



ISSUE NO. 32

JULY 2020

THE DRUM

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UPCOMING EVENTS

MICHIGAN INCARCERATED CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY NETWORK (ICAN) MEMBERS MEETING

Saturday, July 18th

4-5:30pm

Members of ICAN will be meeting this Saturday. Michigan "Juvenile Lifers" who are not yet members of ICAN are encouraged to attend. Please email Kimberly Woodson at kim.miliberation.org with questions.

Zoom link:

[https://zoom.us/j/92437356896?](https://zoom.us/j/92437356896?pwd=Z1QvZXQvbXVPZ2pCOWVHWDI1cXI4QT09)

[pwd=Z1QvZXQvbXVPZ2pCOWVHWDI1cXI4QT09](https://zoom.us/j/92437356896?pwd=Z1QvZXQvbXVPZ2pCOWVHWDI1cXI4QT09)

THE INS AND OUTS OF CREATING A BUSINESS

Monday July 27th

5-6pm

The Small Business Administration will be hosting a webinar with SADO Reentry and other organizations to provide returning citizens with in-depth information and resources needed to start a business. The webinar will include a presentation followed by Q&A. Please follow @SADOreentry for Zoom link.

PROJECT REENTRY AUGUST WORKSHOP

Sunday August 2nd

2-4pm

This workshop will feature local employers who are currently hiring for multiple positions. They will answer questions about available jobs, pay, and showcase current opportunities. All employers featured are felony friendly and do not discriminate based on type of crime. Stay tuned @SADOreentry facebook,

VOTE AUGUST 4TH!



Michigan's primary is August 4th!
Get your ballot by mail, register to vote, preview your ballot, change your address, all by visiting Michigan.gov/vote

Michigan voters are encouraged to mail in ballots as soon as possible!

Returning Citizens

YOU CAN VOTE!

If you are at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen and a resident of Michigan, **you can vote.**

If you have a past conviction, **you can vote.**

If you are on parole, **you can vote.**

If you are on probation, **you can vote.**

If you are in or out of jail waiting to be sentenced, **you can vote.**

If you recently received or renewed a Michigan ID or driver's license, **you are registered to vote.**



Check your voter information today!

Find more information about where and how to vote at Michigan.gov/Vote or call (888) SOS-MICH



Thank you Safe and Just Michigan!

FAMILY AND FATHERHOOD: INTERVIEW WITH RENARD JOHNSON

BY KATHERINE ROOT 

Project Reentry is excited to be able to share some happy news during this difficult time. On June 30, 2020, Renard Johnson, former juvenile lifer, welcomed his second child with his partner, Linda. Renard and Linda have a one-year-old daughter, Renhya, and their new son's name is Shyheim Isaac Johnson. I spoke with Renard to find out how he is adjusting to this new life, and how starting a family has changed his perspective.

Renard said that his relationship with Linda “grounds” him. He said, “she made me look at things different when I get frustrated. She helps me see that not everybody’s your friend. She keeps me on my toes. She makes sure I don’t do nothing stupid, or hang around guys that’s doing anything stupid.”

Even though he has learned to better cope with frustration, he does still face challenges. It continues to be hard to find work, especially with a murder conviction. I asked him if he had any advice to help other people leaving prison. He said, “patience. Everything is about patience. You can’t get frustrated. Don’t let situations frustrate you. If you get frustrated, you gonna put yourself in a predicament that’ll put you right back. If you don’t have patience, you gonna do something stupid.” The most important thing, though, is that, “those kids make me determined to stay out here even more.” He said, “they’re a joy.”

Renhya follows him around the house, calling, “Dada”: “I gotta sneak out the house. That’s all love. It lets you know you appreciated.” Renard didn’t have the chance to be in the world and watch his older son, Renard Jr., grow up. He said, “I didn’t get to see Renard, but now I got two kids that I get to watch how they grow.” He will help Shyheim avoid the same traps he fell into: “I’ll just stay in his ear. I never had nobody in my ear about things like this. I can show him a different way, tell him what I’ve been through. He ain’t gonna go down the same road I went down. I don’t have everything I need, but what I have, I maintain. As long as I keep my family happy, I’m happy.”



