

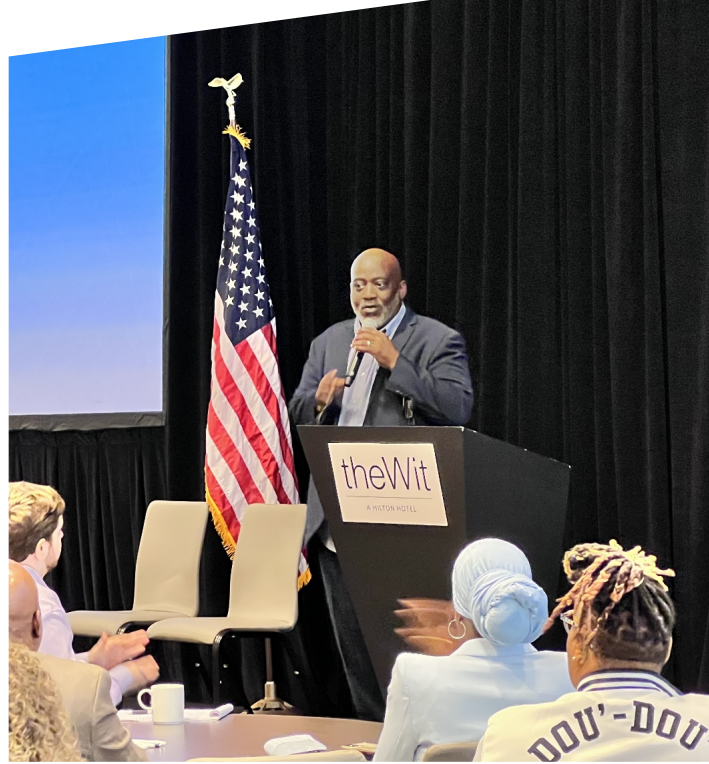
Civic Power 2023

Challenging 50 Years of Mass Incarceration
August 2023

A half a century ago, the United States embarked on a path of mass incarceration that has led to a staggering increase in the prison population and the number of people disenfranchised due to a felony conviction. More than 4.6 million people were disenfranchised from voting in 2022, despite 25 states and Washington DC expanding voting rights to persons with felony convictions since 1997.

The Civic Power 2023 Convening brought together advocacy organizers, academics, researchers, communications specialists and others in Chicago to build on recent efforts to expand the vote and challenge fifty years of mass incarceration. We would like to thank everyone who participated: attendees, speakers, session organizers, sponsors, and our Convening Planning Committee!

Many lessons were learned from Civic Power speakers and attendees during several plenaries and breakout sessions. Highlights included:



Incarcerated residents at Illinois Stateville Correctional Facility joined the Lessons from Directly Impacted Led Campaigns Plenary virtually. The residents are members of the **DePaul Behind the Walls Participatory Civics Collaborative**;

Organizers from California to Texas to Georgia shared **tactics and strategies on collaborative organizing** with incarcerated activists, guaranteeing ballot access for eligible voters in jail, and why currently disenfranchised residents are working on rights restoration campaigns;

Activists traveled from Chile to share how **best practices** are employed in Chile to guarantee ballot access for voters in prison; and

Academics and researchers shared methods and practices for **collaborating with voting rights activists** to guarantee ballot access for voters with felony convictions.

We concluded Civic Power with a strategy session that identified the goals, tactics, and strategies to advance voting rights for all including all persons with felony convictions.

Civic Power Convening By the Numbers

The Convening Planning committee worked to center directly impacted advocacy organizers, foster connection between movement partners, and create an inclusive convening environment. We are happy to report that the 2023 Convening was attended by more than 130 advocacy organizers, academics, and communications specialists, exceeding the number of anticipated participants.



Civic Power featured welcome remarks by **Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson** and a keynote address by **Desmond Meade**, a nationally renowned voting rights reformer. The event included three General Plenary sessions, 11 Breakout Sessions, and strategy sessions that fostered self directed discussions among convening attendees on several issues including “Intersection of Migrant Justice and Challenging Felony Disenfranchisement” and directly impacted organizing. More than 50 speakers attended to give informative perspectives on opportunities and challenges to guarantee voting rights for all persons regardless of incarceration status.

We are confident the information shared and strategies developed will help national and state partners collaborate on efforts to expand the vote and initiatives to guarantee ballot access.

Convening Agenda

The Convening Planning team cultivated a diverse program focused on issues around rights restoration and voting in prison campaigns, civic engagement policy, advocacy, and inclusion with workshops that provided information and expertise to support national and state partners in the next year and beyond.

We began our convening itinerary focusing on new trends in rights restoration and successful tactics to engage new voters with felony conviction histories. Throughout all of our programming, we worked to center directly impacted experts and advocates to share what true democracy is when not being undermined by the criminal legal system.

The Civic Power team looks forward to continuing to build from convening discussions to identify next steps guided by the collaborative strategy chart attendees developed together.

