
The Institute for Community Justice

ICJ Newsletter

Issue No. 2 | June 2022

REENTRY AWARENESS MONTH~EDITION

WHAT IS REENTRY AWARENESS MONTH?

Philadelphia recognizes June as Reentry Awareness Month. This month is meant to highlight the endeavors that over 100 governmental agencies and nonprofits do to reduce recidivism and celebrate individuals who have gone through reentry.



ICJ Business

SCI Chester Reentry Wellness and Workforce Initiative Network (R.W.I.N.)

Reentry services begin from the moment arrest and detainment occurs. While a plethora of support services are available upon release of jail or prison, this process is not as prevalent prior to release. ICJ has partnered with SCI Chester to bring forth a 14-week initiative titled Reentry Wellness and Workforce Initiative Network (R.W.I.N.) which will take place inside SCI Chester. Topics of discussion include mental health and wellness, employment, parole, financial wellness, community and family support, housing, and education. This opportunity will assist individuals in preparing their personal reentry plan and what to expect upon reentry. This initiative began May 19th and is going strong!

The Black Women of Excellence Panel: The Misnomer of "Black Girl Magic"

On behalf of Women's History Month, on March 25th 2022 ICJ held it's second annual Black Women of Excellence Panel. This years theme we examined the misnomer of "Black Girl Magic". What does this term mean and how does it impact Black women? How can we relieve the weight of the cape? Find the video on our YouTube Channel!



Philadelphia Budget: Protest Demands

A few staff members of The Institute for Community Justice attended a protest outside of City Hall to stand up for more funding to support those who are incarcerated and against brutal deaths within the prisons/jails. Many of those incarcerated face disparities in receiving simple items such as toilet paper or even feminine hygiene products. These simplicities and more should always be available, and the safety of those incarcerated should be prioritized. The lack of humanity is inexcusable.



Workforce Initiative Network (W.I.N.)

Not to be confused with R.W.I.N., Work Force Initiative Network (W.I.N.) is a work-readiness workshop held at ICJ. This program has been revamped, and includes further elements of restorative justice to aid individuals in their healing and wellness. This initiative is for those who are formerly incarcerated and the next cohort will begin soon! If you are interested to learn more, please contact Michael Butler at mbutler@fight.org or 215-525-0460.

Reentry Awareness Month Events

ICJ Bail-Out Fundraiser

Every day people are being placed in jail and held for bond. Bail bonds vary by state, offense, age, first time or multiple time offender, etc. Many people are held for petty offenses and cannot afford to pay bail. As a part of this month's endeavors, we are raising funds to bail-out a minimum of 15 or more individuals!

For every \$10 YOU spend in donations, you will be entered into a raffle to win a refurbished laptop! We will be 2 chances to win! Please share your name, email, and phone number upon donating in case you are the big winner. See

Drop off/Mail money order or check to:

The Institute for Community Justice
1207 Chestnut St. Floor 2 Philadelphia, PA 19107

Attention: Assata Thomas, Bail Fund
(Include your name, contact information, and BAIL someplace in your deliverance)

Paypal: ICJ account through Assata Thomas - Chief Community Justice Officer

Include your name and contact information and write BAIL in the note box

Website

www.fight.org > Donate > Donate Now > Select Amount and ICJ > Dedicate this Donation - Type "BAIL" > Fill in your contact and payment information



fight.org



Paypal



Life After Reentry: Managing the Business of YOU

On June 10th ICJ hosted Life After Reentry: Managing the Business of YOU, a fair offering resources around reentry and knowing your rights! ICJ also partnered with Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity to develop a "cleaning of your record" strategy for those formerly incarcerated. We were joined by 26 vendors and over 80 guests! Thank you everyone for making this event possible!



Conversations about Mass Incarceration

ICJ was fortunate to have The University of Connecticut join us in March and Mercy College join us this month to learn more about mass incarceration and its impacts on society. ICJ hosted students from both and the conversations were raw and impactful. Should you be or know a school interested in learning more about the impacts of mass incarceration, please reach out to us!

The Impact of Being Impacted

Reentry impacts everyone differently due to many things, including (but not limited to): the environment you come home to, support systems, discrimination and stigma, financial status, biological makeup (age, ethnicity, gender, etc.), and more. The more we take time to understand individuals who have been impacted and look at the prison legal system, the better we can make reentry (and the act of incarceration) a humane process. A successful reentry begins with support at the point of incarceration, and through release. If we are to reduce recidivism, and build and strengthen communities, let's look at reentry a little further.

The Statistics: Understanding who is Coming Home

The 25,000 people released to Philadelphia annually are disproportionately Black and Brown people, a majority are under 40 years old, and return to some neighborhoods far more frequently than others, (PRC, 2015).

Older persons experience higher levels of homelessness, unemployment, and loneliness upon returning home. The rate of which older persons are being released from prison is on the rise, (Couloute, Prison Policy Initiative, 2018).



Many individuals who experience incarceration develop Post-Incarceration Syndrome (PICS). The severity of PICS symptoms is related to the level of coping skills prior to incarceration, length of time served, restrictiveness of the incarceration environment, etc. Symptoms could include Institutionalized personality traits, PTSD, Anti-Social Personality Traits, Social-Sensory Deprivation Syndrome, and substance abuse disorders, (Quandt & Jones, Prison Policy Initiative, 2021)

The Impact of Being Impacted

Why is this important?

Knowing who is coming home helps us to understand two VERY important things:

1

The types of services we should be providing to those coming home.

2

The type of reform that must be put into place as Black and Brown persons are still incarcerated at disproportionately higher rates



The system isn't broken, it is built this way.

Supporting Persons in Reentry



DO'S

Give space to those who are in reentry, this can be an exhaustive and overwhelming experience, have patience.

Ask individuals how you can support them, or what is it they need support with. It can be hard to ask for help sometimes.

Listen. Often, those incarcerated haven't had much of a voice, allow individuals space to speak and voice their thoughts.

Look at individuals as PEOPLE, like anyone else. Everyone has a story.

Eliminate barriers that hinder growth and success of those in reentry.

Prepare for the changes of someone coming home, both internally and externally.



DON'TS

Treat individuals as who they were prior to incarceration, they have changed and grown.

Assume individuals are incapable of work or responsibilities, they deserve a fair chance like anyone else.

Punish individuals further, so much stigma already comes with incarceration, this will further harm individuals trying to do better.

Discredit their feelings and emotions, this is a difficult process. Remember, they've suffered further trauma by being incarcerated.

Shame someone for not knowing how to do something or communicate. Time and trauma has impacted this greatly.

Ask why they have been incarcerated. Period.

Ending Remarks

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Media Spotlight

As a part of this newsletter, ICJ will be highlighting varying forms of media (podcasts, movies, shows, YouTube channels, books, etc.) that are relevant to the work ICJ does around mass incarceration. Below are a few we want to showcase this month!

["Just Mercy" a 2019 film and 2014 memoir by Bryan Stevenson.](#)

[Death By Incarceration Podcast](#)

["The Prison in 12 Landscapes" \(2016\) Documentary](#)

["A Woman Doing Life" a memoir/notes written by Erin George](#)

[Equal Justice Initiative \(EJI\) - YouTube Channel](#)

["The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by Michelle Alexander](#)

The Institute for Community Justice is a comprehensive prison services and reentry program providing health linkages, supportive services, education, and advocacy for individuals, families, and communities impacted by mass incarceration.

