



# JUSTICE COLLAB NEWS

The Justice Collaboratives is an initiative of the IBW 21st Century

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## FEATURED ARTICLE



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## COMING IN 2018



*In 2018, IBW's Racial Justice Collaboratives in Washington, DC, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia will be gearing up to advocate for local bail reform in their respective cities.*

Too many poor people and mostly African-Americans are sitting in local jails because they cannot afford bail. Additionally, even a short stay in jail can have a major impact on a person's current employ ability and long-term job prospect. This is an issue that will occupy IBW's attention in the months ahead.

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# D.C. JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE LIKE OUR STYLE?



*The D.C. Justice Collaborative gets positive results from its work. For the past quarter, the collaborative and 12 of its member organizations have been involved in social justice issues which directly impact services to the African American communities in Washington, DC, as well as Prince George County, Maryland.*

After several weeks of strategy meetings and with the incredible assistance of Brother Aswad Thomas, organizer with the National Alliance of Safety and Justice, the DCJC was able to develop a comprehensive model of a Trauma Recovery Center project and has submitted this to the DC VOCA Office.

After learning that there was a careful review of this application, the DCJC was contacted by the Office of Victim Services/Justice Grants (OVSJG) and is in receipt of a "Letter of Intent to Fund" dated August 29, 2017. Additionally, the collaborative was informed that the proposal submitted while acceptable and approved, the original budget request was reduced from \$1.1 million dollars to \$300,000.00 dollars.

In addition, several changes in the basic concept of Trauma Recovery Center had to be made since the grant as approved, was being considered as a "Pilot Project", and, if implemented successfully, would be expanded to meet the needs of the original grant request. The DCJC considers this as the most significant accomplishment given the short time span from the initial training less than a year ago by Aswad Thomas, and getting an approved proposal/project at the first attempt.

Ever determined, the collaborative, continued to work very hard on pulling together the final components of the project and the requested changes and hopes to be starting no later than the end of December 2017.

The success of this project for the D.C. Justice Collaborative is a testament to the involvement of individuals like Charles Thornton, former director, Office of Returning Citizens; Tyrone Parker, Alliance of Concern Men; Jo Patterson, Parent Watch; Cheryl Maxwell, Black Mental Health Alliance; Janice Liggins, The Clarion Call; Patrick Crawford, the National Association of Black Social Workers, and the fiscal agent and foundation organization, and the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative. While other organizations in the collaborative assisted in so many helpful ways, the above list of individuals, does give one a sense of the strong partnership involved in the effort.

And the DCJC is not stopping. We continue to work with the organizations in Maryland, in their effort to formulate a strategy and project for a VOCA grant for the next funding cycle. A meeting regarding the status of VOCA within the State of Maryland is being scheduled with policy makers. State Senator Curry has agreed to take the

lead in setting up this meeting and IBW will invite Aswad Thomas, from the National Alliance for Safety and Justice to attend this meeting.

Not tired yet..... the collaborative must recognize and acknowledge the hard work and leadership of the "Clarion Call" under the leadership of Ms. Janice Liggins. As the host of a local TV program, she uses this medium to discuss community concerns and other issues to promote information and education about social justice.

Janice recently organized and promoted the documentary "**Returning Citizens**". She welcomed collaborative members, Charles Thornton and Roach Brown (both returning citizens featured in the film) to the program and had a very informative discussion regarding the obstacles to successful reentry to the community.

The D.C. Justice Collaborative have these organizations and so many more individuals as its core members. Let's give ourselves a BIG PAT ON THE BACK.



# PHILLY KEEPS ON STEPPING... WATCH OUR MOVES WITH VOCA

*The Philadelphia Regional Justice Collaborative's most recent meeting, as hosted by Mothers in Charge and its executive director Dorothy Johnson-Speight, welcomed its newest member, State Representative W. Curtis Thomas.*



Rep. W. Curtis Thomas

He was thrilled to join the collaborative and lend his support to the current VOCA activities. He agreed to take the lead to help expand this work by inviting other state representatives to join the collaborative and make sure they become more educated about the VOCA funding available in the state.

During the member updates from the over 20 organizations at this meeting, State Rep Thomas invited the Collaborative to join its efforts with the weekly meeting, as convened by a select group of practitioners whose focus is to discuss how best to support strategies that address issues pertaining to violence in the community.

