

# upENDING the Child Welfare System: THE ROAD TO ABOLITION



**TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20-21  
1-4PM ET**

**In Partnership With:**

**THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON GRADUATE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

We are so excited to welcome everyone to the launch of the upEND Movement. We launch this movement at a time when over 400,000 children across the nation are separated from their families and placed in foster care. We also launch this movement while we are experiencing the deep and intertwined challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and reckonings about entrenched racism in society and our public systems, including child welfare. We cannot wait; now is the time to radically shift how we view the safety and protection of children by imagining a society in which the forcible separation of children from their families is no longer an acceptable solution.

All children experience trauma when they are forcibly separated from their families by child protection systems. Black, Native, and, in many jurisdictions, Latinx children experience this separation and resulting trauma at rates disproportionate to their presence in the general population. The removal of Black and Native children from their families has a long, troubling, and racist history. With roots in slavery and the decimation of tribes and Native culture, the routine and systemic separation of Black and Native children from their families is influenced by pernicious stereotypes of Black and Native parents and child welfare systems that maintain enormous coercive power over families.

It is within this context and with the recognition that little progress has been made in reducing racial disparities in child welfare outcomes despite years of concerted reform efforts that the upEND Movement began. Through the work of upEND, we seek to create a society in which families and communities are at the center of our work and the routine separation of children from their families is no longer an acceptable solution. The upEND Movement calls for the abolition of the child welfare system. By abolition, we mean a fundamental reimagining and recreating of the ways in which we support children, families, and communities leading to the elimination of the current child welfare and foster care systems, which are built upon a model of surveillance and separation of families.

The work of upEND is about investing in the health and safety of children, which at its core requires us to preserve their relationships and attachments to their families and communities. The road to abolition is not intended to dismantle the child welfare system and leave nothing in its place. Rather, the road to abolition means supporting families and communities through increasing access to mental health services, to jobs that pay living wages, to well-funded public schools, to health care, to homes that are healthy and free of environmental toxins, to child care, and to community-based interventions to stop harm from occurring in the first place. When harm does occur, mechanisms of support should be designed to not cause more harm by separating families, punishing parents, and fragmenting communities. Rather, they should support families in figuring out what is needed for healing, safety, and the prevention of future harm.

The call for abolition is a collaborative one, led by the families and youth who have been impacted by this system. We join with them and many others in the work to build a new future—a new vision for the safety and care of children and families outside the confines of oppressive and carceral systems.

Over the course of this two-day convening, we will lay out the case for upENDING child welfare systems. We will hear from organizers, activists, and system leaders who are supporting and advocating for families now involved with the child welfare system while simultaneously imagining new means of care. We will engage with tribal leaders working to decolonize their systems and restore tribal values and connections. Finally, we will examine child welfare research and explore the questions we need answered in order to craft anti-racist policies and practices that can inspire us and move us forward on the road to abolition.

Thank you for joining us and please stay connected.



Kristen Weber  
Director, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice  
Center for the Study of Social Policy



Alan Dettlaff  
Dean, University of Houston  
Graduate College of Social Work

Join the conversation on Twitter using #upEND and #upENDmovement

# ABOUT THE upEND MOVEMENT



## WHO WE ARE

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) and the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work have collaborated to launch the upEND Movement, a network designed to tap into work already being done and spark new work that will ultimately create a society in which the forcible separation of children from their families is no longer an acceptable solution for families in need.

## WHY WE NEED CHANGE

Racism is deeply rooted in the child welfare system's history, policies, and practices. The system as we know it must be dismantled and we must come together to create new systems of care that value families and communities.

We have known for decades that Black, Native, and, in many jurisdictions, Latinx children have disproportionately high rates of family separation and involvement with child welfare systems. We also know that foster care causes trauma and harm to many children. In addition to the initial crisis of family separation, children too often experience additional trauma from failed or unsafe placements, multiple moves while in care, placements in congregate care settings, and loss of connections to friends, extended family, and school. Children who spend extended time in foster care are at high risk for a host of negative outcomes including low educational attainment, homelessness, unemployment, economic hardship, mental health disorders, and involvement with the criminal legal system involvement.

