

MOSES



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

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750 Converge on the Capitol

For WISDOM's Madison Action Day: Building the Beloved Community

On March 26, about 750 people from all over the state assembled at the Masonic Temple to share collective and individual hopes for justice with each other and with our state legislators. We heard from many powerful speakers about America's history of oppression, which continues today through our corrections systems, and about living our lives with a deep respect for generations to come, all the way to the seventh generation. Speakers ranged in age from high school (RIC youth group members Evaline and Sean Mitchell) to grandparents, in ethnicity from white to Native to Latina to African American. That was the morning.



In the afternoon, we followed the Jingle Dress Dancers to the Capitol steps. There MOSES's Sandra Brown enumerated the effects of parents' incarceration on their children and exhorted us to speak up on our children's behalf. MICA's Rev. Marilyn Miller demanded radical inclusion of all people: "Anything less than racial equity and liberation is unacceptable." Tony Brown stated that the Native people love those of the dominant culture and want us here, but they also want respect. The ACLU's Emilio De Torre spoke on reconciliation, which "cannot come before a shared understanding of the truth" of the realities and the effects of poverty, mental health, and skin

By Pam Gates

color. He demanded "a future without ICE [Immigration Customs and Enforcement]."

Next on the agenda were meetings with state senators

and representatives. Eleven of us met with Rep. Shelia Stubbs and her very capable aide Savion Castro. Stubbs agreed that mass incarceration is a problem in Wisconsin and that we cannot continue present policies. She assured us that she'd be fighting hard and urged us to do so as well by writing letters, making phone calls, and attending and speaking at hearings, e.g., the Joint Finance Committee hearing on the state budget April 3 in Janesville.

New this year was a gathering of people with loved ones in the prison system. About 20 showed up for this end-of-the-day opportunity; probably more would have done so if the timing had been different. (Buses to other parts of the state were departing imminently.)

The discussion at this meeting was mainly about Old Law Parole. That is also the subject of a follow-up to the documentary film "53206," which featured Baron Walker and his wife, Beverly. Both Mr. and Mrs. Walker were at the meeting, along with a film crew working on the follow-up documentary.

All in all, Madison Action Day was a very inspiring experience! ■

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Organizer's Corner

The last few months have been some of the most challenging for me in some time. Most recently, a friend, mentor, all-around good guy, and MOSES member, Terry Millar, passed. Terry had played an active role in my personal and professional development. He tutored me in calculus and trigonometry and gave me great advice about life, telling a few jokes along the way. While his death wasn't a sudden surprise, it brought some things into perspective.

After spending 20 years in the Wisconsin prison system and nine years on supervision, I was finally able to wash my hands of the system in November 2018. That month I was able to gain back the one right I never should have lost: the RIGHT TO VOTE! It is unthinkable that I was 48 before I was able to vote for the first time.

There are a multitude of laws which suppress one's ability to be part of the political process, especially once one becomes entangled in the justice system. Twenty-two states have made it illegal for people on supervision to vote. These are people working, living, and paying taxes in and around our communities. Yet their voices are being silenced due to policy.

A new report, by the Columbia University Justice Law Center, showed that mass supervision is growing at an alarming rate in the United States. It is unfortunate, yet not surprising, that Wisconsin ranks among the worst when it comes to "over-supervising" people. Approximately 67,000 people are being actively "supervised" by the Department of Community Corrections. That is 67,000 voices silenced and shut out of the system.

In February, MOSES organized a forum around this report, and about 50 attendees heard testimonials about how supervision affects the dynamics of the home, the family, and relationships (see article on page 3). It's powerful and sad to see how some men and women can lose their freedom for breaking a rule of their supervision. This rule can be as simple as "not taking a job without prior approval." We learned that Wisconsin gives 5 times more supervision time than the national average. And anything longer than two years is ineffective and essentially a trip-wire for re-entry back into the system. So, even as I was coming to the end of my "punishment," I couldn't help but to think about the many who will continue to be left out of the process, and left out of their communities, if things don't change soon.

Not too long ago, MOSES was able to share space at the Wisconsin Grassroots Festival with other grassroots organizations from across the state. It was a great experience and

an awesome opportunity to hang out with other people who are working to create change across the state. This is a perfect example of how all of our issues are interrelated, and that we are mightier together than apart.

