SWAG is on the Move!

Insights

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PARTICIPATORY DEFENSE HUB
TWO STORIES OF VICTORY

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How to Find Your Mission in Life
JOSEPH J. MORRISON, JR, FOUNDER & CEO
RAISER SHARP CONSULTING
Dear Readers of Inspire Magazine,

I hope this letter finds you well and filled with inspiration. As the Editor and Founder of Why Not Prosper, I am honored to address you in the 4th edition of our magazine. At Why Not Prosper, we are committed to inspiring, educating, and informing the community about different community partners and programs that uplift and empower.

I am particularly proud to be a part of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge. Working in collaboration with outstanding organizations, we strive to make a positive impact on our community. As the Bible states, "People perish for a lack of knowledge," and Reverend Michelle Simmons, our founder, is committed to ensuring that the community has the tools and skills to thrive.

In this edition, we are shining a spotlight on the SWAG TEAM, which stands for Sisters with a Goal. This sisterhood consists of formerly incarcerated women who have transformed their trauma into triumph. They are now using their life experiences to effect positive change in the city of Philadelphia. SWAG is actively engaged in several initiatives, including the anti-violence campaign, the Doris Manning healthcare campaign, and the COVID/health equity campaign funded by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and the Urban Institute.

The SWAG TEAM recently completed a year-long participatory action research project in partnership with Darlene Bailey and Bryn Mawr College. This project has now launched the pilot program called the "Straight Out of Trouble" campaign, which aims to assist individuals in ending long-term probation and clearing up bench warrants for those interested in reinstatement to the probation department and the courts.
There is so much more I could say, but what truly matters is that I am honored to be a part of this remarkable group of women. I am proud to be their sister, mentor, leader, and friend. Together, we work tirelessly to reform and dismantle the criminal justice system. We have realized that we are not defined by our mistakes, and we want to thank all our funders, including the MacArthur Foundation and the City of Philadelphia, for trusting our leadership and supporting our work as we advocate for the voiceless.

I am humbled by the achievements of these women in such a short amount of time. Among the many accomplishments, Rev. Michelle Simmons has received her PhD in Philosophy, Delores Brown has earned a Master in Divinity, and Faith Bartley has obtained a Bachelor’s in Human Service. Additionally, our organization has received numerous acknowledgments, awards, and recognition from the State of Pennsylvania and the local community.

Simply put, these ladies rock! So do all the other organizations and agencies you will read about in this edition. I urge you not to simply flip through these pages but to actively engage with the services and resources provided by our community partners.

Together, let us inspire, educate, and inform one another as we strive for a better tomorrow. Thank you for your continued support and belief in our mission.

in Sisterhood,

Rev. Dr. Michelle Anne Simmons
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How to Find Your Mission in Life

Five Steps to be Sure it’s the Right One for You

BY JOSEPH J. MORRISON, JR

I work with many different nonprofit organizations, and I spend a lot of time helping them develop mission statements. So, I know a bit about finding your mission. Unfortunately, as individuals, most of us don’t know what our mission in life is.

There are many reasons why you may not know your mission in life. Sometimes it’s because the world’s problems seem too big. Or we seem too small. Or maybe we are just exhausted from life and don’t know where we’ll find the energy to fight for what really matters to us. But finding and living our mission is key to having a meaningful, fulfilling life. So how do you find yours? Let me give you five steps, according to Psychology Today.

Step 1: Find out what drives you.
When I was a teenager, took a lifesaving course in order to prepare to be a lifeguard at a summer camp. It was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. Nevertheless, I passed the course with flying colors and learned a few things along the way, too, about life… and death. For example, I learned that when a person is drowning, panicked and flailing about, they will literally grasp at anything to keep their head above water – including their rescuer. This can be a precarious position for the lifesaver, and he or she must approach the victim with caution, lest they both be sucked under and perish together. It’s actually much easier for the rescuer if the victim is unconscious, or at least so weak that they can’t fight back. And dragging them back to shore, even against their will – may be difficult, but it is deeply empowering. What could be more impactful than saving a life? I didn’t know it at the time, but this course launched a series of events that helped me to realize that deep down what drives me is helping other people in a general sense stay above water and not drown.

So one way to find your mission is to ask yourself: What situation has impacted you in a way that makes you want to do more? Is there anything that touches you so deeply that it drives you? Often, a powerful purpose can come from powerful pain or experience.

Step 2: Find out what energizes you.
It was a sunny but cool spring morning. I sat down at my computer to work on a project and when I looked up it was dark outside. It was something I really wanted to do – the creation of the Donor Finder System, a series of videos that teaches the basic principles of online fundraising (www.donorfindersystem.com). I was shocked that the whole day could go by and that I barely noticed. Time just seemed to fly by and I was in the zone! I could have worked all night and the next day as well.

This was the day I learned that you should always pursue things and projects that energize rather than deplete you. Life has a way of bringing lots of energy-zapping things your way. If you let them consume you, you will burn out. But if you do the things that energize you, you will be full of life and want to do even more.

It is not enough to know the problem you want to solve; you have to think carefully about whether or not it draws you in. Do you feel excited and energized when implementing your mission? Then you’re on the right path.

So to find your life mission, ask yourself: What energizes you?
Step 3: Find out what you are willing to sacrifice for.
Feeling deflated and defeated after working as a fundraiser at a national nonprofit for many years, I found myself feeling upset in my gut about going in to work and having to face a micro-managing boss. I just couldn’t do it anymore. So, I paused to ask myself what I really wanted to do. I don’t know about you, but often I think I want to do something, but I don’t end up following through or putting in the work required to succeed — a sign that whatever it was, it wasn’t really important enough to me to sacrifice for.