## WHY UPEND THE SYSTEM

The work of the upEND Movement isn't about modest reform; it is about ending the current child welfare system and creating in its place new, anti-racist structures and practices to keep children safe and protected in their homes. upEND is about changing our nation's approaches to family poverty and instability so that we work collectively to tackle the core societal stressors that make children vulnerable to unnecessary family separation.

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# AGENDA: DAY 1



DAY ONE

Tuesday, October 20, 1pm-4pm ET



## WELCOME

*Judith Meltzer, President, CSSP*

*Kristen Weber, Director, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice, CSSP*



## MAKING THE CASE FOR UPENDING THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

*Alan Dettlaff, Dean, Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston*



## OPENING KEYNOTE: BUILDING A MOVEMENT

*Lisa Sangoi, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Movement for Family Power*



## PANEL DISCUSSION: SHIFTING POWER, BUILDING CHANGE

*Maya Pendleton, Policy Analyst, Facilitator*

*Alan-Michael Graves, Director of National Programs, Good+Foundation*

*Tymer Hudson, Youth Organizer*

*Joyce McMillan, Parent Advocate and Founder, PLAN (Parent Legislative Action Network)*

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# AGENDA: DAY 2



DAY TWO

Wednesday, October 21, 1pm-4pm ET



## WELCOME

*Alan Dettlaff, Dean, Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston*



## PANEL DISCUSSION #1: INDIAN COUNTRY: SUPPORT US OR GET OUT OF THE WAY

*Hon. William A. Thorne, Former Tribal and State Court Judge (Trial and Appellate), Facilitator*

*Abby Abinanti, Yurok Chief Judge*

*Priscilla Day, Professor, Social Work and Principal Investigator, Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies*

*Cheryl Fairbanks, Interim Executive Director of the UNM Native American Budget and Policy Institute*



## PANEL DISCUSSION #2: WORKING ON THE ROAD TO ABOLITION

*Leonard Burton, Senior Fellow, CSSP, Facilitator*

*Ned Breslin, Chief Executive Officer, Tennyson Center*

*Leon D. Caldwell, Founder and Managing Partner, Ujima Developers*

*Kimm Campbell, Assistant County Administrator, Broward County*



## CLOSING

*Kristen Weber, Director, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice, CSSP*

*Alan Dettlaff, Dean, Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston*

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# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Please note: in some cases, speaker bios in this program have been condensed. Complete bios are available on our website at: [www.upENDmovement.org/upending-system-speaker-bios/](http://www.upENDmovement.org/upending-system-speaker-bios/).

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## **ABBY ABINANTI (SHE/HER)**

### *Yurok Chief Judge*

Abby Abinanti, Yurok Chief Judge, is an enrolled Yurok Tribal member, she holds a Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of New Mexico School of Law, and was the first California tribal woman to be admitted to the State Bar of California. She was a State Judicial Officer (Commissioner) for the San Francisco Superior Court for over 17 years assigned to the Unified Family Court (Family/Dependency/Delinquency). She retired from the Superior Court in September 2011 and on July 31, 2014 was reappointed as a part-time Commissioner for San Francisco assigned to Dependency, and Duty Judge for that Court where she served until 2015. She has been a Yurok Tribal Court Judge since 1997 and was appointed Chief Tribal Court Judge in 2007, a position she held in conjunction with her Superior Court assignment until 2015.



## **NED BRESLIN (HE/HIM)**

### *Chief Executive Officer, Tennyson Center*

Ned has been able to convert his experiences with trauma from abuse and neglect, his deep feelings of abandonment, judgement and isolation, along with his navigation of multiple non-bio homes towards work that changes systems, relentlessly focuses on including all, and helps people re- imagine pathways to healing. For 27 years, Ned focused on international water and sanitation and launched a global initiative called Everyone Forever that forced sector changes in how programs were implemented, outcomes achieved and funding flowed so that every family, school and clinic had water supply (Everyone) and never needed international aid or philanthropy (Forever) again. By the end of this year over 30 million people will have benefited from Everyone Forever, and \$2.5 billion of annual spend has converted to support this work globally, and earned Ned the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship in 2011.

