



FORWARD JUSTICE  
ACTION NETWORK

# 2023 IMPACT REPORT



---

# MESSAGE FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

Dear Friends,

Reflecting on the work of 2023, we know it is only a snapshot of what is possible to realize change. Despite the realities of legislative backlash, entrenching regressive policies, Forward Justice Action Network continued to answer the call to be a beacon for local and movement partners.

We are excited to share what we have accomplished and the beginnings of what we hope to envision as we move forward and determine what advocacy in a new political paradigm looks like in the Third Reconstruction.

In North Carolina, in partnership with the Second Chance Alliance (SCA), we organized and welcomed over 700 members to the general assembly lawn to advocate for their legislative priorities, including removing barriers to jobs and housing and removing criminal justice debt, among other policy priorities.

Not only did we help to organize the second largest gathering in the history of SCA, but we also helped to organize the North Carolina Moral Monday 10th Anniversary and Recommitment Rally, in which we once again laid the stakes about democracy as we continue to advocate against the North Carolina Photo Voter ID challenge and other voter suppression tactics in the state.

Across the South, we are thrilled to have organized the first Kentucky Movement Assembly that drew nearly 300 Kentuckians together to begin to carve out a new vision for new policy priorities for the state. When lawmakers threatened to expel the two youngest Black lawmakers who spoke out against gun violence in America, we stood with Repairers of the Breach when hundreds marched in the streets of Tennessee to demand change.

For the past 13 months, we've stood alongside powerful community leaders in Jackson, Mississippi, providing legal and advocacy counsel as they fight for clean water to be able to live and thrive. We supported the National Poor People's Campaign Moral Poverty Action Congress in Washington, DC, with state leaders to advocate for federal policies to address poverty.

We know this will be a long road, but we know that when we fight, we win. And we are committed to fighting racial injustices in this country. This is just the beginning of what is possible as we continue to organize, advocate, and build our political power to realize racial justice movement agendas. Join us in our vision to Ground the South and build our political power.

Onward,

Ashley, Daryl, and Caitlin

# Who We Are



Caitlin  
Swain



Daryl  
Atkinson



Ashley  
Marshall



Attica  
Scott

**Founded in 2019**, we serve as a strategic partner for nonprofit organizations, coalitions, and networks at the forefront of movements, organizing for a more just, equitable, and free South. Our work catalyzes success for movements and expands democratic opportunities for people affected by injustice. Our key strategies include communications, narrative change, legislative and legal advocacy, community organizing, and building.

# Table of Contents



• <b>North Carolina</b>	<b>4</b>
◦ 2023 Second Chance Lobby Day & Gala	
◦ North Carolina Legislative Advocacy	
◦ Moral Monday 10-year Anniversary and Recommitment Rally	
◦ Photo Voter ID Fight	
◦ Police Accountability & Regulatory Stops Campaign	
• <b>Kentucky</b>	<b>8</b>
◦ Kentucky Movement Assembly	
◦ Inaugural Black Women’s Healing Retreat	
◦ Louisville Metro Council District 3 Candidate Support	
◦ No New Louisville Jail	
◦ No New Letcher Prison	
◦ The People’s Consent Decree	
◦ “Waking the Sleeping Giant” Mass Rally	
◦ Fentanyl West End Community Conversation	
• <b>Grounding The South</b>	<b>12</b>
◦ Tennessee	<b>13</b>
◦ Mississippi	<b>14</b>
▪ The Fight for Clean Water	<b>14</b>
• <b>Federal Advocacy</b>	<b>15</b>
◦ Moral Poverty Action Congress	
◦ National Racial Equity Initiative Social Justice Summit	
• <b>Highlights</b>	<b>16</b>
• <b>Brand Transformation</b>	<b>17</b>
• <b>Join the Work Ahead</b>	<b>18</b>

# NORTH CAROLINA

## 2023 Second Chance Lobby Day & Gala

We supported a powerful Second Chance Lobby Day in North Carolina, where community members were able to speak to lawmakers about the criminal justice and reentry issues that are impacting our North Carolina community. Over 700 community members attended the day of advocacy. We sent nearly 7,000 pieces of direct mail, made over 38,000 phone calls, and sent over 32,000 text messages.

