



2019 Annual Report

A Pin Prick of Light



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

"Imagine living in a sea of darkness... You are just floating, trying not to drown, but you have struggled for so long you want to give up... All of a sudden there is something way in the distance – it's a prick of light about the size of a pin. It gets bigger and bigger and your hope rises, giving you a new strength to continue on a bit more. DecARcerate is that light to me and so many more."

– Joseph Collins, Currently incarcerated in Arkansas

Joseph is one of more than 18,000 Arkansans trapped in a sea of darkness. Arkansas has one of the fastest growing prison populations in the world, disproportionately affecting communities of color, the poor and people with mental illnesses. This hyper incarceration crisis is the result of criminal justice system practices and policies that create harsher treatment of people of color and the poor in all areas of the system throughout the state.

For the last four years, decARcerate has worked to shine light on the criminal injustice system and unite communities to end mass incarceration in Arkansas. This year, in particular, has been a monumental year.

We transitioned from a coalition to a full-fledged non-profit, an evolution that has positioned us to grow for years to come. We welcomed co-chairs to both of our campaigns, spent three months advocating for reform at the Arkansas State Capitol, grew our campaigns and annual conference, elevated the voices of directly impacted persons through our events, and hosted an activism training for directly impacted persons.

This report will provide a look back at the previous year and preview some of the work to come.

In Solidarity,



Zachary Crow, Executive Director

Celebrating 4 Years of Movement Building!



In October, we celebrated four years of work by throwing ourselves a birthday party, complete with balloons, cake, karaoke, and a prison shaped piñata.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Zachary Crow
Executive Director



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Board Member



Morgan Leyenberger
*Board President,
End Solitary Co-Chair*



Sen. Joyce Elliott
Board Member



Denise Chai
*Treasurer,
Curb Co-Chair*



Ryan Davis
Board Member



Furanda Brasfield
Board Vice-President



Laura Danforth
Board Member



Tanya Hollifield
Board Secretary



Laura Berry
End Solitary Co-Chair



Amy Pritchard
Board Member

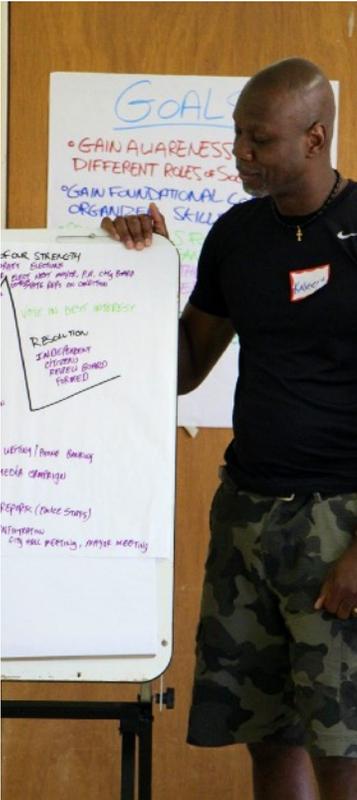


Madeline Porta
Curb Co-Chair



Kaleem Nazeem
Board Member

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

We work through diverse coalitions to identify, develop, and advocate for smart legislation that eliminates the harmful effects of Arkansas' criminal punishment system.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

We educate the general public by compiling reports, hosting an annual conference, hosting art-based events, and participating in panels and speaking engagements.



CAMPAIGN WORK

We mobilize communities through campaigns aimed at dismantling the criminal injustice system and building a constituency that will press for criminal justice reform.

IMPACTED LEADERSHIP

We empower those directly impacted by mass incarceration by placing them in positions of leadership and providing the training and resources they need to grow as organizers.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

We believe that those most impacted by systems of injustice are most equipped to diagnose and dismantle them, and often furthest from the resources needed to organize against injustice.

This year, we were honored to welcome Kaleem Nazeem to serve as a member of our board of directors, and Laura Berry to serve as the co-chair of our Campaign to End Solitary. Both are directly impacted by the criminal punishment system and are quickly becoming respected leaders in the movement.