This time was different, though. I decided I wanted to start my own business and become my own boss, and not have to deal with such negativity from someone above me. I spent the next year researching and writing a business plan, reading books on how to launch a business (this was before the internet), and talking to successful business owners. Then I pulled the trigger and left my comfortable job to go on my own.

This willingness to sacrifice didn’t end when I opened my business. I worked relentlessly to the point of burnout. Now, I’m not recommending that you sacrifice to the point of burnout. All I’m saying is that when you find something that you are willing to sacrifice a lot for, you know that you’ve found your mission.

So ask yourself: What are you willing to sacrifice for?

Step 4: Find out who you want to help.
I proposed an idea once to the United Way after being asked for ways they could help and my idea was so unique it caught the attention of the CEO. I proposed that they begin sharing their staff expertise among several nonprofits to help them save money and gain expertise. Each organization would contribute toward the salaries of the staff, and each would receive the expertise it so desperately needed. But after months of discussion and negotiation, they decided they didn’t want to pursue it. So, I decided to do it myself – and that became the formula for Raiser Sharp Consulting – an organization that helps Executive Directors of small nonprofits that want to grow but may not know how. That was the group of people I knew I could help the most.

To find your life mission, ask yourself: Who do you want to help? There are many ways to chip away at the same problem, and it’s up to you to find out who you want to help. By figuring out the specific person or people you want to help, you can more easily find your mission.

Step 5: Find out how you want to help.
When I first started working with nonprofit leaders, I helped in any way I could. I created brochures, wrote grants, and even did IT work. This is what I knew and was good at, but it didn’t energize me (remember Step 2). As I acquired more and more clients with different needs, I found a real passion for problem solving and strategic planning. Yup! I’m a planner at heart, and I love to problem solve issues and map out a strategy that moves and organization from point A to point B. That’s what motivates me.

Ask yourself: What do you love to do? And how do you apply this passion to your mission? To find your mission, you need to figure out how you can best use your passions and skills to achieve your unique goals and solve your unique problems.

Finding your life mission is a lifelong journey. It’s normal to pause and reevaluate long-term goals regularly. And it’s OK to feel overwhelmed. Nothing worth doing is easy, and this will not always be easy.

You will encounter frustrations and challenges along the way. Some days, you’ll throw your hands up in the air in defeat. But then you’ll remember Step 1. You’re driven to solve this problem, and for some reason, you won’t let yourself give up.

JOSEPH MORRISON IS THE FOUNDER & CEO OF RAISER SHARP CONSULTING, LLC – A PENNSYLVANIA-BASED FIRM THAT ASSISTS NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN RAISING LEADERS, RAISING EXPOSURE AND RAISING FUNDS. WWW.RAISERSHARPCONSULTING.COM
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Dr. Michelle Anne Simmons

Amidst the city of Philadelphia,
A Reverend Michelle resides,
A woman of great knowledge and skill,
With a heart that forever abides.

Her talents are numerous and vast,
A doctorate of philosophy in hand,
And a masters in clinical psychology,
Her wisdom a valuable brand.

Her love for service is immense,
A 501c3 called Why Not Prosper,
She helps women thrive after release,
Her care and dedication, never lesser.

She finds solace in nature's beauty,
Flowers and water, her favorite pair,
And in her heart, a love for God,
A faith she's always happy to share.

Oh, how talented and beautiful,
This Reverend Michelle stands,
A beacon of light in the world,
A woman with healing hands.

Her life is one of purpose and meaning,
Her service a gift to all,
A shining example of kindness,
A true inspiration to us all.

-Consequential Flowers
STILL WE RISE
FREEDOM COALITION
Breaking barriers for women, trans, and GNC people impacted by carceral systems

WOMEN AND TGNC PEOPLE WITH HISTORIES OF INCARCERATION ARE....
beautiful
smart
more than their past
deserving
resourceful
brave
mothers, daughters, sisters, and grandmothers

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Introducing No Way Home

We are thrilled to premiere a new documentary about the devastating human cost of Life Without Parole sentences in Pennsylvania. No Way Home traces the story of Lorraine Haw, known as Mrs. Dee Dee, a leader in the movement to end mass incarceration in Pennsylvania. Over 5,000 people in Pennsylvania are sentenced to die in prison due to a life without parole sentence – the highest per capita rate in the United States. One of those people is Mrs. Dee Dee’s son, Phillip. In the course of the half-hour film, we see Mrs. Dee Dee’s story reflects the experiences of thousands of people in Pennsylvania who simultaneously sit on both sides of the gun violence epidemic: having lost loved ones to gun violence and also having lost loved ones to the carceral system. We have hosted community screenings in Chester and Philadelphia and will be showing the film in Norristown on July 14th. We look forward to continuing to screen No Way Home at communities across PA through the Summer!

Victory for Mobile Crisis Teams

We are overjoyed to announce that Philadelphia City Council approved $3 million in additional funding for mobile crisis units in Philadelphia. This means more mental health first responders will be hired, trained, and available 24/7 to serve people in crisis.

After the police killing of Walter Wallace Jr, we began a campaign along with the Philadelphia Treatment Not Trauma Coalition (TNT) for non-police responses to people in mental health crisis. In 2021 we helped win the initial 7.2 million for mobile crisis teams, and in 2022 we collectively took that amount to 10 million. A couple weeks ago, we held a press conference with TNT and a number of members of Philadelphia City Council to call for increased funding for this essential service. We celebrate the expansion of this life-saving service to a budget of over 13 million.

We are grateful to Councilmember Kendra Brooks and Councilmember Jamie Gauthier who have stood with us in this fight for years. As Councilmember Brooks pointed out at the press conference, “Right now, over 200 people a day are reaching out for support with mental health crises. The need for help is outpacing the support our city can offer.”