My most recent challenge was Madison Action Day, March 26, a day on which WISDOM members focus on the governor's budget and on the issues that address our statewide affiliates' concerns. About 750 people from around the state showed up here in Madison to make a stand around important issues, like driver cards for immigrants, transit issues, revocations, increases in treatment alternatives and diversions (TAD) funding, solitary confinement, parole, and compassionate release. This is the third time I have been able to participate in Madison Action Day, but I must say that this one was the best. This was the first time that I was able to see so many people who were impacted by the system coming together for change. There was a strength and confidence that imbued the crowd and all of its participants.

As I walked around taking it all in, my thoughts kept coming back to Terry Millar, and to all the other Terrys in the world. When I was released in 2007, I came out to an unknown community, with no friends or relatives nearby, and to a system that was expecting and waiting for me to mess up. I was told that I would most likely commit another crime and return to prison. The stress was constant and unnecessary for growth.

I look at the men and women who are currently under the weight of the system, and I wonder: Do they have a Terry? Do they have someone who values them as a person and is willing to put into them what was lost? Do they have a community that will embrace, love, and protect them? Do they have a partner who can understand their trauma and walk with them through it? Will they have someone to assist them when they don't know what they need to know?

The last few months have reinforced for me the reality that the ills of our community can be solved once we finally make the choice to become community. It's all about being intentional. As intentional as the policies we are trying to change. ■



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From the Viewpoint of the Supervised

by Pam Gates

In the February newsletter, we summarized a Columbia University Justice Labs study of Wisconsin, which pointed out that mass supervision – author Michelle Alexander calls it “the newest Jim Crow” – is driving Wisconsin’s incarceration rate. In 2017, nearly half the adults in Wisconsin prisons had been on community supervision before incarceration; over one-fifth had been incarcerated for a supervision violation, not a new crime.

On Feb. 13, MOSES and EXPO (Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing) held a forum featuring people directly affected by mass supervision. Moderator and MOSES organizer Frank Davis characterized mass supervision as “a true epidemic” that affects families and kids as well as those directly under supervision. “There’s truly a malfunction within the system,” he declared.

Frank’s comment was well illustrated by tales from people forced to wear GPS ankle bracelets, which seem to malfunction frequently. Panel member Aaron Hicks, who said he’ll wear one for the rest of his life, related being at his halfway house when his bracelet started beeping; 15 minutes later he was in jail. “You live your life in fear,” he said. “... You’re scared to talk to the people around you; you don’t know who’s with you, who’s against you.” (Allegations of a rule violation can promptly get a person on supervision back in jail while the allegation is being investigated.)

University of Wisconsin Law Professor Cecelia Klingele agreed that “supervision gets in people’s way. Huge numbers of people on probation don’t need it ... Wisconsin stands out because of the length of our periods of supervision: you mess up, you do the whole rest of your time ...”

“We have a bigger problem,” she continued: “racial disparities. Lots of them ... People coming out [of jail/prison] are already pretty overwhelmed and vulnerable. Judges impose conditions [of their probation/parole], and, in Wisconsin, probation/parole agents can, too.”

Agents have impediments to succeeding in their work, and so do those they are supervising: there is, she said, an “absolute absence of programs people need to succeed, for example, treatment programs.”

A panel comprised of Mr. Hicks and two married couples



spoke from the point of view of the supervised. James Morgan, on supervision after 24 years in prison, was not allowed to take a job at the Urban League, can’t shop at the mall, can’t go to Chicago without permission.

Demell Glenn was incarcerated three times. His supervision rules had accumulated, and he couldn’t understand some of them; they seemed irrelevant. His wife, Carmella, helped him decide that his rules were “just like the rules of life, and I had to follow them, too. I used them as a positive. [Now] I’m free in every sense of the word, free of the negativity that plagued me.”

Mr. Hicks went to prison in 1989 and has been on supervision since 2010. “Trying to follow all them rules is damn near mathematically impossible,” he declared. “I’ve stopped answering the door. I’m not free. I pay \$240 a month [for the bracelet] for the rest of my life. You always live in fear. It’s super-difficult to have a relationship. They wouldn’t even let me see my daughter.”

