



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

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New Crisis Triage Center

By Margaret Irwin

A Crisis Triage Center (CTC) is coming to Dane County! On Nov. 8, the County Board approved this initiative as part of its 2022 budget. The CTC will fill a recognized service gap in the crisis response system. It will act as a “psychiatric emergency department,” operating 24/7, with stays of up to 23 hours. Under the “no wrong door” approach, people will be able to get help from the crisis center whether they are referred by community partners, are brought in by law enforcement, or just walk in themselves. This will include individuals needing detoxification services and those with intellectual or developmental disabilities. There will be no need for medical clearance in advance of admission. The one-stop facility will help keep individuals out of the criminal justice system and directly link them with the services they need.

In introducing the CTC, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi termed it “the single largest item in my 2022 capital budget.” He added that the Center will be “among a handful of such crisis centers in the country dedicated to stabilizing individuals and improving outcomes in such a comprehensive manner. This is our most significant initiative

to date at improving our community’s behavioral health.” The budget includes \$10 million for development of the Center and an additional \$1.5 million for operational needs when it opens.

The establishment of the CTC is a major victory for MOSES’ Justice System Reform Initiative (JSRI) Task Force. They have been working on this for seven years, beginning with hearing a podcast that discussed alternatives to jailing people with mental health issues. Their work has included participating in the County Mental Health Work Group and other work groups, researching and writing a white paper on crisis centers, attending and speaking up at innumerable county committee meetings, participating in community forums, expressing concerns,

and supporting each positive step on behalf of MOSES. As Sr. Fran Hoffman put it, they succeeded through a long process of “persistent pressure persistently applied.”

MOSES applauds the work of the JSRI Task Force in bringing into being the Crisis Triage Center. It will inaugurate a new, comprehensive approach to crisis care and help keep people with mental health crises out of jail. ■

“The establishment of the CTC is a major victory for MOSES’ Justice System Reform Initiative (JSRI) Task Force.”

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WISDOM Task Forces

Post-Release
Prison Prevention
Old Law Parole
Conditions of Confinement

MOSES Operational Team Leads

Communications Team
Margaret Irwin
Fundraising
Rachel Kincade
Joan Duerst
Member Engagement
Karen Julesberg

MOSES Caucus

Faith Leaders Caucus
Joan Duerst
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Patti La Cross

An Interview With Eugene Crisler 'El

By Sherry Reames

The MOSES Community Organizer is a very busy man. When I caught up with him in late October, he filled me in on a few of the activities and projects on his agenda.

Eugene was enthusiastic about the success of the EXPOntial Black Tie Event, which took place at the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison on Oct. 23. Over 100 people attended, including well-known leaders like Milwaukee state Sen. Lena Taylor and Dane County Sheriff Calvin Barrett, EXPO organizers from around the state, and a large number of formerly incarcerated youth. Besides networking and reconnecting with friends, attendees celebrated the achievements of four award winners: Deborah Mejchar and Demell Glenn, who shared the award for 2021 EXPO Person of the Year; Wendy Sisavath, Ally of the Year; and the Wisconsin Alliance for Youth Justice, Ally Organization of the Year. Eugene expects EXPOntial to be an annual event, and he hopes more MOSES members will attend next time.

On Sept. 30, Eugene gave testimony for Locked Up on the Outside, a forum on conditions of supervision that was collaboratively organized by members of EXPO, MOSES, and the WISDOM network and held at the Madison Urban League. Attendees included state Rep. Shelia Stubbs and several officials from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

Eugene has at least four ongoing projects in connection with EXPO and WISDOM:

- Raising awareness about the never-ending impact of the sex-offender registry on the lives of those convicted of such offenses
- A documentary for PBS Wisconsin that will include local

panelists discussing the documentary "Ferguson Rises"

- Collaboration with the Wisconsin Council of Churches in a statewide campaign called "Taking a Faithful Stand for Equity."

Besides helping to organize the campaign's participants in Dane County, Eugene has made a video as part of its "Teach the Truth Wisconsin" project on our racial history. For this video and others in the series, see the WCC website at <https://www.wichurches.org/2021/09/30/teachthetruthwisconsin-sites/>.

- Relational voter engagement, a critically important program for our state that will continue until May 2022. Please contact Eugene for more information on how to participate either in this or in the WCC campaign.

Besides all these activities, Eugene is working actively with several MOSES task forces and receiving training this year in several leadership programs offered by WISDOM and Gamaliel. He has also become involved with Diversity-Equity-Inclusion efforts, support for disadvantaged students, and the Parental Advisory Council at the Middleton elementary school where his daughter is a second-grader.

