

FOR Topeka Center Peace & Justice

Bill Beachy left us a legacy to build upon for Peace and Justice

December 12, 2020 marked the 35th anniversary for the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice. The Topeka Peace Resource Center opened its doors in December 1985 to carry out its mission to promote and educate the community on peace and justice issues and established the Peace and Justice Library.

Bill Beachy was involved from the beginning, serving on the Center's Board of Directors and as editor of the newsletter. In 1992, Bill took on the role of Executive Director and served as such until he retired in 2012.

The Topeka Center for Peace and Justice (name changed in 1992) utilizes several strategies to respond to issues and community problems. "Since Karl Menninger cut the ribbon on the center in December 1985, it has initiated, implemented, coordinated, co-sponsored and provided resources for numerous peace and justice activities in the Topeka Community." (Bill Beachy 2/28/1998).



Since its inception, The Center has been especially active in programs dealing with multiculturalism, racism, war and peace, women's issues, responding to hate speech and attacks on the local gay and lesbian community, the need for a community response to violence and health care reform. The Peace Center collaborated with other area peace and justice organizations on various issues facing our community including: Amnesty International, Church Women United, Citizens for a Nuclear-Free Topeka, Coalition to Keep Kansas Free of the Death Penalty, Kansas Committee to Free Southern Africa, Midwest AGAPE to Stop the Nuclear Train, Parenting for Peace and Justice Network, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Topeka Alliance on Central America, Topeka Clergy Against the Death Penalty, Topeka Clergy Peace Group, Topeka Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament, Topeka N.O.W. and Topeka chapter of Women's Action for New Directions (WAND, Inc) and the NAACP Topeka Chapter.

The Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, is, and always has been a small organization. Bill Beachy served as the only paid employee for several years. He relied on many trained community volunteers to educate about and promote solutions for peace and justice issues. Collaboration has always been a critical strategy to respond to problems. No one agency can take on the scope and depth of social issues by itself. We promote the best practices of collaboration where a common mission is defined, and everyone comes to the table with their vision, strategies, and resources to address social issues. Bill Beachy modeled this position from the beginning saying "the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice does not exclude anyone who has a commitment to human rights and social justice."

On February 25, 2021, Bill Beachy died at the age of 72. Bill was committed to a life of nonviolence, peace and equity. It is hard to sum up what Bill Beachy meant to so many in just a few words "a soldier, advocate and quiet leader for social justice. He was inclusive, supportive, patient, kind. A VISIONARY is his legacy." Rest in Peace gentle man. Highlights of his legacy and the opportunity to donate to TCPJ in his honor are outlined on our website [Topekacpj.org](https://www.topekacpj.org).

(visit <https://www.penwellgabeltopeka.com/Obituary/196758/William-Beachy/Topeka-KS> to read more comments about Bill).



Carl Frazier
Board Chair

Board Chair News

As the new Board Chair for the Center of Peace and Justice, Pastor Carl Frazier is not new to justice ministry. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) in accounting in 1983 and, shortly after, began his tenure with the US Department of Agriculture. In 2012, after 11 years of pastoring in Kansas City, MO, he became the pastor of a local, multi-cultural church - New Hope and Love Community Church (formerly Southwest Baptist).

In March 2020, with almost 35 years of service, Pastor Frazier retired from the federal government and continues to pursue service as a Chaplain for the Topeka Police Department.

Pastor Frazier has worked with several social justice organizations throughout the nation. Some of his roles include Kairos Prison Ministry (State of Kansas Chair), Social Justice Consultant for the American Baptist Central Regional Office, member of Topeka Downtown Rotary, and Vice Chair of Topeka JUMP. Pastor Frazier is also a lifetime member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Pastor Frazier met his lovely wife, Linessa W. Frazier, in Kansas City, Missouri in 1985, the year they both started their professional careers. They are now proud parents of three awesome children (LaRonta, Carleigh, and Emersen) and two wonderful grandchildren (Tori and Asa Carl).

Uniting Topeka One Relationship at a Time

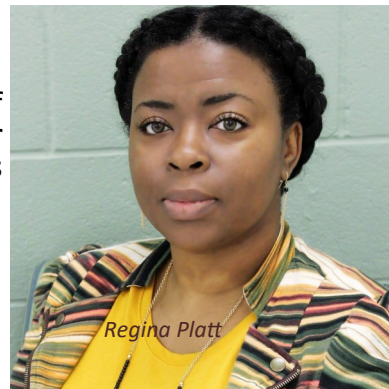


Lou Saadi

Topeka United, an organization established after the 65th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, has engaged the community in participating in a process to breakdown barriers and unite the Topeka community one relationship at a time. The program underway is Mosaic Partnership Pairs. This program has had considerable success in other regions of the country to bring together individuals who would not normally cross paths, encouraging participation in activities to establish relationships, develop understanding and support collaboration long after the program is completed.

