

F o c a l P o i n t

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JoEllen Culp, Editor

Message from the President

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As the sands shift through the desert land, so are the days of our lives! Ever moving, swirling, tossing and never staying still too long. We are at a crossroads. The economy is like a rollercoaster off the tracks, people are losing their jobs, their homes and other possessions. One thing we must hold onto is our sanity!!! We can not lose heart and faint, we must stand for our principles and continue to do the right things. Hold on, help is on the way!



This past year and a half has been an awesome season in my life. Having the opportunity to serve as the President of the **“Biggest, Baddest and Boldest”** NABCJ Chapter in the land is indeed an honor and a very humbling experience.

I have been blessed by the many opportunities I have had to meet with formerly incarcerated persons, community leaders, educators, religious leaders and other interested parties to talk about NABCJ and share our agenda with the masses.

This Chapter has done some really great things! You were the driving force in getting hundreds of formerly incarcerated folks registered to vote in the most recent historic presidential election. Ohio NABCJ has clothed scores of folks across the state, homeless folks, those who recently left correctional facilities looking for work, and provided socks to Hannah's Socks for years. Dozens of you serve as mentors to children in schools all over Ohio and we have adopted schools in all of the major cities. Most recently we had seven women sign up to become the first Life Coaches/

Mentors for women who are returning home after periods of confinement.

Our partnerships with the Urban League, the Urban Minority Alcohol and Drug Abuse Outreach Program, Triple Crown Publications, Power Net and other grassroots organizations have helped to make Ohio NABCJ not only better but also stronger and more diverse in our thinking! We know that we are our Brother's Keeper! We know that we have come a long way but there is still much work to be done.

I am a little melancholy as I prepare to step back in October and hand the gavel over to Ms. Brooks. I am proud of the Executive Team who served with me. They are some of the most talented and gifted people I know. Not to single anyone out but I am most proud of my husband, Mr. Ohio NABCJ himself, Jeffrey E. Carson. He stepped back and allowed me to fly with the eagles. He was the wind beneath my wings and the song in my heart!

Spring has sprung! It is time for new growth, new ideas and new energy. Let's get busy and keep Ohio NABCJ the **“Biggest, Baddest and Boldest”** Chapter in the land! Lets' continue to be servants to those who need us. The greatest attribute of a leader is the ability to serve.

Humbly Yours,

*Andrea*

Madame President

## My Experience - The NABCJ Faith-Based Symposium

By: Rev. Ernest Dandridge

The NABCJ Faith-Based Symposium, held at the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church on March 21st, was a rich time of fellowship, networking and inspiration for me. Though the turnout was small, I believe that God had the right people there. It was wonderful to see Chaplains, Prison Administrators, Ministry volunteers, Parole professionals all meeting for one common purpose: to discuss strategies, and opportunities that are available for the faith-based communities to participate in the successful re-entry of incarcerated persons back into society. One pleasantly different and important addition to this year's gathering was the presence of formerly incarcerated individuals from Alvis House and the Franklin County Correctional Based Facility who came both to learn of the help available to them and to offer their perspective on the need that still exists.

Although there is strong anecdotal evidence that churches, mosques, synagogues, and other religious groups have a positive effect in helping offenders become productive citizens, there is still much work to be done and more help is needed. President Carson, Chaplain Sims and others repeatedly told us that of the 50,000+ people who are currently incarcerated and the more than 30,000 who are on some form of supervision, 80% will someday leave confinement and will have to function in society without the watchful eyes of Correction Officers and

Parole Officers. Their need for jobs, housing, and clothing is great, but so is the need

for counseling, positive friendships, spiritual instruction, mentoring and loving accountability. I believe that this is the area that the faith-based community can operate to effectively meet the needs of these people.

