

MOSES



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



2020: The Year in Review

AM I DEAD?
BY TOM, WHO IS INCARCERATED IN WISCONSIN

Am I dead and just didn't accept it yet
Did I die by the hands of a white man
Like Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Dontre Hamilton,
Michael Brown, Tony Robinson,
Laquan McDonald, George Floyd and so many other young
Black Men
Is this our generation of lynching
I just don't understand
I am a father, student, a son, and working
Man
I never imagine this
But who can
Screaming out names asking why me
How this enter into my plans
Was it because of my past
Or who I will become in the future
That made me a target and decide my life had
To end
Am I dead?
What happen to my goals
Giving a little sister away
Watching my son graduate
Buy mother a house and
Meeting my real father one day
Now look what got in the way
Can't remember much
Just woke up naked in a cold cell like
What's up
Am I dead?
What happened to my family and friends
Is they putting together money for my lawyer
Or my funeral plans
My woman crying, her friends comforting her
Saying girl you have to move on
This all I can hear on the other side of the
Phone
Am I dead?
That's still a mystery to me
But the sad faces and head downs, them signs
Don't look good to me
And why now every time they say my name it
In past tense
Like remember his smile, how he use to walk
And talk like this
Am I dead?
Wait I just heard voices
Damn! Guys we miss!

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About MOSES

MOSES (Madison Organizing in Strength, Equality and Solidarity) is a grassroots, interfaith, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working for transformative justice in Dane County and Wisconsin. Most of our members belong to faith communities, but others are unaffiliated individuals committed to social justice. Our mission is to build collective power to dismantle the systems of mass incarceration and mass supervision and to eradicate the racial disparities in our community that contribute to them.

MOSES values:

- **Human Dignity:** We treat all people with respect and dignity.
- **Compassion:** We hold concern, love, and acceptance in our hearts for others and support their well-being.
- **Justice:** We believe that everyone should have a fair chance to succeed. We intentionally practice the principle of justice in our organization by prioritizing the voices of those who have been directly impacted by the system.
- **Inclusion:** We strive to build a diverse organization with distributed leadership and participation by all members.
- **Credibility:** We act with honesty and integrity with MOSES members and stakeholders in the public sphere while educating and advocating with evidence-based recommendations.
- **Hope:** We remain hopeful even when facing adversity, for we are guided by a vision of a more equitable society.

To create change, MOSES engages in:

- **Education:** Helping individuals and communities better understand the issues that affect their lives.
- **Training:** Advancing our abilities to act as teachers and leaders.
- **Advocacy:** Speaking with a common voice so public policy better reflects our common values.
- **Action:** Working collectively to change the power dynamic and transform our communities to better reflect our shared humanity.



MOSES seeks to:

- Deliver a message of hope, healing, and unity that reaches beyond the divisions of race, creed, and socioeconomic status.
- Build solid relationships within the organization and with the greater community.
- Identify and take action on the root causes of injustice, oppression, and poverty.
- Empower and train leaders to respond to injustices at the local, state, and national level.
- Be an agent of change to build upon and create strong and just communities.

Our Relationship to WISDOM:

WISDOM is a statewide organization with more than 125 member congregations in ten local affiliates across Wisconsin that work to live out their values in the world. As part of the WISDOM network for the past eight years, we align with other regional networks to build education and advocacy campaigns to embed social justice in systems of governance. While each local organization is autonomous, we work together on matters of common concern.

MOSES Executive Committee:

Rachel Kincade, *President*
Saundra Brown, *Designated Vice President*
Alison Mix, *Vice President*
Ann Lacy, *Treasurer*
Lucy Gibson, *Secretary*
Sister Joan Duerst, *Chair, Faith Leaders Caucus*

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Message From the President



Rachel Kincade, President of MOSES

This has been an exciting first year of my MOSES Presidency. Throughout the year, there have been many successes and one major frustrating heartbreak for WISDOM and all its affiliates. I'd like to start with some of our successes, which can be attributed to the commitment of so many MOSES members. In November, MOSES adopted a new Mission, Vision, Values, and About Us Statement. In April, MOSES was happy to welcome Mark Rice as our new Community Organizer. Mark, along with the Events Team, organized a successful Senate Forum and an equally successful Assembly Listening Session.

MOSES also started two new task forces in 2020. One is the Racial Justice for All Children Task Force, which concentrates on root causes of the childhood-to-school-to-prison pipeline, with a focus on racial justice support for families and schools in Dane County. The other is the Public Safety Task Force, which focuses on reforming public safety practices in Dane County. These task forces helped expand the scope of our work and have also brought new people to our work.

Our Justice System Reform Initiative (JSRI) Task Force has had the tenacity to see the Crisis Restoration Center concept evolve from an idea raised at the Dane County Work Groups -- resulting in Resolution 556 in 2015 -- to a feasibility study being done in 2016.

Now, in 2020, County Executive Joe Parisi has allocated \$300,000 to plan what will be called the Triage-Restoration Center.

In addition, the JSRI, as part of the Diversion Focus Group, has been meeting with judges, the District Attorney's Office, and the Public Defender's Office regarding sentencing reform. The goal is to keep the jail population down, using recommendations from the James Austin Report presented to the Criminal Justice Council (CJC) in 2019, focusing on modest reductions in sentence length combined with reentry services for people released from jail. MOSES will have a Judicial Candidates' Forum before the upcoming spring 2021 elections, where we will provide information to the judicial candidates regarding best practices for reducing incarceration.

The new Dane County Jail proposal is still in progress, with work being done to reduce beds and use more space for programming and services. The new jail is planned to be a more humane place. However, MOSES members are not happy with the projected number of 922 beds and are working hard to reduce that number and have more space for programming. At the beginning of the pandemic, Sheriff Mahoney worked with other criminal justice stakeholders (police, prosecutors, judges) to reduce the population early and dramatically without subsequent safety problems, showing that it can be done.

With great frustration and heartbreak, I must also report on inmate safety in Wisconsin's state prisons and Gov. Evers' unwillingness to reduce the prison population, in spite of the dangers of the COVID pandemic. This concern has continued unresolved since March 2020, despite persistent efforts and actions by MOSES and affiliates.

The number of COVID cases has increased severely in our prisons, and there have been reported deaths due to COVID. Some prisons have been especially hard hit. MOSES supported actions by WISDOM, EXPO, and all other WISDOM affiliates

across the state to strongly advocate that Evers decarcerate the prisons through commuting sentences. The Governor has the power to do this, but has done nothing.

In March, we all wrote a letter to request the release of inmates over age 50 with pre-existing health issues and those over 60 who were not a threat to society. Later that month, we presented a petition including the same request, with 1,200 names on it, to the Governor. In April, state of Wisconsin public health officials wrote Evers a letter stating that not reducing the prison population would be detrimental to people's health.