## SPEAKER BIOS

**LEONARD BURTON (HE/HIM)***Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of Social Policy*

Leonard Burton is a Senior Fellow at Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), where he serves on the Systems Change and Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Teams. He works on the Youth Thrive and the getREAL initiatives, advancing ideas and equitable practices and policies that support healthy development and well-being for youth connected to child welfare and other intervening human services systems. Leonard has nearly three decades of executive leadership in community change, child welfare, faith-based programs, juvenile justice, youth development, and systems improvement. Leonard currently serves on the board of the prestigious Black Administrators in Child Welfare, and leading research development, and service agency WestEd.

**LEON D. CALDWELL, PH.D. (HE/HIM)***Founder and Managing Partner, Ujima Developers*

Dr. Leon D. Caldwell, has transformed his career to include a real estate development as a form of scholar-activism. His brand of holistic equitable development is rooted in social entrepreneurship. He has been in real estate for over 15 years as an investor and developer. West Philadelphia born and raised, he received a BA in Economics and M.Ed. in School Counseling from Lehigh University, and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Penn State. After his graduate degree he held a staff psychologist position at the University of California, Irvine. Leon has held rank and tenure as an Associate Professor at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln; University of Memphis; and directed a community research center at Rhodes College. After a successful career as an Associate Professor, award winning community-based researcher, national thought leader on Black men and boys' health, social entrepreneur, and Senior Leader in the Philanthropic sector and author with over 50 national and international publications he established Ujima Developers, LLC as a public health intervention for blighted neighborhoods. Ujima Developers seeks to contribute its unique brand of social impact development as an approach to re-designing neighborhoods for the optimal health of all residents.

## SPEAKER BIOS

**KIMM R. CAMPBELL (SHE/HER)***Assistant County Administrator, Broward County*

Kimm R. Campbell holds a Master's degree and clinical licensure in Social Work and has over 24 years of experience in public administration and human services within state and local governments. She has provided leadership, direct services, and consultative services in adult and child mental health, child welfare, special education, juvenile justice, domestic violence, homelessness, and substance abuse. Kimm has designed family support services frameworks for housing authorities, standardized supportive services within school districts, and created detention transition services for incarcerated youth. Kimm is currently a Broward County Assistant County Administrator with oversight responsibilities for various departments, divisions, and offices across the County enterprise. Additionally, Kimm is a national consultant working with the US Department of Justice, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, and various State Disability Rights Firms. She serves as Chair of the Broward County Suicide Prevention Coalition, is a member of the Board of Directors for Broward Behavioral Health Coalition and OIC of South Florida and is a member of the Coordinating Council of Broward.

**PRISCILLA DAY (SHE/HER)***Professor, Social Work and Principal Investigator, Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies*

Priscilla A. Day, MSW, Ed.D., Anishinaabe and enrolled tribal member, Leech Lake Reservation, MN and is a tenured full professor at the Department of Social Work, University of Minnesota Duluth (1993–2020). Dr. Day is the Principal Investigator for the Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies whose mission is “to advance the well-being of children by strengthening families and communities through social work education, research, and outreach in the region.” She is an advisory board member for the Children's Bureau Capacity Building Center for Tribes, consultant for the Center for Native Child and Family Resilience, and tribal lead for the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute. Dr. Day's area of research is American Indian family preservation. She is the mother of three and grandmother of 10 children.



## SPEAKER BIOS

**ALAN DETTLAFF (HE/HIM)***Dean, University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work*

Alan J. Dettlaff is Dean of the Graduate College of Social Work at the University of Houston and the inaugural Maconda Brown O'Connor Endowed Dean's Chair. Prior to entering academia, Dean Dettlaff worked in the child welfare system as a caseworker and an administrator, where he specialized in investigations of maltreatment. He received his Bachelor's degree in social work from TCU, and Master's in social work and Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Arlington. Dean Dettlaff's research focuses on addressing and eliminating the impacts of structural and institutional racism on Black children and families involved in the child welfare system.