During the plenary sessions we were constantly reminded of the theme of this year's event, "I Am My Brother's Keeper". In other words, it is not the responsibility of the state, county, or federal government alone to take on the daunting task of rehabilitation. That job is for any and everyone who cares about people and the situations that they find themselves in. It is not just the offender that needs help either. Every person involved in the criminal justice system comes from a community of family, friends and loved ones. Our work must extend to the ones that have been left behind. Spouses need help as they navigate the system and try to cope with the loss of income and support. Children need someone to come alongside them as they face the reality of life without the guidance of a mother or father. Every inmate has at least one parent, and many of them are in need of reassurance, and hope as they deal with a child that is behind bars. Many offend-



ers leave victims in the wake of their criminal activities and these victims and their families

need someone to bring comfort, and strength to rebuild their lives and come to terms with what has been done to them. They need to find some way forward toward closure, and even forgiveness.

In the breakout session that I attended the chaplains were gathered to discuss some of their needs and relay to the clergy present what their vision of a faith based collaboration would look like. Chaplain Sims challenged all of us to engage ourselves in an area of prison ministry that is perhaps the most difficult of all the religious activities that go on behind the walls - ministry to death row inmates. He said that of all people on earth, these people know when they will make their transition from this life to Eternity. Chaplain Sims told us of the importance of helping these inmates face the reality of their mortality. My pastor, Bishop D.J. Washington shared his experiences dealing with death row inmates and how vital this ministry is. The other issue that resonated with me was spoken by Tim Smith, Chaplain at Marion Correctional Institute. Very simply and forthrightly he said that there was no problem in getting the religious community involved in providing study groups and worship services to the

inmates in prison. The issue was the lack of one-on-one involvement with individuals both while they are incarcerated and after their release. He said that many of the churches, synagogues and mosques that faithfully come to the prisons to minister lack that same commitment to people that leave the institution. He challenged us to go beyond our relatively small role of just preaching, and studying the scriptures and involve ourselves in the process of redemption by being that resource on the other side of the fence.

Although I enjoyed the symposium this year, I came away with more of a conviction that there is more to prison ministry than just "prison" ministry. Our calling as clergy and faith-based service providers is to take to heart our mission to go the help the least, the lonely and the forgotten. They are found inside the concertina wire fences, and in the halfway houses and CBCF's across our state, but they are also found in every neighborhood, large and small. They wait on us at the fast food joint, they check us out at the store, we pass them by as they walk to school, we see them sitting on their porches in the evening. They are everywhere, waiting for someone to come home, and as I see them I hear a question. It rings in my mind, and disturbs my soul. It is the question that the LORD asked the prophet Isaiah, "Whom shall I send, And who will go for US?"

## Keeper's Of Truth & Justice

By: Garey Burt

Hello my fellow NABCJ members. I am ecstatic over what I saw and heard during the Faith-Based symposium, "I AM MY BROTHERS KEEPER" held at Mt. Hermon Missionary Baptist Church. It reinforced in me why the Ohio Chapter is the **Biggest, Baddest and Boldest** chapter in the World!!

To those who weren't there, you missed a "treat". We had Church!! From the opening remarks by our illustrious president Andrea Carson, you could feel the



NABCJ Board at Symposium

energy emanating throughout the Sanctuary. Bishop Donald J. Washington was a most gracious host, who made us feel welcome in the Lord's house. Thank you Bishop Washington and the Mt. Hermon family.

I had the distinct honor of introducing a speaker who brought to life our theme, "I

Am My Brothers Keeper". Ms. Zakia McKinney, President of The Junia company tore up the church. She told us that we ARE keepers of each other, male and female, brothers and sisters.

Dr. John Little, pastor at ReebHosack Baptist church, brought a message of faith out of the book of Daniel (1:8) that left me with copious notes. It was titled "A Non-negotiable Faith". I was reminded about some of the non-negotiable in our lives (ethics, Lord, service, truth etc.). He said, "you can't eat from the King's table if you are doing the

wrong thing".