While we hope Philadelphia will invest significantly more in non-police mental health crisis response over time, we celebrate this step in the right direction. We won’t stop until Philly is a place where essential caring services are available to people in crisis 24/7 in every corner of the city.
Our Podcast – Purely Speculation is a live bi-weekly podcast that exposes the trauma of the criminal legal system and the need for reform. On the second and fourth Tuesday of the month we go live with special guests and court watch volunteers. The second Tuesday we host a guest to talk about special cases, changes in the laws, historic information, highlight our allies and be a trusted resource for interacting with the criminal legal system. On the fourth Tuesday we have our Court Watchers edition where we have candid conversations with out court watch volunteers that have sat in on cases and are reporting out what they experienced. These episodes call out bad actors; judges who make bad rulings or have a reputation for being a harsh judge, or prosecutors who degrade defendants and throw tantrums in the courtroom…we will also give a shout out to a judge or attorney that truly listened to the case and gave an appropriate ruling. Without our perspective and eyewitness accounts of court proceedings that old saying “If you do the crime, you do the time” would remain the attitude and the system will continue to overcharge defendants, ignore proper protocol, prosecute without evidence and send innocent people to prison. Purely Speculation is a tool to educate and empower the community to know their rights, participate in their defense and interrupt the mass incarceration of black and brown men, women, and children.  https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP8h3sdlxPQ7S2gTKoLK3ZQ
To ensure that persons in recovery have a successful recovery journey by empowering them with education and connections, magnifying their voice through advocacy and celebration, and certifying that their residence meets national standards of quality and care.

PARR is dedicated to ensuring that individuals in recovery can find safe and supportive housing throughout Pennsylvania. Our alliance provides guidance and a variety of resources to Recovery Residence providers to ensure that residents who live in PARR certified houses have the very best chances to succeed in their recovery journey.

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National Study of Treatment & Addiction Recovery Residences
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Simplified Covid-19 Vaccine Schedule

Unvaccinated individuals can now receive a single dose of a bivalent vaccine, rather than multiple doses of the original monovalent vaccines.

4 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE SIMPLIFIED COVID-19 VACCINE SCHEDULE

1. The original vaccines, the monovalent Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines, are no longer authorized for use in the United States.

2. Unvaccinated individuals 6 years of age and older may receive a single dose of a bivalent vaccine, rather than multiple doses of the original monovalent vaccines.

3. Most individuals 6 years of age and older previously vaccinated with a monovalent COVID-19 vaccine who have not yet received a dose of a bivalent vaccine may receive a single dose of a bivalent vaccine.

4. Those 65 years of age and older or those who are immunocompromised may receive an additional bivalent dose.

Calendario simplificado de vacunas contra el COVID-19

Las personas no vacunadas ahora pueden recibir una sola dosis de una vacuna bivalente, en lugar de dosis múltiples de las vacunas monovalentes originales.

4 COSAS QUE DEBE SABER SOBRE EL CALENDARIO SIMPLIFICADO DE VACUNAS CONTRA EL COVID-19

1. Las vacunas monovalentes contra el COVID-19 de Moderna y de Pfizer-BioNTech ya no están autorizadas para su uso en los Estados Unidos.

2. Las personas mayores de seis años no vacunadas pueden recibir una sola dosis de una vacuna bivalente, en lugar de dosis múltiples de las vacunas originales monovalentes.

3. La mayoría de las personas vacunadas previamente con una vacuna monovalente contra el COVID-19 que aún no han recibido una dosis de una vacuna bivalente pueden recibir una dosis única de una vacuna bivalente.

4. Las personas de 65 años o mayores y personas immunocomprometidas pueden recibir una dosis adicional de la vacuna bivalente.

FUENTE: https://about.kaiserpermanente.org/news/5-things-to-know-about-the-covid-19-vaccines
The Power of Participatory Defense is the Community

Participatory Defense is a grassroots organizing model that pulls on the collective knowledge of the community that has been directly impacted by the criminal justice system. Families are empowered and educated about their rights within the criminal legal system and how to amplify their voices in the courtroom. The power of community is so mighty that we’ve seen lives saved, people changed, people healed and families reunited. Here are two victories from the Montgomery County PA HUB;

A black man, father, foster parent, entrepreneur and social worker was charged with rape of a child; very serious charges. He reached out to our hub on referral from another person on the inside that we were supporting. The first order of business was to address his astronomically unaffordable bail, $1 million dollars. Through advocacy, working with his attorney and some constant prayers his bail was reduced to an affordable amount but was still subject to electronic monitoring. Although he was not in a cage controlled by the state, he was still confined to his home without the ability to work or financially support himself. Again, through prayer and community support he was able to manage until his restricted movements were modified and he was able to get work to help support his family. Over the next few months we strategize, suggest motions and anxiously wait for a trial date which was moved twice. Through tears, anxiety, near homelessness, the loss of his career and foster children, committed to his innocence, his 3 day jury trial begins. Routinely, the police that took the report testify, the detective that conducted the investigation testifies and some experts on child sexual assault testify. Sadly, the alleged child victim who is now 16 (she was 11 at the time of the alleged incident) testifies, the mother of his accuser testifies and the testimony of the Mission kids interviewer closes the prosecutions case. There is one witness for the defense; the defendant. He tells his story with such passion and conviction and highlights the timeline of the custody battle that is raging simultaneously with the allegations. He tells a story quite different from that of the prosecution who has the burden of proof for these horrible allegations.

The jury was made up of 11 white men and women and 1 black female all of whom appeared to be over 40. Often times, we as practitioners get nervous when there is little diversity on the jury panel, especially when the defendants are black; however, justice prevailed that day. The jury deliberated for less than an hour and delivered a not guilty verdict. The quickness of their deliberation also gave us concern prior to hearing the verdict. Anyway, the power of Participatory Defense and the support the defendant received that gave him the courage to fight his case and speak his truth is epic in the face of such ugly and traumatizing charges. We recognize that no one goes through a situation like this unscathed and a “victory” does not undo the harm caused by the criminal justice system.

