

As we see an ever increasing number of people impacted by the punishment system, we recognize the imperative of organizing ourselves and creating community using an inside/outside approach. Through mentoring, support, and by employing transformative justice approaches **The North Star Collective** advocates for fullness, access, and healing for directly impacted people and communities.

North Star Goals

- To provide community education
- To empower and support those currently incarcerated
- To empower those who have been system involved to recognize their inherent value and talent
- To train directly impacted people to become leaders and voices for change

Ask us about:

- Freedom Management classes
- Speaking Engagements
- Policy Advocacy & Leadership Training

North Star Members:

- Practice self and family care and development
- Respect and support community
- Believe in the expertise of directly impacted people and communities

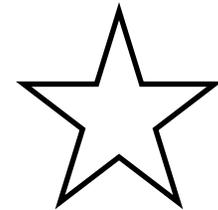
Manifesto of the brave and brokenhearted

There is no greater threat to the critics and cynics and fear mongers than those of us who are willing to fall because we have learned to rise. With skinned knees and bruised hearts; we choose to own our stories of struggle, when we deny our stories, they define us. When we run from struggle we are never free. So we turn toward truth and look it in the eye. We will not be characters in our stories. Not villains, not victims, not even heroes. We are the authors of our lives. We write our own daring endings. We craft love from heartbreak, compassion from shame, grace from disappointment, and courage from failure. —Brene Brown

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**The North Star
Collective**



Who are we?

North Star is an American Friends Service Committee of Arizona sponsored collective. It includes people who have been charged, convicted and branded with an arrest and/or conviction history. North Star also includes loved ones of directly impacted people.

We are firmly committed to organizing and agitating for social and legislative change. We prioritize de-entry over re-

entry and oppose the rapidly growing and shifting terrain of the treatment industrial complex. We work to educate, assist and empower our communities. And we challenge the root belief that punishment is synonymous with justice.

Overview of the Problem

There are millions of people in the United States suffering the impact of a felony conviction. When you add the number of family members that also suffer from having a loved one either currently incarcerated or trying to re-enter society, that number moves into the thousands of millions!

Imprisonment or conviction on a felony charge should not result in a lifelong violation of our basic rights as human beings, nor should our family members have their rights abused.

The punishment system is devastating and disrupting, particularly in under-resourced communities of color. After two generations of the American Drug War, people are suffering far more than when it began. Over 2 million children have a parent behind bars and 10 million children have had a parent in prison at some point in their lives. With the explosion of criminalization in 1970's, 80's and 90's, we have entire school systems impacted by parental incarceration or parents facing discrimination as a result of a conviction history.

Society's reliance on prisons and punishment does not make our communities safer. The warehousing of human beings, mostly people of color, is an unacceptable substitute for social programs. Prisons are not a substitute for mental health care and jails are not housing for the homeless.

Why Is North Star Our Name?

Our modern day prison system can be viewed as both the result and legacy of slavery. In 1845 Frederick Douglass published an anti-slavery newspaper called **North Star**. The newspaper engaged the anti-slavery movement politically. Douglass wrote, "*If justice is to be done, the truth must be told...I will not be silent.*"

The newspaper condemned slavery and served as a connector for people. Its founder and eventual contributors were the directly impacted- the formerly enslaved. Similarly, the **North Star Collective** strives to contribute to the marketplace of ideas around the criminal legal and human punishment systems. We contribute our stories, our voices, our analysis, and policy recommendations from the vantage point of the directly impacted- because if justice is to be done, as Douglass asserted in 1845, we must not be silent.

This freedom we seek, like freedom dreamers before us, is one that we have to create and claim for ourselves. It begins by changing the narrative surrounding the issues that affect our

lives. This is work we must do together. It can take various forms such as:

- Writing opinion editorials (OpEds)
- Advocating for policies and practices that we know will *actually* help us to succeed in the free world.
- Serving in leadership positions when and where we can.
- Leadership development & training
- Helping our brothers and sisters navigate and manage their freedom.
- Helping families navigate the prison system (i.e. how to send mail, what to expect at visitation, and set up payment processing)