At the end of April, MOSES supported WISDOM/EXPO in organizing a week of actions. On June 13, a webinar regarding commutations was held. On June 20, MOSES members helped WISDOM/EXPO organize a Drive to Decarcerate Caravan to the Governor's Mansion, followed by a rally and press conference. This led to a phone call with the Governor in late July, during which he assured our leaders he would look into what he could do to help. Then he went silent.

In September, MOSES and members of other WISDOM affiliates called their legislators to urge the Governor to decarcerate the prisons. Still, silence. Our last actions were a sit-in in front of the Governor's Mansion from

September 19 to October 24. On the last day, we held a press conference and a socially distanced rally and said, "Enough is Enough!" Evers' only response was to Fox 6 WITI News: "If we had 5% of the prisoners left in the institution, they'd still be getting COVID-19." MOSES will continue working with WISDOM and EXPO to demand safety for all the prisoners in Wisconsin.

In summary, I applaud all of these efforts by MOSES and its membership to make real and lasting reforms, both locally and statewide. I am proud to be a volunteer member of an organization with other volunteers who put in hours of work with heart, tenacity, dedication, commitment, and humanity. ■

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MOSES Candidates' Forum Attracts Eight Candidates and 900+ Attendees



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

Thirteen policy issues
Some of the 13 policy issues were presented by MOSES members involved in the relevant task forces. 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' responses showed that they had been moved by them. The speakers conveyed their experiences of parole, probation, and mass supervision; Dane County's Community Restorative Court (a positive account); being held at the outdated and inhumane Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility; being denied the right to vote; solitary confinement; and 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 aggressively 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). Wisconsin policymakers can easily close both MSDF and GBCI by ending the practice of detaining people for convictionless 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. These, 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 returnees 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 candidates agreed
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 at which The Capital Times's state government and politics reporter and WORT's news and public affairs director asked questions of the candidates. In addition to helping the many attendees get to know the candidates ahead of the election, which took place on Aug. 11, this highly successful event educated an unprecedented number of people about MOSES's work and about Wisconsin's criminal justice system. ■

Stopping the Slide from Mental Health Crisis to Incarceration

Behaviors resulting from a mental health crisis, especially if they happen in a public setting, can often lead to contact with law enforcement authorities. Police really have only two options: take the person to a hospital emergency room (ER) or take the person to jail and charge him/her with a crime. Hospital ERs are not really designed to provide mental health crisis care so, all too often, the choice is made to arrest and charge the person, starting a slide into the criminal justice system.

People with some mental health issues are challenged by ordinary living conditions and common interactions with others. Imagine how much more difficult it is for such people to be locked in cages or tiny solitary rooms and to interact with uniformed officers and other prisoners. Behaviors can become much worse, leading to additional criminal charges that draw the person deeper into the criminal justice system.

This well-known “pipeline” to incarceration and a criminal record needs to be interrupted and the flow stopped. What is needed to stem this flow? It requires plugging the gaps in the availability of mental health services in the community.

Treatment, not jail

Preventing people with mental health issues from becoming involved in the criminal justice system has been an important goal of MOSES since its involvement in the formulation of Resolution 556, which was adopted by the County Board in May 2015. A goal of Resolution 556 was to reduce the arrest and incarceration of people with substance abuse and mental health issues, and of people with developmental disabilities.

MOSES members, particularly members of the Crisis/Restoration Center Focus Group (part of the Justice System Reform Initiative Task Force) have been vigilant in keeping this important issue before the public and relevant governmental bodies. MOSES members researched and learned how other communities around the country have closed the gaps in their mental health services. San Antonio, Tex., and Tucson, Ariz., have excellent

models of 24/7 mental health urgent care centers, where people experiencing a crisis can come for services and where law enforcement officers can securely drop off people in crisis instead of taking them to a hospital ER or booking them into jail. Eugene, Ore.; Pima County (Tucson), Ariz.; and Denver, Col., all have mental health mobile response teams that can be dispatched by 911 center staff in lieu of a police response.

Three workgroups established by Resolution 556 developed 30 recommendations for reforming the criminal justice system in Dane County in ways that reduce racial disparities and the number of people with mental health issues in the jail population. In October 2015, these recommendations were presented during a “community conversation.” Participants were asked to rank these recommendations. “Develop a culturally relevant community-based crisis, assessment, and resource center” was the highest-rated recommendation.

“The 2021 Dane County budget commits \$300,000 to planning for a Triage and Restoration Center, with the goal of opening such a facility in 2023.”

Through the advocacy efforts of MOSES, along with other community voices, Madison and Dane County have made slow but steady progress toward this goal. County Executive Joe Parisi included \$140,000 in the 2018 budget to study important gaps in mental health services and to specifically look at whether a crisis/restoration center would help fill such gaps. Consultants hired by the county delivered their report, “Dane County Behavioral Health Needs Assessment,” in October 2019. It recommended development of additional services to fill gaps in crisis care, such as would be provided by a crisis/restoration center.

One-stop call center set up

One of the Desired Future Condition statements for improved mental health treatment in Dane County that we developed in 2018 is: “There is a coordinated approach among service providers, referring organizations, first

responders, etc., to help people navigate the system and find the services they need.” With the help of a private foundation grant, the 2020 Dane County budget funded the creation of a one-stop universal call center for people in need of substance abuse or mental and behavioral health care. The Dane County Behavioral Health Resource Center began operation in November 2020. People needing such assistance can now call the center at 608-267-2244. People can also contact the center through its website: danebhrc.org. The website provides additional resources and links to limited crisis intervention services.

More reforms in the pipeline

On Oct. 15, 2020, the Dane County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 180, “Endorsing Criminal Justice Reform and Developing Both a Triage and Restoration Center and a Community Justice Center.”

This is a huge step toward filling critical gaps in mental health treatment services. The 2021 Dane County budget commits \$300,000 to planning for a Triage and Restoration Center, with the goal of opening such a facility in 2023.

This fulfills another of our Desired Future Condition statements: “A Crisis/Restoration Center (providing mental health urgent care services 24 hours a day) is available to anyone in the community needing such services. The Crisis/Restoration Center provides immediate triage and stabilization followed by seamless/uninterrupted access to community services for longer-term treatment as needed.”

Resolution 180 calls for comprehensive transformation of the criminal justice system in Dane County. Its introduction states: “Smart justice in Dane County will provide a way to address criminal justice issues that solves the problem of crime rather than simply punishing individuals: it will address the profound connections of crime to mental health, addiction, employment, education, housing and social inclusion.”



In addition to the Triage and Restoration Center, the resolution calls for expanded use of the Community Restorative Court, planning and development of a Community Justice Center, creation of a mental health treatment court, and cooperation with the city of Madison on its pilot project for mental health emergency responses with a team of medical and crisis workers, rather than law enforcement. It is clear to many in the community that a significant way to reduce crime and incarceration is to provide new

approaches and services to those having mental health challenges.

The value of dedicated mental health crisis response teams has been demonstrated in other communities around the country. In Eugene, Ore., the teams are known as CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets). Each team consists of a mental health crisis worker and an emergency medical technician (EMT) who is available 24/7.

