



# Actor, Advocate Jesse Williams Says 'Free Them Now' – Urges Release Of People In Jail During COVID-19 Pandemic

*Star lends support to national #FreeAndSafe campaign calling to release people in jails during public health pandemic*

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES, April 3, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Jesse Williams, star of Grey's Anatomy and racial justice advocate, has taken to social media to champion the need to decarcerate jails around the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Joining forces with racial justice and civil rights organization [Advancement Project National Office](#), Williams has [asked fans](#) to call policymakers in Miami, Detroit, Baton Rouge, and St. Louis, and demand people in jail are released and made [#FreeAndSafe](#) from the coronavirus.

"I wanna' suggest one thing that we could be thinking about and that we could be doing... the impact of this COVID-19 pandemic on our almost 700,000 brothers and sisters around this country locked away in local jails who don't have access to consistent running water, or soap, or certainly hand sanitizer, can't social distance, and don't have adequate health care ... [in] jails where people are locked up for traffic tickets and unpaid fines and petty misdemeanors but they don't have the money to pay for their bail," said Williams in an Instagram video posted Wednesday night.

Williams is throwing his support behind a growing coalition of advocates, organizations, and social influencers calling for decarceration in jails, prisons, and detention centers amidst the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic.

People are jailed in cramped quarters, cannot practice social distancing and don't have regular access to soap or adequate healthcare. Jails and prisons fail to provide sufficient hand soap and alcohol-based sanitizers to the people detained in and working in these settings. Once inside this perfect breeding ground, the virus will rapidly spread, leading to countless illnesses and deaths both in and out of the facility.

Williams urges people to visit [freeandsafenow.org](#), a website that provides a call to action allowing people around the country to call policymakers, urging them to release community members to their families where they can be safe and practice physical distancing. The website also provides information on each jurisdiction where legal action is being explored, including St. Louis, Miami, Detroit, and East Baton Rouge, challenging sheriffs, courts and cities to release community members that are in jail during the coronavirus pandemic. The #FreeAndSafe campaign also includes petitions for communities with large populations in detention in Arizona and Pennsylvania. Advancement Project National Office is leading litigation alongside its national and grassroots partners urging decarceration in an effort to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who are in jail simply because they could not afford bail and be released on their own recognizance.

"It's a cash bail country, by and large, and some people just don't have 300 bucks to buy themselves out. And those that do have a little bit more green paper can. We know that's unfair ...They're the ones who are actually trapped," said Williams.

"People in the jail, those who work there, and the general public are at greater risk if we leave people inside than if we let them return home. Wealth-based pretrial detention criminalizes poverty, destroys lives, and exacerbates already existing systemic racism in the criminal legal system," said Advancement Project National Office Justice Project Director Thomas B. Harvey.

"The Justice Project at Advancement Project is proud to use litigation, policy advocacy, communications and coalition-building strategies to assist community partners and allies in transforming policing and abolishing the criminalization of poverty and race."

If these residents are not released to their families in the coming days, health care services in jails and prisons will quickly be overwhelmed, leaving a devastating death toll. This death toll won't only affect those inside once the inadequate healthcare inside the jail has been pushed to its limits.

"Every minute counts. There are people that are trapped ... in steel and concrete cages and because they didn't have a couple of hundred bucks. They're human beings too. They deserve our love, empathy and attention," said Williams to his fans on a video that has since been viewed more than 575,000 times in under 24 hours.

For more information, visit [freeandsafenow.org](http://freeandsafenow.org).

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Advancement Project National Office is a next-generation, multi-racial civil rights organization. Rooted in the great human rights struggles for equality and justice, we exist to fulfill America's promise of a caring, inclusive and just democracy.

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