

RETURN & RESTORE

Policy Advocacy Checklist: Decriminalizing Black Bodies

The purpose of this checklist is to outline all the necessary tasks to consider in hosting a “Policy Saturday/Sunday” event in your faith community and advocate beyond. You can share this document with other faith networks across the state as a template to encourage preaching, teaching, and mobilizing **to advocate for reducing criminal penalties for personal use & possession of certain drugs of certain drugs**

PREACHING

Dedicate one Sunday service to discussing the harms of the drug war on Black communities

Identify the date of the service

Announce the service regularly in morning announcements

Create a flyer for the church bulletin, website, and social media

Consider creating a countdown clock for social media

Invite advocates, lawmakers, and local media to the Sunday service

Consider developing your sermon by listening to [Rev. Dr. Malik JoDavid Sales speak on the theology around drug decriminalization](#) or using [SandSJ's “The Greatest Good” Pulpit Toolkit](#) based on the story of the Good Samaritan

TEACHING

After your Sunday service, host a conversation about the drug war or harm reduction with the congregation, local community, advocates, and lawmakers

Consider a panel discussion about reducing criminal penalties for certain personal use drugs and how that could impact the Black community

Consider a roundtable discussion about how the community has been impacted by the drug war and document the stories told

Research statistics on the harms of government-funded enforcement of drug activity in the Black community through [this report published by the New Jersey Policy Perspective](#)

Set up informational tables before and after service with toolkits and additional resources on the drug war, harm reduction, and how to advocate for more equitable policies statewide

Emphasize the importance and impacts of: 1) mental health; 2) the need for more compassion toward those suffering; 3) educating the community on decriminalization vs. legalization; and 4) breaking down the stigmas and myths with drug use in the Black community

MOBILIZING

Contact your legislator and tell them you support A3265, expanding expungement eligibility. Also, urge them to adopt legislation that prioritizes health and community-led approaches to support people rather than incarcerate them. You can locate your NJ Legislator by visiting <https://njleg.state.nj.us/#findLegislator>

Contact your US Congressman and urge them to allocate federal dollars to support violence interruption work. You can locate your member by visiting <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

Host a faith leader training on drug decriminalization and how to speak about the issues with their faith communities, sharing "The Greatest Good" Pulpit Toolkit and SandSJ's infographic about the difference between decriminalization & legalization and about expungement eligibility

Encourage your local elected officials to create and pass legislation supporting or endorsing comprehensive harm reduction services in your community

www.sandsj.org

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For more than 50 years, the United States government has launched a racist and ineffective War on Drugs which has been nothing more than a war on Black communities. Salvation and Social Justice advocates for the decriminalization of personal use drugs to stop the disproportionate over-policing and incarceration of our communities. But to be clear, drug decriminalization is NOT drug legalization. Here's the difference...

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

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DRUG DECRIMINALIZATION

is the act of removing criminal sanctions against certain activities such as having in possession personal use drugs or paraphernalia. While the substance itself may still be prohibited, the consequences for possession are no longer treated as criminal. The production and sale of drugs are still illegal.

DRUG LEGALIZATION

is the act of permitting by law the use of substances and is often met with some sort of regulations. It means that the law would permit individuals to freely acquire and possess drugs in the state of New Jersey. **We are NOT advocating for this!**

While Black people make up

15%

of New Jersey's population,
we represent

43%

of the arrests for drug violations even though there is no evidence that Black people use drugs at a higher rate than white people.

SO WHAT WOULD DRUG DECRIMINALIZATION LOOK LIKE IN NEW JERSEY?

It would no longer be a crime to...

...Be in simple possession of a controlled substance

...Be under the influence of or consuming a controlled substance

It would still be a crime to...

...Manufacture and/or sell drugs

...Use, distribute, sell or possess drugs on school property
and/or in the presence of minors

EXPUNGEMENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The information reflected does not capture the entirety of NJ laws surrounding expungement. For details please call Legal services of New Jersey at 1-888-576-5529 or visit website at <https://www.lsnjlaw.org/Pages/Expunge.aspx>.