“You never get the opportunity to move on,” he continued. “People talk down to you. The family fails. Some of the reason is being on supervision.”

Other panel members echoed that. Mr. Morgan’s daughter was born six months after he went to prison; when he came out, she was 24. He was told he couldn’t see his grandkids. Mr. Glenn’s son was 6 weeks old the last time he was incarcerated. “That was the turning point, when I started to change. When he was 27 months old, I was told I couldn’t go home. Someone had control over all of us: me, my wife, my baby. They were keeping me away from my support system.” Ms. Glenn added: “I can’t imagine going through this without a whole lot of people to fight for you. The system isn’t broken; it’s working just like it’s supposed to.”

Rachel Morgan quoted her husband’s parole officer, who asked her: “Do you have a plan for the next time this [allegation of parole violation] happens? ... My mandate is ‘incarcerate, then investigate.’”

Mr. Morgan said someone should do a psychological study of the effects of GPS monitoring on human beings. “I know, deep down inside, that this system has nothing

continued on page 4

From the viewpoint of the supervised

continued from page 3

to do with me,” he said, but went on to explain how it nevertheless affects those who must live with it, and their loved ones as well. “I have psychological boundaries,” he said. “I didn’t want to date, much less marry, because I didn’t want this prison reality to affect someone else ... We’re battling a system. Many believe they’re doing the right thing. My battle is to tear down the system, especially for our young people.”

Brief closing remarks

“My support system saved my life,” Mr. Glenn said. “I’m so grateful. When we go through supervision, we need a support system.” Ms. Glenn put the experience of supervision in the category of trauma, adding that the trauma is passed on to all the relatives as well. Mr. Hicks agreed that the trauma is very real. He remembered, in prison, “the cries of men, some of the biggest, strongest men ... and when you get out, it’s a whole ‘nother kind of trauma. The bracelet is a constant reminder that you’re not whole.”

Professor Klingele called the bracelet a shackle, adding that “it’s easy to minimize burdens that you yourself don’t bear.” She also said that supervision periods should be shorter, adding that when supervision works, it can make a huge difference.

Mary Kay Baum, former director of Madison Area Urban Ministry, told the panel: “Your stories have to be understood, and we [the audience] need to be your allies.”

Questions were raised as to who is making money off the system, implying that that’s what’s driving it.

Jerome Dillard recalled a conversation with Michelle Alexander, who told him in 2011: “We’re dealing with mass incarceration right now, but these systems have a way of replenishing themselves.”

Frank Davis offered concluding remarks: “Mass supervision is far-reaching, to the depths of who we are as human beings, as a community. We need to stand up and say, ‘Stop. Mass supervision is inhumane, it isn’t decent, and it destroys people’s lives.’ We need to fight it.” ■

Please promote our upcoming **“Lunch and Learn”** by prominently posting page 9 in your congregation, library, and other places you frequent.

MOSES Meetings

MOSES Religious Leaders Caucus (RLC)

- RLC Monthly Meeting: May 8 and June 12
8:30-10:00 am, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church (Jericho Room)

MOSES Task Force: Justice System Reform (MJSR)

- MJSR Monthly Meeting: May 9 and June 13
6:30-8:30 pm at Madison Police Station South District, 825 Hughes Place

Next MOSES monthly meetings

Sunday, May 5 at 2:30 pm

Sunday, June 2 at 2:30 pm

Click on the calendar link for details and directions.

Events

MOSES Lunch & Learn: The 2.2 Million: The History and Human Cost of Mass Incarceration

- Featuring Reggie Jackson
- April 17, 2019 at 11:30 am-1:30 pm, Bethel Lutheran Church (see page 8 for details)

Why I Am a Sustaining Member of MOSES

by Rachel Morgan

I became involved with MOSES a few years back while working with my church on incarceration prevention and reentry issues. I had previously worked with homeless youth in Minnesota and saw them go from juvenile detention to jail, and some on to prison. I recognized how untreated childhood trauma, the use of drugs to cope with pain, mental health issues, and the need to survive had led them to committing crimes. I knew these young people personally and knew they needed help, not incarceration, which only exacerbated their trauma.

