

Susan Burton Gives a Voice to Formerly Incarcerated Women Through Her Memoir and JustUS Voices: A Living Library

Burton's A New Way of Life Re-Entry Project and a Living Library through a Collaboration with McKinney & Associates Changes the Narrative about Incarceration

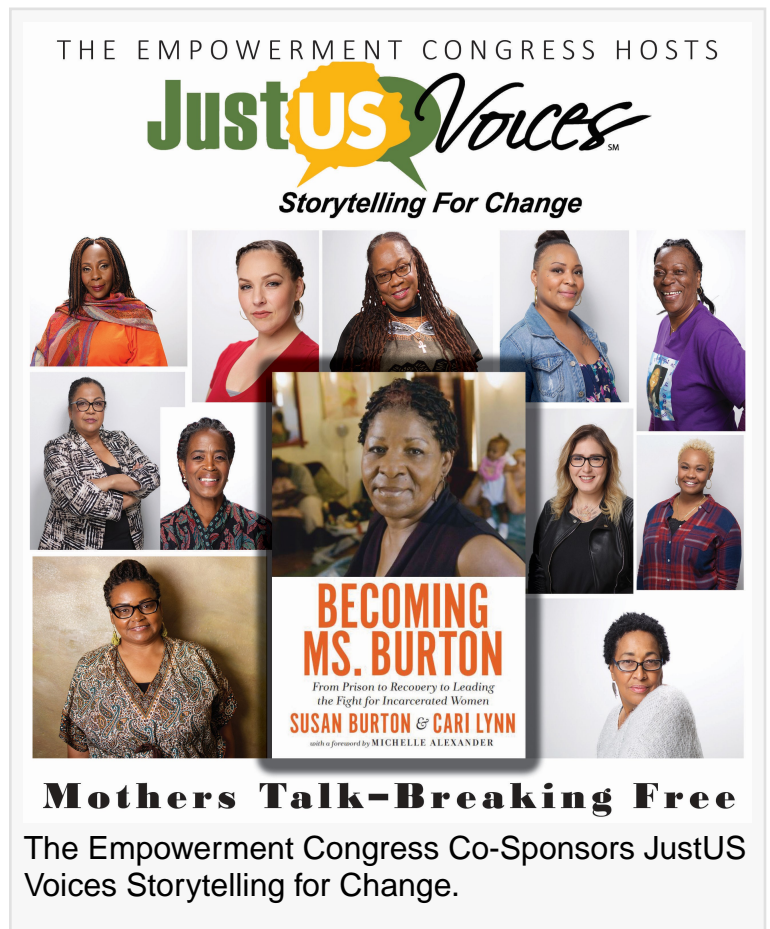
LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, May 12, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the eve of Mother's Day, a large number of mothers are spending Mother's Day behind bars in California and across the country. More than 60 percent of women in state prisons are mothers of children under the age of 18. They are disproportionately Black and Latina.

Women behind bars are mostly invisible and their voices are silent in the public discourse around mass incarceration. Their perverse and unique circumstances defy most public notions about crime, punishment and public safety. Although women are the fastest-growing segment of the prison population, the national conversation on mass incarceration focuses primarily on the experiences of men.

To raise the voices of women who have been touched by the criminal justice system, the JustUS Voices | Storytelling for Change, a new multimedia initiative that aims to transform the public dialogue on mass incarceration through storytelling and the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated women, will launch at the L.A. Downtown Hotel, 333 Figueroa Street on May 13, 2017 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. RSVP is mandatory at 323-563-3575.

The event, hosted by Actresses Ta'Rhonda Jones and Jeryl Prescott, will showcase five formerly incarcerated women who have been touched by the criminal justice system, Susan Burton, executive director and founder of [A New Way of Life](#) Reentry Project, and the debut of her memoir, "Becoming Ms. Burton From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women." The hosts: Jones is best known for her recurring role as Porsha Taylor on the hip hop television series, "Empire," and Prescott is known for her roles as Jacqui in the AMC series, "The Walking Dead," and in a recurring role in Showtime's "Ray Donovan."

JustUS Voices will broaden the conversation to include perspectives and insights through the unique lens of gender, race and justice. JustUS Voices features authentic storytelling by women who have



THE EMPOWERMENT CONGRESS HOSTS

JustUS VoicesSM

Storytelling For Change

BECOMING MS. BURTON
From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women
SUSAN BURTON & CARI LYNN
with a foreword by MICHELLE ALEXANDER

Mothers Talk-Breaking Free

The Empowerment Congress Co-Sponsors JustUS Voices Storytelling for Change.

been touched by and triumphed over the tragedies of mass incarceration. It will capture their lived experiences through video vignettes, guided storytelling, social media, live events and “Living Libraries.”