Afterwards, we celebrated with the Second Chance Alliance Gala, where we honored with awards some of the leaders supporting the work for second chances in North Carolina.



## North Carolina Legislative Advocacy

**FJAN supported significant advocacy in support of the Second Chance Alliance policy priorities in 2023.** Below is an index of six policy priorities - expanding expungement, driver's license restoration, and debt relief encapsulated in legislation that have survived the crossover deadline and therefore will be alive for further advocacy in the 2024 short session.

In addition to these bills, we engaged in successful advocacy to change the mens rea requirement attached to the criminal liability statute impacting people voting with a felony conviction in North Carolina before their rights are restored.

### SECOND CHANCE BILLS THAT SURVIVED THE CROSS-OVER

#### Senate Bill 339

##### MODIFY LIMITED DRIVING/PRIVILEGE CRIMINAL LAWS

- Bill ends permanent suspension for three or more moving violations and permanent suspensions for driving while license revoked.

#### Senate Bill 779

##### PROHIBITION ON DISCLOSING BOOKING PHOTOGRAPHS

- Prevent law enforcement from openly sharing booking information to third party companies.

#### Senate Bill 565

##### REMOVING BARRIERS TO JOBS AND HOUSING

- Reinstate automated expunctions for certain dismissed and not guilty charges.
- Allow expunction of certain B&E convictions after a 15-year waiting period.

#### House Bill 836

##### REENTRY REFORM/MODIFICATION

- Remove the 12 month waiting period required to become eligible for a Certificate of Relief.
- Establishes the "Basic Needs Fund" to provide grants to state and community based entities.

#### House Bill 888

##### REMOVE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FROM COURT DEBT

- Bi-partisan bill that will end suspensions for unpaid traffic related fines and for missing a court date.
- Reinstate licenses that are suspended for failure-to-appear or failure-to-pay.

## Moral Monday 10-year Anniversary & Recommitment Rally



For the soul of our democracy, we are constantly and continually pushing for a moral revival and a Third Reconstruction. **We joined over a dozen organizations for a Moral Monday 10-year Anniversary and Recommitment Rally in Raleigh, North Carolina**, where our Co-Founder and Co-Director Caitlin Swain delivered powerful and moving words on why we need a Third Reconstruction.



