

#FREEnewyork

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 15th, 2018

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As faith leaders committed to justice and racial equity, we write to you on this day commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr., in the spirit of his words: "Justice too long delayed is justice denied." By declaring your support for closing Rikers, and reforming bail, speedy trial and discovery law, you have taken a just position. By committing to take action to address New York's statewide jail crisis and setting a three-year target for closing the Rikers Island correctional complex, you recognize the urgency behind these crises, especially for communities of color. Mass incarceration is a statewide issue and we need your leadership in advocating for statewide solutions that will truly meet the needs of communities most impacted by mass incarceration. **Reform** must be bold and comprehensive. It must protect against collateral consequences. And it must be **defined by directly impacted voices and the outcomes that it achieves**.

The numbers tell a chilling story: On any given day, over 25,000 New Yorkers are caged in county jails. 67% of those incarcerated have not been convicted. They are legally innocent, but caged because they are poor, and trapped because their Constitutional rights to due process and a fair and speedy trial are routinely violated. As people committed to justice, we cannot abide by a wealth-based bail system that criminalizes poor New Yorkers and people of color, a failed speedy trial law that allows people to languish in jail for months or years pre-trial, or a cloaked discovery system that blindfolds people to critical information about their case.

Our faith traditions remind us of the sacred importance of radical hospitality and beloved community. If New York is to be a place of genuine welcome, we cannot permit the continued existence of human rights violations that are funded, and therefore implicitly endorsed by our tax dollars. We cannot allow the ballooning of jail populations in counties across our state, or the extreme socioeconomic and racial disparities that plague our criminal justice system. Our families deserve better. Our children deserve better. *And New York can **do** better.*

As those of us with congregations impacted by the criminal justice system know, incarceration, even for a short amount of time, corrodes connection to the community, ability to earn a fair outcome in your case, and the well-being of you and your family. A respect for humanity demands that we end mass pretrial incarceration and ensure that access to justice is not contingent on access to wealth nor the color of one's skin. **Our communities need and deserve bold and comprehensive bail, speedy trial and discovery law reform.** That is why [JustLeadershipUSA](http://JustLeadershipUSA.org), in partnership with organizations and directly impacted communities across the state launched a bold campaign to [#FREEnewyork](https://www.instagram.com/free_newyork/) and bring justice to communities that have been devastated by incarceration for far too long. With over 100 partner organizations representing more than 20 counties, directly impacted membership across the state, [#FREEnewyork](https://www.instagram.com/free_newyork/) demands not partial reform that results in collateral consequences or fails to address the root causes of criminalization, but gold-standard legislation that decarcerates our jails and transforms our criminal justice system into one that is just, transparent, and equitable.

We applaud you for committing to bail, speedy trial, and discovery reform in your State of the State address and list of key 2018 proposals. However, as we know, the details of this legislation are what will determine whether reform efforts truly meet the needs of impacted communities and achieve the outcomes that this crisis demands. Tomorrow, when you release your Executive Budget, faith communities, directly impacted leaders and members and partner organizations across the state who are dedicated to the campaigns to #FREEnewyork and #CLOSErikers, will be looking for your executive budget to include legislative language that powerfully overhauls the criminal justice system.

On this day, we remember Martin Luther King Jr.'s declaration, "The time is *always* right, to do what is right." Governor Cuomo, NOW is the time to accelerate statewide decarceration and the closure of the Rikers Island Jail Complex by ensuring that New York State passes *meaningful pretrial justice reform* in Albany – reform that is driven by the voices of those who have been most harmed by mass incarceration. In the words of Ella Baker, "We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes."