This case was not a question of guilty or innocent but rather is this a case of self defense of attempted homicide? We get this case after the young woman was able to post her bail after 2 months of pretrial incarceration away from her children. She was leaving an abusive relationship that has a documented history of violence against her and her children. The retrieval of property or the shared custody of children is always a volatile situation for any person leaving an abusive relationship and this was a textbook case of continued manipulation and harassment of our family member by this person. The short story is that after the breakup her abuser continued to use property and children to continually
harass, intimidate and threaten her to the breaking point of obtaining a firearm. Days leading up to the incident, threatening calls from him and his new girlfriend seeking his property escalated into a violent confrontation in front of her children and the community. Despite several 911 calls, police presence and PFA’s the alleged victim still managed to harass and threaten our loved one. On the day in question, the alleged victim and his girlfriend went to her house and threatening and brandishing fire arms towards her and her friend. She was ultimately dragged out of her car and beaten in the street. Her children came running to her defense and fearful for their safety, she retrieved her firearm and shot her attacker. She was arrested and charged with attempted murder.

Upon her release on bail, she finds her way to our hub just as we are doing a new member training of which she attends. This information in the training gave her the tools to advocate for herself when the DA attempted to rearrest her on the attempted murder charge that was dropped at the preliminary hearing. Without an attorney present she knew enough about the system and was empowered enough to stand on her rights and avoid being incarcerated again.

Two years later, three attorneys later she is offered a deal of 6-8 years of incarceration down from 10-20 years. This is where it gets good and the true power of Participatory Defense and an empowered individual shines. She insists that she can’t go to jail, who is going to take care of her children, one of which is the adopted child of her abuser who had since been murdered. She frustrates her attorney to no end, but she prevails in accepting an open plea with a cap of 11 months and we go to her sentencing hearing. Several members of the community and the hub testify on her behalf and then comes the moment our girl has been waiting for; she finally gets to tell her truth, unencumbered and without cross examination. The judge takes a few moments in her chambers before returning with her decision. She begins talking to our girl, she’s connecting with her as a mother and protector of her children, but also acknowledged that she is a judge and behavior like hers has consequences. She’s dropping the sentence as she speaking to her, saying that she does not agree with what she did, but does not know if it were her, she would have done anything different, so 2 years house arrest should be enough time for you to think of better people to have in your life and 4 years consecutive probation will provide the additional support you need to heal and take care of your children. The courtroom was packed and we’re all in tears and awe that our girl was not going to jail; something for certain we thought was going to happen. Through tears we’re smiling and standing up getting ready to leave when our girl says your honor, one more thing; since I’m on house arrest, can you waive my supervision and monitoring fees since I can’t work? We all gasp...the judge with a wave of her pen says sure...anything else? Her attorney grabs her arm and motions “that’s enough” and court is adjourned. Update our girl is 4 months into her sentence and has been able to see her daughter graduate from high school, take her kids to summer camp, attend therapy and seek employment. She is also using the Participatory Defense organizing model to interrupt the school to prison pipeline by advocating in the school system.
FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF INCARCERATED PEOPLE
END THE TORTURE OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN PA STATE PRISONS & COUNTY JAILS

ABOUT THE HRC
The Human Rights Coalition (HRC) empowers incarcerated people’s families to be leaders in the movement to abolish DBI sentences, close Toxic Prisons, abolish Solitary Confinement & control units, and give our incarcerated families a Second Chance.

SOLIDARITY NOT SOLITARY

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FACTS

• Involves total Physical Isolation for 23 hrs or more per day
• Causes severe Mental Illness
• Increases the risk of premature death (by suicide, homicide & opioid overdose) after release
• The United Nations consider Solitary Confinement TORTURE when used for longer than 15 consecutive days
• Solitary Cells generally measure 6x9 feet
• Black & Brown people are overrepresented in solitary confinement

OUR DEMANDS
END SOLITARY CONFINEMENT & PROHIBIT THE USE OF INDEFINITE SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
CREATE PRISON OVERSIGHT BOARD & ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY
CLOSE ENVIRONMENTALLY HAZARDOUS PRISONS/JAILS & INVEST FUNDING INTO OUR PHILLY SCHOOLS

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Offering Women In Distress
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SWAG
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Kids Birthday Club
for children of incarcerated women

Sign up here and have a birthday gift delivered directly to a child!

www.why-not-prosper.org/birthday-club-application
Prosper Salad

5 servings  20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1-Higher Power
Bag of Baby Spinach
1-Carton of Education
Sliced Strawberries
1-4oz of Recovery
Feta Cheese Crumbles
8oz-Spirituality
Pulled Apart Chicken Breast

SWAG DRESSING

1-Love
Grape Seed Oil
1-Hope
Balsamic Vinaigrette
1-Faith
Freshly Crushed Raspberries
1tsp-Friendship
Herbs To Taste

Salad DIRECTIONS

1. Remove and rinse baby spinach from bag.
2. Place in bowl.
3. Cut strawberries in halves.
4. sprinkle in feta cheese as little or as much as desired.
5. Sauté chicken breast with oil and salt and pepper.
   a. Allow to cool then pull apart using hands or two forks.
6. Finally Mix Salad in bowl

Dressing DIRECTIONS

Into small mixing bowl add in...
1. 1pt grapeseed oil
2. 4oz Balsamic Vinegar
3. 4oz of crushed raspberries
4. 1tsp of desired herbs for taste.
Sprinkle in salt and pepper as desired.

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Scan here for free resources and to contact us.
WHERE TO FIND US

230 S. BROAD ST., SUITE 1102
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102

PHONE
+1 (267) 519-5323

EMAIL
INFO@PLSEPHTLLY.ORG

WEBSITE
PLSEPHTLLY.ORG

CHECK OUT OUR EVENTS PAGE FOR INFORMATION ON ADDITIONAL EVENTS!

