



million
ONE JAIL AT A TIME.
story

REFORM TOOLKIT

S2 E3

How Bail Shackles Women of Color

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A PODCAST BY

Lantigua
Williams
& Co.

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PEABODY
NOMINEE



WHO



A Coalition of Groups in Atlanta

WHO

“Black women are carrying the bail burden ... [It] has grave effects on the trauma, the stress both the mental, emotional, physical that women are carrying.”

- Mary Hooks, co-director of Southerners on New Ground

The costs of mass incarceration weigh heavily on women of color.

[Nearly half of all Black women](#) in the United States have a family member behind bars. And [more than half of women of any race in the U.S. are unable to afford](#) the money bail set for a detained loved one, meaning that person must remain in jail for the weeks or months it takes for their case to be resolved.

In Atlanta, a coalition of groups is working to address the financial and emotional costs of incarceration for women of color whose loved ones, or they themselves, are involved in the criminal justice system. These include [Southerners on New Ground \(SONG\)](#) and [Women on the Rise](#).

Participants at Southerners On New Ground's Black Mama's Bail Out Homecoming. Photo by Kunjo.



WHAT



**A Way to Change the Justice
System Together**

WHAT

“We’ve bailed out women who, once they get out, they’re like, I need to find where my kids are at. I’ve been locked up for days and haven’t been able to reach anybody..”

- Mary Hooks, co-director of Southerners on New Ground

[SONG](#) has been bailing women out since 2016. Their “Bail out Black Mamas” campaign has spread across the country, with organizers [bailing out 147 Black women in 26 cities](#) last year.

The Atlanta-based [Racial Justice Action Center](#) is a grassroots organization focused on achieving justice for all people. Their organizing project [Women on the Rise](#) is made up of formerly incarcerated women working to empower their community.

SONG and the Racial Justice Action Center [successfully led the campaign to close the Atlanta City Detention Center](#) in 2019, bringing together nearly 50 organizations. They are now working on transforming the jail into a community center.

A workshop participant at Southerners on New Ground’s Black Mama’s Bail Out Homecoming. Photo by Kunjo.



WHERE

Atlanta, Georgia

WHERE

“I’m born and raised here in Atlanta. So I’ve had not the privilege but the un-privilege of being arrested in [the Atlanta City Detention Center] which started my life into a spiral of crime.”

- Marilynn Winn, exec. dir. of Women on the Rise

Not long ago, Georgia led the nation in criminal supervision, with [one out of every 13 Georgians](#) behind bars, on probation, or on parole.

But thanks to pressure from organizers and the election of Nathan Deal as governor in 2011, the tide began to change. The state formed the [Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform](#) with the goal of profoundly reshaping the state’s correctional systems and reducing spending on those systems.

After years of increasing, the [state prison population has dropped](#) from a high of 54,895 in July 2012 to 52,692 at the end of 2017.

Marilynn Winn at the “Day of Redemption” organized by social justice groups in Atlanta. Photo by Pamela Kirkland.





WHEN

2018 - Present

WHEN

“We eliminated cash bonds in the city of Atlanta ... No longer do you say in our jail because you’re poor.”

- Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms

Georgia has made important justice reforms in the last two years.

In 2018, state legislators [passed a law](#) requiring judges to take into account a defendant’s ability to pay before deciding on their bail amount. Previously, judges had very little flexibility when it came to setting bail.

Also last year, Atlanta [eliminated](#) bail for low-level, nonviolent cases. In the first year of the law, a third of defendants were eligible for release on a “signature bond.”

Then in May of 2019, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms [signed legislation closing the Atlanta City Detention Center](#). A task force is now [working on repurposing the jail](#) into a Center for Equity.

A participant at Southerners On New Ground’s Black Mama’s Bail Out Homecoming. Photo by Kunjo.



WHY



**The Case of
Tamiki Jackson Banks**



WHY

“It’s a struggle to pay my bills. I have rent, I have a car note, I have car insurance. ... My kids have to eat and then trying to take care of my husband is killing me. It’s killing me.

- Tamiki Jackson Banks

Tamiki Jackson Banks is a mother of six with a degree in healthcare administration. For the last two and a half years, her husband has been behind bars in the Fulton County Jail because Tamiki cannot pay his \$80,000 bail.

Tamiki’s husband, Erric, was charged with “homicide by vehicle” after being involved in a highway accident that killed one person. Before his arrest, Erric worked as a forklift driver for a concrete company and was the family’s main source of income. Tamiki now works full time and is doing everything she can to make ends meet.

But it hasn’t been easy. She lost her home because she couldn’t afford the payments. And things like video visitations with her husband and parking downtown for his court dates are costly.

Tamiki Jackson Banks. Photo by Pamela Kirkland.



HOW

**Addressing the Costs of
Incarceration for Women**

HOW

“We want businesses and we want to be entrepreneurs and we want to be the best mothers we can be. [But] we’re pouring our resources into this system that keeps us from aspiring to be who we want to be.”

- Tamiki Jackson Banks

Over the last two years, Tamiki has tried many things to get Erric out of jail. She started a [GoFundMe](#) campaign to raise money for his bail and filed two petitions asking the judge to lower Erric’s bail amount.

In those petitions, Tamiki argued that the family’s inability to pay and the fact that this was Erric’s first criminal incident should be taken into account. But the court has refused to change his bail or set him free before his trial.

Tamiki husband’s case shows the complexity of criminal justice reform in places like Georgia. The recent changes the state and Atlanta made to pre-trial detention came too late to make a difference in Erric’s case. But the push by [SONG](#) and others to eliminate cash bail altogether could be the key to addressing the high costs of pre-trial detention for women like Tamiki.

Tamiki Jackson Banks. Photo by Pamela Kirkland.



RESOURCES

To get started developing a reform project like the SONG:

- [“Because She’s Powerful” by the Essie Justice Group](#)
- [“Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families”](#)
- [Racial Justice Action Center](#)
- [Close the Jail ATL](#)
- [“Putting Women Already in Jail First \(70 Million S1 E4\)](#)
- [“Keeping Women Out of Jail, One Mother at a Time” by 70 Million and the Vera Institute of Justice](#)

70 Million Team

Editor: Jen Chien

Managing Editor: Casey Miller

Ep. 3 Reporter: Pamela Kirkland

Host: Mitzi Miller

Sound Designer: Luis M. Gil

Associate Producers: Adizah Eghan and Cher Vincent

Marketing Lead: Kate Krosschell

Staff Writer: Nissa Rhee

Design Director: Kenia D. Serrette

Fact Checker: Sarah McClure

Intern: Emma Forbes

Creator/Executive Producer: Juleyka Lantigua-Williams

70MillionPod.com

@70MillionPod // Hello@70Millionpod.com