

MOSES



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

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Madison Action Day Report *By Margaret Irwin*

WISDOM's Madison Action Day successfully transitioned from the usual in-person event to a virtual one on April 15. Over 300 people from across the state participated in the morning session on Zoom, and 1,300 more viewed a recording later. You can still watch it [here](#). The purpose of the Morning Plenary was to reinforce the guiding values behind our stands on the proposed 2021-2023 state budget and to prepare us to meet with our own legislators in the afternoon.

Three WISDOM guiding values

Living for the Seventh Generation is a value that comes to us from the Iroquois tradition: Remember seven generations in the past and consider seven generations in the future when making decisions that affect the people. This value is particularly important in a society that rewards short-term thinking and neglects the negative impact that hasty decisions can have on generations to come. This applies to all the issues we advocate for: criminal justice reform, the needs of children, climate change, access to clean water, and more. As one speaker pointed out, intergenerational trauma can be passed down six or seven generations, but healing takes just one generation.

Radical Inclusion means that in the Beloved Community, everybody's in and nobody's out, regardless of race, ethnicity, religious belief, age, physical or mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, geography, or political beliefs. Although this simple idea is difficult to put into practice in everyday life, we need to continue working at it, making sure that the people most impacted by our decisions have a voice in making those decisions.

Costly Reconciliation means honestly confronting the details and the consequences of injustice. That can be painful. As one speaker stated, reconciliation is not just an intellectual exercise; it involves heart and hand surgery as well. In WISDOM, we seek to achieve real healing by deep listening and forgiveness with no strings attached, by repairing the damage done by years of injustice, and by building bridges across the divides that separate us.

The morning concluded with a discussion of where we go from here. Takeaways included the following: If 3.5% of the populace is actively engaged in an ongoing and sustained way, they can bring about lasting political change. We must follow our conscience and take a position even when it is unpopular or inconvenient. Don't be afraid to think big!

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 Pat Watson, Treasurer
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 Faith Leaders Caucus

Operational Team Leads

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 Team operating cooperatively;
 no designated lead
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 Karen Julesberg

MOSES Task Forces

Justice System Reform
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MOSES Caucus

Faith Leaders Caucus
 Joan Duerst
 Michael Marshall

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In the afternoon sessions, participants in every part of the state met via Zoom with their own legislators of both political parties. MOSES members asked their legislators to support budget items in the areas of affordable housing, treatment alternatives and diversion, earned release, and education improvement, and they agreed with all of our requests.

By way of encouragement, Rep. Lisa Subeck advised: Don't take your eyes off the long game in criminal justice reform. It's great that these issues are in the budget for the first time. Don't give up! ■



WISDOM Madison Action Day Attendees

WISDOM Advocates for Equity Issues in New State Budget

By Tricia Hillner

The 2021-23 state budget writing process presents opportunities for ensuring funding for programs that could improve the lives of many people, and WISDOM members have been making sure state legislators know where the statewide group stands on critical issues. Understanding the far-reaching impact of the budget decisions, WISDOM has been focusing its energy on the budget process since January.

In the document “WISDOM Priorities for Wisconsin 2021-2023” (available to view or download at www.wisdomwisconsin.org), WISDOM highlighted the following issues to concentrate on:

- Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD)
- No new money for prisons or prison expansion
- Community-based Alternatives to Revocation (ATRs)
- Expanding the Earned Release Program (ERP)
- Increasing the age of justice-impacted juveniles from 17 to 21
- Increased funding for transitional jobs programs
- Childhood lead poisoning
- More money for transit programs/No I-94 expansion
- Affordable housing
- Childhood poverty
- Environmental justice
- Public instruction and education improvement
- Driver's licenses for undocumented Wisconsinites

On Madison Action Day, held on April 15, members gathered in virtual meetings with elected officials from across the state, and of both parties, to present their positions on issues and advocate for their inclusion in the budget. Throughout April, individuals testified at virtual and in-person Joint Finance Committee hearings to explain the impact of the legislators' budget decisions on Wisconsinites.

