

# MOSES



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

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## MOSES Candidate Forum Attracts 8 Candidates and 900+ Attendees

by Alison Mix

On July 28, more than 900 people attended the online State Senate Candidate Forum hosted jointly by MOSES and EXPO. The candidates are vying to succeed retiring Madison-area State Senators Fred Risser (District 26) and Mark Miller (District 16). (All nine candidates had agreed to participate but one, Andrew McKinney, was unable to join on that night.)

All of the eight candidates in attendance committed to supporting each and every proposal submitted to them for a vote. Collectively, these proposals would radically overhaul Wisconsin's carceral system.

Some of the 13 policy issues were presented by MOSES members involved in the relevant task forces: Karen Julesberg and Ann Lacy on prison prevention, Barbara Benson on sentencing reform, Jenna Ramaker on transitional jobs programs, Barbie Jackson on restorative justice, Paul Seaman and Jeannie Verschay on juvenile justice, and Paul Saeman on mental health.

Other issues were introduced by justice-impacted people with lived experience of some of the most egregious practices in our state. These personal testimonials were a powerful means of humanizing these issues, and the candidates'



*Sr. Joan Duerst leads opening prayer*

responses showed that they had been moved by them.

The justice-impacted speakers included Just-Dane's James Morgan, speaking about parole, probation and mass supervision; EXPO's Ramiah Whiteside, recently released after 25 years, speaking about those incarcerated under Old Law; Takeya

Young, speaking (with Barbie Jackson) of her positive experience of Dane County's Community Restorative Court; Ventae Parrow, speaking for the closing of the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility, where he has been held; EXPO Organizer Peggy West, speaking about the right to vote that is still denied her; Talib Akbar, of MOSES and EXPO, speaking from his own experience of solitary confinement; and Latoya Greer, speaking as Organizer for the FREE Campaign about issues facing incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, particularly the need for transitional housing.

The candidates committed to urging Governor Evers, both publicly and privately, to honor the commitments he made in 2018 to WISDOM and to more aggressive-

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Jeanie Verschay

Racial Justice for All Children

Barbie Jackson

James Morgan

## MOSES Caucus

Faith Leaders Caucus

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## Organizer's Corner

by Mark Rice, MOSES Community Organizer

The MOSES Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) program has made great strides over the past few months. We have built a tremendous amount of capacity in a short period of time. Twenty MOSES leaders participated in two IVE trainings this summer. MOSES has hired five new staff members, a project lead and four canvassers, who will assist with this project by doing literature drops and phone banking. In addition, 11 MOSES members have committed to volunteering their time to contribute to this project.

Our first day in the field was July 11. Seven people joined the canvass and dropped off literature at hundreds of doors on the south side of Madison. The literature included a flyer with important voting information, a MOSES one-pager, and a flyer for the State Senate Candidate Forum, which is scheduled for July 28. The main issues that are being lifted up by the IVE team are restoration of voting rights, crimeless revocations, and mass supervision.

## Statewide Task Forces

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

- Solitary Confinement: August 11 and Sept. 8 at 4:00 pm (code 423950)
- Post-Release: August 20 Sept. 17 at 7:30 pm (code 423951)

### WISDOM Zoom calls

- Old Law: August 8 and Sept. 12 at 8:30 am
- Prison Prevention: August 11 and Sept. 8 at 5:00 pm

Join a WISDOM conference call

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

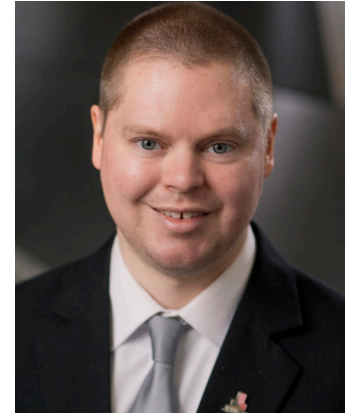
Join a WISDOM Zoom call

- contact David Liners to request connection information.  
[david.liners1@gmail.com](mailto:david.liners1@gmail.com)

I have had a great experience collaborating with leaders of MOSES and EXPO to plan the MOSES/EXPO of Madison State Senate Candidates Forum. Over 30 leaders have contributed to the development of this event.

All nine candidates for state Senate Districts 26 and 16 who are in competitive primary races have committed to participating in the forum. MOSES and EXPO members will be having a crucial conversation with the candidates about carceral system issues that have had a devastating impact on Black, Brown, Native, and poor communities in Madison. I am excited about the new energy and enthusiasm that these candidates could bring to the state Senate, and I am hoping that they will aggressively work to move forward MOSES' agenda of advancing racial and economic justice in Madison.

My priority in the coming months will be identifying ways to build on the momentum created by the Candidate Forum. I plan to work with MOSES leaders and community members in Madison to organize at least one other major action in the fall. I also plan to connect MOSES members with additional training opportunities and continue my work with building the MOSES IVE program. ■



## MOSES Meetings & Events

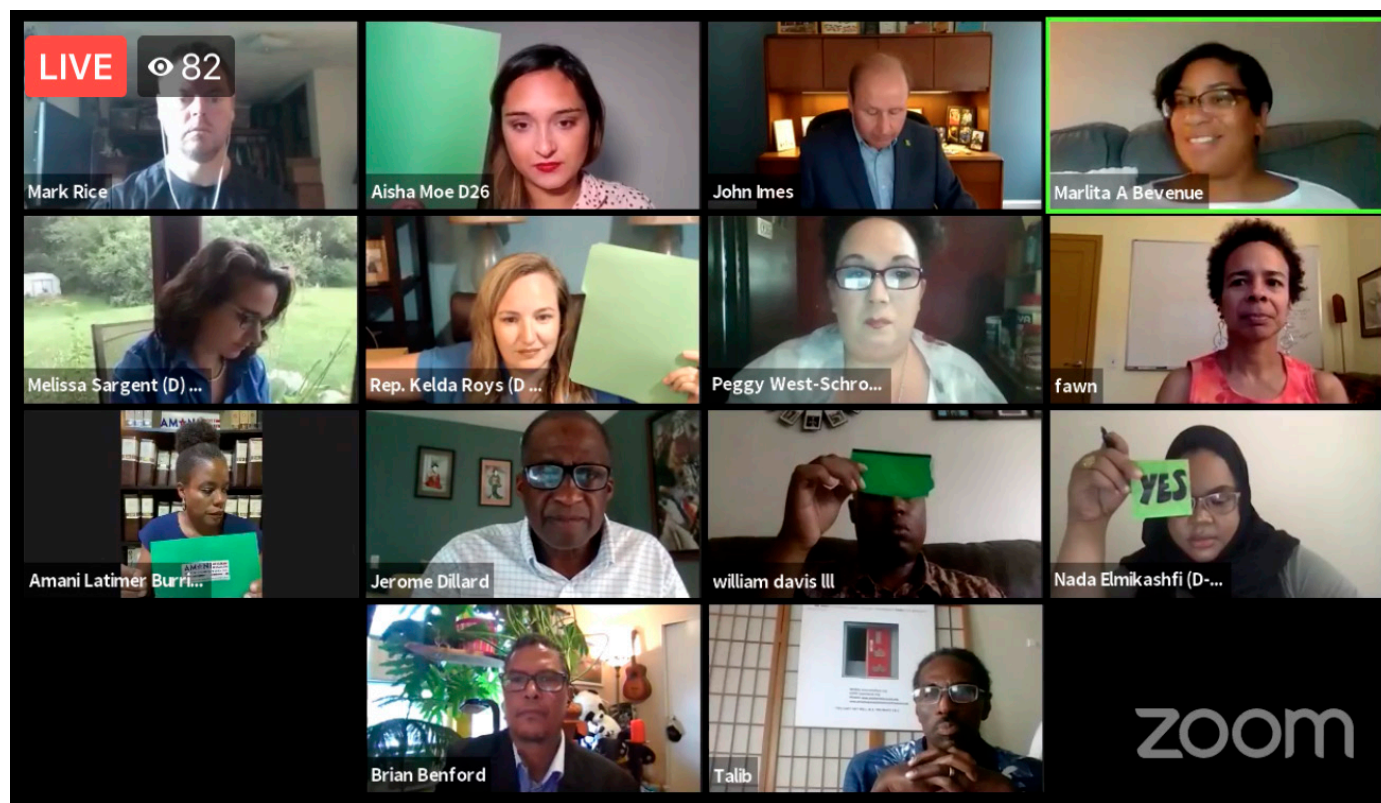
### Next MOSES monthly meetings

- Sunday, August 2, 2:30 pm via Zoom
- Sunday, September 4, 2:30 pm via Zoom
- Sunday, October 4, 2:30 pm via Zoom