Renard with daughter Renhya



Shyheim, born June 30th, 2020

POETRY: THE PEN//BY ANTHONY GIVENS

This pen is an extension of my fingers; guided by the confident steady stroke and flow of my hand, tethered by a controlling arm that itself is at the mercy of the emotions of my mind. As my mind dialogues with itself, as verbal words are hard to vocalize, to relay these ideas, dreams, desires, my mind positions my arm to communicate its vision. Jealous, my arm is hard on my hand who is ecstatic to play a role in the mind's scheme. The arm restrains the hand from getting too "big headed" but the hand is rebellious and takes advantage of the aid the fingers give, tirelessly committed to finishing whatever the objective is. Holding the pen, which bleeds its very essence across the paper to best paint the picture that are my words. Words from a pen—as I am the pen.

***Mr. Givens wrote this piece in order to express how therapeutic and necessary writing is for his self-improvement and self-discovery as well as having a positive outlet to express his emotions.*

Do you have a message you'd like to send to the community? We would love to share it! Please send any written pieces, artwork or images to reentry@sado.org to be featured in an upcoming Drum!

CATCH UP WITH THE TEAM! Interview with Katherine Root

HOW DID YOU COME TO WORK AT SADO?

My background is in law and social work. After the 2012 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Miller v Alabama*, I began working with SADO on the resentencings of eligible juvenile offenders serving natural life. My role was in sentencing mitigation. I then began working in mitigation at SADO on direct appeal cases, as well. In 2016, the *Montgomery v Louisiana* decision made hundreds more people in Michigan serving natural life sentences for offenses committed as juveniles eligible for resentencing. At that time, I transferred to SADO's Juvenile Lifer Unit, and I have been working exclusively on juvenile lifer cases ever since.

WHAT IS SENTENCING MITIGATION?

Sentencing mitigation is an essential part of client advocacy. Most simply, I see my fundamental task to be presenting my client as a full human being, with a past, a present, and a future. My goal is to help courts, prosecutors, and people impacted by my client's actions to get a more complete understanding of my client as a whole person, both before they entered prison, and since they have been there. I hope that this will ultimately lead to a variety of outcomes. First and foremost, I want my client to receive a more compassionate sentence. That means different things in different cases. For example, in the context of juvenile lifer cases, that means a resentencing from natural life to a sentence that provides a chance to someday live a life outside of prison. In other cases, it might mean a shorter term of years sentence, or a probation sentence instead of incarceration. It will be exciting to see the role that mitigation will play as alternatives to prison, such as restorative justice, become more common. Another outcome that is much harder to measure is that by telling a client's story, we may help people understand why a crime was committed. Learning more about why something happened may help victims gain some sort of closure, or even help my client better understand themselves. This is very important during the process of preparing for allocution, which is when a convicted person has the opportunity to address the court and any impacted persons who wish to hear what they have to say. My work in mitigation allows me to help clients work out their own feelings about the crime, often including what it means to apologize and how to express things they may have been bottling up inside for many years. Finally, thorough mitigation also includes planning for the future, such as reentry planning. SADO's Project Reentry is dedicated entirely to reentry. This is particularly important when presenting cases to court where the client may be able to return to the world soon, and judges and prosecutors will have concerns about whether they will have a place to go. Project Reentry also provides assistance to returning citizens as they transition back into a world that may have changed very much since they were incarcerated.

HOW DO MITIGATION SPECIALISTS GET THE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO TELL CLIENTS' STORIES?

