

MOSES



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

In this issue:

Justice System Reform
 Organizer's Corner
 TAD Resolution Introduced
 Upcoming Events
 Odyssey Behind Bars
 The Jail Tutoring Project
 MOSES Leadership Award
 Book Review

JSR Task Force Marks Progress in 2017

by Paul Saeman, Co-Chair, JSR Task Force

The MOSES Dane County Justice System Reform Task Force has had a challenging, active, and positive year.

Formerly the MOSES Jail Task Force, it was renamed in response to County Resolution #556, which supports not only County Jail safety and other concerns but also a reform of the Dane County criminal justice system to include the following:

- alternatives to incarceration
- solutions to racial/ethnic disparities
- elimination of solitary confinement
- solutions to address mental health challenges both within and outside of the jail

Areas of focus

1. Implementation of a crisis/restoration center approach in Dane County as an alternative to arrest, booking, and incarceration for individuals who have committed minor misdemeanor offenses while having a mental health crisis;
2. For the current jail and the proposed jail renovation, focus on issues including eliminating solitary confinement, improving mental health treatment, increasing programming, ensuring continuity of health care, and providing reentry support;
3. Focus on diversion programs and other recommendations that came out of the Resolution #556 County Work Groups;

4. Continued interest in data and statistics to understand the criminal justice system and to measure the impact of changes;
5. An education component in response to the recognized need to educate members of the Task Force, members of MOSES, and members of the wider community.

Purpose and approach

The purpose of the Task Force is to become knowledgeable about the Dane County criminal justice system and then to advocate for positive change. This involves doing research, attending County meetings and having many conversations both with people who operate the system and with people who are affected by the system.

As a member of MOSES and of WISDOM, the Task Force has always approached its work from the perspective of reducing the level of incarceration. This is particularly important at the county level because that is where involvement with the criminal justice system starts. At the same time, the Task Force understands and respects Resolution #556 Guiding Principle 14, which states that "Dane County shall have a safe and secure environment for those incarcerated."

Under Resolution #556, a more modest approach has emerged for replacing the obsolete and dangerous part of the jail housed on the

continued on page 3

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 Talib Akbar, Vice President
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 MOSES Justice System Reform
 Task Force
 Paul Saeman
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Organizer's Corner

December is almost upon us and as I write this piece Madison is having its first snowfall of the year. My wife saw it and got all excited, oohing and aahing. My little daughter woke up and screamed, "It's Christmas!" I noticed the snow as I looked out my kitchen window and, being the pragmatist that I am, just shook my head and said, "Here we go again." In that moment I saw a squirrel climb our fence and do a quick survey of the surrounding area before he scurried about ten yards across the top, stopping after a yard or two to briefly look around. I laughed out loud and wondered if Mr. Squirrel said "Here we go again" every time he put his life on the line and ran across that fence.

A year ago, I was chosen to be the community organizer of MOSES and was excited (It's Christmas!) about the journey ahead of me. I couldn't wait to be part of changing a system that I once endured for so long. Since then, I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of great people who volunteer their time and effort to change the life conditions of the tortured and incarcerated. I have been able to build solid partnerships and friendships that will hopefully benefit those who continue to suffer. It has been a rich learning experience that will propel me into the next year. Thank you to all who have worked to make MOSES effective.

December 9th is the date for the MOSES Annual Banquet and Fundraiser. It will be held at Christ Presbyterian church (see p. 8). Our keynote speaker will be Rev. Jerry Hancock and our honoree Rudy Bankston (see p. 5). This will be a great opportunity to meet new people, celebrate the good work that has been done this year, and support the community restoration for which MOSES fights.

It is no secret that Wisconsin has the distinction of ranking among the worst states when it comes to racial equity. Racial disparity affects all things from education to jobs and from income to incarceration. This disparity can add more layers of challenges for citizens returning home after doing time in the Wisconsin prison system. Too often, challenges such as finding employment and housing have caused many to stumble, veer off course, and lose sight of their goals.

About 13 percent of African Americans in Wisconsin are unemployed. Compare this number with the 3.9 percent unemployment rate for white workers, then add other variables like possessing a felony record, lack of work history, and no formal education, and it is no secret that the road to success can be treacherous for the previously incarcerated. But we all know the most effective way to keep people out of

prison once they leave is to give them job skills and provide opportunities to be successful. Teach and train: two simple things that could mean so much.