If it sometimes seems a little hard to reach him by email, now you know why! ■



Eugene Crisler 'El

EXPOntial Celebration!

By Margaret Irwin

One of our WISDOM affiliates, EXPO (EX-incarcerated People Organizing) held its first black-tie event at Monona Terrace Oct. 23. The organizers wanted to honor the achievements of formerly incarcerated people and their allies and to build camaraderie just having fun together in a free environment, and they clearly succeeded with both of those goals. Over 100 people attended, and these photos attest to the spirit of the evening. For more about the event, see the Interview with MOSES Organizer featured above. ■

Eugene Crisler 'El & La Toya Greer of EXPO's FREE campaign

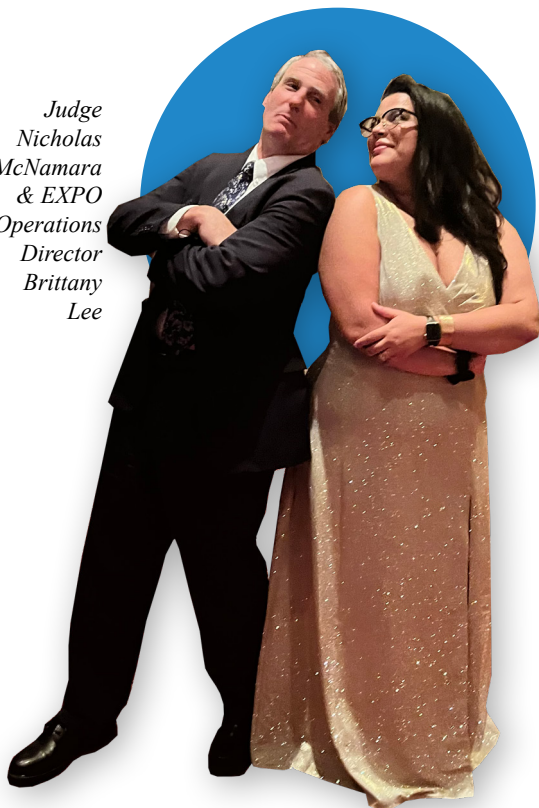


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EXPOential Black Tie Event

Judge
Nicholas
McNamara
& EXPO
Operations
Director
Brittany
Lee



State Sen. Lena Taylor (l) & friends



Dane County Sheriff Calvin Barrett, MOSES
President Rachel Kincade, Eugene Crisler 'El



Velette Reynolds
& Debra Atkins



Halfway Home: Race, Punishment, and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration

By Reuben Jonathan Miller • Little, Brown and Company, 2021, 328 pages

Reviewed by Pam Gates

“The problem of mass incarceration,” Professor Reuben Miller says toward the end of this book, “is really a problem of citizenship. ...The struggle is about making a world in which everyone belongs.” Miller, a former Cook County Jail chaplain who now teaches at the University of Chicago, thus sums up his observations on and experiences with a minute sampling of the 2.3 million people in American prisons and the half million who leave prison each year to join 20 million others living with a felony record. How do they cope, given all the stumbling blocks placed before them? Miller spent 15 years interviewing prisoners, former prisoners, and their friends and families. He got firsthand experience as well, by helping his own brother during, after, and between the latter’s incarcerations.

It became very clear to Miller that life after prison is its own form of prison. So many jobs are not available, so much housing is inaccessible, and convicted felons can’t even vote until they’re off paper. Miller faults such measures as the Second Chance Act (2008), for example, which provided \$165 million for re-entry programs, for not truly helping those it was intended to help. It provided “nothing to help them secure long-term employment ... no money for affordable housing ... [nothing for] jobs to cover their rent and bills [or for] landlords that

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BOOK
REVIEW

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would rent them apartments. ... [Re-entry programs] teach only how to cope with their position on the bottom of the social order.” (p. 229-235)

Miller describes the housing search of Sabrina, who was gainfully employed, had strong credit, and was well respected in her community. A state representative even wrote her a letter of recommendation. But none of that mattered. Sabrina had a criminal record, and her housing applications were denied. (p. 254)

One result of mass incarceration, Miller says, is being separated from one’s hopes and any real idea of freedom. The problem is not about crime, he says; it’s that the people Americans fear are subject to a separate set of rules and live in a separate and altogether different social world. They belong to a different political community, and “no