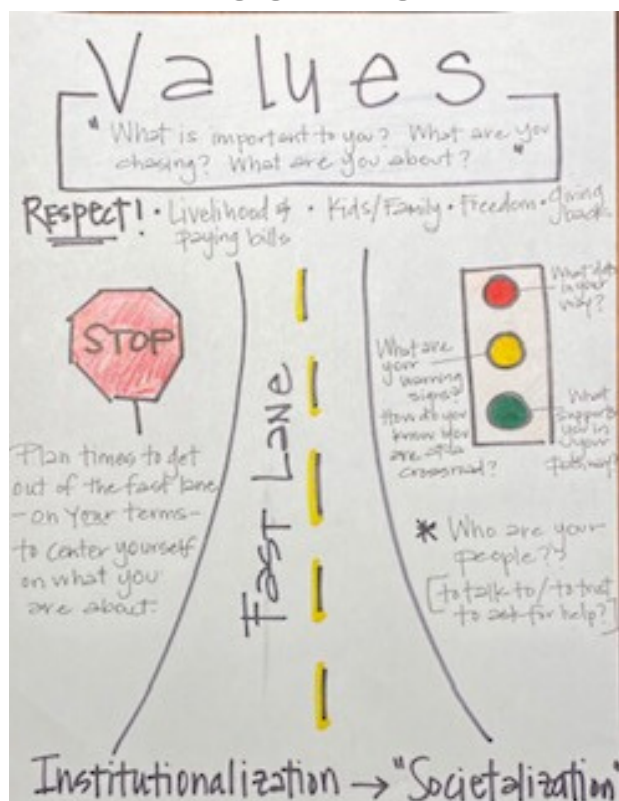
The most important sources are our clients themselves. I always want to make sure that my client feels like their voice is heard. After interviewing my client and reviewing any information we already have, I try to collect records from places like schools or medical providers that might give me relevant information. I also begin interviewing other people. This might include family members and friends, teachers, doctors, attorneys, and even codefendants or witnesses.

WHAT IS THE HARDEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

In terms of the actual tasks of my job, it can be very difficult to find the people I need to talk to in order to get information about my client or their past, or to find records. This is especially true when a client has been in prison for a very long time. Schools or hospitals can close, and people may have relocated, retired, or passed away. From a more emotional perspective, I know that when I talk to people, whether it's my client or others, I may be bringing up topics that cause them a lot of pain, that they may have learned to live with, and not have thought about for a long time. The hardest thing, though, is when our team is not able to get a positive outcome for our client.

Yes. Working in sentencing mitigation is the most rewarding work I have ever done. My work is interesting; I get to talk to people I would not otherwise have met, and go places I would not otherwise have been able to go. Most importantly, I feel honored that my clients share their stories with me, and that more than anything else inspires me to work as hard as I can to get a result that can make their life better.

THANK YOU WEDNESDAY WELLNESS FACILITATORS!



For the last 3 months, Project Reentry has hosted virtual bi-weekly wellness events to provide a space for people formerly incarcerated to discuss topics related to mental health, share their experience, strength and hope, learn coping tools from mental health professionals, and discover valuable community resources. On July 1st, licensed counselor and social worker Daphne Brydon facilitated a discussion based on finding identity after incarceration and how to deal with new experiences (notes pictured left). Overall the feedback of the virtual wellness discussions have been positive and we look forward to the continued series. Follow Project Reentry on social media for Wednesday Wellness event details and information on other upcoming events.

FOLLOW US
@SADOREentry



CONTACT US

Email: reentry@sado.org
Phone: 313.256.9833

INTERVIEW WITH BARAKA SANDERS: REAL SOLUTIONS TO REAL PROBLEMS

BY ALLISON GORINE

I spoke with Baraka at length about solutions he proposed to make our legal system function as a just and fair entity. The solutions he proposed also include ways to change funding streams that will rearrange corrections spending to get people effected by the legal system the appropriate resources. *Below is a summary of our conversation.*

