

MOSES



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

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State Watch



by Kate Mulligan

Gov. Evers Earns B-/C+ on Criminal Justice Reform

Gov. Evers struggles to find a steady path to reach his goal of reducing the prison population by 50 percent. Republicans are also in disarray, with voices for reform and actions that prevent it. Here are items that show the confused picture at the state level.

— When campaigning, Evers promised to include \$15 million in his budget for the Treatment and Alternatives Diversion program. In his budget, he proposed \$2 million for the two-year period. After energetic lobbying by WISDOM, the governor requested that the Joint Finance Committee add \$4 million more each year. The Committee refused, and Evers signed the budget with the \$2 million figure.

— WISDOM urged the closing of the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF). While professing sympathy with that goal, Evers instead included funds to renovate the facility and offered no plan for its closure. He also requested money to add beds at a women's prison and a correctional facility in Black River Falls.

— Evers refused, however, to include

funds for a maximum-security facility at Green Bay. The Republican-controlled Joint Finance Committee added money to acquire land for the prison. Evers vetoed the item in the budget that he signed.

— Action about the Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake complex is downright odd. A bill stipulating that the complex would close by Jan. 1, 2021, passed unanimously at the end of the last legislative session. Evers eliminated any deadline in his budget. Republicans and Democrats argued that a deadline emphasizes the need for quick action and joined forces to put a new deadline into law. Evers signed that bill, but continues to resist the idea of a deadline.

— Patrick Marley reported in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R) defied members of his own party, Democratic legislators, and Evers to deny the state an opportunity for the Pew Charitable Trust to undertake a study of our probation and parole system. Those studies have led to major reforms in other states. The study would have



Executive Committee

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Alison Mix, Vice President
Rachel Morgan, Designated Vice President
Ann Lacy, Treasurer
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Jeanie Verschay
Member Engagement
Karen Julesberg
Recruitment
Frank Davis

MOSES Task Forces

MOSES Justice System Reform Initiative
Paul Saeman
Jeanie Verschay

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Organizer's Corner

Whoever said, "Summertime, and the living is easy" didn't live in Wisconsin. Maybe they didn't even live in America! Because in the world of nonprofits and social and criminal justice work, the living is hard and at times discouraging. However, we push on for the good of those who are in our communities, including those in our jails and prisons.

In the last few years, MOSES (locally) and WISDOM (and its 11 statewide affiliates) have been taking some bold steps to push our justice system beyond what they were doing in the past. The term "crimeless revocation" was coined by us, and we have fought to end this practice in Wisconsin. It affects almost 3,000 people per year! We have worked to end the use of solitary confinement for more than 15 days in our jails and prisons, which the U.N. has stated is torture. Plus, we have lifted up the injustice levied on "Old Law" prisoners, who are trapped in a system that won't give them the opportunity to be paroled and returned to their families and community.

These are just a few of the issues that we have fought to improve, to ensure that people throughout our communities are treated fairly and humanely. Now it's on to our next big campaign, which will give voice to those who should not have lost it: Unlock the vote!

On June 27, 2019, WISDOM kicked off its "Unlock the Vote" campaign to much excitement. About 250 people took part in the launch in Racine during our week-long leadership training. "Unlock the Vote" is a campaign to restore voting rights to people who have been convicted of a felony and are currently on some form of supervision in the community. Twenty states currently don't allow people in this situation to vote, and Wisconsin is one of them.

MOSES Meetings

MOSES Religious Leaders Caucus (RLC)

- RLC Monthly Meeting: August 6
4:00 pm, St. Luke's Episcopal Church (Jericho Room)

MOSES Task Force: Justice System Reform Initiative (MJSRI)

- MJSRI Monthly Meeting: August 8
6:30-8:30 pm at Madison Police Station South District, 825 Hughes Place

Next MOSES monthly meetings

- Sunday, August 4 at 2:30 pm
- Sunday, September 8 at 2:30 pm

Click on the calendar link at the MOSES website for details.

