled down and enjoyed the inspirational singing of new member Andrea Harris and her friend Cliff. After the singing, Barbie Jackson rounded up hearty souls who were game

for sailboat rides offered by a few members of the Mendota Yacht Club, with a pretty good breeze that carried several boatloads of riders all the way to Memorial Union and back.

But the bravest one of all was Talib, who allowed three bags full of water balloons to be pelted at him to the squeals and giggles of the children along with a few hefty shots by Deb and a certain Dane County Supervisor who shall remain unnamed.

As sunset approached in the overcast sky, a rainbow began to form in the southwest and soon it reached all the way across the sky to bless the closing of our celebration. A few more parting beats of the drums carried people off with their belongings and happy memories for all. Alison Mix commented to Barbie that this should certainly become an annual event! ■









# MOSES Engages in Racial Justice Education

## Racial justice circles formed

by Barbie Jackson, MOSES Secretary

Fifteen MOSES members attended a WISDOM Spring Leadership Meeting on May 17. After a framing by WISDOM's Racial Justice Team, the members of each affiliate gathered to discuss how they would carry out racial justice in their affiliate. Participants were asked to focus on one of the following five questions with regard to racial inclusion: Who makes decisions? Who controls the finances? What education is provided? What is the organization's culture? What alliances do we have with organizations of people of color?

The MOSES members in the discussion were: Frank Davis, Jerome Dillard, Joan Duerst, Pam Gates, Ann Hodges, Eric Howland, Barbie Jackson, Karen Julesberg, Nancy Kosseff, Ann Lacy, Lynn McDonald, Rachel Morgan, Carolyn Moynihan-Bradt, Carol Rubin, and Jeanie Verschay.

The group decided together to focus on education. Each participant answered the question: "What is the best way you have learned about racial bias?" There was consensus that MOSES would benefit from additional education about racial bias. Participants also agreed that the sharing was very energizing. Together we agreed that:

- Overcoming racial bias should be part of all MOSES discussions, events, speakers, and planning.
- Small circles in which participants share their own experiences of racial bias and racism should be a part of every general MOSES meeting, for 15 to 30 minutes.
- Formal training in this area is important and is already a part of the strategic planning group's proposed action items.

- Racism discussions must include all racial groups, not, as is sometimes the case, emphasizing just black/white relations.
- The circle of 15 people who attended the May gathering will be accountable for these MOSES commitments, shepherded by the multicultural team of Rachel, Barbie, and Frank.
- After receiving the meeting notes summarized here, one member observed:
- "Self-improvement strategies on racist attitudes through reflection together and self-examination within trusted relationships, in which we plan to repeatedly share encounters with one another over time in positive, personal, relationship-based encounters, has been shown to be the only effective practice to shift deeply held prejudices about The Other."

In our first two experiences of these Racial Justice Circles at MOSES monthly meetings, we have begun by exploring in small groups (1) how each of us individually became aware of racial differences and racial biases and (2) how early experiences through children's games, songs, media such as television, radio, or comic strips delivered racial biases to our formative consciousness.

We have honored one another by speaking openly and trustingly in order to deepen this experience. We all recognize that overcoming racial disparities begins with us and we are very committed to this effort. MOSES plans to send a small group to formal training in the fall. We will continue to explore these issues and learn together for the remainder of 2018 and assess our progress and next steps thereafter. ■

## Face of Dedication

Debra Adkins is present at all MOSES meetings and events, yet somehow the camera failed to capture her presence in photos of Juneteenth and the May photo of *Like an Animal in a Cage* cast. We want Deb to know that she is greatly appreciated and we did manage to capture her in a picnic photo on page 5! ■



## Knocking on Doors

Part of the Integrated Voter Engagement campaign  
in our Race for Justice.

August 11, 2018

Meet at Damascus Road Church at 10:00 a.m.

# Rational Sex Offense Laws

A new issue for MOSES

by Alison Mix,, MOSES Vice-President

Attorney (and MOSES Treasurer) Janice Greening spoke at the July MOSES monthly meeting about a conference she attended in June organized by the National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws (NAR-SOL).

She shared some of the things she had learned at the conference, for example that the sex offender registry creates a climate of fear and hysteria, while having no measurable effect on recidivism rates. Also, a large percentage of those on the registry were juveniles at the time of their offense. Supreme Court Justice Kennedy famously said in 2001 that the risk that sex offenders will commit new crimes is “frightening and high.” However, this was based on dubious data, specifically a March 1986 issue of *Psychology Today*. The recidivism rate for some categories of sex offenders, such as those committing incest, is as low as 3 percent. The difficulty with current laws is that they are not evidence-based. Not only are many registrants (a term favored over “sex offenders”) capable of being rehabilitated, they want to be productive members of society. In some states public urination or indecent exposure can put people on the sex offender register, with serious consequences for their ability to find work or housing. Ninety percent of victims of sexual assault know their attackers. The chances of being assaulted by a stranger are low.

