

County Announces Plans for Mental Health Crisis Center adapted from the County Board's press

adapted from the County Board's press release by Pam Gates & Alison Mix

OSES members rejoiced when, on Sept. 24, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and County Board Chair Analiese Eicher announced a major initiative to divert those with behavioral health challenges from the criminal justice system, and to further extend

recovery services available in our community. Building on the significant investments in mental health and addiction-recovery services in the 2020 budget, the 2021 budget will include \$300,000 to plan a mental health triage and restoration center, thus bringing to fruition a longtime goal of MOSES. "It has been three years since the JSRI brought the concept paper of a Crisis Restoration Center to the CJC [Criminal Justice Council]," said MOSES President Rachel Morgan. "I want to commend all of those involved for their tenacity and commitment to see this through to fruition. MOSES needs to lift up and celebrate the work they have done for our most vulnerable citizens: those suffering from mental health crises."

"[W]hen it comes to behavioral health, we are going to be bold and lead progressively, ..." Parisi said in the Board's press release. "In re-



cent years, we built a \$1-million-a-year school-based mental health program, partnered with community centers to provide on-site mental health programing for youth, and expanded opportunities to address trauma and addiction. In just a few weeks, we will mark

the opening of the brand-new Dane County Behavioral Health Resource Center – a onestop service to better connect residents with mental health and addiction services when they need them, where they need them."

A triage and restoration center (also known as a crisis or stabilization center) provides services to address mental health challenges both inside and outside the criminal justice system. Individuals can access services by walking in, getting a referral, or being brought by law enforcement.

"The triage and restoration center is a key part of our criminal justice reform package to keep people out of jail and to improve the health of the community," said County Board Chair Analiese Eicher, who also chairs the Criminal Justice Council, in the press release. "This innovation is in use in commu-

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Organizer's Corner

central focus of my work over the past few months has been collaborating with MOSES leaders to organize a State Assembly Candidate Listening Session. The event is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 6, 7-8:30 p.m. People who are not able to watch the livestream will be able to watch it later on the MOSES Facebook page. All candidates for state Assembly seats in the Madison area were invited, and Francesca Hong, Samba Baldeh, Jimmy Anderson, and Phillip Anderson committed to participating. Francesca and Samba are likely to be new representatives in the Madison area. They are Democratic candidates running in heavily Democratic districts. Jimmy Anderson is defending his seat against Republican challenger Phillip Anderson.

The conversation at the listening session will be centered around a new Human Rights Watch/ACLU report titled "Revoked" that highlights how probation and parole fuel the mass incarceration crisis. The author of this report will be doing a presentation about the key findings and recommendations. Then, directly impacted leaders and leaders of MOSES task forces will discuss the impact

Statewide Task Forces

WISDOM conference calls (605) 468-8012

• Conditions of Confinement: Oct. 13 and Nov. 10 at 4:00 pm (code 423950)

Join a WISDOM conference call:

- 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

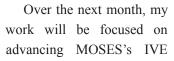
WISDOM Zoom calls

- Old Law: Oct. 10 and Nov. 14 at 8:30 am
- Prison Prevention: Oct. 13 and Nov. 10
- Post-Release: Oct. 29 Nov. 19 at 7:30 pm

Join a WISDOM Zoom call:

• contact David Liners to request connection information. <u>david.liners1@gmail.com</u> By Mark Rice, MOSES Community Organizer

revocation and connected issues are having on communities in Madison as well as potential solutions. Issues that will be lifted up include crimeless revocations, transitional jobs, housing, and treatment alternatives to incarceration.





(Integrated Voter Engagement) and RVP (Relational Voter Program). Some progress has already been made in recent months, but MOSES now has an opportunity to make a major impact during this critical time period. All MOSES members have the opportunity to get involved and make a difference. The MOSES IVE team has been dropping literature in neighborhoods across Madison since July. We would love to see more MOSES members get involved during the last month before the election.

Some MOSES members have started to get involved with the Relational Voter Program, but we could have an even greater impact if more MOSES members got involved in the next month. The work of WISDOM/EXPO Leader Ramiah Whiteside (see p. 4) is an inspiring example of what can be achieved through RVP. Ramiah returned home just a year ago after 25 years in the Wisconsin prison system. He has been able to get more than 200 people in Wisconsin prisons to be RVP leaders. That means that each of those people has submitted a list of 20 eligible voters whom they know personally, and whom they have pledged to communicate with up through ensuring that they have voted. This means that Ramiah's network has taken responsibility for more than 4,000 eligible voters!

