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EMAN- CIPATE

END OF YEAR REPORT

Support Our Work
www.emancipatenc.org

2025 has brought many reasons for concern:

the erosion of the pillars of democracy; the swift dismantlement of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and targeted attacks on immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities, and BIPOC people.

Yet 2025 has also brought cause for joy:

This year, we celebrated our 50th anniversary.

In 2025, we celebrated 50 years of resilience. We have turned every legislative, judicial, executive, and rhetorical attack on progress into an opportunity to raise awareness about the critical importance of our work and what is at stake if we fail. While dozens of government administrations have come and gone, each presenting a unique challenge to fighting racist mass incarceration, Emancipate outlasted them all. We not only survived a global pandemic—but we emerged from it stronger than ever. Every adversity encountered over the past 50 years only made our resolve, our influence, and our impact stronger.

In 2025, we celebrated 50 years of extraordinary resistance. Fighting mass incarceration at the height of “tough on crime” policies and practices. Loudly protesting on the street, marching in solidarity, yelling into megaphones, and stopping traffic. Training and educating our community to understand and protect their rights—to protest, to vote, and to live without fear of police violence. The quieter work of publishing op-eds and shifting public narratives in the media. We have resisted racism, social and economic oppression, and disenfranchisement in a myriad of creative ways over the last 50 years.

Thank you for standing with us as we honor our past, reflect on how far we’ve come, and strengthen our resolve for the next chapter.

Here’s to another 50 years.

In Solidarity,

Dawn Blagrove



A thick orange square frame with a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance, centered on the page. It contains the text "OUR TEAM" in white.

OUR TEAM

Our Team



Dawn Blagrove
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
& ATTORNEY



Elizabeth Simpson
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR
& ATTORNEY



Kerwin Pittman
POLICY & PROGRAM



Ian Mance
SENIOR COUNSEL



Dedan Waciuri
ORGANIZER & LEGAL
LIAISON



Joy C. Belk
PARALEGAL



Dillon Sharpe
STAFF ATTORNEY



Jatoia Potts
ORGANIZER



Jaelyn Miller
STAFF ATTORNEY



Margaux Lander
INVESTIGATOR & STRATEGIST

Board of
Directors



Savannah Baker
BOARD CHAIR



Frances Castillo
BOARD MEMBER



Tessa Hale
BOARD MEMBER



Kristie Puckett
BOARD SECRETARY
AND TREASURER



Mandie Sellars
BOARD MEMBER

A thick orange L-shaped graphic, resembling a stylized bracket or a partial square frame, is positioned on the left side of the page. It consists of a vertical line segment on the left and a horizontal line segment at the bottom, meeting at a right angle. The text is centered within the open space of this shape.

QUOTES FROM OUR FUNDERS

Quotes from select funders.

“

Emancipate NC continues important work making sure we tell a story of all of North Carolina. Their responsive work platforms people to be sure that more voices shape local news coverage of the justice system and policing. Their long-term commitment to protecting the right to dissent, training organizers, and interrupting harmful narratives continues to protect NC's civic life.

”

North Carolina
Local News Lab
Fund

Lizzy Hazeltin

NC Local News Lab

“

Criminal justice reform faces its toughest test in decades. Emancipate NC stands in the breach to take on these challenges head on and move to make a meaningful difference.

”

THE JUST TRUST

James Gore

The Just Trust + The Just Trust

“

Southern Partners Fund truly appreciated the work of Emancipate NC as they continue to push forward progress in the south, particularly in the realm of voter engagement. Their work is extremely important and we truly value Emancipate NC as a partner.

”

Southern
Partners
Fund

Antoine Smith

Southern Partners Fund

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JUSTICE LEAGUE

The Justice League

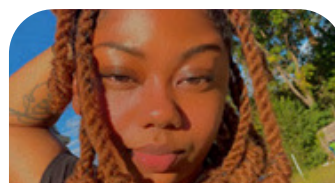
The Justice League is an organizing fellowship for justice-impacted individuals and youth to learn advocacy and organizing skills, and to deploy those skills on campaigns to fight structural racism and mass incarceration. The Justice League members earn stipends while planning and developing campaigns.



Nyesha Adkins



Patrick Ballard



Makayla Banks



April Barber



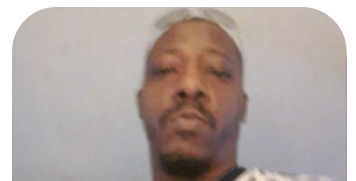
Destiny Benjamin



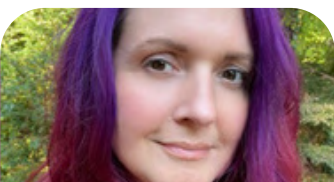
Erin Blagrove



Madison Blagrove



James Bourber



Deborah Bridger



Kyndal Coulter



A'Nya Cox



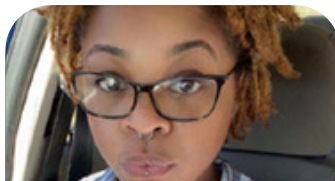
Mia Dickens



Jakiya Franklin



Treeva Freeman



Kiona Harvey



Dominique Hathaway



Charles Hodge



Trinity Holder



Kyla Holton



Ayanna Iovieno



Gianni Jackson



Rhonda Joines



Ricki Leak



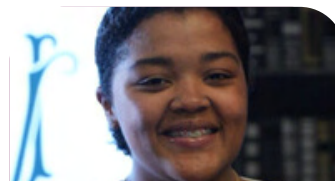
Ciara CeCe Levy



Maya Muldrow



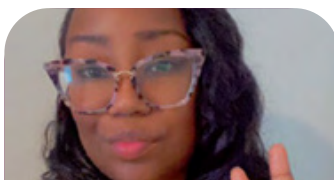
Shahonda Pope



Saylah Rogers



Edward Scott



April Short



Kenyata Smith



Mallory Thornton



Brandon Tweedy

Dismantling Structural Racism and Mass Incarceration Across North Carolina

An orange L-shaped graphic, consisting of a vertical line on the left and a horizontal line on the bottom, with a small square cutout in the top-right corner.

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

Strategic Litigation:

REMOVING CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS & RECLAIMING PUBLIC SPACE

Emancipate NC attorneys Ian Mance and Jaelyn Miller have been representing Black residents of Tyrrell County in a lawsuit to remove a Confederate monument bearing an engraving glorifying chattel slavery from the front of their courthouse. Team Emancipate is arguing that this monument, which greets visitors to a government building, violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment because it promotes racist government speech. In May, our community celebrated the ruling by a federal judge allowing this lawsuit to proceed.

In Chowan County, the Confederate monument that loomed over downtown Edenton for generations was Finally taken down. In August, a Superior Court Judge overruled legal protections of this monument, and the City of Edenton removed it less than two weeks later. However, officials have announced that they will relocate this offensive monument. While we are celebrating the victory of Black community members in Edenton, we are continuing to support efforts to prevent this monument from terrorizing public land again.



ACHIEVING HOUSING JUSTICE FOR NORTH CAROLINA'S MOST VULNERABLE TENANTS

This year, Attorney Jaelyn Miller has expanded the scope of Emancipate's strategic litigation to encompass protecting the rights of tenants; in particular, people of color, low-income tenants, and tenants who are people with disabilities.

In October, Jaelyn won a monetary settlement for a tenant with auditory impairments whose landlord refused to make necessary repairs to make her home safe. This landlord not only ignored the tenant's written requests, but he also blamed her disability for impacting communication about the needed repairs.



Jaelyn also supported an elderly tenant whose landlord withheld her security deposit, violating their legal obligation to return security deposits within 30 days of move-out, with deductions itemized. In these situations, the withholding of such a large amount of money can be catastrophic for a tenant's financial stability. Jaelyn helped her client win the full return of her security deposit.



Through these courtroom victories, Emancipate NC is supporting the personal well-being of our clients while signalling to landlords that tenants have a right to enforce housing protection laws. Recognizing that access to safe housing is critical to preventing criminal legal system involvement and recidivism, this work is also addressing a root cause of mass incarceration.

JUSTICE FOR DARRYL WILLIAMS

Last year, Emancipate NC announced a major civil rights lawsuit against the City of Raleigh on behalf of the estate of Darryl Tyree Williams. Mr. Williams died after being tased six times by Raleigh police officers, including, the estate alleged, while he was unconscious and handcuffed. The Complaint also alleged that Williams pleaded with



officers and told them he had a heart condition. Mr. Williams' death raised urgent questions about excessive force, accountability, and the use of tasers by law enforcement. The City and individual officers denied and continue to deny the allegations. In March 2025, a federal judge rejected the City of Raleigh's attempt to have the case dismissed, allowing the lawsuit to move forward. In the wake of the court's ruling, and following continued litigation and advocacy, the case was successfully settled for \$975,000. We

believe this settlement represents the largest recovery by a plaintiff in a federal taser-related death case to be brought against a police department in the Fourth Circuit. While no settlement can undo the harm done or replace Mr. Williams' life, this outcome represents a meaningful step toward accountability and underscores the importance of persistent legal advocacy in the fight for justice.

Emancipate NC remains committed to standing with families impacted by police violence and to using the courts as a tool to challenge unlawful and inhumane practices. The organization also thanks our co-counsel in this case, DiCello Levitt LLP and The Ben Crump Law Firm, for their advocacy on behalf of the Williams family.



DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY FROM THE DURHAM COUNTY JAIL

Emancipate has continued to utilize strategic litigation to challenge inhumane practices in jails. Since 2024, we have been demanding that the Durham County Sheriff release a copy of the Durham County Jail policy manual for public inspection; in particular, policies related to the use of solitary confinement and physical restraint chairs. Accessing this information is a critical first step to investigating jail conditions and identifying practices that need to be reformed. While requests for jail policies are considered routine, and Emancipate's records requests were granted quickly by other counties, the Durham County Sheriff's office resisted making these records available for public inspection—instead releasing just one chapter at a time, each of which was heavily redacted.

In October, a Special Superior Court judge dismissed the lawsuit, citing deference to the Sheriff's authority as an elected official. In response, Team Emancipate shifted its focus toward public education, emphasizing the power of the ballot and the importance of electing leaders who are committed to humane conditions in jails. That same month, Emancipate hosted a community forum to examine jail conditions and discuss the profound ways incarceration impacts families. By December, sustained pressure from the coalition led to a meaningful victory: the Durham Sheriff restored in-person visitation at the jail for families and friends!



DEFENDING VICTIMS OF POLICE VIOLENCE

Emancipate is one of the only teams of attorneys in NC that is equipped to provide legal representation to clients who have not only experienced violence at the hands of police, but also face criminal charges after such encounters.

In September, Emancipate represented Mr. Hannon, a man who was assaulted by police officers during a child custody case, then charged with felony assault on a law enforcement officer, causing injury, and misdemeanor damage to personal property—charges that have the potential to result in substantial prison and extensive collateral damage post-release.

Mr. Hannon fought for his innocence with multiple public defenders until he was stripped of his right to appointed counsel and pressured to accept a deal in exchange for pleading guilty. With nowhere else to turn, he approached Team Emancipate for help. The same day that attorney Dillon Sharpe accepted and began working on his case, jury selection began, with a judge denying Attorney Sharpe's motion for more time to prepare.

In spite of these obstacles, Attorney Sharpe stood with Mr. Hannon, resolving to fight to defend his innocence. After a week-long trial, the jury found Mr. Hannon not guilty on all counts.



INTERRUPTING RACIAL PROFILING BY EQUIPPING DEFENSE ATTORNEYS WITH DATA-DRIVEN LEGAL TOOLS

Even though Black and Brown drivers make up the majority of traffic stops and searches, defense lawyers have historically had little success proving in court that law enforcement engaged in racial profiling. Through our innovative Traffic Stop Racial Profiling Interruption project, Emancipate Senior Counsel Ian Mance is working to change that.

With funding from a national Microsoft and Catalyst Fund initiative, Ian is using traffic stop data to not only identify law enforcement officers who are selectively targeting Black and Brown drivers, but also to meet the criteria required to prove selective enforcement in court. Ian has been working with interns at Emancipate to develop a data collection/analysis tool that will allow us to create a database of law officer names, patrol districts, and enforcement profiles—in particular, the races/ethnicities of drivers/passengers they stop and search—and consolidate this information, which is kept in separate public databases, into one place. Ian will train public defenders to use this database to prove racial profiling in court. This work is especially important for reducing the time that public defenders, who often field heavy caseloads with minimal resources, need to spend obtaining information required to prove selective enforcement in court.

Ian will also work with staff at Emancipate to use this data to identify and disrupt patterns of racial profiling in policing proactively. This tool will enable Team Emancipate to analyze traffic-stop data, identify officers who contribute the most to racial/ethnic disparities in traffic stops, and schedule meetings with law enforcement leadership to present this data and recommend interventions.

Through this groundbreaking work, Emancipate is developing and training attorneys to disrupt discriminatory policing practices that drive disproportionate rates of incarceration among Black/Brown individuals.



Family Defense:

CAROLINA PARENT DEFENDERS SPREADS ITS WINGS AND TAKES FLIGHT

Last year, we were proud to announce the launch of Carolina Parent Defenders (CPD), the first program in NC's piedmont region to offer parents facing CPS investigations access to free, holistic legal representation.

CPD supports families facing abuse/neglect allegations—in particular, allegations related to poverty—through both court representation and early advocacy/holistic support services to stabilize families before a court petition to remove a child is filed. In every pre-petition case, CPD effectively prevented a petition from being filed that would necessitate court intervention—which would have otherwise led to family separation and foster care placement. CPD provided court and pre-petition legal services to 60 families in Beaufort, Craven, Chatham, Cumberland, Durham, Guilford, Halifax, Lee, Lenoir, Macon, Mecklenburg, Moore, Onslow, Orange, Pamlico, Person, and Wake counties. CPD obtained approval to join the Parent Representation Court Appointment list in Durham County, which will position CPD attorneys to reach even more NC families in need.

CPD's legal representation and advocacy has had a profound impact on families in NC. In court, CPD attorneys won the return of a child to their family after suffering physical abuse in foster care and the return of a child to their home after proving they did not show any signs of abuse/neglect. Through early defense, CPD attorneys supported a mother being investigated after childbirth despite negative toxicology tests, conducting advocacy and securing medical records necessary to close the case; helped a mother secure a protective order and trauma-informed services after her partner harmed her child while she was hospitalized, preventing the mother from losing custody; and kept together a family at risk of separation due to homelessness, stabilizing their housing and providing other resources.



In addition to providing free legal services, CPD created and delivered a range of outreach services to communities throughout NC. CPD created a statewide hotline and email platform that enables direct access for families, social service providers, and attorneys seeking early defense support. CPD also launched an internship program to equip the next generation of lawyers and legal activists with knowledge and skills to prevent family separation. To date, we have trained four interns from local law and social work schools. Additionally, CPD hosted educational sessions and trainings for lawyers, law students, and medical professionals as well as professors developing NC's first family defense clinic at UNC School of Law, with whom we are collaborating closely.

In 2025, CPD's work was so well-received and supported by the community that this program became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Team Emancipate is excited to collaborate with CPD as a partnering organization!



Artwork by Dawn Blagrove, "We will be fine."

BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER THROUGH TRAININGS

In partnership with Carolina Parent Defenders, Emancipate hosted several workshops that educated mental health professionals in NC about the family policing system and trained them in strategies for intervening to provide support when CPS is involved in their clients' lives. These included trainings for staff at Radical Healing, a Durham-based health and wellness center for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC people; service providers at the UNC School of Social Work, who work with people at risk of opiate use disorder; Durham Crisis Response Center, which works with the community to end domestic, sexual and family violence and human trafficking; and North Carolina Technical Assistance Center, which supports individuals at risk of incarceration and overdose.



CHALLENGING LEGAL STANDARDS THAT DESTABILIZE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Family Defense Organizer Toia Potts co-authored an article for the Family Justice Journal with American Bar Association (ABA) Staff Attorney Alexandria Cinney in support of the ABA Center on Children and the Law's End TPR Initiative, which calls for the child welfare system to end the practice of terminating parental rights (TPR) in favor of family-centered alternatives. Drawing from her personal experience losing custody of her own sons, Toia describes how the practice of TPR severs not only the legal relationship between parents and their children, but also their connections to other family members and their culture, heritage, and communities. Toia critiques the child welfare system's prioritization of inflicting punishment on caring parents rather than on supporting the well-being of families and children. In this article, Toia and Alexandria chart a path forward for ending TPR and promote an approach to child welfare that focuses on investing in support for helping families feel connected, healed, and supported.



ART BY DAWN BLAGROVE

Community Education:

Raising public awareness about policies, civic actions, and strategies to abolish the root causes of mass incarceration

BUILDING THE POWER OF BLACK COMMUNITIES TO TRANSLATE HOPE INTO ACTION

Executive Director Dawn Blagrove visited Wilmington, NC to co-lead two Town Halls that created space for Black citizens to voice concerns about the current political climate and explore opportunities for civic engagement and action. Wilmington was the site of the Wilmington Massacre of 1898, an effort by white supremacists to steal the 1898 elections through violence. As our country faces unprecedented threats to democracy, building the civic power of Black citizens in Wilmington to protect their rights holds special significance.

EMANCIPATE HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL EMANCIPATE CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION SEMINAR

Emancipate's third annual CLE brought together lawyers, law students, and advocates engaged in movement law to deepen their skills and build meaningful connections across the legal and activist community. Panel discussions focused on training attorneys to use traffic stop data to prove racial profiling in court, effective strategies for obtaining body camera footage and other police records to advance transparency, and practical approaches to media advocacy that support systemic change.



Protecting Dissent in NC:

Protecting protestors who challenge injustice.

STRENGTHENING THE PROTEST DEFENSE NETWORK

More than ever before, the right to protest is under imminent threat. Over the past year, we strengthened our commitment to defending dissent and protecting the right to protest in North Carolina. We welcomed Dillon Sharpe, a dedicated defense attorney who has taken on cases to protect the rights of protestors, including Amazon employees and students. We continued our legal advocacy with a lawsuit against UNC to safeguard the rights of student protestors and ensure that campuses remain spaces for democratic engagement. We co-hosted a national convening in Durham with the Piper Fund focused on the future of dissent, bringing together partners from across the country to strategize around emerging threats and collective defense. We also hosted a gathering featuring Rev. Ms. Johnson of the Beloved Community Center in Greensboro, who shared hard-earned wisdom and inspiration from the civil rights movement. Throughout the year, we sustained a statewide network of legal referrals and community support systems for individuals arrested in the course of protest. Together with partners like the Piper Fund, we remain more committed than ever to protecting the fundamental right to dissent.



DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST AT THE LEGISLATIVE LEVEL

Emancipate continued to fight proposed legislation that would infringe on the rights of citizens to engage in lawful acts of protest. In July, Emancipate joined with For the People Action, Common Cause N.C., Democracy N.C., North Carolina Asian Americans Together, Advance Carolina, and El Pueblo to oppose House Bill 237, which could criminalize masked protesters and punish protesters who use public spaces like roads and streets for protests and demonstrations.



Don't Plead to Weed Campaign:

Abolishing over-policing for marijuana-related charges

LEGAL REPRESENTATION TO WEED OUT UNJUST CHARGES

This year, Emancipate NC welcomed civil rights attorney Dillon Sharpe to strengthen the Don't Plead to Weed campaign by providing aggressive legal defense to people unjustly charged with marijuana offenses. Since joining the team, Dillon has successfully defended four clients whose drug charges stemmed from unrelated traffic stops, including driving below the speed limit, a tinted license plate cover, and a window tint violation.

Dillon is also collaborating with Emancipate attorneys Elizabeth Simpson and Jaelyn Miller on a civil rights lawsuit against the Greenville Police Department. The lawsuit alleges Fourth Amendment violations after officers pulled over a student for a broken headlight and charged her with marijuana possession based solely on odor—despite the student presenting a receipt proving she had legally purchased hemp from a local dispensary.

Through this case, Emancipate seeks not only justice for the student, but a broader ruling that curtails marijuana-based over-policing and advances meaningful policy reform.



BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR MARIJUANA REFORMS

We have complemented our courtroom advocacy with robust community education and public-facing advocacy efforts.

In May, Emancipate NC partnered with the Child and Family Action Coalition to host a community forum focused on the legal status of hemp and the ways marijuana enforcement fuels the over-policing and criminalization of Black and Brown communities. The forum also highlighted emerging opportunities for legal and policy reforms that could significantly reduce these disparities. The conversation was led by Senator Natalie Murdock and Emancipate NC attorney Dillon Sharpe.

In the fall, as the North Carolina Supreme Court considered multiple cases involving searches and arrests based solely on the alleged odor of marijuana, Emancipate NC Strategic Director and Attorney Elizabeth Simpson published an op-ed in The Charlotte News & Observer calling for an end to the practice of using marijuana odor alone as a pretext for searches and arrests.



Peace Not Police:

Protecting Greenville from over-policing

FREE LEGAL INFORMATION FRIDAYS

Emancipate launched our Free Legal Information Fridays initiative to provide a resource to keep the Greenville community safe, informed, and free from police harassment. These informational sessions educate community members about their legal rights, provide resources about how to obtain relief from court fees/fines, provide support with criminal record expunctions, and educate about our Don't Plead to Weed campaign.



JUSTICE FOR ANOTHONY DRAYTON



Our team is currently supporting Anthony Drayton, a man facing misdemeanor charges after experiencing a violent assault by Greenville police officers at a McDonald's. Even after being restrained and posing no threat, officers struck Mr. Drayton on the back of his head.

In response, Emancipate is providing legal representation to help Mr. Drayton defend himself against the criminal charges. Emancipate also hosted a press conference to center Mr. Drayton's experience in public narratives about the case and encouraged the community to attend Mr. Drayton's court hearing to provide support. Additionally, we shared contact information for the Chief of Police, City of Greenville, and Pitt County District Attorney, encouraging the community to contact these offices to demand that charges against Mr. Drayton be dropped and that the officers be fired and held accountable.

Community-Centered Public Safety:

□ ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE BECOMES A REALITY IN RALEIGH AND FAYETTEVILLE

In 2024, after years of advocacy and organizing, the City of Raleigh committed to funding and launching the city's first-ever unarmed crisis response team: the Raleigh Crisis Alternative Response for Empathy and Support (CARES) program. To date, the City has launched a care navigation unit which is actively helping community members access housing and mental health services as well as a crisis call diversion line. The City is also preparing to launch mobile crisis response teams and has budgeted to establish public-facing data platform to monitor calls to Raleigh's Addressing Crises through Outreach, Referrals, Networking, and Service unit (ACORNS) and increase transparency. Emancipate is continuing to monitor the implementation of this program to ensure that the City's promises of alternative response become a reality.



Emancipate replicated our advocacy for alternatives to police response, which produced Raleigh's CARES program, in Cumberland County; specifically, in the City of Fayetteville.

We launched this effort by identifying the needs of the community and opportunities to develop a non-police response model that would address these needs while promoting safety. We engaged over 500 community members in educational panels, community forums, and speaking appearances at the Fayetteville City Council and the City Public Safety Summit. We also established a community-led coalition, which included Fayetteville PACT, Blueprint NC, Black Voters Matter, and the local NAACP chapter. We used the feedback generated from this work to develop a proposal for a non-police public safety response model tailored to community needs.

In June 2025, the Fayetteville municipal government established the Office of Community Safety (OCS) and hired its inaugural director. OCS is designed to reduce reliance on police intervention as a one-size-fits-all response to complex human services needs. OCS focuses on building collaborative, preventative approaches across four key pillars: violence interruption, mental health response, youth opportunity, and homelessness risk reduction. Rather than responding after harm occurs, OCS is structured to support proactive, community-centered solutions that empower residents, connect them to critical resources, and strengthen social infrastructure. This office also serves as the connective tissue between neighborhoods, service providers, and city systems, ensuring that people in crisis do not fall through the cracks. The launch of OCS represents an approach to safety that centers empathy, early intervention, and the lived experiences of the community.



☐ POLICE MISCONDUCT DATABASE:

An avenue to keep Black families safe from police violence and hold police accountable for misconduct



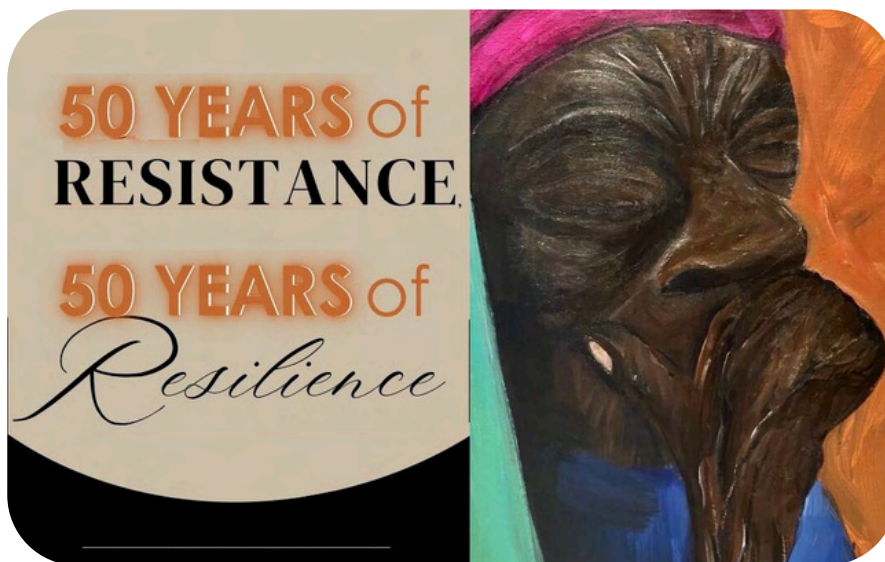
Emancipate's Police Misconduct Database provides a mechanism for individuals to report a police encounter, upload videos/photos, and share this information publicly. Emancipate NC uses stories submitted to our Police Misconduct Database to advocate law enforcement agencies and elected officials to address patterns of misconduct among officers and within agencies and to file complaints with state commissions overseeing law enforcement certifications.

Earlier this year, Team Emancipate received a report through this database about a resident of Pitt County who was punched in the face by a state trooper after crashing his car due to experiencing a medical emergency. Dash camera footage captured witnesses telling Sgt. Ashley B. Smith, the responding officer, that Thomas J. Simmons, a 44-year-old Native American man, had experienced an epileptic seizure while driving, causing him to crash his car. Sgt. Smith responded by punching, dragging, and handcuffing Mr. Simmons—then slapping him with false drug and other criminal charges, which they refused to dismiss unless Mr. Simmons waived his right to sue the trooper.

Thanks to this reporting system, Mr. Simmons was able to connect with Emancipate's team of attorneys, who were able to get all charges dismissed. We have also filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the trooper, seeking damages for excessive force, malicious prosecution, disability discrimination, and battery.

50 Years of Resistance, 50 Years of Resilience:

Emancipate hosted our 50 Years of Resistance, 50 Years of Resilience event to celebrate our 50th anniversary, honoring the progress we have made toward dismantling mass incarceration in North Carolina. Emancipate NC hosted an unforgettable evening bringing together supporters, advocates, and community partners for a celebration of justice, artistry, and collective power. A major highlight of the event was the Presentation of Awards, honoring individuals whose courage, leadership, and commitment to justice have shaped transformational progress across North Carolina. This year's honorees were recognized for their unwavering dedication and work to seek justice:



Marcus Bass received the Protector Award, honoring his steadfast leadership, advocacy, and protection of community power.

Clarence Roberts received the Crusader Award, recognizing his tireless pursuit of equity and accountability.

Darryl Howard received the Fighter Award, acknowledging his strength, resilience, and fight for justice

Awards

In October, Executive Director Dawn Blagrove received the North Carolina A. Philip Randolph Institute's Community Leader Award. This award recognizes a community leader who demonstrates extraordinary dedication to justice, equity, and uplifting the community.



A thick orange L-shaped graphic, resembling a stylized corner or a partial square frame, positioned to the left of the text.

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Media Spotlight

NC police shouldn't be able to use marijuana smell to search people. Here's why.

"The state of North Carolina shouldn't be able to have it both ways: legalizing a cash crop to uplift the economy while continuing to criminalize regular people for enjoying the product that is sold. It is time to admit that the smell of cannabis doesn't mean illegal activity is happening, and it cannot reasonably justify a search or an arrest."



The News Observer

ELIZABETH SIMPSON, Strategic Director & Attorney

NC Republican lawmakers share plans to introduce public safety package following deadly stabbing

"The idea of ending cash bail is simply just another tax on the poor. Another way to criminalize poverty, another way to destabilize our communities. The longer that people spend in jail, on post-trial awaiting trial, the higher the likelihood is that their economic life will be upended and that more criminality will result."

DAWN BLAGROVE, Executive Director



Bodycam footage adds context to NC Central protest arrests

Our clients, all members of the NCCU community, were exercising their constitutionally protected right to voice legitimate concerns about unacceptable living conditions at North Carolina Central University. Their April 16 arrests were unwarranted, and we will vigorously challenge them in court."



DILLON SHARPE, Attorney

Confederate statue dedicated to 'faithful slaves' targeted in class-action lawsuit

"This is the only monument of its kind at a courthouse with that language of appreciation, or an endorsement, of slavery on it."

IAN MANCE, Senior Counsel



Hundreds protest GOP challenge for NC Supreme Court seat: 'Let it go, bro'

"Protesting is a way to show and remind the people in power to whom they are accountable and that is us."

DAWN BLAGROVE, Executive Director



Slaughtering The Innocent: A New NC Law Will Keep Innocent People Locked Up

"If something is considered unconstitutional now, it must have also been unconstitutional 20 years ago. There's no time limit on injustice. But North Carolina's new statute of limitations on MARs closes the door on justice after seven years, even if the convicted person is actually innocent."

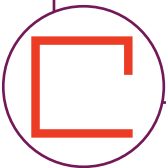
PHILLIP VANCE SMITH II



Attorney Jaelyn Miller Wins \$10,000 for Fayetteville Tenant Forced to Live in Uninhabitable Conditions

"Every tenant deserves a safe home and respect, regardless of who they are or what barriers they face. Landlords cannot ignore their legal responsibilities or use a tenant's disability as an excuse for neglect."

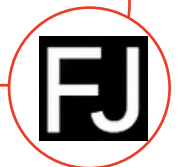
JAELYN MILLER, Attorney



Reclaiming futures: Ending TPR and strengthening family bonds

"The true punishment of TPR isn't just in losing my children, but in the way the system deliberately and cruelly punishes parents for being human."

TOIA POTTS, Family Defense Organizer





THANK YOU
to 2025 Funders and Partners!

We Can't Do This Without You.

PO Box 309, Durham, NC 27702

(919) 682-1149

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Support Our Work

www.emancipatenc.org