CLEAN SLATE 10 year waiting period

Eligibility requirements:

- Must be ineligible for other expungement types
- For automatic expungement, all fines must be paid in full



DRUG OFFENSES (YOUTH) 1 year waiting period

Eligibility requirements:

- Must have been 21 or younger at time of offense
- No other convictions
- No probation/parole violations



INDICTABLE CONVICTIONS 5 year waiting period

Eligibility requirements:

- No previous expungement of indictable convictions
- No subsequent convictions



CERTAIN MARIJUANA RELATED OFFENSES Immediate to 3 year waiting period

Eligibility requirements:

- Subject to automatic marijuana and hashish related expungement



DISORDERLY PERSONS 5 year waiting period (at least 3 years under "compelling circumstances")

Eligibility requirements:

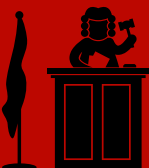
- No previous expungement of indictable convictions
- No indictable convictions
- No subsequent convictions



DRUG COURT/ COURT-ORDERED REHAB Immediate expungement upon dismissal

Eligibility requirements:

- Title 2C offenses only
- Not eligible if you've had any indictable/disorderly persons convictions during probation
- Ineligible if you have any "non-expungeable" convictions



MUNICIPAL VIOLATIONS 2 year waiting period

Eligibility requirements:

- Fines must be paid in full
- Ineligible if you have an indictable conviction or more than 2 disorderly person convictions



ARRESTS WITHOUT CONVICTIONS Immediate expungement

Immediate expungement

Eligibility requirements:

- Not eligible if dismissal resulted from a plea bargain involving conviction of other charges
- Eligible when conviction is expunged
- Subject to expungement immediately upon dismissal



ENTIRE JUVENILE RECORD 3 year waiting period

Eligibility requirements:

- No indictable, disorderly persons convictions, or delinquency adjudications in the 3 years before requesting expungement
- No non-expungeable offenses committed as a juvenile
- No adult convictions expunged
- No adult criminal charges dismissed after a diversion program



SUPERVISED TREATMENT PROGRAM, CONDITIONAL DISCHARGE 6 month waiting period

6 month waiting period

SALVATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PULPIT TOOLKITS

Our **pulpit toolkits** are a "one-stop shop" for information, resources, and action that the Black Church can leverage to create lasting change in their local fights for social justice.



Police Accountability: History (Part I)



Police Accountability: Theology (Part II)



Police Accountability: Policy (Part III)

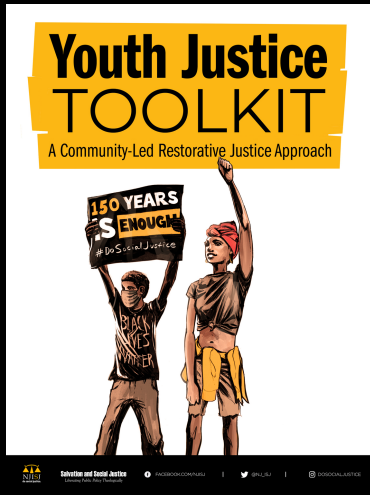
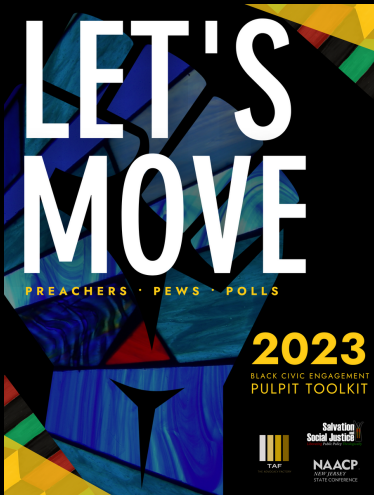


Black Maternal Health



Vaccine Equity

Red, Black, and Blue: The Underground Railroad, Policing and the Black Faith Response



The Greatest Good: A Good Samaritan Theology on Drug Decriminalization



The Black Ballot: Civic Engagement



Youth Justice



Make the Right Call

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Salvation and Social Justice
Liberating Public Policy Theologically