We applaud the work being done by UW Odyssey Project to provide rigorous college classes to people at Fox Lake Correctional Institution and Wisconsin Resource Center (see page 4). We

appreciate the classes offered by Madison College in the Dane County Jail, which allow people to earn their high school equivalency degrees. We appreciate the work of the tutors that give their time to work one-on-one with incarcerated people in the Dane County Jail through the Madison Area Jail Ministry's Jail Tutoring Project (see page 6).

These programs and others got me thinking of that squirrel and his run across the high fence. I think of people returning to communities after being incarcerated, surveying the area and setting out with hope, though the lack of community support can literally mean their lives are on the line. The footing is more secure and the chance of falling is diminished when communities provide education, training, and opportunities for success.



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Casting Stones

who are you to judge?
I am not my worst mistake
re-humanize me

Excerpted from
Snippets of Soul
in Seventeen Syllables
by Roderick "Rudy" Bankston

available at www.iAmWeClassics.com

Justice System Reform continued from page 1

sixth and seventh floors of the City County Building, consolidating the jail within the Public Safety Building, and reducing the overall number of beds in the jail by 91.

While acknowledging the need to rebuild the jail, the Task Force has put most of its energy into encouraging the County to address all the areas outlined by Resolution #556 and the recommendations developed by the resolution's four County Work Groups.

Progress has been made

Members of the Task Force continue to attend and give testimony at the County committee and Board meetings that take up issues related to Resolution #556.

The Task Force developed two proposals:

1. Comprehensive Mental Health Crisis/Restoration Initiative
 2. High Utilizer of Multiple Systems (HUMS) "Familiar Faces" Proposal
- Multiple County Board supervisors are stressing the need to do more to divert individuals who are having a mental health crisis from the jail and the criminal justice system. There is support for County Executive Parisi's budget item allocating funds for a comprehensive review of existing mental health services in our community.
 - With a dedicated County data analyst on board, much of the preparatory work has been done for developing data-sharing agreements, learning from best practices around the country, and assembling the tools needed to develop infor-

mation from multiple data sources across the criminal justice system.

- Members of the Task Force meet monthly at the jail with Lieutenant Pierce and other staff. This gives members an opportunity to learn about policies and procedures concerning matters important to MOSES, including solitary confinement, mental health, medication, and planning for the jail replacement project.
- The Criminal Justice Council (CJC) consists of the County Executive, the Sheriff, the County Board Chair and other leaders of the Dane County criminal justice system. The CJC has taken seriously the recommendations of the Resolution #556 County Work Groups and the need to be accountable for their implementation. Several of the recommendations include the expansion of the Community Restorative Court, the expansion of the Community Treatment Alternative program for diverting individuals with mental illness from the jail, the hiring of the data analyst, electronic notification of court dates, diversity training, and the expansion of pre-trial services. The CJC is also seeking and implementing evidence-based best practices from around the country. An example is the pre-trial randomized experiment involving the Public Safety Assessment (PSA) tool.
- Dane County has formally joined the National Counties Association's Stepping-Up Initiative to reduce the number of individuals with mental illness who are in the jail.

Dane County Board Introduces TAD Resolution

A resolution to increase state funding for the Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) Grant Program by \$15 million was introduced at the 11/30/17 Dane County Board of Supervisors meeting. Introducing the resolution was Supervisor Paul Rusk, Chair of the Public Protection and Judiciary (PP&J) Committee, with support from the other PP&J committee members: Supervisors Carousel Bayrd, Dorothy Krause (MOSES member), Maureen McCarville, and Michael Willett.

The introduction of county board TAD resolutions was initiated by the WISDOM Prison Prevention Task Force. WISDOM affiliates are working with county representatives to propose the introduction of this TAD County Resolution within each of their counties. MOSES successfully worked with Dane county representatives to be the first WISDOM

affiliate to obtain the introduction of this TAD County Resolution at a County Board of Supervisors meeting. In addition to obtaining the support of the PP&J, County Supervisors, MOSES also obtained the support of the County Executive Joe Parisi and Sharon Corrigan, Chair of the County Board of Supervisors.

The resolution asks that the County Executive and County Board of Supervisors direct a copy of this resolution be sent to our State Legislators and to Governor Scott Walker. The vote on this resolution by County Supervisors will take place in a few weeks.

