

MEDIA MATTERS: What if *Democracy Now!* had covered the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March?



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Devone Nash, a College Initiative student, won the Jeffrion L. Aubry Award for community contribution.



EVENTS: College Initiative celebrated the 20 students graduating this year!

OUR VOICE

student feature

What if *Democracy Now!* had covered the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March?

by *DONALD HOOKER*

The Women's March brought out nearly a million protesters in Washington, D.C. on January 21, 2017.

Exactly 210 days later, on August 19, the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March was held.

On March 24, 214 days after that, the March for Our Lives was held.

I became aware of Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now!* and the journalism and reporting they do about social movements nearly four years ago. Their on the ground reporting at the Women's March was excellent.

Sometime thereafter, I became aware of the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March. Seeing the crowd turnout for the Women's March, I realized this was an opportunity to have similar crowds showcasing public support for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

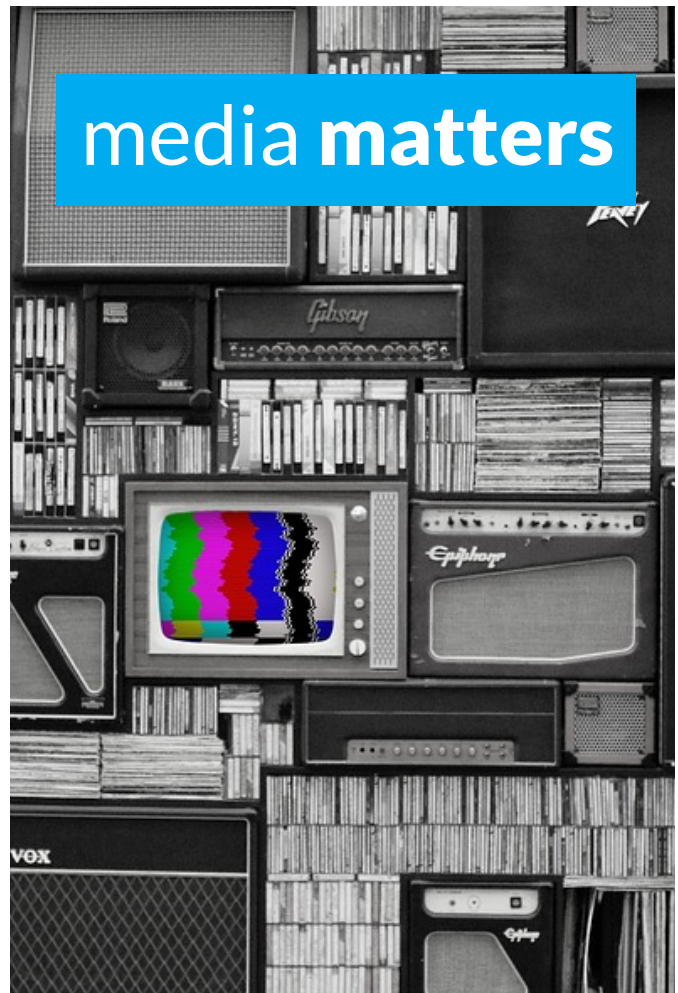
I told anybody I could about the march. Driven by my passion, I highlighted that it was our responsibility to assist those in society who are helping us behind the wall. While this was my message, many didn't seem to get it.

For the past two years, every Saturday, I have worked with the Nation of Islam and their Fruit of Islam (FOI), regarding Minister Farrakhan's "10,000 Fearless," the call for men and women to be involved in neighborhood conflict resolution.

On Saturday, the day of the Prisoners March, I skipped the weekly meeting to watch Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now!* cover the Prisoners March. This didn't happen. It happened nowhere on broadcast television, even though this was a nationwide march.

Continued on page 2.

media matters






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Write to us!
Prisoner Reentry Institute
524 W 59th Street
New York, NY 10019
sreuss@jjay.cuny.edu

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 www.johnjaypri.org

MEDIA MATTERS, *continued*

On Saturday, August 12, 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia, Heather Heyer was fatally killed in a hit and run during a protest rally of white nationalists. A week later, rallies were held across the country and covered in the national press and *Democracy Now!*

While our Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March rallies were nationwide, and multitudes of people did participate, we did not reach critical mass to capture the public imagination. And why was that? I list poor planning by the national event organizers, poor funding, and a lethargic, *laissez faire* attitude by the incarcerated population in getting family members involved.

"We are living in an age where social movements are becoming aware that support must be intersectional"

Longtime activists have seen the failures of the individuals with big ideas but poor managerial skills, or lack of staffing to support those ideas.

