

June 13, 2019

Katal Weekly Update

Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice



In this issue:

Death of Jose Rivera, Brings Spotlight to NYS's Outdated Parole System, Pg. 2

In Montgomery County, NY: Harm Reduction Training, Pg. 3

Changing the Narrative Toolkit Launch, Pg. 4

Death of Jose Rivera, Brings Spotlight to NYS's Outdated Parole System



Donna Hylton, Vincent Schiraldi and Tyler Nims discussing our Less Is More bill with Bill Sponsor Assemblyman Walter T. Mosley at the Capitol.

[On Sunday, June 9, a tragic death occurred](#) – the *second* of two in a week on Rikers Island (the first, **Layleen Cubilette-Polanco**, a transgender Afro-Latinx woman found dead in her cell Friday). **Jose Rivera** was on parole after release from prison in 2016. He was homeless and suffering with health issues. He was arrested May 7 at a local hospital for a crimeless, technical violation of parole of missing previous parole meetings. After 33 days on Rikers, too sick to be transported to parole court to address the technical violation, he died in the custody of the Department of Corrections, handcuffed to a hospital bed. He was 54 years old.

In response, members and leaders of the #LessIsMoreNY Coalition – including Katal and Unchained – took to the Capitol in Albany demanding that lawmakers immediately overhaul New York's deeply broken, and racially unjust parole system by passing transformative parole legislation, the *Less is More: Community Supervision Revocation Reform Act (S.1343B – Benjamin / A.5493A – Mosley)*.

Read our full statement [here](#).

Jose Rivera and Layleen Cubilette-Polanco should still be here with us today working towards successfully rebuilding their lives. Rikers *must* be shut down. Lawmakers in Albany must pass the Less Is More Act, to stop people from being unjustly reincarcerated for technical violations and swiftly bring about the closure of Rikers once and for all.

Learn more about our #LessIsMoreNY bill and take action to demand lawmakers urgently pass this transformative legislation this session [here](#).

In Montgomery County, NY: Harm Reduction Training



Katal's Director of Health & Harm Reduction, Keith Brown, alongside Tressa Rossi and Rita Bravo of Catholic Charities at one of ten harm reduction trainings in Montgomery County.

In April and May, our Director of Health and Harm Reduction, **Keith Brown**, facilitated a series of [ten full-day harm reduction trainings](#) for stakeholders in Montgomery County. Katal was invited by County Health officials and local service providers to this County-wide effort as a way to build a harm reduction-centered approach to addressing the overdose crisis in the area. In total, 127 people attended, representing directly impacted communities, treatment and service providers, law enforcement, probation, drug court, and judicial sectors. Several of the training sessions were co-facilitated by individuals with lived experience – providing real-life context for the topics discussed.

At the conclusion of the sessions, stakeholders in the area committed to forming an overdose task force to explore pre-arrest diversion, medication-assisted treatment (MAT) in corrections, expansion of syringe access, naloxone distribution, and several other actions covered in the harm reduction trainings.

If your group would like to host a harm reduction training in Connecticut or New York (or beyond!), please contact Keith at keith@katalcenter.org.

Changing the Narrative Toolkit Launch



There's a new toolkit available to journalists (and anyone else) covering the overdose crisis: [Changing the Narrative](#). And Katal is proud to be a part!

Since last year, a group of experts in harm reduction, drug policy, recovery, chronic pain, and public health developed the toolkit and source expert list related to overdose, addiction, and opioids. The final result, [Changing the Narrative](#), launched on Monday, June 10. The toolkit

addresses the myths and tired narratives used in how the media represents drug use and addiction.

By providing up-to-date, evidence-based, factual information on these subjects while centering the expertise in the lived experience of people, the project aims to advance humane, accurate, science-based reporting. Katal's **Keith Brown** was part of the group, attending the initial convening in Boston last September. He is included as a source expert within the toolkit.

We anticipate this resource will be helpful in advancing health-based policies and interventions centered in the directly impacted communities. Check it out, and share it with reporters and advocates you know!

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**