Topics such as the need for equitable bail bonds and fair sentences, as well as how juveniles are impacted by these, are paramount to bring about juvenile justice reform. He reminded the group that the state of Pennsylvania was the first in the country to sentence a 14-year-old to life in prison.

The PRJC also welcomed another new member, Nick Taliaferro, the host of a very popular program on WURD radio. While Nick could not attend this meeting due to a conflict, he did send greetings and said how thrilled he was to become an active member of the collaborative.

Other PRJC members, Amina Saunders, Laura Dijols and the IBW VOCA coordinator, Ron Hampton, met with the city of Philadelphia, Interim District Attorney, John Delaney, and outlined the mission and purpose of the collaborative. Special emphasis was to gain more insight into the distribution of the VOCA funding for the state of Pennsylvania. Members of the PRJC during the meeting, also pointed out the lack of equitable representation on the VOCA committee in Harrisburg, and requested that consideration and support be given to appoint a member of the PRJC to that committee.

PRJC members, along with the IBW VOCA coordinator, attended the monthly VOCA meeting as convened in Harrisburg. This afforded them an opportunity to also meet with Kathleen Buckley, VOCA administrator for Pennsylvania, learn more about the operations and about which agencies have been receiving funding over the years. A frank exchange on the lack of funding to community-based organizations which are serving those greatly impacted by violence occurred.

One key goal to address what and how VOCA operates in the state is that the PRJC will collaborate with State Rep W. Curtis Thomas, to schedule a meeting with the state representatives, local officials and the members of the Congressional Black Caucus to introduce the Trauma Recovery Centers concept. IBW will invite Aswad Thomas from the National Safety and Justice Alliance, to present at that meeting. The main objective is to increase VOCA funding to organizations which have been shut out of the process, as well as replicate the implementation of Trauma Recovery Centers in the state of Pennsylvania.

# THE PITTSBURGH JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE CALL FOR UNITY AND SUPPORT

*The Pittsburgh Justice Collaborative, through IBW, has applied for a Pre-Arrest Diversion Micro Grant from the Criminal Justice Initiative (CJI) in partnership with the Open Society Foundations to fund viable alternatives to mass criminalization and incarceration as a response to drug use, sex work and other subsistence-driven trade.*

**The grant proposal, entitled Returning/Remaining Citizens Build Community (RRCBC) is for \$25,000 to**

**1)** Organize a Pre Arrest Harm Reduction Coalition in Pittsburgh's East End, specifically in Homewood composed of **(a)** formerly incarcerated citizens, **(b)** recovering addicts, **(c)** grassroots leaders and organizers committed to ending Mass Criminalization and the War on Drugs,

**2)** Train 15 organizers on:

**(a)** the concepts of diversion programs, **(b)** the structure and service components of model diversion programs, and **(c)** how to design and organize a group of the most affected, those that provide social services, government and law enforcement representatives into a resource for a diversion program.

**(3)** Organize and Host a Community Town Hall to unveil the plan to build an East End Diversion Program modeled along the lines of the HOPE Diversion and LEAD program models.

PJC member organizations involved with the grant include: the Formerly Incarcerated Citizens Project (FCCP),

The House of Manna/Homewood Renaissance, the One Hood Media Center and the Alliance for Police Accountability. Other Collaborative affiliates involved are the HOPE Diversion Program and the Homewood Community Sports/Ezekiel House Mentoring groups.

The Pittsburgh Justice Collaborative was involved in spearheading a Call for Unity and Support for the Pittsburgh School Board because the district has initiated programs that call for emphasis on school wide positive behavior interventions, employment of restorative justice practices at all schools and a reduction of out-of-school suspensions.

A Call for Unity and Support ad was placed in the **New Pittsburgh Courier** and the broad based community coalition that answered the call attended in mass the School Board's Reorganization meeting Monday, December 4th. The Pittsburgh Board is for the first time, with the addition of two new African American Directors who were elected in November, a majority Black legislative body. Besides PJC member organizations; the effort is being supported by New Voices Pittsburgh, Women of Worth and P.A.C.T. Initiative Prevent Another Crime Today along with numerous community, educational and faith-based leaders.