The conference program included such topics as “Framing Sex Offenders: The Complexities and Challenges of Talking About Registrants”; “Beyond Treatment: Creating a Community of Accountability and Support”; and “Clearing Digital Pitfalls: Ethics in the New World of Social Media”. Reference was made at the conference to a documentary film about sex offenders, called “Untouchable”, by David Feige.

Although the raising of this issue triggered some emotion among those attending the meeting, including victims of sexual assault, the consensus was that this would be a good topic for MOSES to address, carefully, looking dispassionately at the data, and all the while respecting those among us and others in the community who have been victims and are survivors.

Two guests attended the meeting, both with extensive professional experience working with registrants. Preferring for the most part to remain in the role of observers this time, they may, it is hoped, return on a future date as we explore sex offense laws further, and provide their perspective on this issue, one on which the NAACP is reportedly trying to put together a statement. Perhaps the time has indeed come to confront the taboo that surrounds this sensitive topic. ■

# MOSES Educates at Juneteenth Celebration

Members share information about criminal justice reform issues

by Tina Hogle, MOSES Member



Education, information, and fun drew people to the MOSES table at Madison’s Juneteenth celebration in Penn Park. A small and dedicated group of MOSES members pulled together to assemble the exhibit, gather educational materials, and create a Black history challenge game. Though the temperatures were in the mid-90’s, our team spent the day speaking with community members about our criminal justice system and sharing the goals and objectives of MOSES.

Special thanks to Rachel and James Morgan, Talib Akbar, Deb Adkins, and Sister Joan Duerst for their efforts to make this event a reality. ■

# Book Review–Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City

by Matthew Desmond

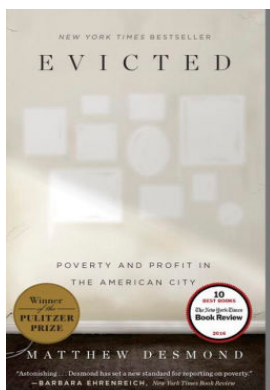
reviewed by Pamela Gates, MOSES Communications Team

*Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* is a modern study (2016) of one of the clearest results of poverty and causes of continuing inequality in America: housing insecurity. Desmond, a professor of social sciences at Harvard, lived in a trailer park on Milwaukee's far south side for the four years he was researching the book, which was the UW's 2016 Go Big Read selection.

In the first 300 pages, we meet the people he lived among: black, white, with kids, without kids, couples, singles. He accompanied people to court, watched evictions -- sometimes with the family being evicted -- got to know their often overcrowded and under-maintained homes, and went along on post-eviction housing searches. He got to know landlords as well as tenants, and gives us an intimate look inside their lives. He experienced much trust and kindness, as well as occasional hostility. He was as much a part of the scene as he was allowed to be, learning – and telling us – stories of those who, much as they dreamed of leaving, were highly unlikely ever to be able to do so.

You can find Desmond's recommendations, background, and thorough annotation (64 pages!) at the end of the book. If you already have a clear understanding of housing issues in America, you can just read those. But understanding the everyday lives of people who face eviction as a matter of course, i.e., putting faces on the statistics, is without a doubt worthwhile.

In his epilogue, significantly entitled "Home and Hope," Desmond offers a solution to the misery created by our current situation in America, namely, "significantly expanding our housing voucher program so that *all* low-income families could benefit from it." He sees this as a solution to "two



freedoms at odds with each other: the freedom to profit from rents and the freedom to live in a safe and affordable home".

"What we need most," he says on page 308, referring to the poor, "is a housing program for the unlucky majority – the millions of poor families struggling unassisted in the private market – that promotes values most of us support: security, fairness, and equal opportunity." Right now, he says, we spend each year three times as much on housing benefits for homeowners, such as mortgage interest and capital gains tax deductions, as a universal housing-voucher

program would, by best estimates, cost.

"One thing is certain," Desmond declares in the epilogue: "This degree of inequality, this withdrawal of opportunity, this cold denial of basic needs, this endorsement of pointless suffering – by no American value is this situation justified. No moral code or ethical principle, no piece of scripture or holy teaching, can be summoned to defend what we have allowed our country to become."

*Evicted* adds another piece to the puzzle of what we as a state and a country have become, and it offers sage, concrete advice on how we can start correcting the mess. ■

Matthew Desmond will be the Keynote Speaker at the WHEDA\* Conference on Tuesday, August 21, 2018 at Monona Terrace

see [www.wheda.com/theconference](http://www.wheda.com/theconference) for information

\*WHEDA is the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority

## Thanks to our sponsors!