WHO WE ARE

Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity (PLSE) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit legal aid organization. PLSE’s mission is to work toward just outcomes for low-income individuals who have had contact with the Pennsylvania criminal justice system. Through individual representation, strategic litigation, community education, research, and legislative advocacy, PLSE advocates for a more equitable and restorative approach to the criminal justice system. PLSE helps incarcerated individuals navigate their legal issues and assists individuals who have been wrongfully convicted. PLSE also provides access to employment and social services for those with criminal records.

WHAT WE DO

We offer criminal record clearing services. This includes expungement and pardon services. Do you need charges removed from your record? You’ve come to the right place!

BECOME A CLIENT!

Scan this QR code to do an intake with us. You can also use this link: https://www.plsephtlly.org/intake/
**EXPUNGEMENT**

**WHAT IS IT?**
An expungement is the destruction of non-conviction information from your record so there is no trace of it. It is as if it never existed.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**
Any non-conviction information on your record is eligible for expungement. Non-conviction information consists of arrest records and cases that did not end in a finding of guilt or a guilty plea. Non-conviction dispositions you might see on your record include things like: not guilty, dismissed charges, withdrawn charges, ARD or other diversionary dispositions, acquittals, nolle prossed charges, and many juvenile adjudications.

---

**PARDON**

**WHAT IS IT?**
A pardon is a forgiveness granted by the Governor for a conviction on your record. You can apply for a pardon for any and every convicted charge on your record.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**
The Board of Pardons will review your pardon application and can recommend you for a pardon. Once you're recommended for a pardon, the governor can sign off on it. A pardon doesn't erase a crime but forgives it, which makes the charge eligible for expungement. Once you get a pardon, a judge can erase the record through the expungement process.

The pardon process takes 3-5 years from start to finish but requires very little from you after the initial application.

In your application, you have to prove three things:
1. You are truly sorry for what you did.
2. You are a changed (“rehabilitated”) person.
3. The pardon will really help you (and your family).

---

**RECORD CLEARING TIMELINE**

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**OTHER RESOURCES**

- **Pennsylvania Bar Association Lawyer Referral & Information Service**
  100 South Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101
  [https://philadelphiabar.org/pg=lawyerreferral-tome](https://philadelphiabar.org/pg=lawyerreferral-tome)
  (215) 238-6333

- **Delaware County Public Defender Office**
  300 S. Market Street, Suite 400
  (302) 577-1500
  [https://www.delawarepubliclawyer.com](https://www.delawarepubliclawyer.com)

- **Delaware County Bar Association (Referrals for private attorneys to file expungement petitions)**
  359 S. Market Street, Suite 400
  (302) 577-1500
  [https://www.delawarepubliclawyer.com](https://www.delawarepubliclawyer.com)

- **Office of Judicial Support, Delaware County (Information about how to file your own expungements)**
  Government Center Rm. 220
  201 West Front Street
  Media, PA 19063
  (610) 897-4370

- **Montgomery County Public Defender**
  2022 N. 10th Street
  Norristown, PA 19401
  (610) 335-3400

- **Montgomery County Clerks of Court**
  Stop by their office to pick up an expungement packet and send to: Montgomery County Court House Attn: Clerk of Courts P.O. Box 311 Norristown, PA 19404
  (610) 335-3400

- **Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania**
  419 Avenue of the States #605
  Chester, PA 19013
  (610) 874-8421
  [https://www.laspp.org/](https://www.laspp.org/)

- **Mid Penn Legal Services**
  Central Pennsylvania counties
  213 A. N. Front Street
  Harrisburg, PA 17101
  (717) 234-0492

- **North Penn Legal Services**
  Northern Pennsylvania counties
  559 Main Street, Suite 200
  Bethlehem, PA 18018
  (877) 953-3250

- **Legal Services of New Jersey**
  New Jersey
  745 Market Street
  Camden, NJ 08102
  (856) 964-3010
  [https://njlawhelpline.org/intake/1008/language/1](https://njlawhelpline.org/intake/1008/language/1)

- **Delaware Center for Justice**
  333 Market Street, Suite 600
  Wilmington, DE 19801
  (302) 368-2000
  [https://www.dejustice.org](https://www.dejustice.org)
THE MISSION IS CLEAR!

Mission Statement:
Aims to end domestic violence in the LGBTQ+ community by providing early intervention strategies such as education, mentorship, and mobile crisis services.
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ORIENTATION DATES

COHORT 7: AUGUST 7TH (ACCELERATED CLASS)
COHORT 8: SEPTEMBER 1ST
COHORT 9: OCTOBER 24TH
COHORT 10: NOVEMBER 28 (ACCELERATED CLASS)

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2. SSN CARD
3. STATE ID
4. WORKING CELLPHONE AND EMAIL ADDRESS

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THE ORIENTATION DATES FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER
COHORT 6: JUNE 26TH (ACCELERATED CLASS)
COHORT 7: AUGUST 7TH (ACCELERATED CLASS)
COHORT 8: SEPTEMBER 1ST (REGULAR CLASS SCHEDULE)

(CLOSED) HOLIDAY, TUESDAY, JULY 4TH, 2023 (INDEPENDENCE DAY)

AUGUST 2023 COHORT 7 (ACCELERATED CLASS) 10AM TO 12:30PM
@ PHA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE 2300 W. MASTER STREET

WEEK 1:  MONDAY, AUGUST 7TH ORIENTATION
          TUESDAY, AUGUST 8TH
          THURSDAY, AUGUST 10TH

WEEK 2:  MONDAY, AUGUST 14TH
          TUESDAY, AUGUST 15TH
          THURSDAY, AUGUST 17TH

WEEK 3:  MONDAY, AUGUST 21ST
          TUESDAY, AUGUST 22ND

(CLOSED) HOLIDAY, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2023 (LABOR DAY)
NO CLASSES SEPTEMBER 11 TO SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2023

SEPTEMBER 2023 COHORT 8 (REGULAR CLASS SCHEDULE) 1:00PM-3:30PM
@ TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, STUDENT FACULTY CENTER 3340 N BROAD ST

WEEK 1:  TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH ORIENTATION
          THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST

WEEK 2:  TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26TH
          THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28TH

WEEK 3:  TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3RD
          THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5TH

WEEK 4:  TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10TH
          THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12TH

WWW.MERCYNEIGHBORS.ORG/P2P
An Attorney General who will fight with us

Keir Bradford-Grey was raised in a proud union household where she was the first in her family to graduate college.

She has devoted her career to creating a justice system that makes our communities safer and serves the people it’s meant to protect. Keir has a track record as an effective leader who delivers results.

As Attorney General, Keir will always fight for fairness, opportunity and justice.

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IT’S YOUR JOURNEY. BUT THAT DOESN’T MEAN YOU’RE ALONE.

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Questions?
Visit www.thephoenix.org or reach out to Lauren Johnston at ljohnston@thephoenix.org
HCPA Friends and Partners
- Local Interfaith Congregations
- Employment, Housing & Education Networks
- State & County Reentry Coalitions
- Justice Transformation Advocates
- Restorative Justice Practitioners
- Secular & Faith Based Community Organization

Contact Us

Healing Communities PA
Philadelphia Leadership Foundation
2821 Island Avenue
Suite 102C
Philadelphia, PA 19153
267-582-5013
www.healingcommunitiespa.org
www.facebook.com/healingcommunitspa

Mission
HCPA is a faith based, BIPOC, abolitionist, open and affirming ecumenical organization, led by directly impacted people of faith to educate, organize, elevate and empower people of faith, in PA, directly impacted by the criminal justice system and their allies to be change makers for justice transformation.

Vision
Our interfaith vision for change is one of abolition, justice transformation (as opposed to reform), restorative justice, racial and economic justice and an end to systemic racism and oppression and state sponsored terror as well immigration and LGBTQ+ equity.

Healing Communities PA
“Balancing Justice with Mercy”

Faithful Advocates for Reentry & Justice Transformation
We train communities of faith to:

- walk with the returning citizens
- help them connect with their faith
- open their hearts to them
- embrace them
- provide understanding
- advocate for political change for justice transformation on a local, state, and federal level

We provide support and technical assistance to faith communities by:

- offering seminars in restorative justice, family reintegration and family support
- identifying resources and building networks for capacity building, service delivery and advocacy
- offering opportunities for peer learning from other congregations & expert learning at local, regional & national conferences
- customized programming for local congregations

We facilitate the HCPA Faith Action Network providing:

- movement building
- faith community organizing
- legislative advocacy
- media & social media campaigns
- turnout
- campaign education
- research
- direct & virtual action

---

Dr. Movita Johnson-Harrell
Chairperson of HCPA

Dr. Movita Johnson-Harrell is a former PA State Rep & the first Muslim woman elected to the PA House. She is formerly incarcerated and the mother of two sons lost to gun violence. She is a fierce advocate for justice transformation, victims right & ending gun violence. She is the founder of the CHARLES Foundation & the DANTE Initiative.

Rev. Dr. Chris Kimmenez
Executive Director of HCPA

Rev. Dr. Chris Kimmenez is an ordained Baptist minister, psychologist, educator, retired marine, formerly incarcerated, father of a homicide victim. He is a dynamic, sought-after speaker, pastor, chaplain, professor, trainer, organizer & nonprofit executive, & agent of change for justice transformation.
Greetings,

Thank you to Rev. Dr. Michelle Anne Simmons for her extraordinary work through Why Not Prosper. Rev. Michelle’s passion for helping women transitioning out of prison is unsurpassed and I look forward to our continued partnership. I would like to share some updates from my office:

We are open in our Philadelphia and Abington Offices Monday to Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., during the summer. We assist neighbors to solve problems using state resources and provide service and resource connections for many city and state programs. Some of our primary services are listed below:

- Department of Human Services Programs (SNAP, LIHEAP, Medicaid, and others)
- Free Notary services (by appointment only)
- Septa Senior Key Cards and Renewals for those 65 years +
- PennDOT services
- Property Tax & Rent Rebate
- Unclaimed Property Searches
- Unemployment Compensation
- Utility assistance via LIHEAP and other income-based programs
- And more!

Safe Summer 2023

My office launched a local effort to saturate our most vulnerable communities experiencing the highest amount of crime and gun violence with love. Our “Saturate with Love” strategy works to meet the unmet needs of those in high crime blocks to provide positive alternatives to violent choices, focusing on shooters, victims of shootings, and their immediate family & social circle. Our multi-prong strategy consists of:

- Satellite office hours
- Bi-monthly job & resource fairs
- Increased block cleaning, and funding organizations like Philadelphia CeaseFire to bring more services and trusted messengers to our communities.

Do you want to know the best way to get updates on legislation, resources, and more from my office and across the Commonwealth? Subscribe to my e-newsletter! Visit my website at www.senatorhaywood.com to subscribe and call us at 215-242-8171.

Participation is Power,

Art Haywood
State Senator
Five Tips to Get You Meditating

Our SWAG Team has an offering for everyone! This summer we will be meditating at the local playground in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. All are welcome!

Meditation is one of the most effective things you can do to manage your stress levels. Stress symptoms can affect your body, your thoughts and feelings, and your behavior.

And unchecked stress can contribute to many health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes. If you’re anxious or depressed, your stress levels will be playing a part in how you feel.