## A Moment in History:

*The Western Pennsylvania Black Political Assembly (WPBPA), a nonpartisan group, feels it is particularly important at this time to galvanize our community to support the Pittsburgh Board of Education,*

For the first time in history the Pittsburgh School Board will simultaneously be led by an African American, Superintendent Dr. Anthony Hamlet, and with a majority Black School Board. The nine-member board will have Regina Holley, Sylvia Wilson, and Kevin Carter, joined by newcomers Sala Udin and Veronica Edwards for a 5-4 majority! If ever we had the opportunity to impact the quality of education for our children in Pittsburgh, the time is NOW!

This opportunity to eliminate the racial achievement gap and equip all students with the skills and knowledge to be successful members of the community must not be missed.

We are impressed and enthusiastically supportive of the recent progress the District has made. We recognize and appreciate that the School Board Directors, White and Black, who have been almost unanimously supportive of the District's initiatives.

## Our Call:

We invite all to join us in proclaiming our collective expectation that:

**1)** All members of the elected school board, current and newly elected, Black and White, will continue to work collaboratively to support the vision and programs of Superintendent Dr. Anthony Hamlet and Board President Dr. Regina Holley

**2)** The educational, corporate, philanthropic, and City, County and State governments will continue and expand their support of the Pittsburgh School District

**3)** All community, educational, religious, business, labor and fraternal organizations will join together to renew and/or launch new collaborative initiatives in support of the District's pursuit of educational equity and achievement for all children.

We look forward to seeing the leaders of the community at the School Board's organization meeting on Monday, Dec. 4, 5:30 pm, at the Board Administrative Building, 341 S. Bellefield St., Pgh, Pa., 15213. At this meeting, the new school board members will be seated and the officers of the Board elected. Email your agreement to be included in this community Call to [theradioactivist@prodigy.net](mailto:theradioactivist@prodigy.net).

## Community Response:

### Western Pennsylvania Black Political Assembly (WPBPA)

Rick Adams, Betty Pickett, Rev. Ronald E. Peters, Louis Hop Kendrick, Ginger Underwood-Herring, CEO, Women of Worth Rich Phipps, Abdur-Rahman Shareef (PAA-MA USA), Diane Powell William, Jack Simmons, Roxanne Sewell, Fred Logan, Dana N. Thompson Dorsey, JD, PhD, Rev. Johnnie Monroe, Ronald B. Saunders, Shamika Zyhier, PhD, MSN, RN Kevin Amos, Rev. Dr. John C. Welch, Pittsburgh Justice Collaborative (PJC), New Voices Pittsburgh, Sarah Jameela Martin, Rev. Victor J. Grigsby, Luther Sewell, Brandi Fisher, Keith Murphy, Dr. Lenall Thomas, Billy Jackson, Tyra Good, Ed. D. ,Chuck Powell, Sharnay Hearn Davis, MSCL, Rodney L Regan ,Valerie Dixon E.D, The P.A.C.T. Initiative, Malik Bankston, Rev. DeNeice Welch, George Moses, Rev. Chad Collins, and Rev. Darryl Canady.

# VOICES CALL FOR UNITY & COLLECTIVE SUPPORT

“ The National Association of Black Social Workers celebrates its 50th year and is proud to be a founding member of the Philadelphia Regional Justice Collaborative. We get it done. We stayed focused on activities to improve the quality of life and social conditions for the Black Community.

**Lois Hayman-El**, immediate past President of ABSW Philly and first co-convener of the Philadelphia Region Justice Collaborative.

“ Our Success is documented. We find employment for formerly incarcerated persons

**Courtney Stewart**, chair, Community Re-entry Services and a member of DCJC

“ I am encouraged to note that there is a new member- a Black Woman-Angela Parker-Quarles appointed to the Victim Services Advisory Committee in Harrisburg, PA. Now is the time to submit letters of recommendation to Governor Tom Wolf to address the need for more diversity on this committee as well as VOCA.

**Laura Dijols**, member of the PRJC.

“ We must stay focused. Homicide in our community is a public health crisis. We demand action now

**Dorothy Johnson-Speight**, PRJC.

“ The time has come for a more effective working relationship with the Philadelphia Managing Directors office, the Police Assisted Diversion program, and the office of Criminal Justice for the city of Philly. I met with each office. Has been assured that the PRJC will be an added voice to each of their efforts as IBW seeks to implement the Seattle (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) LEAD program. Let's keep an eye on this effort

**Robert Ximinies**, member of the PRJC who is charged with coordinating LEAD in the city of Philly

“ Without parent advocacy, our children are left behind. Keep the pressure on in all areas

**Jo Patterson**, DCJC member and founder of Parents Advocacy.