20 THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW ABOUT PRISONS

(adapted from "Casting America's Soul: torture & transormation in our prisons and why we should care available from www.TrustOneKindness.com or SageWriters * P.O. Box 2115 * Swarthmore, PA 19081")

1) Educate yourself about MO's laws & practices regarding the inefficiencies of the Board of Probation & Parole (e.g., holding non-violent offenders longer than the national average, costing taxpayers $50 million in extra, needlessly prolonged incarceration expenses, for no greater safety).

2) Peruse the DOC $550 million budget looking for cost reduction; speak out!

3) Identify individual prisoners' causes, their websites and blogs, and select one or more to support.

4) Identify activist groups and give your time, energy and or donations to help them (see list on back).

5) If you are a member of a church, synagogue or mosque, start a prison ministry

6) Volunteer to assist an aspiring writer in prison through editing, and preparing for publication where possible.

7) Visit your elected officials and ask them their positions on alternatives to incarceration; if they maintain a tough on crime position, then educate them and tell them as a taxpayer you don't want to continue funding an expensive, ineffective system that threatens public safety and cuts down on funds for education and health care.

8) Research MO law on mandatory (85%) sentencing & connect with reform groups.

9) Make generous contributions to and join organizations whose goals you support such as FAMM, MASW, MO-CURE, NAACP, NDRAN, etc.

10) Speak out and write letters when a comedian or cop show uses the threat of rape to elicit a laugh or force a confession. Make the truth known - according to the Dept. of Justice, there are reported 88,000 Americans raped in prison every year, 1/5 within 24 hours, by staff or fellow prisoners.

11) If you're a lawyer, volunteer to help prisoners needing representation. Contact local Public Defender and regional ACLU offices.

12) Arrange related film screenings (e.g., "Writ Writer") and book signings (e.g., The New Jim Crow) at your church or organization.

13) Look for ways to support prisoners' families through organizations like Mothers of Incarcerated Sons & Daughters, Social Work Consolidated Youth Services, Coalition of MO Inmate Families.

14) Approach editors of mainstream media about giving more voice to prison issues and outstanding examples of transformation by prisoners.

15) Support efforts of NAACP prison-branches (@ CRCC, JCOC, MCC, PCC, SECC).

16) Hold all people in prison & their families in your prayers & mediations.

17) Provide mentorships & jobs to those with skills coming home from prison.

18) Have your book club read some excellent writings by prisoners (e.g., PROSE and CONS, Doing Time, IN THE PLACE OF JUSTICE, by Wilbert Rideau)

19) If you haven't already seen them, check out movies like "The Shawshank Redemption" or "The Green Mile" to see how little has actually changed. Shiny new prisons; same old marring of the spirit.

20) Subscribe to prison-issue coverage publications like the Cry Justice Journal, the Turning Point, Prison Legal News and the African News World.

Don't talk about it... Be about it.
RESOURCES

1. For a free copy of Branch #6073's detailed & documented issue-publication, "Slammer State," send 61¢ SASE to CRC-NAAACP.
3. Google search
4. MO-NAAACP * 1028 Austin Ave. * Columbia, MO 65201 * WWW.NAAACP/NAACP * MO-CURE * P.O. Box 1285 * Cape Girardeau, MO 63702 * WWW.MOCURE.ORG / FAMM * 1512 K. Street, NW * Suite 700 * Washington, DC 20005 * WWW.FAMM.ORG / The Sentencing Project * 514 11th Street, NW * 20004 * Washington, DC 20004 www.sentencingproject.org
5. For info to establish prison congregations - www.prisoncongregations.org
6. For advice, contact: SageWriters * PMB 215 * Swarthmore, PA 19081 * TrustOneKindness.com
10. Stop Prisoner Rape, Inc. * 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 310 * LA, CA 90016
11. ACLU-Eastern MO * 4557 Laclede Ave. * St. Louis, MO 63108 / ACLU-Western MO/KS * 3001 Main Street * KC, MO 64114
13. Mothers Incarcerated Sons & Daughters * P.O. Box 36991 / KC * 64114 / Social Work Consolidated Youth Services * 12003 Beacon Ave. * Grandview, MO 64030 / Coalition of MO Families * POB 7 / New Bloomfield, MO 65063 / National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (has three excellent resources on website) www.fcnetwork.org
14. MO-NAAACP, State Prison Project Coordinator: Rev. Elston McCowan * Star Grace Missionary Baptist Church * 55117 Lillian Ave. * St. Louis, MO 63120 * revemccowan@yahoo.com
15. Beyond Bars: Rejoining Society After Prison, Jeffrey Ross & Stephen Richards
16. Releasing Prisoners, Reclaiming Communities: Reentry and Justice
17. Anthony Thompson