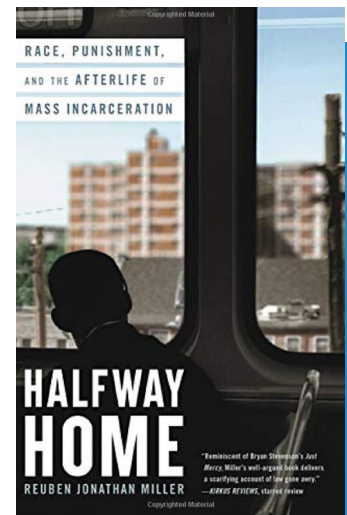
Sixty percent will leave an American jail without ever being convicted of a crime, but almost all of these women will be separated from their children,” he says, as the offices of child protective services move quickly to remove children from the custody of a mother who is incarcerated. (p. 172)

The limitations they face force former prisoners to come up with creative solutions just to survive,

Miller says. He

tells us about Jimmy, who lives “in an economy of favors. With so many rules to follow and so much risk involved – one mistake could cost him his freedom – he needed favors from people he barely knew to meet his basic needs,” Miller says (p. 123), adding that the power others had over him changed the nature of his relationships with the significant people in his life, e.g., whom he could live with, whom he would marry, etc. (p. 177)

“I am well acquainted with the many cages intended for the men and women whose lives I document,” Miller writes in his author’s note. This book follows many personal histories, the author’s included, and extrapolates from these histories the conclusions highlighted in this review. I strongly recommend it. ■



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social service agency, no matter how well funded, can bridge the divide between these two worlds, nor can any of our criminal justice policy reforms.” (p. 269-70)

Prisons kill people, Miller says. “The people the government has incarcerated, cut off from family and friends, are twice as likely to die from any cause as anyone else in this country, three times as likely to die from heart disease, four times as likely from cancer,” he writes. “They are most likely to die within the first few years of their release. Incarcerated people are 129 times more likely to die of a drug overdose within two weeks of their release than the general population.” (p. 196)

And what about the children, especially now, as incarceration of women increases? Children have to deal with separation from their mother during her imprisonment – but returning to her custody after her release isn’t necessarily what happens, Miller says. “Half of the women in prison are there for a property crime, like shoplifting, or a drug offense ... 40% are there for a violent crime.



MOSES LIBRARY ANNOUNCEMENT

MOSES has a library of books and magazine articles that you can borrow. Our librarian, Bonnie Magnuson, is even happy to deliver materials to you. We currently have about 30 titles, a number of which have been reviewed in this newsletter, as well as relevant magazine articles. Contact Bonnie at bonniemagnuson@gmail.com to find out what we’ve got, and select your next read!

Affirmation of MOSES' Position on the Dane County Jail

By Eric Howland and others

M OSES has spent many years studying the Dane County Jail. These are the primary principles that motivate and inform our advocacy around the jail remodeling project.

We believe that:

- People who do not need to be in jail should be diverted from incarceration.
- People who are not diverted should be treated humanely while they are incarcerated.
- People leaving the jail should be supported while integrating back into our community.

Diversions

MOSES supports:

- Expansion of both the age range of people and the range of crimes referred to the Community Restorative Court (CRC)
- Expansion of the Deferred Prosecution Program, particularly its pre-charge arm
- Establishment of a county-wide system of alternative (non-police) responses to mental health calls coming to 911. This can be an expansion of the Madison CARES program.
- Establishment and integration into the Dane County Human Services network of a Triage Restoration Center for people with behavioral health and AODA issues.

We believe that these and other programs will significantly reduce the number of people incarcerated in the jail. Indeed, the Community Restorative Court (CRC) has already processed many people who would otherwise have been incarcerated. The jail population dropped in 2019 even before the pandemic, and it dropped more dramatically during the pandemic. The Dane County Criminal Justice Council (CJC) has collected written statements from the decision-makers who created that dramatic drop by altering established policies. In those statements, many decision-makers committed to retaining the new policies. MOSES supports retention of those new policies which have resulted in a lower jail population.

HUMANE TREATMENT

MOSES supports:

- Closing the jail facilities on the 6th and 7th floors of the

City-County Building

- Eliminating solitary confinement
- Providing robust opportunities for programming and worship by at least retaining those central spaces found in the current architectural program, and preferably expanding them.

The facilities on the 6th and 7th floors of the City-County Building are old and dangerous and have been described by former Sheriff Mahoney as inhumane.