Lastly, I attended the Prison Ministry workshop presented by Bishop Washington, Rev. Gary Sims and Rev. Tim Smith. Being in a workshop with members of the Death row team was eye-opening to say the least. I congratulate those who volunteer their time to assist in this capacity. Mr. Paul Hendrix and Chaplain Stephen Rice said they truly enjoyed our symposium and would love to attend any other event that we should host. I told them to put it in writing. I think they did!!

### Faith Based Symposium - Am I my brother's keeper...?

Genesis 4:8-10 (New International Version)

By: Larome Myrick

Am I my brother's keeper? If Genesis 4:8-10 did not answer that question, then I am sure it was answered on Saturday, March 21, 2009 in Columbus, OH during the NABCJ Faith Based Symposium. The Symposium was truly an awesome experience. There were several powerful speakers and presenters available that date. These speakers were clergy and lay people, young and old, black and white, male and female. More important, everyone was together on one accord.

How are we are our brother's keeper you were asking? Well, let me tell you. On Saturday, we did much more than just meet to meet and speak to speak. At the Faith Based Symposium, our Brothers (both male and female) from a local CBCF were in attendance as well. These Brothers not only received an invaluable amount of knowledge and support in word form, but they received contacts that are in the Criminal Justice Field that are willing to work with and mentor the residents in several areas of their lives. ALSO, yes I said ALSO, they were given food and clothing. The clothes they were given were not just items that were in the back of someone's closet; however, they were given professional attire (many of the items were new). This was truly an awesome experience. For those of you that missed this year, mark you calendar's for the next event.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" --- Yes I am.

*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"*

*"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"*

## “With God All Things Are Possible”

By: Rev. Tim Smith

News Flash! For the people of God, loving other people is the most effective, low-cost reentry strategy going...

The recent NABCJ faith-based reentry symposium at Mt. Hermon Church in Columbus shined much light on the reentry strategy of the people of God serving the community. There was energy and enthusiasm around challenging one another to reach out: to women and men in need in our prisons and our communities. The common refrain was, “I AM my brother’s keeper!”

Over the last several years there has been increasing focus on faith-based interventions as a low-cost approach to correctional programming (See Criminology and Public Policy, August 2006, *Criminology And Religion: The Shape Of An Authentic Dialogue*, p. 559-570). Congress passed the Second Chance Act in 2008 and Federal dollars are increasingly made available to assist in faith-based prisoner reentry. However,

studies indicate that most offenders access religious programming while incarcerated not to bolster their personal reentry goals, but in order to make it through the challenging experience of incarceration. Religious involvement provides social support to offset the experience of loss and deprivation that comes with incarceration (See, Journal of Community Corrections, Winter 2004-2005, “*What Works, Religion as a Correctional Intervention, Part II*” p. 24). This religious involvement while incarcerated positively impacts the institutional climate by aiding in offenders’ adjustment. But what about reentry?

Prisoners indeed tend to focus on the short term: trying to get through the next day. Ever heard an offender sum up his approach to life as, “I’m maintaining”? Hunkering down and “maintaining”, even aided by a pro-social engagement with faith, is not necessarily related to reentry success. Chaplains and faith community volunteers would contend that what helps offenders take a pro-

active approach and focus on their personal reentry goals is that powerful but intangible virtue known as “hope” – Confidence not in what the future holds, but in He who holds the future!

Fear constricts vision, but hope and love expand it. John the Apostle said, “Perfect love casts out fear”. Human relationships with positive people of faith expand minds and hearts to see possibilities. Faith-based volunteers provide this by merely walking through the prison gate to come inside, so great is the impact of their presence. Chaplains offer offenders (and staff) counseling and support through difficult times.

The presence and resources of the faith community bring a wealth of pro-social connections. Correctional chaplains leverage these resources and train and support networks of volunteers. Additionally, chaplains are needed for, among other things, preventing an arbitrary and capricious provision of services which could result in legal exposure for institutions. But it is America’s faith traditions, which

chaplains and volunteers bring, that challenge offenders to take responsibility and find hope in God. The words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah ring out even to the incarcerated, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

The stigma of felony incarceration does not mean that society has finally cast off criminals. People of faith offer offenders hope in God as a foundation for building a new and better life. Ohio’s correctional chaplains continue to stand with the faith community and all people of good will to assist those in need.

