

## LOCAL NEWS

# San Bernardino nonprofit founder Kim Carter wins pardon recommendation



Supporters of Time for Change founder Kim Carter point to her Tuesday following a pardon hearing. The board voted to pardon Carter.

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SACRAMENTO >> Kim Carter has dedicated half of her life to giving fresh starts to women and children while she herself was held back by the crimes of the first half of her life.

That didn't stop her from helping more than 1,000 people or earning recognition as one of the [top 10 CNN heroes](#), but she said the felony record prevented her from reaching her full potential.

“If you think I’ve made an impact now, just wait until I’m out from under this shroud,” Carter, founder and executive director of the Time for Change Foundation, said Tuesday.

Hours later — 24 years after Carter’s last conviction — the California Board of Parole Hearings recommended removing that shroud by pardoning her crimes.

For much of the 1980s until 1993, Carter was convicted of crimes in San Bernardino, Los Angeles and San Francisco counties including possession of a controlled substance for sale, possession of a controlled substance in jail/prison and two counts of grand theft, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

“I was a full-fledged addict,” Carter said. “From 18 to 30, I was in and out of prison and jails. ... I’ve been sober and clean for 24 years, without a drink or drug.”

Because she was convicted of more than one felony, the [California Constitution requires](#) the California Supreme Court to recommend a pardon.

But as of Tuesday, Carter has a recommendation of pardon from Gov. Jerry Brown’s office and the parole board.

“I’m overwhelmed with emotion right now,” Carter said by phone, just after learning the board’s decision. “I hope I can inspire more people. It took me 24 years to get here. You have to stay the path no matter what.”

Carter is indeed an inspiration, and has been for years, said a contingent of dignitaries who flew into Sacramento for the hearing.

“It represents hope for everyone,” said Fontana Mayor Acquanetta Warren, who has known Carter since 2003, a year after the founding of Time for Change. “No one should ever give up on themselves, and we shouldn’t give up on them either. She’s our Rocky Balboa.”

The parole board heard Tuesday from representatives of district attorneys, former wardens, school superintendents, Rep. Karen Bass, D-Los Angeles, and other elected officials.

“When you have that cross-section of people from all walks of life, races, political affiliations, whatever, you represent all of us and what we should be doing,” said Warren, a Republican. “That’s huge.”

Assemblywoman Eloise Gomez Reyes, D-San Bernardino, said during the parole hearing that Carter is a shining example that it's possible to break the cycle of incarceration.

“Kim’s story is validation that change is possible, that the cycle doesn’t have to continue. That in spite of the statistics the chain can be broken,” Reyes said. “But Kim’s story is also one of hope – not only for her and the women she helps, but for the children who live and witness a different life than the one they were destined to live. Their story will be different because Kim Carter dedicated her life to make that happen.”

As the executive director of Time for Change, Carter has been frank about her past as an addict – homeless, in and out of jail, seemingly hopeless.

Then, she says, she was chosen to participate in a rehabilitation program and for the first time in her life she was offered treatment and a solution. She became an accountant, and in 2002 she founded Time for Change to help homeless women and children, many of them formerly incarcerated.

In 2005, she received a certificate of rehabilitation – an earlier step in the pardon process – and in 2015, CNN and voters nationwide recognized her as one of the country’s [top 10 “heroes.”](#)

She looks forward to accelerating that work once she’s unburdened by the record.

A governor’s pardon allows former felons to serve on a jury and reclaim other civil rights, although it does not erase the record and they must still answer on employment forms that they have been convicted, according to the [governor’s parole forms.](#)

It also means she’s finally eligible for a CPA license, Carter said.

“I want to continue to help the struggling people of the community to do the right thing and turn their life around,” she said. “I’m going to go home and dream and decide what I’m going to do with my life. I have choices.”

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Ryan Hagen covers San Bernardino County and politics for the Southern California News Group. Since he began covering Inland Empire governments in 2010, he's written about a city entering bankruptcy and exiting bankruptcy; politicians being elected, recalled and arrested; crime; a terrorist attack; fires; ICE; fights to end homelessness; fights over the location of speed bumps; and people's best and worst moments. A graduate of Pepperdine University, he teaches journalism classes at Cal State San Bernardino. His greatest accomplishment is breaking a coffee addiction. His greatest regret is any moment without coffee.

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