

## PANEL 1 | UNDERLYING ISSUES:

What conditions, from economic disparities to the school to prison pipeline, affect incarceration rates?



**DURREL DOUGLAS**

**Founder & President | Houston Justice**

Durrel grew up in Houston's South Park neighborhood where he saw firsthand the systemic inequity of our society's infrastructure, education system, and criminal justice system. After a 5-year stint as a prison guard, he dedicated the remainder of his life to creating a world where fewer people who came from neighborhoods like his ended up behind bars. Durrel has previously served as Chair of the Houston NAACP Community Coordination Committee, on the Board of Directors for the League of Women Voters-Houston, was a 2013 LWV Rising Star, received the 2017 Black Love Matters award from SEIU Afram-Washington, 40 under 40 Politicos of Houston in 2015, and the 2017 Community Trailblazer Award at the Teamsters National MLK Day Gala. Durrel has guest lectured at University of Houston, University of Texas, Jackson State University, and Howard University. He currently lives in Houston where his hobbies include learning to play the upright bass, eating soul food, laughing with friends, and hosting a bi-weekly podcast.

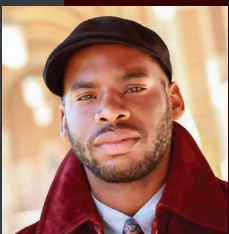


**BLAKE HOLMES**

**Author | Reflections of Life Through the Eyes of a Convict**

Blake Holmes was born and raised in a working class two parent home in Houston, Texas. As a young adult, he and his twin brother made misguided decisions that landed them both in prison. Sentenced to five years, Blake was inspired to reach back and help others avoid the mistakes he had made. While incarcerated he authored a memoir entitled *Reflections of Life Through the Eyes of a Convict*, a compilation of letters that he and his brother wrote to one another while they both served time in prison. The book also chronicled his time spent behind bars and the stories of some of the men he met while in the system.

Blake is now focused on partnering with organizations that institute policies and programs that empower male ex-offenders through vocation, education and re-entry support. The second edition of Blake's highly acclaimed book is due out this summer.



**TERRANCE "TK" KOONTZ**

**Right2Justice Lead Organizer | Texas Organizing Project**

Terrance "TK" Koontz currently serves as the lead organizer on the Right 2 Justice Campaign with the Texas Organizing Project. He has been mobilizing communities of color throughout the city for years. He has worked for organizations like Texans Together, SEIU, and Working America. His path to organizing began after he was arrested in 2010. While in Harris County Jail he witnessed the mistreatment of black and brown people and realized that the Criminal Justice System was essentially about class and racial oppression. Recently, TK lead a field team that significantly impacted the 2018 Fort Bend County D.A.'s race, which led to the election of the first African American D.A. in Fort Bend's history who has already begun transforming the criminal justice system there. TK has become a highly influential advocate in effecting change in the Houston-area. He has committed his life to social change and community service.



**DR. JUAN BARTHELEMY**

**Assistant Professor | UH Graduate College of Social Work**

Dr. Juan J. Barthelemy has about 20 years of practice experience working with at-risk African American youth. Dr. Barthelemy's research focuses on community engagement strategies to reduce juvenile violent crime. He has been funded to conduct research focused on community capacity building, violence intervention development and implementation, and monitoring the effects of group violence reduction strategies on homicides and other violent crimes. Through developing collaborative relationships within African-American communities, significant decreases in fatal and non-fatal shootings have been observed. Dr. Barthelemy is also interested in research that focuses on increasing school engagement for youth who may be at risk for dropping out of school and engaging in future criminal behaviors.