A resolution passed by the Madison Common Council in July 2020 calls on the Dane County Criminal Justice Council to work with the Madison fire chief to develop a pilot project for mental health crisis response teams. The Mayor is committed to including funding for the pilot program in the city’s 2021 operating budget. MOSES members can justifiably be proud of these changes that are taking place in our communities as a result of our advocacy. Let’s continue to interrupt the flow of this pipeline. ■

MOSES Members Learn About College Behind Bars, Discuss with Director and Alumnus



At a time when we were being bombarded with bad news, the May 3 MOSES general meeting, held on Zoom, provided some very good news. We learned of the success of college behind bars programs, focusing on the Bard [College] Prison Initiative (BPI) in New York state. Alison Mix organized the program – a 30-minute film followed by a discussion with panelists Lynn Novick, the filmmaker, and Salih Israil, currently a software engineer, who earned his bachelor’s degree with the BPI while incarcerated. The film we viewed was a condensation of a four-hour special shown on public television last year.

The BPI started as an experiment that asked the question: What happens if you assume inmates are just as capable as students on the outside and you offer them the same rigorous education they would receive at an elite school? The answer has been inspiring and hopeful.

Incarcerated students find an interest in learning they never had before. One said: “I didn’t read a whole book until I came to prison.” They discover they are capable of doing intensive academic work, and their self-confidence blossoms. One student admitted that his friend forced him to apply to the program. He said it was “the kindest, most loving thing anyone ever did for me.” Professors note that the students show up for class well-prepared and ready to engage in discussion. In their senior year they spend most of their time preparing a senior project, comparable to a master’s degree thesis, which they must defend before three faculty members. One triumph that made headlines across the U.S. was when the BPI debate team beat Harvard!

Students maintain that school serves as a buffer to keep prison from poisoning their minds and defeating their spirits. One said:

“I’m not studying just to earn a degree, but to change my life. Education is changing the way I think, the way I interact with people.” Another stated: “Education helps us learn we are part of a community and the community is part of us.” But several students added they felt cheated by an education system on the outside which overlooks the potential of poor students, especially students of color.

Each year, 630,000 men and women are released from prison. In trying to find work, they must face the hard reality of bias against ex-offenders. But those who have been educated in prison find that with persistence and help from supporters, they can find meaningful work. As a result, the recidivism rate among BPI graduates is 4%, compared to the general average of 50%. A Rand Corporation study found that every dollar spent on higher education in prison saves taxpayers five dollars.

Governmental support for higher education in prisons has had a checkered past. Currently, a Second Chance Pell Grant pilot program initiated by President Obama has been continued under the Trump administration. Clearly this effort must be expanded, and the education system for poor children must be strengthened to shut down the school-to-prison pipeline. ■

Dane County Makes Long-Awaited Reforms



MOSES had much to celebrate in 2020 as it witnessed concrete improvements in Dane County's criminal justice system that it had long advocated for. Perhaps no change was as gratifying as that involving mental health services. An estimated 40 percent of those confined in the Dane County Jail suffer from mental illnesses. Preventing people with mental health issues from becoming involved in the criminal justice system has been an important goal of MOSES since its involvement in the formulation of Resolution 556, which was adopted by the County Board in May 2015.

Behavioral Health Resource Center

It took five more years, but early in 2020, the Dane County government, private health providers and insurers, and community nonprofit service providers teamed up to support the creation of Dane County's new Behavioral Health Resource Center. Nearly \$500,000 was included for it in the County's 2020 budget. Staff was hired, and in November the Center finally opened to the public at 818 W. Badger Rd. The center operates from noon until 4 a.m., seven days a week, with professional resource staff on hand to help connect individuals with care and treatment. (See more about this on p. 4-5)

Reconsidering the new Dane County Jail

In other county developments this year, MOSES published a position statement in July on RES-145, known as the "Doyle resolution," which called for an immediate and permanent "halt to all planning, design, architecture, and construction of a new jail facility." While agreeing with many of the

principles and points raised in the resolution, MOSES called instead for "an immediate five-month hold" on the planning activity. Conditions in the current Dane County Jail were considered to be too inhumane, unsafe, and cramped to address the needs of the people and staff within, which meant a new facility was required. Ultimately, the resolution was left in committee and not voted on, but a reevaluation by the community and other stakeholders of actual bed needs and other appropriate changes in the space design is ongoing, based in part on the important lessons learned from the significant reduction in the jail population due to COVID-19.

MOSES also opposed the resolution's call on the County to further increase the use of electronic monitoring. MOSES believes that electronic monitoring has a significantly disparate and negative impact on people of color and a generally negative impact on all those subjected to it. MOSES's position statement instead supported working "with the Sheriff and other stakeholders to find better alternatives to electronic monitoring."

Mental Health Triage and Restoration Center

Another cause for rejoicing came in September, when the Dane County Board of Supervisors announced another 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.

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 in by law enforcement. MOSES members were a critical part of the community involvement and advocacy that brought this about. 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 when confronted with a mental health crisis: 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.

A Community Justice Center?

The triage and restoration center will be in addition to – or perhaps integrated into – still another "center" under study by the County: a community justice center, a centralized one-stop shop for services, which would ideally include a "community court." Ninety-six percent of those in jail will not go to prison; the Dane County Jail should therefore be seen as a catchment center, an opportunity to connect people with services. As they leave jail, people should receive a "warm handoff" to these services, with a coordinated plan for reentry into the community. The Dane County Board has included \$100,000 in its 2021 budget for further study and development of this idea.

Not only does Dane County not have enough psychiatric beds, detox beds, etc., but law enforcement, mobile crisis teams, and other agencies are unable to access those services – or others such as housing

and job training – in a way that can easily and efficiently get someone into the specific plan he or she needs. A community justice center could address these deficiencies. In order for it to become operational, however, an integrated system is needed, involving stakeholders from the healthcare community (including financial experts, because of the huge fiscal savings that will be made possible), but also advocates, including jail abolitionists. Having them at the table could be really effective, because by operating such a center the County will in fact be decarcerating.

At a Town Hall held by the Dane County Criminal Justice Council on Oct. 29, representatives of the Brooklyn community of Red Hook gave an inspiring presentation about the impact that a community justice

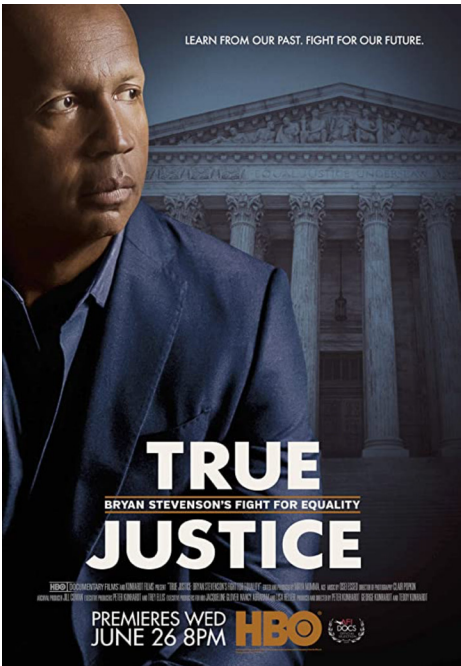
center has made there over the past 20 years. Rather than ask "What happened?" they explained, courts should take a problem-solving approach and ask: "Why did this happen?" To stop recidivism, the underlying problem has to be treated, be it job training, a mental health issue, substance abuse, or trauma. It sounds simple, yet for decades court systems, including Dane County's, have recycled people through jail without giving them the tools they need to be successful.