Oprah Winfrey and George Clooney gave the March for Our Lives organizers \$500,000

donations each. It is not as though our movement doesn't have arts and entertainment supporters and other philanthropists.

The family members of the 2.2 million individuals incarcerated across America could

mobilize a formidable movement. We are living in an age where social movements are becoming aware that support must be intersectional.

While much progress has been made, the mere fact that one march came 210 days before our march, with mass media coverage, and another 214 days after our march, also with mass media coverage, shows we have a long way in capturing the public's imagination here in the United States.



Donald Hooker has written for Prison Action News, California Prison Focus, and Mprisoned Thotz. He's been written about in People, darealprisonart, and KCET-Los Angeles's Departures.

student spotlight

At College Initiative's annual graduation celebration, Devone was awarded the Jeffrion L. Aubry Award, in recognition of his commitment to the community.

The interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

What are the ways in which you've been engaged in the community?

That's just it! I just didn't see it -- that was just my normal course of action, going throughout the day, helping my family, guys that I come across, the other students that I mentor. It was something natural that just came to me.

What does mentoring mean to you?

With the guys coming out of prison, they may not know the ropes in the school system, how to maneuver the different services that the schools have. That's where I come in, because I was in the same position they are when I came home. Now I'm showing [my mentees] what I did, how I

was able to be in school, keep my grades, work -- and not be in trouble.

What do your mentoring relationships look like?

I keep in contact [with my mentee] at least every other week, but we often touch base a couple times a week.

If there's something he needs or wants to know more about, he'll text me and I respond right away. Or I'll call just to check up on him and ask how it's going, wish him a good day. He does the same thing to me.

To know there's somebody out there rooting for you, to know somebody cares about you, just a hello sometimes, it means a lot. Sometimes all people need is a good morning text!

How did you feel when you found out you won the award?

I was just so overwhelmed, because I really didn't look at [my community work] as anything but pushing through,

showing someone that even though it's tough or hard, you just have to get up each day and do it.

You cannot give up no matter what you do. And that's how I live my life, I don't give up. [Winning the award] really felt good. My mother was [at the graduation], my best friend from high school was there. These people who were there and are still there, it makes me appreciate them even more.

I believe in treating people the way you want to be treated, and giving out the energy you expect back.

Why is community service important?

I believe you reap what you sow! I don't want to dedicate my life to doing wrong things, I want to dedicate my life to doing positive things.

And anytime I get the chance to do something positive, I really go to bat for it.

meet devone nash:

student, Jeffrion L. Aubry Award winner, mentor



in the news

Family separations spark protests, outrage



The Trump administration launched a "zero tolerance" policy on immigration this April. Shortly after, the administration began separating undocumented families crossing the US-Mexico border, prosecuting parents and placing over 2,300 children in government custody or foster care. No law or court ruling mandates family separations.

After nationwide outrage and mass protests, the Trump administration signed an executive order halting the separation of children from their families, although the "zero tolerance" policy remains in place. At the time of writing more than 2,000 children, some under the age of five, are believed to still be separated from their families.

The number of families facing separation as a result of the Trump administration's immigration policy has brought attention to the human rights violations perpetuated by the U.S. immigration system. Last fall, Trump's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, which offered protections and work permits to undocumented children, sparked similar protests.

As the family separation policy continues to play out in the courts and public imagination, activists and advocates are bringing communities together to raise awareness about the injustices occurring on the US-Mexico border.

events Short film *Unbecoming* explores themes of justice, family

On May 15, College Initiative held the premiere screening of the short film *Unbecoming*, a short narrative film produced by the incarcerated community at Otisville Correctional Facility and high school students from the High School of Art and Design.

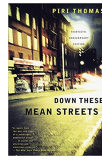
Unbecoming tells the story of main character Troy Tubman, a young Assistant Defense Attorney committed to upholding what he believes to be the principles of justice. But Tubman begins to re-evaluate his perspective and career in the criminal justice system when he is forced to prosecute a family member arrested during a Black Lives Matter protest. The film delves into his psyche: how strong are his values and commitment to his

job, now that his sister, Tiffany Robinson, is on the other side?

While incarcerated at Otisville Correctional Facility, Alejo Rodriguez, Stephen Smith, Sandy Ramirez, Chas Ransom, Dino Solarzano, and Chris Werner spent months collaborating to write the script for the film, with support from the Tribeca Film Institute, V. Bravo, and Jacky Gutierrez. Production began in May 2017 and was finalized by October of the same year.