Signed,

1. Reverend Andrew Wilkes, The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York, Associate Pastor of Social Justice and Young Adults
2. Dr. Chloe Breyer, Executive Director of the Interfaith Center
3. Reverend David F. Telfort, Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church
4. Pastor Elyse Ambrose, Associate Pastor of Social Justice, Church of the Village
5. Maxine Phillips, NYC Religion and Socialism Working Group, Democratic Socialists of America
6. Dave Ehlke, Justice Ministries, New York City Presbytery
7. Christina Tasca, Executive Director, Muslim Community Network
8. Ian Carr Mcpherson, Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries, West End Collegiate Church
9. Reverend Christopher De La Cruz, First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica Queens
10. Reverend Emily McNeill, New York State Labor-Religion Coalition
11. Rabbi Rachel Timoner, Congregation Beth Elohim
12. Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara, The Village Zendo
13. Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Executive Director, Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
14. Reverend Rubén Austria, Founding Executive Director, Community Connections for Youth
15. Reverend Ron Steif, Executive Director, National Religious Campaign Against Torture
16. Reverend Wendy Calderón-Payne, Executive Director, Urban Youth Alliance International and BronxConnect
17. Rev. Jacqueline J. Lewis, Ph.D., Senior Minister, Middle Collegiate Church
18. Oneilove Alston, Executive Director, PICO-Faith in NY
19. Macky Alston, Senior Vice President, Prophetic and Creative Leadership, Auburn Seminary
20. Rev. Kaji Dousa, Senior Minister, Park Avenue Christian Church
21. Rev. Stephanie Kendell, Staff Clergy Liaison, Park Avenue Christian Church
22. Rev. Dr. Hector B. Custodio, Senior Pastor of Immanuel-First Spanish UMC
23. Rev. Sydney Avent, Park Avenue Christian Church
24. Rev. Ismael Sanchez, Park Avenue Christian Church
25. Rev. Peter Heltzel, Union Theological Seminary
26. Rev. Jeanette Zaragoza-De León, Park Avenue Christian Church
27. Rev. Bertram Johnson, Minister of Justice, Advocacy & Change, The Riverside Church in the City of New York
28. Rabbi Barat Ellman, Ph.D., Faculty, Bard Prison Initiative, Adjunct Professor, Theology, Fordham University
29. Su Patel, Public Square Media
30. Rabbi Jeremy Kalmanofsky, Rabbi, Anshe Chesed
31. Hans Hallundbaek, Coordinator, Prison Partnership Program, Hudson River Presbytery, UN NGO Representative for the International Prison Chaplains Association
32. Rabbi Seth Wax, Jewish Chaplain, Williams College
33. Rev. Vivian Nixon, Executive Director, College and Community Fellowship
34. Rev. Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches

35. Rev. Dustin C. Wright, Pastor and President, New York Messiah Lutheran Church and New York State Council of Churches
36. Rev. Adriene Thorne, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn
37. Marc Greenberg, Executive Director, Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing
38. Rev. Martha Swords-Horrell, Emmaus United Methodists Church-Albany
39. Rev. Bobby Outterson-Murphy, Pastor, United Ministry of Delhi
40. Rev Jo-An L. Owings, President, AME Ministerial Alliance of NY
41. Rev. John W. McNeill, Senior Pastor, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Ithaca NY
42. Rabbi Rachel Goldenberg, Rabbi/Founder, Malkhut: Progressive Jewish Spirituality in Queens
43. Dr. James Fairbanks, Editor, Saving Justice Newsletter
44. Rabbi Avi Killip, VP of Strategy and Programs, Hadar Institute for Jewish Learning
45. Reverend James Sheehan, Campus Ministry, Catholic Archdiocese of NY
46. Rabbi Jonah Geffen, Rabbi, Congregation Shaare Zedek
47. Mr. Jerry Rivers, Environmental Scientist, The Vineyard Church
48. Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Executive Director, Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
49. Reverend Schuyler Vogel, Senior Minister, Fourth Universalist Society in the City of New York
50. Rabbi Joshua Stanton, Rabbi, East End Temple
51. Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, Rabbinic Director
52. Rabbi Mark Hurvitz
53. Rabbi David Adelson, Dean, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion
54. Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster, Director of Programs, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
55. Rabbi Liev Meiowitz Nelson, Director of Education, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
56. Rabbi Felicia Sol, Rabbi, B'nai Jeshurun
57. Rabbi Nancy H Wiener, Director, Blaustein Center for Pastoral Counseling, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
58. Rabbi Lina Zerbarini
59. Rev. Zac Martin, Pastor of Community Outreach, Trinity Grace Park Slope
60. Pastor Russell Joyce, Lead Pastor, Hope Brooklyn
61. Rabbi William Plevan
62. Imam Samer al-Raey, GNYLRC, College Chaplain
63. Reverend Hugo Monroy, Pastor, Second Christian Church, Bronx NY
64. Russ Jennings, Advisory Board of Micah Institute, Host/Producer of Love in A Dangerous Time podcast
65. Rabbi Robert N Levine, Senior Rabbi, Congregation Rodeph Sholom
66. Reverend Emma Loftin-Woods, Director, Kingdom of Heaven Within, Inc.
67. Rabbi Jo Hirschmann
68. Rabbi Steve Gutow, Visiting Scholar, Wagner School, NYU
69. Rev. Melissa Boyer, Pastor, Katonah United Methodist Church
70. Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President, Union Theological Seminary
71. Rev. Fred Davie, Executive Vice President, Union Theological Seminary
72. Rabbi Lauren Grabelle Herrmann, Rabbi, Society for the Advancement of Judaism
73. Rev. Cris Mogenson, President, New York State Association of Protestant Chaplains
74. Rev. Moira Ahearne, Interim Pastor, Presbyterian
75. Reverend Joe Cleveland, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Saratoga Springs
76. Sister M Doretta Cornell, Chari RDC Social Justice Board, Sisters of the Divine Compassion
77. Rev. Dr. Karyn Carlo, Global Theological Educator, American Baptist Churches
78. Intern Minister Julio Torres Jr., Intern Minister, Unitarian Church of Westport
79. Reverend Ron Garner, Pastor, Wantagh Memorial Congregational Church
80. Rev. Earl Arnold, Honorably Retired, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
81. Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth, Reverend, Deansboro Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
82. Ms. Kathryn E. Seib Vargas, Former Lay Missioner, Maryknoll Lay Missioners
83. Rev. Tim Taugher, Pastor, St. Francis of Assisi
84. The Rev. Tamara K. Razzano, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church
85. Pastor Arthur R. Barnes, Senior Pastor and Founder, Abundant Life Transformation Seventh Day Sanctified Church
86. Reverend Dustin Wright, Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church
87. Joseph Olejak, member, Old Chatham Quakers
88. Rev. Linda Brebner, retired, Presbyterian Church
89. Rev. Dr. Katharine Rhodes Henderson, President, Auburn Seminary
90. Mrs. Maria Studer, Ruling Elder, PC USA