MOSES members can help by calling your Dane County Supervisor to request a "yes" vote on this TAD resolution and to thank them for their support. Thanks for taking this extra effort to keep this issue "front and center!"

Odyssey Behind Bars

by Alison Mix, MOSES Communications Team

At a well-attended MOSES monthly meeting on November 4th, member James Morgan and former NPR distinguished broadcaster Jean Feraca gave a presentation about using materials from UW's Odyssey program in Wisconsin's prisons. The Odyssey program, now in its 15th year, teaches philosophy, art history, literature, and American history. Students receive six academic credits. Several Odyssey graduates have since graduated from Madison College, the UW and Edgewood College.

Morgan described how he became an Odyssey graduate himself, after many years of incarceration during which he had earned an Associate Degree. He said he had always been a writer, especially poetry, and described how he became immersed in the literature and the program. He spoke of the counselors and all the other support that was available. He liked the requirement to "be open-minded" and learned how important it was to tell his story and to convey his discovery that we are all essentially the same, whether wardens, fellow incarcerated people or others. He expressed his appreciation for both Feraca and Odyssey Project director Emily Auerbach, and said that he considers himself an ambassador. Morgan was overjoyed by the creation of Odyssey Junior, for Odyssey students' children and grandchildren, and spoke of seeing the faces of the children in the program, who are studying the arts and having their horizons expanded.

Feraca explained that the whole idea of expanding the Odyssey program into prisons began more than two years ago when MOSES members Morgan and his now wife Rachel Kincaid visited Holy Wisdom Monastery, where Feraca was in attendance, and did a "wonderful" presentation about MOSES. Subsequently, Feraca was able to attend the graduation ceremony for those in the restorative justice program at New Lisbon Correctional Institution. She was inspired by these two events and wanted to start some sort of program in the prisons. After a pilot program at Fox Lake Correctional Institution in the spring of 2015, Feraca received an invitation to run the program at the Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC). The WRC, where the men have mental health issues, is the only prison that is organized under the Department of Health.

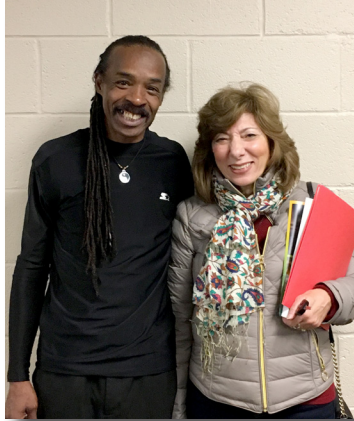
Feraca described the program at WRC, noting that one of the inmates found this quote from Charles Dickens's Da-

vid Copperfield: "It is a matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age." She also quoted former Dane County Jail chaplain John Mix who had said: "There is a river of grief [in the prisons]." Feraca went on to speak of the use of a liberal education to inspire poor people, mentioning in particular the late writer and social critic Earl Shorris, who in 1995 established the Clemente Course in the Humanities, to teach the humanities at the college level to poor people living on New York's lower east side. Shorris taught Plato's Allegory of the Cave, saying his inspiration came from a woman in a maximum-security prison: "The ghetto is the cave. Education is the light."

Morgan quoted Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, who had once said: "Prisoners are persons whom most of us would rather not think about. Banished from everyday sight, they exist in a shadow world that only dimly enters our awareness...It thus becomes 'easy to think of prisoners as members of a separate netherworld.'" Feraca explained that in the Allegory of the Cave, Plato has Socrates describe a group of people who have lived all of their lives chained to one another, facing the wall of a cave. Shadows are projected on the wall from objects passing in front of a fire behind them. The shadows are the prisoners' reality. Socrates says the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and can perceive the true form of reality rather than the manufactured reality that is the shadows seen by the prisoners.

Morgan explained what the Allegory of the Cave meant to him, quoting renowned poet Nikki Giovanni who recognized the power of speech. "What is that like for someone in a cave?" he asked. "To question all these things, to assert our rights, it is necessary to raise our voices."

