

Joseph Jazz Hayden
A Decade of Activism & Service
2000 - 2009

The 1990s, while incarcerated, was a decade of personal growth and achievement for me. During that decade I earned a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts and graduated magna cum laude, class valedictorian. I earned a Master's degree in Professional Studies from New York Theological Seminary (NYTS). And, upon completion of my Master's, I was appointed an adjunct professor of NYTS, and taught a certificate program for undergraduates for the next 5 years.

During the 90's I was also deeply involved with the struggle to empower the least powerful populations in the country: prisoners, their families, and, by extension, the communities from which they came. My efforts on behalf of these populations resulted in the filing of a class action law suit challenging the denial of the right to vote to citizens because of felony convictions. This lawsuit was the product of social and historical research, by prisoners, that reached the conclusion that the laws denying them the right to vote violated the Voting Rights Act and, in fact, contravened all of the achievements and efforts of the civil rights movement in this country. I filed the class action lawsuit prior to exiting the prison system. The filing date was September 13th in honor of those that died in Attica while demanding to be treated as human beings and not as chattel slaves. Thus began a decade of activism that continues as I write.

2000 - 2009

Co-created (with Eddie Ellis) and produced **On the Count**, a radio program, aired to this day on WBAI FM, dedicated to covering criminal justice issues and enjoying widespread support from prisoners and the community.

Named **Director of Public Policy** Department: Justice Policy Group for ADAPT (Association For Drug Abuse Prevention & Treatment).

Acted as Northeast Coordinator for **Nu-Leadership Policy Group** at Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, in building a national network of former prisoners who had become CEOs, Directors, and Leaders of organizations throughout the country.

With the help of **Fordham Law School**, launched **Prodigal Sons & Daughters**, a not-for-profit organization to address the issue of re-entry for those returning to the community from incarceration.

As project manager with the **Right To Vote Campaign**, built a coalition and movement to educate, reform, and organize the communities in New York City around the struggle for the right to vote.

The **Right to Vote Coalition** ultimately grew to 85 organizations, including the Brennan Center at NYU, American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way, the Fortune Society,

Osborne Association, The Community Service Society, NAACP LDF, and Picture the Homeless, and I was named **National Director**.

With a press conference, we formally launched **UNLOCK THE BLOCK: RELEASE THE VOTE!**

Completed training for community organizers at **Northeast Action** in Connecticut.

Worked with **Dr. Manning Marable**—author, professor, activist, and then-chairman of the African American Studies department of Columbia University—on a variation of the slave narratives; ours was a narrative of formerly incarcerated citizens.

Published *Juneteenth*.

Awarded partial scholarship by **Harvard Divinity School** to attend their **Summer Leadership Institute**, with further funding from **Demos**. From Harlem to Harvard! It was an opportunity to improve my organizing skills and a chance to network with the faith based community from all over the country

Selected to serve on the **Urban League's National Commission on the Crisis of the Black Male**.

Interviewed by Amy Goodman on **Democracy Now!** Speaker at an event for **Students For Sensible Drug Policy**. Sat on a panel at **Yale Law School** and testified at the **City Council of New York**. Invited to give testimony on New York State criminal justice reform at the **Westchester County Council**. Participated as a panelist in a conference on felon disenfranchisement sponsored by **Harvard University**.

Founded **Still Here Harlem Productions**, a multi-media production company. The mission; develop a miniature CNN for Harlem. Main stream media ignores the voices of the people at the base of the social, economic, and political pyramid. There was and is a need to provide a voice for the voiceless. We cover every aspect of community life in Harlem, with a primary focus on news and information. Viewable on www.allthingsharlem.com and on Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN), community access television.

In providing a platform for the issues that are particular to **Harlem and the Harlems of America**, Still Here Harlem Productions has produced and broadcast videos for the advocacy and service community, such as **Citizens Against Recidivism's Award Ceremony** that recognizes those that have made a successful reentry into the community and are now contributing to the community through their work and **Family Empowerment Day at Columbia Law School**, an event at which the Commissioner of Parole met with the long suffering families of prisoners in a highly emotionally charged interaction. We have worked with organizations such as the **Fortune Society** and the **Correctional Association of New York** on the issue of the Rockefeller Drug Laws.

Visit <http://freejazzhayden.wordpress.com/> for more information