Where else but among God’s people could you find in abundance those *necessary avenues* of success - housing, social networks, and employment - as well as *the all-sufficient avenue* for success... the Almighty God.

The NABCJ Symposium was just another reminder of the fact that “Yes, I Am My Brother’s Keeper”.

## Toledo Affiliate Hosts Meet and Greet

By: Amy Jackson

On February 26, 2009, the newly-reactivated Toledo Affiliate hosted a “VIP Meet & Greet” to reintroduce themselves to the Toledo community. DRC’s Jeff Carson was the keynote speaker at the event. Mr. Carson spoke on the topic of “if it has to be done, it has to be me”, focusing on the com-

mitment that each individual needs to make to get things done in their own communities.

Also in attendance at the Meet & Greet were representatives from Girl Scouts, Big Brother Big Sister, Pastor Nolan White of Fathers Being Involved (FBI), and Center for Advancement. Each agency was also given

the opportunity to speak on their involvement in the Toledo community.

The crowd of attendees, which included local clergymen, Toledo Police Department, community members, ODRC, and DYS representatives were treated to light refreshments while networking at the end of the program. The Meet & Greet

was the first event for the Toledo Affiliate and plans are already in the works for their next program.

## Hot Grillin!!!

*Sheri Talley*

On March 16, 2009 NABCJ Dayton Affiliate held our first Scholarship fundraiser of 2009. The event was held at *bd's Mongolian Grill* in Beavercreek, Ohio. We successfully sold tickets to family, friends and supporters. The event offered a Stir fry bowl, soup, salad and soft drink.

The Affiliate members stepped up as Guest grillers, sold raffle tickets, and greeted guest. We raffled off four beautiful gift baskets and they were a big hit.

We would like to thank everyone for their participation and your donations. We

would also like to thank the State board members who were in attendance.

Thanks to your support our grilling experience was very successful and as many of you found out I am an excellent cook.

The outing provided a great atmosphere to network and to inform the community about the creative opportunities that NABCJ provides. As we go forward to continue to be the BIGGEST, BADEST and BOLDEST Chapter we challenge everyone to be ambassadors to greatness.



*Dayton Affiliate with Jeffery Carson at *bd's Mongolian Grill* fund raiser.*

## Cleveland State University's Career Services Center and the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ) Join Forces

*Materia Shaw*

The Career Services Center at Cleveland State University (CSU) hosted the Ohio Chapter-Cleveland Affiliate of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ) Open House on Thursday, February 12, 2009. This was the first initiative for CSU's Career Services Center and NABCJ to collaborate in establishing a Cleveland State University National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice chapter. Several Cleveland State University students attended this event, including the Vice-President of CSU's Sociology and Criminology Club.

The Open House provided a wonderful opportunity for students to network with

professionals in the field, as well as gain valuable information on the history, mission and membership into this outstanding organization. Students learned that the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice is a multi-ethnic, nonpartisan, non-profit association of criminal justice professionals and community leaders dedicated to improving the administration of justice.

This dedication was clear as attendees at the Open House were granted the opportunity to learn firsthand about the positive impact of the Ohio Chapter of National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice from officers and members, including the Midwest Regional Director, Mr. Garey Burt, and Mrs. Alicia Rey-

nolds, Chairperson of the Cleveland Affiliate. The students in attendance were quite enthusiastic about an opportunity to become more involved with NABCJ's Cleveland Affiliate.

One of the students to join the organization that evening was Patricia Wilson, who earned a Bachelor Degree in Sociology with a concentration in Criminal Justice in May, 2008. She is presently pursuing her graduate degree at CSU. Ms. Wilson stated, "NABCJ will assist me and other students to build a network within the profession and possibly open doors for career opportunities". These sentiments were echoed by the forty attendees including CSU faculty and staff; community mem-

bers and students.