Currently, the solitary confinement policies at the Dane County Jail are not even in compliance with the U.N.'s Nelson Mandela Rules.¹ Solitary confinement, by any name, should be banned for juveniles and people with mental health issues.

Former Sheriff Mahoney has said that because of the design of the current jail, even before the pandemic, many people — including those with mental or physical health issues — were placed in solitary confinement due to lack of more suitable facilities. Staffing and facility constraints also limited the number of people allowed to attend worship or other programs.

MOSES supports remodeling and policies that allow elimination of solitary confinement, regardless of how that practice is labeled. De-escalation and behavior-management practices have been found by other jurisdictions to be effective alternatives to solitary confinement.

Reintegration into our community

MOSES supports:

- Beginning the re-entry process before leaving the jail
- Connecting people with needed social services before discharge
- Discharging people who do not need to be in jail while awaiting a court date.

Effective reintegration services reduce the number of individuals who subsequently return to incarceration. Reintegration is also critical because some of the large drops in our jail population resulted from discharging people from the jail rather than holding them pending legal proceedings. In the remodeled jail, programming space is needed to set up successful reintegrations.



MOSES supports retention of those new policies which have resulted in a lower jail population.

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Space is needed both for reentry planning and for connecting people to the social services they need. This space should not be compromised by a desire for more beds.

Summary

Dane County is to be commended for investing in significant diversion programs and policies, including potential expansion of the Community Restorative Court, initiation of the CARES program, establishment of a Triage/Restoration Center, and the sustainable diversions initiated during the pandemic which led to reductions in the jail population. Therefore, a significant reduction below the 922 beds proposed in the current program is realistic. Community safety is best served by using services that make incarceration an outcome of last resort. ■

Footnote

¹The United Nations “Nelson Mandela Rules” (<https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/175>) state, in part: (Rule 44) For the purpose of these rules, solitary confinement shall refer to the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact. Prolonged solitary confinement shall refer to solitary confinement for a time period in excess of 15 consecutive days.

(Rule 43) In no circumstances may restrictions or disciplinary sanctions amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The following practices, in particular, shall be prohibited:

- (a) Indefinite solitary confinement;
- (b) Prolonged solitary confinement;
- (c) Placement of a prisoner in a dark or constantly lit cell;
- (d) Corporal punishment or the reduction of a prisoner’s diet or drinking water;
- (e) Collective punishment.

Context for MOSES’ Position on the Jail

By Barbie Jackson

Members of the MOSES Justice System Reform Initiative (JSRI) Task Force met in early September to develop a Unified Jail Position Statement for consideration by the MOSES Leadership Board. The statement, with a few minor changes, was unanimously approved by the Leadership Board on Sept. 18 as an affirmation of past MOSES position statements.

The Jail Consolidation Project

The impetus for preparing this comprehensive statement was a renewed study of the Jail Consolidation Project. In July, County Executive Joe Parisi announced that the budget for the project as previously approved could not be met, due to a significant increase in construction costs. This led the Dane County Criminal Justice Council (CJC) to engage Dr. James Austin of the JFA Institute to evaluate impacts and options for their consideration.

Prepared Statements on Behalf of MOSES

At the Sept. 23 CJC meeting, the JSRI submitted MOSES’ Unified Jail Position to the CJC and to Dr. Austin and gave prepared statements on behalf of MOSES, based on our position. Members subsequently listened to Dr. Austin’s report, documented his comments, and analyzed his recommendations. They continue to attend and engage in various Dane County Board committee meetings, which are taking Dr. Austin’s recommendations under advisement.

PP&J Amendment

At this writing, the Public Protection and Judiciary Committee (PP&J) has forwarded a \$23-million budget amendment to the Personnel and Finance Committee. The PP&J amendment was approved on a 4-3 vote. JSRI members are actively preparing statements to oppose this amendment and to affirm the jail population reductions recommended by Dr. Austin, which could eliminate the need for two floors of the jail and negate the need for the additional budget. As always, MOSES supports an emphasis on diversions from incarceration and a speedy implementation of the consolidation project, which is needed because the portion of the jail on the top two floors of the City-County Building is unsafe. ■



On Nov. 21, the MOSES Leadership Board voted to change the word Equality in our name to Equity. We are now **Madison Organizing in Strength, Equity, and Solidarity**. More on this in our next issue!