Despite public input from WISDOM members and others, the legislature removed hundreds of items from the proposed budget that would have helped countless people.

So, in mid-May, WISDOM members made another push to salvage what they could. The week-long phone/email/social media campaign focused on Medicaid expansion, drivers' licenses for undocumented Wisconsinites, and expanded funding for Alternatives to Revocation and Earned Release programs.

As of press time, the budget approval process was ongoing. The new state budget is due to be signed into law by July 1, 2021.

More information and educational materials are available at www.wisdomwisconsin.org. You can find shareable infographics on the [WISDOM Facebook page](#). ■

Action Items

By Cindy Lovell

Right Now

Testify or submit written feedback to the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education on or before June 14 and 28 in support of budget items specific to restorative justice and safety, and to mental health support.

Traditionally, school suspensions have been used as a response to conflict caused by a student. There is a known relationship between school suspensions and later involvement with the criminal justice system,

sometimes referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline.

Restorative Justice is an alternative response to a conflict, big or small, which brings people together to discuss harms done and to bring resolution. Rather than punishment, the focus is on accountability, repairing, and preventing further harm. Victims

have an active role in the process, which can reduce feelings of anxiety and powerlessness. Offenders have an opportunity to redeem themselves. Specially trained employees in each MMSD high school would facilitate, ensuring that order is maintained.

If you are interested in showing support, or would like to learn more, please contact Barbie Jackson, co-chair of the Racial Justice for All Children Task Force: barbie.g.jackson@gmail.com.

mentally ill and in crisis. Thus if a dispatch call comes in involving a person with mental health issues, that person often ends up in handcuffs and in the back of a police car.

If a person experiencing a mental health crisis requires inpatient psychiatric care and declines to be voluntarily admitted to a local treatment center, or if the community hospitals' behavioral health units are full or otherwise unable to accommodate the patient's needs, the only state-approved mental health institution is Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh. If the police have to take someone to Winnebago, that person has to first be medically cleared. That process, the drive, and the intake proceedings take, on average, 10 hours per assigned officer. For the police, it is costly, time-consuming, and cumbersome. For people with mental health issues, it is criminalizing and aggravating.

Many things can be done to address the needs of people with mental health issues in crisis, but there is bipartisan agreement that Wisconsin Statute Chapter 51 needs to be revised. Law enforcement also largely supports changing this law, as do various Wisconsin counties (especially those up north) and mental health advocates. Anna Moffit, executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Dane County team, who recently spoke at a MOSES general membership meeting, recommended that MOSES members work with the psychiatric and medical societies to change the law.

Find ways to learn more and be active in making a positive change.

Special thanks to Sarah Henrickson, LCSW, Crisis Intervention/Law Enforcement Liaison, Emergency Services Unit, Journey Mental Health Center for information about Chapter 51.

Learn how to be a Peacemaker and a Facilitator of Restorative Justice in four virtual training sessions for Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

When: Monday, June 21, Wednesday, June 23, Monday, June 28, and Wednesday, June 30
Time: 5-8:30 p.m. each day

If interested, please contact Stephanie Marino at Marino@countyofdane.com.

Anytime

Participate and educate.

Consider joining a MOSES team or task force or a WISDOM task force. To learn more about all the opportunities, go to MOSESmadison.org > Get Involved > Join Our Justice Work.

Educate yourself and others about racism and our criminal justice (or injustice) system. To see a list of ideas, go to MOSESmadison.org > Get Involved > Congregational Resources.

Suggestions for books to read also can be found in the book reviews in MOSES newsletters since August, 2017. To see past issues, go to MOSESmadison.org > About > Newsletter. ■

Long Term

Advocate for changing Chapter 51 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Wisconsin Statute Chapter 51.15 states that police officers initiate emergency holds (a.k.a. involuntary transports) of people who are

Lunch and Learn with Myra McNair

By Samiya Pettaway

At a virtual Lunch and Learn session on May 14, Marriage and Family Therapist Myra McNair shared her knowledge about trauma that happens before incarceration, and the role of adverse childhood experiences in the school-to-prison pipeline. McNair is the owner and founder of Anesis Family Therapy in Madison and is a trauma specialist.