## Photo Voter ID Fight

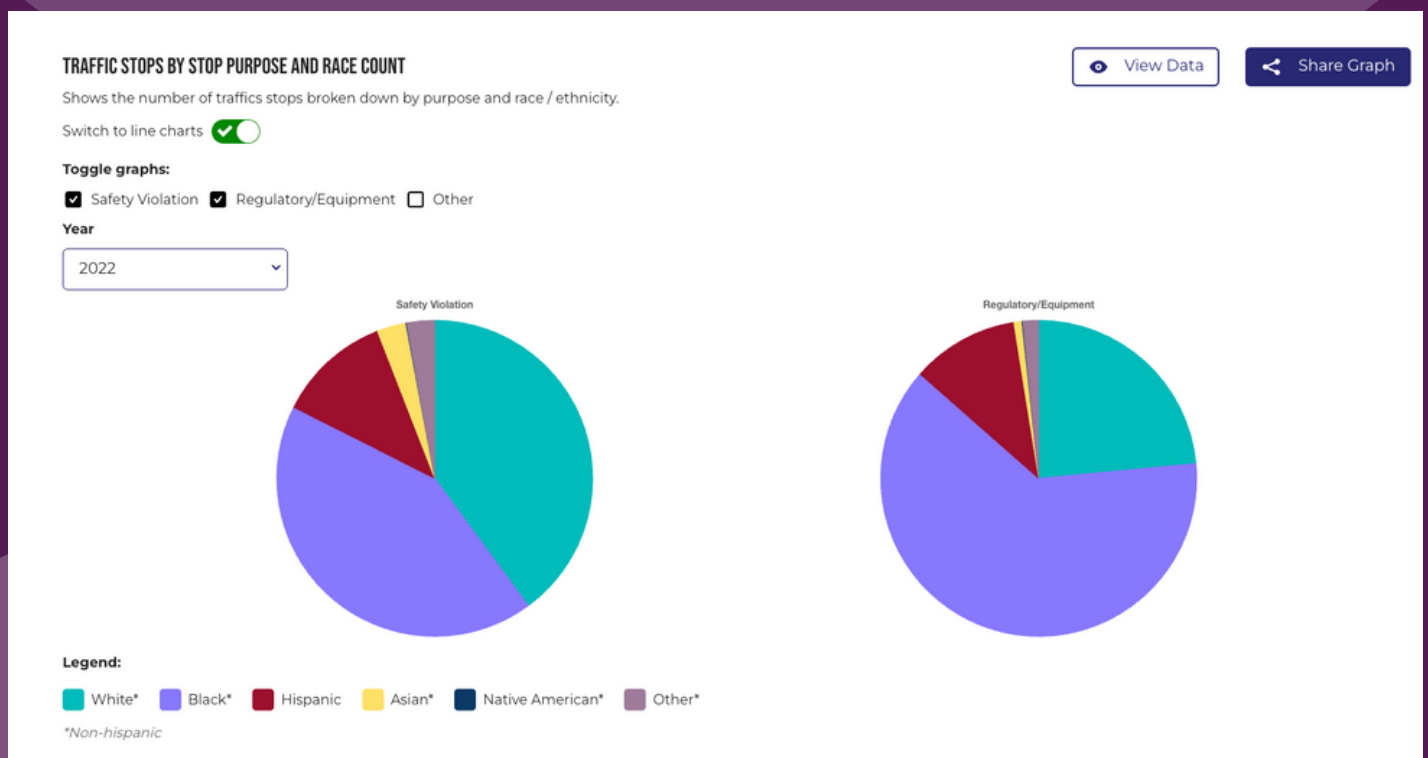
On Wednesday, July 26, Plaintiffs from the NAACP North Carolina, dozens of community members, and our movement lawyers appeared in front of Magistrate Judge Auld for a Status Conference to continue to fight the discriminatory photo voter ID law in North Carolina. That fight is still ongoing, and we will continue to show up and advocate for North Carolinians to have the right to vote without discriminatory photo voter ID requirements burdening them.



## Police Accountability & Regulatory Stops Campaign

Forward Justice, sister organization to Forward Justice Action Network, hosts CopWatch, which makes stop, search, and use of force data publicly available to community members. It aggregates and visualizes data for all known traffic stops that have occurred in North Carolina since 2002. This tool was created as a resource, making this data available and understood by community members, organizers, and advocates across the state of North Carolina seeking transparency and accountability in our statewide policing practices.

We supported Forward Justice in its debut of the CopWatch database results to Mecklenburg County civilians, which allowed the community to interact and see the disparities that impact their community. This prompted several conversations with the local Sheriff to develop ways to limit interactions that often lead to deadly outcomes. This resulted in the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office agreeing to implement a policy that ends regulatory stops. Due to the success in other areas, we are in conversations with the Wake County Community Advisory Board and Wake County Police Department to educate these bodies on the data and advocate for internal policy practice reform.



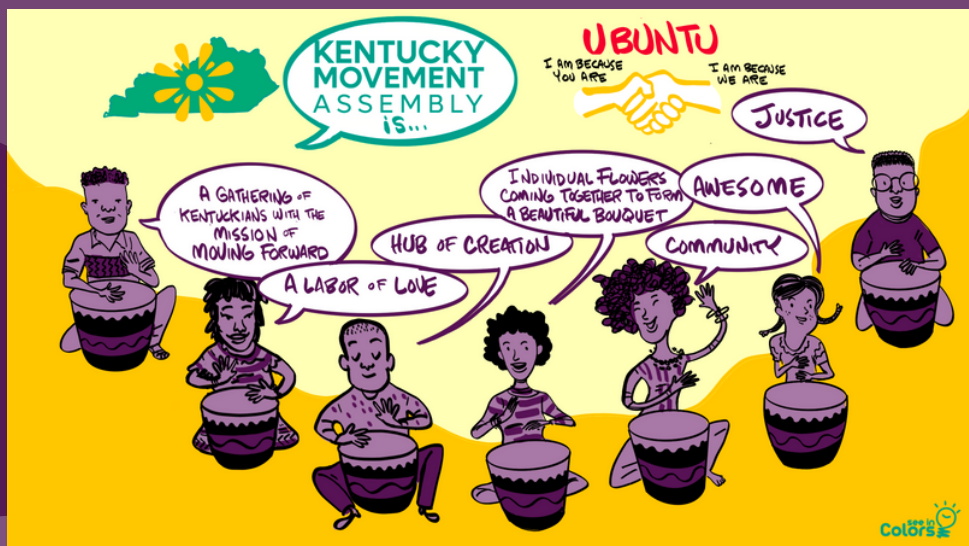
*Raleigh Police Department Traffic Stops by Purpose and Race*