**CHERYL FAIRBANKS (SHE/HER)***Interim Executive Director of the UNM Native American Budget and Policy Institute*

Cheryl Demmert Fairbanks, Esq. works in the area of Indian law as an attorney and tribal court of appeals justice. Currently she is the Interim Executive Director of the UNM Native American Budget and Policy Institute. She recently served as the Walter R. Echo-Hawk Distinguished Visiting Professor of Law at Lewis and Clark and was also a visiting Professor of Law at the University of New Mexico's Southwest Indian Law Clinic. Formerly a Partner at Cuddy McCarthy LLP, she had a general practice in Indian law, including tribal-state relations, personnel, tribal courts, peacemaking and family conferencing, mediation, family, school, education, and indigenous law. Cheryl is Tlingit-Tsimshian and was born in Ketchikan, Alaska. She obtained her BA from Fort Lewis College in 1969 and her JD in 1987 from the University of New Mexico. Prior to her law career, she served as a teacher for the Albuquerque Public Schools, Zia Day School, and Administrator for Acomita Day School and the Albuquerque/Santa Fe Indian Schools.

**SPEAKER BIOS****ALAN-MICHAEL GRAVES (HE/HIM)***Director of National Programs, Good+Foundation*

Dr. Alan-Michael S. Graves serves as the Director of National Programs with Good Plus Foundation where he focuses on a broad range of multidisciplinary activities, from research and program development to training and advocacy for policy change. Currently leading a National Fatherhood Initiative on policy change and training social workers in Los Angeles County on Fatherhood Engagement, Alan-Michael has worked in the human services field, with extensive experience as a facilitator and administrator, for both public and private agencies, for the past 17 years. He has brought these diverse perspectives to his work helping agencies develop, implement and evaluate interagency systems of care, family partnerships and community programming. With a doctorate in Educational Leadership, Dr. Graves utilizes his knowledge and expertise to strategically and positively impact the lives of children through his work with parents.

**TYMBER HUDSON (THEY/SHE)***Youth Organizer*

Tymber Hudson is a speaker, strategist, and multidisciplinary artist based in Pittsburgh, PA. Prior to their role at Hugh Lane, Tymber served as the LGBTQ+ policy associate at the Biden Foundation. Tymber managed a national public education and storytelling campaign, facilitated youth round tables centering the experiences of young people with intersectional identities, and provided technical assistance and research support to other national youth-serving organizations working to implement LGBTQ+ inclusion and equity into their programs, policies, and practices. Tymber also served as a Congressional Intern for Congresswoman Karen Bass. Tymber is deeply committed to centering the voices and experiences of Black LGBTQ+ youth impacted by the foster care system.

**SPEAKER BIOS****JOYCE MCMILLAN (SHE/HER)**

*Parent Advocate and Founder, PLAN (Parent Legislative Action Network)*

Joyce McMillan is a thought leader, advocate, activist, community organizer, and educator. Her mission is to remove systemic barriers in communities of color by bringing awareness to the racial disparities in systems where people of color are disproportionately affected. Joyce believes the conversation about systemic oppression must happen on all levels consistently before meaningful change can occur. She completed a restorative certificate program at the New School and believes change will not happen independently of healing. Her ultimate goal is to abolish systems of harm while creating concrete community resources. Joyce leads child welfare family engagement and advocacy efforts at Sinergia Inc. Prior, she was the Program Director at Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP) where she created a community space, to educate the community about restorative practices to empower, affirm, transform and heal communities of color that have been traumatized by systemic injustices.