While working in a mental health agency prior to founding Anesis, McNair noted that providers who looked like and came from the communities they served would be better able to meet the needs of Black and Brown people seeking mental health care. Since its founding in 2016, Anesis has provided holistic and culturally competent mental health services to many children and families in the Dane County area.

While the standard, diagnostic definition of trauma requires “actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence,” McNair says that trauma can encompass a lot more, and that it often does for the clients she works with. This is where the role of adverse childhood experiences comes in. Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are traumatic events that occur before the age of 18 and have been found to lead to a host of poor mental, physical, and behavioral health outcomes.

While the standard ACE assessment accounts for 10 common forms of trauma that can happen in the home, there is a growing body of research pushing to expand the ACE assessment to include community and systemic sources of trauma, such as experiencing racial discrimination or witnessing community violence. When referencing the school-to-prison pipeline, McNair credits these forms of trauma as a source.

When young children experience racial discrimination, it changes the way that they make meaning of things and how they define who they are. When housing issues and food insecurity are added on, the effects are compounded and the trauma becomes complex. These forms of trauma become stored in our bodies, affecting our stress hormones and changing the way we think, respond, and behave. When these behavioral outcomes of trauma are met with racial bias in the education system, the behavior becomes criminalized, leading to the current disparities of Black students, particularly Black boys, being suspended and expelled at higher rates. For Black and Brown children, this can start as early as preschool.

McNair stressed the importance of a supportive caregiver in combating the long-term damaging effects of trauma. She concluded by emphasizing the continuous need for trained professionals to de-escalate mental health crises and to provide trauma-informed care during these times.

Samiya Pettaway recently graduated with honors from the UW-Madison School of Nursing. Her honors project was “Adverse Childhood Experiences and Chronic Stressors in Racial Minority Youth: A Literature Review.”



Carmella Glenn led the discussion with speaker Myra McNair. ■

MOSES Benefit Rummage Sale Coming Up Labor Day Weekend!

On the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, MOSES is having a large rummage sale. To save volunteer time and make this doable, we will be asking people to pay what they can or what they think an item is worth; we will not be pricing items. This technique has been proven to work very well, particularly for benefit sales.



Donated items should be clean and in good condition. Just think: All those items you cleared out during the pandemic can find a home and help MOSES, too!

Questions? Email bonniemagnuson@gmail.com.

MOSES Website Updates



Do you see something on the [MOSES website](https://www.mosesmadison.org) that is out of date, incorrect, or just needs to be updated? Maybe something is missing? If you notice something on our website that needs changing, please contact Tricia Hillner in care of the MOSES Secretary at secretary.moses.madison@gmail.com with the details, so that she can update the website accordingly. Thank you!



Update from the Racial Equity Team

By Sherry Reames

Thanks to everybody who responded to our survey in early May. We received 49 responses in all, and they included a lot of valuable feedback and suggestions.

The responses to our survey made it clear that some MOSES members have been learning and teaching about racial equity and inequity for years, while others are relative beginners in this area. Nevertheless, we found overwhelming agreement on two of the questions. When asked whether they believe the Racial Equity circles at monthly meetings are valuable to MOSES as an organization, 96% of the respondents said yes. Almost as many (94%) said yes when asked whether they are open to the idea of devoting as much as 45-60 minutes to these circles a few times a year.

Not surprisingly, there was less consensus on other issues. Asked how long the circles should ordinarily run, about 30% of the respondents said 20 minutes and almost the same number said 30 minutes. Other suggestions varied widely, and many people said (quite sensibly) that it all depends on the question being asked and the number of people in the circle. What makes the circles valuable, we heard again and again, is the opportunity to express our own take on a racial issue and hear the thinking

and experience of others. Going forward, we hope to make that happen more regularly.