# KENTUCKY

## Kentucky Movement Assembly

We co-hosted the Kentucky Movement Assembly (KMA) alongside a powerful gathering of nearly 300 people from across Kentucky and surrounding southern states who are interested in grounding the South and building our collective power. Furthermore, we hosted planning meetings for the KMA all across Kentucky, including in Paducah and Berea.



Discussion topics at the KMA included mass incarceration, youth organizing, harm reduction, climate disasters, mutual aid, environmental justice, housing justice, tenant organizing, voting rights, immigration, and more!

**“We live in times when we’re all talking at each other. Being heard really means something. Listening is a healing act, and we need healers.” -Tim**

Visit [fjan.org](http://fjan.org) to view a larger version of the KMA graphic notes.

## Inaugural Black Women's Healing Retreat

The Black Women's Healing Retreat allowed us a space to reflect, converse, and build community with a group of phenomenal Black women in Northern Kentucky. The Black Women's Healing Retreat included meditation, ancestral connection, and healing through exercises using different elements including water.



## Louisville Metro Council District 3 Candidate Support

### Shameka Parrish-Wright believes in justice and safety!

Living in an extended stay hotel with her three kids when she came to Louisville 20 years ago, she depended on help from the community to earn her degree. She devoted her career to giving back, and she learned that the best way to improve public safety is to invest in justice for all.

#### On the council, she will:

- ✓ Address the criminalization of poverty
- ✓ Champion economic development in the most marginalized communities
- ✓ Invest in youth programs and oppose new jails
- ✓ Make the Metro Council more accessible to regular people
- ✓ Utilize a public health approach to safety and wellness



SUPPORTED BY:



**VOTE Shameka Parrish-Wright for Metro Council District 3!**  
EARLY VOTING IS NOV. 2-4. | ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, NOV. 7.

We supported the successful candidacy of Shameka Parrish-Wright. Shameka will continue to fight for housing justice, food access, and racial justice as the councilwoman for Louisville Metro District 3. Our support of Shameka included social media graphics, a direct mailer to thousands of District 3 voters, and radio ads.

## No New Louisville Jail

Louisville, Kentucky, does not need a \$300 million dollar new jail. We supported and amplified calls from the Louisville community, including over a dozen Black-led local organizations, to reject the plan to build a new jail in Louisville. Our Director of Special Projects, Attica Scott, wrote an op-ed in the Courier-Journal that further expressed the need to reject the plan to build a new Louisville jail.

**courier journal**

#### OPINION

*This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

### Louisville cannot justify fast-tracking a \$300 million dollar shiny new jail: Opinion

**Attica Scott**

Published 5:11 a.m. ET March 20, 2023

*"If now isn't a good time for the truth, I don't see when we'll get to it." –Nikki Giovanni*

Louisville does not need a [new jail](#).

## No New Letcher Prison

FJAN signed on to the campaign to stop the construction of a new prison in Letcher County, KY. A new \$500 million federal prison in eastern Kentucky would devastate the community and would be the most expensive prison ever. The proposal from the Federal Bureau of Prisons includes the construction of the prison on a former mountaintop removal coal mine, which would have detrimental consequences for the environment.



## The People’s Consent Decree

The People’s Consent Decree Coalition (TPCD) in Louisville, includes individuals, groups, and organizations that are deeply invested in Louisville and protecting the people of Louisville from the threat of harm from law enforcement.

