

Three Social Justice Opportunities

19 February 2021

- **What do I do?** “Attend” information session;
- **How Much Time Will it Take?** Probably no more than an hour and a half.
- **Tell me more...**

1) Criminal Justice Reform: from the Paulist Center’s St. Dismas Group

A Paulist Center community member recently alerted us to a clemency campaign based in Brockton for a man named **William Allen**. Mr. Allen, now 46, engaged in an armed robbery at age 20 that led to the death of a Brockton-area. Though not committing the murder himself, Mr. Allen’s participation in the crime - under state law - made him as culpable as the murderer and thus he was sentenced to life in prison without parole. The organization **Second Chance Justice** is asking the Governor for clemency in the form of a *commutation* (reduction) in Allen’s sentence. They are inviting members of other communities to join them in this campaign. **Thus, Second Chance Justice is inviting you** to join them for an info-session to learn more about William Allen's case, his progress, clemency in MA, and what we can do to encourage change.

Ways you can help:

Learn more: Registration link for info-session February 24th at 5:30pm:

<http://bit.ly/BICSCJFeb24> (March dates TBA.) Visit our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/secondchancejustice/> to learn more.

Other info sessions:

- Monday, March 1st , 6pm: <https://mcan.salsalabs.org/RSVPforBICEvent/index.html>
- Sunday, Mar 7th , 4pm: <https://mcan.salsalabs.org/AnRSVPforBIC/index.html>
- Thursday, Mar 11th ,
11:30am: <https://mcan.salsalabs.org/BICSecondChanceJusticeCampaignBringHimHome311/index.html>

Second Chance Justice supports clemency for William Allen for the following reasons:

- He was 20 at the time of his crime, and as evidenced by his inability to understand his potential to earn a life sentence for a murder that did not exist, brain science has shown us more and more that the brain and its prefrontal cortex (decision-making center) are not fully formed until approximately 25.

- He has worked *exceptionally* hard in prison to better himself through various vocational programs, volunteer programs, and religious services - all the while expecting to live out his life in prison
- He is admired by not only fellow prisoners, but by prison staff and guards.
- In 2017, the parameters of law by which Mr. Allen were sentenced were changed, opening a door to reconsider the applicability to his particular case.
- (Less related to merit, but relevant in 2020/21 - William has multiple comorbidities)

Despite these weighty reasons, this campaign is engaged in an uphill battle. The Parole Board just held its first clemency hearing in six years this past October, and while the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) of MA has urged the Governor to use his clemency tool, at this time, he has not done so.

It is the hope of **Second Chance Justice** that through raising awareness, garnering more media attention, and placing appropriate pressure on those who hold power, we may get Mr. Allen a hearing with the Parole Board and perhaps a hearing with the Governor's Council - the final stage in the clemency process.

- **What do I do?** Sign the petition via internet; learn more about the case.
- **How Much Time Will it Take?** An hour or two of reading.
- **Tell me more...**

2) **Racial Justice: from Paulist Center attendees of the Faith and Racial Equity Program, The Martinsville 7**

Seventy years ago, February 1951, **seven young African-American men** -- Frank Hairston, Jr., James Luther Hairston; Howard Lee Hairston; Booker T. Millner; John Clabon Taylor; Joe Henry Hampton and Francis DeSales Grayson – (known as “the Martinsville Seven”), **were wrongfully executed** by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The **Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop**, an organization who sponsored an immersion experience for the **Faith and Racial Equity Program**, is working with the Martinsville Seven Initiative Inc., and the Martinsville 7 Project – to learn more about their case and the advocacy effort to **call for a posthumous pardon**.

Ways you can help:

A) Sign the petition:

Sign the petition to Governor Northam: https://www.change.org/p/ralph-s-northam-governor-northam-posthumously-pardon-the-martinsville-7?use__react=false

B) Become involved with The Martinsville Seven Initiative, Inc. Formed in September of 2019, this organization is working to bring attention to the example of systemic injustice. Their goal has also been to solicit a Pardon and apology from the State of Virginia for this travesty and at least to commemorate this event in the history of Martinsville in one of their local museums. Any information, support, or historical data that you can lend to this project will be overwhelmingly appreciated. To become a member of this organization or to simply share information, call 276-226-4318 or go to www.martinsville7.org

C) Educate, educate, educate!

For a comprehensive study of the Martinsville 7 case, read *The Martinsville Seven: Race, Rape & Capital Punishment* by Eric W. Rise. <https://www.upress.virginia.edu/title/2797>

3) Slave Trading in the Massachusetts?

- **What do I do?** “Attend” a Museum Tour;
- **How Much Time Will it Take?** An hour and a half.
- **When:** Wednesday, February 24th, 6-7:30pm (you must preregister; see link below)
- **Tell me more...**

Did you know that there were slaves in Massachusetts? Slavetrading took place at the site of the now Royall House Museum (<https://royallhouse.org/> The virtual tour uses the history of the Royall family, a local slavetrading family, to tell the often forgotten history of Northern slavery and the North’s role in the global slave trade. More importantly, the Museum centers the lives and labor of enslaved people to tell a complex story about resistance and freedom and demonstrate how Black people were crucial to ending slavery in Massachusetts.

- To attend and be part of the discussion, register here:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-royall-house-and-slave-quarters-tour-premiere-and-discussion-tickets-138659019861>