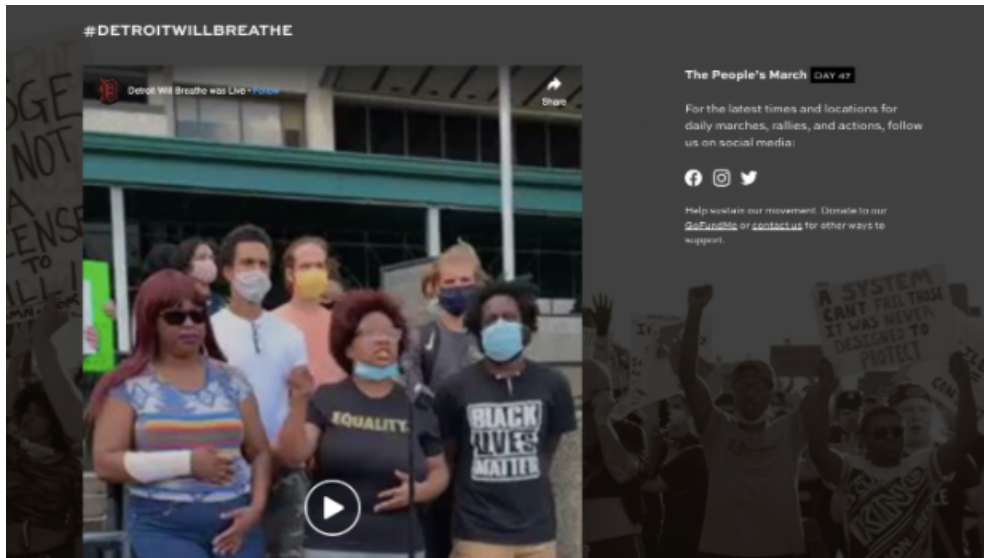
Background

Michigan prison's population has drastically changed since the closing of state mental hospitals and funding cuts by former Michigan Governor John Engler in the 1990s, but we (as a state) have failed to address the needs of persons with mental illnesses in Michigan Prisons. Michigan has been criminalizing persons with mental illness who would benefit from mental health treatment but instead are locked up with no real way of getting help. Although there are programs in prison, none focus on treating a person's individual diagnoses. Instead there are groups, which are oftentimes unregulated and are more focused on discussion-based topics such as communication or anger management; they are not therapeutic. Further problematic, is people serving life are not eligible to engage in the bare minimum of "self-help programing", such as Thinking for a Change and Cage Your Rage groups. Additionally, it is well known that there is not an overarching solution to all people with a mental illness. Mental health treatment is individualistic, and solutions or coping methods may vary widely among individuals. Another compounding factor is the stigma of mental health that exists in and outside of prison, however there is really no privacy in prison, so stigma against persons with mental illness and internalized stigma towards yourself if you have a mental illness can be tenfold in prison. And because there is no way of seeking therapy or treatments typically available outside of prison, people incarcerated do not self refer or ask for help. If you express you are thinking of suicide or engage in self-harm, treatment in prison equals solitary confinement where you are locked up 23 hrs a day in a tiny cell. That is not treatment, it is torture. This might be hard to imagine for some people, but take a minute and think about that, and if reading this, do not let this issue remain hidden. It has been going on for too long and politician after politician has failed to make a change.

Solutions

There are thousands of people in the Michigan Department of Corrections who instead of prison, need mental health treatment. We may not be able to erase the past by sifting through each individual, going back in time, to eliminate or reduce sentences, but we can move forward with real solutions and provide people who are getting out with mental illness with treatment. When a person is being discharged or comes up for their parole hearing, instead of being supervised by a parole agent, they should have the opportunity to get treatment from a social worker. Yes, I am saying no parole, no punitive aftermath, but instead out and into the care of a licensed health professional who has no ties to corrections. Parole agents and social workers check very different boxes: Essentially, A parole officer wants to know where you live, if you had contact with law enforcement, and if you are working, whereas a social worker wants to know if you have a safe place to live, how you're treating and coping with a mental illness, if you are physically healthy, and then actually helps to eliminate barriers preventing a person from getting what they need. Paroling to a social worker will also decrease the workload and funding on corrections. We all know parole agents are overworked and tired of seeing some of the same patterns. If we streamline people who have mental health illnesses to the correct field, to the mental health professionals, the positive impact is two-fold: people get the help they need, and decrease spending for corrections. The expense would be transferred to Medicaid. We can also transfer funding into federal control to put money back into our state's mental health budgets, not corrections. Criminalizing those with mental illness is purely irresponsible.

ADVOCACY WORK IN THE COMMUNITY



While social media coverage of protests have lessened, the fight for racial justice and Black Lives still continues. There are numerous protests and events occurring throughout the city of Detroit to bring awareness to injustices and advocate for change. A great resource to stay informed about these different events you can attend and participate in is the Detroit Will Breathe Organization. You can access their website to view their list of demands and view their social media that publicizes upcoming events.