We joined the TPCD because of the egregious nature of the Department of Justice's findings after their investigation into the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD), where the DOJ found that the LMPD engaged in a pattern or practice of conduct that deprives people of their constitutional rights.

The TPCD’s demands include making the community a part of negotiations during the consent decree process, a civilian review and accountability board with subpoena power, community observers for the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) contract negotiations, and more.



## “Waking the Sleeping Giant” Mass Rally



We co-hosted Bishop William J. Barber II, President of Repairers of the Breach and Founding Director of the Public Theology and Public Policy Center at Yale, in Louisville, for a non-partisan voter engagement mass rally at Greater Friendship Baptist Church.

Kentucky Poor People's Campaign (KY PPC), Kentucky Democracy Project, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC), Black Leadership Action Coalition of Kentucky (BLACK), Forward Justice Action Network (FJAN), Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, Louisville Showing Up for Racial Justice (LSURJ), Union College, VOCAL-KY and others co-hosted this non-partisan voter registration event because poverty is the 4th leading cause of death in the U.S., and there are more than 1.5 million poor and low-income voters in Kentucky.

## Fentanyl West End Community Conversation

We co-hosted an opioid abatement conversation in the predominately Black West End of Louisville to discuss and amplify solutions to the ongoing opioid crisis plaguing our community. Fentanyl, Family, and Community: A Solutions-Based Conversation in Louisville's West End was co-hosted by Exploited Children's Help Organization, Family & Children's Place, FindHelpNowKY.org, FindRecoveryHousingNowKY.org, Forward Justice Action Network (FJAN), Kentucky Harm Reduction Coalition, Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission, and VOCAL Kentucky.



### FENTANYL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

A SOLUTIONS-BASED CONVERSATION  
IN LOUISVILLE'S WEST END

TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2023  
5-8 PM

LOUISVILLE CENTRAL COMMUNITY CENTER  
1300 W MUHAMMAD ALI BLVD  
LOUISVILLE, KY 40203

HOSTED BY:



# GROUNDING THE SOUTH

FJAN is committed to being a catalyst for transformative change at the forefront of creating a Third Reconstruction in the U.S.

We have continued the work of connecting movement partners, building power, and amplifying community efforts across the U.S.

We showed up in Nashville in solidarity with multiple calls to action to stand with the “Tennessee Three,” including marching with the Poor People’s Campaign and Repairers of the Breach. We showed up in Jackson, MS, to provide legal advocacy and communications support as the community works to address the ongoing water crisis.

Read more about how we used our collective political power to Ground the South at the federal level.



# TENNESSEE

Key areas we have engaged in include Tennessee, **where we amplified and supported the “Tennessee Three,”** who are lawmakers advocating against gun violence in the U.S., and includes two young Black lawmakers who were expelled by the Tennessee state legislature.

How many more preventable murders of children, elders, sisters, brothers, mothers, and fathers must this country endure before a moral tide shifts the political calculus from money-hungry gun manufacturers to the people?

Our community spaces and sacred spaces are invaded by instruments of war and senseless massacres. Banks, grocery stores, post offices, schools, parades, colleges, churches, mosques, synagogues, restaurants, movie theaters, dance studios, neighborhood bars, nightclubs, concerts, military bases, farms, apartments, and city streets. It does not have to be this way.



# MISSISSIPPI

## The Fight for Clean Water

Too often, directly impacted people are left out of the solutions to the problems affecting them the most. This is the case in Jackson, Mississippi.

**For the past 13 months, FJAN has stood alongside community leaders in Jackson as they push to be included in solutions to the current water crisis.**

Community members are being locked out of the decision-making process. This is a huge concern for the Mississippi Poor People's Campaign (MS-PPC) and the People's Advocacy Institute (PAI). Both organizations are a part of the Rapid Response Coalition and they have fought to get clean and safe drinking water to residents prior to federal involvement.