A number of respondents expressed concern with the lack of racial diversity at MOSES meetings and in most of our congregations. We hear you, and we agree! We intend to devote our first two hour-long circles, tentatively planned for July and October, to some materials from WISDOM that are designed to help us learn how to be more welcoming and inclusive, both in our personal thinking and in our organizations. We need to keep working to live up to the parts of MOSES's mission and values statement which describe our goals of diversity, inclusion, and "prioritizing the voices of those who have been directly impacted by the system."

Although we don't do actual surveys very often, the Racial Equity Team always welcomes suggestions, forwarded videos and articles for possible future use, and other kinds of feedback from those who participate in MOSES meetings. If you are interested in possibly joining our little team, we would also like to hear from you. Please contact Jeanette Arthur, Gloria Stevenson-McCarter, or Sherry Reames via secretary.moses@gmail.com. ■

Why I Am a Sustaining Member

By Pat Watson

I became involved with MOSES through my church, First Unitarian Society, shortly after the need for a new jail in Dane County was announced. The announcement triggered a slow but long-growing personal uneasiness with the direction in which the United States and especially the criminal justice system seemed to be moving

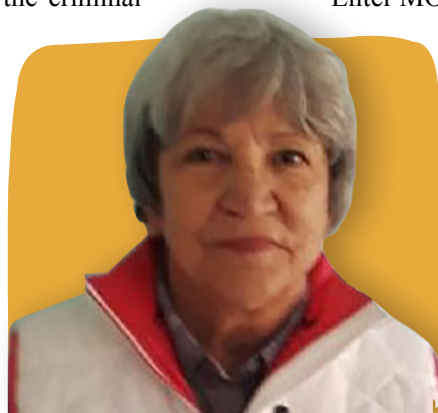
I'm a child of the '60s and was introduced to the civil rights movement in my high school political science class. Being practical is one of my hallmarks. The agenda and demands being put forth by the movement made sense to me. I felt then as I do now, that if they were enacted and supported, our country would be strengthened, not diminished.

Then came President Nixon's war on drugs, used politically by President Reagan in 1982 when he declared illicit drugs to be a threat to U.S. national security. This was followed by the Tough on Crime movement, enhanced in Wisconsin by Governor Thompson in the '90s. The Wisconsin adult prison population exploded.

For me, both these movements seemed to be exacerbating our problems while being used for political gain. But what to do about it? A feeling of helplessness was creeping in.

Enter MOSES, an interfaith group of people dedicated to not just treating symptoms, but to working on a sustained campaign to change the policies responsible for the current injustices. The people I've met and become friends with are so passionate, smart, and motivated! Although the road to obtain real change will be discouraging at times, I have faith we can succeed together.

While MOSES has grown tremendously from its beginning in 2012, to accomplish our goal of changing the system will require time, organized people, and organized money supported by competent staff. So when asked in 2019 to become a sustaining member, I said yes; it made sense to me.



Pat Watson

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Since becoming MOSES Treasurer in January, I've been exploring why I was so quick to conclude that being a sustaining member made such sense.

I moved to Madison after grad school, jobless and knowing no one. I met my husband, who was two years out of dental school and wanting to open his own practice. I quickly learned, to my chagrin, that Larry was a compassionate, accomplished dentist and a terrible businessman. Suddenly I had to assume the roles of receptionist and small business owner.

In the beginning I wasn't just scared; I was often terrified. I had trained as an elementary school teacher and knew nothing about running a business. I was responsible for not just our livelihoods, but also our staff's, while trying to sustain our dream of helping patients receive affordable, quality dental care.

It made things more difficult that we charged for a service, not a product. Our accounts receivable could vary wildly from month to month. Eventually my solution was to maintain a standing fund that equaled our average yearly expenses. I could count on a base income from monthly checkups to cover a percentage of our bills, while having funds set aside to see us through lean months. This gave us the leeway to succeed as a small office in a very tough market for 20 years.

As MOSES treasurer, I realize that keeping a nonprofit financially viable is very similar to my small business experience. Since beginning as treasurer in January, my knowledge of the structure needed to sustain MOSES's momentum and growth

has deepened. We are very fortunate in the quality of people in leadership positions. MOSES has the necessary funds set aside to help cover the variations in this year's expenses.

