



WOMEN TRANSCENDING

Collective Leadership Institute Cohort #7, 2025-2026



Abbie Summer Bell, New York

Abbie Summer Bell is a New York City native and a firm believer in the power of community, justice, advocacy, and cultivating the inner strength within individuals to become the best version of themselves. As an individual who was formerly incarcerated and was a ward of New York state during her childhood, Abbie is actively advocating to illuminate the pipeline of youth in foster care to jails and prisons. Abbie currently holds an Associates Degree in Liberal Arts and is currently enrolled in Columbia University school of General studies completing her Bachelor's degree. Abbie is also in the process of writing her first autobiography and plans to use the knowledge she is obtaining from the Collective Leadership Institute to develop a 501c3.



Brandi Peterson, New York

Brandi Peterson is from Harlem, New York and currently serves as a community organizer for The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, as well as Step Beyond Women and Girls. As a formerly incarcerated woman, Brandi is deeply passionate about inspiring and empowering youth to build a brighter future. She is a firm believer that ending the incarceration of women and girls and uplifting our young people is key to creating lasting change.



Danielle Metz, Louisiana

Danielle Metz is a nationally recognized criminal justice reform advocate and abolitionist, committed to uplifting the voices of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. Her lived experience within the system of mass incarceration fuels her relentless pursuit of justice, equity, and second chances.

Currently, Danielle serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Pep Rallies to Professionals, an organization she founded to promote education, empowerment, and public awareness. Danielle also serves as the Clemency Coordinator for the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, a board member of the Louisiana Community Health Outreach Network (LACHON), and a national community health worker with the Common Indicator Project.

She remains deeply committed to breaking generational cycles of incarceration by investing in the next generation and paying her journey forward.



Darlisa Ware, Arkansas

Darlisa Ware, is a resilient leader who has transformed pain into power and purpose. With an associate degree in Religious Studies and a bachelor's degree in Psychology, she is currently pursuing her master's with unwavering determination. As the founder of World Changers of America Advocacy Group, she passionately advocates for the underprivileged and underserved in her community. She also established a non-collegiate Greek social club for women, rooted in sisterhood, service, and meaningful travel experiences. Darlisa's journey is a powerful testimony of triumph having experienced sexual abuse, police brutality, domestic violence, and heartbreak, she continues to rise. Her life reflects a deep commitment to healing, empowerment, and helping others do the same. Through faith, education, and action, she proves that even in the face of adversity, dreams are still worth chasing.



Emilee Shell, Mississippi

Emilee Shell found her voice by advocating for women who've been criminalized due to human trafficking. She is the Director of a sober living program for justice-impacted women recovering from substance use disorder, and the founder of Exchanging Pathways, where she focuses on legislative advocacy, reentry consulting, and voting rights restoration. Additionally, she is the Programs Director with the Mississippi Impact Coalition. She has organized nationally with the Poor People's Campaign and helped lead Mississippi's Clean Slate coalition. She is currently a Business major with a Sociology minor at Jackson State University. Her work is rooted in the belief that public health is public safety, with a focus on harm reduction, Clean Slate policy, and expanding Medicaid access after incarceration. She is deeply committed to building power with and for directly impacted communities, especially in the South.



Jan Rogers, Kentucky

Jan Rogers, a Care Coach on the Kentucky Humana Beginnings team works to support the needs of pregnant and postpartum individuals across Kentucky. A Reproductive Justice activist born and raised in the West End of Louisville, KY, Jan was inspired to begin Reproductive Justice work at an early age after learning the story of her paternal grandmother's passing during child birth. Jan graduated from the University of Louisville with a BS in Public Health and Information Sciences with a focus in Maternal Child Health. Soon after graduating, Jan became a birth and postpartum doula and began serving the community as a birth support worker ensuring that birthing individuals have the tools needed to build a strong foundation for their families. Jan has served in roles within the Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness Center for Health Equity where she was able to create programming that supports pregnant and postpartum individuals and their families through education, providing resources, advocacy and mental health initiatives. The Neighborhood Nest, a local maternity pantry was one of the

programs erected through a partnership with local libraries. Jan was provided the opportunity to lead Healthy Babies Louisville, a coalition of healthcare providers, social service agencies, academia, birthing hospitals, non-profit organizations and grassroots lead organizations dedicated to improving maternal child health outcomes within Louisville and Kentucky. Through exploration of the intersectionality of social justice issues, Jan has began work in housing justice and food apartheid.



Kristy Laschober, Oregon

Kristy Laschober believes education should be accessible to everyone, including behind bars. After serving a five year prison sentence, she earned her degree in Innovation and Leadership and made it her mission to help others do the same. Her passion is freeing other women from the invisible chains that hold them back, through knowledge, support, and opportunity. In 2021, she led the successful effort to remove the criminal history box from all college applications in Oregon. Now she focuses on expanding prison education and creating real pathways to opportunity.



