

October 18, 2019

Katal Weekly Update

Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice



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Big Victory: NYC Council Votes “YES” to #CLOSErikers



Katal members and leaders alongside Community Organizers Shaka Colon and Cedric Fulton before entering New York City Hall for the vote on the Mayor’s Plan to #CLOSErikers.

We are proud to share that yesterday [NYC Council voted “YES”](#) on the plan to close Rikers, dramatically shrink the detention system in NYC, and replace facilities in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. Additionally, we won a [package of nearly \\$400 million in investments](#) to support local communities and expand justice reforms like alternatives to incarceration. Katal members and organizers were there yesterday, participating in a rally and vigil outside of City Hall, and then sitting in the Council chambers to witness the deliberation and vote. It was a historic day, and this is a transformative victory -- but it’s not without controversy (more on this below). We believe yesterday’s victory is a critical step in the journey to end mass incarceration in NYC once and for all.

As some readers of this newsletter know, Katal co-founded the #CLOSErikers campaign, and co-led the campaign from 2015 - 2017. After stepping down from our formal campaign leadership role, we remained deeply engaged in the fight in NYC and in Albany, in particular focusing on state level reforms (like speedy trial, bail, and parole reform) to shrink detention populations in jails and prisons. Then, over the last year, we’ve again been working much more closely with our partners at **JustLeadershipUSA** for the closure of Rikers and for substantial

community investments. Yesterday's Council vote is a victory to all who were committed to this fight, including those who are currently detained at Rikers. Many Katal members -- and some folks on our team -- have either been detained on Rikers or had family detained there, so this victory is especially powerful and meaningful for us.



There's more to do -- from implementation of this plan, to continued reforms we have to win in Albany (like our parole reform bill, [#LessIsMoreNY](#)), to securing even deeper, permanent community investments. We have to continue organizing *until the last person is off of Rikers Island*. And we're ready.

Read our thread including photos & clips from yesterday's #CLOSERikers actions and City Council vote, [here](#).

ICYMI: There's a lot of conflict among advocates about the plan to close Rikers. To get an idea of what's behind some of the conflict, check out our summary, "Making Sense of the Fight Over NYC Jails", [here](#).

Read our #CLOSERikers campaign summary about the first two phases of the campaign (2015-2017), [here](#).

We will provide more updates in the weeks and months ahead. For now, if you're in NYC and want to work with us on next steps, drop us a line at info@katalcenter.org.

In CT: Katal On “In the Thick” LIVE



(L-R) Nicole Rothman, Kelvin Young, Katal member Taylor Ford, and Community Organizer Kenyatta Thompson.

On **Wednesday, October 16th**, Katal leader **Taylor Ford**, alongside our Senior Community Organizer, **Kenyatta Thompson**, were guests on a live taping of the **In The Thick** podcast, discussing mental health, trauma, and addiction in communities of color in Connecticut and beyond.

“What we’re actually in is an overdose crisis. We’re not in a crisis of opioids; we’re in a crisis of people overdosing and dying from opioids.”

- Kenyatta Thompson



Full house at Three Rivers Community College for the live recording of *In the Thick* podcast.

We deeply thank show producer **Nicole Rothman** for providing our team the platform to speak openly and honestly about issues that are detrimental to our communities, issues that are consistently being inaccurately framed and painted within the media.

Read the write up featured in *The Day* about Wednesday's live recording, [here](#).

Katal works to strengthen the people, policies, institutions, and movements that advance health, equity, and justice for everyone.

Visit our website at www.katalcenter.org to learn more about our work and how you can get involved. Be sure to follow us across social media @katalcenter and stay in touch!

Contact us at info@katalcenter.org or at **646.875.8822**