

## Upcoming Transformative Storytelling Project with Formerly Incarcerated Women Leaders

*"I love these monologues because they shift the narrative that has enabled systems of oppression in the U.S."* - Bryan Stevenson, ED of the Equal Justice Initiative

*"This format, this process, should definitely be something that is happening in every state. Motus Theater has provided a voice to those who were voiceless. And as a result, a lot of people are speaking about things that they weren't speaking about: the injustices of the justice system and its punitive damage."* - Juaquin Mobley, *JustUs* monologist

### **JustUs Monologues:** *Stories from the Frontlines of the Criminal Justice System*

In 2019 [Motus Theater](http://www.motustheater.org), based in Boulder Colorado, began working with formerly incarcerated leaders to develop autobiographical monologues about the impact of the criminal justice system on our lives in order to challenge the injustice, dehumanization, racism, and class bias within it.

The first group of [JustUs](http://www.justusmonologues.org) monologues was presented for 1,600 stakeholders as the keynote of the National Association for Community and Restorative Justice conference. Since then, the monologues have been performed regionally and internationally: RJ World Conference 2020; European Restorative Justice Forum's REstART 2020; Grantmakers in the Arts; and in collaboration with regional law enforcement leaders.

### **Information on the upcoming workshop:**

Motus is looking for 6-8 formerly incarcerated women of color to work together over 17 weeks to develop a short 5-10 minute autobiographical monologue aimed at reaching both a regional and national audience to transform the criminal legal system. The group will meet virtually over Zoom for 2hrs each week to write and reflect on their lives and the impact of the criminal legal system. Trauma support, public speaking, and performance training are woven into each workshop. Both oral and written storytelling is encouraged. One does not need to be a 'writer' to participate - the only requirement is the courage to show up and share the truth of your experience and knowledge to transform the criminal legal system. The workshop will culminate in a performance for friends and family members, followed by public presentations. Each person attending is requested to commit to at least five performances, one of which will be filmed and another pulled for audio recording. *(There will be additional regional and national performance opportunities for those interested.)*

Workshop participation and performances are paid. The workshop will be facilitated over Zoom, from March through June, by autobiographical monologue coach Kirsten Wilson and transformative healing coach Wendy Talley.

**Those interested can sign up for a virtual information session below by adding your name and email [here](#):**

- Saturday, Feb 13th @ 10-11am MST (12pm EST)
- Saturday, Feb 27th @ 10-11am MST (12pm EST)
- Tuesday, March 2nd @ 6-7pm MST (8pm EST)

**You can explore the stories of the first *JustUs* group using these links:**

1. Watch a performance of *JustUs* leaders reading their own stories over Zoom ([here](#))
2. Watch a performance with *JustUs* monologists, a capella group Spirit of Grace, and guest law enforcement leaders over Zoom ([here](#))
3. Read the monologue of *JustUs* monologist Juaquin Mobley ([here](#)); listen to an interview with him on CPR ([here](#)); and watch him deliver his prologue to the *JustUs* series live ([here](#))

## **General information on Motus Theater's *JustUs* Project:**

The criminal legal system is a human rights crisis. The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate of any country, profound race and class disparities, and regular violent assaults in prison. Yet, as Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice initiative, states: "Americans seem to be very comfortable with this system."

The Motus Theater [JustUs](#) autobiographical monologue performance project aims to make audiences and guest readers (*including law enforcement officials, political representatives, and public policy and religious leaders*) take action to re-envision how we do justice in our country.

Motus' *JustUs* project supports formerly incarcerated people to tell personal stories about their experience with the criminal legal system. Autobiographical monologues humanize people defined as "criminal" and expose the devastating impact of the system. The stories uplift the voices of formerly incarcerated leaders and the authority of our experience to influence systemic change. Audiences and readers find themselves profoundly uncomfortable with the violence, racial and class bias, and abuses happening in the name of 'justice'.

The *JustUs* project relies on a central strategy of narrative change: proximity. Again quoting Bryan Stevenson... "We cannot create justice without getting close to places where injustices prevail." The stories we share in our families, media, and theater are important because the stories we hold close are the ones that impact what we care about, the actions we take, and how we vote.

## **Information on Motus Theater and the Vision of *JustUs*:**

[Motus Theater's](#) mission is to develop original theater to support critical conversation. Motus has been collaborating with leaders on the frontlines of violence in America to support them in crafting powerful autobiographical monologues since 2013.

Motus Theater sees all of our work within a transformative justice model in that we try to get at the root causes of systemic violence and injustice. In addition to telling our own stories in the *JustUs* project, Motus formerly incarcerated monologists ask law enforcement, public safety leaders, district attorneys, prosecutors, and others working within the criminal legal system to stand on stage with us and take a first step towards repair by listening deeply to the impact of the criminal legal system on our lives.

By listening to and reading the stories of formerly incarcerated leaders, politicians and law enforcement agents connect more personally to the harm, violence, and injustice that the criminal injustice system has inflicted in the name of 'justice'. As guest readers hold close the violence of the criminal justice system, the personal pressure they feel and the possibilities they imagine increase - allowing them to envision a justice system in which repair and restoration to those convicted of crimes does not lean on punishment and exploitation models infused with racial bias.

### **Workshop Facilitators:**

**Kirsten Wilson** is the Artistic Director, founder and visionary of Motus Theater. She is a narrative artist, master teacher in the field of autobiographical monologue work, and the editor of the [Motus Monologues](#) and [Shoebox Stories](#) podcasts. Kirsten has created several award-winning multi-media performances exploring history through the lens of race and class. She excels in supporting individuals who have negotiated trauma in creating compelling narratives aimed at opening hearts and minds. Since 2013 she has been working with undocumented leaders to share the stories of people on the frontlines of U.S immigration policy. She began collaborating with formerly incarcerated leaders to share their stories of the criminal legal system in 2019. Her work has been featured in media as diverse as *Theater Magazine*, *NPR*, *FAST Company Magazine*, *Ms. Magazine*, and *USA Today*.

**Wendy Talley** is a transformative healing coach, an explorer of spiritual truth, and a practitioner of healing arts for thirty-three years. She creates dynamic programming to impact adults and young people from around the world through intensive leadership experiences. Her life's work is a rich tapestry of community advocacy and engagement as a highly seasoned life coach, facilitator, and trainer. Wendy has worked for over thirty-seven years in the field of social issues facing people including health, poverty, housing, homelessness, incarceration, trauma, mental health, and youth development, where she spearheaded designing programs and developing policies. For fifteen years she has initiated a consulting practice, which includes working in communities to address issues related to nonprofit development, executive coaching, leadership & staff training, project design, implementation & evaluation.