

BEYOND THE BARS

CLOSING JAILS AND PRISONS

8TH ANNUAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



Ending the Incarceration
of Women and Girls

THURSDAY MARCH 1, 2018

Columbia Law School

Conference Schedule

THURSDAY, MARCH 1ST

Ending the Incarceration of Women and Girls

6:30–9:00 pm, Columbia Law School

FRIDAY, MARCH 2ND

Building the Movement: Conversations with Patrisse Khan-Cullors

7:30–9:30 pm, Lerner Hall, Columbia University
(Doors at 6:45 pm; Event Starts at 7:30pm)

SATURDAY, MARCH 3RD

Closing Jails and Prisons

10:00–5:00 pm, Columbia School of Social Work

SUNDAY, MARCH 4TH

Building the Grassroots: Organizing Workshops

10:00–5:00 pm, Columbia School of Social Work

PROGRAM

ENDING THE INCARCERATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Envisioning the End of Incarceration for Women and Girls

PANELISTS

Andrea James, Founder, Families for Justice as Healing, The Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls

Michelle Jones, Doctoral Student, NYU, Board Member of Constructing Our Future

Lindsay Rosenthal, Senior Program Associate and Gender Justice Fellow, Vera Institute of Justice

Rita Zimmer, Founder and Executive Director, Housing Plus Solutions

MODERATOR: **Jaya Vasandani**, Co-Director, Women and Justice Project

Concrete Efforts to End the Incarceration of Women and Girls

PANELISTS

Wakumi Douglas, Co-Founder and Executive Director, S.O.U.L. Sisters Leadership Collective

Kelsey M. Campaigner and Organizer, Sisters Uncut and the Empty Cages Collective

Bamby Salcedo, President and CEO, Trans Latin@ Coalition

Syrita Steib-Martin, Founder and Executive Director, Operation Restoration

MODERATOR: **Shawnda Chapman-Brown**, Vera Institute of Justice, Center for Justice at Columbia University

HOST: **Miyhosi Benton**, Associate, Women in Justice Project

8th Annual Justice Conference at Columbia University

BIOS

Miyhosi Benton is the Associate at the Women & Justice Project (WJP), a non-profit organization dedicated to centering the leadership of women directly impacted by incarceration in its work to end mass incarceration and criminalization in the U.S. Miyhosi plays a lead role in creating and carrying out WJP's storytelling, advocacy, organizing and culture change work, and she serves as a lead spokesperson for the organization in the public and the press. Miyhosi has presented on women and mass incarceration in a wide variety of public forums and national conferences, and has been featured in such publications as Huffington Post, The Nation, and Al Jazeera America. Prior to joining WJP in April 2016, Miyhosi worked at the Osborne Association's NY Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, and at Hour Children, a reentry program that supports families uniting after incarceration. Miyhosi was a leader in the successful campaign to pass the 2015 Anti-Shackling law banning the barbaric practice of shackling incarcerated pregnant women in New York State, the most progressive law of its kind in the nation. Miyhosi resides in Long Island City with her two children, and is pursuing her bachelor's degree in Communications. Miyhosi is a recipient of the 2015 Susan B. Anthony Award from the National Organization for Women-NYC and the 2016 Hour Children Mother of the Year Award.

Shawnda Chapman Brown is a researcher and social justice advocate who works at the intersection of racial, gender and criminal justice. She currently works as Lead Program Specialist on an initiative to end the incarceration of girls in New York City and beyond at the Vera Institute of Justice. Shawnda is also the Co-director of the Beyond the Bars fellowship program at the Center for Justice at Columbia University. With particular focus on marginalized and vulnerable populations, she has broad experience developing as well as implementing research, monitoring, and evaluation materials both domestically and internationally. Partially based on her own experiences, her work has focused on racial justice and examining the ways in which youth of color get pushed into the criminal justice system. In addition to her professional and academic work, she currently serves as board chair at Black Women's Blueprint, a transnational Black feminist organization that works to empower and end violence against Black women and girls through education, direct services and research and political advocacy.