Throughout WISDOM, we have more than 700 RVP leaders, who are in contact with more than 12,000 voters. Our goal, as a state organization, is to get 1,000 people signed up as RVP leaders. This is one of the single most effective tools to ensure that people vote. It would be great if MOSES could contribute significantly to helping WISDOM reach this goal.

If you would like to get involved with the IVE or RVP programs, or if you have any questions or concerns about these programs, please contact me at 608-843-0171 or ricermark@gmail.com. ■

Crisis Center continued from page 1

nities throughout the country. The planning of Dane County's triage and restoration center is the result of several years of community-involved research and advocacy."

MOSES members were a critical part of that community involvement, especially Paul Saeman, Jeanie Verschay, Tom and Jan Gilbert, and Mark Hoover, but also many, many others. County Supervisor and MOSES member Dorothy Krause played a central role.

Even with substantial annual investment in mental illness and addiction services—totaling almost \$65 million per year—our community and law enforcement often have only two options: jail or the emergency room. A triage

and restoration center provides an alternative to the justice system for the community to use as a response to individuals in behavioral health-related crises.

"We have a strong commitment to criminal justice reform. We've made great strides by implementing a community restorative court and other jail diversion programing," Parisi added in the press release. "But the fact remains that an estimated 40 percent of those in the Dane County Jail suffer from mental illnesses, and we must do everything we can to support those in crisis and find safe alternatives to incarceration whenever possible."

Parisi's full 2021 budget was introduced Oct. 1. ■

MOSES Meetings & Events

Assembly Candidate Forum

Oct. 6 from 7-8:30 pm via Facebook

Lunch and Learn

Thursday, Oct. 22, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. via Zoom

Transformation Celebration Annual Gala

Nov. 21 from 6:30-8:00 pm via Zoom

Upcoming MOSES monthly meetings

- Sunday, Oct. 4, 2:30 pm via Zoom
- Sunday Nov. 1, 2:30 pm via Zoom
- Sunday, **Dec. 6**, 2:30 pm via Zoom

Details at the MOSES website.

JSRI Task Force

Oct. 8, 6:30 pm via Zoom Nov. 12, 6:30 pm via Zoom contact Jeanie Verschay for link

Racial Justice for All Children Task Force

Oct. 6 and 20, 4:00 pm via Zoom Nov. 3 and 17, 4:00 pm via Zoom contact Barbie Jackson for link

Public Safety Task Force

Oct. 15, 6:00pm via Zoom Nov. 19, 6:00 pm via Zoom contact Barbie Jackson for link

New MOSES Task Force

By Tina Hogle

group of interested individuals has been meeting since May to discuss forming a new task force within MOSES that would study, comment on, and make recommendations for issues related to policing and other issues of public safety. This grew out of the need to address racial disparities in policing and arrests in Dane County, concerns about the safest way to deal with disturbances due to mental health and substance abuse, as well as a shift in public perception about how we might influence the creation of a more safe, just, and equitable community, especially for our brothers and sisters of color.

After much discussion, planning, and work, the group was able to agree upon a proposal to put forth to the Leadership Board. The board requested additional information, after which further revisions were made and presented at a special meeting of the Leadership Board on September 26. The proposal was passed unanimously at that time.

The MOSES Public Safety Task Force's broad issue is to reform public safety practices in Dane County with a more focused goal of lifting up community-based responses and downplaying the role of armed police. After study and learning, this may result in recommendations to redirect a portion of responsibilities, public funding, and services from Dane County armed law enforcement to community-led public safety practices.

The group will meet at 6:00 pm on the third Thursday of every month. We welcome new members. If you are interested in this issue, please contact <u>Barbie Jackson</u>. ■

Meet Returning Citizen Ramiah Whiteside

By Alison Mix

amiah Whiteside, 45, is a full-time student who is married, works two jobs, pays taxes, is trouble-free, and mentors others on a daily basis. Things weren't always so. September marked his first full year of freedom after 25 years of incarceration.