**JUDITH MELTZER (SHE/HER)**

*President, Center for the Study of Social Policy*

Judith Meltzer is the President of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), where she is responsible for developing its overall vision and direction and, in conjunction with the staff and leadership team, working to achieve CSSP's mission to create a racially, economically and socially just society in which all children and families thrive. With a particular focus on improving the ways in which public systems support families and ensure children are able to grow up in safe, stable families and communities, Judy brings considerable experience in work related to child and family well-being and public system reform, strategies for community change and local, state and federal policy initiatives. As the federal Court appointed Monitor of the District of Columbia's and New Jersey's child welfare systems, she has supported large scale reform of their policies, practices and outcomes in the context of class action litigation. She is a national leader in promoting non-adversarial approaches to litigation, currently working in South Carolina, New Mexico, Humboldt County, California, and Baltimore, MD. Judy previously served as CSSP's Executive Vice President and has a Master's Degree in Social Welfare Policy from the University of Chicago.

## SPEAKER BIOS

**MAYA PENDLETON (SHE/HER)***Policy Analyst, Center for the Study of Social Policy*

Maya Pendleton supports CSSP's work with public systems to increase well-being for children, youth, and families. As a member for CSSP's Equity, Inclusion, and Justice team, Maya assists in building internal and external work and capacity around anti-racism and racial equity. Additionally, she sits on CSSP's Policy and Systems Change teams, working to transform public systems and address root causes for the racial disparities that Black, Native, and Latinx communities experience. Prior to CSSP, Maya worked directly with children and youth with experiences in foster care. Maya completed her B.A. at Georgetown University in Government and African American Studies and completed her Master's of Public Policy at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Administration, focusing specifically on social policy at the intersection of race and gender.

**LISA SANGOI (SHE/HER)***Co-Founder and Co-Director, Movement for Family Power*

Lisa Sangoi is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of Movement for Family Power and is committed to working in service of growing a movement for child welfare and foster system reform and abolition. Lisa has had the honor of working on a number of campaigns to roll back laws, policies and practices that punish women and mothers. She has also had the privilege of providing legal representation to women targeted by the child protection and criminal legal systems through trial and appellate advocacy. Given the intersection of the drug war and the child welfare system, Lisa spends quite a bit of time learning about drug use, pregnancy and parenting, and she regularly consults on related child welfare cases and legislation throughout the country. Lisa values being in community with people and doing the hard work of slowly, over time, jointly building political analysis and thought. She loves to research, read, write and publish and she wants to explore how to democratize spaces like research and media that have not always been open to diverse voices. Lisa has a law degree, a master's degree in human rights studies, and undergraduate degrees in math and philosophy. She has previously worked or interned at the NYU Law Family Defense Clinic, National Advocates for Pregnant Women, Women Prison Association Incarcerated Mothers Law Project, and Brooklyn Defender Services Family Defense Practice, among other organizations.

## SPEAKER BIOS

**WILLIAM A. THORNE (HE/HIM)**

*Former Tribal and State Court Judge (Trial and Appellate)*

Judge William A. Thorne, Jr. (ret.), a Pomo/Coast Miwok Indian from northern California, was appointed to the Utah Court of Appeals in May 2000 by Gov. Michael O. Leavitt. He retired in September of 2013. He was a judge in the Third Circuit Court for eight years, having been appointed by Governor Norman Bangerter in 1986, and then served in the Third District Court for six years, having been appointed by Governor Leavitt in 1994. Judge Thorne received a B.A. from the University of Santa Clara in 1974 and a J.D. from Stanford Law School in 1977. Judge Thorne has served for over 34 years as a tribal court judge in Utah, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Nevada, California, Nebraska, and Michigan. He is the former president and current vice-president of the National Indian Justice Center (a nonprofit that trains tribal court and other personnel around the country), and a former member of the Board of Directors for National CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates, a nonprofit group that provides volunteer representation for abused and neglected children in court). He was formerly a member of PEW Commission on Children in Foster Care, the Board of Directors for the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute (a nonprofit seeking to improve the level of research and practice related to adoptions), a former member of the Board of Trustees for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, a former board member for NACAC [North American Council on Adoptable Children], former Chair for the board of WestEd Inc. (a non-profit focusing on excellence and equity in education) and a former member of the ABA Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children. He is also a former member of the Utah Judicial Council, the Board of Circuit Court Judges, and the Board of Directors for the National American Indian Court Judge's Association, and most recently ended his term as Chair of the Board for Child Trends, Inc. (a non-profit devoted to research dealing with children and families). He is currently a member of the board for the Center for the Study of Social Policy, a member of the board for WestEd, Inc., a member of the Advisory Council for the Capacity Building Center for Tribes of the U.S. Children's Bureau, and a member of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and a member of the advisory board for the National Child Welfare Workforce Initiative. In 2016 the National Center for State Courts recognized Judge Thorne with their Distinguished Service Award.



