



WOMEN TRANSCENDING

Collective Leadership Institute Cohort #6, 2024-2025



Barbara Ornelas, Texas

Barbara Ornelas, based in Austin, TX, is an accomplished Executive Director and Program Coordinator with extensive experience in re-entry program management. Currently leading RARE Academy, she specializes in developing and implementing re-entry services, coordinating educational pathways, and managing placements for justice-impacted clients. Barbara also serves as a Reentry Advocacy Fellow at the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable and participates in the Hogg Foundation Policy Academy and Fellows Program. Her prior roles include Program Coordinator at the Austin Area Urban League and Life Skills Mentor for the State of Texas. Barbara holds numerous certifications, including Reentry Workforce Development Specialist and Mental Health Peer Support Specialist, and is known for her excellent communication, sound judgment, and strong time management skills.



Chermaine Black, Pennsylvania

Chermaine Black is a Social Worker/Researcher/Justice Advocate. Chermaine currently holds an MSW from Columbia University. She is currently employed at Volunteers of America Greater NY as a Client Care Coordinator/Social Worker, Fairleigh Dickinson University as a Sr. Researcher, and P2P (Prison Cells to PhD) as a Research Coordinator. Chermaine also volunteers at Women Community Justice Association as a coordinator for one of the committees under the Justice 4 Women Taskforce. She is also the first Justice Fellow for Alliance of Families for Justice. Chermaine's aspirations are to obtain her PH.D or DSW and open a program dedicated to serving young people.



Dara Baldwin, Washington D.C.

Born in Torrejon, Spain to parents involved in serving their country, the desire to serve has continued through her education and current career journey. She is an activist, scholar and author. Her debut non-fiction book will be released in July 2024. She is an Adjunct

Professor at McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University and a strategist, writer, instructor, project manager, connector, changemaker, and policy wonk.

Currently Ms. Baldwin is President of DMadrina, LLC. a consultant firm working with organizations around the world to incorporate Intersectional policy agendas with an emphasis on disability justice. She has held senior level positions in federal policy at multiple organizations. She was the Director of National Policy for the Center for Disability Rights, Inc. (CDR) and Senior Policy Analyst at National Disability Rights Network (NDRN). She works within the Disability Justice movement and with an intentional strategy to end racism and systems of oppression.



India Johnson, Maryland

India Johnson, a serial entrepreneur from Baltimore, has always found great joy in assisting and watching people of the African American community succeed. Growing up, India had dreams of becoming a nurse and successfully entered the medical field by becoming a Certified

Nursing Assistant and Medical Assistant. She soon realized that the medical field was not the best fit for her. She longed to assist businesses directly, so she acquired the titles of insurance producer, real estate agent, tax preparer and youth leader to fulfill her true passion. These opportunities allowed her to support her family, while assisting families in communities with little to no resources.



Janet Hughes, California

Janet Hughes is a Los Angeles native. She is a leader in the Sisterhood Strategy Team for Essie Justice Group, a sister/member led organization. Joining Essie Justice Group has allowed her to use her leadership and advocacy skills for everyone who has been impacted by mass incarceration. In being an advocate, it has led her to be a part of Essie's Campaign Team, working on the local campaign to close the Men's Central Jail and the state bill for incarcerated pregnant people in tandem with the Solis Policy Institute. As a life coach, with her own organizations, Finances Simple and Healing N Wholeness, she uses her voice to help people put into practice caring for their financial traumas and having mindfulness of their soul care. She's trained and certified in several therapeutic modalities to guide healing. Janet knows if our community works together we can have the best we deserve.



Jessica Drew Umberger, Georgia

After serving a five-year sentence, Drew Umberger became a Certified Peer Recovery Empowerment Specialist who has dedicated her life to helping others, particularly incarcerated women and underserved communities in Atlanta. Originally hailing from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Drew is currently working towards her B.A. from Atlanta Tech. Drew joined the Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative in August of 2022 as a Peer Advocate on the Street Wellness Enhancement & Engagement Team, providing intensive-street level peer support to unhoused individuals experiencing serious mental health concerns. Now as a Care Navigator, Drew provides case management to people impacted by the criminal legal system through a harm-reduction, person-centered approach. Drew is actively involved in several organizations based in Atlanta, including Motherhood Beyond Bars, Living on Purpose ATL, Women in Transition, Support + Feed, and ATL Free Fridge. When not working or studying she enjoys spending time with her children and doing home improvement jobs to her home she just purchased in December.



Justine Moore, New York

Justine Moore, a native of Brooklyn, NY, served 16 years of a 20-year sentence. Even prior to her release from prison Ms. Moore decided she needed to make a difference, she participated in the CHOICES program where incarcerated women shared their life experiences with students from the local high schools, group homes, college students, lawyers, judges and politicians. Ms. Moore also was part of a group of women in the prison who began to have discussions about the criminal justice system and how they could use their expertise to help create change. Upon release Ms. Moore began sharing her story and organizing formerly incarcerated women as a co-founding member of The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. She is also founder of Empowerment: Before, During and After. Currently she serves as the Director of Training for The National Council and part of the training team for Silicon Valley Debug.