MOSES Transformation Celebration was held via Zoom on Saturday, November 20

By Margaret Irwin

Attendees celebrated three previously incarcerated individuals who have successfully worked through stigma to transform their lives. Videos by Tim Coursen introduced each of the awardees, and then we had a chance to meet them “in person.” For more details of the event, see the MOSES Yearbook coming out in February 2022. ■

Transformation Awards Went To:



LA TOYA GREER
FREE Campaign



PEGGY WEST-SCHRODER
EXPO-WISDOM Organizer



JAMES HAWK
Tellurian

Testimonial: I Found MOSES

By Susan Balliette

I discovered MOSES in 2015 at my church’s Board of Christian Outreach meeting. I had done jail meetings in the three Dane County jails for two of my 12-Step programs. I thought the jail/prison system needed to change to really help the inmates. When I learned of MOSES, I felt I had to join. I came with a friend from my church.

MOSES was all I had hoped it would be. I took part in WISDOM phone meetings for prison prevention for a long time, until I could no longer attend. I enjoyed having input in these meetings. We did important work.

WISDOM and MOSES include everybody. I have health issues which make my participation difficult at times. MOSES and WISDOM included me. I’m also on the City of Madison’s Disability Rights Commission (DRC). We deal with disability issues. MOSES and the DRC are two ways I can give to my community and try to build a better world. ■

Upcoming Meetings (via Zoom)

MOSES Meetings

General Membership

- Sunday, December 5, 2:30 p.m.
- Sunday, January 9, 2:30 p.m.
- Sunday, February 6, 2:30 p.m.

Leadership Board

- Saturday, January 15, 9-11 a.m.
- Saturday, March 19, 9-11 a.m.

Task Forces

- **Justice System Reform Initiative (JSRI)**, December 9 & January 13, 6:30 p.m.
- **Public Safety**, December 16 & January 20, 6 p.m.
- **Racial Justice for All Children**, December 7 & January 4, 4 p.m.

Why I Am a Sustaining Member

By Karen Julesberg

We never know where one step in life is going to lead. One Sunday our church bulletin included a request from former Dane County Jail Chaplain John Mix for jail tutors. Tutoring was my first encounter with the jail and with incarcerated men of color. Even though my main purpose was to work with them on their reading and math skills, I learned from them. I built relationships, temporary though they were, and learned how much these men cared about making changes in their lives.

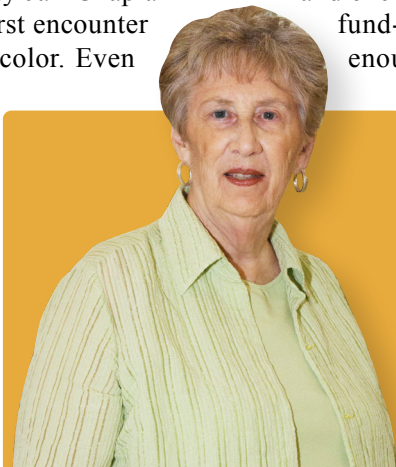
One day in 2013, John Mix invited me to a monthly MOSES meeting. I said yes primarily because of my respect for him. I confess that I planned to go to one or two meetings and then let John know that I just had “too much on my plate” to continue. WOW ... Was I wrong! I was hooked! For the first time, my eyes were opened to the fact that systemic change in laws, policies, and procedures are needed for true and lasting change. I’m grateful for all I learned about unjust laws and policies, as well as the issues of solitary confinement, old law parole, crimeless revocation, mental health, TAD, mass supervision, sentencing policies, and even more. Equally important was realizing the personal impact on women and men before, during, and after their incarceration.

For the first time, my eyes were opened to the fact that systemic change in laws, policies, and procedures are needed for true and lasting change.

Through the years, I contributed financially when there was a special event or need, and then decided a few years ago to become a Sustainer. First, it is my sincere belief that MOSES is unique in our area, with its major focus on dismantling the systems of mass incarceration and mass supervision. Second, MOSES needs financial

support that can be counted on if we are going to continue to grow and make an impact. It is great to have dedicated and energetic volunteers and to raise money through fund-raisers, grants, and donations. That is not enough, though. To cover its operational costs and grow, MOSES needs more consistent financial support in order to host special events, hold additional trainings, bring in speakers of note, hire an administrative assistant, and more.

Will you become a Sustainer? Consider the impact MOSES has had on you personally, as well as on those directly impacted by incarceration. Then please join me and others in becoming a Sustainer with whatever fits your budget. It’s exciting to think about the ways we will continue to work together for change. Thank you. ■



Karen Julesberg

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.

Thanks to MOSES Sponsors