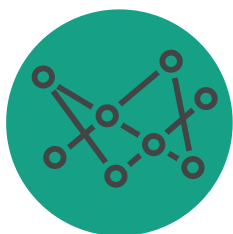
**SPEAKER BIOS****KRISTEN WEBER**

*Director, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice, Center for the Study of Social Policy*

Kristen Weber leads CSSP's strategic vision for addressing equity internally at CSSP and provides external technical assistance to jurisdictions working to address racial inequities. She leads CSSP's Institutional Analysis project (IA), a qualitative review process to analyze laws, policies and practices that contribute to poor outcomes for particular populations involved with child welfare systems. Kristen has conducted IAs and written accompanying papers about child welfare system contributors to racial disproportionality and disparities in achieving permanency experienced by African American and Latino children, youth, and families; systems' responses to battered women and their children; and system contributors to the lack of safety and affirmation experienced by LGBTQ+ youth and families.

***The upEND Movement and this convening were made possible through generous funding from the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund and the Reissa Foundation. We are grateful for their continued trust in and support for this crucial work.***

## GET INVOLVED



### #1 STAY CONNECTED

We want to stay connected with the people who are reimagining how our society cares for children, families, and communities. Review what the upEND Movement commits to accomplishing and [add your name to the growing network of supporters by signing our pledge](#). Follow us on Twitter [@upENDmovement](#) and use our hashtags #upEND and #upENDmovement. Lastly, we want to know what you are doing to upEND systems and create alternatives to the existing child welfare system. Share with us any organizing, strategies, practices, etc. that you or your organization has done/is doing by emailing us at [info@upENDmovement.org](mailto:info@upENDmovement.org).



### #2 HELP US TO DISRUPT THE NARRATIVE

For too long negative, racist narratives about Black and Native families have been used to justify the policies and practices that surveil and separate children from their families. Changing the narrative about children and families is a central element to questioning the current system, having honest conversations, and charting a new path. Whether on social media, in dialogue with others, or in your writing and/or research commit to telling the real stories about communities and parents, challenging racist research and ideas, and centering the voices of those with experiences in the child welfare system.



### #3 COMMIT TO ONGOING LEARNING

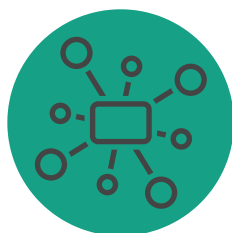
The work of upENDING the child welfare system will require all of us working together, learning from one another, deepening our analyses, and sharing our knowledge. Help us to make the case that there is a better way to support and protect children and families. Share the information and data that you have—both qualitative and quantitative—that supports this effort. In particular, we invite you—when possible—to share stories about the experiences of children and families who have been involved with the child welfare system—what has been helpful, what has been harmful, and what we can collectively imagine that could be better.

## GET INVOLVED



### #4 CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL EFFORTS

Change is needed in communities, at the state level, and nationally. We ask you to seek out and join local efforts that are working to dismantle family policing, develop alternative community supports for children's safety and well-being, and build new policies and programs to address root causes of family need. If you are already connected locally, we invite you to share the work of upEND with your networks.



### #5 BUILD THE MOVEMENT WITH US

Over the next months, we plan to hold additional convenings for those who are interested in conversations and workgroups centered around identifying the road to abolition. While our agendas are not yet firmed up, we are currently brainstorming and would love feedback from you. Reach out to us at [info@upENDmovement.org](mailto:info@upENDmovement.org) if you are interested in joining this more in-depth, collaborative work.