While MOSES has grown tremendously from its beginning in 2012, to accomplish our goal of changing the system will require time, organized people, and organized money supported by competent staff.

However, like in my small business, a good portion of our income is sporadic. The fund-raising committee is continually working to tap

income sources from grants, fund-raisers, Community Shares, and donations, and it is the sustainers, like the dental check-ups, that provide the steady stream of income MOSES can depend and build on. ■

How do you become a sustaining member?

It's easy! Decide how much you wish to contribute to MOSES each month (there is a \$10 monthly minimum to participate through electronic funds transfer), then download and fill out this [form](#), and mail the form with a voided check to MOSES, PO Box 7031, Madison, WI 53707. As an affiliate of WISDOM, MOSES shares in WISDOM's 501(c)3 status. To ensure that donations are tax-deductible, WISDOM coordinates the monthly electronic giving program through electronic funds transfer.

Questions?

Contact treasurer.moses.madison@gmail.com.

Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration

By Nicole R. Fleetwood • Harvard University Press, 2020, 300 pages

Reviewed by Pam Gates

This National Book Critics Circle Award winner is a scholarly work by Rutgers University Professor of American Studies and Art History Nicole Fleetwood. Fleetwood has made a deep study of "carceral art," which she analyzes in almost every aspect one could imagine. Her sympathy is clearly with the incarcerated, as versus the state that holds them captive.

Fleetwood shows us many samples of carceral art, all with titles and the artists' names. Many are labeled just as they would be in a museum – for example, "Lisette Oblitas, In Your Eyes, 2013. Graphite and watercolor pencil on Bristol board, 14 x 11

inches." But art is also her springboard for thoughtful ruminations on the matter of 2.3 million people being locked up in cages – and how these people cope.

An entire chapter is devoted to portraiture, "a genre of primary significance to, for, and about incarcerated people," Fleetwood says. She describes the difficulty incarcerated people have getting materials to work with and their resourcefulness in creating art, often with

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BOOK
REVIEW**

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very limited supplies. She talks about and shows us art created in solitary confinement and on death row. She describes the efforts of a number of formerly incarcerated artists, whose work plays a large role in addressing the incarceration experience – making sense of it for themselves, bringing understanding to the larger society, and reaching back to those still incarcerated.

Fleetwood describes the challenges of collaboration between incarcerated and unincarcerated people, which starts with the prison bureaucracy but is hardly limited to that. For prison staff, programs such as art classes are a way to manage prisoners, while many incarcerated people view art as a tool for liberation. “Art teachers and educators had to walk a tightrope between not appearing as a threat to prison staff and not coming across to incarcerated people as employees or agents of the state,” Fleetwood says. (p. 167)

The author talks about the art created by political prisoners living in the isolation of Management Control Units. She speaks of the special difficulties LGBTQ people experience in incarceration, and

Art teachers and educators had to walk a tightrope between not appearing as a threat to prison staff and not coming across to incarcerated people as employees or agents of the state.

how making art can help them cope. Her research includes prisons all over the U.S., from Louisiana to New Jersey to California and many points between. Only the immigrant detention centers did not get some attention, probably because they are relatively new and access to them may have been more limited. This book must have taken years to research as it was.

Fleetwood levels the playing field between incarceration and nonincarceration everywhere she can. Some of her subjects are incarcerated, and thus the rest are unincarcerated. An unexpected wording was a reference to a California prison, which was followed by a comma and the name of the city that housed the prison. The reference was exactly the same as a reference to a University of California system campus. She speaks of “collaboration” between incarcerated and unincarcerated artists, rather than of one group bringing and the other receiving.