**MS-PPC and PAI represented by Forward Justice, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Natural Resource Defense Council, and ACLU Mississippi.** Together this co-counsel alliance has worked with the community to advocate for a seat at the table. In July 2023, the co-counsel alliance helped the MS-PPC and PAI file a community statement, which outlined how they envision success over the water crisis. In addition, in August, the co-counsel group helped MS-PPC and PAI file an emergency petition demanding safe drinking water with the Environmental Protection Agency. On September 25, 2023, counsel filed a motion to intervene in the current Jackson water lawsuit pending in federal court.

As the work continues, FJAN understands that movement work, like the work in Jackson, requires moving out of the way to allow people on the ground to lead. We stand by the community leaders in Jackson, Mississippi, and we will continue to fight alongside them to ensure their voices are heard.

MISSISSIPPI TODAY

## Advocates attempt to intervene in Jackson water case, respond to judge's criticism



by Alex Rozier

September 28, 2023



# FEDERAL ADVOCACY

## Moral Poverty Action Congress

In the U.S., poverty is the fourth leading cause of death, and it is also a policy choice. We stood alongside the national Poor People's Campaign, Repairers of the Breach, and hundreds of clergy and poor and low-income leaders from across the country to uplift and advance policy solutions that address the needs of poor and low-income people in the U.S.



## National Racial Equity Initiative Social Justice Summit

FJAN participated in the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation National Racial Equity Initiative Social Justice Summit in Washington, D.C. The space was informative, and we had the opportunity to engage in conversation about voting rights, banned books, and more. We were also able to connect with dozens of people from across the country, including many individuals fighting for voting rights in the U.S. South.





# HIGHLIGHTS

## 2023 TheGrio Hero Award

We are proud and honored that our Co-Director Daryl Atkinson, was awarded the inaugural 2023 theGrio hero. TheGrio Heroes are the everyday Black heroes in our world determined to impact our communities, culture, and humanity.

To hear more about Daryl's story and our work visit: [thegrio.com/heroes2023](https://thegrio.com/heroes2023)



## NCCU 40 Under 40 Alumni Awards



**FORTY**  
UNDER FORTY  
ALUMNI AWARDS

**Ashley Marshall, '15**



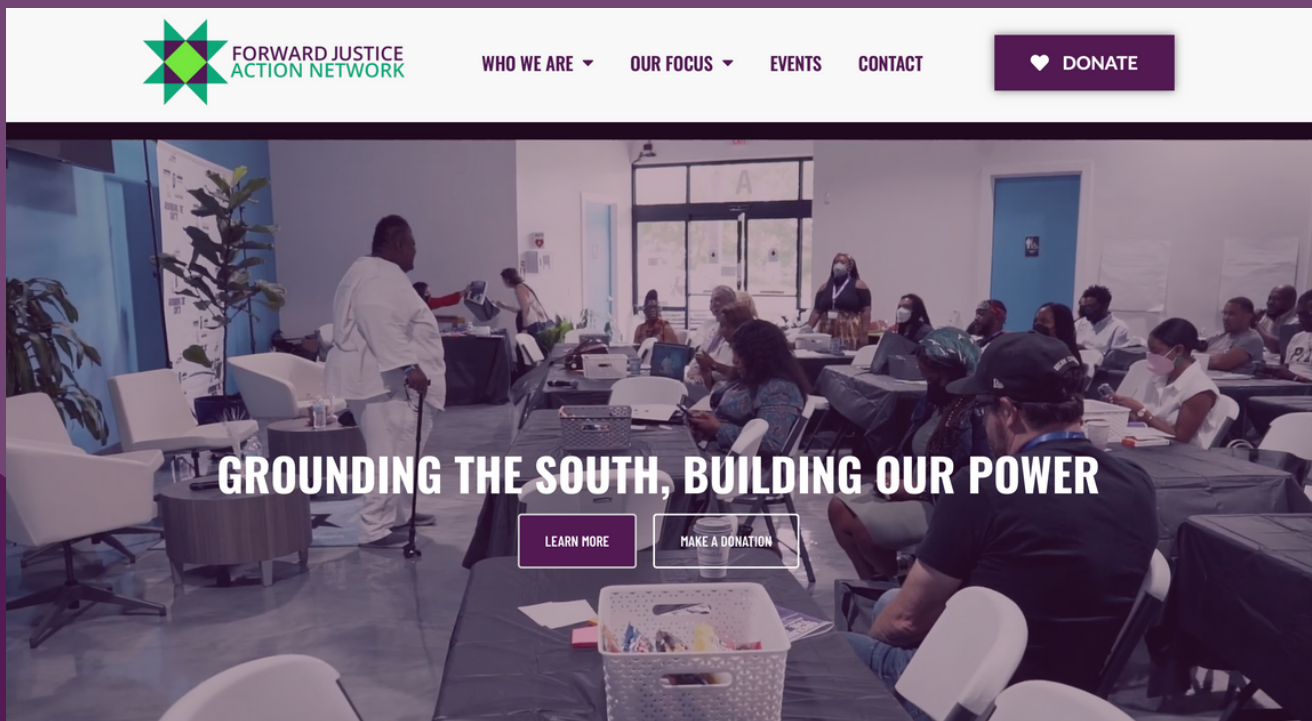
*Durham, NC*  
*Master of Public Administration*  
*Deputy Director*  
*Forward Justice, Durham, NC*