Katrina Butler, Georgia

Katrina Butler is a resilient woman, published children's book author, and social impact life coach who has transformed life's challenges into opportunities to inspire and assist others facing similar hardships. As the founder of "Different Souls on One Accord" and "So Far So Close," Karina's organizations are dedicated to supporting women survivors of domestic violence and incarceration toward freedom, self-worth, and empowerment utilizing a holistic approach of peer mentorship and restorative justice principles. Her commitment to her work has led her to obtain certifications in Social Justice Life Coaching and Restorative Justice Facilitation. Currently pursuing higher education at Georgia State University and Strayer University, Karina lives by the words, 'Never forget where you came from and stand on your truth no matter what!' She believes it is only when we stand in our truth that we can foster personal growth and work towards the betterment of humanity.



Lisa Guss, Alabama

Lisa Guss is the Family Engagement Specialist at Offender Alumni Association (OAA), Credible Messenger, Pastor and Peer Specialist. She is the ultimate example of a success when given a second chance. She has previously served as Senior Case Manager in the PROVE program with

IMPACT Family Counseling.

Lisa credits a portion of her road to success to her 99 year prison sentence that she was given but through God's Favor and Blessing, she received an early release after doing 25 years.

Lisa's desire is for others to follow her lead and live a productive life and bring life, hope, help and healing to the families and communities they once destroyed. Lisa is a Messenger not only of the Gospel but also to bring life to what was once considered a dead situation.



Maria Morris, Oklahoma

Maria, a former award-winning culinary arts student and talented chef, tragically lost her 22-month-old daughter in a house fire in 2018. Despite being wrongfully arrested and imprisoned for her daughter's death, Maria continues to use her trauma and culinary gift

to help others triumph. In January 2020, she created Carabelle's Legacy to aid women who have experienced loss and justice system involvement. Maria currently advocates for the underprivileged, providing second-chance employment and training through her catering business, and increasing fire safety awareness in the community.



Marion Rodriguez, Texas

Marion is the Creative Founder of MUVSU What Moves You?. MUVSU's mission is to uplift and support formerly incarcerated women and to educate and empower the masses. Every one of a kind bag is significant because when women are incarcerated they are stripped of their possessions. The empty bag represents a new beginning and a fresh start. Personalized note cards of encouragement are included in every bag. The therapeutic value of creating and giving is Marion's privilege, especially since she is formerly incarcerated. Women who are gifted a bag are grateful to know that people care and support her in the journey to re-enter society. Since 2020 Marion has created, sold, and gifted over 3000 bags. MUVSU bags are sold in 7 women-owned businesses in Texas and New York.



Marsha King, Virginia

Marsha King's life journey has been shaped by her personal experiences with the justice system, which taught her the critical importance of having an advocate on the outside. Her passion for the protection of inmates' rights has inspired her to become an activist, serving as a voice for incarcerated individuals and their loved ones. Marsha is committed to providing a range of prison services that enable prisoners and their families to navigate the complex legal and administrative processes involved in incarceration. Marsha also serves as a resource for those who have been impacted by the policies of the penal system and is dedicated to fighting for human rights in this context. She is deeply committed to ensuring that these rights are honored even after a sentence has been completed, and she believes that this is critical for the well-being of both individuals and society at large. In addition to her work as an advocate, Marsha is also committed to promoting legislative policy that addresses the accountability of lawyers and judges who violate the rights of offenders during the pretrial phase. She believes that this is essential for ensuring that previously incarcerated individuals are able to achieve meaningful and lasting restoration.



Melinda Johnson, California

Melinda Johnson is a Black Certified Birthing Doula, Emotional Wellness Coach, Domestic Violence Coach, Mental Health First Aid Responder, Motivational Speaker, Author and Poet.

She is the founder of the Self Determination Initiative, a nonprofit organization designed to prepare incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and their family members to prepare for their release from prison, identify reentry barriers, and how to navigate the reintegration process. Her passion comes from being formerly incarcerated and learning how to rebuild her and her children's lives after being incarcerated. She has twenty-five years' experience working with this community.

She is also the founder of Hidden N' Him, a nonprofit organization that holds sacred space to educate and empower women through intimate conversations that navigates through releasing pain, healing, restoration, and child birthing.



Michelle Daniel Jones, Indiana

Scholar, Artist, Organizer and Executive Director.



Noreen McClendon, California

Noreen McClendon is the Executive Director of Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles (CCSCLA) and is responsible for day-to-day management of the non-profit founded in 1985. CCSCLA developed over 700 units of affordable housing, an 80,000 s.f. grocery-store anchored shopping center, provided job training and placement assistance, entertainment industry training and re-entry services for community residents and been a co-sponsor of the Central Avenue Jazz Festival since its inception in 1995.

CCSCLA was involved in gang intervention from 2005-2013. Ms. McClendon teaches anger management and curriculum she developed based on her book HURT PEOPLE HIGHWAY, Identifying Unhealthy Elements in Relationships, (published in 2018) in various prisons in California.

Ms. McClendon received her education in the Philadelphia public school system, studied Electrical Engineering at Clark College, received a Certificate in Engineering and Construction Management from UCLA and completed the USC Minority Program in Real Estate.



Rose Harris, New York

Rose Harris is the Director of Adult- Young Adult Initiatives at the Women's Community Justice Association. For the past 20 years, she has served in one role or another to educate, uplift, and edify women. She has over 10 years of re-entry expertise and is extremely passionate about re-entry work because she believes in second chances. She aims to incorporate her education and resources into assisting women returning to their community from jail or prison. In addition to her work at WCJA, she is an ordained Evangelist and the Assistant Director of the Sons and Daughters Ministry. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Phoenix.



Sannecia Davis, Arkansas

Sannecia started a brand called BlessedGals and Prison Transportation Called Blessings after working for a company that transported young men, women, and children to see their incarcerated parents. Sannecia has become a mentor in the lives of many, putting sweat, blood, and tears into criminal justice reform because she believes in hope and giving second chances. In 2015, after being in and out of the justice system from her youth, Sannecia completely changed her life. She is blessed and very thankful and dedicated to helping as many as she can in hopes of preventing them from making the same mistakes she did. She is filled with gratitude for the second chances God has given her. Her prayer is to continue to bless others as God has blessed her.



Sappho Fulton, Pennsylvania

Sappho Reynan Fulton is a seasoned life coach and social justice advocate with a rich social work and community leadership background. She holds advanced degrees in social work and organizational leadership and is pursuing a Ph.D. in International Psychology. As the founder of Sapphosway LLC, she offers trauma-informed coaching and counseling focusing on empowering marginalized communities, including the LGBTQBIPOC+ community. Her expertise extends to program development, public speaking, and nonprofit management. Sappho's journey through the carceral system has fueled her passion for aiding those affected by social injustice, leading her to establish impactful programs for pre-entry and reentry support and serve as the executive director of Womxn Beyond Borders, which works with QTBIPOC individuals who are justice-impacted.



Susannah Bannon, Texas

Dr. Susannah "Susie" Bannon is a formerly incarcerated teacher, scholar, and public servant. As a rhetorical critic, their research examines the ways discourse constitutes identities, influences public policy, and structures the world and the role of communication in social movement. In

addition to her work as an educator and researcher, Susie is a committed advocate for currently and formerly incarcerated people and is a founding member of the Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network.



Tammara McCoy, New York

As an activist and advocate deeply committed to justice reform, Tammara McCoy is dedicating her life to challenging the carceral punishment paradigm in the United States, with a particular focus on domestic violence. She is steadfast in addressing the disproportionate impact of

incarceration on marginalized communities, including Black, Brown, Indigenous, queer, trans, and low-income individuals. Additionally, Tammara is a proud member of WCJA: Women's Community Justice Association and works closely with SJP: Survivors Justice Project and WJP: Women Justice Project. Through collaborative efforts with these esteemed organizations, she strives to amplify voices, advocate for rights, and foster positive change within marginalized communities.



Traletta Banks, North Carolina

Born in Boomer, West Virginia, Traletta is a mother of two wonderful children, ages 24, and 17. She is passionate about helping others.

Traletta works with individuals who have criminal backgrounds, connecting them with meaningful employment and resources, to help reach their

personal and professional goals. She is the Chief Visionary Officer and Founder of Erika's Closet, a grassroots organization that assists justice involved individuals with clothing, job coaching, and other essential items needed to transition back into the community. She is also the CEO of Another Level Staffing LLC, that provides second chance direct hire placement and they also provide training and development to employers, jobseekers with barriers to employment, and other nonprofits that service formerly incarcerated job seekers.

Traletta is also a founding member of Reentry Housing Alliance, a Fellow with Emancipate NC's Justice League, Central Piedmont Community College Human Service Advisory Board Member and recently Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Community Engagement Task Force.



Virginia Douglas, New Jersey

Virginia Douglas, a native of Harlem New York served 17 years in Danbury Federal Correctional Facility, with five years' supervised release. While incarcerated Ms. Douglas was a part of a group of women in prison who began to have discussions about criminal justice reform and how they could

use their experience to create change. Upon release Ms. Douglas began sharing her story and organizing formerly incarcerated women for The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. Currently Ms. Douglas is one of the CO founders of the leadership team for The National Council. She is also the founder of Step Beyond Women and Girls, and continues her work to advocate on behalf of incarcerated women and to educate society in ending incarceration of women and girls.