At the conclusion of this event, all agreed with Midwest Regional Director Burt exclamation that the Ohio Chapter of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice is **'the biggest, the baddest** chapter in the nation'.

*Materia Shaw is a Career Services Coordinator for students, in Criminal Justice, Sociology, Psychology and Liberal Arts. For more information about programs at Cleveland State University, please email careers@csuohio.edu*

## Sole 2 Soul

*Sheri Talley*

The Dayton Affiliate had the pleasure of setting up an information and membership table at Wilberforce University's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Women's Summit entitled "Sole 2 Soul: Strengthening our Walk, Liberating our Souls, Changing our Lives!" on March 14, 2009.

The event had everything from a powerful performance by the Omega Baptist Church Worship Arts Ministry, sixteen workshops that covered topics from A-Z, love, education, STD's on campus, spirituality, defining you, and many more. The luncheon speaker was Lily L. Ratliff, a writer, educator and motivational speaker.

There were vendors, vendor, and vendors galore. You could browse the information area and find what you needed to know about various organizations, education opportunities, and the latest novel by local authors. Or you could choose to stroll down the relaxation and beauty aisle to have a massage, look for wonderful jewelry, or have your eyebrows threaded... this was amazing to watch!

### Expression of Appreciation

*James Hendrix*

*Just a note to express my appreciation for the opportunity to take part in the "I am my Brother's Keeper" Symposium at Mt. Hermon Baptist Church on Saturday. The more we communicate the message of the Faith Based Initiative and it's positive impact on the reduction of recidivism and the success of the returning citizens to our communities. I am very pleased to know that there are folks at every level that have a genuine interest in the fate of the individuals that have found themselves in bad situations. I have gained a greater appreciation for the work done that is not always known by others. Thank you for the work that you do and the program that took place this last Saturday. I was impressed with Pastor Little's message and the emphasis on being responsible for the impact we have on others lives.*

"To Whom It May Concern:

I feel very honored and blessed to have been chosen to attend the 2009 NABCJ Reentry Faith-Based Symposium.

I have always believed that GOD speaks through people and I really felt the power of him in every word that Zakia McKinney spoke. WOW!!! What an inspiration!!

Also, Herstory by Andrea Carson really touched me. She said that a woman should be so close to God that a man would have to seek Him in order to find her. I love that!!!

Thanks NABCJ and God Bless all of the inmate and their children. And remember, "I Am My Brother's Keeper"!

Sincerely,

Angela R. Peterson

"Sometimes we need words of encouragement and I'll use these words to fuel the drive in me even harder. I will, I can succeed. I understand the desire to change, the will to understand opportunity. I also thought that the workshops were great and very informative..."

Sincerely,  
Michael Thurman



“At this convention I learned that people make mistakes but you don’t have to live in your past. It is never too late to change and learn from my mistakes...I learned that there are people out there that want to help you change...they are people who give you hope and inspiration...I will truly never forget what I learned at this convention because I now know not only can I change for the better and the human conditions around me, but I am my brother’s keeper”

- Shenia Gant

I learned you have to sincerely want to change your life. To be aware of the power of associations...Using what life has taught you to survive in the new life that you are living in...to learn new values and morals...to close the doors and return from the you were living because that was not your life...I felt honored and respected...”

- Derrik Thompson

“AT the NABCJ symposium I praised Jehova for letting me see the dignity and the common interest of Helping Hands and Hearts of Praise. Thank you for the opportunity. It was overwhelming and breath taking, my mouth stood wide open. Motivational speaker Zakia McKinney, president of Junia Company, was the heart of the program. “Herstory” by Andrea Carson, NABCJ President, and “The Issue of Forgiveness” by Mike Davis and John B. Culp, Chaplain, were so uplifting and becoming each one of them. They did let their light shine before men. I did see the glory of the Father in them. All the workshops were also enlightening and generously displayed with the common interest of helping people who are trying to reenter back into society. Their example of hard work and dedication helps us to follow our dreams, overcome adversity and get new insight into the world of tomorrow.