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

# Candidate Forum

*continued from page 1*



ly use his executive authority, including his broad power to commute sentences, to decarcerate Wisconsin.

One group of proposals centered on closing two Wisconsin prisons – Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF) and the Green Bay Correctional Institution (GBCI)– both of which have been declared outdated and inhumane. Wisconsin policymakers can easily close both MSDF and GBCI by ending the practice of detaining people for conviction-less rule violations, by giving people a fair chance to be released on parole, and by increasing funding for treatment alternatives to incarceration.

Another cluster of speakers focused on the long periods of supervision (among the longest in the country) often included in Wisconsin’s prison sentences, which, combined with the ability to revoke people back to prison for rule violations, cruelly disrupt genuine efforts to hold down jobs and restore family lives. Also needed for those reentering the community are transitional jobs programs, involving subsidized, limited-term work experiences so that these people can gain work skills, develop a work history and find financial stability. In addition to

moving 17-year-olds out of the adult justice system, proposals included supporting alternatives to incarceration, such as drug courts and Dane County’s restorative justice court; restoring voting rights to people on supervision; deploying a “mental health ambulance” to keep people with mental health crises from being incarcerated; and eliminating the practice of putting people with mental health issues into solitary confinement.

All the candidates agreed either to press the Governor to act, or to initiate or promote legislation themselves to advance these policies so important to MOSES.

After the forum, there was a press conference, moderated by Gil Halsted, at which The Capital Times’s state government and politics reporter Briana Reilly and WORT’s news and public affairs director Chali Pittman asked questions of the candidates.

In addition to helping the many attendees get to know the candidates ahead of the August 11 election, this highly successful event educated an unprecedented number of people about MOSES’s work and about Wisconsin’s criminal justice system. ■



# WISDOM's "Drive to Decarcerate" Sparks Productive Talks with Governor Evers

by Alison Mix

On June 18th, some 140 cars from all over the state participated in a caravan dubbed "Drive to Decarcerate" that wound its way noisily from the Labor Temple on Madison's south side to the Capitol Square and then to the Governor's Mansion in Maple Bluff. More than 200 people met at the Governor's Mansion where they did a "noise demonstration" and had reports that people from in the mansion were looking out the windows. Reporters from at least three local TV stations covered the event.

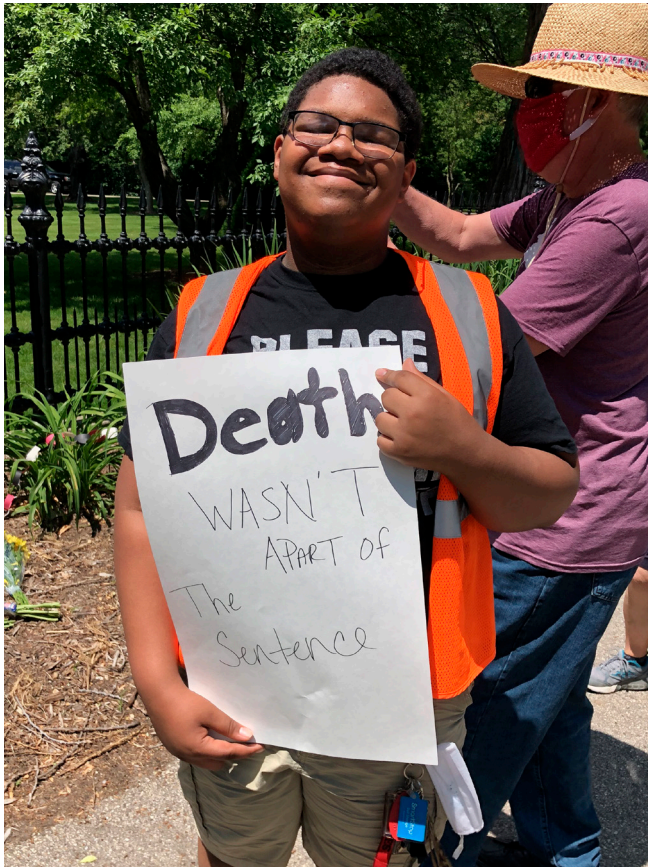
As a result, WISDOM Director David Liners, WISDOM President Rev. Willie Brisco, and EXPO Director Jerome Dillard were invited to talk with the Governor about the issue of COVID-19 and the prisons. The conversation took place on June 26th, and resulted in three commitments from Governor Evers, who agreed to:

- Put out a statement expressing his concern for the health and well-being of people who live and work in Wisconsin prisons and stating that he is actively exploring means, including commutation of sentences, that might be taken to reduce the prison population.
- Expedite a conversation with state officials to explore potential ways to use his power to commute sentences. Subsequently David Liners, Rev. Brisco, and Jerome Dillard were invited to several conversations with Governor Evers, Lt. Gov. Barnes, and Corrections Secretary Carr. On July 20th, Evers promised that he would shortly form a small group to put together a proposal for criteria and a process to recommend people in prison who could be candidates to have their sentences modified through "commutation." The Governor promised to include WISDOM's recommendations and to seek further input from our organization.
- Speak with the Department of Administration about the authority that Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) have to modify the sentences of people they have sent back to prison for crimeless revocations – to see if there might be some sort of review process.

David Liners cautioned that it was not yet time to celebrate anything. However, WISDOM and MOSES should be ready to amplify the Governor's message when he puts it out – to be sure he gets positive feedback for that decision. And if and when he takes any concrete action to commute sentences, or to get ALJ's to modify sentences, we should all make a lot of noise! ■









# MOSES Position Statement on Doyle 2020 RES-145 Related to the Jail, approved by Leadership Board July 25, 2020

**M**OSES supports many of the principles and points raised in the proposed Doyle resolution. Many issues and proposed actions included in the package are consistent with MOSES' past and ongoing positions on criminal justice reform. However, MOSES opposes the following two elements of the proposed resolution and suggests the following amended language:

1. MOSES opposes an immediate, permanent "halt to all planning, design, architecture, and construction of a new jail facility" as recommended in the Doyle resolution. Rather, MOSES supports the following alternative language: "an immediate 5-month hold on all replacement Jail design and documentation activity by the architectural/engineering/construction consultants."

**Rationale:** The conditions of the current Dane County Jail are inhumane, unsafe and do not provide appropriate space to address the needs of the people and staff within. Addressing the conditions in the Jail is mandatory and therefore a temporary hold on the design, rather than a total halt, is appropriate for Dane County.

A 5-month maximum hold on the replacement Jail design and documentation activity by the architectural/engineering/construction consultants would allow time for an in-depth and comprehensive reevaluation by the community and other stakeholders of actual bed needs and other appropriate changes in the space design.

The time to make these reevaluations is now, so Dane County can revise the program to guide the final design, based on the important lessons learned from the significant reduction in the jail population due to COVID-19 and the important decisions made and actions taken by the County.

2. MOSES opposes Article 11, which calls on the county to "Continue to increase the use of electronic monitoring beyond the current number." Electronic monitoring has a significantly disparate and negative impact on people of color and a generally negative impact on all subjected to monitoring. Rather, MOSES supports the following alternative language: "Work with the Sheriff and other stakeholders to find better alternatives to electronic monitoring." ■

## From the MOSES Statement to the Madison Police & Fire Commission

*Presented to the Commission on July 22, 2020*

**T**hank you for the opportunity to speak about our important decision to hire a new Chief of Police. Our recommendations include several areas of concern.

**Racial Disparity:** We recommend that any candidate be able to connect productively with Madison's communities of color. Politically, the new Chief will be pressured by some people from Madison's White majority, some of whom are angered by crimes they attribute disproportionately to people of color. Any hope of decreasing racial disparities in the criminal justice system will require a Chief of Police who can create a single standard of policing in all neighborhoods while simultaneously enlisting the entire community against white fragility and racism.

