

As a foster parent of kids needing psychological support, a therapist in training, a special educator for the last 20 years for children ages 2 through 22, a trauma survivor carrying the complexities of complex PTSD, an autistic person, a human carrying and watching and occasionally drowning in the familial effects of epigenetic traumas, an lgbt+ trans+ person who has been 'out' and visible, harassed and discriminated against since the 1980's in school, jobs, housing, friendships, finances, politics, relationships, etc. and as someone who specializes in the trauma of people with societally marginalized identities -
- We need a better way to deal with people in crisis and in need.

It is clear that our Vermonters of Color will be incarcerated here in high numbers, evidenced by the unreasonable numbers of Black and Brown Vermonters incarcerated, stopped by police, and in psych facilities today; also evidenced by the statistics that as a nation Black and Brown people are seen overall by doctors, mental health professionals, and lay people alike as having lesser amounts of pain, less feelings, less reasonable feelings, less impulse control, less honesty, less educational ability, and who are in general treated with more fear, anger, and violence (restraint, drugging, solitary, and including death etc...) when in heightened states.

Having the only option for our families of color, my family, to be more prisons, lockups, psych wards -- regardless of how 'humane' or how 'tolerable' or how 'trauma-informed' they might try to purport to be -- is unacceptable. The system itself perpetuates fear, harm, control, and trauma, which comes out as symptoms, which then again perpetuates the cycle... We can not advertise ourselves as trauma-informed while building buildings with these intentions. We also can not build this building knowing that there is 100% chance that this building and this exact broken system will incarcerate people of color in Vermont at rates far higher than is statistically reasonable. This is and continues to be institutionalized racism at its worst.

We need community resources for people needing psychological and mental health support, separate from policing, separate from lockups, medications, or mandated 'normalcy'... It is not ok in 2021 for Vermont to VOTE to support any form of institutionalized racism or systemic violence that has been proven to have always been, and will always be primarily aimed at taking BIPOC people out of Vermont communities. We need better options for our loved ones, for our kids in DCF who have already been traumatized beyond belief, for our elderly and those self-medicating with drugs to find some semblance of balance in a systemic world that doesn't provide any. These people, Our people, are important members of our society, our families, our schools, and towards our learning and growth as a human species. The human species needs all its biodiversities, all of its good minds, even if the "mainstream" doesn't yet understand the meaning of it, and finds it less palatable to look at. Vermont is and has never been "Mainstream." We must do better and work towards true liberation. We can not continue to hide people away and harm them so that they will stay silent and compliant. Do not fund this facility, instead fund the true needs of the neuro-diverse and the traumatized, and build real and loving support for the ways each human can be brilliant, intuitive, helpful, loving, caring, beautiful, and a whole part of society.

Please vote to NOT support another carceral facility in this state. Use this important funding to give communities the chance to support and uplift and the voices of our people who have been silenced and controlled rather than heard for generations.

Thank you
Ruth wplk
Putney, Vermont