The campaign will also be a call for those who can vote to exercise that right. Too often, communities of color and people of low economic status won't vote because they think it doesn't matter or won't affect them one way or the other. Well, my retort is: We haven't voted in high numbers for years. How has that worked out for our communities?

Throughout July, August, and September of this year, we will continue to roll out the Unlock the Vote campaign with workshops in five Wisconsin cities. These workshops will be facilitated by EXPO (EX-incarcerated People Organizing) and others who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. We expect a total of at least 400 people to attend.

Why does it matter? Because there are approximately 68,000 people in Wisconsin who are currently not able to participate in our election system, and many more who are still under the erroneous impression that they can't vote. These people are working, paying taxes, and living in our communities, and they have been for years. They should not be excluded from the election process.

So, this summer, as you are enjoying your family and friends, eating good food, and collecting great memories, remember that injustices, biases, and wrongs don't take a vacation. Neither do the organizations that continually fight to improve our community. ■



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

MOSES Events

When They See Us: Group Film Discussion

Thursday, August 22, 2019, 6:30-8:30 pm
Christ Presbyterian Church
944 E. Gorham St.
Madison, WI 53703

Transformation Celebration: MOSES Fundraising Gala

Saturday, December 14
Doors open at 5:30 pm
6:00-7:30 Mingling and heavy hors d'oeuvres
7:30 Program followed by music and dancing
Watch for more details!

Why I Am a Sustaining Member of MOSES

by Sherry Reames

My road to MOSES started in 2005 with an armed robbery at our neighborhood grocery store. My husband, Fred, walked in on that robbery, and the money in his wallet was taken too. Once the robber had been caught and convicted, the court invited Fred (as an “elderly crime victim”) to attend the sentencing hearing. The intergenerational tragedy he witnessed at that hearing changed his life from then on-- and it has changed mine too.

The robber was just a teenager. He was a promising kid, but he had been in and out of the juvenile justice system for years-- apparently following in the footsteps of his father, who had been in prison for most of the young man’s life. Now the young man had committed several serious crimes (not just the grocery store robbery), and he was sentenced to spend the next 20 years in prison-- leaving behind some heartbroken adults who loved and believed in him, plus a toddler son who would grow up as he had, with an imprisoned father.

After that hearing, Fred became a dedicated volunteer for MUM (Madison-area Urban Ministry). From 2006 until shortly before his death in 2012, he mentored the child of an imprisoned parent, helped raise public awareness about the obstacles faced by returning prisoners, helped with fund-raisers, and served on MUM’s

board of directors-- eventually as Treasurer. I have tried to carry on some of that legacy through my own volunteer work for MUM and, more recently, through my contributions of time and money to MOSES as well.

So far as I know, Fred never learned about the work done by MOSES and WISDOM. But he would definitely have approved. He cared deeply about racial and social justice. And like me, he loved the parable about the rescuers who kept fishing people out of the river until they got curious enough to go upstream and find out who or what was throwing all those people in. It’s obviously not enough to help individuals who are suffering from the cruelties and disparities in the Wisconsin justice system. We need to work together, pooling our collective resources of knowledge, energy, and persistence, until we have persuaded our fellow-citizens and elected leaders to reform the system itself. And of course sustained campaigns like this require continuing, reliable sources of financial support-- “sustaining memberships,” in short. In Fred’s memory, I am happy to know that part of the annuity he left me is going automatically every month as an electronic funds transfer (ETF) to WISDOM-MOSES. I hope many members of MOSES will find reasons of their own to become sustainers. ■



Sherry Reames

State Watch *continued from page one*

been conducted with the help of a task force composed of both Democrats and Republicans. Despite pleading by Republicans, Vos refused to sign off on the request, which ended its chances with Pew.