The program inspired me to be a mentor. It showed me the way I can help others. It gave me motivation to continue volunteering part of my regular routine for the rest of my life. It gave me inspiration not to give up in my quest to find a job. The program gave me a way to use my strong faith in God to lift other people up. The presentation on mentoring ex-offenders and business opportunities really struck a cord with me. Being an ex-offender myself I am happy there are programs like this. In my younger days there were no programs to help felons find work or a network of people who cared about us. I want to use my experience to help the next generation of convicts become successful in the business world.

Sincerely Yours,

Michael Bailey

Dear Andrea Carson,

I had the honor and pleasure of attending the third faith based symposium sponsored by the NABCJ. Many thanks go to my supervisor, DWSS Norm Robinson, who encouraged my partner and I to attend this important symposium, and who also processed our applications so we could attend.

I was encouraged first of all by the obvious support and involvement of the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections in this event. From Chaplain Smith's excellent invocation on bridge building to the videos relating the department's commitment to faith based programming, aftercare, and volunteerism; the tone set by this presentation reveals a deep and abiding interest in the department to help offenders succeed in their respective communities. I was encouraged second by the obvious commitment of Mt. Hermon Church to this process. Third, it was heart warming to see and hear from some of our fellow Chaplains in regards to their work and commitment to the re-entry paradigm. Though I did not attend his class, I am certain Chaplain Culp elucidated a timely and important presentation on forgiveness. I also want to compliment him on his courageous character as he continues to minister in the face of incredible personal challenges.

What I will remember and take with me from the morning speakers is the emotional fervor and sacrificial commitment to help those who have been despised and rejected by much of society. There is a real sense that when one person hurts, we all hurt. When one person experiences triumph, we all share in the celebration. In this sense I resonate with Zakia McKinney's fervent message that I am my brother's keeper.

During the afternoon round table discussion I was at first intrigued, then increasingly enthusiastic as I listened to and heard several voices of concerned ministers who truly desire to help the incarcerated. In my experience this attitude is rare in churches, but it is also welcome. We were also made aware of ministry opportunities with the death row inmates and some of the challenges involved with this intense process. It became apparent from several of those who spoke that there is deep concern over the position of chaplaincy in our institutions. Those who volunteer and are interested in volunteering in our prisons, as well as conducting aftercare for our inmates, recognize the necessity of having consistent spiritual leadership present in the institutions.

The day was well spent and I felt privileged to be able to connect with many beautiful people who are engaged in some of the most important work of our time: helping those who are in prison. It is my hope that the seeds planted this past Saturday will be watered by the God who cares for us all so that each one will grow in good soil and produce much fruit for the benefit of those who have need of it.

Respectfully, in the service of our Lord,

Chaplain Gary Eno

Noble Correctional Institution

We are on the Web

[www.ohionabcj.org](http://www.ohionabcj.org)

**National Association of  
Blacks In Criminal Justice**

JoEllen Culp, Editor  
P.O. Box 328872  
Columbus, Ohio 43232

## Mission

To act upon the needs, concerns, and contributions of African Americans and other people of color as they relate to the administration of equal justice.

The National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice is a multiethnic, nonpartisan, nonprofit association of criminal justice professionals and community leaders dedicated to improving the administration of justice. The Association was founded as a vehicle by which criminal justice practitioners could initiate positive change from within, while increasing opportunities for the average citizen to better understand the nature and the operation of our local, state, and federal criminal justice processes. Membership and participation in the activities of the Association are open to all, irrespective of race, creed, or country of national origin. For NABCJ members, criminal justice is more than just a career; it is a commitment to a fundamental aspect of our democracy justice.