Website:<https://detroitwillbreathe.info/>

Overt White Supremacy (Socially Unacceptable)

Lynching
Hate Crimes
Blackface The N-word
Swastikas Neo-Nazis Burning Crosses
Racist Jokes Racial Slurs KKK

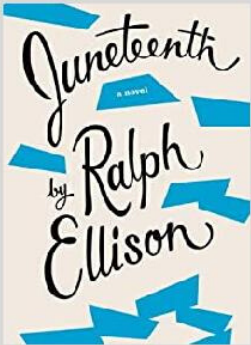
Covert White Supremacy (Socially Acceptable)

Calling the Police on Black People White Silence Colorblindness
White Parents Self-Segregating Neighborhoods & Schools
Eurocentric Curriculum White Savior Complex Spiritual Bypassing
Education Funding from Property Taxes Discriminatory Lending
Mass Incarceration Respectability Politics Tone Policing
Racist Mascots Not Believing Experiences of BIPOC Paternalism
"Make America Great Again" Blaming the Victim Hiring Discrimination
"You don't sound Black" "Don't Blame Me, I Never Owned Slaves" Bootstrap Theory
School-to-Prison Pipeline Police Murdering BIPOC Virtuous Victim Narrative
Higher Infant & Maternal Mortality Rate for BIPOC "But What About Me?" "All Lives Matter"
BIPOC as Halloween Costumes Racial Profiling Denial of White Privilege
Prioritizing White Voices as Experts Treating Kids of Color as Adults Inequitable Healthcare
Assuming Good Intentions Are Enough Not Challenging Racist Jokes Cultural Appropriation
Eurocentric Beauty Standards Anti-Immigration Policies Considering AAVE "Uneducated"
Denial of Racism Tokenism English-Only Initiatives Self-Appointed White Ally
Exceptionalism Fearing People of Color Police Brutality Fetishizing BIPOC Meritocracy Myth
"You're So Articulate" Celebration of Columbus Day Claiming Reverse-Racism Paternalism
Weaponized Whiteness Expecting BIPOC to Teach White People Believing We Are "Post-Racial"
"But We're All One Big Human Family" / "There's Only One Human Race" Housing Discrimination

In order to challenge the system, we must first recognize the ways in which it perpetuates these historical group inequities and discrimination.

READ. WATCH. LISTEN.

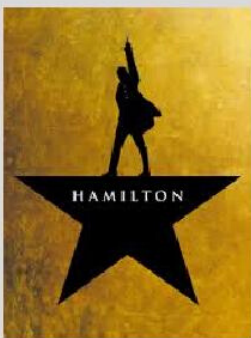
The following resources celebrate the stories of and increase representation for BIPOC.



READ//JUNETEENTH

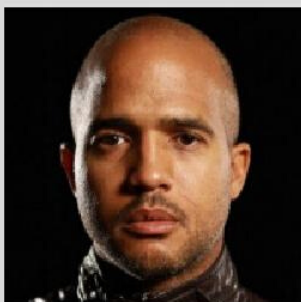
BY RALPH ELLISON

From Ralph Ellison--author of the classic novel of African-American experience, *Invisible Man*--the long-awaited second novel. Here is the master of American vernacular--the rhythms of jazz and gospel and ordinary speech--at the height of his powers, telling a powerful, evocative tale of a prodigal of the twentieth century.



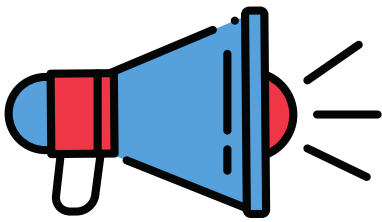
WATCH//HAMILTON

The musical that is redefining Broadway...and American history. Following the history of the American Revolution while putting BIPOC at the center of the story, *Hamilton* is a different way to digest history. Written by a second-generation immigrant, *Hamilton* is heralded as a representation of the current need for change and revolution while also presenting a different way to critically analyze the foundation of our nation. Can be found on Disney+ (they offer a free month trial).



LISTEN//DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN

A violinist, composer, and artist-entrepreneur. He is known for using every part of the violin in surprising ways to create whole new sounds. Also known as DBR, Roumain is a Haitian-American social activist who looks to shed light on areas of inequity in society and try to find a common ground for all kinds of people in his work. Found on Spotify, Youtube, or any other music streaming platform..



ATTENTION!!!