Dr. Ashley Marshall is the co-founder and deputy director of Forward Justice. She co-leads the growing organization with an intersectional approach to support movement-building priorities in democracy, criminal justice and economic justice advocacy.

We are proud of our Co-Director Dr. Ashley Marshall was chosen by her peers and inductee into the "40 Under 40" 2023 class. Inductees are all under the age of 40 and have made contributions to a variety of fields including education, social justice, law, healthcare, sciences, mass communication, and public service. "The Forty Under Forty Awards recognize the accomplishments of NCCU's young alumni who are the embodiment of "The Eagle Promise."

# BRAND TRANSFORMATION

We are excited to share that FJAN has recently undergone a comprehensive brand transformation with the expert assistance of Layla Nielsen & Co. This significant transformation includes a new brand identity, a refreshed website, and a revamped media presence. Stay tuned for a unique and more dynamic FJAN as we continue to drive our mission forward through innovative design and impactful communication.



## Amplifying Social Justice Issues Through Media Engagement

In today's digital age, social media has become a powerful tool for activism and social justice. It allows people to connect and share their voices with the world, bringing attention to important issues that may go unnoticed. This is where our new design comes into play.

Through our redesigned platforms, we can engage with hundreds of individuals on our social channels and website, amplifying issues and causes that are important to us, like the wrongful expulsion of two young, Black lawmakers in Tennessee, and calling out issues like the attempt to fast-track a new 300 million dollar jail in Louisville, Kentucky, and the attempt to build a new prison in Letcher County, Kentucky.



# JOIN THE WORK AHEAD!



We are on a mission to mobilize and build the political power we need to sustain our victories as we work to realize our Third Reconstruction of racial justice, human and civil rights, a fair and free democracy, and economic justice.



Become a supporter of FJAN to help us scale faster by investing in our technology, expanding our team, and investing in the movement work.



Sign up for our newsletter to receive insights from the FJAN team, hear about success stories, stay up-to-date on urgent needs, and mobilize opportunities from our community and movement partners.

## Stay Up-To-Date

Grounding the South Convening | September 2024

# FOLLOW US!

---



[@forwardjusticeactionnetwork](https://www.instagram.com/forwardjusticeactionnetwork)



[@ FJAN](https://twitter.com/FJAN)



[@ForwardJusticeActionNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/ForwardJusticeActionNetwork)



[@forwardjusticeactionnetwork](https://www.youtube.com/forwardjusticeactionnetwork)



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

---

Thank you to all of our 2023 donors and funders, the fight continues!

[\*\*DONATE NOW\*\*](#)

*Thank you to our board members:*

*Nia Wilson, Co-Executive Director of Spirithouse*

*Christian Motley, Senior Advisor of Results for America*

*Reverend Erica Williams, Founder & Director of Set It Off Movement*

*Norris Henderson, Executive Director of VOTE*

*Forward Justice Action Network*

*P.O. Box 1932*

*Durham, NC 27702*

*Forward Justice is a Section 501(c)(4) charitable organization, EIN 84-2032850. Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the North Carolina State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-814-5400.*

**All rights reserved, 2023**