Whiteside had just turned 19 when he refused to pull over for police while driving a stolen vehicle. The six-minute high-speed car chase that followed culminated in a horrific crash that killed not only his younger

cousin, a passenger in the car, but also three pedestrians at a bus stop. He was sentenced to 47 years on four counts of second-degree reckless homicide and related charges.

Over his 25 years in prison, Whiteside met and befriended many men and women. Part of his current job as RVP (Relational Voter Program) coordinator for WISDOM/ EXPO is to stay in touch with many of these people, to urge them to encourage their friends and family to actively participate in our democracy. (To learn about Whiteside's achievements in this role, see Organizer's Corner, p. 2). He can personally attest to the power of this connection to the outside community in supporting a healthy reentry.

Luckier than most

Whiteside was luckier than most in having a full-time job to go to when he was released. While still incarcerated at a mini-"I could talk about my anxiety mum-security facility in Milwaukee, in open spaces, like shopping he was employed at Pace Industries in Grafton, Wis., on work release. Though

he lacked formal training as a machin-

ist, the on-the-job training he received over the 16 months meant he was allowed to keep the job after he was paroled. Because the company is a 45-minute drive from Milwaukee, he had to get a driver's license and buy a car, but he had saved up enough money to make that possible. He did not have to wear an ankle bracelet "because I had proved with Pace that I could be in the community unsupervised."

Whiteside was also lucky in having housing to go to;



Whiteside with his mother

at Pick'n Save."

family members were able to provide him with his own room in their home. This is a requirement, he explained: "If you are going to live with a relative, you must have your own space." He and his wife now have their own housing. "Everything has to get approval, including your housing and even your significant other," he says. "I got married literally two weeks after I was released. I didn't want to give her a chance to change her mind!" He met his wife, a friend of the family, while incarcerated.

After eight more months at PACE,

Whiteside found a better job with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Now, he is working part-time for WISDOM/EXPO and soon will be taking a full-time position there, continuing to connect with people who are still incarcerated. As EXPO adds support services to its advocacy work, with programs such as Brother to Brother and Circles of Support, there will be even more direct, hands-on, peerto-peer life coaching.

Whiteside is also a full-time student at the University of Northern Iowa. Having received his HSED and earned other credits while incarcerated, he was able to enter university as a junior and is slated to graduate with a degree in psychology in two years. His ambition is to work as a counselor, mentor, or life coach in the criminal justice system.

Whiteside admits that if it were not for EXPO (EX-incar-

cerated People Organizing) his transition would have been much more difficult. He first heard about EXPO through Jerome Dillard, whom he met when Dillard was working briefly as a peer-support specialist in the

prisons. Later, when Dillard and current MOSES organizer Mark Rice co-founded EXPO, Dillard discussed it with Whiteside, who was by that time at the work-release center in Milwaukee.

"The biggest help and support that EXPO/WISDOM gave me was to be mentored by formerly incarcerated people," says Whiteside. "Jerome Dillard was great in that I didn't have to explain everything. I could talk about my anxiety in continued from page 4

open spaces, like shopping at Pick 'n Save. He understood."

Overall, Whiteside's entire family has been welcoming, but there have been some tensions. "I'm older age-wise, but they still see me as my younger self. Sometimes they want to approach me as if I were a 19-year old. On the one hand, I really do need assistance. On the other, I also want to go it alone."

Whiteside is the youngest of seven siblings. His mother is 85 and suffering from advanced dementia. It was his fervent wish that she would still be there when he was released. He still sees her when he can, "even

"What so many people don't know is that I am not the exception,
I am the norm."

though she sometimes mistakes me for my brother." He has written letters of apology to all his family members, including the mother of the cousin who was killed in the car crash. While another cousin who survived the crash was a younger member of the gang Whiteside belonged to, the cousin who died was not. "I have talked to his mom several times," he says. "She has faith, so that is a sustaining force."

Of the many programs he completed while in prison, Whiteside says the most helpful by far were the restorative justice and victim-impact programs. He is still completing that work through the restorative justice program at the UW-Madison Remington Center. He is currently writing letters of thanks and apology to the first responders who pulled him from the car 26 years ago, unconscious and severely injured, before it exploded in flames. He says it took about 10 years of back and forth to get the proper format for his apology letters.