I was also touched by the injustice in our system when my brother was charged in Wisconsin and basically forced to take a plea for a crime he did not commit, because his own public defender told him to plead guilty or they would send him to prison. He was 58 years old, had never been in trouble, and was really afraid. Now he has a felony on his record.

My passion for criminal justice reform continued to heighten when I became close friends with, fell in love with, and then married a man who had spent a significant time in prison. Because of his situation, I am now also concerned with the injustices of extended supervision: the constant disruptions in lives due to being arrested for false or petty allegations, GPS failures, and rule violations (crimeless re-



vocations). This directly impacts me; it causes me great pain to have the man I love even spend one night in jail for no reason. It also has a tremendously negative impact on my husband, who is retraumatized each time this happens. If the doorbell rings in the evening and we are not expecting company, I (we) panic, never knowing if it's the police coming to arrest him. This revolving door in and out of jail for no reason happens to many people on extended

supervision. The number of rules are staggering, rules that any person would find it hard to abide by. My husband and I cannot be spontaneous, as he needs prior approval from his agent before we can go out of town, to the mall, etc.

I work with a team of MOSES member fundraisers who help to support MOSES's important work on these issues and more that affect people, many of whom are incarcerated, who do not need to be in prison. Although I once raised money through grants for my nonprofit, which provided direct services, I have found there are few grants that support the work of education and advocacy. Realizing that we needed to expand our sources of revenue, I decided to become a sustaining member to help support the work of MOSES. This year, I increased my giving as I was able within my tight budget. I want MOSES to succeed in its goals, and I know that takes time and money. ■

Statewide Task Forces

WISDOM conference calls (605) 468-8012

- Old Law: April 13, May 11 and June 8 at 8:30 am (code 423950)
- Solitary Confinement: April 9, May 14 and June 11 at 4:00 pm (code 423950)
- Prison Prevention: April 9, May 14 and June 11 at 5:00 pm (code 423950)
- Post-Release: April 25, May 23 and June 27 at 7:30 pm (code 423951)

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#

Engaging African American Churches in MOSES by Sandra Brown

On Feb. 9, members of St. Paul A.M.E. and Unity churches presented a multifaceted event to further engage African American churches in MOSES activities. At a morning gathering at Lake Edge Lutheran church, Frank Davis presented a moving talk about the impact of the criminal justice system, by sharing both his personal experience and the broader context, including some compelling statistics.

The talk was followed by a discussion of what brought people to the event or to other activities with MOSES. This discussion continued in smaller groups over a plentiful lunch. Members of the four WISDOM Task Forces and the MOSES Justice System Reform Initiative Task Force were on hand to answer questions and provide some perspective on MOSES. Talib Akbar provided an experience of solitary confinement by having his truck available for viewing.

St. Paul A.M.E. and Unity had previously cooperated on several events: a viewing and panel discussion of the Vel Phillips documentary at Unity, and a Family Health Day

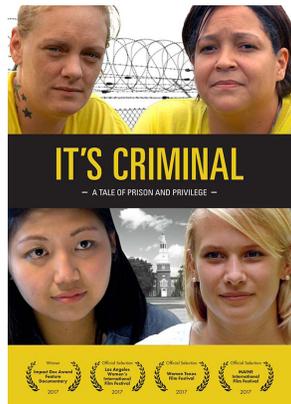
at St. Paul A.M.E. Both churches are members of MOSES. Based on this earlier experience of working together, Sandra Brown of St. Paul A.M.E. discussed her idea to reach out to African American churches in Madison with Barbara Benson and Kay Frazier of Unity. They were dismayed at the statistics for incarceration of African Americans in Wisconsin. Frank Davis also became involved in organizing the event, and Sister Joan Duerst offered advice. Other members of both churches provided support on the day.

The morning was a positive time of connecting and educating people. However, attendance was not as large as we had expected. We had reached out to every African American Church in Madison by making personal contact with some pastors and by distributing fliers. We are now discussing what the next steps toward engaging the African American faith-based communities will be. Our plan is to visit with the pastors of these churches to understand what would interest them and their congregations around the issues that MOSES addresses. ■

FUS Core Team Shows Documentary Film: "It's Criminal" By Kathy Luker

The threat of more snow didn't deter some 50 folks from viewing the compelling FUS First Friday film "It's Criminal" on Feb. 1. The evening event at First Unitarian Society, co-sponsored by the UW-Madison Odyssey Project and EXPO (EX incarcerated PEOPLE ORGANIZING), began with a shared meal and conversation.