In Red Hook they have a classroom for people to earn their High School Equivalency diplomas right inside the center. In addition, a youth court, based on Navajo tradition, is manned by teens known as peacemakers. They also have extensive youth programming: a basketball court,

entrepreneurship clubs, and community service opportunities. Red Hook was one of the first courts in the country to bring in trauma-informed counseling, because the community expressed the need for it.

Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne is particularly enthusiastic about the idea of a community justice center, so much so that he believes one could be created and operated virtually, while the bricks and mortar one is being built. "We would have to give people tablets and internet access," he said at the town hall. "They would have their court appearances and apply for jobs online, and take part in Telehealth, which is proving to work very well." While it is early days, Dane County may finally be moving towards the kind of transformative change that MOSES has been advocating for. ■

MOSES-Sponsored Showing of "True Justice" Attracts Record Audience to FUS Film Series



On March 6, First Unitarian Society held its First Friday Film series as usual, this time featuring a documentary on the life and work of Bryan Stevenson, author of the bestseller "Just Mercy" and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative. The event

was organized by the FUS MOSES Ministry Team and co-hosted by MOSES Madison. First Fridays at FUS feature films of social significance and offer a free community meal before the film showing. Childcare and a children's film are also offered.

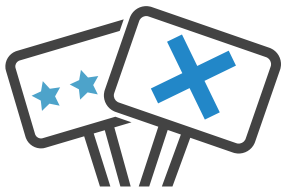
"True Justice" drew a record crowd for a "first Friday" film, estimated at 75. The high turnout was due at least in part to the fame of the film's subject, Mr. Stevenson, but also to extensive publicity and co-sponsorships, including the Wisconsin Network for Peace, Justice and Sustainability and WORT 89.9FM.

The film relates incidents in Stevenson's youth that shaped his development, such as having a motel swimming pool quickly emptied of all the white children when he and his sister dove in. We learn about the strength of his family members, particularly his mother and grandmother, and we hear from family members today who love and support him as he goes about trying to create a more equal justice system in this country.

We learn what an uphill battle that is. We meet Anthony Hinton, author of "The Sun Does Shine," who was finally released from death row after Stevenson's untiring, years-long efforts that took them all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. We meet Walter McMillian, also imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit; his is the story in the recently released film "Just Mercy." We watch as Stevenson leads kids to a lynching site, where they dig up jars of soil to commemorate the person who was lynched there. We see the Equal Justice Initiative headquarters in Montgomery, Ala., where we meet and hear from his staff and see the striking memorial he's creating to honor the Americans who were lynched.

The film is beautifully done and seems quite thorough; it is also long, probably unnecessarily so. But all in all, we highly recommend it. It describes and honors the critically important pioneering justice work of a man who, we believe, is one of the true heroes of our time. ■

Worst Bills Vetoed, Best Also Fail to Pass



The 2019-2020 legislative session ended with a mixed message. The Democratic administration rallied against a number of bad bills and stopped a few of them. But progress on modest reform efforts by Democratic legislators was also stymied, because of lack of support by their Republican counterparts.

Republicans waited until mid-January to introduce a package of bills that was quickly scheduled for committee hearings and rushed to the Assembly and Senate for action. Passage of the “Tougher on Crime” package would have resulted in more people going to prison and staying there longer. It would have increased the number of juveniles in secure detention facilities.

The intent of these legislators was so clear and detrimental to reform efforts that it drew a protest from DOC Secretary Kevin Carr. He sent written testimony to the Assembly Committee on Corrections that urged a move from an “old school, ineffective mentality of ‘lock ‘em up and throw away the key’ to a smart, safe and rehabilitative approach. States like Texas and Michigan have changed laws and policies, reduced their prison population, closed prisons, and saved the taxpayer money, while increasing public safety!”

Despite Carr’s testimony, the most pernicious of the bills passed. Thankfully, Gov. Evers vetoed four of them and sent a statement to MOSES and other advocates that echoed Secretary Carr’s views.

Reform bills get a hearing

In a last-minute move, two of the three reform bills developed by Rep. Evan Goyke (D) and his colleagues also received a hearing by the Assembly Committee on Corrections. Those bills would have added earned release programs that enable prisoners to shorten their stays and exit with new skills. They would also have set a maximum of 30 days of incarceration for a noncriminal violation of supervision and allowed

DOC greater use of short-term sanctions. DOC representative Paulina de Haan testified that “Secretary Carr is committed to prioritizing and increasing programming at all of our facilities to provide adults in custody with the necessary tools, training, and treatment to become tax-paying citizens.” She added, “Reducing revocations has been a priority for this administration, and DOC is working on proposals and policies to effect that change.”

Signs of bipartisan approaches

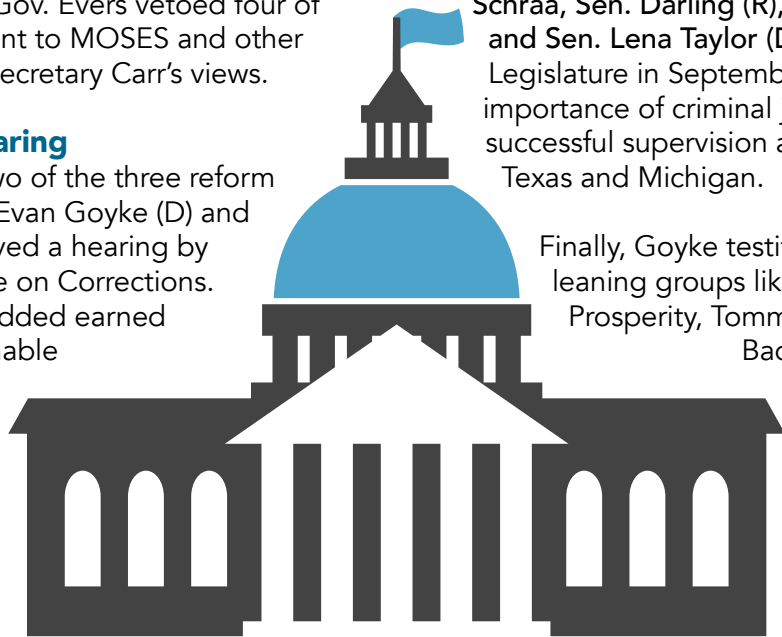
The differences between the two parties concerning criminal justice might appear insurmountable, but a few hopeful signs are emerging.