Board member Lou Saadi and Regina Platt have been selected as one pair of 14 designated coaches to lead partner pairs in their journey toward better understanding of each other's lives. Regina's experience in restorative justice principles will enhance the work of the group.

For more information about this program, see TopekaUnited.org.



Regina Platt

Although we are not yet at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that we have made strides toward recovery with the onset of vaccine availability in December 2020. There is, however, still a great deal of work to do from a Federal and local level to assure that these strides are made for people of color, affected disproportionately by this pandemic.

In the past 12 months, there is data that makes clear that all people are not affected equally by the virus. In fact statistics show that people of color, including African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx and Native Americans are more frequently infected, have more severe disease, require hospitalization and die more often than whites, as a result of COVID-10 infection.

These racial health disparities are not new, but have been exposed throughout the pandemic; they can be attributed to 3 root causes: structural racism affecting patient access to care, high occurrence of chronic disease and economic inequalities leading marginalized populations to work high-risk jobs.

Although only accounting for 18% of the US population, black patients comprise one-third of COVID-19 hospitalizations.

In light of this, it would seem obvious that as vaccines became available, an effort to prioritize the people affected disproportionately with COVID-19 would occur.

On the contrary, according to Kaiser Family Foundation (kff.org), "there is a consistent pattern across states of Black and Hispanic people receiving smaller shares of vaccinations compared to their shares of cases and deaths and compared to their shares of the total population. White people received a higher share of vaccinations compared to their share of cases and deaths and their share of the total population in most states reporting data".

This is the case in numbers reported for the state of Kansas. As of March 15, 2021, Blacks accounted for 6% of the total population but only 3% of vaccinations. Hispanics accounted for 12% of total population in Kansas, but 7% of vaccinations given. Whites 84% of population and 77% of vaccinations. This information is not reported for Shawnee County for reasons that are not clear.

Data are essential to prioritizing racial and ethnic equity in COVID-19 vaccination. Mitigating disparities in vaccine administration will require explicitly prioritizing equity to ensure communities with the highest COVID-19 risk get vaccinated.

As Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, Chair of President Bidens COVID-19 equity task force stated, "We cannot ensure an equitable vaccination program without data to guide us."

Here are steps that Kansas state and local governments must take to prioritize equitable vaccine distribution:

1. Collect complete, high-quality race and ethnicity data when administering vaccines

Status: Shawnee County race and ethnicity data reporting for vaccine is not reported or at least not in a form that is readily accessible to the general population.

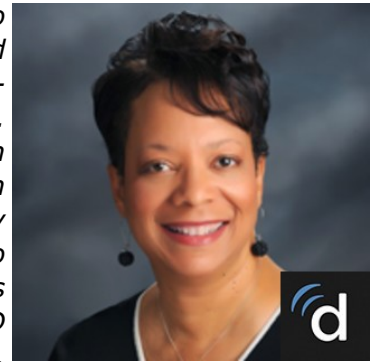
2. Increase vaccine availability in hard-hit communities.

Status: Shawnee County Health Department is supporting community based organizations to locate vaccine clinics in underserved and disproportionately affected areas. Stormont Vail and SCHD has simplified access to vaccine appointments for people who may not be able to navigate online sign up systems.

3. Address vaccine hesitancy among populations at high-risk for exposure

Status: Community groups, churches and social groups are collaborating to provide education and overcome vaccine hesitancy, using trusted medical influencers in the community.

Monitoring inequities will become even more important as vaccine distribution moves from prioritized groups to the general population, expanding the recipient pool. As distribution continues, collecting, sharing and using data on race, ethnicity and other indicators, will be critical to reducing disparities in health outcomes during and after the pandemic.





Gia Brooks

**S.A.V.E. Outreach Coordinator &
Program Director**

My name is Gia Brooks, I graduated from Wyandotte High school in 2002, then continued my education at Brown Mackie College with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice in 2016. I am a mother of two young men. One attends USD 501 and the other attends USD 437 High School. I have been working in social services since 2016, previously I worked in nursing. My current positions at TCPJ are Program Director and Service Outreach Coordinator under SAVE. I have been with TCPJ since April 2021 and I am excited to be a part of a great organization serving the Topeka Community.

Our Year In Review

This was a year of changes for the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice (TCPJ). On the positive side, we have an awesome and talented board ready to move forward to continue our mission to serve as a community resource to promote peace and justice using Restorative Justice Principles.

This year, we received informative board training provided by KIPCOR in addition to our local board development training. We have assigned each board member to a committee and everyone is ready to work. Gia Brooks is on board to assist with Strategies Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) and other programs. We're excited about the talent Gia brings to the TCPJ and our opportunity to work with the SAVE council, which includes the District Attorney's office, Topeka Police Department, and Topeka JUMP, among others.