LaChandra Moore, Arkansas

LaChandra Moore is the founder and CEO of OneMoreKiss, a nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of fentanyl, promoting harm reduction, and supporting individuals and families impacted by addiction. Her advocacy has earned her two community activist awards, one from Dream.org and another from New Life in Christ Church. She is also a devoted mother of four and a grandmother of nine, passionate about creating positive change in her community.



LaCrecia Day, Alabama

LaCrecia Day is the Programs Director at Offender Alumni Association, where she leads initiatives to empower case managers serving diverse populations. With over 20 years of experience in program development, management, and finance, she previously served at IMPACT Family Counseling, where she created and directed the PROVE Program, led the UTurn Program, secured millions in grant funding, and held roles in case management, instruction, and financial oversight. LaCrecia holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master's in Finance. Deeply committed to service, she volunteered for over 18 years as Alabama Statewide Coordinator for Angel Tree through Prison Fellowship Ministries, as well as with various other community organizations.



LaPorcsha Haggins, Tennessee

Through her work, LaPorcsha aims to humanize the justice-impacted experience, bridge the gaps between communities, and forge a new path forward, one rooted in empathy, compassion, and a relentless pursuit of justice for all.

As she continues on this journey, she is guided by her core values: "Embracing righteousness, pursuing justice, and uplifting the oppressed." She is excited to explore opportunities to leverage her skills, experience, and passion to drive meaningful change.



LaToya Spillman, West Virginia

After being incarcerated LaToya Spillman found her voice advocating for women with lengthy sentences for drug trafficking and conspiracy charges for people arrested for the first time. She works as a Recovery Coach at Health Path Integrity which is a non-profit organization that serves impacted men and women suffering from mental illness

and substance use. She also works with reentry programs to help women and men get housing and identification before leaving prison. She is also part of the West Virginia Criminal Law Reform Coalition. They work with delegates at the State capitol to get bills passed into law. She collaborated with the delegates in 2016 on the House Bill 2459 which is the Snap benefits for people convicted of drug offenses which passed in 2019. All people in the state of West Virginia who are convicted of felony offenses are eligible to get Snap benefits and housing. Latoya is currently working on the Clean Slate Bill that allows certain convictions to be sealed or expunged and gives people second chances. She is dedicated to helping people who are justice impacted and deeply passionate about working with the state of West Virginia on prison reform.



Mathilda Adeniji, New York

Mathilda Adeniji is a Community Restorative Justice Initiatives Coordinator at the Kings County District Attorney's Office, where she supports youth and young adults impacted by systemic harm through healing circles, case management, and community programming. She recently completed the Justice Ambassadors Program and the Center for Justice at Columbia University's Facilitation Training, both of which deepened her commitment to transformative justice and youth empowerment. With over 15 years of experience in human services, Mathilda has worked extensively with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and has led violence prevention initiatives such as Project Restore Bed-Stuy. She is passionate about creating culturally responsive spaces of healing and growth for system-impacted individuals.

Mathilda holds a B.A. in Psychology and is preparing to pursue her MSW at NYU. Outside of her professional work, she enjoys cooking and freelance makeup artistry as creative outlets.



ML Smith, Missouri

ML Smith is a criminal punishment system-impacted advocate, abolitionist and activist who experienced incarceration during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made her intimately aware of the dire reality faced by our imprisoned populations, as well as the egregious actions and apathy of institution staff and administrators.

Being a Black, disabled, system-impacted woman who has experienced generational poverty is the foundation of her ideological framework, rooted in advocating for those suffering & struggling within a society created and built to oppress, marginalize and dehumanize targeted, vulnerable communities. ML is dedicated to using her experiences, knowledge, determination and voice in the struggle for equity, justice and recognition of humanity.

ML's advocacy efforts extend to all facets of mass incarceration, including wrongful convictions, higher education for system-impacted people, humane and adequate healthcare, legislative reforms and decarceration. ML serves as the Executive Director of Missouri Justice Coalition, as well as serves as a leader/advisor within several local and national organizations' coalitions & cohorts.



Nicole Davis, Illinois

Born and Raised on the Westside of Chicago, Nicole Davis is an author, public speaker, mentor, organizer, activist, and advocate deeply committed to ending mass incarceration. She is the founder and CEO of the Talk2mefoundation, a nonprofit dedicated to breaking the cycle of generational incarceration. Nicole holds an associate degree in Business Management and uses her education and lived experience to empower justice-impacted individuals and their families. Through initiatives like the Sisters of Support House, she provides safe housing, mentorship, and workforce development for formerly incarcerated women. Her work is rooted in healing, second chances, and transforming communities through justice reform.



Shaheedah Ross, North Carolina

As a passionate advocate for justice, healing, and human potential, Shaheedah possess a bold, truth-telling voice and a heart for transformation, using her lived experience to challenge systems and uplift those navigating reentry, survival, and self-reclamation. She is committed to helping women unearth their power, rewrite their narratives, and lead with purpose. Her journey is proof that breaking does not mean broken.