Rep. Shae Sortwell (R) testified in favor of AB 831, which would have reformed revocation policies. Sortwell pointed out that “the standards for people under supervision are often higher than the standards of law for everyone else.”

Rep. Michael Schraa (R) argued against the initial version of AB 805, which recommended that parole be revoked if a formerly incarcerated person is charged with a new crime. Schraa pointed out to Committee members that the bill would result in new prison construction, when funds could not be found to close Lincoln Hills.

Schraa, Sen. Darling (R), Rep. Goyke (D), and Sen. Lena Taylor (D) sent a letter to the Legislature in September emphasizing the importance of criminal justice reform and noting successful supervision and revocation systems in Texas and Michigan.

Finally, Goyke testified that “conservative-leaning groups like Americans for Prosperity, Tommy Thompson Center, The Badger Institute, and Right on Crime have joined with liberal-leaning groups like the ACLU and WISDOM.” ■



Despite Persistent Protests, Gov. Evers Remained Silent on COVID in Wisconsin’s Prisons



The numbers tell the sad story. More than half of the people incarcerated in Wisconsin prisons (10,472 out of 20,137) and more than 2,000 correctional staff contracted COVID-19 in 2020; at least 23 died from the disease. However, despite persistent calls, emails, a car caravan, and a month-long daily vigil at the Governor’s Mansion culminating in a protest and press conference, Gov. Evers remained silent.

Drive to Decarcerate

By contrast, WISDOM started making its views known as early as June 18, when some 140 cars from all over the state participated in a caravan, dubbed “Drive to Decarcerate,” which wound its way noisily to the Governor’s Mansion in Maple Bluff. More than 200 people met there and performed a “noise demonstration.” MOSES was well represented, and reporters from at least three local TV stations covered the event. As a result, WISDOM Director David Liners, WISDOM President Rev. Willie Brisco, and Jerome Dillard, director of EXPO (EX-incarcerated People Organizing), were invited to talk with the Governor about the issue of COVID-19 in Wisconsin’s prisons. This conversation, which took place on June 26, resulted in three commitments from Gov. 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 ways to use his power to commute sentences.
- 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.

In the end, Gov. Evers effectively failed to act on any of these commitments. And so, the protests continued.

Vigil, Civil Disobedience, Press Conference

From Oct. 19 to Nov. 24, members of WISDOM, EXPO, and MOSES held a daily vigil in front of the Governor’s Mansion, culminating in a larger action on Nov. 24, when dozens gathered there in the rain and sleet in an effort to amplify our demands for action. The media turned out in force, and

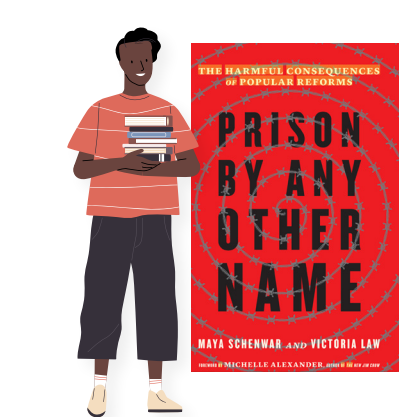
for four hours we blocked the entrance and exit to the Mansion with our cars and our bodies. We prevented the mail from being delivered, but still there was no response from the Governor.

Speaking at the press conference, WISDOM director David Liners asked why the Governor wouldn’t even discuss taking steps that governors in Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, Virginia, and Washington had already taken. These governors used their executive authority to commute sentences to move elderly and ill people out of the prisons, and to release many very-low-risk people so that those who remain in the prisons could have a chance to stay healthy.

Still, the response from the Wisconsin Governor continued to be a stony silence. Despite the Governor’s inaction, the state’s prison population has decreased by 2,500, to 20,137. However, this is largely because of reforms in Community Corrections, which WISDOM and MOSES have advocated. At the end of 2020, plans were under way to continue the vigil and more forcefully reiterate our demand for action. ■

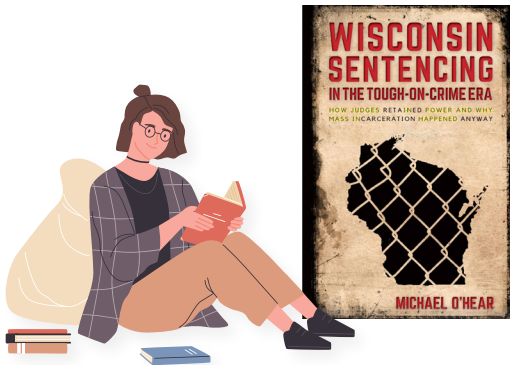


Books Reviewed in MOSES Newsletters in 2020



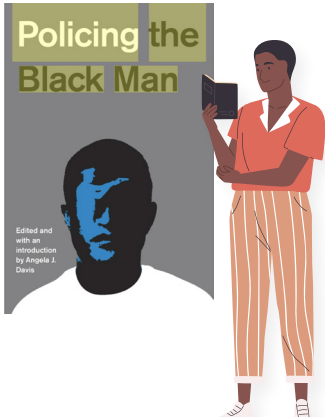
“Prison by Any Other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms,” by Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law

Reforms advocated as alternatives to mass incarceration, such as electronic monitoring and extended community supervision, actually widen state surveillance and create what the authors, both journalists, call the “carceral state.” They consider a number of reforms, point out the drawbacks, and, as the book jacket states, “ultimately offer a bolder vision for truly alternative justice practices.” Engagingly written.



“Wisconsin Sentencing in the Tough-on-Crime Era: How Judges Retained Power and Why Mass Incarceration Happened Anyway,” by Michael O’Hear

O’Hear, a professor of law at Marquette University, writes a thorough explanation of the matter. There are graphs, percentages, acronyms, and names familiar to Wisconsinites attentive to state government. A dense, “scientific” approach that dispassionately clarifies how Wisconsin got where it is and why it stays there: in part, it’s due to fear, real or imagined. A ponderous read.



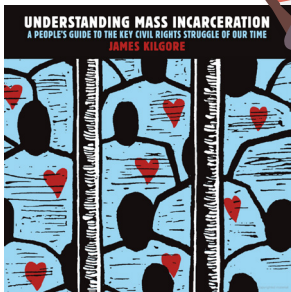
“Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment,” Angela Davis, editor

Davis wrote one of the chapters herself and recruited, among others, Bryan Stevenson, Mark Mauer, and Sherrilyn Ifill to write chapters in their areas of expertise. Some of the messages of this book: U.S. social and economic life lacks a basic fairness. Mass incarceration exacerbates a cycle of poverty and violence. The darker the skin tone, the longer the sentence. An interesting, readable, insightful, incisive book by people who know whereof they speak.