Thanks to a generous donation of \$30,000 made by long term supporter and past board member, Richard Alexander, the board has established a Reserve Fund which sets aside funds to be used when circumstances that impact the normal flow of revenues threatens the continuation of community service programming, especially for the youth. A heartfelt thank you to Richard Alexander and to each of you.

We apologize for our delayed correspondence and the publication of our newsletter. Our new Communications Committee is ready to bring our friends the latest news on a quarterly basis. If you have any questions, our board will be happy to answer. The intent of our correspondence is to show accountability and transparency to our community.

Our Executive Director, Mrs. Glenda DuBoise, has accepted a position with AARP as the State Director with a departure date of September 30, 2021. We would like to thank Mrs. DuBoise for the accomplishments she made at the Center and wish her well in her new opportunity. We have begun the search process for a new Executive Director.

Again, thank you to all the friends of the TCPJ for your support and we look forward to continuing and even growing our relationship in the future. We need you.

Written by Carl Frazier, Board President

If you are interested in more information on the TCPJ Executive Director position, please send an email to ed@topekacpj.org.

Strategies Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.) Update

Lindsey Anderson

*Shawnee County District Attorney's Office
SAVE Project Manager*



The Topeka Center for Peace and Justice is proud of Lindsey Anderson for being selected to serve as the SAVE Project Manager. Following is a brief update she provided to keep us abreast of the progress and accomplishments being made to implement our unique, community-based group violence intervention strategies.

The Topeka GVI initiative, Strategies Against Violence

Everywhere (S.A.V.E.), focuses on the coordination of law enforcement, social service agencies, and credible community members with the singular goal of reducing violence that destabilizes the health and well-being of our community. Shawnee County's key stakeholders have committed to building the community's capacity to prevent violence, using enforcement strategically, helping the most vulnerable people, and improving the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of the community. The Group Violence Intervention model emphasizes on:

- Focusing on groups who commit most homicides, shootings, and other acts of extreme violence
- Strengthening community norms against offending,
- Communicating directly with high risk people to deter violence, and
- Offering extensive case management for those who want a way out of that lifestyle.

Following is a brief timeline of our strategies and accomplishments to date:

June 2019— partners of the S.A.V.E. initiative brought the National Network of Safe Communities to Topeka to hold a one-day conference called "*Healing Gun Violence: Exploring Evidence-based Strategies to Create a Safer Community.*"

January 2020— *Topeka Community Foundation invested \$300,000 into the consulting needs with national experts.*

April 2020— *the National Network for Safe Communities began their 21-month consulting with Topeka and the SAVE Leadership Team.*

August 2020—*the National Network for Safe Communities conducted two data collection exercises to interrogate serious violence crime dynamics in Topeka. A strategic implementation plan was developed.*

November 2020—*Lindsey Anderson was named SAVE Project Manager, under the Shawnee County District Attorney's office.*

December 2020—*Present weekly advising calls: The National Network consults with the Topeka Police Department Liaison and the S.A.V.E. Project Manager to maintain and update intelligence on active groups and to conduct regular incident reviews.*

April 2021—*Gia Brooks was named Topeka Center on Peace and Justice's Program Director; 50% of her time will be dedicated to SAVE's outreach and support strategies.*

August 2021—*A community meeting was held to learn more about the SAVE Initiative using the Group Violence Intervention Model from National Network for Safe Communities. This meeting was an opportunity for community members to come together and learn about the Group Violence Intervention Strategy from National Network for Safe Communities.*

continued on page 6...

continued from page 5...

Next Steps:

- Build and nurture relationships with the community and law enforcement
- Develop a referral process for identified S.A.V.E participants
- Establish tracking measures to monitor the fluid dynamics of local violence and group membership
- Maintain strong interagency partnerships, and helping each partner routinize S.A.V.E activities within their agencies
- Communication plan to reinforce the shared mission of the strategy to reduce violence, strengthen communities and their relationships with law enforcement, and use enforcement in a strategic way.
- Working collaboratively across all sectors on how to deliver this offer of help to those who have been involved in violent victimization and offending, with the intentions to keep these individuals and families alive, safe, and out of prison. This will be done through a process called Custom notifications.



Best wishes to Hope Dimick as she heads to Wichita State University this fall. Thank you for serving as a board member for the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice!

Pictured: Carl Frazier, Hope Dimick, Glenda DuBoise

Current TCPJ Board Members

Carl Frazier, New Hope and Love Community Church, Chair
 Rev. Donna Gilchrist, West Side Christian Church, Vice Chair
 Lou Saadi, Islamic Center of Topeka, Treasurer
 Virginia Barnes
 Lori Brown, Ba'hai Community
 Carol Christensen, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
 Rev. Clarence Newton, New Life Baptist Church

Hope Dimick
 Esther Potts, Temple Beth Sholom
 Dr. Glenda Overstreet-Vaughn
 Rebecca Morrissey
 Dr. Gianfranco Pezzino
 Megan Waltner