

## Report on the Inaugural Mike Lee Fellowship



On October 1, 2018, the inaugural Mike Lee Fellow, Jarue Lawson, began working with PLSE. A Philadelphia native, Jarue was an honors student throughout his schooling. He briefly went to Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Community College of Philadelphia. He worked at multiple jobs and ran the streets (guns and drugs), leading to his incarceration. He was a certified tutor for 6 years while incarcerated, a dedicated reader, and constantly engaged in real conversations about identity and serving people. Jarue's plan has always been to serve his community, which is something he learned from family, particularly his mother and oldest sister.

Over the course of the Mike Lee Fellowship (which was created and is funded by Friends of Mike), Jarue's outreach efforts led to him meeting and speaking with more than 300 people impacted by criminal records. In addition to attending intake clinics for PLSE's Criminal Records Expungement Project, Jarue represented PLSE at a number of community and partner events around the city. Some highlights were:

- Oct 5, 2018: Beyond the Walls Prison Summit, hosted by Philadelphia FIGHT!
- Oct 24, 2018 & Jan 30, 2019: Quarterly Stakeholder Meetings of the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition
- Nov 3, 2018: College & Career Fair at Beloved St. John Evangelistic Church, in Wyoming
- Nov 9, 2018: Grant interview with the Patricia Kind Family Foundation
- Nov 10, 2018: Community Job Fair at Prince of Peace Baptist Church, in Strawberry Mansion
- Dec 20, 2018: Board of Pardons Hearing, in Harrisburg
- Apr 10, Apr 16, & May 2, 2019: Councilperson Cherelle Parker's Town Hall Meetings, in Northwest Phila.
- Apr 22, 2019: Interview with Renee Chenault Fattah on WURD Radio
- May 15, 2019: Resource Fair hosted by SELF, Inc., in Ludlow
- June 8, 2019: Expungement Clinic hosted by Diversified Community Services, in Point Breeze

Jarue was creative with how he incorporated the Fellowship into his daily life. He became a Mike Lee Fellow six months after being released from 20 years in prison, which meant that on top of working for PLSE, he was also searching for stable employment and housing. He was offered a job with Amazon's delivery service since they do not run criminal background checks on employees. Jarue reported that he often saw other men who were inside of prison with him, and so Jarue would talk with them about their options for clearing their criminal records, employment rights, voting rights, and other related issues. He always took PLSE's flyers to every event he attended in his community. Even though his Fellowship has ended, Jarue reports that he continues to get calls about criminal records and to share his story and experiences.

"The staff at PLSE was fully engaged with the fellowship and they were honest with me about what they felt my role should be. Everything we discussed came true. My networking possibilities and job opportunities have increased and my experience in these various nonprofit spaces was rich. The most important thing to me is being able provide a resource to the people and have it be meaningful. PLSE does work that the community needs and being provided a chance to be a part of that has pushed my life forward in ways I can't quantify!" – Jarue Lawson

During his time with PLSE, Jarue has proven to be a valuable liaison between the community and the organization. He demonstrated a dedication to and passion for meeting others where they are and informing them on their rights. His presence at events, often as PLSE's sole representative helped PLSE build and maintain not just presence but partnerships in affected communities. The next Mike Lee Fellow starts in October.