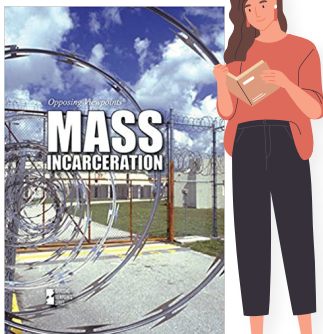
“The Meaning of Life: The Case for Abolishing Life Sentences,” by Marc Mauer and Ashley Nellis, with six portraits of lifers by Kerry Myers

The authors make a case for 20-year-maximum sentences, enough time for rehabilitation, they say, in part simply because the person who committed the crime has aged. They point out the racial aspects of life sentencing and show how it drives our incarceration situation. The fact that we sentence so many to life says to them that our main concern is punishment, not rehabilitation. Mauer is founder and director of The Sentencing Project. A relatively short, easy read.



“Understanding Mass Incarceration: A People’s Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggle of Our Time,” by James Kilgore

Mark Mauer says this belongs on everyone’s bookshelf; it’s a comprehensive analysis of the data, the political history, and the way forward in challenging mass incarceration. Michelle Alexander calls it “a brilliant overview of what must be done to end mass incarceration.” Need one say more? This little book provides all the information we need in short, easy-to-read sections with graphs and illustrations.



“Opposing Viewpoints: Mass Incarceration,” Rebecca Aldridge, editor

This series takes on current topics and presents, as the title indicates, different viewpoints for high school and/or college students – or anyone else – to consider. Mass incarceration is presented as a problem that needs to be addressed, no matter what side of it one is coming from. The sections are short. Mark Mauer co-authors one titled, “The Relationship Between Crime and Mass Incarceration is Limited.” Others address solving our drug problem and putting more police on the streets. Worthwhile.

Smart Justice Lobby Day



A standing-room-only crowd of over 300 people from around the state filled a State Capitol hearing room on Jan. 29, 2020, for Smart Justice Lobby Day. The event, where attendees were so numerous they actually overflowed the hearing room, was sponsored by the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) and WISDOM, among others. Many MOSES members were part of the crowd, which represented over 31 senatorial and 63 assembly districts. The goal of Lobby Day was to urge legislators to adopt smart criminal justice reforms that would reduce prison populations, reduce recidivism, and make communities safer and stronger.

At the orientation session, we learned that Wisconsin spends \$1.2 billion on prisons each year – more than the national average, more than neighboring states, and more than is spent on the entire University of Wisconsin System.

One of the speakers, Lance Ley, described how crimeless revocation

had overturned his efforts to be a productive citizen. While on extended supervision, Lance had built up a successful business. But someone made a false accusation against him, which led to a search of his home, and alcohol was found there. As a result, Ley was sent back to prison, his business closed, and 28 of his employees lost their jobs. He asked us to lobby against such injustice.

Following the orientation, we made visits to our representatives and senators to request action on four pending bills on these topics: Expungement Reform, Unlock the Vote, Crimeless Revocation, and Against the Shackling of Pregnant Women.

At the same time as we were lobbying, a large group of doctors, wearing traditional white coats, was also gathering in the Capitol Rotunda to lobby against the shackling of pregnant women. It’s good to have allies! ■

THE FORK IN THE ROAD BY JOHN MIX

The air is heavy with regret and worry in this federal courtroom.

A young man not yet 40 does not look up to the bench as the sentence of 294 months is read.

The collision of unwise choices and severe consequences screams silently in tears rolling down cheeks of mother, sisters, brother and friends.

This fork in the road was not foreseen in the fog of addiction and drug deals going down.

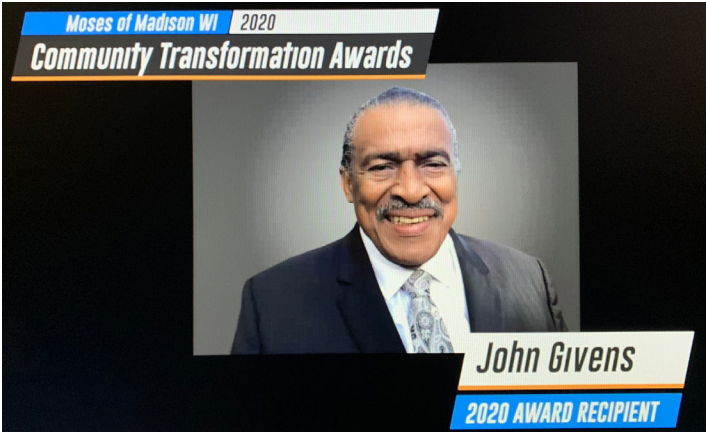
The next transformation may either be a mind and soul-numbing twilight zone of fossilizing anger and depression ending in alienation; or a revolution in character through grief, sorrow, and compassion for self and others.

The prevailing winds of statistics favor the former. The prayers of the family in shock heading home across the frozen fields are for the latter.

Hearts Touched and Inspired by Transformation Gala Honorees

The MOSES Annual Transformation Celebration 2020, held via Zoom on Nov. 21, lifted up the lives of three persons of perseverance and passion who have spent time in prison.

Awards were presented by MOSES President Rachel Kincade to:



John Givens
JustDane Circle of Support Coordinator, Mentor



Talib Akbar
Solitary Confinement Truck Inventor and Coordinator, Advocate



Shanita Lawrence
JustDane Case Manager, Role Model

MOSES Annual Transformation Celebration 2020



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Mary Anglim, Sister Joan Duerst,
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Award Reviewers
Sister Joan Duerst - for John
Sister Fran Hoffman - for Talib
Mary Anglim and Rachel Kincade - for Shanita

Media
Timothy Coursen
Interview videos and theme music
Tina Hogle
Press releases, programs, flyers,
and video summary of 2020
James Morgan
Photography

**Meals for honorees & their families
provided by:** Food Junkies

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Ways to Support MOSES

Learn

- Check out the MOSES website: www.mosesmadison.org.
- Attend a monthly meeting (usually the first weekend of the month, check the [event calendar](#) on the MOSES website for date and time.)

Get involved

- Serve on a task force or committee.
- Volunteer for an action.
- Participate in a training. Testify at a hearing.

Donate

Donations in any amount are always welcome! As an affiliate of WISDOM, MOSES shares in WISDOM's 501(c)3 status, so your donation is tax-deductible. The more financial support MOSES receives from our members — congregational, organizational, and individual — and friends, the less time we need to spend organizing fundraising or seeking and writing for grants.

Ways to support MOSES financially:

- Mail a check (payable to "MOSES") to MOSES, PO Box 7031, Madison, WI 53707
- Donate using a credit or debit card or a PayPal account, by going to the MOSES website donations page (mosesmadison.org/give/volunteer-donate) and clicking on the "Donate" button.
- Enroll in monthly giving. Another advantage of being an affiliate of WISDOM is that MOSES, like the other affiliates across the state, is able to participate in WISDOM's coordination of an electronic giving program through electronic funds transfer. Download the form from the MOSES website donations page at mosesmadison.org/give/volunteer-donate.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please email the MOSES Treasurer at: treasurer.moses.madison@gmail.com.