**Behavioral Health:** In short, the emerging consensus that police should serve a secondary role in 911 calls that are primarily for behavioral health issues will require the department to adjust their procedures and stance toward other agencies.

We recommend that any candidate considered for the Chief of Police position must have the flexibility and will-

ingness to work closely with social services staff where mental health professionals are taking the lead roles.

[Read the full statement](#)

**Mass Incarceration:** We recommend that any candidate recognize the work Dane County has done to promote alternatives to incarceration and have the ability to garner support for the alternatives to incarceration that we currently have and are developing. This should include continued support for Madison Police Department diversion programs, such as the Madison Addiction Recovery Initiative program and the Dane County Restorative Court.

**Demilitarization of police and changes in police culture:**

Some of the actions required by the new Chief will include a commitment to the training identified, a commitment to redirect officers who don't comply with the affirmed principles in that training, and a willingness to fire officers who seriously fail to live up to the standards we all have for the Madison Police Department. ■

# Getting Ready for the November Election

## Part II: Build on TAD's Success

By Kate Mulligan

Wisconsin's Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) program is poised for expansion of funding and services. As its name suggests, TAD promotes a primary purpose of criminal justice reform. It keeps people out of prison and jail by offering help that enables them to live as productive members of their communities.

Currently, TAD serves adults who have been arrested for a nonviolent crime related to a substance abuse problem. Programs are based on two models: pre-trial diversion and drug courts. Diversion programs provide treatment, job training, case management, and other services. In the drug court model, a judge gives a sentence that allows a person to avoid incarceration if he or she meets certain conditions.

### WISDOM credited

The program is one of WISDOM's most significant accomplishments. Marquette University law professor Michael O'Hear wrote that TAD's passage in 2005 "resulted, in part, from the tenacious advocacy of WISDOM, a statewide coalition of faith-based community organizations." MOSES has played an important role in lobbying for increased funding. In 2017, members worked with representatives of the Dane County Board of Supervisors to present a resolution urging the state to increase TAD funding to \$15 million.

WISDOM Director David Liners has pointed out that TAD can be sold to a wide variety of groups and to both political parties. "[TAD] saves all kinds of money, so it's fiscally really responsible, and the recidivism rate is much lower for people who get into TAD programs than it is for the equivalent people who go to jail. Whichever thing we're trying to do — save money or reduce crime — they both have the same answer."

### Funding boost needed

Timing is right for another push for a large increase in funding. The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn attention once again to our overcrowded prisons and the difficul-



ty of releasing people from them. Economic repercussions of the virus will bring severe challenges for the state budget and highlight the importance of programs that save taxpayer dollars. During his election campaign, Gov. Evers promised to increase TAD's funding to \$15 million. Although he reneged on that promise, he later tried to

persuade the Joint Finance Committee to increase his original budget request and has since praised the program.

Timing is also right for an expansion of TAD beyond its original target group of people with substance abuse problems. In his plan for criminal justice reform, state Rep. Evan Goyke (D) argued that the program should address other issues as well, such as mental health, trauma, and restorative justice. The Black Lives Matter movement also has highlighted the need for a shift in funding to programs that address root causes of mass incarceration.

### Talking Points

- Research shows that TAD helps keep people out of jail or prison and saves taxpayer dollars.
- According to figures provided by the Department of Corrections, TAD graduates are nine times less likely than non-graduates to be admitted to state prison after program completion.
- Eighty-one percent of TAD graduates did not have any new convictions after three years.
- For every dollar invested in TAD, nearly two dollars are saved in costs associated with the correctional system.
- TAD's proven success has attracted bipartisan support and steady funding increases. ■

## MOSES Forms New Task Force

by Barbie Jackson

I am delighted to announce that on July 18th the MOSES Leadership Board approved formation of a new MOSES task force called Racial Justice for All Children.

The task force will address root causes of the childhood-to-school-to-prison pipeline, with a focus on racial justice support for families and schools in Dane County. Our first step is to advocate for expansion of trauma-informed school programs for children of color - programs which enhance the school experience for all children.