Wakumi Douglas, Co-founder and Executive Director of S.O.U.L. Sisters Leadership Collective. As the daughter of an undocumented immigrant serving 30-to-life in a New Jersey prison, Tanisha “Wakumi” Douglas has dedicated her life to building leadership among youth most impacted by mass incarceration and other oppressive systems. She is the Co-founder and Executive Director of S.O.U.L. Sisters Leadership Collective, a leadership program for girls facing incarceration, homelessness and truancy. Prior to that, she was the Clinical Supervisor for the alternative-to-incarceration program for youth at the Center for Community Alternatives in Brooklyn, NY. She has worked as social worker, community organizer, trainer and popular educator for organizations including Miami Children’s Initiative, Sadie Nash Leadership Project, the Harlem Children’s Zone and Children’s Defense Fund, among others. She is a graduate of Columbia University School of Social Work where she focused on clinical practice, criminal justice, law and African-centered healing models. She did her undergraduate studies in culture and politics, with a minor in justice and peace and a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa at Georgetown University. She has also studied with renowned African-centered holistic healer Queen Afua and earned the Womb Wellness practitioner certification, holding womb wellness circles, soul sweats and spiritual ceremony. Wakumi believes strongly in the healing power of connection to Mother Earth and ancestors, telling stories, raising voices and taking action.

Andrea James is the Founder and Executive Director of the National Council For Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, Founder of Families for Justice as Healing, author of *Upper Bunkies Unite: And Other Thoughts On the Politics of Mass Incarceration*, a 2015 Soros Justice Fellow, and recipient of the 2016 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights award. As a former criminal defense attorney and a formerly incarcerated woman, she shares her personal and professional experiences to raise awareness of the affect of incarceration of women on themselves, their children and communities. Her work is focused on ending incarceration of women and girls and contributing to the shift from a criminal legal system to community led human justice.

Michelle Jones is a first year doctoral student in the American Studies program at NYU. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Ball State University. Following graduation, Michelle completed a four-year seminary ministerial diploma from the University of the South. Her interest in history, women, race, and prisons led her for the last four years to participate with a group of incarcerated scholars in challenging the narratives of the history of women's prison. Incarcerated for twenty years, Michelle made the most of the academic platform given to publish and present her research findings and dispel notions of about the reach and intellectual capacity of justice-involved women. Michelle's advocacy extends beyond the classroom. She is currently on the board of Constructing Our Future, a reentry alternative for women, created by incarcerated women in Indiana, wherein they are given access to rehabilitative programming, carpentry job skills and the means to earn their own home. In addition, she has presented legislative testimony on a reentry alternative she created for long-term incarcerated people that was approved by the Indiana State Interim Committee on the Criminal Code. Michelle is also an artist and is interested in finding ways to funnel her research pursuits into theater and dance, including writing an original play, "The Duchess of Stringtown," due for professional production, fall 2017.

Kelsey M is a campaigner from London fighting in solidarity with survivors of domestic, sexual and state violence with several grassroots organizations including Sisters Uncut and the Empty Cages Collective. Kelsey is involved in the Reclaim Holloway campaign, fighting for that historic site of state violence to be used for the benefit of the community, with affordable social housing and a women's building. Loves infiltrating liberal spaces to shout about intersectionality and the flaws of the criminal justice system.

Syrita Steib-Martin is a nationally certified and licensed Clinical Laboratory Scientist in the state of Louisiana. Mrs. Steib-Martin also has unrelenting passion to help women successfully reenter into society after incarceration through access to basic fundamentals and higher education. In 2000, at the age of 19 she was sentenced to 120 months in federal prison. She was released after serving 110 months and since that time she has earned a B.S. from Louisiana State University Health and Science Center

in New Orleans. Steib-Martin a United States Navy veteran and until recently was the Laboratory Support Services Supervisor at Touro Infirmary. Mrs. Steib-Martin is married and has a six year old son. She is one of the founding members of The National Council of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. Mrs. Steib-Martin is also the founder and executive director of Operation Restoration (The OR) which is an official partner of Newcomb College Institute of Tulane University. The OR focuses on helping women reenter into society through education. Steib-Martin wrote and helped to pass House Bill 688 now Act 276 during the 2017 legislative session. Act 276 restricts public post-secondary institutions from considering criminal history for purposes of admissions. Louisiana is the first state in the nation to pass this type of legislation. The OR host a weekly radio broadcast on and local FM station entitled What About Her? Steib-Martin was recently appointed to serve as a co-chair to the Healthy Families Committee which oversees three subcommittees on Mayor-elect Latoya Cantrell's transition team.

