

Tour of New Orleans

Biographies of Tour Leaders

Norris Henderson is the founder and Executive Director of Voice of the Ex-Offender (VOTE), a nonprofit organization designed to educate, organize and mobilize formerly incarcerated persons around their right to vote in Louisiana. He is also a former Soros Justice Fellow and was co-director of Safe Streets/Strong Communities, promoting community organizing and advocacy to transform the criminal justice system in New Orleans to one that is fair, safe and accountable to all regardless of race and economic status. In this work Norris has achieved significant wins and has built bridges with other organizations, acting as the Safe Streets representative in a city-wide coalition on race and criminalization. He also regularly speaks publicly in support of the underprivileged, immigrant workers' rights, and the rights of the under-served. Sharing his first hand experience of racism and brutality in the criminal justice system, Norris has affected public policy and public discourse about police accountability, public defense for poor and indigent people, and reforms to the notorious Orleans Parish Prison (OPP). Norris also serves on a number of organizations' Boards of Directors including Innocence Project of New Orleans, Family & Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children and Junior Regional Services.

Rosana Cruz is Associate Director of Voices of the Ex-Offender. Previously, Rosana was Co-Director of Safe Streets/Strong Communities, and she also worked with the National Immigration Law Center helping to create the New Orleans Worker Center for Racial Justice to address the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina on immigrants and refugees. Prior to joining NILC, she worked with SEIU in Miami, after having been displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina. Before the storm, Rosana worked for a diverse range of community organizations, including the Latin American Library, Hispanic Apostolate, the Lesbian and Gay Community Center of New Orleans, and People's Youth Freedom School. Ms. Cruz came to New Orleans through her work with the Southern Regional Office of Amnesty International in Atlanta. Rosana holds a B.A. in Race and Gender Studies from New College of Florida and is completing a Master of Arts program in Latin American Studies at Tulane University.