"It's Criminal" is a powerful and moving documentary. The film highlights the economic and social inequities that divide us and offers a vision of how separated communities can learn to relate to each other. The 80-minute film shares the life-changing journeys of incarcerated women and Dartmouth College students working together to write and perform an original play that explores the often-painful paths that landed the women behind bars. Winner of several



film festival awards, the film delves into privilege, poverty, and injustice and asks viewers to think about who is in prison and why.

The event concluded with the screening of a recent WISC-TV opinion piece by editorial director Neil Heinen, which stated: "Corrections reform is arguably the most important issue facing our state right now, morally, ethically, and financially. Our prisons are inhumane, and prison policies are ineffective. We are losing lives that could be productive and meaningful. There are too many prisoners who

don't need to be there. And if we don't fix these problems, their costs will break us."

If you or your organization is interested in viewing or screening this film, please contact FUS MOSES Ministry Team leader Pat Watson at cc2ss@yahoo.com. ■

Thanks to
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Sinsinawa Dominicans

THE EVJUE FOUNDATION
THE CAPITAL TIMES

Tribute to Terry Millar, Friend of MOSES

by Eric Howland

Terry Millar died on Saturday, March 9, in the company of his family. It is hard to actually believe someone with so much vital energy is gone.

Terry was a great friend of MOSES and the leader of our data and record keeping operation. His wife, Susan, an early member and stalwart part of the MOSES executive committee, introduced Terry to MOSES. His engagement started with his recognition that we were not using the data we collected from attendance to give people the information they were interested in receiving.



He then plunged headfirst into mastering online information systems. Before long, Terry had created a sophisticated system supporting our efforts to understand our volunteer base and how to welcome everyone into our work.

But even more than the specific lists and analyses, his personal example set the tone for our data operation. Being around Terry, it was easy to adopt his generous, good-natured, practical, roll-up-your-sleeves-and-make something happen way of working. We will miss him. ■

Terry with two of his grandchildren at the 2018 MOSES picnic

Thanks for Making the Big Share a Big Success!

by Tina Hogle

Thank you to everyone who gave to and supported The Big Share on March 5, 2019. You showed that when the community comes together, we truly can change the world.



The Big Share was an online day of giving hosted by Community Shares of Wisconsin for 71 local nonprofits dedicated to building an equitable, just community and protecting our environment.

Thank you for your support during The Big Share! Your donation goes beyond any one organization's mission, as your support celebrates the philanthropic spirit and generosity that unites the entire state of Wisconsin.

This was the first year that MOSES participated in the Big Share, after being accepted as part of Community Shares Wisconsin, thanks to the efforts of Rachel Morgan with the support of the Fundraising Team.

Seventy-one people donated a total of \$5,020 during the 24-hour campaign. Thanks to Ann Lacy, Jim Stolzenburg and Eric Howland for providing matching fund incentives during our Power Hour.

MOSES was awarded \$500 for the most creative video. Special gratitude to those who wrote the script for and

Overall Results		MOSES Results	
Raised	\$456,675.19	Raised	\$5,020
Donors	3,377	Donors	71
Nonprofits	71	Best Video Prize	\$500

appeared in the video: Rachel Morgan, Barbie Jackson, Talib Akbar, Deb Adkins, and Andrea Harris. Thanks to Eric Howland and James Morgan for their support and to Tim Coursen for filming. You can view the video in the MOSES Facebook Discussion group by scrolling to March 5 and clicking on the video image like the one below. ■



Old Law “Ready For Release” Work Parties Have Started!

by Alison Mix

When WISDOM Director David Liners proposed early this year to collect details of 100-150 incarcerated people sentenced under Old Law and deliver those profiles to the new chair of the Parole Commission (not yet appointed at this writing), with a request that these men be released, word traveled fast. It has now become a dynamic project with lots of interest from within the prisons.

To assist the new chair in rapidly deciding these cases, prisoners’ profiles are being entered into a giant spreadsheet to be printed out and delivered, explaining that these (nearly all) men are ready for release and that they represent just the tip of the iceberg, given that there are nearly 3,000 Old Law prisoners.