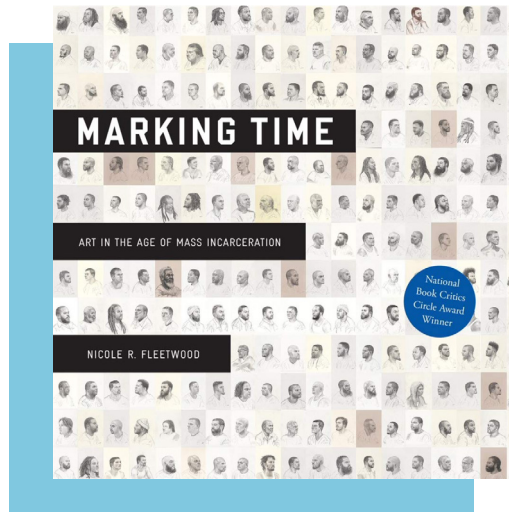
“*Marking Time*” is a scholarly study, but it is also a moving personal history. In her introduction, Fleetwood tells us about her cousins,

two young men with whom she’d grown up, and their incarceration after jobs disappeared in their southwestern Ohio community and their efforts to cope failed them. She goes into depth about how her incarcerated and unincarcerated family members deal with these imprisonments, especially in Chapter 7: “Posing in Prison: Family Photographs, Practices of Belonging, and Carceral Landscapes.” We see the love that her family maintains and expresses all the way through this difficult period, demonstrated through photographs taken in the prisons by prison photographers.

As always, Fleetwood maintains her analytical eye, but we learn and feel the personal toll that imprisonment of family members has taken on her and others. Her story mirrors the stories of hundreds of thousands of others in this country – stories that last a lifetime, whether or not the incarcerated person is released.

Fleetwood worries, for example, about the resignation she sees in the eyes of an incarcerated cousin in one of the family photographs. Has he given up, as several older male relatives did before him?

Fleetwood concludes “*Marking Time*” with this observation: “The works of these artists and activists extend radical imaginaries and relational practices beyond the regulatory and isolating structures of imprisonment to envision and help create a world without human caging.” Fleetwood herself is envisioning and, we hope, helping to create a more compassionate, inclusive world, a world from which the harshness and short-sightedness of human caging has been erased. ■



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MOSES Madison: for Criminal
Justice Reform

Update from Returning Citizen Niki Wilichowski

By Sherry Reames

I recently had a chance to catch up with Niki Wilichowski, whose inspiring life story was the subject of a great article by Alison Mix in the November/December 2020 issue of this newsletter. Niki reports that she is still cleaning houses on weekdays to support herself and also taking a full-time load of courses at Milwaukee Area Technical College, building the foundation for an eventual degree in Communications. Her long-term goal is to work for legislative change, perhaps as a speech writer in government, or do church work — or both.



The public issues closest to Niki's heart right now are Unlock the Vote and more funding for AODA programs and reintegration after release. She has recently become engaged, and she and her fiancé are part of a small group (called the 11/28 Community) that is working to start a church in Oak Creek that will welcome all people, regardless of what they've done or been in the past.

You don't have to be defined by the most negative parts of your past.

When asked about the message she'd like to give to people who are still incarcerated, Niki says, "There is life after incarceration!"

You don't have to be defined by the most negative parts of your past. Identify the job skills and other positive things you have learned, even in prison, and build on those aspects of your experience." She has done that herself, already with impressive results.

Asked for her message to MOSES members, Niki urges us to embrace the work of "getting out the voices of the unheard, which is the first step toward changing the public mind. This work is hard and slow, but essential because separation and invisibility create misunderstanding. And don't give up!" ■

MOSES Madison Mission

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.

We envision:

- an end to the systems of mass incarceration and mass supervision;
- an end to systemic racism;
- a reallocation of resources to create racial and economic equity;
- a just society without discrimination in which all people thrive.

Upcoming Meetings (via Zoom)

MOSES Meetings

General Membership

- Sunday, June 6, 2:30 p.m.
- Sunday, July 11, 2:30 p.m.
- Sunday, August 1, 2:30 p.m.

Leadership Board

- Saturday, July 17, 9-11 a.m.

Task Forces

- **Justice System Reform Initiative**, June 10 & July 8, 6:30 p.m.
- **Public Safety**, June 17 & July 15, 6 p.m.
- **Racial Justice for All Children**, July 6, 4 p.m.

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