



JUSTICE COLLAB NEWS

The Justice Collaboratives is an initiative of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century



From the Desk of Dr. Ron Daniels, IBW's President

Greetings Sisters & Brothers,

John Ehrlichman, who [served 18 months in prison](#) for his [central role in the Watergate scandal](#), was Nixon's chief domestic advisor when the president [announced the "war on drugs"](#) in 1971. In a recent interview published in Harper's magazine, Ehrlichman said, "The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."

In other words, the intense racial targeting that's become synonymous with the drug war wasn't an unintended side effect — it was the whole point. Ehrlichman's candid statement shocked many on both the left and the right these days but we at IBW have been saying for years that the "War on Drugs" has always been a "War on Us."

Our hard-working justice collaboratives in Washington, DC; Pittsburgh and the Philadelphia region understand first hand the harsh realities of the "War on Drugs." Members of our justice collaboratives know countless family members, co-workers, friends and community residents who have suffered from the devastation wrought by this punitive and repressive war on African-American and other communities of color across the country.

And for that reason, they continue to soldier on in building and strengthening networks of community organizations, churches and activists to mount sustained and impactful advocacy campaigns that demand meaningful, sweeping and immediate criminal justice reforms.

I applaud all the member organizations and community activists who continue to provide invaluable service to our people through their dedicated work in our Justice Collaboratives and urge you to redouble your efforts especially in this election year.

Forward Ever.

UPCOMING EVENTS

IBW's State of the
Black World Conference

November 16-20, 2016

Newark, NJ

To register [click here](#).



Philadelphia Regional Justice Collaborative: Ain't No Stopping Us Now

The member organizations of the PRJC, continue to forge ahead with ensuring that an informed community, is an enlightened community. To that endeavor a number of events were held during the past few months, and this edition of the JC newsletter, allows the collaborative to have bragging rights. To keep the leadership momentum going, the inaugural co-conveners of the PRJC, Lois Hayman El and James Dickerson passed the torch to Rev. Keith Collins and Amina Saunders. We thank Lois and James for their commitment to serve, their outstanding leadership and continued support of ensuring that the mission and goals of the collaborative are upheld.



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

Association of Black Social Workers, (ABSW) Philly chapter, participated in the planning of a two day effort sponsored by State Rep. W. Curtis Thomas. The event was held on February 4-5, 2016 at the Temple University Student activity Center. The theme was: " Bridging The Gaps: A Community Building Behavioral Health and Wellness." The focus was on behavioral health of children, youth, and young adults. The effort identified problems and solutions to addressing the issues and not only resorting to police intervention.

The event was open to professionals and community residents. The effort is continuing with the goal of developing a strategy for addressing situations from trauma to healing.

ABSW hosted a community give-back and day of service event on Dr. Martin Luther King holiday. This day of service was held at the ABSW house on February 20, 2016. Over 200 coats, hats, gloves and scarves were given away to men, women and children. Items were donated by members and friends of ABSW.



Fatherhood Initiative/BMLI held a fundraiser to support its youth leadership program, featuring jazz musician Alfie Pollit at First African Baptist Church on Saturday January 16, 2016.

Black Male Leadership Initiative has started another group for 18-30 year olds at the Church Of The Overcomer located in Trainer Pa. This group works with a re-entry population of young men who are residents in the church shelter housing program.

All of the PRJC organizations joined forces to convene the third annual Town Hall meeting, which was hosted by Rev. Keith Collins at the Church of the Overcomer, November 21, 2015. The panel of local community leaders, advocates and law enforcement officials, engaged those in attendance in a spirited discussion about how the war on drugs has led to an increase in juvenile arrests and mass incarceration. The theme was: "Power Partnerships: What Can the Community Do?"



PRJC member Yvette Rouse has formed the Akoma Rites of Passage mentoring group for girls age 7-18. There are currently 15 girls and 6 mentors who have been linked. The Akoma Rites of Passage IBW and PRJC will be sponsoring an event at Mander Recreation Center 33rd and Diamond Sts. on Monday April 25th at 6pm to 8pm. The theme is Bridging The Gap: Ways to communicate with Law

Enforcement.

D.C. Justice Collaborative Scores Big with the DC ACLU

The D.C. Justice Collaborative had a very busy end of 2015. A lot of its energy and effort were directed at working in a collaborative effort with the American Civil Liberty Union DC office. The DCJC worked directly with that office, to plan and implement Town Hall meetings, to address issues pertaining to law enforcement. In that regard Town Hall meetings were convened in five (5) of the eight wards of the District of Columbia. The central focus was to organize and educate the community around police practices. Attorney Seema Sadanandan of the DC ACLU, and Ronald Hampton, co-convenor of the DCJC and chair of the IBW Task Force on Police Reform and Accountability, lead the charge in convening the police practice town hall meetings across the city.