Feraca then talked more about the "ascent of the soul into the intellectual world", of which Socrates speaks in the Allegory. "At the very end," she said, "if you've made it to the light you have a responsibility to go back – and that's exactly what James has been doing. He insists on it as his right to go back." Feraca says she has a lot of stars, but wished to single out one "ordinary" guy in particular, who wrote this: "To me alcohol became the solution. My parents were teenagers when they had me. The truth is I've been running away from my pain and reality. I built a barrier. My father taught



James Morgan and Jean Feraca

Odyssey Behind Bars continued from page 4

me that real men never get emotional, saying: “Cry and I’ll give you something to cry about”. I still have an indescribable pain. I drank more, had run-ins with the law. My intoxication has now put my family in jail. I’ve hit the bottom of the barrel. I needed to be locked up for the safety of my family and community. I saw my father in those shadows on the wall. Socrates says what he saw before was an illusion. It hit me like a ton of bricks. That monster on the wall was not my father, but me. I have to break down these walls. I can’t blame my troubles on my father. I have to take responsibility.’

Morgan then explained that there is a big difference between the WRC and a regular DOC prison like Fox Lake. He said that one of the reasons that this Allegory of the Cave is

“It is a matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age.”

—Charles Dickens, quoted by an inmate

so effective is that when it is presented, it is done in a way that asks people to personalize it. He said he used to wonder: “What has a dead old white man got to do with my life”. He had read the Allegory several times but it hadn’t affected him. But when Morgan was asked to help with the way it was presented and when the WRC let him come into the prison on the last day (something no regular DOC prison had ever done), he was impressed with how these men were able to see its relevance in their lives.

Morgan noted that anyone can sit in on the regular Odyssey classes here in Madison. He added: “And if you go to the Odyssey Junior program, you’ll fall in love.”

Please note:

Beginning in January, MOSES monthly meetings will take place on the first Sunday of each month from 3:30-5:30 p.m.

Upcoming Events

WISDOM conference calls (605) 468-8012

- Old Law: December 9 and January 13 at 8:30 am (code 423950)
- Solitary Confinement: December 12 and January 9 at 4:00 pm (code 423950)
- Prison Prevention: December 12 and January 9 at 5:00 pm (code 423950)
- Post-Release: December 28 at 7:30 pm and January 25 at 7:30 pm (code 423951)

MOSES Task Force: Justice System Reform (MJSR)

- MJSR Monthly Meeting: December 14 and January 11 6:30-8:30 at Madison Police Station South District, 825 Hughes Place

Events

- Annual MOSES Banquet: Saturday, December 9, 5:30–8:30 pm at Christ Presbyterian Church

Next MOSES monthly meeting

- December 2 at Catholic Multicultural Center, 1862 Beld Street. 9:30 Coffee & conversation, 10:00-noon meeting.

NOTE DAY/TIME CHANGE

- Sunday, January 7, location TBD

Joining one or more of the WISDOM conference calls is easy and can be very informative. At the appointed date and time:

- Call (605) 468-8012
- Enter the code after the beep
- State your name and that you are from MOSES after the greeting
- Listen, learn, and contribute as you wish

Old Law Parole: code 423950#

Solitary Confinement: code 423950#

Prison Prevention: code 423950#

Post-Release: code 423951#

The Jail Tutoring Project

Tutoring Services for People Incarcerated in the Dane County Jail

by Tina Hogle, Director, Jail Tutoring Project

In 2009, struck by stark correlations between low literacy rates and high rates of incarceration, then Chaplain John Mix first started bringing literacy tutors into the Dane County Jail. This was the beginning of what is now known as the Jail Tutoring Project, a program of the Madison Area Jail Ministry. In 2016, two tutors joined Chaplain Christa Fisher and Deb Lyons, a reading specialist, to develop a training program for tutors, grounded in compassionate communication and best practices. There are currently ten tutors providing one-on-one reading, writing and math lessons in the City County Building and Public Safety Building. Additionally, the Jail Tutoring Project has partnered with Madison Area Urban Ministry's Just Bakery to provide tutors to work alongside Just Bakery trainees as they tackle math required in order to become successful bakers.

Relationship: the foundation for learning

A trusting relationship between tutor and learner is the foundation upon which we build a mindset and climate for learning. We understand the role that trauma can have on concentration, memory, and organizational and language abilities, and we know that all of the people with whom we work have experienced trauma in their lives. Through trust and empathy, connections are made that open the mind to learning. Along with language skills, some of the most important things that people learn and develop are a sense of pride, competence, hope, self-worth, and joy.

Because we believe that literacy is a fundamental human right, essential to the ability to improve one's quality of life, we are committed to providing a tutor for every man and woman who requests one. This can be a challenge within the space and time constraints of jail programming, but jail administration and staff support the program and work closely with the chaplains to develop processes and procedures that allow for tutoring without placing undue pressure on staff.