Watch the Assembly Corrections Committee for hopeful signs of action on reform. Its members worked together very successfully in a bipartisan fashion to pass the bill closing Lincoln Hills. That spirit of cooperation seems to remain. They united recently to pass the bill adding a new deadline for that closure. Rep. Evan Goyke (D), who has presented a comprehensive plan for reform, is a key member and appears to work well with the committee chair, Rep. Schraa (R). Schraa believes that Wisconsin could cut the state prison population by

thousands of inmates, according to an article in Wisconsin Watch. ■

Statewide Task Forces

WISDOM conference calls (605) 468-8012

- Old Law: August 10 and Sept. 10 at 8:30 am (code 423950)
- Solitary Confinement: August 9, and Sept. 13 at 4:00 pm (code 423950)
- Prison Prevention: August 9, and Sept. 13 at 5:00 pm (code 423950)
- Post-Release: August 25 and Sept. 22 at 7:30 pm (code 423951)

WISC-TV Interviews MOSES

by Alison Mix

On Feb. 19 of this year, MOSES members Frank Davis, Eric Howland, and Alison Mix met with WISC-TV editorial director Neil Heinen and his board “to help them think through how they could promote corrections and criminal justice reform,” as Heinen had put it in an email to Pat Watson, who heads First Unitarian Society’s MOSES core team. Jerry Hancock, director of the Prison Ministry Project and an old friend of Heinen’s, was also present.

As a result of this meeting, Heinen invited MOSES to appear with him on “For the Record,” and so on Sunday, June 9, MOSES organizer Frank Davis, Religious Leaders Caucus chair Sister Joan Duerst, and Justice System Reform Initiative chair Paul Saeman joined Heinen on his program to talk about MOSES and its role in advocating for criminal justice reform.

Frank explained the structure of WISDOM and MOSES, pointing out that more than 90 percent of people in prison will return home, and taking the opportunity to talk not only about mass incarceration, but also about mass supervision. Sister Joan talked about her own introduction to the organization through Edgewood College sociology professor (now emerita) Sister Esther Heffernan. Paul spoke of his background in state government and welfare reform and of how, when the Race to Equity report came out, he was struck by the similarities in racial disparities between Madison and the city where he had worked earlier, Newark, N.J.

Looking at the issues, Paul emphasized that things start locally, in the community, and talked about MOSES members going to county committee meetings, listening, testifying, and being willing to participate in county work groups examining diversions, mental health, and length-of-stay issues. Asked about sources of hope and progress, Frank mentioned the new Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Kevin Carr, who speaks of his charges as “men and women in our care,” rather than “offenders.” He also mentioned the fresh hope that John Tate II’s appoint-



l to r: Neil Heinen, Frank Davis, Joan Duerst, Paul Saeman

ment as chair of the Parole Commission offered. Sister Joan spoke of Dane County’s restorative justice courts as another sign of hope. Paul said that Dane County’s Criminal Justice Council had really listened to the community and to the dozens of recommendations made in Resolution 556. He also applauded the county’s review of the mental health system. Frank mentioned the national Unlock the Vote campaign.

MOSES’s website and Facebook page addresses were displayed prominently on the screen during the course of the program. If you missed the broadcast, here is the link to see it:

<https://www.channel3000.com/news/for-the-record-moses-a-non-partisan-interfaith-organization-promoting-social-justice/1084814633>

Thanks to MOSES member Pat Watson for initiating this fine opportunity for MOSES! ■

Wisconsin's Dubious Distinction

by Kate Mulligan

More than 50% of the people in Wisconsin's prisons are there for a supervision violation. Our state earned the dubious distinction of ranking 4th in the country in terms of this cause of incarceration.

That figure and other information about issues related to probation and parole appears in an analysis by the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG). In "Confined and Costly," the authors point out that until now national data about the impact of probation violations on prison populations had been unavailable.