Old Law prisoners were sentenced before Truth in Sentencing became law on Dec. 31, 1999. They have served at least 19 years of their original sentences, some of them twice that. The judges who originally sentenced them fully expected that they would be released on parole long before completing their full sentences. Instead, the vast majority have been left to languish in prison. Fewer than 10 percent were paroled annually under former Gov. Scott Walker, who dramatically slowed the process down.

Now we have a new governor and will soon have a new chair of the Parole Commission. WISDOM’s plan was publicized on an Old Law and Compassionate Release conference call early this year, allowing many of those who were on the call to communicate the plan to their loved ones behind bars. Old Law prisoners are feeling new hope and are eager to complete the questionnaire WISDOM is dis-

tributing, detailing their situation, the number of parole hearings they have attended, the programs they have completed while in prison, and their post-release support network, among other details, including an optional personal statement.

As a result of the understandable interest in the project, the WISDOM office in Milwaukee has been receiving a steady stream of letters and completed questionnaires and is forwarding them to MOSES’s Alison Mix in Madison. A member of the Old Law Task Force, she had volunteered (not quite knowingly!) to be the central hub for these communications. The first bulging bag of mail was forwarded to her in February, and another is due shortly. At the same time, several dozen prisoners have emailed their completed questionnaires to her via the prison email system known as CorrLinks. Friends and family of still others have emailed her as well, attaching questionnaires their loved ones have completed.

Clearly, this is too much for one person to handle. Luckily, help was at hand! An initial “Ready for Release” work party was held at First Unitarian Society (FUS) in Madison on March 9. Some people had sent RSVPs; others just showed up on the day. It was a bit wild, but ultimately, coffee, bagels, and other baked goods fueled a very productive morning. A total of 18 people, most with laptops, spent more than two hours reading through letters and questionnaires and typing the relevant information about each case into a spreadsheet, to allow rapid action by the Parole Commission when it is appointed.

The next work party will be Saturday, April 13, 9:30-noon. These gatherings are expected to continue on the second Saturday of each month, at FUS (Courtyard A/B), at least through the summer. The most useful skills are familiarity with spreadsheets and fast, accurate typing.

The FUS MOSES Ministry Team, headed by Pat Watson, has adopted the hosting of these work parties as a project and will be taking care of refreshments as well as postage when letters need to be sent back to prisoners by snail mail. Because not everything involves a laptop, those with an interest in the plight of these individuals and, preferably, some knowledge of criminal justice terminology and the Old Law issue, are welcome to come help.

Please email Alison at alisonbmix@gmail.com if you are interested in helping on April 13. If you did not attend on March 9, plan to arrive by 9:00 for a short training session. ■



Lunch & Learn

a MOSES Educational Fundraising Event

The 2.2 Million

The History and Human Cost of Mass Incarceration



Reggie Jackson has been a speaker, author, and journalist for over a decade. As a trainer/consultant with Nurturing Diversity Partners, he helps communities, institutions, and individuals around the country develop greater historical and cultural literacy, compassion, and capacity for action. He is also currently head griot at the African American Holocaust Museum. In his presentations, Reggie shares seldom-told stories of the African-American experience past and present and conducts anti-bias, diversity, and inclusion education at schools, libraries, social service agencies, churches, and businesses.

April 17, 2019

11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
Bethel Lutheran Church

312 Wisconsin Ave, Madison, WI 53703

- 11:15 Doors open
- 11:30 Lunch is served (vegetarian option available)
- 12:00 Presentation
- 1:00 Conversation and Q & A with Reggie Jackson

\$30 per person includes salad, lasagna, dessert, coffee and program

Register at MOSESMadison.org
Click on the event on the home page and scroll down to register on the event page.

Parking available at the State Street Capitol Ramp, across from the church on the corner of Johnson and Carroll.

This program will take a look back to understand how our nation developed the largest incarceration machine in modern history. It will cover the laws and policies which created the tools that built mass incarceration and how that has negatively impacted the lives of millions.

MOSES



Thanks to Emanuel Scarborough, Renewal After Prison (RAP), and Dane County NAACP for sponsoring this event.