Learners

Our learners range in skill levels from the most basic, such as identifying letter sounds, to advanced, such as writing poetry and essays in need of structural editing, and everything in between. We also have English language learners and people who would like to focus on math so they are better prepared for the workforce.



"My name is K and for many years I regretted not going to High School. I had given up on getting my High School Diploma because I had a learning disability. I couldn't read, write, spell or understand things. It made me mad and frustrated. Instead I had gotten heavily into the streets. Before I knew it, I was locked up in the county jail and reality hit me that not only had I lost my freedom but also the opportunity to continue my education.

I had given up on everything until I put my pride to the side and started asking for help. That's when I asked the chaplain for some help and he appointed M and T to me as my personal tutors. They both were very good tutors who helped and encouraged me every day to study hard and stay focused. I thank them for all the hard work and motivation they gave me. I really appreciate them for having patience and understanding because I know it wasn't easy working with someone like me.

Eventually I obtained my HSED and feel it has changed my outlook on life and myself. I have more confidence now and feel that there's nothing I can't do. I want to continue my education and eventually help other incarcerated people, who have given up hope of ever doing anything positive in their life, find their way."

Though there are many differences in lessons and goals, our learners report experiencing many of the same benefits, including: tremendous gratitude, expressed verbally, in writing, poetry, and artwork; peace, from having work to help pass the time and a focus on something positive; and hope, nurtured by knowing that they can learn, that they are capable, and that they can make positive things happen in their lives.

Tutors

Tutors come from many backgrounds and experiences. They share a love of learning and a belief that all people can learn. Tutors find great satisfaction and joy in serving, in making a difference, in being a light of humanity in a dark and dehumanizing place. If you are interested in becoming a tutor, please contact Tina Hogle at DaneJailTutors@gmail.com or visit the website at www.DaneJailTutors.org.

Rudy Bankston Receives 2017 MOSES Leadership Award

A Voice for Justice, Equity, and Community

Think about what you were doing from the age of 18 to the age of 38. Roderick “Rudy” Bankston was robbed of those years when he was sentenced to life in prison at the age of 19 for a crime he didn’t commit. For 20 years he endured the mental, physical and spiritual agony that is the Wisconsin prison system. During that time he never stopped fighting for his freedom. After a successful appeal, he finally reclaimed his freedom in March of 2015.

Following his release, Rudy quickly realized that Milwaukee, where he was born and raised, held too many distractions. He relocated to Madison and, with the support of his mentor and friend, Donna, and of MOSES board member Carolyn Moynihan Bradt, he began a new life. While he returns to Milwaukee on occasion, keeping up with and cherishing time with family and a handful of friends, it is rare for Rudy to linger there.

In Madison, Rudy soon committed himself to working at whatever jobs life put before him. He was also discovering his voice in the community. He advocates for the voiceless still held in captivity, participates in MOSES and EXPO community forums, and has appeared on radio shows and in news stories. He’s participated in presentations about the school-to-prison pipeline, mass incarceration, restorative justice and other topics that he understands from both the inside and outside.

In 2016, Rudy began a mission close to his heart—interacting with youth, some of whom have been marginalized and traumatized, and are fighting their own inner and outer battles in school and beyond. In February of 2016, less than a year after he was freed, Rudy became the community liaison for James Madison Memorial High School’s Peace Room. He took the lead in organizing and furnishing the welcoming space, facilitated community and other forms of “restorative circles” and worked with teachers and students to repair and rebuild relationships. He’s become a valuable asset to, and a much needed voice within, the district. In the fall of that same year, Rudy moved into full time work with Restore, the Madison Metropolitan School District’s then newly formed expulsion abeyance program. As the 2017-18 school year started, Rudy accepted a job with the district’s Restorative Practices Team and is now a full-time restorative jus-



Rudy Bankston presents on *The Criminalization of Students of Color in Our Schools*

tice coach serving the entire district. But, given the multiple directions in which his work takes him, that title is deceptive.

Rudy has completed numerous trainings in such topics as restorative practices, developmental designs and adoptive schools. He joined with his Restorative Practices Team in planning and implementing a very successful Restorative Justice Symposium this past June that brought in people from across the nation. Last month, Rudy was selected to become an Equity Fellow in the Madison School District’s first Equity Cohort. He is also Co-Adjunct Faculty at Edgewood College where he co-taught a social justice class last year. This year he co-teaches

a class entitled “Community, Identity, Service”.