The report provides a national context to arguments long advanced by WISDOM about the harm of "crimeless revocations" and Wisconsin's failure to follow other states in reform efforts. It should provide new ammunition for WISDOM's revitalized effort to close the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF). Many of the men who end up in MSDF are there for technical violations of rules while they are on community supervision.

Check out the report at <https://csgjusticecenter.org/confinedandcostly/> ■

KEY QUESTIONS STATES SHOULD ASK

As state leaders begin to address supervision violations in their state, these questions should guide decision-making:

- How many people in your state are on probation or parole?
- How are technical violations handled in your state?
- What impact do supervision violations have on local jails in your state?
- How do your state's policies impact the length of time that people are on probation and parole?
- For what types of new offenses are people on supervision being sent to prison?
- What has your state done to scale up implementation of supervision practices and programs designed to reduce new criminal behavior?
- How much does your state invest in supervision annually? How much do supervision violations cost your state annually?

IN 13 STATES, MORE THAN 1 IN 3 PEOPLE in prison on any given day are there for a supervision violation.

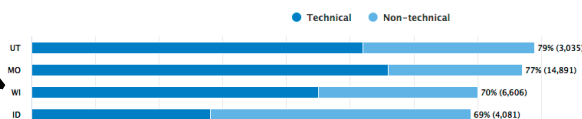
Proportion of State Prison Populations That Are Due to Supervision Violations²



IN 20 STATES, MORE THAN HALF OF PRISON ADMISSIONS are due to supervision violations.

Variation in these proportions across states is shaped by the overall size of each state's supervision population, how violations are sanctioned, whether those sanctions are the result of incarceration paid for by the state or county, and how well state policy and funding enable probation and parole agencies to employ evidence-based practices to improve success on supervision.

Proportion of State Prison Admissions That Are Due to Supervision Violations³



Transformation Celebration 2019

MOSES Fundraising Gala
December 14, 2019

5:30 Doors Open
6:00-7:30 Mingling and heavy hors d'oeuvres
7:30 Program followed by music and dancing

Look for more details in the Sept-Oct newsletter and on the MOSES Website at www.MOSESMadison.com

The Goyke Prison Reform Plan: The Good, the Bad and the Cautious

by Gil Halsted

State Rep. Evan Goyke, D-Milwaukee, published his master plan for prison reform, titled “No Vacancy,” this past April. There is a lot of good news in it, or at least hopeful plans that could result in good news. Overall, it is a very cautious proposal to shrink the prison population, make the system more humane, and save the state a lot of money.

What follows is a brief summary of Goyke’s hopes and dreams. It is divided into six policy proposals and closes with an admonition to Goyke’s fellow lawmakers to look to other states that have adopted some of these policies and realized positive results. The focus is on what can be done legislatively.

Goyke begins with front-end issues to reduce crime and thereby bring down the number of people going in the front door of what has been for too long a revolving door entrance/exit/reentry to Wisconsin’s prisons. Goyke’s ultimate, cautious goal is to reduce the prison population by 500 by 2021, and by a total of 5,000 by 2030.

So, Policy #1 is to invest in crime-ridden neighborhoods. The investment would come in the form of combined state and federal funding, using the federal Edward Byrne Memorial Grant program as a model. He predicts the result will save money in legal fees, healthcare expenses, and policing.

Policy #2 is to increase TAD funding by \$3 million. This is something that Governor Evers has already done in his budget. But it falls far short of the \$25 million WISDOM has long been calling for.

Policy #3 is an increase in the Housing First grants that help prevent homelessness. Goyke says that Milwaukee’s current federal Housing First grant is helping, but he proposes a \$3-million statewide housing program. He says that would save almost \$4 million in reduced Medicaid and mental health payments and in reduced legal expenses incurred by homeless people, many of whom have mental health or drug addiction problems.

Policy #4 is a reform of the revocation system, something WISDOM has been advocating for several years. Specifically, Goyke calls for:

1. Ending “crimeless” revocations
2. Creating a stronger post-sentence Treatment, Alternatives, and Diversion (TAD) framework.