Supervision Rules

Supervision and its myriad rules complicate his life, but Whiteside did his first year "completely clean," he says. That gives him the right to go before the court and ask that they adjust his parole. "If they grant that, I could have just six months more of supervision after March of 2021. If they don't grant it, then it will be four and a half more years."

He encourages those who will be on paper to actually read the rules, "because of crimeless revocation," he says. "Everyone signs these release papers in a hurry. Not everyone understands that for the first few months, you have to live like you're still going to get a conduct report, as if you were still incarcerated. When you are on the inside, you

have rules. It's called the 303. On the outside, you need a self-imposed system of accountability."

If you read the fine print, says Whiteside, you cannot be offensive or disrespectful to people in the community. "So, say – I've witnessed it a few times – you might have a conversation with law enforcement or a social worker, and raise your voice at them. You can be revoked for

that." While he is allowed to have a smart phone and other technology, "at any time they can look at whatever you have on your cell phone or computer. In addition to the electronic intrusiveness, he

says, "they do come to your house and search your car, your glove compartment."

Reflecting on his life, Whiteside says: "What so many people don't know is that I am not the exception, I am the norm." He says that most of the men and women preparing to return home have the potential to experience the same success he has known, if only society will invest in them. "The first step," he says, "is getting to know them better."

To that end, this newsletter is launching a regular series profiling formerly incarcerated men and women who have made successful transitions back to the community.

No MOSES Silent Auction or Art Show in 2020

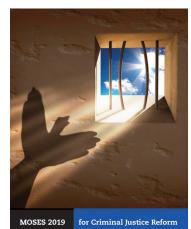
Due to COVID-19, the MOSES Fundraising Team has decided that this is just not the right time to hold a silent auction. We have also made the difficult decision to postpone the Arts and Crafts Show planned for this December until it can be safely held in person, whenever that may be.

It's time to put together the 2020 MOSES yearbook, and we need YOU to help! By Ann Lacy

ach year, MOSES produces a yearbook full of articles about criminal justice reform, inspirational quotations and poems, photographs from MO-SES and WISDOM events, and information useful to those seeking to learn more about MOSES. The yearbook also has another purpose: offering local businesses, faith communities, and organizations the opportunity to support criminal justice reform by purchasing advertising space. Ad space is available in dimensions ranging from the size of a business card to a full page.

We depend on our members to sell ad space. While this is a big responsibility, it's not as difficult as it may sound.

• Look at your copy of the 2019 yearbook. (If you don't have a copy, check out the yearbook page on the MOSES website to view or download pdf copies of the 2019 or earlier yearbooks: http://mosesmadison.org/get-involved-2/yearbook/. We also have hard copies available in the MOSES office.



- Make a list of businesses and organizations to approach about buying an ad. Don't forget your faith community!
- Download a copy of the 2020 ad sales recording form from the MOSES website. And now for the most important part: spend some time thinking about why you are involved with MOSES. Remember that your "product" is MOSES, not the yearbook; MOSES is worth your investment of time, energy, and money; and it is worth theirs, too.
- Then make your ask, knowing that you are inviting an investment in a strong, vibrant, and interesting organization.

The deadline for submitting camera-ready ad copy for the 2020 yearbook is Saturday, Nov. 21. The yearbook will be ready for distribution in early February of 2021. For questions on yearbook articles, contact co-editor Alison Mix. For questions on ads or to get a hard copy of the 2019 yearbook, contact yearbook ad coordinator Ann Lacy at mosesyearbook@gmail.com. ■

Lunch and Learn with Justice Janine Geske

Thursday, Oct. 22, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. via Zoom

anine Geske, a former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice and former Milwaukee Circuit Court judge, is a retired professor in the Marquette University Law School, where she founded and directed the school's Restorative Justice Initiative. She has a private Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) consulting practice; other specialties include restorative justice and spirituality in everyday life.

Bring your lunch, share your spirit, and learn how we can grow our advocacy for people, not prisons, heal the harm for wrongs done, and make our neighborhoods safe for everyone. This virtual educational event, sponsored by MOSES, is free and open to the public. To register, go to: https://mosesmadison.org/event/lunchand-learn-fall-2020/ ■



State Watch -

Modest Police Reform Efforts Stalled

By Kate Mulligan

n June 19, following George Floyd's death on May 25, Gov. Tony Evers (D) announced a package of nine bills addressing police reform. Wisconsin's Black Legislative Caucus requested that Evers call a special session about the measures and other methods of confronting racism.