Shakiethia Wheeler, Georgia

Shakiethia is the founding President and Executive Director of Southern Women In Motion Foundation Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides safe, supportive housing & re-entry services to justice impacted, disadvantaged women. She is a proud black mother of four, a 20-year entrepreneur and a native of Atlanta Georgia with a lived experience in the criminal justice system. She is dedicated to this work and eagerly ambitious as she leads S.W.I.M Foundation into the criminal justice reform movement. Her mission is to provide suitable housing and wrap around services to unsheltered women who are directly impacted by the justice system. She is a leader within her community and collaborates with community partners, nonprofit organizations and other leaders to organize and advocate for justice, diversity and to bring awareness to the issues of mass incarceration and inequality within the Black and Brown communities.



Shaneka Jones, Arkansas

Shaneka Jones is the Reentry Program Coordinator for the City of Little Rock, where she is dedicated to providing 2nd chance opportunities for justice-impacted individuals. Having personally experienced the justice system, she understands the critical need for support and resources upon reentry. Shaneka leads efforts to

connect individuals with employment, drivers license reinstatement, expungement and record sealing, voter rights restoration, and more. Her lived experience fuels her passion for creating meaningful change in the reentry process. She believes that resources are not optional-they are essential to success after incarceration. Through her work, Shaneka advocates for second chances not second sentences.



Sheree Kennon, Alabama

Sheree Kennon is a very devoted advocate and founder of What About Us, a grassroots nonprofit rooted in compassion, healing, and justice. As a Black mother and community leader, her work reaches deep onto the lives of incarcerated individuals who have lost loved ones to violence while serving time, a rarely acknowledged layer of grief and trauma. Through outreach, support groups, and trauma-informed resources she stands beside those navigating grief, incarceration, and systemic neglect- reminding them that their pain matters.



Tahira Harris, Pennsylvania

Tahira Harris (she/her) has worked in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas school districts. She works with students with behavior issues due to displacement in foster care, being arrested, and other traumas. She is an advocate for them when they aren't able to put their feelings or behaviors into words encouraging and allowing a healthy outlet.



Terri Minor-Spencer, Pennsylvania

Terri Minor-Spencer is the Founder and Executive Director of the grassroots non-profit organization West End P.O.W.E.R. – whose mission is providing opportunities with effective resources by giving back by doing works of service with employment support(s), educational civics & awareness,

etiquette empowerment, and social/home needs.

She is also the Outreach Coordinator of The Community of Change Center – a safe community space for community members, unity building, returning citizens and guests to have fun, job readiness, adult g.e.d. 6-month schooling, home economics, Spanish class, and Entrepreneur Readiness. Terri serves on the committee of multiple boards & committees.

Terri is a member of the Center for Shared Prosperity Committee, whose mission is to dismantle economic, cultural, social, & structural barriers of entry. Terri has received a proclamation from the City of Pittsburgh making October 7th Terri Minor-Spencer Day for her Advocacy and Community Outreach Volunteerism. Terri is a graduate of the Emerge PA Cohort which teaches women how to run for office. Terri is one of Pittsburgh Courier 2019 Women of Excellence and the co-hosted for The Juneteenth Black Tie Affair.



Tiffani Shaw, Oklahoma

Tiffani Shaw is a passionate advocate, motivational speaker, and community leader who has transformed her lived experience with incarceration and addiction into a powerful force for change. In just two years since her release—and now over six years sober—she

has rebuilt her life while helping others do the same through her work at JusticeLink, her certification as a Peer Recovery Support Specialist, and mentoring women through a support group called Footsteps. She also volunteers with reentry programs, serves on the Community Advisory Board for the Making A Way Foundation, and advocates for policy change with Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform. In 2024, she spoke on a U.S. Senate panel in support of SB3190 to protect SNAP benefits for those in reentry programs and continues to raise her voice nationally through platforms like the Clean Slate Initiative. Tiffani is living proof that second chances work, and she is committed to transforming pain into purpose while bringing love, justice, and restoration back to her community.



Dr. UniQue C. Starks, New York

Dr. UniQue C. Starks is a visionary leader in social work, holding a Doctorate in Social Work from the University of Southern California and a Master of Social Work from New York University. With over a decade of experience in mental health, restorative justice, advocacy, and community organizing, she has received recognition for her transformative contributions, including Citations from Assemblywomen Monique Chandler-Waterman and Stefani Zinerman.

As the Director of Community Restorative Justice Initiatives at the Kings County District Attorney's Office, Dr. Starks reimagines public safety through restorative practices, fostering healing and accountability. She is also an Adjunct Professor at New York University's Silver School of Social Work and a Global Ambassador for the Pan-African Leadership Institute in Ghana, where she supports leadership development and deepens connections to African history.

Dr. Starks leads A UniQue Lifee, a social club for Black women in social justice movements, focused on healing, individuality, and community care. Dedicated to creating transformative change, she works tirelessly toward a more just and equitable society.

"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept." - Angela Davis