James Morgan and I co-lead the task force, which held its first official meeting on July 21st, following months of preparation by a group of 17 MOSES members passionate about this issue. Interested MOSES members may join us by contacting me at [barbie.g.jackson@gmail.com](mailto:barbie.g.jackson@gmail.com) for more information. See MOSES Calendar for scheduled meeting dates. ■



## Why I Am a Sustaining Member of MOSES

by Pam Gates

It's personal. My family is large and extends deep into the African American community, and it's important to me that all my family members have successful lives. I do whatever I can to stand behind them and help make this possible, and that includes doing my part to oppose a penal system that is stacked against people of color, particularly those who lack money.



Pam Gates

Our current situation offends me.

When I was growing up, I was told that this country was founded on principles of fairness and equal opportunity. When almost 50 percent of the men in our prisons are African American – while African Americans are only seven percent of the overall population – there is something seriously, seriously wrong with our concepts of fairness and equal opportunity. And I need to do what I can to rectify matters. Otherwise, as Bob Dylan asks in one of his songs, what good am I?

My reading as book reviewer for the MOSES newsletter has only made it clearer how harshly America has been stacked against African Americans. When even the government creates policies that deny people of color

decent housing; when the prison system becomes another country within the country; when angry kids settle their differences with guns, endangering others and putting themselves on the road to prison; when the simple act of participating in the process – voting – becomes a potential felony if one doesn't jump through the hoops just right; when drug laws and duress sabotage Black families; when our jails and prisons become our de facto mental health institutions... I could go on and on, but

I trust my message is clear: Change has got to come.

To keep my hope alive and to help create the change I want to see, I donate to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative, the UW Odyssey Project, Omega GED School, and MOSES, and I patronize Black businesses when possible. I am very grateful to WISDOM and MOSES for their efforts to end the mass incarceration policies that are plaguing our times and stifling lives. Helping the general populace understand these critical issues is a worthy group effort, and I am grateful to be able to be part of it. That's why I am a sustaining member of MOSES. ■



## I Take Notes From My Brother In Prison On Quarantine

I tell my brother, who is held in New Hampshire State Correctional Facility that

the virus is locking people into their homes across the world

So my brother jokes

*"must stink to feel like you're in a prison"*

the world has shifted radically & I don't mean just in terms of economics or politics  
but in the way that my brother  
a tattooed Mexican man with three dots covering his left cheekbone, suited in a blue jumpsuit uniform

is suddenly a scholar  
the rest of us

in a field                      where  
are gravely uneducated;

how to be isolated against your own will

I take notes, on how  
we speak not knowing how many minutes  
I believe the lesson is to say

are left on the time card  
what you mean              first

all calls from a prison are outgoing  
I must choose the people I care to

I notice how in the epidemic,  
speak to

my brother fills time  
refines his skills until he is commissioned  
love letters they gift

with words  
to write poetry for his cell mates  
to their girlfriends

like most of America  
we are all ticking a black check on the calendar

my brother also counts the days  
& hoping to move closer to an end

the world is laid belly up  
with nothing to look at  
before we had the choice to be  
the veils of our country stripped away  
mustn't we all become students of  
Their vivid view of justice

to the sky  
but ourselves  
unseeing, now we watch  
like a cell mattress  
prisoners?  
like a beach front window

what I mean to say is  
in the same way my brother  
metal bar & curfew  
can do the same  
if we all stare at the ceiling long enough  
can be just enough  
the right question

maybe  
finds the right words amongst  
maybe America              like maybe  
all the time in the world  
to finally ask

*By Angelica Maria Aguilera. Reprinted with her permission.*



## Good Communicators Needed!

Do you like to write? Can you tell a good story? Are you a careful copy editor? The MOSES Communications Team is always on the lookout for fresh talent. We need people to report on MOSES events and developments as well as sharp-eyed editors to refine their work. In addition to putting out the bimonthly newsletter and annual MOSES Yearbook, we also welcome requests from other teams and task forces for editorial assistance. If this sounds like something you could do and would enjoy, and you can attend a meeting every other month, please contact one of our co-leads: Pam Gates

[pml.gts@gmail.com](mailto:pml.gts@gmail.com) or Alison Mix  
[alisonbmix@gmail.com](mailto:alisonbmix@gmail.com).