Here are five tips to get your meditation practice started.

1. **Begin with five minutes** sitting with your eyes closed. Practice sitting for five minutes until it becomes easy and then move to ten minutes. Once you’ve mastered ten minutes try 15. You’re aiming to go for 20 minutes twice a day.

2. **Always have back support.** Anywhere will work, it doesn’t have to be quiet. So a bus, a train, or even a park bench will work. Back support is important because it means you can lean back and relax. Make sure you are seated, not lying down. If you lie down your body may prepare for sleep.

3. **No coffee or heavy food before you practice meditating.** It’s best not to drink any coffee or tea, or eat anything heavy before you meditate. This is because you want the metabolism to drop so you can rest deeply.

4. **Bring the mind to the breath.** Once your eyes are closed, become aware of your breath. The idea is to naturally allow the mind to follow the breath but we are not trying to concentrate on the breath. *There is no focus or control.* Just bring your mind to the breath when you remember. The rest of the time your mind might think about millions of things. This is fine. Just bring your mind back to your breath when you remember.

5. **Use a watch.** Time yourself by using a watch or checking your phone. Don’t set an alarm because alarms are alarming! You might be deep in your meditation and you will be pulled out suddenly. This can cause headaches and make you irritable.

- Joh Jarvis
  Founder/Director
  The Light Inside
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HEALTH AND WELLNESS AWARENESS AMBASSADOR
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Mental Health Awareness In The Black Community: Black People Don’t Get Help!

Mental Health is often viewed as taboo in black communities, mainly because of the many stigmas that it is associated with. Negative attitudes and beliefs towards people who live with mental health conditions is pervasive within the United States and can be especially prevalent within the Black community. One study showed that 63% of Black people believe that a mental health condition is a sign of personal weakness. Consequently, some individuals may experience shame about having a mental disorder and worry that they may face harsh judgment and ridicule due to their condition, as well as experience discrimination.

The stigma of mental health isn’t new to the Black community. Martin Luther King, Jr. reportedly had severe depression during periods of his life but refused psychiatric treatment, despite the fact that he was often urged to seek care by his staff.

According to Medical Practitioner and Psychiatrist, Christine M. Crawford, “The root of mental health stigma among Black people can be traced back to as early as slavery, when it was commonly thought enslaved people were not sophisticated enough to develop depression, anxiety, or other mental health disorders; From those historic misconceptions, we learned to ignore mental illness or call it other terms, like stress and being tired!”

These nuanced descriptions for mental illness that have been adopted by the Black community have been passed on from generation to generation up until post modern times that we live in present day. It is said that most black people choose to seek support from their faith community opposed to attaining a professional mental health diagnosis.

Mental Health and Physical Health
The state of a person’s mental health ability definitely plays a significant factor in that individual’s physical well-being. From a personal perspective, I can definitely concur this to be evident, particularly while experiencing episodes of depression at some points in life. For instance, while being engulfed in a seemingly never-ending
“I was taught that seeking any form of professional mental health support was not something a strong black woman should ever do.”

custody battle where I didn’t see or talk to my daughter for months at a time, then being on probation and parole for 5 years with the other parent being the complainant on both criminal cases, I experienced ongoing episodes of sadness and hopelessness for weeks at a time. I had become so mentally drained that suicide had began to cross my mind on a regular basis because it seemed like the only answer to my chaotic, upside down life. I wouldn’t dare share this with anybody I knew personally, especially not relatives because this would expose vulnerability, opposed to that strong, unbreakable superwoman that everyone perceived me to be.

The idea of any form of mental health treatment was out of the question and with that being said I was determined to get through it the best way I knew how, whether it was drinking alcohol and smoking weed 5 or more days a week, going to church almost every day of the week, becoming so consumed with work with two or three jobs- I was taught that seeking any form of professional mental health support was not something a strong black woman should ever do.

However, while I thought I was hiding my depressed mood, it became quite evident in my appearance and actions with others. My skin began to break out in rashes and sores, I had dark circles around my eyes and my weight would go up
and down constantly from consuming a lot of unhealthy foods and beverages on a daily basis. I begin to feel shortness of breath, have consistent migraines and unexplainable pains in my chest, back and lower body parts.

Since I had a well-established relationship with my primary care doctor’s office of over 15 years, I felt comfortable to talk about what I was going through and was willing to accept help. At this point, I believed that my life was beginning to spiral out of control and even had begun to consider suicide but I knew that my daughter needed me. I couldn’t imagine her growing up without a mom or worse case scenario, never having a chance to see or talk to her mother again.

My PCP was very supportive and after a thorough physical exam, concluded that the physical pain I was experiencing appeared stress related. He suggested that I began to take an antidepressant, along with a low dosage of anxiety medication. My physician explained that Antidepressants are not addictive and would need to be taken regularly as prescribed in order for the medication to become effective in my system. Antidepressants work by increasing neurotransmitters such as serotonin and noradrenaline, chemicals in the brain responsible for mood and emotions. Increasing these levels can stabilize your moods and disrupt pain signals sent by nerves.

After about a month of regular therapy sessions and taking prescribed medication, I noticed a significant change within myself and surprisingly others did as well. Being in therapy allowed me to reflect and challenge distorted, negative thinking patterns, as well as irrational self-talk. It enabled me to gain a sense of control over my emotions and develop healthier coping mechanisms. I resumed activities that I enjoyed like going to the gym and library, line dancing, going to the beach or just going to the park to enjoy nature. In addition, I was now able to focus more on enhancing my personal and professional growth. I started working toward my own business which is an LLC, “Foundations For Serenity” focusing primarily on Mental health wellness by way of intensive case management and mental health services.