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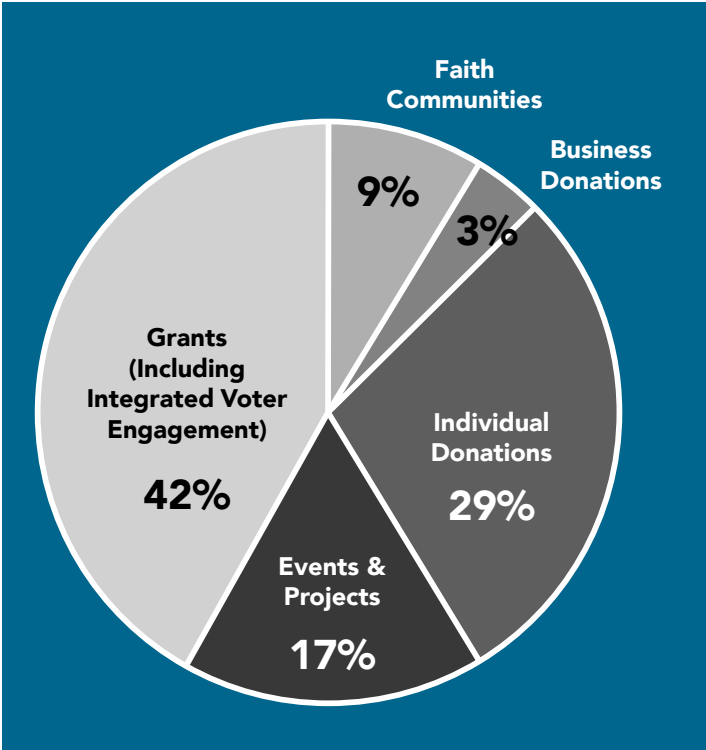
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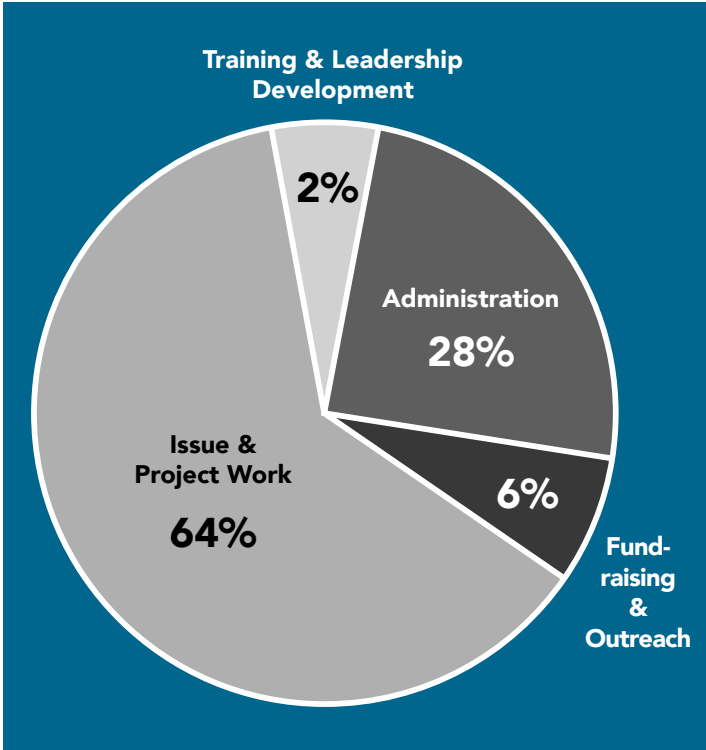
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January - November, 2020

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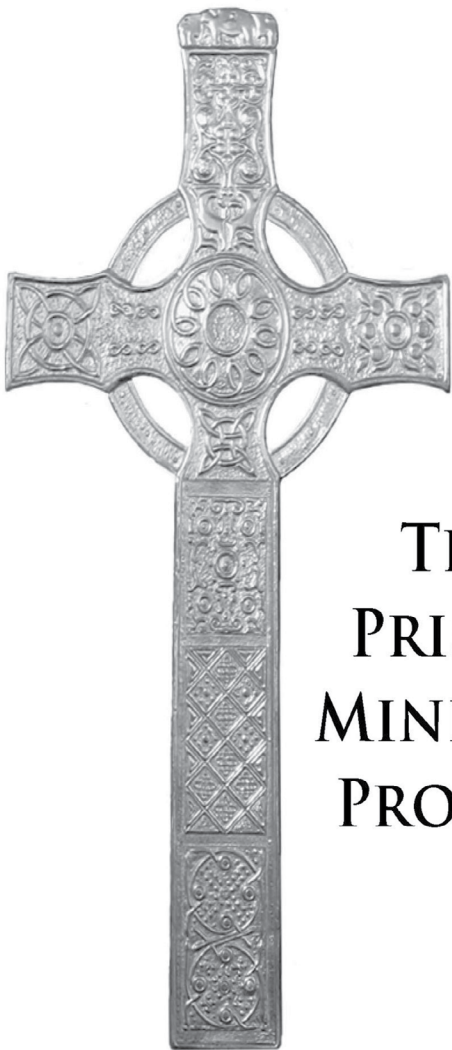


