



## **Criminal Justice Task Force Zoom Meeting Monday, April 13, 2020 6:00 pm**

Present: John, Howie, Mark, Ellen, Jo, Roberta, Shanique, Penny, Betty, Kathleen

1. Check in: How is everyone doing? Shanique is thinking about doing a survey to determine what issues people would like to support or not support, anonymously. Everyone agrees. She will do a Survey Monkey and send it out to email. You do not have to put in your name. Penny asks if it has to be anonymous, but you can use your name if you like. Howie suggests ranking the items, low to high priority. Shanique will design it, send it to Kathleen and Betty, and then we'll send it out to you.

John checks in about possible Zoom meetings with legislators, depending on what happens with the Session. Marijuana reform is tabled and bail reform has become complicated, with the conflation of safety with bail. Fearmongering has been going on throughout our country's history. Betty notes how this adversely affects people of color.

Betty has been doing a lot of Zoom training with Faith in Action. RocACTS is a small organization and through this training, she has been able to get ideas from larger groups. She likes doing Zoom, it saves on gas and time. Eric is doing well.

Penny asks how some of the smaller businesses and restaurants are doing. Some are doing takeout orders.

Shanique thanks those who purchased the magazine. She's going to add a page for prisoners to write in about what their prison is doing for Covid-19. Things have stopped due to the virus. She's looking to May 1 but we'll see. Penny finished the letters she had. We can continue to write, but Shanique is concerned that the prison might send packages back. She's waiting to mail out the publication, letters are probably OK.

There are many issues going on in prisons lately. She referred her friend to an attorney recommended by Jerome. NYCLU has an email thread going around we can sign on to. Penny notes that Cuomo is doing a good job around Covid but is not a supporter of any social justice issues, which you can hear in the briefings.

Shanique notes that this is why she wants to address Covid in the current issue; we will only get the real story from the prisoners themselves. John notes that the Monroe County jail released people in anticipation of bail reform, but it may have gone on hold. Penny suggests looking at this issue of health protection in the facilities. Betty notes that Shanique is scheduled to speak with the religious leaders caucus, and we can reach out to this group to broaden what we are doing and engage more people. We can reach out to the jail chaplain. Is there a group or prison ministry workers? Shanique has a contact who goes in to Attica who agreed to deliver the

magazines there. She expects that inmates will then write back to us. We can still write personal letters.

Betty asks how we will focus our attention on prison reform; Shanique notes that Covid-19 and provision of medical care inside should be the overall goal. Betty notes that a corrections officer who spreads the infection to inmates can be an issue. Jerome may be able to help with this. We need to hear from all sides. We need to rattle the cages of the politicians and try to force the reporters to ask the questions.

We talked about the ways in which Covid affects the Black community. There was a massive group that assembled for a young man who was murdered and it appeared that many did not understand the contagion issues with Covid.

2. Activism in quarantine: What can we be doing to pursue our goals at this time? We will do a survey to clarify this. Kathleen sent out the NYCLU letter earlier today. We also have HALT solitary, PAB, Project Exile and RtA are our current focuses. Betty still attends meetings for PAB, which is currently writing bylaws. She will have an update Thursday. The Executive Director position is listed on the City website. Betty clarifies that the only pillar that has an issue is the disciplinary power. The other pillars are in place. Everything is on hold due to C-19. Fundraising continues, as there may need to be an appeal depending on the judge's decision. Juma may not still be focused on this, but there are other groups working on it, Betty will get this. Howie notes that we may need to set our priorities through the survey. We can choose our primary focus and then also support the efforts of other groups. Partnering is essential. Roberta asks about the meeting Betty participates in with the community organizers. The lead organizer is out on maternity leave and expects this to pick up again soon. Betty notes that in Rochester we are often siloed. Event coordination and collective impact is important. They are using Slack to communicate so events do not overlap.

3. From Dr. Gayle: If RocACTS were to focus on community trainings, what specific topics could or should these be? Betty explains that many people are uneducated on issues. What are the issues, how to get involved, where do we start? The people who are closest to the pain are often the least informed.

John notes that one of the things he learned was the religious people can be activities -- you can lobby your legislators. It's OK to be an activist. What age group? Anyone who will listen, Teen Empowerment, young adults, whoever will listen; invite them all. No discrimination! Start by targeting churches. Thinking of yourself as an activist gives a sense of power. Power is defined as the ability to act.

Voter registration is an important issue. Voter suppression is a long-term strategy. People need education about why it is important to vote, how it affects you where you live, what judges hear cases, etc. We can share the NYCLU petition throughout our constituencies. Send it to Lane for distribution to the Clergy Caucus who

can share it with their groups. Kathleen will add the Clergy Caucus members to the CJTF list. Penny notes that PAB organized and had feet on the ground. Person to person contact works; what doesn't work is using social media, etc. but going house to house worked. Of course, we can't do that now. Getting people to register to vote

4. Updates on projects: See above.

5. Shanique: Survey - see above

6. Additions: Betty suggests we consider advocating for more balanced jury pools. It has been noticed that a local police cruiser had an "I support Project Exile" sticker on it, which seems inappropriate; we could find out more about that. We can see about these issues as we go forward with the survey. Also, prison and jail health systems are typically woefully

inadequate. See: [https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/04/the-jail-health-care-](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/04/the-jail-health-care-crisis?mbid=&utm_source=nl&utm_brand=tny&utm_mailing=TNY_SundayArchive_041220&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&bxid=5bd67e5b24c17c1048030151&cndid=49093091&hasha=4cbb4f7b72cf7f649a4441b4c2e94ed7&hashb=a2494139973f2f3fbf8789d0852e439d19625196&hashc=c990642bee7cd8631787d250586d32b1b5d6004b327adfb9e83aecc8007543a&esrc=frm_act_Daily_subs&utm_term=TNY_SundayArchive)

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Thanks to all who attended tonight.

**Next meeting: May 11**, most likely on Zoom again. Please contact me if you need more information about how to participate via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen FitzPatrick, Co-Chair with Shanique  
with Penny and Roberta for First Unitarian, Criminal Justice Ministry