



# Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative

## Phase III Final Report

Walter Lomax



This report must begin with Mammoth and Novelty: Mammoth, because of the magnitude of the task we are undertaking; and Novelty, because of the newness and originality of its concept.

We concluded Phase III January 10, 2008 with a measure of success, by that I mean we collected over 300 hundred family members, friends, and supporters for our data base. We sent invitations to over four hundred people, and though the attendance was small in comparison, the planning and execution of the program was flawless. In keeping with Malcolm X's philosophy, we begin the program on time. Sister Dolores gave the opening pray, followed by Dr. Anna McPhatter, who welcomed us to the campus. Ms. Polly Riddims, Fusions Director, introduced the guest. A Power Point presentation giving a historical perspective of the MRJI's movement was presented. And a much deserved award was presented to our Unsung Heron, Mrs. Verna Burnett for her dedication and relentless compiling of the many names, numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses into our data base, the filing system, visiting the women at MCI-W, answering letters, phone calls, attending meetings, and to much more to mention. Often time's people look at the finish product and conclude that it was easy. Ask Mrs. Burnett, she can tell you differently. Ms. Adar Ayira, along with her group gave an excellent performance, she performed two of her signature pieces, "Michelle Obama, and Chase Street," she and the group also performed a piece designed specifically for our initiative, and especially for the women involved. Former Delegate Davis spoke on the legislative process, specifically what needs to be done by way of support in contacting the legislators in the Senate and House Judiciary committees. Senator McFadden was unable to attend because of family matters, but a meeting was held with him on the evening before the event, and he reassured us that he would in fact be introducing a bill in this general assemble session. Delegates Branch and Carter also did not attend. However, meetings have been held with them, and they support our efforts, as does Senator Lisa Gladden. Dr. McFatter, the Chair of Morgan's Social Work Department spoke on the survey and study she hopes to conduct with family members and friends on the effects of having an incarcerated loved one. Our next speaker, Mr. Michael Well, a Maryland Parole commissioner, spoke to the concerns of having sensible parole and criminal justice policies. He specifically spoke to the concerns of having an aging prison population that are being little more than warehoused. Mr. Lamont Carey, an ex-prisoner who works with ex-offender spoke on the importance of having a support system, and how he was able to transform his experience in prison into a productive transformation on the outside. (More on Mr. Carey, latter in the report.) Ms. Monique Dixon, Program Director at Baltimore OSI spoke to the importance of grassroots organizations working in the community, and coalition building. She spoke of how her organization supports positive programs, and encourages individuals to develop their thoughts and ideas into viable projects. Mr. Fanon Hill, representing Safe and Sound, with the Youth Ambassadors, and Mr. Ron Williams delivered a powerful spoken word on the stupidity of keeping silent which spoke directly to our initiative.

Following our break for lunch Mr. Lamont Carey delivered a powerful spoken word on 'Imagine,' The inhumanness of living with a cell partner, "The disappointing letter received, or not received, the visit not gotten, the phone call not accepted, and the anticipated reality of being released from prison. The family members who spoke all gave hart warming testimonies. One family member told of reading a scripture on placing yourself in the other persons place. She said that she now realize how important that phone call, that visit, and that letter answered is. It gave her a completely new awareness and perspective of how it must be for someone incarcerated.

The program concluded with remarks on the legislation we hope to have introduced in the upcoming general assemble session: After an individual has served twenty years, received a recommendation from the parole board, and a favorable evaluation from the Patuxent institute, the decision to determine an individuals release should be decided by a three Judge panel. Sister Gwynne Shelton gave the closing prayer.

Finally, the program was videoed by Mr. Ralph Randall, a personal friend, who I neglected to mention in the program. For which I am publicly apologizing. This brother was, and is the prisons institutional coordinator. He was with us when Phase I was being developed at the Maryland House of Correction, and understands the history of this movement. He has reported on every aspect of our struggle, and deserves credit for keeping our issue in the public eye. Thank you Ralph. When we forget our history, and those who struggled with us, it becomes just, His Story. In the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability, it comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of people willing to make a change." Dr. M.L.K., Jr. The strength of any effort is the exact measure of its results.

Sincerely,

Walter Lomax, Director  
Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative