



Organization for Black Struggle

“Black People on the Move!”

OBS organizes for political empowerment, economic justice and the cultural dignity of the African American community. We are building power with the Black working class.

2022 in Review

You are receiving this newsletter because you have contributed time and /or money to our organizations.

From the OBS Interim Leadership Committee

The year felt heavy with the pandemic blues still hovering over us. Locally, we had our fair share of challenges. St. Louis experienced its first school shooting and all the trauma that brings to a community. The metro area, along with our urban cities, saw an uptick in violence on the domestic and community side. Targeted violence came looking for people of color, and members of the Muslim and LGBTQA+ communities. Families saw their spending power restricted with increasing inflation and ever-growing income inequality.

Challenges present organizing opportunities. We witnessed an intensified fightback around many existing issues—like organizing non-union worksites or holding police departments accountable.

OBS was proud to stand should-to-shoulder with our partners and allies to claim some hard-fought victories for working people. Coalition partners like the Coalition Against Police Crimes & Repression, Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, Missouri Jobs with Justice, the Community Justice Coalition and Missourians Organized for Voter Empowerment, to name a few.

Like others whose organizing focus is basebuilding, OBS has struggled to stay connected to our base during COVID-19. Our people don’t always have easy access to the internet or they wrestle with all of technology’s bells and whistles (can we say Zoom?!).

OBS has put its search for an Executive Director on hold for now and is redirecting those energies and resources to strengthening our core operations. This means that we will not have our traditional anniversary dinner celebrating in January. We are planning for an awesome event in 2024. Our 43rd anniversary celebration won’t slip by unnoticed. The yearly anniversary celebration is our major fundraiser so we’ll be looking for your participation in our virtual auction.

This newsletter highlights our activities in 2022 centered around our main organizing pillars. We’re looking forward to a new year of networking, strategizing, organizing, and celebrating with you. So 2023, bring it on!

We Brought Them Home! Free All Political Prisoners!

OBS is a staunch supporter of the Jericho Movement. We believe political prisoners entrapped by the FBI’s COINTELPRO need to be released immediately. Many political prisoners have been held in captivity since the turbulent 60’s and 70’s when some of us came into our political consciousness. We know these brothers and sisters. We mourn those who died behind the walls and we fight for the release of those who remain incarcerated. OBS honors their contributions and their sacrifices.



Political prisoners, Sundiata Acoli (left photo) and Dr. Mutulu Shakur(photo below) were finally released from prison in 2022 thanks to movement pressure. Both were former members of radical Black groups, making them a threat to the racist, capitalist system. They represented the best and brightest

of our youth which is why they had to be shut down. Both have been to hell and back, being denied parole numerous times and subject to repressive conditions while incarcerated.

Sundiata graduated from high school at age 15; he graduated from college with a degree in math at age 19. He was caged for 47 years. Sundiata needs our love and financial support for his aftercare. Donate at www.sundiataacolifc.org.

At a young age, Mutulu became a certified acupuncturist, using this alternative to treat drug addiction and other health problems in the Black community. Better known as Tupac’s stepdad, Mutulu has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Find out more about his case and how you can financially support his medical homecare at www.mutulushakur.com.



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Black Workers Matter! Workers Unite!



> The 69th annual Jefferson Bank Commemorative Protest highlighted the successful organizing efforts of workers at Amazon, Starbucks and fast-food restaurants.

> The St. Louis Fight for \$15 celebrated its 10th anniversary. The campaign to raise wages for low-paying workers and to unionize took off, forcing many employers to raise wages before the campaign came to their doors. We made a surprise visit to the Lindell Blvd. McDonald’s to remind them we’re still here—and demanding a union.

> Amazon and Starbucks workers, tired of the repressive work conditions, were successful in unionizing. We saw the first union sites in 2022, with more to come. Starbucks has refused to recognize the over 260 locations which have voted to unionize with Workers United.

> For the past six years, OBS has participated in the National Black Worker Center’s Black Labor Day. This year’s theme was “Show Me the Money!” We also endorsed its Black Workers Bill of Rights because Black workers matter.



Towards the Dismantling of the Prison Industrial Complex and the Re-imagining Alternatives that Deliver Real Justice



Although some may find the terms “abolition” or “defund the police” problematic, all justice-seeking people believe that the current system that encompasses the police, the courts and the prisons is racially biased and corrupt. It rarely works for Black people. OBS has devoted much of its organizational time and resources to this pillar of our foundational work. We have seen progress but it is not fast enough nor expansive enough. Greater, more strategic efforts must be waged against a system that is eating our communities alive.

OBS has joined allies in working the system inside and out—meaning organizing campaigns to pass new laws and elect officials who share a restorative justice agenda and will use our resources to meet the basic human needs of communities. We spend way much money on control and punishment, with little impact on the root causes.

It is reform laws that allowed Bobby Bostic to seek relief from an unjust sentence he received as a teen. OBS helped to pass historic legislation that gave new powers to the Circuit Attorney’s office to hold police and courts accountable. Having led the efforts to establish a civilian oversight board in 2015, it was time to create a new office for its expanded functions and improved efficiency.

Above photo: Mayor Tishaura Jones signed BB47 into law but its full implementation was stalled due to a legal challenge by the police associations.



OBS joined the family and supporters of Cortez Bufford to celebrate his “heavenly” birthday at City Hall. The 24-year-old was gunned down by St. Louis cops in 2019. Other families are similarly marking the birthdays or the death anniversaries of their police-murdered loved ones every year including Carey Ball, Jr., shot 25 times by police in 2013 and Isaiah Hammett, murdered by SWAT in 2017. These families are still seeking justice.



Missouri loves being first in all the negative ways. The state’s first execution of the year will be the first transwoman to be put to death in the U.S. You can get more information on their case and sign the petition at MADP’s website.

Death Penalty Fact: Gov. Kate Brown used her executive privilege to commute the death sentences in Oregon to life without the possibility of parole. No more executions!

Welcome our Brothers Home

Keith Carnes (left photo), wrongfully convicted, served 19 years before his release. Bobby Bostic received a harsh sentence of 241 years, served 27 brutal years. He’s now able to promote his poetry books.



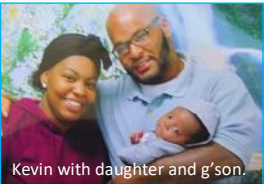
What battlefronts OBS was on in 2022:

- OBS has supported Lamar Johnson’s fight for freedom for many years. In 2019, we partnered with Color of Change to collect and deliver over 25,000 signatures to then-Missouri State Attorney General Eric Schmitt’s St. Louis office demanding that he end his efforts to block Lamar’s efforts to prove his innocence. In 2021, we gathered 35,000 more signatures and delivered them to his Jefferson City office with the same demand. Lamar finally got his day in court. Judge David Mason presided over a week of hearing evidence in the wrongful conviction case. The hearing exposed the racism and corruption in the prosecutor’s office, a task that current prosecutor Kim Gardner is working hard to change. We anxiously await the judge’s decision.
- Alder Shameem Clark Hubbard, Board Bill 47 sponsor, acknowledged that the bill was twenty years in the making and credited the leadership of the Coalition of Police Crimes and Repression (CAPCR) and others for its realization. The milestone builds on two other historic acts by the community: local control of the police department back to its citizens in 2004 and the creation of an independent Civilian Oversight Board in 2015. The new legislation also gave the Circuit Attorney’s needed funds to effectively operate the Public Integrity Unit. This is a step in the right direction to implementing The People’s Agenda.



- OBS has been on the case of Fredrico Lowe-Bey with Centurion Ministries for decades. We hope to see a breakthrough soon. Fredrico has been locked for 25 years for a rape he didn’t commit.
- OBS was a co-sponsor of the annual Missouri #DayofEmpathy, a national project of Dream Corps Justice. The goal is to rally the broader public around bold alternatives to mass incarceration and to humanize the families most impacted by brutal system.
- The Community Justice Coalition played a leading role in warding off the vicious and racist attacks against Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner for the last few years. In 2022, the bogus allegations of misconduct were laid to rest. For now. The 3-year probe wasted thousands of taxpayer dollars. Despite the sabotage, Circuit Attorney Gardner was defiantly re-elected to a second term by the majority of St. Louis voters.
- OBS served on the Use of Force Working Group to review the St. Louis Police Department existing policies on deadly force. The working group is facilitated by the Center for Policing Equity who issued a report on the policing practices and behaviors of the SLPD. CPE is authorized by Mayor Jones to come up with solutions to the department’s persistent policing problems. As the only Black organization on the Working Group, OBS takes its responsibility very seriously. We hope the new Police Chief takes the group’s final recommendations seriously.

▪ Missouri kept death penalty abolitionists busy. It executed Carman Deck in May. Despite national media and local pressure, Kevin Johnson was executed last month. Executions are scheduled for Amber McLaughlin on January 3, 2023 and for Leonard "Raheem" Taylor on February, 7, 2023. MADP can count on OBS to continue standing with them to stop upcoming executions and to abolish the death penalty in Missouri.





Project Haki is OBS’ violence prevention program that we launched in 2020 to stem the rate of homicides in the 22nd Ward. Last year, funds from the City’s Community Violence Initiative allowed us to expand the program. Lisa LaGrone and her team have been recognized nationally for their important work, including by the White House. The photo above was held in Barrett Brothers Park last summer to announce Project Haki’s grant from the City and to unveil our upcoming activities for residents.



Bade Ali Jabir was murdered by SWAT. Project Haki was at the scene and we're still on the case. Bade’s four children are now in foster care. They’re not adjusting well, having lost their only surviving parent. The community still demands answers on the senseless murder of this Sudanese immigrant struggling to make a new life for his children in St. Louis. We urge Mayor Jones, Public Safety Director Dan Isom and Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner to provide transparent updates on the case.



OBS celebrated its annual African Liberation Day by recognized the 50th anniversary of ALD’s founding . The event was celebrated with a virtual panel featuring Abdul Alkalimat (scholar and author), Mickey Dean (National Black United Front-Kansas City) and Kalimu Endesha (OBS, former Congress of African People's rep to ALSC), moderated by Jamala Rogers. The focus was Abdul's book, *Dialectics of Liberation: The African Liberation Support Movement*. There was resounding agreement that ALD is still relevant and that the movement to unite Africa and Africans in the Diaspora must intensify.



The Struggle for Control over Black Women’s Bodies Continues

OBS is unapologetic is its stand on women’s rights. OBS’ Sistahs Talkin’ Back is committed to the relentless struggle against patriarchy, homophobia and all forms of gender discrimination. Violence against women, especially trans women, is rampant. We support the right of women to have a life free from harassment, sexual abuse and domestic violence. We need pay equity. We must have power over our bodies and defend full access to reproductive rights, including the right to safe and legal abortions. We defended Black, female elected officials who were under siege because of their bodacious efforts to dismantle systems of oppression that have long benefited white men and white supremacy.



♀ OBS joined groups like ProChoice Missouri, Planned Parenthood and SisterSong to save the future of Roe v. Wade. Freedom fightin’ sistahs around the country raised the banner higher to “Trust Black Women” beyond our Black bodies. We know what’s best for us and our families.

♀ Who would’ve thought that a popular WNBA player who was Black and Queer would be the focus of international intrigue? We didn’t, but it didn’t take long for us to understand the implications of Brittney Griner being held hostage by the Russians. We quickly joined the #BringBrittneyHome campaign led by Black Feminist Future and others. And now, Brittney is home!

Honoring the Local Freedom Fighters who made their transition in 2022...