Evers refused. In a letter to the Caucus chair, he wrote, "...calling another special session where legislative leaders come in and gavel in and out risks losing this incredible moment in history ..." Two months later, after the shooting of Jacob Blake, the governor decided the need for action had become urgent. He called a special session of the Legislature that took place, as required by law, on Aug. 31, but no debate or votes are held.

Use of force

Four of the nine bills in Evers' package cover use-offorce standards. They include developing statewide standards that would ensure that force is used as a last resort, publication online of those standards, eight hours of training in the standards, protection for officers who report violations, and collection and publication of demographic data concerning use-of-force incidents.

Those bills were noncontroversial when Evers announced them in June. In fact, Jim Palmer, the executive director of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA), said he believed "having a uniform standard makes a lot of sense" and that "most agencies largely comply with those standards already."

Opposition surfaced about some bills only after the call for a special session. Sen. Van Wanggaard (R), Chair of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, argued against the bill prohibiting no-knock search warrants, claiming such warrants can keep officers safe because they make it more difficult for criminals to prepare for interactions with police. WPPA's Palmer also believes no-knock warrants can be used correctly.

Chokeholds

Another of Evers' bills would require law-enforcement agencies to develop policies prohibiting the use of choke-

holds. Wanggaard told the governor, "It's not going to happen." The senator argued that chokeholds are rarely used but should not be prohibited. Palmer supported the bill, saying that officers are instructed not to use the chokehold and that he would support a legal prohibition.

Wanggaard also opposes a bill that would allow civil suits and fines for "false calls to police," if the call could cause the person to be humiliated or if the call would damage a person's reputation. That bill resulted from publicity about the frequency of police calls that appear to target Black people who were behaving in a lawful fashion.

Wanggard introduced his own package of bills. He named as his first priority a bill that would establish an "Independent Use-of-Force Review Advisory Board" that would "investigate and learn from certain police use-of-force incidents." It would be modeled after the National Transportation Safety Board, which "investigates every civil aviation accident in the U.S. and significant accidents in other modes of transportation. Based on their investigative findings and special studies, the board makes recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents."

Response to "Defund the Police"

A bill that appears to be a direct response to the "Defund the Police" movement would reduce state payments to any city or county that decreases the amount of its budget dedicated to hiring, training, and retaining law-enforcement officers. The state reduction would be in the amount of the city or county reduction from its previous budget.

Other bills are modifications of Evers' use-of-force bills or are nearly identical to them. Senate Speaker Robin Vos asked Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke, R-Kaukauna, to chair a legislative task force on racial disparities, educational opportunities, public safety, and police policies and standards. Vos unveiled the task force in late August, at about the same time Evers called the special session.

It is expected that the task force, which Rep. Shelia Stubbs (D-Madison) has agreed to co-chair, will introduce a "broad package of bills" in early 2021, at the beginning of the next regular legislative session. ■

Why We are Sustaining Members

By John Mix

By now we are all rediscovering the value and power of community. We are each capable of doing a lot of good in the world, but together our potential is unlimited. In my early days as full-time chaplain in the Dane County jail, it was important to keep perspective on how much one person can accomplish among 700+ men in trouble. The support of primarily Lutheran congregations in Dane County has made that ministry of presence possible for over fifty years.



One of the most important discoveries then was my realization that the criminal justice system, with so many people in jail and prison, must change. That change was only going to happen with organized people and organized money to move lawmakers in Wisconsin to change the system.

Late in 2011 Rev. Joe Elwanger came to Madison from Milwaukee to see how we could gather congregations here in a common effort to address social justice issues like mass incarceration. Rev. Jerry Hancock, Jerome Dillard, I and a few others met every month at various churches to build consensus around forming our own non-profit that would join the ten other WISDOM organizations in the state that are committed to specific social justice issues.

Historically, religious groups have been good at feeding and clothing the needy, but standing for justice by lobbying legislators for more mental health and addiction treatment centers, not so much. By the fall of 2012 MOSES was formed to join hands with WISDOM to do just that.