Lindsay Rosenthal's work aims to prevent and end the incarceration of girls in America by reforming unnecessarily punitive law enforcement practices and creating pathways to long-term well-being, safety and justice for girls in their communities. She leads the Project for Gender Equity in Health and Justice, which implements public health solutions to violence and incarceration for girls and LGBT/GNC youth of color. Prior to joining Vera, Lindsay was a post-graduate policy and advocacy fellow at the Ms. Foundation for Women. There she co-authored a groundbreaking report, *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girl's Story*, which was published through the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality in 2015. The report systematically exposes the widespread incarceration of girls of color in America as a direct result of their status as victims of violence. It creates a framework for understanding girls' delinquency as a problem rooted in gender and racial stereotypes and our societal failure to protect girls' safety, well-being and opportunity. The sexual abuse to prison pipeline framework has changed the narrative on girls' incarceration in the United States and has become the impetus for national efforts to reform policies and practices that criminalize survivors of gender-based violence.

Bamby Salcedo is a national and internationally recognized Trans Latina who is currently pursuing a master's degree in Latino/a Studies. Bamby is the President and CEO of the TransLatin@ Coalition, a national organization that focuses on addressing the issues of trans Latin@s in the US. Bamby is developing the Center for Violence Prevention & Transgender Wellness in Los Angeles, a multi-purpose, multi-service space for trans and gender nonconforming people in Los Angeles. Bamby's remarkable and wide-ranging activist work has brought voice and visibility to not only the trans community, but also to the multiple overlapping communities and issues that her life has touched, including migration, HIV, youth, LGBT, incarceration and Latin@ communities. Through her instinctive leadership, she has birthed several organizations that created community where there was none, and advocate for the rights, dignity, and humanity for those who have been without a voice. Bamby's work as a collaborator and a connector through a variety of organizations reflects her skills in crossing various borders and boundaries and working in the intersection of multiple communities as well as the intersections of multiple issues. Her activist public speaking has ranged from testifying to governmental bodies, human rights and social justice organizations, universities and colleges, demonstrations and rallies, and national and international conferences as featured speaker. Bamby speaks to diverse audiences on many topics and intersecting issues. Bamby has spoken about transgender-related issues, social justice, healthcare, social services, incarceration, immigration and detention as well as professional and economic development for transgender people. Bamby has been invited to participate in several panels at the White House including in 2016 at The United State of Woman conference where she shared stage with Vice President Joe Biden at the opening plenary session.

Jaya Vasandani is the Co-Director and Co-Founder of the Women & Justice Project, a non-profit organization that centers the leadership of women directly impacted by incarceration in its work to end mass incarceration and criminalization, and uphold the dignity and worth of all women. From 2004-2015, Jaya served as a senior staff person at the Women in Prison Project (WIPP)

of the Correctional Association of NY where she helped manage all aspects of the Project, including leading WIPP's coalition work and carrying out policy advocacy campaigns, drafting policy documents, implementing legislative reform efforts, and facilitating prison monitoring visits. Jaya speaks publicly to a wide variety of audiences and press. Prior to joining the Correctional Association, Jaya worked on women's rights issues as a Policy Associate at the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund (now Legal Momentum) and the Center for Women Policy Studies, in Washington, DC. Jaya received her law degree from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law where she was a member of the pilot class of the Kathryn O. Greenburg Immigration Justice Clinic, and received her Bachelors in Foreign Service from Georgetown University.

Rita Zimmer, as a volunteer at Taconic and Beacon Correctional Facilities, heard many stories of homelessness and trauma from the women she met there while helping them prepare for moving back home. This experience and the impact of their testimonials led to her founding HousingPlus in 2002 to create transitional and permanent housing for women and women with children. Sixteen years later, they remain committed to changing the circumstances women face—homelessness, trauma, domestic and community violence, health and behavioral health issues, insufficient income and resources and unnecessary incarceration. Rita, who also founded Win (Women In Need) in 1983 and served as its executive until 2000, began her professional life as a family worker and addiction counselor. In 2015 Rita, along with the executives of Hour Children, Providence House, Greenhope Services for Women and the Women's Prison Association established the Women's Community Justice Project, to create and operate a community-based alternative to detention project aimed at reducing the number of women unnecessarily detained for far too long at Rikers. In July 2017 the project was funded by the city, and the Women's Community Justice Project has established 49 units of transitional housing in the community with services on site to support women in ways that will help them to build lives leading to permanent housing, economic stability and self-determination. Rita has been in recovery for over 40 years and she has a Master's in Public Health from New York University.

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