This is a reform that must come from the Department of Corrections (DOC), not the Legislature, although some states have passed laws reforming revocations. DOC Secretary Kevin Carr has said he will pursue this. It is also something that has attracted an increasing amount of bipartisan support in the Legislature. On July 9, Rep. David Bowen, D-Milwaukee, and Rep. Patrick Snyder, R-Wausau, were guests on the WPR program “Central Time”. They spoke in bipartisan terms about making this issue a priority.

Policy #5 shifts the focus to the back end, meaning releasing people from prison. Goyke proposes to modernize the state’s Earned Release Program (ERP). He plans to do this by allowing inmates to reduce their in-prison time by completing rehab, alcohol and other drugs (AODA), academic, and vocational programs. That time would be added to their supervision time once they are released, to keep the change in sync (unfortunately) with the Truth In Sentencing law. This policy also calls for converting Prairie du Chien and Lincoln Hills prisons to treatment- and education-intensive facilities. Goyke says this could save the state more than \$14 million.

Finally, Policy #6 appears to address the Truth in Sentencing problem not solved by #5. It would

1. Create a system for earning compliance credit
2. Reform the rules of supervision
3. Reduce DOC agent caseloads
4. Expand early discharge

The result would be, according to Goyke, a reduction in the number of people on supervision, because agents could offer incentives to their clients to get off supervision early. Key to this reform is reducing the caseload of community corrections officers.

Goyke sums up his proposals by highlighting the success of similar reforms in Michigan and Louisiana. He does not address the issue of Old Law inmates. He has said that is an issue for the DOC to address through the Parole Board.

For WISDOM and MOSES, it seems to me, these are reforms that we should support and do what we can to get implemented, while at the same time encouraging a more aggressive approach to invest in programs that will reduce the prison population more quickly. ■

MOSES Turns “Ready for Release” Project Over to EXPO

(EX-incarcerated People Organizing)

By Alison Mix

On July 17th, MOSES president Eric Howland and WISDOM Old Law Task Force members Alison Mix and Sister Fran Hoffman met with EXPO’s director, Jerome Dillard, and lead legislative organizer, Peggy West, at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the future of the “Ready for Release” project and to hand over responsibility for it, together with all the paper files, to EXPO.

The project started in earnest back in February, when WISDOM executive director David Liners had the idea of collecting information on 100-150 people incarcerated under the “Old Law,” before Truth in Sentencing came in on Dec. 31, 1999. The idea was to present these human profiles to the new chair of the Parole Commission, once that person was appointed by Gov. Evers. During the considerable delay finalizing that appointment, some 30 MOSES members and friends met in multiple work parties, organized by Alison Mix, to enter the responses to questionnaires that had been sent out to Old Law prisoners into an Excel spreadsheet.

On May 31, three days before the new Parole Commission chair, John Tate II, started work, a group of some 20 WISDOM and EXPO members met with Tate and presented him with a 13-page printout of the spreadsheet, by then containing 180 files, describing how long people had been incarcerated, the nature of their crime, their age when convicted, what programs they had completed, the number of parole hearings they’d had, and reasons they’d been given for deferral of parole, their post-release support systems, etc. In addition, a dozen more elaborate profiles on separate

sheets of paper highlighted the information, personal statements, and family photos of some of the 2,800 people deserving of release.

Chairman Tate expressed his appreciation and said that information so organized would be useful to him.

EXPO decided to take him at his word. Rather than let the project end with the delivery of these files to Tate, which was the original plan, EXPO leaders decided to take the project forward and continue to distribute questionnaires to Old Law people and add profiles to the spreadsheet, with no upper limit to the number, including, at least in theory, all of the current Old Law prison population.