Little did I know in my single life that at a fundraiser for Breaking Barriers Mentoring at Carolyn Moynihan Bradt's home I would meet someone who would powerfully change my life. Alison had returned to her na-

tive Madison after working abroad for forty years, and our brief meeting that night in May 2014 turned into a budding relationship and marriage in 2016. Her roots at First Unitarian Society and mine as a Lutheran minister may not seem like an ideal match, but our common ground in making our community better, love of family, and dedication to using our gifts as best we can to live into our vision of a healthy, just, and sustainable planet that supports us all is what we are about. Inclusive visions and big change rarely happen quickly. They take sustained effort. We are sustaining members of MOSES because we believe in the goals and principles that unite people from all walks of life to stand together for those unjustly treated and forgotten.

Thanks to MOSES sponsors









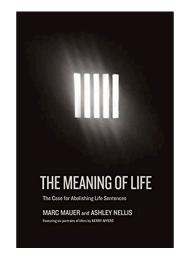


The Meaning of Life: The Case for Abolishing Life Sentences

by Marc Mauer and Ashley Nellis, with six portraits of lifers by Kerry Myers

reviewed by Pam Gates

hree very readable experts make an excellent case for abolishing life sentences in this well-annotated, comparatively short book that has received high praise from other experts in the field. Mauer and Nellis work for The Sentencing Project, an organization based in Washington, D.C., that promotes criminal justice reform: Mauer is executive director and Nellis is a senior research analyst who has written extensively on life sentencing in the U.S. Myers offers another angle of expertise on the issue: He served 27 years of a life sentence for a crime he maintains he did not commit.



To change the over-incarceration of our nation, we can't just focus on low-level crime, the authors argue. Over 200,000 people in the U.S. are lifers; the extensive use of this sentence "is in many ways an outgrowth of the American commitment to punishment rather than rehab and reintegration."

Two-thirds of those serving life sentences are people of color; 48 percent are African American. A partial explanation is whites' (often inaccurate) perception of crime and criminality, which politicians have been able to capitalize on. In a 2017 study, the Urban Institute found that in 35 of the 44 states it studied, racial disparities in prisons were greatest among people serving the longest terms.

The authors argue that lengthy prison terms lead to diminishing returns for public safety, place a great – and growing – barrier on efforts to dismantle the system of mass incarceration, and deny the possibility of redemption and reconnection to the community. They contrast the aforementioned U.S. commitment to punishment with the rest of the industrialized world's rehabilitative approach to crime. The U.S.'s excessive prison sentences "fundamentally conflict with international norms and policies of respected national legal bodies," they assert.

One extremely good reason to abolish life sentencing is that people age out of crime. Elderly prisoners cost about twice as much to maintain as younger prisoners, largely due to health-care costs. Instead of keeping older people behind bars, using those funds to improve schooling, job opportunities, housing, and substance-abuse treatment in under-resourced neighborhoods would be both more compassionate and more effective in reducing both crime and the influx of young people into jails and prisons.

The authors state that the certainty of arrest for a crime is a much more effective deterrent than the length of sentence, and that, in general, a person who commits a crime counts on being able to get away with it. They also argue that judges need to be able

to take numerous factors into account when sentencing, and that current, politically motivated sentencing practices lead to inappropriate outcomes (e.g., a life sentence for what amounts to shoplifting, because it was a third offense). The U.S., they assert, "is distinct in its tendency to require long sentences for offenses that do not involve serious violence."

The authors make the case for a 20-year maximum sentence, arguing that that is sufficient rehab time for almost everyone, noting that measures could easily be installed to delay the release of anyone who appeared still to be a danger to public safety. They encourage organizations like MOSES and WISDOM, pointing to the increase in state and local campaigns that rally against prison expansion and private prisons, promote the right to vote for people with felony convictions, challenge the racial bias of criminal justice policy and practice, and decry the growing intersection of immigration and criminal justice enforcement.

"The Meaning of Life" begins with a quote from Nelson Mandela: "It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones." This statement is, as well, a fine encouragement to MOSES, WISDOM, and anyone else addressing America's erroneous choice of mass incarceration, to never give up until we've truly made a change.