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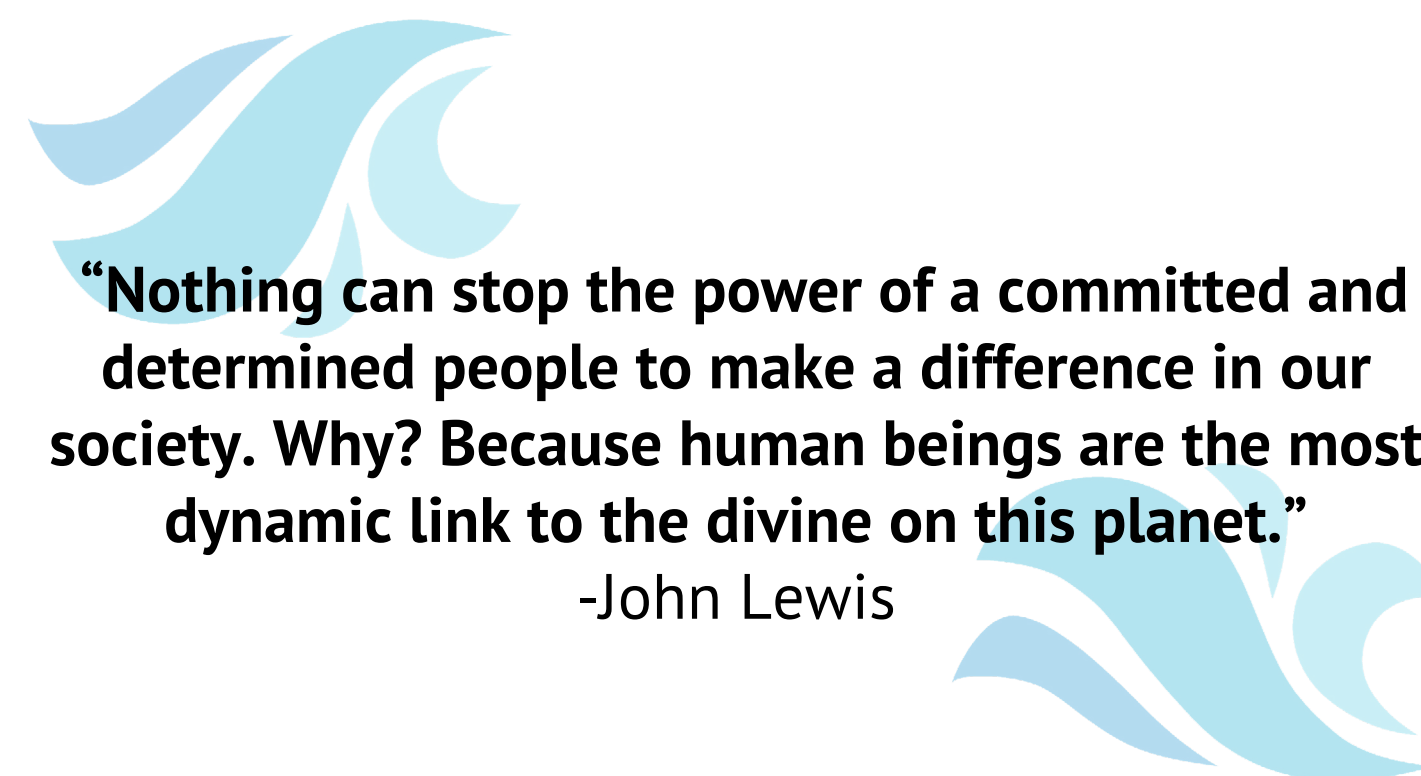
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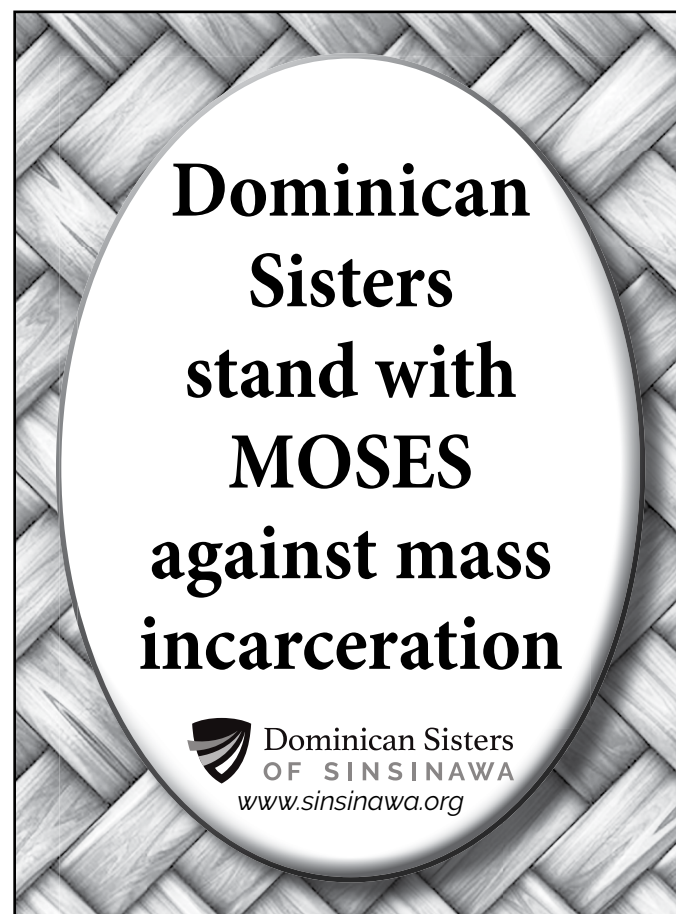
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Community of Hope, UCC
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www.madisonchristiancommunity.org
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until one has been inside its jails.”
-Nelson Mandela**



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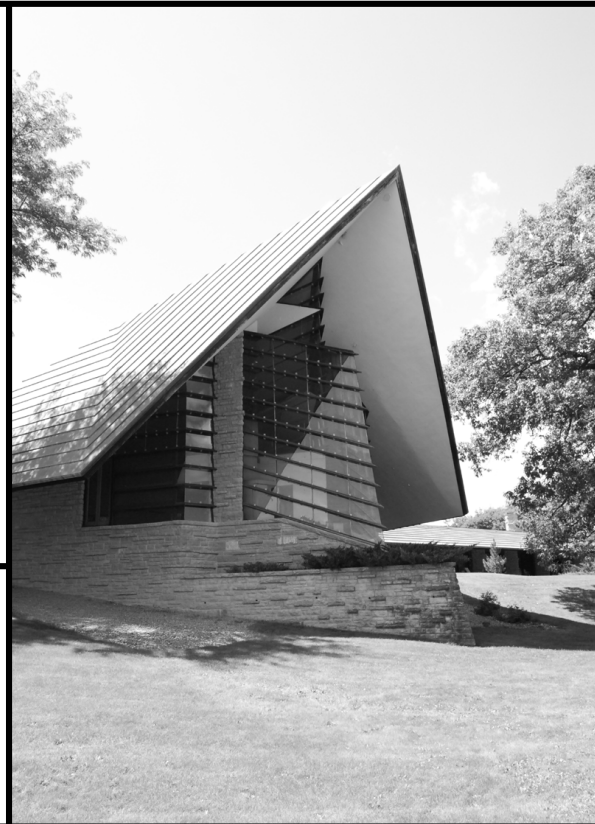
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“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.” -Desmond Tutu

CONGRATULATIONS MOSES!

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Church email: madisonstpaulamec@gmail.com

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Congratulations MOSES



Reach out to NAMI Dane County
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NAMIDANECOUNTY.ORG

CONTACT@NAMIDANECOUNTY.ORG

The mission of NAMI Dane County is to
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and wrong, but finding out
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Social Justice Ministry

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JustDane initiatives provide support for reentry challenges

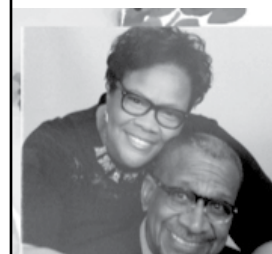
The Journey Home — Circles of Support — Peer Support — Phoenix Initiative

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JustDane (formerly "MUM") 2115 South Park Street, Madison, Wisconsin 608-256-0906 justdane.org

**"Each time a
man stands up for
an ideal or acts to
improve the lot of
others or strikes
out against
injustice, he
sends forth a tiny
ripple of hope."
-Robert Kennedy**



Love a lot, Pray Without Ceasing and Give Till it Hurts.

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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

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