EXPO’s plan is to send Chairman Tate a link to the online spreadsheet every month, perhaps sorting the list one month according to the number of years people have been in prison, another month according to age at the time of conviction,

another month highlighting those who had never even had a parole hearing, and so on. Peggy West, who works in the WISDOM office in Milwaukee, has already accumulated completed questionnaires from some 100 people, in addition to the 200 names currently in the spreadsheet. To get all of that data added to the spreadsheet, she will be organizing regular work parties in Milwaukee, benefiting from a core group of six to eight experienced volunteers, all with laptops, all tech-savvy. She is planning to distribute the questionnaire at Taycheedah women’s prison, as so far all of the respondents have been men.

MOSES wishes EXPO well as it keeps this most necessary project alive, along with the hopes of nearly 3,000 too-long-neglected men and women yearning to return to their families and communities. ■



l to r: Alison Mix, Eric Howland, Jerome Dillard, Peggy West

MOSES Jazzes Up Annual Picnic

About 40 people turned out on July 11, a beautiful, sunny summer evening, for MOSES's second annual potluck picnic. It was held again at Burrows Park, but without the sailing activity that was so popular last year. To make up for that, MOSES engaged the jazz trio Chance Allies, which played jazz classics to rave reviews. A few couples even took the opportunity to dance!

Chance Allies performs for charities and churches, helping them to raise funds. Lead singer Tisha Brown, who is studying for her Doctor of Divinity degree, was for several years the minister at Madison's Community of Hope, UCC.

In addition to regular MOSES attendees and their guests, a number of folks from EXPO (Ex-incarcerated People Organizing) joined the party, including EXPO director Jerome Dillard and others who made the trip from Milwaukee. There was plenty of food and drink for all, and plenty of opportunity for deep conversation. For the kids there was croquet and corn hole, plus the chance to run around freely in a beautiful outdoor space and make some new friends. Everything was masterfully organized by Jami Wood. Thank you, Jami, for all your hard work, and thank you to all who contributed food and drink items. ■





WHEN THEY SEE US

GROUP FILM DISCUSSION

The need for truth and reconciliation in the world doesn't take a break, and neither should we! Stay connected this summer by watching the new docu-series "When They See Us" on Netflix.

August 22, 2019
6:30-8:30 pm
Christ Presbyterian
Church

944 E. Gorham St.

Madison, WI 53703

This is a free event

When They See Us is a film series about five young men of color, the "Central Park 5," who were accused of raping and assaulting a jogger in Central Park in 1990.

They were falsely convicted, given the maximum sentence, and sent to prison.

In 2002, DNA evidence cleared them, but they had already served their terms.

Watch it this summer, then join Christ Presbyterian and MOSES on August 22 at 6:30-8:30 pm for a discussion in Fellowship Hall.



This is a free event, but register online and let us know you're coming at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2536250013326913/>

Questions or comments, send an email to jamilane.wood@gmail.com.

Sponsored by:



MOSES at Juneteenth

by Sister Joan Duerst

Juneteenth is a day set aside to commemorate June 19, 1865, when the enslaved people of Texas finally learned about President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of Jan. 1, almost six months earlier. Juneteenth has been celebrated since 1971 in Milwaukee and since 1990 in Madison. 2019 is the third year in a row that MOSES has participated in the Juneteenth celebration at Penn Park on Madison's south side.

At this year's event, which was held on Saturday, June 15, MOSES used the event theme, "Embracing Our Legacy of Resilience," to showcase the MOSES members honored at our Gala this past December. Our display read: "Out of the darkness of incarceration into the light of wholeness and service to the community."



Deb Adkins, Joan Duerst, Rachel Morgan, and Bonnie Magnuson



Deb Adkins and Talib Akbar speak with a visitor

We highlighted the strengths of James Morgan, peer support specialist at Madison-Area Urban Ministry (MUM); Carmella Glenn, director of MUM's Just Bakery; and Minister Eugene Smalls, who serves as a prison minister. These three are examples, teachers, leaders, counselors, encouragers, and guides. Each not only models resilience, but also strengthens others on their life's journeys toward resilience.