91. Rev. Erica Baron, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Catskills
92. Rev. Dr. Miriam Lawrence Leupold, Pastor
93. Sister Honora Kinney, Member of Justice Committee, Sisters of Saint Joseph
94. Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Quick, Pastor, First United Methodist Church
95. Rev. Dan Fullerton, Retired Pastor, Hudson River Presbytery
96. Rev. Robert Emerick, Pastor, Bay Ridge United Methodist Church
97. Chaplain Rev. Dr. Alan Bentz-Letts, former Hospice and College Chaplain
98. Rev. Danielle Miller, Senior Pastor, Advent Lutheran Church
99. Rev. Andrea Abbott, Minister, First Universalist Church of Central Square New York
100. Mr. Narinder Kapoor, Sr. Vice President, Geeta Ashram of New York
101. Rev. Amos Acree, Health Ministry consultant, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) & United Church of Christ
102. Ms. Carol McLoughlin, Chair of Social Justice Committee Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Queens
103. Rev. William C. Webb, Vicar, Saint Simon Episcopal Church
104. Rev. Doris K. Dalton, Executive Director, Westchester Martin Luther King, Jr. Institute for Nonviolence
105. Rev. Jeffrey Court, Pastor, Westernville Presbyterian Church
106. Rev. Sandy Damhof, Pastor, United Church of Christ
107. Ms. Mary Dewar, retired Nurse Educator and Missionary Garden City Community Church
108. Rabba Anat Sharbat, Associate Rabba, The Bayit Hebrew Institute of Riverdale
109. Rev. Micah Bucey, Minister, Judson Memorial Church
110. Rabbi Nicole Auerbach
111. Rev. James Roberson, Pastor, Bridge Church NYC
112. Rabbi Gary Greene, Marathon Jewish Community Center
113. Cantor Israel Gordan, Huntington Jewish Center
114. Sister Doreen Glynn, Province Justice Coordinator, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
115. The Rev. Dr. Gary E. Doupe, retired Methodist Pastor
116. Fr. Tim Taugher, Pastor, St. Francis of Assisi
117. The Rev. Elsie Armstrong Rhodes, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Cooperstown
118. Lay Community Minister Robb Smith, Executive Director, Interfaith Impact of New York State
119. Rabbi Lina Zerbarini
120. Cantor Abbe Lyons, Spiritual Leader, Gilat Rina
121. The Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert, President, Interfaith Impact of New York State
122. Rabbi Danya Rutenberg, Rabbi in Residence, Avodah
123. Rev. Dr. Janet Adair Hansen, Pastor, Christ Community Church of Cortland
124. Meg Sullivan, Director of Programs & Community Engagement, JCC Harlem
125. Rabbi Jonathan Jaffe, Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester
126. Rabbi Peter W. Stein, Senior Rabbi, Temple B'rith Kodesh
127. Rev. Andre Broady, Genesis Transitional Housing
128. Rev. Helen Broady, Genesis Transitional Housing
129. Jone Johnson Lewis, Leader, Society for Ethical Culture of Riverdale-Yonkers and Brooklyn
130. Rabbi Shuli Passow, Director of Community Engagement, B'nai Jeshurun
131. Rabbi Rachel M. Maimin, Associate Rabbi, North Shore
132. Rabbi Daniel Geffen, Rabbi, Temple Adas Israel
133. Rev. Reginald Benjamin, Executive Director of ABBA Leadership Center Inc.

For more information:

justleadershipusa.org/freenewyork

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