- James Buchanan** was a longstanding supporter of OBS and the local civil rights struggles.
- Sarah “Granny” Griffin** was a longtime resident of the 22nd Ward and a strong OBS supporter.
- Edna “Hedy” Harden** was an OBS member and a steadfast fighter for prisoners and their families.
- Dhati Majaliwa** aka Gary Kennedy was an awesome percussionist and enthusiastic steward of Black history and culture.
- Michael “Baba Mike” Nelson** was a faithful servant of the people and an accomplished musician.
- Richard Patton** was a supporter of OBS and the YCPD, and an unwavering advocate for children and families.
- Cora Faith Walker** was a former OBS Board of Directors’ member and a staunch fighter for women's empowerment.
- Commie White** was an OBS member and a fierce supporter of African liberation.
- Clifford Wilson** was respected labor leader and a fighter for Black political power.
- Alice Windom** was a supporter of the OBS family and a revered elder in our community.

Remembering the Legacy of Lynching in St. Louis



OBS participated in the Soil Collection commemorating the lynching of Francis McIntosh. The project is part of a national project by the Equal Justice Initiative and partners to acknowledge lynching sites. The three jars of collected soil (photo above) will be displayed at the EJI museum in Montgomery, the St. Louis Griot Museum and the Black Archives in Kansas City. In 1836 Francis McIntosh, a free Black man, was abducted by a white mob from the St. Louis jail at 6th & Chestnut. He was chained to a tree and burned alive. No one was ever held responsible. The burned tree was left standing as a reminder of white supremacy.

Black Political Power and Self-Determination: The Power of Black people to determine their own destiny



Founding OBS members actively organized around the historic National Black Political Convention that brought 10,000 people to Gary, IN. We’ve always understood the importance of organizing communities around a political agenda that advances Black political power. It is through this lens that we determine our support for candidates and ballot issues.

2022 was the 50th anniversary of the Gary Convention. OBS was participating on the organizing committee for NBPC2022. Mayors Ras Baraka (Newark) and Antar Lumumba (Jackson) were the co-conveners. The water crisis in Jackson and other factors forced the postponement of the gathering. Stay tuned for the new dates.

Our support for candidates such as Mayor Tishaura Jones, Comptroller Darlene Green, Congresswoman Cori Bush, Aldermanic Board President Megan Green and others is based upon a shared vision and values. Elected officials must be held accountable for the actions, this is more than a personality contest. Tax dollars must be used as an investment in the development of families and neighborhoods.

With the current configuration of elected officials and funding, St. Louis should be able to see measurable progress in the coming years.

Legislative Action in 2022

Sometimes we must use the master’s tools...

When it comes to passing statewide legislature, OBS knows its strength is in working with our state-wide partners, some who are more savvy at the legislative process than we are. They also are more adept at educating indifferent legislators than we care to be.

Every year, we join allies to repeal the death penalty. Every year, no success. Some bills we’re glad are unsuccessful such as the anti-gender and critical race theory (CRT) bills. We were also able to stop efforts to eliminate the ballot initiative process. Attempts to divert funding from the St. Louis Public Schools to charter schools failed. We also beat back bills that would’ve criminalized certain lawful protests.

In Missouri, there’s a Republican trifecta. The GOP controls the senate, the house and the governorship. This means advocates and organizers spend a lot of energy stopping hurtful bills and unfortunately, and less time on introducing bills that could benefit Missouri’s families.



REPARATIONS
for AFRICAN DESCENDANTS!

OBS supports the St. Louis Reparations Commission.

OBS and the YCPD answered the call of the Universal African Peoples Organization to respond to the water crisis in Jackson MS. The crisis is based upon structural racism. The contaminants in the water are creating a health problem for the poverty-stricken, predominantly Black city.

The good news is that our donation helped to provide over 1000 cases of water to the Jackson community. (See photo above.) The bad news is that the 24,000 bottles added to the environmental damage because the plastics are non bio-degradable. Another problem of the capitalists to solve!