ORGANIZER'S TRAINING

In April, we partnered with MidSouth Peace and Justice Center to offer a weekend-long training to ten formerly incarcerated persons. The training covered community organizing tactics, direct action, media training, and direct lobbying.



Presently Incarcerated Leadership

Thanks to the work of our dedicated volunteers, we are able to regularly communicate with nearly fifty presently incarcerated persons across the state.

Their knowledge, insight, and leadership helps inform and direct our work.

We drafted legislation introduced in the 92nd General Assembly in collaboration with leaders who are in prison.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

Passing criminal justice reform legislation in Arkansas requires building bi-partisan alliances and fundamentally shifting the dominant narratives that have led to “tough on crime” policies in both political parties. During the 2019 session, we worked to do this by partnering with legislators on both sides of the aisle and helping introduce and advocate for meaningful reform.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment

The Arkansas Constitution permits slavery and involuntary servitude as a punishment for crime. We worked with Rep. Vivian Flowers to draft a proposed constitutional amendment to forbid this practice. Despite failing to pass this legislation, we were able to launch a state-wide conversation on uncompensated prison labor through media coverage and community events.



Solitary Data Collection Bill

We introduced legislation to require the Arkansas Department of Correction to collect data on its use of solitary confinement. The bill failed to pass, but as a concession, they now include some data on solitary confinement in their quarterly reporting.

Weekly Analysis

Every Friday of the 92nd General Assembly, decARcerate leadership gathered to read, evaluate, and strategize our response to recently introduced legislation.

Monthly Meetups

Once a month throughout the 92nd General Assembly, we gathered at Community Bakery to update the public and contact members of the legislature about key pieces of legislation through email, telephone calls, and twitter.

Policy Report

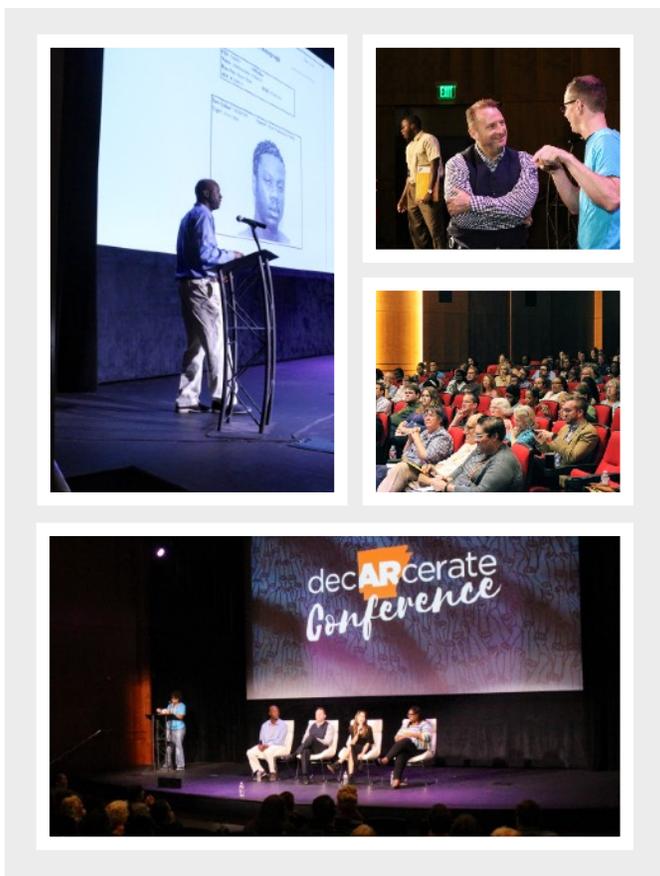
Summer intern Sarah Pickering worked with us to draft a 50+ page report summarizing legislation passed earlier this year. It was released on January 14, 2020, the one year anniversary of the 92nd General Assembly's convening.

Planning for 2021

We are already hard at work planning from the 2021 legislative session. Working with like-minded organizations, we've spent the last six months developing a collective policy platform.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

We believe that education takes many forms. Out of that belief, we work to educate the general public through both academic means and artistic expression. Each of these efforts seek to elevate the voices of persons directly impacted by mass incarceration in Arkansas.



Second Annual Conference

In September, we hosted the Second Annual DecARcerate Conference. In the spirit of TED Talks, eight speakers shared twenty minute presentations and participated in one of two question and answer sessions. Presenters including directly impacted persons, legal scholars and advocates covered a wide range of topics including the war on drugs, racial disparities, police raids, and the death penalty among others.

BARRED II: True Stories of Incarceration

This year marked the second time decARcerate partnered with The Yarn, a local non-profit, to present Barred II, a live storytelling that seeks to share true stories of mass incarceration from a variety of perspectives. This year, formerly incarcerated storytellers were joined by lawyers and community advocates to bring their experiences to the stage.



CAMPAIGN WORK



Despite acknowledging the need for reform, the Arkansas Department of Correction (ADC) recently built an additional 400 solitary confinement cells and continues to use the practice broadly, arbitrarily, and capriciously.

DecARcerate's Campaign to End Solitary is demanding Arkansas eliminate extreme isolation and replace the practice with program-rich communities that support safe, healthy rehabilitation and reintegration into society.



All across Arkansas, people are being confined in debtor's prisons simply because they are too poor to pay fines, fees, or bail.

The system relies on the money collected from defendants to fund their operating budgets, creating massive conflicts of interest, and disproportionately affecting the poor and people of color.

DecARcerate's Campaign to Curb Criminal Justice Debt is working to end these systemic injustices by stopping the often unbearable burden of fines, fees, and bail.

Particularly Notable

- Developed a long term vision and strategy for the campaign.
- Partnered with Disability Rights Arkansas to begin compiling a report on ADC's use of solitary confinement.
- Campaign co-chairs attended the Unlock the Box convening in Washington D.C. to learn from and network with other states working to end solitary.

Particularly Notable

- Developed a long term vision and strategy for the campaign.
- Worked with the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights under law to issue Freedom of Information Act requests, resulting in a report on fines and fees in Arkansas.
- Sent teams of lawyers, artists, and interviewers into all eight Pulaski County District Courts for a future report.

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT



"I support decARcreate because they act on issues that make things better for people who've been thrown away by society and most everyone else. They give hope to those who've only been seen for the things they've done wrong; instead of as people who've made mistakes but still have the potential to be some of the greatest you'll ever meet. DecARcreate sees them as people who deserve the same rights and treatment as anyone else. And fight to make it possible."

– **Laura Berry** (*Campaign to End Solitary Co-Chair, Formerly Incarcerated*)



"Decarcerate is important to me for so many reasons. The prison industrial complex has put profits over people, and many times leaves individuals worse off than they were before incarceration. But Decarcerate works to improve outcomes for "I support decARcreate because they act on issues that make things better for people."

– **Furonda Brasfield** (*Vice-President of the Board*)

FINANCIALS

Income

Foundation Grants	\$16,000.00
One Time Contributions	\$5,766.64
Monthly Donors	\$1,712.50
Events and Other Revenue	\$5,690.79
Sponsorships	\$7,950.00

Expenses

Salaries and Payroll	\$27,003.43
Event Costs	\$7,820.51
Programs	\$6,672.43
Contract Services	\$3,619.95
Facilities and Operations	\$3,251.30

LOOKING AHEAD

decARcerate is a small nonprofit with a big vision. Here is where we are headed in the next few years.

CONTINUE THE WORK

We will continue to grow our annual conference, legislative efforts, and campaigns to End Solitary and Curb Criminal Justice Debt.

GROW THE TEAM

We will hire additional staff members, giving priority to persons directly impacted by the criminal punishment system in Arkansas.

TRAINING CURRICULUM

We will develop and regularly offer training for impacted persons wishing to grow their skills in grassroots organizing and activism.

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

We will develop a speaker's bureau of academics, activists, and directly impacted persons to help educate people statewide.



DecARcerate works to end mass incarceration in Arkansas through community education, smart legislation, and community action.

Learn more about how to get involved at www.decarceratear.org

decARcerate

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For More Information

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Read an interactive version of the report at www.decarceratear.org/2019annualreport