

COMMUNITIES OVER CAGES.

CLOSE THE JAIL ATL: COMMUNITIES OVER CAGES CAMPAIGN

WHAT WE WANT

The Communities Over Cages Campaign calls for:

- The closure of the Atlanta City Detention Center (also known as the "Extra" Jail);
- The reallocation of the \$32.5 million dollars spent annually on its operation;
- The repurposing of the giant multi-story facility into a Center for Wellness and Freedom.

WHO WE ARE

Communities Over Cages is a campaign led by Women on the Rise and the Racial Justice Action Center. We are Black and Brown women - cis, trans, and gender non-conforming - who are formerly incarcerated or otherwise directly impacted by our current criminal legal and immigration system and who have united in this campaign to help the city redeem its past and transform itself in the service of our communities. We are joined by forty-two (and growing) allied organizations.

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WHAT WE ENVISION

What can our communities do with \$32.5 million dollars and a giant multi-story building in the heart of downtown?

We envision a **Center for Wellness and Freedom** - a place of hope, of interdependence, of wellness, of community power. We envision a unique public-private business model that allows for ongoing community leadership and decision making. We envision a vibrant, mural-filled community space with well-funded services and supports inside.

A design team, comprised of key stakeholders, mandated to lead a comprehensive process that includes rigorous community engagement should decide the details. Our preliminary community visioning processes include ideas such as:

- A rooftop garden and/or a rooftop performing arts center
- A one-stop-shop for Atlantians coming home from prison and jail
- Solar Panels and a Solar Panel installation training program
- A wellness center and clinic (with alternative methodologies as well as traditional)
- Entrepreneurial programs for formerly incarcerated women
- A childcare center and parenting supports
- A 24-Hour behavioral crisis center
- Community gathering space
- Office Space for racial, gender, economic, and immigrant justice non-profit organizations
- Creative Art Studio Space



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WHAT WE BELIEVE

- ★ **WE BELIEVE** our communities and our people are beautiful, resilient, and wise, and deserve wellness and safety!
- ★ **WE BELIEVE** no one should be arrested, harassed by police, or locked in a cage simply because they are poor, were not born in this country, or suffer from unmet mental health or substance abuse needs.
- ★ **WE BELIEVE** our communities and neighborhoods are made more safe and well when funding goes into community based services and supports instead of police and jails. We work to remove the money from our punishment system and put it back into our communities.
- ★ **WE BELIEVE** that there is enough money and resources for the City and County to care for and provide opportunity to all of its people, and to put an end to glaring racial and economic disparities that have plagued us for decades.
- ★ **WE BELIEVE** communities most impacted by our criminal legal system and by violence and crime (they are the same communities) are the experts on what is needed for safety and wellness. They should be the deciders in the reallocation of funds and the repurposing of the facility (and in most city development projects).
- ★ **WE BELIEVE** women - cis, trans, gender non-conforming, in particular, bear the brunt of many of the negative economic and social impacts of over-policing and jails, because we have been locked up for trying to survive, or because we are the ones most often paying the fines, fees, bail, and housing, feeding, and supporting our formerly incarcerated loved ones in our homes with no help from the city, county, or state.
- ★ **WE BELIEVE** in redemption. And that the City of Atlanta needs it.
- ★ **WE BELIEVE** in putting an end to the racist and classist "Broken Window/ Quality of Life" policing and into courts who make their money off the very poorest and most vulnerable in our communities.



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HOW WE GOT HERE

- Atlanta City Detention Center, "the extra jail," was built right before the 1996 Olympics specifically to hide the city's poor and homeless from the Olympics visitors and viewers.
- The extra city jail is exactly that: extra. It exists in addition to both Fulton County and DeKalb County Jails and holds people accused merely of city ordinance violations. This means that most, if not all, of the people held at the jail are there because they are poor, have unmet mental health, and/or substance use needs. The city has been using the jail as a makeshift and dysfunctional homeless shelter and mental hospital.
- Up until 2018 when the Mayor rightly put an end to the practice, the only other people held there were immigrants, separated from their families and detained through a contract the city held with ICE.
- The jail has over 1100 beds but thanks to reforms such as ending cash bail, reclassifying marijuana, the creation of the Pre-Arrest Diversion Initiative, and the end to the contract with ICE, the daily population is down to fewer than 150 people a night.
- This means tax payers spend \$32.5 million dollars each year to keep a giant building open to hide (not help) fewer than 150 of Atlanta's most vulnerable residents who've done nothing more than "driving with a broken tail light," "drinking within a 100 feet of a liquor store," or "urinating in public."
- We can do better. We can repeal the laws that get people arrested, use the \$32.5 million dollars for services that help the most vulnerable in our communities, and repurpose the building that once jailed, punished, and tortured our people into one that celebrates and supports every Atlantan.

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HOW WE GET FREE

When we fight, we win. When we value people over profits, we win. When we empower and invest in community-led decision making, we win. Our proposal and fight is to divest from profit-centered initiatives and invest in the people of the Atlanta Metro Area; diverting resources into community programs and services that are able to address root causes (i.e substance use, mental health, lack of jobs, etc.) so we can build safer and stronger communities. The Communities Over Cages campaign proposes that the design team is specifically community-led because our personal and collective freedom, safety, and wellness is something we should be in control of. **We are the ones we've been waiting for.**

- *Can your group or organization sign on as an allied organization in support?*
- *Can you talk to your City Council representatives or attend public meetings where important votes will happen to shutter the jail and repurpose the facility?*
- *Help us find and recruit investors and raise additional funds to manifest our vision?*
- *Will you contact your council member or the Mayor and tell them that you support a community led design team to lead this process?*

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CONTACT US:

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● (404) 458-6909





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OUR CURRENT ALLIANCE MEMBERS:



SisterLove, Inc.



Winning
Justice for
Working
Women

SOUTHERN
CENTER FOR
HUMAN
RIGHTS



THE
**COUNTER
NARRATIVE**
PROJECT



**LEGAL
ACTION
CENTER**

Sister
Song

THE NEW GEORGIA
PROJECT



LaGender, Inc.
"We Are No Longer Invisible"

AID
ATLANTA



NATALIE HALL
FULTON COUNTY
COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 4



ASIAN AMERICANS
**ADVANCIN
JUSTICE**
ATLANTA

Georgia State
University | COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES
WOMEN'S, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES



Trans(forming)



ATLANTA'S
JOHN MARSHALL
LAW SCHOOL



THE VISION CHURCH
OF ATLANTA



GEORGIA
JUSTICE
PROJECT

American Friends
Service Committee

THE RE-ENTRY CONNECTION INC
Mentoring Formerly Incarcerated Females
501c3 Tax Deductible



innovation
LAW LAB