Bonniemagnuson@gmail.com.'" data-bbox="55 707 892 956"/>

**ARTS & CRAFTS  
FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**

Calling all artists and craftspeople! The Fundraising Team is planning to hold an arts and crafts sale early in December at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church. To make the sale a success we need artwork and crafted items to sell. Are you an artist or a craftspeople? Do you know any artists or craftspeople who might be interested in helping to support our criminal justice reform advocacy with their art? To learn more, or to share the names of possible artist contacts, please connect with Bonnie Magnuson: [Bonniemagnuson@gmail.com](mailto:Bonniemagnuson@gmail.com).

# Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment

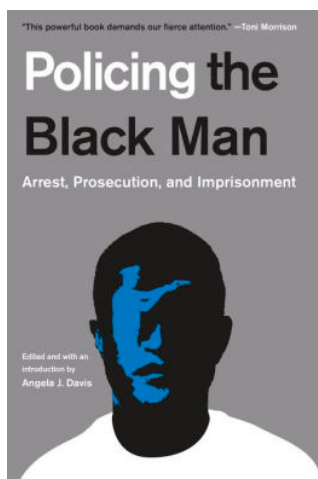
Angela J. Davis (Editor)

reviewed by Pam Gates

This book, comprised of 11 annotated chapters written by 15 contributors, with an introduction by Angela Davis herself, is probably one of the best I've read so far in this field of interest to MOSES members. Davis is now a professor of law at American University and was a director of the D.C. Public Defender Service. She recruited, among others, luminaries Bryan Stevenson, Marc Mauer, and Sherrilyn Ifill to write chapters for this book, and wrote one herself as well. I found almost all the chapters interesting, readable, insightful, and incisive, addressing issues that have gained great prominence recently, especially in the last two months.

Perhaps the most important chapter is the last: "Poverty, Violence, and Black Incarceration." Its authors state that racial justice needs to provide for the physical safety of African American children and adults while at the same time improving the level of material well-being in Black communities. Not only has the excessive use of prison as a response to the problems of violence and crime failed to advance the safety of those communities; it has now become a barrier to any hopes for their economic, political, and social advancement. "The causes, scope, and consequences of mass incarceration have contributed to a cycle of poverty and violence, producing a novel kind of embedded social inequality that prevents the full participation of blacks in American social and political life." The challenge, they say, is to create "basic fairness in social and economic life."

Sherilynn Ifill and Jin Hee Lee, in their chapter "Do Black Lives Matter to the Courts?" give us activists on the ground a challenge: "to document and demonstrate the shortcomings of our manifestly flawed and unfair criminal justice system and demand real and meaningful



progress for those who have suffered the most." Ifill and Lee, both of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, spend most of their chapter documenting the history of systemic racial discrimination in U.S. law enforcement, but they end with "a remarkable dissenting opinion" by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor in 2016.

In her dissent to the Court's majority ruling in *Utah v. Strieff*, which supported the admissibility of evidence gained by police searching a car during a traffic stop, Sotomayor wrote that we must "not pretend that the countless people who are routinely

targeted by police are 'isolated.' *Until their voices matter, too, our justice system will continue to be anything but.*" [Italics mine.]

A chapter titled "Making Implicit Bias Explicit" cites research which found that the darker a person's skin tone, the longer the sentence. Traci Burch, who published these findings in 2015 in the *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, reviewed the cases of over 67,000 first-time felony offenders. Findings revealed that a Black person's average sentence was 270 days longer than that of a white person. Darker-skinned Blacks, though, received sentences averaging 400 days longer than did whites, while lighter-skinned Blacks' sentences averaged 20 days shorter than whites'.

These are just a few samples to whet your appetite for this interesting, readable book, written by knowledgeable people. Most of the chapters are divided into brief sections, the last of which is a conclusion, so a reader in a hurry could read just the conclusions and get the gist of each chapter. Even that would be worthwhile, but I strongly recommend the whole book. There's a lot of food for thought and action in it. ■

Thanks to MOSES sponsors