Thanks to the Kujichagulia Madison Center for Self-Determination for giving us a place to share the mission and actions of MOSES, to converse with others working to free us from racism, and -- last but not least -- to listen to good music and eat good food! ■

Celebrate With and Support the Accomplishments of Talib Akbar

As he receives Community Shares Wisconsin's Change-Maker Award

by Tina Hogle

MOSES is pleased to announce that Talib Akbar is the recipient of a Community Shares of Wisconsin (CSW) 2019 Change-Maker Award. Nominated by MOSES-WISDOM of Madison, Akbar will be awarded the Linda Sundberg Civil Rights Defender Award for his tireless work on ending solitary confinement.

Community Shares of Wisconsin invites you to attend the annual Community Change-Maker Awards event on Thursday, Sept. 19, 2019, in Union South. Mark your calendars!

This year's Change-Makers are:

- **Talib Akbar**, Nominated by MOSES-WISDOM of Madison - **Winner of the Linda Sundberg Civil Rights Defender Award**



Talib Akbar

- Ginger Baier, Nominated by OutReach - Winner of the Liesl Blockstein Community Leadership Award
 - Ruth Schmidt, Nominated by Wisconsin Early Childhood Association - Winner of the Sally Sunde Family Advocate Award
- Community Shares of Wisconsin will also honor 24 exceptional Backyard Hero Award Winners for their volunteer work at Community Shares' member nonprofits.

Tickets may be purchased at:

<https://tinyurl.com/y38arahe>

Have questions? Contact Susan Kilmer at skilmer@communityshares.com or call 608-256-1066. ■

Book Review – Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement

Edited by: Jean Casella, James Ridgeway, and Sarah Shourd

by Pamela Gates

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan E. Mendez, who wrote the afterword to this book, has stated that solitary confinement beyond 15 days is a “cruel and degrading treatment that often rises to the level of torture.” Yet, by Mendez’s best estimate, 80,000 people are held in isolation in the U.S. on any given day. The number could be smaller, he says, but it also could be far greater, because corrections systems are not easily forthcoming with information.

The numbers are unbelievable, and they weren’t started under Trump. This book was published in 2016, during Obama’s administration, and of course the situation didn’t start then, either. It began in our colonial days, and though it was observed to be ineffective even then, its use has been growing for years as corrections systems, both federal and state, take on lives of their own, pretty much doing whatever they want because legislators are reluctant to second-guess prison administrators.

Most of this 226-page book is devoted to statements from 16 people who are actually living or have lived in solitary. “It turns you into someone you never thought you would be,” writes Judith Vazquez. “Your life is just never the same.” She draws a parallel with the soldier who ends up with PTSD due to his/her experiences in the military. “These people have no idea of the damage they did to me by keeping me



in this ‘shoe box’ for so many years ... I feel I was actually dehumanized.”

Galen Baughman speaks to the position of the sex offender. To be given this label, he says, is “to be relegated to the most despised segment of society, outcast, and forced to live as a pariah.” Baughman was held in solitary confinement for two and a half years past his mandatory release date. “Those who are part of the system have the hardest time seeing how these systems rob all of us of our common humanity – prisoner and guard alike,” he wrote toward the end of his essay. What goes on in solitary confinement, the shame and the misery of

it, cannot but have an effect on both the confiners and those confined, and the situation is clearly described by the 16 whose voices we hear in this book.

Part 2 of the book offers perspectives on solitary confinement from psychiatrists and professors. The most telling essay title: “How to Create Madness in Prison,” by Dr. Terry Kupers. The most frightening aspect of this whole situation is that “we the people” have turned all decision-making over to a prison system that, in its zeal to protect the rest of the populace, too often views those in its charge as less than human, suitable for punishment only. The writer of the preface, who was held in solitary in an Iranian prison, titles her piece “A Human Forever.” We must not forget that about any of us. ■

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 *Sinsinawa Dominicans*