The JustUS Voices Living Library animates the stories of five formerly incarcerated women who, like human books, can be checked out by the library audience. The courageous five women describe themselves as:

- A former lifer who attained two college degrees since coming home, and now helps other formerly incarcerated students pursue their dreams.
- A sister and aunt who sought her own salvation from drug misuse, and now guides others toward rehabilitation.
- A self-described “disrupter” who calls for ‘eradicating the box’ and brings urban gardens to Los Angeles food deserts.
- A daughter of undocumented parents who emerged after three years in solitary confinement to build the prison to college pipeline among “revolutionary scholars.”
- A grandmother who endured childhood trauma but found her creative spark in prison, and is now writing plays and leading a women’s self-help group.



Empire's Casting Director and A New Way of Life Board Member Leah Daniels Butler lends her voice and star power to the ANWOL cause.

"On my way out prison, a guard said, "I'll see you back in a little while," said Burton who has been dubbed the modern-day [Harriett Tubman](#). "I only had \$200 and a one-way ticket to Skid Row, at that moment, I decided I was never going back."

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The bell has rung and the successful journey of formerly incarcerated Susan Burton has gone viral by notables: Tavis Smiley (PBS), Nicholas Kristof (New York Times), Michelle Alexander (civil rights advocate), Angela Davis (activist), and [Bill Moyers](#) are among the dozens of journalists, talk show hosts, and civil rights leaders who shared how Burton, a former California inmate who found a way to help formerly-incarcerated women rebuild their lives. ANWOL has served more than 1,000 women and is a national leader in the struggle to break the cycle of addiction and incarceration.

"I stand in the commitment to #Free America by lending my voice to the narrative describing the mass incarceration of women," said Burton who counts Hollywood celebrities and civil rights leaders as her supporters: John Legend, Common, Quincy Jones, and more. "I just wanted my life to count towards something good."

The Living Library is co-sponsored by the Empowerment Congress. A New Way of Life Re-Entry Project partnered with strategic communications firm McKinney & Associates to launch JustUS Voices in California.

This is a media friendly event. For press credentials, talent submission consideration, an interview request or speaking engagement for Ms. Burton or Leah Daniels-Butler, contact Marie Lemelle, publicist for ANWOL at 213-276-7827 or info@platinumstarpr.com. To view Ms. Burton's book tour dates, go to <http://becomingmsburton.com/events/>

About JustUS Voices

JustUS Voices | Storytelling for Change is a multimedia story project. The initiative is a partnership between Susan Burton and a New Way of Life Re-entry Project and strategic communications firm, McKinney & Associates that embraces advocacy through the power of storytelling, interviews, testimonials and commentaries, blogs, video vignettes and social media. The project website will also invite new storytellers – formerly incarcerated women who never knew they had a voice – to share through an online “Tell Your Story” function. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Weingart Foundation provided initial funding.

About A New Way of Life

Founded in 1998 by CNN Top Ten Hero Susan Burton, A New Way of Life provides housing and support to formerly incarcerated women for successful community re-entry, family reunification and individual healing. ANWOL, based in South Los Angeles, California, also works to restore the civil rights of formerly incarcerated people and empowering, organizing and mobilizing advocates for social change, civic engagement and personal transformation. She is nationally known as an advocate for restoring basic civil and human rights to those who have served time. Among the many honors and recognition bestowed on Ms. Burton, she is the recipient of the James Irvine Foundation Leadership Award in 2014. In 2015, the Los Angeles Times named her one of the nation's 18 New Civil Rights Leaders. In an effort to continue to bring social justice issues to the forefront, Burton and award-winning author Michelle Alexander collaborated on creating an annual Justice on Trial Film Festival, which is set for September 2017 at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

<http://justiceontrialfilmfestival.net/>

About McKinney & Associates

McKinney & Associates is the first Black woman-owned firm in the nation's capital dedicated to social justice communications. For more than 25 years, the firm has promoted, marketed and advocated on behalf of progressive public policy including criminal justice reform, voting rights, health equity and racial justice by advancing authentic leaders and initiatives that embody those values.



Actress/Rapper Ta'Rhonda Jones, Empire's Porsha will co-host JustUS Voices.



Actress Jeryl Prescott (The Walking Dead, Ray Donovan and West of Hell) will co-host JustUS Voices.

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A New Way of Life
RE-ENTRY PROJECT

LINKING PROMISE WITH OPPORTUNITY

A New Way of Life provides housing and support to formerly incarcerated women for successful community re-entry, family reunification and individual healing.

This press release can be viewed online at: <http://www.einpresswire.com>

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