In addition to the service he provides to students and the community, Rudy is a vocal advocate for justice and speaks up and out in whatever space he finds himself. Another platform for self-expression is his writing: Rudy’s voice is heard in *Shed So Many Tears*, a novel he published during his incarceration. The book is a coming-of-age story about being Black and growing up in Milwaukee. Rudy explores with passion the issues of race, family, incarceration, violence, love, soul searching and self-discovery. His characters are authentic and capture what it is to be fully human. They run the gamut from gritty to graceful, innocent to incarcerated, enlightened to embattled, and sometimes embody all of these things. Rudy released his second book in July of 2017: *Snippets of Soul in Seventeen Syllables*, a collection of movingly insightful haiku written both while incarcerated and after his return to the community. His poetry reverberates with anguish, hope, anger, love, longing, and compassion. He will be releasing a new book of prison poetry in early 2018 (for a snippet, see page 3). For more information, visit Rudy’s website at www.iAmWeClassics.com.

For Rudy’s unfailing devotion to the youth of Madison, his ongoing connection to his brothers and sisters who find themselves in the hell he survived, his commitment to conspiring with others to disrupt the status quo and build a better world, and for his continued support of MOSES, we are honored and pleased to present the 2017 MOSES Leadership Award to Rudy Bankston.

Book Review: The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace

by Jeff Hobbs

by Pamela Gates

Robert Peace was brilliant. He was kind and thoughtful with friends and family, but could handle himself on the streets of Newark, N.J., where he was born, grew up, and lived most of his life. His mother bent over backward to send him to a private academy instead of Newark public schools, and he earned the highest honor the academy had to bestow. Eventually Rob Peace won a full scholarship to Yale University and moved to Cambridge, Mass., where he, again, quite capably held his own in an elite student body made up mostly of privileged young white folks. Rob was black, and he was most definitely not privileged. Lucky in some respects, but hardly privileged.

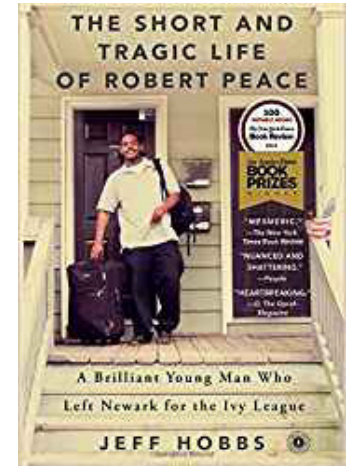
There's a whole lot more to the story of this young man's life; perhaps the most critical factor was his father's imprisonment when Rob was only 10. We learn about Rob and how he handled what he was dealt from Jeff Hobbs, one of his Yale roommates. The two became reasonably good friends in college and kept in touch afterward as well, sometimes directly, sometimes through mutual friends and/or roommates.

Rob's talents tended toward science, though he read assiduously in many fields. Jeff aspired to be a writer and won an award in that discipline at Yale. His talent stood him in good stead when he decided to write Rob's story. It

is meticulously researched; family, friends, and associates were carefully interviewed. The story flows well and gives as complete a picture as possible. For the most part, well, Hobbs refrains from personal observation and lets the story tell itself, though he can't resist a few considerations on how and particularly why things happened.

Robert Peace was a young black man of incredible potential, and in many ways he carried out that potential. Jeff Hobbs shows us how. But ultimately Peace's life story is a tragedy, when one considers how much more he could have achieved, how differently his life could have gone. It's a tragedy being enacted every day on the streets and in the prisons all over this country: so much human potential being waylaid or snuffed out by societal structures and political policies.

I highly recommend this book for anyone concerned about today's social ills. That should be all of us in MOSES.



Saturday, December 9th MOSES Annual Banquet & Fundraiser

5:30-8:30 p.m.

Christ Presbyterian Church

Dress is celebration casual

Meal: Choice of Infused Roast or Stuffed Acorn Squash

Keynote Address: "Beyond Donuts" with Reverend Jerry Hancock, JD, M.Div., Director, The Prison Ministry Project

Silent Auction

MOSES Leadership Award Presentation

MOSES is supported by congregations, individuals and

The Evjue Foundation

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