The first meeting was held in Ward Eight, and with a standing room only crowd, was very successful. Building on this, other meetings were subsequently held in Wards One, Five, Four, and six. The agenda allowed for community input and feedback, based on the current policies and practices of the police department as outlined.

Each of the Town Hall meetings, resulted in very personal accounts of how the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department has used a variety of abusive strategies in the African American community, ranging from racial profiling to conducting jump outs on African American men and boys who were just standing in their neighborhood. The information gathered from the Town Hall meetings have been chronicled and are being inserted into a document for publication. This will then be submitted to the DC Police Department, community leaders and the general public for feedback.

The DCJC also convened and participated in a number of other events. For example, The D.C. Justice Collaborative along with Dr. Ron Daniels and other IBW board members, hosted a local leaders luncheon meeting, in order to discuss the feasibility of implementing the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (L.E.A.D) project in the District of Columbia. Many of the attendees were already aware of LEAD, and expressed a keen interest in forging ahead with such a discussion.

Also, in December 2015 the DCJC convened its quarterly meeting to coincide with one of its members, Attorney Nkechi Taifa's recognition by Human Rights Commission, for her outstanding work while serving as the Chair of the D.C. Human Rights Commission. As a show of support, a number of DCJC members attended that event, which was held prior to the start of the DCJC meeting. Attorney Tiafa once again did not disappoint, when she delivered a magnificent acceptance speech, which highlighted the important work of the commission.

*Respectfully submitted by **Ronald Hampton**, co-convenor, DCJC*

The Pittsburgh Justice Collaborative (PJC) continues to be on the move

The last Collaborative quarterly meeting had as its guest City Councilman Daniel Lavelle who sponsored and championed the recent Marijuana decriminalization legislation before the Pittsburgh Council. Justice Collaborative Co-Chair Brandi Fisher of the PJC member Alliance for Police Accountability (APA) and Councilmember Daniel Lavelle teamed up to spearhead this initiative. The legislation passed by a 7-2 vote in December with only Councilwomen Darlene Harris of Spring Hill and Theresa Kail-Smith of Westwood voting against it. They said Pittsburgh lacked the authority to make the change.



City Councilman Dan Lavelle, IBW President Ron Daniels and Alethia Bush Southwestern PA Reentry Coalition (SPARC) Coordinator

Under the new legislation police will have a choice to bust a violator under existing state law — which requires a misdemeanor charge — or cut a user a break by issuing a civil citation. Under the latter, possession of 30 grams or less would be subject to a \$25 fine. Those caught smoking marijuana in public could be fined \$100. This change can potentially provide a major impact in the city's African American neighborhoods because in Pittsburgh Black males are charged with minor possessory offenses five times more often than Whites.

Pittsburgh Police Chief Cameron McLay is putting the bulk of his 843 officers through training sponsored by the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice which is designed to improve relationships and increase trust between police and the community in 6 targeted cities.

Specifically Pittsburgh Police have been going to Chicago to receive training in two areas; Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias.

Procedural justice focuses on how the characteristics of law enforcement interactions with the public shape the public's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and actual crime rates.

Implicit bias focuses on how largely unconscious psychological processes can shape authorities' actions and lead to racially disparate outcomes even where actual racism is not present.



Councilman Lavelle, sponsor of the marijuana decriminalization bill that was passed 7-2 this past December.

Chief McLay feels that his officers will be ready to support a LEAD program once they have completed this training which should be completed in midway through this year. The current thinking is that it would be implemented on the zone level in one of the city's 6 zones.

LEAD planning task force members Rick Adams and Mark Lewis of the POISE Foundation met with Buhl Foundation President Fred Thieman to explore how to move forward with this effort to implement a program in Pittsburgh. Support for pre arrest efforts, like the diversion pilot on Pittsburgh's north side under way for several

years led by PJC member organization the North Side Coalition for Fair Housing led by Ronell Guy was affirmed. While not LEAD, the diversion program underscores that different populations, different communities and different sets of crimes will require the use of various models of harm reduction and diversion models.. The next steps include mapping out how pre arrest models and post but delayed arrest models like LEAD can coexist and be part of a tool box of models in play around the city in the future.

Most recently the PJC was an integral component of the W. Pa Black Political Assembly sponsored candidates forum where Ben Jealous representing the Bernie Sanders campaign and former S. Carolina State Senator Bakari Sellars representing the Clinton campaign were questioned on issues of criminal justice reform, mass incarceration and drug decriminalization. Representatives of Pa. US Senate candidates Joe Sestak and Katie McGinty and Senate candidate Braddock Mayor John Fetterman were similarly questioned.