At the premiere, the writers said that *Unbecoming* is more than a short film: it's the story of communities coming together to work on a shared project.

to read and watch



Book recommendations:

Girls Like us, Rachel Lloyd
Down These Mean Streets, Piri Thomas
Caramelo, Sandra Cisneros
Random Family, Adrian Nicole LeBlanc
Before We Were Free, Julia Alvarez
The Lost Children of Wilder, Nina Bernstein

Film recommendations:

After Innocence, Dir. Jessica Sanders, Documentary
Kids for Cash, Dir. Robert May, Drama

Submit your book and film recommendations or review one of the books or movies above -- we'll publish your thoughts!

poetry by ERIC BRIGHT

I like to write poems
 When there is nobody home
 I even write poems over the phone
 I write them when I'm alone
 I switch the style, switch the tone
 Write them over when they're wrong
 Make them short, fat, skinny, long
 Make sure everyone's my own
 Just keep writing till it's full grown
 But nothing's set in stone
 So what's that about the phone?
 I write my own poems.

It just gives me more time to rhyme
 I need to at least give it a try
 To give it a sign
 When something's on my mind
 Like this rhyme
 Or was it I?
 Yeah, I was the guy
 Who can't tell a lie
 Don't as why
 Just give it a try
 Time for a new line
 Harmonious



events College Initiative celebrates graduates

On June 21, we celebrated the 20 College Initiative students who graduated this academic year, joining hundreds of other alumni in our community. This year's graduates completed Bachelor's and Associate's degrees at 12 colleges across New York City and State.

The theme of this year's celebration, "In Their Words," paid tribute to the diversity and value of student voices and perspectives, and acknowledged the power every student holds to enact change in the world. As CI students move on to the next steps in their journeys, whether it's another degree with our support or a new career, we will continue to amplify their voices and serve as an alumni network and resource.



Every year, CI presents awards to students in the community, the Victor Hassine Memorial Essay Prize and the Jeffrion L. Aubry Award, and recognizes one of our many community partners with the Champions of Justice Award.

The Victor Hassine Memorial Essay Prize is granted to a CI student whose writing reflects a deep personal commitment to educating communities about criminal justice reform. This year's winner is Matthew Wilson.

The Jeffrion L. Aubry Award is granted to a CI student who has demonstrated exemplary community involvement through engagement. This year's winner is Devone Nash.

The Champions of Justice Award, awarded this year to the Legal Aid Society, is granted to a community-based organization that advocates for criminal justice reform and provides reentry support.

Congratulations to the graduates, their families, and to this year's award winners. Together, we will continue to grow and uplift the CI community.

puzzles, games, etc.

B	R	U	T	A	B	A	G	A	E	R	Z	P	C	E	P	L	C	S
C	E	W	X	T	E	S	G	R	A	C	Q	C	C	X	K	Q	T	C
F	R	L	A	G	L	N	W	E	A	H	I	U	I	N	F	E	H	J
E	S	R	L	T	Z	N	D	Z	L	D	T	L	L	P	E	U	J	U
U	Y	H	B	P	E	H	F	G	U	T	I	I	A	B	H	V	C	F
V	Z	A	Y	V	E	R	Q	Q	E	C	V	S	R	N	G	X	N	C
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B	R	U	S	S	E	L	S	S	P	R	O	U	T	S	T	E	M	M

Find these vegetables in the word search:

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EGGPLANT
LETTUCE
RADISHES
SWISS CHARD
ZUCCHINI
RUTABAGA
SWEET CORN
GREEN BEANS

poetry by TONY GOLDEN

Where it comes from

It maybe from the pain hidden inside of me
But I know it's not something I did not see
It maybe from the struggle I've been through
Maybe it's what the abuse of a child do
If you see the hurt why not help
If you've listen to the screams why not tell
If you know how I feel why not understand
If you've been in my shoes why not walk again
If you feel I'm out of reach why not give a hand
I don't know where it comes from but here it is again--
Pain

Everything

If I had everything would I be who I am
If I had everything would I be where I am
If I had everything it would be too easy
I would've never felt a struggle
Or the pain when they tease me
If I had everything would they just please me
Cause if I had nothing them same people would leave me

announcements

To find out more about College Initiative or to schedule an appointment, get in touch with us!

Call (646) 781-5118

Or write us:

College Initiative
Prisoner Reentry Institute
524 W 59th Street Room 609B
New York, NY 10019

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publish with us!

Our Voice is a submissions-based newsletter published on a quarterly basis. We welcome submissions from anyone, about anything. Whether you're passionate about current events, have a strong opinion about a book you just read, want to share your perspectives and thoughts, or are a poet or creative writer -- we want to hear from you! Read the insert for more information about how to submit.