- By Kaleyna M. Tabb, MA, BSS,AAS
Tips For Mental Health Stability

By Kaleyna M. Tabb, MA, BSS.AAS

- **Exercise**: Physical activity and exercise is a great way to keep you physically healthy as well as improving your mental wellbeing. Research concluded that doing exercise releases feel-good chemicals called endorphins in the brain. Even a short burst of 15-minute brisk walking can improve your mental alertness, energy and mood. Whether you’re tending your garden, Bike-Riding, Dancing, or Swimming, exercise can significantly improve your quality of life. Finding an activity that you enjoy can make you feel less stressed, more focused, and give you a sense of purpose.

- **Healthy Dieting**: The foods you eat have a direct impact on your mood, cognitive function and mental health. Several nutritional deficiencies such as vitamin B12, B9 (folate) and zinc, can cause symptoms of depression and dementia such as low mood, fatigue, cognitive decline, and irritability. Complex carbohydrates like brown rice, quinoa, sweet potatoes, and starchy vegetables boost our serotonin levels and have a calming effect. Serotonin is a chemical messenger that helps the brain and nervous systems cells communicate; the primary function is to stabilize your mood, feelings of happiness and well-being. Too little serotonin can cause depression. There is a correlation between eating a processed low-nutrient diet and increased rates of depression and anxiety. However, eating a diet rich in whole foods decreases risk for these mental health issues. (Michigan State University Extension, 2022)

- **Avoiding Toxic People and Chaotic Environments**: Peace of Mind and Serenity within personal, as well as environmental space is priceless. People who are exposed to toxic behavior on a regular basis are at higher risk of developing mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In many cases, being constantly exposed to toxic people and environments can contribute to distorted sense of self-worth, leading to low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence. This can also lead to difficulty in forming healthy relationships in the future due to a lasting impact on a person’s mental health.

- **Check on friends and loved ones/co-workers Who are going through Hardships or Experiencing Times of Grief**: Life is full of ups and downs but can be more devastating to some people to cope with. Far too many times, people experience depression and choose to suffer in silence due to fear of being judged or embarrassment of exposing intimate details of their circumstances. Often times, the seemingly most pleasant individuals are severely depressed and unfortunately nobody knows this until they attempt or commit suicide. Another common behavior of a person experiencing depression is isolation, spending more time alone. If you haven’t heard from a friend or relative in a while or know someone who seems to be unusually standoffish, reach out to them and let them know that you are thinking about them. You would be surprised how much it helps for someone experiencing depressed moods to just know that someone actually cares about them and genuinely has concerns about their well-being.
WHY NOT PROSPER, INC.
OFFERING WOMEN IN DISTRESS
A HAND UP, NOT A HAND OUT

We are a grassroots nonprofit founded by a formerly incarcerated woman for other formerly incarcerated women. We are strong advocates for women and are committed to providing programs and services that support women in their re-entry efforts from prison to community. We provide a continuum of programs listed below and partner with resource organizations throughout the Philadelphia area.

MISSION
Our mission is to help women from prison systems discover their own strength by providing them with the support and resources that will empower them to become responsible, economically self-sufficient and contributing members of the community.

SERVICES
- Re-entry & Recovery Resource App
- Pre-Release Mentoring
- Residential On-Site Facilities
- Community Resource Center
- Teleservices
- Graphic Arts
- Workforce Academy
- Family and Reunification Support
- Assistance for Employment
- Support for Safe, Decent, and Affordable Housing
- Access to Drug and Trauma Treatment

WHY NOT PROSPER, INC.
717 CHELTEN AVENUE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19144
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TEL: (610) 716-1113
WWW.WHY-NOT-PROSPER.ORG
SISTERS WITH A GOAL

Formerly Incarcerated? Need Help With Healthcare, Child Custody, Discrimination, Housing, Legal Trouble?

CALL OUR HOTLINE TODAY:
1-866-C-ME-NOW5
WORKFORCE ACADEMY

JOB SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

WORK READINESS AND CERTIFICATE COURSES

The courses run in person and online. Students are required to register for the courses. The self-paced courses have instructional support. At the conclusion of the certificate courses, students take an industry exam to become certified in the subject studied.

Employment Workshops
The goal of this course is to provide students with the documents and interviewing skills needed to succeed in finding employment.

Computer Literacy
The goal of this course is to provide students with keyboarding, internet, Google email skills, and how to use basic computer input and output devices.

Customer Service
The goal of this course is to provide students with an understanding of quality customer service and how good customer service skills impact job security.

Re-Entry Work Readiness
Why Not Prosper’s work readiness program is designed to provide employability skills for formerly incarcerated women. The program consists of employment workshops, computer literacy, and customer service courses. At the conclusion of the program, students will receive a certificate of completion.

Certificate Courses
- Basic Caregiver Certificate – In-Class and Online 6-week course
- ServSafe Food Handler Certificate - Online Self-Paced Course
- Computer Skills for the Workplace – In Class Self-Paced Course
- Phlebotomy Certificate – In Class and Online 12 weeks [120 required clock hours]
Inspire Magazine is a publication of Why Not Prosper, Inc. It is designed to be a social, racial and health equity magazine featuring inspiration, insights and spotlights on our community’s most pressing issues.

Why Not Prosper is a grassroots nonprofit founded by a formerly incarcerated woman for other formerly incarcerated women. We are strong advocates for women and are committed to providing programs and services that support women in their re-entry efforts from prison to community.

Why Not Prosper provides a continuum of programs that includes Pre-Release Mentoring to incarcerated women, residential services at Why Not Prosper House and community services at our Resource Center located in Philadelphia, PA.

Above: The SWAG Team at the Why Not Prosper Command Center in Germantown, PA.

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FACEBOOK: @WhyNotProsper | INSTAGRAM: @why__not__prosper | TWITTER: @whynotprosper
YOUTUBE: @whynotprosper | LINKEDIN: michelle-simmons
WEBSITE: www.why-not-prosper.org