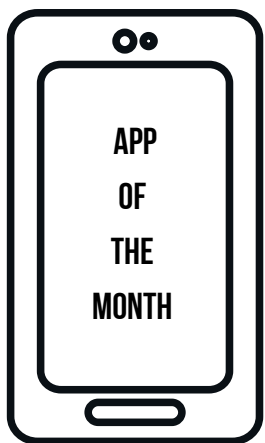
If you are a "juvenile lifer" and would like to be interviewed by "The Appeal", please reach out to Michigan Liberation Canvass Manager Kimberly Woodson at 313-957-1410 or Ms. Marjon Parham, Michigan Liberation Communications & Public Relations at 248-878-9302

RESOURCE OF THE MONTH



Do you or a loved one own a small business? Has it been impacted due to COVID-19? You may qualify for economic relief. The State of Michigan has announced that they have allocated \$100 million of CARES Act funding to implement the Michigan Small Business Restart Program. The application for businesses to apply for funding will open on July 15, 2020 and close August 5th, 2020. You may visit their website to access more information and the application when it becomes available. Additionally, business owners may contact DEGC for assistance with this grant and to learn about other business support programs and funds. For direct contact, call the DEGC at (844) 333-8249 from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday or go online to degc.org.

SANVELLO



"If you're looking for online tools to cope with stress, anxiety, and depression, Sanvello is your go-to app. You can track your moods, meditate, and also practice cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) by using psychologist-designed tools to help manage stress, anxiety, and/or depression. Audio exercises include topics such as deep breathing and soothing soundscapes."

Cost: You can use Sanvello pretty comprehensively for free. There are paid upgrades as well.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR JUSTICE

Justice Through Code Program
Now Accepting Applications for
Fall Semester.

Are you formerly incarcerated
and want to learn how to code
and explore jobs in the tech
industry? We are currently
accepting students for our
Justice Through Code program
for the fall semester.

Applications are due July 31,
2020.

Visit <https://centerforjustice.columbia.edu/>

Questions? Email:
adan.macdonald@columbia.edu

AT&T, VERIZON, SPRINT METRO DETROIT

Looking for about 70 quality employees to
operate locations

Serious inquires should send resume to ISW
Companies, Isaac Hanna.
Email: Isaac.hanna@wirelessgiant.com

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Hiring immediately, felony friendly
no matter the convictions, parole
eligibility flexible. Transportation to
work site from central location.

Questions? Contact SADO Reentry
or email Ashely Blake at
ablake@ceoworks.org

7310 Woodward Ave #701b
Detroit, MI 48202

DETROIT JUSTICE CENTER- PARALEGAL

The Detroit Justice Center (DJC),
an innovative community law
practice opened in 2018, seeks a
full-time Paralegal.

Visit Detroitjusticecenter.org-Careers for details

Applications are due via their
website by Friday, July 24th at
5pm

1420 Washington Blvd #220,
Detroit, MI 48226

MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION OF DETROIT

Hiring immediately for multiple
paid apprenticeship programs
designed to lead employees to
high paying, sustainable careers.

Contact SADO Reentry to
connect or call Chief Talent
Officer Melody Magee at 313-779-
1666 or 313-341-7661 Ext. 203

14801 West 8 Mile Rd.
Detroit, MI 48235

ABOVE AND BEYOND STAFFING SOLUTIONS

On the spot interviews, multiple
positions available

Open 7:00am-3:00pm

4270 High St.
Ecorse, MI 48229
313-451-8510

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Project Reentry has taken pride in publishing a reentry newsletter every month since November, 2017. The newsletter was created by former reentry intern Brooke Wolters and community member Antonio Williams. The purpose of the newsletter has always been to build community by highlighting the work of Project Reentry and other ally organizations. Traditionally the Drum highlights events related to reentry, features community resources, and showcases stories of hope and inspiration. In order to refocus the newsletter's mission, make time for new projects, and feature more content, the newsletter will be published quarterly (once every three months) moving forward. We want to thank our readers and every one who has submitted contributions to the newsletter over the years. We look forward to putting out a new and refreshed issue in the fall. Meanwhile, please continue to send submissions to reentry@sado.org for review.

THANK
YOU

-Allison Gorine