

Re: In Memory of Our Sister, Belinder Hymes

From: Charlie Sullivan (cure@curenational.org)

To:

Bcc:

Date: Monday, December 16, 2019, 02:11 AM EST

Grace, I am copying our MS CURE members concerning the **inspiring** life of Belinder Hymes. Charlie (& Pauline)

On Sun, Dec 15, 2019 at 4:30 PM Grace Bauer-Lubow <gracebauerlubow@justice4families.org> wrote:



Dear Family Leadership Network,

I write today to share sad news that our sister, friend, and yet another matriarch in the Family Leadership Network, **Belinder Hymes**, passed away on November 29, 2019. The cause of death was pulmonary complications. Miss Belinder was 57 years old and has been a part of Justice For Families since the very beginning in 2010. Miss Belinder waged two simultaneous battles in the 10 years I have known her. One, fighting against the horrific conditions that her son lived in day after day and the other fighting for reforms in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, especially the trying of young people as adults, and mandatory sentencing of youth to life without parole. Miss Belinder sacrificed and joyfully gave everything she possibly could to the fight to end mass incarceration and to all those she met along the way.

Miss Belinder left our first training and went back to organize other families in her home state of Mississippi. In 2013, she joined with these families to create [The Coalition for the Resentencing of Youth United Together \(CRYOUT\)](#), a group organized to support the families of those individuals who were incarcerated under the age of eighteen with life without parole or other extreme sentences. On March 15, 2018, CRYOUT celebrated its 5-year anniversary. It was an honor to be asked to give the keynote address and to be in the room to hear families honor Belinder for her work and the work of the organization. In a thank you note, she shared this with me: *"The gift of your time and presence was priceless. I could not be where I am today had it not been for a Grace Bauer who took the time to listen, encourage, invest and sow a seed for this harvest to spring forth. The best I can say is thank you and continue to let your light shine"*. That night and her words will always be remembered as the greatest achievement of my life's work and cherished with all of my heart.

Miss Belinder was also a long-time member of the [Campaign For the Fair Sentencing of Youth's National Family Network](#). I received a copy of the tribute they shared with their network and I want to share an excerpt of it with you:

Belinder was engaged in this movement and with the CFSY for many years — when her son, Alexander (AJ), was sentenced to life without parole as a child in Mississippi (now serving life with parole), she dove headfirst into the work of freeing him and others like him in her state and around the country. Belinder was an integral member of our National Family Network, and regularly befriended, comforted, and supported others with loved ones serving. She was always willing to facilitate calls, attended many of our Convenings, including our most recent last month where she sat on a panel called "Spotlight on the South" — [you can watch a video of that here](#).

Belinder was known for being a force of nature, yet led with humility. She was a courageous and tenacious advocate, a devoted mom, a passionate warrior for justice, and members of the CFSY staff always relished opportunities to engage with her." Specifically, Belinder worked closely with James Ross, our

former Director of Outreach and Engagement, and he offers this remembrance of her:

"I will remember Belinder for the joy that she demonstrated in the midst of her incredible work to ensure that her son would not die in prison. Belinder had a ready smile and quiet wit. She was quick to give encouragement and slow to intrude with an uninvited perspective. Her presence was unlike that of anyone else in the room."

"I also suspect people often underestimated Belinder because she was soft spoken and usually wore a conservative pantsuit. Doing so, however, would be a major misstep. Belinder was part Southern Black Mama, part community advocate, part ready confidant, and part trained, empathetic social worker. She used all of these elements to create powerful change in Mississippi and contribute to a broader movement throughout our country."

James's description of Miss Belinder is 100% accurate and I couldn't have said it any better.

In fact, for the first few months I knew her, I called her Miss Belinda because she spoke so quietly, I had misunderstood her first name. However, when she spoke, her courage and conviction moved others to take action and through the years she assembled a great multitude of others to fight against our country's addiction to incarceration and the abhorrent long-term consequences that have devastated communities of color throughout our country. She was a dear friend to me and understood my fears and endless worries over my son during the many years he spent in America's brutal cages. I never had to explain the source of my fears or concerns, she knew as a mother with her own son confined to one of those cages, exactly what I was feeling and always had words of wisdom and care to share not only with me but with the hundreds of others she encountered on her journey.

Miss Belinder's son, AJ Hymes, remains confined to one of those cages in Holly Springs, MS, not even given the opportunity to say goodbye to his mother. I have included his contact information and hope that each of you will reach out through letters to let him know about your own relationship with Miss Belinder. To lose our mothers is often one of the most difficult experiences of our lives and to do it while confined with no chance to say goodbye is a shameful commentary on the nation's "correctional" system.

Alexander Jonathon, AJ Hymes, 136732
Marshal County Correctional Facility
833 West St.
Holly Springs, MS 38635

If you would like to send condolences to the family, Miss Belinder's sister, Sally's contact information is as follows:

Ms. Sally Williams
244 Levon Owens Cove

Terry, MS 39170

Email: sally.j.williams@jsums.edu

"Miss Belinder, it was my honor and privilege to have known you, worked beside you and to be a part of the "Beloved Community" that you built. To have been a part of your work and witness the life you lived, changed my life for the better and I will miss your beautiful presence always. You fought hard and have earned a special place in heaven. Thank you, my friend. May you rest in peace and may freedom be upon your son, soon." Love You Always, g

In solidarity and with sorrow,

Grace Bauer-Lubow

Executive Director, [Justice For Families](#)

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